

PhD Opportunity | Freshwater Ecology & Biological Control | Southern Africa

We are seeking a motivated and suitably qualified PhD candidate to immediately join the JWO-funded **AQUA-STR** (Aquatic Systems under Transformation and Resilience) project, based at the NRF - South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (**Johannesburg**), and in association with the Centre for Biological Control.

This project focuses on understanding how **climate change and invasive species interact to reshape freshwater ecosystems across Southern Africa**, with a particular emphasis on trophic dynamics, ecosystem functioning, and **the role of biological control** in building back resilience. Fieldwork will be conducted in various African countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia.

Project Focus

The successful candidate will investigate how invasive aquatic plants influence food web structure and energy flow, and how biological control interventions contribute to ecosystem recovery.

The work will involve:

- Field-based ecological research across sites in Southern Africa (including protected areas)
- Sampling across trophic levels (plants, invertebrates, fish)
- Evaluating ecological responses to biological control agents
- Application of stable isotope analysis ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$, $\delta^{15}\text{N}$)
- Data analysis and ecological modelling in R

Candidate Profile

We are looking for someone with:



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for Aquatic Biodiversity

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- A Master's degree in Ecology, Zoology, Botany, or a related field
- **Strong interest in freshwater ecology**, invasion biology, or biological control
- **Experience with fieldwork** (aquatic systems advantageous)
- Quantitative skills (R or similar)
- Ability to work independently and as part of a collaborative team

Funding

Please note: Partial funding to the value of R 180 000 is available for the first year through the AQUA-STR project, and the applicant will be required to apply for the NRF-SAIAB ring fenced bursary for the remainder of the project.

How to apply

Please send:

- A short motivation letter
- CV
- Academic transcripts

to: Dr Nompumelelo Baso [N.Baso@SAIAB.NRF.ac.za] and Prof. Julie Coetzee [J.Coetzee@saiab.nrf.ac.za]

Closing date: 15 June 2026, but we're reviewing applications on a rolling basis, so don't wait!

For any additional enquiries, feel free to get in touch.

Please share with anyone who might be interested!