FEATURE STORY
Inspiring Global Change
Hangqin Tian traces his path to scholarly excellence from China to Auburn

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New degree programs showcased during Auburn's homecoming game

Each football season Auburn University selects outstanding and impactful academic programs to highlight on the field before home football games. The School of Forestry and Wildlife Science was recently recognized during the homecoming game against Kent State. Specifically, the school's new and innovative degree in geospatial and environmental information, sustainable biomaterials, and packaging and wildlife enterprise management were the focus of a 20-second video spot on the Jordan-Hare Stadium jumbotron. Dean James K. Alavalapati and professors Susan Pan, Mark Smith and Khan Vu, were on the field representing the school. In addition, a new story was published in the football program and on the Auburn website, along with social media, and other communications and marketing efforts. The integrated multimedia campaign provided SFWS with significant exposure to a large audience, both at the game and online.

Wildlife Extension Specialist and Professor James Armstrong retires as emeritus professor

James B. Armstrong began his career at Auburn University as an assistant professor in 1966 and retired as professor and extension wildlife specialist on July 1, 2015, becoming an extension coordinator of the Forestry and Wildlife Resources Program from 2009–2015. Armstrong was named the status of emeritus professor in recognition of his distinguished mentorship to Auburn University. He received a bachelor’s from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and a master’s degree from Texas A&M University, both in wildlife management. Armstrong focused on non-traditional topics such as forestry and wildlife interactions. He also devoted his efforts to the wildlife community. He retired from Auburn in 2015.

Woodland Wonders Nature Preschool

The Kirkwood Nature Center has introduced the community to the innovative and revolutionary concept of nature-based, emergent learning with the first nature preschool in east Alabama. The newly established Woodland Wonders Nature Preschool launched this summer with its first class of 12 students. "You may have heard of the nature preschool concept, a movement in innovation, child-led education and early intervention. Woodland Wonders is the first nature preschool in Alabama, and one of only 25 nationally recognized programs," said Michael Buckman of Woodland Wonders.

Environmentally literate children grow up to become informed adults who are more likely to maintain a delicate balance between natural and human processes. Woodland Wonders fosters that balance in a delicate environment in the forefront of their lives with our precious and irreplaceable earth. "Yet, more and more children are growing up without that critical environmental literacy. Woodland Wonders is growing at a time when sustainable environmental awareness and action are critical," Buckman said. "The importance of environmental awareness cannot be overstated as the human species is facing the biggest challenge thus far." Buckman said "We, more than any other species, are growing up without that critical environmental literacy. Woodland Wonders aims to change that trend and ensure that students start their lives with our precious and delicate environment in the forefront of their thoughts and actions."
Five Star Preserve preserves the inaugural scholarship for wildlife enterprise management students

Aliens Five Star Preserve has established the inaugural celebrations in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences for students who are pursuing the new multidisciplinary degree, wildlife enterprise management. ‘We did as Five Star is a 501(c)3, an independent nonprofit hunting preserve nestled in between the Appalachian Mountains in the north, and the Southern Coastal Plains to the south in Coosa County, Alabama. The scholarship was born from one of Five Star’s core principal, to preserve wildlife habitat and education.

Academics & Learning

Spring Graduation

Auburn University’s Spring Graduation Sessions begin with an opening commencement held on May 8. Graduates degrees are conferred in a variety of fields, including sciences, arts, business and education.

Academics & Learning

SFWS PhDs, students from Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, participate in the spring commencement ceremony. Of the 1,650 degrees conferred at Auburn’s spring commencement ceremony, 346 degrees are awarded in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. 

Dissertation Symposium

Academics & Learning

Documentary funded by SFWS

Auburn Public Television’s “The Global Teaching Academy” is a joint initiative between the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) and the University of Alabama. The program is designed to support high-achieving students in the integration of STEM-related doctoral degrees through research and training experiences. The graduate students and researchers will explore the relationship between cellular processes and environmental factors, and the potential impacts of climate change on wildlife populations and ecosystems. The program is open to undergraduate and graduate students from a variety of disciplines, including biology, chemistry, physics, and computer science.

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Auburn University Professor Hanqin Tian was named a 2019 Andrew Carnegie Fellow and will receive $201,000 to support his research into climate change — “to honor the half of the world’s population — can provide enough food for its citizens without causing detrimental effects on the environment.”

