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About Our Cover Photos:

Photo 1: A two-toed sloth with her offspring in Costa Rica (photo credit: Dr. Bridget Baker).

Photo 2: Dr. Baker holding a female lake trout just prior to release following egg collection on Lake Superior. Photo courtesy of Dr. Baker. More about Dr. Baker on page 19.

Welcome to WEC!

20 new students join the WEC graduate studies program this Fall.

New PhD Students...

Orlando Acevedo-Charry joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Miguel A. Acevedo and the co-advisement of Dr. Scott Robinson (FMNH-Zoology). Born and raised in a tropical megadiverse country, Orlando studied biology at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, graduating in 2012. During this undergraduate career, he became involved in field and museum work to study Colombia's vast bird diversity. He served as student monitor for the animal taxonomy, field ecology, and ornithology courses while coordinating a student association of ornithology in his department. After graduation, Orlando engaged in conservation work with rural communities in southern Colombia by leading participatory efforts to monitor local bird populations. His students became his colleagues and they gathered crucial information about the local avifauna in a poorly known region of Colombia, including the use of citizen science initiatives.



*Orlando Acevedo-Charry giving a TED talk.
Photo courtesy of Orlando Acevedo-Charry*

Welcome to WEC, continued...

In 2013, Orlando moved abroad to obtain a master's degree in biology at the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras. For his master's research, he performed a meta-analysis to evaluate how vertebrate diversity recovered following secondary succession of a tropical forest. Orlando also studied acoustic traits (soundscapes) from Puerto Rico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, and Madagascar. His experiences with acoustic traits allowed him to coordinate the environmental sound collection at the Humboldt Institute in Colombia from 2018 to 2021. Additionally, Orlando established a scientific agenda on bioacoustics research throughout Colombia. He also served as president of the Asociación Colombiana de Ornitología (2018-2020) and is currently involved in the national committee of bird records and is on the editorial board of the journal *Ornitología Colombiana*. For his doctoral research at the University of Florida, Orlando seeks to understand biogeographic patterns of phenotypic and diversity traits in tropical birds from global to local scales. He will integrate an array of quantitative tools to develop robust statistical models and evaluate ecogeographic trends (e.g., along environmental gradients) to assess these patterns. In his spare time, Orlando enjoys outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, running, birding, herping, sound recording, and photography. He also loves to dance salsa and talk with friends and family with a good cup of coffee (or beer or wine).

Po-An Chen joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Born and raised in Taiwan, Po-An earned a bachelor's degree in animal science at National Chiayi University and a master's degree in life science at National Chung Hsing University, where he researched the habitat utilization for granivorous birds and their impacts on the rice grain damage in natural farming paddies. For his doctoral research, Po-An will focus on informationscapes ecology in the songbird family Paridae to gain a deeper understanding of the bioacoustics and behavioral mechanisms behind titmice and chickadees' communication. In his spare time, Po-An enjoys birding, watching movies, cooking, and tasting delicious food.



Photo courtesy of Po-An Chen

Welcome to WEC, continued...



Photo courtesy of Isadora Fluck-Essig

Isadora Fluck-Essig joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Ben Baiser. Originally from southern Brazil, she received her bachelor's degree in biology (2018) and master's degree in animal biodiversity (2020) from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Brazil. During both degrees, Isadora studied community ecology by investigating the environmental and geographical factors that determine diversity patterns of birds in Amazonia. Her doctoral research at University of Florida will focus on the newly funded project: NSF Macrosystems Biology: Local- to continental-scale drivers of biodiversity in NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network). In this project, she will investigate diversity patterns in mammal, fish, and beetle communities from small to large scales and its drivers. In addition to nature research, Isadora enjoys studying arts, drawing, crafting, reading, and bird-watching.

