

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: Evolution 2004.....

Travel Dates: 26-30 June.....

Location: Colorado State University, Colorado, USA.....

Group Member(s): Meghan A. Gannon-Guinnee.....

Aims: To give a talk presenting data from my PhD studies.....

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

I am grateful to The James Rennie Bequest for kindly helping to fund my airfare to attend the 2004 Evolution Conference. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Society for the Study of Evolution, the Society of Systematic Biologists and the American Society of Naturalists, and has an outstanding reputation in the fields of evolutionary biology and ecology.

At the conference, I gave a talk entitled 'Testing small clutch models using *Daphnia*', where I described an experiment I had done to explore variation in egg size in the waterflea (*Daphnia magna*) which is a small crustacean. This experiment made up part of my PhD research at the University of Edinburgh. After giving my talk, I received much useful input from other scientists in my field regarding my talk and my research.

I not only had the chance to present data, but I also attended many talks detailing the results of others' research in evolution and ecology. This way, I was able to learn about new breakthroughs in my field of study. This has come in useful as I am about to finish my PhD and apply for postdoctoral positions.

In addition to the usual research-based talks, this conference also had a number of longer talks dealing with current issues in evolutionary biology. One talk that was particularly useful was entitled 'How to get a job in academia'. There, faculty familiar with the hiring practices at American academic institutions explained the perks and pitfalls of academia, and gave tips on how to write a CV, interview and give talks. There were also multiple long talks on the media's influence on teaching evolution, which discussed how popular books and movies affect people's opinions and understanding of evolution.

Overall, I found the conference very useful. I learned about recent breakthroughs in my field, gained valuable public speaking experience, and made contacts that could prove invaluable to my future career.