

Newsletter 2018

IBERS Institute of Biological,
 Environmental and Rural Sciences

*Countryside and
 Environment*

List of Courses

BSc

Countryside Conservation
 Countryside Management
 Ecology
 Plant Science
 Wildlife Conservation

Foundation Degree

Countryside Management and
 Conservation

**Interested? Phone Ian Keirle on
 01970 621636**



Students carry out vital research in Borneo

In September 2017, 17 intrepid IBERS students and three staff set off to explore and research the wonders of the Bornean rainforest as part of the Tropical Rainforest Ecology and Conservation module, which is open to Ecology, Plant Science, Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Conservation students in their final year. The Danau Girang Field Centre, situated in the heart of the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary is open year-round, and houses researchers from across the world working on the incredible diversity of life that persists in the surrounding habitat.

During their time at the centre, our students worked alongside the researchers, engaging with projects ranging from the conservation of the Malayan pangolin to radio tracking resident slow loris. The core research activity the students undertook during their time in the rainforest was to help with the ongoing DGBarcoding project devised by module coordinator Dr Natasha de Vere (Head of Science at the National Botanic Gardens of Wales). This aims to inform what tree species are present within the rainforest as well as attempting to resolve taxonomic discrepancies between sapling and adult trees, and as part of this project, our students collected samples from various forest plots and prepped the leaf material for herbarium and DNA processing. But it wasn't all work and no play, the Jungle Quiz night proved to be competitive as it was fun!

Royal Society of Biology accreditation

Congratulations to our BSc Ecology and BSc Plant Biology courses that have recently gained accreditation from the Royal Society of Biology. This acknowledges that a degree programme meets a defined set of overarching criteria. Accreditation by the Royal Society of Biology recognises and supports the advancement of skills and education in the biosciences. Graduates from accredited degree programmes are equipped with well-rounded knowledge and skill sets, making them highly employable both within and beyond their chosen field.



IBERS visits St Helena

St Helena, a British overseas territory, is a remote small volcanic Island in the South Atlantic 2000km west of Africa. It supports many endemic plant and invertebrate species. As part of a Darwin Plus project to map the natural environment in support of conservation efforts for these endemic species, Aberystwyth University visited the island in November 2017 to work with local environment groups to ground truth remote sensing data of soils.



Studying soils on St Helena



Foundation Degree students develop their practical skills in the field

Atrocious ground conditions and a schedule of works that was fraught with difficulties did nothing to dampen the spirits of year 1 Foundation Degree Countryside Management and Conservation students studying practical estate skills. Work was carried out on a local footpath that had fallen into disrepair. The remains of old stone step stiles and collapsed retaining walls demanded robust dry stone walling repairs whilst dilapidated gateways gave them the chance to show off their prowess at green woodwork. Sweet chestnut gates and kissing gates fashioned 'from the round' were installed in the boundaries. Fitted with self-closing hinges this combination of old and new techniques looked attractive. An old footbridge over the Afon Peris was also refurbished including new decking and handrails.

Employment success

Every year it is good to report on some of our students who have graduated and are now starting their careers. Roles taken up by our graduates recently include:

- Visitor Centre Manager for the Forestry Commission, in Norfolk
- Ministry of Defence countryside access and conservation officer
- Assistant ranger South Downs National Park
- Assistant access officer for Worcester County Council
- Assistant ecologist for an environmental consultancy
- Researcher at the National Institute for Agricultural Botany (NIAB) in Cambridge

In addition, many students have gone on to study for PhD's and MSc's at universities across the country

Work experience

Gaining work experience as part of your course will help with future employability as it provides a real-world learning environment in which you can develop your transferable skills and enhance your CV. The combination of one of our courses and work experience is the ideal preparation for your future.

All our degree courses now offer the option of work experience. To give you an idea of the kinds of positions you may obtain, here are some of the placements from our Foundation Degree in Countryside Management and Conservation course.

- National Trust - Botalack Estate near Land's End, Cornwall
- National Trust - the Lake District
- Natural Resources Wales - Stackpole in Pembrokeshire
- RSPB - Northern Ireland

Juniper researches rice disease at the University of Arkansas

Juniper Kiss a year two Plant Biology student has won a prestigious Adair Scholarship. She has been awarded \$5,600 to complete a 10-week long placement in the Plant Pathology Department at the University of Arkansas. Juniper will work alongside Prof Jim Correll on the cell biology of appressorium morphogenesis in the rice blast fungus, *Magnaporthe oryzae*. Research will target infection processes using molecular techniques. Rice blast disease represents the most serious plant pathogen of cultivated rice globally.

Erasmus exchange to the Netherlands

Students at the University can take an ERASMUS exchange as an integral part of their course. In this you spend one or two semesters in a university of your choice (must be within the EU) to study course material similar to that in Aberystwyth. Tom Moore went on such a placement in the Netherlands in his second year.

During my first year within BSc Countryside Conservation, I was made aware of the ERASMUS programme. I chose to go to Wageningen University and Research (WUR) because I kept finding brilliant research papers published by or contributed to by WUR.

Many of the courses I studied in Wageningen were a combination of social and physical sciences, which was brilliant. The best things about my experience were studying and socialising with lots of other international students sharing the experience. Travelling around the Netherlands and nearby Germany with my newly found friends was priceless!

What I took away from the experience most, is that I am more capable to adapt than I ever thought. Not only was I living in a new country, with friends from all walks of life, succeeding at a very intensive education programme (many courses I did were Masters level as they were taught in English), but I was thriving. In addition, I felt I came into my third year at Aber super prepared and I find myself applying lessons learnt in Holland constantly. Not to mention, I now have very good friends from all over the world.



Tom Moore

Countryside Management in Practice

Every year, final year BSc Countryside Management and BSc Countryside Conservation students go on a week of visits to interesting countryside sites around Wales. This allows the diverse material taught within the course to be integrated in the field. Each year a theme is selected to focus the visits and this year students were asked 'What current policies, designations, incentives and practices should be retained for effective countryside management in a post-Brexit Wales?' Sites visited this year included:

- Cors Caron bog, managed by Natural Resources Wales
- Heather restoration at Pwllpeiran Upland Research Platform
- Cwm Idwal National Nature Reserve (an upland glaciated site), managed by the National Trust and situated in Snowdonia National Park
- The Welsh Beaver Project
- Lake Vyrnwy - An RSPB reserve
- Cilgerran Wildlife Centre at Cardigan, a busy conservation visitor site managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
- Coed Allt Boeth - a wonderful woodland in the Rheidol Valley managed by the Woodland Trust



Students in a bird hide at Cilgerran Wildlife Centre



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