

ANNUAL REVIEW 2017-18



BRITISH
ECOLOGICAL
SOCIETY



STATEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT



I am delighted to introduce you to the British Ecological Society's Annual Review for 2017-18. In my first year as BES President, I have been inspired by the drive and dedication of the Society's staff and volunteers to work towards our vision of a world inspired, informed and influenced by ecology. At the core of the Society are its members and we now represent 6,000 ecologists. This membership is spread across 120 countries, meaning that the BES is a truly international society.

The science of ecology is at the heart of helping human society meet significant global challenges, such as increasing resource consumption, biodiversity loss, and on-going climate change. The work of the BES in supporting and fostering ecology, and increasing its influence and impact, continues to be vital in helping to meet those challenges.

This report provides a snapshot of some of the Society's achievements over the last 12 months. The BES does so much each year, working with members and other organisations to deliver real impact for ecology. As such, it is always a challenge to pick just a few highlights. Our Joint Annual Meeting in Gent, Belgium, in association with the European Ecological Federation. This was our biggest-ever Annual Meeting, welcoming

1,500 ecologists from Europe and the rest of the world for three action-packed days of top ecological science and fantastic networking, despite the snow. We have also fostered the establishment of two new Special Interest Groups, which bring the total to 19. They organise a huge range of activities each year from practical field-based learning to workshops and conferences. And we have expanded our social media reach by launching a BES Instagram account, which is a perfect way of sharing the excitement of ecology with a wide audience. We have also expanded our journals portfolio by launching *People and Nature*, covering research that explores the relationships between humans and the natural world.

We have increased our support for policy in the devolved nations of the UK by appointing our first-ever Policy Officer based in Scotland who is helping the Scottish Policy Group, as well as supporting ecologists in Wales and Northern Ireland. As part of our work on equality and diversity we ran our first A-Level Summer School, taking 30 students from Black, Asian and other minority ethnicity, low-income families and those first in family to consider higher education to inspire them about ecology. We have also been working hard to diversify our income by launching a wills and legacies campaign, and encouraging

individual giving to support our work in fostering the next generation of ecologists and helping ecologists in Africa.

We have gained a great deal from being co-located with like-minded organisations for almost 10 years in Charles Darwin House. Sadly, the decision has been taken to dissolve that partnership and the BES will be on the move in 2019 to new headquarters somewhere in central London. However, we hope that move will give more opportunities for the BES to welcome members and the broader community to our new home. We will keep members posted on developments.

I hope that the stories you will read about in this review will show how the BES is a thriving learned society, championing the science of ecology, its application, and our members. We are about to embark on the development of a new 4-year strategic plan, so please take up the many chances that you will get over the coming months to share your ideas and help shape the future of the BES.

As I come to the end of my first year as President of the BES, I am really proud of what we have achieved together. I hope you will be inspired to get involved in our work and become the inspiration for some stories in next year's annual review.

Professor Richard Bardgett

OUR VISION, MISSION AND MAJOR GOALS

We have a long and proud history of successfully supporting the academic ecological community and this remains core to our future. However, we also work hard to ensure that ecology has an impact across wider society through our work in policy, education and public engagement. This Annual Review showcases some of our achievements across all our key strategic goals in 2017-18.

Our vision is:

A world inspired, informed and influenced by ecology

Our mission is:

To generate, communicate and promote ecological knowledge and solutions

Our major goals are to:

- Generate, synthesise and exchange ecological knowledge
- Communicate world-leading ecological science
- Share the excitement and relevance of ecology
- Inspire, engage and recognise talent
- Build a sustainable, resilient and efficient BES

WE GENERATE, SYNTHESISE AND EXCHANGE ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE



BES SYMPOSIUM: SECURING OUR NATURE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

More than 220 policy officials, practitioners, and natural and social scientists, gathered for the first conference jointly organized by the UK conservation agencies and the BES to set a new direction for nature conservation in the UK. The event was a huge success, with a great line-up of speakers, but it was 14-year-old Dara McAnulty who stole the show, giving his view from the next generation “We’re not lost, we just haven’t been found yet!”

