



School of Natural Resources Alumni Newsletter



From the Director's Desk

Another spring is upon us here in Nebraska and for me, two years in as director of SNR. We are in a very exciting and dynamic time in SNR and at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln overall. While many universities have been retrenching, we are in a period of expansion and increasing excellence.

SNR faculty and staff have just completed a year in which we saw the best granting in our history with over \$13 million. Our undergraduate majors continue to grow in student numbers and student quality. We began recruiting for our new applied climate science major and already there has been a scholarship donation to the program.

This year we also began a restructuring of the School to create a more streamlined management structure and a more unified face to the outside. We now have four mission areas embracing our diversity, including: climate science, geography and spatial science, environmental sciences (soil and water), and applied ecology. Each of these areas is now larger in faculty and staff numbers, but more of a critical mass. In addition, we are encouraging each of the areas to work closely with the others.

We are likely to see up to eight new faculty hired over the coming year to help support our programs and expansion in SNR. As some of you know, IANR has adopted a cluster approach to hiring around topical areas so new faculty might end up in one of several units. This experiment seems to be working, but there is also a recognition that core area hires are also important to

fulfill particular unit missions. One of the positions this year is also our first venture into faculty lines jointly funded with outside partners. We are in the process of hiring a wildlife human dimensions position, jointly funded by Nebraska Game and Parks Department.



John Carroll
Director

Finally, this year saw UNL undertake a retirement incentive program. Four of our valued and senior faculty, Trish Freeman, Ken Hubbard, Mark Kuzila, and Jim Brandle will be retiring in June. We wish them well and of course they leave very big shoes to fill. On a sad note, we recently lost longtime faculty member Jim Merchant after a short illness. For those of you who knew Jim, you will remember someone who loved SNR, geography, and students. He will be missed.

We hope to hear from you and please do not hesitate to offer suggestions on how we might keep SNR front and center in natural resources management in Nebraska and beyond.

A Note from Our Alumni Coordinator



Karen Jensen
Alumni Coordinator

SNR Alumni Newsletter - Spring 2015

Hello alumni and friends of SNR! 2015 is an exciting time for SNR. We have an opportunity to review where we have been and plan for where we would like to go as part of our academic program review. We say farewell to several longtime members of the SNR team.

I want you to feel a part of the team too! If you're in the area, stop by for events. Check out a calendar of upcoming events at <http://events.unl.edu/snr/upcoming/>. You can keep connected to us via the web as well. We have an SNR Alumni webpage at <http://go.unl.edu/snralumni>. There you can sign up to receive the weekly SNR newsletter, Inside SNR, and you can see what other interesting things are happening with our alumni.

Contact me at kjensen4@unl.edu if you would like to be more connected and involved with SNR. Whether it's staffing a booth at one of our outreach events or being a guest lecturer, there are plenty of ways to be active within SNR. We love hearing what our alumni are up to! Share your story so we can share it with the rest of the SNR community.

Atlas analyzes 2012 elections from geographical perspective

If there's one thing J. Clark Archer knows – and knows well – it's elections.

"I've been writing about elections for 35 years," said Archer, professor of geography. "Before I became a geographer, my undergraduate degree was in political science, so I had a little bit of background from that."

Archer's "Historical Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, 1788-2004" was named Best Single-Volume Reference in Humanities & Social Sciences for 2006 by the Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers, and was on the Library Journal's Best Reference List for 2006. His "Atlas of American Politics, 1960-2000" was named Choice Magazine's Outstanding Academic Title for 2003 by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

"Elections are an empirical researcher's dream because there's just an enormous amount of data, and the data become available fairly frequently," Archer said. "It's not quite as data-driven as, let's say, climatology. Election data tend to be obviously episodic – but there's a lot of it."

Archer's latest publication, "Atlas of the 2012 Elections," employs a geographical perspective to analyze virtually every aspect of the 2012 U.S. presidential election, in addition to selected state and local elections.

"I've been very interested in research that involves various kinds of quantitative methods and mapping," Archer said. "So some of the tools and techniques that I learned as a graduate student and developed later on, in terms of analysis, are very applicable to the geography of elections."

Archer and Robert H. Watrel, associate professor at South Dakota State University, produced most of the maps featured in the atlas, which is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter contains maps and accompanying narratives. Technical appendices describe the data sources along with cartographic and analytical procedures.

Of the atlas' 40 contributors, six earned doctoral degrees in geography from UNL.

"If I knew that they knew something about the subject, then they had a higher chance of being invited to contribute," Archer said.

The contributors provide a comprehensive and detailed assessment of many election issues and results including presidential primaries; newspaper endorsements and campaign stops; the results of the presidential election at regional and national levels; and key voting patterns by race and ethnicity, religion, occupational groups, age and poverty.

Moving beyond the national race, the atlas examines important senatorial and gubernatorial races and considers selected state referenda including the marijuana legalization votes in Colorado and Washington and same-sex marriage referenda in Maryland, Washington, Colorado and Minnesota. The voting patterns identified in 2012 elections are also compared to earlier contests to provide political and geographic context over time.



Clark Archer

"These things fit together pretty nicely because there's a lot of numerical data, a lot of locational and geographical patterns, and various kinds of statistics that can be applied to try and extract information," Archer said.

