JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title: Attending and present at the symposium by ParusNet (network in France about research on Paridae, great tits, blue tits and coal tits)

Travel Dates: 5 – 7 October 2026

Location: Montpellier (Centre d'Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive, CNRS)

Group member(s): Raphaëlle Gladieu

Aims: Exchange with leading researchers working on Paridae, present my PhD research on blue tits, broaden my professional network, and gain an up-to-date overview of current research and projects in this field

Photography consent form attached: *(please refer to your award letter)*

☐ Yes
☒ No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

During this three-day symposium, I had the valuable opportunity to engage with leading researchers, as well as promising PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, all working on Paridae species such as blue tits, great tits, and coal tits. The symposium brought together an impressive array of experts from across France, Norway, and Quebec (Canada) and me from the UK, creating a truly international and dynamic atmosphere for scientific exchange. One notable highlight was meeting the creator of the long-term 50-year blue and great tits project in Montpellier, whose insights into the importance and challenges of long-term studies were particularly inspiring and informative.

Throughout the event, I was able to present my own research on blue tits, which forms the core of my PhD at the University of Edinburgh. This presentation not only increased the visibility of the Phenoweb blue tit project in Edinburgh but also allowed me to receive valuable feedback and constructive suggestions from experienced researchers in the field. Several attendees expressed their appreciation that I was representing the Phenoweb project from the University of Edinburgh, and were eager to learn more about our ongoing work and future directions. The positive reception of my research encouraged me to pursue new analytical approaches and to consider potential collaborations with other research groups.

Participating in this symposium also significantly expanded my professional network. I engaged in in-depth discussions with researchers working on a wide range of topics related to Paridae, including quantitative genetics, behaviour, urbanisation, cognition, space use, daily activity patterns, food provisioning and more. These exchanges allowed me to better understand the current landscape of Paridae research, the diversity of methodologies employed, and the emerging questions driving the field. I learned about innovative techniques for data analysis, long-term monitoring, and the integration of field and laboratory studies, all of which will be beneficial for the future development of my own research.

Beyond the scientific content, the symposium fostered a sense of community and collaboration among Paridae researchers. I was able to establish contacts with several early-career scientists. These connections are likely to be valuable for my career going forward, as they

open up opportunities to work on joint projects, share resources, and exchange expertise. The collaborative spirit of the symposium was also evident in the informal discussions and social events, which allowed for more relaxed and creative exchanges of ideas.

Importantly, attending this event gave me a comprehensive overview of the current state of Paridae research, including both well-established themes and innovative new directions. The exposure to a broad spectrum of research approaches and study systems has inspired me to think more broadly about the questions I am addressing in my PhD and to consider how my findings might contribute to the wider field.

Overall, my participation in this symposium was extremely beneficial both for my personal development as a researcher and for the visibility of the Phenoweb project and the University of Edinburgh within the international Paridae research community. The experience has provided me with new methodological insights, and professional contacts that will support the ongoing progress of my PhD and future scientific career.



JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST







