



... Long-term plans

Mark your diaries for next year! We have a whole host of familiar events planned for 2027, including the 3rd edition of Long-Term Experiments, this time hosted in South Africa at Stellenbosch University & Langgewens Research Farm (pictured) - find out more on page 4.



... Outreach

Share your science with the world in next month's Biology Week Campaign, or quietly observe the global action at COP31. We're also offering you plenty of opportunities to get involved, read more inside!



... Early Career

Build skills and a career-defining network at 'Early Career Essentials for Applied Biologists'. In-person registration closes in less than a month - find out more on page 3.

Finally, don't miss fresh career development opportunities on page 8 and the next batch of meeting reports from our early-career travel awardees from page 9.

Contents

AAB News	2
Upcoming AAB Events.....	3
Events in our Community.....	5
Community News.....	7
Career Development Opportunities.....	8
Meeting Reports - ICPR 2026.....	9
Membership.....	18
Call for Papers.....	19
AAB Specialist Groups.....	20
AAB Council.....	21
AAB Office.....	22
Contact Us.....	22



AAB News

September's here and with the changing season we're bringing you a positive windfall of events here at the AAB and in our wider community.

Back to school

It's been a relatively quiet month in the AAB Office. With no in-person events to attend we've been knuckling down to all the admin associated with moving across to a new membership platform (hopefully to be launched imminently this month!), getting our organisational ducks in a row, and planning for our Autumn events and beyond.

September, however, is looking to be a different story altogether. As this newsletter arrives in your inboxes, half of the AAB team are whizzing off to the Royal Society, London, to host our first conference of the season: the International Symposium on Rice Functional Genomics 2026. We're then hosting not one but two webinars later in the month with the next instalments of our PlantEd and AAB webinar series. And of course our Annual General Meeting will be held online on the 16th September - giving our members a chance to influence the direction of the society. We're looking forward to seeing lots of familiar names and faces across September!

Looking to later in the Autumn, don't miss your chance to join us at our many upcoming events. There are plenty of deadlines this coming month, with registration and abstract submission closing for Early Career Essentials, IPPM, Sustainable Crop Nutrition and Horticulture & Healthy Diets - find out more in our events calendar from page 3.

Finally, thinking longer-term, make sure you save-the-date and the spread the word for our 2027 conferences - the calendar is fast filling up! We're thrilled to be bringing some favourites back next year: from annual regulars such as Monogram, to rarer specialities such as International Advances in Plant Virology, Long Term Experiments, Plant Biology Education, Creating Canopies and EUCARPIA Leafy Vegetables. Mark your diaries now!

Biology Week

Royal Society of Biology's annual celebration of all things Biological will be back next month on 8th - 18th October. Last year our members got involved with a fantastic series of '[Day in the Life of an Applied Biologist](#)' videos for RSB's #IAMABiologist campaign, amassing just shy of 10k views across YouTube and Instagram! If you'd like to share your work with the world and inspire the next generation of applied biologists, get in touch with Jordan (jordan@aab.org.uk) this month. We'd love to see what you're up to!

Cover image: Aerial view of Langgewens Research Farm, host of Long Term Experiments 2027, supplied by Prof Johann Strauss.

Upcoming AAB Events

Webinar 'all aabout' Plant Genome Editing

15th September, 2pm BST

The next webinar in the AAB-PlantEd series will feature talks from Ralf Wilhelm (Julius Kühn-Institut): "The EPSO Working Group on Agricultural Technologies and the EU Legislation on NGT" and Robert Hoffie (IPK Gatersleben): "Targeted Diversity: Base Editing to engineer Virus Resistance in Barley"

[Register for free](#)



Webinar 'all aabout' Nematology

29th September, 2pm BST

The next webinar in our series all 'aabout' plant science and sustainable agriculture comes from our Nematology specialist group, featuring a keynote from James Price (James Hutton Institute), early career talk from Lilian Atira (South East Technological University) and Annals of Applied Biology paper highlight from Saulo Chaves (University of São Paulo).

[Register for free](#)

AAB Annual General Meeting

16th September 2026, Online

Our AGM is at 12.30pm BST on 16th September. AAB members should have received online joining instructions.

Auxin 2026

4-8th October 2026, Albufeira, Portugal

We are delighted to bring Auxin2026 meeting to the Algarve this Autumn. [In-person registration now closed](#)

Early Career Essentials for Applied Biologists

20th - 21st October, Nottingham UK & Online

Cultivating careers and creating a community - our ECPro group are hosting their first conference this October, focussing on communication and career development for early career applied biologists. With talks, panel discussions, workshops and plenty of opportunities to network with fellow early career professionals across academia and industry, there's something for everyone - check out the draft programme online now!

[Register now - in-person registration closes 1st October](#)



IPPM26 - Technological Innovation for Integrated Pest, Pathogen and Weed Management

3-4th November, Leicester UK

IPPM is back - this year officially including weed management alongside pests and pathogens for the first time. With an outstanding set of invited speakers already confirmed, don't miss your chance to join the line-up.

[Register now - Abstract deadline 13th September](#)

Sustainable Crop Nutrition - AAB President's Meeting

17-18th November, York UK

Join us as we address global issues in sustainable crop nutrition, bridging fertilizer use, soil health and plant uptake of nutrients essential to human health. The AAB President's Meeting is a biennial celebration of the research interests of the current AAB President - Professor Dale Sanders FRS. The programme will feature talks from submitted abstracts and invited speakers: Tony Miller (John Innes Centre), Stephanie Swarbreck (Niab), Ute Kraemer (University of Bochum) and Tim Mauchline (Rothamsted Research) and award talks from the 2026 AAB President's Medallists.

Register now - Abstract deadline 12th September



Horticulture and Healthy Diets

26th November, Kent UK



In collaboration with the East Malling Trust, the AAB are happy to present this exciting one day event designed to support healthy diets with a thriving UK horticulture sector. Featuring Keynotes from Henry Dimbleby (author of the National Food Strategy) and Prof. Martin Warren (CSO of the Quadram Institute) - the event will feature plenty of opportunities to share your own work. We especially encourage Early-Career Professionals to submit abstracts, if selected to present ECPs will receive free registration!

