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Welcome to WEC... 19 new students join our graduate studies program this fall.

New PhD Students...

About Our Cover Photo
These donuts have been covered with raspberry flavoring and left under a bait line on private land near Tate’s Hell State Forest. They have been placed there by WEC MS student Don Hardeman, Jr. to attract black bears, like the yearling pictured above. Don is studying their demographics, diet, movements, and the influence of the human landscape on their behavior.

Celso Poot joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Holly Ober. From Belize, Central America, Celso holds an MA from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and a BS in Environmental Science from the University of Indianapolis/Galen University. He has spent the last two decades working in wildlife conservation at the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center, where his work focused on reducing vehicle collisions with wildlife, specifically the Central American tapir, the country’s national animal. At UF, Celso will expand his research to examine the home range, habitat use, and activity level of this particular species in central Belize, a human dominated landscape. His personal interests include road ecology, landscape ecology, hiking, nature photography, traveling and ecotourism.
Welcome to WEC (continued)

Nick Gengler joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Lyn Branch. An outdoor enthusiast from Helena, Montana, Nick earned his BS in Biology from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, AZ. While an undergraduate, Nick volunteered with the Arizona Conservation Corps, worked on a camera trap study in California, and participated in telemetry studies of garter snakes and Gila monsters. Following his graduation, Nick served for three years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay, where he completed conservation-focused community development projects and helped initiate a new camera trap program that provides other Peace Corps volunteers across Paraguay the opportunity to use camera traps. Resulting photos have collectively provided much needed ecological data to support the programs of USAID and the Paraguayan Secretariat of the Environment. Nick has also worked with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) on their conservation efforts within the Paraguayan Atlantic Forest. At UF, he plans to study mammal movement patterns in Paraguay to determine factors which influence functional connectivity. In his spare time, Nick enjoys rock climbing, slacklining, kayaking, birdwatching and board games.

Owen Schneider joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Ben Baiser. Owen holds a BS in Evolutionary Biology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a certificate in Environmental Science. At Madison, he developed a passion for plants, working as a native plant specialist and Ranger at the UW-Arboretum. Following his graduation, he did field work with the Juneau Forestry Sciences Laboratory, investigating different treatments of incrementally-aged logging stands throughout the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska.

Owen also worked as a Natural Resource Technician at Sitka National Historical Park, where he collected and organized data on vegetative communities, salmon, bird, bat, and bumblebee populations, and terrestrial and underwater acoustics. Finally, he has worked most recently as a GIS technician for the North Dakota State Forest Service and preparing for Emerald Ash Borer. At UF, Owen will investigate the effects of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) on native plant communities in the Everglades. In his free time, Owen enjoys music, camping, baking, exploring for rare plants and insects, brewing, and trivia.
Welcome to WEC (continued)

Maggie Jones joins the SNRE doctoral program under the co-advisement of Drs. Bob McCleery and Rob Fletcher. From West Virginia, Maggie earned her MS in Wildlife Ecology from Iowa State University in Ames, IA and her BS in Biology and BA in Creative Writing from Denison University in Granville, OH. For her MS, Maggie studied the impacts of immunocontraception management on the behavior and physiology of a feral horse population located on Shackelford Banks, North Carolina. Her main research interests are focused on questions that concern how interspecific interactions shape ecological communities.

At UF, Maggie’s doctoral project will focus broadly on the influence of elephants on savanna dynamics in Kruger National Park in South Africa. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, folk music and dance, and reading.

Jack Hartfelder joins the SNRE PhD program under the advisement of Dr. Bob McCleery. Jack earned his BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN. Jack has a passion for studying natural resources abroad, and has done so in Thailand, Belize, and southern Africa. While working as a technician in Belize, he worked on a project studying mammal movement along forest corridors, specifically focused on jaguars. While in southern Africa he conducted research on the dispersal capabilities of avian species in the lowveld of Swaziland. Jack will continue researching wildlife in southern Africa, acting as a mentor to undergraduate students studying various taxa and their ecosystem services. He will also be working in Kruger National Park in South Africa setting up large exclusion fences for a project looking at the effects of African elephants on their surrounding ecosystem. For his doctoral research, Jack plans on studying megaherbivores and their impact in Kruger National Park. In his own time, he enjoys traveling, exploring, birding, and hiking.
Welcome to WEC (continued)

Natalia Teryda joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Ray Carthy. Originally from Mar del Plata, Argentina, Natalia received her BS in Biology from Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (Argentina), where she conducted her undergraduate thesis on marine debris ingestion by Green Turtles along the coast of Uruguay, South America. After earning her BS, Natalia was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to pursue a Master in Advanced Studies in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego in California. Her MAS project studied the economic approach of sea turtle bycatch reduction efforts in the swordfish fishery in the US.