For instance, maps illustrating campaign stops of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates during the week leading up to Election Day indicate that key battleground states like Iowa, Florida and Ohio were fought over until the eleventh hour.

“Because an election is largely determined in states that could go one way or the other, states that are likely to be either very Republican or very Democratic – the candidates won’t visit them because they’re wasting resources,” Archer said. “The folks who guide these campaigns do some analyses that are somewhat similar to what we’ve done here. There seems to be a fair number of people who are interested in maps of elections.”

"Atlas of the 2012 Elections" is available for purchase from the Nebraska Maps and More Store on the first floor of Hardin Hall, 33rd and Holdrege streets. The book can also be purchased online at <http://go.unl.edu/izvj> and <http://amazon.com>. To place an order by phone, call 402-472-3471.

— *Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources*

Exhibit celebrates collection gifted to NU State Museum

On a crisp January afternoon, Trish Freeman and John Carroll traveled to Everett “Buzz” Madson’s home in Omaha where dozens of glass cases sat idle in a packed basement.

“We were astonished,” said Freeman, professor in UNL’s School of Natural Resources and head of the Biodiversity Laboratory of Zoology at the University of Nebraska State Museum.

The treasures behind the glass – long hidden from outsiders – were revealed.

“Immediately, we were blown away,” said Carroll, SNR director and professor. “They were absolutely beautiful.”



The glass cases held taxidermied game birds from virtually every corner of the globe, from the prairies of Nebraska to the Andes of South America to the woodlands of equatorial Africa.

“(Madson’s) basement was overflowing with ducks, geese, grouse, turkeys and quail,” Freeman said.

In all, Madson’s collection amounted to 163 individual game birds representing 103 species.

“Clearly, this collection was a force to be reckoned with,” Freeman said. “I have spent nearly 50 years among museums and natural history collections both small and large. Never before have I seen birds so beautifully and thoughtfully arranged in such natural, graceful poses and, importantly, protected from dust and damage to the feathers.”

Madson gifted his collection to the NU State Museum in honor of Paul Johnsgard, emeritus professor in the School of Biological Sciences, whom Madson had as a professor in zoology courses during his undergraduate years at UNL.

“Dr. Madson spent a lifetime collecting these specimens,” Carroll said. “We believe it will provide opportunities for our students and visitors to see just a small bit of the diversity of birds, and maybe spark an interest in bird biology and conservation.”

In March 2014, one semi-trailer truck delivered the birds from Madson’s Omaha home to Hardin Hall where they are currently on display.

The collection, now officially part of the NU State Museum’s Biodiversity Laboratory of Zoology, is on loan to the School of Natural Resources and is on public display throughout Hardin Hall.

“(Madson) has visited the building and I am not certain he had ever seen (the birds) displayed in a space as large as Hardin Hall,” Freeman said. “Faculty, staff, students and visitors notice them, enjoy them and are excited and delighted by them. It is my sincere hope that (Madson), his family, friends and any who are interested in the natural world and its beauty will enjoy this wonderful gift to the university – it is a magnificent sight.”

— *Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources*

Joeckel Named Nebraska State Geologist

Robert Matt Joeckel has been named Nebraska state geologist and associate director for conservation and survey in UNL's School of Natural Resources. He succeeds Mark Kuzila, who stepped down after 16 years of service in the position.

"(Joeckel) is an outstanding scientist with a long history of working on important issues in the state of Nebraska," said John Carroll, professor and director of UNL's School of Natural Resources. "I can think of no person who is better qualified."

The state geologist position is housed within the Conservation and Survey Division, a multidisciplinary research, service and data-collection organization in the School of Natural Resources.

"I am very appreciative of the opportunity afforded by the position," Joeckel said. "I have the opportunity to work with a great faculty and staff, and I will always feel fortunate to work for the university in my home state."

Joeckel joined the Conservation and Survey Division as a research geologist in 2000. He is curator of geology in the University of Nebraska State Museum and a fellow of the Geological Society of America. He has a doctorate in geology from the University of Iowa.

"(Joeckel) has contributed enormously to the museum as curator of geology, most recently with the new mineral exhibits he has created," said Priscilla Grew, director of the NU State Museum. "(He) will be an outstanding ambassador for our state."

Joeckel said many challenges await the Conservation and Survey Division, the greatest of which is further demonstrating the significance of a geological survey in Nebraska.

"CSD faculty and staff have valuable prior expertise in the petroleum, environmental, engineering consulting and mineral industries, as well as other experience in the public sector," Joeckel said. "All of us in CSD need to reassert the importance of earth-science data and expertise to a wide range of stakeholders within and outside of the university. A geological survey can make major contributions toward the resolution of the complex environmental and societal problems of the 21st century."

Investigating the geological framework of the High Plains Aquifer and the paleoenvironmental record within Nebraska's understudied ice age sedimentary record are among Joeckel's research priorities for his tenure as state geologist.



Matt Joeckel

"Nebraska's geologic record and physical environment have and will continue to provide important data relevant to the understanding of global environmental systems, changing environments through geologic time and the evolution of life on this planet,"

Joeckel said. "Some of our expertise also extends well beyond Nebraska and into the national and international realm. I take some pride in that expansiveness and I expect that we will build upon our very positive reputation."

