

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** 2nd World Seabird Conference (WCS2)

Travel Dates: 26th – 30th October 2015

Location: Cape Town, South Africa

Group member(s): Katharine Keogan

Aims: To present a poster, learn about current seabird research and meet potential collaborators at the beginning of my PhD

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The 2nd World Seabird Conference was held in Cape Town, South Africa and hosted 562 delegates from 52 countries. The theme of the conference was “Seabirds: Global Ocean Sentinels” and included 24 symposia across 5 days. It gave the opportunity for researchers, policy makers, government officials and representatives from NGOs and conservation groups to get together and discuss their work. A range of topics were covered, from seabird interaction with fisheries and using tracking data to define Marine Protected Areas, to managing disease control in threatened populations and addressing plastic pollution in top marine predators. These were enhanced by parallel talks, workshops and discussions and also included Early Career Scientist social events. The first WSC was held in 2010, so I was lucky to be able to begin my PhD by attending the second meeting, five years later. I am extremely grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for giving me this opportunity, which I feel was invaluable for my research career.

Throughout the conference I seized every opportunity to speak with eminent researchers such as Bill Sydeman and Henri Weimerskirch who are highly respected in the field of seabird ecology. I presented a poster entitled, “a global meta-analysis of the climate drivers of seabird phenology”, which included a request for datasets that I can analyse under unique parameters. Both the poster and project were received very warmly by people at all stages of their careers, and overall the poster sessions gave me the opportunities to connect with other students and learn through informal discussions. Networking with key researchers and Early Career Scientists gave me useful insight into potential further research areas, and WSC2 offered countless opportunities for this.

The World Seabird Union heavily promotes communication via Twitter. Throughout the conference there was a live feed for delegates to give concise summaries of the talks they attended. I hadn't used Twitter before, but fully embraced it as an effective means of communication and also connected with colleagues online. One colleague of mine Tweeted a link to my poster, which was retweeted by one of the hosts of the BBC Radio's Environment programme, something I was particularly excited by. Communication skills are so important in promoting science, and attending such a large conference allowed me to see which approaches are most effective when presenting research. The next conference will be held in Edinburgh, and I'm looking forward to helping with the organisation, as well as presenting the results of my work thus far.

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Overall, the outcome of the World Seabird Conference was one of great success. I presented my research topic to ecologists from all over the world, and gained a wealth of knowledge about current research that would have taken me months to collect otherwise. I made contacts who will be invaluable over the course of my career, met PhD students who will no doubt become my colleagues, and learned how to communicate effectively with a diverse range of people. This was a great opportunity at the beginning of my PhD, and I left feeling truly inspired by my chosen field of research. Thank you very much to the James Rennie Bequest committee for providing me with the financial assistance to attend.