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International Network of Next-Generation Ecologists
@INNGEcologist

Many ecological societies have some form of network for early-career ecologists such as students or post-docs. In contrast, there has never been an international platform where this demographic can communicate globally. The International Network of Next-Generation Ecologists (INNGE¹) was created with this broad goal of increasing opportunities for and communication among early-career ecologists.

Left; Peter Søgaaard Jørgensen
Right; Thomas H. G. Ezard



Initiated by PhD students and post-docs involved in ecological societies, INNGE aims not to replace membership of ecological and evolutionary societies, but instead to connect and empower young ecologists to explore ideas from disparate influences to question established ecological norms. We believe that such diverse approaches are important for ecology, particularly at a time when making our science relevant for policy and management has never been more crucial. Following from this motivation, INNGE has focused on a set of emerging areas including open-science, higher education reform, the ecological sustainability crisis, and use of new communication and networking technologies. We call this combined focus on connecting early-career scientists and on the future of the ecological discipline, Next-Generation Ecology.

NEXT-GENERATION ECOLOGY

Now you might be thinking, “well that all sounds good, but how has this vision unfolded in reality?”. Since launching two years ago, our major focus has been on establishing a viable infrastructure. This has required a creative process to find a suitable format for an international bottom-up network. However, this has not stopped INNGE from starting a couple of next-generation projects to facilitate discussion. EcoBloggers² is an attempt to aggregate the online blogging debate within ecology, and counts the celebrated *Journal of Ecology* blog among its contributors. One way of connecting early-career ecologists is to provide better conditions for following online debate, which is often spread over many sites; the benefits for the

bloggers are an increased readership. EcoBloggers works as an RSS-feed, collecting the posts from blogs spread around over web. After four months, EcoBloggers is currently fed by around 20 blogging sites with the hope to grow this over the coming months and years. Please get in touch if you have a blog that you feel contributes to the global ecological debate.

Communication is a two way street, obviously, and international networks provide one way to survey the ecological community. In late 2012, INNGE launched a survey of ecologists’ experience and skills within mathematics, statistics and programming. The survey was relayed through the major list-serves in Europe and North-America and achieved close to 1000 participants. The responses relayed a general dissatisfaction with mathematical, statistical and quantitative training in early career ecologists, particularly from postgraduate levels and above. With such wide spread dissatisfaction, we argue for better integration of mathematical training in ecology teaching. Finally, we highlight a next-generation project to of initiate interdisciplinary dialog between ecology and economics. To this end INNGE recently partnered with the Institute for New Economic Thinking – Young Scholars Initiative (INET YSI) with plans including online webinars and on ground events to identify common needs.

REFERENCES

- ¹ <http://innge.net/>
- ² <http://innge.net/?q=ecobloggers>

Get involved

There are several ways to get involved in INNGE: we are currently formalizing INNGE as a network based on member institutions, such as ecological societies, who can appoint a number of early-career representatives. These representatives constitute the core of the network, and putting yourself forward is a great way to get to meet enthusiastic young ecologists from around the world (and some “more experienced” ones, too). In addition social media provide a natural means for nearly global interaction in the 21st century; we’re on Twitter at @INNGEcologist and have a Facebook page, too. Any ecologist is free to pitch a project to INNGE and to get involved with carrying it out. We therefore close with a call for students, post-docs and other early-career ecologists to bring out those crazy ideas for how ecology could look in the future. There will be a number of INNGE events at INTECOL 2013 in London (more details in the next *Bulletin*), so contribute to the debate and shape Next Generation ecology in your image: INNGE is a novel opportunity to give your ideas wings.