

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Conference Title: 13th International Society for Behavioural Ecology Conference

Travel Dates: 24th September 2010 to 7th October 2010

Location: Perth, Western Australia

Aims: To give an oral presentation of my paper, 'The Impact of Ecology on Sexual Selection in wild red deer', to receive feedback on this work, and to meet other researchers in the field of behavioural ecology.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Thanks to the generosity of the James Rennie Bequest fund, I was able to attend the 13th International Society for Behavioural Ecology Conference in Perth, Western Australia. This brings together researchers at all stages from all over the world to present and discuss findings in the field of behavioural ecology.

At this conference I gave an oral presentation, entitled 'The Impact of Ecology on Sexual Selection in wild red deer', work which constitutes a chapter of my thesis. The timing of the presentation was rather nerve-wracking, being the very first session of the conference; however, I was pleased to see the room was full and I received several interesting questions at the end of my talk. Throughout the conference I received a wealth of positive and insightful feedback into this work. In particular, I met Hope Klug (Yale) and Hanna Kokko (Australian National University), whose theoretical paper ('The mis-measurement of sexual selection', 2010, *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*) was the inspiration for this work. I also had the opportunity to discuss my work with Tom Tregenza (University of Exeter), Marco Festa-Bianchet (University of Sherbrooke) and Mark Boyce (University of Alberta), all of whom had useful insights. Having the presentation to open up these conversations proved extremely useful, and gave me the confidence to approach these people and discuss their presentations/work later in the conference.

Aside from my own presentation, I gained much from the exciting and varied nature of the work presented at this conference. Highlights included Safi Darden's (University of Exeter) work on the effects of sexual conflict on social association in fish, Steve Chenoworth's (University of Queensland) use of allelic association techniques to explore the maintenance of genetic variation, and Erik Postma's (University of Zurich) brilliant dissection of sex ratio variation in song sparrows. Finally, Nick Davies (Cambridge University), gave the Hamilton lecture, a prestigious lecture given by someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of behavioural ecology. The opportunity to hear Nick speak on a topic which he has been passionate about for his whole career- mimicry- was a very inspiring opportunity. As a behavioural ecologist in a predominantly evolutionary department, this conference gave me a fantastic opportunity to meet the key members of my field, hear about exciting new research directions and to place my own work within the framework of current research.

The conference was very sociable, with many opportunities to talk informally to other delegates, particularly at the conference dinner and during the long lunch breaks. Finally, I

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was able to use the opportunity of being in Perth to travel around a small part of South-Western Australia, which was very enjoyable.

I would like to sincerely thank the organisers of the James Rennie Bequest fund for enabling me to attend such a fantastic conference, and for giving me the opportunity to meet fellow scientists in my field, and to be inspired by their work- which has proved particularly helpful during the final months of my PhD!