

# ECOLOGY NEWS

Fall 2024  
Vol. 1, Issue 1

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## Important Academic Dates:

Sept. 20—Grad student fall graduation application due  
Oct. 1—Undergrad spring graduation application due  
Oct. 21—Spring registration begins  
Nov. 13—Last day to drop with a “W”  
Dec. 9-12—Finals week  
Dec. 13—Fall commencement

## Department Event Dates:

Sept. 28—Ducky Race  
Oct. 24—Grad Scholarship Banquet

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Dr. Diane Debinski

## Letter from the Department Head

Welcome to the Fall semester! MSU Ecology continues to be one of the largest and most popular departments in the College of Letters and Science, with just under 600 undergraduates and ~50 graduate students.

During the summer, we offered a broad variety of courses for our undergraduates, including a study abroad course to Tanzania, field courses in Yellowstone Wildlife Ecology, Field Ornithology, Alpine Ecology, and Human Impacts on Soil, Plants, and Water in the Western US, and an online version of General Ecology. Meanwhile, our graduate students were conducting research or analyzing data related to projects in a wide array of locations from Africa, Antarctica, Iceland, and the Pacific Islands to places closer to home such as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Glacier National Park, and the prairies of eastern Montana.

This fall we have an exciting seminar series lined up for Thursday afternoons. In addition, for graduate students, we look forward to the annual Ducky Race on Sept. 28th and Graduate Scholarship Banquet on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>. For undergraduates, we will be starting a new “Coffee Hour” series where students can meet with faculty and staff to learn about internships, undergraduate research, and graduate school.

Lewis Hall celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday last year and also got a new roof. We had hoped for an elevator as a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday gift, but that project is at least in the planning phase. This year construction will be underway for a “Fish Pod”, a hazardous materials storage container to house alcohol-based museum specimens, increasing safety for both people and specimens. We were saddened by the passing of Dr. Robert Moore, emeritus faculty member, in July. A new Sacajawea Audubon scholarship has been set up in his name. We look forward to welcoming Dr. Sarah Bassing, an Applied Quantitative Ecologist who will start her position as a faculty member in January, 2025.

As usual, there is a lot going on. We have a talented group of faculty, staff, and students who regularly impress me with their commitment to teaching, research, outreach, and service. I hope to see you in Lewis Hall.

## New Faces in the Department

### **Madalyn Eglan** **Academic Services Coordinator**

Madalyn started in March and quickly proved herself as an excellent addition to the department. Madalyn previously worked as a project manager for an IT company while also teaching first year and technical writing courses at Boise State College. She still continues as an adjunct instructor of technical writing at MSU in addition to her Ecology job. She also spent over 3 years as a technical director, editor, and photographer with local news stations both here and in Boise. It was a volunteer job at ZooBoise (see picture at right) where she worked directly with students and visitors on conservation-focused programs that developed her interest in ecology. Madalyn is a lifelong lover of books and enjoys all genres. Her current favorite author is Erika Fatland.



### **Lorri Nielsen** **Program Mgr.—MT Coop. Fishery Research Unit**

Lorri is our new program manager in the MT Coop Fisheries Research Unit. Previously, Lorri worked as a program manager in MSU’s Animal Resource Center for 12 years. It was during that time that she realized how much she enjoyed working with grad students. Indeed, she lists that as her favorite part of this current position. When asked to share something about herself that others would not know, Lorri confessed to being an avid sports fan. She loves the Green Bay Packers, and, additionally, has followed thoroughbred horse racing since she was young! Lorri also loves to fish when she can—we think she’s in the right place!

## **Welcome to Our New Grad Students:**

| <b><u>STUDENT</u></b> | <b><u>DEGREE PROGRAM</u></b>            | <b><u>ADVISOR</u></b> |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Benny Bevil           | M.S., Fish & Wildlife Management        | Tim Cline             |
| Jesse Boulerice       | Ph.D., Fish & Wildlife Biology          | Justine Becker        |
| Kelson Hickman        | M.S., Fish & Wildlife Management        | Chris Guy             |
| Nicholas Hudson       | Ph.D., Fish & Wildlife Biology          | Tim Cline             |
| Michael Lant          | Ph.D, Fish & Wildlife Biology           | Al Zale               |
| Samuel Larkin         | M.S., Biological Sciences               | Wyatt Cross           |
| Elizabeth Osterhoudt  | Ph.D., Ecology & Environmental Sciences | Ethan Linck           |
| Max Rubino            | Ph.D., Fish & Wildlife Biology          | Al Zale               |
| Jayden Skelly         | M.S., Biological Sciences               | Justine Becker        |
| Noah Starling         | M.S., Fish & Wildlife Management        | Justine Becker        |
| Allison Sutcliffe     | M.S., Biological Sciences               | Wyatt Cross           |
| Ben Weber             | M.S., Fish & Wildlife Management        | Tim Cline             |

## **Time to Get Quacking For the 15th Annual Rubber Ducky Race Saturday, September 28**



**Join us for the 15th Annual Rubber Ducky Race to meet and greet new graduate students.  
After the race, we'll have pizza, and beverages, and play 6 innings of "duckball."**

**Start shopping for your winning duck now! The winner will receive a coveted prize and a significant confidence boost.**

**Bogert Park  
3-9 pm**



# What I did over the summer..

**Danielle Ulrich (Assistant Professor):** I received a \$1.2M NSF grant (with Co-PI Dr. Anna Schweiger in LRES) to develop the ability to broadly predict tree drought recovery and survival before drought onset by remotely measuring tree carbohydrate dynamics from leaf spectra. *(At left, raising a future ecologist while sailing at Flathead Lake for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.)*

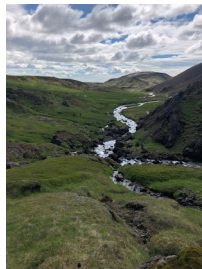


**From the Cross Lab:** Grad students, **Ally Sutcliffe, Sam Larkin, and Nate Heili** worked on a project aimed at understanding how climate warming interacts with hydrologic drought in streams.

