



# Notes from the Field

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## Ecology Recruitment Weekend A Success

~Andy Wilson and Joe Dauer, PhD students in Ecology

The Ecology Program had a busy but very successful graduate recruitment weekend on February 17th-18th. No less than 15 prospective students visited Penn State, mainly from the northeast and Midwest. Several other students could not visit that weekend but will be making independent visits over the next few weeks. It's good to see that the program is generating lots of interest!

Most of the prospective students arrived mid afternoon on the Friday for a brief introduction and orientation, led by Jenny, Mary, Dave and a handful of current students. The prospective students then had the opportunity to visit with professors across campus to discuss their work and research interests. Friday evening was given over to socializing, many of the students were keen to meet at the bar before going to the Days Inn for the buffet reception in the evening. The reception was hosted jointly with the Biology department, who had an additional nine prospective students. It was great to see such a good turn out of both of current graduate students and faculty, ensuring that the prospective students each had the opportunity to meet with and talk to several people. The evening carried on in a more informal manner in Mad Mex, where it was good to see that some of the prospective students showed the potential to bring sociability as well as lots of academic potential to the program!

The good times continued on Saturday and it appeared that a few prospectives had definitely enjoyed the hospitality the night before. After a quick breakfast and a few encouraging words from Dave, Jenny, and Mary, a few veterans took the students on a tour of campus, braving the brisk morning air and passing flurries. After the students met with potential advisors it was time for some relaxation. The potluck lunch at Dave's gave the prospective students time to chat and get answers to any lingering questions. Lunch was followed by a nice walk in Rothrock forest where the cold weather could not dampen the enjoyment for the 20+ students and faculty.



Thanks to everyone, staff and students, who contributed to making this a very successful weekend. We have no doubt that the students went away with a very favorable impression of the program and look forward to seeing many of them again as newly enrolled students.

## Road trip! Our Scranton Adventure

~Randa Jabbour, PhD student in Entomology

On cold, windy February 10, Zeynep Sezen, Laura Pomeroy, and I piled into a Fleet vehicle to travel to PSU Worthington-Scranton. We had snacks (pretzels, animal crackers), music (Nat King Cole, Porcupine Tree), and our flash drives – ready for anything. The Ecology grad students at University Park have worked together with Professor Dale Holen at Worthington-Scranton to organize a graduate student seminar series. Four students visited in 2005, and we kicked off the 2006 series.

With the help of Dale's flawless directions (do NOT take the Dunmore/Drinker exit), we arrived to the school safely. We immediately noted the smallness of the campus, as well as the ability to park in the parking lot next to the building, rather than a mile away. We toured the Biology teaching facilities and then the entire

campus. Everyone was so nice and took the time to stop and chat with us about their work!

We gave our research seminars to a mix of faculty from several departments and undergraduate students. Afterwards, we spoke with interested undergraduates about the graduate school experience. We even tried to recruit a few to work in our labs for the summer or when they move to University Park. We finished our visit with a wonderful lunch with the Biology faculty members. We were eager to talk to them about their experiences as faculty members at a smaller, teaching-oriented school. Overall, it was a valuable opportunity for us to discuss our research, interact with undergraduate students, and learn about possibilities for our future.

### Ecograd Selected as Gates Cambridge Scholar



Tiffany Bogich, M.S. student in Ecology, is one of a handful of scholars to garner a Gates Cambridge scholarship, a fixture among elite academic honors since the program began in 2001. She is one of two students selected from

Penn State University and only 40 students nationwide.

The Gates Cambridge scholarship was established by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to enable outstanding young men and women from outside the United Kingdom to study as graduate students at the University of Cambridge. The program's trustees award scholarships on the basis of a person's capacity for leadership, intellectual ability and their desire to use their knowledge to contribute to the well-being of society.

Tiff has combined her love of ecology and mathematics to proactively address current environmental concerns. Since fall 2003, she has been working with Ecology faculty Kat Shea, examining the costs and benefits of two types of activities that are used to control gypsy moth invasions through mathematical modeling. Since millions of dollars go into trying to slow or stop the spread of the gypsy moth each year, she is trying to determine if there might be a better way to allocate resources in order to detect new colonies when they are smaller and cost less to eradicate. In addition, Tiff has investigated ways to apply management strategies to best reduce population size.

She currently is the senior adviser of the Penn State Chapter of Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, for which she previously served as regional chairperson, secretary and president. In addition, she is a student representative on the national executive board of Phi Eta

Sigma. She also is a member and past treasurer and vice commodore of the Penn State Sailing Club.

Tiffany has been recognized with a number of scholarly honors, including national awards such as the Morris K. Udall Scholarship, the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and the EPA STAR Fellowship.

Tiff hopes to earn a Ph.D. in the area of quantitative ecology and would like to be involved in developing new mathematical models to answer questions of optimization and decision making in conservation and natural resource management. She will start at Cambridge in October.

~ article adapted from Penn State Live

### Ecograd Receives Biology Outstanding Student Award

The Biology Department recently gave special recognition to Matt Ferrari for his accomplishments. Matt has one paper published, another accepted pending revision, and another with resubmission encouraged after revision. All are in very good to excellent journals. He has a co-authorship (a "side project") in press, other papers near completion, and has been invited to submit a review article to yet another very good journal. In addition, he has given eight presentations, including two invited talks during his 4 years in our program. As a result, Matt Ferrari is receiving The Outstanding Graduate Student Award in the Department of Biology for 2006 which includes an award of \$2,000. Matt just successfully defended his PhD thesis.



*Prospective and current Ecology students and faculty brave the cold to enjoy the scenery at Shingletown Gap.*

**We are always looking for news and stories! Please send submissions for the next newsletter to Angie Luis (ADL12@psu.edu)**