Spotlights

Rutgers University’s Cook Campus is buzzing with the news of a recent $750,000 U.S. EPA grant that will fund important and innovative research about biodiversity and West Nile Virus. Read more.

Each summer, for the past three summers, David Tulloch (Landscape Architecture) has been leading Rutgers alumni in a tour highlighting the landscape architecture of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. You can read more about it in his blog, Places and Spaces.

The New Brunswick 4-H club, part of the 4-H Youth Development Program of Middlesex County, is moving onto the G. H. Cook Campus. New Brunswick 4-H Club will use the trailers on College Farm Road as a base for club meetings, leader training sessions, advisory council meetings, and New Brunswick 4-H events. An ongoing relationship has been established with the Lazos America Unida organization and the Marigold Project at Rutgers University, which currently provides adult programming in the areas of food, nutrition, health, and gardening for New Brunswick’s Latino community. The New Brunswick club has been established in response to expressed interest from Lazos members. Approximately 15 to 20 adults from the Latino community have been trained to serve as volunteer 4-H leaders with additional training sessions planned. New Brunswick 4-H aims to

- Develop sustainable, positive youth development programming for New Brunswick youth
- Enhance the ongoing connection between Latino community organizations and Rutgers University
- Develop a model for a successful Latino 4-H club program that can be replicated in other Latino communities throughout the country
- Provide opportunities for Rutgers undergraduate and graduate students to teach and learn from the Latino community in New Brunswick

Summertime Fun with Rutgers NJAES 4-H Youth Development!

4-H youth at the Lindley G. Cook 4-H Youth Center for Outdoor Education. Photo courtesy of Brian Dougan.

Union County 4-H Archery Club Members prepare to shoot their bows. Photo courtesy of Ellen DiIorio.
The Passaic County 4-H Youth Development Program and St. Paul’s CityServe Program teamed up on a service-learning program titled CityServe. Fifty youth from Passaic County devoted 5 weeks of their summer vacation to serving their community. 4-H was able to provide the CityServe staff with training on youth development, service-learning, and the 4-H Get Moving Get Healthy program.

Children from the Union County 4-H Gardening Club at the King’s Daughters Day school in Plainfield remove a shrub to make way for a new garden. Photo courtesy of James Nichnadowicz.

New Faculty Appointments and Hires

After serving as director of the Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment since October 2001, Gerben Zylstra has stepped down as of June 30. Zylstra has been active in all aspects of the center’s programs from building infrastructure to research, teaching, outreach, and international exchange programs. Zylstra founded and managed the biorobotics lab, the DNA sequencing core facility, the biotech equipment shared facility, and the Foran Hall computer classroom. Zylstra also encouraged a major increase in international research collaboration, participating in research projects in central Asia, Brazil, South Korea, and the European Union while continuing his own research program with major federal support and more than 60 publications in the last seven years.

He has been a member of the Rutgers Graduate School Executive Committee since 2006, served on the self-study committee for the Middle States Reaccreditation, and served as faculty advisor to the Designer Genes club since 2005. Zylstra is taking a year’s leave before resuming his regular teaching and research responsibilities as a member of the center and the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology.

Professor Eric Lam (Plant Biology and Pathology) has been appointed to serve as director of the center during a transition period of two years, during which time an international search is planned to recruit a new director for the center. Lam will focus on opportunities to expand the center’s mission and promote greater interactions with the university community with input from center faculty and school leadership.
Faculty appointments and start dates

