



Collective behaviour and animal communication field course

Fully funded field biology course at the Kalahari Research Centre, Northern Cape, South Africa.

Application deadline: 05 April 2026. Course dates: 1 – 15 June 2026



This practical field course is designed to put graduate students into the field where they will gain hands-on expertise in behavioural ecology, collective behaviour and animal communication research. The course will train participants in the methods, tools, and equipment used for conducting behavioural field research. It will include both theory and practical exercises. Participants will plan a short field study, collect and analyse data, and present their findings to their peers.

The course is free to attend for South African students who are interested in topics of Animal Behaviour and Communication.

Applicants from other African countries will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The course does not award credits/points towards BSc or Honors degree.

Curious about what this course is like?

Watch this short video filmed during the 2024 course for a glimpse into the experience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJD1tOXZYZY>



How to apply:

Please fill the form at <https://www.exc.uni-konstanz.de/cbfc/application-procedure/>. Upload your CV and add a short cover letter explaining your interest in the course.

For any informal inquiries get in touch with Vlad (vdemartsev@ab.mpg.de) or Gabriella (gabriella.gall@ab.mpg.de).

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Day 1: Where are we?

- a. Field safety
- b. Kalahari habitat, flora and fauna
- c. Basic telemetry

Day 2: How to observe animals?

- a. Ethics
- b. Ethograms
- c. Data collection schedules

Day 3: Why study communication?

- a. What are signals?
- b. Basic acoustics
- c. Recording audio in the field

Day 4: Camera traps – what are they good for?

- a. Which questions can be answered?
- b. Camera deployment
- c. How to analyse camera data

Day 5: What to do with all the audio?

- a. Acoustic analysis
- b. Soundscape
- c. Animal vocal repertoires

Day 6: How accurate is GPS, really?

- a. GPS errors
- b. Types of movement
- c. Home range maps

Day 7: Meet the meerkats, squirrels and yellow mongooses

- a. Visit to the projects
- b. Analysing camera trap data

Day 8: Planning your research

- a. Writing research proposal
- b. Choosing tools
- c. Data collection and management

Day 9: Field project

- a. Data collection
- b. Troubleshooting
- c. Data logging, processing and backups

Day 10: Field project

- a. Data collection
- b. Progress reports
- c. Designing analytical pipelines

Day 11: Field project

- a. Data collection
- b. Data summary
- c. Preliminary results

Day 12: How to deal with these data?

- a. Data management and processing
- b. Summary stats
- c. Visualisations

Day 13: So, what have we learned?

- a. Re evaluating predictions
- b. Project presentations
- c. Course summaries

