

Basic Obligations & Duties for Assistant Project Director (APD) volunteers at Semliki.



The position of Assistant Project Director (APD) is mostly a volunteer position. While the project covers food, accommodation and travel expenses (the main airfare is reimbursed after the APD term is over), the position only includes a very small monthly stipend, US \$150. Airfare is paid after the successful completion of the six

month contract and submission of project data and project financial records.



It is very important to keep in mind that while the position is voluntary, I require a genuine commitment. You will be obligated to a 6-month tenure at the field site, and there are substantial data management duties. APD duties take up 6 days a week. We normally take Sundays off as a day of rest, but in most cases you will remain in the reserve on your break day, as travel is time-consuming. Sadly every few years APDs find

they lack the commitment to keep up with all the work, and are fired. In these cases travel costs are reimbursed. Occasionally I've had an APD who has decided to leave early and gave me adequate notice; in these cases, I reimbursed part of their airfare. It's in both of our interests to make sure you'll be happy in this position.

The camp has one permanent structure, a thatched but somewhat open-air building where we have our kitchen, dining room and living room. We have a solar array, which provides a little light in the APD tent and charging for cell phones and computers. We do get cell phone reception in camp and in much of the forest. Texts to the US cost about 25 cents, so you will not be completely isolated. I'm always astonished that so many APDs are willing to spend \$50 a month (a third of their stipend!) on a satellite link to allow email in camp. I don't recommend that, myself; I prefer a little bit of isolation. The toilet is a 'long drop' outhouse, and the shower is primitive. Laundry is done by hand, and while the staff will help out with your heavy duty laundry, I ask APDs do launder their own underwear. Your 'bedroom' will be a large tent on a tent platform (see pix below), furnished with a bed, table and chairs. The project cook prepares meals for the APD and the staff and makes sure there is adequate boiled water and water for cleaning.

Your local transportation will be our small Mitsubishi, which you'll use to shop in Fort Portal every 2 or 3 weeks (I go three weeks, but many of my APDs can't stand to be away from the glories of Fort Portal that long!) and it will be available for emergencies, of course. Below you'll see 2014 APD Luke Loudon waving goodbye to me as I sat on the bus to Kampala June, 2014.



### **The SCP Mitsubishi Pajero Junior**

Most applicants for this position are under 26 and thus on their parents insurance. You should also get emergency evacuation travel insurance. It's relatively inexpensive, and I will cover half of it. Medical care in Uganda is surprisingly good and very, very inexpensive. A doctor visit is about \$5, and drugs are inexpensive, too.

Turning to scholarly issues, if you complete your term you will be included as coauthor on any publications to which you contribute data. Occasionally APDs come up with their own research initiatives. If you have such an idea, you will to apply to me for approval as I will need to consider whether such projects overlap with research of my students, myself and other collaborators, and Ugandan authorities must approve them as well. I am coauthor on all publications that originate with the project.

The project has always allowed tourists who are staying at the Semliki Safari Lodge to accompany us into the forest. In return the lodge managers offer various kinds of support to the project,



when they can. The lodge has a chef, so meals (not to mention drinks) are very popular with APDs. The tourists are allowed to stay with the chimpanzees up to an hour a day, but they must bring their own ranger to escort them in the forest. We get tourists in camp about once a week.

Vacation days accumulate at 3 per month, so over the 6-month period you'll have 3 weeks of vacation. That cannot be taken at the very end of your stay, however, at least not without returning to Semliki, because the final duty will be to train your replacement. If you wish to travel after your contract is over, you'll need to make time after you finish up at Semliki.



**Tent platforms at Semliki. There are five tents in camp.**

You will probably appreciate a brief history of the Semliki Chimpanzee Project. The site, the Toro-Semliki Wildlife Reserve, is remote in some ways, but it is only an hour's drive from the nearest town, Fort Portal. I started at Semliki in 1996, and I naively expected to have the chimpanzees habituated by 1998. In fact, habituation is still not completed. My most recent records show we are seeing chimps only about 60 hours a month, and we observe them about 75% of the time we search.

Most of the physical work involves spending hours in the forest walking, searching for and observing chimpanzees. The position also involves supervising four Ugandan employees. Your duties will include paying salaries, helping to coordinate “off” days for staff, and, inevitably, coping with personal crises. If staff misbehave or perform poorly, you may be forced to fire one of the workers, though this is rarely an issue. There are six data collection initiatives that must be sustained through heat, rain, vehicle breakdowns and sickness, including keeping spreadsheets up to date.

You must submit data sheets and a very brief (one page is adequate) report to me each month.



**Dining room/kitchen, solar array and tents in camp.**

Some expats find it discouraging that we often go days at a time without getting close to the chimps. Some find it difficult to get up early in the dark. Others find the annoyance or worry about the bugs, snakes, elephants, buffalo, lions and tsetse flies to be a low-level but wearing kind of water-torture. It's hot, except when it's pouring rain. It's just hard work. In the past my assistants have fallen into roughly two categories. First, there are those

who say "why did you scare me so much! It turned out to be a holiday! I loved it." Equally commonly though they say (having heard the same warnings) "why didn't you tell me how incredibly difficult the work was?"

That's pretty much all the bad news. The good news is that I have worked at three other chimp sites, Mahale, Gombe and Kibale, and Semliki is more pleasant, more beautiful and has better creature comforts. There are no other researchers there, which can be a good thing--petty competition and personal friction are not a worry. One of the duties is interacting with tourists, and many APD's find that very pleasant—not to mention that it sometimes involves having dinner at the lodge with the lodge guests. Then there's the wildlife...you'll hear baboons, colobus, bushbabies, waterbuck and leopards at night and you'll see many other exotic animals almost daily. Not to mention that baboons and black and white colobus are near camp and you can often watch them from your tent platform.

--Kevin D Hunt, PhD  
Professor  
Founder and Director, Semliki Chimpanzee Project

#### Position Available

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Position Category: Field Position

Title of Position: Project Manager

Hiring Organization: Semliki Chimpanzee Project - Indiana University

Street Address:  
Department of Anthropology  
Student Building 130  
701 E. Kirkwood Avenue  
Bloomington, IN 47405-7100  
USA

Position Description:  
Assistant Project Director (APD), Semliki Chimpanzee Project. Research manager and staff supervisor for a continuing chimpanzee project in

western Uganda. APD is responsible for daily collection of project data, including ranging, diet, nesting behavior and climatology data. Supervise research assistants and camp maintenance workers. See <http://www.indiana.edu/~semliki> for more details.

**Qualifications:**

Primate field school completion or previous field work strongly recommended. University classes in primate behavior, primate ecology, and basic biology required; minimum 3.5 GPA. Familiarity with chimpanzee socioecology required and assumed.

**Salary/funding:**

Small monthly stipend of \$150.

**Support**

All travel costs reimbursed on successful completion of six month contract, submission of receipts for project running costs and data. Meals, accommodation and local transportation provided while on site.

**Term of Appointment:** ASAP/Negotiable (was—June 30, 2020).

**Comments:** To apply send a brief note detailing your qualifications, a copy of your university transcript to [kdhunt@indiana.edu](mailto:kdhunt@indiana.edu) and contact information for three recommenders; if one of your recommenders is your primate field school instructor, you will receive special consideration.