

## **SRF Travel Grant Report**

### *Biology of Spermatozoa meeting, 2013, Sheffield UK*

The biennial biology of spermatozoa (BoS) meeting, organised by Tim Birkhead and Harry Moore (University of Sheffield), recently took place in the glorious setting of the Peak District's Hassop Hall. Thanks to the SRF I was able to attend and present some on-going work investigating the effect of social status on the reproductive proteome. The raison d'être of the BoS meeting is to stimulate discussion and ideas. To aid this speakers are encouraged to present work that is in progress and the programme allows as much time for questions as it does for presentations.

Despite the conference title, the talks and posters presented covered a diverse range of topics from sexual conflict in plants to male deception in a nuptial-feeding spider, via the Japanese quail's specialised meringue-like foam that aids fertility. This year's meeting particularly highlighted the significance of non-sperm components of the ejaculate. Mariana Wolfner's plenary on *Drosophila* seminal fluid proteins was an excellent introduction to this theme that carried on through posters and presentations of on-going studies in diverse species. A highlight of the meeting was an impromptu talk by Patricia Brennan about how she had dealt with the recent media attention her work had received. Many American news channels considered it extravagant of the US government to be paying for research into duck penises, leading to quite an aggressive and personal attack by the media on Patricia and her group. Many of the delegates, including myself, were quite shocked to hear this and also how careful other scientists based in the US felt they had to be when discussing their research. This initiated much discussion of why and how to communicate the value of basic research, and international differences in how this is perceived.

As a PhD student moving into my final year this meeting was a fantastic opportunity for me to present some data and discuss ideas with international experts. I left with many ideas to carry into the rest of my PhD. Many thanks to the SRF for providing me with a travel grant so that I could attend.