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Working with Nature for Society’s Well Being

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Auburn to grow its wildlife programs with prestigious Boone and Crockett Club Professorship

Auburn University will pursue the creation of a prestigious Boone and Crockett Club Professorship in support of its wildlife research and academic programs. At the invitation of Auburn President Dr. Thomas Leath, Tony Schoonen, chief of staff to the renowned conservation organization, presented a campus-wide seminar at the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences on Sep. 28.

Schoonen’s talk, “Understanding Conservation: Responsible Commercial Use of Natural Resources,” explored the principles of wildlife conservation and the sustainable and ethical use of natural resources for commercial and recreational hunting and fishing.

Founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1887, the Boone and Crockett Club promotes wildlife conservation and vicarious management of big game and associated wildlife in North America. The club and its sister organizations advocate for the conservation of wildlife, fisheries, and natural resources and to support the responsible use of natural resources.

The Boone and Crockett Club Professorship would help ensure Auburn’s students are prepared to lead in this growing sector,” said Leath. “By partnering with one of the world’s most renowned conservation organizations, Auburn is poised to offer even more outstanding learning experiences for our students and open the door to tremendous economic opportunities for our state.”

Through research and collaboration, the Boone and Crockett Club Professorship will help drive policy to ensure landowners have healthy wildlife populations, and resources and research for habitat enhancement and conservation of big game.

“Legislation that assures robust wildlife populations will result in higher land values, increased job opportunities within the state, and the state and the sustainability of our natural resources,” said Janaki Alavalapati, dean of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. “We continue to engage with Auburn’s leaders and students to ensure Auburn is vibrantly recognized for its wildlife research and academic programs. Based on the stature of its programs and the potential for faculty support, the Boone and Crockett Club Professorship encourages the school to pursue the creation of a Boone and Crockett Club Professorship at Auburn.”

“Auburn is a leader in wildlife management and conservation education, and establishing a Boone and Crockett Club Professorship would help ensure our students are prepared to lead in this growing sector,” said Leath. “By partnering with one of the world’s most renowned conservation organizations, Auburn is poised to offer even more outstanding learning experiences for our students and open the door to tremendous economic opportunities for our state.”

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Alumni & Friends | FEATURE STORY

LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Auburn alumni fly high in top leadership roles at Ducks Unlimited

By Maggie Smith

From the director of conservation operations in the southern region to the head scientist at Ducks Unlimited, leaders in the wildlife sector are shaping the future of conservation efforts. Auburn alumni play a significant role in shaping and inspiring the next generation of conservation professionals.

“I was fortunate to have a great team of faculty advisors while I was at Auburn. Their direct interest in me greatly shaped and inspired my development as a conservation professional.”

- Nick Wiley

As an alumnus from the Auburn Family, Nick Wiley ’86, chief conservation officer at Ducks Unlimited, is proud to continue his service to the organization he loves. Wiley credits his time as a graduate student at Auburn for fueling his desire to follow in his footsteps as a conservationist. He says the social science are an important convergence that is foundational to the profession. Wiley encourages students who wish to follow in his footsteps as a conservationist to dream big, set big goals and never compromise on those goals.

Another Auburn alumnus contributing to Ducks Unlimited’s conservation efforts is Chad Manlove ’98, managing director of the development department for the organization. “I am responsible for managing a fundraising team of staff and volunteers within the southern region to implement a comprehensive major gift program,” he said. “I also maintain a personal portfolio of high and top priority gift prospects.”

Wiley noted that because competition among wildlife-related jobs is fierce, he always encourages students to pursue a master’s degree in their field of interest and consider volunteering at a conservation organization like Ducks Unlimited. “By earning a master’s degree in wildlife sciences or similar, you have a competitive advantage in securing a permanent job with a non-profit wildlife sector,” he said. “The oral and written communication skills I gained have been essential in maintaining long-term relationships with potential supporters of Ducks Unlimited.”

Auburn alumni also found opportunities to make a difference at Ducks Unlimited. Chad Manlove, the national director of event fundraising, holds a few close relationships that are foundational to the profession. “I was fortunate to have a great team of faculty advisors while I was at Auburn. Their direct interest in me greatly shaped and inspired my development as a conservation professional.”

- Nick Wiley

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- Tom Moorman

Tom Moorman ’87, chief scientist at Ducks Unlimited, feels his time at Auburn earning a wildlife sciences master’s degree rounded out his education and gave him a broader view of the organization’s conservation efforts. “I was fortunate to have a great team of faculty advisors while I was at Auburn. Their direct interest in me greatly shaped and inspired my development as a conservation professional.”

- Nick Wiley

Another Auburn alumnus contributing to Ducks Unlimited’s conservation efforts is Craig Lobdell ’86, director of conservation operations. “My role is to work on national and international partnerships and conservation programs, and serve as the staff liaison to the Auburn conservation and research team,” he said.

To help prepare students for the workforce, Auburn also has a presence in the wildlife sector. “The oral and written communication skills I gained have been essential in maintaining long-term relationships with potential supporters of Ducks Unlimited.”

Although each alumnus took different paths, all credit Auburn University for providing the groundwork for their careers.

“My work changed my life - the combined wildlife ecology education at Auburn, graduate work on the waterfowl that included working with several other grad students and the guidance I received from my advisor, Dr. Guy Baldassare, really shaped my future.”

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Academics & Learning

ACHE approves new degree and online graduate certificate

In December, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education approved the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences' new degree offerings in wildlife enterprise management. Enrollment begins in the spring for students who will take classes primarily in the SFWS in partnership with Auburn College of Human Sciences and the Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism College of Business. Courses will include wildlife management, hotel and restaurant management and accounting and marketing. In addition to earning a new bachelor's degree, students will have a minor in business. The agency also approved the school's new One Online graduate certificate. The 15-credit hour program will examine public health threats including infectious diseases, and assess strategies for creating sustainable local and global ecosystems. The concept, promoted by the CDC, follows the premise that health-related interactions among people, animals and the environment have profound influences on disease risk, transmission and prediction efforts.

Auburn University and Atlanta Audubon Society team up to study West Nile virus presence linked to type of trees, variety of birds and forest size

Michael Buckman

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences recently hired Michael Buckman, former director of the Cornell University’s Day Butterfly Center at Cayuga Gardens, to serve as manager of the Kreher Preserve and Natural Center, or KPNC. Buckman will oversee communications, development and marketing for the KPNC, as well as provide overall administration management to include strategic planning, capital projects and personnel.

SFWS Student Services and student club leader hosted a great Fall Icebreaker event for SFWS students. The event was held in the Auburn Student Center. A total of more than 150 students, faculty and staff gathered to enjoy food, fellowship and fun.

SFWS Sheds workers who participated in the 2018 Career Fair. The event is an opportunity for students to network with potential employers, while gaining a better understanding of current job availability within private, corporate and governmental organizations.

Eckhardt selected to teach you about science through global STEM mentoring program

Forestry and Wildlife Professor Lori Eckhardt will be a STEM Unlester to all high school students in an upcoming initiative in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The initiative is called STEM Mentors. This program is a collaboration between United Technologies Corporation and the New York Academy of Sciences. “I believe that having a mentor can make a difference in choosing a career path or for high school students,” Eckhardt said. “I also have a positive impact on my development and academic achievement, and it is critical in helping youth expand and develop their interest in the fields of STEM.”

Fall Graduation

SFWS celebrates its fall 2018 graduates with a ceremony and reception on Dec. 15. The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences’ Weaver Lecture Series and graduate student scholarship were recognized. SFWS graduate students participated in the 2018 Graduate Research Symposium. The research builds upon a 2016 Auburn University study that showed that West Nile virus is lower among forested areas with pine trees.

“If our goal is to develop a more accurate risk prediction system to determine which neighborhoods are at higher risk,” Lockaby said. “The information we gathered could help in the allotment of resources to battle West Nile virus. It also permits us to improve our understanding of why mosquitoes and other pestiferous animals change their behaviors.

“I don’t understand all factors that influence the presence of birds that infect mosquitoes, and it’s known what areas are ideal breeding grounds for the mosquitoes, which transmit the disease to other species,” Capinera said. The CDC recommends that people try to avoid mosquito bites by wearing long sleeve shirts and using insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, IR3535 and permethrin, as well as wearing light-colored and loose clothing.

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences’ new degree offerings is available at sfws.auburn.edu. More information about the latest program offerings is available at sfws.auburn.edu.

Research

Auburn University and Atlanta Audubon Society team up to study West Nile virus presence linked to type of trees, variety of birds and forest size

Auburn University researchers and Atlanta Audubon Society volunteers studied birds and mosquitoes at 20 sites this summer in and around Atlanta — finding that the presence of West Nile virus is associated with different types of trees, variety of birds and size of forest patches. “If you increase the forested areas, especially with more pines, more non-carrier birds will inhabit the area, which will lower the probability of having a West Nile ‘infested’ bird,” said Grove Lockaby, associate dean for research in Auburn’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. The researchers found:

- Larger forested areas of 80 to 140 acres have fewer West Nile virus-borne birds, but also have more non-carrier birds. Additionally, there are more non-carrier birds in the forest.
-cardinals, birds that carry West Nile virus, are more prevalent type of bird visiting small forest patches; thus, those areas have higher West Nile virus risk. A small forest patch is more successful in attracting mosquitoes, but also by identifying birds by their sound. They recorded the locations in a database using GPS and GIS coordinates.

Atlanta Audubon is thrilled to be partnering with Dr. Lockaby and others from Auburn University. Atlanta is known as the City in a Forest so learning more about the role of our tree canopy in bird biodiversity, ecosystem health and human health are of the utmost importance,” said Adam Bienal, Atlanta Audubon Society executive director.

There’s a long way to go before we can provide a more accurate risk prediction system to determine which neighborhoods are at higher risk,” Lockaby said. “The information we gathered could help in the allotment of resources to battle West Nile virus. It also permits us to improve our understanding of why mosquitoes and other pestiferous animals change their behaviors.

