



NW European IUSSI Newsletter: October 2023

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Forward by Section Secretary



Welcome to the October 2023 edition of the NW EU Section IUSSI Newsletter!

This is also our first newsletter in quite some time, for which I apologise. Going forward, I would like to produce these more regularly, but to do that it would be excellent to have more contributions from the membership. Specifically, we would like to regularly publish lab news, exciting research outputs from our section, and anything else that might be interesting to our readers, such as book reviews, social insects in the news etc.

In this edition, we have updates about our Annual Section Winter meeting, which is being hosted by Christoph Grueter and colleagues at the University of Bristol, information about the upcoming 2024 European meeting in Lausanne (symposia submission closes soon!), and we are launching a 3-year membership! Other items include updates about our society journal and reminders about our mailing list and Facebook page.

If you want to contribute to the newsletter, please email me at: [secretary.nweu.iussi\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:secretary.nweu.iussi[at]gmail.com)

Annual Section Winter Meeting at Bristol



We are happy to announce this year's Annual Section Meeting will be hosted by our colleagues at the University of Bristol. The meeting will last two days and have the usual line up of excellent talks, posters, networking, and social insect chat!

Conference information

Programme

More information will be released nearer the time.

Conference Dinner

There will be a conference dinner on Monday evening (18th December), involving a buffet menu at the Orangery at Goldney Hall, Bristol.

Photo competition

There will be a social insect themed photo competition and entries can be uploaded [here](#).

Plenary speakers

Our plenary speakers will be [Dr Adria LeBoeuf \(University of Cambridge\)](#) and [Prof Francis Ratnieks \(University of Sussex\)](#). We very much look forward to hearing about their work!

Abstract submission and registration

Abstract submission is now live with a deadline of the **20 October 2023**.

Registration is now live with a deadline of the **24 November 2023**.

There are multiple in-person, remote, student and ordinary membership options, so please check the website for more information.

[Website](#)

More information about the meeting, such as location, accommodation options, and abstract/registration can be found on the dedicated meeting website [here](#).

2024 European IUSSI meeting Lausanne



The European meeting of the IUSSI will take place in Lausanne, Switzerland in 2024. The meeting will include three and a half days for scientific sessions, plenaries and posters, a half day for excursions in the region, a welcome reception, and a banquet on the final evening. The lead organiser is Cleo Bertelsmeier (President of the French IUSSI section) and is being hosted by the University of Lausanne.

Conference Dates

7-11th July 2024

Conference Website

More information about the conference can be found on at the conference website [here](#).

Symposia Submission

Submissions for symposia are still open until 15 October 2023.

More information on how to submit symposia can be found on the website of the conference [here](#).

New 3-Year Membership Options



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The option for multiyear memberships has been raised numerous times in the last few years and we are happy to announce we will now offer both 3-year student and ordinary membership options.

Benefits

The benefit of a multiyear membership includes members not having to remember to pay their dues every year, the section will have more stable membership numbers (as people usually pay at the end of the year), and there is a small saving by choosing the 3 year option.

Cost

- 3 year student membership = £25
- 3 year ordinary membership = £55

How to sign up

We are launching the 3-year membership as part of this year's Winter Meeting registration options but you can also sign up directly via our section website [here](#).

Insectes Sociaux Updates



Insectes Sociaux is the society's journal and is published by Springer. It covers the various aspects of the biology and evolution of social insects and other presocial arthropods; these include ecology, ethology, morphology, population genetics, reproduction, communication, sociobiology, caste differentiation and social parasitism.

*Our current Editor in Chief is **Madeleine Beekman**, who started her tenure early this year.*

More information about the journal can be found [here](#).

Engagement

Engagement with *Insectes Sociaux* is important as it is our major source of funding for the Society. If the journal doesn't publish enough papers, our income goes down, and the number of student travel grants we can give for conferences will decrease. This means that there is a direct incentive for us to submit to and review for *Insectes Sociaux*, and to actively encourage others to do so.

Special Issues

Insectes Sociaux is now publishing Special Issues, which are a great way to generate engagement and interest around a particular topic and to boost the impact of the journal. An ideal special issue includes Perspectives/Opinion/Commentary papers, theoretical, and empirical contributions but there is no 'rule'.

There are three Special Issues that are either currently inviting or will soon invite contributions:

Special Issue on "The overlooked biodiversity of ant associates"

This special issue welcomes reviews and articles highlighting the important role of ants as a source of biodiversity for a wide range of associated organisms (other than ants), and how nest micro-habitats and/or ant behavior promote this biodiversity.