Although a native of China, he became an Auburn University professor in 1995 after his doctoral work at the University of Kentucky.

**Why Auburn**

Tian said he was drawn to Auburn because of its focus on interdisciplinary research, and the university’s support for innovation. He also admired the work done by Auburn’s International Center for Climate and Global Change Research and its impact on the world.

**The Search Committee**

The search committee that brought Tian and Pan to Auburn was made up of members from the colleges of forestry, environment and science, as well as faculty and staff from the Auburn University Office of Research.

**Tian’s Contribution**

Tian’s research focuses on climate change, with an emphasis on the role of forests in carbon sequestration and the impact of climate change on forested ecosystems. His work has been published in numerous peer-reviewed journals and he has received numerous awards for his contributions to the field.

**Tian’s Family**

Tian is married to Shufen “Susan” Pan, his former doctoral advisor and current professor at Auburn University. They have two children, Alex and Tina.

**Tian’s Legacy**

Tian is a highly respected and influential scientist in the field of climate change research. His work has had a significant impact on the understanding of the role of forests in carbon sequestration and the impact of climate change on forested ecosystems. He has received numerous awards for his contributions to the field, including the National Academy of Sciences Award for his work on climate change and the National Science Foundation’s Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers.

Tian’s legacy is one of dedication, hard work, and a commitment to understanding and addressing the challenges of climate change. He is remembered as a mentor, a teacher, and a friend to many who have worked with him throughout his career.

**Tian’s Advice**

Tian’s advice to students and researchers is to never give up on their goals, no matter how difficult they may seem. He encourages young scientists to pursue their passions and to never be afraid to take risks.

**Tian’s Final Words**

In his final interview, Tian said, “I want to be remembered for my contributions to the field of climate change research, and for my dedication to mentoring young scientists.” He also expressed his gratitude to those who have supported him throughout his career.

Tian’s legacy will continue to inspire others to pursue their dreams and to make a difference in the world. He will be remembered as a true leader in the field of climate change research, and as a mentor and friend to many who have had the privilege to work with him.
Auburn University researchers have published a new hypothesis that could provide the foundation for new scientific studies looking into the association of habitat loss and the global emergence of infectious diseases. They presented their research in the paper “The Coevolution Effect as a Driver of Spillover” in the latest issue of the Journal of the American College of Sciences and Mathematics.

The researchers hypothesize that as habitat loss and disease spillover into human populations, this will precipitate the coevolutionary landscape through which the virus gains new capabilities and spreads. Through several case studies, the researchers propose that humans alter the landscape through habitat loss, forest fragmentation, and agricultural practices that create a habitat for spillover of microbes, increasing the probability that any one of these microbes may spill over into humans, leading to outbreaks.

“I believe that the research will impact the way these problems are perceived,” said Ryan Nadel, assistant research professor with Auburn’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. “Our paper presents an evolutionary mechanism to explain the association between habitat fragmentation and disease spillover into human populations, which we hope will complement the ecological perspectives on this global health challenge,” he said. School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean Jarek Abolawoju said the paper’s findings are compelling.

“Dr. Zohdy and her fellow researchers provide noteworthy insights into the field of emerging infectious diseases and the driving forces behind them,” Abolawoju said. “Their findings could result in a significant shift in the way the origins of diseases are perceived.”

Funded by an Intermountain Graduate Program award, the research, from its inception, was a collaborative and fully integrative project, from identifying and acquiring funding to writing manuscripts to organizing conference presentations.

**Study reduces Southern pine seedling mortality**

By Charlotte Martin

Auburn University research has led to a new product that reduces Southern pine seedling mortality for the forestry industry. This is a major accomplishment that will allow forest tree resources to more quickly grow, for longer time periods without detrimentally affecting the seedling survival,” said Ryan Nadel, assistant research professor with Auburn’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

The product from April New, trademarked as Landzing, recently received EPA approval to include coastal seedlings after three years of testing by the Southeast Forest Nursery Management Cooperative at Auburn. The U.S. produce results in 1.2 million pine seedlings per acre and is used on a large-scale, continent-wide basis for almost all Southern pine plantations. It is a barrier that prevents problem seedlings from taking over the field and blocking more desirable seedlings from growing.

