



Living on the edge – Lesser black-backed gulls foraging and breeding at a coastal-urban interface

Lesser black-backed gulls once successfully adapted to anthropogenic environments, indicating a high degree of behavioural plasticity. They are also considered to be generalist feeders with a wide ecological niche. But most individuals do not exploit the complete range of habitats and resources that are available, they rather specialize. However, the adaptive significance of such specialization likely depends on the predictability of the environment, which at current becomes increasingly unreliable - among others due to human-induced environmental changes.

The PhD project aims at investigating how reproductive decisions vary with the ability of an individual to respond to environmental and anthropogenic changes, and how the costs and benefits of individual specialisation relate to trade-offs throughout the annual cycle (including migration, nest-site selection and reproduction). This will be studied in field experiments via large scale behavioural observations of individually marked (colour-ringed) birds in collaboration with the Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO). This will be combined with the implementation of state-of-the-art GPS tracking devices that collect detailed information about individual movements and behaviour 24h/24h via the high tech sensor network (LifeWatch Infrastructure) in collaboration with Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ).

We are seeking a highly motivated, enthusiastic and creative person with a Master in Biology or a related field. You must have good communication skills and be able to work in a team. You have a strong interest in Behavioural Ecology and Conservation, previous experience in related research and fieldwork would be helpful. The post is a full-time four-year PhD position from 1 March 2018 onwards (starting date negotiable).

To apply, please send in a single pdf file: (a) a statement of your research interests, motivation and suitability for this position, (b) your CV and (c) the contact details of two references. Please send your application to Wendt.Mueller@uantwerpen.be before **8 January 2018**. Interviews will take place in January 2018, and will continue until the position is filled.

For informal enquiries please contact Prof. Wendt Müller Wendt.Mueller@uantwerpen.be, see also <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/staff/wendt-muller/>