

## Hengistbury Head Placement Report: 3<sup>rd</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June 2019, 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September 2019

The following report is based on my placement at Hengistbury Head for the duration of three weeks. I wanted to pursue a placement as a ranger as I thought the job would be my style of work being outdoors and actively involved with wildlife. I initially got in contact with Brian Heppenstall via LinkedIn in January 2019 following a visit he made to one of our lectures. This contact led to a series of conversations (mainly through emails), resulting in a confirmed set of dates for me to participate in a three week placement. The reason for choosing three weeks rather than the full five weeks was mainly due to my halls of residence rent running out at the end of June, meaning that I would have no accommodation present in Bournemouth for me to continue carrying out my placement. Another aspect that resulted in only a three week placement was due to me deciding it could be more beneficial for me to have two different placements, providing different experiences and for me to gain varied knowledge about multiple sectors within ecology and wildlife conservation.

Prior to my placement on the third of June, Brian emailed a series of opportunities that the Hengistbury Head placement students could be involved with if they chose to. I attended the ones that I was able to including a BioBlitz at Kings Park where I spent most of my time assisting Anita Diaz record flora species identified within the site. This was then followed up with me providing a spreadsheet of the compiled list of species with the common and scientific names which I sent to Brian. I also attended a Dawn bird walk where Richard (a member of the Hengistbury Head staff) led the walk where he identified different bird calls and provided information about the bird behaviour. I found both of these experiences very valuable as I had not fully considered the potential variation (and abundance) that the two sites provided for wildlife. I also gained the satisfaction of being able to identify more flora species in person (rather than studying an image), as well as identifying birds from their calls when sightings may not be possible. Although I had previous knowledge of both flora and bird species, my knowledge and interest has increased.

Before starting my placement I was unaware of anyone else from the course participating in a placement at Hengistbury Head at the same time as my duration. As it turned out, there were four of my coursemates meaning I didn't arrive on my own. Although I can be very independent, I must admit it was a relief to know that I would have some familiar faces during my time on placement. However, regardless of me having familiar faces during my placement, I think I would have felt just as welcome if I was on my own as the team of staff members were extremely welcoming and very easy to get along with. This was one of the main reasons I believe I enjoyed my placement so much as I truly felt I could see myself permanently working with such kind people who are clearly dedicated to their job without seeming superior – how a team should be.

During my time at Hengistbury Head, I was able to take part in a range of activities including moth trapping and identification, using machinery (brush cutters and BCS), data collection, grassland and wet meadow flora identification, awareness raising off site, educating primary school students on site and providing species documents for a BioBlitz and for flora identification. I am grateful that this placement opportunity enabled me to have an understanding of the broad activities involved within the "ranger" role. I know that I would have much preferred the variation in work roles presented on my placement, rather than being set (or having to choose myself) one or two main focuses for my three weeks. The idea of having multiple jobs to be carried out also meant that there was still actions to be made when obstacles were presented e.g. poor weather or lack of staff available.

The skills I gained during this placement include the use of machinery. Although I have had the occasional opportunity to use some in the past, this was a good experience and I feel we were suitably introduced and taught how to use the gear effectively and safely. I appreciated this

opportunity as the staff felt that I was responsible enough to be trusted. From this, I gained training and development certificates for safe use of brush cutters with metal cutting tools, as well as safe use of BCS Crusader with flail attachment. I have also learnt how to handle and identify moth species. This was really interesting as I have not had a special interest in moth species, but this opportunity (which was usually daily) has increased my interest in the invertebrates. I have enhanced my previous knowledge of flora species that had been gained from my first year at university. I really appreciated that Brian noticed that I could identify species that my peers potentially struggled with. I also used my knowledge of data collection and compilation to provide accurate results and clearly documented species lists. I feel I have also gained confidence within myself during my time on placement as I had the opportunity to be involved with educating school children which would not be my natural choice of activity but I thought I would push myself.

Overall I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Hengistbury Head and would definitely recommend this placement to other students. I feel that my performance during my placement was enhanced due to my true enjoyment and satisfaction of the job, as well as me being willing to be involved with any activities promoted meaning that I achieved as much as possible during my time on placement. My experience has led me to think that I am very interested in the "ranger" position within ecological job roles and I would see myself having a very high job satisfaction. The staff made me feel like a member of the team and it felt very strange completing my three week placement as I would have liked for it to continue. Due to this, I would be very interested in pursuing a career as a ranger and would consider carrying out another placement at Hengistbury Head or at another site as a ranger.