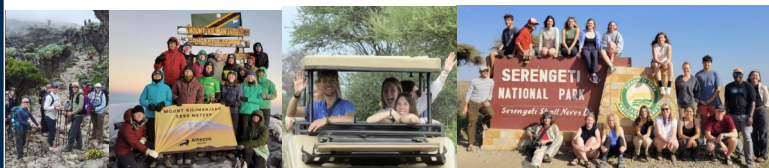


←  
*Inoculating artificial streams in England*

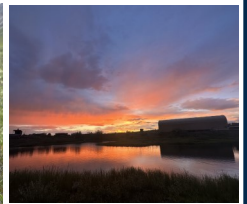
→  
*Choosing study sites in Iceland*



**Ecology students summit the highest peak in Africa (Submitted by Brian Smithers, Assistant Research & Teaching Professor:)** On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 17 students and their instructors, Dr. Brian Smithers and Dr. Israel Borokini had a class in possibly the most breathtaking (yet uncomfortable) classroom in the world: at almost 20,000 feet in elevation at sunrise on the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. The class was summiting Africa's highest peak as part of the course "Tanzania, Kilimanjaro, and the World's Biomes." In the second incarnation of the course after a successful course in Kenya in 2022, the course met this year for two weeks of intensive instruction in Bozeman about a variety of cultural, historical, and ecological topics concerning East Africa. This was followed by a 17-day trip to Tanzania. In addition to climbing Kilimanjaro over 6 days while studying the amazing plant diversity along a huge elevation gradient, the course traveled to Tarangire, Serengeti, Ngorongoro, and Lake Manyara National Parks to experience the amazing plants, birds, and mammals of East Africa. This included seeing the "Great Migration" in the Serengeti Plain where millions of wildebeest and zebra march towards the rains and the animals that like to eat them are close on their heels. In addition to studying and witnessing the amazing diversity of plants and animals that East Africa has to offer, students got a chance to visit a Maasai village, learn about Tanzanian culture from our guides, and to visit Tanzanian towns. It was an amazing experience!



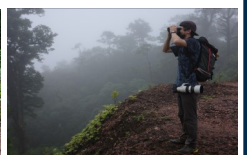
**Lizzy Osterhoudt (grad student in Ethan Linck's lab):** Over the summer, my highlight was working in the tundra north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska! I helped out as a field technician for a PhD student under my McNair Mentor, Cory Williams. I joined the Arctic Ground Squirrel Monitoring Project at the Toolik Field Station. I learned to trap, mark, and recapture squirrels. It was a super fun way to spend my summer—hiking the tundra and catching squirrels!



**Jayden Skelly (grad student, Justine Becker's Lab):** Over the summer I swapped the heat out for an even hotter location and worked in Amazonas State, Brazil on conservation and biogeography work at a remote research station with 4 others. For the second half of the summer I joined a team of collaborators from Yale, Rutgers, Universidade Federal do Amazonas, and the Field Museum on the Rio Negro river in Brazil as a finalist team member for a biodiversity monitoring competition. Over my time in Brazil, I saw many incredible bird and mammal species—one of my favorites being the Harpy Eagle (pictured).



**Assistant Professor Ethan Linck and new grad student Jason Gregg:** We spent most of July on the island of New Britain in Papua New Guinea, arranging permits for future fieldwork and conducting interviews with residents to understand how oil palm expansion has impacted local ecological knowledge. We also managed to spend 11 days working with Indigenous landowners to conduct bird surveys in the rarely visited Whiteman Range. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first ornithological fieldwork in the area since 1959, and we were lucky enough to document a range of rare species. Most exciting of these was a bird called the New Britain Thrush (*Zoothera talaseae*), which hadn't been definitively recorded since 1972. We managed to get the first-ever photos and videos of the species, which we hope will help local communities in their pursuit of formal conservation designation for a large forest in the Whitemans.





Thursdays 3:30-4:30

346 Leon Johnson Hall

Live talks will be held in **346 Leon Johnson Hall** unless otherwise noted. This is a preliminary listing. More dates and speakers may be added. Please check the website for the most current information:

[https://www.montana.edu/ecology/seminar\\_fall.html](https://www.montana.edu/ecology/seminar_fall.html)

| Date        | Seminar Details  |
|-------------|--|
| October 3   | <b>David Christianson, Ph.D.</b><br>Associate Professor, Departments of Ecosystem Science and Management, University of Wyoming  |
| October 17  | <b>Michael Quist, Ph.D.</b><br>Professor of Fisheries Management and Assistant Unit Leader, Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Idaho |
| October 31  | <b>Cecily Costello, Ph.D.</b><br>Biologist with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks  |
| November 7  | <b>Susan Adams, Ph.D.</b><br>Fisheries Research Scientist, U.S.F.S.  |
| November 21 | <b>Gabriella Pardee, Ph.D.</b>   |

## 2024 Graduate Scholarship Awards Banquet



**Thursday, October 24th**

**Alumni Foundation Great Room  
1501 S. 11th Avenue**

**6-9 pm**

**Tickets & 50/50 Raffle available  
for purchase in the office now!**