

When I was an intern in the indicators and assessments unit at the institute of zoology, nearly 10 years ago, Ben was my line manager. It was the start of my career in conservation research, and I was keen to make the most of the 6 month position. At that time there were a lot of interns at the IOZ, Kate Jones and Alanna in the office further along the corridor had a couple, and in the I&A unit I think there were about 6 or 7 of us at any one time working across the LPI and SRLI and national red list projects. So needless to say it was pretty hectic but an awful lot of fun, particularly as back then ZSL still had its own Social Club where the beer was cheap and the resident Barman Jim turned a blind eye to almost anything. Looking back I imagine it must've been quite a handful for Ben to manage what was a fairly unruly and excitable bunch, but he did a fantastic job and we did manage to produce an enormous number of species assessments for the red list. The downside of being surrounded by so many others in a similar position to oneself, meant that it was difficult to stand out. I absolutely loved working at the IOZ and was very keen to continue there, but more permanent positions were very hard to come by and there was a lot of competition. Ben knew about my designs to remain, and he would help where he could. I remember he once asked me to create a map for a report he was writing for UNESCO. It was plotting very simple points, but with almost no mapping experience it took me a number of days to get right. Looking back, he could have produced it himself within about 15 minutes, and it would have looked a great deal better! But he was always about giving people chances and opportunities to progress. At the end of my internship Tim Blackburn came to him to ask if he had any suitable interns who might be good for a longer contract as a Research Technician on an invasive bird project. Ben put my name forward, and 8 years, 1 PhD and 14 odd papers later I'm still on the same project, and I have Ben to thank for that initial leg up.

Since that first 6 months at IOZ, he has been my boss, my PhD co-supervisor, my colleague and always my friend. I would go to him for advice on almost any topic – he was even the first person in CBER to know that David and I were having a baby.

Recently when I looked back at my time working with him it occurred to me that I clearly wasn't the only one who he had helped along their career in a myriad of ways, and I wanted a way to capture some of these stories and keep them for Alanna and Otilie and Ben's family to look at over the years, as a window into what it was like working with him. At CBER we discussed how best to achieve this and decided upon printing and binding a selection of his papers, and contacting a co-author from each one to provide a foreword to explain the story behind the paper and the role that Ben had played. We couldn't choose all of his papers, as that would have run into many volumes, and we also didn't just want those which had the most citations. In the end we selected 26 that span his whole career from his first ever paper when he was a PhD student himself, to one published earlier this year by a current PhD student of his. In between there are those with nearly 3000 citations, those where the lead author is a prestigious Stanford professor, but also those which have arisen from a masters student project, or from a particularly obnoxious group of interns wanting to get their names on a paper, or because Ben wanted to give a collaborator recently returning from maternity leave the chance to get a really high profile publication.

Contacting the co-authors from all corners of the world and reading their stories of working with Ben was wonderful. The common theme that runs throughout is Ben's ability to bring people together and get the best from them. Recurring descriptors include: negotiator, mischievous, good humoured, robust science, levity, kind, understanding, mentor, fun, patient, wisdom, encouragement, gigantic individual scientific capacity.

To borrow the words of Dr Helen Meredith who contributed the foreword to the final paper in this volume: Ben made a profound contribution to this world - not just in the science and conservation projects he developed, but in the lives he helped to shape and propel.



I hope that Alanna and Ben's family and Otilie in the future enjoy reading this as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

Dr Ellie Dyer