

Position Description

Biology Volunteer

Tern Island Field Station, French Frigate Shoals (Kanemiloha'i)

Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

I. Major Duties

The Incumbent (volunteer), or this position will perform biological, maintenance and logistic tasks in support of biological monitoring, studies and conservation of wildlife and plant resources at French Frigate Shoals. The work will involve data collection at an isolated field station under primitive working and living conditions. The work may also involve written and oral communication with teachers, students, visitors, FWS staff and/or others, concerning biological monitoring. The data collected by this position will be used as part of long-term monitoring studies conducted on the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

The duties include:

- Conducts biological surveys, observing and recording a wide variety of basic events and observations pertaining to wildlife numbers, distribution and habitat. Participates independently, and as part of a small team, conducting surveys and habitat restoration.
- Collects, records and enters data into computers data from seabirds and other migratory species including: reproductive success studies, phenology of breeding species, band application and reading, occurrence of migratory and vagrant species, and/or results of censuses.
- Computes, compiles, summarizes data in tabular, graphic, and narrative form, and reports significant results in detail.
- Assists with various tasks associated with maintenance of Field Station operations, equipment and facilities, as needed.
- Participates in alien species control efforts including preventing new introductions, limiting the spread of established aliens, and assisting with the control and eradication of select species of plants.
- Participates in small boating operations within the atoll.
- Participates in education and outreach activities.
- May develop, implement, complete and report on a special project.

II. Factors

A. Knowledge Required by the Position

- A specialized technical knowledge of biological data gathering techniques, including standard methods, techniques, tools and equipment involved with seabird surveys and monitoring studies.
- Knowledge of seabird species sufficient to observe and report on status, health, and habitat conditions.
- Ability to accurately record, compile, and organize data using arithmetic and simple statistical procedures.
- Knowledge of forms, record, and terminology of wildlife management in order to keep accurate records and prepare detailed reports of work accomplished.
- Ability to live and work well with a small team in an isolated living situation.

B. Supervisory Controls

Scope of the assignment, procedures, immediate objectives, and the nature of the end product expected are specified by the supervisor and vary with assignments and time of year. The incumbent is expected to apply standard techniques and practices in carrying out the assignments. Potential and actual sources of controversy are typically discussed with the supervisor. The supervisor will regularly review data collected and field techniques to ensure consistency and completeness.

C. Guidelines

Standard operating protocol (SOPs) are provided for data gathering and reporting. Guidelines include files on past practices, technical references, and oral guidance. Little interpretation of guidelines is required; however, incumbent uses judgment in applying procedures in varied circumstances found in the field. Incumbent may draft original methods, reviewed by the supervisor, for a special project.

D. Complexity

The assignment requires the incumbent to follow detailed instructions and practices to carry existing methods, as well as to troubleshoot and figure out the best way to perform maintenance and repairs with limited facilities, equipment and supplies. Tasks are assigned by the supervisor, but the incumbent must be able to work independently, and identify solutions to problems, and is expected to make suggestions for improvements, within time and budget limitations.

E. Scope and Effect

The duties of this position are critical to biological monitoring operations at French Frigate Shoals.

F. Personal Contacts

Contacts are with other FWS professionals, volunteers, researchers, National Marine Fisheries Service personnel, and visitors. Occasional contact may also be required with teachers, classrooms, or the public for education and outreach purposes. Contact with the outside world is sporadic and undependable, but sometimes available by internet/email. A satellite phone is available for emergency use only.

G. Purpose of Contacts

Contacts are to establish cooperative relationships for supply and maintenance of the Field Station, operation of the station, and/or education and outreach.

H. Physical Demands

The work requires strenuous physical exertion for hauling supplies ashore. Work will be in the hot sun, and requires the incumbent to be able to walk and stand for long periods of a work day, and be able to lift and carry up to 50 pounds. The work requires average agility and dexterity. The incumbent must be able to meet the General Requirements for Tern Volunteers (attached)

I. Work Environment

The position requires both outdoor and office work. The office is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. Weather extremes may be encountered in outdoor work, including hot sun, strong winds and rain. The position also requires occasional travel and work in small boats for periods of up to a full work day at a time. The incumbent is expected to conduct duties in a safe and orderly manner so as not to endanger self, fellow workers, or property with which entrusted.

Incumbent is expected to be sensitive to the fragile nature of the island and its inhabitants. While safety has first priority, regular biological monitoring is second. All persons within the Monument must adhere to safety, biological protection, and cultural respect at all times, or will be required to leave.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are remote islands accessible by ship. Tern Island is sometimes, but not always, accessible by small aircraft.