Cardasis, Dean  Professor I  Landscape  7/1/08
Cirignano, Sherri  Cty Agent III  FCHS  2/1/08
Fefferman, Nina  Asst. Prof  EENR  9/1/08
Jin, Yanhong  Asst. Prof.  DAFRE  9/1/08
Kohut, Joshua  Asst. Prof.  Marine & Coastal  1/1/08
McDonnell, Janice  Cty Agent II  4-H Youth Development  8/1/08
Molnar, Thomas  Asst. Rsch. Prof.  Plant Biology & Pathology  7/1/08
Myers, Phillipa  Cty Agent III  4-H Youth Development  5/1/08
Shwom, Rachael  Asst. Prof.  Human Ecology  1/1/09
Wang, Changlu  Asst. Ext. Prof.  Entomology  9/1/08
Werner, Francisco  Professor  Marine & Coastal  6/2/08
Winfree, Rachael  Asst. Prof.  Entomology  7/1/08
Zimmerman, Tim  Asst. Prof.  Marine & Coastal  9/1/08

Chair appointments
Animal Sciences  Carol Bagnell
Biotech Center  Eric Lam
DAFRE  Ramu Govindasamy
Human Ecology  Acting Chair – Tom Rudel

Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

Gerben Zylstra (Biochemistry & Microbiology) traveled to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan August 9–21 as part of his NIH-funded FIRCA grant to work with Kyrgyz colleagues and the Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment’s NIH-funded ICBG project in central Asia. In Kazakhstan, he met with research collaborators and discussed the status and direction of the microbiology portion of the ICBG project. Zylstra returned to the United States with actinomycete cultures isolated by the Kazakh scientists for further work on identification and utility of the microorganisms. Zylstra also met with the new director of the Kazakh Institute of Microbiology and Virology. In Kyrgyzstan, Zylstra visited the Kyrgyz Turkish International University and spent four days with a collaborator, collecting soil in the Issyk-Kul region for microbial analysis at Rutgers.

On August 9, the Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment’s high school internship program, organized by Gerben Zylstra, came to a close with a symposium where each of the 12 students gave a presentation on his or her work. This internship program stems from a collaboration between the Monmouth County Biotechnology High School and Zylstra, who is on the High School Advisory Board. The high school students spent five weeks working in the laboratories of center faculty Carol Bagnell, Max Häggblom, Michael Lawton, Tom Leustek, Nilgun Tumer, Lily Young, and Gerben Zylstra. In addition to the students from Monmouth County, Lawton hosted a high school student from the Pingry School in Bernards Township.
The Center for Turfgrass Science has been selected as the recipient of New Jersey Golf Course Owners Association’s President’s Award for 2008. The New Jersey Golf Course Owners Association represents over 75 golf courses in the state and is an affiliate of the National Golf Course Owners Association, which represents thousands of golf courses across the nation. The President’s Award is given annually to “the individual or organization that has contributed greatly to the game and business of golf in the New Jersey.” The center was selected for its “many contributions to the game, industry, and science of golf” and will be recognized at the association’s annual golf outing and meeting in October at the Fiddler’s Elbow Country Club.

John Dighton (Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources) and Walt Bien (Drexel) were interviewed for the NJ Network radio program Sounds of Science (airing Aug. 26 at 7 p.m., Aug 28 at 10 p.m., Aug. 30 at 3:30 p.m., and Aug. 31 at 9.30 p.m.). They discussed the nature of the Pinelands and some of the research Rutgers/Drexel is doing. The program can be found at www.njn.net/radio/programs/soundsofscience.html.

George McGhee (Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources) has been elected as a member of the Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research, Altenberg, Austria, by vote of the General Assembly of the KLI.

Tony Broccoli (Environmental Sciences) was quoted by The New York Times in news article titled “Tropical Warming Tied to Flooding Rains.” He was also interviewed by NJ101.5 WKXW radio (Trenton, NJ) about the latest seasonal hurricane forecast and the effects of climate on hurricanes.

Alan Robock (Environmental Sciences) was quoted in the following articles: “Can we engineer a cooler earth?” in the Christian Science Monitor and “Wildfires may briefly slow Arctic warming, study says” in National Geographic News.

Joseph V. Florentine (Greenhouse Operations and Planning) has been named the chair of the Association of Education and Research Greenhouse Curators (AERGC), an organization composed primarily of university, botanical garden, and industry greenhouse managers. The organization serves to bring together greenhouse management professionals from all over the globe by sharing information and resources through an annual meeting, quarterly newsletter, and email forum. Florentine will be serving as chair for two years.

