

### Short placement report 2017- Norway SERT

My short-term placement from 5<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 in eastern Norway, was a SERT created by Bournemouth University in collaboration with Hedmark University. It involved collecting data on the distribution of moose population to aid in a research project that is trying to build a model in order to predict moose distribution and habitat selection. Field work involved up to 10 hours of trekking to sampling points per day to carry out pellet counts. Our group also had to collect data for our own project about the effects on *Vaccinium myrtillus* height and percentage cover in relation to tree canopy cover. A report about our project and a detailed diary were written in order for the SERT to count as a 5 week placement.

This placement opportunity was advertised during a lecture by a postgraduate student who needed around eight volunteers to collect data for her independent project. I applied via <https://mycareerhub.bournemouth.ac.uk> and had to go through an interview before being accepted a place on the team.

I decided to choose the Norway SERT for my short-term placement as it would be a great experience to collect scientific data out in the field, which would be providing information to help aid an ongoing conflict between logging and moose distribution. This meant the placement would be highly linked to my Ecology and Wildlife Conservation course due to the conflict between Moose and loggers, and by taking pellet counts to collect ecological data on the moose themselves. It would also give me the chance to visit a new country with a biome different to that of the UK which would allow me to see new flora and fauna! This placement could also enable me to learn more about the Norwegian culture.

I gained many technical skills while out on my placement. One of them was how to use and navigate with a GPS as I had never previously used one before. The GPS was an incredibly important device as we needed it to help locate sample points and to find our way to meeting points. It was also used to mark points of scientific interest such as a beaver dam. I had to learn a new method for counting pellets as I had never done this before but repetition of the method improved my accuracy and precision with data collecting which will help make my data more reliable in the future.

My identification skills for flora and fauna improved as I previously had little knowledge about Norway's wildlife. Now I can confidently identify some birds and plants that I didn't know before going on my placement. Faeces identification skills of deer and moose also improved as well as footprints for the large mammal species of Norway such as wolf, bear and elk. Improving identification skills is incredibly important for my career path as surveys rely on accurately identifying particular species and the impacts they have on their environment.

My communication skills vastly improved as I had to be concise and clear when speaking so that as a group we could work effectively and quickly with various people. Taking control and becoming the leader of small group occurred occasionally and helped me become more confident as a person overall. To be able to speak confidently to a group of people is a skill that is needed in any career path.

Being able to work in a team efficiently was key when I was on my placement and this skill increased through the weeks. Getting to know your colleagues and being able to share ideas and opinions to find the most effective solution to a problem helped to collect data in the quickest time. It also meant that the team bonded which made the experience even more enjoyable!

Being able to stay calm in stressful environments was a challenge at some points but I managed to do this effectively. Sometimes locating sample points which were in dense undergrowth with a combination of unpleasant weather could be quite mood dampening so staying positive helped the team stay at an efficient working pace so that all the data was collected in our designated time. This skill is useful for any job as you don't want stress to affect your work.

My time management skills also improved as we had to plan our days in advance so that we all knew what jobs we were doing and the locations we were sampling. Making sure we collected data at a suitable pace in order to sample a number of plots could sometimes be difficult depending on the terrain, however by knowing what the terrain would be like beforehand helped us prepare a route in advance. This is an important skill to have as it helps limit stress and maximise the efficiency and organisation of your work.

I thoroughly enjoyed my short-term placement over the summer as I gained valuable skills and made new friends while having a memorable and fun experience! It gave me a large insight into ecological research and has made me consider going into field or practical conservation as a possible career choice, especially linked to the taiga biome as I witnessed some incredible landscapes with some amazing wildlife. The placement has also allowed me to make a couple of great contacts in the field which will be very beneficial for my career path in the future. I highly recommend running this SERT again if possible!