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Dr. Staria Vanderpool says goodbye to students, colleagues and friends

The following article was written by Dr. Staria Vanderpool who has left the Department of Biological Sciences to pursue other professional opportunities. She will continue to be associated to the Department as an adjunct faculty member.

We will miss you!

Life changes – even for botany faculty who seemed to be rooted in place. Over the summer I made the difficult decision to accept a position in Missouri and, in July, resigned from Arkansas State University and moved to central Missouri. It was a difficult decision. After so many years at ASU – as a graduate student, then as a professor in the biology department – it wasn't easy to leave familiar surroundings and move to a new state, a new university, and a new position. However, I had the opportunity to work on a research project at Lincoln University in Jefferson City. The faculty and staff at Lincoln have made me feel welcome and the challenges of my new job are invigorating. At present I am working on a Department of Defense project to assess fine-scale vegetation patterns in grasslands that have different types of land mines implanted. In addition, I am teaching a course in Plant Protection. Although I'm gone from ASU, I'm still connected to the people there, and I'll still be popping in and out. I am still involved in research projects with colleagues in biology, psychology, and teacher's education. My research with the Flora of Arkansas Project also continues, and the ASU herbarium has the best collection of plants from northeastern Arkansas. As President Elect of the Arkansas Native Plant Society, I'm committed to that organization for the near future, including planning for the Fall Field meeting at Mammoth Spring during the weekend of October 24 (we welcome new members and guests; see our website http://www.anps.org/).

Even though I have moved, ASU and my experiences there are never far removed and connections between ASU and my present location and position appear with amazing frequency. I've bumped into former students, who are working on research projects at Fort Leonard Wood, where my field sites are located. This past week one of the students in Plant Protection and I discovered that we had both spent the summer of 2008 at ASU in Jonesboro. She was in the RISE program, working in Dr. Lorence's lab in ABI. Because of our CSI project this summer, I hadn't worked with Dr. Lorence's students this year, although I usually did. The student said everyone kept telling her "you have to meet Dr. Vanderpool!", but we didn't meet until we both came to Lincoln University campus – where she ended up taking a class with me. She is excited about returning the ASU for graduate school and had such a positive experience there. Thanks to electronic mail, I'm still in touch with students, advisees, and colleagues, and I look forward to retaining those connections, and building new ones that link ASU with other institutions.

ASU Biology

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DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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The Biology Department goes International

Through a number of new initiatives the Department of Biological Sciences is internationalizing itself. From an instructional viewpoint we now offer a course in marine biology in Belize being taught by Dr. Richard Grippo and a field course on marine mammals in the Bahamas being taught by Dr. Aldemaro Romero. Dr. Tom Risch is developing a research project on bats in Belize and Dr. Malathi Srivatsan was an invited 'Distinguished Speaker' at the Fifth International Conference on Smart Materials, Structures and Systems held at The Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, India (see full story on page 2), while Dr. Romero, Dr. Stanley Trauth, two graduate students and one undergraduate student presented papers at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists that took place in Montreal, Canada, last August.

In addition to that, the Department now counts with six new international students: Jignesh Chandarana and Praneeth Kamana who will be working under Dr. Ronald Johnson, Xing Fu working under Dr. David F. Gilmore, Yiou Wang working under Dr. Anne A. Grippo, Amrit Shrestha working under Dr. Roger Buchanan, and Zhaojia Ci who will be supervised jointly by Drs. Martin Huss and Tanja McKay.

Finally, the front page of the Departmental website, in addition to English, can now be read in Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Swahili.

It is expected that these and other initiatives will help the Department to develop an international reputation as an academic unit that integrates excellence in teaching, research and service.

Dr. Jennifer Bouldin receives James Bailey Memorial Educator of the Year Award

Arkansas State University's Dr. Jennifer Bouldin, Director of ASU's Ecotoxicology Research Facility, is this year's recipient of the James Bailey Memorial Educator of the Year Award. This is a very significant accolade that honors not only Dr. Bouldin but our institution as well.

The James Bailey Memorial Educator of the Year Award was established by the Arkansas Water Environment Association in memory of James Bailey in recognition of his many years of devoted service to the people of the state of Arkansas, the Water Environment Federation, the Arkansas Water Environment Association, and the Arkansas Environmental Academy. James Bailey's professionalism and passion for the protection of the Natural State and the advancement of environmental education in the State of Arkansas set the standard for all other educators in the state.

This honor is awarded to an Arkansan who strives to inspire fellow Arkansans, young and old, with an enthusiasm and desire to protect the state's water environment, understand environmental issues, and further environmental education. Award criteria require that the recipient teaches in an accredited Arkansas high school or a two- or four-year college or university, and/or that he or she accepts a leadership role in guiding students and adults in water environment activities, and/or that he or she conducts public outreach activities with Arkansas leaders and with the public to further understanding of the state's water environment and environmental issues.

Dr. Bouldin has been an excellent teacher, receiving very high marks in her student evaluations. Her preparation and pedagogical delivery are outstanding. This is a highly deserved honor for her.

Congratulations!

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Manatee in Belize being studied by ASU faculty.