Savannah Grace joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Drs. Samantha Wisely and Jim Austin. She has received a Bachelor of Science in organismal biology with a minor in genetics from Montana State University. During her time as an undergraduate, Savannah helped extensively on research on the relationships among the microbiome and metabolome of the human vaginal tract, and their relation to infection and disease. Savannah has also completed a Master of Science in animal and range sciences with a certification in statistics from Montana State University. Her graduate research focused on isolating bacterial and fungal strains from Montana's wild ruminant populations capable of degrading Methyl lycaconitine (MLA), a potent plant toxin responsible for a great deal of cattle mortality across the western US. At University of Florida, Savannah's research will focus on how genetic variation within Florida white-tailed deer populations affect susceptibility to epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV) infection. When she's not out in the field or working in the lab, Savannah enjoys exploring with her husband and dogs, swimming, traveling, and catching up on good TV.



Photo courtesy of Savannah Grace

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Priyanka Hari Haran joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Emilio Bruna. She has a bachelor's degree in zoology and a master's degree in ecology and environmental sciences. For her master's dissertation, Priyanka looked at the habitat use of mixed-species flocks in an evergreen forest in India's Western Ghats, a mountain range she'd first been drawn to as an undergraduate student. She returned to this landscape and worked with restoration practitioners in a non-governmental organization to understand how rainforest birds respond to ecological restoration of forests in a working landscape. She finds endless inspiration to write about the natural world and loves communicating science to varied audiences, and her work has been published in *Mongabay India* and *Yale e360* among other Indian publications. She also served as editorial assistant for a book that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India put together on the effects of climate change on Indian biodiversity. For her doctoral research, Priyanka wants to better understand how bird communities (in particular, mixed-species flocks) are affected by fragmentation and restoration in the tropics. She also hopes to actively engage with local communities at her field sites and write about all her adventures in grad school.



Photo courtesy of Priyanka Hari Haran

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Daniel Haro joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Christina Romagosa. He is Chicano and grew up chasing lizards in the chaparral mountains of southern California. Daniel has been involved with research projects studying invasive reptiles for much of his education and career. He helped study adaptations to non-native arid environments in Mediterranean house geckos during his undergraduate career (BS at CSU Northridge, '16), and studied cold acclimation and physiological plasticity in non-native Italian wall lizards for his master's degree (Cal Poly '18). Daniel worked as a lab manager at Tulane University from 2018 to 2019, helping the Gunderson Lab study heat-hardening of non-native brown anoles. Then, he worked with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as a field crew leader responding to an incipient population of Argentine black and white tegus in Georgia. At UF, Daniel plans to study how life history and physiology inform success of Argentine tegus outside their native range, how tegus impact native fauna in the southeast, and how to best manage incipient and established populations of Argentine tegus. In his free time, he enjoys reading poetry, painting, visiting museums and parks, and kickboxing.



Photo courtesy of Daniel Haro

Sebastián Mena joins the SNRE doctoral program under the advisement of Drs. Brett Scheffers and Rob Fletcher. From Quito, Ecuador, he earned his bachelor's degree at Pontificia Universidad Católica, where he worked as a research assistant for several butterfly monitoring projects in the hyperdiverse rainforests of Ecuador, aiming to disentangle ecological patterns in space and time. After



