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CONSERVATION INTERNSHIP SCHEME 2019 REPORTS



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Charlotte Paterson – UN Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre

This summer, I have undertaken a nine week internship at UNEP-WCMC (United Nations Environment Programme, Wildlife Conservation Monitoring Centre). The centre is a collaboration between the UN Environment Programme and WCMC, an NGO. My internship was based within the Science Programme, which provides technical support all the other teams in the centre but also conducts research on its own and in collaboration with external partners. The team does a lot of remote sensing and modelling work and my work was based in the later category. My work was different from that of the other interns in that it was completely independent of all other work in the team so I had little to no work overlap within anyone other than my Supervisor Mike who offered great support and encouragement throughout. I was working on the Madingley Model (madingley.github.io) which is a next generation ecological modelling looking to predict human impacts on ecology worldwide. It is unique in both its modelling approach and the crossing of marine and terrestrial realms so it was amazing to be working at the forefront of this area of modelling.

In the first couple of weeks, I got to grips with the structure and working of the model, specifically the version that I chose to work on for my internship. Set up took a while but was great for developing compiler/linker skills and for me to get a working knowledge of the IDE we used on windows and how C works. There are now discrete and continuous versions of the model in C++ and C# and I chose to work on the continuous model and in C++. Together with Mike, we discussed a range of potential projects from which I narrowed down to looking at hibernation mechanisms in regions at high latitude who were struggling to survive in the model. The internship is very flexible in the sense that I was free to come up with and research my own ideas. The software development had no deadlines so the work is very much self-driven and independent which took some getting used to, but was made easier with weekly meetings with my supervisor to discuss my progress and any problems I was having. This was also different to the work of the majority of the centre who were constantly working to tight deadlines for conferences and meetings.

The bulk of my internship, however, was spent debugging various errors that had wound their way into the code and file reading. Although trying at times, this was an excellent experience in software development and gave me much greater insights into the working of the model than if the code had been building and running correctly. I managed to fix a number of issues in the code and to get my mechanisms on hibernation written in as well. Unfortunately I wasn't able to get any significant results on the effects of my hibernation code or work on fine-tuning the variables involved in hibernation as I was unable to fix some problems in the code that were causing all the carnivores to die. I was able to mitigate some of the carnivore death but some changes to the starvation mortality rate are needed before significant results could be produced.

I gave a presentation towards the end of my internship focusing on the issues I had found and those that still face the model, but also explaining how the model worked to members of the centre. Mainly attended by the members of Informatics and Science team, it was nice to be able to share what I was working on as many people had little to no idea what Madingley did or how it worked beyond it existing on a computer in the corner. I found this surprising given the nature of working at centre which is very collaborative within and across teams. However, Madingley is atypical in the sense it currently isn't attached to any projects, while its in its early stage of development so maybe I should have been less surprised.

The collaborative and friendly nature of UNEP-WCMC really stood out as being a big positive of working here. In my time there, I learnt a lot about what was going on around the centre in both the Science team and others. The Centre runs weekly tea for the entire organisation where updates are given on big projects, trips and other work that go on in the centre which was invaluable for getting an insight into what was happening in the conservation world and the types of work people were doing around the Centre.

Overall, I had a fantastic time working at UNEP-WCMC and has given me key skills for starting out a career in ecological modelling as well as a great insight into the work of conservation organisations like UNEP-WCMC and the work they do nationally and globally, for which I am incredibly grateful. I

would definitely recommend this internship to anyone looking to improve their programming skills and to gain experience in software development within the field the conservation.

“The collaborative atmosphere allowed me to delve into staff members’ career paths...[and gave me] ideas about pursuing further study within Environmental Sciences and gaining further work experience.”

Dayna Cheah – Tropical Biology Association

Over summer, I did a month-long internship with the Tropical Biology Association (TBA) within the Cambridge Conservation Institute. This is a charity that focuses on local capacity building, giving free workshops to equip managers, scientists and those planning to go into conservation with ecological and practical skills needed for working in conservation. It was a very small organisation with only about three people, but their passion and drive were very inspiring.

As an intern, I was tasked to compile resources for the field courses, work on publicity materials and to help out with other administrative details. It was a very good opportunity to practise producing educational materials, and constantly think about updating your designs to make it the most effective tool for communication. Designing posters was also a skill that I was not familiar with, so churning out many drafts had helped me to get more comfortable with the nuances needed for publicity. In addition, we had the chance to source for funding, edit field study reports and analyse some data as well. The team also kept us interns in the loop with all the ongoing projects with short meetings twice a week so that we could see the bigger picture behind what we were doing.

Besides that, it was a great experience working within the Cambridge Conservation Institute as a whole. I really enjoyed going for the talks that were

held (though there weren’t many in August) and especially loved the cake afternoons on Wednesdays where I could meet many new people from different departments. It was absolutely fascinating hearing about all the work that the different organisations were doing.

All in all, I think this was a great experience of working in a small non-governmental organisation. While most of what we did had been administrative, the small size of the organisation allowed us to really be involved in the day-to-day proceedings and give us an accurate representation of how most charities work. The staff are very kind and encouraging, helping us to the best of their ability not just in doing our tasks but going beyond and enquiring about talks at CCI that we could attend as well.

Eleanor Palmer - UNEP-WCMC

In the summer before beginning Part II of my Degree, I spent 8 weeks as the ‘Climate Change, Marine and Finance Intern’ at UNEP-WCMC (United Nations Environment - World Conservation Monitoring Centre). I worked within the Business and Biodiversity team which focusses on supporting the integration of biodiversity in private sector decision making.

The ‘Climate Change’ aspect was the part the majority of my time at the centre was focussed upon. This involved researching and presenting how climate change could be better considered in Business’s Environmental Impact Assessments. I began my internship by reading numerous documents which greatly improved my understanding of what an Environmental Impact Assessment involved. I appreciated the opportunity to learn and understand in more detail about management processes and key concepts such as the Mitigation Hierarchy.

Specifically, I was tasked with researching if and how business can take into account climate change when assessing an area for Critical Habitat; this involves assessing if a habitat holds biodiversity value for a species conservation under future climatic scenarios. To gain conceptual understanding of how this may work, I researched and read literature on climate change and critical habitat designation - particularly focussing on the

concept of Climate Refugia. I really enjoyed this part of my internship as the reading was really interesting; it felt really great to be doing something both academically challenging and also worthwhile. I then conducted market research on each of the Centre's Proteus Partners to assess if and to what extent they were integrating climate change in this way. The Proteus Partners are large extractive companies which communicate with the business team. It was both invaluable but also sobering to spend time deconstructing how these companies evaluate climate change and biodiversity. By the end of my internship I produced a briefing note outlining why it is necessary such businesses take into account climate change in habitat assessment, and how this could be done in each stage of the mitigation hierarchy. I found this large project immensely satisfying and I was able to take pride in the end document.

For the 'Marine and Finance' Part of my internship, I carried out market-based research on the marine activities of the Proteus Partners. The purpose of this was to create an excel database which listed every country the companies worked in and what type of operation was carried out there. This was mainly a supporting project to help aide other members of the business team quickly assess countries and operations they should be aware of for discussions with partners.

For my internship I had a really approachable line manager who gave me a lot of guidance while also letting me carry out research on areas I found particularly interesting or important. Particularly for the larger climate change project, I found this structure was a really good mixture for my development as I learnt to critically judge what to focus research upon, while also having constant guidance and someone to ask questions to. During my time at the centre I felt I had the opportunity to learn and cover a lot and this has been really useful to help me explore and consider future career paths. My internship was definitely a steep learning curve as my academic background is not in conservation (my degree is in English although I often focus on eco-criticism), however this was not a barrier as I always knew I could ask questions if I needed and I've found I've now left the internship with greater professional confidence in the transferrable skills from my degree and other work experience.

