

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** Simultaneous Hermaphrodite Organism Workshop

Travel Dates: 22 – 25 April

Location: Rennes, France

Group member(s): Elpida Skarlou

Aims:

1. Present for the first time my PhD work in my field
2. Becoming part of the community and increase my network

Photography consent form attached: Yes
(please refer to your award letter) No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

The Simultaneous Hermaphroditic Organisms Workshop (SHOW), only in its kind, is an annual gathering organized by a small community of scientists dedicated to studying the evolutionary aspects of mating systems, particularly hermaphroditism. For the past 15 years, this workshop has proven to be equally beneficial to both early and mid/late career researchers. Over time, its members have fostered a warm and inclusive atmosphere where scientists, especially those in the early stages of their careers, feel encouraged to share their research and receive constructive feedback. Moreover, what sets SHOW apart is its intimate size, with approximately 30 participants each year. This allows for numerous in-depth conversations among all attendees, paving the way for future collaborations that are both meaningful and fruitful. It is those unique characteristics of the workshop that piqued my interest and led me to seek your assistance.

My primary objective in attending the meeting was to present the initial advancements and future plans of my PhD project. I achieved this by delivering a 15-minute talk to all participants. During my presentation, I introduced the hermaphroditic community to the fascinating and unconventional world of *Icerya purchasi*, the first known androdioecious insect. I delved into their intricate biology, discussed the puzzling questions surrounding selfing in this species, and outlined the methods we plan employing to unravel this mystery. Additionally, I shared some results from an honors project conducted in our lab.

My primary goal in joining the workshop was to receive valuable feedback for my PhD project, which held a central role on my agenda. Being at the beginning of my PhD journey, I highly valued any crucial feedback at this stage. Luckily, that expectation was met, as presenting a talk facilitated fruitful conversations and feedback. Additionally, I aimed to deepen my understanding of the field and gather new ideas and perspectives. The small

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number of participants allowed for multiple conversations with each of them, enabling me to achieve this goal. Furthermore, I successfully built a strong network comprising both new PhD students and more senior scientists, through common projects we plan to embark on (such as the STN application and collaboration on a review paper about "detection of selfing in the wild"). The overwhelmingly positive experience has led us, along with other lab members, to plan hosting the next iteration of the workshop in Edinburgh. This endeavour will not only allow us to develop crucial organizational skills for the future but will also serve to unite the evolutionary community in Edinburgh and the hermaphroditic community, offering an anticipated gathering that promises to be mutually beneficial and fruitful for all involved parties.

As is evident from all the above, this was an invaluable experience that significantly impacted my future projects and likely my career. Therefore, I would like to sincerely thank the James Rennie Bequest for making all of this possible.