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What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

Whilst completing my Master's in Applied Marine and Fisheries Ecology at the University of Aberdeen, I visited the Lighthouse Field Station as part of a short field trip. I fell in love with Cromarty, the wildlife surrounding it, and the fascinating world-class marine mammal research going on within this small village community. I therefore felt very privileged to become part of this research for a short time, completing my Master's thesis, 'Assessing the Potential for Photogrammetric Assessments of Pregnancy in Free-Living Harbour Seals and Bottlenose Dolphins' supervised by Prof. Paul Thompson, Dr Barbara Cheney and Dr Julien Martin. I measured body width-length proportions from aerial photographs to investigate the influence of pregnancy status and/or sex. I also ate a lot of doughnuts from the local bakery!

What are you doing now ?

Five years on I am now studying and mapping the cumulative effects of human impacts to marine mammals around the UK as part of my PhD research, based at Heriot-Watt University. I previously spent three and a half years at the Sea Mammal Research Unit, completing boat based surveys photographing the east coast dolphin population, and then grading and IDing the photographs to help better our understanding of their movements and population demographics, in collaboration with the Lighthouse Field Station.

What's the best advice you have been given ?

From an old fisherman's and lifeboat crewman's father: 'Catch your own fish, don't chase others'. You can use this advice in most aspects of life, but in terms of my career I use it to remind myself that we are all slightly different, with our own quirks, interests and talents, and that means there is a unique place for each and every one of us in this field. There isn't room if we only compare, criticise or chase others, but there is plenty of space for us all if we are each given our own space to shine, evolve, and go after our own (proverbial) fish!

