

## Hannah Fiszpan, Geography

One of the things I valued most about the Geography course at Birmingham was the freedom to pick and choose from the many wide ranging and specialist topics in the second and third years.

I always favoured physical geography, and chose ecology, palaeoecology, hydrology, hydro-geomorphology, and river and floodplain management, amongst many others. My dissertation focused upon biodiversity conservation: in particular, the distribution of a group of beetles in a declining UK habitat. This led me to understand and prioritise the potential conservation status of these declining habitats and make a qualified judgement of the potential beneficial and detrimental impacts of anthropogenic disturbance on them.

After a year as a Research Assistant on a major global biodiversity research project in Birmingham, I decided I wanted to move to a more commercial and applied role, so applied for jobs in environmental consultancy. Over the next three years I established myself within one of the world's leading engineering and infrastructure consulting groups where I now hold the position of Senior Environmental Consultant. My main task is to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments on development projects ranging from new roads and urban regeneration schemes, to major port and marine projects. Environmental impacts are assessed on everything from air quality and archaeology, ecology and nature conservation, to hydrology and geology. It is also my job to ensure that appropriate mitigations are suggested and implemented so as to minimise the environmental impact and maximise the sustainability of a particular development scheme.

Studying Geography at Birmingham has played a major role in shaping who I am and the career path I have chosen. Following my interests, tailoring the flexible and diverse choice of modules available, and capitalising upon the resources and expertise available to undergraduates, I have applied my degree course to work in an area that is stimulating, challenging, and varied. Furthermore, it is rewarding to know I play a major role in sustaining and protecting environments all over the world whilst facilitating development, and educating developers that projects need not be synonymous with environmental harm.