Register now - Abstract deadline 15th September

SAVE THE DATE - further details coming soon

Advances in Nematology 2026

10th December 2026, London UK

Monogram 2027

23-25th March 2027, Nottingham UK

International Advances in Plant Virology - IAPV 2027

6-8th April 2027, Cambridge UK

Plant Biology Education II

13-14th April 2027, Cambridge UK

Long Term Experiments 2027

22-24th June 2027, Stellenbosch, South Africa ([find out more](#))

EUCARPIA Leafy Vegetables Conference

12-15th July 2027, Warwick UK ([find out more](#))

Creating Canopies III

31st Aug - 1st September 2027, Shropshire UK

PLANT BIOLOGY EDUCATION 2

13-14th April 2027, Cambridge UK

Partnerships,
Learning,
Audiences, and
Networks for
Teaching

Building on our Manifesto
for Plant Science Education

Save the Date!

Page | 4

Featuring Keynotes from
Ottoline Leyser & Johnathan Napier

aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS



Events in our Community

UK Precision Breeding – Farming Futures Conference

24th September, Norwich UK



John Innes Centre

Join the John Innes Centre for a one-day conference bringing together farmers, breeders, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders to explore the fast-evolving opportunities of precision breeding in the UK – covering policy and regulation, farmer benefit, on-farm evaluation, routes to market, and the ecosystem needed to support future innovation and growth.

[Register now](#)

IPPS9: Phenotyping for All: Bridging the Gap in Global Agriculture

12-16th October, Accra, Ghana

The 9th International Plant Phenotyping Symposium (IPPS9) convenes a global community of scientists and industry partners to confront the challenge of food insecurity in an era of unprecedented global shocks - focusing on the adaptation and deployment of plant phenotyping tools specifically tailored to serve Pan-African research and agriculture.



[Registration closes 1st October](#)

2026 Arabidopsis Community Impact Awards

27th October, Online



Join the North American Arabidopsis Steering Committee (NAASC) for a webinar celebrating community members committed to supporting the Arabidopsis community and making positive impacts on it through one or more approaches including outreach, service, communication, mentoring, and/or advocacy. The 2026 award talks will be delivered by Sterling Field (BASF & Michigan State), Yoselin Benitez-Alfonso (Leeds) and Mary Williams (ASPB).

[Register now](#)

CROPADAPT2026

14- 15th October, Ghent, Belgium

Join this dynamic, young scientist-led plant symposium bringing together researchers, students, and professionals from across the plant sciences community. The program is structured around two complementary perspectives: immediate resilience, focusing on how plants endure stress today, and future resilience, exploring innovative ways to shape the next generation of crops.



[Register now](#)

Black in Plant Science (BiPS) Conference 2026

30th October, York UK



BiPS is back for 2026 - this year welcoming Yoselin Benitez-Alfonso (University of Leeds, UK) and Tessa Burch-Smith (Danforth Center, USA) as plenary speakers. Featuring workshops, poster sessions and talks from Research Excellence Award Winners: Sibongile Zimba and Ousmane Dao. It promises to be a fantastic day celebrating, cultivating and connecting the UK BiPS community.

[Register now - Early-bird registration rates end 18th September](#)



Genotype x Environment x Management (GxExM) Symposium IV

5- 6th November, Brisbane, Australia & Online

GxExM Symposium IV will bring together researchers, industry representatives, breeders, agronomists, modellers and agricultural innovators to explore the critical role of GxExM interactions in crop improvement. Across two days of presentations, discussions and collaborative exchange, participants will examine new approaches and emerging insights that can advance experimental design, modelling and predictive methods to support future crop improvement strategies. The symposium aims to foster interdisciplinary discussion and strengthen integrated approaches that connect genetics, agronomy, environmental understanding and on-farm outcomes.

[Register now- its free to attend!](#)

SciFor26: Science & Innovation in Forestry Conference

11-12th November, Edinburgh UK



With adaptation, resilience and productivity as key challenges for those working with Great Britain's trees, woods and forests, the role of long-term scientific research has never been more important. As well as showcasing the vitally important research, the conference will provide a forum for discussion, knowledge exchange and networking between researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

[Register now](#)

New Genomic Techniques for Crop improvement 2027

25-28th January 2027, Valencia, Spain

This international congress on the science, technology and social aspects of New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) for crop improvement will bring together leading experts in genome editing, trait biology, and AI-driven trait discovery to discuss advances in developing high-yielding, better-quality, more resilient, and disease-resistant crops, trees and vegetatively propagated species. NGTs for Crops 2027 provides a forum for researchers, technology developers, breeders, policymakers, regulators, and industry partners to share the latest results and address the scientific, technical, social, and regulatory dimensions of NGTs. Topic-specific sessions and roundtable discussions will offer up-to-date science and perspectives on evolving global and EU regulatory frameworks and their implications for research, innovation, and food systems.



[Register now](#)

Plant Biology Europe 2027

17-20th August 2027, Vienna, Austria



Plant Biology Europe 2027 - From Single Cell Multiomics, AI and Modelling to Food Security and Policy - will be hosted in Vienna next summer.

[Save the date](#)

Community News

Do you have something to share with our community? Opportunities, jobs, achievements... we'd love to hear about them. Get in touch with the AAB Office!

NGTs - EU call for evidence

The European Commission has opened two calls for evidence on the technical rules that will determine how the EU's new gene-editing law will work in practice. The aim is to give operators "clarity and predictability" on how to prepare verification requests and applications, and to support Member State authorities and the EFSA in implementing the regulation. If you feel you can contribute please [submit your responses by 28th September](#).

£1.6M investment in innovative plant growth facilities



A £1.6 million investment from the Wolfson Foundation, will support a next-generation glasshouse, insectary and horticultural research facility at the John Innes Centre and The Sainsbury Laboratory in Norwich. The 4,500 m² state-of-the-art infrastructure will enable scientists to study crop performance under realistic, reproducible conditions. With integrated facilities allowing for plant-insect-microbe studies from molecules to the whole plant, providing a nationally accessible research capability.

