



The Darwin Scholarship Programme Monitoring and Communicating Biodiversity

A short scholarship programme led by the **Field Studies Council** in the UK as part of the Darwin 200 celebrations.

August 8th-18th , 2008 - Preston Montford Field Centre, Shrewsbury, United Kingdom.

This scholarship programme is aimed at

Young Scientists from around the world probably in a Biology or Ecology faculty at University. You should be under the age of 30 and studying at graduate or post graduate level or be a young lecturer or work for an environmental organisation.

The aim of the Darwin Scholar Programme is to develop "better naturalists" in the spirit of Darwin's love of nature and observing the natural world. The Scholarship will focus on three areas - skills of observation and identification - skills of recording biodiversity and skills of communicating biodiversity to different target groups

This is a unique opportunity to work with leading scientists and educators in the UK and will be based in Shrewsbury - a beautiful historic English market town and the birthplace of Charles Darwin.

The FSC is seeking applications for the scholarship programme from young scientists from 25 countries around the world.

Reasons and Purpose of the Scholar Scholarship

On a global scale there are a number of key needs related to science education.

- Firstly there is a global shortage of taxonomists and experts with observation and identification skills,
- Secondly – there is a need to record biodiversity in a more coherent and robust way both nationally and internationally,
- Thirdly – there is a huge need for scientists to communicate more effectively with a range of different groups from school students and the general public through to decision makers.

This Scholarship will focus on these three needs with the overall goals of the scholarship being to :-

- Strengthen the exploration and observational competencies of young field scientists at University level to develop more skilled naturalists;
- Give a greater understanding of the importance of national biodiversity databases and recording;
- Enhance the ability of scientists to communicate effectively with a variety of target groups;
- Build learning partnerships in local communities to monitor local biodiversity;
- Develop resources and materials that will promote first hand exploration and observation.

The FSC is offering this scholarship as part of the celebrations that are planned for the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth in 1809 – and the 150th anniversary of the publication of the origin of the Species in 1859. Although Darwin is usually remembered for his work on the theory of evolution, much of this work was based on an enthusiasm for the natural world together with first hand observation and exploration of the natural environment. As Charles Darwin said later in his life - "I was born a naturalist".

The Field Studies Council aims to promote the same enthusiasm and understanding of the natural world that Darwin did in order to achieve our goal of "bringing environmental understanding to all". We want to share our enthusiasm and expertise with young scientists across the world and create a learning community dedicated to enhancing public participation in biodiversity conservation and highlight the importance of exploration and observation to understand the world we live in.

What will scholars do – in more detail

We aim to train a group of young "up and coming" scientists from 25 countries in:-

- Basic techniques of biodiversity monitoring and identification;
- The creation and management of national data bases and recording networks;
- Fundamental approaches to communicating biodiversity to a range of audiences;
- How to lead and manage school and community based biodiversity monitoring projects;
- How to develop biodiversity education materials for different groups based on FSC expertise.

For this we would provide training using the expertise of both the Field Studies Council and other organisations including leading Universities, the Natural History Museum and British Ecological Society. One of the goals of the course would also be the sharing of positive ideas and solutions to the biodiversity challenges that we face on a local through to a global scale.

The scholarship programme will involve a number of different kinds of activities: -

- Training workshop activities – focusing specifically on identification and observation skills, the development of identification keys and communication skill;
- Lectures from FSC and other organisations NHM staff and researchers;
- Meetings with leading ecological organisations in the UK such as the British Ecological Society;
- An opportunity for you to meet with leading scientists in Britain that work in your research area;
- Sharing your experience through a formal presentation to other scholars on the programme and earning more about biodiversity in other parts of the world;
- Planning the “Darwin’s Footsteps” Schools Observation programme that will take place in 2009;
- A social programme including local excursions.

Field Studies Council (FSC)

The FSC was founded in 1943 with the mission statement of “bringing environmental understanding to all” and is one of the leading environmental education organisations in the United Kingdom. We achieve our goal through a network of seventeen field centres spread across the UK. The FSC employs over 75 trained geography, ecology and biology tutors and each year over 100,000 people experience FSC courses. In addition to running courses we also manage two national nature reserves and have world respected range of publications, especially in the area of taxonomy.

