

Organisms and the Environment Newsletter 2022

Photo: Jay Burk

List of Courses

BSc

Animal Behaviour
 Biology & Climate Change
 Ecology
 Marine & Freshwater Biology
 Wildlife Conservation
 Zoology
 Life Sciences

MBiol

Zoology
 Marine & Freshwater Biology

Interested?

Phone Helen Marshall on
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IBERS Institute of Biological,
 Environmental and Rural Sciences

Researching meerkat behaviour in the Kalahari

In 2021 Zoology graduate Zoe Turner has returned from South Africa after a three-year stint working for the Kalahari Meerkat Project. Zoe volunteered for the project after her graduation, completing a year as a field assistant recording behavioural ecology and life history data on meerkat groups. She was then appointed as project manager for a further two years, working with the University of Zurich on meerkat communication and cognition. Zoe was principally involved in research investigating sound communication, and would record and annotate calls, as well as record meerkat behavioural responses to them in playback experiments. Zoe now hopes to continue her research career through postgraduate study. "Without all the help and support I received at University, and the fulfilment I had from my final year research project, I would likely not be doing this today and be as invested in behavioural and communication studies!"



Zoe at work in the Kalahari

Bright horizons for Aber graduate



Hayden Close

"After my Aber BSc, I did a MSc in Marine Environmental Protection at Bangor and then spent 6 months at Wether- spoon's before getting my first marine science job as a taxonomist at the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS). I now work as a habitat mapper which involves data collection (using research vessels, small boats and drones), creation of maps and writing of reports/ papers. This is primarily as part of the UK MPA programme, but I am also involved with a variety of projects such in the Caribbean, the South Atlantic and Pacific. Particular highlight has been

finding new species to the UK, some of the overseas travel to remote islands and publishing papers" – Hayden Close, BSc Marine and Freshwater Biology graduate.

Working with sled dogs in Sweden



Katherine driving her sled dog team in Sweden

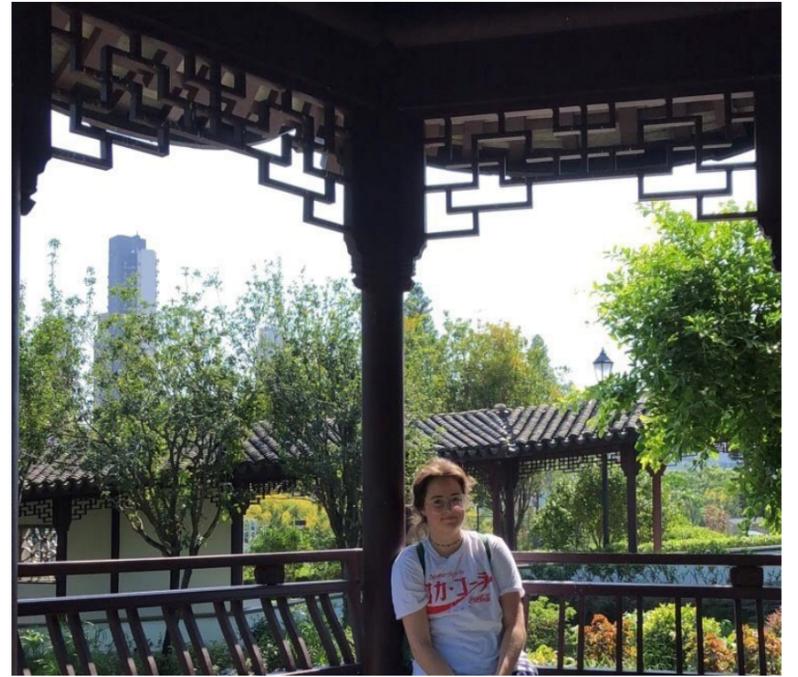
After graduating with a BSc in Animal Behaviour, Katherine Green spent a year volunteering in Sweden for a small family run sled dog tourist company (Echoes of the North) through a company called Workaway. "While I was living in the middle of the forest 20 miles away from the nearest town, I was able to distance train a team of up to 8 dogs alone in the wilderness for distances of up to 26 miles, or up to 50 miles when accompanied. During tourist visits, I helped to instruct and drive tourists, or drive the snowmobile for the tourist sleds to follow. I also regularly went on moonlight drives, tried wilderness camping in -15°C, and took the dogs on a trip to the mountains!"

Global opportunities for Aber student!

BSc Animal Behaviour (with Integrated Year in Industry) student Eliot Hall is making full use of the global opportunities available to Aber students. “In my second year I spent a semester studying at Hong Kong Baptist University. It was incredible, and one of the best decisions I have ever made. I got to explore all of Hong Kong and travel to South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore. I got to see and do things I never would have dreamed of, met so many incredible people, and ate so much good food!”

Eliot also completed her Integrated Year in Industry abroad during the 2020/21 academic year. “I was selected for an internship with the Animal Behaviour Research Team at the Smithsonian National Zoo, studying the behaviour of their Asian elephant herd. I got to live and work in Washington, DC, and study the behaviour of Asian elephants. It was an irreplaceable opportunity!”

For international opportunities available to Aber students, see: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/study-with-us/global-opportunities/go-abroad/>



Eliot in Kowloon's Walled City Park, close to her university in Hong Kong.

Student research into animal personality

Students on our degree programs complete a substantial independent research project in their final year. For his project, BSc Marine and Freshwater Biology student Matt Lambert is making use of our aquarium facilities to investigate how three-spined sticklebacks – a species commonly used in studies of learning and memory – respond to novel objects in their environment. Behavioural responses to novel objects are often used to determine animal personality, with bold individuals approaching and investigating faster than shy individuals. But the question is, what do fish consider novel? Matt is investigating this by changing the object itself, keeping the same object but changing its location, or changing both the location of the object and the type of object. Preliminary results indicate that fish respond to both the object itself and its location as aspects in determining novelty. This animal personality project is taking place during the 2021/22 academic year.



A three-spined stickleback investigating a novel object.

Integrated Year in Industry in Costa Rica

“Hola from Costa Rica! I am writing this from my hammock on a beach in paradise, I am accompanied by a group of capuchins making their way through the forest, just one of the many species we see on a daily basis here in GVI Jalova. The opportunity to travel to a destination like this is a chance of a lifetime and wouldn't have been possible without the backing of the Uni.



A green iguana in Costa Rica.

I have learnt so much about the beautiful wildlife here and about myself. My days consist of walking through the forest and recording every species we see ranging from red eye tree frogs, iguanas, anteaters, sloths, snakes and on good days the odd Jaguar. My favourite part of my stay here is by far working with the turtles, the mums and the babies” – Mary Futter, BSc Zoology (with Integrated Year in Industry).

Wildlife encounters close to home!



A barn owl at RSPB Ynys Hir, photographed during our visit by Aber student Jay Burk.

At Aber, our degree courses make full use of the natural habitats and charismatic species on our doorstep, and we were glad to return to RSPB Ynys Hir in February 2022 to observe avian behaviour for the first time since covid restrictions were imposed. Those who braved the cold were rewarded with spectacular views of a barn owl hunting late in the afternoon. It's interactions with wildlife like these that make Aber such a special place to be a biologist!



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