BOU guide to Bluesky conferences

Welcome to BOUasm25…

…this is a multi-format event, held in-person, online and on Bluesky

Welcome to our guide. This guide aims to provide a thorough overview of why BOU are hosting parallel Bluesky conferences and to provide clear guidelines to someone who hasn't used Bluesky before, or hasn't previously participated in a BOU social media conference.

If you're already a Bluesky user and confident writing a thread for a BOU conference, please read **page 2** only.

Otherwise, please use the Contents table to navigate this guide.

Contents

The 'must-knows' for BOUasm25 presenters

This section is aimed at people who are familiar with Bluesky and confident writing a thread for a BOU conference. If that's not you or you'd like more help, please use the contents table above to navigate this guide.

BOUasm25 Bluesky threads must dos:

- You are expected to post a thread (not individual posts)
- The first post must contain the conference tag (#BOUasm25) and should include any other relevant tags that will help your thread appear in relevant feeds – e.g. #ornithology.
    - See our feed section for more information and a list of suggested feeds and keywords.
    - See example of a first post.
- Your thread should be made up of text and images. Links to papers or blogs are encouraged.
- Number the posts in the thread (1 – 6 or 1 – n; see below for length of thread).
- We encourage you to monitor Bluesky during the conference to answer any questions or to respond to comments on your thread.

Length of Bluesky thread:

Keynote presenters: between 6-15 posts in a thread

Oral and Bluesky-only presenters: up to 6 posts in a thread

When to post Bluesky thread:

You must post your thread at your allocated time within the conference programme.

Keynote and oral presenters: The time-slot for your Bluesky presentation is the same as the time-slot for your oral presentation. You can schedule your Bluesky presentation in advance (see How and when do I post my thread?).

Bluesky-only presenters: The time-slot for your Bluesky presentation is during a conference break (e.g. refreshment or lunch breaks). You can schedule your Bluesky presentation in advance (see How and when do I post my thread?).

We strongly encourage presenters to pre-schedule their threads for the programmed time. If you're unable to do this, please get in touch with us.

All of BOUasm25 threads will be visible within the #BOUasm25 conference feed.

Please read our accessibility and inclusivity guidelines for tips on making your threads and images more accessible to all.

Why the multi conference format and why should I engage?

BOU's mission is to make science globally inclusive and accessible. Bluesky conferences are a low carbon, cost-free and inclusive way for scientists (and those interested in research) from around the world to come together, share and discuss research.

Traditional face-to-face conferences can be quite exclusive. A key barrier to in-person conference attendance is the associated financial cost, particularly for researchers from low-income backgrounds. Some potential attendees sadly also fear discrimination and / or inaccessibility due to their background, identity, language, disability or life-stage (e.g. breastfeeding mothers).

Over the past few years, online conferences (e.g. on Zoom) have been gaining popularity and they are effective at making scientific conferences more inclusive and accessible as they are cheaper and logistically simpler to attend. However, they are usually still limited to an academic audience, require a registration fee and need to be attended live. This is where conferences on social media platforms are so successful at breaking down these barriers and deliver science to much broader and more diverse audiences – for BOU events, as much as 12x the size of in-person events. Everyone with access to the internet can follow a social media conference at their own pace and in their own time, making this method of science communication accessible. This is revolutionary for science communication.

Formerly, Twitter provided an effective platform for hosting social media conferences. However, changes to Twitter (now X) mean that we need an alternative. In particular, posts on X can no longer be viewed without an account, and posts with links (such as to research papers) are penalised by the algorithm. Many users are also leaving X, or reducing their engagement, including members of the ornithological community. Bluesky presents a promising alternative – it is free, rapidly growing in users (over 25 million new users in under a year, with ornithology being one of the largest communities), and provides users with lots of control over its use.

Check out BOU's Bluesky account: [@bou.org.uk](#)

For further reading on this topic, see our [Further reading and help](#) section at the end.

What exactly is Bluesky and how do I get started?

Bluesky is a microblogging social media platform, similar to Twitter (now called X). Visually it looks similar to Twitter and has the key features you'd expect from a social media site – ability to post, reply, repost and like. Bluesky is easy and free to join ([you can join here](#)).

There are also lots of fantastic guides online, such as:

- [How to Get Started on Bluesky: A Guide for Beginners](#)
- [Bluesky Isn't Like Other Social Media Networks: Here's How to Get Set Up](#)

Note – many of the recommended guides above cover similar content but each is written differently so find the one that you like, or search Google or YouTube for more.

Bluesky Feeds – what are they and why are they important?

