

## **MASTS small Grant Scheme December 2018**

### **SG489: Attendance at Benthic Ecology Meeting 2019**

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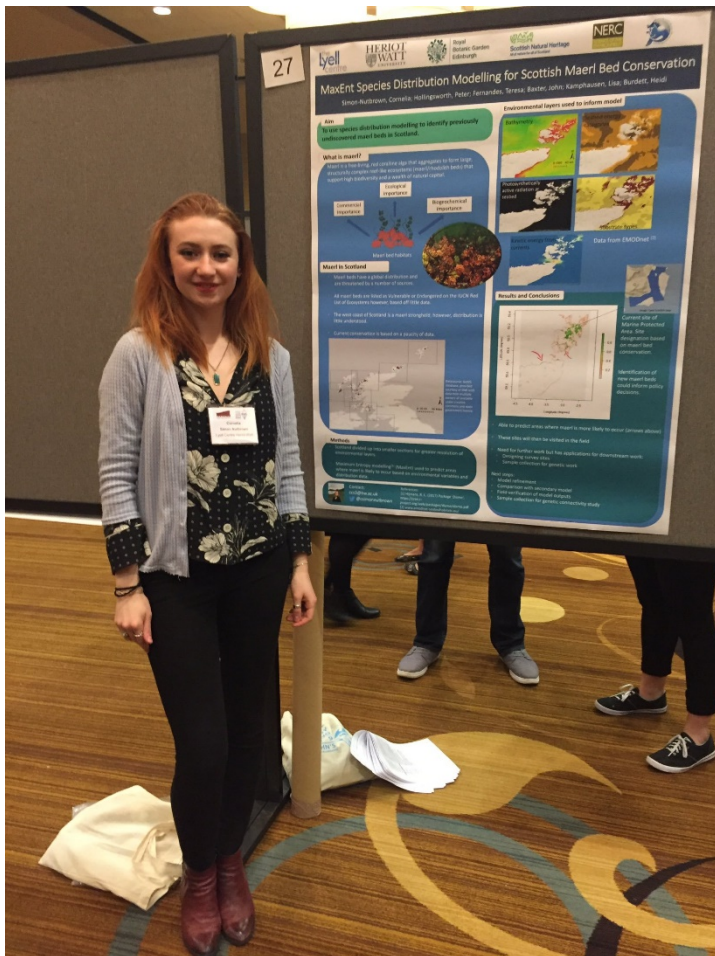
The Benthic Ecology Meeting 2019 was held in St Johns, Newfoundland, Canada from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2019, hosted by Memorial University. The aim of the conference is to draw together scientists from all areas of benthic ecology to facilitate networking and collaboration. The conference also hosted delegates from industrial and policy sectors further promoting an atmosphere of interdisciplinary discussion. Thanks to the MASTS small grant scheme I was able to attend the Benthic Ecology Meeting and was lucky enough to present a poster of my PhD research.

The conference had over 320 participants from all over the world with 290 oral presentations in 27 sessions and 151 posters in 21 different research areas. This was a fantastic opportunity to fully immerse myself in three days of benthic ecology research and become fully aware of the breadth of research going on in the field. From sessions dedicated to coastal ecosystem resilience to fisheries and aquaculture to molecular ecology and evolution it was a great opportunity to learn, network and think about how I could translate some of what I was seeing to my own PhD.

The poster session was very well attended and I was able to discuss my research with a diverse range of people. I found this incredibly helpful at this early stage of my PhD as many of the people I spoke to were experts in their sector and had helpful and insightful comments about the research. Since the meeting, many of the conversations I had while presenting have been incorporated into the work as I take it further, or I have been able to work to address questions raised. This opportunity to talk about my work to such a diverse group of people also greatly improved my communication abilities and I feel better equipped to explain the work I have done and where I hope it will lead going forward.

The research I presented at the conference was the preliminary outputs of a species distribution model predicting maerl bed distribution around Scotland. This model is a first of its kind for maerl and results in a far more comprehensive view of Scottish maerl beds. The outputs of the model also have implications for Blue Carbon research as maerl beds present a large standing stock of blue carbon as well as having associated sequestration capacities. Following a session at the conference on species distribution modelling, I was able to see a greater scope in the directions I could take the model and I have been able to adapt and modify it to much greater performance ability.

I would like to thank MASTS for their financial contribution which allowed me to travel to the meeting. As a member of the MASTS graduate school I hope I was able to act as an ambassador for MASTS on the international stage and draw attention to cutting-edge marine research taking place in Scotland.



*Me with my poster at the Benthic Ecology Meeting 2019*