



NW European IUSSI Newsletter: January  
2020

## The #Wasplove game



*Contributed by Seirian Sumner*

Unless you work on bees/pollinators/pesticides, you will probably empathise with the anxiety I feel when asked to justify (to funders, the public, and even other scientists) the ‘impact’ of the science I do, which honestly has no immediate impact on society and wellbeing. In the ‘Pathways to Impact’ part of our NERC grant on wasp genomics and major transitions, we took the bold move to state explicitly that this grant will have no impact of immediate relevance to society and wellbeing. Instead, we said we’d make a computer game to help people learn more about the amazing lives of social wasps. The WaspLove game went live a couple of weeks ago (unlike the papers, which are taking a bit longer!): it’s open source for anyone to play at [wasplove.com](http://wasplove.com). It’s loosely based on a *Polistes dominula* nest – and we tried to include some of the main traits of these societies; e.g. seasonal constraints; the need to build up your worker force before you can produce sexuals; risks of foraging; range of nest predators and parasites; brood tending; trade off in nest expansion vs brood care; workers can lay eggs, but you soon learn that these don’t survive and so carry a cost. It went a bit crazy on social media, with players (from kids to PhD students to dedicated gamers) reporting it as “dangerously addictive” and that you should “expect hours of your life to disappear”! The developers are the fabulous Amber and Dave at [Fo.am](http://Fo.am), who work with scientists to produce computer-based solutions for research, communication and outreach (consider working with them!). They are based in Cornwall and, thanks to their connections, the Wasplove game is also now installed as a permanent interactive at the Eden Project. But if you’re not in Cornwall, then have a play [online](#); share the #wasplove with your friends, colleagues and families!



1 - :(

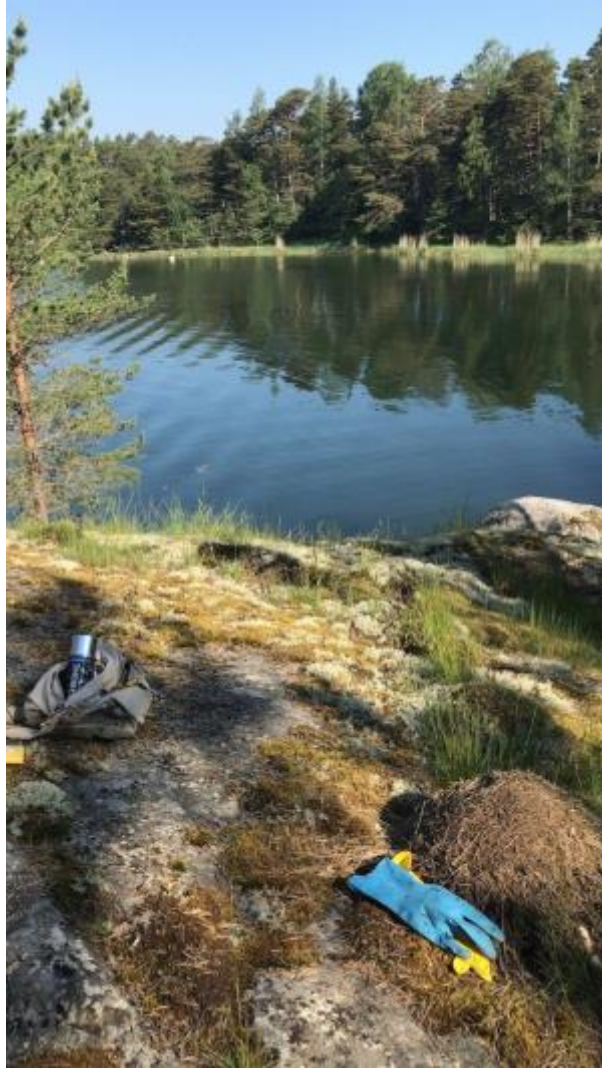
## Tales from the lab: Emma Vitikainen (Uni Helsinki)



After taking a break from ants to work on the banded mongoose in Emma Vitikainen is back in Helsinki, and excited about her new position as the acting Professor of Ecology at the Organismal and Evolutionary Biology research programme. Emma is setting up her own lab, as well as continuing to work on the long term study of the ant *Formica exsecta* with Lotta Sundström.



2 - Emma hanging out with her study population



*3 - The view from one of the islands during field work. Formica exsecta mark/recaptures are done using a glove which the ants attack (bottom right) for easy collection.*

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## Current job opportunities



**Current vacancies on the section web site:** <http://www.iussi.org/NWEurope/vacancies.htm>:

[PhD: Transmission dynamics and disease defences in ants \(University of Bristol, UK\)](#)

[PhD: Thermal Adaptation in Native Australian Bees, Monash](#)

[The London NERC Doctoral Training Partnership](#)

Do you have Ph.D. or Postdoc positions coming up? Email nbos [at] bio.ku.dk and we will add them to the newsletter. We also run the INSECTSmal mailing list, which distributes information about job and studentship opportunities, meetings, courses, and calls for information about social insects. See more on the section website: <http://www.iussi.org/NWEurope/INSECTSmal.htm> and send any information to be included (or subscription requests) to INSECTS [at] bio.ku.dk.

Looking for pictures!



We would like to enrich the newsletter with lots of social insect pictures. If you have pretty pictures to share, please send a link to [nbos \[at\] bio.ku.dk](mailto:nbos@bio.ku.dk) and they might just be used for the next newsletter. Credits will be given of course!

[Questions? Contact Us!](#)

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please mail to [nbos \[at\] bio.ku.dk](mailto:nbos@bio.ku.dk).