The Centre itself is one of the loveliest places I have ever worked. From the very start of the

application process, the people team were really communicative and welcoming. It always felt like the People team were really invested in my professional development as they supported the interns by; giving interview feedback, holding workshops for interns on application processes and also organising tea and cake mingles between us and experts in the fields we were interested in. The Centre as a whole is really friendly and the people working there are really passionate about the work they do - this made it a really positive environment I felt very lucky to work in.

"I had a great experience... even after only 6 weeks I felt like a part of the team."

Ellen Miller – UNEP-WCMC

I started my three-month internship at UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) a few days after getting back from conservation work in Borneo for seven weeks. Feeling slightly jet lagged and adapting to Western society again, I was relieved at how welcoming the staff were at helping me to settle in.

I am based with the Conserved Landscapes and Seascapes Team and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Team, currently two-thirds of the way through my internship. So far, I have worked on two different projects and I intend to present my results to the centre at a lunchtime seminar before I leave.

My internship is based around the theme of "restoration", where degraded or damaged ecosystems are rehabilitated through a variety of methods such as planting trees, introducing new species, or eradicating invasive species. I have particularly enjoyed using my scientific background to collect data and present it using GIS, as well as learning about the policy side of biodiversity and examining global and regional scale policies on restoration.

In particular, I feel that my work is very relevant as the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration begins in 2020, and my results will feed into decision making for policy makers and practitioners for this decade.

My first task was to construct, from scratch, a database on every European restoration project taking place since 2010. Initially daunted after weekly meetings with my line manager and chatting to other staff that had undertaken similar tasks, I soon found my feet and managed to compile over 500 projects from an extensive literature search.

I then represented this data as a StoryMap – similar to a PowerPoint presentation – which uses GIS to show spatial information and provides space for a narrative. I also developed infographics to convey the conclusions from my data in an eye-catching way.

Overall, the first task had a positive focus as I could read all about the work people are doing to restore biodiversity around the region. However, my second task took a more sombre turn as I examined whether any restoration projects considered climate change in their design, implementation or monitoring after completion. In more detail, I was looking for projects that sought to predict how climate change will alter their restoration actions, such as changing species distributions, sea level rise or temperature increases. Some projects used this information to better design a more efficient, cost-effective, and successful restoration project.

After extensive literature searches, I realised how few of the projects looked long term, preferring instead to try and restore past habitats. As disappointing as this was, I learned the importance of “negative results” and I hope that UNEP-WCMC would present this information at the start the UN Decade to advocate for better restoration planning in the face of a changing climate.

I have been very thankful for my opportunity to work with UNEP-WCMC. My most memorable time so far was being given the chance to contribute at a meeting for a brand-new project between the Endangered Landscapes Programme, Flora and Fauna International and UNEP-WCMC. My work acts as an initial background study for this project and staff from all three organisations will continue to use my database when I've left to answer important questions about European restoration. Briefing other members of staff about my work gave me confidence in my abilities to pick up new tasks quickly.

In addition, the collaborative atmosphere allowed me to delve into staff members' career paths and I was interested to learn of the myriad ways people

had come to work at WCMC. This gave me many ideas about pursuing further study within Environmental Sciences and gaining further work experience.

Another excellent opportunity for collaboration and networking comes from the change to work at the David Attenborough Building (DAB). Frequent social events such as happy hour and pub quizzes at the DAB let me make acquaintances from other organisations. Working alongside so many collaborative conservation organisations is also uplifting and reiterates how much work is going into making our futures greener, better, and more sustainable.

Imogen Smith - Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

This summer I spent 6 weeks as a Monitoring & Research intern at the Wildlife Trust BCN. The Trust aims to protect and restore the natural environment in three counties (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire) and enable people to learn about it and enjoy it.

There was no typical day during my internship as the role was so varied. This meant that I learnt a variety of skills inside and outside the office.

I carried out multiple species' surveys from bats to reptiles to plants. One of the most enjoyable surveys I carried out was at Felmersham gravel pits. We were carrying out an aquatic plant survey on the lake using a small boat. This involved rowing to multiple points in the lake and using a bathyscope to estimate the percentage cover of each plant species. The survey was particularly important for measuring the spread of an invasive plant species, water soldier, and to monitor the effectiveness of the Trust's current management plan.