Photo courtesy of Sebastián Mena

graduating, Sebastián moved to Panama to join the lab of Dr. Owen McMillan at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, where he split his time between research in ecology and science communication projects. He has focused his research on butterfly ecology and evolution at the vertical dimension. Sebastián has also written two field guides for the butterflies of Panama and Ecuador. He enjoys the tree canopies, nature photography, rock climbing, and bike-packing.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Marlyn Zuluaga joins the WEC doctoral program under the advisement of Dr. Bette Loiselle. Marlyn was born and raised in Colombia, where the country's rich natural history inspired her to choose a career in biology. In 2017, she earned her bachelor's degree at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali, where she developed a research project regarding the interaction between tent-making bats and palm trees in a tropical dry forest. Over the past four years since her graduation, Marlyn has worked in research and conservation with local environmental agencies. She was involved in diverse projects, ranging from invasive species management, ecology of migratory birds, bioacoustics, protected areas declaration, and community outreach to promote conservation awareness through education. She wanted to expand her knowledge about plant-animal ecological interactions, thus in 2019, she presented a proposal to the Colombian Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation. The department supplied funding for Marlyn to evaluate plant-hummingbird interactions and forecast how climate change-induced distributional shifts may affect those networks. These experiences, and her determination to follow her passion, led her to pursue a doctoral degree in wildlife ecology and conservation sponsored by the Fulbright Scholarship. At UF, her doctoral research will focus on evaluating how plant-bird mutualistic interaction networks differ across time and elevation gradients to reflect the variation in phenology of plants and their interaction with pollinators. In her spare time, Marlyn enjoys outdoor activities such as bird-watching, hiking, scuba diving, and camping.



Photo courtesy of Marlyn Zuluaga

Welcome to WEC, continued...

New MS Students...

Yutong An joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. She received her bachelor's degree in ecology and evolutionary biology with a minor in atmospheric and oceanic sciences from the University of Colorado - Boulder. As an undergraduate, Yutong worked on a project that evaluated environmental damage levels from construction. She helped draft the "Environmental Impact Assessment Report" by building a reservoir for drinking water and irrigation. Yutong's master's research will focus on wildlife conservation and management, focusing on population ecology and dynamics of native vertebrates, non-indigenous species, and threatened and endangered species. Her academic interests include wildlife conservation, invasive species control, and ecological restoration. Yutong enjoys hiking, skiing, yoga, and traveling in her free time. She plans to work in areas related to conservation management, environmental consulting, or environmental sustainability in her future career.



Photo courtesy of Yutong An



Hanna on her drive from New Jersey to Gainesville. Photo courtesy of Hanna Arostegui

Hanna Arostegui joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Hanna plans to specialize in conservation planning/design with a focus on cheetahs. She enjoys hiking, spending time with animals, and watching scary movies. Hanna is from New Jersey where she worked at a safari with many exotic species. Her favorite animals to work with were the giraffes.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

In the future, Hanna hopes to educate the public on the importance of animal safety and minimize human-animal conflict. She is excited to begin graduate school and to work with other students who share her passion.

Kelsey Demeny joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Marcus Lashley. Kelsey grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin and earned her bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. As an undergraduate, she conducted her senior capstone research project on the consumption of anthropogenic food by raccoons in different land-cover types and its influence on individual health. Then, she wrote and submitted her manuscript until it was accepted and published in the *Canadian Journal of Zoology* in 2019. Since graduating, she has worked on a variety of wildlife research projects including trapping and radio-tracking beavers along a desert river in Utah and capturing and GPS collaring white-tailed deer in West Virginia. Kelsey's master's research will focus on the effects of supplemental feeding and oak masting cycles on community interactions and white-tailed deer behavior. In her free time, Kelsey enjoys hiking, camping, and cross-stitching.



Kelsey holding a beaver. Photo courtesy of Kelsey Demeny

Welcome to WEC, continued...



