



### New Director for RSB

Professor **Craig Moritz**

(E&E) commenced as the new Director of RSB, effective March 1st. Craig has a long history with



ANU, having done his PhD here (in RSBS) from 1980-1984 and then coming back to RSB as Professor and Director of the Centre for Biodiversity Analysis in 2012. In between, he spent time at the Univ. Michigan, Univ. Queensland and Univ. California, Berkeley. He is an evolutionary biologist with a passion for understanding how the extraordinary biota of Australia came to be. He likes nothing better than remote field work in northern Australia to catch lizards, or planting trees on his farm on the Murrumbidgee.



RSB Directorship passed from Scott Keogh to Craig Moritz.

## CONGRATULATIONS

### Australian Academy of Science Awards

**Susanne von Caemmerer** (PS) was a recipient in the [Academy's 2021 honorific awards](#), which recognised 24 outstanding Australian scientists. Susanne was a recipient of the inaugural [Suzanne Cory Medal](#), and was recognised as the pre-eminent authority on modelling metabolic, physiological, structural and environmental aspects underpinning photosynthetic CO<sub>2</sub> fixation in plant leaves. Her research, aimed at improving photosynthesis in crops to increase their yields and adapt to climate change, is now applied worldwide.

**Xiaoxiao Zhang** (ARC DECRA Fellow, Rathjen and Williams Groups, PS), was one of four recipients of the 2021 [JG Russell Award](#), which provides an additional \$7K to ARC DECRA projects. Xiaoxiao's research investigates disease resistance in cereal crops, and she aims to reduce waste in global food production and address the environmental impact of toxic pesticide use.



Recipients of Australian Academy of Science awards. Susanne von Caemmerer (right) was a recipient of the inaugural Suzanne Cory Medal, the and Xiaoxiao Zhang (left) received a JG Russell Award. (See under 'Congratulations'.)

### Elections

**Megan Head** (E&E) is Vice-President elect of the [Australian Evolution Society](#).

### Grants

**Christina Spry** and **Kevin Saliba** (Saliba Group, BSB) have won a large [NHMRC Ideas Grant](#). \$758K CIA - Christina Spry; CIB - Kevin Saliba; CIC - Leon Hugo (QIMR). *Spinosyns as endectocides for blocking transmission of malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases.*

**Ben Corry** and **Josiah Bones** (Corry Group, BSB) have been awarded \$10K from the Replacing Animals in Medical Research Fund for a grant entitled *Replacing animal testing with computational predictions of coronavirus pathogenicity to test the safety of COVID19 vaccine candidates and predict the danger of future outbreaks.*

The **Corry Group** (BSB) also received [one of five NCI Australasian Leadership Computing Grants](#). These are the largest computing grants in Australia, and will make an enormous impact on the group's research.

### Scholarships

**Rita Tam** (Honours Student, Schwessinger Group, PS), received the [ANU Chancellor's International Scholarship](#) under the category of Postgraduate International Applicants.

**Rhiannon Schembri** (Honours Student, Bromham Group, E&E) was awarded the [Anjeli Nathan Memorial Scholarship](#).

### Society and conference awards

**Hannah Carle** (PhD Student, Meir Group, PS) was awarded second place for the Ecological Society of Australia (ESA) student prize for Outstanding Spoken Presentation, and Overall Winner for best poster at the British Ecological Society (BES) 'Festival of Ecology', also to be featured in the BES newsletter '[The Niche](#)'. Hannah's presentations were from the first chapter of her PhD, which is focused on using functional traits to predict the survival and growth outcomes of rainforest trees.

**Alex Yi Yang Chen** (PhD Student, Jennions Group, E&E, supervised by Bec Fox) was awarded best poster at the World Congress of Marine Biology.

**Upama Aich** (PhD Student, Jennions Group) was awarded a [Rosemary Grant Research grant](#) by the Society for the Study of Evolution.

