

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: Animal Behavior Society Conference 2023

Travel Dates: 10 July – 17 July 2023

Location: Portland, Oregon, USA

Group member(s): Georgia Lambert

Aims:

- 1) To present my most recent results and receive feedback
- 2) To hear the latest research in animal behaviour
- 3) To widen my scientific network

Photography consent form attached: Yes
(please refer to your award letter) No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

The Animal Behavior Society Conference was held in Portland, Oregon, USA from the 11th to the 15th of July 2023. It is one of the most prestigious conferences in animal behaviour and hosts researchers from all over the world. Delegates ranged from established academics to early career researchers. Each morning and afternoon session was opened with a plenary talk covering a different, innovative area of research in animal behaviour. I particularly enjoyed the talk by Dr Kate Laskowski (University of California, Davis) which focused on the role of environment and genes in the development of animal personality in a clonal fish. Her talk highlighted the need to explore beyond the traditional ideas of nature and nurture when trying to understand the causes of complex behavioural patterns which is something I will consider when interpreting my own results in the future. The plenary talks were followed by sessions of delegate talks each focusing on a specific theme varying from 'Host-parasite interactions' to 'Cognition and learning'. On the evening of the first and third days, poster sessions were held during which delegates could informally view posters and chat with the presenters. There were several fun social events run in the evening including a film festival, 'academic karaoke' and a live recording of the Animal Behavior Podcast. The conference dinner was held on the last night of the conference at Portland Zoo.

I delivered an oral presentation on my second PhD project entitled 'Nutritional state affects parental cooperation in a burying beetle' in the 'Parental Care 1' session. In this project, I investigated the effect of nutritional state on parental cooperation and found that females adjusted their level of care in response to nutritional state. My results challenge the assumptions of current theoretical models by showing that parents can assess the state of their partner and that these assessments play an

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important role in the mediation of sexual conflict. Reflecting on the questions I received after my presentation allowed me to re-evaluate how best to explain the complex ideas involved in this project which will be very helpful in further developing the manuscript I am writing. In the break after my talk and throughout the rest of the conference, I also had the opportunity to further discuss my work with other delegates with sparked some interesting conversations about potential future directions.

I am very grateful to the James Rennie Bequest Fund for generously providing me with a travel award that made my attendance and participation in the Animal Behavior Society Conference in Portland possible. Attending this conference allowed me to update and reinforce my knowledge of the exciting current research happening in animal behaviour, receive feedback on my current work, and extend my scientific network. I was able to meet other researchers from all over North and South America for the first time which was a particularly valuable experience since I am nearing the end of my PhD and I am actively looking for potential future post-doc supervisors. The conference was a motivating experience that has been invaluable for my academic and professional growth as an aspiring academic.