

MASTS Small Grant Award: SG262

Complex animal culture: humpback whale song as a model system

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This MASTS Small Grant award enabled me to attend and present at the winter meeting of the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) in London (3rd and 4th December 2015). The meeting theme of 'Animal Social Learning and Culture' brought together an international set of researchers to provide an overarching understanding of empirical and theoretical studies of social learning across a broad range of taxa.

My presentation was one of only two oral presentations that focused on marine taxa. The presentation was well received and sparked some interesting discussions regarding signal function and learning. These discussions highlighted the importance of this model system (humpback whale songs) as one of the most outstanding examples of transmission of a cultural trait and social learning in any non-human animal. By attending the speaker's dinner, I was able to network with UK and international researchers that focused on vastly different taxa. This MASTS grant provided me with a unique opportunity to discuss far-reaching theoretical concepts with a wide range of interdisciplinary and international researchers while showcasing the work currently conducted in Scotland. The research I presented at ASAB is part of a larger project funded by a Royal Society Newton International Fellowship.

Total amount awarded: £500

Travel: £ 80.85

Meals: £ 104

Accommodation: £ 378