

Postdoctoral Scientist – University of Nebraska

Spatial Ecology, Mortality Risk, and Predator-Prey Interactions of Mule Deer in Nebraska

Salary: \$50 - 55,000 per year and benefits

Start date: ASAP (Spring/Summer/Fall 2023)

Applications will be reviewed as they arrive until an excellent candidate is identified

<https://bensonlab.org/>

The Benson Lab of Predator-Prey Ecology at the University of Nebraska is seeking a highly motivated ecologist interested in playing a lead role in exciting, cutting-edge research on spatial ecology, population dynamics, and predator-prey interactions involving mule deer in Nebraska. In collaboration with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) we seek to better understand the factors that limit mule deer in Nebraska along the eastern periphery of the range of the species. From 2018-2022, we collected an intensive dataset from 4 study sites with varying degrees of human disturbance, different predators, and considerable landscape heterogeneity in northwest and southwest Nebraska. The data include detailed movement, survival, and cause-specific mortality data from 240 GPS-collared adult females and >300 VHF-collared fawns. We have body condition (rump fat via ultrasound) and precise age (cementum annuli) data on all adults. We also collected data from trail cameras deployed in portions of our study areas. Combined, these data provide excellent opportunities to address questions about the influence of human disturbance (e.g., agriculture) and forage-predation risk tradeoffs (coyotes, mountain lions) on space use, seasonal movements, survival/mortality, and resource selection of mule deer in a state with virtually no previously published information about the species. We also work closely with researchers at NGPC who track mountain lions with GPS collars in our study area. Thus, we have developed concurrent risk surfaces derived from fine-scale data on mountain lions that can be included in the mule deer analyses to understand interactions with this naturally recolonized top predator at the easternmost extent of its range. The work will directly inform mule deer management in Nebraska and contribute to a better understanding of the basic ecology of the species and ungulates in general. If this sounds like fun – please contact me soon!

The initial appointment will be for one year. Main duties will include data analysis, manuscript writing, and publishing results in scientific journals. In addition to research, the successful candidate will be expected to play a positive role in our growing lab group. This position provides excellent opportunities for publishing, networking with a variety of university and agency research groups, and professional development.

Qualifications: PhD in Wildlife, Ecology, or related field. A strong track record of research excellence that includes publishing, strong quantitative and coding skills (especially R), and writing are expected. A passion for basic and applied wildlife ecology are required. Although previous research experience with large mammals may be beneficial it is certainly not required and ecologists with experience with other taxa are encouraged to apply.

Above all we seek an ecologist that will be a good fit for our lab group who brings a high level of motivation to do excellent science and ask important questions about wildlife.

Please email the following as a single PDF attachment to John Benson at jbenson22@unl.edu:
1) cover letter, 2) current CV, 3) contact info for 3-5 professional references, and 4) PDFs of up to 3 peer-reviewed articles published if available. Desired start date is as soon as possible but later start dates will be considered. Please apply soon if interested!