## PHDs SUBMITTED

**Kiran Javed** (Bröer Group, BSB), *Development of biomarkers for inhibition of SLC6A19 - a potential target to treat metabolic disorders.*

**Diego Márquez Antivilo** (Farquhar Group, PS) *Dynamics of water and carbon dioxide gas exchange on the adaxial and abaxial surfaces of leaves.*

**Nghiem Nguyen** (Price Group, PS) *Examining the interactions of cyanobacterial Rubisco.*

**Chen Wang** (Solomon Group, PS)  
*Identifying pathogenicity factors in the wheat pathogen *Zygomycetia tritica*.*

**Mahboobeh Behruznia** (Gordon Group, E&E)  
*Genetic Structure of *Escherichia coli* strains isolated from septic tanks in the Canberra region, Australia.*

## PHDs AWARDED

**Han Lee** (Djordjevic Group, PS)  
*Identification of the *CEP1* peptide receptor in *Medicago truncatula*.*

**Sarah Shafik** (Martin Group, BSB)  
*Exploring the substrate specificity of the *Plasmodium falciparum* 'chloroquine resistance transporter'.*

**Alyssa Weinstein** (Peakall Group, E&E)  
*Pollination ecology of Australian sexually deceptive orchids with contrasting patterns of pollinator exploitation.*

**Arid Arifin** (Linde Group, E&E)  
*Diversity of *Tulasnellaceae* mycorrhizal associations of Australian terrestrial orchids.*

**Eve Cooper** (Kruuk Group, E&E)  
*The age-old question: evolutionary causes & ecological consequences of ageing in the wild.*

## IN THE MEDIA

A [paper](#) by Anastasia Dalziell, Alex Maisey, **Rob Magrath** (E&E) et al. entitled 'Male lyrebirds create a complex illusion of a mobbing flock during courtship and copulation', achieved widespread media coverage; 270 press items, including those in *Nature*, *Science*, *New Scientist*, *Cosmos*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and *Australian Geographic*. The estimated audience was >900K.



Male lyrebirds were found to mimic a mobbing flock during copulation or when females 'break off' courtship, creating the illusion of a nearby threat.

A [paper](#) by Ross Crates, **Naomi Langmore** (E&E) et al. entitled 'Loss of vocal culture and fitness costs in a critically endangered songbird' was covered by over 170 news outlets.



Populations of the Regent Honeyeater have reached such low numbers that young males are not getting a chance to learn mating calls from other adults.

A [paper](#) by Carlos Pavón-Vázquez, **Ian Brennan**, **Scott Keogh** (E&E) et al. entitled 'A comprehensive approach to detect hybridization sheds light on the evolution of Earth's largest lizards', was covered in *The Guardian*, *Australian Geographic* and other online science news sites.



Genetic data reveals that millions of years ago the Komodo dragon interbred with an ancestor of the Australian sand monitor, and may have originated in Australia.

**Aude Fahrer** (BSB) was interviewed on ABC 666 local radio to explain genome sequencing of COVID.

**Karen Ford** (Foley Group, E&E) was featured in *The Canberra Times*: [From black ash to green shoots: hope for an adorable night animal.](#)

**Constanza Leon** (Head Group, E&E) was featured in [BBC's Animal Einsteins](#) due to her PhD study on white winged choughs.

**Adrienne Nicotra** (E&E) was featured in a [video](#) produced by the College of Science, entitled *Climate change in the Australian Alps*.

## NEWS

### HDR conference and induction

Thirty-three HDR student presentations were delivered at the HDR conference on 15 April. The winners of the Hiroto Naora Best Presentation prizes were: **Joseph Chung** (Jennions Group, E&E), **Jenni Hayward** (van Dooren Group, BSB) and **Holly Beckett** (M. Ball Group, PS).



2021 RSB HDR conference participants. (Image: S. Wragg). [See a larger version of this photo](#)

The conference followed a highly successful (and entertaining) student-led induction event for new PhD students comprising a range of activities over two half days.

### Vale Jeremy David Pickett-Heaps

One of the illustrious founder members of RSBS passed away on 11 April 2021.

Jeremy David Pickett-Heaps FAA, FRS worked in the (then) Department of Developmental Biology from 1968-70. Jeremy's surveys of ultrastructural aspects of cell division in green algae (many collected from Lake Burley Griffin and Sullivan's Creek) led him to a new formulation of the evolution of the Plant Kingdom, a landmark contribution in the plant sciences, now confirmed and fleshed out by sequencing data. [Read more.](#)



The [Australasian SynBio Challenge](#) has started its second year! **Joseph Brock** (BSB) and **Xiaoxiao Zhang** (Williams and Rathjen Groups, PS) are the Chair and Secretary of the organising committee. This year they have recruited 10 keen students to the ANU team with a \$4K cash budget from RSB and ARC CoE in SynBio (RSC) in addition to ~\$6K of in-kind support per team from industrial sponsors (CSIRO, TWIST, IDT, NEB, Main Sequence Ventures and Blackbird Ventures). **Andrew Bowerman**, **Melanie Carmody** and **Diep Ganguly** (Pogson Group, PS) and **Xiaoxiao** will mentor the ANU team.

