YETI mailing list survey December 2023

Summary

To mark the YETI mailing list crossing 15,000 subscribers, a survey of subscribers was circulated on the mailing list to better understand **who** the subscribers are, and **what** they look to the list for (and conversely what they prefer to see less of). The survey was first circulated on 19 December 2023, and after a few reminders, was closed on 1 January 2024.

In total, the survey received 491 responses. Although this is only 3.2% of the total subscribers, the absolute number is reasonably high, and the overall responses therefore relatively stable (although patterns from subsets of the responses may be less stable). Of course, those who took the survey are unlikely to be representative of the set of all subscribers, since it is likely that a substantial fraction of subscribers do not read YETI emails at all. Still, perhaps we can assume that the respondents are a reasonable representation of that set of subscribers who regularly open and read YETI emails.

In the document, we summarise the results from the survey, and point to some changes we intend to make as a consequence of the input received.

When did you subscribe to the YETI mailing list?

Roughly when did you subscribe to the YETI mailing list
491 responses

- In the past 1 year
- 1 to 5 years ago
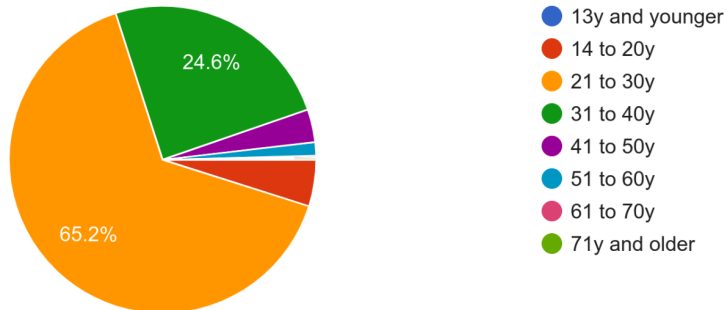- So long ago, I can't remember
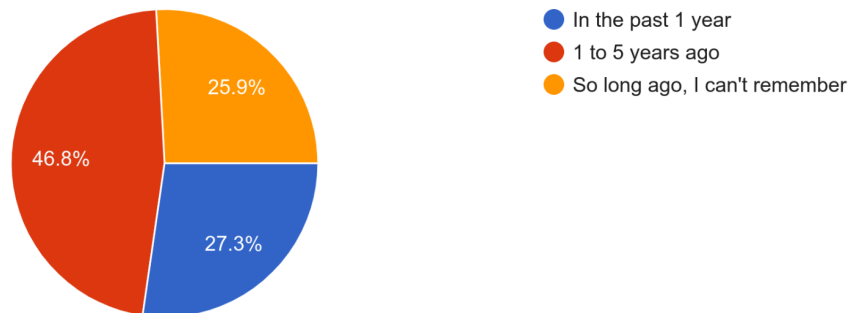
A full quarter of respondents are relatively new, having subscribed in the past year. Another quarter are long-term subscribers, from over 5 years ago.

Age group

Age group

What age group do you fall into?
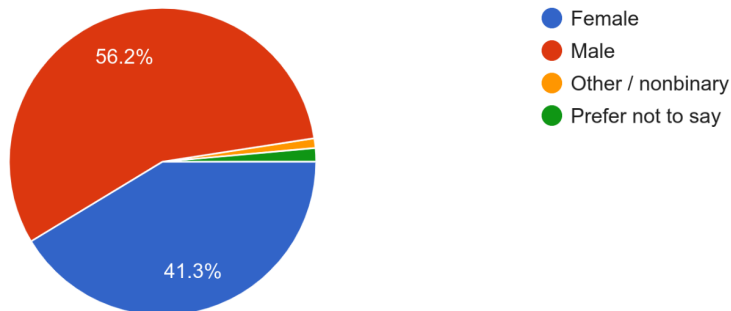491 responses

The vast majority of respondents (90%) are in the age group 21 to 40.
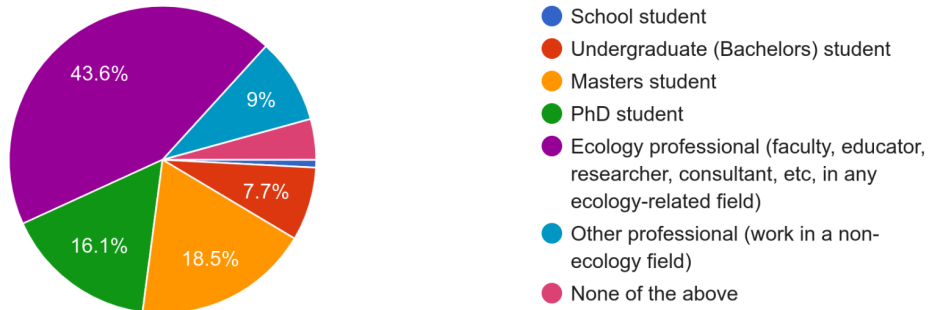
Gender

Your gender
491 responses

The survey contains more male than female respondents. If this is reflective of the YETI community as a whole then women appear to be under-represented among subscribers.

