

100 YEARS OF THE BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Julie Hodgkinson
Festival of Ecology Manager
British Ecological Society

At the British Ecological Society's golden jubilee symposium of 1964, JB Cragg wrote that "science is essentially an art from in which a handful of inspired pioneers set the pace". The pace of academic ecology in Britain was undoubtedly set by the founders of the British Ecological Society, the world's first academic ecological society.

In the late 19th century naturalists began not only to record what they saw but to try and explain the patterns and distribution of what they encountered and the environment in which they existed. In 1904 the British Vegetation Committee was set up to review, conduct and establish a methodology for vegetation surveys. The impetus behind this Committee and its work led to the establishment of the British Ecological Society on 12 April 1913. This first meeting launched the world's first academic ecological journal, the *Journal of Ecology* to its 100 members. Since then the Society has expanded and now publishes five internationally peer reviewed journals, runs educational and policy programmes, grants and meetings and provides a supportive network for over 4,000 members.

The Society's centenary was inspired by the words of the first president, Sir Arthur Tansley FRS, in that first issue of the *Journal of Ecology*, that the aim of the new Society was to "foster and promote in all ways the science of ecology". The Society has been doing this for the past 100

years and the centenary is a chance to highlight the work of the Society and academic ecologists across the world.

POLICY

On 25 June 2013 the Society will be launching the latest in its Ecological Issues series entitled *The impact of extreme events on freshwater ecosystems*. The series takes a topical policy-relevant issue – in this case, the consequences of extreme floods and droughts on rivers, lakes and ponds – and provides a general introduction

publication shows how the scientists of the past influence the scientists of today and how the science of ecology has developed.

FOR SCIENTISTS

Ecology covers many diverse scientific disciplines, a series of cross disciplinary meetings were held across the UK in the spring on a variety of topics. These were the *Marine Ecology Centenary Symposium*, in Edinburgh, *Global change and biosphere interactions* at the University of York and

... great success in producing wall charts for schools ...

to the ecological science behind it. It is aimed at non-specialists and is a good example of our work in communicating the science of ecology to policymakers.

JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS

One hundred eminent ecologists were asked to nominate the paper from the Society's journals that they felt most influenced themselves of the science of ecology. This has culminated in the publication of *100 Influential papers published in 100 years of British Ecological Society journals*. The

Evolutionary ecology of infectious diseases at the Society's offices in London. Nearly 300 scientists attended the meetings.

INTECOL is the International Ecological Association which hosts a major international scientific meeting every four years in partnership with a national ecological society. From 18-23 August 2013 this meeting will come to London. There will be over forty symposia on cutting edge ecological research, over twenty workshops on policy, public engagement or skills development and eleven world

... themed events nationwide for all the family ...



class plenary lectures. Currently around 2000 delegates from across the globe are registered to attend the meeting.

FOR THE PUBLIC

Engaging the public in an appreciation and understanding of the science of ecology is a fundamental part of the

centenary. From 15 June to 4 August 2013, the Society will be celebrating with its first Festival of Ecology. In partnership with over sixty organisations, the Festival includes over 120 ecological themed events nationwide for all the family. Events range from a celebration of urban trees in Manchester to a bee survey across the north

east, learning more about the habitats of Wales, to exploring the marine ecology of the Scottish Islands, ecological workshops from Newtownabbey to Kent as well as exhibitions, talks, activities and walks. Partners include institutions such as the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts to international museums such as the National Museum of Wales to universities and small volunteer led institutions.

The Society had a garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May 2013 on the topic of alien species and which of these had been introduced since 1913. Over 2000 people came to the stand to learn more about the science of ecology.

EDUCATION

The Society has had great success in producing wall charts

for schools and non formal learning groups. These charts highlight certain ecological issues and show the relevance of ecological science across many different disciplines. The wall charts are *Food, food and more food* focusing on food security, *The competition for life on earth* which is concerned with the ecology of pests and disease, *How diverse is life on earth?* on the diversity of organisms and *Is there life beyond earth?* which shows how extreme environments on earth can tell us about extreme environments in other worlds. The charts were accompanied by a series of competitions. Over 32,000 charts have been distributed.

The Centenary celebrations are only just beginning, for more information please go to festivalofecology.org



Copyright Buglife