



BIOLOGY Department Newsletter Ithaca College

www.ithaca.edu/biology



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Greetings from the Chair, Marc Servetnick



For those of you who haven't been back to Ithaca for a while, lots of changes are taking place on campus. Two new buildings are going up: a new Business school building, and a building for Admissions and administration, just down the hill from Job Hall and Dillingham, respectively. The campus will look very different when you next visit.

In the Center for Natural Sciences, the changes are more subtle, but they're there. After enormous turnover in Chemistry and Physics over the last few years, Biology is changing, too. John Confer, who has been with the Biology Department for 37 years, is officially leaving his faculty position, but he will be continuing his ornithological research as a Scholar-in-Residence. Even as John leaves, we will welcome a new Animal Ecologist, Dr. Leann Kanda, to the faculty this fall. This coming academic year will be the last year of teaching for Dr. Vicki Cameron, who will retire after her one-year sabbatic in 2008-09. And it may be my last year at IC, too, as my wife and I have been offered faculty positions at the University of Washington.

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John Confer, Scholar-in-Residence

John Confer spent the 2006-07 year on terminal sabbatical. When he first came to IC John taught Aquatic Ecology; he offered Animal Ecology for many years, and has more recently taught courses in Ornithology and Field Biology. He is pleased to be granted the title of resident scholar.

His appointment as Scholar-in-Residence is part of a multi-team study on the decline of Golden-winged Warblers. The study, with the Laboratory of Ornithology as lead agency, was recently funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with \$10,000 for Confer's work. Studies will be conducted throughout the range of this declining species with field work conducted in a coordinated manner so that results can be easily compared.

Accomplishments/ Contributions:

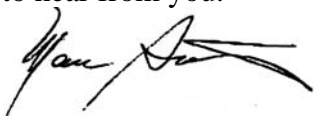
- o instrumental in developing the Environmental Studies & Environmental Science programs at IC
- o Coordinator of the Environmental Studies & Environmental Science Programs for three years
- o a founding member of Ithaca College Natural Lands
- o supervised numerous research students
- o often described by students as a zealot because he is so passionate about issues regarding the environment
- o recipient of numerous state and regional grants to study bird ecology
- o a renowned expert on the Golden-winged warbler.

For his dedication to the Department, John received a Black Locust bench to be placed on IC's Newfield property.



Greetings continued

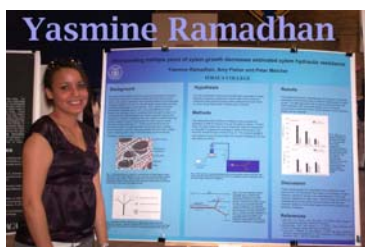
As faculty come and go, our goal remains the same: an excellent undergraduate education in Biology. We are proud of the work that we do, and we are consistently gratified by the accomplishments of our alumni. I urge you to look through the newsletter to share in the achievements of your fellow alums: in the sciences, in medicine, in fields far removed from biology, and, perhaps most important, as responsible citizens. If you haven't contacted us lately to let us know what you're up to, please do; we'd love to hear from you.



Student Achievements

Best Platform Presentation

Yasmine Ramadhan ('08) won the Best Plant Biology Poster at the Eastern Colleges Science Conference. She worked with Peter Melcher on her research entitled, "Incorporating multiple years of xylem growth decreases estimated xylem hydraulic resistance".



Yasmine Ramadhan
Best Plant Biology

Jason Dickens Memorial Award

Hugo Valencia ('07) received the [Jason Dickens Memorial Award](#). This award is given in honor of Jason Dickens, who was an Ithaca College Biology major. Recipients of this award must have a GPA over 3.5 and must be committed to a future in science. Hugo has surpassed that GPA each semester. He conducted research with Andy Smith.

Thomas Morrin Jones Scholarship

Hugo Valencia was also awarded the Thomas Morrin Jones Scholarship. This is awarded to a senior with need who majors in the sciences and who, through his or her academic work and commitment to the liberal arts exemplifies the tradition of social service as personified by Thomas Morrin Jones.