On Bluesky, feeds are curated lists of posts on a given topic and users can follow feeds of interest. This gives users a lot more control over what posts they see as each user chooses what feeds to follow, rather than seeing posts determined by an algorithm.

Depending on how a feed is set up, for a post to appear in a feed, a key word, hashtag or symbol has to appear within the post. For example, all posts with the tag #ornithology appear in BOU's Ornithology Feed.

Some feeds are more restricted and only posts from users on their contributor lists appear in the feed. For example, to be able to contribute to the Bioacoustics Feed, you need to message the Feed owner to briefly describe your bioacoustics work. Once added as a contributor, any posts you make with one of the following tags: #bioacoustics, #animalcommunication, #nocmig, 🔈, 🔉, 🔊, will appear in the feed.

This may appear like a lot of work, but it ensures that all posts within a feed are relevant to feed followers and are likely to yield quality engagement and interactions.
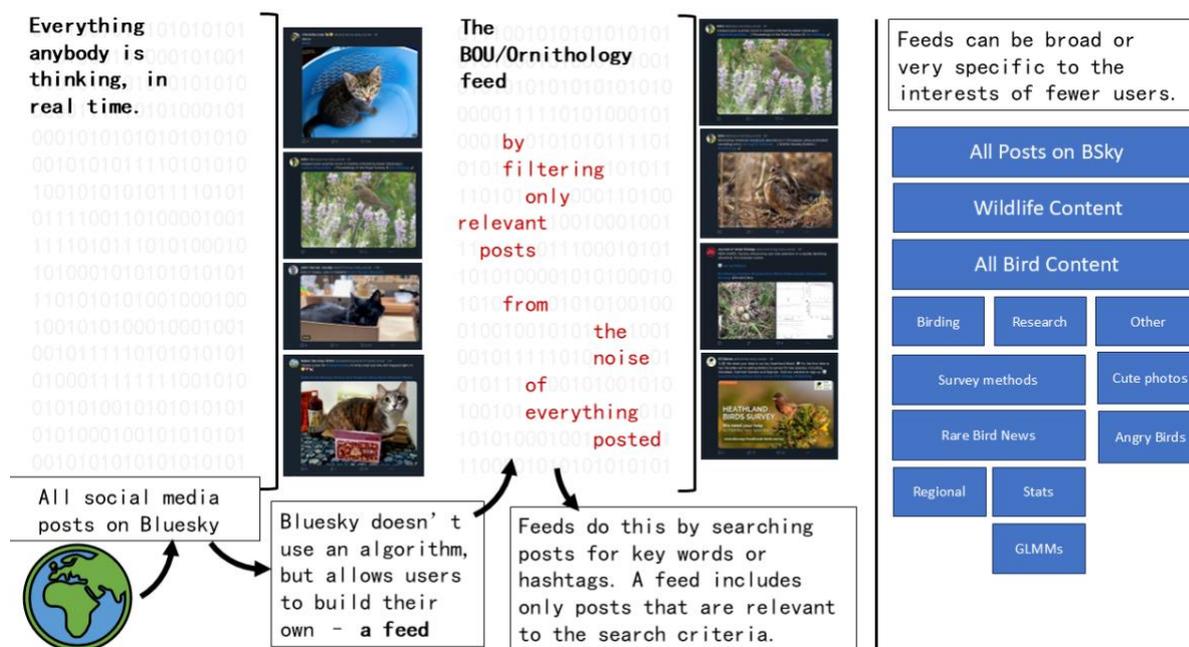
How do Bluesky conferences work?

At a Bluesky conference, presentations are delivered as threads, which are a string of linked posts, appearing one underneath the other. All posts containing the conference tag will appear within a conference feed.

For BOU conferences, we ask all of our presenters (keynote, oral, poster and Bluesky-only) to deliver a Bluesky thread that summarises their presentation.

Engagement at conferences is key – when you apply to present your work, you're likely hoping for some questions and feedback. Networking opportunities are also a key motivator to attending conferences.

Online conferences should be no different, so we strongly encourage our presenters and delegates to follow all BOU Bluesky conference threads and engage with them by liking, reposting and commenting to share thoughts or questions.

A key advantage of social media conferences is that they stay available beyond the time and day of the 'scheduled presentation', meaning that they can be read in people's own time. The engagement with conference threads is often greatest during the days of the conference and in the few days following it, so it is still worth checking your Bluesky account and the conference feed after the in-person event has finished.

Examples of BOU conference threads

You can view Bluesky threads from previous BOU events here: #BOUatEOU, #BOU2025, #BOU2024, #BOUasm24, #BOUsci24.