**Nicky Aitken** (Ecogenomics and Bioinformatics Lab) ran a 3-day workshop on the fundamental aspects of molecular lab research in late April.

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

**Soumi Bala** was appointed Technical Services Specialist, PS Divisional Support Team.

**Benjamin Durant** was appointed Senior Technical Services Officer, E&E Divisional Support Team.

**Christine Larson** was appointed Plant Services Coordinator, Plant Services Team.

**Benjamin Parker-Brown** was appointed Senior Purchasing Officer, Purchasing and Store Team.

**Sam Jahromi** was appointed Acting Senior Student Administration Officer, Biology Teaching and Learning Student Administration Team.

**Sarah Kaines** was appointed Technical Services Officer, PS Divisional Support Team.

**Brad Rath** was appointed Store Assistant, Purchasing and Store Team.

**Jenny Rath** was appointed CEF Coordinator, Plant Services Team.

**Monica Ruibal** was appointed Technical Services Specialist, E&E Divisional Support Team.

**Karen Scholte** was appointed Interim Team Leader, Biology Teaching and Learning Student Administration Team.

**Trent Wilson** was appointed Technical Services Coordinator, Building & Infrastructure Services Team.

**Steven Worthington** was appointed IT Client Services Officer, IT Services Team.

## WELCOME

The School welcomed 25 Honours students (below) and 21 PhD students this semester.



RSB welcomed 25 Honours Students (Image: S. Wragg).

The Corry Group (BSB) welcomes three new PhD students. **John Tanner** joins us from Western Australia to work on the molecular modelling of malaria membrane transporters; **Yie Chang Lin** is studying how we sense mechanical forces; and **Josiah Bones** is examining the molecular steps involved in coronavirus invasion into host cells.

**Lachlan Sweeting** has been appointed to Purchasing Officer, Purchasing and Store Team.

**Hannah Wilson** (PhD Student, Solomon Group, PS), is working on the mechanism of PR1-mediated plant immunity.

**Sheehan Yang Xin** has been appointed to Divisional Administrator/ School Education Outreach Officer, BSB Divisional Support Team.

**Nicolette (Ming) Yue** has been appointed to IT Client Services Officer, IT Services Team.

## FAREWELL

**Maider Iglesias Carrasco** (Head, Noble and Jennions Groups, E&E) is taking up a post-doc at CSIC in Sevilla, Spain.

**Ashutosh Das** (Mikheyev Group, E&E) has left and returned to the Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

**David Duchene** (Moritz Group, E&E) has left RSB to continue his Carlsberg post-doc in Copenhagen, Denmark.

**James Forge** (IT Team) joined ANU at PERC (CMHR) and JCSMR in 1999, joining BoZo in 2003. Jim has taken up an IT officer role in ITS, so we will see him around campus.

**Julia Hammer** (Atkin Group, PS) has left to start a Masters at the University of Western Ontario in Canada.

**Denis Hawkins** (IT Team) has left RSB and taken up a cybersecurity course and artistic pursuits.

**Corin Pennock** (Technical Services Team) left RSB in April. She is working at the APF and continuing voluntary wildlife care and conservation with ACT Wildlife.

**Darcy Standford** (IT Team). After all too short a time, I must sadly leave this fine institution, and pursue other opportunities. I thank you all, profusely and effusively, for the opportunities you've given me to contribute to your sterling work.

**Panit Thamsongsana** has been Team Leader for the Biology Teaching and Learning Centre Student Administration Team for 10 years, following 10 years in College of Science student administration. Panit has played a huge role in managing education across the School and ensuring that our teaching enterprise runs efficiently. Her knowledge of ANU policies and procedures is second to none, and her organisational skills and pro-active attitude are remarkable. Panit's last day was March 25 and she intends to return to Thailand and re-join her extended family later this year.

**Hanh Vo** (Pogson and von Caemmerer Groups, PS) has moved to Hobart to begin a PhD at the University of Tasmania.



Panit with members of the BTLC (Image: S. Wragg).

## PAPERS

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