

May 2024

Dear readers, the newsletter team will be taking a summer break before returning with the next edition in July 2024. In the meantime, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your readership.

This newsletter provides links to published news articles, preserving the original title and summary line. Views or opinions presented are those of the original author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Royal Society of Biology.

News

RSB news

[Over 100 members attend the 2024 AGM with Charter Lecture given by Professor Dame Melanie Welham FRSB](#)

The RSB 2024 [Annual General Meeting](#) took place online (due to train strikes) on Wednesday 8th May and included updates from the RSB chief executive, approval of the 2022-2023 finances, appointments to the RSB Council, and this year's Charter Lecture.

[Winner of Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year 2024 announced at HUBS](#)

The Royal Society of Biology has named Dr Carys Watts, Senior Lecturer in Enterprise and Director of Engagement at the School of Biomedical, Nutritional and Sport Sciences at Newcastle University, winner of the Higher Education Bioscience Teacher of the Year Award 2024.

[Higher education institutes receive Accreditation for their outstanding bioscience degree programmes](#)

Over 50 bioscience programmes at more than 20 higher education institutions were formally awarded degree accreditation by the Royal Society of Biology at the 2024 Accreditation Awards Ceremony in Westminster. This year's event was held on Thursday 25 April 2024 in the Terrace Pavilion, House of Commons.

Plant health and biosecurity

Government makes next set of crucial changes to improve biosecurity at UK's trade border

This Government press release reports on new changes to the way the UK imports food, animal and plant products in order to improve biosecurity.

Battle against pests and pathogens stepped up with new funding for national tree health laboratory

This Government press release reports on funding for a new £4 million research and containment facility at the UK's Forest Research Alice Holt Research Station in Surrey as part of plans to improve UK biosecurity and tackle emerging threats to tree health.

The optics of pest insect invasions

A new study shows that Hi-tech optical sensors in fields could provide an effective means of monitoring beetle numbers arriving in oilseed rape (OSR) fields, reports Rothamsted Research.

Upside down and bolt upright: Aphid aerial acrobatics revealed

A state-of-the-art camera with high frame rates and high resolution has shown the flight dynamics of two aphid species in unmatched detail for the first time, reports Rothamsted Research.

Plant sensors could act as an early warning system for farmers

The Global Plant Council highlights research which has developed sensors that detect plant signalling molecules, thereby revealing when crops are experiencing too much light or heat, or attack from insects or microbes.

Plant breeding

Tales across time from the Plant Tree of Life

Kew Science highlights the latest milestone in its Tree of Life Initiative, which aims to sequence the DNA of as many flowering plants as possible and build a definitive plant tree of life stretching back to their origin.

Making crops colorful for easier weeding

To make weeding easier, some scientists suggest bioengineering crops to be colorful or to have differently shaped leaves so that they can be more easily distinguished from their wild and weedy counterparts, reports this Science Daily article.

Opinion: Heat is coming for our crops. We have to make them ready

Writing for the Conversation, Mohan Singh and Prem Bhalla, Professor of Agri-Food Biotechnology and Professor of Crop Biotechnology at the University of Melbourne, discuss the need to develop new varieties of crops more tolerant to changing weather conditions as a result of climate change.

Agriculture

Government ensures long-term certainty for food labour needs

This Government press release details plans to tackle labour shortages in the food supply chain, fund technology to reduce the reliance on migrant labour, and provide certainty and clarity for farms and other food businesses across the UK.

Food security

Biofortified maize could help to reduce vitamin A deficiency in Zimbabwe

Encouraging smallholder farmers to adopt maize varieties high in vitamin A could make a major contribution to reducing stunting and childhood blindness in rural Southern Africa, according to a new study highlighted by Rothamsted Research.

Essex University builds lab to develop climate-resilient plants

A new laboratory where researchers aim to develop climate-resilient plants to ensure food security has been built at the University of Essex, reports BBC News.