NEW SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

In 2018, we were pleased to welcome two new Special Interest Groups (SIGs): The Palaeoecology Group and the Invasion Science Group. We now have 19 SIGs, run by members of our community, which provide a focus of activity in specific areas of ecology and organise meetings and events throughout the year. Attend a SIG social at the Annual Meeting to see how you can get involved!



INVASION SCIENCE



PALAEOECOLOGY GROUP

ECOLOGY HACKATHON IN GENT

At the Joint Annual Meeting in Gent, *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* brought together Special Interest Groups from all three participating societies in a 1-day hackathon to solve R challenges involving ecological data that were crowd-sourced ahead of the meeting via Twitter. The hackathon was very popular – and so were the challenges, especially one aiming to translate R error messages into simple English, i.e. more intuitive responses for beginners. Amazing what ecologists accomplish when they get their laptops together!



BES POLICY FELLOWS

The first two BES/ Defra Policy Fellows completed their fellowships in 2018. The Fellowship provides the Fellows with a greater understanding of the science-policy interface and promotes partnerships between academics and policymakers at the heart of government. Bethan O’Leary (University of York), developed case studies to support the UK’s report to the CBD, and the evaluation of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy. Deepa Senapathi (Reading University), helped to develop a framework for evaluating the Biodiversity 2020 strategy.



WE COMMUNICATE WORLD-LEADING ECOLOGICAL SCIENCE

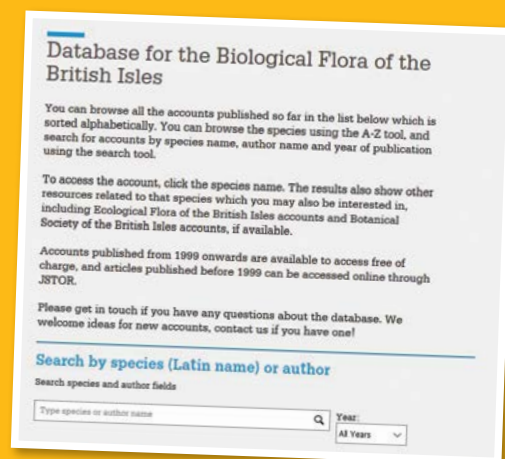


SUPPORTING AUTHORS AND REVIEWERS WITH PUBLICATION WORKSHOPS

The publications team have been out and about at events offering support for authors. Our workshops provided advice on getting published and peer review at three BES Special Interest Group events and gave Summer School Undergraduates an introduction to journal publishing. We ran workshops and chaired a panel discussion at three international conferences in Finland and the USA.

JOINT ANNUAL MEETING: ECOLOGY ACROSS BORDERS

Our Joint Annual Meeting in Gent, Belgium, organised with the Gesellschaft für Ökologie and NecoV and in association with the European Ecological Federation, was our biggest ever, welcoming 1,500 ecologists from Europe and the rest of the world. We packed a lot of top-quality ecological science, fantastic networking and quite a bit of fun into three very busy days despite the snow.



LAUNCH OF THE BIOLOGICAL FLORA OF THE BRITISH ISLES DATABASE

Journal of Ecology launched a database of all papers in its Biological Flora of the British Isles series dating back to 1941 and covering 348 species. The database makes the accounts more discoverable, linking directly to the papers on Wiley Online Library (1999–present) and JSTOR (1941–1998). Articles in this series describe the ecology of plant species found in the UK and often include unpublished work that would normally be inaccessible to field ecologists.

LAUNCH OF PEOPLE AND NATURE – A JOURNAL OF RELATIONAL THINKING

This year the 6th BES journal *People and Nature* opened for submissions. Led by Editor-in-Chief Kevin Gaston and Lead Editors Kai Chan, Robert Fish, Rosemary Hails and Cecily Maller, the journal is open access and publishes work from across research areas exploring relationships between humans and nature. We are excited by both the number and quality of submissions we have received so far and we look forward to publishing our first issue in 2019.



