PhD Opportunity in modeling marine birds in the Gulf of Mexico

A collaborative PhD position in the Department of Integrative Biology at Michigan State University is available to model marine bird populations and communities in the Gulf of Mexico. The student will have the ability to develop a research project that aligns with their interests, which will include both power analyses and distributional modeling. The work for this project will be done as part of the Gulf of Mexico Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (GoMMAPPS) project, which is funded by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). As part of the project goals, the student will 1) develop power analyses to estimate the statistical power of survey effort to identify areas of high and low abundance for priority species; and 2) characterize the seasonal distributions and abundances of species and relate observed counts to pertinent broad and local scale environmental characteristics.

The student will work with a team of researchers at Michigan State University, where the position will be based (in Elise Zipkin’s lab), the USGS (lead by Jim Lyons) and the USFWS (lead by Emily Silverman and Randy Wilson). The successful candidate will start in fall (or summer) 2018 and will receive three years of a research assistantship (tuition, health care, and stipend including summer salary). There is also funding available for conference travel and to meet with collaborators. Funding for subsequent years will be in the form of fellowships and/or teaching assistantships.

Qualifications:
The successful candidate should have excellent verbal and written communication skills and a strong mathematical and/or statistical background. Knowledge of marine bird ecology, spatial modeling, and population estimation are also desirable. Candidates with a M.S. degree will be ranked highly as will those with scientific publications.

Application:
Send a brief letter of interest, CV, and writing sample (if available) with names and contact information for three references to Elise Zipkin (ezipkin@msu.edu). Please include the subject line: “GoM marine bird PhD”. We encourage applicants to make contact by November 1. A formal application to MSU and the Department of Integrative Biology (https://integrativebiology.natsci.msu.edu/graduate-program/) is due by December 1, 2017.