

## **Graham Duggan, MSc Wild Animal Biology alumnus, 2014**

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

I am currently a researcher for a 5-part natural history documentary series about Canadian wildlife. This is being funded and broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (like the BBC but with a lot less money). My role consists of finding great wildlife stories throughout Canada, liaising with researchers and finding out how our film crew can film some epic scenes!

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

The 'WAB' course provided me with a broad range of practical and theoretical skills for work in wildlife, from understanding disease in wild populations, to tracking animals, conservation practices, and even husbandry. I think one of the biggest lessons from any post grad course (including mine) was how to properly research and organise an entire project from scratch - it was great to have a blank slate to work with, that allowed me to study any topic or any animal that I had access to. It was quite a challenge but really gave me that confidence in my research skills, much of which I apply in my everyday work. It also really helps to develop a connection with researchers that are working in academia, as I can really relate to the pressures under which they work, and find ways to compromise on film shoots, making sure everyone is able to get what they want out of it. Overall though, the course was just an absolute blast and I miss it loads!

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

The teaching staff were great - our course was mainly made up of guest lecturers; experts in various fields that would come in for a day or two and provide in-depth information on any number of topics (see above). It was also great to make so many connections from around the world in various wildlife facets, as they will (and have) come in handy after graduation. More of the regular RVC or ZSL staff that provided teachings were always super well-informed and very eager to help. Most of the time, it actually felt as though they were working with you rather than speaking at you - it was very easy to have a conversation with lecturers after class as many had been through the same course or similar, and made them feel much more like colleagues, which was really great for me.

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

We did a lot of lectures and things at ZSL (over at London Zoo) but many of the RVC facilities that we did use were great. Admittedly, some of the facilities at the Camden campus were a bit tired, but that didn't seem to deter us or affect our learning in any way. Having said that, the computer labs, science labs, and lecture halls were all fairly up to date and nice to learn in. The times that we visited Hawkshead campus were good as we often used the state of the art post mortem facilities. That was a great

experience and really made it feel like we were doing things for real - rather than cutting up dead things in a cold shed (that happened too, but not with RVC, haha).

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

So far yes! It took some time to get where I wanted to be after graduation. I moved back home to Canada and there never seemed to be too many opportunities in the field that I wanted. I ended up going back to a job in agriculture that I had before starting the course, but was determined to get into the wildlife film industry. So, being confident in my skills, I pursued and pursued, made some great contacts, and eventually was asked to interview for a 2 year production. Still doesn't feel real, but I really feel like I'm putting my learning from the course to good use now (instead of stewing away in the old job) and everything came flooding back to me which is great. I've also made so many amazing friends that are scattered all over the world, ones I can rely on for advice or info on various things that might come up in the job. Overall, it certainly got me to where I wanted to be, but it also takes the effort to keep pushing to where you want to be; no one's going to hand you a dream job right out of the gate and you have to put everything you've learned in play. You can't be afraid to call someone up and ask for their help.