New BYDV tool for aphid management

AHDB have launched a new tool for reducing the impact of Barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) in winter wheat and winter barley. Designed with farmer, this new tool integrates decades of aphid biology, virus epidemiology and computer modelling, considering more risk factors than ever before. [Find out more](#).

New Living Biology episode featuring Ros Gleadow

Society of Experimental Biology new podcast series 'Living Biology' this month features a double episode on Dr Ros Gleadow - exploring her non-linear career path into plant ecophysiology, balancing a PhD with motherhood, the importance of a supportive lab team and her work on cassava, cyanide, climate change and human health. Well worth a listen - [check it out online](#) now.



Join the AAB and Global Plant Council at COP31

As part of the Global Plant Council, we're offering AAB members the chance to access the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) this November. On this year's action agenda are a whole host of topics which will effect our wider applied biology community: from Zero Waste & Methane Reduction to Food Security to Youth & Education. If you'd like to join the GPC online delegation please contact Geraint (geraint@aab.org.uk) as soon as possible.

Career Development Opportunities

Rank Prize - New Independent Investigator Grant

Designed to support researchers in the UK who have gained their first appointment to an independent research position. This grant is to help newly appointed researchers establish their careers as independent investigators in human nutrition, animal nutrition or crop science. Find out more and [apply by 14th September](#).



DEFRA Research and Development Fellowship Programme 2027/28

Defra are delighted to launch the 4th year of their R&D Fellowship Programme - providing an opportunity for scientists and analysts to gain experience in a policy focused environment and understand how evidence is used within government. Successful applicants will join Defra for up to 1 year, gaining skills and experience in project delivery, evidence synthesis, communicating complex information to non-experts, writing for a policy audience, working at pace, and balancing use of policy and evidence in government. [Application deadline: 14th September](#).



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Global South Conference Travel Grant



The Company of
Biologists

Biology Open has launched a new grant offering up to £3,000 to early-career researchers based in the Global South, wanting to attend international scientific meetings relating to the broad areas of research covered by the journal. Find out more and [apply by 20th November](#).

Association of Applied Biologists' ECPro group presents...

Early Career Essentials for Applied Biologists

Cultivating careers & creating a community!

20th – 21st October 2026
University of Nottingham & Online

Featuring keynotes, workshops,
opportunities to present your
work and network across
academia & industry

aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

Register now!

In-person registration
closes 1st October



cvent.me/8o1kkP



Meeting Reports - International Conference on Photosynthesis Research 2026

We were delighted to host ICPR26 in July, bringing together 750 researchers from around the world for the main ICPR event in Liverpool and its satellite meetings across the UK. The AAB were very glad to be able to support the attendance of 18 early-career researchers and a handful of carers through our early-career and carer & accessibility travel grant schemes. This month we're continuing with their meeting reports!

Dr Yuzhen Fan

Australian National University, Australia

yuzhen.fan@anu.edu.au

I am grateful to the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for providing a travel grant that financially helped me attend the International Conference on Photosynthesis Research (ICPR2026) in Liverpool, UK. ICPR is the premier international conference in photosynthesis research, bringing together scientists working across a diverse range of topics. The meeting provided an outstanding opportunity to present my own research, learn about the latest developments in the field, and establish collaborations with researchers from around the world.

At one of the ICPR2026 satellite meetings, C4 60 From Kranz to Crops: Celebrating 60 Years of C4 Discovery and Innovation, I was invited to give a keynote presentation (Figure 1). There were only two early career researchers (ECRs) invited to deliver keynote talks, and I was honoured to be one of them. This represents important recognition of my research and reflects the growing international interest in my work on C4 leaf respiration, particularly from my immediate colleagues working on photosynthesis. I received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the talks and a number of collaboration calls. Except that I was too nervous to ask someone to take a photo of me, this talk was the peak of my career so far.

At the main ICPR2026 event, I presented a poster entitled "Revealing the impacts of C4 photosynthesis on leaf dark respiration", which summarised our recent work investigating how the evolution of C4 photosynthesis has altered respiratory substrate utilisation and the implications for modelling carbon cycling. The poster generated considerable interest and led to valuable discussions with researchers working on C4 evolution, plant respiration and ecosystem modelling. Many attendees were particularly interested in our hypothesis that C4 species preferentially utilise organic acids during nocturnal respiration and the consequences this may have for modelling respiratory carbon losses.



Fig 1. Self portrait of Yuzhen giving a Keynote at the C4 60: From Kranz to Crops Satellite Meeting

One aspect I found particularly valuable was the diversity of expertise represented at ICPR2026. Researchers working on structural biology, molecular genetics, physiology, ecology and computational modelling were all discussing different aspects of the same biological process, photosynthesis. This interdisciplinary environment encouraged me to think beyond the traditional boundaries of respiratory physiology and to consider how mitochondrial metabolism connects with broader questions in crop improvement and global carbon cycling.

The poster sessions were especially rewarding. They provided an informal setting for detailed scientific discussions, allowing me to receive constructive feedback from researchers whose work I have followed for many years. These conversations strengthened my confidence that our findings on C4 respiration address an important gap in current understanding and have relevance beyond plant physiology, particularly for ecosystem modelling.

One challenge of the meeting was simply the breadth of excellent concurrent sessions. With three parallel scientific streams running throughout most days, it was impossible to attend every presentation of interest. Choosing between sessions on C4 evolution, photosynthetic modelling, structural biology and ecosystem physiology was often difficult. However, this also reflected the strength of the conference and highlighted how rapidly the field of photosynthesis research continues to expand.

Beyond the scientific programme, Liverpool is proved to be an excellent host city. Walking along the historic waterfront and exploring the city centre after conference sessions provided opportunities to interact with fellow delegates in a relaxed setting. One particularly memorable feature was the city's iconic Super Lambanana sculptures, which have become a distinctive symbol of Liverpool. Of course, I bought a small Super Lambanana plush (Figure 2). It will travel with me back home.

