

In March/April, I spent a week at Slapton Ley Field Centre in South Devon, which was offered as an optional field trip for Part IA Evolution & Behaviour. During this week, concepts taught in lectures came to life as we studied living organisms in their natural habitat. We had a flexible, yet busy schedule thanks to a highly enthusiastic group. Efficient time use gave us many valuable hours out in the field to explore a wide range of habitats and their abundance of organisms, ranging from woodlands to freshwater lakes, streams and shores. In the evenings, there were lecture sessions covering evolutionary relationships and other relevant, in-depth theory. With all this information at hand, one can really start to recognise the manifold adaptations and fine-tuned ecologies that exist everywhere around us. I am particularly interested in ecology and enjoyed piecing together relationships between different organisms, and between biotic and abiotic factors. I also appreciated how multiple of my Natural Sciences courses could be integrated to get a fuller understanding of what we saw around us.

We spent one day at the Eden Project in Cornwall, which provided a whole new world of plants, collected from all over the planet. The rich botanical gardens gave a unique opportunity to consider and compare widely different environments side by side to see how climates and growth conditions affect plant physiology.

We also had the opportunity to conduct our own research projects, with guidance from lecturers and demonstrators. Organising own projects and hearing about others' was a valuable experience in preparation for more extensive research in the future. This also provided an excellent opportunity to draw in statistics and computing taught in the Mathematical Biology course.

The week spent in Slapton was highly rewarding and I would warmly recommend future students of Evolution & Behaviour to attend the field course. The area is ideal for observing (and being amazed by!) a big variety of organism. The course served to break the constraints of individual lecture series, to combine concepts to a bigger picture. It was a very inspiring week. I would like to thank Pembroke College for awarding me a grant towards this travel.