

EDITORIAL

The Forest of Biologists – biopositive publishing with Journal of Cell Science

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Earlier this year, we announced our biodiversity initiative – The Forest of Biologists. As part of this initiative, we've been planting a new tree (in the [Young People's Forest at Mead in Derbyshire, UK](#)) for each Research Article and Review article published in Journal of Cell Science (JCS). And to acknowledge the efforts of our peer reviewers, we're helping to protect the trees in a piece of ancient woodland (at [Great Knott Wood in the Lake District National Park, UK](#)). To keep track of our progress on this new biodiversity initiative, all these real trees are being represented together in a virtual forest (<https://forest.biologists.com>).

Almost a year on, we are delighted to say that the initiative has been enthusiastically welcomed by the JCS community (see [Box 1](#)). The journal has already contributed just over 250 new trees to The Forest of Biologists in its first year. By the end of the year, we predict we will also have contributed to the protection of ~1000 trees. To catch up on progress, we decided to revisit the two woodland sites, taking with us a film unit so that we could capture and share these two beautiful locations, their trees and the biodiversity around them.

Planting new trees for JCS authors

Planting at the Young People's Forest is transforming the site (see video at <https://youtu.be/CaZ-aalPiVU> and [Fig. 1](#)), formerly an open cast coal mine, into new native woodland. We're working in partnership with [The Woodland Trust](#), the UK's largest woodland conservation charity, to ensure that this important work is done in a rigorous and sustainable way. John Tucker, Director of Woodland Creation at The Woodland Trust, explained that young people have been involved at the site since the outset. This has provided valuable hands-on experience, both in planting the new trees and also in helping to determine the future direction for the forest, nurturing a passion for biology and environmental stewardship.

The Young People's Forest features a strong mix of native UK tree species, which fosters biodiversity and bolsters the resilience of this new woodland. Guards against voles have done their job in protecting the saplings from damage and the new trees are thriving. As we revisited the site, we found that the silver birch saplings, a strong pioneer species, had grown the tallest and will soon start to provide important shade for the other trees and plants. Grasses and other plants were already at waist height in some areas, and we saw a multitude of insects from flies and grasshoppers through to bees and dragonflies. Skylarks – classified in the UK as Red under the Birds of Conservation Concern – are one of the species now nesting at the site, and we saw buzzards flying overhead.

Box 1. Feedback from our authors, reviewers and readers about The Forest of Biologists initiative

Safia Mahabub Sauty

I just came across [@For_Biologists](#) and I can't believe how extraordinary this initiative is! Making science accessible while simultaneously preserving the environment? Yes, please! Check out the plants [@Co_Biologists](#) planted for their published articles.

Liver Growth and Cancer Lab

Can [@Co_Biologists](#) do no wrong? What an awesome initiative. For every paper or review article published in their journals they plant a tree in the Young Peoples Forest, Mead as part of the [#Iwill](#) campaign to promote youth social action. [#ScienceInAction](#) [#moralpublishing](#) 🌱🌲❤️

Halyna Shcherbata Lab

Super Bio-Positive publishing initiative [@For_Biologists](#) where you get a tree planted at Young People's Forest at Mead as a thank you for publishing a paper. Super cool. We love it.

Dr Agathe Chaigne

Fantastic biodiversity project from [@Co_Biologists](#)! 🌱

Laura Machesky

Replying to [@For_Biologists](#) and [@WoodlandTrust](#)
Really excited about this and can't wait to submit our next paper!

DacksLabECB

The [@For_Biologists](#) initiative reminds me that good people still do good things for good reasons.

Thank you.

Protecting trees in ancient woodland

Ancient woodlands are some of the most biodiverse habitats in the UK. Great Knott Wood is a beautiful woodland full of mature trees and self-seeded saplings. The stones are covered with a variety of mosses and there are lichens and fungi all around. Again, we're working with The Woodland Trust to help protect this site ([Fig. 2](#)). John Tucker confirms that "correct management is really vital in terms of issues such as managing light levels and removing inappropriate species – this is vital so that we can counteract biodiversity loss and ensure the preservation of these vital habitats for future generations." Great Knott Wood is a home for the iconic red squirrel as well as roe deer and red deer (although the deer are known to nibble the self-seeding saplings).

