



## Department of Ecology and Evolution

Newsletter, April 2019

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Greetings from the [Department of Ecology & Evolution](#) in the College of Arts and Sciences at Stony Brook University! I'm happy to share some of the latest news and accomplishments for the Department and our students, faculty and alumni.

Our students have received multiple awards over the past few months, and have used their departmental awards to conduct research and travel to scientific meetings:

- PhD candidate Maureen Lynch used her 2018 Departmental Excellence Award to fund her travel to the ESA Meeting in New Orleans. She presented her work on gentoo penguin hormonal stress responses to tourism activity in Antarctica. Maureen also won a Professional Development Award to Advance Diversity and Inclusion.
- PhD candidate Joseph Kelly used his 2018 departmental research award to conduct fieldwork in the Florida Keys, where he collected sponge specimens belonging to the genus *Ircinia*. These specimens are being used for a species delimitation study that will help describe the ecological diversity that *Ircinia* microbiomes impart to benthic communities in the Caribbean.
- In very novel [research funded by NASA](#), recent PhD grad Casey Youngblood used several decades of satellite imagery to study distributions, diet, and population dynamics of Adélie penguin populations in Antarctica. This work provides unprecedented insights on this ecosystem and its fisheries, which will be vital to management and conservation in the Antarctic region.
- Alexander Rodriguez, a high school student researcher in Joshua Rest's lab, was named a Regeneron Science & Talent Search scholar for his project on "*A Genomic and Pharmacological Analysis of Adenosine Receptors in the Sea Anemone Nematostella vectensis*."

Our faculty members continue to gain national and international recognition:

- Dr. Jessica Gurevitch has been appointed to the rank of [Distinguished Professor](#) by the SUNY Board of Trustees. This recognizes Jessica's long record of outstanding scholarship in her field, teaching in biology, and service to the University and her discipline. Jessica joins Doug Futuyma and Jeff Levinton as current Distinguished Professors in the Department.
- Professor Dianna Padilla was awarded a five-year \$500,000 grant from NSF for an Organismal Systems Modeling Network (OSyM) research coordination network. This grant is to encourage development of systems-type models of organismal function and interactions with the environment. The OSyM network website will be live later this month.
- Professor Bob Thacker was appointed as a Research Associate of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. Bob will continue his research at STRI over the next several years with support from an award from the National Science Foundation.
- Professor Liliana Davalos received a Human Frontier Science Program grant for a collaboration on "Regrowing the Brain: Evolution and mechanisms of seasonal reversible size changes in a mammal" with collaborator John Nieland.
- Jackie Collier and Joshua Rest received a grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore foundation to develop tools and methods for the consistent, efficient genetic manipulation of *Aurantiochytrium*. These tools will be used for understanding the ecology and evolution of labyrinthulomycete protists.
- Dr. Fred Venc'l's [paper](#) on leaf beetles was highlighted as one of the most read papers of 2018 in the Biological Journal of the Linnean Society.
- Dr. Maria Rosa, who was an NSF Postdoctoral Fellow in Dianna Padilla's lab in 2018 has accepted a tenure track faculty position in the Dept. of Biology at Connecticut College, where she has been a Visiting Assistant Professor for 2018-2019. Maria will start her position there in Fall 2019.
- Former E&E doctoral student, AGEP and Turner Fellow Dr. Rocio Ng returned to the CIE for its Alumni Speaker Series. Her March 28 talk, "From Biologist to Data Scientist: How I Leveraged My PhD Into Success in the World of Tech" attracted many graduate students interested in pathways to non-academic careers.

We are continuing efforts to provide much needed resources for faculty, students, and staff. This year, we are participating in the University's first ever [Giving Day](#), a 24-hour online fundraising drive on Tuesday, April 30. The Department of Ecology & Evolution depends on our alumni and friends to support our membership in the Organization for Tropical Studies, to assist in the creation of a Center for Genomics, and to establish an Institute for Biodiversity. We also seek additional contributions to our departmental fellowship funds including the Lawrence Slobodkin Fund for Ecological Research, the Robert Sokal Fund for Statistical Biology, the George Williams Fund for Student Research, and the Ecology and Evolution Award for Student Excellence. You can find a [full list of E&E's giving opportunities here](#).

Your gift, whether it's the renewal of your support or the decision to give for the first time, allows us to do what we do best – innovative, creative research and teaching that's the hallmark of a great public university. I hope you'll consider making a [gift](#) today or on Giving Day; you may also speak with the College's development representative, Assistant Dean Rebecca Bair, [rebecca.bair@stonybrook.edu](mailto:rebecca.bair@stonybrook.edu).

I'm encouraged by the responses I've received from many of you to my recent emails, and I hope more of you will stay connected with me and other faculty in our department. We enjoy hearing where life has taken you! Please stay connected with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Best regards,

Bob Thacker  
Professor and Chairperson  
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Stony Brook University