Australian National University

Research School of Biology Newsletter

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From the Director

Welcome to the 2024 academic year and our first newsletter for 2024. A deliberately admin-light January gave most of us a chance to rest, reconnect with family and friends, and, perhaps, consider our goals for 2024. I hope this year brings good things for all our staff and students. There is certainly much to celebrate with multiple awards for service, teaching and research summarised below. And we did have a rather good end of year party to wrap up 2023.

Over recent weeks, many of our academic staff were deeply engaged with preparation of Expressions of Interest for ARC DP25 grants. This is a chance to think through and pitch the research challenges that excite us. I think many of us discovered that the new short-format project descriptions are not necessarily easier that the long-form for full proposals. But there was less pain with career achievements (ROPE) and, of course, no budget required at this stage. In the end we had a great response, with 24 RSB-led EoIs and a further 8 externally led proposals. Many thanks to all those involved in preparation, checking & processing and peer-review of proposals. Good luck all.

Continuing with research-related news, congratulations to Prof Adrienne Nicotra who is to be appointed as the next CoS Associate Dean for Research. Adrienne, ably supported by Charlie and our Research Committee, has done a great job in leading us through the maze of engagement and discussions around RSB's research strengths and priorities and with getting the RC up and running. In her new role she will set the tone at the college level and help us all respond to expectations of the new DVCRI (and Ute as PVC-II) around research engagement and infrastructure.

Our teaching is off to a good start for 2024 with solid enrolments across the board, and a notable build-up of the Masters cohort. And we have a big an excited group of commencing Hons and MScA students who will get their first taste of independent research and bring energy to us all. As always, the smooth functioning of our teaching program is only possible because of the excellent work done by BTLC admin and lab teams, led by Maja & Juliey. Thanks to all.

Enjoy the following!

Craig

Welcome

It is a great pleasure to welcome to **Alison Bentley** (PS) to our academic staff as of early January. As a group leader in RSB, Alison will lead an exciting program of translational research for crop improvement. Alison is also appointed as Deputy Director of the Agrifood Innovation Institute (formally CEAT) – see more here.

Welcome to **Yiqing Chen** (Farine Group, E&E). Yiqing completed her studies at Sun Yet-sen University, China, and has joined the Farine Group for her PhD. Her MSc was a comparative study of divorce rates in birds, and she will be continuing to use these comparative methods to understand the evolution of different forms of wintering and breeding social systems.

Welcome also to **Samuele Ramellini** (Farine Group, E&E). Samuele completed his studies at the University of Milan, Italy, where he contributed to a number of studies—notably working on lesser kestrels for his MSc. He has joined the Farine Group, where he will be uncovering the secrets of fairy-wren's wintering societies, using both historic and new data collected from the superb fairy-wren project at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Farewell

This month, the Williams Group (PS) said "Goodluck and catch you soon" to Daniel Yu who has taken up a postdoc position at the John Innes Centre (Norwich, UK). Daniel submitted his PhD thesis "Structural Investigation of the interaction between SIX effectors and resistance proteins" in November 2023. During his PhD he made important contributions to the field. We will miss his enthusiastic and tenacious approach to his craft, his expert knowledge and willingness to assist in anything protein biochemistry! We are also thankful for his talents in terrarium design. Please use the following doi links to view his publications:

https://doi.org/10.1094/MPMI-08-21-0218-TA

https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.89280.2

Farewell to **Elizabeth McLennan** (BSB) who finished up her position as Technical Services Officer at RSB on the 29th of January. We wish her all the best for her future endeavours.

Grants awarded

Sasha Mikheyev (E&E) was awarded $188,000 for a CSIRO Industry PhD (iPhD) Program (Own Purpose), and $48,000 for Partner Contribution grant, from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) .

Aude Fahrer (BSB) was awarded $25,000 for a Research Matching Grant from Tour de Cure.

Adele Lehane (BSB) was awarded $862,849.38 for an Ideas Grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Megan Head (E&E) was awarded $19,410 for a Marine Vertebrate Grant from the Sea World Foundation.

George Cavic (Fahrer Group, BSB) was awarded

$10,000 for a PhD Support Scholarship from Tour de Cure.

Nils Kreuter (Sequeria Group, E&E) was awarded $6,750 for a Holsworth Wildlife Research Endowment from the Ecological Society of Australia.

Congratulations

We have many awards to announce across service, teaching and research. Forgive us if we've missed something, please let us know and we'll be sure to put it in the next edition!

Congratulations to **Alexander Maier** (BSB) who has been named science teacher of the year in the 2023 Awards for Teaching Excellence by Universities Australia. See the full article on the RSB Website. Alex will also be undertaking a series of interviews in the coming weeks about his award, so keep an eye on the RSB and BSB twitter accounts for more news.

The 2023 Anjeli Nathan Memorial Scholarship has been awarded to **Edward Lawrence**, an honours student in the Farine Group (E&E). This award commemorates the life of former RSB student Anjeli Nathan, and is awarded to an outstanding applicant engaged in field-based biology research. Many congratulations to Edward for this achievement.

Congratulations to **Jay Nicholson** (Nicotra Group, E&E) was recently awarded a Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens Student Research Scholarship for the 3 years of their PhD.

Congratulations to **Emily Roycroft** (Moritz Group, E&E) for receiving a Vice Chancellor's Award for Early Career Academic Excellence.

Congratulations to **Gavin Huttley** (E&E), **Scott Keogh** (E&E) and **Adrienne Nicotra** (E&E), who were awarded an ANU 25 Year Service award.

