

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: European Geosciences Union Annual Meeting

Travel Dates: April 02-09, 2011

Location: Vienna, Austria

Group member(s): Jennifer Wright

Aims: To give an oral presentation on my PhD research, attend relevant academic and skills talks, and meet and discuss research with others in my field

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The European Geosciences Union Annual Meeting is one of the largest conferences of its kind and provides an opportunity for researchers from many diverse backgrounds and research fields to disseminate and discuss current and future work. Alongside the geological talks, EGU increasingly attracts many ecologists and environmental scientists and I was given the opportunity to talk on “Carbon-Water Interactions of Longleaf Pine Savannas” in the session entitled “Linking Carbon Water and Nutrient cycles from Organisms to Globe.” This session was one of the largest of the ecological sessions and presenting in it was a hugely valuable and challenging experience that would not have been possible without the James Rennie Bequest.

I also attended many other conference sessions in my field and some of the most interesting to me personally were “A plant’s perspective of extremes: Plant and ecosystem responses to changing climate variability” and “Biogeochemistry and ecohydrology of arid and semi-arid ecosystems”. From these sessions I gained many useful ideas for my own future research directions and also inspiration for new analysis techniques that I will use in my PhD thesis and upcoming papers.

In addition to the talks programme, the conference hosted daily poster sessions from many areas in my field of research. This allowed me to discover what was going on at the forefront of carbon cycling research, particularly in savanna ecosystems. It also gave speakers the opportunity to be asked questions in a more informal setting, which I found personally found very useful. Following my talk I was approached to become involved in a potential new review paper collaboration on the use of eddy-covariance towers in savanna ecosystems. I also met many other savanna ecosystem researchers who told me about the until recently little-known annual Kruger Savanna Meeting, which is becoming increasingly recognised as one of the most relevant meetings for savanna researchers.

Finally, apart from the academic benefits of the conference, attending EGU allowed me to spend some time in the beautiful city of Vienna and to socialise with others at a similar stage in their academic careers. It also provided both informal and formal opportunities to receive careers advice from more experienced researchers. Myself and some other students from Edinburgh University attended a discussion session on “Women in Science” of which the most useful aspect was discussing with eminent professors in various fields about how they achieved their research goals and hearing their advice for young researchers starting an

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

academic career. Without the assistance of the James Rennie Bequest I would not have been able to attend and benefit from this conference and would like to thank the board for the awarded funds.