EEB Monthly: March 2023

EEB Monthly is a department newsletter to be distributed at the end of each month. It will be used to share departmental information, remind team members of upcoming events, acknowledge various accomplishments, and keep us all connected between our different goals and responsibilities.

This newsletter is for your enjoyment, and to provide it, we rely heavily on submissions from our community for its content! If you have anything you'd like to share in upcoming editions, we encourage you to send any submissions to Pam Diggle, Harrison Goodale, and/or the assistant email (eeb.assistant@uconn.edu).

Upcoming in April
As we move into the latter half of the semester, a lot of exciting things are going on! Here are some of the events to look forward to:

- **Graduate Student Appreciation Week** from April 3 to April 7
- **More than Scenery**, a book talk and signing event, on April 5
- **A Glimpse of the Deaf Community**, a DEI presentation, on April 6
- and **multiple graduate defenses**!

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**In the News**

Our own **David Wagner** received a narrative profile on his life and work as an entomologist in *The New Yorker*: *The Little Known World of Caterpillars: An entomologist races to find them before they disappear.*

**Michael Willig** and **Steven Presley** were quoted in a *UConn Today* article: *When Constructing Conservation Networks, It's Best to Have a Plan*

In a report by Research.com, EEB’s **Gene Likens** was ranked #26 the world rankings and #13 in the US for Best Ecology and Evolution Scientists. See *UConn's ranked faculty here.*

**Sarah Knutie** was featured in an article from *New Scientist*: *City life may help Darwin's finches survive bloodsucking flies*
The Greenhouse's first *Vanilla pompona* of the season bloomed this past month!

This plant is particularly special, as it is one of the original greenhouse specimens that was accessioned on 12/31/1985. The flowers are only open for one day and require hand pollination to produce the delicious vanilla bean that we use to flavor ice cream, baked goods, etc.
Awards

Frank Muzio has received the 2022 TA Excellence Award, which distinguishes "graduate students who have contributed exemplary teaching in EEB classes." Congratulations!

Congratulations to EEB undergraduate student Reilly Stiefel, who was awarded a 2023 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) to work with EEB members Louise Lewis and Zach Muscavitch. Reilly’s project will use an amplicon sequencing approach to study the geographic distribution of a particular group of green algae, which are lichen photobionts of fog desert lichens (Zach’s specialty). Reilly will be writing a senior thesis in fall 2023 using the information about the algae collected this summer.

Joan Tremblay, who graduated with a dual major in EEB and English last year—and conducted her honors thesis on the impacts of the Covid-19 shutdowns on mammal activity—has just been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship! Joan will be pursuing her Master's degree in Scotland, where she will be studying the influence of folklore on conservation in the United Kingdom. Congratulations!

Analisa Milkey has been awarded a 2023 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. She will use this to pursue her dissertation research involving a Sequential Monte Carlo approach to the multispecies coalescent model, which is important in Bayesian phylogenetics for estimating the species tree in the face of conflicts among gene trees due to deep coalescence.

Brandon Chan has also been awarded an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. He'll be exploring how mutualistic interactions between marine phytoplankton and bacteria influence their stress tolerance and responses to changing climate.

Several years ago, Greg and Mona Anderson generously donated funds to be used for an award for the best EEB Ph.D. dissertation in each calendar year. The 2022 Award goes to Valeri Milici for her dissertation examining variation in plant-pathogen interactions along a plant diversity-precipitation gradient in
Publications


Trumbo, S.T. 2023. Moving the corpse to hide the evidence: horizontal as well as vertical movement is important when burying beetles cache a carcass. Journal of Insect Behavior 36: 11-19

Graduate Student Appreciation Week (April 3rd-7th) is right around the corner! Here’s a first look at the planned events.

### Accomplishments
Yettive's poster title was “Exploring the Impacts of Preservation on Paleontological Data: A Literature-Based Survey of Body Size and Biodiversity in Late Mesozoic-Paleogene Gastropods.” Andrew’s was titled “Funnel-shaped trace fossils from the Upper Devonian of north-central Pennsylvania: preservation and behavior.”

Please congratulate Franco Gigliotti on giving an "accomplished defense of his dissertation prospectus."

Congratulations to Henry Frye for a successful PhD defense!

Opportunities

We are happy to announce the third annual Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship in EEB. This program is designed to support students from underrepresented groups, or who have overcome obstacles and disadvantages, or have experience with diverse environments.

We will offer two fellowships ($5000 each) to support student research in EEB.

