

May 20, 2015

Dear E3B Family,

As the 2014-2015 academic year winds down, it's a good time to look back and reflect on the achievements of E3B students and faculty. Once again, there were many this year. Students continue to make great contributions with their research and other activities. We are happy to congratulate six E3B Ph.D. students who will have successfully defended their dissertations this academic year:

Meghna Agarwala's dissertation was titled, "Forest degradation and commerce in Central India: Evidence from ecology, remote sensing and political ecology" – Meghna is now a post-doctoral research fellow at Columbia University, continuing her work with Ruth DeFries.

Bene Bachelot's dissertation was titled, "The role of mycorrhizal fungi and natural enemy communities on seedling dynamics in a secondary tropical rainforest" – Bene will be moving to Duke to pursue a post-doctoral research fellowship with Dr. Charlotte Lee in the Biology Department.

Francine Kershaw's dissertation was titled, "The influence of ecological process on evolution of a highly migratory Baleen whale" – Francine has been named an NRDC Marine Mammal Science Fellow.

Bob Muscarella's dissertation was titled, "Functional and phylogenetic dimensions of tree diversity across environmental gradients in Puerto Rico: Insights to community assembly processes" – Bob is now an NSF Postdoctoral Research Fellow conducting research at two host institutions: Aarhus University in Denmark under the sponsorship of Dr. Jens-Christian Svenning and the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands under the sponsorship of Dr. Frans Bongers.

Vivian Valencia's dissertation was titled, "Ecological and social dimensions of tree diversity in coffee agroforestry systems" – Vivian is now awaiting official news of her next career step!

Rae Wynn-Grant's dissertation is titled, "The impacts of human activity on carnivore population persistence" – Rae has received two very important offers for post-graduate work. She was selected from among 7800 applicants (!) to receive a Presidential Management Fellowship in STEM (72 others received STEM fellowships). The Education Department at the American Museum of Natural History also offered her a post-doctoral position with half time research and half time teaching.

We applaud you on passing this milestone in your careers!

In addition, Ph.D. students received prestigious awards, among them:

Sarah Guindre-Parker was awarded an NSF DDIG grant.

Steve Wood will be based at Yale doing a NatureNet Post-doc Fellowship; he will be studying how soil organic matter connects to human nutrition.

Ph.D. students **Amrita Neelakantan, Ben Taylor, Nicole Thompson, Andrew Quebbeman**, and M.A. student **Natalie Hofmeister** presented at the recent Penn Princeton Rutgers Columbia conference.

Congratulations to the **thirteen Master's students** who are graduating:

Natalie Bray, Erin Dimech, Erin Eastwood, Natalie Hofmeister, Eleen Liao, Cynthia Malone, Molly McCargar, Amy McDermott, Kaggie Orrick, Allison Roth, Amanda Sigoun, Jess Stitt and Amy Wray.

Our students in the Master's program for Conservation Biology continue to excel: E3B M.A. student **Cynthia Malone** was awarded the Society of Woman Geographers Pruitt National Minority Fellowship.

Vijay Ramesh won the Mewaldt-King Student Research Award for 2015 from the Cooper Ornithological Society

Five of the graduating M.A. students are going on to get Ph.D.s (one at Idaho, one at Princeton, one at Oxford, and two at Cornell), others are in the running for prestigious policy internships or have landed jobs in places like the American Museum of Natural History.

Looking forward to the class of students who will be joining the department this Fall – four Ph.D. students and 14 M.A. students will be joining E3B!

Undergraduate Programs: There are 9 **Evolutionary Biology of the Human Species** students graduating this year (plus, an honorary EBHSer from Barnard who did her senior thesis with us). We have 8 majors and 2 concentrators graduating from the **Environmental Biology** program this academic year. One major and one concentrator graduated in Feb 2015, the rest will graduate this month.

Undergraduate Awards: Phi Beta Kappa inductees for this year have been announced and as a department we have three: **Caitlin Miller-EBHS; Alexandra DeCandia, Hannah Skolnik**, both of EB. The new **Dobzhansky Prize** is awarded to **Alexandra DeCandia** and **Caitlin Miller**. Congratulations to all of the graduating students and to their major advisors **Jill Shapiro** (EBHS) and **Matt Palmer** (EB)!