Yuzhen's Meeting Highlights:

1. C4 photosynthesis and engineering future crops

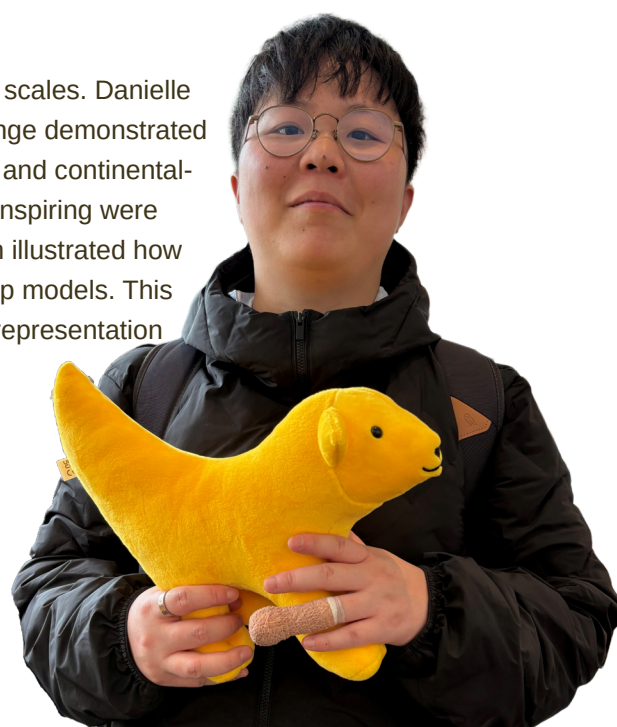
One of the highlights of the meeting was the dedicated C4 and CAM for Photosynthetic Improvement session, particularly Jane Langdale's presentation on "The long and winding road to C4 rice." This session showcased the remarkable progress being made towards engineering C4 traits into rice while also highlighting the remaining biological challenges. As my own research focuses on respiration in C4 plants, these talks reinforced the importance of understanding mitochondrial metabolism as part of future C4 crop engineering. Conversations following this talk also inspired me with a new idea on whether mitochondrial engineering should become an explicit component of future C4 rice projects. I will be working on this Perspective paper for submission to a special C4 issue at Annals of Botany.

2. Integrating photosynthesis from molecules to ecosystems

Another highlight was the breadth of research spanning multiple biological scales. Danielle Way's opening keynote on forest photosynthetic responses to climate change demonstrated how physiological measurements can be integrated with field experiments and continental-scale datasets to improve predictions of future forest productivity. Equally inspiring were sessions on high-throughput phenotyping and ecosystem modelling, which illustrated how advances in physiology are increasingly feeding into Earth system and crop models. This integration closely aligns with my own research interests in improving the representation of C4 respiration within terrestrial biosphere models.

3. Advances in computational and AI approaches

The meeting also highlighted the rapid emergence of computational tools and artificial intelligence in photosynthesis research. Presentations on AI-enabled phenotyping, modelling of canopy photosynthesis, and computational approaches to photosynthetic engineering demonstrated how machine learning and large-scale datasets are becoming central to modern plant science. These talks provided valuable perspectives that



Yuzhen & the famous super lambanana
Page | 10

will influence my future work, particularly as I begin projects combining physiological measurements with large-scale modelling of C4 photosynthesis and respiration.

Acknowledgements

Overall, ICPR2026 was an exceptionally valuable meeting that broadened my scientific perspective, strengthened existing collaborations, and created new opportunities for future research. I sincerely thank the Association of Applied Biologists for supporting my attendance. The travel grant enabled me to present my work to the international photosynthesis community, receive valuable feedback, and develop collaborations that will contribute to my future research career. I am also grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Owen Atkin, who is generous enough to cover a part of my travel costs. I look forward to ICPR2030 in Kobe, Japan!!

Michaela Crosbie **University of Turku, Finland**

mmcros@utu.fi

I am grateful to have received travel-grant support to attend the International Conference on Photosynthesis Research 2026 (ICPR2026), held at the LEX Liverpool from 26–30 July 2026 as well as the Early Career Day on 24th July. The conference was a valuable experience both scientifically and personally, and gave me the opportunity to discuss my research with people working on related questions from very different perspectives.

As a PhD researcher in the Nikkanen group, I work in a relatively niche area of cyanobacterial bioenergetics. My project focuses on developing experimental approaches to study ion channels and their role in regulating the proton motive force (pmf) and carbon uptake efficiency in *Synechocystis*. Because this is a small pocket of the broader photosynthesis research field, opportunities to meet other researchers working on similar questions are always welcome and valuable. ICPR2026 allowed me to present our work, discuss our approach with researchers in the field, and make connections that could be useful as my project develops.

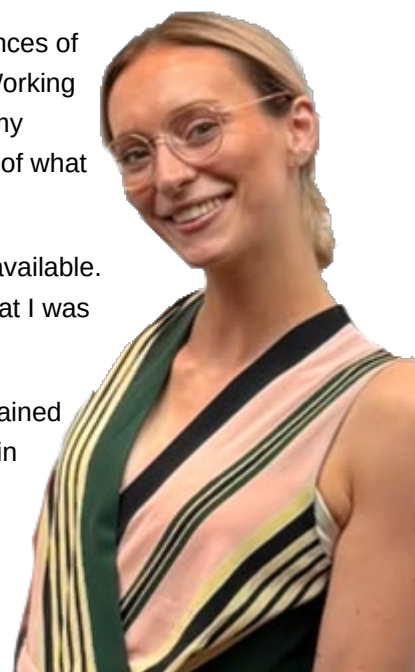
One of the most useful aspects of the meeting was discovering how broadly ion transport can be studied within photosynthesis research. I spoke with researchers working on chloride in areas I had not previously considered, as well as people studying transport proteins such as NhaS3, manganese transporters, and phosphate transporters. Their approaches to experimental design, mutant characterisation, and interpreting phenotypes were interesting and made me think more critically about the biophysical pipeline I am developing and about which aspects of our approach could potentially be adapted to other transport systems.

