

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title:	SMBE 2018
Travel Dates:	8 th July – 24 th July
Location:	Yokohama, Japan
Group member(s):	Lewis Stevens
Aims:	Attend SMBE 2018 and present my work on the <i>Caenorhabditis</i> Genomes Project

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

In July this year, I attended SMBE 2018, the annual meeting of the Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution, held over four days in Yokohama, Japan. The conference hosted over a thousand researchers working at the interface between evolutionary biology, molecular biology and genomics. There, I was able to attend talks on a diverse range of topics, many of which were directly relevant to my research. The symposium on phylogenetics was particularly interesting and provided me with several ideas for analyses to include in my PhD thesis. A particular highlight was hearing a talk by Tomoko Ohta, who, alongside Motoo Kimura, has made significant contributions to our modern-day understanding of molecular evolution.

I was selected to present my work on the *Caenorhabditis* Genomes Project - a project to sequence the genomes of all species in the genus *Caenorhabditis* - in the form of a poster. The poster session generated many interesting discussions with researchers from a range of fields, and I've already incorporated several their suggestions into my research. Several of my collaborators on the *Caenorhabditis* Genomes Project were also in attendance, and they were excited to see my recent progress on the project. I also met with Professor Kazuharu Arakawa, a Japanese scientist with whom our lab has been collaborating with on the genomics of tardigrades. He was able to share with me his group's progress on the sequencing of several new tardigrade species and his methodology for minION sequencing, which I have employed since returning to Edinburgh. We also discussed a potential future collaboration on tardigrade phylogenetics.

After the conference, I travelled in Japan for two weeks, visiting Kyoto, Hiroshima and Tokyo, with a brief stop at the summit of Mt Fuji to watch the sunrise.

This trip has been the highlight of my PhD thus far, and I am tremendously grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for funding my travel to Japan.