In 1871, an ad hoc geological survey was established within the University of Nebraska. Since then, nine individuals have served in the state geologist position. The Conservation and Survey Division was formally established in 1921 by state statute.

"I love geology and I love Nebraska too," Joeckel said. "It's great to practice my profession in a place in which there is still so much important research and outreach left to do."

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Mekita Rivas, communications associate, School of Natural Resources, mrivas@unl.edu, 472-6515

Students experience summer wildlife in Botswana

Wake up and smell the wildlife.

That's what one group of UNL students did every day during a month-long education abroad program this summer at the Mashatu Game Reserve in Botswana.

"Most days we had a chance to sit and watch elephants," said Katie Ferris, a fisheries and wildlife major who graduated in August. "They are giants, and to be so close to them and observe how they interact is incredible."

Mingling with elephants was just one of the many wildlife encounters students had in Botswana.

"How many people can say that they got to touch a lion or a cheetah in its native habitat?" said Audra McCaslin, a senior fisheries and wildlife major.

For McCaslin, traveling to Botswana fulfilled a lifelong ambition.

"I've wanted to go to Africa since I was old enough for people to ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up," McCaslin said. "Other programs seemed touristy and less focused on fieldwork. I was drawn to this trip because of the opportunity to see what research is really like out in the field."

That's no accident.

John Carroll, professor and director of UNL's School of Natural Resources, organized and led the trip alongside doctoral student Andrei Snyman, who previously served as research director of the Mashatu Game Reserve.

Carroll has conducted research throughout the African continent since the early 1990s. Prior to coming to UNL, Carroll was a professor at the University of Georgia where he regularly took students to various parts of Africa. Four years ago, his focus shifted to Botswana.

"I moved my education abroad course from South Africa to the Mashatu Game Reserve to give us more flexibility in what we are able to do in the field and to allow us to start undertaking field research," Carroll said. "This year, we had the students help with a cheetah and several lion captures. Seeing the students have unforgettable experiences makes all of the planning worth it."

Those firsthand fieldwork experiences gave Jazmin Castillo a clearer picture of her professional future.

"Going to Botswana has made me more interested in the research field," said Castillo, a sophomore fisheries and wildlife major. "I had heard a little about graduate school but didn't know much. Dr. Carroll helped pique my interest in continuing my studies and taught me so much about what it takes to be a researcher in Africa."



Ferris said her interactions with people from different backgrounds provided her with guidance and inspiration for her postgraduate path.

"Based on their experiences and stories, I was able to get a better grasp of what I want to do in the next couple of years in my career," Ferris said. "I left Botswana having more direction and more mentors to help me get where I want to go."

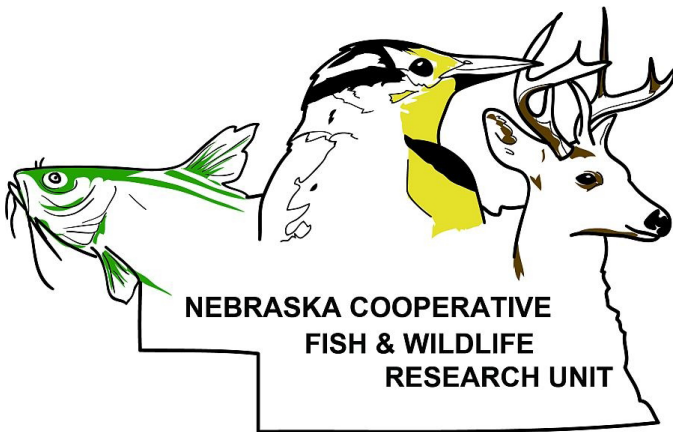
For Carroll, that's what education abroad is all about.

"I have been doing the course for a long time and over the years I regularly hear how students feel that this is a life-changing experience," Carroll said. "No doubt I think education abroad is important for our wildlife and conservation students, but really for students in general. We share a pretty small planet in the end, so getting to know our neighbors is a good idea."

— Mekita Rivas, *Natural Resources*

Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit celebrates 10 years

The Nebraska Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit celebrated its tenth anniversary on Sept. 30, 2014. The unit conducts natural resource management-related research, which currently focuses on the role that diversity plays in providing ecological functions.



“The landscapes of Nebraska are transforming, literally, in the form of loss of grasslands to agricultural and invasion by trees, and figuratively, in the form of reduced participation in activities such as fishing and hunting,” said Craig Allen, unit leader. “Helping shape these changes such that we achieve a desirable future for Nebraska’s natural resources will be a challenge in the next decade.”

The national Cooperative Research Units Program is a collaboration among the federal government, universities, states and non-profit organizations. In 1935, the first Cooperative Research Unit was established in Ames, Iowa at Iowa State College (now Iowa State University). With the addition of the Nebraska unit in 2004, the program is now comprised of 40 units.

Within a decade, the Nebraska unit has secured \$22 million in external funding and has published three books and more than 160 peer-reviewed articles.

In addition to its research functions, the unit also provides technical assistance across the state and mentors graduate students. Since 2004, 28 students have earned postgraduate degrees. The unit currently supports 22 graduate students.

“Our graduated master’s and Ph.D. students are our biggest achievement,” Allen said. “They represent the successful completion of research products and the fostering of another generation of natural resource professionals.”

