

## **Department of Zoology Zooniverse project wins University Public Engagement Award**

A Department of Zoology Zooniverse project has won a Project in this year's Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards, which celebrate public engagement work across the University. The announcement was made at an awards ceremony at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History on 28 June hosted by Vice-Chancellor Professor Louise Richardson. The winning project was recognised in the Collaboration and Communications Project Award categories - for activities that have involved collaborating while also informing and inspiring the public about research.

The award-winning project *Penguin Watch – citizen science to monitor the Southern Ocean* was designed to help conserve the declining number of penguins. The project was led by Dr Tom Hart of the Department of Zoology and Professor Chris Lintott of the Department of Physics.

*Penguin Watch* collects time-lapse imagery of penguin colonies to monitor the timing and success rate of breeding pairs. Public volunteers then process the data on penguinwatch.org via the Zooniverse platform. Since its launch in September 2014 over 865,000 people from 214 separate countries visited the website, with 44,000 going on to become registered users, many of whom visit the site every day.

The project continuously seeks to engage new publics with the research taking place and to encourage more volunteers by generating media interest including appearances on the BBC 10 O'clock news.

*Penguin Watch* has processed 5.3 million images to date, generating an outstanding data legacy. The data is being used by DPhil students and to inform bodies such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

The Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards recognise and reward those at the University who undertake high-quality engagement activities and have contributed to building capacity in this area. *Penguin Watch* was one of six winners in the Project category of the awards.

Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor says: "I have been deeply impressed by the quality of the public engagement with research projects submitted for this year's awards. The breadth and diversity of the activities taking place show how seriously the University takes its commitment to public engagement."

Professor Alison Woollard, the University's Academic Champion for Public Engagement with Research says: "Public engagement enriches both research and society and the University is committed to enabling our researchers to inspire, consult and collaborate with the public. I'm delighted that we are able to recognise and highlight the fantastic work our researchers are doing and hope

these awards encourage more colleagues across the University to carry out their own public engagement with research.”

### **About the awards**

The Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards recognise and reward those at the University who undertake high-quality engagement activities and have contributed to building capacity in this area. The awards are awarded in three categories – Early Career Researcher, Building Capacity and Projects. Entrants can be at any level in their career and activities of any scale are welcome.

Winning entries receive recognition for their achievements at the Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards Ceremony that will take place on 28 June 2017. The Vice-Chancellor's prize will also be announced at the ceremony and receive a cash prize of £1,500.

### **Further information on 'Penguin Watch'**

#### **1) Project lead**

Dr Tom Hart  
Independent Research Fellow  
Department of Zoology

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01865 600170

#### **2) Website and videos**

Website <https://www.penguinwatch.org/>

British Science Week – BBC Breakfast

<https://myshare.app.box.com/s/8a0hv8kozs bj62g1vg2z004lc43l5sq s>

BBC Our World: The Penguin Watchers

<https://myshare.app.box.com/s/l1pop2iqyiowlopabbaiehp sc8niew6a>

#### **3) Project Case study**

### **Penguin Watch – citizen science to monitor the Southern Ocean**

Awarded for Collaboration & Communications with the Public

Dr Tom Hart, Dept of Zoology & Professor Chris Lintott, Dept of Physics

To help conserve the declining number of Penguins, we have developed innovative ways to collect and analyse large data sets through Citizen Science; and raised

awareness of the research and the need to conserve seabirds to people around the world.

### **About the Project**

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### **Outcomes & Impacts**

Penguin Watch has processed 5.3 million images to date, generating an outstanding data legacy. The data is being used by DPhil students and to inform bodies such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

The Zooniverse platform is made available so that any researcher can build similar projects, seeding projects worldwide from monitoring Red-footed boobies to seals.

In terms of public benefits, nearly a million people have participated and increased their understanding about penguin ecology and conservation, valued being part of a research project and many more have been engaged via the media, events and schools' activities.

*" [Tom and his team] engage with our tourists and staff in a two-way process that benefits all parties and the environment. His work deserves this recognition; it is a very impressive thing he's achieved."* Karl Kannastader, Quark Expeditions

**Project team:** Ms Fiona Jones, Dr Catilin Black & Dr Grant Miller, University of Oxford and other members of the Zooniverse team; Falklands Conservation

**Funded & Supported by:** Darwin Initiative Challenge Fund & Darwin Plus; University's Development Office; Quark Expeditions; Google; Science & Technology Facilities Council & others.