Since the age of fourteen, Natalia has been actively involved with marine fauna conservation, projects, especially of sea turtles, in her hometown, and along the coasts of Argentina and Uruguay. Because of her contributions in Argentina, she was selected by the US Embassy in Argentina to be the Argentinean Youth Ambassador in the International Visitor Leadership Program “Our Oceans, Young Ambassadors” organized by the US Department of State. At UF, Natalia is excited to continuing her research and work on sea turtle ecology and conservation. Her personal interests include cooking, traveling to new places, making macramé jewelry, attending symphonic metal concerts, and outdoor activities.

Alumnus Diego Juarez-Sanchez (WEC MS ’17) begins his WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Christina Romagosa. He is originally from San Juan Sacatepeques, a town in rural Guatemala, where he grew up on a small farm. He earned his Bachelor’s degree from the historic national university, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (USAC). At USAC he worked with jaguars and Mesoamerican river turtles (Dermatemys mawii). He then worked with different NGOs including the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and research institutes from USAC, studying small felids and Neotropical river otters. Eventually, he became employed by the Guatemalan government as the head biologist in Tikal National Park.

Diego earned his MS from UF with a Fulbright Scholarship, co-advised by Dr. John Blake and Dr. Eric Hellgren, evaluating niche breadth and tropic position changes in Neotropical river otters, associated with the inclusion of an invasive fish in their diet. Since graduation, he has worked with Dr. Romagosa on her python trophic ecology research. For his doctorate, Diego plans to evaluate the role that native predators play in stopping or controlling invasive species, focusing on riverine ecosystems in Guatemala, using invasive fish and native riverine predators as model species.
Christian Rivera joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Vanessa Hull. Originally from San Pablo de León Cortés, San José, Costa Rica, and raised in Bridgeport, CT, Christian earned his MA degree in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology from Columbia University in New York City, and a BA in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University in Princeton, NJ. For his Master’s thesis, Christian studied the ecological and social dimensions of success of a highly acclaimed freshwater turtle management program in the Peruvian Amazon. His research methods included population viability modeling and anthropological approaches.

Following his undergraduate studies, Christian spent a summer in Jishou, Hunan, China, managing a summer English language program through a Princeton in Asia (PiA) summer of service internship. He then served as a yearlong PiA fellow as a Research and Training Associate for RECOFTC-the Center for People and Forests in Bangkok, Thailand. At RECOFTC he conducted research on the social dimensions of coffee agroforestry systems and participated in trainings of stakeholders on the principles of community forestry and natural resource management.

Throughout his MA studies at Columbia University Christian held a research assistantship at the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History, where he assisted with projects focused on the conservation of biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity. He is a member of the global Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Committee of the Society for Conservation Biology. At UF, he plans to develop a doctoral project that applies biocultural approaches to international endangered species exploitation and conservation issues in East and Southeast Asia and/or the Amazon Basin. Christian enjoys teaching Latin dance, studying languages and cultures, country music, trying new foods and wines, travel, and hosting social events.

Alumnus Andrew Marx (WEC MS ’18) continues his graduate studies as a new doctoral student under the advisement of Dr. Jim Austin. Along with Alex Potash (WEC MS ‘18), Andrew is a recipient of this year’s Graduate School Fellowship award.
**Welcome to WEC** (continued)

**Alex Potash** (WEC MS 18) continues his graduate studies at UF as a WEC doctoral student after recently completing his MS program. He will be advised by Dr. Robert McCleery. Alex was born and raised in Burlington, Vermont, and in 2013 he graduated from the University of Vermont with a BS in environmental science. For his MS thesis, Alex studied how the environment influences behavioral and physical antipredator adaptations in fox squirrels. His doctoral research will examine how fear of predation structures wildlife communities in a variety of ecosystems. In his spare time, Alex enjoys running, rock climbing, cooking, and learning to speak German. He is a 2018 Graduate School Fellowship recipient.

