

MASTS Aquatic Stressors Forum Travel Grant

Grant Title: Presenting MASTS Aquatic Stressors Research at an International Conference: International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5)

Awardee Name: Emily Hague

Institution: Heriot-Watt University

Report: In February 2023, with help from the MASTS Aquatic Stressors Forum Travel Grant, I travelled almost 5000 miles from Scotland over to Vancouver Canada, to attend the [Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress \(IMPAC5\)](#), a global forum that brought together ocean conservation professionals and high-level officials to inform, inspire and act on marine protected areas. During the 6-day congress, I was inspired and moved listening to a variety of incredible keynote speakers, including talks from marine biologists, photographers, videographers, academics and representatives of the indigenous First Nation communities. I also really enjoyed attending the variety of sessions scheduled each day, which included talks and workshops focusing on various themes and topics important to collectively working together to improve ocean protection. Throughout the conference, I took full advantage of the networking opportunities that arose from having 3000 ocean professionals within the same space – and met and connected with many scientists, practitioners and interested parties from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, who are all working tirelessly towards a common goal of improved ocean protection. During the 'Managing Marine Protected Areas and Human Activity' session, I was delighted to have the opportunity to present some of my own PhD research relevant to the congress topic, and presented a talk titled 'Same species, same space, different practice: reviewing the non-uniformity in assessment of cumulative impacts to marine mammals'. I received great feedback and questions following my talk and am really pleased to have been able to present my UK-based research to an international platform. If you're interested in this work, you can check out the published paper in *Frontiers in Marine Science* here <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2022.822467>

Following the conference, I then remained in British Columbia (BC) for a further three weeks, to fully utilise the opportunity of being able to meet in-person with like-minded marine researchers based in BC who are working on similar and complementary topics to my own PhD research. I travelled around Vancouver itself to meet with representatives from Ocean Wise, the Port of Vancouver, and SMRU Consulting North America, and then spent the remaining time on Vancouver Island attending preorganised meetings with over 20 researchers across a variety of organisations, including the University of Victoria (UVic), Transport Canada, Ocean Wise, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Marine Education Research Society, the Institute of Ocean Sciences, Simon Fraser University and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Alongside some really productive one-on-one meetings where we discussed common research interests and identified future collaborative opportunities, I also gave further talks on my research, providing a 1-hr seminar on my research as part of the Institute of Ocean Sciences seminar series, and also gave a 30-min talk on my current studies to a research lab at UVic. Meeting with such a multitude of organisations and researchers allowed me to simultaneously expand my network of research contacts whilst also introducing them to my own research interests. This allowed for rich discussions on the potential for building future UK-Canada collaborations, and will be invaluable to my career progression post-PhD. I have now returned to my studies in Scotland feeling reinvigorated, and excited and energised to proceed with developing a strong Fellowship application founded on the ideas and new collaborations developed during my time at IMPAC5 and whilst travelling around BC.

Profile: I am Emily Hague, a PhD researcher based at Heriot-Watt University, primarily supervised by Dr Lauren McWhinnie. My research focuses on better understanding cumulative impacts to marine mammals, with a focus on UK seas, and I have a special research interest in the impacts of vessels (check out the project I lead: [The Scottish Vessel Project](#)).

Twitter Post: Our funding enabled PhD researcher @emilyhague to undertake a month long networking visit to British Columbia, to meet with organisations undertaking similar research, and also to present her work at @IMPAC5Canada and as part of the Institute of Ocean Science seminar series! 🗺️

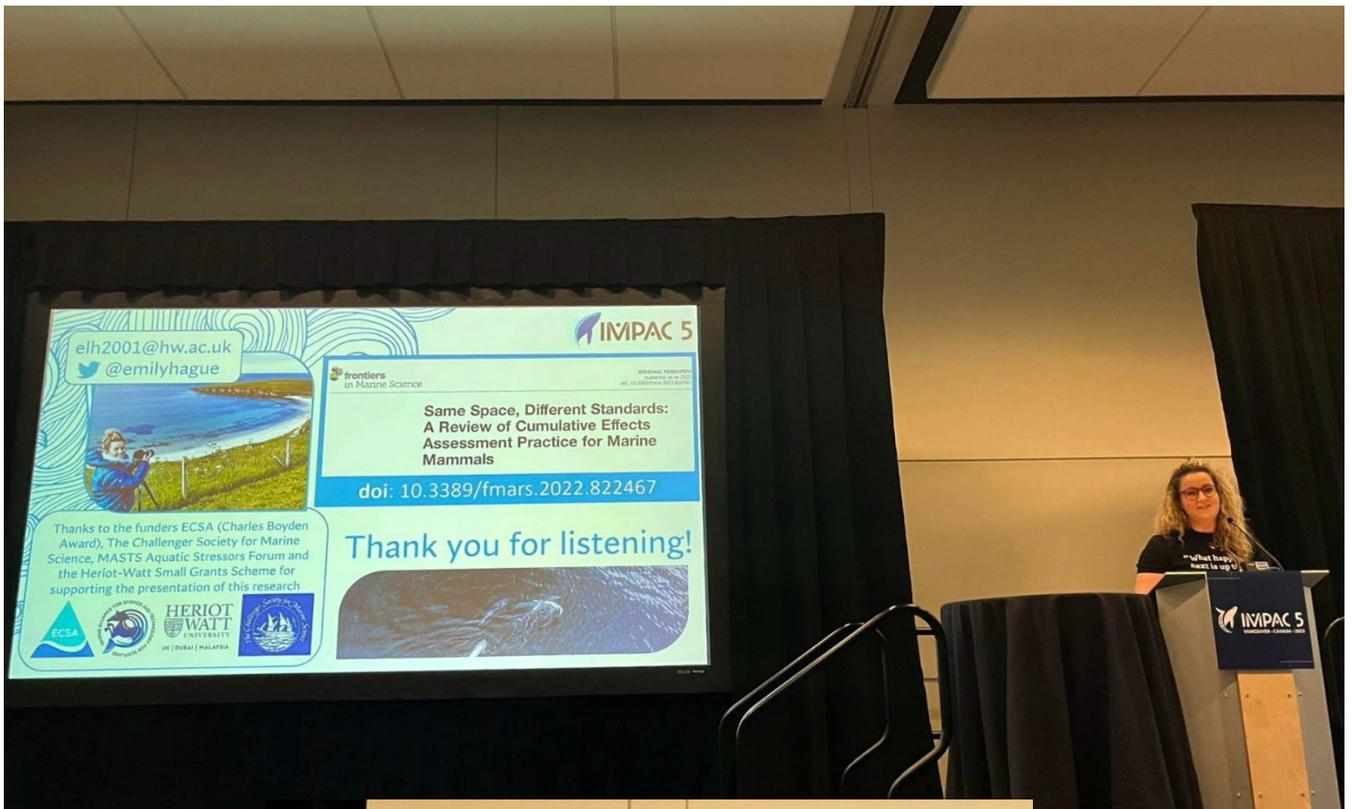
Travel Photos:



My participant pass for the IMPAC5 Congress, taken whilst looking out of the congress venue (Vancouver Convention Centre) over Burrard Inlet and Vancouver Harbour, towards North Vancouver. Fantastic venue and views!



Checking out the Digital Orca, by Douglas Coupland, which is situated right outside the Vancouver Convention Centre.



Presenting my talk 'Same species, same space, different practice: reviewing the non-uniformity in assessment of cumulative impacts to marine mammals' at the IMPAC5 congress.



Following moving keynote talks, I was lucky enough to meet with two incredible people making serious waves to protect our oceans, including [Dr Sylvia Earle](#) (left), who I met with fellow Scotland-based marine researcher [Dr Isla Hodgson](#), and [Titouan Bernicot](#) (right), the inspiring founder of [Coral Gardeners](#).



During my trip to Vancouver Island, I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with some of the founders, researchers and educators of the [Marine Education and Research Society](#), [Jackie Hildering](#) (pictured) and Christie McMillan. Jackie has worked tirelessly to develop an educational campaign known as [‘See a blow? Go Slow!’](#) to help boaters (see sign, pictured), particularly recreational boaters, to understand best practice behaviour when whales are in the area.



Whilst visiting northern Vancouver Island, I travelled over to Malcolm Island and hiked around Bere Point – an area where northern resident killer whales sometimes come close inshore to rub their bodies on the smooth rocks. It was fantastic to see the beach site itself, read the public engagement material dotted around the area, and to temporarily immerse myself in the wilderness of BC – walking through the cedar forests and taking in the breath-taking mountain views across Queen Charlotte Strait.



Travelling around Vancouver Island, I visited Telegraph Cove, situated at the north western end of Johnstone Strait, Telegraph Cove is the site of BC's first established whale watching company (Stubb's Island Whale Watching), and the Whale Interpretive Centre. Here I am outside the interpretive centre, with a life size replica of a killer whale dorsal fin.



It was fantastic to meet some of my current PhD collaborators for the first time in-person. Here, I met with Dr Pat O'Hara and Leh Smallshaw, both from Environment and Climate Change Canada and based at the Institute of Ocean Science.



Not all meetings have to be in an office! Dr Chloe Robinson, Senior Manager at Ocean Wise, and I conducted our research discussion meeting whilst taking in the incredible views of the Salish Sea, by heading out together on a wildlife-watching trip with Eagle Wing Tours, from Victoria on Vancouver Island. Out on deck the wind chill made it feel around -10°C, however it was awesome to wrap up warm, meet Chloe, talk whales and ideas, whilst taking in the incredible views!



During the trip we were lucky enough to see harbour seals and Stellar sea lions (pictured, a.k.a. northern sea lions).



A key focus of some of my research, and many of the research meetings, was shipping and its associated impacts. The waters around Vancouver Island are very heavily trafficked, yet are also home to two 'resident' populations of killer whales. The introduction of area-based management measures to slow ships down is leading to a reduction in underwater noise and green house gas emissions. Check out the [ECHO program](#) for more information.

Breakdown of Spend

	Total Spend
Travel (Flights, Bus Fares, Ferry Tickets, Fuel)	£1218
IMPAC5 Congress Registration	£380
Subsistence	£1425
Accommodation	£1134
Other	£382
Total Spend	£4539
<i>Amount awarded from contributing funders</i>	<i>£3512</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MASTS Aquatic Stressors Forum Travel Grant</i> £800 • <i>Heriot-Watt University Small Grants Scheme</i> £840 • <i>ECSA Charles Boyden Small Grants Scheme</i> £500 • <i>Challenger Society Travel Grants Scheme</i> £500 • <i>ePlcenter H2020 Project</i> £872 	