

The Natural Enquirer



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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Fall Semester, 2012



A group from the Department of Biological Sciences attended the **Botanical Society of America meeting** in Columbus, OH in July 2012. Pictured at the Columbus Botanical Garden are (l-r): Dr. Sam Zwenger, Katelyn Lindsey, Jerad May, Keri Caudle, and Dr. Brian Maricle.

Presentations given at the BSA meeting included:

Caudle, K.L. and B.R. Maricle. Physiological responses of coastal marsh species to spilled oil.

Olsen, J.T., R.K. Goad, M.L. Mendola, H.M. Tetrault, L.C. Johnson, S.G. Baer, and B.R. Maricle. Photosynthetic gas exchange of big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) ecotypes across a precipitation gradient of the Great Plains.

Caudle, K.L., P.B. Adler, and B.R. Maricle. Influence of water availability on photosynthesis, water potential, and phenology in Kansas grasses.

Keri Caudle, a junior working for Dr. Brian Maricle, was awarded an EPA Undergraduate Fellowship in the amount of **\$36,796**. These funds will support Keri's botany research in the Department of Biological Sciences, provide a paid summer internship at an EPA research facility, and partly cover tuition expenses.

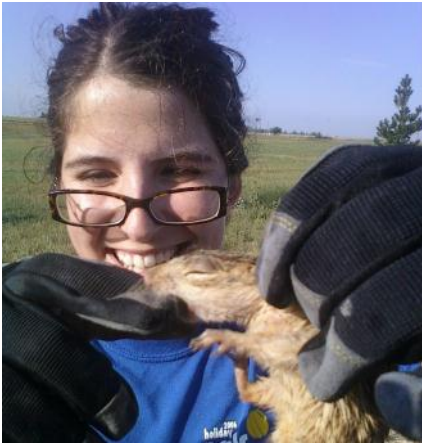
Congratulations Keri!



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Congratulations to Fall 2012 Biology MS graduates!



Amanda Cheeseman: “Diet Analysis of Two Mephitidae Species Reflects Population Trends and Landscape Structure”.

Amanda graduated with a B.S. degree from Michigan State University in 2009. While pursuing her undergraduate degree she had opportunities to conduct research projects in mammalogy and landscape ecology, and knew she wanted to combine these aspects in future graduate studies. She was happy to be able to pursue landscape and temporal aspects of eastern spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius*) and striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) diets with Dr. Elmer Finck during her time at FHSU, and hopes to begin Ph.D. studies in Fall 2013.



Scott Schmidt: “Habitat associations of grassland birds along a gradient of eastern redcedar succession in Central Kansas”

Grassland birds have declined more rapidly than any other group of North American birds. Tree invasion is often cited as a serious threat; however, some grassland-dependent species requiring habitat with scattered trees or shrubs also are declining at statistically significant rates. To better understand the ecological costs and benefits of brush management, I assessed bird-habitat associations along a gradient of eastern redcedar succession. The results of my study suggested that some species would be negatively impacted by current brush management recommendations. Thus, maintaining sites with > 5% canopy cover, where appropriate, might help mitigate significant population declines of grassland-shrub adapted species.

Scott hopes to maximize the benefits of conservation for wildlife and people through land stewardship, applied research, and public outreach. He was recently hired by Pheasants Forever in Blair, NE.

Congratulations to Fall 2012 Biology MS graduates!

William Moore: "Continual passage of *Staphylococcus epidermidis* in subinhibitory levels of the biocide triclosan results in a marked increase in the minimum inhibitory concentration, antibiotic resistance, and ethidium bromide resistance"

Carol Grover-Mariner: "Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) ecology in western Kansas".

Congratulations to graduate students who passed their oral examinations this semester:

Jessica Bitner (M.S. '08)
passed the Ohio State Bar Exam this fall. Way to go Jessica!!

Brad Bott
Joanna Fay
Brian Gaston
Justin Kerby
Brian Tanis



Graduate Student Presentations:

Jordan Hofmeier presented "Antimicrobial resistance of channel catfish intestinal microflora in the Arkansas and Ninescah rivers", by J. Hofmeier, W. J. Stark, E. T. Gillock, and Y. Kobayashi, at the 73rd Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Wichita, KS, Dec. 12, 2012.

Jessica Casey presented "Timing and Intensity of Cattle Utilization on Old World Bluestem (*Bothriochloa ischaemum*) and Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) in Southern Mixed-Grass Prairie" (poster) by J. L. Casey, J. J. LaFantasie, and K. Harmony, at the Kansas Society for Range Management meeting, Kansas Wetlands Education Center, Great Bend, KS, Oct. 25, 2012.

