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Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

EEB Monthly: June 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

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(eeb.assistant@uconn.edu).

In the News

Several EEB folk, including **Abigail Hayes**, **Nicolette Nelson**, and **Matt Opel**, contributed to the success of Queer Science Day, which was reported on in UConn Today: [Queer Science Conference Connects LGBTQIA+ Youth with Role Models in Various STEM Fields](#)

The UConn Botanical Conservatory was featured in the latest episode of "[Let's Botanize,](#)" [on the importance of living collections](#). Shout out to **Minya** for helping coordinate!

Chris Elphick was quoted in a UConn Today article: [Ph.D. Student Helps Protect Long Island Sound's Marshes](#)

Henry Frye, **Cynthia Jones**, **Cory Merow**, and **John Silander** are featured in a UConn Today article: [UConn Researchers Join NASA-Funded International Biodiversity Monitoring Project](#)

Former EEB affiliate **Louanne Cooley** was featured in UConn Today: [Connecticut: Get Ready for CHEAPR e-bikes](#)

Knutie lab research was featured in the University of Minnesota Biological Station Spring 2023 newsletter: [Bluebird friends](#)



The front-page photo of the University of Minnesota Biological Station Spring 2023 newsletter, featuring a Knutie lab nest box.

Awards

G Young Kim in the Heyduk lab was awarded a Botanical Society of America Graduate Student Research Award to help with her thesis exploring gene expression of CAM in *Peperomia* species.

Kara Heilemann received an Outstanding Student Paper award at the New England Association of Parasitologists for her presentation *A clash of clades: Conflict in phylogenetic signal between scolex morphology and proglottid anatomy*.

Maurice Amee was awarded a Sigma Xi graduate student research award AND the Botanical Society of America for his proposed research: *Molecular Mechanisms of White Pine Blister Rust Disease Resistance Among the Endangered Whitebark Pines*

Akriti Bhattarai was awarded a graduate student research award from the Botanical Society of America for her proposed research: *Exploring the Genetic*

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Cynthia Webster was awarded a travel grant from the Bioinformatics Open Source Conference to present her work at the upcoming BOSC/ISMB Conference in Lyon, France on *EASEL (Efficient, Accurate, Scalable Eukaryotic modeLs), a tool for the improvement of eukaryotic structural and functional genome annotation.*

Congratulations to undergraduate researchers - **Cris Guzman** (Wegrzyn Lab) and **Lesley Rendon-Hernandez** (Jockusch Lab) for their EEB Summer Research Awards!

The UConn SURF Awards have been announced! Congratulations to **Harshita Akella** (Wegrzyn Lab), **Cristopher Guzman** (Wegrzyn Lab), **Anita Amiti** (Knute Lab), **Sila Inanoglu** (Knutie Lab), **Hailey Baranowski** (Wagner Lab), and **Reilly Stiefel** (Lewis Lab).

Perkins, C.R. and **M.R. Willig**. CT-DEEP: Analytical Support to the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection for the Long Island Sound Study and Ambient Water Surveys (With C. Perkins). \$250,000.

Publications

Repeated evolution of unorthodox feeding styles drives a negative correlation between foot size and bill length in hummingbirds. <https://doi.org/10.1086/726036> Just accepted by The American Naturalist, authored by **Robert Colwell**, **Thiago Rangel**, **Karolina Fučíková**, **Diego Sustaita**, **Gregor Yanega**, and **Alejandro Rico-Guevara**.

McAssey EV, Downs C †, Yorkston M, Morden C, **Heyduk K**. 2023. A comparison of freezer-stored DNA and herbarium tissue samples for chloroplast assembly and genome skimming. Applications in Plant Sciences. doi.org/10.1002/aps3.11527

Heyduk K, **McAssey EV**, Field R, Leebens-Mack J. 2023. The Agavoideae: an emergent model clade for CAM evolutionary biology. Annals of Botany. doi.org/10.1093/aob/mcad062

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B., **Wegrzyn, J. L.**, & **Urban, M. C.** (2023). Characterizing biological responses to climate variability and extremes to improve biodiversity projections. *PLOS Climate*, 2(6), e0000226.

Willig, M. R., and S. J. Presley. 2023. Latitudinal gradients of biodiversity: patterns, processes, and prospects. Pages 1-20, Reference Module in Life Sciences in the *Encyclopedia of Biodiversity*, 3rd edition (S.M. Scheiner, editor). Elsevier Ltd., Oxford, UK. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-822562-2.00083-9>.

Presley, S. J., and **M. R. Willig**. 2023. Long-term responses to large-scale disturbances: spatiotemporal variation in gastropod populations and communities. *Oikos* 2023:e096705.

Willig, M. R., and S. J. Presley. 2023. Reproductive phenologies of bat populations and ensembles from lowland Amazonia. *Journal of Mammalogy* <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmammal/gyad032>.

Presley, S. J., and **M. R. Willig**. 2023. Gradients and the Structure of Neotropical Metacommunities: Effects of Disturbance, Elevation, Landscape Structure, and Biogeography. In: *Neotropical Gradients and Their Analysis* (R.W. Myster, Ed.). Springer Nature, New York, New York, pages 419-450.



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[Jonathan XV has been revealed!](#) UConn's new mascot-in-training recently visited the Storrs campus for the first time, and has made quite a splash with his cuteness. Photo by Sydney Herdle.

