

# Meet The Team

This month we interviewed **Ellie Strike**, who is involved as a Local Engagement Officer for the Thames Area, and has recently begun co-managing our instagram. Learn more about her journey into marine conservation and how it wasn't always where she thought she would end up!



## What is your role within Plover Rovers, and what made you want to be part of the project?



I'm an LEO for the South East, so I'm involved in engaging and liaising with local partners from the Thames Estuary area. My role is to get organisations, charities and groups within the local community involved in the Talking the Coast Project and plan educational events to celebrate our coastline! I've also recently taken on a Communications role too, co-managing and creating content for the Instagram, Twitter and Facebook pages.

I was very keen to be part of this project because, I believe that to better protect our oceans, we need to do more to share messages, encourage more action and support and, ultimately, improve ocean literacy. Talking the Coast is a really exciting way of increasing communities' knowledge and inspiring change - I just had to be part of it! My career aspiration is to work in marine science communication, and this project has been a great way to get stuck in.

I currently live in the West Midlands, in the town furthest from the ocean! Being so far from the coast, I have always struggled to find opportunities to give up my time to help protect our oceans. I'm so glad I discovered the Plover Rovers, which has given me the opportunity to have a marine conservation impact by working remotely.

I'm due to travel to Mozambique in a few weeks to work as a Research Assistant for a marine research lab, which is my dream role. I'm very excited to get out in the field, as it has been a long year away from the ocean! I'll be keeping up my work for the Plover Rovers on the side!



## What path led you to pursuing a career in marine science?

I've taken a bit of a crooked pathway into marine science! My undergraduate degree was in English Literature, but I have just finished my MSc in Marine Environmental Management. I would love to be able to combine my two loves - writing and the ocean - into a career!

After graduating with my BA (Hons), I spent two years working and travelling around Australia and South-East Asia. I tried scuba diving for the first time in 2017 and saw my first coral reef, my first manta ray and my first whale shark... and that was it, I was obsessed! I trained to be a Divemaster and worked in Thailand for a couple of months, leading groups of recreational scuba divers and learning all about the vast array of marine life Thailand has to offer. It was such an amazing experience that when I returned to the UK to my grad job, I had a bit of a crisis! I realised I needed to be part of something bigger than just a profit for a business - I wanted to work in marine conservation.

## What sort of experiences have you had in the environmental sector so far?

My research interests are in elasmobranch conservation - I am obsessed with manta rays and sharks! My MSc dissertation explored public attitudes to sharks through history, and my external research placement was studying manta rays with the Manta Trust.



Having graduated, I'm currently working on a publication with the Manta Trust on manta rays in the Maldives, and I'm getting stuck into my voluntary work with the Plover Rovers. I'm also trying to fit in as many online courses and qualifications as I can before I go to Mozambique - particularly in science communication!

## What are some of the highlights and challenges of your experiences since entering the field?

Unfortunately, doing my MSc during the COVID-19 pandemic meant that my two exciting opportunities for field work in the Maldives and in Mozambique were cancelled. Not only was this really heartbreaking, but we also had to move back home and complete our degrees remotely which was a real challenge. While I thought marine science would involve a lot of 'ocean time', so far it has been entirely desk-based!



My absolute highlight has been learning so much about the ocean's spectacular ecosystems. I went into my degree with absolutely ZERO science/marine experience and I have come out the other side as a marine scientist. I had never done stats, had never read a scientific paper, had no field experience and I didn't even know what an abstract was! All I had was a LOVE for scuba diving and coral reefs.

I almost didn't apply for my MSc because I was worried I wouldn't get a place without experience, but I'm so glad I did. It was the best decision I've ever made, and it just goes to show that it's never too late to switch career and follow your passion.

## And lastly, what is your favourite British sea bird?

My favourite British coastal seabird is the Turnstone! The way they hop along the beach turning stones over to find food is just so cute. I could watch them going about their business for hours!

*All photos in this article were provided by Ellie Strike. If you'd like to see more of her involvement with Plover Rovers then check out our [instagram](#)!*