

NATURAL INQUIRER

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ALUMNI NEWS

Monty Vacura (BS 97, MS 00) has accepted a position as a faculty member in the biology department at Orange County Community College in Middletown, NY. The department was specifically looking for someone with strengths in field botany. In addition to teaching biology, he has been asked to develop a botany course for them. Monty indicated to **Dr. Joe Thomasson** that "The position sounds too good to be true." Monty received his undergraduate degree in biology with an emphasis in botany and then worked on his masters degree under Dr. Thomasson studying plants in wetlands in Ellis County. After completing his thesis study and defense (**Survey of Aquatic Macrophytes of Ellis County, Kansas**), Monty volunteered for the Peace Corps and spent two years in Africa.

FACULTY HAPPENINGS

On December 6, **Dr. Joe Thomasson** presented a public lecture titled "Beautiful orchids, attacking ruffed grouse, and raging forest fires--How I spent my 2002 summer in the Black Hills of South Dakota" in the Engel Education Center at the Sternberg Museum.

For 27 days in June and July of 2002, Dr. Thomasson conducted botanical surveys for rare and sensitive plants in the central Black Hills. While hiking more than 110 linear miles through forests and along streams, he discovered the largest known population of yellow lady slipper orchids in the Black Hills. Additionally, he was attacked by a very irritated ruffed grouse (and has the video to prove it) and was forced to evacuate his living quarters in Lead, SD, by a forest fire that started less than a mile away. Dr. Thomasson described his experiences and showed some of the digital images he took during the summer.

Dr. Thomasson also gave the same presentation to the FHSU Chapter of Sigma Xi on December 12.

On December 13, more than 40 Fort Hays State University employees were recognized for their service

to the university at FHSU's 16th annual Awards Ceremony and Holiday Party. Awards honored faculty and staff who have served the university for 10, 20 and 30 years. The alumni Association presented awards to 25-year employees. Among those being honored was **Dr. Joe Thomasson**. He received his 20-year award.

Mark Eberle and **Drs. Mary Morgan, Frank Potter,** and **Elmer Finck** participated in Tiger Day November 2. Approximately, 40 prospective students visited Albertson Hall that day.

Drs. Mary Morgan and **Elmer Finck** assisted with the bison round-up at the Circle 3 Buffalo Ranch near Longford, KS. Dr. Morgan also collected hair samples from the mature bulls and calves to determine paternity of the calves by comparing their DNA.

Drs. Bill Stark and **Elmer Finck** attended the Kansas Nongame Wildlife Advisory Council to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks on November 4. Dr. Stark represents the Kansas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, while Dr. Finck represents the Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

Drs. Rob Channell and **Elmer Finck** attended the 3rd Efrogmson Workshop on regional planning for The Nature Conservancy at Fort Robinson, NE on October 27 – 30. They worked with Greg Wingfield from the Kansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy to develop an ecoregional plan for the Chalk Bluff Area, which includes the Smoky Valley Ranch and the Smoky Hill River.

Dr. Eric Gillock and graduate student, **Lance Thurlow**, attended a training session on a DNA analyzer at Li-Cor in Lincoln, Nebraska December 18-20. They are learning the techniques related to using the analyzer for their research.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Matt Bain (B.S. 2000) has accepted a position as a Wildlife Biologist Technician, working with the Region 2 biologists of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Matt will be a wildlife management consultant for landowners in Wabaunsee, Shawnee, and Douglas

counties, and will be conducting wildlife surveys. With good fortune the latter may include prairie chickens!

On a related note, Matt successfully defended his thesis "Male-Male Competition and Mating Success on Leks Attended by Hybrid Prairie-Chicken" on December 5, in front of a large and enthusiastic audience in Albertson 235. Several administrators from FHSU and his new employer, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, were in attendance, along with his parents, Craig and Carol Bain from Ness City.

Faculty members consistently have had positive interactions with Matt in and out of the classroom and will miss his presence in Albertson Hall. Matt already has published a portion of his thesis in *The Condor*, and plans to submit his final chapter to *Behavioral Ecology*, the leading international journal in this discipline. We wish him well in his professional endeavors.

PUBLICATIONS

October 2002 was the publication date of a comprehensive guide on "Trout and Salmon of North America" written by Dr. Robert Behnke (Colorado State University) and illustrated by **Joseph Tomelleri** (BS 80, MS 84). The 359-page book provides detailed descriptions and information on the biology, evolution & classification, and conservation of over 70 taxa of trout, salmon, and related species from Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Joe has traveled from Alaska to Mexico to see the fish alive, and his detailed, accurate drawings illustrate the variety of color and form exhibited by trout. Initially, Joe's education and work were in botany, but he now lives with his family in Leawood, Kansas, as a self-employed illustrator of fishes. His 750+ illustrations have appeared in over 200 publications, including more than 25 books, since 1986. A sampling of his work can be seen on-line at americanfishes.com.

ODDS AND ENDS

Among FHSU classified employees recently awarded the Tuition Assistance Award for the spring 2003 semester is **Carrie Longpine**, plant technician for the Biological Sciences Department. Carrie works part-time for the department and part-time for Grounds Maintenance and Landscaping. Also receiving an award is Wanda Hinton whose husband, **Dr. Duane Hinton**, is an Assistant Professor in the Biological Sciences Department.

On Friday December 20, the pinning ceremony was held for the graduating nursing students. One of the graduating seniors is **Kiley Pracht**. Kiley has worked as a student administrative assistant in the Department of Biological Sciences since September of 1999. Congratulations Kiley -- we are going to miss you!!

