



What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

I did my dissertation for my MSc in Marine and Fisheries Ecology at the Lighthouse Field Station. My project was a collaboration with the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme, and used both data from strandings and PAM to establish baseline patterns of strandings from which unusual mortality could be identified, and associate those findings with harbour porpoise presence along the east coast of Scotland. While my project was rather stats-heavy and desk based, I also occasionally got to assist with the bottlenose dolphin and seal monitoring studies as a bonus.

What are you doing now ?

I currently work for the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme; the research and reporting scheme for stranded marine animals around Scotland. We are only a very small team, and while my official title is data manager, I do a little bit of everything. This includes database and sample archive management and development, necropsies of stranded animals, a variety of knowledge exchange activities, and coordination of a great network of volunteers. We are involved in a large number of research projects globally and provide data and evidence to government - so it is a highly variable position with not (m)any dull days!

What advice would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

When someone asks you to join a necropsy of a half-submerged beaked whale in a hailstorm, during gale-force winds, at the end of December; make sure you weigh up how much you can learn with how ok you are about not feeling your toes for three days, before saying yes! No in all seriousness; my main advice would actually be to take (or really I mean create) every opportunity you can to get that experience, orientate, and develop or improve your skills. Secondly I think it is important to keep a broad perspective during your career development; having transferable skills is invaluable, and sometimes helping that friend in a completely different system and area of study can trigger an interest, or provide you with just those skills or contacts that come in handy at a later stage. Finally I would say that this field thrives on collaborations and integration of different research areas and disciplines- so I would recommend to be open and inclusive, and be ready to be an individually competent team player.



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