“I appreciated the opportunity to attend talks outside my immediate research area. Although not all were directly relevant to my project, they helped me place my work within the wider field of photosynthesis and gave me new perspectives on how different research questions can be approached.”

The Early Career Day was another valuable part of the meeting. Hearing about the experiences of other PhD researchers and researchers at different career stages was particularly useful. Working on a specialised and competitive topic can sometimes make my work very fast-paced and my awareness of current research quite narrow and limited. It was nice to pause and be aware of what is being done in other research groups.

One challenge of attending such a large conference was simply the amount of information available. With several sessions running at the same time, I inevitably had to choose between talks that I was interested in and missed some presentations that I would have liked to attend.

Overall, ICPR2026 was highly beneficial for my scientific and professional development. I gained new perspectives, received feedback on my research, and made valuable connections within the field.



Kayla's Meeting Highlights:

1. Reconnecting with a research community

One of my favourite moments was attending the first coffee break after the first day of talks and realising that many familiar faces from previous conferences and workshops were now all in one place. Seeing fellow Researchers I'd met over the past 2 years, and recognising how our paths kept crossing, gave me a strong sense of belonging to a wider community. A bittersweet moment was saying goodbye to my friend Kim, who will defend her PhD next April. Who knows when our paths will cross again. We celebrated with a little photobooth moment at the Conference Party, showing off our new dance move the "DIRK" ("Proton Motive Force"- "Electrochromic shift" jargon).

2. Being with my group outside the lab

Getting to spend several days with most of my research group away from the lab and offices was special. We attended sessions together, shared our work with others, and then reconvened to discuss what we'd heard. Having that shared experience, talking through new ideas, methods, and questions as a team, made the conference feel like an extension of our group meetings.

3. Poster session

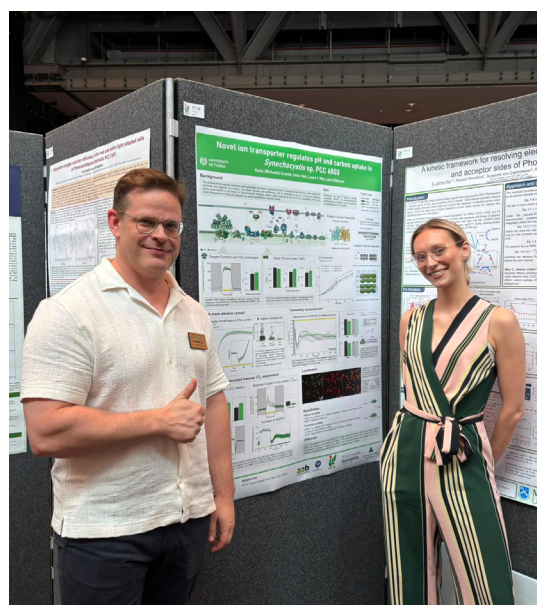
The poster sessions were one of my favourite aspects of the conference. I wish we had even more time for them, because I felt I missed out on many interesting posters. Still, the conversations I did have were a real highlight: talking with people at similar stages to me and to those who were actually interested in my work, asking detailed questions, and offering suggestions. Also, feeling confident in my knowledge and being able to communicate my work in a way that really suits me (visually) was really rewarding. Although this was my second international poster, it was my first time getting a photo in front of a poster (I forgot to last time). It was also my first time getting a photo with my supervisor, Lauri Nikkanen, in front of my poster. Having that photo felt like a small but meaningful milestone in my PhD journey.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to my supervisor, Dr Lauri Nikkanen, for providing detailed feedback on my poster, and for encouraging and supporting my attendance at this conference.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleague Yulu Wu, who works on potassium transport proteins. Sharing a related research area has made my PhD journey feel less isolated, and I am very grateful for her continued scientific and practical support. I am also thankful to my research group for their valuable input during group meetings, particularly Dr Peter Bos, whose expertise in expansion microscopy and data analysis has made an important contribution to my project. And also, to the Wey group, especially my co-supervisor Dr Laura Wey.

I thank the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for awarding me an AAB travel grant, and the ICPR26 organisers for awarding me an Early Career Award, which together made it possible for me to attend the Early Career Programme and the main conference. In addition, I acknowledge the Research Council of Finland and the Novo Nordisk Foundation for funding my PhD research, without which this work and my participation in ICPR26 would not have been possible.



Top: The Nikkanen Group and Wey Group, University of Turku, attending ICPR26, Liverpool. Bottom: Kayla with her supervisor Lauri in front of her poster.

Dr Kai Thoris

University of Cambridge, UK

kt604@cam.ac.uk

Overall, these meetings significantly broadened my perspective on the field of photosynthesis. Before attending, my knowledge was naturally centred around my own research area, but the conference highlighted just how diverse the field is. It was fascinating to see how researchers from these different subfields approach the many outstanding questions in photosynthesis, often using complementary techniques and perspectives.

I particularly appreciated the structure of the meetings. The balance between scientific talks, poster sessions, and networking breaks was excellent, allowing enough time to absorb new information while also engaging in meaningful discussions with other attendees. The keynote speakers were outstanding and presented exciting developments that showcased both the history of the field and the future directions of photosynthesis research.

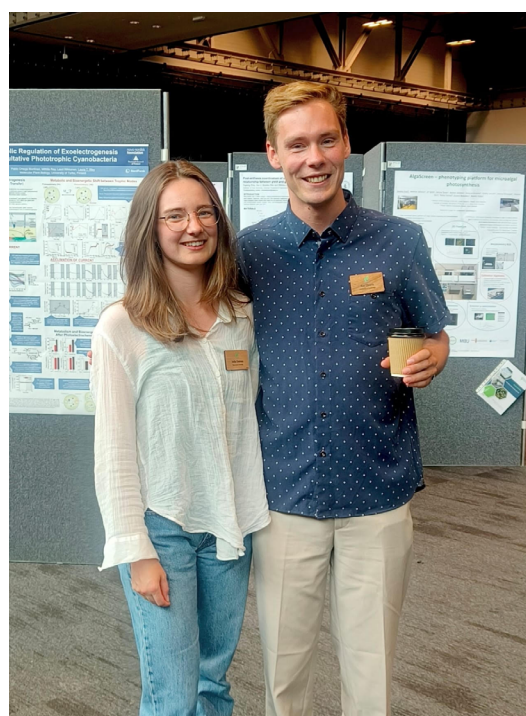
I also found it especially valuable that my conference experience began with the smaller C4 60 satellite meeting before moving on to the larger ICPR2026 conference. The satellite meeting created an ideal environment for networking in a more relaxed setting, making it much easier to establish connections early on. By the time the larger conference began, I already recognised many familiar faces, which made approaching new people feel much less intimidating. The larger ICPR2026 meeting then expanded these opportunities by bringing together researchers from many different areas of photosynthesis and from institutions across the world. Together, the two meetings provided a highly complementary experience, combining focused scientific discussions with broad exposure to the wider research community.

