

Grant Tremblay

When I was nine years old, I was the world's worst paleontologist. Based on embarrassingly weak evidence, I was convinced that there was a dinosaur buried in the field behind my house in Maine, USA. I asked my father to inform the local science museum of my impending find, and I launched a carefully planned and well-researched expedition to excavate it. When I mistook the white root of a sapling for the neck bone of a *Dilophosaurus*, I was overcome with the sort of elation that could only herald a future astronomer's first spectacular failure in science.

I may have been disappointed when I realised my dinosaur was actually a mound of dirt and shrubbery, but the experience was a perfect illustration of why I love science. Amid the collapse of my hypothesis, I learned the difference between bones and fossils, discovered that plant roots could be bright white, and realised, after some follow-up research, that a field in Maine is not the likeliest place to find giant ancient reptiles. Most importantly, I learned that human beings advance our understanding of Nature not by becoming more right, but by slowly becoming less wrong. Today, I am grateful for the privilege of working in a field where getting things wrong is the most important part of eventually getting it right.

This is why I feel so lucky to be at ESO. After doing half of my PhD research at the Space Telescope Science Institute (the operational heart of the Hubble



Grant Tremblay

Space Telescope) and the other half in Rochester, I had dreamed of going to Europe for my first postdoc. Being from the US, an ESO Fellowship felt so out of reach. Yet in addition to building the world's greatest telescopes, one of ESO's most important gifts to the world is its perfect illustration of international cooperation toward a common goal, and of human collaboration that is blind to borders and flags. ESO welcomed me, and I now live in both Germany and Chile, and have an incredible group of friends and collaborators from no less than 27 different countries. In addition to my Fellowship in Garching, my ESO duties are performed as an astronomer in the Paranal Observatory Science Operations team, supporting UT2/Kueyen on the Very Large Telescope. Every night at the telescope, I feel like that kid in the field in Maine.

My own research uses data from the VLT, as well as the Hubble Space Telescope, Chandra X-ray Observatory, Herschel and now ALMA to study the black-hole-powered outflows of nearby radio galaxies. They are amongst the largest and most powerful objects in the Universe, and many of them are embedded in megaparsec-scale halos of ultra-hot primordial gas. The mechanical feedback associated with the propagation of these outflows amid their atmospheres exca-

vates buoyant bubbles large enough to encompass 500 Milky Way galaxies. And I thought dinosaurs were big!

I don't know where I'll end up next, but I'll always be grateful for my years at ESO. A year after my failed dinosaur hunt, I first saw the rings of Saturn through my tiny toy telescope, and it started me on the path towards becoming an astronomer. Twenty years later, thanks to ESO, I find myself writing these words in the Paranal Observatory control room, using a telescope with 12 000 times greater light-collecting area. I still haven't found any dinosaurs, but I guess I haven't stopped searching.