

Conservation Biology Graduate Program Weekly Newsletter

04 December 2006

A weekly newsletter of the Conservation
Biology Graduate Program

<http://www.consbio.umn.edu/newsletter/>

Submissions to coop0162@umn.edu



Editor's Corner

Welcome to winter! I know that there isn't that much snow out there this morning, but I'm optimistic that there is more where this came from—a lot more! Be sure to get out there and enjoy it while it lasts at the many FREE or nearly free ice rinks, ski trails, and sledding hills near campus. Check out: <http://minneapolis.about.com/cs/sportswinter/a/xcountryski.htm> for ski trails and http://www.exploreminnesota.com/Winter_Activities.html for all kinds of indoor and outdoor winter activities in Minnesota. While there is plenty to do outside, I should also remind everyone that as the semester draws to an end we need to focus beyond the last day of class (Wednesday December 13th) and the snow. Therefore, I've included lots of need-to-know details on degree programs, spring courses, and funding deadlines in this week's newsletter.

Anne Cooper

Lectures/seminars on campus

Conservation Biology

Date: 04 December 2006

Time: 4:00-5:00

Presenter: Dr. Sharon Jansa, Dept, of Ecology, Evolution & Behavior

Title: "Genetic and geographic diversity of Madagascar's native rodents"

Notes: Madagascar is considered one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, in part due to the near total endemism of its mammalian fauna. However, our understanding of species-level diversity within Madagascar is only in its infancy. In this talk, I will present results from my recent research on geographic and genetic variation in Madagascar's endemic rodent fauna. The resulting patterns, coupled with those from the island's other mammalian radiations, are dramatically changing our view of how many species exist in Madagascar and what processes may have promoted their diversification. These studies serve as examples of how phylogenetic and biogeographic studies can shape our understanding of biodiversity in a conservation hotspot.

Please note that we will be moving back to our regular location!

Location: Room 140 in the Plant Growth Facilities Building (At the corner of Gortner and Folwell. Go through the doors behind the Seed of Knowledge sculpture).

As always, coffee and snacks will be provided and all are welcome.
We look forward to seeing you there.

Ph.D. Dissertation Seminar

Date and time: Thursday, December 7, at 10-11AM

Location: Skok Hall, Room 100 St. Paul Campus, UMN

Presenter: Shu-Jin Luo, Conservation Biology Graduate Program

Title: Comparative Phylogeography of Sympatric Wild Cats: Implications for
Biogeography and Conservation in Asian Biodiversity Hotspots

Refreshments will be provided.

Ecology, Evolution and Behavior

Time and date: Wednesday, December 6th 4:00 p.m.

Location: 100 Ecology

Presenter: Dr. Jacques Finlay

Title: "Patterns and mechanisms of biogeochemical responses to warming in arctic watersheds"

Notes: Northern rivers play important roles in linking the biogeochemistry of arctic and boreal watersheds to that of downstream aquatic ecosystems. The nature of the interactions between terrestrial and aquatic environments is changing rapidly with climate warming yet we have a poor understanding of both contemporary relationships, and the direction of change under sustained northern warming. In this seminar I will describe results of recent field studies in Siberia and Alaska to understand the role of rivers in the ecology of the Arctic land-water system.

Coffee, Tea and Cookies

Twin Cities Agricultural Issues Round Table this academic year with two sessions featuring faculty from the Department of Applied Economics:

•Vernon Eidman will speak on Thursday, December 7. His topic will be "Biofuels: Implications for Grain and Livestock Production."

•Kent Olson will speak on Thursday, February 15. His topic will be "The New Farm Bill: Impacts on Minnesota Farms."

Both sessions will be at the Four Points Sheraton Minneapolis. We will gather at 11:30 a.m. for lunch served promptly at noon. The program and discussion follow lunch, and we conclude by 1:30 p.m.

Professor Vernon Eidman, our speaker on December 7, is internationally recognized for his work on biofuels and renewable energy. In his Round Table presentation he will discuss the current status and economics of ethanol and biodiesel production in the U.S., speculate on the rate of growth for these two biofuels over the next five years, and explore some of the likely implications of biofuels growth for farms in the Midwest.