**New MS Students...**

**Virnaliz Cruz-Hernandez** joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Miguel Acevedo (SNRE PhD ’13). From Bayamon, Puerto Rico, Virnaliz earned her BS in Environmental Science from the University of Puerto Rico, at the Rio Piedras Campus in San Juan, where she studied the effects of malaria on red blood cell size variation in lizards. Virnaliz is an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship recipient. At UF, she will continue to study diseases using a data science approach and is interested in disease spillover prediction. As for personal interests, Virnaliz enjoys jigsaw puzzles, jogging with her dogs, swimming, and learning to program.

**Alumna Lorna McCallister** (WEC BS ’15) joins the SNRE MS program under the advisement of Dr. Bob McCleery. Lorna earned her BS in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida. Following her graduation, Lorna has monitored for wildlife diseases for the FWC wildlife health lab, while traveling and performing fieldwork on various projects. She has worked on the Elephants and Bees Project in Sri Lanka and Kenya, suni antelope camera trapping in South Africa, mule deer fawn collaring and riparian bird surveys in Colorado, and bonneted bat and turkey tracking in Florida. In the McCleery lab, her MS research will focus on mammal ecology in South Africa. Lorna’s personal interests include backpacking and camping, road trips, beekeeping, crafting, painting, and exploring natural areas.
Welcome to WEC (continued)

Alumna Mel Moreno (WEC BS ‘17) joins the SNRE MS program under the advisement of Dr. Bill Pine. Originally from Miami, she graduated cum laude from UF in 2017. Mel had an insightful internship at the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center in Summer 2017, under Dr. Mathieu Basille. As an intern, she assisted in creating maps of wood stork migrations and sites. Mel is currently finishing an R tutorial with Dr. Basille to help students visualize their data in creative and well informative maps. She also volunteered as an undergrad with USGS, weighing and crushing samples, with grad students, identifying and counting insects and processing rodent picture data. Mel has helped care for abandoned pet ferrets at Broward Ferret Rescue, and with injured wildlife rehabilitation at the South Florida Wildlife Center. She currently manages a Git Hub page (link below), which displays data collected by fixed sensors located in Cedar Key, Florida.

http://www.wec.ufl.edu/oysterproject/restoration.php

Annalee Tweitmann joins the WEC MS program under the co-advisement of Drs. Peter Frederick and Bill Pine. From the Jersey Shore, Annalee earned her BS in Environmental Science and Sustainability from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. At Cornell, Annalee’s research was primarily focused on conservation paleontology, comparing live and dead molluscan assemblages in estuaries. Following graduation, she worked as an environmental educator with the New York State Parks, a research coordinator for the non-profit Reclam the Bay, and a shellfish hatchery technician with Rutgers University. Annalee’s research interests are very broadly investigating natural and human-derived stressors and how they influence estuarine habitats and invertebrates, in particular. At UF, Annalee will continue her research with shellfish, working with the UF/IFAS oyster restoration project at Lone Cabbage Reef. Her pastime interests include hiking, kayaking, and cooking.
Welcome to WEC (continued)

Alumna Celine Carneiro (WEC BS ’16) begins her SNRE MS program under the advisement of Dr. Jim Austin. Celine earned her BS in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida. As an undergraduate, she worked for the USGS Wetland and Aquatic Research Center in Gainesville, studying southeastern freshwater mussels, and UF’s molecular ecology lab, conducting research on various taxa. Following her graduation, she also spent a field season with the Florida Parks Service, studying Florida grasshopper sparrows, and her MS research will focus on the molecular ecology of the Florida grasshopper sparrow. Celine enjoys reading, cooking, surfing, canoeing, and traveling.

Liu Yue joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Liu Yue earned her BS in Wildlife Conservation and Nature Reserve Management from Beijing Forestry University in 2018. During her undergraduate study, she secured practical work experiences in many nature reserves in China, including the West Dongting Lake National Natural Reserve in Hunan, the Henan Dongzhai National Nature Reserve in Henan, and the Changqing National Reserve of Shaanxi province. Liu Yue is interested in the reproductive behavior and information exchange of birds. She plans to research the effects of human activities on birds in her graduate study. Her pastimes include bird-seeing, cooking and dancing.