Conservation management can often be a controversial subject as management can often favour one species over another. The Trust's general principle is to increase biodiversity on its sites as well as using scientific evidence to back up their management plans. I was involved with carrying out one of their scientific experiments to see whether the invasive creeping thistle could be controlled using a native fungus. Plots were set up

in a field at Trumpington meadows which were either spread with dried, infected thistles or left as controls. The experiment will be ongoing for several years but research in Canada already suggests positive results.

Communication of the Trust's work is also key to effective management as much of their work is carried out by volunteers. One of the great ways to inform the public is through social media. Therefore, I was encouraged to write regular Facebook posts and blogs about what I had been up to. I also had the chance to get involved with a public outreach day on moths. I loved showing the excited children different moth species especially the UK's largest species, a Privet-hawk moth.

Back in the office, I learnt how to use different software programmes from online training courses. QGIS is commonly used by ecologists for a variety of mapping tasks. I used the programme to measure the vegetation cover of reserve sites, which contributed to reports for the Trust's management plans. I also learnt to use Adobe Premiere Pro, a video editing programme. With this, I created a few introductory videos of the Trust's reserves using their drone footage.

The Trust is full of knowledgeable people and so I learnt a lot from just talking to the people that work there and the volunteers. One such volunteer taught me how to distinguish bat species from their sonogram calls. I also gained much better plant and animal ID skills which developed through plenty of repetition.

I would highly recommend this internship to those especially willing to get stuck in with the practical, outdoorsy work. I would like to thank Josh Hellon and all the team at the Wildlife Trust BCN for making it such an enjoyable experience.

Jacob Buckton – UNEP-WCMC

I undertook a 6-week internship with UNEP-WCMC last summer. My role was Information Communication and Impact, and my main responsibilities entailed analysing data from the Protected Planet website (a global database of protected areas) and social media accounts, and using it to draft a new communications strategy for the project.

I spent the first 2 weeks using Google Analytics to analyse data from the Protected Planet website, in order to work out the demographics of its audience, most viewed pages, exit and bounce rates for different pages, etc. I also used Facebook and Twitter's built-in analytics tools to analyse similar data for the Protected Planet social media accounts.

Using this information, I put together a report of recommendations for improvements to both the website design and social media strategy, and essentially spent the remaining time testing these recommendations. For example, I took over social media posting, and diversified the content as much as possible, adding more photos and infographics. I also created a short video explaining the significance of ICCAs (Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas) to demonstrate the effectiveness of boosting video content. This video ended up being Protected Planet's most engaging social media post of 2019.

All in all, I had a great experience at UNEP-WCMC. The team was really friendly and welcoming, and even after only 6 weeks I felt like a part of the team. It was also nice getting to spend a lot of time with the other interns who were there at the same time as me. The atmosphere in the office is sociable, relaxed and friendly, and they were flexible about occasionally having to leave early or come in late, etc.

In terms of my future plans, this was a pretty enlightening experience for me. I became very interested in the social science side of UNEP-WCMC's operations, and chatted to several people about their experience in the field of behavioural psychology. I also attended a talk by the founder of the London-based organization Behaviour Change UK. This has sparked my interest in this field, and led me to spend the first part of my Year Abroad in northern Peru working on a behaviour change project to stop deforestation of the remaining dry forest. I am also now considering applying for UCL's Behavioural Psychology diploma when I have finished my bachelor's degree.

Joseph Everest - BirdLife International

I spent 8 weeks working as an intern within the Red List Team at BirdLife International. Having just graduated from a geography undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge, specifically focusing on biogeography and ecological impact of climate change, I was looking for ways to transition from a purely academic environment into a professional one whilst furthering my interest in the study and protection of the natural world. The Conservation Internship Scheme provided an ideal route through which to make this happen and I was lucky enough to be awarded a position as a 'Science Intern' at BirdLife International, based in the David Attenborough Building (DAB). Being based at the DAB was fantastic as it is a hub for the conservation sector not just in Cambridge, but nationally which means there were numerous opportunities to mix with the other big conservation organisations present within the building.