Vernon is former Head of the Department of Applied Economics. In that capacity he coordinated the Agricultural Issues Round Table, so those who do not know him well will remember him as organizer and host of past Round Table sessions. Vernon is a Past President and Fellow of the American Agricultural Economics Association. He is an award-winning teacher and is the author of numerous articles and reports on farm management, risk analysis, and renewable energy. Vernon will be retiring from the University on January 2, 2007, though he plans to continue some of his current work on biofuels and renewable energy. Our session on December 7 will also be a great opportunity to wish him well in his retirement.

The session will be held at the Four Points Sheraton Minneapolis, 1330 Industrial Boulevard, Minneapolis, (Hwy. 36 & Industrial Blvd. — phone: 612-331-1900). Advance

reservations are necessary because we need to make a guarantee on luncheon numbers 72 hours prior to event. Please contact Sue Pohlod at 612-625-8779 or spohlod@umn.edu to reserve space. Luncheon cost is \$30.00 with checks payable to the University of Minnesota. "No shows" and "late cancellations" will be billed for the full luncheon fee.

If you have any questions or suggestions about future speakers or the topics, call me at 612-625-0231. For registration and logistics information, call Sue Pohlod at 612-625-8779. We look forward to seeing you there.

Announcements

Degree programs

Just a reminder, all students who do not yet have met with their committees to develop a degree program, should do so early in the next semester. If you are planning to take your written prelim and do not yet have a program for your PhD approved by the Graduate School, you should convene your committee ASAP and get your program to the CB program for review and approval no later than Dec. 15. You can't participate in the prelim unless you have a degree program approved. For first and second year students, if you plan to apply for a CB summer fellowship, you need your degree program approved before March 1.

Let Anup or I know if you have any questions

Welcome weekend

The time of year has come to begin our search for volunteers to help out with the 2007 Conservation Biology Welcome Weekend (January 18-21,2007). As in years past, there are three ways to volunteer:

1. provide housing by hosting a prospective students
2. provide transportation to and from the airport
3. drive the passenger vans for our tours and activities

If you are willing to help please complete the questions below and email them to Becca Bronk (hunt0448@umn.edu).

Please feel free to contact Becca Bronk, Lauren Brudney (brud0041@umn.edu), Albert Carbo (carbo017@umn.edu), Genya Dana (dana0010@umn.edu), or Sarah Margoles (Marg0058@umn.edu) with any questions regarding volunteering.

The implementation of Grants.gov

While submission of several grant types has already required use of Grants.gov, a major expansion of Grants.gov utilization will take place when NIH requires that all applications for R01 Research Project grants be submitted electronically using Grants.gov for the February 5, 2007 deadline. By fall 2007, all applications to federal agencies for grants or cooperative agreements will be via Grants.gov.

Grants.gov training sessions and on request sessions for faculty groups are available. Check the SPA Web site for Training and Support at

<http://www.ospa.umn.edu> .

E-mail help@egms.umn.edu to schedule a special session for faculty.

Frequently Asked Questions regarding deadlines are available at

<http://www.ospa.umn.edu/policiesandprocedures/deadlines/deadlineFAQs.html> .

Funding opportunities

Applying for a Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship and not quite sure about the paperwork or how to explain your research to people in different disciplines?

Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship Information Session

- 1) what is the application process and timeline – overview by the director of the Graduate School Fellowship Office
- 2) what the selection committee is looking for - advice from a former selection committee member
- 3) how to write a research proposal that "makes sense" across disciplines - insight from a current fellow
- 4) question and answer period

Date and time: Monday December 4, 12:30, @ 110 St. Paul Campus Student Center (see map at <http://onestop.umn.edu/Maps> <<http://onestop.umn.edu/Maps/StCen/>> /StCen/)

OR

Wednesday December 6, 2:30, @ 2-101 Nils Hasselmo Hall (see map at <http://onestop.umn.edu/Maps> <<http://onestop.umn.edu/Maps/NHH/>> /NHH/)

You can apply for this fellowship only after passing the oral prelims. For more details, visit the Graduate School website at <http://www.grad.umn.edu> <http://www.grad.umn.edu/fellowships/enrolled_students/fellowships/enrolled_students/>

New Funding for International Scholarly Activities

The following are new funding programs to promote a global network of scholarship and engagement and encourage interdisciplinary and transnational partnerships. The programs are administered and funded by the Office of International Programs.