Of course, attending a conference of this scale also comes with its challenges. The combination of information-rich scientific talks, poster sessions, and continuous networking means that each day is both intellectually stimulating and mentally demanding. By the end of the day, you certainly sleep well after processing so many new experiences and information. Another challenge is that successful networking often requires stepping outside your comfort zone, whether that means introducing yourself to someone you have never met or approaching internationally recognised researchers whose work you have admired for some time. While this can initially feel daunting, conferences provide the perfect environment to practise these skills.

Kai's Meeting Highlights: Making new friendships and professional connections

Since I started relatively recently in the scientific world of photosynthesis, one of the biggest highlights was simply meeting people from across the community. Attending the smaller C4 60 satellite meeting before the main conference felt like a very warm and welcoming introduction. The more intimate setting made it easy to start conversations, ask questions, and get to know researchers at different career stages. As someone who has only recently begun a postdoctoral position, this experience helped me feel part of the community from the very beginning.

A second highlight was meeting many of the leading researchers in photosynthesis in person. Throughout my literature research, I have read papers from many of these scientists, so it was inspiring to hear them present their work first-hand and to have the opportunity to speak with them during breaks and poster sessions. Putting faces to the names behind important publications made the research feel much more personal and provided valuable insight into the people driving advances in the field. These interactions were both motivating and educational, particularly as I continue to develop my own research interests.



Kai with fellow ECR delegate Julia Damen

The scientific programme of both meetings was complemented by the many informal networking opportunities, including coffee breaks, lunches, and evenings spent having dinner or drinks with other attendees. These conversations often extended beyond the topics presented during the sessions and provided opportunities to discuss future research ideas, career experiences, and different perspectives on science. I am confident that many of these new connections will develop into lasting professional relationships, and I look forward to meeting many of them again at future conferences.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Prof. Julian Hibberd, for supporting my attendance at these meetings, particularly as I had only recently started my postdoctoral position. This allowed me to quickly become integrated into the international photosynthesis community and provided an invaluable opportunity for both scientific learning and professional development.

I would also like to thank the organisers of both the C4 60 satellite meeting and ICPR2026 for creating such welcoming, well-organised, and scientifically stimulating events. Their efforts provided an excellent environment for learning, exchanging ideas, and building new collaborations.

Finally, I am extremely grateful to the AAB for awarding me a travel grant to support my participation in these meetings. This financial support made it possible for me to attend and fully benefit from this valuable experience, for which I am sincerely thankful.

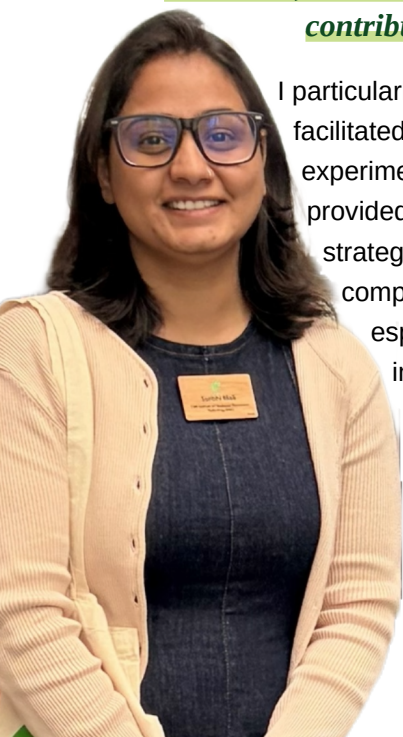
Surbhi Mali

CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology, India

surbhimali20@gmail.com

As an early-career researcher, I found the opportunity to deliver an oral presentation particularly valuable and rewarding, as it provided an excellent platform to communicate my research findings to an interdisciplinary scientific audience and to critically evaluate my work through discussions with experts and fellow researchers. Presenting my research enabled me to articulate the scientific rationale, experimental approaches, and key findings of my work while receiving constructive questions and feedback from researchers with diverse areas of expertise. The discussions after the presentation were particularly valuable in refining my interpretation of the results, identifying potential limitations, and considering alternative explanations and avenues for further investigation.

“These interactions encouraged me to view my research questions from broader physiological, molecular, and mechanistic perspectives and helped me appreciate how individual findings can contribute to a wider understanding of plant responses to environmental challenges.”



I particularly valued the opportunity to engage extensively with poster presenters, as the poster format facilitated in-depth scientific discussions and enabled a closer examination of the methodologies, experimental designs, and biological interpretations underpinning their research. These interactions provided a valuable platform for exchanging ideas and gaining insights into emerging experimental strategies, analytical approaches, and conceptual frameworks that could inform and potentially complement my own research. Discussions around ongoing and developing studies were especially insightful, offering opportunities to critically consider experimental design, interpretation of complex datasets, and alternative approaches to addressing challenging biological questions. Such exchanges not only broadened my scientific perspective but also reinforced the importance of open scientific dialogue and collaborative knowledge exchange in advancing research across disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

The diverse scientific sessions were highly stimulating and significantly broadened my understanding of recent advances in photosynthesis research. Exposure to research spanning multiple biological scales helped me place my own research within a broader

scientific framework. I was particularly interested in how changes in photosynthetic performance can influence downstream processes such as carbon partitioning, growth, development, and productivity under environmental stress. The presentations and discussions generated new hypotheses and perspectives that may be valuable for strengthening the conceptual framework of my ongoing work and for developing future research directions.