Navigating a BOU Bluesky conference

Bluesky conferences use unique tags (know on Twitter as hashtags) to bring together all presentations. These are keywords that all presenters use so when someone searches for the tag on the social media platform, they can easily find all of the conference threads.

The BOUasm25 conference tag is: #BOUasm25

Tags are also a way for posts to appear within feeds (as discussed above). The BOU have a conference feed and all posts with the tag #BOUasm25 will appear within it. During the conference, you can simply view this feed and be sure not to miss anything.

Bluesky can be used on your laptop, mobile or tablet device. The in-browser and app versions of Bluesky are similar and the diagrams below point out the key features of Bluesky that you'll need to know to follow BOUasm25 and to post your thread.

On the next page, you can see an image which shows what Bluesky looks like in a web browser and points out the key features.

You can repost any Bluesky post or thread by clicking the repost icon, as shown below. Once you do this, you'll get two options:
- **Repost**: simply adds the reposted post to your timeline so your followers can see it.
- **Quote repost**: allows you to add your own comment to the post you're reposting. If you do this, the comment you added will appear above the reposted post on your timeline.

What Bluesky looks like

Posting a thread

In the image above, you can see the big blue button in the bottom right, which lets you make a post. This will make a window appear like this:
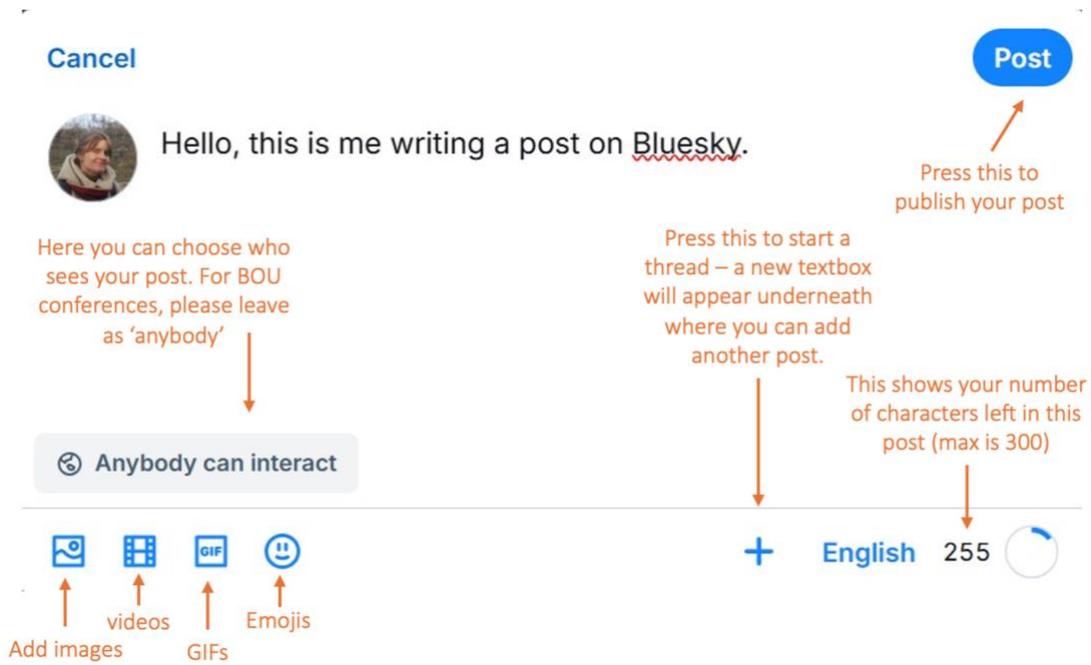
In each of your posts, you can **mention other Bluesky accounts** and users. To do this, type the @ sign and start tying their account name (e.g. @bou.org.uk) and once the correct account appears, just click it to add to your post.

Bluesky at BOUasm25 guidelines

Your Bluesky presentation will take the format of a thread, which is made up of a set number of posts. Each post is limited to 300 characters in length. The number of posts per thread varies on your presentation type:

Keynote presenters: between 6 - 15 posts in a thread

Oral and Bluesky-only presenters: up to 6* posts in a thread

Please number your posts in your thread 1 – 6 (oral, poster and Bluesky-only presenters), or 1 – n (keynotes). You may wish to use the 🧵 in your first post to indicate it is part of a thread – see example below.

BOU conference Bluesky threads may follow the format of a standard scientific presentation with an introductory post > brief outline of aims / questions and methods + results + discussion > ending in a conclusion that clearly wraps up your thread.