Auburn University professor says seasonal water deficits may limit benefits for plant growth of earlier, more non-carrier birds.

“Mentoring helps build self-confidence, as well as skills in leadership, communication, critical thinking and academic readiness,” said Eckhardt, who learned of the program through Sigma Xi, the National Scientific Research Honor Society. “Dr. Eckhardt’s includes effort and service to help others in educational settings throughout the world is admirable and reflects the enthusiasm she has for our faculty members to share their knowledge and skills in a global setting,” said Janaki Alavalapati, dean of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

The school has also made the following faculty appointments since the last report at the annual conference. The Wildlife Society has elected as fellow of The Wildlife Society.

Auburn University professor says seasonal water deficits may limit benefits for plant growth of earlier, more non-carrier birds.

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences’ new degree offerings is available at sfws.auburn.edu.
SFWS celebrates success with donors of Because This Is Auburn — A Campaign for Auburn University

Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences donors recently joined with administration, faculty and staff to celebrate the successful close of Because This is Auburn — A Campaign for Auburn University.

The reception and dinner at Auburn’s historic Pebble Hill honored donors who contributed toward the school’s $19.8 million goal and the university’s $1 billion goal.

The school raised $25,449,813, representing 128 percent of its total campaign goal. SFWS was the first campus constituency to reach its goal, doing so in July 2017, six months ahead of schedule.

Gifts to the campaign supported the creation of five new degrees, 30 new scholarships and five new professorships. Philanthropic support also funded the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center, the naming of the EBSCO Atrium and the McCrary Institute and the creation of the Auburn Oaks at Samford Park, among other initiatives.

Donors recently joined with administration, faculty and staff to celebrate the successful close of Because This is Auburn — A Campaign for Auburn University.

In addition to academic support, scholarships have enabled me to participate in a life-changing study abroad trip to New Zealand and Fiji,” she stated.

“This success rested on the shoulders of 6,559 donors to the school during the campaign, including the 1,726 new donors who gave to the school for the first time,” he stated. “All of their support and guidance helped the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences go beyond its goal and achieve success.”

To commemorate the occasion, donors signed a section of timber etched with the campaign total and split by the new portable sawmill, the product of a successful Tiger Giving Day.

Visitors to the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences will find the timber proudly displayed in the halls, commemorating the tremendous outpouring of donor support to the historical campaign.

Donors recently joined with administration, faculty and staff to celebrate the successful close of Because This is Auburn — A Campaign for Auburn University.

Attendees of the celebration included, from left, Joanna and Ken Nichols, Elmo Ziebach, Tom and Susan Fell and Nancy Ziebach.

President Steven Leath addressed donors and friends during the event.

Campus Chairman Marc Walley, right, is pictured with his parents Jane and Bill Walley, and his wife Penny Walley.

In The Spotlight

Evan Wheeler
Wildlife Sciences

“My favorite part of my research has been traveling to new areas to meet with a variety of stakeholders, ranging from private landowners to government agency officials, and discussing land management techniques and objectives.” -Evan Wheeler

Evan Wheeler has always known Auburn University’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is a cut above the rest when it comes to graduate education. “I chose Auburn for my undergraduate degree because Auburn is without question the top university in Alabama for forestry and wildlife sciences,” said Wheeler, a master’s student in wildlife sciences. “I chose to return for graduate school because I felt that the project that I am working on was a good fit for my ecological interests and would be valuable in developing skills that will help me make a successful and impactful biologist.”

As a graduate research assistant under SFWS Assistant Professor William Gulsby, Wheeler focuses on identifying how planting density and management approaches for plantation longleaf pine stands impact timber stand structure and habitat quality for focal wildlife species. “From a timber stand perspective, we are assessing the effects of planting density on longleaf pine stocking rates, height and basal area over time,” he said. “From a wildlife habitat perspective, we aim to quantify how longleaf pine planting density and prescribed fire regime influence the composition and structure of understory plant communities, which are primary predictors of wildlife habitat quality.”

He also said that specific objectives include determining the effects of longleaf planting density and management approaches on habitat suitability for Northern Bobwhites, broad-narrowing habitat for Eastern Wild Turkeys and forage production for white-tailed deer.

Wheeler’s main roles within the research project are to conduct all of the field data collections and work with research committee members on data analysis and preparation of scientific manuscripts. “My favorite part of my research has been traveling to new areas to meet with a variety of stakeholders, ranging from private landowners to government agency officials, and discussing land management techniques and objectives,” he said. “Observing how site conditions and management regimes have shaped longleaf stands has been integral to advancing my understanding of the complexities of longleaf pine silviculture and wildlife habitat management.”

Wheeler credits the SFWS faculty for providing him with the knowledge he needs to be a successful researcher. “The faculty and staff are exceptional at providing graduate students with technical expertise and motivational support to help guide them through the complexities of a graduate-level research project, while encouraging independent work and thought,” he said. Wheeler recently accepted a position with the Georgia Wildlife Foundation as a private lands biologist specializing in longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat enhancement.

Of the position, he said he is confident that the skills he is developing, along with the professional networking in the department and beyond, will be important to his post-graduate career development.