

## **MSI Student Award Reflection**

In the spring of 2021 I was awarded the Marine Studies Initiative Student Award. Originally I applied for the award to help fund my international travels for an internship in South Africa. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions I was unable to study abroad and I instead worked on a Oregon State Fish and Wildlife field crew surveying for salamanders during that time. Since I was unable to travel abroad I decided to take advantage of my MSI award funds to take the Motorboat Operator Training Course (MOTC) with Oregon State at Hatfield in Newport, Oregon to further contribute to my career and academic goals in marine studies.

Over the summer, I attended Oregon State's first back in-person MOTC course. This was an intensive 3-day training course in basic small boat handling and safety. Before this experience I had no boating experience. I am studying marine biology and plan on working in the field. For this I found it necessary to gain preliminary boating experience to not only give me an opportunity to have an introduction to boating, but also to show future employers that I have this crucial experience and certification plus the initiative to learn scientific boating in advance.

On the first day we learned basic boat safety rules and knot tying in a classroom setting. On the second and third day we were given the field experience of personally being able to handle different types of boats in various circumstances. I was able to practice high speed maneuvers, docking, trailering, object recovery, man overboard recovery, and on board fire suppression, all while being guided by the experienced instructors. On the third day we were tested on all the skills we learned throughout the course and given an exam to complete our certification.

During the course I was also able to meet professionals within my field and connect with them. I had the pleasure of meeting many Oregon State graduate students, ODFW employees, and prominent Hatfield professors. This experience left me with valuable boat handling experience, new connections, and a scientific boating certification, after previously having no boating experience. I was able to implement my new skills and certification for the first time during my marine mammal behavior and physiology course (FW 469). For this course, we had four days of field work before fall term started, some of which was spent doing bird surveys in Yaquina bay from a small boat! During this survey, I was able to help operate the boat, tie knots, and had valuable knowledge in case of an emergency.

Because of the MSI award I was able to gain critical boating skills and knowledge that I will now be able to use during my future employment in marine studies and research.

Thank you MSI!