

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** "Genomic patterns of hybridization and divergence in the genus
Antirrhinum"

Travel Dates: From the 21st to the 25 of July 2018

Location: Rochester Civic Centre, Minnesota, USA

Group member(s): Mario Saturnino Duran Castillo

Aims: Present the first chapter on my thesis project in a scientific
conference.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

In the UK the scientific community working on plants is small and collaborative. This means most people know each other, their work and main interests. However within the plant community, groups using genomic approaches for phylogenetics and population studies are still rare and the opportunities to share results and exchange ideas are scarce. Therefore, this conference was a massive opportunity to build important networks in plant genomics with people from different institutions across the sea and possible future postdoc advisors. It also gave me the opportunity to hear about the development of new technologies and tools I can apply to my work and to improve my skills communicating my research.

From all the meetings on evolutionary biology, very few are specialized in plants. With around 1000 talks, The Botanical Society of America Conference is one of the most important meetings in North America for those who study plants in all different aspects, from taxonomy to evolution.

From all the symposia I was able to attend the most important for my academic experience were the ones on hybridization and phylogenomics. During these talks I heard about new methods to analyse patterns of hybridization, to evaluate the level of conflict in phylogenetic trees and I talked with the people responsible for the software and methods I used for my own research.

Another important part of my experience was my assistance to the workshops about how to pursue a career in science and how to analyse transcriptomic data. The first workshop was about the best strategies and different ways to apply for a job in science and how important is to keep an open mind when sending applications. Here I learned that there is more than one way to stay in science. On the second workshop I learned about the advantages and disadvantages of transcriptomics, the methodology and the applications of working with RNA.

Finally, this conference gave me the chance to catch up with old friends in the field and to meet new people working in a massive diversity of topics in plants going from conservation to evolution in carnivorous plants. I feel really fortunate to have had this inspirational experience and I want to thank the University of Edinburgh and the James Rennie Bequest committee for the all support given.