Biodiversity and conservation

No Mow May: councils urge Britons to put away lawnmowers

The Guardian reports that forty local authorities will leave some grass verges and parks uncut as part of the annual wildlife-friendly event.

Forestry

Scientists discover forests that may resist climate change

The Global Plant Council highlights a study exploring forests that experience “cold-airpooling,” a phenomenon where cold air at higher elevations drains down into lower-lying valleys, reversing the expected temperatures—warm at the bottom, cold at the top—that typically occurs in mountainous areas.

Business and industry

Opinion: The importance of translating plant science into practice

Writing for NIAB, Professor Mario Caccamo, NIAB CEO, discusses the importance of translating plant science into practice, the lessons learnt from NIAB’s journey over the past 20 years and the UK’s fragmented approach to applied crop science.

How the humble coconut is starting to fuel parts of Papua New Guinea

Coconut biodiesel offers a cheaper alternative to fuel imports and scientists in the Pacific country are looking at how to use it more widely, reports the Guardian.

Sustainability

World Bank calls for sharp increase in investment to halve agrifood emissions

Euractiv reports on a study by the World Bank arguing that money invested in cutting agrifood emissions should increase 18-fold and reach around €240 billion per year if we want to halve emissions and put the world on track for net zero emissions by 2050.

Carbon capture cropping

NIAB's Lydia Smith, Stuart Knight and Jasmine Toole discuss the Centre for High Carbon Capture Cropping - a NIAB-led multi-partner project that began in 2023.

Opportunities

Plant Health Professional Register

Those working in plant health are encouraged to apply for the RSB's Plant Health Professionals Register, which was created in partnership with Defra to recognise individuals with skills and experience that align with the current Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain. You are also invited to join our Plant Health Professionals LinkedIn network where you can explore and share job opportunities, events and more.

John Maddox Prize nominations 2024

Nominations for the 2024 John Maddox Prize are now open for researchers who are standing up for science and advancing public discourse. More information can be found on this website.
Closes: 20 May 2024

The Royal Society of Biology (RSB) Apprentice of the Year award

The Royal Society of Biology (RSB) Apprentice of the Year award is now open for applications. The award celebrates apprentices and recognises their contribution to their teams and the wider bioscience community. Any apprentice currently on a level 3+ bioscience-based apprenticeship, or who has completed a bioscience-based apprenticeship in the last 12 months, is eligible to apply. To find out more and apply, please visit the RSB website. Applications close **24th May 2024, 12:00 (BST)**.

RSB Outreach and Engagement Grant Scheme 2024 will open to applications on 4th June

The RSB Outreach and Engagement Grant Scheme will open to applications from RSB members wanting to create local community, schools and, or families engagement events, activities or resources to be run between 7th October 2024 and 30th May 2025. To include **Biology Week** which will take place from **7th - 11th October 2024**. Grants of up to £1,000 are available for individual members of the Royal Society of Biology to run an event or activity in their region (anywhere in the World). Please see further details and a link to the application process online from **4th June** until the application deadline **1st July 2024**. For enquiries, please email Dr Amanda Hardy.

International Exchanges

International Exchanges grants from the Royal Society provide support for scientists based in the UK to stimulate new research collaborations with leading scientists overseas. Grants can cover either a one-off short visit to explore opportunities for building lasting networks or bilateral visits to strengthen emerging collaborations.

Closes: 5 June 2024

Signs of Spring Survey

The Royal Society of Biology is working in partnership with the Field Studies Council to invite everyone to look out for ten **Signs of Spring** across the UK - bluebells, bumblebees, butterflies, daffodils, damselflies and dragonflies, frog spawn, hazel catkins, ladybirds, snowdrops and the first cut of the lawn and to **add your sightings to our survey**. Please take part to record when you first notice these signs of spring near you as the year progresses. We are asking what you saw, when, where and what the weather conditions were when you saw this sign of spring. The survey will remain open until **17th June**.

