



Mackay Greenland Fund
Ecological & environmental processes and patterns of change
Craig Menzies

I took part in a 6-week research expedition in northeast Greenland during the months of July and August 2006. The research was undertaken within a team of 5 scientists (2 British, 2 Dutch, 1 American) and was concerned with the high arctic tundra vegetation response to projected global climate change. The expedition was located at the isolated research centre 'ZERO' (Zackenberg Ecological Research Operations), with excellent logistics access to a variety of diverse ecosystem types and species, ideal for ecological, biological and earth science research; located in the Zackenberg region, approximately 78 degrees north, close to Daneborg.

The expedition was primarily organised by scientists from the Ecosystems Centre, at the Marine Biological Laboratories, in Massachusetts US. Given the considerably high costs of operating and working in this area of Greenland, most of the expedition costs were borne by the MBL, however, the Greenland Fund award that I received played a critical role in aiding my participation within the research. The funds were primarily used to cover the finances incurred during a portion of the travelling to and from London from north Scotland and the purchase of a small quantity of vital equipment that was required for fieldwork, as I had previously not worked in arctic conditions. In essence, the fund was extremely helpful to me with regards to being able to take part in the trip. As the weather conditions at the research site were relatively favourable, but changeable and highly exposed, it was essential that I had at least the minimum equipment that would be required to let me participate and remain healthy and warm, etc.

The fund was also particularly helpful in the sense that at the time of participating on the research trip, I had recently graduated, and as is typical of recent graduates, was not only relatively under-funded, but also heavily in student debt! In this respect the funding that I received was somewhat critical to my participation. The research itself was incredibly rewarding and interesting. I felt privileged to have had the opportunity to work with some of the leading experts in earth system science, ecosystem and global change studies. I also believe that I gained a valuable insight into how good practice research should be undertaken; a perfect culmination of my BSc Ecological Sciences academic and practical training. Perhaps more than anything however, the research has fuelled my passion and interest in the sciences of ecology, biology and ecosystem modelling.

Since the research trip, I have undertaken a Masters degree in Environmental Studies at Strathclyde University, worked for a period as an environmental consultant, and enjoyed many mini-cycling expeditions in Scotland. My ambition is to undertake a PhD and research within this area that I am strongly motivated and intrigued by. I know that this decision has been highly influenced by my experience in Greenland.