

Jonathan Wiese

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DAAD RISE Internship Report

Hi! My name is Jonathan Wiese, and I am a third year undergraduate student studying Evolutionary Biology at the University of Minnesota. This fall, I took the semester off of classes to participate in the DAAD RISE research internship program. I completed my internship in-person at the Alexander Koenig Zoological Research Museum in Bonn, Germany from September-November 2021.

At the Museum Koenig, I was part of the team working on the Caucasus Barcode of Life (CaBOL) project. The Caucasus is an understudied biodiversity hotspot region located mainly in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and southern Russia. The main goal of the CaBOL project is to catalog the entire diversity of life that is found in the Caucasus and to create a comprehensive database of DNA barcodes (short sequences of DNA that can be used to identify each species), along with data on each specimen that will be useful for further research in conservation, biogeography, systematics, and many other applications.

By working at the museum for three months, I learned about all of the steps of the CaBOL workflow that leads from specimen collection to database entry. The task I spent the most time on was sorting arthropods which had been caught in malaise traps in Georgia and Armenia to the order and suborder level, which helped me learn a lot about arthropod taxonomy. Before working at the museum I didn't know the difference between a fly and a mosquito, but now when I'm taking a walk I can point out whether the bugs on the sidewalk are Heteroptera or Coleoptera! I also spent a lot of time taking pictures of individual specimens to be included on the database (which is live right now at <https://ggbc.eu/data>).

Outside of my day at the museum, I learned a lot about what it is like to live and work in Germany. I rode the train to work every day, shopped for groceries at Rewe and Aldi, picked up Brötchen at the bakery, and went to after-work barbecues with bratwurst and beer. The weather was fantastic during the first month of my internship, and I was able to spend a lot of time outside by taking walks along the Rhine river and hiking in the Siebengebirge.

I also took advantage of my time here to do some traveling around Germany. I was able to visit several cities around the country, including Cologne, Bremen, Munich, and Berlin! My favorite thing that I did was hike around the Neuschwanstein castle in the Bavarian Alps. This was my first time hiking in real mountains and I thought it was really cool!

After having this experience, my main advice to future RISE students is to be proactive in going on sightseeing trips, eating certain foods, or doing anything else that you want to do while you are in Germany. The time you have here will go by really fast so make sure to do these things while you have the chance! Another practical piece of advice is that I would recommend opening a WISE transfer account to use while in Germany. I was able to open one completely online very easily, and it comes with an IBAN number that I could use to receive my RISE stipend and make other transactions in Germany.

Overall, I have had a great time in Bonn this fall and I'm very grateful to the DAAD for this opportunity!

-- Jonathan