Seedlings are typically grown in native soil within fields for about a year before they are removed from the soil, during harvesting, or what is called lifting. They may be planted in areas that have been recently fertilized and field, converting land back into forest. Auburn researchers have found the use of Landzing increased the survival rate by 15 percent, which would potentially yield this growth of an additional 12 million pine seedlings after one year. This product reduces packing, stacking, and replanting—at substantial savings.

“Optimizing is stressful for seedlings and storing forest tree seedlings is a financial challenge for forest managers due to the short time frame between lifting and planting,” said Nadel. “Little research exists between late November and late February, the optimum time period for seedling moved and depleting the supply and decreased survival rates. The seedlings are packed into boxes, bags, or bundles and placed in cold storage for three weeks before being shipped to the field where they are implanted in January. Replanting reforestation throughout the Southeast.

“Weather conditions are not always optimal during the seedling period, so they are harvested from the nursery, requiring seedlings to be stored for longer periods than recommended,” said Nadel. The Auburn University Southeast Forest Nursery Management Cooperative is a regional interagency seedling organization that serves to develop technologies for the commercial production and utilization of forest seedlings in the southeastern United States. The Cooperative is one of several research centers providing assistance to forest managers, seedling suppliers, and policymakers.
Frank Walburn named 2018 Outstanding Alumnus

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences recognized Frank Walburn, Regions Bank senior vice-president of natural resources and real estate, as the 2018 Outstanding Alumnus of the School during the school’s recent awards ceremony. Walburn, a 1979 graduate, has worked in forest and wildlife management for more than 40 years, including forest regeneration, timber and fiber procurement, strategic planning, consulting foreetry and the ground-up development of the state’s first timberland investment fund.

“During his four decades of service, Frank has solidified a reputation as a knowledgeable, ethical and hard-working forester and industry leader with a genuine and authentic concern to give back to his alma mater and the state’s forestry community,” said School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean Janaki Alavalapati. “Frank is truly a role model for our students.”

Walburn said is honored by the recognition.

“If you’ve always given credit for the professional success I’ve had to the ability to network with other professionals, which began for me at Auburn University and continues to this day,” Walburn said. “I’ve understood and prided in that network of the—especially considering the dear, dedicated professional foresters I’ve known over the years. “I feel blessed to know the people, the science and the application of good forestry practices that I acquired at Auburn as an Alumnus of School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.”

Walburn was a member of the Alabama State Board of Registered Foresters for five years beginning in 2006, serving as chair of the board in 2008 and 2010. Additional contributions and leadership positions include chairmanship of the Alabama Forestry Association, and Alabama State Board of Forestry. Walburn plays an active role on the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences board of trustees.

It was during this period that Moultrie was named to the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. The Moultrie Museum Collection consists of a large range of species that represent most of the big game species found on the North American continent. Located throughout the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences and the School of Natural Resources, the collection is a unique and important resource for understanding North America’s natural heritage and includes species such as elk, moose, and bison.

Moultrie, a Birmingham native, who graduated from Auburn University in 1974 with a degree in business administration, has deep roots within the hunting and wildlife industry.

While working for the Southern Company for nearly 40 years, he built his business, hunting and fishing for over 40 years, as well as hunting and fishing for order purchased for the school for the benefit of students and wildlife.

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences recognizes outstanding students annually. Award recipients not only are the graduate of the school, their career demonstrates a history of outstanding contributions to forestry or wildlife science across states, nationally or internationally, while exhibiting exemplary character and integrity. Nominations for the 2018 Outstanding Alumnus Award will be accepted beginning January 2020.

Dean connecting with alumni and friends from across the state

The Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is reaching out to its alumni and friends from across the state. This year, we welcome your attendance at the School’s annual dinner on February 19. Each year, we welcome hand written notes from students. Over the course of four years, over 12,000 hand-written notes from students have been mailed to donors. For more information about the society, visit aub.ie/WWS.

To make a donation or to support one of these events, contact SFWS Development Coordinator Carolyn, and Sharon Tatum, SFWS development coordinator.

Bringing “Big Game” to Auburn

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is now home to a diverse collection of professionally managed big game species thanks to Dean Moultrie, founder of Moultrie Game Feeders and cameras.

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In the Spotlight

Outstanding Graduate Student Anna Tucker is trailblazing research on migratory shorebirds

Anna Tucker, who received her Ph.D. from Auburn University’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, earned two significant recognitions before her commencement in May. She was named one of the University’s Outstanding Doctoral Students and was selected to serve as a graduation marshal for the Auburn University Graduate School.