Making an impact with your science

The initial proposal for The Forest of Biologists came from Steve Kelly, Professor of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford (and previously Editor-in-Chief on our sister journal *Biology Open*). "The idea was to do something really simple," he explained, "what if every paper that we published just made one tiny contribution to improving biodiversity or fighting against climate change. Because then, if you took all the papers that we publish and put them together

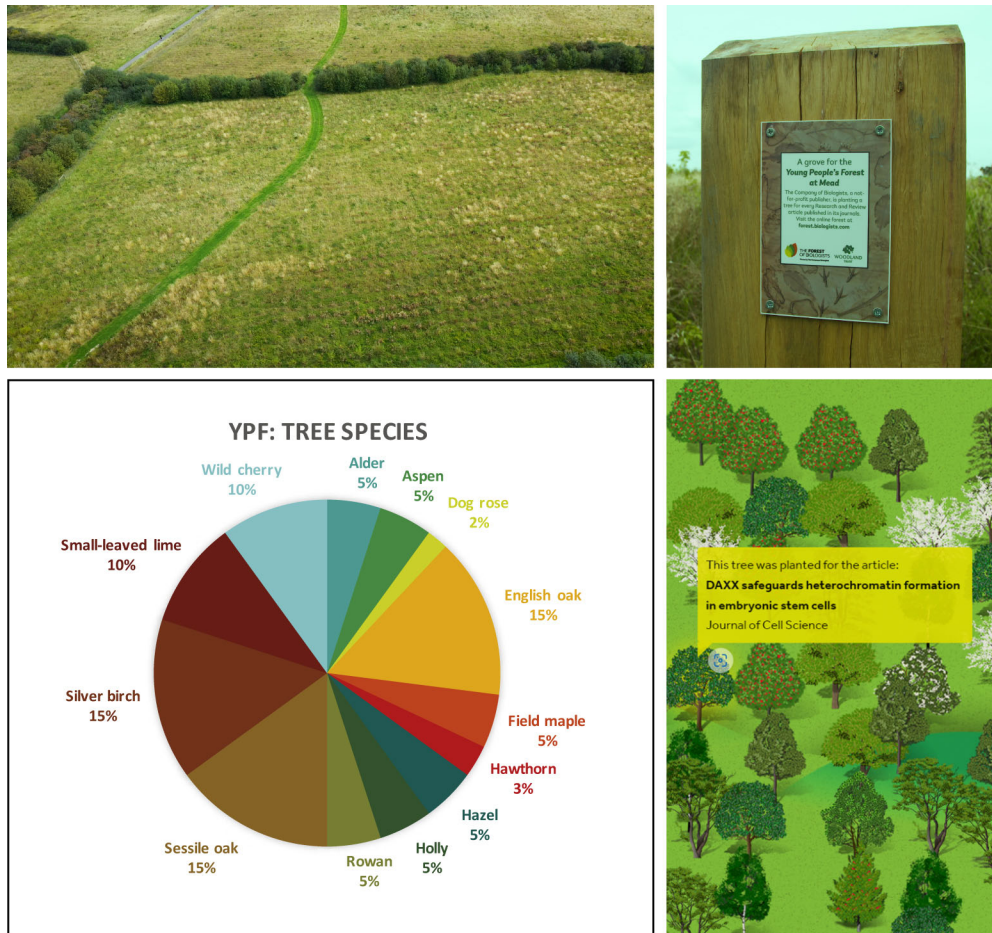


Fig. 1. Planting trees at the Young People's Forest for peer-reviewed articles. Top left, new trees at The Young People's Forest. Top right, our Company plaque welcomes visitors to the grove we've funded on behalf of authors. Bottom left, the site features a wide range of UK native species: alder, aspen, dog rose (shrub), English oak, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, holly, rowan, sessile oak, silver birch, small-leaved lime and wild cherry. Bottom right, authors' trees are also represented in our online forest. Corresponding authors are sent a link to their virtual tree on the date of the article's online publication – there, they can see which species has been allocated to them and can 'tweet' their tree. A forest icon is also included on the published article so that readers can view that specific article's tree in the online forest.

and added up all those tiny impacts, you could do something really substantial.”

Adding together the trees planted and protected for JCS and all of our sister journals – Development, Journal of Experimental Biology, Disease Models & Mechanisms and Biology Open – gives us a predicted total of more than 6000 trees in 2023. As you continue to support JCS by publishing your cell biology articles with us and peer reviewing for us, we will continue to plant and protect trees on your behalf, helping you and your science to have a lasting impact.

The Forest of Biologists brings together our love of science with a desire for greater sustainability in the way we work. Planting and protecting trees is only a part of that; readers might be interested in some of our other sustainability initiatives (see our [Sustainability hub](#)), including our Sustainable Conferencing Grants, which support innovative ideas that will enable biologists to collaborate proactively while minimising their impact on the environment. As we continue to think deeply about our contributions to nature, we hope you'll continue to support our biopositive publishing initiative by sending your cell biology articles to JCS.