The Nebraska Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit is a partnership unique to the state, involving the university, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Wildlife Management Institute.

– Mekita Rivas, *Natural Resources*

Environmental Characterization Workshop Marks Successes

SNR hosted an Environmental Characterization Workshop from Sept. 16-18 in Hardin Hall on UNL's East Campus and at UNL's Agricultural and Research Development Center in Mead, Nebraska.

As a result, one of the world's premier mesoscale numerical weather prediction models and one of the premiere land data assimilation systems are now housed on the University of Nebraska's HPC enterprise infrastructure.

All UNL/UNO/UNK/PKI faculty, staff and students can now request an account on one of the Holland Computing Center's clusters to use the NASA Unified Weather Research and Forecasting (NU-WRF) mesoscale model and the NASA Land Information Systems (LIS) data assimilation framework.

These analysis and forecasting systems will enable interdisciplinary research, enhance classroom instruction, and help to develop new tools for outreach and extension.

"Overall, the workshop objectives were met and it was deemed a large success by everyone who participated," said Eric Hunt, workshop organizer and staff scientist at Atmospheric and Environmental Research.

The workshop had several objectives: bring together leading aerosol experts at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), the NOAA Earth System Research Laboratory and UNL for an aerosol plenary session to discuss a way ahead for the Air Force



Weather Agency (AFWA) Point Analysis Intelligence System project, introduce stakeholders to the Mead Testbed concept, and obtain the software baseline of NU-WRF and LIS for use by UNL faculty, staff and students.

“All of those objectives were met,” Hunt said. “A white paper was delivered to the government as a result of the aerosol session, which laid the groundwork for a way ahead on a project of high importance to the intelligence community. All of the visiting scientists were quite impressed with the facilities and research being conducted at UNL's Mead Agricultural Research and Development Center.”

Hercules, a field sprayer converted into a mobile remote sensing research platform by Art Zygielbaum, research associate professor, and the stationary and mobile cosmic-ray soil sensors used to monitor soil moisture by Trenton Franz, assistant professor, were of particular interest.

Todd Schimelfenig, research technologist, also impressed the visiting scientists with the instrumentation related to the ongoing Carbon Sequestration Program at UNL.

As a result of the visit, research scientists at NASA-GSFC, NCAR, and elsewhere are using data from Mead for validation of earth system model output.

The last day of the workshop was a joint venture between SNR and EAS. Tricia Lawston (University of Delaware) and Joe Santanello (NASA-GSFC) presented a summary of their Central Plains irrigation modeling case study. This case study led to a vigorous discussion with Robert Oglesby, climatologist; Ayse Kilic,

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hydrologic information systems specialist; and other SNR, EAS, and agronomy faculty on the current issues with land cover maps, among other topics.

After the workshop was complete, an interdisciplinary team of UNL faculty worked with Christa Peters-Lidard, Deputy Director for Hydrospheric and Biospheric Sciences in the Earth Sciences Division at NASA-GSFC, to acquire and port the software baselines of LIS and NU-WRF onto the University of Nebraska's HPC infrastructure.

Faculty included Jerry Wegiel (SNR), Jun Wang (EAS/SNR), Adam Caprez (HCC), and Dave Swanson (HCC).

“Much praise also goes to John Carroll (SNR director), Kurt Preston (Associate Vice Chancellor for Research), and terrific SNR staff like Karen Jensen, Sharon Kelly, and Jacki Loomis for ensuring this workshop was a success,” Hunt said.

In all, 58 people participated in the workshop, many of whom represented departments across the university including the School of Natural Resources, the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, the Department of Biological Systems Engineering, among others. Visiting scientists came from NCAR, NOAA, AFWA, NASA-GSFC, CRREL, and University of Delaware.

Questions regarding the workshop can be directed to Hunt at 402-294-3616 or ehunt@aer.com.

– Written by Eric Hunt

– Edited by Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources

UNL Soil Judging Team advances to national contest

UNL will appear at the 2015 National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest following a third-place finish at regionals on Oct. 2, 2014 in Ames, Iowa. Nationals will take place April 19-24.

“I was very pleased and confident with our performance during the competition,” said Austin Baldwin, a senior environmental restoration science major. “We (went) into the competition with many individuals on the team

that have been a part of the team before, so we were really able to work together and build off of what we have learned.”

The national contest will take place in the spring at the University of Arkansas-Monticello, where UNL hopes to unseat defending national champion Virginia Tech.

Collegiate soil judging originated in the southeastern United States in 1956 and began in the Midwest in 1958 with a contest hosted by Kansas State University. Today, the American Society of Agronomy organizes the contests and more than 40 universities from seven regions participate. Region 5 includes universities from Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

“Soil judging has really taught me a lot about leadership and dedication,” Baldwin said. “I really enjoy the team aspect of the competition. We all push each other to go into the competition as prepared as possible.”

At UNL, team members take a one-credit hour class. Depending on when the fall semester begins and when competitions are scheduled, the team has anywhere from one to five weeks to prepare and train before a contest. “We cover how the competition works, what aspects of the soil the students will judge, how their answers are generally graded,” said Becky Young, graduate student and a team assistant coach. “Since some of the students are new to soil judging each year, we also practice the soil judging techniques like how to determine a soil color, soil texture, soil structure and how to classify the soil based on the properties they’re observing.” Additionally, three practice days precede the actual contest, giving the team a chance to familiarize themselves with the material at hand.

