PhD position: “Stress, life history and dental development in primates”

Applicants are sought for a Leverhulme Trust funded (UK / EU fees plus a stipend*) PhD studentship to work with Dr Jo Setchell (Anthropology, Durham University) and Dr Wendy Dirks (School of Dental Sciences, Newcastle University) starting October 2013.

This project combines primatology and dental histology using the teeth of naturally deceased mandrills (an African primate) to compare the timing of accentuated increments in the mandrill teeth with important life history events to test whether these events are recorded in tooth sections. The ultimate aim is to provide a method for using teeth in the fossil record to understand the evolution of our own unique life history pattern.

The project builds on Jo Setchell’s long-term studies of mandrills in collaboration with the Primate Centre at the Centre Internationale de Recherches Médicales de Franceville, Gabon, and Wendy Dirk’s expertise in dental histology and dental development.

The PhD student will receive interdisciplinary training in biological and evolutionary anthropology, as well as dental histology. S/he will undertake laboratory work (polarised light microscopy and image analysis) and collate mandrill life history data. S/he will undertake data analysis and participate in the discussion and interpretation of the results. S/he will also be expected to draft manuscripts and present the work at conferences.

The student will be registered in Durham, where they can benefit from the intellectual, theoretical background provided by the Anthropology Department and the Evolutionary Anthropology Research Group in particular. S/he will travel regularly to Newcastle for laboratory work under the guidance of Wendy Dirks and an experienced technician.

Applicants should have an appropriate Masters degree. We are looking for someone with a good capacity for original and analytical thinking, who is highly motivated, works well in a team and who is receptive to constructive criticism. An aptitude for quantitative methods and experience with statistics are essential. Laboratory experience is highly desirable.

Applications should include a CV, the contact details of two referees and a cover letter detailing relevant experience. These should be sent via email to joanna.setchell@durham.ac.uk. The deadline is 15 March 2013.

Anthropology at Durham: www.dur.ac.uk/anthropology
Jo Setchell: www.dur.ac.uk/research/directory/staff/?mode=staff&id=5345
Evolutionary Anthropology Research Group: www.dur.ac.uk/anthropology/research/earg
Student life at Durham: www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate/experience

Newcastle School of Dental Sciences: www.ncl.ac.uk/dental
Wendy Dirks: www.ncl.ac.uk/dental/staff/profile/wendy.dirks

* we welcome non-EU applicants, but please be aware that fees are substantially higher, and we can only cover UK / EU fees