George A. Gonzalez-Gallardo Scholarship

Samantha Palmer ('07) was awarded the Biology Department's George A. Gonzalez-Gallardo Scholarship. This scholarship was established in memory of George A. Gonzalez-Gallardo, a 1979 graduate. Recipients must demonstrate high academic achievement. Sam more than meets these criteria with an outstanding academic record and senior standing. She will

pursue her interest in cancer research in the Ph.D. program at Cornell University.

Fred Kastenbaum Pre-Health Award

This year's recipient of the Premedical Sciences [Fred Kastenbaum Pre-Health Award](#) is **Dennis Thapa** ('08). He used the award to cover expenses associated with preparation for the MCAT.

ALUMNI CONTINUE TO SUCCEED

Tim Alefantis (Biology '96) and **Christine (Coleman) Alefantis** (Biology '97) have three children. Tim is working on designing vaccines for human health, biodefense, and agriculture as the Chief Product Development Officer at Vital Probes, Inc. Christine is working as a Physical Therapist.

Nancy Andersen (Biology '07) is a Biological Technician, US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine in Natick, MA.



Spring 2007: Jean Hadwick meets up with alum at a conference in Boston: Alison Mikita, Suzanne Taylor, Andrew Cameron, Michelle Niescierenko, Jason Burnett (with fiancé), Jennifer Morawiak (with boyfriend), Laura Gay, Jean Hadwick

Tamara Arvanian Petrosyan (opt 3-1 '06) is pursuing an O.D. at the SUNY College of Optometry.

Michael Axtell (Biology '98) finished his postdoctoral research in Boston last summer. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Biology Department at Penn State.

Joshua Baker (Biology '99) received a MS from Syracuse University and is working at the Basset Army Community Hospital in Alaska.

Amanda Bostick (Biology '07) will be attending RIT in their MSSE program in the field of Secondary Education of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Chris Breuer Merrikh

(Biology '02) is in the Ph.D. program at Brandeis University. He is working in a RNA lab and works with HeLa cells. Chris is pleased to announce his marriage last summer.



Chris Breuer Merrikh got married in the summer of '06.

Max Bronstein (Biology '05) is a Technology Assistant at the National Science Foundation

Derek Budman (Biology '98) is a General Dentist in Canton, Georgia.

Andrew Cameron (Biology '05) is pleased to announce his recent publication in *Neuron*

54,721-737, June 7, 2007. View the summary as a PDF at: ithaca/biology/article_acameron_smr07.pdf

FJ Cava (Biology '92) is a MBA and a graduate of San Francisco State University. His thesis is entitled, "Entrepreneurship as a Development Mechanism in the Third World".

Amanda Cavallaro (Biochemistry '04) is a Research Assistant at the HMI Janelia Farm Research Campus.

Stacy Coleman Contakos (Biology '01) and her husband are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter in January.

Paul Crispen (Biology '95) participated in the Department's Seminar Series in the Spring and spoke to a group of premed students. The title of his talk was "Defining the Natural History of Renal Cell Carcinoma". Paul is now at the Mayo Clinic.

Wilhelm Goebel (Biology '82) returned to the department to present a seminar entitled, "The Biology of Art - A personal journey from cells to canvas". Wilhelm is a wildlife artist. Among his many artistic



Wilhelm Goebel presented at the Department's Seminar Series in the Fall.

accomplishments, Wilhelm won wildlife art's most prestigious award, the Federal Duck Stamp contest in 1995. In 1997 he was chosen Ducks Unlimited International Artist of the Year.

Kristin Hinkle (Biology '99) is a Physician at St. Anthony's Primary Care in St. Petersburg, Florida. She completed her family medicine residency in June 2006 and opened her practice in October 2006. She traveled to 18 countries in Europe and Africa over during the summer of 2006 and plans to travel to Australia and Asia in 2007.

Brittany Herits (Biology Teaching '07) continues at IC while working on a MS in Exercise Science, Excerise Physiology.

Brett Hollingshead (Biochemistry '00) was awarded his Ph.D. last year in Biochemistry, Microbiology and Molecular Biology at the Penn State University. Brett has taken a chemist position at QBC Diagnostics.

Brent Karow (Biology '05) is a Forensic Investigator in the DNA section at the New York State Police. He plans to obtain a Masters degree from SUNY Albany in forensic molecular biology.

Julie Kubik Speitel (Biology '98) is a Senior Scientist/Study Director in the General Toxicology Department at GlaxoSmithKline in Pennsylvania.

