

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

Sometimes, it is the smallest events that have the biggest impact. Seemingly trivial details can suddenly offer incredible insight, an off-the-cuff remark can provide the best advice you've ever had. So it would seem for the four graduate students who have kept monthly journals for *Naturejobs* this past year.

Mhairi Dupré, a first-year graduate student in evolutionary developmental biology at the University of Oxford, UK, nearly didn't do her PhD at all. Her first doctoral programme proved to be unsatisfying and she took some time out after halting her studies. She then decided to give academia another try and landed a place at Oxford. Now she finds her thoughts turning to experimental design in the middle of planning dinner — a sign that her return to the lab was the right choice.

For Andreas Andersson, a PhD in oceanography in Hawaii sounded like it would be an adventure. But he found that surfing the island's legendary waves provided more immediate gratification. Back at the bench, he wondered whether a scientific career would give him the same buzz. He now acknowledges that the thrill of data collection is worth some slightly more mundane work before and after each dive.

Molecular-biology graduate student Milan de Vries, who is at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, openly admits that yeast isn't glamorous — even though he sometimes sings to his samples. But he realized, through the illness of a relative, that his work in basic science could have more profound implications and that the daily slog is worth pursuing.

And for Katja Bargum, a graduate student at the University of Helsinki, Finland, clarity came amid ending a relationship, buying a home and skiing. She realized that she enjoyed writing about research more than doing it, and is now pursuing a career in science journalism.

These four students are now closing their diaries, ready to pursue the next step in their careers. You can see their final journal entries, which look back at what they've learnt, online at www.nature.com/naturejobs/archive/archive-gradjn.html.

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