

The Department of Behavioral and Cognitive Biology at the University of Vienna, Austria, invites applications for a **fully funded PhD position** (3 years) in the field of Behavioral Ecotoxicology, starting on **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026**.

## Project Description

Mercury contamination is a major environmental concern in tropical ecosystems, particularly in regions affected by artisanal gold mining. Our research aims to investigate the effects of mercury contamination on behavioral endocrinology in a wild population of Smooth-fronted caiman, *Paleosuchus trigonatus*, inhabiting rainforest ecosystems in French Guiana. The study combines fieldwork, laboratory analyses, and statistical modeling, and is embedded within an international research collaboration.

The successful candidate will conduct doctoral research (3-year PhD position) within the project A 'Multibiomarker Approach to Mercury Effects on Crocodylians'. The project is funded by an Austrian Science Fund (FWF) Principal Investigator Grant to Dr. Jeremy Lemaire. The PhD candidate will be responsible for investigating the potential disruptive effects of mercury (total Hg and methylmercury) on endocrine physiology in wild caimans along a gradient of anthropogenic disturbance in French Guiana. Fieldwork will include the capture and sampling of wild caimans in tropical ecosystems.

Supervision will be provided by Dr. Jérémie Lemaire, in collaboration with Dr. Virginie Canoine and Prof. Leonida Fusani, at the University of Vienna.

The PhD candidate will be integrated into the group of Prof. Leonida Fusani at the Department of Behavioral and Cognitive Biology (<https://becogbio.univie.ac.at/>) and is expected to actively participate in research activities, doctoral training, and dissemination of research results. The working language of the Department is English. The PhD candidate will be enrolled in the Vienna Doctoral School for Cognition, Behaviour and Neuroscience (COBENE, <https://vds-cobene.univie.ac.at/>).

## Funding and Employment

**Funding:** Fully funded PhD position

**Employment/Salary:** According to the §26 of the Austrian Collective Agreement (currently approx. € 2832.10 gross/month, 14 times a year)

**Duration:** 3 years

## Candidate profile

Applicants should have the following requisites:

- A completed Master's degree (or equivalent) in Ecology, Zoology, Biology, Ecotoxicology, Endocrinology, Environmental Sciences, or a related discipline by the start date of the PhD position.

- Strong interest in behavioral ecotoxicology and wildlife physiology.
- Experience or strong motivation to work with hormone assays, molecular biology, and contaminant analysis.
- Willingness to conduct fieldwork in tropical environments.
- Proficient knowledge of English; knowledge of French or German is an advantage but not required.
- Excellent academic standing.
- Ability to work independently and as part of an international research team.

Further desirable qualifications:

- Previous experience in the field (preferably in tropical countries)
- Previous experience working with hormonal and/or mercury quantification would be a plus.
- Familiarity of international publication processes

Letters of application including **academic CV, academic transcripts and certificates, Master's thesis summary, 2 letters of recommendation, and a statement of research interests** should be sent to [jeremy.lemaire@univie.ac.at](mailto:jeremy.lemaire@univie.ac.at) by May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

For further information about the project, please contact Dr. Jérémie Lemaire: [jeremy.lemaire@univie.ac.at](mailto:jeremy.lemaire@univie.ac.at). The planned starting date is October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

The University of Vienna is committed to equal opportunities and diversity and encourages applications from qualified candidates regardless of gender, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, disability, or age.

### **About the University of Vienna**

Founded in 1365, the University of Vienna (<https://www.univie.ac.at/en/>) is the oldest university in the German-speaking world and one of Europe's leading research institutions (Top 100). It offers an excellent research infrastructure, strong international networks, and a vibrant academic environment.

### **About Vienna and Living Conditions**

Vienna is consistently ranked among the world's most livable cities. It offers:

A high quality of life with excellent public services  
Affordable and efficient public transportation  
A diverse cultural scene and rich historical heritage  
A large international and academic community

The cost of living in Vienna is moderate compared to other European capitals. Public health insurance coverage is included for employed doctoral candidates.