Guidelines and application materials: <http://www.international.umn.edu/funding/strategic.html>

Questions: Karen Brown, 612-624-0832 or kbt@umn.edu

Funding for Faculty, Staff, and Colleges/Departments

- Interdisciplinary International Institutional Partnership Grants *Deadline noon on Jan. 29, 2007*
- Interdisciplinary International Research Circle Grants *Deadline noon on Jan. 29, 2007*

Informational Sessions: are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, November 28, 9:00-10:30am, 620B Mayo Building
Wednesday, November 29, 9:00-10:30am, 190F Coffey Hall
Thursday, November 30, 9:00 - 10:30am, 110 Heller Hall
Thursday, November 30, 11:30am-1:00pm, Nolte Library

Funding for Graduate and Professional Degree Students

- OIP Doctoral Fellowships for International Research and Writing *Deadline noon on March 9, 2007*
- OIP International Pre-Dissertation and Small Grants Competition *Deadline noon on Jan. 29, 2007*

OIP International Internship Awards *Deadline noon on Jan. 29, 2007*

More information on guidelines and application forms is available at:

<http://www.international.umn.edu/funding/strategic.html>

Torske Klubben (The Cod Club) Fellowship for Minnesota Residents

Students currently registered for credit in the University of Minnesota Graduate School who are official state-of-Minnesota residents may apply. The award is open to individuals who have an interest in or connection with Norway and/or its culture. Applicants should have a strong, mature, and clearly defined career interest in a specific field, with a sound research or study plan. Applicants must be able to demonstrate outstanding leadership skills and high academic achievement. Preference will be given to students who earned their undergraduate degrees from a Minnesota college or university, or from a college founded by or associated with Norwegian-Americans, such as Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

A stipend of \$10,000 for the academic year. For recipients without another source of tuition support, such as an assistantship, the Graduate School Fellowship Office will provide a Tuition Scholarship for full-time study for the academic year.

Torske Klubben is interested in supporting students of high academic achievement who show great promise of becoming leaders in their chosen profession and/or in the Norwegian- American community, who have a deep and abiding cultural and/or professional interest in Norway (in a historical or present-day context), and who convey a sensitivity to the future of Norway and Norway-America relationships. Need may be taken into account, all other factors being equal.

Complete Fellowship description, application form, and instructions are available on the web at http://www.grad.umn.edu/fellowships/forms/tk_mn_residents.pdf or from the Graduate School Fellowship Office gsfellow@tc.umn.edu

Deadline: March 1, 2005

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships

Scholarship Funding Opportunities for Graduate/Professional Students

Funding available: **Summer 2007** (\$2500 stipend + tuition and selected fees) and **2007-08 Academic Year** (\$15,000 stipend + tuition and fees)

FLAS fellowships promote the study of modern foreign languages within graduate and professional schools. The awards are available on either a 9-month academic year or summer term basis. The fellowships are primarily available to graduate and professional school students studying less commonly taught languages, but students of other languages are also welcome to apply.

For more information, see <http://igs.cla.umn.edu/grad/>

The Udall Foundation

Applications are being accepted for the 2007 Environmental Public Policy & Conflict Resolution Dissertation Fellowship for qualified Ph.D. students. The Udall Foundation awards two one-year fellowships of up to \$24,000 to doctoral candidates whose research concerns U.S. environmental public policy and/or environmental conflict resolution, and who are entering their final year of writing the dissertation. Dissertation Fellowships are intended to cover both academic and living expenses from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008. Please see the brochure for program details. Applications are available at www.udall.gov

While scholarly excellence is of prime importance in selection of fellows, the Foundation is also seeking to identify individuals who have a demonstrated commitment to environmental public policy and/or environmental conflict resolution, and who have the potential to make a significant impact in the real world.

The Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences
(<http://www.lifesci.consortium.umn.edu>)

There are 3 funding opportunities for faculty; graduate and professional students; and departments, programs, or centers. This funding initiative aims to encourage work on the broad societal implications of problems in health, environment, or the life sciences.

The Requests for Proposals (RFPs) may be found at:

<http://www.lifesci.consortium.umn.edu/rfps/> :

1. Request for Proposals (RFP) from GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS to Provide Support for Summer 2007 or 2007-08 (deadline 2/19/07);
2. Request for Proposals (RFP) to Support DEPARTMENT, PROGRAM, or CENTER Colloquia in Summer 2007 or 2007-08 (deadline 2/5/07); and
3. Request for Proposals (RFP) from FACULTY to Fund Interdisciplinary Research, Projects, or Curricular Innovation on Health, Environment, or the Life Sciences in Summer 2007 or 2007-08 (deadline 2/5/07).

The Consortium currently links 18 University programs and centers to examine the legal, ethical, and policy questions raised by the life sciences.

If you have questions concerning these RFPs, please contact Audrey Boyle at boyle032@umn.edu or 612.626.5624.

Audrey Boyle, Project Manager

Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences University of Minnesota Law School

(612) 626-5624

(612) 624-9143 fax

Boyle032@umn.edu

<http://www.lifesci.consortium.umn.edu>

AAUW Career Development Grants

The American Association of University Women will make 60 Career Development Grants of \$2,000-\$8,000 to women in the early stages of a master's degree program who have not received academic degrees in the last 4.5 years. Special consideration will be given to women of color.

DEADLINE: December 15, 2006

http://www.aauw.org/fga/fellowships_grants/career_development.cfm

Short Courses

SAS PROC Mixed—two day training session

Presented by Dr. Micheal Casler, USDA-ARS, US Dairy Forage and Research Center, Madison, WI and Professor of Agronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madsion.

Where: Room 335 Borlaug Hall

When: December 18, 2006 1:00-5:00 PM and December 19, 2006 8:00 AM-12:00 noon.

All interested faculty, staff, and graduate students are welcome to attend. There is no fee for this workshop, but REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

TO REGISTER: reply to Jean Swanson: swans008@umn.edu

Questions: joannlamb@umn.edu

Spring Semester 2007 Courses

Biology, Ecology, and Conservation of Large Mammals FW 8576 / Spring 2007

Credit: 2 credits, A-F

Prerequisites: Graduate standing in a biological science; if space is available, undergrads may be accepted with instructor permission.

Co-Instructors: Peter Jordan & Pete Cutter

Schedule / Time Requirements: One 2-hour session per week (time to be agreed among prospective students for maximum scheduling convenience), assigned readings, one class presentation, probably one weekend field-trip

Meeting Room: To be announced

Course Objective: To provide a critical overview of the biology, ecology, management, and conservation of large mammals, much in the form of case studies by experts with world-wide research experience. Students are expected to become familiar with all of the large mammals of North America.

Overview: This is a graduate-level course providing a conceptual and practical framework for understanding large-mammal biology and ecology and how conservation of these species has been and is being addressed. Topics covered in readings and discussions include:

- taxonomy
- ecological physiology
- environmental ecology
- predation
- plant-animal interactions
- parasites and diseases
- social dynamics and other behavioral aspects
- large mammal roles in ecosystem processes
- management / conservation challenges and approaches
- capture / immobilization
- current research / monitoring techniques

Meetings combine lecture and discussion. Geographic scope of taxa considered is global, including terrestrial, marine, and freshwater biomes. Taxonomic and topical emphases will reflect expertise and current research of both speakers and students. The co-instructors cover some subjects, but the majority of topics are addressed by guest speakers. The last time the course was offered (Spring 2005), invited speakers included Glenn DelGiudice, Dave Garshelis, Craig Packer, Dan MacNulty, Sam McNaughton, Dave Mech, Don Siniff, Dave Smith, and Tony Starfield. We anticipate that many of these guests will be with us again along with several new ones. Approximately one quarter of each student's effort is a review of the natural history, distribution, and conservation status of a taxonomic group of large mammals of his/her choice (within the constraints of having these selections represent a wide taxonomic and geographic sample).

