

WEDDELL SEAL PROJECT TECHNICIAN 2026

Project Description:

The Erebus Bay Weddell seal population study in McMurdo Sound, Antarctica was initiated in 1968 and represents one of the longest intensive field investigations of a long-lived mammal in existence. This long-term study is a valuable resource for understanding population dynamics of not only Weddell seals but also other species of both terrestrial and marine mammals with similar life-history characteristics. Knowledge of the mechanisms that limit and/or regulate Weddell seal populations and the specific biophysical linkages between climate, oceans, ice, and Antarctic food webs can provide important contributions to our understanding of pinniped population dynamics, as well as contribute more generally to theoretical understanding of population, community, and ecosystem patterns and processes. Such knowledge can be readily applied elsewhere to enhance the ability of natural resource managers to effectively maintain assemblages of other large-mammal species and the ecological processes that they facilitate. Continuation of this long-term study may also contribute to an understanding of the potential detrimental impacts of human activities such as climate change and the commercial exploitation of Antarctic marine resources.

Job Description:

We are looking to hire up to 3 technicians for the 2026 field season. Technicians will participate in all aspects of the project including tagging animals, conducting population surveys, and collecting genetic samples. The job is very physically demanding, and heavy lifting (>45lbs) is required. Work is conducted on sea ice, and travel is primarily by snowmobile. Weather conditions are commonly cold and windy. Our crew will either live at McMurdo Station, the main base of the U.S. Antarctic Program, or at a small field camp on the sea ice approximately a 1-hour snowmobile drive from McMurdo Station.

Qualifications:

If you do not possess the required qualifications list below, your application will not be considered.

Required qualifications:

- A B.S., B.A., or M.S. degree by the time this position starts (October 2026)
 - Applicants with PhDs are unlikely to be chosen as we strongly prioritize applicants who will utilize this experience for their future career opportunities.
- Demonstrated ability to work safely in challenging, risky environments with a positive attitude
- Experience working on a small team and getting along with a diverse group in a remote setting
- At least one field position involving multiple days away from the front-country within the last three years
- High level of attention to detail

In addition to the above required qualifications, we are also looking for technicians with the following skills:

Preferred qualifications:

- Ability to work both independently and as part of a research team
- Animal handling experience, especially experience working around large mammals
- Experience working in cold weather environments
- Experience performing in high-pressure situations
- Excellent physical condition accustomed to long, strenuous hours outside
- Experience driving and maintaining snowmobiles
- Between 2-5 years of field experience

Terms of Employment:

The field season starts at the end of September and ends in mid-December. Assuming good weather, technicians can expect to have one day off every 10-14 days and to be outside between 40-60 hours a week. Technicians are paid \$16.34/hr, and overtime rates apply after 40 hrs/wk. Transportation, international health insurance, and room and board are covered during employment. Technician positions are contingent on support from the U.S. Antarctic Program and the National Science Foundation.

Applicants must be able to pass a background check and an extensive medical qualification. Each participant must meet with a physician and dentist in early June to have requisite testing done and *must follow-up diligently* to be physically qualified by the U.S. Antarctic Program by the end of July. In recent years, the U.S. Antarctic Program has required participants to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and may require that again in 2026.

How to apply:

If you are interested, please send a cover letter, resume or CV, and contact information for three references to Parker Levinson as a single PDF document via email (parkerlevinson@gmail.com) with the subject line “Weddell Seal Technician Application – FULL NAME”. If you know or have worked with a past technician on the project, please be sure to include their name in your application materials. In your cover letter, please clearly detail (1) the skills and qualifications (both technical and interpersonal) you already possess for this position, (2) how this position will help improve your field skills, and (3) how this position will benefit your professional and/or educational goals. Attention to detail is critical to this position, and applications will be scored accordingly. If you have any questions about what the position entails or the hiring process, email Parker Levinson (parkerlevinson@gmail.com).

All applications must be received by 11:59pm MST Sunday, March 29, 2026. Hiring decisions will be made by mid-May.

FAQs:

- **I don’t meet all the qualifications, can I still apply?** *No, you cannot.*

- **I don't have a passport, can I still apply?** *As long as you have the ability to obtain a passport, you can apply. Please note that if you are hired, you will need to apply and obtain a passport immediately at your personal expense.*
- **I'm healthy, but I have to take medicine regularly for some physical or mental condition. Will I pass the medical qualification?** *We are not involved in any part of the medical qualification process; it is conducted by a third-party organization at the request of the National Science Foundation and the US Government. However, some conditions and/or medications (even very common ones) can disqualify potential candidates, and you are encouraged to check NSF websites to learn if you might be ineligible. For more information about the medical qualification process, please read these websites:*
 - <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/soh/polar-physical-qualification>
 - <https://nsf-gov-resources.nsf.gov/files/PQ-Guidelines-Current-13-March-2025.pdf>
- **What gear and clothing do I have to provide?** *This is a valid question, and something we can talk about if you are offered a position on the project. Generally speaking, a lot of clothing and gear is provided except for base layers, a jacket, and socks. If you are worried about the financial cost of gear, please bring this up if you are offered a position.*
- **Does domestic animal handling or zoo experience count as "animal handling experience"?** *Yes, but preference is given to applicants with wildlife handling experience. Handling animals in a more domestic setting, like a marine mammal stranding center or vet technician role, do demonstrate that you are comfortable working around animals. However, animals in these settings tend to be more docile and trainable than the animals we work with.*
- **I don't have any professional backcountry experience, but I have a lot of recreation experience in the backcountry. Does that satisfy the qualification?** *Preference is given to those with extensive professional backcountry experience. Professional backcountry experience differs from recreational experience because of the safety expectations and protocols.*
- **I have loads more questions about this position and working in Antarctica. Who can I ask?** *The internet is a great place to learn more about the Weddell Seal Project and general questions about working in Antarctica. Working in Antarctica requires balancing a lot of new information, utilizing a range of resources, and problem-solving. Please demonstrate that in your application, and try to answer your own questions with online resources before contacting us.*
- **I applied. When will I hear back?** *All applications are reviewed by multiple people on our team, which can take a long time. You will get an update on your application status via email once applications are reviewed and processed. Do not email us otherwise, unless you have another job opportunity lined up.*