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Global climate change is occurring at an unprecedented rate and magnitude as a result of anthropogenic CO_2 emissions. The rising level of atmospheric CO_2 is resulting in rapid changes across multiple chemical-physical seawater variables. This poses a serious threat to the persistence of marine species in the future with the majority of scientific studies indicating negative impacts across different physiological and behavioural traits. This in turn is expected to cause significant alterations at the ecosystem level.

Left: the Sven Lovén Centre for Marine Sciences, Sweden

My primary research interests lie in how marine organisms may respond to future global climate change stressors, what drives their responses and how we can predict their future persistence in a changing world, in particular, through evolutionary processes. My past research experience has focussed around these questions using taxa ranging from marine microalgae to marine polychaetes. In my future research plans I wish to develop these questions. I have been accepted onto a PhD place at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) with James Cook University in Townsville, Australia to commence in June 2015, the research project that I have planned centres on the potential for evolution in corals and their symbiotic algae, in response to multiple climate change stressors.

I applied for a Society of Biology Travel Grant in order to attend a 'Marine Evolution under Climate Change' course in Kristeneberg, Sweden with the University of Gothenburg at one of the oldest marine stations in Europe. The course perfectly matched my research interests. I was taught by renowned leaders in marine evolutionary biology through a multidisciplinary approach, ranging from experimental evolution, molecular methods to investigate evolution (e.g. genomics and transcriptomics) and the effect of climate change on ecological interactions in the future. The course was challenging and involved a number of group-work exercises, one of which involved proposing a research idea and presenting it to the rest of the course leaders and group members. My group was awarded with the best research idea and we won the opportunity to return to the centre to carry out our proposed experiments.

I would like to thank the Society of Biology for awarding me with the Travel Grant which allowed me to attend this course. The opportunity to form collaborative links with leaders in the field of evolutionary biology, as well as other early career researchers with similar interests, was invaluable. Although this course was aimed for current PhD and Post-doc level students, I was fortunate enough to have been awarded a place. Therefore, being in the early stages of my research career, I believe that I benefited substantially from attending this course and the knowledge I have gained will be invaluable for my future PhD and research career.

Our group wins the opportunity to return and carry out research!