Photography Competition 2024

Transforming Life' is the theme of this year's **Royal Society of Biology Photography Competition**, which is now open to entries. All amateur photographers are invited to enter up to three photographs on the theme of Transforming Life. There are two age categories in the competition; 18 year olds and over, and under 18s. Read more online and submit up to three images through the **competition's webpage** by **20th June** by following the link to the competition's entry page.

BioArtAttack (2D) 2024

The Royal Society of Biology's **BioArtAttack (2D) 2024** is now open to entries. The competition is a 2D art drawing and painting competition for 7 – 18 year olds to draw or paint your favourite animal, plant or fungi. Prizes include £50 for winners and an invitation to take part in an experience day event at the **Royal Veterinary College**. The deadline for entries is **30th June**. Visit the Royal Society of Biology's **website** for more information and to enter your painting or drawing. Competition news posters for school's labs or classes are available as a **tiger** poster for the BioArtAttack 2D competition and an **axolotl** for the Nancy Rothwell Prize 2024. Teachers can **download a free lesson plan** to help your students prepare their artwork.

Consultations

Consultation on proposed reforms to the regulated products authorisation process

This joint Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) consultation concerns initial proposals for legislative reform to streamline the authorisation process for regulated products. Regulated products are food and feed products which require authorisation before they can be sold. These include food additives, flavourings, novel foods, GMOs as food and feed, food contact materials and feed additives.

Closes: 5 June 2024

Research Excellence Framework 2029 open access consultation

The four UK higher education funding bodies are opening a consultation concerning the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 Open Access Policy. The proposed policy aims to embed progress in the sector for open access submission for journal publications. It also introduces an open access requirement for longform publications. They invite responses from any organisation, group or individual with an interest in research or scholarly publishing.

Closes: 17 June 2024, midday

RSB Policy Resource Library online

The RSB has created a searchable, digital library of more than 800 statements, responses, briefings and other policy resources produced by the RSB and our Member Organisations across the biosciences. This collection is freely and openly accessible to everyone, including members and non-members, through the [mySociety portal](#) (no registration necessary).

Events

How Policy is Shaped by Natural Capital

28 May 2024

14:00 - 15:15

Online via Zoom

This event, organised by the Natural Capital Initiative (NCI) will explore how different areas of policy are informed and shaped by Natural Capital. Natural Capital is an essential component in various areas of policy making, and its understanding and protection can be critical in the successful implementation of these policies.

Plant Health Series: Summer conference 2024

6 June 2024

10:00 - 15:45

Online via Zoom

As part of the Royal Society of Biology's Plant Health Series, this symposium will involve lectures and short flash talks from a range of professionals within the industry. There will also be opportunities to engage with different members of the plant health community, and build bridges across the many disciplines within this sector.

Planting Resistance: Botanical Legacies of the African Diaspora

28 May 2024

18:00 - 20:00 (including reception for attendees after)

Lady Lisa Sainsbury Lecture Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Jodrell Gate, Kew Road, TW9 3DS

At this event, as part of the British Academy's flagship lecture programme, Judith Carney considers how the expansion of industrial agriculture across tropical landscapes threatens food systems.

Plant Pathology 2024 and Early Careers Plant Pathology 2024

10 September 2024 - 13 September 2024

Mathematical Institute, University of Oxford, Radcliffe Observatory, Andrew Wiles Building

The BSPP invites you to register for Plant Pathology 2024 (#PPATH2024), the main annual meeting of the British Society for Plant Pathology. The first two days of the main meeting will feature open sessions based on submitted abstracts, presentations from our invited speakers, the RKS Wood Prize lecture, PH Gregory Prize session and the J Colhoun Poster Prize. ECPP2024 will run alongside the event, a chance for early career researchers to network, gain experience and share their work.

And finally...

[Thousands of tulips in bloom for festival](#)

Over 18,000 tulips of 130 varieties are on display at a festival in East Yorkshire, reports BBC News.



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