MEMO

TO: Wisconsin Ecology community

FROM: Claudio Gratton, 2011-12 Chair, Wisconsin Ecology
      Don Waller, 2012-13 Chair, Wisconsin Ecology
      Steve Carpenter, 2010-11 Chair, Wisconsin Ecology

DATE: June 18, 2012


Wisconsin Ecology had another active and successful year, and we are pleased to share with you a summary of our activities and accomplishments, as well as a preview of events for the coming academic year. As always, we greatly appreciate the ongoing support provided by the Nelson Institute and other units on campus.

The primary goals of Wisconsin Ecology are (1) to promote interaction among ecologists at UW-Madison, in order to foster research, instruction and outreach, and (2) to provide a gateway to ecology on campus both within and outside the university. Consistent with these goals, and evident from this report, there has been active participation by faculty, students and postdocs from all across the campus. Among the highlights of this year’s Wisconsin Ecology activities were two successful symposia; several social gatherings; a faculty dinner focused on the future of Wisconsin Ecology in terms of curriculum and the relationship with the Nelson Institute; and some activities specific to graduate students. The Nelson Institute provides administrative support staff, and all other participants are volunteers. Operating funds are provided by the Nelson Institute, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, various departments and centers on campus, and through applications made to the University Lectures Committee and Student Activities Funds.

Planning for next year is underway and we look forward to continuing to partner with you to foster an excellent and vibrant ecology community on our campus.
I. Participation At A Glance, 2011-2012

Executive Committee Members
Dr. Steve Carpenter, Center for Limnology/Zoology, Past Chair
Dr. Claudio Gratton, Entomology, Chair
Dr. Don Waller, Botany, Curriculum Committee Chair and Chair-Elect
Dr. Ankur Desai, Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences, Communications Chair
Dr. Tony Goldberg, Pathobiological Sciences, Member-at-Large
Dr. Katherine (Trina) McMahon, Civil & Environmental Engineering, Member-at-Large
Dr. Erika Marin-Spiotta, Geography, Member-at-Large
Dr. Jack Williams, Geography, Activities Chair
Jamin Dreyer, PhD Candidate, Entomology, Graduate Committee Representative
Phil Hahn, PhD Candidate, Zoology, Graduate Committee Representative
Alison Coulson, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, Wisconsin Ecology Program Coordinator

Graduate Committee Members
Jamin Dreyer, Entomology, Co-Chair
Phil Hahn, Zoology, Co-Chair
Bryan Althouse, Limnology
Kathryn Anderson, Community and Environmental Sociology
Tavis Anderson, Pathobiological Sciences (School of Veterinary Medicine)
Emily Atkinson, Geography
Peggy Boone, Anthropology
Jim Doherty, Botany
Meghan Fitzgerald, Zoology
Sagan Friant, Nelson Institute
Gosia Golub, Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences
Phil Hahn, Zoology, Co-Chair
Max Henschell, Forest & Wildlife Ecology
Ben Kraemer, Zoology
Ben Linzmeier, Geology
Christina Locke, Forest & Wildlife Ecology
Rachel Mallinger, Entomology
Jesse Miller, Zoology
Grace Nguyen, Sociology
Mallika Nocco, Soil Science
Axel O. Ramirez Madera, Horticulture
Amanda Raster, Horticulture
Brendan Reid, Forest & Wildlife Ecology
Kaitlin Rienzo-Stack, Entomology
Autumn Sabo, Forest & Wildlife Ecology
Anna Seidl, Plant Pathology
Xuan Shi, Civil & Environmental Engineering
John Sourbeer, Economics
Lisa Wasko DeVetter, Horticulture
Lindsay Wells, Plant Pathology
Sam Zipper, Agronomy
Number of Affiliated Faculty: 72

Listserv Size: 579

Departments Represented
- Agricultural & Applied Economics
- Agronomy
- Anthropology
- Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences
- Bacteriology
- Botany
- Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Community and Environmental Sociology
- Economics
- Entomology
- Forest and Wildlife Ecology
- Geography
- Geology & Geophysics
- History
- History of Science
- Horticulture
- Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
- Soil Science
- Statistics
- Veterinary Medicine
- Zoology

Affiliated Research Centers
- UW Arboretum
- Center for Biology Education
- Center for Climatic Research
- Center for Culture, History and Environment
- Center for Limnology
- Center for Restoration Ecology
- Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE)
- Environmental Remote Sensing Center
- Land Tenure Center
- Primate Research Center
II. COMMUNICATIONS, 2011-2012

Website and Weekly Email Update
After three years of planning, Wisconsin Ecology launched its website in December 2010. The site addresses a long-standing need for ecologists at UW-Madison to become visible and transparent to prospective graduate students as well as others off-campus. The Communications Committee improved coordination between website content and the weekly email. We are excited to have a better platform for connecting current and prospective students with ecology-related faculty and resources at UW and have plans for continued improvement.

