

Norah Boyce Science Lectures – Autumn term 2021

These lectures will take place on Tuesdays at 4.30 pm via Zoom.

The Zoom lectures are open to members only. You will need to log in to access the Zoom link. The link for each lecture is on the Norah Boyce Lectures page of the website and will be included in the weekly Bulletin the week prior to the lecture.

Any last-minute changes to the programme will be publicised in the weekly Bulletin.

"Science for everyone"

19 October COP26 and the scientific importance of achieving its goals

Speaker: Dr Emily Shuckburgh OBE, Reader in Environmental Data Science and Fellow of Darwin College, Director of Cambridge Zero, the University of Cambridge's climate change initiative.

Lecture details to follow.

2 November The joy of insect watching

Speaker: Dr William Foster, Department of Zoology

We cannot hope to understand the evolution and ecology of insects (or anything else) without observing the behaviour of identifiable individuals in the field. I will discuss some of the things I and my team have discovered by doing this relatively rare thing for entomologists to do.

16 November Hey Siri! How smart are you?

Speaker: Prof Steve Young FRS FREng Emeritus Professor of Information Engineering in the Department of Engineering and Fellow of Emmanuel College.

In the last ten years, conversational agents such as Siri and Alexa have developed into quite capable personal assistants. They can execute simple commands and provide information over a wide range of topics. The artificial intelligence technology on which they depend is improving rapidly and they will continue to evolve and improve. So just how smart are they, and perhaps more importantly, how smart will they become in the future? Will they remain benign assistants making our lives easier, or might they become a threat?

This talk attempts to give some insight into these questions. It provides a brief overview of how conversational agents work and how the underlying technology is developing. It then examines their future evolution and the various issues of trust that will inevitably arise.

7 December Why calories don't count

Speaker: Dr Giles Yeo, WT-MRC Institute of Metabolic Science, Addenbrookes Hospital

A calorie is a calorie, so they say. It shouldn't matter whether it comes from steak, a carrot or a doughnut. Except it does! Our body works harder to extract calories from some food compared to others, which is why calories don't count. Remember, we eat food, not calories.