

Centre for Bioscience Professional Development Programme

Making the Most of Fieldwork

Tuesday 14 March 2006

Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire

The second of the Centre for Bioscience's fieldwork events was held in the beautiful surroundings of Losehill Hall, Castleton - the Peak District's Centre for Environmental Learning. The day was structured around two invited presentations and swapshop contributions from delegates. A summary of the day and links to relevant resources are given below:

The Benefits of Fieldwork

John Archer-Thomson, Dale Fort Field Studies Centre

John started the day with an outline of the benefits of fieldwork and enhanced his presentation with some inspiring photographs. One of the key themes running through the day was that there is no substitute for doing fieldwork and being there. Fieldwork introduces students to new and potentially unusual environments, provides an opportunity for them to view things differently while simultaneously stretching and (hopefully) enthusing them. Fieldwork is often the most memorable experience that a student takes away from his or her degree.

[View John's 'The Benefits of Fieldwork' slides](#)

Preparing students for fieldwork

Chris Southgate, University of Central Lancashire

Chris introduced us to the overseas fieldwork that his students get involved in, and highlighted the social and cultural experiences students get from this as well as the fieldwork and generic skills they develop.

[View Chris' 'Preparing students for fieldwork' slides](#)

Swapshop sessions

In the two sessions participants contributed their experiences, ideas and highlighted resources for others to try.

John Grahame (University of Leeds) based his talk on his experience of leading many fieldwork courses and raised the question 'What *should* I teach?'. He highlighted the tension between Louis Compton Miall's quote 'The value of instruction does not lie in what the teacher tells his pupils, but in what he leads them to discover for themselves' and the fact that graduates are unemployable if they don't know animals and plants, as well as, the reality of what can, and cannot, be achieved in a 10-day field course.

Julian Park (University of Reading) discussed enthusing students about research and scientific monitoring. Julian uses the research focus of his university to his advantage and makes use of the many post docs in his department to help with the

teaching activities and frequently links teaching to research being conducted in his Dept (Agriculture) and the research opportunities in the locality.

Calvin Dytham (University of York) commented on his field course to Mallorca and posed the question of how to best divide the time.

David Slingsby (British Ecological Society) emphasized that the British Ecological Society (BES) is committed to fieldwork at all levels and highlighted some of the grants, courses and meetings that the BES provide to support this commitment.

Richard Bevan (University of Newcastle) described the threats, the saviours and current situation (including problems) with respect to the fieldwork training that he has been involved in.

John Grahame [What *should* I teach?](#)

Julian Park [Enthusing students about research and scientific monitoring](#)

Calvin Dytham [How to allocate time on a field course](#)

David Slingsby [The British Ecological Society's support for fieldwork](#)

Richard Bevan [Fieldwork Training](#)

Relevant links

[Applied Undergraduate Research Skills](#)

This [CETL](#) aims to develop undergraduates' applied research skills, as practiced within research intensive departments, through students' active engagement with two major primary research resources: fieldwork and the use of university collections and museums.

[Experiential learning in environmental and natural sciences](#)

This [CETL](#) aims to build on the University of Plymouth's experience in the areas of fieldwork, laboratory work and work-based learning.

View the [general information we have on fieldwork](#) in the biosciences.

Event outline: Fieldwork is regarded as fundamental to a number of bioscience subject areas including ecology, agricultural sciences, environmental and marine biology and to the GEES (Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences) subject areas; aimed at members of these disciplines, this one day meeting will focus on the core values of fieldwork and will explore the types of fieldwork experience that may best promote deeper learning and skills development by students. An important element of the day will be the informal sharing of practice amongst attendees and we would encourage you to consider offering a contribution for a [swapshop](#) session. Issues of cost, staff time, accessibility and health & safety will also be considered during the day.