WE SHARE THE EXCITEMENT AND RELEVANCE OF ECOLOGY

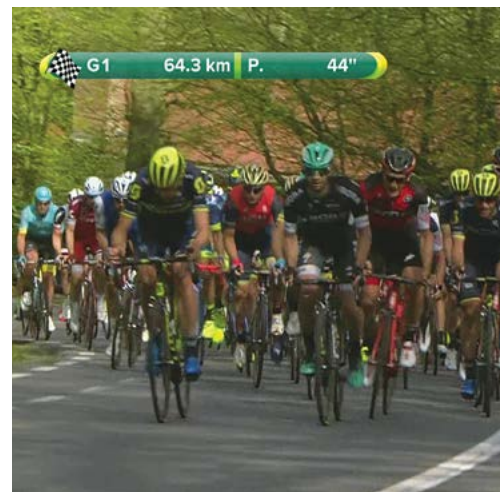
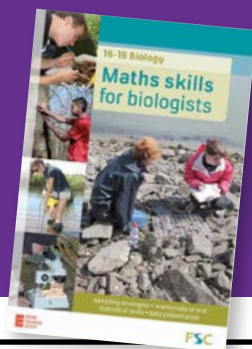


BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW: THE NATURE OF FOOD

In partnership with the N8 Agrifood Resilience Programme, the BES brought ecology to the record 100,000+ attendees of the BBC Good Food Show with the only science stall present this year. BES members developed interactive activities communicating the important role of ecology in providing the food on our plates, and future-proofing our food in the face of environmental challenges. The show was a first foray into public engagement for many members, but left people inspired to do more.

MATHS IN BIOLOGY RESOURCE

In collaboration with the Field Studies Council, a 12-page guide to 'Maths skills for biologists' was produced, which was sent to every Science department in schools in England and Wales, with copies to all FSC Field Centres and further copies to be sent out on request. The resource gives an overview of sampling strategies, mathematical and statistical skills and data presentation, with the aim to increase confidence in maths relevant to ecology.



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EXCELLENT PRESS COVERAGE FOR PAPER INVOLVING THE TOUR OF FLANDERS

A study in *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* took advantage of TV broadcasts by VRT of an annual cycling race to quantify impacts of climate change on tree leafing/flowering. A highly successful BES press story, the paper was covered globally by 80+ newspapers, news sites and broadcasters. The author was interviewed on the BBC 'Science in Action' programme and Dutch radio and 380 tweets reached a potential 1.4 million followers.

POLICY IN THE DEVOLVED NATIONS

Nature conservation is a devolved issue and policy positions need to reflect the different legislative, ecological, economic and cultural circumstances of each country in the UK. Although nature does not respect political borders, the BES Policy Team does! Looking to build on the success of the Scottish Policy Group, we hosted a meeting in Cardiff exploring similar models in Wales and Northern Ireland. We look forward to building those groups next year, largely involving pies and pints!



WE INSPIRE, ENGAGE AND RECOGNISE TALENT

BES INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY OF ECOLOGY

We launched a brand-new Instagram account. Focusing on sharing the excitement and relevance of ecology with new audiences, the page already features many beautiful images celebrating Ecology. This also provides a perfect platform to showcase the incredible images submitted into our annual photographic competition: *Capturing Ecology*.



A-LEVEL SUMMER SCHOOL

We took 30 students from Black, Asian and other minority ethnicities, low-income families and those first in family to consider higher education to Margam Park in South Wales. This fully funded week-long residential course aimed to inspire young people to pursue ecological careers.

REGARDING NATURE: ECOLOGICAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION FUNDED BY THE BES

Each year we fund 12 Outreach grants which are designed to promote the science of ecology to a wider audience. In 2018 this award funded an exhibition on landscape change and plant photography of the North Norfolk coast, by artist Chrystel Lebas. Alongside this, a series of events engaged audiences and participants with talks by the artists, curators, and scientists on the study of the historical and current ecological and environmental change along this coastline.