Occupation

What are you doing now?
491 responses

- ● School student
- ● Undergraduate (Bachelors) student
- ● Masters student
- ● PhD student
- ● Ecology professional (faculty, educator, researcher, consultant, etc, in any ecology-related field)
- ● Other professional (work in a non-ecology field)
- ● None of the above

Respondents were divided equally between students of some kind (school, undergraduate, Masters or PhD students), and ecology professionals – at roughly 43% of the respondents each.

What announcements do you look for?

What announcements on YETI do you mainly look for? [rank from most important to least important]
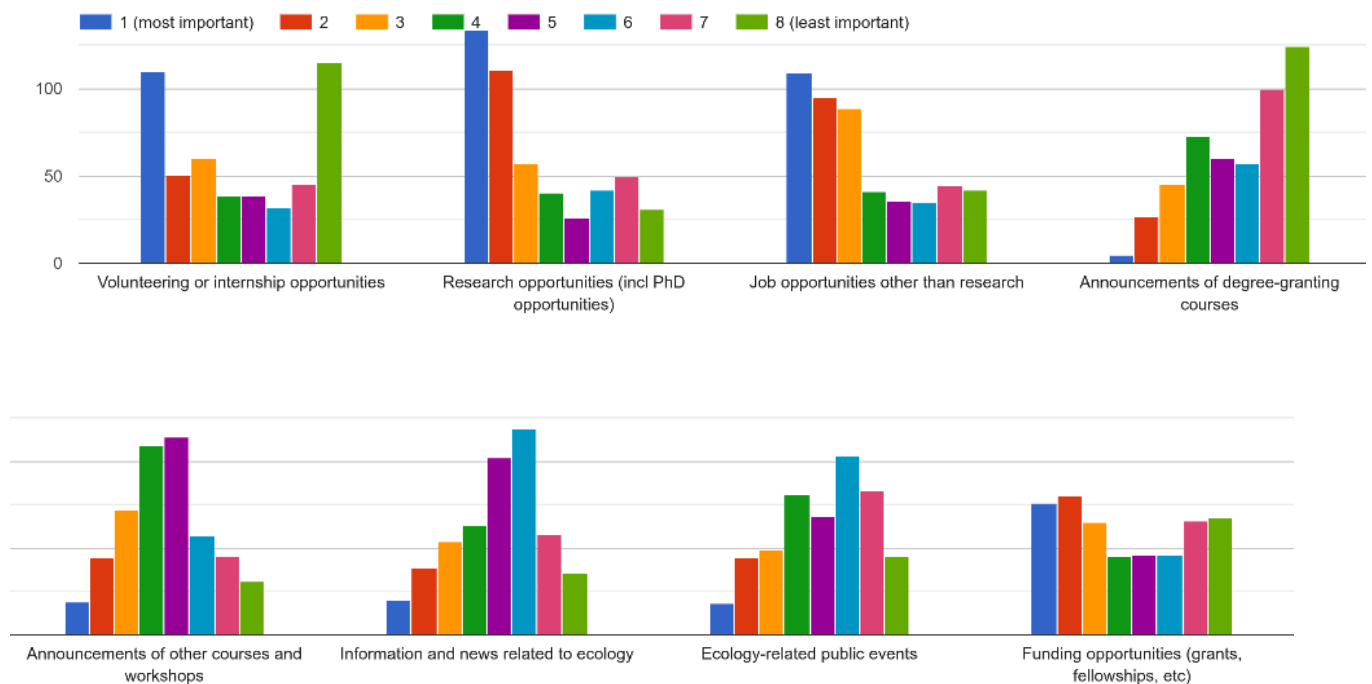
These graphs show a tabulation of how many respondents assigned each priority rank to each topic. Some lessons are fairly clear from this – for example, that research opportunities as well as

non-research jobs are generally of high importance, but that not all that many people are on the lookout for announcements of degree-granting courses. Other patterns are contradictory, for example volunteering/internships has modes at both 'most important' and 'least important'. This suggests that different subsets of YETI subscribers have different priorities.

