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Gough Island – Field Officer

What the job is about

This contract position is designed primarily to conduct bird monitoring on Gough Island, but will also include work to control an invasive plant *Sagina procumbens* and follow-up activities after the unsuccessful mouse eradication operation in 2021. This position will work alongside and report to a Field Team Leader that is also being recruited. Both staff will take part in all activities as required by the work plan and agreed priorities.

The majority of the work will consist of monitoring the abundance, breeding success, and survival of selected bird species throughout the entire year. In addition, monitoring of invertebrates, mice and plants will also be required.

Training in advanced first aid, wilderness survival, and safe use of herbicides will be provided for both team members prior to departure to Gough Island. Any other training identified as necessary will also be provided.

The induction to Gough Island and the annual work plan will be provided by our Conservation Science team based in the UK and the outgoing Gough overwintering team during the changeover period.

Important context for the role:

- Living and working in such a small team, with a diverse range of cultures, for a prolonged period, in a remote location, is not always easy. It is very important that the successful candidate can demonstrate and/or explain why they believe they will be able to do this successfully.

Duties

- Conduct fieldwork according to a workplan and scientific methodology devised by the Conservation Science team and your Team Leader.
- Assist in scientific research, *Sagina* control, fieldwork and monitoring as required.
- Maintain accurate records of the work and computer databases of the work.
- Regularly report to and update the Team Leader and line-manager.
- Take responsibility for your own safety.
- Take part in cooking and cleaning duties as requested by the SANAP Team leader.

Remuneration and conditions

- During Gough Island deployment, all food, accommodation and necessary personal protective clothing will be provided.
- All pre-deployment training and accommodation will be covered.
- Agreed travel between home country and Cape Town will be covered.
- All candidates must complete a detailed medical and dental check-up in order to be allowed to travel to and work on Gough Island and any employment offer will be dependent on successfully passing these important safety checks.
- Starting salary £23,939 – 26,558 per annum (RSPB Pay Band P6)



Location

- Staff will be based on Gough Island for a continuous period of ~15 months. Gough Island is part of the UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha which make it exempt from UK and EU immigration restrictions.
- The climate and terrain on Gough are challenging with high winds and heavy rain regular occurrences.
- The RSPB Overwintering Team will live alongside a small (7 person) South African team (SANAP) who service a weather station (more information see <https://www.sanap.ac.za>).
- Departure will take place from Cape Town, South Africa on the South African Government owned research ship, the SA *Agulhas II*. While the changeover voyage occurs during August/September in 2022, the departure date for the SA *Agulhas II* has not been confirmed yet.
- Travel to and from Gough Island requires 6 – 10 days onboard the SA *Agulhas II* each way. There is no other vessel service to the island, rendering off-island holiday impossible.
- Pre-deployment training is usually carried out in both the UK and South Africa. However, ultimately the location of the training will be dependent on the nationality of the selected applicants i.e. respective Visa requirements.

How to apply

Application deadline: **midnight BST on 24th April 2022**

As part of this application process you will be asked to provide a copy of your CV and complete an application form including evidence on how you meet the skills, knowledge, and experience listed above.

Interviews will be held online via Zoom/Teams or telephone.

Interview date: Early May 2022

Starting date: TBC. Most likely mid to end June 2022

Contract end date: October 2023.

Please note, there is little flexibility over the starting date for these positions due to the pre-deployment training requirements.



About Gough Island

Gough Island is an exceptionally remote island in the Tristan da Cunha island group in the South Atlantic Ocean, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, a Tristan da Cunha Nature Reserve, an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, and an Endemic Bird Area. It is part of the United Kingdom Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Gough Island is the second largest island (around 6520 hectares, or 65 km²) in the Tristan da Cunha island group, volcanic, with steep mountainous terrain, and regarded as one of the most pristine temperate islands in the Southern Ocean.

A Key Biodiversity Area, Gough Island is widely considered one of the most important seabird breeding sites in the world. The island holds virtually the entire world population of the highly threatened Tristan albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* and Atlantic petrel *Pterodroma incerta*, both of which are endemic to the Tristan da Cunha group, and most of the world's highly threatened MacGillivray's prion *Pachyptila macgillivrayi*. Four other globally threatened or Near Threatened seabirds breed on the island: the world's largest population of sooty albatrosses *Phoebastria fusca*; the second largest population of Atlantic yellow-nosed albatrosses *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*; around 20% of the global population of northern rockhopper penguins *Eudyptes moseleyi*; and one of the largest populations of grey petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. It also holds significant global populations of (non-threatened) burrowing petrels and most of the global population of the subspecies Tristan skua *Catharacta antarctica hamiltoni*. There are also two globally threatened land birds, the Gough bunting *Rowettia goughensis* and Gough moorhen *Gallinula comeri*. Approximately 80% of the global population of Subantarctic fur seal *Arctocephalus tropicalis* breed on the island, along with a small, and potentially decreasing number of southern elephant seals *Mirounga leonina*.

Gough Island itself is entirely uninhabited except for the seven South African meteorological station staff and two RSPB staff who work on the island in one-year rotations.

The community of Tristan da Cunha Island are the closest community to Gough, ~380km away, however Gough is rarely visited. Fishing vessels do harvest lobster from around Gough Island however, crew members do not come ashore, and no tourists are permitted on the island. The RSPB has a 25-year history of conservation work with Tristan da Cunha, and almost 20 years on Gough Island.

The Gough Island Restoration Programme

The main threat to Gough's wildlife is invasive non-native house mice that predate the eggs, chicks, and even adult seabirds. Of the 22 seabird species breeding on Gough Island, we know that at least 15 species were affected by mouse predation. In 2021 the Gough Island Restoration Programme attempted to eradicate mice from the island in one of the most challenging and logistically complex island eradications ever ventured. This operation was not successful as mice remain on the island, and part of the Field Team's work programme, under direction from staff in the UK, could be related to monitoring mice. There is more information on the Gough Island Restoration Programme at www.goughisland.com or follow us on Facebook/Twitter @GoughIsland for more about island life and the operation.