Submissions open: 1 September 2023

Submissions close: 15 May 2024

Special Issue on Sociable arthropods: Broadening conceptions about social insects

This Special Issue welcomes reviews and articles highlighting how and why our knowledge of social arthropods with different life histories and origins of sociality.

Submissions open: 27 March 2023

Submissions close: 1 December 2023

Special Issue on Successes and Challenges in Social Insect Conservation

The focus of this Special Issue is on concerns and advances related to the conservation of social insects, be it at the molecular, organismal, or ecosystem level. Submitted research and review papers may deal with any area directly related to this topic.

Submissions open: 13 March 2023

Submissions close: 1 August 2023

More information on Special Issues can be found [here](#).

Best Paper of 2022

Every year *Insectes Sociaux* bestow a Best Paper Award on one of its published works, which is chosen by the Editorial Board.

The winner this year was "Social insect colony size is correlated with rates of molecular evolution" by Rubin, published in *Insectes Sociaux* volume 69, pages 147–157 (2022).

You can read the paper [here](#)!

INSECTSmail and Facebook Page



INSECTSmail

For many years, David Nash (Webmaster) has run a very popular and informative mailing list for social insect researchers (around 650 subscribers). The purpose of this list is to make announcements about:

- Forthcoming meetings, workshops and seminars relevant to social insect research
- Job vacancies and studentships in Social Insect research
- Other information that social insect researchers might want to distribute (e.g. requests for specimens or information)

It is an excellent resource and we wanted to make new members aware of it and remind current members to utilise it when searching for new recruits/job vacancies. Job adverts are best sent to INSECTSmail rather than Secretary, who generally only sends emails to the membership about section news and updates. Please make sure to include any deadlines in the information, and send it in plenty of time to be included in the next message (ca. 6 weeks in advance if possible).

Facebook Page

In addition to the mailing list, David also runs the section Facebook page and posts many of the same information contained in the mailing list there as well. Sometimes because of tight deadlines jobs etc will be posted on the Facebook page before the mailing list goes out, so it is worth signing up to both.

If you would like to subscribe to INSECTSmail, please send an e-mail asking to join, and giving your name and e-mail address, to: INSECTS@bio.ku.dk. This e-mail will then reach David, and he will add your e-mail address to the list of those who will receive mailings.

You join the Facebook page [here!](#)

A link to several exciting vacancies can be found [here!](#)

A link to upcoming relevant meetings can be found [here!](#)

Two postdocs: Insect Sentience, Queen Mary University of London

Application deadline: 11 October 2023

Two Postdoctoral Research Associate positions are available at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) on the Open Philanthropy-funded project: Addressing key evidence gaps in the science of insect sentience.

Are insects sentient? The question is urgent. Insect farming is on the rise, presented by its supporters as a creative solution to the problem of feeding the world while combating climate change—but feared by critics to be an animal welfare catastrophe. Recent work on bees (emotion-like states and cognitive biases, play behaviour, cross-modal object recognition, interval timing, metacognition and motivational trade-offs based on memories) points to a capacity for conscious experiences in these insects. There is fragmented evidence across insects to indicate there may be a substantial risk of pain-like experiences in some species. Nonetheless, one of the perceived advantages of insect farming is that there are (supposedly) no ethical concerns. Globally, trillions of insects are slaughtered annually by methods such as microwaving, baking or boiling without anaesthesia; many are simply starved to death.

The successful candidates will work under the supervision of Profs Lars Chittka (QMUL) and Jonathan Birch (LSE) to explore the question of sentience, and its ethical implications, in two commonly farmed insects, black soldier flies and house crickets.

About You

Candidates should have a PhD (or close to completion) in Biology, Psychology, Neuroscience or a similar field. Experience with behavioural tests, video analyses, statistics and data evaluation are essential, as is a track-record of high quality publications. Self-motivation, ability to work as part of a team and excellent research management and presentation skills are essential.

About Queen Mary

At Queen Mary University of London, we believe that a diversity of ideas helps us achieve the previously unthinkable.

Throughout our history, we've fostered social justice and improved lives through academic excellence. And we continue to live and breathe this spirit today, not because it's simply 'the right thing to do' but for what it helps us achieve and the intellectual brilliance it delivers.

We continue to embrace diversity of thought and opinion in everything we do, in the belief that when views collide, disciplines interact, and perspectives intersect, truly original thought takes form.