“The hosting school provides all of the teams with various soil profiles to practice on to get an idea of what the soils are like in that particular area, and to get a feel for what might be seen during the competition,” Young said. “During those three days, the teams practice from about 8 a.m. until 5, 6 or even 7 p.m., and really begin to get a feel for what soil judging is and refine their techniques and judgments.”

Josiah Dallmann, a senior agronomy and fisheries and wildlife major, said all of that practice – plus the team’s strong morale – paid off.



“The contest in Ames was both fun and challenging,” Dallmann said. “The competitive spirit was high, but I think our team showed up with a positive, calm and focused demeanor. That, combined with our practice from the previous three days, earned us a third-place spot.”

UNL Soil Judging Team members:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Austin Baldwin | Danielle Jones |
| Roberto Carlos | Mark Keck |
| Josiah Dallmann | Jared Krueger |
| Joshua Gates | James Reece |
| Philip Goodin | Rachel Stevens |
| Seth Gurley | Jared Williams |
| Alainie Hersh | |

Coaches:
Mark Kuzila
Paul Hanson

Assistant coaches:
Zachary Olson
Rebecca Young

— *Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources*

Alum Tom Christiansen returns to UNL for Alumni Masters Week

When Tom Christiansen signed up for Howard Wiegers' Wildlife Management course in 1981, he didn't think much of it.

"(It) was the first wildlife class I took," Christiansen said. "At the time, I viewed it as an elective that would support my then-goal of being an outdoor writer."

But for Christiansen, the course ended up being more than your run-of-the-mill elective.

"It was a life-altering experience that resulted in my adding the natural resources and wildlife management major to my nearly complete agjournalism dual major," he said.

This experience unfolded in the days before the School of Natural Resources was a school and the fisheries

and wildlife major was a stand-alone major. Even so, Christiansen found ways to foster his love for the outdoors.

"I was very involved with the UNL Wildlife Club, serving in various offices including president," he said. "My UNL education and involvement in the Wildlife Club provided both the ecological foundation and, through the Wildlife Club activities, much of the experience needed to start a career in wildlife management."

Like most recent grads, that career began in a humble fashion.

"I was fortunate, as were several other UNL wildlife students, to have a UNL alumni mentor working for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Mr. Steve Kilpatrick," Christiansen said. "Steve hired me for my first job after graduation."

The job was a temporary, nine-month gig involving a mixed bag of responsibilities.

"This job included conducting habitat improvements such as controlled burns and wetland development, surveys for waterfowl, elk and bighorn sheep, and glamorous tasks like fixing fences and cleaning public outhouses," he said.

The department would go on to hire Christiansen as an elk feeder in Jackson Hole, which meant a winter living in a cabin accessed only by snowmobile and feeding several thousand elk using sleds and teams of draft horses.

"These jobs helped me learn the culture of the agency and prepared me to succeed in passing the various tests and interviews required to advance to a permanent position as a wildlife biologist," Christiansen said. "Then and now, only a small proportion of those taking the exams succeed in being offered permanent positions."

Indeed, all of those experiences paid off; in 1987, Christiansen was selected as the biologist for the Green River – a position he filled until 2004 when he was appointed as the department's sage-grouse program coordinator.

"This position is unique in the agency in that it is the only single-species biologist position," he said.



Tom Christiansen

This special position exists because of the potential for the species to be listed as a threatened or endangered species under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act. Moreover, such a listing would result in economic impacts totaling upwards of \$50 billion in western states, particularly in Wyoming, Christiansen said.

“My work includes monitoring sage-grouse populations, providing management recommendations to agency administrators and the Wyoming Governor’s Office, working across boundaries with colleagues from other states and agencies, and administering eight local citizen-based working groups tasked with developing local conservation plans for sage-grouse,” he said.

While Christiansen’s position comes with challenges – like bringing together groups of people with opposing viewpoints – he said that knowing he’s making a difference is what really matters.

“The most rewarding aspect of my position is knowing that what I am doing is part of something really important,” he said. “It is meaningful conservation on a large scale. The ecological and economic ramifications of sage-grouse conservation are huge.”

Christiansen returned to UNL on Nov. 20-21, 2014 to participate in Alumni Masters Week, a program sponsored by the Nebraska Alumni Association, Scarlet Guard and the Chancellor's Office. 2014 marked the 50th annual Alumni Masters Week. Ten outstanding alumni and 56 past alumni masters were on hand for the celebration.

— *Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources*

Annual 'Coats for Clinton' drive collects record donations

Now in its seventh year, SNR’s annual “Coats for Clinton” drive continues to provide coats and winter gear to the students of Clinton Elementary, located at 1520 North 29th Street – just a few blocks away from SNR’s home building, Hardin Hall.

The 2014 drive resulted in several bags full of warm attire and \$955 in donations.

“We received more money than ever before,” said Dennis Ferraro, professor of practice and chair of SNR’s community engagement committee.



Clare Nelson, Clinton Elementary family care coordinator, said that many Clinton families struggle to make ends meet, which means purchasing winter gear can be challenging. SNR’s cash donations will help those families swap out sweaters for winter-appropriate coats and replace worn-out shoes with new snow boots.

