

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: 13th International Behavioral Ecology Congress 2010 (ISBE).....

Travel Dates: 24/9/2010 – 10/10/2010.....

Location: Perth, Australia.....

Group Member(s): Gethin Evans.....

Aims:

- 1) Present a talk from my PhD research entitled: Dissecting population variation in female mating costs.
- 2) Attend the conference including a programme of plenary talks, oral and poster presentations, and a workshop- how to study sexual selection.
- 3) Meet and discuss ideas and theories with internationally renowned scientists working in the field of behavioural ecology

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Conference report

A generous award from the James Rennie Bequest enabled me to attend the 13th International Behavioural Ecology Congress (run by the International Society for Behavioural Ecology, ISBE) held in Perth, Australia from the 26th of September to October the 1st 2010. The Society holds large scale conferences once every two years to promote behavioural ecology and provides researchers in the field a forum to present their work, engage in discussions, and exchange views. I was fortunate to be awarded an oral presentation at the conference, and so attending provided me a valuable opportunity to present my research to renowned scientists in the field at an important time in my training as the need to find a post-doctoral position grows.

As usual, the conference opened with a welcome reception that was very enjoyable as I was able to see and catch up with friends (old and new) from across the world working in the field. Six plenary talks were given over the course of the conference, ranging from the socio-biology of microbes(Prof Stuart West), through selfish genetic elements in sexual selection (Prof Nina Wedell), seminal fluid proteins (Prof Mariana Wolfner), to conflict among baboons (Prof Louise Barrett). It was exciting to hear these and to learn about the cutting edge research that is being done across the broad width that behavioral ecology encompasses, as well as my specific study area of sexual conflict and male-female co-evolution.

After the Plenary talks, short talks were held in parallel sessions throughout the week. As always deciding which talks to go to was tricky, and although I did switch between sessions for specific talks, I spent most of my time in sexual conflict and related sexual selection sessions including sperm competition, cryptic female choice, signaling, and speciation. Many of these talks were of high relevance and have implications on my research, and all talks were of a high standard. My talk was scheduled towards the end of the week. As it was my first talk at a major conference I was fairly apprehensive about it in the days prior to delivering it, especially having notified some prominent figures in the field about it and asked them to see it. However, it appeared to be well received and a number of people asked questions and came to chat with me about it afterwards.

Following my talk in particular, I was able to relax and the friendly atmosphere made it easy to talk with people and discuss research ideas during coffee and lunch breaks as well as at the poster sessions. Prior to the conference I had arranged to meet up with a few eminent researchers in my area and it was good to be able to discuss both my research with them, and possible future directions of study.

I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest for the award that allowed me to have such a worthwhile and beneficial experience. The exposure of giving a talk was very useful in terms of networking, and subsequent conversations in particular have given me renewed incentive to explore my data from a different angle