
University of Regensburg, Biotic Interactions group & Biodiversity Exploratories

PhD student position - BuggedBugs project

Application deadline: 14th of December 2025

We are currently looking for a PhD student to join us on the BuggedBugs project – deadline for applications 14th of December 2025.

This 3-year PhD studentship is part of the Biodiversity Exploratories (<https://www.biodiversity-exploratories.de>), a large-scale long-term project to study how land use affects biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. With the project "BuggedBugs", led by Prof. Lena Wilfert and Dr Ruth Archer, we will ask how climate change and land-use interact to affect host community composition, abundance and health, and how this in turn is reflected in the biodiversity and composition of their parasite community. To do this, we will use the unique long-term Biodiversity Exploratories (data alongside samples of true bugs (Heteroptera) and their parasites collected since 2008. Collectively, this will expand our understanding of an important but hidden axis of biodiversity (parasites) and what they tell us about ecosystem health.

The PhD student will use powerful molecular approaches to characterize the parasite communities of some preserved true-bug samples, but also go out into the field to collect recent samples. The candidate will help ID and phenotype the true bugs, so that we can relate land-use and climate to both these important insects, as well as the parasites they host. Accordingly, skills in the following would be advantageous: molecular biology, taxonomy, morphometrics and confidence with the statistical program R and willingness to learn ecological modelling approaches. This project is part of a multi-team and long-term program across Germany, using interdisciplinary approaches to study how land-use affects biodiversity and ecosystem processes. It offers excellent opportunities for training, collaboration and networking with leading institutes in ecology. The PhD student will be part of Prof. Wilfert's group at the University of Regensburg, embedded in the new focal research group on biotic interactions in the Anthropocene (<https://go.ur.de/biotic-interactions>); the student will also be part of the local grad school (<https://www.rigel-regensburg.de>).

The position will start on the 1st of March 2026; it is for three years and the salary is TV-L E13 65%.

For more information and to apply please contact lena.wilfert@ur.de. To apply, please send your CV and a cover letter by the 14th of December.