Benefits

We offer competitive salaries, access to a generous pension scheme, 30 days' leave per annum (pro-rata for fixed-term), a season ticket loan scheme and access to a comprehensive range of personal and professional development opportunities. In addition, we offer a range of work-life balance and

family-friendly, inclusive employment policies, flexible working arrangements, and campus facilities, including an on-site nursery at the Mile End campus.

The posts are based at Mile End campus. They are full time (35 hours per week), fixed term for 2 years, with an expected start date of January 2024. The salary is Grade 4/5 in the range of £37,182 - £44,722 per annum, inclusive of London Allowance.

Informal enquiries should be addressed to Prof Lars Chittka via: l.chittka@qmul.ac.uk

For further details and to apply for the role, please

visit: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/jobs/vacancies/items/8935.html?fbclid=IwAR1jQi5m4X-xrqGOs8snqNSIWUYybmbugG09rlcikw1Z6y-VjPbu-GFxS8uQ>

The closing date for applications is **11 October 2023**. Interviews are expected to be held shortly thereafter.

Postdoctoral Research Assistant: Cognitive Control of Invasive Ants, Regensburg, Germany

No specific deadline, but please apply as soon as possible.

2 year post-doc position: Developing and field-testing novel approaches to invasive ant control

We are looking for a postdoctoral researcher to bring our ERC-funded project 'Cognitive Control' to fruition.

The aim of COGNITIVE CONTROL is to gain fundamental insights into collective cognition and apply them to the emerging global challenge of invasive animal control. Invasive ants are ecologically devastating, economically damaging, and almost impossible to control. Ants are protected physically and by social immunity. However, their cognitive abilities are almost universally ignored, and offer novel angles of attack.

Over the last three years, we have identified some simple interventions which may improve invasive ant control methods. This includes adding psychoactive ingredients to baits to reduce foraging round-trip time, and psychological manipulations like strategic odour use. The aim of this post-doc is to bring these methods from the lab into the field, running large scale baiting experiments in Spain, within a national park heavily impacted by invasive Argentine ants. We plan to deploy toxicants in alginate hydrogel beads, with and without the addition of psychoactive or psychological manipulations, in order to compare the effect of adding these manipulations to control efficacy. The post-doc will be responsible for working out the details of the large-scale field experiments, managing the student staff hired to help with the fieldwork (working closely with our colleagues in Spain), take part in the fieldwork and data collection, analyse the results, and write any resultant manuscripts in collaboration with the rest of the project team. In addition, outside the fieldwork season, the post-doc will work on bringing similar manipulations to controlling pest ants in buildings, in collaboration with our industrial partner.

The position is set to start in January 2023, but we will continue searching until a suitable candidate is found.

Candidates require:

- a PhD in Biology, Zoology, Conservation, or a related field
- excellent written and spoken English

- experience in organising projects

Also advantageous are:

- experience carrying out field trials, especially pest or invasive insect control trials
- an EU-valid driver's licence
- some knowledge of Spanish

For more information, or to apply, contact Dr Tomer Czaczkes (tomer.czaczkes@ur.de). For more information about the lab, visit our website: www.animal-economics.com. Applicants should send: their C.V., a personal statement of motivation, and the contact details of at least one previous supervisor willing to provide a letter of reference.

The successful candidate will be employed at full time researcher rates for Germany (§ 2 Abs. 1 WissZeitVG, TV-L E13, 100%), c. 4100-6000 euro gross per month depending on years of qualifying experience.

Note: This advertisement is not legally binding. The official advertisement (German only) may be found at <https://www.uni-regensburg.de/universitaet/stellenausschreibungen/lehre-forschung/index.html>. But be warned: it won't be very informative.

Postdoc: The origin of sociality in Hymenoptera, University of Exeter, Cornwall

*Application deadline: **23 October 2023***

A 3 year full time NERC-funded postdoctoral position is available to starting during January 2024 in the research group of Professor Jeremy Field, based in the Centre for Ecology & Conservation, University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus, UK (https://ecologyconservation.exeter.ac.uk/staff/profile/index.php?web_id=Jeremy_Field). The successful applicant will be part of an exciting and novel project using UK-based field experiments and molecular work to test the roles of trade-offs and plasticity in the origin of sociality in Hymenoptera (wasps, bees and ants). There could also be comparative, theoretical or transcriptomic work depending on how the project develops and on the interests and aptitudes of the postholder. The Centre for Ecology & Conservation (<https://ecologyconservation.exeter.ac.uk/>) provides an environment that is exceptional on a world scale for conducting research in evolution and ecology, including several large research groups that focus on social evolution and ecology in insects, vertebrates and microbes.