Photo courtesy of Ana Gesek

Ana Gesek (BS, SFRC '21) joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. She grew up in upstate New York and worked at an animal hospital as a vet tech before attending college. During this time, Ana also volunteered at Pine Bush Nature Preserve as a docent. She has enjoyed a lifelong love of all animals and knew from a very young age that this was her calling. Ana specifically moved to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida, and this past May graduated from UF, receiving her bachelor's degree in natural resource conservation with a specialty in wildlife ecology. As an undergraduate, she interned at a New World Monkey Sanctuary, as well as studied abroad in Costa Rica learning about tropical ecosystems. Ana's primary focus is centered around working with large mammals and traveling the world to observe them in their natural habitats, while working alongside the communities to better the livelihood of everyone. Part of her dream is to travel to different countries, and experience diverse populations in places such as Africa or Australia, and to work on preserves with a variety of endangered megafauna. Ana has always been very passionate about wildlife, as well as the environment. Travel and adventure have always been a dual passion of hers, and she's traveled to different wildlife seminars in places like Australia, Costa Rica, and the Disney Animal Kingdom Education Series. To date, she has traveled to 16 different countries, including Australia, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Prague, Hungary, England, Colombia, and several Caribbean locales. To keep busy in her spare time, she enjoys swimming, hiking, and experiencing new and different adventures, such as skydiving, paragliding in the Alps, and ziplining over the rainforest.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Sara Green joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. She grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana and went to Purdue University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in animal sciences with minors in wildlife sciences and biological sciences. While an undergraduate student, she researched the effects of urban noises on peafowl vigilance, volunteered at a wildlife rehabilitation center, and studied abroad at Massey University in New Zealand. Since graduation, she has worked in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at UF studying dopamine-related disorders. Sara's research interests include the human dimensions of wildlife conservation, urban ecology, and eco-friendly communities. She is particularly interested in learning how urban and agricultural development can be improved to benefit native species and increase biodiversity. In her free time, Sara enjoys playing soccer, Dungeons and Dragons, rollerskating, snorkeling at the springs, and camping.



Photo courtesy of Sara Green



Photo courtesy of Grace Horton

Grace Horton (BS, Biology '18) joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Grace grew up in Jacksonville, Florida and graduated from the University of Florida cum laude with a bachelor's degree in biology and minor in dance in 2018. Since graduating, she has worked as the foster coordinator at the Humane Society of North Central Florida in Gainesville and received a graduate certificate in shelter medicine through The University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Grace is currently working at a small animal hospital in Newberry as a veterinary and surgery technician. From working in this position for two years, as well as undergraduate volunteer work, she has gained a lot of experience with small mammals and wildlife. This work continues to fuel the passion and interest in wildlife she's always had. While most of her background is in veterinary medicine, Grace is excited to explore conservation, scientific communication and outreach, mammalogy, and ecology.



Photo courtesy of Lameace Hussain

Lameace Hussain joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Nia Morales. They are a non-binary herpetologist who grew up chasing frogs and snakes in Kentucky. After graduating, they moved to the state of Washington to pursue a career with Washington Fish and Wildlife, where they worked as a herpetologist for a couple of years. During that position, they ran around the Olympics and Cascades scooping up giant salamanders, kayaked rivers looking for western toads, and meandered through sagebrush checking den sites for snakes. They also taught wildlife ecology at a local community college. Their favorite aspect of the wildlife field is outreach, especially with historically excluded and marginalized communities. Educating others is their passion, and showing people that nature is for everyone will always be what they strive for.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Maddie Magrino joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Martin Main. Maddie was born and raised in Orlando, Florida. In 2017, she was accepted at Arizona State University to study astrophysics. After a year-and-a-half in the School of Earth and Space Exploration, she decided to take a sustainability course as an elective. Maddie immediately fell in love with the class, realized that conservation was what she wanted to pursue, and switched her major from astrophysics to Earth and environmental studies with a minor in sustainability. During her undergraduate career, she was involved in research with ASU's Global Locust Initiative (GLI), where she collected and analyzed data comparing the media coverage of the desert locust outbreak in 2004/2005 to the outbreak in 2020. Upon working with the GLI lab, Maddie



