Department News

Upcoming Presentations
Check out the Biology Seminar Series web page at http://www.ewu.edu/x64410.xml. You’ll find a schedule of upcoming and tentative seminars, links to fliers, and speaker biographies … along with contact information to get more details. Next presentation: December 4th. Featured presenter is Ean Esche, biology graduate student, who will discuss his thesis research on “Effects of Exercise and the Hormone Leptin on Female Rat Reproductive Capability.” All seminars start at 2:00 p.m. in SCI 137, with a pre-seminar social at 1:30 p.m. in SCI 175.

The fall quarter Graduate Student Seminar is Wednesday, December 2nd, with oral presentations from 8:30-10:10 a.m. in SCI 247, and poster presentations starting at 10:30 a.m.

2009-10 Graduate Fellows
Graduate fellows for the current school year are: Candace Bennett, Levi Bridges, Carolyn Connelly, Brittany Davidson, Dan Fisher, Stephen Flanagan, Thayne Lacy, Lucille Morgan, Cassandra Pharr, Elliott Reams, Brandy Reynecke, and Katie Wagner. Watch upcoming issues of Biology News for information about their research and teaching activities.

Equipment Donations
The Biology Department recently received donations of a microscope and miscellaneous equipment and supplies. See page 3 for info.

Faculty Grants
Joanna Joyner-Matos, assistant professor of biology, received a grant from the University of Florida to study genetic stocks of nematodes. Allan Scholz, professor of biology, obtained three grants, one from Battelle Pacific Northwest to research bull trout movement in the Albeni Falls Dam Trail Race and two from the Spokane Tribe to study Lake Roosevelt fisheries and for covering expenses to attend fisheries meetings.

Field Botany Excursions
Hog Canyon, Murphy Pond, Palisades Park, Riverside State Park, Liberty Lake County Park, Leavenworth, Quincy Lakes, Peshastin Pinnacles State Park, and Fish Lake Bog were some of the sites the Field Botany class visited spring quarter 2009. Taught by Rebecca Brown, associate professor of biology, the emphasis of the course was to allow students to identify plant species in a variety of settings.

On each field trip, students were responsible for recording their observations: location of the site, terrain, weather conditions, plant life, and evidence of environmental impact (example from the Murphy Pond field trip: “…numerous piles of cow excrement found on the site” … if not “proof enough of the previous cattle inhabitance, a cow skeleton found in the area confirmed the site’s prior use”). Recorded observations were compiled into Proceedings: Field Botany Excursions Spring Quarter 2009.

Other student findings from Proceedings: At Hog Canyon:
We finished our walk back along the rim rock of Hog Lake. In sites where the soil was deeper there were clumps of sage brush – the sage was only present in the (continued on page 2)
Excursions (cont. from page 1)
southernly exposed rim rock area where moisture was scarce. Moving away from the rim rock, there were a series of depressions which had a greater moisture reserve than the surrounding rocky soil. These depressions gave life to many small emergent plants, including camas and onion.

From Liberty Lake County Park:
… opportunity to collect in a habitat which differed from those we had visited previously. The rendezvous point was a trailhead at the south end of the lake. After the class had assembled we set out, only to stop feet from the entrance where we encountered a diverse range of wetland plants including species of *Equisetum*, sedges, cottonwoods, and a crowd-favorite: Skunk Cabbage. Dens around the lake and felled trees about the trail are sign of beaver … inadvertently creating a wetland habitat which floods a large area of pines and snowberries. Pausing to make note of the change in elevation, we spot the first chocolate lily. [*Editor’s note: See Proceedings for table of all identified plant life*]

At the Quincy Wildlife Refuge in Grant County:
The path started off between columnar basalt outcroppings and there were a lot of bunch grasses, rabbit brush, cheat grass, sagebrush, asters, and others too numerous to mention.* Cheat grass has changed the fire frequency in the shrub/steppe habitats as this area did not burn before being colonized by this invasive grass. The sagebrush and bunch grasses were too far apart to carry a fire until cheat in-filled and allowed the area to burn frequently and hotly. The annual rainfall is only 5.5 inches and almost all of that falls in the winter, so summers are extremely dry. We came to a wetter area with clematis, chokecherry and willow. Willows are dioecious and we found both the male and female plants.

[Scholz Book Published]

Coming in the next issue of *Biology News:*
Details on a newly-published book by Allan Scholz, professor of biology.
Biology Benefactors

Recent donations of equipment to the Biology Department will benefit our students. **Tonya Vanover** (MS, 2009) donated a stereo microscope for use in the Herbarium. The articulated boom allows for studying different specimen heights.

The department obtained approximately $13,000 in equipment and supplies from Amgen in Seattle. Part of a massive public offering of surplus equipment, we secured a portable autoclave (valued at approximately $7,000), a needle pipette puller, recirculation water bath, petri dishes, sterile gowns and caps, culture flasks, carboys, autoclave bin, cryogenic vials, pipette tips, centrifuge tubes, pH paper, assorted printer cartridges, and more. The autoclave replaces one that was not working and not repairable. Other equipment and supplies will be put to use in classrooms and labs, saving the department thousands of dollars.

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Homecoming 2009

Livening up the Biology Department, **Lisa Williams**, secretary senior, decorated the office with western gear for Homecoming’s theme of Wild Wild Eastern. Assisting Lisa were student employees **Maria Anderson**, **David Hardenbrook**, **Theresa Scott**, and **Erika Vela**.

Carrying the western theme into Halloween the following week was **Bradley Fillmore**, lecturer of Biology, whose bull rider costume as a hit with students, faculty, and staff!

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Fall Seminars

To date, fall quarter seminars: “Crisp Sperm: The Role of a Snake Venom Protein in Sperm Maturation” by Ken Roberts (WSU/WWAMI), “Spatial Patterns of Denitrification in Restored & Natural Wetlands” by Cailin Huyck-Orr (WSU), and research by EWU biology faculty **Andrea Castillo**, **Joanna Joyner-Matos**, and **Robin O’Quinn**.

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Alumni Update

Visiting for EWU’s Homecoming, **Michael Clawson** (BS, 2007, and Frances B. Huston Award recipient) stopped into the Biology Department to catch us up on his recent activities. Since graduation, Mike spent three months in the Peace Corps in Paraguay helping incorporate trees into the agricultural landscape for windbreaks, to increase nitrogen, and to create more diverse, productive, profitable, healthy and sustainable land-use systems. From there, Mike went to the University of Washington to pursue his master’s degree in statistical population reconstruction in wildlife. Working as a research assistant with **John Skalski**, the project Mike is working on seeks to identify a model for assessing wildlife population effects using capture-recapture data – a method routinely used to determine fish populations. Mike plans to complete his degree in Spring 2010.

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Thank you, Tonya & Amgen
Hollister-Stier Textbook Assistance Awards

The following students earned textbook awards for Fall quarter:

- Dustan Bilte
- Darlene Brumley
- Olga Shiva
- Jennifer Wolbach

Congratulations! Thank you, Hollister-Stier, for your generosity in helping our students.

Watch for the Winter 2010 Biology News ... Faculty research, Darwin Day Celebration, alumni updates, and more.

Contact Us

*Biology News* is a quarterly publication of the Eastern Washington University Department of Biology. To contribute items of interest – news, features, alumni updates – please contact:

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