Scott Schmidt gave the following presentations: "Habitat associations of grassland birds along a gradient of eastern redcedar succession" by S. Schmidt and E. J. Finck, Kansas Ornithological Society, Winfield, KS, Sep. 28-30, 2012; and "How are birds affected by eastern redcedar succession in grasslands?" by S. Schmidt and E. J. Finck, Kansas Section, Society for Range Management, Great Bend, KS, Oct. 25, 2012.

Graduate Student Presentations (continued):

Clint Helms presented "Effects of Grazing Treatments on Nest Success of Wet Meadow Breeding Birds at Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve, Barton County, KS", by C. Helms, J. J. LaFantasie, G. H. Farley, and R. Penner, at the Kansas Ornithological Society meeting, Winfield, KS, Sep. 28-30, 2012; and also as a poster presentation for the Kansas Society for Range Management meeting, Kansas Wetland Education Center, Great Bend, KS, Oct 25, 2012.

Amanda Cheeseman presented "Spatial and temporal diet analysis of a declining mesocarnivore, the eastern spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius*)", by A. E. Cheeseman and E. J. Finck, at both the 92nd Annual Meeting of the American Society of Mammalogists, Reno, NV, June 2012, and the 19th Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society, Portland, OR, Oct. 2012. Amanda also presented "Effects of landscape structure on the diet of Kansas Mephitidae", by A. E. Cheeseman and E. J. Finck, at the Annual meeting of the Central Plains Society of Mammalogists, Oct. 2012.

Lisa Prowant presented "Inferring Species Distributions of Herpetofauna in South-central Kansas for Conservation Planning" at the Kansas Herpetology Society meeting, Nov. 3, 2012.

Graduate Student Awards:

Brian Tanis received the Outstanding Master's Presentation Award at the Central Plains Society of Mammalogists meeting in Cape Girardeau, MO, Oct. 6-7, 2012. The title of Brian's presentation was: "Influence of Wind Turbines on two Canid Mesocarnivores, *Canis latrans* and *Vulpes velox*." He is a student of Dr. Elmer J. Finck.

Amanda Cheeseman was chosen to receive a \$500 Student Travel Grant to attend the 19th Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society in Oregon, October 13-18, 2012. She is a student of Dr. Elmer J. Finck.



Stasya Berber created an original art piece for the crew working on Clint Helm's thesis research at Cheyenne Bottoms this summer. Pictured are (l-r): Dr. Greg Farley, Clint Helms, Nina Haro, Stasya Berber, Jessica Casey, Dr. Jordge LaFantasie, and Jeff Carter.

Faculty News

Dr. Rich Packauskas, associate professor of biological sciences, was named this year's **President's Distinguished Scholar**. Packauskas, who received a medallion and a \$1,500 cash award, was selected by President Hammond from recommendations forwarded to him by an evaluation committee of previous presidential scholars.



Dr. Packauskas and President Hammond

Dr. Rob Channell, professor of biological sciences, was named the **2012 Faculty Member of the Year**. Dr. Channell was chosen from among the previous academic year's winners of Research, Service, and Outstanding Teaching Awards. Those winners included Mark Eberle, program specialist in the Department of Biological Sciences, for research, and Dr. Channell for teaching. Each of those awards carries a \$500 cash award. Dr. Channell, as Faculty Member of the Year, also received a \$1,000 award.

A New Book on Kansas Fishes:

A group of 11 Kansas biologists signed a contract in September 2012 with the University Press of Kansas to publish a new reference on the fishes of the state, titled *Kansas Fishes*. Writing and editing the book will take place through autumn 2013, with a projected release in early 2014.

The organizing committee is made up of representatives from three state agencies and the six regents' universities, including two representatives from FHSU Department of Biological Sciences: **Dr. Bill Stark** and **Mark Eberle**. In addition, FHSU alumnus **Joe Tomelleri** is a member of the organizing committee and will contribute his color illustrations for each species. Species accounts will be authored by members of the committee, and over 20 experts on various species from across the United

States and Canada, making this the most extensive collaborative project for a book of this type.

This book will be an updated reference that fully summarizes our current knowledge of fishes in Kansas. It will also acknowledge the collective work and legacy of the late Dr. Frank Cross, who worked at the University of Kansas from 1951 to 1991 and did more than anyone to educate his peers and the public about the fishes and aquatic habitats of Kansas and the Great Plains. Dr. Cross will be honored in the foreword, preface, and a brief biography. All royalties from the sale of the book will be donated in Dr. Cross' name to the Kansas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society to support a student scholarship awarded to fisheries students in the state.

