

A day in the life of...

Name: Dr Lauren Smith

Job title: Senior Research Scientist 1

Responsibilities:

Laboratory based research and subsequent data analysis, literature searches, organising collaborative work, animal husbandry, conference attendance and participation.

Daily routine:

This can vary but predominantly consists of carrying out laboratory based experiments, analysing results and planning for future research goals and initiatives.

How I got here:

At the age of 16 having forced myself to produce a B grade in Chemistry GCSE I pretty much dismissed the notion of Marine Biology, as far as I knew you had to have an A level in Chemistry to pursue a career in Marine Biology and I figured that was somewhat beyond me. So I took Biology, Geography, Art and the compulsory General Studies for my A' Levels. Luckily for me my mum paid closer attention to the various University prospectus' I'd had delivered through the post and it was she who found the Marine Biology and Coastal Ecology BSc course offered at Plymouth University, and my old dream of pursuing a career in the marine sciences came alive. I obtained a first class BSc Honours degree in Marine Biology and Coastal Ecology from Plymouth University in 2004 and then undecided as to what to do next I took a year out to go travelling. Prior to leaving I had started to investigate the option of undertaking a PhD related to sharks. I applied to four, one based in Aberdeen UK, and the other three in Australia. Ironically enough it was in Sydney Australia that I accepted the PhD in Aberdeen! I completed my PhD in September 2008 entitled "Behavioural and Neural Correlates of Hydrostatic Pressure Sensing in Sharks". My PhD is something I am incredibly proud of, it was hard work both mentally and at times physically (building various contraptions for tanks etc!), but it is a process which if approached with a positive attitude can really open many doors for your future (it's how I got involved with my current job) and also be a fantastic experience for instance; I was fortunate enough to visit the Bimini Biological Field Station (Doc Gruber's Sharklab) during my PhD and my research there resulted in one of my chapters for my thesis. Once I had completed my PhD I took a month off and then began my current job here in Aberdeen.

Best bits:

I get to continue indulging my passion of learning more about sharks, everyday I learn something new all the time be it from experiments, literature or co-workers.

Worst bits:

The 9-5 bit!



Extra info:

I also have a website www.sharkiologist.com whose main mission is to promote awareness and enhance the education and understanding of sharks. I can be contacted via this site and am more than happy to answer any questions people may have about sharks or marine biology in general.

To all of you budding marine biologists!

There isn't just 1 path you have to follow to become a "marine biologist" there are all sorts of options out there and with various organisations such as the Shark Trust which readily accept the active involvement of volunteers you can even become involved in marine biology alongside your current career!