




Department of Ecology and Evolution

Newsletter, November 2019

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Greetings from the [Department of Ecology & Evolution](#) in the College of Arts and Sciences at Stony Brook University! I'm happy to share some of the latest news and accomplishments for the department, our students and faculty, and our alumni.

- This fall we welcomed Assistant Professor [Dr. Natasha Vitek!](#) Dr. Vitek's research focuses on how lineages change over time in relation to their environment, including investigations of fossil records in the western U.S. She also examines spatial and temporal variation in phenotypes in relation to modern climatic, phylogeographic and ecological variables as signals of evolutionary adaptation. 
- Associate Professor [Dr. Heather Lynch](#) was named a winner of the prestigious Blavatnik National Awards for Young Scientists in the category of Life Sciences. The award includes a \$250,000 unrestricted prize. Dr. Lynch was recognized for "her unique synthesis of cutting-edge statistics, mathematical models, satellite remote sensing and Antarctic field biology to understand the spatial and temporal patterns of penguin colonies to predict population growth, collapse and possible extinction in the face of climate change."
- Dr. Jessica Gurevitch has been appointed by State University of New York Board of Trustees to the rank of [Distinguished Professor](#). This promotion recognizes Jessica's long record of outstanding scholarship in her field, teaching in biology, and service to the University and her discipline. Jessica joins Doug Futuyma and Jeff Levinton as Distinguished Professors currently in the Department and a select group of former distinguished Ecology and Evolution faculty promoted to this prestigious rank.
- [Dr. Ross Nehm](#) was promoted to the rank of Full Professor. His recent award from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Inclusive Excellence Program continues to impact how we teach undergraduates throughout the STEM fields at Stony Brook.
- Dr. Jessica Stanton, PhD '13 is now a biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey in La Crosse, WI. Jessica co-authored [a report in the journal Science](#) on the decline of bird abundance in North America since 1970. The study employed innovative methods, including utilizing weather radar data to collect information on migratory birds, and is making a strong impact in the media and in the conservation community. 
- Noah Strycker, a master's student in Dr. Heather Lynch's lab, published [an essay in National Geographic](#) on the conflict between cats and wildlife, and the range of possible solutions.
- Dr. Marisa Lim, PhD '18 and Dr. Liliana Dávalos published a [paper in Genome Biology and Evolution](#) that revealed that multiple hummingbird species have adapted to high altitudes in the Andes Mountains through genetic mutations that affect the same biochemical pathways.
- Dr. Krishna Veeramah received a \$10 million Synergy Grant from the European Research Council, one of the most prestigious awards granted to researchers around the world, to fund a multidisciplinary study of more than 100 ancient medieval cemeteries across Central Europe. The main objectives for the [project](#) are to explore the impact of mobility on early medieval populations, refine methods of archeogenetic research and establish a multidisciplinary model for future research. 

Resources for faculty and students support and strengthen the educational experience. The Department of Ecology and Evolution depends on our alumni and friends to support our faculty, students and staff so we may provide departmental fellowship funds, including the Lawrence Slobodkin Fund for Ecological Research, the Robert Sokal Fund for Statistical Biology, the George Williams Fund for Student Research, and the Ecology and Evolution Award for Student Excellence. You can find a [full list of E&E's giving opportunities here](#).

Your gift, whether it's the renewal of your support or the decision to give for the first time, allows us to do what we do best – innovative, creative research and teaching that's the hallmark of a great public university. I hope you'll consider investing in our faculty and students by making a gift today or speaking with Hodan Hassan, Interim Assistant Dean for Advancement at (631) 632-4055 or hodan.hassan@stonybrook.edu.

I'm encouraged by the responses I've received from many of you to my recent emails, and I hope more of you will stay connected with me and other faculty in our Department. We enjoy hearing where life has taken you! You can also follow our posts on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Best regards,

Bob Thacker
Professor and Chairperson
Department of Ecology & Evolution
Stony Brook University