

The Natural Inquirer



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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Community mourns loss of Collections Manager, Educator, and Friend.

It was with great sorrow that the Biology department learned of the sudden and unexpected passing of **Curtis J. Schmidt** in June, 2022. A Hays native and Biology department alum (B.S. 1999, M.S. 2004), Curtis began working as a curatorial assistant at the Sternberg Museum of Natural History in 1998, eventually becoming an Associate Curator of Herpetology and Mammalogy.

In 2011, he became the Museum's first official Zoological Collections Manager. Curtis also assisted with educational programming and exhibits for the museum, and helped acquire thousands of dollars in scholarship funds for the Sternberg Science Camps.

In 2012, Curtis became an Adjunct faculty member in the Biology department, providing assistance with many different research projects. Curtis will be missed by all of his colleagues, and his enthusiasm for herpetology, mammalogy, and natural history education will be remembered fondly.



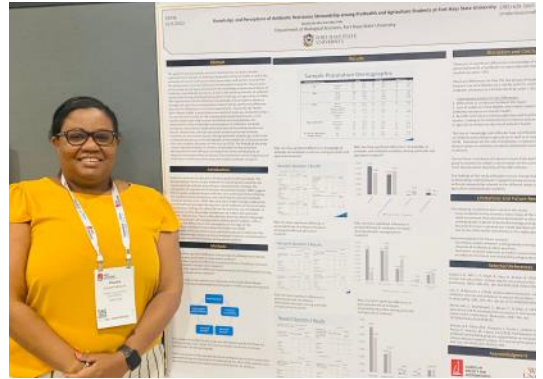
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Meetings and Presentations

Microbe: American Society of Microbiology annual meeting, Washington DC June 9-13, 2022.

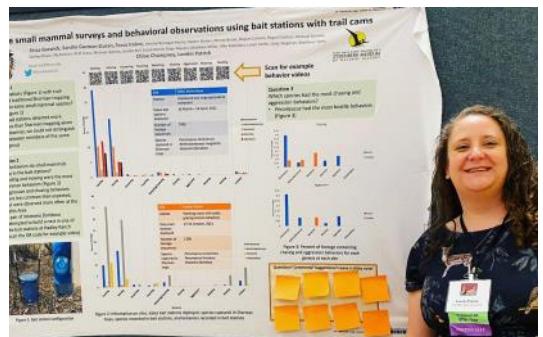
Carvalho, C. M. Knowledge and perceptions of antibiotic resistance stewardship among pre-health and agriculture students at Fort Hays State University (poster).



American Society of Mammalogists 101st annual meeting, Tucson AZ, June 17-21, 2022.

Champney, C., Z. Nelson, N. Stewart, and L. Patrick. Diet of maternal big brown bats vs. bachelor big brown bats in Kansas (poster).

Irvine, T., S. Guzman-Duran, E. Barwick, C. Champney, and L. Patrick. Prairie small mammal surveys and behavioral observations using bait stations with trail cams (poster).



Central Plains Society of Mammalogists annual meeting, Ozarks Education Center, Missouri State University, Oct. 8, 2022.

Sielaff, M., and L. Patrick. Comparing bat activity and insect biomass at McConnell Air Force Base and nearby Wichita parks (oral presentation).

Mayden, B. C. Hinck, and L. Patrick. Kansas mammal activity patterns before and after a wildfire (poster).

Smith, L., L. Patrick, and N. Stewart. Methylation patterns across tissue and time in *Peromyscus leucopus*; a targeted museum study (poster).





A pair of **Mississippi kites**, graceful raptors similar in size to a peregrine falcon, nested in a tree directly across the street from Albertson Hall this summer. The nesting pair defended their fledgling young with numerous swoop attacks on passing pedestrians. FHSU grounds



crew set up a 20-foot perimeter of barricades and “caution” tape around the tree to keep passers-by at a distance. However some reports remained of the adult birds flying low to buzz pedestrians or thump them on the head with rolled talons. Mississippi Kites often nest in Hays during the spring and summer months. They feed primarily on cicadas, grasshoppers, and frogs before migrating to South America to overwinter. Mississippi kites are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, therefore the birds, their eggs, their offspring, and nests cannot be captured, hunted, or relocated.



Sternberg Museum’s “A New Way to Museum” series featured Dr. Lori Patrick and her students as they conducted small mammal trapping. Trapping enables them to collect data on small mammal populations nearby. Check out the link below to see the video!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Prnz_5JDA64

Grad Student News:

Congratulations to **Michaela Von Lintel** for defending her thesis (“The impact of planting time and ground cover on germination rates of native forb species”) and completing her master’s degree this semester!

Congratulations to the following students for completing their oral exams:

Mario Rodriguez, Michaela Sielaff, and Vinita Karki



Meet the Biology department’s newest faculty members:



Dr. Sarah Elzay, Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences, earned her PhD from Oklahoma State University’s Department of Integrative Biology, and specializes in landscape ecology and native bee ecology.