Ecology Weekly Email Update
In 2009, the PA started sending weekly digests of ecology-related events and opportunities in order to streamline communication to the growing Wisconsin Ecology listserv. Last year, the listserv expanded to include job offerings, new ecology-based course listings, upcoming conference and symposia information and general announcements that are valuable to the ecology community both on campus and in our extended community. The weekly email is a valuable tool for keeping the group informed and maintaining an organized communication schedule, both valuable for nurturing continued engagement among our constituency. This year, the content in the email was streamlined to make it easier for subscribers to scan the range of information available on the website. Readers can click links of interest in the email to be directed to the full entry on the website. Many members of Wisconsin Ecology have commented enthusiastically about the increased professionalism and predictability in communications, and they are finding them useful.

Election
Elections for members of the executive committee for the next academic year were held on 15 June 2012. Dr. Tony Goldberg (Pathobiological Sciences/Veterinary School) was selected as Chair-elect (to be Chair 2013-2014 academic year) and Drs. Ellen Damschen (Zoology), Peter McIntyre (Zoology) and Jon Pauli (Forest and Wildlife Ecology) were elected as member-at-large for two year terms by WE faculty members.

Jamin Dreyer (PhD Candidate, Entomology) will be rotating off as Graduate Committee Co-Chair on July 1. James Doherty (PhD Candidate, Botany) will begin his two year term as Co-Chair at that time.

Appointed positions for 2012-13: Dr. Erika Marin-Spiotta (Geography) will be the Curriculum chair, Ankur Desai (AOS) will be the Communications committee chair until the spring and will be succeeded by Mutlu Ozdogan (F&WE); Dr. Jack Williams (Geography, NIES) will finish his term as Activities chair and will be succeed by Dr. Chris Kucharik (Agronomy).
### III. Wisconsin Ecology Activities, 2011-2012

**Calendar at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Fall Ecology Social</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fall Symposium</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Graduate Co-Chair Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Executive Committee Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Spring Symposium Planning Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Graduate Student Ecology Research Presentations and Social</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Ecology End-of-Semester Social</td>
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<td>January</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Co-Chair Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Executive Committee Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Job Fair Planning Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Faculty Dinner</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Undergraduate Job Fair</td>
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<td>March</td>
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<td>Graduate Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>Graduate Committee Spring Symposium Planning Meeting</td>
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<td>28-29</td>
<td>Spring Symposium</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Co-Chair Meeting</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Executive Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>Graduate Committee Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>End-of-Semester Ecology Social</td>
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<td>July</td>
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<td>Transition to new Executive Committee members</td>
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17th Annual Fall Ecology Symposium
On October 6th, 2011, Wisconsin Ecology held its 17th annual campus-wide Fall Ecology Symposium featuring Dr. Elinor Ostrom, Distinguished Professor, Arthur F. Bentley Professor of Political Science, and Senior Research Director of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, Bloomington; and Founding Director, Center for the Study of Institutional Diversity, Arizona State University. Dr. Ostrom is a resource economist who received the 2009 Prize in honor of Alfred Nobel for Economic Sciences. Her lecture, *Polycentric Institutions to Cope with Ecological and Social Diversity*, drew in members of the scientific community from across campus. Following her talk, she joined a panel of four affiliate faculty members of Wisconsin Ecology for a discussion surrounding how pools of users manage natural resources as common property.

The Hilldale Fund provided generous financial support for the symposium including honorarium, travel, venue costs and meals. The event drew over 300 attendees. During her visit, Dr. Ostrom visited with students, participated in a lively lunch discussion with about 25 ecology students and met with a group of students from Agriculture and Applied Economics. She also met with several faculty and post docs.

This event is annually organized and hosted by Wisconsin Ecology faculty and is typically a 2-day event that includes a series of research presentations from faculty members. This year, the symposium itself was only one day, with a lecture and panel discussion. In lieu of a faculty dinner with the speaker, there was a reception for Dr. Ostrom the evening before her lecture. It provided an excellent opportunity for faculty and students to mingle with the keynote speaker and may be a good model moving forward.

15th Annual Spring Ecology Symposium
On March 28-29, 2012, Wisconsin Ecology held its 15th annual Spring Ecology Symposium featuring Dr. David Jablonski from the University of Chicago as the distinguished speaker. Dr. Jablonski presented two public lectures on his research on the ecology and biogeography of the origin of major novelties and the evolutionary role of mass extinctions. Additionally, five graduate students presented their research on the second day of the event, and 11 graduate students participated in a poster session that was on display for most of the two-day event. Presenting at this event is an important opportunity for M.S. and Ph.D. students who are near completion of their ecological research. Several small group meetings with faculty, staff and students from various departments were scheduled during his visit, including two dinners and a lunch with Wisconsin Ecology graduate students.