As in past years, the course may include a weekend field trip to northern Minnesota to visit one or more active research project(s).

Requirements and Evaluation:

- Attendance at all meetings and active participation in class discussions
- 20-40 pages reading per week
- Natural history / status review of a large-mammal taxon with a class presentation and written summary
- In past years there has been a verbal, round-table final exam, emphasizing North American large mammals or other species discussed. This would not, however, count for any more than a small part of the final grade.

If you are interested or would like to learn more, please contact either Peter Jordan (ph: 612-624-9281 / email: pajordan@umn.edu) or Pete Cutter (ph: 612-626-1213 / email:

cutt0016@umn.edu). We will also be able to direct you to students who have taken the course.

Analysis of Mark-recapture Data FW 8200 Seminar

Dr. Todd Arnold is teaching this seminar (Tuesday evenings, 5:00-8:00 pm, 20 Feb to 27 March).

Mark-recapture (or mark-resighting) data can provide a powerful means of estimating population size and important vital rates like survival, natality, and immigration, but the statistical programs for analyzing these data can seem daunting at first. In this 6-week seminar, we'll take a whirlwind tour of Program MARK and use it to analyze various forms of mark-recapture data, examining everything from population size based on live-trapping data to adult survival based on telemetry data.

Contact Todd Arnold for more information on this course (arnol065@umn.edu).

Sustainable Aquaculture FW5455

How can we make the world's fastest growing food sector environmentally and socially responsible?

Dr. Anne Kapuscinski is teaching this 3 credit course (MW 4:30-5:45, 490 Hodson Hall) this spring. There is also an optional hands-on lab section where you can learn to raise fish (FW4292, section1). <http://fwcb.cfans.umn.edu/courses/fw5455>. This course meets the Environment and International Perspectives Themes and it is now an elective for the new Sustainability Studies Minor www.sustainability.umn.edu.

Graduate Seminar in Climatology (GEOG 8270)

Spring 2007

Topic: Climate Models and Modeling

Meets Wednesdays from 2:00-4:30 p.m. (West Bank)

Instructor: Katherine Klink

Science and Policy of Global Environmental Change

EEB/FR 5146, T, Th, 10:15 - 11:30 am

Instructors: Sarah Hobbie, Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, shobbie@umn.edu, Steve Polasky, Applied Economics and Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, spolasky@apcc.umn.edu, Peter Reich, Forest Resources, preich@umn.edu

Course Description: Through readings, lectures, discussions, and presentations this course will introduce the critical issues underpinning global environmental change and its biological implications. The course will examine current scientific literature in exploring evidence for human-induced global change, including changes in biodiversity, land use/land cover, the global N cycle, the global C cycle and climate change. We will also discuss the potential effects of these global changes on a wide range of biological processes. In addition, we will examine some of the economic drivers, economic consequences, and political processes related to global change, including local, national and international laws and policies that impact global change.

Please feel free to contact any of the instructors with questions about the course!

Sarah E. Hobbie, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Admissions

Dept. of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior University of Minnesota

1987 Upper Buford Circle

St. Paul MN 55108

ph: 612-625-6269

FAX: 612-624-6777

Office: 502 Ecology, St. Paul Campus

Research Web Page: <http://www.cbs.umn.edu/labs/shobbie/>

EEB Graduate Program Web Page: <http://www.cbs.umn.edu/eeb/graduateprogram/>

PFF

The Preparing Future Faculty Program (PFF) offers graduate students and post-doctoral fellows opportunities to develop teaching skills, understand ways in which students learn, explore faculty roles in higher education, and prepare teaching as well as job search materials with colleagues and mentors. Read on to discover how our Retreats and Classes might help you prepare for your future career--and increase effectiveness in your current teaching and learning roles on campus.

