Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center

Dr. Patrick Osborne leaves the Harris Center

After 16 years of service as Executive Director of the Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center, Dr. Patrick Osborne will be leaving the Center at the end of the 2012 calendar year. What began as a part-time position to help with day-to-day operations developed into a full-time, leadership role. Dr. Osborne has provided continuity across the years, serving with four different faculty directors. Together with the Biology faculty, he has worked to promote the Harris Center and its mission, locally, nationally, and internationally.

Patrick came to St. Louis with his wife, Nancy Birge, a St. Louis native, and their two children in 1996. It has been the great fortune of the Harris Center, the Department of Biology, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the greater St. Louis community, and conservation in general that they did so. Patrick has become a personal ally and friend of each and every graduate student supported by the Harris Center during his 16 years with the Center.

Before coming to St. Louis, Dr. Osborne was Deputy Director of the Water Research Center at the University of Western Sydney in Australia, and before that Head of the Biology Department at the University of Papua New Guinea. He is an expert in the ecology of tropical freshwater systems, with a focus on using phytoplankton to gauge the health of tropical aquatic ecosystems. He is a tireless advocate for efforts to reduce human contributions to recent global climate change.

During his 16 years as Executive Director, the three endowments worth around $50,000 have grown to twenty endowments and two annuities with a combined total value of approximately $5 million. Twelve students from eleven countries have been provided with full fellowships through the Christensen Fund Fellowship Program in Plant Conservation, thirty students were supported with Compton Fellowships in Environment and Sustainable Development, and over 220 research scholarships were given out to graduate students and 18 scholarships to undergraduate students. The World Ecology Award has been awarded to fifteen leaders in environmental advocacy and biodiversity conservation during this time, with the gala dinners associated with these events having raised over $500,000 for student research scholarships.

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2010, the Harris Center was awarded a “What’s Right with the Region” Award from Focus St. Louis. This is truly a great legacy!

During his time at UMSL, Dr. Osborne wrote and published his textbook, *Tropical Ecosystems, and Ecological Concepts* (Cambridge University Press). In 2012, he updated this volume, publishing the second edition. He taught numerous courses at UMSL, including Environmental Biology, Biology of Plants, Global Ecology, Conservation Biology, and General Ecology. In 2007, Dr. Osborne received The Science Educator Award from the Saint Louis Academy of Sciences, and in 2011, was honored with the Outstanding Educator Award from the St. Louis chapter of the Audubon Society.

In the immediate future, Patrick is off to Tanzania in January as an environmental consultant. He will be back in St. Louis after that. He and Nancy have promised to remain actively involved in the efforts of the Harris Center. We look forward to their generous contribution of time, resources, and mentorship well into the future!

*Dr. Robert Marquis, Scientific Director*

**New Faculty Appointments**

The Department of Biology announces two new tenure-track faculty hires, both of whom will join the faculty in August 2013. We look forward with great anticipation to both joining our faculty.

**Dr. Michael Hughes** was hired to fill the faculty position in Animal Physiology. Michael investigates genetic control of circadian rhythms in *Drosophila*. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Biology from Stanford University, and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He was a postdoctoral associate with Professor John Hogenesch at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and is currently completing a postdoc at the Yale University School of Medicine under the mentorship of Dr. Michael Nitebach.

*Dr. Michael Hughes*

**Dr. Nathan Muchhala** was hired to fill the Ecology and Evolution faculty position. Nathan is completing a postdoctoral position with Dr. Stacey Smith at the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska, after completing a postdoc at the University of Toronto. He completed his B.S. in Biology at Earlham College, and his Ph.D. at the University of Miami, under the mentorship of Dr. Ted Fleming, a former faculty member at UMSL. Nathan is an expert in pollination biology, especially of systems involving bats and flowering plants of the Neotropics.

*Dr. Nathan Muchhala*

**News**

Robbie Hart ([Salick laboratory](#), [Missouri Botanical Garden](#)) was interviewed by the [GoKunming](#) online newspaper and you can find a copy of the article [here](#).

*In partnership with the Missouri Botanical Garden and the Saint Louis Zoo*
Vona Kuczynska (Marquis laboratory) presented a poster at the North American Symposium on Bat Research held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in October, 2012: Does honeysuckle invasion in forests affect insect availability and bat foraging activity?

Daniel Layton (Kellogg laboratory) successfully defended his M.S. thesis on November 19, 2012. It is entitled: Species limits in the new model species Setaria viridis (Poaceae) and the closely related Setaria faberi. Daniel received his B.S. in Biology from the College of William and Mary.

Kirk Barnett (Marquis laboratory) successfully defended his M.S. thesis on November 26, 2012. It is entitled: The 'slow-growth-high-mortality' hypothesis: How plant species, leaf quality, and the third trophic level contribute to the mortality of two common leaf-tying microlepidopteran herbivores. Kirk received his B.S. in Biology from UMSL, and is a native of St. Charles, Missouri. In January, Kirk will join the Ph.D. program at the University of Western Sydney in Australia.

The 2012 Whitney and Anna Harris Conservation Forum was held at the Saint Louis Zoo on Thursday, November 8. The theme this year was: Environmental issues of St. Louis: Past, present, and future. Presentations were given by Dr. Andrew Hurley, Department of History at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (Whatever happened to yesterday’s environmental problems? Lessons from St. Louis), Mayor Shelley Welsch, University City (A living (and growing) legacy of environmentalism in University City) and by Catherine Werner, Sustainability Director in the City of St. Louis Mayor's Office (Where ecology fits into the City of St. Louis' Sustainability Plan).

Upcoming Events

The 2013 Jane and Whitney Harris Lecture will be delivered by Dr. Gary Langham, Vice President and Chief Scientist of the National Audubon Society. The lecture will be held on Wednesday, March 6, 2013, at 7:30 p.m. in the Shoenberg Auditorium at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Recent Publications


Wishing all of our readers
Happy Holidays and
Best Wishes for the
New Year!

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