Keynote presenters producing a longer thread may wish to format their thread differently, especially if they are presenting multiple studies or questions. The key is still to have a clear introductory post and a succinct conclusion with some take home messages.

Note on acknowledgements – we understand that acknowledging collaborated, partners and funders is important and crucial and we encourage our Bluesky presenters to do this in a 7th post at the end of their thread

Key feeds for BOUasm25

Beyond the conference tag and feed, we strongly recommend and encourage our presenters to use other tags in their threads so that they appear in other relevant feeds. This way, your thread will be visible to a broader audience and is likely to get more engagement. **Please only use tags in the first post of your thread.**

We have put together a list of suggested Bluesky feeds that may be relevant to our BOUasm25 presenters. This is not an exclusive list so feel free to find other relevant feeds to your presentation, and please consider the overlap between some of these feeds and use the most relevant tag to your thread.

Bluesky feed name and link	How to appear on this feed
Ornithology This is for all ornithological content, not just academic	Use #ornithology tag in post.
Science focused feeds, collating scientific research Ecology and Conservation	To many of these, you need to join the contributor list first. Use one of these emojis: 🌍, 🌏, or 🌎

Global Ecology	Use 🌐 emoji
Forest Ecology	Use 🍁 emoji or #forestecol
Marine Ecology	Use #MarineEcology tag
Science	Use 🧪 emoji
Ecology	Use one of these: #Ecology #Conservation #Climate #Environmental # 🌱
Conservation	Use ▯ emoji, or conservation or #conservation
Conservation Science	Use #conservationscience AND 🌍, 🌎, or 🌏
Bioacoustics	Use any of the following: #bioacoustics, #animalcommunication, #nocmig, 🔈, 🔉, 🔊
Conservation Genetics	Use any of: #consgen #conservationgenetics #conservationgenomics
Citizen Science	Use #citsci or #citizenscience
Feeds focussing on specific groups of birds	
Seabirds	Use #seabirds tag in post.
Raptors of Bluesky	Use #Raptor or #Raptors
Feeds focusing on birding in specific regions	
Birding UK/IRE	Use #ukbirding
Birding Scotland	Use #BirdingScotland

The first post of your thread is most important

The **introductory post** to your thread is the most important because it may be the only one someone sees. In many feeds, the first post of a thread is all that appears so it is the only opportunity to engage your audience with your thread and make them want to read the rest!

The first (introductory) post must contain:

- **#BOUasm25** tag

- Number 1 to indicate it is the first post of a thread

- Other **key tags** to help your thread appear in relevant feeds. We recommend all presenters use the #ornithology tag, and consult Key feeds for BOUasm25. Please only add relevant tags to the first post of your thread.

- A short intro to what your thread is about, perhaps even a question to **create intrigue**.

- An **eye-catching image** - this could be of your study species or system, or even the first slide of your PowerPoint presentation.

See page 12 for an example of what this may look like.

Text

Each post in the thread should contain text that succinctly and clearly conveys your message. You should use full sentences rather than linguistic short-cuts, though in some cases emojis and symbols can be helpful in conveying your message, for example, using the increase graph emoji 📈 instead of 'increase' or an arrow ➡ to say 'this led to…', or the question mark ❓ instead of the word 'question'.

Use this free character counter to ensure each post is within the 300-character limit (including spaces).

Images and media

We *strongly recommend* that each post in the thread contains <u>one accompanying image</u>. The image should capture attention and add to your written message. Your images can be similar to PowerPoint presentation slides and can include:

- images of your study site or organism
- diagrams explaining your methods
- figures showing your results
- infographics
- graphical abstracts
- GIFs
- Videos – up to 60 second long. *Appropriate use includes footage from camera traps or short animations showing migration routes. The videos should not be recordings of you presenting your work or series of figures that are not described in the text.*

Links

It is common practice to include links to published studies in your posts and we encourage it. We recommend limiting this to one link per post. It may also be appropriate to include links to relevant blogs or project websites.

Please do not include links to webpages with extended text – the point of threads is that they succinctly tell the story of your research so lengthy webpages will most likely not be read. The exception is a link to your paper!

Please note that each character in the URL contributes to the post character limit. This is why using a shortened URL (you can do this here) or the DOI of a paper (rather than the full URL to the journal page) may be better.

Remember that sharing links to published research contributes to that paper's Altmetric Attention Score so please do go ahead and promote your work!

Please read our accessibility and inclusivity guidelines for tips on making your threads and images more accessible to all.