“It was a real honor to be named one of the Outstanding Doctoral Students as well as a graduation marshal by the Graduate School,” Tucker said. “I’m proud of the work I’ve done at Auburn, and it’s wonderful to have the results of that hard work be recognized by the school.”

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean Janaki Alavalapati commended Tucker’s academic and research achievements.

“Dr. Tucker is certainly deserving of her recent recognition,” Alavalapati said. “Her extensive research and academic accomplishments also shine a light on the outstanding work coming out of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, as well as the guidance of faculty to help develop the potential of our exemplary students.”

Tucker is currently working as a postdoctoral fellow with her Ph.D. advisor, Assistant Professor Cameron McGowan, who is assistant unit leader and a research wildlife biologist at USGS, Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. Her research aims to develop wildlife population models for endangered species classification and recovery decisions. She has been one of McGowan’s Ph.D. students since 2015.

“Anna has excelled in her academic career, raising the profile of my research lab and our school by winning presentation awards at international conferences and publishing her research,” McGowan said. Her avid interest in migratory shorebirds began in her high school years.

“I knew I wanted to pursue some kind of career that would let me study nature and help conservation efforts,” she said.

Growing up in New Jersey, Tucker often traveled from her hometown of Haddonfield to Delaware Bay, where she conducted some of her first field research. While studying at Auburn, she was able to return to that spot. McGowan had researched connections in Delaware Bay, which is a globally important stopover site for migratory shorebirds.

“It’s kind of funny that I had to make it all the way down to Alabama to study birds back in New Jersey, but that’s life.”

- Anna Tucker

Tucker’s dissertation research focused on using a long-term mark-recapture database for migratory shorebirds in the Delaware Bay to evaluate ecological questions that have significant scientific and conservation value.

McGowan said the research is trailblazing.

“Her work will be the first in this system to consider multiple species responses to habitat and resource availability. She is developing new statistical models to analyze these data that heretofore the Delaware Bay research community lacked the skill to implement,” McGowan said.

He added that Tucker’s contributions to SFWS and Auburn go far beyond her commendable research, including her service as a graduate teaching assistant. A course she helped develop for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on population assessment and predictive modeling has been offered three times in three different states to more than 70 students.

He said her leadership on campus is noteworthy as well.

“Within the school, Anna started and leads a group of grad students and post-docs called Quant Club, which meets weekly to discuss current literature and assist each other with analysis problems related to their graduate research,” McGowan said.

“All participants in the group credit Anna for starting the group and helping a number of students with their thesis and dissertation research. She has been a significant asset to our school’s graduate program.”

Graeme Lockaby, associate dean of research at SFWS, was impressed by Tucker from the start.

“My first experience with Anna Tucker involved my research methods class where she proved to be startlingly adept at creative research ideas and science in general,” Lockaby said. “She is truly extraordinary in terms of her abilities and record of achievement, and we are very proud of her as a School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences alum.”

Before coming to Auburn, Tucker earned her bachelor’s in biology at Loyola University Maryland, a liberal arts college that allowed her to pursue science as well as the humanities — a priority for her — and then completed her master’s in ecology at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Tucker is pursuing a career in quantitative ecological research, with an emphasis on applied ecology related to conservation and management issues. In the short term, she is working as a postdoctoral fellow with McGowan and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help develop wildlife population models for endangered species classification and recovery decisions.

“At Auburn, I’ve been able to grow as an independent researcher and teacher,” she said. “Beginning in high school and through my Ph.D., I’ve had incredible mentors that have been instrumental along my entire journey so far.”

SFWS establishes new giving priorities

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is committed to enabling resources that allow the school to stay at the forefront of forestry, wildlife and natural resources education. While all gifts help enable the school to rise to new levels of excellence, the school revisits its funding priorities periodically to allow it to adapt to the changing landscape of higher education. New funding priorities for the next three to five years include the creation of a named deanship, the funding of a Boone and Crockett Club Professorship, scholarships and program support for new majors, graduate support and fellowships, and planned and unrestricted gifts.

Visit sfws.auburn.edu/sfws-priorities/ to learn how these funding priorities will impact faculty and student outcomes. For more information on how you can support these important efforts in the form of cash, securities and real estate, or for information on how to include the school in your estate planning, please contact the Office of Development at sfwsdev@auburn.edu or 334-844-2791.