Please go to our website - www.field-studies-council.org for more information

Funding the Scholarship

The full cost of the 10 day scholarship programme is 3000 GBP. This covers the costs of all accommodation, teaching, and local travel in the UK. It **does not cover** the cost of getting to and from Preston Montford Field Centre in Shrewsbury.

Of this 3000 GBP -

- **The FSC will provide 2250 GBP**
- **Successful scholars will have to raise 750 GBP from sources in your own country.**

The FSC can assist successful applicants in this process and provide suggestions of sources of funding and also letters of support for applications to grant organisations.

How do you apply?

We are looking for up to forty scholars from twenty five countries across the world to join this first Darwin Scholarship Programme. We shall be able to select two scholars from larger countries and one scholar from other countries.

Before you apply please make sure that you are able to meet these criteria: -

- You are aged 30 or under;
- You are studying for or have a degree in Ecology, Biology or related subject;
- You are an undergraduate, postgraduate, postdoctoral student, young lecturer or work for an environmental organisation;
- You can speak and read English well – this is very important. There will be no interpretation or translation facilities;
- You have the support of your University or other organisation for the Scholarship programme.

To apply you will need to send us: -

- Your CV;
- A short letter in English;
- A letter from your University or NGO that states clearly that you have permission to take part in the scholarship;
- Your CV can be in any format that is usual for your country – but must include your home and work addresses, email and telephone contacts, and skype address if you have one. You **must** also include the name of two referees we can write to; Please **do not** include reference letters with your application.

- Your letter should be of no more than two sides of A4, explaining why you want to take part in the scholarship programme. It should provide the following information – why you want to become a Darwin scholar, your personal assessment of your identification/observation capacity, your views on how well science is communicated to a wider audience and the role of scientists in education and what you will do with the new skills that you gain through the scholarship. You need to persuade us that YOU are the young, dynamic and enthusiastic scientist we are looking for from your country.

Your application should reach the Field Studies Council not later than the 30th April 2008. You do not need to have guaranteed funding before making your application

Your application should be emailed to fscee@field-studies-council.org and the contact person is James Hindson

How does the selection process work?

The FSC will select the Scholars for the programme and selection will be based on:-

- The quality of your application – especially your letter;
- The commitment of your University;
- The likelihood of you getting the required funding.

We shall make an initial selection based on these criteria and then in some cases undertake a follow up interview either by phone or skype.

We shall inform you whether your application has been successful by the end of April 2008 to hopefully give you enough time to raise the necessary funding.

What happens after the Scholarship?

The FSC and our partners intend to run this scholarship course each year and build up a network of people committed to communicating biodiversity effectively to different groups of people. Each year we intend to apply for funding to bring together FSC Darwin Scholars in an education related project.

There will be an opportunity for this first round of Scholars to take part in a global schools project the FSC will be running in 2009 called **“In Darwin’s Footsteps”**

If a Scholar wishes to take part in this project your task will be to identify one school in your country that would be willing and able to link with one school in Shropshire and for the two schools to undertake a joint biodiversity observation related project. It would be the work of the FSC Darwin Scholar to support the school in your country and the FSC will support the Shropshire schools.

The exact nature of this project will be discussed with the scholars during the scholarship programme and opportunities will vary from country to country depending on different opportunities. In some countries the data collection might involve the development of keys similar to the FSC Schools Playing Field key – whilst in other countries schools might link with local scientists and undertake a monitoring project.

Whatever happens, **local first hand monitoring of biodiversity by young people will be the central linking theme of all projects** and ideas will be shared on the “In Darwin’s Footprint” website and schools will be encouraged to collect data on an annual basis - thus giving the opportunity for schools to create a local biodiversity database and for schools to continue sharing information and ideas – and some project sustainability.

The Darwin’s Footprint Schools project would be concluded in September with a **“Big Link Up”** in which all the schools would present their findings to each other through a skype link up. This would be a public event in Shrewsbury linked to the Darwin 200 celebrations.