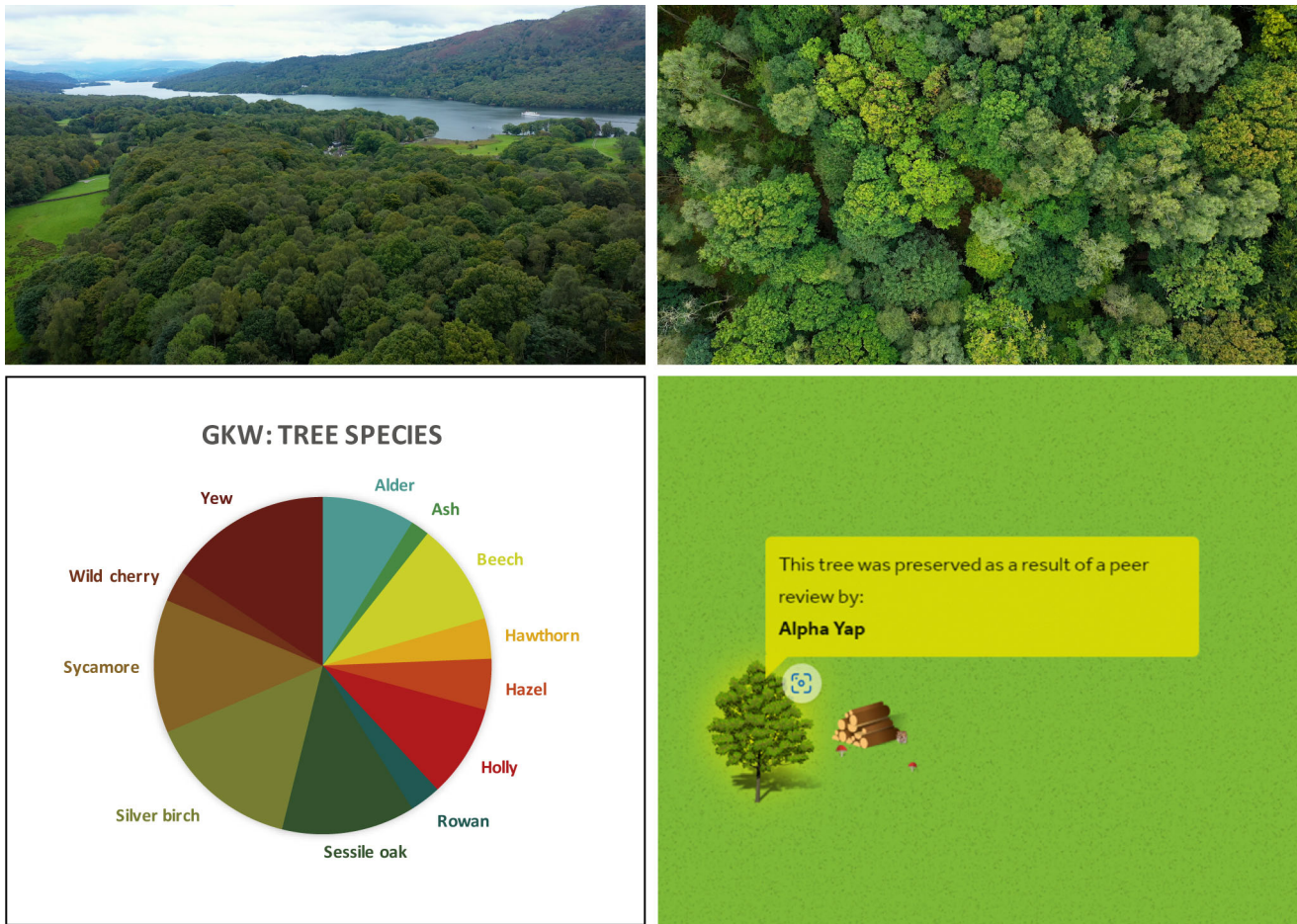


Fig. 2. Protecting trees at Great Knott Wood on behalf of peer reviewers. Top left and top right, aerial views of the woodland overlooking Lake Windermere. Bottom left, we are helping to support the protection of an area of ancient woodland featuring sessile oak, sycamore, ash, alder, birch, beech and yew with an understorey of hazel, holly, hawthorn and the occasional rowan and cherry. The number of ash trees is sadly declining in the face of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), which the Woodland Trust predicts will kill up to 80% of ash trees across the UK. Bottom right, peer reviewers' trees are also represented in our online forest. These trees are added in batches every few months (so that they're not associated with any specific article). Peer reviewers are sent a link to their virtual tree so that they can see which species has been allocated to them and can 'tweet' their tree.