Recent publications in the school


This publication is based on Roland’s BSc Honours project (2017). Congratulations Roland!


This is Samarth’s first publication and at first author. Samarth is presently doing his PhD in Plant Biology. Congratulations Samarth!


PhD oral exam completed

Gregory Baxter-Parker successfully defended his PhD thesis on Wednesday 26th June. Greg’s thesis was titled Induction of Innate Immune Response by Physical Trauma and Infection: Quantification through analysis of Biomarkers. Congratulations Greg!

Pictured: NZ examiner A/Prof Elizabeth Ledgerwood from the University of Otago’s Biochemistry Department, Greg and his supervisor A/Prof Steven Gieseg.
In the spotlight

UC shines at NZ Marine Sciences Society annual conference

The Marine Ecology Research Group had another grand showing at the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society annual conference in Dunedin (3-5 July). David Schiel led off in the first morning by outlining some of the marine ecological infrastructure changes related to the Kaikōura earthquake, including altered reef topography, increased benthic temperatures and decreased light from sedimentation in nearshore waters. This was followed by Tommaso Alestra (changes and recovery of seaweed-dominated communities), Shawn Gerrity (impacts on pāua populations), PhD student Dan Crossett (subtidal community changes), Leigh Tait (NIWA, multi-spectral surveys) and Mads Thomsen (heat wave effects). Yuriy Malakhov presented on estuarine benthic algae dynamics and Mike Hickford on oceanic influences on whitebait development. Mareike Babuder presented a poster on light dynamics of kelp. A highlight was PhD student Spencer Virgin presenting on his previous work in Canada on salt marsh restoration, for which he received the Conference Conservation student award. Also from School of Biological Sciences, PhD student Thuy Nguyen (Marsden, Davison) presented on pāua ecophysiology, and Michelle Marraffini (Stouffer Lab), in another highlight, presented a talk on species interactions in marine fouling communities, which won the MPI student award for best use of quantitative methodology.

MERG PhD student Spencer Virgin delivering his award-winning talk on salt marsh restoration at the NZ Marine Sciences Society annual conference in Dunedin.

Finally, the University of Canterbury crew took home the most prestigious accolade, “The Battle of the Labs” award, prising it out of the begrudging hands of the University of Auckland. The criteria for this award are vague, the judges anonymous, and the prize outstanding (see photo). The competition for this award was intense, with one over-striving research group dressing up as penguins for the conference dinner. MERG triumphed, however, apparently in recognition of their putting no effort at all into impressing the judges. The UC team plans to make several “improvements” to the trophy before bringing it to the 2020 conference in Sydney (pending biosecurity approval).

The much-coveted “Battle of the Labs” stargazer trophy. There are no recognised criteria for receiving this award but, nonetheless, it was a high honour. Presented to the stunned Univ. of Canterbury crew at the NZ Marine Sciences Annual conference dinner.

Student success

Yuriy Malakhov (PhD candidate in Ecology) was recently awarded with the Junior Bledisloe trophy by the Canterbury Botanical Society. He was their 2017 scholarship recipient.
UC celebrates outstanding teaching
Infectious enthusiasm for their subject, extensive expertise and engaging teaching methods marked out three University of Canterbury (UC) academics for special recognition on 1 July.

Associate Professor Ashley Garrill from Biological Sciences, Professor Alessandro Palermo from Civil and Natural Resources Engineering and Dr Marlène Villenueve from Geological Sciences each received a Teaching Award at the opening ceremony of UC’s Teaching Month.

Biodegradable coating to help achieve food security
Associate Professor David Leung’s biodegradable coating can help achieve food security in an environmentally friendly and consumer-conscious way.

Read the full article at Phys Org.

UC ecologist leads urgent global call to change river management
International experts, led by a Canterbury ecologist, are calling for urgent global change to how the world’s rivers are managed and modelled.

University of Canterbury Rutherford Discovery Fellow Dr Jonathan Tonkin and a range of international scientists contend we can no longer solely aim to restore river ecosystems to historical or ‘natural’ states, because often, and increasingly, those states are themselves changing.

Read the full article at UC Communications.
Nature article: Prepare river ecosystems for an uncertain future.

Postgraduate news

R-Ladies Christchurch chapter
We are the newly created Christchurch chapter of the R-Ladies global organization, whose mission is to promote gender diversity in the R community via meetups and collaboration. We welcome all gender minorities in STEM, including but not limited to cis/trans women, trans men, non-binary, genderqueer, bigender and agender people, and we are planning to meet once a month.

As a diversity initiative, the mission of R-Ladies is to achieve proportionate representation by encouraging, inspiring, and empowering people of genders currently underrepresented in the R and general STEM community. R-Ladies’ primary focus, therefore, is on supporting minority gender R enthusiasts to achieve their programming and data science potential, by building a collaborative global network of R leaders, mentors, learners, and developers to facilitate individual and collective progress worldwide.

We are excited to start up a local chapter, but first we would like to know who our local audience is and what their interests are. If you’re interested in R and/or data science, please reach out by answering a few questions in our start-up survey: https://forms.gle/4uM2PcutJbAiNzfs9

We welcome your input and your suggestions. If you have any comments or questions, feel free to contact us at chch@rladies.org, on Twitter @RLadiesChch, and join the Meetup group at https://www.meetup.com/rladies-christchurch.
PhD position in tropical Agroecology/Malawi
Applications close: 12 July

In a paired design the implementation of local diversification measurements will be studied in farms along a gradient of landscape complexity to explore how agroecological practices and land use impact biodiversity (birds, pest insects and natural enemies), pest control, and crop yields.