Six departments co-sponsored the event, and the University Lectures Committee provided generous financial support. Over 230 faculty, staff, students and community members attended over the two days (we recorded 162 attendees on the first day and 68 on the second day).

This annual event is organized and hosted entirely by the Graduate Committee, and in complement to the Fall Ecology Symposia, the Spring Symposia feature graduate student research presentations.
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Undergraduate Ecology Job Fair
For the fifth year in a row, the Graduate Committee organized a summer job fair for undergraduates seeking research experience, which took place on February 29, 2012. The main focus of the fair is to match young ecologists with lab and field positions offered through UW-Madison research labs and community ecology-related organizations. The opportunity to gain research and lab experience is important for students considering careers or research in ecology. This event is Wisconsin Ecology’s primary opportunity to engage with the undergraduate population at UW. It provides an efficient way for campus faculty and graduate students to recruit talented undergraduates, and for the undergraduates to learn about the myriad opportunities available for paid positions or volunteer internships.

Over 100 students attended the 4-hour event, and 16 employers hosted tables. This event is annually sponsored by the Ecological Society of America’s SEEDS program and this year was also supported by the Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment.

CROSS-CAMPUS NETWORKING

Faculty Dinner
Wisconsin Ecology sponsors a dinner for ecology faculty across campus each winter, typically in late February or March. These dinners provide networking opportunities and a valuable means for new faculty to meet ecologists from many departments. The agenda typically focuses on a product that benefits from the synergies of many perspectives (e.g., cluster hire proposal, strategic planning) or a current topic of broad interest. This year’s Faculty Dinner was held on February 23 at Steenbock’s on Orchard. The event included a discussion led by Dr. Claudio Gratton about the future of Wisconsin Ecology and the ongoing relationship with the Nelson Institute. Dr. Don Waller also gave a brief update on the status of the application for an Ecology certificate. Twenty faculty members participated.

Ecology Socials for Grad Students and Postdocs
The Graduate Committee facilitated and organized a fall research gathering. It was a valuable opportunity for students to meet and learn about new research on campus as well as possible opportunities for collaboration; it is also a means to reach out to postdocs on campus, who can fall through the proverbial cracks with respect to campus networks. Approximately 35 students and postdocs attended. These events are announced through our listserv and various departmental listservs and numerous flyers are also posted throughout ecology-related departments on campus. They also hosted 3 additional socials during the academic year for all ecologists on campus (faculty, postdocs and students). All socials were well attended and provided useful networking opportunities.
IV. PREVIEW OF GOALS AND ACTIVITIES FOR 2012-2013

COMMUNICATIONS

Website and Weekly Update: The Communications Committee will continue its work in the upcoming year to focus on the primary purposes of the website and further push development in those directions. The website will be moved to the Nelson Institute server over the summer, which will include an updated look and feel to boost the use of the logo and branding. It will also incorporate rotating news and events features on the home page. This move will result in improved functionality and increased ease of maintenance.

CURRICULUM

Graduate Study in Ecology: The curriculum committee will be focusing on several goals:
(1) We are preparing a submission to the Graduate School for a proposed graduate certificate in ecology. Discussions across campus reveal strong support for this new graduate certificate. The major objections to the certificate so far have come from those who feel that we need instead a graduate degree in ecology. The certificate seems like a feasible step for the short term, even if subsequent discussions lead to a future graduate degree in ecology. (2) We are putting in place administrative pieces for the graduate certificate, including who will manage students and admissions to the certificate, as well as which departmental unit will be in charge. In addition, (3) we are exploring options and the structure of a potential new Undergraduate Ecology track for the new Biology major at the campus level.

ACTIVITIES

18th Annual Fall Ecology Symposium: The 2012 Fall Ecology Symposium will feature Dr. David Schimel, Chief Science Officer and Principal Investigator of the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) and will be held on 20-21 September 2012.

15th Annual Spring Ecology Symposium: Next year’s Spring Symposium will be on 18-19 April 2013 featuring Dr. Margaret Palmer, Director, National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center, University of Maryland.

Undergraduate Job Fair: We are planning to hold the job fair again and to continue building upon it in terms of attendance and employers represented. It will be held in late February or early March, as usual.

Graduate Recruitment: This coming year, we will work closely with member graduate programs that recruit students with ecological interests. We are already working to coordinate the spring recruitment weekend with Zoology and Entomology and other member departments to ensure strong WE student and faculty participation at these events.
Ecology Research Gatherings: We will again coordinate and promote 2-5 Fall and Spring Gatherings for students to present their research in an informal setting and have an opportunity to mingle with students from other departments and across campus.

Faculty Dinner: The annual faculty dinner will be held during winter.

NEON: WE is planning on become a member of NEON, the new NSF-funded National Ecological Observatory Network. We are exploring ways to fund the annual membership dues and how to best coordinate information flow from NEON to WE members.