Jessica Gersony, E3B undergrad alum and Naeem lab member, has been awarded an NSF GRFP. Her proposal was titled "The influence of climate change induced vegetation shifts on arctic tundra fires". Jess will be entering the Ph.D. program in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard this Fall.

Post-doctoral fellow Jesse Lasky won the young investigator award from American Society of Naturalists, and will be starting a tenure track job in Biology at Penn State this Fall.

Our faculty has also made great strides in research and teaching.

Lecturer **Josh Drew** published a piece in *Integrative & Comparative Biology* entitled, “Using Technology to Expand the Classroom in Time, Space, and Diversity” -- a result of his invitation to present at a symposium at the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology.

Jill Shapiro happily relays that it's been a great year for the EBHS program. The "Crypts" group is nearly finished with the second phase of reconstructing the fragmentary human remains of the B2 collection from Peru and the student run bio-anthropology journal *Sapient* has just published its third issue. The students in this year's cohort are off to graduate school and to exciting research and work positions across the country and in the UK.

Matt Palmer is part of a team of scientists and educators that was awarded a three-year, \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to create a Curriculum and Community Enterprise focused on restoration science with the New York City Public schools. He will be working closely with three cohorts of public middle-school teachers and colleagues from Lamont, the New York Harbor Foundation, Pace University, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the New York Academy of Sciences, and others.

Duncan Menge has been awarded grants from the National Science Foundation and NOAA. The NSF grant is for a project titled, “Does a transition in nitrogen fixation strategy explain the latitudinal abundance distribution of Nitrogen-fixing trees?”

Krista McGuire published a paper in *Microbial Ecology* with former E3B undergraduate Heather D'Angelo (and several Barnard undergraduate students): McGuire, K.L., D'Angelo, H., et al. 2015. “Responses of soil fungi to logging and oil palm agriculture in Southeast Asian tropical forests”

Dustin Rubenstein received an NSF grant to convene a workshop this past summer in New York City to discuss New Frontiers for the Integrative Study of Animal Behavior. The 26 member working group resulted in an NSF white paper discussing the future of animal behavior research, an upcoming issue of *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* devoted to the topic, and two upcoming conference symposia in summer 2015 at the Animal Behavior Society meetings and winter 2016 at the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology meetings.

Maria Diuk-Wasser, our newest faculty member, had her research featured in the Columbia News [LINK](#). She just was awarded a grant from NIH (as co-PI), entitled 'Probing the natural genomic diversity of *Babesia microti*'.

Marina Cords was named an Alumnae Gallery Honoree by the Stuart Country Day School, Princeton, New Jersey.

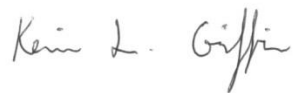
Ruth DeFries is one of the Faculty Winners of the 2015 President's Global Innovation Fund grants for her project titled, “*Collaborations for Developing the Science Base for Improved Air Quality in India*”. The purpose of the Fund is to support faculty who are developing projects that increase opportunities for research, teaching, and service around the world.

Don Melnick launched the first two Rainforest Standard Demonstration Projects in Indonesia (supported by USAID) and Brazil (supported by ICCO). He also published an op-ed in *The New York Times* on January 20, 2015. To read about carbon offsets as a tool for protecting tropical rainforests, please follow this [LINK](#)

Shahid Naeem (and **Ruth DeFries**) have been selected as two of "The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds 2014" based on the number of highly cited papers contributed during the period 2001 to 2012, and citations to them as per ISI Thomson Reuters.

Maria Uriarte has been selected as a 2015 Leopold Leadership Fellow. She is among the 20 mid-career academic environmental scientists named as Fellows this year. The group was selected through a highly competitive process on the basis of their exceptional scientific qualifications, demonstrated leadership ability, and strong interest in sharing their knowledge beyond traditional academic audiences.

As I complete my first year as chair I would like to thank all of you for your encouragement and support. I am particularly grateful to **Lourdes Gautier, Amy Kohn, Maria Estrada and Jae McFadden** for all the effort they put into making this a fun and productive place to work. E3B has a lot to be proud of and the work we do couldn't be more timely, relevant or important. The fact that we somehow manage to accomplish all of this in a friendly and fun atmosphere makes this a great department to be part of. Thanks again for terrific year and I look forward to our continued successes and accomplishments.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kevin L. Griffin". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline for the name "Griffin".