

Title: Ph.D. Assistantship: Sagebrush Obligate Passerines and Pinyon Jay Ecology and Conservation

Organization: Utah State University
Location: Logan, Utah
Job Category: Graduate Assistantships
Salary: \$24,000/year stipend + tuition & fees + health insurance (~ \$31,500/year)
Start Date: 09/01/2022
Last Date to Apply 02/28/2022

Description: The Rangeland-Wildlife Extension lab in the Wildland Resources Department at Utah State University (USU) is seeking applicants for a funded Ph.D. research assistantship. The successful candidate will be advised by Drs. David Dahlgren and Eric Thacker and has the opportunity to **begin field work in Spring 2022**, with matriculation into a full-time Graduate Research Assistantship for the **Fall 2022 semester**. The GRA includes a monthly stipend equaling **\$24,000/year**, with **tuition and fees covered**, and the option for **health insurance**, which equates to approximately **\$31,500/year**.

The sagebrush obligate passerines and pinyon jay objectives for this announcement are part of a larger research project that also includes sage-grouse research objectives. There will be two Ph.D. Assistantships available for this project: one with an emphasis on sage-grouse (status: filled), and one with an emphasis on sagebrush obligate passerines and pinyon jays (status: open). The two Ph.D. students will work closely together to meet the research objectives and, although separate emphases will be in place, our expectation will be a high level of cooperation and collaboration between both students for the entire project including workloads such as method development, field work, data management, analysis, and publications. Funding begins January 2022 and currently goes through September 2025, so 3 field seasons and approximately 1 year for analysis and writing for both students. Our hope is to have the successful candidate for this announcement start field work this coming field season (Spring/Summer 2022) and begin their graduate assistantship in late August 2022 (i.e., Fall 2022 semester).

The overarching theme of this project is the response of the above species of concern to sagebrush conservation and management actions. Within the Great Basin the persistence of sagebrush communities is threatened by multiple factors, two of the most significant being wildfire, with associated cheatgrass issues, and conifer (Pinyon-Juniper) expansion into sagebrush communities. Significant conservation resources have gone into wildfire recovery/rehabilitation and conifer removal. The successful candidate will assess the response of sagebrush obligate passerines to recovery of the

vegetation community post-fire and the response of pinyon jays to conifer removal treatments aimed at restoring sagebrush communities. Habitat use surveys and modeling habitat selection and abundance for these target species is expected.

Field work will take place in the remote areas of extreme northwestern Utah and south-central Idaho during the spring and summer field seasons (~ March to August). Field-based responsibilities for this position will include overseeing breeding surveys for both pinyon jays and sagebrush obligate passerines. Some vegetation surveys may be included as well. Both PhD students will help each other with conducting field work when they can. Housing during the field season will be provided and will likely include bunk-style housing and a mobile travel trailer. The graduate students will work together to hire up to 4 field technicians for each field season. Field trucks, UTVs, and ATVs will be provided. Classwork will take place on USU's Logan campus (main campus) mostly during the fall and spring semesters. Logan sits in a beautiful mountain valley surrounded by public lands with many different recreational opportunities, from winter snow activities to fly-fishing, hiking, and more year-round.

Both teamwork and the ability to work independently will be needed. Strong positive leadership and a cooperative approach are required to successfully fulfill the demands of this position. Our expectation is that multiple scholarly products will be produced from the research including, but not limited to, peer-reviewed journal publications, Extension bulletins and factsheets, multiple scientific conference talks, webinars, and stakeholder presentations and trainings. The successful candidate will be conducting applied research working with two advisors that are Extension specialists in range and wildlife. This research project will be integrated with multiple partners and collaborators such as private livestock producers, state and federal agencies, NGO interest groups, and others. We expect the successful candidate to grow and maintain professional relationships with multiple stakeholders interested and involved in this project. We also anticipate this research being integrated into the policy and planning of conservation actions by our partners, making a difference on the ground.

USU is an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex/gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability status, veteran status, or any other attribute protected by law. We appreciate applications that help build a more diverse community here at USU.

Qualifications:

Required Qualifications-

- Meet admission requirements for USU's School of Graduate Studies
- Valid Driver's License
- Master's degree in wildlife or related field
- Demonstrated communication skills in English (written and oral)

- At least a basic skill set in using R-statistical software

Preferred Qualifications-

- Demonstrated ability to supervise others
- Ability to walk/hike long distances while carrying 30 or more pounds of equipment
- Ability to conduct field work in extreme climatic conditions, both hot and cold weather.
- Experience writing and publishing scholarly publications
- Experience with terrestrial ecology and avian field work
- Experience working in remote areas independently
- Demonstrated ability to drive long distances for field work, use 4-wheel-drive vehicles, and use UTV/ATVs safely
- Ability to spend multiple nights in a primitive camping setting
- Experience using Resource Selection Function or related modeling
- Experience supervising others in natural resource field work situations
- Experience working on a project with a partner, including cooperative study design and co-producing results
- Experience with experimental design and quantitative analysis
- Experience with GIS software and using spatial data for mapping and analysis

Desirable Skills-

- Bird dog ownership/handling experience would be beneficial
- Experience with bird ID through plumage and call characteristics
- Experience with western rangeland vegetation ID and methodology
- Experience or interest in outreach and integrating science with stakeholders

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Application Materials: Please send an email to both David and Eric with the subject line "Application Ph.D. Assistantship [your first and last name]." Attach your letter of interest, resume/CV, unofficial transcripts, and contact information for 3 references. If you have taken the GRE, please include your unofficial results in your resume/CV.