Example of a first post in a BOU Bluesky conference thread

Post number
And a thread emoji to indicate this is a thread

Conference tag
Post will appear in #BOU2025 conference feed

Tagging People and Nature journal

Two more tags
Post will appear in the Ornithology and Bioacoustics feeds

Image of the study system – birds in vineyards

Globe emoji
Post will appear in the Ecology and Conservation feed

Text to hopefully induce curiosity!

Commonly used keywords
Not linked to feeds but commonly used by Bluesky users

Link to paper
If someone doesn't read the rest, hopefully they'll click on the link!

Natalia (Nat) Zielonka @natbzielonka.bsky.social · 6s

1/ 📝 The 🌍 is facing 3 crises:
⚠️ Declining biodiversity
⚠️ Disconnect from nature
⚠️ Poor wellbeing

I'm at #BOU2025 today exploring how diverse bird communities and #birdsong can benefit our #wellbeing

Our @peopleandnature.bsky.social paper 👉 shorturl.at/zjg5Z

#ornithology 🪶 #bioacoustics

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How and when do I post my thread?

You must post your thread at your allocated time within the conference programme.

> **Keynote and oral presenters**: The time-slot for your Bluesky presentation is the same as the time-slot for your oral presentation.

> **Poster and Bluesky-only presenters**: The time-slot for your Bluesky presentation is during a conference break (e.g. refreshment or lunch breaks).

Your Bluesky thread should be scheduled ahead of time, so you needn't worry about writing or posting it last minute when you'd rather be enjoying a conference coffee or when actually presenting! Once scheduled, your thread will be posted at the scheduled time regardless of whether you're connected to the internet or have charge left in your device.

You can schedule your Bluesky thread with a free Fedica account: https://fedica.com/blog/schedule-bluesky-posts-free/ or a free Buffer account: https://buffer.com/bluesky

If you are unable to schedule your Bluesky thread in advance, we can help – please get in touch (contact details below).

Engagement

We hope your BOUasm25 presentation will receive a lot of positive interactions from the virtual audience, which can be through likes, comments and reposts. We encourage our presenters to check Bluesky during and after the conference to respond to any questions and comments on their threads.

We also strongly encourage all of our delegates to look for and engage with other conference threads and posts. Remember to use the #BOUasm25 tag when you want your post or comment to appear in the conference feed.

Contacting us and extra support

Get in touch with the #BOUasm25 Bluesky event organisers via email:

- **River Stewart** riveraxstewart@outlook.com
- **Leila Walker** leilawalker@bou.org.uk

#BOUasm25 is an inclusive, unmoderated event. Bad, aggressive, distasteful, abusive and/or offensive language will not be tolerated and anyone disregarding this rule will be reported to Bluesky and not welcome at future BOU events.

Further reading and help

Research on the benefits of social media / online conferences

Caravaggi et al. (2021) **Twitter conferences as a low-carbon, far-reaching and inclusive way of communicating research in ornithology and ecology.** *Ibis.* https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.12959

Cusick et al. (2024) **Is it time to get over the X? Assessing the global impact and future of social media conferences in animal behaviour.** *Animal Behaviour.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2024.04.001

Bos et al. (2017) **Family-friendly academic conferences: a missing link to fix the "leaky pipeline"?** *Politics, Groups and Identities.* https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1403936

Estien et al. (2021) **Virtual Scientific Conferences: Benefits and How to Support Underrepresented Students.** *The Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America.* https://doi.org/10.1002/bes2.1859

Gattrell et al. (2022) **The Carbon Costs of In-Person Versus Virtual Medical Conferences for the Pharmaceutical Industry: Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic.** *Pharmaceutical Medicine.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s40290-022-00421-3

Kuehne et al. (2022) **Benefits of permanent adoption of virtual conferences for conservation science.** *Conservation Biology.* https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13884

Puccinelli et al. (2022) **Hybrid conferences: opportunities, challenges and ways forward.** *Frontiers in Marine Science.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2022.902772

Raby et al. (2022) **An inclusive venue to discuss behavioural biology research: the first global Animal Behaviour Twitter Conference.** *Animal Behaviour* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2022.02.015

Walton et al. (2022) **Virtual academic conferences: A mixed-methods study of equitable participation according to gender and country-income level.** *Research Square [not peer-reviewed].* https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-2250662/v1

Bluesky and ornithology

- How to Get Started on Bluesky: A Guide for Beginners
- Bluesky Isn't Like Other Social Media Networks: Here's How to Get Set Up
- Bluesky Starter Parks in Ornithology
- The Researcher's Guide to Bluesky