Congratulations to the RSB recepients of the College of Science Service Awards for 2023. The RSB Building and Infrastructure Team who received a Team Service Contribution Award and **Karen Scholte** (BTLC) who received an Outstanding Leadership Award.

Congratulations to the RSB recipients of the College of Science Teaching and Learning Awards for 2023. **Ben Corry** (BSB) won the award for Excellence in Supervision. **Yie Chang (YC) Lin** (Corry Group, BSB), who won the award for Excellence in Tutoring or Demonstrating. **Alexander Maier** (BSB) and **Giel van Dooren** (BSB), who won awards for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. **Kiaran Kirk** (BSB) who won the award for Teaching Excellence.

Congratulations to **Laura Hardy** (Stone Group, E&E), **Evie Hodgson** (van Dooren, BSB) and **Russell Woodform** (Furbank Group, PS) who were the recipients of the Research School of Biology Director's Prize in Honours for 2023.

Congratulations to **Ciara Wallis** (Corry Group, BSB) who won a prestigious travel award from the Biophysical Society to attend their annual meeting in Philadelphia. Congratulations also to **YC Lin** (Corry Group, BSB) and **Elaine Tao** (Corry Group, BSB) who received travel awards to attend the Worldwide Sodium Channel conference in Switzerland. Ciara, YC and Elaine together with **John Tanner** (Corry Group, BSB), **Ruitao Jin** (Corry Group, BSB) and **Sitong He** (Corry Group, BSB) formed a roving lab gang that in various combinations presented at both these conferences well as at Oxford, Warwick, Columbia & Cornell Universities, and at the Flatiron institute in NYC. Well done to all of them for representing RSB so well!

Congratulations to **Audrey Prasetya** (Moritz group, E&E) who won the prize for best student talk at the International Biogeography Society biennial conference in Prague.

PhDs commenced

Edward Asare (Mathesius Group, PS)

Danish Baig (Schwessinger Group, PS)

Sabrina De Zen (Nicotra Group, E&E)

Shefali Dorepalli (Aplin Group, E&E)

Fadzai Victor Makota (van Dooren Group, BSB)

Hafiz Sabah-Ud-Din Mazhar (Danila Group, PS)

Callum O'Flaherty (Furlong Group, BSB)

Samuele Ramellini (Farine Group, E&E)

PhDs awarded

Yun Li (Moritz Group, E&E) *Small insects, Big pattern: macroevolution of a hyperdiverse beetle radiation.*

Callum Bryant (Ball Group, PS) *Exploring drought resillience in Australian tree species.*

Ivan Vinogradov (Jennions Group, E&E) *Cognitive Abilities in Fish: Biological Predictors and Impact on Reproductive Success.*

Oliver Stuart (Mikheyev Group, E&E) *Genetic and phenotypic evolution of the critically endangered Lord Howe Island stick insect, Dryococelus australis (Montrouzier, 1855), in captivity.*

News

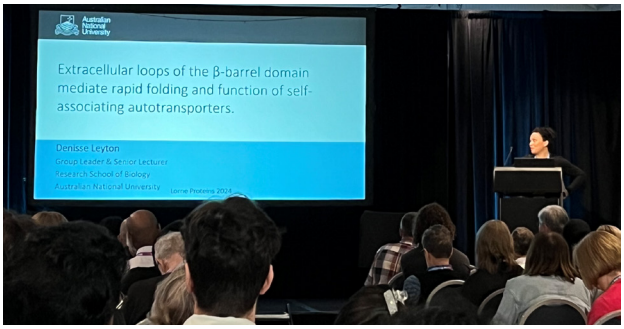
Introducing the **Agrifood Innovation Institute (AFII)**

We would like to announce that from the 1 January 2024, the Centre for Entrepreneurial Agri-Technology (CEAT) changed its name and will continue its work as the Agrifood Innovation Institute.

The name change reflects the evolution of our mission and scope, as well as our status as an ANU Innovation Institute, as we continue our work in the agrifood space. To find out further details, please read here.

WIN News and The Canberra Times reported on research conducted by PhD researcher **Murraya Lane** (Marsh Group, E&E) on koala survival after bushfires.

Lucy Aplin (E&E) was interviewed by the Riotact on her research with Canberra cockatoos.



Denisse Leyton (BSB) was selected to speak in the Sparrow Session at the recent Lorne Proteins conference. The Sparrow Session recognises mid-career researchers who have consistently contributed to protein research in Australia.

Rosalita Rosenberg (Cardillo Group, E&E) attended the Marine Geosciences Masterclass run by the ANZIC International Ocean Discovery Program. Through the masterclass, she gained a real taste of how marine geoscience research is conducted, both on land and on a research vessel. A highlight of the program was the opportunity to work with the other attendees to plan their own research voyage, where they learned how to approach the scientific and logistical challenges associated with deep sea research. The experience provided the opportunity to talk to experts in their fields, from a NASA scientist who created scientific software for the Mars Rover to geobiologists figuring out how corals are built and maintained over geological time.

Emily Roycroft (Moritz Group, E&E) spoke with ABC News and The Conversation about the discovery of two new species of native Australian mice. Please see the full article from the Conversation here, and listen to her inverview with the ABC here.

Sasha Mikheyev (E&E) spoke with The Conversation regarding a new citizen science project to study Australia's honey bees. See the full article here.

RSB PhD Graduate **Weliton Menario Costa** (Kruuk Group, E&E) has taken over the internet with their Dance your PhD competition winning video "Kangaroo Time (Club Edit)". See the full article here.

Papers

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