

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title:	Conservation Expedition in Madagascar
Travel Dates:	14.06.18 – 18.7.18
Location:	Madagascar
Group member(s):	Kai Westwell
Aims:	1- To conduct research on a variety of organisms in the Mahamavo dry forest 2- To develop skills in researching underwater organisms through diving

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The purpose of this trip was to aid with the research on multiple organisms in Madagascar, in order to promote their conservation. This began with two weeks in the dry forests of Mahamavo, where the 3 daily surveys consisted of catching birds in nets to tag and measure their growth, diversity measurements of butterflies and spiders, and covering hog nosed snakes in UV powder to track their movements and territories. Surveys were taken throughout the day and night and could also involve point counts of nocturnal mouse lemurs, DNA analysis of turtles living in the lake next to the camps, and abundance measurements of the invasive tiger frog, which locals are being encouraged to eat in order to reduce the population. This site was in a very remote area of Madagascar, and as such many locals were employed by the organisation, boosting the local economy during the 6 weeks that the organisation is in the area for. Following this, research was conducted on the island of Nosy Be. One week here was spent learning how to dive, and the second week involved learning how to do ecological work under the water. Part of this was learning how to lay transect tapes over coral reefs, so that the corals under the tape could be filmed and identified later. This involved trying to anchor the tape under the corals without damaging them, or getting stung by them. Transect tapes could also be used to lay quadrats along and conduct a HASS survey in, measuring the different topographical features of the coral. Another large part of this section of the expedition was conducting research for the University of Melbourne, doing 'coral watch,' a measurement of the type and health of the coral in regards to coral bleaching.

I very much enjoyed this experience and gained a lot of knowledge into the practical side of ecology, which I will definitely be able to put into practice throughout my university career. I am very grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for the funding they provided towards this opportunity, allowing me to expand my knowledge of ecology.