

Newsletter 2018

IBERS Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

Organisms & Environment

List of Courses

BSc

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

MBiol

Marine & Freshwater Biology
 Zoology

Interested? Phone **Helen Marshall** on **01970 628445** or Email: **hem@aber.ac.uk**

Studying behaviour, from dwarf mongooses to butterflies:

IBERS graduate Rowan Thomas reports...



Rowan is now researching the behaviour of tropical butterflies

Being rudely awoken in the early hours by the (quite unpleasant!) calls of baboons and screaming vervet monkeys was a daily occurrence on the Dwarf Mongoose Research Project in Limpopo, South Africa. After adorning ourselves in adequate pepper tick defence we would head out to the field to attempt to find our mongoose groups. This turned out to be much harder than anticipated, and during my first 10 days I didn't see, or hear, a single dwarf mongoose! After (finally!) finding a group, I would take a register of individuals, record weights by coaxing a mongoose onto the scales with boiled egg, and top up dye marks to ensure members remained identifiable. I would stay with the group for the rest of the day and conduct behavioural observations such as sentinel and foraging scans, and intergroup interactions. Vigilance in the bush was essential. I had more than one encounter with a notoriously grumpy zebra, black mamba snakes, and I was frequently walking into the webs of golden orb spiders! This hands-on and independent research experience gave me the motivation to apply for a PhD, and I am currently conducting research on butterfly behaviour and conservation under natural and artificial illumination conditions as a PhD student in IBERS!

All aboard! IBERS' two new research vessels have been launched!

IBERS' two brand new marine research vessels were launched this summer, ready for use by students in our Applied Aquatic Conservation module. The research vessels were named via a poll of IBERS staff and students, raising £100 for Borth RNLI. Our 6.5m rigid-inflatable boat (RIB) has been named *Idris*, after Cader Idris that overlooks Cardigan Bay; and our 10m Cheetah catamaran, capable of carrying 12 passengers and crew and associated oceanographic sampling and scientific diving equipment, has been named *Taliesin* after the mystical bard of Welsh legend who had links to the sea and the acquisition of knowledge.



IBERS' 10m catamaran, *Taliesin*

Dr Pippa Moore, scheme coordinator of BSc Marine and Freshwater Biology, is certain that IBERS students will gain a great deal from the new boats: "Our new module in Applied Aquatic Conservation focuses on the skills and knowledge required to work in aquatic conservation, and will ensure that Aberystwyth University students remain as competitive as possible for jobs in this sector".

Dream career for IBERS Zoology graduate



Zoology graduate Kathryn hard at work at Manor Wildlife Park!

"Aberystwyth is an amazing place to study: full of friendly faces – students and lecturers alike – it really is a home away from home!", explains IBERS Zoology graduate Kathryn Beddie. Prior to joining IBERS, Kathryn sat our entrance scholarship exams and was awarded the Evan Morgan Scholarship to support her studies. Alongside modules in Ethology, Wildlife Conservation, and Zoo Science, Kathryn took advantage of everything Aberystwyth has to offer by attending interesting research talks and joining Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers. Thanks to this wealth of experience, Kathryn secured a voluntary position at Manor Wildlife Park in Pembrokeshire, and this gave her an excellent idea for her final year research project. "I chose to study the effects of enrichment on the activity levels of captive lemurs, which I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of!", she explains.

Kathryn's hard work and dedication paid off: she graduated with a first class honours degree in Zoology, and was appointed full-time zoo keeper at Manor Wildlife Park! "Aberystwyth has been the most wonderful place to study and I shall forever be pleased I chose this fabulous little town/university to study my degree in!"

Degree schemes accredited by the Royal Society of Biology



The Royal Society of Biology (RSoB) is the learned society and professional association for practising biologists in the UK, and it offers an accreditation programme for degrees in the Biological Sciences. Accreditation is acknowledgement that a degree scheme meets a set of overarching criteria, ensuring that graduates from accredited schemes are equipped with the knowledge and skills required of biologists, making them highly employable both within and beyond their chosen field.

During 2017 representatives of the RSoB came to Aberystwyth to evaluate ten of our biological sciences degrees, meet staff and students, and see the facilities available to students studying those courses. As a result of their assessment, all ten of the degrees assessed have received RSoB accreditation, including BSc Animal Behaviour (C120), BSc Marine & Freshwater Biology (C164), BSc Ecology (C180), and BSc Zoology (C300).

Life's a beach on the Marine Biology Field Course!

Students on our Marine Biology Field Course jetted off to Faro, Portugal, again this year. The week-long residential course gave them the opportunity to compare the rocky shores of Portugal to those much closer to home in Aber, and allowed them to conduct small-group research projects in close collaboration with members of the teaching team.



How do rocky shores in the UK differ from those in Portugal? Rocky shore species identification, Portugal



Zooplankton identification during a 24-hour experiment, Marine Biology Field Course, Faro, Portugal

Vacation studentship investigating learning, memory, and behaviour in snails

Marine & Freshwater Biology student James Atkinson won funding from The Joy Welch Charitable Trust to support a 10-week research project working with IBERS lecturer Dr Sarah Dalesman. James' project investigated the ability of snails to learn about food cues when there are predators nearby, and involved a series of intricate behavioural experiments. The findings were clear: the snails did not pay attention to food cues when they sensed that a predator might be nearby. First-hand research experience like this can be a great start to a career in scientific research!



For the latest news from Aber in these subject areas follow us on twitter @IBERSbio