

# DINA-LEIGH SIMONS

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## SUMMARY

As an award-winning and passionate third-year postgraduate researcher, my ambition is to lead and communicate biological research within the area of marine conservation, molecular ecology, and global change. I am interested in understanding the complex drivers of biodiversity loss and shifts in community dynamics as well as optimising conservation strategies in light of growing anthropogenic pressures. I also thoroughly enjoy science communication and content creation across social media platforms as [No Ordinary Biologist](#).

## EDUCATION

2021 - 2025 | **PhD in Environmental Science (Marine Biology and Molecular Ecology)**

**The University of Liverpool, UK (Department of Earth, Ocean, and Ecological Sciences)**

- **Project title:** Monitoring intertidal biodiversity in light of climate change using eDNA and visual surveys
- Funded by ACCE Doctoral Training Programme (NERC)
- **Supervisors:** Dr Nova Mieszkowska, Dr Helen Hipperson, Dr Tom Webb, Dr Matt Spencer

2016 - 2020 | **Integrated Masters in Biological Science with Year Abroad (MBiolSci) - First Class Honours**

**The University of Sheffield, UK (School of Biosciences)**

- Year abroad at the National University of Singapore (NUS)
- **Relevant modules:** Advanced Biological Analysis (R/RStudio), Research and Communication Skills in Biology, Marine Biology, Ecology and Evolution, Conservation Issues and Management
- **Extra-curricular courses:** Python Level 2 (Code Creators, 2020/21); HTML, CSS & Javascript Level 1 (Code First Girls, 2019); Geographic Information Systems (ArcGIS)(2019, Audit module); French CEFR Level B1- (2016/17)

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2021- **Postgraduate Researcher (PhD)**

2025 **EcoMar research group - The University of Liverpool, UK**

- Collaboration with Marine Biological Association (MBA), The University of Sheffield, and NEOF
- The project applies eDNA metabarcoding alongside visual surveys to assess spatial biodiversity patterns of intertidal marine communities in light of climate change. By conducting field-based, nationwide sampling, we assess the capability of eDNA at various spatial scales and compares eDNA-based methods to traditional visual surveys

**Skills:** Remote fieldwork, molecular laboratory work (eDNA metabarcoding), bioinformatics (DADA2 in Unix), advanced community analyses (R/RStudio), scientific writing, science communication (talks and posters)

2020- **Graduate Research Assistant (Marine)**

2021 **Macroecology of Marine Ecosystems (MEME) research group - The University of Sheffield, UK**

- Conducted research for a PhD student under the supervision of Dr. Tom Webb
- Compiled and analysed large datasets for over 2000 species of invasive and imperilled molluscs with regards to life history traits
- Poster creation for collaboration with European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet)

**Skills:** In-depth literature/database searches, data compiling/analysis, science communication, team work

2019- **Master's Research**

2020 **School of Biosciences, The University of Sheffield, UK**

- Supervised by Dr Karl Evans (UoS) and Dr Richard Bradbury (RSPB)
- Explored the effectiveness of strategic conservation marketing to nudge pro-environmental behaviour

**Skills:** Advanced data analyses (regression models, PCA), scientific writing and publishing, experimental design, in-depth literature searches, budgeting, presenting

2019 **Undergraduate Researcher (Marine)**

**Simon F.S. Li Marine Science Laboratory, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong**

- Supervised by Prof. Laura Falkenberg for the Summer Undergraduate Research Programme (SURP)
- Investigated the effects of ocean warming on physiological responses of marine gastropods

**Skills:** Macro-lab experiments (mesocosms), field sample collection (snorkelling), scientific writing and publishing, poster presentation, advanced data analyses, PADI Advanced Open Water

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

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### 2018-2019 Undergraduate Research

#### 2019 School of Biosciences, The University of Sheffield, UK

- Adapting agricultural land management strategies to promote avian biodiversity in the Peak District National Park, UK (Level 3 research project supervised by Dr David Edwards)
- Assessing the socioeconomic and conservation benefits of tropical forest protected areas (Level 3 research dissertation supervised by Dr Karl Evans)
- Arctic plant communities alter with proximity to human disturbance in Abisko, Sweden (Level 3 research project as part of abroad field course)

**Skills:** Terrestrial ecological surveying, advanced data analyses (ANOVA, NMDS, PERMANOVA, GAMs), scientific writing, conservation knowledge, in-depth literature searches

### 2018 Conservation and Research Assistant

#### Singapore Wildlife Reserves (Singapore Zoo), Singapore

- Placement within the Conservation and Research team at Singapore Wildlife Trust
- Assisted in ecological surveys of reptiles, birds and insects
- Summarised written reports for Southeast Asian conservation projects, managed outreach events, promoted citizen science and designed marketing material