William Hallman (Human Ecology; Food Policy Institute) is quoted in a BusinessWeek article titled “How Whole Is Whole Grain?”

Tom Rudel (Human Ecology) won the 2008 Outstanding Publication Award from the Environment and Technology section of the American Sociological Association for his book Tropical Forests: Regional Paths of Destruction and Regeneration in the Late Twentieth Century (Columbia, 2005).

Peter Rona (Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences) is quoted in the July 28 issue of Nature News in an article titled “Scientists to Dive to the Bottom of World’s Deepest Lake.”
Gef Flimlin (Marine Extension agent for Monmouth, Ocean and Atlantic Counties) was honored on June 9 at the Jersey Shore Partnership’s Summer Celebration on Sandy Hook. Flimlin received the Seafood Industry Award for his 30 years of work with commercial fisheries and aquaculture in the state of New Jersey. His program, the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program, won this honor two years ago.

The following Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension faculty and staff received awards at the National Association of County Agricultural Agents’ 93rd Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference, held July 13–17 in Greensboro, NC: Robert Mickel; Stephen Komar; William Hlubik; Laura Bovitz; Richard Weidman; Abbie Kesely; M. Bickerton; J. Baculis; J. Ochoa-Alvarez; Nicholas Polanin; George Hamilton; Mark Vodak; Richard Weidman; Daniel Kluchinski; Everett Chamberlain; Raymond Samulis; Mary Cummings; Michelle Infante-Casella; Jerome Frecon; William Bamka; Peter Nitzsche; Gef Flimlin; Wes Kline; Madeline Flahive DiNardo; and Brian Oleksak.

Nicholi Vorsa (Plant Biology and Pathology, Marucci Blueberry-Cranberry Research Center) has received a patent award from the Research and Development Council of New Jersey for his most recent cranberry patent. The Office of Corporate Liaison and Technology Transfer nominated Vorsa for the award.

**Student Activities and Accomplishments**

*Paul Loikith* (graduate program in Atmospheric Science) gave a talk to a Girl Scout troop at the Plainsboro Municipal Building on August 9. There were roughly 50 people in attendance for an Environmental Awareness fair coordinated by a girl scout for her Gold Award project.

(Photo: Paul Loikith)

*Wes Brooks* (graduate program in Ecology and Evolution) received the Florida Native Plant Society’s Conservation Grant Award ($2,500) for his proposal titled: “Establishing an Experimental Hammock Community in South Florida.”

*Ryan Burrows* (graduate program in Ecology and Evolution) was invited to give a lecture at the North American Amphibian Conference held on June 7 in Erving, Massachusetts. The title was “Impacts of development on vernal pool ecology and salamander behavior.”

*Charles Hofer* and *Lea Johnson* (both in the graduate program in Ecology and Evolution) received Eagleton Fellowships.

*Amy Karpati* (graduate program in Ecology and Evolution) was awarded $1,500 by the NJ Mycological Association from the Ray Fatto Scholarship fund.
Alison Seigel (graduate program in Ecology and Evolution) gave an invited presentation at the Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership (RPWHP) meeting on May 13 in Princeton, NJ, titled “Hayfield management for the grasshopper sparrow in the RPWHP study area.”

Ai Wen (graduate program in Ecology and Evolution) gave an invited talk at the annual meeting of the Firman E. Bear Chapter of Soil and Water Conservation Society on May 30. The talk’s title was “Seedbank: The time machine to peer into the past and the future of abandoned farmlands.”

The following Ecology and Evolution graduate students were awarded Special Study and Pre-Dissertation Awards from the GSNB:
- Ryan Burrows received $1,000 for his proposal to study “Conservation of the critically endangered Mountain Chicken frog, Leptodactylus fallax, of Dominica: Assessing ecological parameters of habitat use for re-introduction and translocation experiments.”
- Maria Stanko received $900 as a Special Study Award to attend the Bee Conference, an intensive 9-day course on bee taxonomy and biology offered in Portal, AZ by the American Museum of Natural History.
- Holly Vuong received $1,000 to extend her pilot project on examining the genetic diversity of Borrelia burgdorferi in the populations of New York.

