



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Buck Island Reef National Monument
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Buck Island Sea Turtle Research Program *Research Assistant (Field Leader)* Vacancy Announcement 2021

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 Field Leader** to conduct sea turtle research and monitoring. This will be the 34th 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 (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtles.

This project will begin in mid-July, but Field Leader training and program preparation will **begin June 1st and project duties will extend for 28 weeks into early December 2021** (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 Buck 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. The Research Assistant will be expected to work effectively as part of a team and independently.

The Field Leader 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. Nests that hatch will be excavated to estimate hatching success and beach productivity. Throughout the project the Field Leader will ensure intern proficiency in the skills above and sufficient data entry, and quality assurance/quality control on the long-term dataset.

The Field Leader will also be expected to display strong leadership skills and effectively lead and communicate with the BISTRP team and NPS staff. In addition to BISTRP objectives, the Research Assistant will provide assistance to NPS staff and collaborators with a wide-variety of ongoing projects including forest restoration, deployment of acoustic and satellite tags, and a sea turtle nest temperature study. In addition, interns may have the opportunity to conduct snorkel surveys for foraging sea turtles and/or assist in sea turtle stranding response incidents.

The Research Assistant will be compensated with a weekly stipend of ~\$500 and a reimbursable housing stipend of up to \$1200 per month. **The chosen Research Assistant will be responsible for finding housing and reliable transportation.** Travel costs will be covered by the NPS. The person chosen for this position needs to seriously consider their finances before applying to these openings; it will not be possible to work a second job while conducting assistant duties.

Qualifications Required - Must:

- Communicate effectively in English, orally and in writing
- Have strong communication skills and previous leadership experience
- **Have a bachelor degree in environmental science, biology or other related field**
- Collect data and maintain records precisely according to standardized protocol
- Have previous field work lasting **at least three months**
- Enter and analyze data (written and computer database format); supervise data entry and have QAQC experience
- **Be in excellent physical shape**
- Be able to persevere and motivate others through 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); lead field operations over communication equipment
- Be a strong swimmer; previous boating experience or boating license (MOCC preferred)
- **Have a valid US driver's license**

Desired Qualifications- *Please comment on applicable skills and experience in your cover letter:*

- Experience working with and leading volunteers and youth programs
- Communicate conservation and science objectives to the public
- Interest in documenting science and research for social media and public awareness posts
- Experience working with HOBO temperature loggers or other temperature data loggers
- Experience working with Microsoft Access and Excel
- Familiarity with statistics and competency in statistical software
- Experience using GPS information to create maps in ArcGIS
- Previous experience conducting nesting sea turtle saturation tagging and monitoring
- Experience living abroad or previous travel experience

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 (i.e. CV, cover letter, etc.) in the file name. Email is preferred, but postal mail is accepted. Please include position title (Field Leader) in the subject line. **Deadline for application: 12th of February 2021, no applicants will be considered after this date.** If selected for interview you will be contacted in late February, **please do not make follow up inquiries.**

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