



Stony Brook University

College of Arts and Sciences




Department of Ecology and Evolution

Newsletter, Fall 2020

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Greetings from the Department of [Ecology and Evolution](#)! I hope this finds you and yours well during these challenging times. I'm happy to share some good news from our Department, our students and our faculty.

This fall we welcome three new faculty members to campus:

- Assistant Professor [Dr. Rafael D'Andrea](#)'s research examines the mechanisms behind species coexistence, with a strong emphasis on theoretical models. He often targets high-diversity ecosystems, such as tropical forests, seeking to understand the forces that maintain biodiversity. 
- Assistant Professor [Dr. Tara Smiley](#) is an evolutionary ecologist focused on how climate and landscape history shape the diversity, biogeography, and ecological structure of mammalian faunas across multiple spatio-temporal scales. Her research examines the fossil record of small mammals during the Cenozoic in parallel with investigations of modern and historical populations. She will work closely with Stony Brook's [Turkana Basin Institute](#). 
- Research Assistant Professor [Dr. Pascal Title](#) is an evolutionary macroecologist who integrates geographic distributions, phylogenies and trait data to better understand global diversity patterns. His interests include large-scale patterns of diversity, diversification methods, species distribution modeling, and species responses to climate change. 

During the current pandemic, we are teaching all of our E&E courses remotely and much of our research has moved towards computational approaches, but we have maintained some of our field research programs. Our faculty continue to gain international recognition for their research programs.

- Associate Professor Dr. Krishna Veeramah received funding from the European Research Council to investigate the history of ancient migration and mobility in the Carpathian Basin. More than \$2 million will be allocated to Dr. Veeramah's lab, which will lead the genome sequencing, bioinformatics, and population genetic analysis as part of a team of international scientists.

- Professor [Dr. Heather Lynch](#) was named as a [2020-2021 Leshner Leadership Institute Public Engagement Fellow in the field of Artificial Intelligence](#) by the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Center for Public Engagement with Science and Technology.
- Associate Professor [Dr. Joshua Rest](#) was recognized for developing tools and methods for genetically transforming a single-celled marine fungus-like organism known as *Aurantiochytrium limacinum*, with funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.
- Professor [Dr. Liliانا Dávalos](#) received funding from the National Science Foundation to investigate why some bat species seem to carry coronaviruses but are rarely affected by them. Professor Dávalos is also part of the Bat1K project, which recently published the [genomes of six widely divergent bat species](#), revealing the genetic basis of immunity and other adaptations.
- In July, Research Assistant Professor [Dr. Gena Sbeglia](#) was awarded a 2020-2021 Presidential Mini-Grant for Departmental Initiative. The project will focus on developing a measure capable of quantifying the extent to which instructors “see” inclusive practices in classroom settings.
- In August, Professor [Dr. Ross Nehm](#) received a National Science Foundation grant for a Research Coordination Network on evolution acceptance with colleagues at multiple institutions.

Our graduate students have continued their own research programs during this challenging year. Our [Student Profiles](#) webpage will help you learn about work done by Alyssa Liguori, Alex Borowicz, Anna Thonis, Anna McPherran, Allison Rugila and Alexis Brown.

This year, we are participating in Stony Brook's Giving Day on October 8, 2020. We are seeking contributions to the Ecology and Evolution Award for Student Excellence. This fund is our most flexible, and can provide much needed support for our graduate students. 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 and the George Williams Fund for Student Research. You can find a [full list of E&E's giving opportunities here](#). I hope you'll consider making a gift today or on Giving Day; you may also speak with [Hodan Hassan](#), Assistant Dean for Development, at 631.632.4055.

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! You can also follow our posts on [Twitter \(@sbuEcoEvo\)](#) and [Facebook](#).

Best regards,

Bob Thacker
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