The following Ecology and Evolution graduate students were awarded E&E Academic Excellence Fund Awards of $1,000 each:
- Wes Brooks - Investigating the potential of community controls on the invasibility of rockland hammock seedling layers.
- Jean Deo - Assessing the impacts of acid precipitation on migratory songbird reproduction and immune response.
- Kenneth Elgersma - Garlic mustard alters forest community composition through indirect effects in its native and invasive range.
- Inga La Puma - Model validation for the landscape disturbance and succession model: LANDIS-II.
- Holly Vuong - An examination of the genetic diversity of Borrelia burgdorferi in tick populations of upstate New York.

Four students were awarded $1,500 each from Hutcheson Memorial Forest for studies located there. Students who receive summer research support from HMF must help with the annual Buell-Small Succession study. This long-term, old-field sampling has been conducted every summer since 1958. For more information on this study visit the website: http://www.ecostudies.org/bss/ The students and their projects are:
- David LaPuma - Continued study of avian diversity and distribution across a successional gradient at the Hutcheson Memorial Forest.
- Ben Baiser - Mapping territories of breeding birds at Hutcheson Memorial Forest.
- Kenneth Elgersma - Indirect effects of garlic mustard (Alliaria petiolata) on forest community composition.
- Maria Stanko - Networks of pollination interactions between plants and animals in an invaded community.
Kirsten W. Corda (graduate student, Nutritional Sciences) was presented with a Student Research Award at the Society for Nutrition Education’s 41st Annual Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in July. The award was given for a study that assessed NJ Food Stamp program participants’ level of access to and usage of the internet.

Sarah Kelsey (undergraduate, Plant Biology and Pathology), Sasha Eisenman (graduate program in Plant Biology), and Lena Struwe have been presented with an award for best poster presentation in historical botany by the Botanical Society of America. The research in the poster is largely based on collections in the Chrysler Herbarium.

Grants and Gifts

For a list of grants received, please visit http://execdeanagriculture.rutgers.edu/message/.

Publications and Editorships

Lou Cooperhouse (Food Innovation Center) and Tom Orton (extension specialist, Plant Biology and Pathology) are the authors of “Breaking the Perishable Products Paradigm: Hurdle Technology Solutions from Field to Fork,” which is the cover story in the current edition of Food Safety Magazine. Don Schaffner (Food Science) and Wes Kline (Agricultural & Resource Management agent) reviewed the article, and photos taken by Jack Rabin (NJAES) were used to illustrate the article.

Michael Tchinkindas (Food Science) has been named the first editor-in-chief of a new journal, Probiotics and Antimicrobial Proteins. The journal will be published by Springer.


Conferences, Seminars, and Other Events

Joanne Kinsey (Atlantic County FCHS educator) was an invited guest lecturer at Penn State’s Workforce Education’s Special Topics meeting. She gave a presentation titled “Preparing Students for the Workplace, and Using Blogs, Wikis and Podcasts in the FCS Program.”

Tony Broccoli (Environmental Sciences) was an invited speaker at the Fourth National Integrity in Science Conference, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, D.C., in July. His presentation was entitled “Climate change: What we know and don’t know.”

Brian Schilling (Food Policy Institute) and Barbara O’Neill (specialist in Financial Resource Management) were an invited panelists at the Stop & Shop Affordable Food Summit in Madison, New Jersey. The panel was chaired by Senator Tom Kean, Jr., and focused on the causes and
impacts of rapidly rising food prices, as well as strategies for consumers to mitigate their impacts. Schilling was interviewed by NJ News 12 and 101.5 radio.