*Maddie hiking at Cathedral Rock in Sedona, AZ.
Photo courtesy of Maddie Magrino.*

became enthralled with the idea of doing research that combines social science with natural science. Under the advisement of Dr. Jesse Senko, she completed a senior thesis where she interpreted the coverage of plastic pollution as a threat to marine megafauna compared to other threats (i.e., marine bycatch, crude oil exposure, ocean acidification, etc.) to marine megafauna in the media. Maddie is very passionate about the conservation and restoration of natural resources and is excited to work on her master's degree in wildlife ecology and conservation, focusing on wetland restoration, under the advisement of Dr. Main. Maddie is also the new Communications Program Assistant for the Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Department at UF. She hopes to learn more about positive and negative anthropogenic influences on wetland environments and ways to ensure our decisions are not harmful to the wildlife that inhabit those ecosystems.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Allie Pecenka joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. A native to the Gulf Coast of Florida, Allie has always been passionate about environmental stewardship and wildlife conservation. She recently earned her bachelor's degree in environmental studies from The University of Central Florida with a focus in biological sciences and ethology. During her undergraduate career, Allie worked in the Lewis Lab of Applied Coastal Ecology where she used GIS software to assess multi-variable impacts of climate change at the county level, contributing to the creation of a nationwide environmental vulnerability index (EVI). Allie also collaborated with environmental non-profits where she helped educate children on sustainable lifestyle choices and reduced plastic waste on UCF's campus. Her master's research interests include restoration of Florida's coral reefs and tropical conservation ecology. Her career goals for the future include conservation and management of critically endangered species and ecosystems within the tropics.



*Allie hikes to a lookout point at Zion National Park, Utah. **Photo courtesy of Allie Pecenka.***



Photo courtesy of Alexis Pederson

Alexis Pederson joins the WEC MS program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Alexis is from the northern woods of Wisconsin and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a Bachelor of Science in kinesiology. During that time, she worked at an animal hospital and volunteered as a community scientist at Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center, performing data collection of monarch larvae, Butler's garter snakes, and damselflies for species monitoring in a rapidly growing urban environment.

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Alexis moved to Gainesville in 2019 and works at UF as a biological scientist in the Department of Molecular Genetics/Microbiology but wants to pursue her passion of working to preserve wildlife through understanding ecological consequences of urbanization and field survey. Her master's will focus on spatial dynamics of wildlife populations and landscape ecology, which will include understanding behavioral responses caused by anthropogenic pressures that lead to a change in animal activity, dispersal, and distribution. She will have an emphasis in statistical modeling and GIS to assist in wildlife and habitat survey in the field. In her free time, Alexis enjoys scuba diving, kayaking, rock climbing, hiking, craft cocktails, and playing with her cats.

Anne Pfund joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Anne started her undergraduate education at TCC in Tallahassee, FL before transferring to FAMU to complete her bachelor's degree in Animal Science. At the time, she was working as a technician at a local animal hospital. Shortly after graduating, Anne started working for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in the Food Safety lab, analyzing ready to eat commodities for adulteration before becoming one of the lead analysts in the Dairy Program, testing milk and other milk-based products from Florida's different farms and producers. Anne enjoys building and creating things, such as habitats for her various exotic animals: poison dart frogs, emperor scorpion, and a corn snake. She loves going on adventures with her friends and family, especially when she can bring her dogs, and she aspires to visit New Zealand one day.



Photo courtesy of Anne Pfund

Welcome to WEC, continued...



Blake Seegebrecht joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Katie Sieving. Blake has always been interested in studying animals. His curiosity piqued when his family moved to England when he was in second grade. They began traveling to Europe, Asia, and Africa frequently and he got to see animals from all over the world. Blake attended the University of Iowa where he earned his bachelor's in Business Studies after changing his major five times (Finance, Economics, Neuroscience, Biology, and Business Studies). After his sophomore year, he knew he didn't want to go into business, but since he wanted to be able to graduate in four years, he ended up getting his degree in Business Studies anyway. Blake is excited to start taking classes that he is genuinely interested in and go into a fulfilling career.

Blake about to climb the Sydney bridge in Sydney, Australia. Photo courtesy of Blake Seegebrecht

Jaren Serano joins the WEC master's program under the advisement of Dr. Ray Carthy. Jaren attended a field trip to a biological field station in southern Belize. Although wildlife ecology and conservation has always been a deeply embedded passion of his, this field trip further ignited his passion when Jaren saw how enthusiastic the staff were for the flora and fauna around them. That was when it dawned on him that his calling in life is to help protect and preserve the biodiversity around us.