The application includes a short research proposal and faculty recommendation. Students should work directly with a faculty mentor to
Graduate Student Research Blog

Zach Muscavitch

I'm a 3rd year PhD student at the University of Connecticut advised by Dr. Bernard Stiftel and Louise Lescot. I am an evolutionary biologist who studies lichens. Lichens are a symbiosis between a fungus and one or more algae. In this mutualistic symbiosis, algae photosynthesize and produce sugars for the fungus, while the fungus provide a complex structure to house the algae. The fungus also produce secondary compounds which act to prevent herbivory and as a natural sunscreen.

I'm particularly interested in the symbiosis between green algae and lichenized fungi. I use fog lichens (Nostosematale) to study the system. Many groups of lichens occur all around the world and are difficult to sample in a comprehensive manner, but this group is unique in that it's only found in a narrow range along the Pacific coast of the Americas. I have previously done fieldwork in the US and Mexico and have extensive sampling of these species however little is known about the species which occur in South America.

Prior to 1996, only about 15 species of fog lichens were known from North America, but detailed study of the group

Announcing: a new Graduate Student Research Blog on the EEB Website!

Written by EEB graduate students, readers will be treated to first hand accounts of their adventures, trials and discoveries from the field. Many thanks to Zach Muscavitch for the great idea, and for providing the content from his recent work in the Atacama Desert.

If you'd like to have your work featured as a part of the blog, please reach out to harrison.goodale@uconn.edu.

Events

Upcoming EEB Graduate Defenses:

Sarita Munoz-Gomez: Monday, April 3 at 10:00AM in BPB 130.
Brendan Enochs: Friday, April 7 at 1:45PM in BPB 130.
Kristin Anderson: Tuesday, April 11 at 9am in TLS 111.
More than Scenery
YELLOWSTONE AN AMERICAN LOVE STORY
Book talk & signing event with Janet L. Pritchard

Wednesday
April 5, 2023
3:00PM
Barnes & Noble
UConn
1 Royce Circle, Storrs, CT

visit s.uconn.edu/yellowstone for more information and to register
The Tree of Life

Interconnecting Religions, Artistic Traditions, and Scientific Knowledge

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HUMANITIES INSTITUTE CONFERENCE ROOM
HOMER BABBIDGE LIBRARY 4TH FLOOR, 369 FAIRFIELD WAY, STORRS, CT 06269

THURSDAY, APRIL 27 12:00 PM - 6:30 PM

WELCOME LUNCH

THE MAJESTY AND INDISPENSABILITY OF TREES: WHERE SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY CONVERGE
Yehezkel Landau, Hartford Seminary

RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND THE MAGIC OF THE KABBALISTIC TREE
J.H. (Yossi) Chajes, University of Haifa

Franciscan Diet, Spiritual Trees: Jacopone da Todi and Dante on Hunger and Thirst
Andrea Celli, University of Connecticut

THE VEGETABLE SAINT
Greg Bryant, Barnard College

RECEPTION

SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE OR VISIT UCONN.EDU/TREE-OF-LIFE TO VIEW FULL CONFERENCE DETAILS, TO REGISTER TO ATTEND IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY, AND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ABRAHAMIC STORY OF THE TREE PROJECT

FRIDAY, APRIL 28 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM

BREAKFAST

THE TREE AS AN "ANIMAL-ESQUE PLANT"
(NABAT HAYAWANI): ARBOREAL THOUGHTSCAPES IN MUSLIM MAJORITY LANDS OVER THE CENTURIES
Christiane Gruber, University of Michigan

WAYANG KAYONAN PUPPET: SYNTHESIS OF ARTISTIC TRADITIONS, RELIGIONS, PHILOSOPHY, AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE
Nyoman Sedana, Indonesian Institute of Arts Denpasar

THE CURE OF OLD AGE, AND THE PRESERVATION OF YOUTH
Elizabeth Athens, University of Connecticut

FORGING INTIMATE CONNECTIONS: TREES, PEOPLE, PLACE, AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING
Sohyun Park, University of Connecticut

ARBOR ESSENCE
William Friedman, Harvard University

UNEARTHING THE EVOLUTIONARY PAST: PROGRESS AND STORIES FROM RECONSTRUCTING THE TREE OF LIFE
Stephen Smith, University of Michigan
A Glimpse of the Deaf Community:

DEI presentation by UConn Prof. Mike Schlang

On strategies for teaching and working with Deaf and hard of hearing people, interesting tidbits about Deaf culture and ASL, and the diversity of the Deaf community.

Time and Location:
April 6, 2023
3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
BPB 131

Scan the QR code above for a link to the Kaltura livestream!

Alternate link to the Kaltura livestream for Professor Schlang's presentation.