January 2007 Retreat:

If you're interested in finding out more about Preparing for a Job Search, Using PowerPoint for Active Learning, Developing a Syllabus that Works for You and Your Students, or Finding an Academic Position that Fits, please join us on January 11, 2007, for the Preparing Future Faculty Retreat. As a participant, you'll be able to attend workshops that on these topics and ask faculty from local colleges and universities about finding an academic position that's right for you.

A \$10 registration fee includes food and workshop materials. We hope to see you there if you want to know more about teaching in higher education and the job search process. Your early registration allows us to prepare materials for a smooth retreat -- and to assure you a seat at the retreat.

For Retreat Registration:

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/retreat/index.html>.

Spring 2007 Courses:

Brief descriptions of the Spring 2007 PFF core courses (GRAD 8101 and GRAD 8102 are listed below. To find out more about PFF, begin at <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/index.html>.

Please note, we also offer several one-credit special topics courses (GRAD 8200) for individuals with teaching experience or who have completed a PFF or departmental teaching course course. The Spring

2007 one-credit/8200 courses will be: Teaching With Technology, Job Search Strategies in Language and Literature Disciplines, and Multicultural Teaching and Learning Across the Disciplines.

Registration information for all courses is listed at OneStop under the Graduate School's GRAD designator.

****GRAD 8101: Teaching in Higher Education (3 credits)**** This course is designed to help graduate students and post-doctoral fellows become more effective teachers as they develop an understanding of teaching and learning in higher education.

Participants practice teaching and draft the essential documents of a teaching portfolio. Courses are co-taught by a member of the PFF staff and a faculty member who is recognized for teaching excellence.

Spring 2007

Mondays 5-8 pm / Minneapolis

Tuesdays 2:30-5:30 pm / Minneapolis

Thursdays 2:30-5:30 pm/ St. Paul

Fridays 9:05-12:05 / Minneapolis

****GRAD 8102: Practicum for Future Faculty****

(3 credits, prerequisite GRAD 8101 or equivalent department teaching course; e-mail pff@umn.edu for permission number) Under the guidance of the course instructor and a faculty mentor from a local university, participants will plan for their future careers and

consider how best to structure the remainder of their graduate education or post-doctoral appointment for future success in the job market. Activities include examining a variety of institutional contexts in higher education, gaining valuable teaching experience at a host institution, exploring the faculty role beyond the classroom, and creating a job search portfolio.

Spring 2007

Mondays 2:30-5:30 pm / St. Paul

Thursdays 2:30-5:30 pm / Minneapolis

****GRAD 8200: Teaching and Learning Topics in Higher Education**** (1 credit; may be repeated)

Spring 2007

Fridays, 10:10 am - 12:05 pm. Class meets six times.

Teaching With Technology - Practices, Problems and Promises

Tuesdays, PACE Program for CSOM students. Contact Steven Huchendorf.

Fridays, 9:05 am - 12:05 pm. Class meets five times. Language and Literature Job Search Strategies

Mondays, 5 - 7:30 pm. Class meets five times. Multicultural Teaching and Learning Across the Disciplines

Job postings

Postdoctoral Fellow at the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) Network

IFRI is looking for a postdoc to help coordinate its research, data collection, and networking activities. The IFRI network comprises a group of approximately 50 researchers interested in forestry, livelihood, and governance. Currently the program is coordinated through the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan and the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University. Collaborating research centers are located in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, India, Nepal, Thailand, Bolivia, Columbia, Guatemala, and Mexico. The fellowship will involve some travel, and close coordination with Arun Agrawal (the network coordinator), and other IFRI network researchers. It will lead to approximately 50% of the fellow's time being available for research, and 50% of time being committed to IFRI-related activities. The position will be based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The selected candidate will have a strong background in forestry-related issues in developing countries, demonstrate evidence of ability to publish independently, and be able to work with survey data. The Fellowship will provide \$38,000 plus benefits, and a budget for travel and research expenses. We are interested in appointing the IFRI Fellow as early as possible.

