



BIOSPHERE

The Weekly Bulletin of Biology

Biology Colloquium: Friday, 7 March 2014, 2:00 pm in CR 5125

“Parallel evolution of the same reproductive isolation barrier leads to a reversal of speciation in western North America scincid lizards”

Jonathan Richmond, Ph.D.
US Geological Survey & CSUN Biology

Women in Science

[CSUN WiS](#) is a club that holds monthly meetings every first Wednesday of the month. The next meeting is 12–1 pm Wednesday, 5 March in CR 5102. The topic of discussion shall be, “Wake up and smell the roses—recognizing worth when in a rush!” Bring your lunch to discuss women in science, career development, academia, and other science-related opportunities.

A somewhat more elaborate event is the [pre-PI](#) mixer at which scientists, engineers, educators, and other STEM professionals will share insights into their careers. It will be 5:30–8 pm Thursday, 13 March. [RSVP](#) by 10 March.

Science was once largely male turf. Society’s cultural notions have changed dramatically in our life times, and today women comprise a sizable proportion of biology students and professionals. To commemorate Women’s History Month, each issue of *Biosphere* in March will

feature short profiles of pioneers in biology who were women.

Women in Terrestrial Ecology, Organismal Biology, and Conservation

—Dr. Polly Schiffman

Alice Eastwood (1859–1953). A respected field botanist, Alice Eastwood was Curator of Plants at the California Academy of Sciences for nearly 60 years. She single-handedly rescued the museum’s type specimens during the catastrophic fire that followed San Francisco’s great earthquake in 1906.



Everything else was destroyed. Thereafter she was in large part responsible for rebuilding the collection from scratch. She authored over 300 publications during her career. Many species plus two genera (*Aliciella* and *Eastwoodia*) have been named in her honor.

Florence Merriam Bailey (1863–1948). Although her brother (C. Hart Merriam) and husband (Vernon Bailey) were important vertebrate biologists, the contributions of ornithologist Florence Merriam Bailey were significant in their own right. She advocated for wild bird conservation at a time when they were hunted to provide decorative feathers for women's hats. She also wrote several bird field guides and was an early member of the National Audubon Society. In 1929, she was the first woman to become a fellow of the American Ornithological Union. A chickadee is named after her, *Parus gambeli baileyae*.



Ynes Mexia (1870–1938). Ynes Mexia considered herself to be “an adventuress” rather than a scientist. Although she only began doing science



at about age 50 after taking some UC courses, her contributions to science were considerable. She traveled extensively, often solo, throughout Mexico as well as in the wilds of Amazonian and Andean South America and collected thousands of plant specimens for the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago) and the Gray Herbarium (Harvard). Many of her collections were species new to science. Several taxa were named in her honor including one genus, *Mexianthus*.

E. Lucy Braun (1889–1971). One of the first women plant ecologists to earn a Ph.D., Braun was a professor at the University of Cincinnati. Her work focused on forest ecology and phytogeography. She spent a great deal of time in the field



describing and photographing the vegetation that she encountered. Her most important book, *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*, is widely considered to be a classic. In 1950 she became the first woman to serve as president of the Ecological Society of America, a scientific organization that has elected 12 women presidents since then.

Rachel Carson (1907–1964). Rachel Carson was trained as a marine biologist and most of her magazine articles and books were on marine topics. However, she is most noted for her book, *Silent Spring*. In this



bestseller, she used scientific evidence to explain that exposure to synthetic chemicals, particularly the insecticide DDT, was having widespread negative impacts on human health, wildlife populations, and ecosystem processes. Her work resulted in the banning of DDT in many countries and ignited the modern environmental conservation

movement. It also triggered the creation of government agencies and laws including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Endangered Species Act.

Want to know about the Marine Undergrad Program?

The Marine Biology Graduate Student Association is hosting a series of workshops. The next one is, “Curriculum Vitae: what is a CV and how do I make one that looks good?” at 5 pm Thursday, 6 March in MG 4111. All undergraduates are welcome. Refreshments will be provided. For more info email jhackitt@hotmail.com.

New Publication

Coral Reefs has published a paper by **Abigail Poray** and Dr. **Robert Carpenter**: “Distributions of coral reef macroalgae in a back reef habitat in Moorea, French Polynesia.”

Profs Demo STEM Research

Recently, Drs. **David Gray** and **Mary-Pat Stein** gave a demonstration of how DNA is extracted from organisms and then studied at CSUN. The demo was hosted by the Center for Innovative and Engaged Learning Opportunities. This was outreach to the non-science parts of the campus and the off-campus community, showing them what we do.

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Department of Biology
California State University, Northridge
Editors: Paul Wilson and Robert Espinoza
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