Within BirdLife, I was working in the Red List Team, a wonderful group who go out of their way to help assist you with whatever task is at hand. BirdLife are the global authority for all 11,000+ bird species worldwide and are responsible for updating the Red List database on behalf of the IUCN; working with this database formed the bulk of my internship work. The Red List Team produce continually updated assessments for all bird species worldwide; these include data ranging from where each species occur, the species' population size and trend and most importantly, its level of threat in today's ever changing world. As an intern, we were tasked with assisting in the update of these assessments in order to meet the annual deadline imposed by the IUCN.

As soon as I arrived, I was given an online training course that allowed me to qualify as an IUCN Red List Assessor. This gave me a formal qualification early in my time with BirdLife which not only allowed me to effectively carry out the tasks required, but will be invaluable in my career as a conservationist moving forward. Early tasks were fairly simple and manageable in order to let you get to grips with the online infrastructure and processes used by the IUCN and BirdLife to collate such vast amounts of data. Soon after however, we were allowed to begin writing full assessments for species to be published later in the year. As a result, I was tasked with writing assessments for

newly discovered and designated species as a BirdLife Red List Assessor which will be published late in 2019 on the IUCN Red List. This was extremely rewarding work and it was satisfying to be able to see tangible results so early on in our time there. Writing, updating and proofing these reports took up the majority of my remaining time at BirdLife as this is the main undertaking of the Red List Team and we had to meet an August deadline. In total, I worked with over 700 species in the eight weeks I was there and learnt a great deal in the process!

BirdLife were also extremely accommodating of any personal ambitions and made sure that we were given time to learn any skills we had expressed an interest in. We were given a training course in R by two of BirdLife's technical officers which provided an ideal grounding for beginners like us who had never used the program before. I was also given extensive access to ArcGIS towards the end of my time at BirdLife, an undertaking that suited both parties as I updated many species range maps whilst gaining much needed practise in the GIS software!

The BirdLife family are also extremely friendly outside of the office and work! There were weekly rounders matches, pub trips, Grantchester swimming evenings, bat punting trips and Bake-off cooking and screening evenings, all of which helped me settle in and enjoy my time in Cambridge outside of term time.

All in all, I had a great time at BirdLife and would thoroughly recommend the experience to anyone thinking of applying. The Red List Team and all the staff are a thoroughly welcoming and lovely group and always go out their way to ensure that you are having a productive and enjoyable internship. Furthermore, the work not only provided me with an IUCN-recognised formal qualification but a wealth of invaluable experience that I hope to utilise throughout the conservation sector in years to come. I wouldn't hesitate to return there for further work should an opportunity ever arise!

Nicola Elliott - BirdLife International

Over the summer of 2019 I spent nine weeks volunteering with BirdLife International ('BirdLife') in its central secretariat office in Cambridge.

As its name suggests, BirdLife focuses on the conservation of birds, however, through its focus on birds as indicator species of the health of ecosystems, it helps to conserve all aspects of nature. BirdLife is a partnership made up of over 100 partner organisations, each of which devises and implements local policy and 'on the ground' conservation work in their respective countries. BirdLife is in fact the world's largest nature conservation partnership! It is an incredible organisation as it is truly a 'bottom-up' organisation where each full partner is able to contribute and have a say on the overall aims of BirdLife as an organisation, with the central secretariat being responsible for the over-arching organisation, global policy and science research. BirdLife is outstanding for its commitment to its scientific work and its desire to base its work on scientific research. The partnership model is an incredibly powerful tool, spread across the entire world, which can be mobilised to create change on a global scale.

I was based in the Science Team, mainly working with the team responsible for the Red List (see below), and later with the Key Biodiversity Areas ('KBA') Team.

