For my summer placement I went to Bermuda, on an internship with the Bermuda Reef Ecosystem Assessment and Mapping project (BREAM). My project was a pilot study to look at strategic conservation planning, with the aim of developing a network of Marine Protected Areas that represented the full suite of habitat and species diversity.

The BREAM project has been collecting detailed data on Bermuda’s reefs, using a variety of underwater survey techniques, for several years. I used this data to define the various habitat types and to model species distribution, which I then used as my base layers for determining optimum MPA site location. I also obtained opinions and qualitative data from local experts. All of which I used to develop a series of possible network designs.

The project enabled me to develop significant statistical and spatial analysis skills, as well as learning how to use MARXAN software. It gave me an opportunity to experience firsthand some of the issue of Marine Protected Areas and the difficulties that marine planners face. I have no doubt that the experience will be invaluable in my future career.

It also enabled me to spend the summer in a stunning location! I had the opportunity to get involved with other projects that were happening in Bermuda, including tagging both eagle rays and green turtles! I got to meet people from different marine biology backgrounds, giving me both learning opportunities and useful future contacts.

I made some great friends and learnt a great deal. It wasn’t always easy, but your summer placement is really what you make it. It gives you the chance to pursue your interest and see what real marine management, away from the classroom, is like.