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Dr. Malathi Srivatsan gives presentations, receives honors in India

Dr. Malathi Srivatsan was an invited 'Distinguished Speaker' at the Fifth International Conference on Smart Materials, Structures and Systems held at The Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, India from July 24th to 26th. Her talk on "Nanomaterials for Differentiation, Growth and Repair in the Nervous System" on July 25th was very well received. Following her talk, she was interviewed for the science and technology section of a major Indian newspaper, The Indian Express on the application of nanotechnology in the field of Neuroscience.

Dr. Srivatsan was also invited to present a seminar on "Cholinergic Components in Neuroregeneration" on July 15th at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), a premier neuroscience research center in Bangalore, India. She held discussions with graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and faculty. During this visit Dr. Srivatsan identified key areas of research collaborations in neural plasticity with Dr. B.S. Shankaranarayana Rao, Associate Professor at NIMHANS.

Finally Dr. Srivatsan visited TASMAC (an education consultancy that represents ASU in their study abroad program in countries in South Asia) at Bangalore, India on July 31. She explained about the various undergraduate and graduate programs of study available at ASU with a special emphasis on Biological Sciences and Biotechnology. She answered questions on the application and admission processes. Some of the prospective international graduate students participated in the question-answer session via conference calls.

ASU faculty receive $2.3 million NSF grant for environmental, molecular biosciences

In June, Arkansas State University was awarded a grant of $2.3 million over the next 5 years by the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a proposal drafted by ASU faculty, "GK12: Environmental Sciences and Molecular Biosciences in the Natural State."

The proposal was drafted by professors Dr. Alan D. Christian (Associate Professor of Zoology), Dr. Anne Grippo (Associate Professor of Biology), Dr. Cynthia A. Miller (Center for Excellence in Education; Director, the Northeast Arkansas Delta Institute for Math and Science), Dr. James Tillman Kennon (Associate Professor of Science Education), and Dr. Robyn E. Hannigan (professor of geochemistry and environmental science; director, Environmental Sciences Graduate Program). Dr. Christian will serve as the GK12 program director.

The funds provided by this award will include support for the NSF Graduate Teaching Fellows in K-12 Education (GK-12) in accordance with NSF program 07-555. The grant will run through April 2009. The initial monies for the first year of the grant totaled $445,082, with the bulk of the grant being paid out through April 2009.

The focused theme of the program is "Land Use, Land Cover, and Biodiversity in the Mississippi Embayment." The theme was developed based on Environmental Sciences Graduate Program faculty research that addresses regional biodiversity across ecosystems and organisms.

The program places 8 doctoral-level NSF Graduate Teaching Fellows per year in five east Arkansas schools to teach 6th – 8th grade students lessons based on the Fellow's research and state and national standards.

The goals of the program are: 1) to improve Fellows' skills in communicating science to a broad audience while gaining a deeper understanding of their own research; 2) to improve or enhance teachers' knowledge and experience; 3) to pique students' interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and STEM careers while exposing students to an enriched STEM environment; and 4) to strengthen partnerships between ASU and school districts.

Biology Alum Aaron Owens promoted to Major in the U.S. Army

Aaron Owens, who completed his M.S. degree in Biology at ASU in the Spring of 2008 as a Captain in the U.S. Army has been promoted to Major. Mr. Owens is currently serving as a science instructor at West Point. There he teaches a total of four sections with 18 cadets each section. He loves his teaching job and the cadets are very motivated.

Congratulations!

Dr. Trauth honored by naming of *Eimeria trauthi*

Dr. Stan Trauth, Professor of Zoology, was recently honored by having a new species named after him. The June 2008 issue of the Journal of Parasitology published the description of a new species of intestinal parasite of marbled salamanders. The new species was given the scientific name of *Eimeria trauthi* by Dr. Chris McAllister of Chadron State College, Nebraska, and Dr. Steve Upton of Kansas State University. According to Drs. McAllister and Upton the specific epithet (second word in the scientific name) was given in honor of Dr. Trauth, in recognition of his numerous contributions to the understanding of the natural history and ecology of Arkansas amphibians and reptiles.

Eimeria trauthi belongs to a group of single-celled parasites called coccidia, which infect the intestinal tract of many different animals, including livestock, birds, and humans. Trauth, McAllister, and Upton have collaborated on the discovery and publication of about 20 new species of parasites found in amphibians and reptiles.

Dr. Ronald Johnson and Ms. Kimberly Marshall receive campus-wide accolades.

Dr. Ronald Johnson received one of the most prized accolades at ASU: The Outstanding Faculty Academic Advisor Award 2007-2008 and Ms. Kimberly Marshall received the ASU 2008 Distinguished Performance Award representing the Technical/ Para-Professional category.

Dr. Johnson has advised thousands students at Arkansas State University during the 17 years as a faculty member and is well regarded by both students and colleagues as both a person extremely knowledgeable and very accessible when it comes to the advising of students, both undergraduate and graduate. Ms. Marshall, Accountant Technician II, is well known on campus as highly knowledgeable and efficient. She manages the financial aspects of dozens of grants every year in addition to her duties as accountant for the entire Department of Biological Sciences

Congratulations to both of them.

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