

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: 3rd Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology of the American Society of Naturalists, the European Society for Evolutionary Biology, the Society of Systematic Biologists and the Society of the Study of Evolution

Travel Dates: 22nd – 31st July

Location: Montreal, Canada

Group member(s): Elizabeth Drake

Aims: To present work from my PhD studies

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

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

Due to the support of the James Rennie Bequest, I was able to attend the 3rd Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology of the American Society of Naturalists, the European Society for Evolutionary Biology, the Society of Systematic Biologists and the Society of the Study of Evolution in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to 30th July 2024. The joint meeting of these societies only takes place every six to seven years, so I was very grateful to attend this conference during my PhD. During the conference I presented my work to a wide, international audience, expanded my scientific network and enhanced my professional development. I was also able to consolidate the existing connections I made during my time at the Guarda Summer School in Evolutionary Biology last summer.

This was my first time attending an international conference outside the UK and I was determined to make the most of this opportunity. The conference included plenary addresses from all four of the hosting societies, as well as a number of thematic symposia, workshops, mixers and special events. I took part in two workshops during the meeting, focussing on opportunities and development for both academic and non-academic careers. The first workshop, "How to get a Post-Doc", gave advice on findings post-doc advertisements, interacting with potential supervisors and some of the grant opportunities available for post-doctoral research. During this session I was also able to meet other PhD students from across a range of evolutionary fields and ask questions to a panel of speakers, all at different stages in their careers. In the second workshop, "Diverse Careers", there was a panel discussion on working outside of academia after PhD study, adapting CV and personal statements to answer industry job advertisements, and building networks. Throughout the rest of the conference, I also attended a number of talks, many of which have inspired questions about my own research. I also enjoyed hearing a diverse range of talks and reading posters from across the field on topics I do not usually interact with.

During the conference, I presented my work entitled "Sex-specific effects of early-life adversity on first-year survival, reproductive success and longevity in the Soay sheep (*Ovis aries*) of St. Kilda" in a general session of the meeting. As part of my presentation, I discussed work

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undertaken during the first year of my PhD, where I investigated what contributes to early-life challenges in the Soay sheep system and how harsh conditions may subsequently affect adult fitness traits. Following my presentation, I received and answered questions on my work, which lead to a number of further discussions over the following days. I was also invited to smaller group discussions with other attendees of the conference, some of whom I hope to see again at another meeting in October and consolidate these connections.

I am very grateful for the funding from the James Rennie Bequest, which made it possible to present my work at such a large international conference.