

CAPOD Funding Report

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Event /Course Title	Ecology Across Borders
Date of event	11-14 th of December 2017

1. Brief description of Event (50-100 words):

This was an ecology conference of all the main ecology societies of Europe, including the British Ecological Society. I attended two workshops as part of this conference. The first workshop was an Early Career Careers day, where I heard many speakers and took part in activities to give me a better idea of how to be employable in Academia. The other workshop I attended was an Introduction to Bayesian Statistics using STAN in R. This was a coding-based tutorial explaining basic concepts and usage of Bayesian analysis.

2. What were the benefits of attending and what did you gain from the experience in terms of transferable skills and knowledge.

During the careers workshop I improved my networking skills by taking part in a networking exercise with other workshop attendees. This included a selection of breaking the ice topics that are a safe bet at a conference. I also learnt where to search for grants for further research, and tips for successful grant applications.

During the Bayesian workshop, I learnt what prior assumptions are, how they affect models, and how to pick the best ones. Flat priors are apparently the worst because then your model is no better than a frequentist model. I also learnt about and used some R packages that allow you to use STAN (a language for coding Bayesian models) in R (the language I am most familiar with). This is very useful because the ability to use STAN in R is a skill which many research positions require.

3. What actions will you be taking as a result of attending or by making new networking contacts.

I signed up to an online service that will send me emails every time a selection of journals publish new work. This helps me keep on top of the literature.

I will use some of the networking conversation points if I need when in other networking events. Generally, I do not have too much trouble networking, but having a selection of conversation starters to fall back on makes me feel more confident that I can avoid awkward silences.

I have installed the STAN in R packages, and intend to undertake some future analysis in Bayesian models.

4. Can you share any additional resources produced in connection with the event (e.g. feedback from participants, training resources, website links, and additional materials).

[Biosciences careers blog](#): is written by Sarah Blackford includes invaluable links for research grants, as well as support to help you develop your careers and build your CV

Books we were recommended

Jacqueline Aldridge & Andrew Derrington: The Research funding toolkit. ISBN: 9780857029683
Angelika Hofmann . Scientific Writing and Communication - Papers, Proposals, and Presentations. ISBN: 9780190278540

Aysha Divan. Communication Skills for the Biosciences - a graduate guide. ISBN: 9780199226351
[Making the right moves](#) – includes a chapter on grant writing mainly for US but generic ideals are relevant.

Pam Denicolo. Achieving Impact in Research. ISBN. 9781446267059

5. Tips/experience learned from the event

Networking:

- don't start a conversation immediately about work. This should follow once you have developed some rapport
- if in doubt, open with things like "so have you travelled far?", "isn't the weather {insert appropriate description}", or "how are you finding the conference catering?"
- be friendly to everyone, and chat in the coffee que and on the conference trips. You never know who you will meet and how they will affect your future

grant applications

- you need a strong narrative throughout your application
- put everything that needs to be said in the first page, then flesh it out later. Often people only read the first page

job applications

- do not just repeat your cv in your cover letter. Instead this is where you bring up any additional points that you think warrant attention. It is also where you show your character and your enthusiasm
- do not be afraid of applying for positions you don't think you quite fit
- quality over quantity with publications. Employers are often looking for building momentum in early career researchers, not huge list of papers

6. Any additional comments or information regarding the event

These workshops were quite varied, but all the skills and knowledge I developed from them fit well into my long term career plan to get remain in ecological research.