

Researcher awarded Michael K O'Rourke Prize for best PhD publication

Posted on Friday 27th June 2014

GEES doctoral researcher **Martín Ezcurra** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/gees/people/dr-students/ezcurra-martin.aspx>) has won the University of Birmingham Graduate School's Michael K O'Rourke Prize for best PhD publication.



Martín, whose PhD research on Permian-Triassic fossil reptiles is supervised by GEES academics **Dr Richard Butler** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/gees/butler-richard.aspx>) and **Dr Ivan Sansom** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/gees/sansom-ivan.aspx>), was selected as the overall winner for the College of Life and Environmental Sciences and the joint overall winner for the University as a whole.

The award was in recognition of his recent paper in the journal PLOS ONE entitled "The origin and early evolution of Sauria: reassessing the Permian saurian fossil record and the timing of the crocodile-lizard divergence".

In the paper Martín comprehensively revised the early fossil record of Sauria, one of the most important groups of vertebrates which includes lizards, snakes, birds, crocodiles, and dinosaurs.

He also completed a groundbreaking new quantitative analysis of the evolutionary interrelationships of early fossil reptiles.

His work has key implications for understanding the early evolutionary history of saurians, as well as the impact of the Permo-Triassic mass extinction, the deadliest extinction event in the history of life.

The paper resulted from two years of intensive and highly independent research involving data collection in a number of countries including Russia, China, Argentina, South Africa, Australia and the USA.

The award caps an outstanding year for Martín since transferring into the Birmingham PhD programme in September 2013, which has seen his total number of peer-reviewed publications rise to 38, and the award of a prestigious Young Explorer Grant from National Geographic.

Martín is from Buenos Aires in Argentina and became involved in research at an early age, publishing his first peer-reviewed papers when he was just 19.

For more information visit the **Graduate School 2014 Awards page** (<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/student-services/graduateschool/news/public/gsaresults2014.aspx>).

