



Global Forum

A global network of next generation ecologists

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The worldwide growth in the number of ecologists, the globalization of society, and the increasingly important interplay between burgeoning human populations and ecological processes call for new ways for ecologists to communicate at the global scale. Understanding and ameliorating the complex problems we face as a global society stand to benefit from new and diverse perspectives. A new initiative aims to facilitate the growth of a global community of early career ecologists using the great potential of 21st century technologies.

The International Network of Next Generation Ecologists (INNGE, [in-jee]) is a newly established network that seeks to bring early career ecologists together from around the world, thereby strengthening international ties within a growing global community of ecologists. During the past decades, the world has grown steadily smaller. Amidst this, the numbers of students and early career researchers in the sciences have increased dramatically and academic communities have become increasingly international. The discipline of ecology is no exception. Ecologists are now routinely criss-crossing the world for fieldwork, collaborations, and meetings. As our community has grown, so has the challenge of keeping up with developments in the discipline on different continents.

For ecology students and early career researchers, the growth of the community also makes it more difficult to navigate the challenge of developing a career and engaging in professional societies.

The initiative to develop a network like INNGE was undertaken by early career ecologists who are already involved in various ecological societies. The main priority of INNGE is to further strengthen national and regional societies, and facilitate linkages between them that otherwise would not be made.

Working topics of INNGE

By coordinating activities of early career ecologists in one place, INNGE will work to establish better communication between people involved in their national or regional ecological societies (Figure 1). Knowing how other groups of ecologists are growing the field of ecology will help to expand the goals of each ecological society and will aid in inspiring new activities (Figure 2). The ultimate goal of INNGE is to spur the enactment of these new activities by forming a worldwide network of young scientists.

INNGE hopes to be a network where early career ecologists can go to seek advice on international topics in ecology and particularly in cases where the early

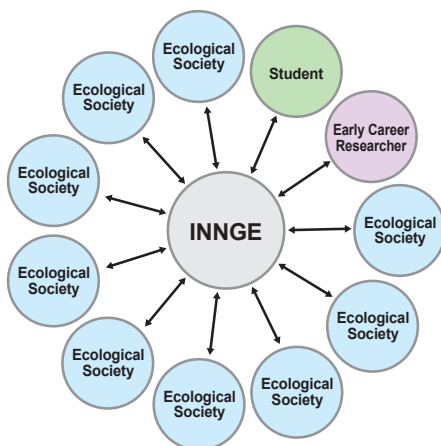


Fig. 1 The aim of INNGE is to act as a coordinating hub for activities of early career ecologists, from individual students and researchers to groups in national and regional ecological societies.

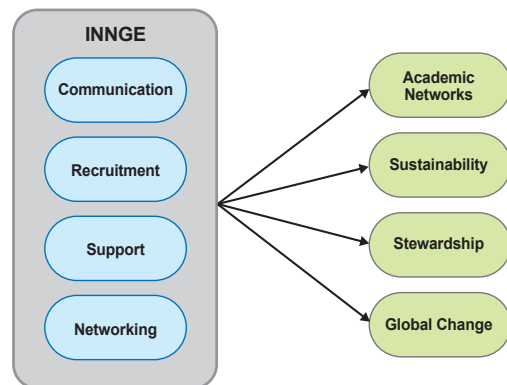


Fig. 2 INNGE seeks to facilitate and encourage new initiatives, such as the ones illustrated here, by acting as an international network of active and visionary next generation ecologists.

career section of their own national societies may have limited knowledge or experience. While there are quite a few established bodies of communication that provide an overview of career opportunities at the national and regional scale, it is hard to find a forum focused on international opportunities like international education programs, open job positions, and travel grants. INNGE wants to build the first such forum directed at and run by early career ecologists.

