



Dear Friends,

It is my great pleasure to send the very first *Wildlife Whisper* – a quarterly newsletter designed to enhance connections with our department of Wildlife, Fish and Conservation Biology. I am thrilled to introduce myself as the new chair for WFCB, an appointment which I enthusiastically approach! Our department is ranked #1 in research productivity and impact among Wildlife and Fisheries programs, and WFCB now engages +300 undergraduate students, +50 graduate students, 18 postdoctoral scholars and 11 faculty. I'm delighted to welcome our most recent faculty:

Andrew Rypel, Rahel Sollmann, Daniel Karp and Eric Post. Collectively, our studies encompass deserts, rivers, oceans, jungles, mountains and polar regions. Leading research is currently conducted on human-wildlife conflict resolution, conservation physiology, climate change phenology, agroecology, vertebrate ecology, biogeography, noninvasive wildlife survey methods, behavioral ecology, riparian restoration, conservation ecology and so much more. We look forward to 2018 with expectations for continued excellence in conservation science research, education and outreach.

We hope you take a few minutes to read the *Wildlife Whisper*. Keep in touch by following our Facebook page, sending an email, or dropping by during one of our department seminars. The seminars run every three weeks on Wednesday afternoons. Visit our [website](#) to see our seminar schedule.

Sincerely,

Nann Fangue



A Student's Perspective Spotlight on a WFCB Major

Melissa Marshall Class of 2018

Describe your job/Internship with or via the WFCB department and who are you working with? What has been your "take away" from being part of the project?

I work as a peer adviser on campus for the WFCB department, and I have volunteered/interned with the Channel Islands National Park Service Island Fox Recovery Team for the last three summers. I became involved with the NPS Fox Project through personal connections with some park employees, and after volunteering my first summer they offered for me to come back in the future. I worked as a field technician helping with island fox, island spotted skunk, and deer mice trapping, gathering samples for genetic studies and diet studies, and recording everything into their database afterwards. Participating in this project not only confirmed my passion for conservation, wildlife and field work, but was also a great example of how working in this field can be a success. Conservation work saved the Island Fox species, and being a part of that is beyond rewarding, and has inspired me to continue in the hopes that I can make any difference, even the smallest, in my career.

Please tell us one of your "aha" and your "wow" moments as a WFCB student.

I think my "aha" moment was fall quarter my freshman year, when I took WFC 10. I entered Davis intending on being a math major, but wanted to explore more majors, and Wildlife, Fish and Conservation Biology was on my list. After listening to all the professors guest lecture about their line of work, and seeing how wildlife conservation was a practical career path, I fell in love with the major. It was as if everything had fallen into

place. I grew up by the beach, but spent a lot of time in the mountains or out on the Channel Islands camping and hiking. I also grew up with lots of pets, so I have always had a soft spot for animals. After taking WFC 10, all the pieces just seemed to fit together perfectly.

If you had a line of advice for current WFCB students, what would it be?

Go to office hours and get face-to-face time with professors, it is a valuable resource that too few students take advantage of.

What would be your dream job after you graduate?

I don't have an exact dream job per say after graduation, but my dream career path would be to travel for seasonal jobs after graduation, getting to work with different species in different locations. I love field work, and would aim to travel throughout California, and hopefully to Alaska, Montana, or even countries abroad. After that, I want to attend graduate school and work my way into academia. I have so much respect for professors who have helped mentor me as an undergraduate, and I only hope I can be a mentor for someone in the future.

What can I do with my major?



Art Exhibit in WFCB

Dead Zones
48x60in
oil on canvas
Fall 2017

McKinna Salinas is a 4th year student at UC Davis majoring in Art Studio. In the Fall 2017 McKinna took Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (WFC10). As an independent study under her art professor, Gina Werfel she chose to create a series of oil paintings

inspired by the topics of WFC10. McKinna is interested in wildlife conservation and is currently translating her curiosity through a series of oil paintings that incorporate the ideas of contemporary wildlife catadysms. McKinna hopes to create art that transcends solely aesthetics by encompassing deeper ecological concerns. The painting, *Dead Zones*, was inspired by Daniel Karp's lecture based on agro-ecology. This painting is two canvases side by side. Through paint thickness and color, McKinna integrated areal views of agricultural land into the shapes and shades of the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

[Read here what UCDavis News and Media Relations Kat Kerlin wrote about the exhibit](#)



WFCB Graduate Student Spotighting

Mickey Agha, Ph.D candidate in Ecology

Describe your project with the WFCB department and who are you working with?

In collaboration with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Water Resources, Dr. Brian Todd and I have initiated a long-term monitoring project on Western Pond Turtles in the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary. Our project broadly seeks to understand the effects of tidal marsh restoration, sea level rise, and

water salinity variation on the Western Pond Turtle, a species of special concern in California and under review for federal listing. By investigating Western Pond Turtle occupancy, abundance, survival, and habitat use in Suisun Marsh, we hope to improve conservation and management strategies for this species in response to a rapidly changing environment.

How did you get involved in the project? What has been your “take away” from being part of the project?

While talking about my passion for studying turtles to a distinguished professor in our department, Dr. Peter Moyle, I was pointed towards a unique ecological mystery – the Western Pond turtle, extremely sensitive to habitat change and declining across its range, occurring in a highly managed tidally influenced brackish water ecosystem in the Bay-Delta Estuary. I asked the question, “Why and how is a freshwater turtle occupying a salty environment that is likely physiologically stressful, and potentially harmful to their existence?” Fortunately, my major professor teamed-up with other WFCB Bay-Delta researchers asking similar questions, and we have forged a path forward to unlock the mysteries of the Western Pond Turtle as well as other sensitive species inhabiting Suisun Marsh. The major “take away” so far has been that simply communicating a passion for my research – “I like turtles” – and having a strong collaboration within our department has proved invaluable.

