



PhD Advert: Wild Harvesting in the Cape Floristic Region

We are recruiting a PhD candidate for our project “WildHarvest: Understanding and recognising wild products harvesting by Indigenous and Local communities to promote environmental justice and halt biodiversity erosion”.

Description:

The PhD position is part of a project that adopts an interdisciplinary and participatory approach to studying how to support the traditional and local knowledge systems surrounding wild harvesting in southern Africa, particularly within the Cape Floristic Region (CFR) and Dry Savanna Woodlands (DSW). By participatory mapping of Indigenous and local knowledge and values of key wild harvested resources, the threats to these, and the visions ahead, in two megadiverse regions of the world, WildHarvest contributes essential knowledge about how to build sustainable and just biodiversity conservation of global importance. The participatory methodology integrates diverse knowledge systems (scientific and Indigenous) to co-create actionable insights and foster biodiversity conservation and environmental justice. This approach promotes dialogue between various stakeholders, including local harvesters, scientists, and policymakers.

The PhD student will work in the Cape Floristic Region (CFR) conducting research in and with communities who hold traditional knowledge of the region’s endemic plant resources. The project will focus on wild harvested species, e.g., Aloe (*Aloe ferox*), Honeybush (*Cyclopia* spp.). Some of these resources have long been used by Indigenous communities and are at different stages of commercialization and global interest. Focus for the PhD project will be studying how governance arrangements from local to international levels are developing as biotrade of the resource(s) is increasing, and to what extent and in what ways Indigenous communities are able to draw benefits from the commercialization of the resource. The resource(s) in focus will be decided on together with the supervisory team and local participants at the start of the project.

If the recruited PhD student is not fluent in local languages (Afrikaans, English, isi-Xhosa), they will work closely with an interpreter. The PhD student will lead publications co-authored with the project team and may contribute to publications led by other team members. The position will demand that a significant amount of time is spent in rural communities in the CFR for field work.



The selected candidate will shape the details of the PhD research in collaboration with the project and supervisory team, including Rhoda Malgas, Vanessa Masterson and Klara Fischer. The recruited PhD student will benefit from a vibrant and collegial research environment in the Natural Resource Science and Management Cluster and within the wider WildHarvest project team from Nelson Mandela University (NMU), the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), University of Limpopo (UL) and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS).

Department of Conservation Management, Nelson Mandela University George Campus

The Department of Conservation Management at Nelson Mandela University George Campus fosters an interdisciplinary research environment. We offer a diversity of basic and applied research activities through national and international collaborative networks. The Conservation Management Department focuses on training competent conservation managers, practitioners and scientists who can apply their skills in social-ecological systems in Africa and globally. We have a vibrant and strong community of academics and students who are passionate about the conservation of Africa's unique biodiversity. Our students come from diverse backgrounds and cultures and, when they complete their studies, are employed by numerous entities within the conservation and related sectors, particularly in Africa.

The Nelson Mandela University George Campus at the foot of the Outeniqua Mountains, aims to become a world-class knowledge catalyst for the green economy. We envisage a more sustainable future, a vision we plan to realise through cutting edge research and engagement, quality teaching and learning, as well as competitive innovation and entrepreneurship.

Qualifications:

- Master of Science degree in Nature Conservation or equivalent qualification in a relevant subject leading to documented acquired competence in qualitative social science methods and social theory (suitable subjects include but are not limited to environmental science, human geography, anthropology, sociology and environmental humanities).
- Experience in theoretically grounded, qualitative empirical research.
- Excellent English skills, written and spoken. Analytical ability as demonstrated by e.g. a scientific report, research articles, or degree project thesis,

Additional desirable qualifications

- Practical or theoretical knowledge of wild harvesting of endemic plants in South Africa, interest in and experience of interdisciplinary work and participatory methods, social-ecological systems research.
- Personal suitability will be considered.
- Conversational Afrikaans language skills would be an advantage.



Place of work:

Nelson Mandela University, George Campus, George, Western Cape, South Africa

Funding:

Allowance of R 300 000 per year for 3 years

Starting date:

1 April 2026 – with some flexibility

Applications

Applicants will be evaluated for suitability based on the above listed qualifications, judged from the application in English, including a concept note (see below), CV, master's thesis; copies of degree certificate and transcript of records from previous first and second-cycle studies at a university or higher education institution, contact details (email and telephone) for two personal references; and potential other relevant documentation attached, such as published academic papers.

The application should include a concept note (of maximum 2.5 pages) that outlines how you propose to take on the project empirically and theoretically.

Please apply at this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/mcgnJCyeyX>

Deadline: 28 February 2026

Contact:

Dr Rhoda Malgas: rhoda.malgas@mandela.ac.za

Ms Jonel Ackerman: jonel.ackerman@mandela.ac.za