

2015 Linnaeus Taxonomy Fellowship Recipients Announced

Orca skulls and giant penguin fossils will be the subjects of research for the 2015 Otago Museum Linnaeus Taxonomy Fellowship recipients. Shaun Wilson and Marcus Richards will receive funding to work on the Museum collection as they undertake significant research projects in zoology and geology, respectively.

Wilson's research will look at the ecotypic, geographic and population variation in the cranial morphology of killer whales (*Orcinus orca*). Earlier this year he visited the Museum to look at one of the earliest orca skulls in New Zealand collections, on display in Animal Attic. Wilson will also be looking at the skulls of nine animals that stranded in Te Waewae Bay, Southland, last year and skulls from other museum collections around the world.

Richards' research will focus on a penguin fossil he found while completing field work in Central Otago. The specimen was the first of its kind found in the region and is one of the most complete Eocene (33–56 million years ago) penguins found in the country. It appears distinct from other prehistoric giant penguin species and needs a species description. Richards will look at the Museum's penguin fossil collection for comparison, along with other collections nationwide.

Both recipients are delighted to have been awarded Otago Museum Linnaeus Taxonomy Fellowships and are excited to progress their research projects. Applications for the fellowship, which aims to support taxonomic research as a discrete project or part of a bigger study, are considered by an awarding committee. This committee includes Otago Museum Director Dr Ian Griffin, the Heads of Department of Zoology, Botany and Geology at the University of Otago, and Dr Ted Nye, a fellow of the Linnaean Society.

The 2014 outgoing fellows will report on their research and how they have utilised the funding and support of the fellowship. Joshua Corrie, a PhD candidate in the Department of Geology at the University of Otago, is studying the systematics, morphology and paleoecology of whale and dolphin

fossils. Kalinka Rexer-Huber's research is focused on New Zealand's white-chinned petrels as part of her PhD in zoology. Victoria Smith is studying the taxonomy of New Zealand trapdoor spiders as part of her PhD in Ecology at Lincoln University.

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