Continued on page 5.



**Julianne Lutz
(Newton)
Murray**

Julianne Lutz (Newton) Murray (Biology '88) has made exceptional achievements as a writer, historian, scientist and linguist with a particular interest in environmental topics. She returned to campus in the spring and spoke in classes for writing, environmental studies, environmental history and environmental ethics. Julianne also and met with environmental studies majors to discuss careers.

Jessica Lyon (Biology '04) received a MS in Biology from the New York University and is continuing there to complete a Ph.D. in Systemic Toxicology.

Quentin Machingo (Biology '00) is pleased to announce his 2006 publication in *Developmental Biology* 297 (2006) 471 -482. View the abstract at ithaca.edu/biology/alumni_machingo/article06.pdf.



Quentin Machingo presented at the Department's Seminar Series in the Fall.

Quentin also returned to the Biology Department in the fall of 2006 to present a seminar entitled, "A Sweet Story; The function of carbohydrates during vertebrate development". He will assume a faculty position this fall at Manhattan College. Quentin and his wife, Stephanie O'Leary (Biology '99) are the proud parents of Hannah.

Michelle L. Niescierenko (Biology '02) is a Pediatric Resident in the Boston Combined Residency Program. She traveled with a group to Bolivia helping to get homeless/abandoned children off the street. The group also provided education on public health topics including dental hygiene, reading, maintaining hydration and preventing parasites and worms.

Heather Page (Biology '98) is an Assistant Principal at a small Manhattan high school, and a teacher of Biology, as well as Physics.

Kalyan Pande (Biology '99) received a Ph.D. in Cancer Biology from the University of Wisconsin and is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Schering-Plough Biopharma in California.

The Department continues to be sincerely grateful to Dr. Jack Bernard for his continued support to our students. We are extremely pleased to have the following two awards available:

The Bernard Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded to juniors and seniors in the biological science program based on financial need and good academic standing.

Jack and Flo Bernard Family Undergraduate Research Fund

These funds are used to provide stipends for summer research, funding for student travel to meetings, and as needed, supplies and equipment necessary for students to carry out their projects.

This summer Elyse Honikel ('08) is working with Bruce Smith on the photopositive response of water mites. Andrew Furfaro ('08) is working with Kit Muma on ultrasonic hearing in moths at the Queen's University Biological Station north of Kingston, Ontario.

Essential reagents were purchased by the Fund which allowed Kirwin Providence's students, Melissa Wern ('07) and Sara Garcia ('09), to study the effect of different oxygen concentrations on white blood cell function. Due to their efforts, and the mission of the Bernard Fund to support student-faculty research, future students will be able to benefit from this opportunity to conduct research in his lab.

If you would like to contribute to either of these funds, we would greatly appreciate it. You may complete the form at the end of this newsletter.

Alumni continued

Gina Placco (Biology '04) is an accelerated nursing student at NYU, where she is working towards a Masters in Midwifery

Jessica Raymond (Biology '03) received an AAS degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She is the Account Manager at the Select Showroom in New York.

Tracy Robinson (Biology '03)

has been named the 2007 Cancer Center Young Investigator of Duke

University's Comprehensive Cancer Center.

She was invited

to give a presentation on her work titled, "Patient-Oncologist Communication in Advanced Cancer: Predictors of Patient Perception of Prognosis". Tracy is currently completing her fourth year in Duke University's School of Medicine.



Tracy Robinson

Melissa Roether Piech (Biology '01) received her MD degree this May from the University of Connecticut. She is pleased to announce her marriage in April 2007.

Jonathan Sparks (Biology '96) received his Ph.D. from Texas A&M and is working as a Patent Attorney in Boston, MA.

Todd Wilson (Biology '93) is a Clinical Fellow at the Laboratory of Allergic

Diseases/NIAID/NIH. He is involved in research: studying the molecular genetics of systemic mastocytosis. Todd was recently co-author on a review on this topic, "Treatment of Systematic Mastocytosis", in *Immunology and Allergy Clinics of North America* 26:549-573.

Rebekah Weck (Biology '06) is a Ph.D. student in the Reproductive Toxicology program in the Department of Veterinary Biosciences at the University of Illinois. She has been accepted into the Interdisciplinary Environmental Toxicology Program and will be a Toxicology Scholar in the fall.

