Tanya **Strydom**

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Dear Prof. Loïc Pellissier,

I am a recent Masters graduate and am writing to you with regards to the advertised PhD position in Biogeodynamics within the Landscape Ecology research group at ETH Zürich. I came across this project on twitter and was instantly attracted to the idea of being able to take my strong background in plant ecology (specifically trait ecology) and being able to apply it within other fields of ecology that have always captured my interest. That is, I am very excited for the opportunity to conduct a research project that not only gives me the opportunity to build on my current knowledge base but also to further develop by knowledge and skill set within the field of Landscape Ecology and perhaps even more broadly ecoinformatics.

My tertiary education has been strongly rooted in the field of ecology and more so within plant ecology in recent years. Within this field I am particularly interested in the relationship that plants have with their environment and how this is related to the expression of traits. However, in an attempt to keep my education (as well as working knowledge) broad I have also focused on selecting courses throughout my education that have broader applications within the Natural Sciences. Some that may be of relevance (and beneficial) to my potential to flourish within this PhD position, these include courses focusing on the fields of geography (at the undergraduate level), evolution (at the graduate and undergraduate level) and statistical analysis (at the graduate level, as well as a course on Bayesian analyses geared for doctorate students that was taken external to my MSc degree). In addition having a broad coursework has fostered an interest in wanting incorporating some of these elements with my previous research - particularly phylogenetic and ecological modelling. My interest in the statistical component of research has also led to a special interest in the programming side of the model development process and have become comfortable and confident in working with R and am often called upon to assist fellow students with coding and statistics related issues. This interest in coding and programming has led me to recently delve into the world of website building and design as a way to further my understanding of other coding languages.

I believe that being accepted to this PhD position will provide me with the opportunity to broaden my skill set within other areas of my research interests while still being equipped with the necessary skills required for this position. I also feel that my interests are aligned with the research interests and projects of the Landscape Ecology group and that I will be a good fit within the team

Best Regards,

Tanya Strydom