Please tell us one of your “aha” and your “wow” moments as a graduate student.

After hearing about freshwater turtles swimming around in the brackish water tidal-sloughs of Suisun Marsh,

I was eager to jump right into field research. However, my major professor insisted that I start my graduate research in the library, reviewing the literature and learning more about why and how freshwater reptiles inhabit brackish environments in other parts of the world. After a year of painstakingly searching published literature, contacting experts in multiple countries, and carefully recording every record I could find, I completed an extensive review of salinity tolerance and response, evolutionary history, and use of saline environments by freshwater turtles. The review, recently accepted to *Biological Reviews*, refined my study questions, and pointed us towards a global conservation issue that could be directly addressed with our turtles in the marsh – “how will projected sea level rise impact coastal freshwater turtles?”

If you had advice for current WFCB graduate students, what would it be? Communicate frequently with your graduate advisor! Stop WFCB professors in the hall and tell them about your research interests, often they can facilitate a useful conversation, collaboration, and outreach or funding opportunity. Finally, take sufficient time to develop your study questions to ensure that they are novel, conservation-relevant, and can be adequately addressed in a timely manner.

What would be your dream job after you receive your graduate degree?

Working as a professor or research ecologist at a conservation-based research institution. Passionate about working with wildlife, I hope to be part of a conservation program that focuses on improving the health of sensitive wildlife populations and the ever-changing ecosystems they inhabit.



Short film emphasizing Dr. Eric Post lab's work in West Greenland.



International workshop on the use of barn owls for agricultural pest control. March 5-7 2018 UC Davis campus
Workshop is partially led by Dr. Roger Baldwin.



Short film emphasizing Dr. Danny Karp's work in Costa Rica.



**Where Are They Now?
Highlighting a WFCB Alumni**

Lizabeth Bowen

Ph.D., Ecology, University of California, Davis. 2003.
Thesis: Immunogenetics in the California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*): evolution of the major histocompatibility complex under differential ecological pressures

Master of Science, Ecology, University of California, Davis. 1995.

Thesis: Defenses of insular endemic plants in the absence of herbivory

Bachelor of Arts, Biology. University of California, Santa Cruz. 1989

Liz will be giving a talk in the WFCB seminar series on Wednesday February 21st 2018 @ 3:45pm in 1138 Foster Room, Meyer Hall. All are welcome

What is your current job?

I am an ecologist with USGS, Western Ecological Research Center.

Could you describe one of your typical workdays?

On a typical workday in the office I do quite a bit of data analysis and paper writing. I also spend a bit of time on the phone talking science with collaborators and potential collaborators.

A typical day in the field is not typical at all. Depending on the species I am working on I might be living on a research boat, catching sea otters, heading to remote beaches to dig for clams, all while trying to avoid getting eaten by grizzly bears and/or mosquitos.

What skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?

The most important skill required of my job is writing. In my position the ability to write clearly and concisely

is critical. It's also something I really enjoy. I learned everything I know about scientific writing from Dr. Dirk Van Vuren.

What parts of your job do you find most challenging?

It is very challenging to successfully carry out a field study. There are always unforeseen adventures that prevent you from carrying out your study in a manner conducive to straightforward analysis. Weather may prevent you from sampling a large portion of your study area, animals may be uncooperative, or your transport boat may break down, to name a few roadblocks.

What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

I have been fortunate to work with many incredible people who are also phenomenal scientists. I have also gotten to see and do things people only dream of. On a daily basis, I get to pose and attempt to answer questions about science. It's like being paid to play a really fun game.



Department Seminars

All Are Welcome

What: WFCB seminar series where graduate students, research staff, post docs, and faculty showcase their latest work. The seminar features 15 minute presentations by 3 people, each followed by a 5 minute Q&A.

When: Wednesday 1/31, 2/21, 3/14, 4/4, 4/25, 5/16 and 6/6 @ 3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Where: 1138 Foster Room in Meyer Hall on UCD Campus



Read [The Putah Creek Nestbox Highway](#) blog by Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology.

The UC Davis Museum of Wildlife & Fish Biology's Putah Creek Nestbox Highway involves students, landowners, and the community in conservation of cavity nesting birds through active habitat restoration and nest box monitoring. Objectives include increasing breeding opportunities and population densities of cavity nesting birds while providing a framework for environmental education and research into cavity-nesting bird ecology. Since its inception in 2000, the Putah Creek Nestbox Highway has provided breeding habitat for thousands of cavity nesting birds, from Ash-throated Flycatchers to Western Bluebirds, many of whom return year after year to nest along the creek. These birds serve to boost local wildlife populations, and provide valuable ecological services and public enjoyment opportunities.

Our many generous sponsors and supporters include: the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee, Solano County Water Agency, the UC Davis Department of Wildlife, Fish & Conservation Biology, Teichert Foundation, Davis Sunrise Rotary, Putah Creek Council, UC Davis Riparian Reserve, Center for Land-based Learning, Cities of Winters and Davis, County of Yolo, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and numerous landowners.

Giving.

Your gifts provide the extra support that enables our students and faculty to reach their fullest potential. Your gifts support experiential learning opportunities, allow scientists to be especially innovative in their research, and keep undergraduate and graduate training financially accessible.

Please contact assistant dean Christine Schmidt cmschmidt@ucdavis.edu, 530-752-6414 or department chair Nann Fangue nafangue@ucdavis.edu for more information or to discuss impactful gift opportunities.

[Giving is also easy online.](#)



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