



P.O. Box 1347
Port McNeill, BC
V0N 2R0
www.mersociety.org

Position: Research and Education Assistant

Permanent / Full-Time (30 hours/week)

Based in Port McNeill, BC

This position is in support of MERS' efforts to mitigate threats to marine mammals in British Columbia, through research, education and wildlife response. For detail about our work, see www.mersociety.org and the summary at the end of this posting.

This is a year-round position based in Port McNeill, British Columbia. The majority of the work is office-based.

Duties include:

1. Matching Humpback Whale identification photographs to Humpback Whale catalogues to determine the identity of individual whales;
2. Data entry and database management for Humpback Whale sighting and photographic data;
3. Data collection and processing for Humpback Whale feeding strategy studies;
4. Assisting in supervising and training others (e.g. volunteers and students) in data entry, photographic data analysis and further office procedures;
5. Assisting with boat-based fieldwork and data collection;
6. Assisting with logistics for MERS [Marine Mammal Naturalist courses](#);
7. Providing technical and content assistance with remote education (includes social media) about the marine wildlife of BC and the threats to their populations, and how these threats can be reduced;
8. Providing further logistical support e.g. for the MERS Humpback Whale sponsorship program; presentations scheduling; and for the positioning and sponsorship of ["See a Blow? Go Slow!"](#) educational signage;
9. When able to do so in accordance with COVID-19 government protocols, educating visitors at the MERS Port McNeill office and aiding in MERS' work to serve as a resource to the local community (with a focus on local ecotourism and boat operators) in order to: enhance the value of wildlife viewing experiences; contribute to boater safety; and reduce threats to marine life;
10. Conducting retail related duties for sustainable products sold in the Port McNeill office and on the MERS online store as a means of fund-raising for our research and education efforts; and
11. Other office and fieldwork as needed.

Hiring priorities:

The Marine Education and Research Society is committed to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion within our organization and all aspects of our work. We welcome applications from individuals who self-identify as members of underrepresented and underserved groups.

Successful candidates:

- Are Canadian citizens, permanent residents or have refugee protection under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (funding requirement).
- Are under the age of 30 (funding requirement).
- Are currently unemployed or under-employed (funding requirement).
- Have graduated from a 2-year diploma or 4-year degree from a post-secondary education in a STEM field, with preference to degrees in biology, environmental science, resource management or a related field (funding requirement).
- Have knowledge of the biology and ecology of marine mammals in British Columbia.
- Have strong computer skills.
- Have skill at identifying individual Humpback Whales. A matching test will be part of the final selection procedure for this position.
- Work well independently and with minimal supervision.
- Have experience with data entry.
- Have exceptional organizational skills.
- Have successful experience with public outreach and science communication.
- Have dedication to reducing impacts to the environment.
- Must reside in, or relocate to, around Port McNeill (Northern Vancouver Island).
- Have the physical abilities to do both (1) office-based work which involves working at a computer for extended periods of time; and (2) boat-based work which involves lifting heavy items, and being at sea in various weather conditions.

Anticipated start date: November 16th, 2020

Number of hours a week: 30

Salary: \$19/hour

Benefits: Medical and dental coverage after 3 months of employment.

Application deadline: October 4th, 2020 at 11:59 PM (PDT)

Application format:

- Applications must include a cover letter specifically addressing position requirements, resume, and 3 references (name, position and email address) preferably with 2 being employment contacts. References would be contacted in the final stage of interviewing.
- Applications are to be emailed to Nicole Doe, Director of Operations:
nicole@mersociety.org.
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Selection procedure:

1. Short-listed applicants to complete a written interview.
2. Further short-listed applicants will be interviewed via Zoom.
3. References of final short-listed applicants will be contacted and these applicants will complete an exercise to assess their ability to match Humpback Whale IDs.

Background on the Marine Education and Research Society

Research, education and response to promote understanding and conservation of marine ecosystems.



Who?

- Registered charity; not-for-profit since 2010.
- Research goes back much further.
- Based in Port McNeill, NE Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

What?

- Coast-wide education to reduce threats to whales – includes signage, resource development, media engagement, presentations, and Marine Mammal Naturalist Courses.
- Photo identification, population, and behaviour studies - Minke and Humpback Whales.
- Feeding strategy studies – Humpback Whales.
- Marine mammal response and rescue.
- Studies to better understand the threat of entanglement to marine mammals.
- Humpback Whale research area is from upper Strait of Georgia to Bella Bella.
- Collaborating to update the British Columbia catalogue for Humpbacks.
- Education to raise awareness of Leatherback Turtles off the coast of BC.

How?

- Highly reliant on community; volunteer efforts of many, including our Directors, data contributors and data analysts; and donors / sponsors.
- Grant funding in 2020
 - Canada Summer Jobs;
 - DFO - Marine Mammal Response Program and Habitat Stewardship Program; and
 - NIMMSA Conservation Fund.

Highlights of what has been achieved by MERS in 2019:

Educational and Outreach

- Development of the guide “Marine Mammals and Boaters” for use nation-wide with the Canadian Power Squadron;
- 106 additional “See a Blow? Go Slow!” signs for strategic positioning on British Columbia’s coast to educate boaters on how to reduce risk to whales;
- 21 presentations aimed at reducing risks to whales, reaching 1,200+ people from coastal BC;
- 95 people trained through two Marine Mammal Naturalist Courses with information including actions to reduce risk to marine mammal and what do to in case of incidences of disturbance / injury / entanglement; and
- For the first time, having an office space (in Port McNeill), which allowed for educating boaters through window displays and by directly engaging with the more than 750 people who visited the office.

Research

- Over 1200 data entries for sightings of Humpbacks in 2019 (with over 500 more sightings to process);
- Further data collection and analysis of scarring in Humpbacks Whales indicative of a previous entanglement (study conducted in collaboration with Fisheries and Oceans Canada);
- Data collection for research into Humpback Whale feeding strategies;
- Continued collaboration with colleagues also documenting Humpbacks off the coast of British Columbia to update the BC province-wide Humpback catalogue; and
- Publication of research on sightings rates of Minke Whales.

Marine Mammal Rescue and Response

- Ongoing data collection to inform areas of high entanglement risk off northern Vancouver Island and the central coast of BC;
- Monitored whales during 6 days when commercial fisheries overlapped with areas of high whale density, to improve reporting of incidents, and to respond or support responses when needed; and
- Communication / coordination for 17 incidents.

Awards

- Winner of the 2019 ECOSTAR Awards for Ecological Stewardship (non-profit) and Educational Leadership (individual).