

Wildlife Ecosystem Health Specialist

Position Description:

A 0.5 FTE CE mid-career Specialist (associate/full level)(0.5 FTE funded from grants & contracts) with a new and strategic primary audience made up of state agencies, Federal regulatory agencies and NGO's focused on managing free-ranging wildlife within California's natural ecosystems. Requires a DVM or equivalent degree and a PhD in wildlife ecology and/or population genetics.

Requires experience working with a wide diversity of state, federal, and non-governmental agencies on existing contracted projects, as well as the ability to negotiate new contracts involving wildlife population health and genetics. Documented experience and expertise required in: free-ranging wildlife capture and handling; analyzing wildlife DNA data; interpreting wildlife disease data; evaluating vectorborne and zoonotic diseases; teaching complex genetics and wildlife health concepts to policy people without technical background; and providing reports to agencies. Documented (research publications, outreach and acquired funding) experience researching California bird and mammal ecology, population health, and genetics. Experience working with the public in wildlife health, ecology, and genetics. Experience using GIS computational tools (ArcGIS).

Targeted agencies include, but are not limited to, the California Departments of: Fish and Game, Water Resources Conservation Boards, CalEPA, Food and Agriculture, Health Services, Transportation, and others. Other clientele include University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Advisors, and Federal agencies working on California wildlife such as the National Park Service, USDA Forest and Wildlife Services, Bureau of Land Management, etc., and non-governmental agencies and organizations including The Nature Conservancy, California Audubon Society and other similar groups. There are currently collaborations with most of these agencies and NGO's but no coordinated effort to expand the network and no formal connection to Cooperative Extension.

Justification:

California holds the greatest diversity of wildlife and natural systems in the US, yet there is no formal conduit to translate and transmit state of the art science in wildlife population health and genetics to key end users: the state and federal agencies biologists in the field, wildlife managers, and decision makers. Wildlife are early sentinels for ecosystem health and are often the key societal concern about use of the state's natural resources.

Data on the genetic diversity of threatened wildlife populations are needed to manage for population health and for conservation programs depending on the successful reintroduction of species to former habitat. Increasingly, laws enacted and recommendations provided to protect wildlife are placing pressure on agencies and stakeholders to acquire, translate, and apply technical and science-based wildlife information efficiently and effectively. Utilizing genetic and disease data, the Specialist will directly impact decisions related to restoration/conservation of rangelands, oak savannah/woodlands, riparian areas, forests, deserts and other important habitats through their interaction with agency leaders.

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This position will formalize a link and facilitate the flow of concepts, ideas, and funded research products between the UC system and agencies. The Specialist will serve as science translator and educator to biologists, experts within state, federal agencies; NGO's and facilitate collaboration with UCCE Advisors. The Specialist will insert themselves into a position to negotiate new contracts to facilitate important research initiatives involving numerous scientists throughout the UC system. The Specialist will be an expert in both wildlife population health and wildlife ecology and genetics (a key component for the science in conservation ecology).

Extension:

Activities for clientele groups include outreach education workshops; educational web site(s); periodic newsletters; meetings with clientele groups to identify educational and data gaps that the Specialist will work to close; make network links and engage clientele groups with university researchers. UCCE Advisors will be an important local link to relevant issues and considered an important collaborator with this position. The Specialist will provide coordination and promote collaboration with campus-based and other researchers to facilitate the successful delivery of research and educational programs to end-users. The Specialist will interact with UC ANR Program Teams, workgroups, Specialists, Advisors and Strategic Initiatives and others within the research/extension continuum in order to develop a successful program. UC ANR Research & Extension Centers are expected to be a strong collaborator with this position. The Specialist will also enhance outreach, continuing education, and connections to state agencies for UC Research & Extension Centers.

Research:

Initially, through stakeholder interactions, the successful candidate will prioritize the key information gaps in wildlife population health, ecology, and genetics that need to be bridged in order for best practices wildlife management. The use of wildlife as sentinels for ecosystem health, and detection and interpretation of wildlife issues as they relate to ecosystems, are major researchable areas in need of outreach education. Having a Specialist with a more direct link to decision-makers at all levels will allow for increased ability to obtain grants, contracts, and other funding necessary to develop long-term research.

ANR continuum:

This position is unique in that it focuses on bringing UC's strengths to governmental agencies with authority over wildlife management, and looks at wildlife as sentinels for early detection of ecosystem imbalances. This will impact decisions related to conservation and restoration of lands throughout the state. There is AES expertise at UCR, UCB & UCD as well as at other UC campuses. Additional expertise exists in the SVM Vet Genetics Lab, UCD Wildlife Health Center, State & Federal Agencies, NGO's, and this position provides new opportunities to extend ANR into programs on other UC campuses.

Support:

Housed in UCD SVM Population Health & Reproduction, with office and lab space available within the Vet Extension unit of the department. Specialist will maintain affiliate membership in the UCD John Muir Center for the Environment and SVM Wildlife Health Center. Start up funding from ANR and the School.

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Other support:

Currently there are many contracts with these agencies for focused work on wildlife issues. This position is expected to significantly extend the number and value of those contracts as well as develop resources from NGO's with an interest in wildlife health.

UCD houses a premier Ecology and Evolution group regularly named number 1-3 by US News and World Report. The School's Wildlife Health Center operates the California Oiled Wildlife Care Network in more than 20 locations (dealing with an average of more than 600 spills per year) and has major projects across California and around the world (caring for the Mountain Gorillas in Rwanda and Uganda, major USAID grant predicting emerging zoonotic diseases in locations in Africa).

Location:

UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Population Health and Reproduction. This location is necessary for regular networking and interactions with researchers and veterinarians working with wildlife population health, ecology, and genetics research. UCD has close proximity to many state, federal and NGO offices in Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay area.