Ecology & conservation management of pine martens in fragmented landscapes

Responses of species to habitat fragmentation may vary markedly depending on trophic level, dispersal ability and degree of habitat specialisation, as well as the quality of the 'matrix' surrounding remnant patches. At the start of the 20th Century, the Eurasian pine marten was close to extinction in the UK but it has now returned to parts of its former range, thanks in part to increased levels of afforestation. Though marten are vulnerable to fragmentation, there is evidence that they may benefit from low levels of fragmentation, provided that forest habitats remain sufficiently connected.

The overall aim of this PhD is to :

1. Assess the influence of landscape scale habitat fragmentation habitat on pine marten populations.
2. Develop DNA extraction techniques to identify individuals from scat samples.
3. Investigate methods of altering pine marten diet and habitat use using experimental manipulations in a native pine woodland.

This project will involve extensive travel and fieldwork throughout Scotland and the student will need to be able to work independently. Previous fieldwork experience is essential, and experience with molecular techniques is desirable.

Funding for this project has been secured and comes from the University of Stirling, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The entry qualification for postgraduate studentships is a first class or upper second class honours degree in a relevant biological subject, or an appropriate masters degree.

Deadlines for applications is 18th February and and interviews will take place on 1st March.

To apply send a CV and covering letter with contact details of two referees to Dr Kirsty Park, preferably by email (k.j.park@stir.ac.uk) or to the School of Biological & Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, Scotland UK