Ms. Nora Lazerus, Instructor of Biological Sciences, earned her M.S. degree from Fort Hays State University. Her focus areas are science education, ecology, and conservation biology.

Welcome Sarah and Nora!!

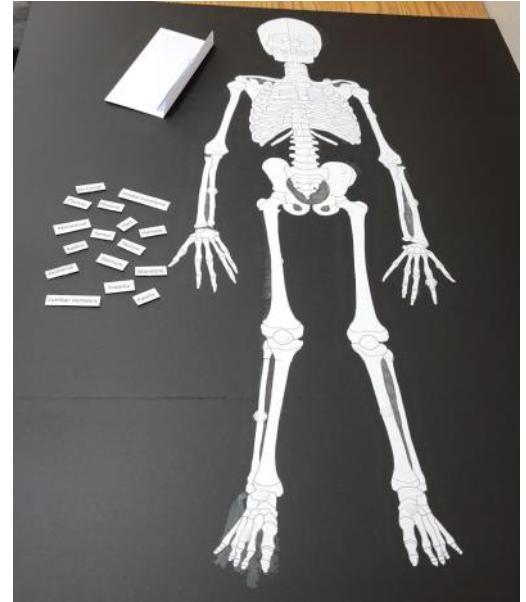
The 2nd annual **Biology club Olympics** on November 17th

featured a variety of games:



Gel-loading relay races

Skeletal
bones ID



Mammal identification

Digging microcentrifuge
tubes out of ice, while
wearing autoclave
gloves



Alumni News:

Dr. Jeff Sekavec (M.S. 2013) was featured on the FHSU Alumni Spotlight page: <https://fhsualumni.com/jeffrey-sekavec-2013/>

Dr. Sekavec earned a Doctor of Management degree from Colorado Technical University, with a concentration in homeland security. He is currently STEM Division Chair at Colby Community College (CCC), leading the biology department as program director and acting as the site director of the FHSU – CCC Noyce STEM Education partnership for STEM educator recruitment. He also consults with first responder agencies and healthcare organizations on bioterrorism events and disaster management.



Anuja Paudyal (M.S. 2017) completed her PhD in microbiology from Kansas State University in October. Dr. Paudyal has accepted a post-doc position at Harvard University. Congratulations Anuja!

Ayanna Hensley (B.S. 2019) was accepted to Creighton University (Omaha, NE) Physician's Assistant program, starting August of 2023.



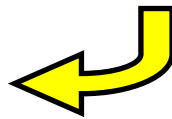
Ayanna was also crowned
Miss Kansas 2022!!



Hilary Gillock's **Entomology lab** class, collecting insects on campus on August 30th, and at the Relict Area south of Hays on October 11th.

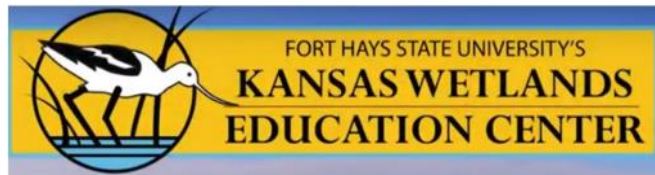


The Red-Spotted Toad Team completing initial set up of a telemetry station in the Red Hills (southcentral KS) in June.



The Hays **Christmas Bird Count** took place on December 17, 2022. Counters included faculty, staff, and students across different departments at FHSU, as well as members of the Hays community and birders from outside the community. There were 10 people out birding and four people watching bird feeders at their homes. With temperatures ranging from 13-38 degrees F, it was the warmest Hays Christmas Bird Count in recent memory! Altogether, the birders saw 54 different species of birds. Highlights included a Short-eared Owl, a Northern Shrike, Harlan's Hawks (a subspecies of the Red-tailed Hawk), a Pine Warbler (it visited a feeder earlier in the week), and Eastern Bluebirds.





The Kansas Wetlands Education Center has been recognized as one of the world's best wetland visitor centers. Their success was announced at the Conference of the global Wetlands Convention, known as Ramsar COP14, in Geneva, Switzerland.

The **Star Wetland Centre Award** is a new initiative to recognize best practices in eco-tourism and education at wetlands. It is coordinated by Wetland Link International (WLI), a support network for staff and volunteers at 300 wetland visitor centers.



Kansas Wetlands Education Center is one of 23 centers worldwide, and one of only 2 in the United States, that have been selected by an international panel of experienced wetlands professionals.



"It's an honor for the Kansas Wetlands Education Center to be included in a list of other awesome wetlands centers internationally," says Curtis Wolf, Director of the Kansas Wetlands Education Center.

- FHSU University Communications

The annual **KWEC Butterfly Festival** on Saturday, September 17, featured Barton Community College dancers performing as dancing butterflies in the KWEC auditorium, and a dance workshop for children. Outdoor activities included crafts, a puppet theater, and tagging monarch butterflies. Over the last five years, 17 tagged monarchs released at KWEC have been recovered from winter roosts in Mexico.



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