Applicants will possess a relevant PhD or equivalent qualification in evolutionary/behavioural ecology or a related field of study. Candidates who will have submitted their PhD thesis before the job start date but not yet had their viva will also be considered. The successful applicant will be able to work collaboratively and supervise the work of others such as field assistants. They will have excellent data analysis skills, enjoy fieldwork and will possess a driving licence that is valid in the UK. While the postholder is expected to already have some of the skills required for the work, they will be able to obtain training and advice in areas where they lack experience.

The closing date for completed applications is **23 October 2023**. Interviews are provisionally expected to take place during 9-10th November 2023. The latest possible job start date is 1 February 2024. Applications from both UK and non-UK citizens are welcome. For full details, including how to apply, enter the job reference number (R87175) as a Keyword in the University of Exeter job search engine

at: https://jobs.exeter.ac.uk/hrpr_webrecruitment/wrd/run/etrec105gf.open?wvid=3817591jNg (or <https://jobs.exeter.ac.uk/>)

Informal enquiries to: j.p.field@exeter.ac.uk

Postdoc : Protein evolution in the course of evolution of social complexity, Münster / Frankfurt

Application deadline: 15 December 2023

The candidate will investigate the genomic basis of convergent slave-maker evolution in ants, a system which has already dazzled Darwin and where one species exploits the social system of their host species. Both diverged from a recent common ancestor. The three independent origins of slave-making in the nine investigated closely related species (of which we avail high-quality genomes) allows investigating specific predictions with regards to these fascinating evolutionary phenotypic changes and associating these to genomic changes. The PostDoc position will be based in Münster (Bornberg group) or Frankfurt (Feldmeyer group) and closely linked to another project (Foitzik group in Mainz and Heinze group in Regensburg) which aims at functionally testing some of the candidate genes which have already been identified or will be identified in this project. Tenure will be for 3 years.

Related publication: Feldmeyer, B., Gstöttl, C., Wallner, J., Jongepier, E., Séguret, A., Grasso, D. A., Bornberg-Bauer, E., Foitzik, S., & Heinze, J. (2022). Evidence for a conserved queen-worker genetic toolkit across slave-making ants and their ant hosts. *Molecular Ecology* **31**, 4991–5004. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mec.16639>

For more details of the position, please see https://www.uni-muenster.de/Rektorat/Stellen/ausschreibungen/st_2031509_sk15.html

We look forward to receiving application (to ebb.admin@uni-muenster.de) by **15 December 2023**. Anticipated starting date is flexible within the first half of 2024.

Postdoc: the molecular regulation of learning and forgetting in ants, Mainz, Germany

Position is open until filled, but may start as early as July 2023

An 18-month postdoctoral position is available at Johannes Gutenberg Mainz, Germany, starting from **1 July 2023** (or later). The work will be carried out in the research group headed by Dr Susanne Foitzik and in collaboration with Dr Inon Scharf (Univ Tel Aviv, Israel) and Dr Romain Libbrecht (Univ Tours) and is funded by the DFG (German Science Foundation). Extension of position might be possible.

Context: The proposed project aims to investigate the molecular underpinnings and fitness consequences of spatial learning in the context of foraging in *Cataglyphis* ants. Experiments on the influence of epigenetic regulators on the ability of foraging ants to learn and forget their way through a maze were conducted by our collaborative team in Israel. The task of the postdoc is now to analyze the transcriptional basis and epigenetic changes underlying these cognitive performances.

Prerequisites: PhD and demonstrated experience through publications in the field of evolutionary biology, molecular genomics and bioinformatics. Interested candidates should apply by sending (1) a letter of motivation, (2) a CV with publication list and (3) the names, institutions and email addresses of three references to Susanne Foitzik at foitzik@uni-mainz.de. The Position is open until filled, if interested send a short email announcing your interest to apply.

The North-West European section generally covers the U.K. and Ireland, plus the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), with some members from Belgium and The Netherlands. All of our business and meetings are conducted in English. Benefits of membership include section newsletters throughout the year, the annual Winter meeting, eligibility for students to apply for meeting travel grants from the section, and discounts on the meetings of the international IUSSI.

If you would like to join the section, please click [here](#).

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please send them to
secretary.nweu.iussi[at]gmail.com