

**Royal Museum for Central Africa
Biology Department
Ichthyology Unit / FishBase**

2021 Training session on FishBase and Fish Taxonomy

organized by the Biology Department - Ichthyology Unit of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

Call for applications for 5 scholarships

Deadline for submission of applications: 10/01/2021

Training session: 01/03/2021 – 21/05/2021

1. General context

The Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren (Belgium) is part of the FishBase Consortium and responsible for the information on the fresh- and brackish water fishes of Africa. FishBase is the most important online encyclopaedia on fishes and incorporates many tools for ichthyologists and fisheries biologists. The FishBase programme of the RMCA includes among others a continuous update of scientific information on the African ichthyofauna and the organization of an annual and comprehensive training session on the use of FishBase and on the taxonomy of African fishes.

Through an agreement with the Belgian Development Cooperation the RMCA has **five scholarships** available for the 2021 edition of this training session. The organization of the training is contingent upon the approval of the budget 2021.

2. Characteristics

The training session comprises three main components:

- A **detailed explanation and demonstration of FishBase** in all its aspects, illustrating the encyclopaedic character and the use of its tools.
- A **training in the taxonomy of African fishes**, including identification exercises, working with keys, the proper curation of collections, morphological examination of specimens and data analysis.
- A **case study** based on taxa for which taxonomic problems have been encountered in FishBase or the RMCA collections.

The focus of the training will be on fish biodiversity data and their integration into FishBase, on how to use FishBase and on how to contribute. The context of these contributions may vary and may also include the knowledge of common names, fish ecology, morphology, zoogeography and many other areas of fish biology, according to the expertise of the candidate.

Applicants should afterwards be able to make their own contribution to fish biology and to continue to work with FishBase. They are encouraged to teach their newly apprehended skills to new/local users, to help in completing the database and keeping it up to date, and to spread the use of FishBase as a source of information and as a fisheries tool.

For more information please visit <http://fishbase.africamuseum.be>.

3. Target group

African scientists with an interest and expertise in African fishes, preferably freshwater fishes, and their biology.

4. Eligibility criteria

- Only applications from people with residency in Sub-Saharan Africa (cf country list below) and working in academic institutions, governments, research institutes, universities and NGOs will be taken into consideration. Applications from consultants or individuals will not be accepted.
- Applications from candidates from the following countries only are accepted: Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- Scientists with a diploma other than a MSc or PhD should demonstrate a record of substantial work related to ichthyology.
- **Language skills:** this call is for **English speaking scientists only** (a training session in French will be organized in 2022). A good command of English is requested in case it would not be the mother tongue or the language of education of the applicant.
- **Age limit:** 45 years at the time of the application.

In addition to the candidate's CV, the following questions will be used for evaluation of the application :

- What is the level of direct or indirect benefits of the training for the candidate for his/her future studies on fish biodiversity and what is the intention for the use and support of FishBase?
- What are the prospects for continued co-operation between the applicant (and/or his/her institution) and the RMCA, and how much mutual benefit can be expected?

All applications will be subject to an evaluation by internal experts.

The training staff may formulate specific conditions for the sharing of existing data with successful applicants.

The RMCA encourages the participation of women in its study visit programs.

5. Instructions for application

A complete application file consists of the following documents saved as **a unique PDF file with the candidate's name:**

1. The **application form**, which can be downloaded from the RMCA internet site at the following address:

<http://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/training/fishbase>

This application form needs to be completed, dated and signed by the applicant.

2. A separate **motivation letter** outlining:

- why you consider yourself a good candidate for this training;
- what would be the benefits of your training to your home institute;
- what is the level of direct or indirect benefits of the training for you in future studies on fish biodiversity;
- what is the intention for the usage and support of FishBase;
- what are the possible collaborations between yourself, your home institute and the RMCA.

3. A **letter from your employer** (research institution, ministry, university...) authorizing your participation in the requested training, confirming your current position within the institution and reintegration after the training. It also should indicate a commitment to make good use of the newly acquired expertise and describe what would be the benefits of this training for the institution. This letter must be dated and signed, and provided with a stamp of the institution. The name, position and address of the author of the letter must be clearly mentioned.

4. A **letter of recommendation** indicating, amongst others, why you are particularly well placed or suited for this training. This letter must be dated and signed with clear mention of the name, position and address of the person. The letter from the person recommending you must be sent directly by him/her to the following e-mail address: muriel.van.nuffel@africamuseum.be.

5. Copies of relevant **diplomas**.

6. A copy of your **passport** (only the page with your personal details and passport number).

Any other element, arriving outside of the requested application documents, will not be considered in the evaluation of the application or the candidate.

Only complete application files will be taken into consideration. No additional information communicated afterwards will be accepted, unless upon specific request from the RMCA.

The complete application file (in one PDF file with your name as file reference) should reach the following e-mail address before 10 January 2021 at midnight (Belgian time, GMT+2): callfishbase@africamuseum.be.

Reception of application files will only be acknowledged by e-mail to the e-mail address to be mentioned in the application form. This acknowledgement will be done shortly after the application form is received.

All applicants will be personally informed of the results of the selection process by the end of January 2021.

6. Scholarship conditions

- **Duration** : training session of 3 months, from 1 March 2021 until 21 May 2021. Selected candidates are supposed to be available for the entire session and need to arrive in Belgium before the start of the training session.

- **Travel expenses** : the RMCA will provide one round-trip ticket (economy class). Some expenses related to obtaining visa will be reimbursed.
- **Allowances** :
 - daily allowance of 44€ covering board, individual transport, and personal expenses of the selected applicant;
 - accommodation provided by the RMCA (accommodation to be shared with other participants).
- **Insurance** : the RMCA will provide insurance for the selected applicants. The insurance will cover :
 - medical and accident insurance (this insurance does not cover medical care related to pre-existing diseases, nor does it cover medical expenses related to pregnancies and/or births);
 - third-party liability;
 - repatriation insurance.

Possible consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on this training session:

If at the time of the training period, a new outbreak should arise and new confinement measures be implemented by the Belgian government, the training could be cancelled or postponed. If a confinement period is declared during the training, on-line continued training and apprenticeships will be organized until safe repatriation of participants can be ensured.

The participants will be informed before their stay in Belgium about the mandatory health measures (social distancing, compulsory use of facial mask, quarantine period at arrival, compulsory Covid-19 test etc.). The participants will have to comply to the safety measures adopted by the RMCA and the Belgian government.