“ICPR highlighted the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of contemporary crop research, where addressing complex challenges such as climate change, environmental stress, crop productivity, and resilience requires the integration of complementary expertise across multiple disciplines.”

I was particularly inspired by the increasing collaboration among physiologists, geneticists, breeders, modellers, and data scientists to connect mechanistic biological understanding with predictive and translational approaches. Such interdisciplinary integration allows researchers to bridge different biological scales, linking molecular and cellular processes with whole-plant performance, genotype-environment interactions, and ultimately crop-level responses. This perspective reinforced the importance of combining physiological observations with molecular, genetic, computational, and quantitative approaches when developing robust and biologically meaningful research questions.

Beyond the scientific knowledge gained, the conference also provided an excellent opportunity to engage with researchers from different career stages and scientific backgrounds, fostering discussions that extended beyond individual research projects. These interactions broadened my professional perspective and highlighted the importance of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and interdisciplinary thinking in addressing complex challenges in plant science.

Overall, the conference provided an intellectually enriching and scientifically stimulating environment that strengthened my understanding of contemporary photosynthesis and crop research, encouraged me to approach my research from multiple perspectives, and enhanced my confidence as an early-career researcher. The knowledge, ideas, and scientific connections gained through this experience will be valuable in shaping my ongoing research and identifying future opportunities for collaborative and integrative approaches to understanding plant responses to environmental stress.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the conference organisers, Geraint Parry and Jordan Robson, for convening such an enriching and scientifically stimulating meeting, which provided an excellent platform for knowledge exchange, scientific dialogue, and networking within the research community. I am particularly grateful to my session chairs, Lisa Ainsworth and Johannes Kromdijk, for the opportunity to present my research and for facilitating engaging and insightful scientific discussions.

I gratefully acknowledge the Association of Applied Biologists for supporting my participation through a travel award, which enabled me to attend the meeting and benefit from this valuable scientific exchange. Finally, I extend my deepest gratitude to my Ph.D. supervisor Dr. Gaurav Zinta for his continued guidance, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout my research journey.



Surbhi delivering her talk in the ICPR26 concurrent session: Plant and ecosystem photosynthesis in a warming world'

Adrian Smith-Beech

University of Queensland, Australia

a.smithbeech@uq.edu.au

My first highlight was meeting and reuniting with both old and new colleagues. Seeing and conversing in person is a very rewarding experience and a great motivator for research. Connecting over a topic after a presentation or recognising the author of a paper by chance makes the academic landscape feel real and tangible.

I was able to establish several lines of correspondence and realise the unique skills of my own laboratory and our niche with the research ecosystem and the field of photosynthesis as a whole.

My second highlight was having an extremely insightful conversation with Zhengfeng Liu on some technical aspects of my project. This involved the recommendation of specific techniques and reagents I may use to grow crystals of my protein of interest. His level of expertise provided many insights, and I am glad to have established this contact in person. It can be difficult otherwise.

The talk by Luning Liu was also very interesting and a third highlight of the meeting. Their findings represent a large advancement in my field on the nature of light harvesting and dissipation within the PSII supercomplex. Keeping on top of the latest findings within the field is important for focussing one's own research, as well as for reviewing the field and potentially publishing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the Institute of Molecular Bioscience for contributing to the funding required for me to attend the conference, and the International Society for Photosynthesis Research for their diligence in arranging frequent meetings. I would like to especially thank Julian Eaton-Rye for his personal communication on the arrangement of the conference and the feasibility of attendance.

Finally, I would like to thank the Association of Applied Biologists, for their ultimate role in making an incredible conference possible, and for their part in sponsoring my attendance. The investment in me as PhD candidate is something to hope to repay and pass on within my academic career.

Parinaz Asadnejad

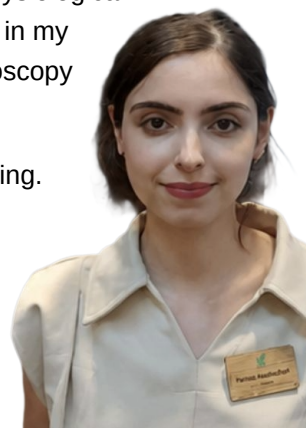
University of Turku, Finland

paasad@utu.fi

Beyond the science which was the most important part, the most valuable part of the meeting for me was simply talking to people. My own work sits on the physiological side of photosynthesis research, measuring proton-motive force dynamics and protein interactions with biophysical techniques, so I do not usually interact closely with structural biologists. At ICPR26, informal conversations over coffee breaks and poster sessions with people working on cryo-EM structures of ATP synthase and PSI gave me a much better sense of how structural detail and physiological measurement can complement each other. Several conversations made me reconsider assumptions in my own experimental design, particularly around how conformational states I infer indirectly from spectroscopy might map onto the structural states other groups can visualise directly.

Meeting early-career researchers from different countries and scientific traditions was equally rewarding. Photosynthesis research is a genuinely international field, and seeing the diversity of approaches biophysical, structural, computational, and applied/synthetic biology, reminded me that my own niche is only one lens on a much larger picture.

"These interactions expanded how I think about my PhD project and where it might connect to adjacent subfields in the future."



Parinaz's Meeting Highlights:

1. Poster interactions

One of the most striking posters I viewed covered how early-branching, ancient bacterial lineages regulate their ATP synthases to prevent wasteful ATP hydrolysis when the proton-motive force collapses. Dr Xu has suggested how the ϵ -subunit in this bacteria also switches between “up” (inhibitory) and “down” (non-inhibitory) conformations depending on ATP concentration as same as E.coli. Because my own thesis work centres on ATP synthase regulation in cyanobacteria, seeing how this inhibitory switch is conserved and modified across very deep branches of the bacterial tree gave me a much sharper evolutionary framework for interpreting my own data.

