National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS)
Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bengaluru - 560012

Open Call for Applications: Project Associate (Level I) for Plant Diversity Assessment & Spatial Mapping

under

Project SWAMP-LIFE: Sustaining Life in the Wilderness - Protecting Western Ghats' Ancient Wetlands

The National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) was established in 1988 through the vision and initiative of the late Mr. J. R. D. Tata to nurture a broad base of scholars, managers, and leaders capable of addressing complex societal challenges through interdisciplinary approaches (www.nias.res.in). NIAS conducts advanced multidisciplinary research in natural sciences, engineering, humanities, social sciences, as well as conflict and security studies.

About SWAMP-LIFE: The Western Ghats (WG) mountain range is a global biodiversity hotspot; millions of people in peninsular India depend on its life-supporting fresh water. The WG is home to ancient wetlands called *Myristica* swamps, characterized by their dense canopy and water-tolerant trees (of the family *Myristicaceae*). These old-growth forests support a plethora of endemic flora and fauna and perform critical ecosystem functions such as carbon sequestration and erosion/flood prevention. They also play a significant role in sustaining local communities. They are revered as sacred groves with important functions as sites of spiritual connection and socio-cultural activities. Through this 5-year project we aim to build a holistic ecosystem services framework encompassing the multi-faceted services *Myristica* swamps provide. The project has been deployed in the Maharashtra-Goa region, around the *Mhadei* and *Netravali* Wildlife Sanctuaries. It will be further expanded to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala depending on funding availability. We assess ecosystem services through:

(I) **Physical and biological measurements:** (A). Mapping the spatial extent and hydrology of the swamps, (B). Surveying biodiversity both floral and faunal, especially ecosystem health indicator taxa (C) Conducting a battery of tests for chemical residues classified as harmful to human health through sampling of water, soil, stream sediment and plant tissues.

(II) **Social and cultural assessments:** Explore the relationships between local communities and the swamps to (D) assess material services that the swamps provide and document (E) socio-cultural and religious values attached to the swamps and sacred groves.

NIAS invites applications for one dedicated Plant Diversity Specialist with experience in plant identification, field work, biodiversity assessments and spatial mapping using geospatial techniques to be engaged as a Project Associate (Level I). Scope of Work below:

- Conducting detailed and systematic plant diversity surveys (trees, shrubs and herbs) within Myristica swamps, sacred groves and surrounding forests.
- Preparing and maintaining a comprehensive herbarium of plant species identified.
- Contribute to field work on the spatial mapping of swamp sites, collect samples for tests and support multi-year monitoring of seasonal changes in the study sites.
- Maintain daily transcripts of observations made on the field in notebooks with photographs.
- Prepare maps, figures, statistics of change and spatial outputs for project reports.
- Lead publications on plant diversity, importance of species and other swamp functions.
- Assist with statistical data analysis and participate in outreach and communication activities.

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Qualification

POSITION	MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS	SKILLS/EXPERTISE
PROJECT ASSOCIATE (Level I) – PLANT DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT & SPATIAL MAPPING	A Masters (M.Sc.) or equivalent graduate degree in Botany / Forestry/Ecology/Environmental Science or other relevant fields. Candidates with demonstrated prior field and/or research experience in performing the duties listed above are encouraged to apply.	Candidates with experience in conducting **Plant Biodiversity Assessments in evergreen and moist deciduous forests and wetlands of the Western Ghats**, **Herbarium Preparation, Sampling of Soil, Water and Plant Tissue, Integrating Survey Data with GIS and GPS based Field Mapping** are preferred. Candidate showing proficiency in identifying flora (and fauna) of the northern Western Ghats are highly desirable. A valid driving license for two-wheeler is a must. Fluency in Hindi and/or Konkani also preferred.

Contract Duration and Salary:

Emolument: **₹31,000 + 30% HRA** per month. Initial contract will be for a period of one year, with potential to extend for 2 years or more based on an annual assessment and need of the project. Due to being a 5-year funded project, opportunities to register for an external PhD through work done towards project objectives can be negotiated.

Mode of Application:

Interested candidates are requested to write an e-mail with the subject line **"Application- Project Associate Plant Diversity Specialist"** attaching **a single pdf file in your name** consisting of Cover letter and Curriculum Vitae (CV) to: pramyabala@nias.res.in and g.vaidheeswaran@nias.res.in.

The last date for receiving applications is **31-10-2026**. Short-listed candidates will be invited for a virtual interview.