

Oceanswell Research assistantships January 2024

Oceanswell is looking to fill two positions within the organisation. These positions are open to anyone looking to support the work of Oceanswell and gain experience.

To apply, email opportunities@oceanswell.org with the following:

1. Cover letter (maximum 200 words) outlining why you are suited for this position and a short description of your previous related skills and experience(s)
2. CV (maximum two pages)
3. Name and contact details for two referees
4. Please mention your last name and the job you are applying for in the subject of your email. E.g. deSilva_ResearchAssistantship1 or deSilva_ResearchAssistantship2

The application deadline for both is the 20th of January 2024, after which short-listed applicants will be contacted for a brief Zoom call; the final decision will be announced by the 28th of January, and the start date will be the 01st of February 2024.

The Organisation:

Oceanswell is Sri Lanka's first marine conservation research and education non-profit. Oceanswell conducts much-needed marine conservation research around Sri Lanka, provides opportunities for students to experience marine research first-hand, educates future ocean heroes with knowledge about the oceans using traditional and social media and encourages and provides opportunities for ocean engagement.

Both opportunities are funded through a grant from the Lanka Environment Fund (LEF) and are **paid opportunities**.

Both positions will report to the Executive Director of Oceanswell and will be based out of the Oceanswell office at Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7. Remote working arrangements will be considered after the first month of the project.

Research assistantship 1: Analysing changes in whale species composition off southern Sri Lanka:

This is a 6-month desk-based research assistantship for a student with the appropriate skills to clean and analyse existing data on whale occurrence off the Southern Coast of Sri Lanka. This is the only such dataset in the Northern Indian Ocean and will help us understand any changes/shifts in species compositions and distribution over our team's ten years of field surveys.

Project objectives:

1. Collate whale species and distribution data from 10 years of field surveys off southern Sri Lanka conducted by the Oceanswell team
2. Analyse total effort, number of sightings and number of individuals (where possible by correlating with photo-identification data) per year for years when surveys were conducted
3. Analyse data to look for any shift in species composition over survey years
4. Investigate potential drivers for changes observed, if any
5. Produce a report on the findings

Required skills:

- Statistics and proficiency in R-studio
- GIS proficiency
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to write scientific reports (English)
- Strong time management skills

The successful applicant will need to have access to a laptop.

Research assistantship 2: Assessing the prevalence of swim-with-whales tourism in Sri Lanka

This is a 5-month desk-based research assistantship for a student interested in learning about sustainable tourism practices and supporting Oceanswell's mission to ensure that whale-related tourism is conducted responsibly. Through the 5 months, the RA will be required to produce a report on the pros and cons of swimming-with-whales operations (using global examples) and highlight existing operators in Sri Lanka.

Project objectives:

1. Gather information on existing swim-with operations by collating data from websites and social media and through photographs or signage displayed in Mirissa, Kalpitiya and Trincomalee and collate into a report.
2. Build a database of operators and the type of tourism they provide.
3. Use official boat-based whale-watching operator websites to evaluate if their advertising (text and imagery) creates false expectations around the opportunity to swim with whales in Sri Lanka.
4. Work with our partners at Parrotfish Collective to create social media outputs related to the findings.

Required skills:

- Strong communication skills in English and Sinhala and/or Tamil
- Ability to write scientific reports (English)
- Strong time management skills

The successful applicant will need to have access to a laptop.