BirdLife is the global authority on birds and is responsible for maintaining the data for all birds on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature ('IUCN') Red List. There are currently over 11,000 bird species listed. There is a global update every four years, but each year, as new information becomes available, it is gathered and collated, and the relevant species' factsheets are updated. This information forms the basis of the Red List – essentially a rating of a species' risk of extinction. The categories range from 'Least Concern' through to 'Critically Endangered' and 'Extinct'. IUCN has strict guidelines for these assessments. During my time at BirdLife, I took an exam to become a qualified Red List Assessor and then assisted the Red List Team with reviewing research, compiling factsheets and proof-reading.

In summary, my work revolved around data management and ensuring the consistency, reliability and relevance of the species database. All tasks were explained thoroughly to me, and the Team was always available to answer my questions, although I was trusted to work mostly independently.

To describe my work in more detail – I began the internship by becoming familiar with the Species Information Service ('SIS') online database where all the data for the Red List is held. I did this by reading EU Species Action Plans and summarising the conservation plans to enter into SIS. I also studied for, and successfully passed, the IUCN Red List Assessor exam, which helped me to understand the process of compiling the Red List. I helped with several other tasks related to the Red List, for example reviewing Country of Occurrence coding in relation to new information, reviewing journals for new research relevant to bird conservation, and entering information into SIS for the Red List Index. After a few weeks, I was able to begin editing and writing factsheets for birds myself, collating existing information and bringing in new research. We had Red List Team meetings once a week to make sure that we were on track to meet our deadlines and to flag up any issues that occurred. There was also a Science Team meeting every six weeks, through which I found out the other work going on across the wider Science Team. Towards the end of the internship, with the Red List deadline looming, all the Team's time was spent on proof-reading the factsheets to check for spelling, grammar and consistency. At times, this became fairly repetitive, but the importance of the task and the fact that I was always reading about different species with unique circumstances, kept me engaged and on track. Finishing the work on time was a great feeling of achievement within the Team, and was, personally, very rewarding. The update was submitted to IUCN for review and will be published as part of the Red List in December 2019.

The Red List assessment is a rigorous process and the guidelines are strict and allow all species to be assessed under the same criteria. This brings legitimacy to the Red List, allows for meaningful comparisons and helps to inform priority-setting in conservation work. However, there are often issues where some people want species to be 'uplisted' – put into a higher threat category – but the data does not support this under the guidelines. This can create conflict between the Red List Team and conservationists in the field who strongly believe that the species concerned is under intense threat, or that uplisting would bring in more money for necessary conservation. While these are valid beliefs and hopes, the guidelines must be adhered to in order to maintain the integrity and respectability of the Red List for all users. It was

interesting to listen to the Team discussing borderline cases where they had to make a judgement on the importance and reliability of certain data and assess the threat level of a particular species.

I was fortunate to go to Birdfair as part of the BirdLife Team and this was a particular highlight for me. It was a very fun day (despite the constant rain!) and I loved volunteering on BirdLife's stall and talking to so many enthusiastic 'birders' about BirdLife's work. I also got to explore the fair myself and I attended several great talks, including an inspirational talk from Simon King (cameraman and presenter of Springwatch and other BBC programmes).

I very much enjoyed working at BirdLife over the summer and getting to know many different people from different teams. As I was working for a long period within the Red List Team, I was able to go deeper into the task and gain a comprehensive insight into the work involved with producing the Red List. Ian, who co-ordinated our internship, asked us, the interns, what we specifically wanted to get out of the internship and did a wonderful job organising work for us and incorporating different aspects into our time there. I particularly wanted to gain some experience and skills with R (a computer language) and GIS (geographic information systems), which I was able to do, with introductory training covering the fundamentals of both, followed by practice using these skills. I spent my last week with the KBA Team using GIS and it was good to learn about the work of another team. I would have liked to have spent a little longer with the KBA Team, but the Red List deadline and the end of my internship meant this was not possible.

Working in the David Attenborough building was also a great experience as it is the home of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative. As a result, there are many conservation organisations working within the building and many talks and events held. The atmosphere was brilliant and there were also plenty of social events which the interns were invited to.

