



ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Marine Protected Area Officer
TEAM:	Conservation and Fisheries
REPORTS TO:	Marine Conservation Team Leader
JOB PURPOSE:	To work with the Marine Conservation Team to deliver the objectives of the Ascension Island Marine Protected Area including the MPA Monitoring and Research Strategy. In particular this includes supporting inshore fisheries management through monitoring, community engagement, compliance and enforcement. The role focuses on conducting biological and ecological studies of exploited fish species, including age and growth determination, reproductive biology as well as supporting project initiation, development and delivery with external research partners and collaborators. This is a highly variable role requiring resilience, enthusiasm and a strong drive to deliver conservation and management applications.

MAIN DUTIES:

1. Conduct abundance, age, growth, reproduction and diet studies on marine species around Ascension Island, in particular for recreationally fished species.
2. Collect and analyse data on fish abundance, length-weight relationships, growth rates and mortality to support fisheries management decisions.
3. Process and analyse otoliths and other hard structures for age determination.
4. Conduct histological assessments of gonadal development to determine reproductive cycles and spawning patterns.
5. Monitor Ascension Island's marine environment using the research methods set out in the MPA Monitoring and Research Strategy. This may include collection of sea water and plankton samples, fishing, tagging animals, video analyses and conducting eDNA metabarcoding techniques.
6. Input data into databases and carry out quality assurance of data holdings.
7. Enforce regulations relating to fishing activity, pollution control and biosecurity.
8. Identify potential research and management projects, collaborators and funding sources that deliver the objectives of the MPA Management Plan.
9. Initiate, develop and deliver work streams and projects that contribute to the MPA Management Plan objectives.
10. Collaborate with external researchers and assist in other marine projects that deliver the objectives of the MPA Management Plan.
11. Assist with preparing detailed reports of work conducted for donors, project partners and non-specialist audiences and produce peer-reviewed publications and presentations.
12. Produce and review risk assessments for marine team activities and assist with health and safety compliance requirements.
13. Shared management of the Marine/Fisheries Laboratory at the Conservation Centre in Georgetown; ensuring that it is clean, well-stocked and services the projects efficiently.
14. Assist with the management and maintenance of scientific equipment and the survey vessel.

15. Initiate and take part in engagement activities with the island community and school to build awareness of, and support for, marine conservation and responsible resource use.
16. Publicise the MPA and the work of the AIG Marine Team locally and globally through social media

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To undertake the main duties of the post (detailed above) to the highest possible standard.
2. Work closely with other on-Island team members, and other stakeholders to complete the main duties of the post and towards a sustainable programme for marine research and conservation on Ascension Island.
3. To report regularly to the Marine Conservation Team Leader, to ensure that all parties are meeting their targets and goals.
4. Comply with Health and Safety at Work procedures.
5. To abide by the AIGCFD data management policy with regards to responsible archiving and documentation of scientific datasets.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

Essential

1. A BSc (Hons) in marine biology or a related subject, or significant relevant experience in this field.
2. A sound knowledge of marine conservation and fisheries biology.
3. Highly self-motivated and able to initiate and deliver projects independently and as part of a team.
4. A full, clean driving licence.
5. A powerboat handling qualification and experience of handling RIBs at sea.
6. A good level of physical fitness and ability to work in challenging marine conditions
7. Must be numerate and computer literate, with a sound knowledge of Microsoft Office applications (Access, Excel, Word) and statistical procedures (ideally in R).
8. Good interpersonal skills with a proven ability to work effectively in a small team.
9. Willing to sometimes work extended hours (often at weekends) and on projects outside of core duties if required. A two year minimum commitment to the post is expected.

Desirable

1. A post-graduate qualification in Fisheries Science or a related discipline.
2. Strong knowledge of data-limited fisheries stock assessment methodologies.
3. Experience in age and growth determination, including processing and reading otoliths.
4. Experience in reproductive biology studies and histological techniques.
5. Experience in collecting fishery-independent data necessary for stock assessments.
6. Experience in conducting molecular techniques including DNA extraction, PCR and eDNA metabarcoding. Experience or understanding of bioinformatics would also be highly regarded.
7. Experience using GIS software (preferably QGIS).
8. Previous experience working in remote island environments or small communities.

This Job Description indicates the main duties and responsibilities of the post. It is not intended as an exhaustive list. The Ascension Island Government (AIG) reserves the right to amend this Job Description from time to time according to operational needs. Any changes will be discussed with you and confirmed in writing. Please note that you share with AIG the responsibility for making suggestions to alter the scope of your duties and improve the effectiveness of your post.

Updated: March 2025