Alumna Cherice Smithers (WEC BS ’09) joins the SNRE MS program under the advisement of Dr. Ben Baiser. Cherice earned her BS in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida in 2009. Since graduating, she has worked in several different capacities within the natural sciences field: as a field technician studying woodpecker habitat use with the US Forest Service, a lab manager of a biomechanics lab at Temple University, an environmental monitor on the BP oil spill response, and a native pollinator researcher with the UF Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab. Most recently, Cherice has worked with the FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute’s Upland Habitat Research and Monitoring team which evaluates, monitors, and restores the native plant communities of Florida’s terrestrial wildlife species. For her MS, Cherice will study the effects of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan on Everglades plant communities. The project is funded by the National Park Service and is a collaboration with fire ecologist Dr. Raelene Crandall in the UF School of Forest Resources and Conservation. In her spare time, Cherice enjoys yoga, photography, making pottery, gardening, and baking.
Andrew Glass joins WEC as an MS student under the advisement of Dr. Elizabeth Pienaar. From the Virginia/North Carolina area, Andrew earned his degree in Biology from Guilford College in Greensboro, NC in 2013. He first became involved in human dimensions research when working on a project examining human-wildlife conflict and land-use change in the Amboseli ecosystem in southern Kenya. His undergraduate thesis research focused on how the invasive Akebia vine impacts avian populations in a forest environment. After spending several years as a meat purchaser in Chicago, Andrew became an audience researcher at the Lincoln Park Zoo, where he deepened his interest in how people view wildlife and conservation efforts. His master’s thesis will focus on examining the messaging of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission in order to better communicate complex information to the public. Andrew’s personal interests include birdwatching, writing poetry, reading, and vegan cooking.

Zachary Steele also joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Elizabeth Pienaar. Zachary received his BS in Biology from the University of South Florida in Tampa, FL. While an undergraduate, Zachary worked in various animal husbandry and research positions for Walt Disney World and SeaWorld. These positions helped shape his passion for working with the public to stress the importance of conservation. After graduation, Zachary spent time in the Sichuan province of China researching the Giant Panda and then working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to monitor populations of nesting least terns and piping plovers. At UF he plans to study the human dimensions of invasive species in Florida in a partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Zachary enjoys playing basketball, going camping, going to the movies, attending rock and metal concerts, and watching anime in his spare time.
Moving On...

WEC MS student **Diane Episcopio** (left) successfully defended her thesis entitled “Understanding Preferences for Non-Native Pet Trade Management in Florida.” She was advised by Dr. Elizabeth Pienaar.

WEC MS student **Kelley Anderson** successfully defended her thesis entitled “Florida Residents Tolerance for Coyotes and Opinions on Methods for Mitigating Conflicts with Coyotes.” Kelley was advised by Dr. Elizabeth Pienaar.

WEC MS student **Sophie Orzechowski** successfully defended her thesis entitled “Quantifying the Impacts of Invasive Burmese Pythons on Wading Bird Reproduction in the Everglades.” Sophie was advised by Dr. Peter Frederick.

WEC MS student **Alex Potash** successfully defended his thesis entitled “The Environmental Drivers of Behavioral and Physical Antipredator Adaptations in the Southeastern Fox Squirrel.” Alex was co-advised by Drs. Bob McCleery and Mike Conner. Alex continues on into a WEC doctoral program this fall as a Graduate School Fellow.

WEC doctoral candidate **Jennifer Moore** (right) successfully defended her dissertation entitled “Ecology and Conservation of Mammalian Communities and the Impact of Illegal Human Activities in Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda.” Dr. Moore was advised by Dr. Bill Pine.

WEC doctoral candidate **Jame McCray** successfully defended her dissertation entitled “Sea Turtle Friendly Lighting in Florida: A Multi-Level Evaluation of Policy Implementation and Effectiveness.” Dr. McCray was co-advised by Drs. Ray Carthy and Susan Jacobson.

SNRE doctoral candidate **Julie Shapiro** (right) successfully defended her dissertation entitled “Bats in a Changing World: Where They Go, What They Bring, and How They Impact People.” Dr. Shapiro was advised by Dr. Bob McCleery.
Publications and Papers


Alumni News

Alumna Hannah Hart (WEC BS ’03) has joined the Orlando, FL office of Dewberry, a privately held professional services firm, as a senior environmental scientist. Her new responsibilities will include project management of natural environmental matters, focusing on major transportation infrastructure and municipal work.

Other News

We’re making videos of our graduate students’ fieldwork!

Click on the pictures to watch, or, if you are reading a print version of this, find them on our Facebook page!

Top photo: *Signamdon hispidus* in trap.
Bottom photo: Katie Hooker, recording data

Top photo: *Malaclemys terrapin* in hand.
Bottom Photo: Dan Catizone measuring terrapin

Note: The next issue of the WEC Spotlight will be mailed in October. Interested in sharing your good news? Contact your graduate faculty advisor with your news by September 1, 2018.

*Be sure to follow your WEC & SNRE colleagues on Facebook and Twitter!!*