

EXEC'S CORNER

ECT welcomed [Danae Dodge](#) as our new part time Communications Officer from the 1st February on a 2 year 0.5 FTE contract. Danae has been working on our new look quarterly newsletter- *Ben*

OUR NEWS

Previous webinars are being added to [our YouTube](#). Subscribe to be notified when they are available. Our upcoming event is [Martin Lester's webinar \(National Trust\)](#), which is on the 30th March. If you are an Amazon customer, [by shopping via Amazon Smile](#) you can get Amazon to donate to the ECT. See the new webpage for [Newborough Warren](#) and listen to the [podcast interview with Laurence Jones](#). [2 new Small Grants have been awarded](#) to Kris Hart (Birmingham) and Katy Faulkner (Warwick). [Grant ceilings have now been raised](#) to £3k for standard grants and £5k for site maintenance for 2021 only.

Please get in contact if you have any information for the website or newsletter, or if you wish to submit a blog.

LTE SITE NEWS

NEW WEBPAGE: COLT PARK MEADOWS



ECT welcomed the new site Colt Park Meadows to the network, and with it [a new ECT webpage](#) in February.



PARTNERSHIPS: INTRODUCING THE SUSTAINABLE SOILS ALLIANCE

The [Sustainable Soils Alliance's](#) (SSA) goal is to see UK soils restored to health through sustainable management. Healthy soils are critical for clean water, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and food supply. But a third of the world's soils are degraded with potentially catastrophic consequences. Unlike other environmental issues, there is no coherent policy framework for soil at national or devolved level. Regulations are inadequate. There is no long-term soils monitoring, and investment in soil education is minimal. This is where the SSA steps in: The SSA aims to raise soil's political profile, and establish a think-tank to devise solutions to challenges to develop a soils policy. Changes occur slowly over time. Therefore, data availability is critical for understanding the trajectory our soils are on, and the effects of land management changes. For this reason, the SSA is very interested in the ECT's work, and looks forward to working with it and its members.

PEOPLE

A NEW POSTDOC JOINS THE RAINDROP TEAM

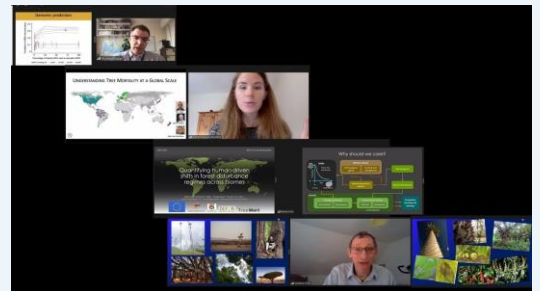
[The RainDrop experiment](#) has received a competitive grant to use autonomous robotics for ecological monitoring. Led by [Rob Salguero-Gómez](#) and in collaboration with [Andrew Hector](#) and [Nick Hawes](#) this grant provides support for the robotics engineer and ecology postdoc [John Jackson](#). He will develop this technological pipeline to assess grassland health. They will be testing how autonomous robots can help in the acquisition, AI digitalisation and integration of field data into ecological models. This will be used to help us understand how natural grassland communities may fare before climate change simulated droughts.

See the RainDrop experiment on the [Oxford Sparks YouTube channel](#).



EVENTS

BIFoR-FACE 5TH ANNUAL VIRTUAL COMMUNITY MEETING



Several of our speakers provided diverse, engaging and thought-provoking talks. Photo Credit: Dr Rosalind Noble, British Society for Plant Pathology

The Birmingham Institute of Forest Research ([BIFoR](#)) held its 5th Annual Meeting on the 27-28th January 2021. The focus was on pests, disease and their impacts to trees. Between sessions, PhD students displayed posters of which there were 22 in total. Delegates navigated through a network of 'break-out rooms' allowing attendees to Zoom in and ask questions. Over 300 people attended, joining from all around the world. They were from academic institutions, the third and private sectors, and community group stakeholders. This year's event clearly indicated to the institute's management that the demand for future annual community meetings must branch out to include virtual ones to reach the global audience, pandemic or no pandemic!