Photo courtesy of Jaren Serano

Welcome to WEC, continued...

Jaren decided to go to graduate school because he wanted to play a key role in protecting the natural resources of his home country, Belize, as well as helping to further encourage stewardship and awareness in the eyes of many. The opportunity for graduate school presented itself when he first met Dr. Carthy in Belize at a biological field station where he worked for two years as a science and education fellow.

During Jaren's fellowship program, he assisted in the captive management of more than 300 critically-endangered Central American river turtles (*Dermatemys mawii*) maintained at the facility. While in Belize, Jaren gravitated to Dr. Carthy's mentorship. This propelled him to further his tertiary education and in May 2021, he earned his Bachelor of Science in sustainability from Jacksonville University. For his master's research, Jaren will examine how human interventions, such as beach nourishment, affects natural coastal processes and resilience. He will primarily examine how gas exchange relates to sea turtle nesting, dune building, and carbon sequestration. Five years from now he expects to be traveling internationally and assisting various nonprofits with projects aimed towards conserving wildlife and habitat restoration. Jaren believes the Earth is a space that we all share, and we all should feel some form of responsibility to help protect it.

Moving on...

8 WEC and SNRE students received summer 2020 degrees

WEC doctoral candidate **Boris Arevalo** successfully defended his thesis entitled "Nesting ecology and habitat selection of Scarlet Macaws (*Ara macao cynoptera*) in Belize," and received his PhD. Boris will continue to work with Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD), a Belizean NGO that co-manages the single largest protected area in Belize, the Chiquibul National Park, with the Belizean government. He will continue to conduct research in the Chiquibul to further understand how legal and illegal anthropogenic activities are impacting the ecological integrity of the area. His main line of work will be to understand how poaching is affecting target wildlife species such as the scarlet macaw, jaguar, peccaries, and the Baird's Tapir. Boris was advised by Dr. Eric Hellgren.

Moving on, continued...

WEC degree candidate **Charles “Tyler” Buckley** successfully completed his MS project and received his MS degree. Tyler was advised by Dr. Raoul Boughton.

SNRE degree candidate **Natalie Claunch** successfully completed her PhD project and received her PhD degree. Natalie was advised by Dr. Christina Romagosa.

SNRE degree candidate **Jack Oliver Hartfelder** successfully completed his MS project and received his MS degree. Jack was advised by Dr. Bob McCleery

SNRE degree candidate **Brandon Merriell** successfully defended his thesis entitled “Demography and Population Dynamics of the Florida Panther: An Integrated Population Modeling Approach.” David will be starting his PhD next month in environmental and life sciences at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario where he’ll be studying the population dynamics of Canadian caribou herds. Brandon was advised by Madan Oli.

SNRE MS student **Mel Moreno** successfully defended her thesis entitled “Big Changes in the Big Bend: A data management and shoreline analysis study.” She plans to continue working full-time in her current position as an App Developer at UF's CTS-IT department for the College of Medicine. She also plans on getting another master’s degree in either computer science, math or statistics (non-thesis). She plans to take many short and safe vacations in the next few months before applying for another master’s program. Mel was advised by Dr. Bill Pine.

WEC PhD student **Mahi Puri** successfully completed her dissertation entitled “Prioritizing and identifying opportunities for carnivore conservation in human-dominated landscapes of India,” and received her PhD.

WEC degree candidate **Katrina Rossos** successfully completed her MS project and received her MS degree. Katrina was advised by Dr. Ray Carthy.

Milestones...

WEC doctoral student **Alex Potash** (WEC MS '16) advanced to candidacy this summer. His dissertation proposal is entitled "Indirect Impact of Predation Risk on Ecosystem Process in a Longleaf Pine Savanna." Alex is advised by Dr. Bob McCleery.

