

April 2024

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News

RSB news

[Plant Health Undergraduate Studentships 2024](#)

Bioscience undergraduates can now apply to the Royal Society of Biology's paid summer research projects. Successful applicants will receive a stipend of £380 per week and gain great research experience working with leading plant health researchers on 8-10 week placements. Twelve research projects are available, based in various institutions across the UK. Details of the projects, eligibility and links to apply can be found on the [studentships webpage](#).

Closes: 21 April 2024

[RSB partners with CWP to present 'Biology for a Better Tomorrow'](#)

RSB is partnering with Content With Purpose (CWP) to produce a wide-ranging digital series celebrating the wonder of biology and its critical role in sustainable development.

Plant health and biosecurity

[First Phoma leaf spot resistance to azole fungicide found in Western Europe](#)

Rothamsted Research reports that the fungal species that cause Phoma leaf spot and stem canker in oilseed rape are showing decreased sensitivity to some chemical controls, sparking concerns for growers in Western Europe.

[Progress towards forest bug control](#)

NIAB's Francis Wamonje and Scott Raffle outline how a research project is developing new knowledge to improve the management of forest bugs in orchards.

Plant breeding

[Biofortified rice to combat deficiencies](#)

This Science Daily article highlights research which has developed a rice line with enhanced Vitamin B1 content, potentially solving a major public health problem in regions where rice is the staple food.

UK plant breeders to benefit from online research tools

The Earlham Institute highlights a project which looks to put research tools in the hands of plant breeders, providing access to genomic resources to accelerate the development of more resilient and climate-resistant crops.

Sweet success: Sugarcane's complex genetic code cracked

This Science Daily article highlights research which has managed to successfully map out sugarcane's genetic code.

Agriculture

Government ensures food production remains primary purpose of farming

This government press release reports on the introduction of new measures to limit the amount of land farmers can take out of productive actions under the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI).

Glyphosate ban could lead to difficult trade-offs

Rothamsted Research reports on a study showing the impact of a glyphosate ban. Whilst the environmental risks associated with this herbicide would be eased, alternative approaches to weed control had mixed outcomes for the environment, food production and profitability, although some show potential benefits.

Better phosphorus use can ensure its stocks last more than 500 years and boost global food production – new evidence shows

The Global Plant Council highlights a study showing that more efficient use of phosphorus could see limited stocks of the important fertiliser last more than 500 years and boost global food production to feed growing populations.

Researchers publish dataset of over 6,000 policies from all over the world

Researchers from the University of Bonn and the Swiss Federal Institution of Technology (ETH) Zurich have published a database containing over 6,000 agri-environmental policies, providing advice to peers, policymakers, and businesses, reports the Global Plant Council.

Food security

Farmers warn 'crisis is building' as record rainfall drastically reduces UK food production

Farming groups have said that record-breaking rain in recent months has drastically reduced the amount of food produced in the UK, reports the Guardian.

Biodiversity and conservation

Rural community green spaces to be rejuvenated through new government investment

This government press release reports that a new Community Green Spaces Fund will provide up to £7 million of funding to support communities across the country to create, restore and enhance their green spaces.

[**New network to integrate biodiversity in the financial system**](#)

UKRI reports that a research and innovation programme that will embed biodiversity into the financial system has launched a network and hub to deliver its second phase.

[**Shade-grown coffee demonstrates the benefits of combining agriculture and conservation**](#)

The Global Plant Council highlights a study showing that increasing shade cover over coffee plants can increase biodiversity and provide new ways to combine agriculture and conservation.

[**Scientists predict the extinction risk for all the world's plants with AI**](#)

A new study has predicted the extinction risk of all 328,565 known species of flowering plants, reports the Global Plant Council.

Forestry

[**£20m available in eighth Woodland Carbon Guarantee auction**](#)

Farmers, foresters and other land managers are now encouraged to apply for the Woodland Carbon Guarantee scheme ahead of the eighth auction, which will take place online from 23-29th September, reports this government press release.

[**Tropical-forest destruction has slowed — but is still too high**](#)

Loss of pristine tropical forests slowed last year — but the world is still falling far short of a global goal to end deforestation by 2030, reports Nature News.

[**New maps help decision-makers factor albedo into tree-planting decisions**](#)

This Science Daily article highlights research which analysed where restoration of tree cover is most effective at cooling the global climate system, considering not just the cooling from carbon storage but also the warming from decreased albedo (the ability of surfaces to reflect sunlight).

[**Tropical forests can't recover naturally without fruit-eating birds**](#)

This Science Daily article highlights a study showing that when wild tropical birds move freely across forest landscapes, they can increase the carbon storage of regenerating tropical forests by up to 38 percent.

[**Five ways that Kew is helping to restore Madagascar's dry forests**](#)

Writing for Kew Science, senior spatial analyst at the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens, Jenny Williams, explains the 5 key ways Kew is working to restore Madagascar's dry forest areas.

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)**.

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

Climate change and security

The Environmental Audit Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the interaction of climate change and security issues and the UK Government's approach to anticipating, preventing, and responding to the security threats posed by climate change.

Closes: 29 April 2024

Engineering biology inquiry

The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee is conducting an inquiry into engineering biology. The committee will explore engineering biology's potential, particularly in delivering UK economic growth through commercialisation and for improvements to public services, which areas of engineering biology the UK is well placed to exploit and where additional support may be needed, and the ethical, regulatory and safety implications of rapid developments in the field.

Closes: 7 May 2024

Consultation on fairer food labelling

The UK Government, the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive are jointly publishing this consultation which seeks views on proposals to improve transparency and consistency through improved country of origin, and animal welfare labelling in the UK.

Closes: 7 May 2024

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

Building a new woodland

27 April 2024

10:00 - 12:30

Low Burnhall Wood, South Rd, Durham DH1 3TX

This event, by the RSB Northern Branch, will involve a guided walk around Low Burnhall Wood, Durham, to find out about the Woodland Trust's work to establish a new woodland.

Royal Society of Biology Annual General Meeting 2024

8 May 2024

11:00 - 14:00

Online

The RSB 2024 Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 8th May, and will include a Charter Lecture by Professor Dame Melanie Welham FRSB, RSB Council member, and presentation of the Trustees' Report and Accounts.

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.

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...

'Otherworldly' plant blooms for first time in decade

BBC News reports that people are being invited to see a *Puya alpestris* plant that has taken 10 years to bloom.



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