

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: Evolution Meeting, 2006

Travel Dates: 23 – 27 June 2006

Location: Stony Brook, NY, USA

Group Member(s): Jennifer Carpenter

Aims: To travel to the biannual Evolution Meeting (Society for the Study of Evolution and Society of Systematic Biology), which took place at Stony Brook University, New York during June 23 – June 27, 2006. These meetings comprise the largest gathering of scientists in my field and provide an excellent opportunity for me to discuss my research with colleagues. I presented a talk titled: Recent spread of a vertically transmitted virus through populations of *Drosophila melanogaster*.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

With financial support from the James Rennie Bequest I was able to attend the Evolution meeting, 2006, in Stony Brook, NY. The meeting covered a wide range of Evolutionary topics, with sessions covering themes such as; Sexual Selection, Theoretical Population Genetics, Molecular Evolution and Coevolution. The meeting provided an opportunity for me to interact with individuals with whom I may consider post-doctoral positions following my PhD at the University of Edinburgh. Many of the researchers working in my field are in the US, so the meeting gave me an opportunity to build links with US labs that use relevant techniques. In addition to this, the meeting gave me an opportunity to present my ideas and generate interest that may lead to future collaborations. I presented a talk titled: Recent spread of a vertically transmitted virus through populations of *Drosophila melanogaster*.

My PhD work focuses on the natural pathogens of *Drosophila* and I am particularly interested in using the natural viruses that infect wild populations of *Drosophila* to answer co-evolutionary questions. My project involves collecting natural populations of *Drosophila* from around the world. The conference provided an opportunity to meet fellow *Drosophila* biologists and I received many offers of help in the field, with accommodation and laboratory space and offers to collect samples from many biologists attending the conference.

In addition to these helpful contacts, my attendance of the conference, allowed me to:

1. Gain experience in presenting my ideas both formally during the presentation and informally in the discussion that followed my talk with fellow scientists over coffee.
2. I establishing links with Todd Schlenke, a key figure in insect immunity. This was most helpful and I have since been in contact with him – receiving advice about experimental design. He also suggested that I might consider going to work in his lab following my PhD.
3. I was able to do a small amount of fieldwork while I was at the conference and use the facilities within the Stony Brook University to sort my fieldwork samples.

4. I was exposed to many other fields, which though not all directly relevant to my PhD, were interesting and through them I sought to round out my knowledge of the types of questions evolutionary biologists are asking and gain insight into the types of approaches that are currently being applied in this field to answer these questions.