“The partnership that we have with the School of Natural Resources is very important to us,” Nelson said.

Ferraro said that SNR has always looked for ways to engage with its neighboring school – and will continue to do so.

“We not only collect winter outerwear and donations for the youth, but we personally invite them to ‘NaturePalooza’ and the SNR Wildlife Club assists with their Family Nature Nights at the school each year,” Ferraro said. “By helping the youth and families of Clinton school, the SNR community is investing in all of our futures. Clinton students who are given warm coats will enjoy and do better in school. They will see SNR as more than part of the university down the street, and will hopefully engage with our community educational events and desire to become part of the SNR community.”

Individuals interested in making a winter gear or cash donation to Clinton Elementary are encouraged to contact Clare Nelson at 402-436-1132 or cnelson3@lps.org.

— *Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources*

Nebraska Master Naturalist Program Announces 2015 Training Sessions

The Nebraska Master Naturalist program has announced its 2015 schedule of training sessions.

"The Nebraska Master Naturalist program is an adult education program, providing volunteers with hands-on experiences in Nebraska's natural resources," said Bruce Mellberg, program coordinator. "While learning about Nebraska's flora, fauna and native ecosystems, trainees are prepared for natural resource interpretation, citizen science projects and so much more."

The program offers participants the opportunity to get up close and personal with Nebraska's natural legacy. Participants will undergo sixty hours of in-depth training led by experts in their fields.

2015 training dates and locations are as follows:

- April 16-18, Wildcat Hills Nature Center (Scottsbluff/Gering area)
- May 7-9, Cedar Point Biological Station (Lake McConaughy-Ogallala-North Platte area)
- June 7-10, Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve (Valentine-Ainsworth-Basset)
- October: Lincoln area facility TBA
- November: Omaha area facility TBA



To date, certified master naturalists have contributed more than 22,000 of hours of service, valued at more than \$490,000, in the areas of Interpretation and Outreach, Resource Conservation and Management, Outdoor Skills and Recreation and Citizen Science Research.

Applications are available at <http://naturalist.unl.edu>. Individual registration is \$150 and spaces are limited. Call Matt Jones, program assistant, at 402-937-8601 for more information.

"Become a certified master naturalist and join a dedicated network of conservation volunteers, discover exciting experiences, connect with conservation organizations and share your passion for the great outdoors," Mellberg said. "Most importantly, connect with Nebraskans who share your passion for nature."

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Mekita Rivas, communications associate, School of Natural Resources, mrivas@unl.edu, 472-6515

Obit: Geography professor, Jim Merchant, 67

James "Jim" W. Merchant Jr., 67, professor of geography, died Feb. 27, 2015. Merchant was part of UNL's School of Natural Resources, having served as director and associate director of the Center for Advanced Land Management Information Technologies.

"Jim loved UNL and the School of Natural Resources," said SNR director John Carroll. "But more importantly, he loved geography and teaching students. When he was getting sick, the thing he was most concerned about were the students in his courses. We have lost a colleague, friend and true academic."

Born Nov. 10, 1947, to James W. and Emely (Wilson) Merchant, Sr., he earned an undergraduate degree at Townson State University. Merchant was awarded graduate and doctoral degrees at the University of Kansas.

He began his career as a senior remote sensing specialist with the Kansas Applied Remote Sensing Program at



Jim Merchant

the University of Kansas Space Technology Center. He went on to serve as an assistant professor of geography at the University of Kansas from 1986 to 1989.

In 1989, Merchant moved from Kansas to Nebraska to accept a position as associate director of UNL's Center for

Advanced Land Management Information Technologies. The addition of Merchant to the CALMIT team greatly enhanced and broadened the scope of the center's activities. His research in this position focused on land-cover mapping with coarse-resolution satellite data. He went on to serve as director of CALMIT from 2008 to 2011.

In addition to his appointments as a geography professor in SNR and as a research scientist in CALMIT, he held a courtesy professor appointment in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture.

"Jim was thoughtful and articulate in his communications with other scholars and managers, and he worked to stay connected — everyone knew Jim Merchant," said Don Rundquist, emeritus professor and former CALMIT director. "Jim had exceptional skill in dealing with the staff of governmental agencies and he definitely knew how to get things done. He was a major player in the widespread implementation of GIS technology in the state of Nebraska."

Merchant's research and teaching interests focused on applications of remote sensing and GIS in natural resources management and environmental assessment. He taught undergraduate and graduate courses in these areas, and also offered an annual professional seminar focusing on research methods and professional development in geography.

Merchant was a member of the Association of American Geographers, an elected fellow of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, and co-founder of the MidAmerica GIS Consortium. Some

of his awards include: John Wesley Powell Award from the U.S. Geological Survey (1997), Outstanding Contributions Award from the Nebraska GIS/LIS Association (1999), Career Achievements Award from the MidAmerica GIS Consortium (2004), and Outstanding Service Award from the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (2008).

"Jim was a consummate citizen of both the School of Natural Resources and the geography program at UNL," said Paul Hanson, SNR associate director. "He readily volunteered to serve the unit and within the last several weeks was writing portions of SNR's current Academic Program Review document even though he was months away from his June 2015 retirement. On a more personal note, Jim frequently provided me with advice, particularly in the past year and a half, much of which helped me tremendously in my career. Jim will be greatly missed by those in SNR."