2. Water Oxidation Session

A second highlight was a series of talks on the long-standing puzzle of O-O bond formation at the Mn₄CaO₅ cluster of the oxygen-evolving complex. Speakers on Water Oxidation session presented new structural and spectroscopic evidence refining the S-state cycle transitions and the identity of the substrate water molecules involved in O₂ release, addressing discrepancies that have persisted in the field for years. This was an area I had only encountered superficially before, and hearing it presented directly by structural biologists made the mechanism far more concrete than reading the literature alone.

3. Angad Mehta's Plenary

The third strand I focused on was the 3rd Plenary session by Dr Angad Mehta (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign). Rather than redesigning individual photosynthetic proteins, his lab builds whole artificial photosynthetic cells by recreating endosymbiosis in the lab, introducing engineered cyanobacteria (secreting ATP, and later glucose) into non-photosynthetic yeast to form “chimeras” where the cyanobacterium acts as a synthetic chloroplast. What struck me most was the evolutionary framing: Mehta presented this as a way to experimentally replay, under lab conditions, the same Darwinian selection and primary endosymbiosis that produced real chloroplasts - applying selective pressure to push these chimeras toward stable, heritable symbioses. It was a novel way to think about “engineering photosynthesis”: building an evolvable system and letting selection do part of the design work, rather than engineering a pathway directly.



Angad Mehta's Plenary talk.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the AAB travel support that made attendance possible, and I would like to thank Dr Lauri Nikkanen (University of Turku) for his support and guidance in preparing for this conference.

Membership

As a member of the Association of Applied Biologists, you join a community of over 1000 professionals working across all areas of Applied Biology to improve agricultural productivity, with added benefits...

Access to Grants

- ◆ Eligible to apply for 'AAB Carer & Accessibility Fund' (£500)
- ◆ Priority access to Early Career travel grants for all AAB events (£500)
- ◆ *New* access to members-only Early Career travel grants for external conferences (£500)

Fellowship

Long-term continuous members (7+ years) can apply for Fellowship of the AAB (F Appl. Biol.).

Discounts

- ◆ Save on registration fees for our scientific conferences & workshops (up to £100!)
- ◆ Two-way membership discount with the Royal Society of Biology (50% off!)
- ◆ 30% off Aspects of Applied Biology
- ◆ 10% discount in publication fees for Plant Biotechnology Journal
- ◆ Discounted membership for LMIC residents - contact Jordan for details!

Community

- ◆ Join an AAB specialist group & steer our society
- ◆ Share your news & opportunities in our monthly newsletter, circulated to ~4500 scientists



ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

**Become a
Member!**

Call for Papers

To coincide with Photosynthesis 2026 we are happy to announce special issues in both of our journals. Guest edited by our very own president-elect Prof. Martin Parry (Lancaster University, UK) and Dr Ben Long (University of Newcastle, Australia).

Plant Biotechnology Journal

Open Access

Special Issue: Call for Papers

Engineering Photosynthesis

Submission Deadline: 1 April 2027



aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

S|E|B

WILEY

Annals of Applied Biology Biosciences for Sustainability

aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

Special Issue: Call for Papers

Novel Applications of
Photosynthesis for
Improved Productivity

Submission Deadline:
1 April 2027



WILEY

AAB Specialist Groups



Applied Plant Pathology



Applied Tree and Forest Biology



Biological Control and Integrated Pest Management (IPM)



Cropping And The Environment (CATE)



Food Systems



Horticultural Quality and Food Loss



Nematology



Pesticide Application



PlantEd: Genome Editing in Plants



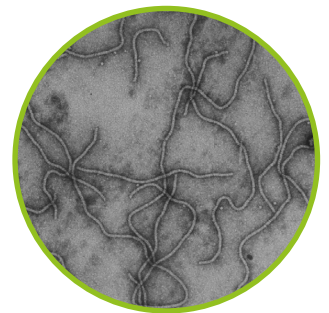
Early Career Professionals



Soil and Root Biology



Monogram



Virology

AAB Council



Dale Sanders, PhD
President

AAB Office, Warwick Enterprise
Park, CV35 9EF, UK
ds10@york.ac.uk



Martin Parry, PhD
President Elect

Lancaster Environment
Centre, LA1 4YQ, UK
m.parry@lancaster.ac.uk



Nigel Halford, PhD
Treasurer

Rothamsted Research,
Harpenden, AL5 2JQ, UK
Nigel.Halford@rothamsted.ac.uk



Guy Barker, PhD
General Secretary

School of Life Sciences, University
of Warwick, CV4 7AL, UK
Guy.Barker@warwick.ac.uk



Kairsty Topp, PhD
Conference Treasurer

SRUC, Kings Buildings,
EH9 3JG, UK
Kairsty.topp@sruc.ac.uk



Christine Foyer, PhD
Publications Officer

School of Biosciences, University
of Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK
c.h.foyer@bham.ac.uk



Steve Edgington, PhD
Programme Secretary

CABI, TW20 9TY, UK
s.edgington@cabi.org



Jake Bishop, PhD
*Early Career
Scientist Champion*

University of Reading, RG6 6UR
j.bishop@reading.ac.uk



Iain Donnison, PhD
*Honorary Council
Member*

Institute of Biological, Environmental
and Rural Science
isd@aber.ac.uk

AAB Office



Geraint Parry, PhD
Executive Officer

geraint@aab.org.uk



Alberto Vitale
Finance & Office Manager

alberto@aab.org.uk



Jordan Robson, PhD
Communications & Membership Manager

jordan@aab.org.uk



John Andrews, PhD
Conference Administrator

john@aab.org.uk

Contact Us

**Warwick Enterprise Park,
Wellesbourne,
Warwick,
CV35 9EF**

**Registered charity number:
1195899**

Please email for...

General enquiries: Geraint
Finances: Alberto
Membership & Comms: Jordan
Events: Geraint
Conference Abstracts: John

And follow us!



@aabiologists.bsky.social



@aabiologists



Association of
Applied Biologists



@AABiologists



Get in touch...

*As an Applied Biologist,
our society is all about you!*

*So if you want to share an opportunity, contribute to the newsletter, or
have any feedback on what you want to see from the AAB in future...
please get in touch with Jordan*

