



**POSITION: MSc Assistantship: Assessing annual and seasonal diet composition of white-tailed deer in the Southeast.**

**LOCATION:** Mississippi State University campus, located in Starkville, Mississippi. A description of the College of Forest Resources (CFR), the Forest and Wildlife Research Center (FWRC), and the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture can be found at <http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/wildlife>. The MSU Deer Ecology and Management Lab website can be found here: <https://www.msudeer.msstate.edu/>

**STARTING DATE:** July 14, 2025 (negotiable)

**SALARY:** \$20,600 plus benefits and tuition waiver

**REVIEW BEGINS:** Begins May 23, 2025; Open Until Filled

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** The MSU Deer Lab is seeking a MSc student to assess the diet composition of white-tailed deer across Mississippi and Tennessee. Diet composition varies temporally in association with various biological stressors such as antler growth, gestation, and lactation and likely varies spatially based on site-specific variation in habitat management. Diet composition for white-tailed deer has historically been quantified using broad vegetative groups (e.g., forbs, mast, etc). Advances in metabarcoding assays now allow assessment of species-specific diet composition across populations. Our goal is to document how diet composition varies annually and seasonally among study sites with varying levels of active habitat management, agriculture, presence of supplemental wildlife food plots, and presence of supplemental feeding (e.g., protein pellets). Responsibilities of the successful candidate include but are not limited to the collection of fecal samples, distributing samples to the lab for analysis, analyzing data and interpreting results, thesis defense, and subsequent peer-reviewed manuscript submissions. Funding for this project is pending state legislative approval. The successful applicant for this position will be co-advised by Drs. Eric Michel and Jacob Dykes.

## **QUALIFICATIONS:**

Ideal candidates will hold a bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology or a related field. Extensive field experience conducted in inclement environmental conditions (e.g., hot and humid weather, biting insects, venomous snakes) is required. Demonstrated experience with data entry, database management, various statistical analyses in Program R, ESRI GIS, and advanced writing capabilities (lead or co-author of a peer reviewed manuscript) are preferred.

The ideal candidate must have demonstrated the ability to work effectively as part of a scientific research team. The selected candidate must have a strong work ethic, critical thinking skills, attention to detail, a positive attitude, and the ability to work successfully both independently and within groups. They must be professional and courteous to landowners, research personnel, and the public. Strong communication skills, both written and verbal, are required. Experience working on private lands is required.

This position demands persistence, independence, self-reliance, and the ability/willingness to work long and irregular hours (holidays, weekends, early mornings/late evenings). A demonstrated ability to collect rigorous scientific data in remote and challenging field conditions is required.

**ABOUT THE STATE AND UNIVERSITY:** The Southeastern U.S. hosts some of the greatest species biodiversity in North America including numerous endangered and threatened species. Mississippi is characterized by diverse terrains including lush broadleaf forests, oak savannas, prairie grasslands, temperate pine forests and delta wetlands, along with abundant waterways. These rich landscapes provide habitat for hundreds of species of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles and amphibians. White-tailed deer are the number one game species in the Southeast, and account for about \$1 Billion in annual economic impact in the state. Mississippi is home to 11 national wildlife refuges and 25 state parks, including the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Mississippi River State Park, and Pascagoula River Audubon Center. Mississippi State University is ranked as one of the top research institutions in the United States. The Carnegie Institute has designated MSU as a "R1, very high research activity" doctoral granting institution. The National Science Foundation has MSU as ranked No. 12 nationally in Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation research. The department has a highly collegial and interdisciplinary group of faculty, post-doctoral fellows, Research and Extension Associates that help make the department one of the premier institutions for applied wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture science in the nation. As one of the fastest growing undergraduate programs in the region, our 320+ undergraduate students concentrate in wildlife agriculture science, human-wildlife interactions, conservation biology, wildlife

veterinary medicine, conservation law enforcement, and wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture science. The department also mentors over 100 graduate students across a variety of programs, with high job placement following receipt of a graduate degree.

**APPLY:** A cover letter, CV (including three references), and unofficial transcripts should be combined into a single PDF and submitted to Eric Michel at [esm120@msstate.edu](mailto:esm120@msstate.edu).

Questions about this position can be directed to Eric Michel ([esm120@msstate.edu](mailto:esm120@msstate.edu)) or Jacob Dykes ([jld475@msstate.edu](mailto:jld475@msstate.edu)).

**Equal Employment Opportunity Statement:** MSU is an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, pregnancy, gender identity, status as a U.S. veteran, and/or any other status protected by applicable law. We always welcome nominations and applications from women, members of any minority group, and others who share our passion for building a diverse community that reflects the diversity in our student population. **What do I do if I need an accommodation?** In compliance with the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), if you have a disability and would like to request an accommodation in order to apply for a position with Mississippi State University, please contact the Department of Human Resources Management at tel: (662) 325-3713 or [ada@hrm.msstate.edu](mailto:ada@hrm.msstate.edu). If you have any questions regarding this policy, contact the Department of Human Resources Management at (662) 325-3713 or [ada@hrm.msstate.edu](mailto:ada@hrm.msstate.edu). Upon request, sections of this job listing are available in large print, and readers are available to assist the visually impaired.