WOMEN IN ECOLOGY MENTORING SCHEME

The Women in Ecology mentoring scheme provided benefits for 60 members in mentoring pairs from 25 countries. Mentoring training was provided for both mentors and mentees with mentoring pairs continuing for 6 – 12 months. The impact of the scheme was captured by a mentee's quote "it was wonderful being able to speak openly to someone further on in ecology about the things that worried me and things that interested me, getting another perspective on how to achieve my goals".



WE ARE BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT AND EFFICIENT BES

IN-HOUSE BULLETIN EDITOR

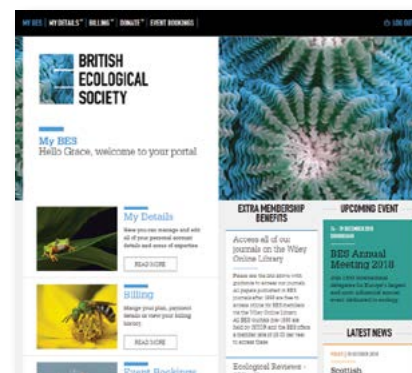
We have brought the *Bulletin* Editor role in-house. Since then, the production schedule and budget have been revised and its content redesigned to cement the magazine's role as a vibrant channel of communication between the BES and our members. In response to members' feedback for a more environmentally conscious publication, we have removed the plastic wrap and reduced the size and weight of the paper. The magazine in its new format will relaunch in December 2018.



**6,000 MEMBERS
IN 120 COUNTRIES**

WILLS, LEGACIES AND DONATIONS

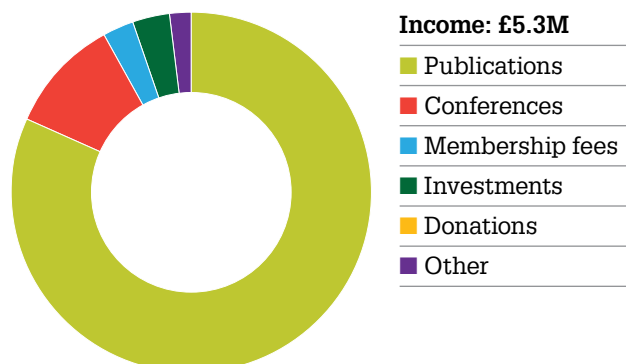
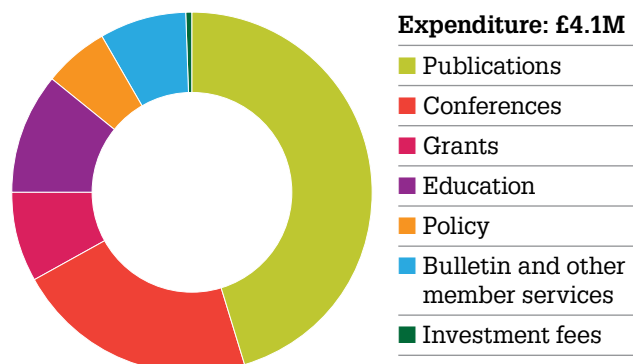
To diversify our income streams we launched our first online wills campaign at farewill.com/BES. This has secured an estimated £62,000 in legacies to the BES in just a couple of months. We have also developed a campaign for individual giving in support of our work fostering the next generation of ecologists and helping ecologists in Africa.



MEMBERSHIP PORTAL

We have launched our new Members portal! Members can log in to update their details, renew their membership and register for our events. We hope this will be a platform we can continue to develop, allowing our members to get the most out of their membership.

IN 2017, £4.1 MILLION WAS SPENT FOSTERING ECOLOGY. HERE'S HOW WE SPENT THE MONEY...



Our members are at the core of all we do. They underpin and enable all our work, getting involved at all levels from delivering our public engagement and reviewing grant applications, to strategic development of our journals and helping the Society to widen its reach and inclusivity. The success of the BES is testament to their commitment and hard work. A special thank you to all our loyal members and all our staff, volunteers and trustees for their valued support.



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