

Master internship vacancy: Investigating animal activity in levees

Location: HZ University of Applied Sciences, Middelburg (with remote work options)

Salary: €400/month

Duration: 6 months

Start date: ASAP



Background Earthen levees are vital for flood protection in the Netherlands, safeguarding people and economic activities. However, burrowing animals like moles, foxes, and beavers can weaken these structures by creating tunnels that accelerate erosion. Despite growing awareness, knowledge gaps remain regarding the factors influencing animal activity and effective mitigation strategies. To address this, HZ University of Applied Sciences, in collaboration with Dutch and Belgian levee management organizations, launched the *Dieren in de Dijk (Animals in the Dike)* project. This initiative aims to understand animal-induced levee degradation and develop evidence-based risk management strategies.

Objective of the internship The intern will support field research and data analysis in the management areas of the waterboards Scheldestromen (province of Zeeland) and Rivierenland, focusing on the relationship between burrowing activity, soil composition, and vegetation types. The findings will help identify high-risk areas and inform proactive levee management strategies, particularly regarding mole and vole activity.

Key responsibilities 1) Conducting field surveys on burrowing activity; 2) Collecting and analyzing vegetation, soil, and environmental data; 3) Identifying patterns of animal activity and their impact on levees.

Candidate profile We seek a motivated student with an interest in field research, environmental science, and data analysis. The ideal candidate has: 1) Experience in field investigations and environmental monitoring; 2) Skills in quantitative data analysis (R knowledge is a plus); 3) Familiarity with GIS tools (ArcGIS experience is an advantage); 4) A valid driver's license (for fieldwork)

Work environment The intern will be based at HZ University of Applied Sciences in Middelburg, with the possibility of remote work. The role will require frequent field visits to levee sites in Scheldestromen and Rivierenland. The intern will work within the Asset Management research group, collaborating with researchers and levee management authorities to support ongoing studies.

Information & application For any questions, please contact Danny Janssen (d.janssen@hz.nl) or Eric Visser (eric.visser@science.ru.nl). To apply, please submit your CV and a motivation letter to Danny Janssen at the email address above.