On July 18, Malcolm Watford (Nutritional Sciences) chaired two oral sessions, “Pathophysiology of diabetes” and “Mouse phenotyping and non-viral gene therapy” at the 2008 Meeting of the Center for Animal Biotechnology and Gene Therapy, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain.

John Worobey (Nutritional Sciences) gave a presentation titled “Maternal behaviors that predict infant weight gain in the first year” at Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference in Washington, D.C., on June 23. His talk was part of a symposium organized and chaired by Harriet S. Worobey (Nutritional Sciences), titled “Overweight in at-risk youngsters: Where are we and where are we going?”

Michael Lawton (Plant Biology and Pathology, Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment) attended the Pan-American Congress on Plants and Bioenergy, in Mérida, Mexico, June 22–25. He met there with colleagues from the University of São Paulo (USP) to plan and coordinate activities in biofuels and to focus on areas that can benefit from joint research activities. This meeting was helpful in defining the agenda of upcoming workshops on cellulosic ethanol and biofuels that will include participants from Rutgers, USP, and The Ohio State University.

Mark Your Calendars!

A Taste of Jersey Fresh: Annual Open House and Tomato Tasting
WHEN: Wednesday, August 27, 3:00 p.m.
WHERE: Snyder Farm, 140 Locust Grove Rd., Pittstown, NJ
Fee: $5 fee, free kids 10 & under
WHAT: A farm open house and research tour. The event will include opportunities to taste approximately 80 varieties of tomatoes suitable for New Jersey farms and gardens, along with a sampling of other farm grown produce. Rutgers NJAES faculty, staff, and Master Gardener volunteers will be available throughout the event to answer gardening questions.

Grand Opening of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences Endocrine Research Building and 1st Annual Endocrine Research Showcase
WHEN: September 8, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
WHERE: Endocrine Research Building, 67 Poultry Lane, G. H. Cook Campus
WHAT: This event will showcase important research in endocrinology currently ongoing in New Jersey and other parts of the country.

Rutgers Gardens Gala
WHEN: September 13, 5 to 9 p.m.
WHERE: Rutgers Gardens
WHAT: 2nd annual garden Gala in honor of the Garden Club of New Jersey. The Garden Club will be presented with the “DOC” award—Dedication and Outstanding Commitment to the Rutgers Gardens. A silent auction featuring unusual plants and other garden-related items and raffle tickets for gift baskets of donated items will also be available. The funds from the Gala will go toward day-to-day operations and will help with the costs of expansion construction.

MORE INFO: www.rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/2007GardenGala.htm

Campus Community Day
WHEN: September 25
WHERE: Skelley Field
WHAT: A celebration of the Cook-Douglass Campus communities.

The Annual Conference of the Community Food Security Coalition: Restoring Our Urban & Rural Communities with Healthy Food
WHEN: October 4–8
WHERE: Crowne Plaza, Cherry Hill
WHAT: Eleven concurrent tracks on issues such as local food systems, community food security, urban agriculture, and food business incubation. In addition, there will be 12 field trips on Saturday and Sunday before the conference.

MORE INFO: foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/2008CFSCConferenceBrochure.pdf

Food Innovation Center Incubator Facility Grand Opening
WHEN: October 17, 10 a.m.
WHERE: 450 East Broad Street (Route 49), Bridgeton
WHAT: The event will include presentations from federal, state and local dignitaries who have made this momentous occasion possible, and will be followed by a ribbon cutting and guided tours of our new facility. Attendance for this event is anticipated to be significant; please RSVP if you plan to attend by completing the form at http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/ficrsvp.asp.

WHEN: February 12–13, 2009
WHERE: Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus
MORE INFO: Contact Mark Nelder (vbccenter@rci.rutgers.edu) or visit www.rci.rutgers.edu/~vbccenter/atmsymposium.php.

Please send contributions, photos, and questions to Amanda Kolling, kolling@aesop.rutgers.edu. Photos must be of high resolution and should add to the editorial value of a submission. Issues of the Dean’s Monthly Message are published on the last Monday of each month. Deadline for submissions is one week prior to publication.