

From: Code, Tessa
Subject: Research Assistant: Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program 2017

Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program Research Assistant Vacancy Announcement 2017

Buck Island Reef National Monument (BIRNM), located on the island of St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, is seeking applicants for the position of Sea Turtle Research Assistant (intern) to conduct sea turtle research and monitoring. This will be the 30th year of the Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program (BISTRP), a long-term monitoring, research, and conservation project supported by the National Park Service (NPS), Buck Island Reef National Monument. BIRNM is a nesting beach for hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), leatherback (*Dermodochelys coriacea*), and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtles.

This project will be up to 12 weeks in duration beginning in mid-July 2017 (applicants must state availability in their cover letter) and are expected to stay the length of the project upon selection. This is a highly competitive project that is physically and mentally intense, aimed at individuals who want to make ecology/resource management their career. Access to the island is by boat only, where there are minimal facilities. Ability to navigate rugged terrain, work in adverse weather conditions, and amongst biting insects and poisonous and spiny plants is essential. Shifts last up to 12 hours and require interns to work effectively on a nocturnal schedule. Interns must work equally effectively as a team and individually.

Interns will provide assistance to the NPS staff in the collection and processing of field data. A mixture of methods will be used: night duty and day patrols. Night duty focuses on working with animals during the laying process. During this time, all nesting turtles will be encountered; biometric data will be collected on turtles, physical data will be collected on nest locations, and animals will be tagged (inconel and PIT). Imperiled nests will be relocated to mitigate risk and increase hatch success. Nests will be excavated to determine hatch success. Night work will last in shifts up to 12 hours and will be labor intensive. Day patrols will require accurate assessment of the previous night's nesting activities from tracks left in the sand alone. Nests that hatch will be excavated to estimate hatching success and beach productivity. Throughout the project interns will be required to perform data entry and equipment maintenance.

Interns are also responsible for weekly daytime monitoring of beaches at The Buccaneer Hotel, their residence, recording activities using GPS. Interns will also conduct outreach to hotel guests and will write a report at season's end summarizing turtle nesting activities at The Buccaneer Hotel. In addition to BISTRP objectives, interns will provide assistance to NPS staff and collaborators with a hawksbill hatchling genetics project and aid in hatchling sampling and data collection. Interns may also participate in the deployment of acoustic and satellite tags as part of directed research to assess sea turtle movement. In addition, interns may have the opportunity to conduct snorkel surveys for foraging sea turtles and/or assist in sea turtle stranding response incidents.

Interns will receive two meals/day and lodging from The Buccaneer Hotel at no cost to the interns. A small weekly stipend will be allotted to each intern (\$100), and travel costs will be covered by the NPS. Interns need to seriously consider their finances before applying to these openings; it

will not be possible to work locally while conducting intern duties.

Qualifications Required - *Must:*

- Communicate effectively in English, orally and in writing
- *Have biology training/background*
- Collect data and maintain records precisely according to standardized protocol
- Enter and analyze data (written and computer database format)
- *Be in excellent physical shape*
- Be able to persevere under stressful conditions
- Work outdoors, day and night in isolated conditions, and in adverse weather.
- Walk in the sand up to 10 kilometers/night; climb rocks; stoop, kneel and stand on soft substrate and in cramped conditions.
- *Have a strong work ethic*
- Be able to work all night and on weekends
- Be able to lift and move heavy objects
- Operate and maintain communications equipment properly (cell phone, hand-held VHS radio, marine radio)
- Be able to swim; crew a boat in open water conditions
- *Have a valid US driver's license*

To apply, send a cover letter stating your interest in and qualifications for the project, a resume or CV summarizing your experience, and contact information for three references to the email address below. The document(s) you submit should include your last name and document type in the file name. Email is preferred, but postal mail is accepted.* Deadline for application: 30 Jan 2017, no applicants will be considered after this date.* If selected for interview you will be contacted by Feb 5th, *please do not make follow up inquiries.*

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