



BIOSPHERE

The Weekly Bulletin of Biology

Biology Colloquium: Friday, 9 May 2014, 2:00 pm in CR 5125

“Causes and Consequences of Decadal-scale Changes in Abundance of an Intertidal Ecosystem Engineer”

Jennifer Burnaford, Ph.D.
CSU Fullerton

Biology Colloquium: Friday, 16 May 2014, 2:00 pm in CR 5125

“Tunas—Their Biology and Future”

Bruce Collette, Ph.D.
Distinguished Invited Speaker
National Marine Fisheries Service, Smithsonian Institution

Tropical Bioly Poster/Mixer

Students who participated in the spring Tropical Biology semester shall present posters on their original research conducted in Ecuador on Friday, 9 May from 11 am–2 pm on the 3rd floor of Chaparral Hall. A slideshow will feature the remarkable plants and wildlife observed on the trip and refreshments will be served.

MS Thesis Defense

Richard Swan will defend his thesis on Tuesday, 6 May at 10 am in CR 5102: “Directing skeletal muscle progenitor cell fate from human pluripotent stem cells.”

Exciting Fall Classes

Dr. **Polly Schiffman** will lead a grad seminar in evolution (BIOL 615F) on T 9 am–12 noon. The class will discuss classic papers anthologized in a new book, *Essential Readings in Evolutionary Biology*, along with related student-selected papers. This seminar is aimed at graduate students with specific interests in evolutionary mechanisms, organisms, population-level processes, and life history.

Dr. **Ray Hong** is offering Developmental Biology (BIOL 542/L) MW 12:30–4:45 pm. The course will provide a comprehensive overview of modern developmental biology, with an emphasis on the integrative nature of

developmental biology and its relationship with medicine, molecular genetics, recombinant DNA technology, and evolutionary biology. The lab will include sessions on nematode, chicken, and fish development.

Participate in Directed Studies: You too might present at Experimental Biology Meetings

Might you be interested in doing a directed studies project with a professor?

Last week students from the lab of Dr. **Steve Oppenheimer** were in San Diego presenting a poster, "A possible cell surface mechanism for magnesium sulfate's antithrombotic activity," at Experimental Biology 2014. The poster included 33 student coauthors and team leader **Greg Zem**. Students who especially helped with the presentation were **Harry Mikaelyan**, **Samantha Arvizu** and **Ani Orujyan**.

This presentation arose out of over 100 student projects. Students whose analysis was top notch were chosen to be coauthors.

Oppenheimer will offer Biology 495D in fall 2014. Students interested in doing research with him can register for his section. To apply, go to the Department of Biology Office to fill out a 495D form.

Students are welcome to start the work as a volunteer during summer, when they can conduct their research without the competition of coursework infringing on bench time.

If you are interested in the research of another professor, you should contact that person before filling out any forms.

Biologist in Paris

Dr. **Randy Cohen's** lab presented two posters on stem cell research at the 20th annual International Society for Cellular Therapy conference in Paris. Other CSUN authors included Dr. **Cindy Malone**, vivarium manager **Toni Uhlendorf**, graduate students **Sabrina Uppal** and **Ruslan Nuryyev**, and undergraduate student **Jackie Saenz**.

Murray Lab in Germany

The Interdisciplinary Research Institute for the Sciences Graduate Fellow **Shannon Wood** and Dr. **Sean Murray** both presented their research via oral and poster presentations at a workshop on "Stalked alpha-proteobacteria and relatives: from genes to structure" in Ebsdorfergrund, Germany. Murray also chaired a session on the bacterial cell cycle. Wood was honored with a student travel award for presenting an excellent abstract on her research at CSUN.

Faculty Presentations

Dr. **Robert Espinoza** gave a seminar at the University of Nevada, Reno: "The evolution of herbivory in reptiles: new approaches to old natural history questions." Espinoza also gave a talk at the Western National Parks Association *Live Reptile and Amphibian Show*, "From social to indifferent: insights into the bizarre sex lives of Southern California lizards."

Dr. **Michael Summers** gave a seminar at CSU Stanislaus: "Characterization of cyanobacterial lipid droplets using a multifaceted approach."

Zavala Honored

Dr. **MariaElena Zavala** was named *Distinguished Professor* at the University of San Diego. As part of her acceptance, she presented two formal seminars and met with faculty, students, and administrators. Her titles were:

- “Changing the institution to meet national challenges OR life in the underground: a radicle perspective.”
- “Planting the seeds of diversity to reap a harvest of scientists.”

Sigma Xi Presenters

Biology students dominated at the annual Sigma Xi Student Research Symposium. The following students placed in their respective sessions:

- 1st place **Michelle Mojadidi**
- 1st place **Catherine Soliva**
- 2nd place **Mehrsa Mehrabi**
- 2nd place **Nicholas Hoo**
- 2nd place **Majib Jan**
- 3rd place **Matthew Dickson**

Thanks to the many students who presented.

CSUPERB Funding

Freshman **Umu Rogers** received an \$8000 Presidents' Commission Scholar Grant from the CSU Program for Education and Research in Biotechnology (CSUPERB) to work with Dr. **David Bermudes**. Rogers will be studying protease inhibitors from microbes isolated from human skin.

Dr. **Michael Summers** was awarded a CSUPERB grant, “Characterization of cyanobacterial lipid droplets,” to fund the identification of compounds present in these subcellular structures. This project is a new direction for Summers's

lab. They are trying to understand lipid droplet composition, determine their physiological function, identify associated proteins, and find the mechanism of their formation. The long-term goal is to use this basic research to engineer production of food, fuel, and fine chemicals in these lipid structures.

Dr. **Ray Hong** received \$15,000 from CSUPERB for, “Mode of action of boron-based anthelmintic compounds in *C. elegans*.” Hong is looking for two student assistants with solid BIOL 360 grades to work on this project over summer: ray.hong@csun.edu.

Beetle-collecting Citizens Science

Dr. **Ray Hong's** lab will conduct its 5th year of scarab beetle sampling for nematodes. Please stop by CS 3212 or visit their [WEBSITE](#) to find out how you can help isolate nematodes from beetles around your porch light! For details: snehakoneru@gmail.com.

EcoEvo Blog

Dr. **Casey terHorst's** EcoEvo Lab started a new [BLOG](#). It is partly about the science of ecology and evolution, but more about the culture of our field.

Have a Great Summer!

Biosphere will be in aestivation for the next three months.

Biosphere: The Weekly Bulletin of Biology

Department of Biology

California State University, Northridge

Editors: Paul Wilson and Robert Espinoza

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