



The Royal Society of Western Australia

RSWA Awards

Student Medallists 2018 (presented 2019)

The Royal Society of Western Australia Student Medal is awarded annually to graduating science students with an outstanding academic record from the universities in Western Australia. The students are nominated by their institutions.

The 2018 RSWA Student Medallists were awarded at the RSWA Annual General Meeting at the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority Administration Building, Kings Park, Perth in August 2019.

Congratulations to the Medallists as follows:-

Ms Joanne Pugliese - Edith Cowan University

Ms Sophie Moles - Murdoch University

Ms Bridget Mellor - The University of Notre Dame Australia

Ms Natasha Lutz - The University of Western Australia

Mr Jae Young Han - Curtin University- Curtin University

Further information on the Medallists is on the following pages.



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Ms Joanne Pugliese- Edith Cowan University

In 2018 I completed a Bachelor of Science Honours in Chemistry at Edith Cowan University, for which I received first class marks and the Western Australian Naturalists' Club's Serventy Memorial Award.

I have always had an interest in science, and particularly in forensic science. In 2017 I completed a Bachelor of Forensic Investigation at Edith Cowan University only furthering my passion for forensics. Throughout this degree I quickly grew an interest in chemistry, in particular analytical chemistry.

These interests culminated in my honours research project which involved the optimisation of an existing solid phase extraction (SPE) clean-up method and the development of a novel dispersive SPE clean-up method for the screening of performance enhancing peptides in horse urine samples. This was an enormous undertaking and a life changing experience. I have an extraordinary amount of gratitude for my supervisors Dr Thao Thi Thu Le, A/Professor Mary Boyce and Dr John Coumbaros as well as Edith Cowan University and the ChemCentre.

In September 2018 I was lucky enough to present my thesis as a poster at the ANZFSS 24th International Symposium on the Forensic Sciences. Currently I am enjoying tutoring Science, Mathematics and Organic and Biochemistry at Edith Cowan University whilst working on publishing the research from my thesis.

My aspiration is to use the knowledge I have gained from my studies at Edith Cowan University to have a successful career in forensics, either focusing on forensic chemistry or working in the field.





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Ms Sophie Moles - Murdoch University

I graduated from Murdoch University in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree with distinction. I had always wanted to become a veterinarian but did not believe I was intelligent enough to gain acceptance into, let alone complete the degree. I was lucky I had a very supportive network of friends and family that compelled me to apply and were later there for me throughout the degree, as they are what helped me to achieve my dream of becoming a veterinarian.

I am originally from Sydney so for most of my university breaks I went home to see my family, friends and most importantly my dog Bella. Although as part of my course I had to complete practical work placements which meant most of my breaks were actually spent completing university requirements. However, this did allow me to combine my love of animals with my love of travel as I completed placements in South Africa, Thailand and at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary on the Gold Coast, Werribee Open Range Zoo in Victoria and the Wildlife Centre of Virginia in the United States of America. In my final year, I chose to stream in Wildlife and Conservation Medicine which meant I undertook 12 weeks of placements in settings which provided veterinary treatment to wildlife. I had decided early on in my veterinary degree that I wanted to be a bear veterinarian so undertaking veterinary placements at clinics which provided veterinary care to bears, such as the Wildlife Centre of Virginia, was an incredible opportunity.

During my degree, it was also required we complete a research project on a topic of our choosing, and given my interest in wildlife, my project involved creating the haematological and biochemical reference intervals for the northern brown bandicoot in the Top End of the Northern Territory. The process of completing this project was difficult but worthwhile as biochemical reference intervals for this species had never before been documented and haematological reference intervals were non-existent for this species in the Top End.

At the end of my degree, knowing that I wanted to work with bears, I moved to Balikpapan in Borneo to volunteer as a veterinarian at Kawasan Wisata Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup (KWPLH). KWPLH cares for sun bears that are unable to be rehabilitated due to being kept illegally as pets or for entertainment and educates the local community about the plight of the sun bear and its environment. KWPLH also houses over 100 cats and 20 dogs for which I also provided veterinary care. Due to unforeseen political circumstances, my time volunteering at KWPLH was cut short, although I hope to return soon.



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I am now working as a veterinarian in Hobart at a practice which provides veterinary care for a large number of animal rescue centres, very rewarding work. Although I have not lost sight of my dream job as a bear veterinarian, for now, I am happy working with domestic animals and the beautiful Tasmanian wildlife that I, unfortunately due to injury or illness, get to treat.





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Ms Bridget Mellor- The University of Notre Dame Australia

Bridget graduated from Notre Dame in December 2018 with a double degree: a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Environmental Science, and a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Journalism. During her degree, Bridget achieved a total of 21 high distinction and distinction grades; over half of which contributed to her study of Environmental Science. Bridget was a passionate and enthusiastic undergraduate student dedicated to good science and the protection of our natural environment. Bridget was not afraid to grasp opportunities to challenge herself and expand her experience. During her degree Bridget worked as a Campaign Officer with the Conservation Council of WA and gained hands-on experience working alongside Scitech to deliver the Perth Science Festival. Both experiences drew on, and enhanced, Bridget's natural capabilities to work at the nexus between science, communication and society. In 2018 she also completed a month-long journalism internship in Qindao, China, which broadened her world-view and helped to globalise her growing skill set. To complete her degree, Bridget undertook a supervised project that critically examined what is best done with decommissioned and obsolete infrastructure associated with the oil and gas industry. Since graduating Bridget has volunteered as a field assistant helping with Boodie research, has started working with an environmental consultancy and will soon be putting her communications skills to good use in a second job.

In this era of post-truth politics, where objective science can be less influential in shaping public opinion than the loudest or most evocative voice, Bridget's combined skills and knowledge undoubtedly arm her to make a positive difference in our society.





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Ms Natasha Lutz - The University of Western Australia

Natasha graduated from the University of Western Australia in 2018 with a double major in Environmental Science and Economics. She enjoyed the variety of subjects in her degree, with a particular highlight being a field trip to Coral Bay to complete a research project. She is particularly interested in the effects of climate change, species loss, and the plastic pollution problem. Natasha's interest for animals and the environment was developed whilst growing up on a farm in regional Western Australia. Her current honours project involves measuring the concentrations of microplastics in stormwater drainage systems in the Perth region.

Throughout her degree, Natasha was been awarded the C.F.H. & E.A. Jenkins Prize, the Laurence C. Snook Memorial Prize in Science Communication, and the Bertha Elvina Shillington Prize in History. She has also been very fortunate to have been a part of the Water Corporation and GHD Vacation Programs. Natasha has also enjoyed getting involved in a number of volunteering opportunities, including Teach Learn Grow, Ronald McDonald House, and co-directing the Sites4Good program hosted by University Hall.

Outside of her degree, Natasha is a passionate Lead Residential Advisor at University Hall, working to provide pastoral care to residents. Through this position she has had the opportunity to lead the Professional Development Portfolio which works to provide leadership and internship opportunities for residents. In 2019 this program was awarded the 2019 APSAA Excellence in Student Experience Award. Outside of work and research, Natasha enjoys painting, playing the piano and learning to code. She is always open to new experiences and opportunities.





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Mr Jae Young Han - Curtin University- Curtin University