

MASTS Small Grants Scheme: ref SG63

Grant awarded to *Enrico Pirotta*

Attendance to the 27th Annual European Cetacean Society (ECS) Conference, Setubal (Portugal), 6th – 10th April 2013

The contribution from MASTS Small Grants Scheme supported my attendance to the 27th Annual conference of the European Cetacean Society (ECS), which took place in Setubal (Portugal) in April 2013. This international conference offers an opportunity for researchers in the field of marine mammal science to meet and share the results of cutting-edge research taking place in Europe and worldwide. This year, more than 800 people attended the meeting.

My abstract, titled “Activities, motivations and disturbance: fitting a state-space model to bottlenose dolphin behavioral data in Doubtful Sound, New Zealand”, was accepted as a short-talk presentation. It was the first time I presented my work in this format, and this experience has taught me how to convey the main message of my work in a concise and effective way. My talk was awarded the prize for ‘Best student short-talk’. Following the feedback I have received during the presentation, I have submitted a manuscript of the work to *Ecological Modelling* (now *Under review*). My short talk was also mentioned by Dr. Len Thomas during his plenary talk: “Interdisciplinary approaches in the study of marine mammals: ecology meets statistics”.

On the two days before the official start of the conference, several workshops were held on specific topics. I attended “An Introduction to Density Estimation from Passive Acoustic Data” on the 6th April. This one-day workshop provided me with useful skills for the analysis of acoustic data, which I will be able to apply to my PhD research. Moreover, I was invited to give an oral presentation at the workshop “The challenge of spatially managing cetaceans – A highly mobile animal group” (7th April 2013). My talk was titled “Spatial management of recreational impacts on cetaceans”, and attracted a lot of interest from the attending audience. Finally, I was also invited to speak at the workshop “Towards a large scale collaboration on sperm whale research” (6th April 2013), with a talk titled “Sperm whales around the Balearics archipelago”.

The conference offered a friendly venue to meet and discuss with more senior researchers in the field of marine mammal science. This has allowed me to widen and strengthen my scientific network. Finally, I could interact with many other young scientists. This has contributed to the development of new ideas for my PhD research and to establish connections for potential future collaborations.

Total amount awarded - £300

Details of how the money was spent:

- Conference registration and ECS membership - £100
- Flights to the conference - £200