I would like to thank everyone at BirdLife for making me feel so welcome during my time there, and especially the Science Team for all its help, support and encouragement. Thank you to BirdLife and the UoC Careers Service for providing this internship and making it possible for me with the not-for-profit bursary. I am so grateful for the

chance to spend my summer gaining insight into the work of an international conservation organisation and to gain valuable and recognisable skills that will hopefully assist me in a conservation role in the future.

Tesni Clare – UNEP-WCMC

This summer I undertook a 10 week internship at the UN Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) in Cambridge, UK. This is a partnership between UN Environment and WCMC and is concerned primarily with biodiversity conservation on a global scale. The centre operates 'at the interface of policy and science', so manages high-level data and intergovernmental agreements with the aim of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into political and corporate decision-making. I was an intern on the Business and Biodiversity Team, who are responsible for ensuring corporate best practice when it comes to businesses' impacts on wildlife, for example by improving biodiversity monitoring in oil and gas operations. Business is not something I have much experience with but I chose this role because it strikes an interesting position, dealing directly with those who are some of the most culpable for biodiversity loss. I knew I wanted an internship that was focused on practical *solutions* and improving current practices; I also wanted a role that was *engaged* with activities on the ground. The business team at UNEP-WCMC have spearheaded various widely-used tools such as ENCORE, a web app that allows financial institutions to see how dependent they are on natural resources, and thus hopes to instil responsibility toward the natural world.

The first week of my internship was filled with lots of reading to get me up to date with the latest work that the business team were doing. The Centre is project-driven and I was struck by how interdisciplinary all projects are. The business team would work alongside the Species team or Conserved Land and Seascapes team for example, on a regular basis. The offices are all open-planned to facilitate this – no pigeonholing people into isolated roles or isolated rooms! Weekly team meetings in a roundtable format (often with cake) were a great opportunity for me to learn about everybody else's responsibilities and latest work. My line manager sent me project reports, academic

papers and web articles to skim through. There was a lot of acronyms and specialised terminology to pick up, but I felt comfortable asking any questions and had weekly catch-ups to ensure I was happy with everything I had been assigned. After the first few weeks of doing some preliminary research on renewable energy companies and their commitments toward biodiversity, mainly collecting and organising data on Excel, we refined the focus of my internship. I was given a huge amount of leeway in choosing a focus that I felt most passionate about and interested in, which I felt to be a great privilege.

The first focus of my internship was to conduct a literature review on mining – particularly lithium and cobalt mining, as this is proliferating with the boom in electric vehicles and renewable energy. I was tasked to assess the ecological impacts of these types of mining in South America and Central Africa. My literature review would support a new GIS project in the Centre – it was really exciting to be part of a team of 6 or so highly driven experts on the topic, who were carrying out this project to bring forward to governments in the Global South. The second focus of my internship was some scoping, stakeholder-mapping work for a huge 10-year, collaborative project called the TRADE Hub, in which over 130 organisations are involved. This project is focused on exposing commodity supply-chains and making global trade more sustainable. I was encouraged to bring my disciplinary background in Human Geography into the research, and focused specifically on the *social* issues embedded in palm oil and soybean trade. UNEP-WCMC is primarily a Centre of ecologists and natural scientists, so it was an invaluable opportunity for me to introduce my social science perspective to the project. On my last day, I gave an hour long lunchtime talk on my research findings. This was somewhat terrifying but the audience were hugely supportive and I felt that my research was genuinely useful and new to many people in the Centre – a very gratifying moment!

The Centre was filled with tropical plants and smiling faces, an incredibly friendly and supportive place to work. Days felt relaxed and informal yet filled with hard work and stimulating conversation. It was an amazing environment in which to engage with people who are all working towards the same goal – a thriving natural planet with healthy biodiversity. Some highlights include Wednesday tea and cake, the beautiful pond by which we all

had lunch, weekly visits to the David Attenborough Building and Friday pub trips to unwind from crazily busy weeks!