Accomplishments

Willig, M.R. 2023. Population, Community, and Metacommunity Responses to Climate-Induced Disturbances in the Luquillo Mountains of Puerto Rico: A Multi-Decadal Synthesis. Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA

Willig, M.R., J. Rojas-Sandoval, and S.J. Presley. 2023. Exploring Phenological Patterns in Ecology: Circular Statistics, Methodological Concerns, and Bootstrap Approaches. Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil.

We wish **Amanda Garchow** all the best in her new position as a Horticultural Specialist with Rose Innovations. They are an independently owned horticultural and aquatic operation that is best known for their development of the Knock Out® family of rose cultivars- of which they have produced over 50 plant patents! Amanda will be primarily responsible for caring for the property's two-acre ornamental gardens and aiding with the rose breeding program.

Opportunities

The 2024 **David H. Smith Research Fellowship** is open for proposal submissions. The purpose of the fellowship is to create opportunities for leading conservation scientists to strengthen their skills through two years of applied post-doctoral research, supplemented by training programs, peer networking, and field learning experiences; so that they may: 1. Build productive partnerships with conservation practitioners; and 2. Contribute and communicate scientific knowledge to problems of critical importance in conservation. [To learn more about the fellowship and how to apply, visit their website.](#)

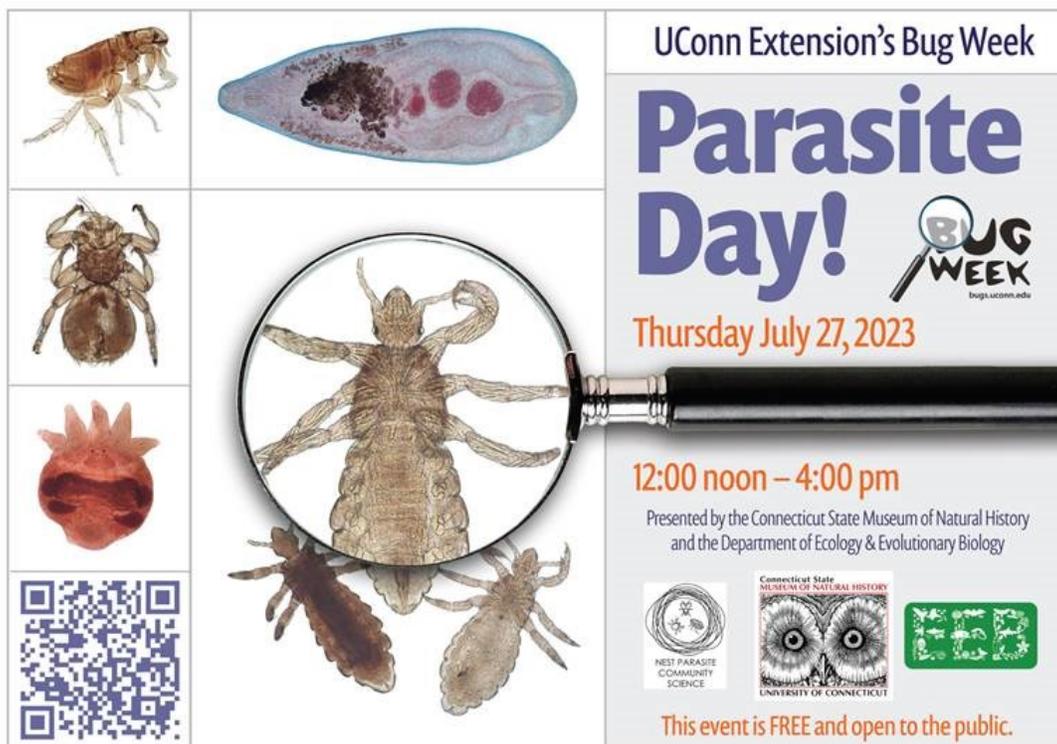
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of any level — from kindergarten through high school, undergraduate and graduate, and even recent graduates. Opportunities include one-day events, summer internships at NOAA, multi-year fellowships, and more.

Today is the last date to submit an application for the Conference Participation Award, presented through The Graduate School. This conference participation fellowship in the amount of \$750 will be awarded for Fall 2023 and paid through the student's fee bill. If awarded, students will be notified in late July. Please review the eligibility criteria for the fellowship carefully before applying at the link below:

<https://grad.uconn.edu/2023/05/10/fall-2023-conference-participation-award/>

Events



The poster for UConn Extension's Bug Week Parasite Day! features a grid of images: a flea, a microscopic parasite, a mite, a magnifying glass over a large mite, and a tick. Text on the right includes the event title, date (Thursday July 27, 2023), time (12:00 noon - 4:00 pm), and presenters (Connecticut State Museum of Natural History and the Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology). Logos for NEST Parasite Community Science, the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, and EEB are shown at the bottom, along with a QR code and the statement 'This event is FREE and open to the public.'

COMMUNITY EVENT | UConn Extension's Bug Week: Parasite Day!

Thursday July 27, 2023

12:00PM - 4:00PM

University of Connecticut, Biology/Physics Building Lobby

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Participants will learn the defining features of a parasite and gain experience with microscopes by viewing real natural history specimens.

Enjoy displays and activities for all ages: see real museum specimens up close, learn about parasites from diverse environments through games and scavenger hunts, take a tour of the [EEB Biodiversity Research Collections](#), and hear about ways to keep your pets parasite free from UConn Police Department K9 Officers Tildy and Carson (and their human handler Officer O'Reilly).

This event is FREE and open to the public!

Visit <https://csmnh.uconn.edu/programs> for more information.

If you require an accommodation to participate in this event, please contact the CSMNH at 860-486-4460 or CSMNHinfo@uconn.edu by **Monday July 24, 2023**.

COVID-19 Resources



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