NATURAL INQUIRER

FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

September 2001 **Department of Biological Sciences** Volume 1 Issue 1

We are beginning a monthly newsletter for the alumni, students, and faculty of the Department of Biological Sciences at Fort Hays State University. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform individuals from the biological sciences family about the activities of the three groups listed above. If you have information to share with us please send it to **Sheila Pfeifer** (spfeifer@fhsu.edu) or **Dr. Elmer J. Finck** (efinck@fhsu.edu). You can also mail the information to either of us at Fort Hays State University, Department of Biological Sciences, 600 Park Street, Hays, KS 67601-4099. If you have questions, please contact us. We look forward to sharing some exciting information.

ALUMNI NEWS

Kami Albers (BS, 2001) has just started the Physician Assistant program at the University of Oklahoma.

Kristine Isaacson (BS, 2001) has just started the Physical Therapy program at KU.

Marsha Harris (MS, 1999) is currently working on her Ph.D. in Food Science and Technology at the University of Nebraska--Lincoln. Her research focuses on the use of lactic acid bacteria to control pathogens such as *E. coli, Salmonella, and Listeria* on alfalfa sprouts and she expects to graduate in May 2002. In August 2001, she was awarded first place in the Developing Scientist Oral Paper Competition for the presentation of her research at the International Association of Food Protection's annual meeting.

Chris Tecklenburg (BS, 2001) began employment as a Rangeland Management Specialist with NRCS at Eureka, KS, in August 2001.

FACULTY HAPPENINGS

Dr. Elmer J. Finck joined our faculty as Professor and Chair on July 2, 2001. Previously he was at Emporia State University, where he taught courses in wildlife management, conservation biology, mammalogy, animal behavior, ornithology, and evolution. Dr. Finck also served as the Director of the ESU Natural Areas and Graduate Coordinator, supervising 24 MS students. Dr. Finck's research interests are studying grassland birds and mammals. He worked extensively on the reintroduction of pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) to the tallgrass prairie and the effects of habitat fragmentation on grassland nesting birds. He also has research interest in human dimensions in wildlife biology.

Dr. Finck received his AS in Math from the College of Lake County, Grayslake, IL in 1972, his BS in Fish and Wildlife Management from University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, in 1974 and his MS in Biology (plant ecology) from University of North Dakota in 1979. His thesis advisor was Dr. Mohan K. Wali and his thesis title was Effects of Oxidized coal on Mine Spoils and the Growth and Chemical Composition of Wheatgrasses. He received his Ph.D. in Biology (behavioral ecology) from Kansas State University in 1983. His dissertation was entitled Male Behavior, Territory Quality and Female Choice in the Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) and was supervised by Dr. John L. Zimmerman. Prior to his position at ESU, he was an assistant scientist and Associate Director on Konza Prairie Biological where he coordinated research efforts and collected data on birds and mammals for the Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) program at KSU.

Dr. Eric T. Gillock joined our faculty in August 2001 as a temporary Assistant Professor in Microbiology. Originally from Hutchinson, KS, he graduated from Buhler High School and attended Hutchinson Community College, transferring to Pittsburg State University, Pittsburgh, KS. While at PSU, Dr. Gillock changed his major from chemistry to biology and graduated with a BS in biology in 1987.

While studying physiology at Wichita State University, he taught a microbiology lab that ignited a desire for further training in microbiology. After taking several independent study courses in bacterial genetics, he applied to the Ph.D.

program in microbiology at Kansas State University. While attending KSU, he did his dissertation research on the murine polyoma virus under the direction of Dr. Dick Consigli.

Just prior to coming to FHSU, Dr. Gillock was a postdoc at North Carolina State University. First he studied the Sindbis virus in the Biochemistry Department, and then he studied Red Clover Necrotic Mosaic, a plant virus, in the Plant Pathology Department.

Dr. Mary Morgan, faculty member in Biology and Nursing, co-presented a paper (with Dr. Liane Connelly of Nursing) titled "The Use of Herbal Products by Rural Kansas Elderly" at the World Congress of the International Association of Gerontology on July 5, 2001, in Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

Dr. Bill Stark, **Mark Eberle**, and **Curtis Wolf** (undergraduate senior) attended the Kansas Pearly Mussel Workshop, August 9-10, 2001, sponsored by the Kansas Pearly Mussel Working Group at Emporia State University, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Presentations were made on topics focusing on the mussel fauna of the Neosho River, KS, commercial harvest in KS, the effects of dams on invertebrates, case studies on dam removal, and the reintroduction of the Neosho Mucket (*Lampsilis rafinesqueana*). A dozen individuals participated in a routine bioassessment of the mussel fauna at one location on the Neosho River. We spent approximately half of a day capturing individuals and obtaining size information from rare or protected species. Overall 19 species of freshwater mussels were observed (over 150 individuals). The relatively high species richness, the high proportion of species considered rare in the state, and the presence of multiple year-classes, indicated a high quality mussel bed. However, all the individuals representing protected species appeared to be quite old. Ages were estimated conservatively at not less than 25 years and most were probably much older.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Jason Luginbill (BS, 1999) received partial support during the summer 2001 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Student Career Experience Program. His position was administered through the USFWS Ecological Services, Manhattan, KS Office. Jason received a stipend and living expenses while investigating the natural history and the potential for reintroducing the Willow Creek population of the Topeka Shiner (*Notropis topeka*) into one or more areas within the native range on the High Plains. In addition, he participated in an assessment of leopard darter (*Percina pantherina*) populations in southwestern Arkansas.

Curtis Schmidt (BS, 1999) was supported by a grant from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to continue his investigation of the life history, habitat selection, and dispersal patterns of the western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*) on the Smoky Valley Ranch. In addition and in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, Curtis has made a complete survey of the herpetofauna of the Smoky Valley Ranch that has resulted in a modest number of range extensions. The detailed species accounts were published in the Kansas Herpetological Society Newsletter (#124).

David Spalsbury (BS, 2000) was supported in his investigation of the effects of American water willow (*Justicia americana*) on recruitment of young-of-year centrarchids in Cedar Bluff Reservoir by a cooperative agreement with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Region I. Under the supervision of Lynn Davingon, David and a crew of five students were able to establish the appropriate numbers and types of treatments to initiate David's thesis project.

Eric Johnson (BS, 2000, University of Oklahoma) arrived on the FHSU campus in August. Over the summer he worked as a research technician at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station. Concurrently, Eric and a colleague, under the supervision of Dr. Keith Gido, investigated the effects of lighting on the interactions of two silverside species (fishes) in Lake Texoma, OK. Eric will present this research at the upcoming Great Plains Limnology Conference.

PUBLICATIONS

Peg Althoff, graduate student, has published her first paper:
ALTHOFF D.P. AND **P.S. ALTHOFF**. 2001. Monitoring southern flying squirrel populations with nest boxes. Ohio Journal of Science 101(2):2-11.

◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊

You may find this issue and all future issues on the department's web page:
www.fhsu.edu/biology/index.html
For University news see: www.fhsu.edu