



Natural Talent Case Study

Name: Phoebe Williams

Age: 23

Traineeship: Hemiptera as indicators of grassland management and quality

Dates of traineeship:

10th April 2017 – 6th April 2018



About your traineeship

Can you give an overview of your Natural Talent UK traineeship? (What organisations are you placed with/type of work you will be involved in?)

I will be based at the National Museum Wales, Cardiff, within the Natural Sciences Department. As well as examining the museum's Hemiptera collection, I will be carrying out fieldwork at various sites. Some of these sites include grassland areas at Ffos y Fran – an open cast coal mine, along with some Gwent Wildlife Trust sites, where I will be exploring Hemiptera as indicators of grassland management and quality. I will also have the chance to participate in public events, sharing with others what I have learnt.

Why did you apply for a Natural Talent traineeship?

After volunteering with Gwent Wildlife Trust for over a year, I built up lots of varied experience, however I did not have a 'specialism'. I saw the traineeship as a brilliant opportunity to build on previous experience, with the bonus of delving deeper into one specific area. I wanted to get the chance to study an area that not many people research, learning first hand from the experts in the field. It is evident from past Natural Talent Trainees that this traineeship is a brilliant way to propel into the world of conservation, I applied because I know it is a great stepping stone into pursuing a career in the sector.

What kind of employment were you in before undertaking a Natural Talent traineeship?

Prior to undertaking a Natural Talent Traineeship, during my time at Exeter University I worked as a Customer Assistant at a cinema, cleaning screens and serving food and drink to the public.

What voluntary experience had you done prior to your traineeship?

After university I spent a while volunteering at a local primary school, helping out at a gardening club, and in the classroom. During this time, I also volunteered once a week with Gwent Wildlife Trust carrying out practical conservation tasks which included; Bracken bashing, fence repair, brushcutting and much more. Having gained experience of practical management, I was extremely keen to gain more experience in surveying and monitoring. I was delighted when Gwent Wildlife Trust offered me a full time volunteer placement, doing just that. I had the opportunity to carry out numerous surveys, attend many courses, work towards my Dormouse License, assist with Bat Surveys, among many other things. It is during this time I found my love for carrying out surveys, challenging myself with species identification, and contributing to the monitoring of sites and species.



What are you most looking forward to during your traineeship?

I am really looking forward to studying Hemiptera, learning from the experts and challenging myself with identification. I cannot wait to get started with some of the projects, looking at Hemiptera and grassland quality, the opportunity to carry out fieldwork, learning how to identify species in the field, but also under the microscope. As the traineeship progresses I am extremely keen to be able to then pass on what I have learnt to others, this has always been a passion of mine. Getting people involved and sharing the knowledge.

What skills do you anticipate this traineeship will give you?

I hope to gain identification skills for Hemiptera, experience of using identification keys and a microscope to identify species, but also the skill of identifying species in the field. I am looking forward to gaining handling skills, I have not yet had experience of mounting, labelling, dissecting tiny specimens, so this is an area where I am keen to build up my skills. I would like to build my community engagement skills, sharing knowledge with others – making resources for identifying Hemiptera more accessible to the public, hopefully encouraging more people to survey for Hemiptera. I hope to increase my data handling, analysis, and gain the opportunity to build upon project design skills.

How do you feel your traineeship benefits the conservation sector in the United Kingdom?

At the moment grasslands are not generally surveyed for Hemiptera. The decline of good quality grassland is continuing, meaning every single site that is lost or damaged is a real misfortune for the wildlife grasslands support. There is a lost opportunity, as information on the presence of Hemiptera can say a lot about a grassland quality and effects of management. Hemiptera are among the most common insects in grassland habitats, yet they are very rarely recorded – which is such a shame. Through the traineeship I will hopefully be able to identify and record a Hemiptera, gaining an understanding of the link between Hemiptera and grassland quality and management. I will then be able to pass on this knowledge to share with conservation charities, and others. I also feel this traineeship could make recording of Hemiptera more accessible. There isn't an easy guide to allow people to identify Hemiptera in the field, so hopefully from this traineeship, identification of Hemiptera can be made easier – through community engagement, training events, and perhaps creating an easy to use identification guide. The conservation sector in the UK will benefit greatly by having more people in the field that know a lot about Hemiptera, encouraging more people to record.

What career path do you see yourself pursuing and how will this experience help you?

I would love to work for a conservation charity as an ecologist, and to carry out surveying and monitoring to inform habitat management. This experience will definitely help in pursuing a career in the conservation sector, by the end gaining a specialism that not many people study, gaining skills such as providing training, identification, fieldwork and much more. The opportunity to work and learn from the experts, will hopefully stand me in good stead in pursuing a career in the conservation sector.