The Ponisio Lab at the University of Oregon is recruiting a PhD student to join an NSF-funded project examining how plant–pollinator communities have changed over the past 50 years in response to climate and land-use change.

The project builds on a historical dataset collected by Andrew Moldenke in the late 1960s and early 1970s, documenting hundreds of thousands of plant–insect interactions across California. By resurveying these same communities, we aim to understand how plant and pollinator diversity, species interactions, and ecological network structure have changed over half a century—and why some species have been more vulnerable than others.

Research opportunities and responsibilities

The student will take a leading role in the Northern California component of the project, which includes field sites spanning the San Francisco Bay Area (Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve) and the eastern Sierra Nevada (near Saddlebag Lake, Dore Pass). Responsibilities will include:

- Organizing and managing seasonal field teams, including technician training, field logistics, scheduling, and data quality assurance.
- Traveling throughout Northern California to conduct plant–pollinator surveys across diverse habitats and elevational gradients.
- Collecting data on bee communities, floral resources, phenology, and plant–pollinator interactions.
- Contributing to specimen processing, identification, and management of large ecological datasets.
- Developing independent research questions related to biodiversity change, species vulnerability, or ecological networks.

  The student will also have opportunities to collaborate on publications integrating the Northern and Southern California datasets, allowing us to examine large-scale patterns of biodiversity and interaction change across latitudinal, elevational, and land-use gradients. Potential research directions include the effects of climate and urbanization on pollinator communities, changes in ecological network structure, and the role of species interactions

in mediating vulnerability to global change.

Funding and benefits

The position includes year-round financial support. Summer research support is fully funded through the NSF grant, allowing the student to focus on fieldwork and research throughout the summer. Field station housing and a lab vehicle are also fully funded on the grant. Academic-year funding will be provided through a combination of teaching assistantships and grant-funded research assistantships.

The University of Oregon Biology PhD program provides:

- 12-month financial support: The most recently published Biology stipend is $32,871.60 annually (2024–25), with rates adjusted periodically. Final compensation will follow the rates in effect at appointment (and has only increased annually).
- Five years of guaranteed funding, contingent upon satisfactory academic progress.
- Comprehensive graduate employee health insurance, coverage includes medical, dental, and vision benefits, with dependent coverage options.

Graduate employees at UO are union-represented by the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF).

More information about funding and benefits is available through the UO Biology Graduate Program.

Qualifications

We seek a curious, motivated student interested in community ecology, pollinator conservation, global change biology, or ecological networks. Applicants should have field ecology experience, strong organizational and communication skills, and an interest in quantitative ecology. We also desire students with an interest in learning or previous experience with plant or insect identification, programming, ecological data analysis, or supervising field crews.

Because this position involves substantial fieldwork at geographically dispersed sites, applicants should be comfortable with extended field trips, variable field conditions, and coordinating teams in remote locations.

Research environment

The Ponisio Lab studies how global change affects biodiversity, species interactions, and ecosystem functioning, with a particular emphasis on wild bees. The student will receive mentorship in research design, quantitative analysis, scientific writing, and professional development, and will work with collaborators across the broader California resurvey project (including Ruben Alarcon, CSU Channel Islands). The position is based at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon, within the Department of Biology and the Institute of Ecology and Evolution.

To apply

Interested applicants should contact us at ponisiolab@gmail.com with a brief description of their research interests, relevant experience, and a CV. Please use the subject line "Northern California Pollinator PhD Position."

More information about our research is available at ponisiolab.com including the rubric we use to valuate candidates.

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University of Oregon