Survivors include Merchant's wife, Loyola Caron; son, Karl; daughter, Anne; siblings, Rob Merchant, Wes Merchant, Betsy Phelps, Cathy Franklin; and eight nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life will take place at 10:30 a.m., March 6 at Roper and Sons Chapel, 4300 O St.

In lieu of flowers, individuals are asked to contribute to the University of Nebraska Foundation in Merchant's name. Donations will go toward a forthcoming fund that will provide support to UNL's geography program. Contact Josh Egley, director of development for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, at 402-458-1202 or jegley@unfoundation.org to make a donation.

— *Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources*

SNR Elevator Speech Contest Winners Announced

The 2nd annual SNR Elevator Speech Contest took place at 7 p.m., March 5 in the Hardin Hall auditorium. The contest was held in conjunction with the SNR GSA Poster Symposium. Final placements in four contest categories, in addition to the poster symposium winners, were announced.



Final placing:

Undergraduate

1. Brooke Welsh-Appleby
2. Jessica Powell
3. Carolyn Reiland-Smith
4. Jenna Schweiss

Master's

1. Katherine Lawry
2. Qwynne Lackey
3. Katie McCollum
4. Lyndsie Wszola

Doctorate

1. Andrei Snyman
2. Amanda Lipinski
3. Julianna Dai
4. Imran Khan

People's Choice Award: Kathrine Lawry



Poster symposium winners:

Undergraduate: Dave Moscicki

Master's: Cara Whalen

Doctorate: Maggi Sliwinski

Popular vote: Alexis Fedeale

Congratulations to all of the participants and thank you to those who attended these events.

More details at: <http://go.unl.edu/snrelevatorspeech>

School of Natural Resources



WEATHERFEST

UNL's 15th Annual Family Weatherfest
and Central Plains Severe Weather
Symposium

Free family event
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Saturday, April 11, 2015
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
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Jim Brandle Trish Freeman Ken Hubbard Mark Kuzila Jim Merchant

Farewell to Retiring Faculty

Five SNR faculty members are participating in a university-wide Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP). A celebration of retirees took place on April 14 at the Lied Center.

Jim Brandle joined UNL in 1975 and as a professor of forestry in the School of Natural Resources, his main research emphasis has been the role of woody plants in agricultural systems, particularly windbreaks and their effects on all aspects of crop production.

Trish Freeman joined UNL in 1981 and has served as curator of zoology for the University of Nebraska State Museum and as a professor with the School of Natural Resources whose papers on natural history and functional morphology continue to be downloaded in high numbers on a regular basis.

Ken Hubbard joined UNL in 1981 and as a professor of applied climate science in the School of Natural Resources, he was able to underpin accuracy issues in monitoring and quality control of weather data, the use of data in modelling, and the education of planners and decision makers on the use of decision tools.

Mark Kuzila joined UNL in 1975 and has served as director of the School of Natural Resources, director of the Conservation and Survey Division, and professor of soil science whose research involves the study of soil genesis and morphology.

Jim Merchant joined UNL in 1989 and had served as director and associate director of the Center for Advanced Land Management Information Technologies; as professor of geography, his research primarily focused on applications of remote sensing and GIS in natural resources management and environmental assessment. He passed away on Feb. 27, 2015.

— compiled by Mekita Rivas, Natural Resources

William L. Baxter Scholarship Awarded to Inaugural Recipient

Jenna Schweiss, a sophomore fisheries and wildlife major from South Dakota, is the first recipient of the newly established William L. Baxter Scholarship. The scholarship was created in honor of the donor's late father, who passed away in 2007.

"My father spent his entire life and career dedicated to wildlife management," said Bill Baxter. "When looking at several ways to continue to his work and legacy, my family and I felt it would be quite important to establish a scholarship in the same areas of his lifelong interest at UNL, his alma mater."

After graduating from the university, Baxter went on to a storied 37-year career as a wildlife biologist at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. He was a lifelong advocate for wildlife and habitat management.

“Throughout my lifetime, my fondest memories of time spent with my father are those where we could experience his expertise and management practices that he employed on our 320-acre Saline County farm,” Bill said.

The family farm, located near Tobias, Nebraska, was always a kind of “outdoor laboratory,” Bill said. Since 2007, more than 70 kids have visited the farm to engage with nature through hunting and wildlife management activities.

“Dad wanted the farm to be an outdoor workshop,” Bill said.

That passion for the outdoors is something Schweiss has felt since childhood.

“I was very fortunate to grow up in a family that supported an outdoors lifestyle,” she said. “When I was younger, I was always outside simply because I enjoyed it.”

And it was an enjoyment she never outgrew.

“Generally many kids start out like that, and as they grow older, they slowly become consumed by everything else and forget to make time for the outdoors,” Schweiss said. “This wasn’t the case for me. My bond with the great outdoors only became stronger as I grew older, and it got to the point where I no longer just enjoyed nature, I felt like I was truly a part of it.”

That bond with nature led Schweiss to UNL’s School of Natural Resources, where she represents a shift in the traditional demographics behind the fisheries and wildlife major, said Larkin Powell, professor of conservation biology and animal ecology.