We are seeking a highly motivated PhD student with strong interest and expertise in insect ecology, tropical ecology or agroecology. 
Full details

M.Sc. student/field assistants wanted

Searching for students/field assistants for next field season in New Caledonia (Oct-Dec 2019). Ideally, for 2/3 students interested in conducting research for their M.Sc. projects on birds behavioural ecology, but under and post graduate students keen to actively take part in the field work are also welcome.

Going to work on:
- arms race between Shining Bronze-cuckoo and Fan-tailed Gerygone
- spatial ecology of the Fan-tailed Gerygone
- breeding ecology of small passerines in New Caledonia
Contact: Dr. Alfredo Attisano

Vacancies

Fixed-term position with the kakī/black stilt recovery team (Band)

The kakī/black stilt recovery programme are looking for a team member to work with the captive management team over our busy breeding season.

The position is based in Twizel at the kakī/black stilt captive management centre, and will run from the 25th October 2019 until the 14th January 2020 (12 weeks). The captive management centre operates 365 days per year, this position will be on a Friday–Tuesday roster and will also be required to work public holidays. Accommodation may be available on site by negotiation.

The main duties of this position will be:
1. Preparing captive diet and ensuring birds are fed according to best practice
2. Daily husbandry of hand-reared chicks (weighing, monitoring, cleaning and feeding)
3. Assisting with egg incubation under the supervision of senior staff
4. Aviary and facility maintenance (weeding, raking gravel, cleaning ponds, netting repairs)
5. Assisting with medical procedures for kakī under the supervision of senior staff
6. Assisting with banding juvenile kakī under the supervision of senior staff

The following qualities or qualifications would be desirable for this position:
1. A full NZ drivers license (essential)
2. A current 1st aid certificate
3. A current growsafe qualification
4. 4WD competency
5. Banding qualification or experience, particularly with waders
6. Previous experience working with birds, particularly in captivity
7. A high level of attention to detail
8. Ability to work well in a small team, and at times unsupervised
9. Self motivation, particularly with repetitive and sometimes mundane tasks

Applications should include a CV, cover letter and details for at least 2 referees.
To apply, or for further information please contact Liz Brown (lbrown@doc.govt.nz)

Ecology Technician position
Permanent senior ecology technician role going at the University of Auckland, in the School of Biological Sciences.

Check it out

What movie is that?
Here kitty, kitty, kitty. Meow. Here Jonesy.
447: Oh, please don't worry. I'm not going into that cavity. That nerve's already dying. A live, freshly-cut nerve is infinitely more sensitive. So I'll just drill into a healthy tooth until I reach the pulp... unless of course you can tell me that it's safe.

Answer: Marathon Man (1976), Dr Christian Szell (Laurence Olivier) speaks to the strapped in Thomas “Babe” Levy (Dustin Hoffman) before beginning his torture...
Guessed by: Brigitta Kurenbach, Sharlene Wilson
Notable mention for guessing the correct actor: Greg O’Beirne

Classified

Great condition textbooks needed for donating to good cause
Hello science people!
Textbooks less than 15yrs old are needed. If you are anything like us you’ll have textbooks sent to you that you don’t use and you may even have many textbooks in great condition cluttering up the place. How many new or good condition textbooks do you have under15yrs old?

I’m working with Ben in Canada @ https://textbooksforchange.com/
He said he may be keen to organise shipping depending on the amount we would have to donate to them. If you can let me know the amount you have and I can include yours in the shipment

Sharlene Wilson  |  School Administrator / PA to Head of School.
School of Physical and Chemical Sciences  |  Te Kura Matū
Room 708, West Building.
DDI: +64 (3) 369-4324

Tutor wanted
Year 11 student requires tutoring for their NCEA Level 1 biochemistry work. Contact is Alizon Paterson.

Editor/proofreader available
Experienced editor/proofreader available online for essays, dissertations, theses and for postgraduates’ papers and publications. Specialist help for students whose first language in not English (ESL).
Local honey for sale
Harry’s 2018 honey is finally here! **New orders can be placed in July.** 1 kg $10, 500 g $5. 2017 season, multi-floral Ilam garden honey in plastic pottles. Soft granulated. I will deliver to the School of Biological Sciences or arrange pickup/delivery elsewhere. Harry Taylor, email: harry.taylor@canterbury.ac.nz; ph/txt: 021 292 5319

Proofreading and Editing Services
Let me help you produce writing that is clear, error-free and consistent. **Joan Gladwyn**, BSc, MSc, CPhys, DipEdit
joan@properwords.co.nz (+64) 21 213 6511
and now for something completely different...

Some of the general crew went out for mid winter Christmas lunch at Garden restaurant. Here we are showing off our themed presents, “tube of something”. Penny was in her element with baby Maeve.

Thought for the week

A girl should be two things, classy and fabulous.
~ Coco Chanel

Contact details

If you have items of news or interest that you would like included in this newsletter, contact the admin office before noon on Friday at BIOLAdminSharedMailbox or phone ext 95200.