

Eager about beavers? Quantifying and understanding the killing of reintroduced beavers.

Please describe the research you have conducted this period.

Our research investigates the killing of reintroduced beavers in Tay Valley, Scotland whereby we surveyed different landowners on their opinions and experiences with beavers. To do this I helped co-create a landowner identification tool to find potential landowners who could have experienced beaver activity. Utilising NatureScot's 2019 licensing summary we established a 0.5 mile radius around our catchment to pinpoint properties that could possibly make a living off of the land and therefore would have a vested interest in beaver activity. Once numbered, we then randomly generated properties to survey over a period of three weeks, allowing us to survey 180 of the 489 properties identified. Our survey was a series of open and closed questions about their opinions on beavers in addition to how beaver activity has affected them and what policy around beavers they would like to see change.

How is the research work you have been undertaking impactful or important?

As this research examines how the culture and species reintroduction collide to influence the success of conservation efforts, this research will illustrate the complicated and symbiotic process a conservation project has with the local populace. Therefore this project demonstrates how the support of those living and working on the land is integral to the success of a conservation project. Thus advising project coordinators to inform and communicate with the community prior to reintroduction to ensure that trust and open dialogue is fostered to prevent potential sabotage.

What impact has conducting research had on your degree course and university experience?

I am incredibly honoured to take part in this programme, especially as my project has allowed me to take part in field research in Scotland. This provided me with the chance to understand the ups and downs of research and how to adapt to them in real time. For example we initially thought that we could achieve 50% of 489 identified properties, however due to the lack of available time we altered our goal to 25% as we did not account for the number of properties who would decline due to the harvest season. I believe this experience will enhance my degree experience as I will set more realistic goals for my future dissertation and provide myself with more time to help account for unexpected issues.

What leadership skills do you believe you have gained from the research period? (please refer to the leadership attributes below)

I have fostered the skill of adaptability and how to deal with unexpected situations such as dealing with low survey uptake due farmers undertaking the harvest season. To get over this obstacle we set up meetings/took contact information to see if the landowners wanted to take part prior to arriving at their property, which in turn saved travel time.

Also this project has helped me become more introspective on how I need to rely more on self-discipline rather than pure motivation to complete tasks, as when you hit multiple obstacles to your progress you can become disheartened very quickly.

Please talk about activities you've been involved in to disseminate your research, including but not limited to attending conferences, producing research posters, and promotion of the scholarship

Through my research poster I have compiled my findings into a concise manner whilst avoiding compliance jargon to remove barriers of understanding for my research. I have also taken part in the freshers fair stall to encourage others to take part in the Laidlaw Scholarship as well as tell them about my research.

What are your future career or educational plans?

Currently I am in the process of completing my integrated masters in Sustainability and Environmental Management at Leeds Uni with the ambition to study abroad next year to gain knowledge in environmental policy in Australia. Once I have completed my degree I plan to continue to a Phd in sustainable food production or deviate towards working for the UN/ environmental consulting company.

Supervisor

Please comment on your Scholar's research period, what you consider to be Your scholars' strengths and which leadership attributes (please refer to the leadership attributes below) you feel your scholar has demonstrated and is particularly skilled in. You could also identify areas which your scholar can develop further

Katie showed good initiative, ability to overcome challenges, ability to work with a light touch supervision, and great rapport and interpersonal skills to get data. She performed admirably, and her work was a great success. Her work showed great maturity. There is no particular area that stands out as one to develop further, but

Scholar: Katie Fox

Supervisor: George Holmes

rather she should continue to build up her general competences with additional experience.