“Ms. Schweiss is symbolic of our growing female student body in the fisheries and wildlife major, as well as students with interests in management of private lands and habitat,” Powell said. “Jenna is a pleasure to advise, and we are thrilled that she comes to UNL from South Dakota. Her family has a ranch, and she embodies the goals of many ranchers to support wildlife through careful management of their lands.”

However, Schweiss’ path to Nebraska contained its fair share of challenges.



Jenna Schweiss

“I thought I would never be able to handle coming to a school this big being from a small town and graduating with a class size of 19,” Schweiss said.

But when her senior class attended a college fair, a friend convinced her to visit with a UNL representative.

“I immediately became interested after hearing how highly rated the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources was,” she said. “I came to Nebraska on a campus visit and I fell in love with the campus and all it had to offer, especially the School of Natural Resources. I have never once thought it was a mistake to come here.”

Although Schweiss had been awarded several scholarships to attend UNL, many of those only lasted through her freshman year.

The William L. Baxter Scholarship will help ease the financial strain on Schweiss and her family as she navigates the remainder of her college career.

“Not only was it a huge honor to be recommended to receive the William L. Baxter Scholarship, it was also a huge relief to have that financial weight lifted off both my shoulders and my parent’s shoulders as well,” she said. “Receiving this scholarship has allowed me to

concentrate on my academics and help me in further reaching my personal goals.”

Those goals include earning a spot on the Dean’s List, running for president of UNL’s Wildlife Club, establishing her own student organization on campus focused on environmental volunteerism, graduating a semester early, and pursuing a graduate degree – and that’s just the short list.

“I do not want things in my life to be handed to me,” Schweiss said. “I want to feel pride and accomplishment in the things I have done knowing that I worked hard and gave my all in order to get them.”

That’s just the type of attitude and spirit Bill wants to foster with the William L. Baxter Scholarship.

“Our family shares the views of my father, of being able to pay it forward with opportunities such as the scholarship fund, (and) helping those students who really want to make this area the focus of their academic training and the building of their expertise as they develop their careers,” Bill said. “My hope is that this scholarship could not only be a legacy in honor of my father, but one that could also be endorsed and advocated by the future generations of our family.”

Those interested in establishing their own SNR scholarship fund should contact Josh Egley, director of development for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, at 402-458-1202 or jegley@nufoundation.org.

— Mekita Rivas, *Natural Resources*

Young Alum Spotlight: Elyse Watson

When she graduated in December 2009, Elyse Watson – like many young alums – faced an uncertain future.

“It took me a little while to get to where I am today,” Watson said. “I had thought about going to graduate school, but found it hard to pick which program was right for me.”

After graduating in fisheries and wildlife, Watson gained management experience at a retail company. She then went on to work for a nuisance wildlife removal service for three years. She also began volunteering as a docent at Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo.

As a docent and then the zoo’s scout and wildlife safari park coordinator, Watson speaks with visitors of all ages and backgrounds, allowing her to use a lot of the knowledge she’s learned in SNR.

“This really pushes me toward looking at finding a career where I’d be able to continuously learn more about wildlife and the environment while sharing my knowledge with others. Besides the obvious fact that I work at a zoo – and who wouldn’t enjoy working at a zoo – I love the fact that things are always changing and growing at the zoo and safari park, and I get to be a part of that,” she said.

Watson’s main responsibilities include running all of the scouting programs at the zoo and safari park. She works with boy and girl scouts, independent groups and families. Watson said that she aims to make her programming an integral part of the Henry Doorly Zoo experience.

“My most immediate goal is to grow my programs, and make them so memorable that they are one of the reasons that visitors keep coming back to the zoo and safari park,” she said.



Elyse Watson

Although Watson’s time at SNR ended more than five years ago, she considers the school an essential part of her success.

“I don’t believe that I would have been able to get the position I’m currently in if it weren’t for my education from SNR,” Watson said. “I’ve been able to take the knowledge I gained as an SNR student and apply it to the classes and events I coordinate.”

Watson said the key is to focus on getting experience, even if it’s not in a job that may result in a career.

“It’s amazing how important it is to employers to see that you didn’t give up just because you didn’t get your dream job right out of the gate,” she said. “Also, remember that you can always find ways to volunteer somewhere that may closer align to your professional aspirations while you’re working.”

— Mekita Rivas, *Natural Resources*



CELEBRATING HOWARD WIEGERS' LEGACY AND LIFE

It's nearly impossible to think of the UNL Fisheries and Wildlife program without thinking of Howard Wiegiers—the man who singlehandedly founded and built the program to what it is today. This year, Howard will be turning 100 years young. In honor of his life and life's work, we're asking everyone to donate \$100 to the Howard Wiegiers Student Travel Support Fund, providing outside-the-classroom experiences that Howard has always encouraged for all students.

Make a gift at nufoundation.org/wiegiers



Fundraising

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Get Involved



Your time, knowledge and expertise with us are extremely valuable to us. Whether it's staffing a booth at one of our outreach events or being a guest lecturer, there are plenty of ways to stay active within SNR even after you've earned that degree.

Share Your Story

Are you working your dream job?
Are you doing innovative research?
Are you living abroad?

We love hearing what our alumni are up to! Share your story so we can share it with the rest of the SNR community.



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