



From the Director

Hello all – welcome once again to the RSB newsletter. The intent of this monthly missive is to share and celebrate achievements, acknowledge arrivals and departures and to communicate important information on school business as needed. The latter replaces a barrage of emails you would receive otherwise, so I do hope you read it (still here?).

This month we have an interesting spread of items, which illustrate the different dimensions of RSB as a community. There is good news on recent grants, media and awards, formation of new research network and a summary of an important outreach activity led by Juliey Beckman. As important is the information from the IDEA committee and our WHS team – each of which reflect our joint efforts to make RSB an inclusive and safe place to work. The IDEA committee sponsored the school morning tea this month and I was delighted to see the strong attendance and engagement at that. Soon we will share with you an important outcome from this committee's work, and I encourage others to participate in that group as requested.

One less-fun part of my job is to nag people about taking accrued leave, especially those who have accumulated excess leave (note to self.....). Taking time off – and actually putting it into the eforms system – is really important for two reasons. First and foremost is your own mental health. The second, is financial. The college, and hence RSB, is now penalised via reduced budget for excess annual leave, and from 2026 the same will be true for long-service leave. So, having excess leave is bad not only for your well-being, but also for RSB's ability to support research and teaching.

On that happy note, please keep reading.

Craig

Welcome

We welcome **Rachel Mapperson** (Head Group, E&E) as a Research Officer in the Head Group in E&E. Rachel will be helping to establish a Diversity Scanner, a high throughput system combining high-res image analysis and DNA sequencing for species identification and discovery.

Welcome to **Nghiem (Nemo) Nguyen** (Brock Group, BSB) who has moved from the Price Group to the Brock Group to start a postdoc project in collaboration with Nourish Ingredients funded by an ARC Linkage grant.



Grants awarded

Congratulations to the Following ARC Discovery Early Career Research Award awardees:



Alexander Skeels (Cardillo Group, E&E) *How environmental change drives the origin and decline of biodiversity*, valued at \$486,675.

Hendry Susila (Pogson Group, PS) *Decoding plant organellar signaling under heat stress*, valued at \$484,087.

Michael Taleski (Djordjevic Group, PS) *Unlocking yield gains with a new pathway targeting plant nitrogen usage*, valued at \$467,603.

Congratulations to the following Ecological Society of Australia Holsworth Wildlife Research Endowment Grant awardees:

Nicola Haggerty Mayers (Whitney Group, PS) *Coupled Therapy: Maximising forest resilience capabilities through syntropic phytobiome relationships*, valued at \$6700.

Naomi Laven (Noble Group, E&E) *Fitness Consequences of Natural Sex-Reversal in an Australian Alpine Skink*, valued at \$6785.

Sofia Bolcato (Aplin Group, E&E) *The influence of landscape and urbanisation on behavioural diversity and cultural richness of sulphur-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*)*, valued at \$8450.

Thomas Hanley (Nicotra Group, E&E) *In Situ Alpine Flora Phenotypic Plasticity in response to Acute and Prolonged Abiotic Stress*, valued at \$8500.

William (Billy) Bray (Langmore Group, E&E) *Loss of song culture in the critically endangered regent honeyeater*, valued at \$8500.

Congratulations to **Chun-Chieh Liao** (Magrath Group, E&E) who was awarded a 2024 Government Scholarship to Study Abroad (GSSA) by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan, valued at \$USD 16,000.

Congratulations

Congratulations to **Emma John** (Supervised by Rod Peakall, E&E, and Darren Wong, Peakall Group, E&E) who has been awarded the 2024 Director's Prize in Honours [mid-year]. This award is given to recognize students who achieve a final mark of 90% or higher for their Honours year. Her thesis is titled *Exploring the mutational hotspots underpinning floral pigmentation variation in Australian Caladenia*.



Congratulations to Alexander Maier (BSB) who was awarded the 2024 Bridget Ogilvie Medal from the Australian Society for Parasitology. The Bridget Ogilvie Medal is an award for an Ordinary member or Fellow of the Australian Society of Parasitology who has made an outstanding contribution to parasitology education.

In the Media



Alexander Maier (BSB) has spoken with a number of media outlets such as ABC Canberra about his research on a delivery system that uses cholesterol to deliver drugs more efficiently to parasites. Read the full ANU Reporter article on the [RSB Website](#) or [ABC news](#) for more information.

News

The beginning of the RSB Wheat Group

In response to the growing interests in wheat-related research at RSB, an RSB Wheat Group has been established this month. The first event of the RSB Wheat Group has been organised with great success. On Friday, August 9th, ICARDA visiting scientists Anna Backhaus and Miguel Sanchez-Garcia presented the talk: “Pre-breeding, Breeding & Beyond at the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas” to the RSB Wheat Group. Going forward, the RSB Wheat Group will focus on establishing a support network for active wheat researchers at RSB and engaging with visiting researchers collectively. We hope to facilitate communications between RSB research groups with diverse interests in wheat. For further information or to join the RSB Wheat Group, please contact Zixiong Zhuang (Way Group, PS) at Zixiong.Zhuang@anu.edu.au.

Outreach

International Biology Olympiad Success

In January 2024, 23 year 10-11 high school students from across Australia qualified via a National entry exam to complete two weeks of intense (1st year Uni and above) biology classes in the RSB Teaching Labs as part of the Biology Olympiad Summer School. Those students undertook theory and practical examinations with the top four selected to represent Australia at the [International Biology Olympiad](#). Having been congratulated in a ceremony at Parliament House, in July they travelled to Astana, Kazakhstan to compete individually against ~240 students from 80 countries. A huge congratulations to our student team who were extremely successful; winning a gold, a silver and two bronze medals. Congratulations also go to Program Director, A/P Julie Cooke (UC), Deputy, Juliey Beckman (BTLC), their team of visiting tutors and our invaluable contributing members from RSB.

From the IDEA Committee

The Rights, Relationships and Respect in Research training for HDR candidates and supervisors has been recommended by the College of Science. To find out more and complete the online training, visit [R4: Rights, Relationships and Respect in Research](#).

The RSB IDEA committee is looking for new members! If you are interested in contributing to initiatives to improve inclusion, diversity, equity and access within the school, please contact Alison Bentley (Alison.Bentley@anu.edu.au) or attend our next meeting on the 9th of September at 11am, Rm S204, Gumnut meeting room, Robertson Building (46).

From the WHS Committee

WHS Audit results. The RSB has recently completed our annual WHS Audit; we are pleased to announce that we have received an audit score of 90.47%. This is the highest score we have received in five years of audits. The Auditors remarked, “The RSB has a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward safety culture. All levels of staff demonstrate understanding and care towards safety culture.” We would like to thank those who participated in the audit; we could not have reached this level without the commitment of the entire RSB community.

Chemical purchasing policy. We have published a new [chemical purchasing policy](#) covering all hazardous, controlled, and imported chemicals. It details the current chemical ordering processes and any licensing or other documentation required to purchase chemicals. As part of this process, we have developed a [letter of authority to possess](#) that can be used to purchase S4 drugs from local suppliers.

WHS changes coming. We are developing a centralised risk assessment index on SharePoint that will act as a single point of reference for all risk assessments across the School. All risk assessments will be available for all staff and students to view and sign-off. It will be the home of the School's collection of standardised chemical risk assessments that will roll out over the coming months. This means that you won't need to keep local copies of common risk assessments.

Papers

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