Jessica Yao (Biology '03) is a Clinical Research Coordinator at the University of Rochester/Strong Memorial Hospital.

Student Presentations

ECSC

The 61st Annual Eastern Colleges Science Conference was held in New York, NY this year. ECSC is held each year in the northeast and is designed specifically for undergraduates to present the results of their research in a friendly environment. All presentations are given by undergraduates. Thirteen biology students had the opportunity to participate, and one won the award for Best Platform Presentation in their section.

Junior Research Symposia

This year has been very busy for our students and faculty in research. Over the year 87 students had the opportunity to work with faculty on research. Of those, 36 students presented the results of their research at the departmental symposia as a course requirement for the junior research class.

Out-of-State Conferences

Jackie Scahill ('07) presented "The Effects of Atrazine on the Development of Fathead Minnows (*Pimephales promelas*) and *Xenopus* Frogs" hosted by Tri Beta, the National Biology Honor Society at the TriBeta Conference. She worked with Susan Allen-Gil. **Will Brogan** ('07) gave a poster presentation entitled "Habituation of male *Arrenurus manubriator* (Acari: Hydrachnida) to female sex pheromone?" at the Mid-Atlantic Ecology Conference. He worked with Bruce Smith.

James J. Whalen Symposium

This spring eight biology students presented at the James J. Whalen Academic Symposium. This yearly event is held on campus and serves as a forum where the best student projects are presented to the campus community.

STUDENTS EXCEED BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Jackie Scahill (Biology '07) has accepted an AAAS Mass Media Science and Engineering Fellowship. She has been assigned to KPCC Southern California Public Radio in Pasadena, CA, for ten weeks during the summer. It is extremely exciting for Jackie to receive this fellowship because there were 125 applicants and only 19 finalists. More importantly, this award is typically received by a graduate student!



Jackie Scahill receives fellowship

Rachel Blasiak (Biology '07) was a member of the Ithaca College women's cross country and track & field teams. She has been named a New York State Women's Collegiate Athletic Association (NYSWCAA) Scholar-Athlete. Rachel had an incredible record throughout the seasons which included: a three-time all-region, four-time all-state and



Rachel Blasiak named NYWCAA scholar-athlete

four-time all-conference cross country selection, named Empire 8 Runner of the Year as a junior and senior (she was the conference's Rookie of the Year in 2002), and was the runner-up at this year's New York State Collegiate Track Conference (NYSCTC) Championship. Rachel was a six-time Empire 8 Runner of the Week.

Several students participate in sports at IC. **Hugo Valencia** and **Beth Hoover** received honors. Hugo received honorable mention to the Empire 8 all-star team as a senior. Beth Hoover was one of Ithaca's conference-best five first-team all-stars.

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT

Promotions

Ed Cluett and **Jason Hamilton** were both awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor effective in the Fall of 2007.



Ed Cluett & Jason Hamilton committed with tenure

Sabbatical

Andy Smith

Andy Smith spent his sabbatical pursuing his research on Molluscan glues. Many snails and slugs produce adhesive gels with unusual and highly useful properties. Andy studied these glues at two major research labs on the West Coast.

He spent the winter and spring doing biochemical research at the University of California at Santa Barbara. There he worked with Dr. J. Herbert Waite, the leading researcher in the field of biological glues. Andy had recently discovered that metals play a central role in the function of the glues, so he spent his time characterizing the metal content and identifying the proteins with which each metal associated. In addition, he analyzed the structure of the glue, identifying several previously unknown components. He then traveled to Vancouver to work with Dr. Robert Shadwick over the summer. Dr. Shadwick is a Canada Chair of Zoology at the University of British Columbia. In that lab, Andy helped build a rheometer for measuring the mechanical properties of gels, and used it to characterize the

effects of different metals on molluscan glue function. Andy would also like to note that Santa Barbara and Vancouver are *very* nice places to live.

Summer Research in Canada



Elyse Honikel at Open House



Andrew Furfaro catching moths

Bernard Family Funds

Name: _____ Major: _____ Graduation Year: _____

Home Address: _____

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ made out to the

ITHACA

- Bernard Family Undergraduate Research Fund**
- Bernard Scholarship**

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