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, their CV, and two letters of recommendation to Natalie Dushane by email at nadushan@umich.edu or by mail at Natalie Dushane, the IFRI program, SNRE, University of Michigan, 440 Church Street, Ann Arbor MI 48109. We will begin to review applications from December 31, 2006 and continue until the position is filled.

Many thanks
Arun Agrawal

News you can use

When Is a Fish Like a Carrot?

Published: December 4, 2006 NY Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/04/opinion/04mon3.html>

The answer is: When it is a farmed fish. The Department of Agriculture routinely distinguishes between organic carrots and the regular kind when it decides whether to grant an “organic” label. But it has gotten into trouble recently over how to decide whether a fish — especially a fish like salmon — is organic or not. The fishing industry is eager to call wild salmon “organic,” as a way of denoting quality to consumers.

But there’s a problem. Carrots are either grown organically — without conventional pesticides — or they’re not. A wild carrot, to most people, is barely a carrot, but the flower called Queen Anne’s lace.

A wild salmon is a glorious thing, and every bit as delectable as its cousins raised in fish farms that are, or are not, organic. But to call a wild salmon organic is to demean it, since it comes from a place where the word has no meaning. That is a little like calling the ocean “natural.” The trouble is, there is no U.S.D.A. “wild” label, nor should there be, for that would represent some final surrender to ourselves.

There are really two answers to what is, after all, a problem of terminology. The first is consumer education. There are few shoppers out there who know as much as they need to know about the fish they buy, how the fish are harvested or what effect industrial fishing is having on the oceans. The other answer is to continue to be strict and judicious with the U.S.D.A. “organic” label, and use it as a tool to help distinguish between fish farming that is done responsibly and fish farming that is not.

Too often, consumers assume that fish farms are inherently “organic,” perhaps merely because they are aquatic. Nothing could be further from the truth. They can be as organic as the finest pasture-raised organic pig farm or as inorganic as a hog confinement operation. Let’s use the word “organic” as a way to distinguish between them, all the while hoping that there remain wild salmon out in the oceans, beyond any of our categorizing.

Date Saver

Looking for a way to unwind after finals? Love coots? If so, please join Courtney Amundson for her upcoming M.S. defense seminar

Presenter: Courtney Amundson, advised by Dr. Todd Arnold

Title: The Impacts of Helminthic Parasites on Survival of American Coot (Fulica americana) Chicks

Date and time: Thursday, December 21st at 1pm

Location: Borlaug 335

Abstract: Parasitic infections can lead to decreased body condition, reduced nesting success, and lowered mating success in birds, but little research has been done on the effect of parasites on offspring survival. In 2004 and 2005, I examined the effect that helminthic parasites have on offspring survival in American Coots (Fulica americana) by experimentally dosing day-old chicks with the anthelmintic drug fenbendazole (treatment) or sterile water (controls) and measuring their survival to 40 days of age. In 2005, I overlaid the experimental treatment of chicks with an independent experiment providing medicated (anthelmintic) or plain (control) feed to incubating adults to determine if chick survival was further influenced by parasite burdens among parents. I marked hatching chicks using colored nape tags, reobserved them at 10-day intervals

from 0 to 50 days of age, and then estimated their survival to 40-days of age using open-population mark-recapture analysis. In both years, offspring survival was a function of anthelmintic treatment. In 2004, chicks receiving fenbendazole had 49.9% (SE = 5.1%) survival to 40 days of age, versus 40.3% (SE = 7.1%) survival for untreated chicks ($z = 1.84$, $P = 0.065$). In 2005, offspring survival to 40 days post-hatch was an additive function of both offspring and parental treatment; cumulative 40-day survival was 54.5% (SE = 7.4) when both parents and chicks were treated, 47.1% (SE = 7.8%) when just chicks were treated, 45.8% (SE = 7.7%) when just adults were treated, and 37.5% (SE = 9.1%) when neither were treated with fenbendazole (chick treatment effect: $z = 1.80$, $P = 0.07$; parent treatment effect: $z = 1.67$, $P = 0.09$). My study provides compelling evidence that helminthic parasites lowered reproductive success in American Coots.

Sweets and refreshments will be provided.