I’m Leela Stoede, a rising 3rd year studying Sustainable Development. I’m deeply interested in exploring and understanding how we humans relate to the natural world that surrounds us in the interest of creating a thriving future for all life. This project really excites me because it directly explores this interconnectedness while also giving me the opportunity to observe my local ecosystem and more deeply integrate myself there within. Having grown up in both south India and the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, the east coast Scottish landscape is still rather unfamiliar to me and being part of this project gives me the time and resources to start to familiarize myself with it – and hopefully have an impact that allows others to do the same in years to come.

My name is Erica and I am currently studying sustainable development and film studies. I am honored to be one of the Biodiversity Monitoring interns this year, where I am constantly learning new ways to read my environment. I also love getting to encounter some of my favorite species every day, such as ladybugs and sweet chestnut trees! Beyond this internship, I serve as co-director of the St Andrews Green Film Festival, where I hope to continue showing the public different ways of viewing and appreciating our environment through film. I strongly believe in the importance of biodiversity literacy and documenting our surroundings, so I hope to continue doing more work like this in the future!

I’m Sasha Calvert, an Ecology and Conservation student currently heading into 4th year. Like many others on the team, I have been working on the Biodiversity Literacy team for this past year. I’ve had a fantastic time learning about the diversity of life in and around St Andrews and sharing it with anyone around me willing to listen. For better or worse, I am now often sent photos by friends and family to identify (most often) a bird. Personally, I would say this is for better. Knowing what I am seeing and hearing around me is exciting, and being able to pass that knowledge on to others even more so. With this internship, I am eager to both learn more about and interact with the life around me, and be a part of an ongoing project that will do the same for others, all the while increasing sustainability at the University of St Andrews.

I’m Tom Beckett, an Ecology and Conservation student starting 3rd year after the summer. I’ve always been a nature enthusiast and have had a lifelong fascination with birds, developing into a serious birdwatching obsession in recent years. I started to engage more broadly with nature as part of the Biodiversity Literacy VIP module, and I am keen to improve my identification skills in a range of taxonomic groups this summer! I’m particularly interested in the challenges of moth identification and am excited to be able to carry out moth trapping as part of the summer biodiversity monitoring internship. I am hopeful that the skills I develop will aid me in pursuing a career in ecology after university.

I’m Megan Gore, a Zoology student going into 4th year. I’m keen to learn about the many different aspects of biodiversity and conservation; the Biodiversity Literacy VIP allowed me to further my knowledge of bird identification and my focus so far during this internship has been on plant mapping, greatly improving my plant identification skills. My favourite part of working on this project is my increasing appreciation for nature as I learn more about it. I want to help enable others to find the same connection with nature through biodiversity literacy.

I’m Iona MacLaren, I study sustainable development at the university and have a particular interest in nature relatedness and improving biodiversity. In my spare time I love going for long walks on East Sands, helping out at the community gardens and playing the Irish whistle. I’m really excited to be contributing to the university’s sustainability agenda and getting to know the plant and animal species on campus more intimately over summer.