**Skills:** terrestrial ecological surveying, tropical conservation knowledge, science communication, marine animal husbandry (crabs), creative design (Adobe Photoshop, Canva)

## AWARDS AND GRANTS

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**2024:** Three Minute Thesis Liverpool University Winner and National Quarter Finalist (UoL and Vitae, £150)

**2024:** Best talk prize at School of Environmental Science PGR conference (UoL, £50)

**2023:** Microgrant winner (The eDNA Collaborative, £350 as a place on timeseries modelling course)

**2022:** Research lab visit grant (ACCE, £1500)

**2022:** Lab visit grant at NERC Environmental Omics Facility (NEOF, ~ £40,000)

**2022:** Best poster prize at ACCE DTP Conference (ACCE, £50)

**2022:** Best flash talk at School of Environmental Science PGR conference (UoL, £50)

**2020:** J.G. Boswell Memorial Prize in Botany for best final year project (UoS, Prize: £150)

**2020:** The "Black and Gold" Award for Sporting Excellence (Sport Sheffield)

**2019:** Scurfield Memorial Bursary to complete a research project in Biology (UoS, £300)

**2017:** DUO Singapore Exchange Fellowship Award (ASEM-DUO, Prize: £3625)

## PUBLICATIONS

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Simons, D-L., Stubbs J., Bradbury, RB., Evans, KL. (in-prep) 'Emphasising ecosystem services, biodiversity benefits, and relational values to improve public conservation support'. *People and Nature*.

Simons, D-L., Bradbury, RB., Evans, KL. (2024) 'Impacts of ecosystem service message framing and dynamic social norms on public support for tropical forest restoration', *Conservation Biology*. (Accepted).

Simons, D-L., Hipperson, H., Webb, T., and Mieszkowska, N. (2024). eDNA water sampling in remote rocky shore environments. [Protocols.io. dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.4r3l27nkqg1y/v1](https://doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.4r3l27nkqg1y/v1)

Falkenberg, L.J., Simons, D-L., and Anderson, K.M. (2021) 'Ocean warming reduces gastropod survival despite maintenance of feeding and oxygen consumption rates', *Limnology and Oceanography Letters*, 6(4), pp. 165-172. doi:10.1002/lol2.10198.

## COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### 2024: Three Minute Thesis (Vitae)

- Global competition which challenges doctoral candidates to present a 3-minute [spoken presentation](#) on their research topic

### 2024-present: STEM ambassador (STEM Learning)

- Regularly volunteer for 'I'm a scientist, get me out of here', which connects schools from across the UK with scientists

### 2021-present: Demonstrator (The University of Liverpool and NEOF)

- Demonstrator for RStudio practicals, project supervision, and R community analyses for eDNA pipelines with NEOF
- Gained FLTHE Associate Fellow teaching qualification (UoL, The Academy)
- Deliver eDNA workshops for Level-2 undergraduate students

## COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

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### 2020-present: Social media science communicator (@no\_ordinary\_biologist)

- Annually run a research communication workshop for undergraduate students and at conferences
- All social media pages and blog articles can be found [here](#)

### 2022-2023: Chair of student organising committee for SoES PGR Conference 2023

### 2022-2023: Member of student organising committee for ACCE DTP Conference 2023

### 2019-2020: Fourth-Year Representative (The University of Sheffield Biology Society)

- Communicating with and encouraging students studying Biological Sciences to build communities by organising a range of recreational opportunities.

### 2019-2020: Science Communicator (The University of Sheffield's Ph7 Science Blog)

- Author of numerous articles for online student-led science blog

### 2016-2020: Founder and Captain (The University of Sheffield Gymnastics Club)

- Created new club and managed club mechanisms throughout my degree.
- Represented British Gymnastics at Sheffield as a Student Sport's Officer in 2018/19.

### 2018-2019: Global Ambassador and Scholar (Sheffield Global Opportunities)

- Supporting and communicating with students when applying to exchange programmes, especially to National University of Singapore and The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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2021 - present: Marine Biological Association

2021 - present: British Ecological Society

## REFERENCES

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### Dr Nova Mieszkowska, Senior Lecturer

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Department of Earth, Ocean and Ecological Sciences, The University of Liverpool

### Dr Tom Webb, Senior Lecturer

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School of Biosciences, The University of Sheffield

### Dr Karl Evans, Senior Lecturer

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School of Biosciences, The University of Sheffield