

## **Eloise Stephenson, MSc Wild Animal Biology alumna, 2014**

### **When did you finish your PGT course at the RVC?**

I am one of the more recent graduates, finishing my Masters in Wild Animal Biology last year (2014).

### **What are you doing now?**

I am juggling a few different things at the moment. I am currently employed as a Research Technician for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia's national science agency. In my job I am working with other scientists to assess the sustainability of agricultural systems and global food security. One of the leading causes of wild animal population decline is habitat loss, and if we cannot address feeding people with the land we have we cannot conserve species in the future. Assessing global food security is a multidisciplinary task, and knowledge gained in my Masters of ecosystem services, sustainable use and emerging infectious diseases is invaluable to the task at hand.

In addition to my work with CSIRO, I am working with the University of Queensland on a study investigating the morphology of wombat and koala skulls. This is an exciting study as we are able to use some of the latest technology to quantify the differences between the species and their common ancestor. More exciting still, my supervisor and co-author in this study is a fellow RVC alumni, Dr Olga Panagiotopoulou from the Structure and Motion Lab.

On top of all of that, I am putting together a poster on my Masters research project which was accepted into the International Congress of Conservation Biology Conference in France, in August.

### **What aspect of the PGT course prepared you best for your career?**

There were individual and group aspects of the course that have been important in my career. Throughout the course we were encouraged to develop our independent research skills, manage our time and critically analyse the science around us. This has prepared my own personal skills and enabled me to move forward with my career. In science however, you rarely work as an individual. So the group tasks, particularly the problem based learning, have been important in enabling me to work with other people towards a common goal, drawing on the groups strengths.

### **What did you think of the teaching staff on the course?**

I found the teaching staff for the Masters invaluable. I think one of my bigger regrets from the course was not taking the time to introduce myself to staff and guest lecturers. Almost all of the lecturers that we had were specific experts in their field and we had the opportunity to meet with any of them and connect with their

interests. Now in my own research I find their names cropping up in science papers and I kick myself for not making more of an effort!

**What did you think of the learning and research facilities at the RVC?**

The course was in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London and as such we had access to different zoos, organisations and hands on experience with wild animals. I am one of those people that learns by doing and the learning and research facilities at the RVC allowed me to harvest that.

**Has the PGT course at the RVC enabled your career goals as you had hoped?**

You have to be prepared to take risks, put you hand up and reach out to people. My masters gave me the confidence to do that, and that is how I have accomplished my career goals.