

# Notes from the Field

January 2008

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Ecology Intercollege Graduate Degree Program spring 2008 seminar series:

## Issues in Sustainable Resource Use

[www.huck.psu.edu/education/ecology/events/upcoming-seminars](http://www.huck.psu.edu/education/ecology/events/upcoming-seminars)

### Getting to know the flora of the Appalachian Region



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Hiking boots and microscopes. Those were some of the tools a group of students found indispensable last May, when they participated in the ecology program's class "Spring Flora of the Central Appalachian Region."

The course was born out of brainstorming sessions between ecology faculty Dave Mortensen and Andy Cole, and grad student Andrea Nord. Carl Keener, retired biology professor and PSU herbarium curator, also agreed to be part of the instructor team. The class was offered for the first time in August 2006 with a focus on fall-flowering species, and was such a success that it was offered again in May 2007.

The emphasis of the class is on gaining familiarity with the local flora as well as learning to use technical botanical keys. To accomplish this we take an entire week outside the normal class schedule for some intensive botanizing. A typical

day begins with Carl Keener leading a laboratory session to help us work through some unknown specimens with the keys, learning the vocabulary and identifying diagnostic plant structures. After a couple hours spent honing these skills we stash the dissecting scopes and pile into the vans for a field expedition. At Rothrock State Forest, Bear Meadows, Fisherman's Paradise, Millbrook Marsh, and other sites we learn to recognize the more common local plants, as well as get a feel for the plant communities of the various ecosystems.

The course has attracted students from a number of different programs, including ecology, entomology, geography, biology, and landscape architecture. This interdisciplinary setting has proven a real strength of the course, allowing us to benefit from such a variety of backgrounds and experiences. A landscape architect student has insight into the history and design of Fisherman's Paradise, while in Rothrock State Forest an entomology student fills us in on the latest hemlock wooly adelgid news. The team of instructors with a diversity of specialties rounds out the experiences. Andy Cole leads the wetland trips, while Dave Mortensen specializes in weeds and invasives. Carl Keener's career of formal taxonomy and encyclopedic knowledge of the local flora are an invaluable resource.

The fall version of the course will be offered again this year: August 13, 14, 15, 18 and 19. It's a one-credit course with the option of an independent project worked throughout the fall semester for a second credit, so it will be listed as a fall class. Come join us, build your fieldwork skills, get to know the local flora...and don't forget your hiking boots!

**Andrea Nord, graduate student, Ecology**  
[ann102@psu.edu](mailto:ann102@psu.edu)

# Penn State Focus The Nation

Thursday, January 31, 2008, 9:00-5:00,  
HUB Auditorium.



*“Focus the Nation is organizing a national teach-in on global warming solutions for America—creating a dialogue at over a thousand colleges, universities, high schools, middle schools, places of worship, civic organizations and businesses, and directly engaging millions of students and citizens with the nation’s decision-makers. Focus the Nation will culminate January 31st, 2008 in simultaneous educational symposia held across the country. The intent is to move America beyond fatalism to a determination to face up to this civilizational challenge, the challenge of our generation”*  
<http://www.focusthenation.org/index.php>

Students and faculty at Penn State, including JB Moon, Ken Tamminga, Denice Wardrop and others from the Ecology Program have put together an excellent program of talks as part of the Focus The Nation’s national “teach-in”.

We encourage every to attend for all or part of the day on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup>, it promises to be an interesting event.

Further information can be found at the *Penn State Focus The Nation* website  
<http://pennstatefocusthenation.org/>

## Schedule:

900-945: Opening Remarks

**Jeremy Cohen**, Professor of Media Studies, Associate Vice President, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education  
**Adam Rome**, Associate Professor of History: History of environmental movements

945-1100: Climate Science

**Elizabeth Crisfield**, Presenter in Al Gore’s The Climate Project: Climate change fundamentals  
**Robert Crane**, Professor of Geography, Director of AESEDA: Multi-scale climate modeling  
**Lee Kump**, Professor of Geosciences: Climate change in Earth history

1115-1230: Climate Impacts

**Brent Yarnal**, Professor of Geography, Director of CIRA: Natural hazards and vulnerability assessment  
**Petra Tschakert**, Assistant Professor of Geography: Rural livelihoods and sustainability  
**Denice Wardrop**, Associate Director of Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center: Ecosystem fitness

1230-1: Intermission/Film Screening

*Water: past & present*. A documentary by the children of the Himalayas. Produced by The Mountain Project:  
**Christopher Hoadley**, Associate Professor of Instructional Systems and Information Sciences & Technology;  
**Sameer Honwad**; and **Ken Tamminga**, Professor of Landscape Architecture.

1-215: IPCC Panel

**William Easterling**, Professor of Geography, Dean of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Coordinating Lead Author of IPCC AR4 WGII (Chapter 5): Climate change impacts on agriculture  
**Klaus Keller**, Assistant Professor of Geosciences, Contributing Author of IPCC AR4 WGII (Chapter 19): Abrupt climate change and climate-economy modelling  
**Anne Thompson**, Professor of Meteorology, Contributing Author of IPCC AR1 WGI: Atmospheric chemistry and global change

230-345: Global Solutions

**Fan Zhang**, Assistant Professor of Energy Policy and Economics: Market-based climate policy  
**James McCarthy**, Associate Professor of Geography: Political ecology and environmental governance  
**Nancy Tuana**, Professor of Philosophy, Director of the Rock Ethics Institute: Ethical dimensions of climate change

400-500: Local Solutions

**Andy Lau**, Associate Professor of Engineering: Sustainable design  
**Dorothy Blair**, Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Science, Technology, and Society: Sustainable food choices

*For more information contact Seth Baum at [sbaum@psu.edu](mailto:sbaum@psu.edu).*