Publications:

Ishihara, S., J. J. Bitner, G. H. Farley and E. T. Gillock. Vancomycin-Resistant Gram-Positive Cocci Isolated from the Saliva of Wild Songbirds. *Current Microbiology* (Published ahead of print).

Sexson, M. G. and G. H. Farley. 2012. Western Snowy Plover Nest Survival in Kansas and Effective Management to Counter Negative Effects of Precipitation. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 76:1587-1596.

Alumni news:



Dr. Lance Thurlow

Dr. Lance Thurlow (B.S. '02, M.S. '05), kicked off the inaugural College of Health and Life Sciences "Young Alumni Speaker Series" with his presentation, "*Staphylococcus aureus* and the Inflammation Paradox" in August, 2012. Dr. Thurlow currently works in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Matt Bain (B.S. '00, M.S. '02) has been named coordinator for The Nature Conservancy's Smoky Valley Ranch. Bain has served as district wildlife biologist for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism for the past nine years. The Smoky Valley Ranch, located southwest of Oakley, is a 16,800-acre working cattle ranch. Bain will be responsible for managing the ranch for keystone and indicator species such as prairie dogs and lesser prairie chickens. His goal is for the ranch to demonstrate a healthy prairie system and still remain a profitable ranching operation.

2012 Homecoming alumni award recipients were **Harry A. Watts** ('76) and **Dr. John Dorsch** ('76). Mr. Watts is the Managing Director of Governmental Relations, Kansas Farm Bureau, Manhattan, KS, and received the Nita M. Landrum Award. Dr. Dorsch is an Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine, KU School of Medicine, Wichita, KS, and received the Alumni achievement award. A reception was hosted October 4, 2012, by Department of Biological Sciences.



Dr. John Dorsch



Harry A. Watts

Behavioral Ecology

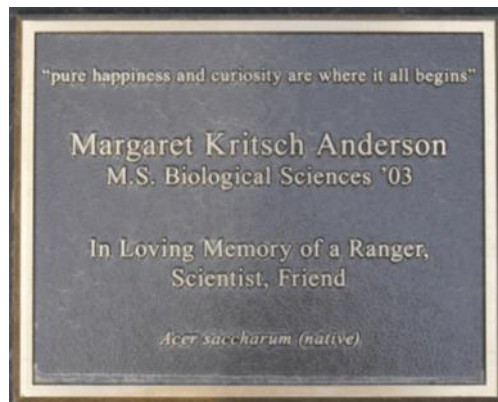
field trip to Rocky Mountain National Park (Oct. 5-7, 2012)



Viewing elk



(L-R): Dr. Greg Farley, Brian Serpan, Jenn Pfannenstiel Klaus, Jeff Carter, Adam Rusk, Kyle Broadfoot, Nina Haro, and Jeremy Bishoff.



A sugar maple tree (*Acer saccharum*) was planted east of Albertson Hall in memory of Margaret Kritsch Anderson (M.S. '03). Several colleagues, friends, and former graduate students organized the selection and planting of the tree to honor Margaret, who was killed Jan. 1, 2012 while on duty as a Mount Rainier National Park ranger.

Graduate Wetlands Assistants Keep Busy with Fall Programs at KVEC:

The Kansas Wetlands Education Center (KVEC) at Cheyenne Bottoms offers four graduate wetlands assistantships (GWAs) each year to Biological Sciences graduate students. This year, GWAs include Stasya Berber, Brian Gaston, Scott Schmidt, and Brian Tanis. GWAs assist with a variety of tasks throughout the year; however, several big events are held during the Fall semester. The 2nd Grade Wetlands Day and the Mad About Monarchs events are held each September. Both are large events that require assistance from the GWAs. In addition to the GWAs, other current and former Biological Sciences students and friends helped with these events, including Victoria Cikanek, current graduate student and KDWPT employee, James Leiker, Education Director at Sternberg Museum of Natural History, and Terry Mannell, volunteer and former interim director at the KVEC.



Clockwise from top left: Brian Gaston, Terry Mannell, and James Leiker assist with 2nd grade wetlands day at the KVEC.

More KWECC news:

Curtis Schmidt (B.S. '99, M.S. '04), collections manager at Sternberg Museum of Natural History, presented a program based on the current exhibit at Sternberg: **"Rattlerssss: From Fear to Fascination"** at the Kansas Wetland Education Center, Nov. 11, 2012. Schmidt talked about the 22 species of rattlesnakes found in the US, with several live specimens on display.



(L-R): Ryan Pinkel (M.S. '12), Jordan Hofmeier (current graduate student), Wes Fleming (B.S. '09, M.S. '12) and Bryan Sowards (B.S. '08, M.S. '12) sampling for pallid sturgeon eggs on the Missouri River in Nebraska.

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