Steven Longmire (WEC BS '18) started at the Whitney Lab as a lab/project manager on an acoustic telemetry project in the Guana-Tolomato-Matanzas rivers.

Other news...



Congratulations to **Claire Williams** on her recent retirement from the University of Florida Wildlife Ecology and Conservation department. At WEC, Claire was the Academic Services Coordinator who would oversee undergraduate and graduate admissions, undergraduate and graduate student services, WEC undergraduate recruitment, transfer admissions, undergraduate advising and related student services, course scheduling, course/instructor evaluations and final grade collection. Claire was a great asset to our department and helpful to everyone she met. Claire joined WEC in 2002 and has contributed to the success of hundreds of students over the past 19 years. She was thorough, diligent, and passionate about her work. She will be deeply missed within WEC and we wish her the very best for her future endeavors.

Other news...



Kelley Graff joins the University of Florida Wildlife Ecology and Conservation department as the new WEC academic advisor! Ms. Graff is the former graduate academic advisor for the University of South Florida (June 2016-May 2021) before joining WEC in May 2021. Ms. Graff's roles include WEC undergraduate recruitment, transfer admissions, undergraduate advising and related student services, course scheduling, course/instructor evaluations and final grade collection. Ms. Graff obtained her bachelor's degree at the University of Florida in 1987 in Criminal Justice. She then pursued her master's degree at the University of South Florida, where she graduated in 2016 with a Master of Education in College Student Affairs.

Dr. Bridget Baker joins WEC as a Research Assistant Professor with teaching duties. Dr. Baker has a background in wildlife ecology and veterinary medicine, which has enabled her to work with a diversity of species, from tarantulas to tigers, but her main interest is aquatic animal health and conservation as well as One Health. After earning her BS (wildlife ecology) at the University of Wisconsin – Madison with an internship at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, she worked for Ventana Wildlife Society on the California Condor Recovery Project and at the Big Sur Ornithology Lab, a MAPS station.



*Dr. Baker paddling in the backwaters of the Mississippi River with her dog, Ginger. **Photo courtesy of Dr. Bridget Baker***

Other news...

Dr. Baker then studied sea otter foraging, physiological, and population ecology throughout mainland California, as well as the Channel, Aleutian, and Commander Islands, while working primarily for the University of California - Santa Cruz and U.S. Geological Survey. She also rehabilitated stranded sea otters at Monterey Bay Aquarium. Subsequently, she returned to UW-Madison to earn both her MS (comparative bioscience), investigating opioid analgesics in red-eared sliders, and her DVM with externships at Vancouver Aquarium, Milwaukee County Zoo, and Toledo Zoo. As a post-doctoral fellow at the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, she developed a method for aging Northern sea otters in Washington State to assist with demographic studies.



After completing a Special Species clinical internship at the UW – Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, she was the first fisheries veterinarian at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, where she performed disease and die-off investigations, and studied the seroprevalence of viral hemorrhagic septicemia in sport and game fish throughout the state. Most recently, she was at Wayne State University, where she coordinated field research in emerging contaminants in fish in the Great Lakes, as well as transdisciplinary collaborations for the Center for Leadership in Environmental Awareness and Research and the science agenda for the One Health Initiative. She has served as a member of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission – Fish Health Committee, Detroit Zoological Society's Science Committee and Animal Health External Review Panel, WSU's President's Standing Committee on Environmental Initiatives, and various Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees.

*Dr. Baker collecting morphometric and health data from an immobilized Northern sea otter on Bering Island (Russia) with Dr. Mike Murray from Monterey Bay Aquarium. **Photo courtesy of Dr. Bridget Baker***

About this issue...

This issue of the WEC Spotlight was edited and produced by Maddie Magrino and Katrina Rossos.

The next issue will be produced and released in November. Please send entries by October 15 to ivette.hernandez@ufl.edu

Want to promote your new research, field work, internship, or alumni news on WEC's social media platforms? Please send submissions to mmagrino@ufl.edu

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