

#MonthlyMotivation: Lauren Cook (class of 2012)



My teacher once told me I would end up on a boat somewhere in the freezing cold ... and now, having tried working in an office, I can safely say I would prefer working on a boat!

What have you done since leaving Putney?

I left Putney in 2012 and went on to study Biological Sciences at Durham University.

After you graduated, what did you go on to do?

I spent six months in the French Alps working as a chalet host. At the end of the season it struck me that I hadn't quite finished with the mountains so I trained to return the following year as a chef, filling the intervening months with surfing/camping /climbing trips to Spain, Portugal, Australia and New Zealand. Whilst I was in the Alps I realised I loved being outdoors and I

developed a desire to help protect the environment.

Where has your new found passion taken you so far?

I began looking for opportunities to work in environmental or media areas and was lucky enough find a job in a small production team working for [National Geographic](#) as a researcher for a children's TV project. This was an amazing experience and I had the responsibility for fact checking and writing science content in a way that could be understood by children! This opened my eyes to the importance of how we need to communicate clearly about science. This experience made me feel that I needed specialist training in conservation biology, and so I decided to study for a Masters (MRes) in Biodiversity, Evolution and Conservation at UCL. It includes teaching under the aegis of the [Zoological Society of London](#) (ZSL) and the [Natural History Museum](#) (NHM)!

What does a day studying for your masters look like?

I have just completed my first term, which means days of 10am-4pm lectures and/or practicals at UCL, NHM or ZSL. A huge part of biodiversity research involves learning to use a coding programme for data analysis. We are taught by amazing researchers working on really important projects such as the [IUCN Red List of Endangered Species](#) and the [Living Planet Report](#) (which shocked so many people when it came out recently!). For the next few months I will be working with researchers at the ZSL using video footage to study a yet unexplored section of the deep-sea in Greenland called Disko Bay.

How do you think Putney helped prepare you for the challenges of working in conservation and studying for a masters?

I believe Putney encouraged me in a range of interests and to manage my time so that I could somehow fit everything in. I feel I have been true to this ethos by keeping up my art, cooking and tutoring while maintaining a respectable level of sport and study; I feel like I have been acquiring many applicable skills and experiences. Also, if I am to pursue my studies to PhD it becomes increasingly important to be able to communicate and present one's work to others. My time as Deputy Head Girl at school and helping out in sports teams was a great confidence builder for public speaking.

Were you involved with any environmental or conservation activities whilst you were at Putney?

All my work experience at Putney was concerned with television or art, so I'm still trying to find a way to marry my creative interests with science. I do feel I am getting there though, especially as I was able to employ a creative eye on the National Geographic project and use illustrations and animations to explain scientific concepts.

What advice would you give to current pupils and alumnae looking at a career in the environmental sector?

If you want to work in the environmental sector, interviewers want to see some kind of specialist course or experience to evidence your suitability. Most of my colleagues have at least a masters in a related subject. Some conservation fieldwork and volunteering is always a great thing to see if the outdoor lifestyle really suits you!

I am not really sure where my career will take me but I am confident that I am putting myself in the right place for some great opportunities in the future.