

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/Conference Title:** British Ecological Society – Ecology Across Borders: Joint Annual Meeting 2017

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**Travel Dates:** 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> December 2017

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**Location:** ICC Ghent, Belgium

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**Group member(s):** John L. Godlee

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**Aims:**

- 1) Conduct a Coding Club ([ourcodingclub.github.io](http://ourcodingclub.github.io)) workshop to inform others of methods to effectively create and broadcast teaching materials for programming and statistics.
- 2) Learn about emerging research in the field of Biodiversity-Ecosystem Functioning, and more widely, Ecology.

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### OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The BES annual meeting is the largest gathering of ecologists in Europe and serves as an important platform for demonstrating cutting-edge research within the field of Ecology. In total, ~600 talks, ~500 posters and 16 workshops were presented, with an attendance of ~1500 people across a full spectrum of academic disciplines and institutions.

I participated in the conference by jointly running a workshop as part of 'Coding Club' ([ourcodingclub.github.io](http://ourcodingclub.github.io)), a University of Edinburgh teaching initiative to improve statistics and programming literacy amongst students and staff in the life sciences. The workshop served to introduce the Coding Club model for developing interactive teaching materials and methods to publish them online, and also provided a forum to discuss issues that have occurred in other Coding Club style study groups. Through this workshop and others, Coding Club is hoping to develop a network of study groups that can share resources and expertise to improve understanding of statistical programming. As a result of the workshop, all participants achieved their goal of publishing a functioning tutorial online. This style of conference workshop is the first that I have organised and provided me with valuable experience of how to engage effectively with a diverse group of people, and to manage limited time.

By attending this conference, I also formed many ideas that will contribute towards my own PhD research. As I am currently in the throes of deciding the direction my PhD will take, the conference came at an opportune time to inspire my future work. By engaging with other academics at the conference I made many connections that may be useful in the future as sources of data, or potential fieldwork collaborators.

Sessions of relevance to my research included those on "Ecosystem and Functional Ecology: Species & Community Traits" and "Global Change Ecology: Habitats, Distributions & Range Shifts". In particular, talks detailing methods to model tree line dynamics in the Arctic provided me with inspiration on how I could create models to predict woody encroachment of different communities of southern African savannah tree species, which also exist along tree line gradients.