

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/**

**Conference Title:** 10th Annual Ecology and Behaviour Meeting

**Travel Dates:** 12-16 May 2014

**Location:** Montpellier, France

**Group member(s):** Natalie Pilakouta

**Aims:** Give an oral presentation and network with other PhD students and senior researchers

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### OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The Ecology and Behaviour Meeting is an annual conference directed to young researchers (primarily PhD students and post-doctoral researchers). This year, there were more than 120 attendees. The meeting was organized into six main themes: biodiversity patterns and habitats, conservation biology and behaviour, movement ecology, interspecific interactions, intraspecific interactions and sociality, and sex. For each of these themes, there were 10-12 oral presentations, including two plenary speakers, and over 40 poster presentations.

During the session on sex, I presented results from my postgraduate work entitled "Predator exposure leads to a short-term reversal in female mate preferences." My talk was well received and several attendees later approached me to discuss the study more in depth. I also got to hear about the latest research that my peers are currently working on, which stimulated ideas relevant to my own work.

Overall, attending this conference provided me with a great opportunity for networking, which I believe is essential for a successful career in science. The friendly and informal atmosphere of this conference, as well as the evening activities and excursions, made it easy to meet and interact with other young researchers working in the fields of evolutionary and behavioural ecology. In addition, because this was a relatively small conference, I got to know the plenary speakers, who are senior researchers, on a more personal basis than would have been possible at a large meeting.

Because I completed my undergraduate and Master's degrees at universities in the United States, I had not had many opportunities to interact with other PhD students and researchers outwith University of Edinburgh. By participating in this conference, I have now

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created a network of connections with colleagues from various universities across Europe. I am thus very grateful for the funding I received from the James Rennie Bequest, which made it possible for me to travel to Montpellier, France to attend this meeting.