INNGE specifically aims to:

- 1) Enhance
 - a. International knowledge about ecological topics
 - b. The ability to build academic networks for early career scientists locally and regionally
- 2) Foster
 - a. Cross-continental initiatives between ecological societies and their early career ecologists
 - b. Local stewardship and sustainability efforts via global coordination
- 3) Communicate
 - a. On-going initiatives from ecological societies to ecologists in other parts of the world so as to ensure synergy and avoid unnecessary redundancy
 - b. International career opportunities for early career ecologists
 - c. Across disciplines, by engaging with networks of early career researchers in other areas of study

Communication

Electronic communication provides a powerful means of bringing people on different continents together with little to no expense and without the environmental harm inherent in international travel, and so constitutes a near-perfect tool for the aforementioned goals. Thus, INNGE will primarily achieve its aims as a web-based community. List-serve based announcements and fora will offer fast communication and a place for discussion. In addition, social media provide a means to communicate among members and visualize the people behind the names. We will use social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to connect and grow the member base

In addition to web-based communication, ecological meetings and conferences will serve as opportunities for people involved in INNGE to meet and organize future INNGE enterprises in person.

INNGE and INTECOL

The need for an international body for early career ecologists to interact has been recognized for some time. At the latest INTECOL congress in 2009 in Brisbane, Australia (organized in collaboration with the Ecological Society of Australia and the New Zealand Ecological Society) early career ecologists restated this need. As the natural place for ecological societies to build initiatives and share experiences at a global scale, INTECOL will be a key partner in INNGE's effort to establish a global community of early career ecologists.



"This new network will enhance communication among the increasing number of early career ecologists in INTECOL. The initial success at our Brisbane meeting with a workshop dedicated to networking among early career ecologists indicates this expanded effort to connect our members globally will be appreciated by many. I look forward to meeting many of our new members in London in 2013 and to following the growth of this network online (INTECOL president, Alan P. Covich)."

Session at INTECOL 2013

One of the activities already planned by INNGE is to organize a session in connection with the 11th INTECOL congress in London, 2013. The session will further explore the role of next generation ecologists and ecological societies in driving forward stewardship efforts and international initiatives in the field of ecology.

INNGE as a resource for ecological societies

Acting as a global contact point for early career ecologists, INNGE will be a resource for ecological societies by being (1) a place to recruit members with an international focus; (2) a place for seeking advice and experiences from other networks of early career ecologists; and, (3) a place to find collaboration partners in other ecological societies (Figure 3).

Where are we now

At this point INNGE is still in its infancy. During the past six months, the primary effort has been focused on engaging national and regional societies in the effort.

The response so far has been overwhelmingly positive and has strengthened the case for a global network.

Thus far, INNGE consists of a working group of early career ecologists representing three continents and a number of ecological societies (the British Ecological Society, Ecological Society of America, Ecological Society of Australia, the French Ecological Society, and Italian Ecological Society). We are currently working on developing an INNGE website and increasing the societal and geographical coverage of participants in the working group.

We encourage all ecological societies and early career ecologists interested in the effort to build this next generation global community to become a part of the working group.

Contact us at: nextgenecologists@gmail.com.

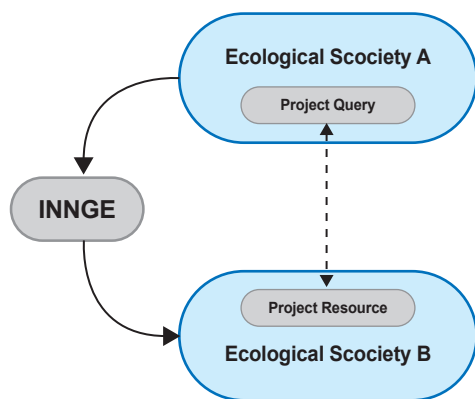


Fig. 3 INNGE will be a resource for ecological societies by being (1) a place to recruit members with an international focus; (2) a place for seeking advice and experiences from other networks of early career ecologists; and, (3) a place to find collaboration partners in other ecological societies.