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, such as serious injury, illness, or family emergency, we will make every effort to evacuate effected personnel; however, evacuation may not be timely or even possible for quite some time – even months. ALL PERSONNEL AT REMOTE STATIONS MUST ACCEPT THE RISK OF POTENTIALLY NOT HAVING TIMELY EVACUATION, EVEN IF IT IS NEEDED. Weather, cost, risk to rescuers, availability of transport, and risk to rescuers must all be considered before any emergency evacuation.

Although first response (e.g. first aid) will be available in the event of an emergency, slow additional response and/or is an inherent and unavoidable risk in living on a remote island. DO NOT ACCEPT A POSITION AT TERN ISLAND FIELD STATION IF YOU NEED REGULAR MEDICAL ATTENTION OR ASSISTANCE, ARE LIKELY TO NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION OF ANY KIND, OR ARE NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT THE RISK OF POTENTIALLY NOT HAVING AN EVACUATION WHEN NEEDED, INCLUDING ANY CONSEQUENCES OF NO EVACUATION. Again, we will try to evacuate when that is an appropriate course of action, but we cannot guarantee timely evacuation at any time.

General Tern Island Volunteer Position Requirements and Preferred Qualifications:

Physical Requirements: Volunteers should be able to work well with a small team in a professional and safe manner, and be flexible on work assignments. Volunteers should be in good physical condition, and be able to work outdoors in a hot environment; be able to lift 75 lbs; be able to carry 50 lbs; be able to swim more than 200 yards in water >30' deep; be able to walk at least 3 miles at a time; and be willing to participate in deep water small boat operations. Volunteers must have vision that is correctable to 20/20, with sufficient color perception to differentiate between colored bird bands.

Volunteers should be prepared to work very closely with seabirds, be dirty and smelly, work hard, and enjoy being outside in the sun and wind. All volunteers work 6 days/week, 48 hours per week, with occasional night hours. No alcohol is allowed on the Island at any time. Fresh water is limited, so while staff on Tern can wash off in the ocean at any safe time, fresh water showering may be limited; do not expect to have a fresh water shower every day.

Work Requirements: All staff and volunteers are expected to do their share of the cooking and cleaning, according to schedule. Everyone is expected to help with maintenance chores, such as bicycle and boat cleaning and maintenance. Wildlife monitoring is certainly the largest part of life at Tern, but it is definitely not the only part. If you enjoy being a jack of all trades, you are more likely to enjoy life at Tern. We work at least 8 hours per day, six days per week, but work must be accomplished to meet biological and logistical needs, so work hours are often irregular.

Safety Requirements: Due to the remoteness of the atoll, safety is a major factor for everyone at Tern. All dangerous horseplay, alcohol, or drug use is prohibited. Applicants are expected to share information with the Tern Manager relevant to current or expected medical or mental conditions, for the safety of both the applicant and others at Tern. While confidential information will be protected, information that is pertinent to the welfare of the team (e.g., diabetic needs, allergic reactions to environmental stimulus) may be shared with team members when needed for safety preparedness.

While we are happy to accommodate special needs to the degree safety will allow, some special needs may not be met on Tern; any medical condition which may require evacuation in less than 24 hours is not compatible with likely evacuation times from Tern. Mental, physical, or social conditions which require regular treatment may also not be suitable for the long stays and stress level that may be encountered while serving on Tern. Keeping our staff and volunteers safe is our number one priority!

Scheduling Requirements: While every effort is made to schedule the field season months ahead of time, there are inevitable changes due to weather, changes in transportation schedules, etc. Logistics can be quite complicated given the number of variables; while we try to set specific dates, we have many partners to coordinate with, and safety is our number one concern. Volunteers must understand that departure and arrival dates to and from Honolulu will be estimates, and should plan for these dates to change plus or minus two weeks in either direction.

Stress in a Remote Environment: Life and work on a remote island can be quite rewarding – but also carries with it a constant low level of stress. Volunteers should be prepared to entertain themselves during off time with reading, exercise, music, or other activities. Volunteers should also expect to experience some level of loneliness; there will inevitably be times when you feel left out, or missing your home. These feelings are

normal, and for many people, can be dealt with through exercise, good diet, learning a new activity, emailing with family, or talking to others on Tern. If you are susceptible to depression or loneliness, or need to be home frequently, Tern may be best enjoyed from a distance. Volunteering on a remote island is not for everyone; feel free to contact the Monument about other ways to participate in Monument public or educational activities.

Be prepared to deal with occasional disagreements between team members, and always conduct yourself professionally. Volunteers frequently form life-long bonds, but not everyone has to like each other. Sometimes we say things that aren't the best. You do have to function as a professional, however, and get the mission done to the best of everyone's abilities. When you're feeling stressed, remember why you are there, acknowledge the problem, and work around it. Take some time for yourself, or enjoy special treats or activities that you brought with you. We have a zero tolerance for gross negligence, violence, verbal abuse, threats or harassment of any kind.