

ATTENDING YOUR FIRST BES ANNUAL MEETING

**BRITISH
ECOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**



First time at our Annual Meeting? Here are some tips and advice to help you get the most out of your first major ecology conference.



PREPARATION

Join our 'An Introduction to the BES Conference' webinar

On Tuesday 22 October we will be holding a short free webinar to talk you through the main things to look out for in the programme as well as hints and tips on planning for the meeting.

Ease your dress code concerns

We don't have a dress code at our Annual Meeting. It's a casual conference, so be comfortable and wear something you feel confident in. Layers are always good as you can never tell what temperature the conference centre might be! And comfortable shoes are a good idea.

Use social media

Follow #BES2019 on Twitter in the lead up to see what's on and who else might be going. You might want to send a tweet from your account asking if there are any others attending for the first time and arrange a meet-up!

Plan your conference

The programme will be online via the conference app a couple of weeks in advance. Take some time to look through what's going on and add the things you are interested in to your schedule.

Arrange meet-ups in advance

The app allows you to see who else is attending and send them a message – so if you want to plan some meetings before the event starts, this is a great way to do it. During the conference, it's also a good way to set up meetings with speakers in case you didn't get a chance to ask your question during their talk.

Old school pen and paper

Pack a pen and paper (or pick up free ones from the BES stand when you arrive). You never know when your laptop might run out of battery and having a pen and paper to hand will be a lifesaver in these situations.



CONFERENCE SURVIVAL KIT

- Paper & pen
- Phone/laptop
- Chargers/power bank
- Name badge with tickets
- Snacks and a (reusable) bottle of water
- Tissues
- Lip balm/hand cream/hand sanitiser
- A jumper/scarf
- Christmas jumper!

AT THE CONFERENCE

Make your first event our Fresher's Function Meeting!

We are putting on a pre-welcome mixer for those who are attending our Annual Meeting or any conference for the first time or attending on their own. It's the perfect opportunity to meet others and share tips before heading into the main welcome mixer.

Remember you are not alone

Our Annual Meeting attracts a lot of students that are attending their first large conference, so you are not alone - remember this when you feel like you are the only one. Also consider how appreciative you would feel if someone in the same position came and said hello to you - so if you see someone standing alone, try going over and saying hi.

Choosing a session

Sessions that relate to your work are useful to go to, but don't be afraid to break away and go to a session that stands out. This could lead to new knowledge and you might find out about new research or methods that apply to your work.



Don't forget the workshops

Workshops are not only a great way to develop skills, but are also a natural way of networking as you will often be working in groups with people you haven't met before.

If you are tired, it is OK to take some time out

Our Annual Meeting is packed with science and fun, which is great, but you don't have to do it all. Remember it's OK to take some time to re-energise, go back to your hotel for a nap, go for a walk, or call someone outside of the conference. This is time well spent too.

Use the quiet room and informal seating areas

We always provide a quiet room at the conference venue for anyone who wishes to have some time out to think or reflect. There are also areas outside of the main exhibition hall with seating, where you can spend some time away from the hustle and bustle.

Keep fed and hydrated

Get a good breakfast each day and make sure you bring some snacks and a bottle of water in your bag, just in case you need a bit of energy between breaks.

Get some sleep!

It can be easy to end up a conference zombie on the last day. You might find it's a good idea to have one quieter evening during the conference and get a good night's rest.

Stay safe in the city

New cities can be daunting. If you are worried about travelling on your own, consider booking a hotel close to the venue. If you are heading to an organised social that is outside of the conference centre, the group will meet at the registration area first to travel together. We also provide recommended taxi numbers in the programme.

NETWORKING

Talk to speakers

We pride ourselves on being an inclusive and friendly conference, but it's not easy to go and talk to a speaker. Before you do, taking some time to think about how you will introduce yourself and what questions you might ask will make you feel more confident. Look at it from their point of view, you'd feel pretty happy if someone came up to you to tell you how great your talk was.

Meet the plenary

After each plenary lecture, we invite PhD students and early-career researchers to come to our Meet the Plenary sessions. This is a great chance to meet our speakers in a smaller more informal setting to ask your questions.

Speak to BES staff

All BES staff come to our Annual Meeting because it's important for us to meet the ecology community. We're all very friendly and work in different areas of the BES, so if you're feeling a bit overwhelmed head to the BES stand for a chat or take part in our popular 'Draw your study organism'!

Attend a social or fringe event

We have a variety of social events on during the week, so there should be something for everyone. Our 19 Special Interest Groups arrange meet-ups, we have events from our LGBT+ and Accessibility Networks, our popular Science Slam, and we also organise a morning fun run!

Keep track of your contacts

Keep a clear record of contact details to follow up with after the conference. It's very easy to lose business cards, so note the details down and keep them somewhere safe.

Get involved on Twitter

The hashtag for the conference usually trends on Twitter, with delegates live tweeting from sessions, asking questions, and sharing photos. Get involved, start conversations, you'd be surprised how many people have built professional relationships and friendships that started on Twitter!



ELEVATOR PITCH

An elevator pitch is a quick synopsis of your background and experience and is a great way to start conversations.

- Name
- Where you work
- What you are working on
- Who you work with – supervisor
- Be prepared with a couple of questions to ask back

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Organise your notes

Give it a week and your notes, if you can read them, will make no sense! Write them up as soon as you can so you can make full use of them.

Follow up with contacts

You have successfully done the hard part and made connections at the conference, so make sure you maintain this and get in touch soon after.

Share your experience

You have made it through your first large conference and hopefully had a great experience. There are bound to be others anxious about their first conference, so why not share your experiences? You could do this on a Twitter thread or consider writing a blog.

**If you have questions about any of our events, please do not hesitate to get in touch:
events@britishecologicalsociety.org**