Therefore we divided respondents into three categories according to occupation: Students (school, undergraduate, Masters and PhD students); Ecology professionals, and all Others. For each of these three groups, we calculated the average rank for each of the 8 topics, and these are plotted below, with sample sizes (number of respondents) in the legend. Note that **a lower rank corresponds to higher importance/priority**.
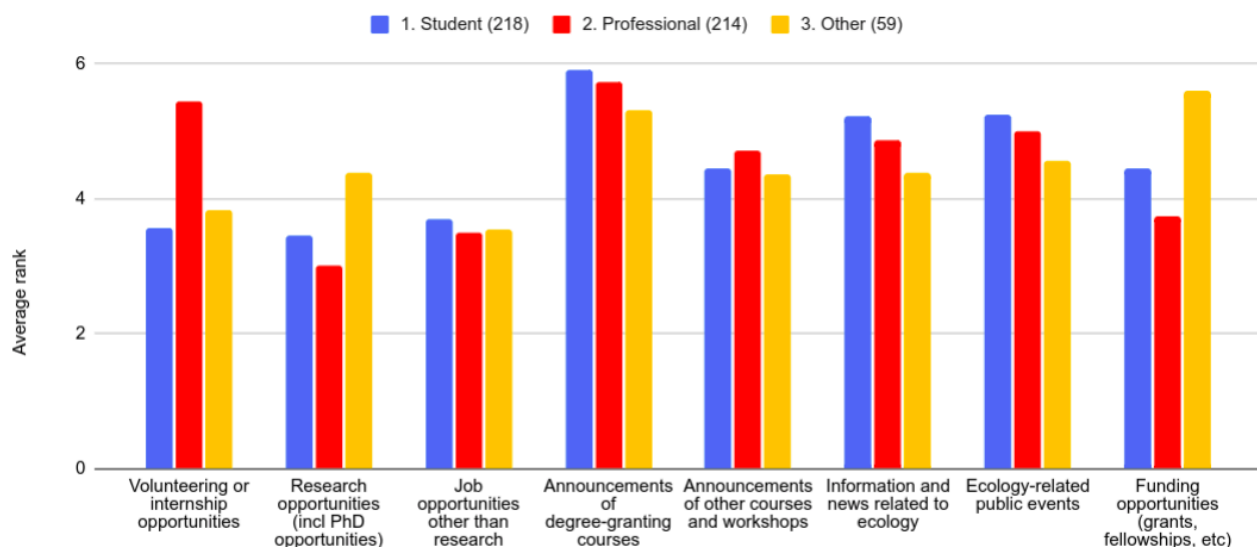
Some broad patterns are that all three groups give a relatively high priority to research as well as other job opportunities. All groups agree that degree-granting courses are not of that much interest. And we can see variation among groups in how much they value volunteering/internships (professionals, understandably, consider this less important) and how much they value funding opportunities (professionals consider this more important than do the other group.

What would you like to see MORE or LESS of?

Before summarising the free-text input received on these questions, a word on coding and analysis. Ignoring nonresponses, and responses that indicated no preference for change, the remainder of the input was coded into single words for consistency of meaning (e.g., global, abroad, and international all indicate a similar sentiment) and form (e.g., so that singular and plural are not counted separately). In the question about "less", retaining the intention often required the use of a two-word phrase; e.g., a respondent may not have minded courses in general, but wanted to see less of **paid** courses (hence coded as 'paidcourses').

What would you like to see MORE of? (311 responses)

It is clear that a large number of respondents were interested in jobs of various kinds, as well as other kinds of opportunities, including research opportunities and internships. Announcements of funding (which includes grants) and fellowships were also mentioned frequently, as well as learning opportunities, including workshops, courses and conferences. A number of respondents were also interested in receiving more news and announcements of international events and opportunities, not just from India alone.

What would you like to see LESS of? (153 responses)

By a considerable amount, the posts that most respondents wanted to see less of were various opportunities (including volunteering and internships) that are **unpaid**, as also **underpaid** jobs (all classed here as unpaidopportunities). Next were training opportunities that charge a fee, including paid courses and workshops. Some people (presumably depending on career stage and interest) wanted to see fewer posts announcing volunteering positions, internships, and courses (including those leading to a degree).

Further ideas and feedback

A number of ideas were contributed in this section. We summarise key ideas and suggestions below, as well as our response in italics. We have set aside suggestions for specific content - eg more marine ecology related content - since we do not have the capacity at the moment to create content. Numbers in parentheses at the end of each bullet point are the number of respondents who made that point (if more than 1).

