

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Conference Title: Evolution 2008** .....

**Travel Dates: 20-24 June** .....

**Location: University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA** .....

**Group Member: Markus Ruhsam** .....

**Aims:** To give a talk presenting results from my PhD project. ....

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

I am very grateful that The James Rennie Bequest funded my airfare to attend the 2008 Evolution Conference. This annual conference is organised by the Society for the Study of Evolution, the Society of Systematic Biologists and the American Society of Naturalists, and has an excellent reputation in the field of evolutionary biology and ecology. The conference was attended by 1200 delegate and was by far the largest conference I have been to so far.

At the conference I gave a talk about my PhD project entitled 'The meeting of mating systems', where I was able to present my research results on the possible evolutionary consequences of hybridisation between inbreeding and outcrossing plants based on the study plant species *G. urnbanum* (selfing) and *G. rivale* (outcrossing). The talk was well received and I had interesting questions from the audience.

It was great to have the opportunity to attend such a big conference and to be able to go to many interesting talks as there were nine parallel sessions daily covering topics such as Ecological Genetics, Speciation, Evolutionary Theory, Hybridisation, Phylogeography, Evolution of Sex, Behavior & Social Evolution, Quantitative Genetics, Animal Mating and Breeding Systems and Molecular Evolution. In addition to these sessions there were special symposia and the competition for the Ernst Mayr award. I probably overdid it on the first day and went to 27 talks which left me quite exhausted in the evening.

The field trip to the Cedar Creek Ecological Long Term Research Station was also great and it was interesting to see how research projects were carried out over more than the usual three to four year funding period. For example one project dealt with the impact of fire on the prairie ecosystem and consisted of three large plots which were burned yearly, every three years and never. Another project studied the responses of vegetation to increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

I found this conference very inspiring and useful. I increased my confidence in presenting my research in front of a scientific audience, I could absorb all the cutting edge research in my field and beyond and also made new contacts.