Better ways to categorise/receive posts

- Have tags/categories or sublists while signing up so that subscribers receive only select content - (9)
- Allow subscribers to rate posts, so that eventually they can be individually customised
- Participants should be able to post directly, with moderation
- Starting the subject line with a category (job, workshop, etc) also indicate paid/unpaid - (8)
- Digest for news etc (no deadline), regular email for announcements with deadlines
- Send email as a digest/newsletter rather than daily - (2)
- Send emails more staggered (2); send in batch at the same time (2)
- Send posts well in advance of event deadlines - (2)
- Some content is too State or location-specific

YETI response: The freelists platform we use doesn't allow users to sign up for certain categories of posts and not others. We don't allow participants to post directly, even with moderation, since we request additional details or corrections for a number of posts, and our current system of forwarding seems to work best.

The suggestion to edit the subject line so that it is more informative is an excellent one. We will implement this henceforth, experimenting a bit first (eg Job - Consultant - EIA; Webinar - Ecological restoration; etc) before settling on a fixed format.

If you prefer to receive YETI posts in a single daily email, you can set your preferences to Digest. Go to the [YETI page](#), enter your email address, and choose "Turn Digest mode on".

Additional features

- Accompanying website with pages for different categories of posts - (2)
- Online resource with information about ongoing research in different subfields
- Collaborative platform (incl govt) for job seekers - (2)
- A google document with all universities in India and abroad for a student to apply to
- Have a social media presence

YETI response: all these are good ideas; if anyone creates such resources, platforms, etc, be sure to post on YETI so that we can help spread the word! We do have a [website](#), but this has mostly information about previous conferences.

Interaction

- YETI conference should be re-started - 6
- Other formats for peer-to-peer sharing - 2

- Enable discussion and interaction
- More engagement, eg quizzes
- Online meetups
- Start an ecological society

YETI response: The last YETI conference was held in 2018. There are discussions about reviving it, more about this soon. We will explore the possibility of other formats for both announcements and discussions. The more structured messaging platforms (like Slack or Discord) appear more suitable for this than platforms like Whatsapp or Telegram. We will likely try out one of these platforms, more about this after we have have had a chance to think through the various implications.

Other platforms

- Create Telegram broadcast channel
- Region/location based Whatsapp groups
- Share news/opportunities on Twitter
- Insta page to highlight news/science

YETI response: We would like to keep this simple and low effort for the moment. See response to "Interaction" above.

Scope

- Broaden scope beyond strictly ecology (to sustainability/environment) - 3
- Include global news/activities/opportunities - 2

YETI response: Sustainability and environment are related to ecology no doubt, but are vast fields, and expanding the scope will only make it harder for subscribers to find posts relevant for them. We intend to continue our focus on ecology. You are welcome to share global opportunities, etc, but please ensure that they are open to applicants from India/South Asia.

Content of posts

- Promote minimum salary/stipend; don't post unpaid/low paid opportunities - 6
- Limit paid events/courses/workshops
- Encourage regional language announcements/activities

YETI response: We share the sentiment that people should be paid, and paid appropriately, for the work they do. However, much depends on context and circumstance; and as an announcements portal it is not our role to enforce this. Similarly, those who run courses/workshops incur costs; and it is up to the reader to decide whether they wish to pay the fee.

Other

- A system to rate workshops/events
- Advertise YETI in conferences etc
- If people charge for courses, they can pay YETI to advertise
- Is there any way to see how many people read a post/email?

YETI response: We can see the value in having a system to rate courses, workshops etc. But we don't see ourselves developing one at this point. Before attending a course or workshop, please ask around and get input from others who have taken it. YETI is an entirely voluntary community, and we don't intend to charge anyone to post their announcements. With respect to the last point, there is unfortunately no way to see how many people read a YETI email.

What lies ahead

The input received is very valuable in understanding the YETI community and thinking of various possibilities for the way ahead.

Some things that will not change are the mix of posts that are forwarded on the mailing lists. To clarify, YETI does not seek out posts from any particular individual/institution, nor on a specific topic. Those wishing to publicise their events and opportunities related to ecology send their post to us; if the post falls within the scope of YETI, then it is forwarded to the list.

One set of changes that we will implement right away is in **making the subject line more informative**, so that subscribers can potentially scan the subject line and delete messages that are not of interest to them. The subject line will contain information on whether or not the opportunity comes with remuneration, and similarly whether or not a course/workshop is paid. As mentioned above, we will try out a few formats before finalising.

The idea of building a platform that allows more interactivity will need some further thought. This could be implemented on the YETI website, in the form of a forum or community; or done on a pre-existing app, such as Slack or Discord. There are multiple things to consider before embarking down one route or another, and this will take us some time to decide.

A big thank you to all who took the survey – we look forward to making the YETI platform more useful in the coming months and years.

YETI website
https://www.meetyeti.net/

YETI mailing list
https://www.freelists.org/list/meetyeti

YETI contact
meet.yeti@gmail.com