NEWS

Rachael Remington appointed to Teaching Intensive position

Rachael Remington has been appointed to the full-time teaching intensive Academic Level B position. Rachael will convene and contribute to both undergraduate and post graduate biology courses, including convening the Masters of Science (Biological Sciences) program.

Ecology field course at Kioloa

The ecology 2131/6004 field course, led by Patrick Meir (PS) and Megan Head (E&E), was held at the ANU Kioloa campus this month.

The aim was to learn to measure, quantify and interpret flora and fauna along a biophysical gradient from foredune to forest. Our group of 50 worked hard for two full days collecting datasets to work on later in the semester. There were additional lectures and demonstrations of wildlife photography and the uses of drones for vegetation survey. The sun shone during the day, and even after dark the sampling continued!

Well done and many thanks to the KCC and RSB staff, post docs, PhD students and the whole of the 2131/6004 class who all worked so well together to make it such an enjoyable weekend. - Patrick Meir (PS).

The following RSB people helped with the trip: Sam Jahromi (BTLC), James Davies (Technical Officer, Operations), Sonya

Geange (Nicotra group, E&E), Ross Deans (Farquhar group, PS), Thomas Semple (Peakall group, E&E), Oliver Binks (Meir group, PS), Meisha Holloway-Phillips (Farquhar group, PS), Tim Brown (Borevitz group, PS), Patrick Meir (PS) and Megan Head (E&E).

RSB Stores have moved back to Robertson

After a year and a half over at the Research School of Chemistry store, RSB stores have moved back into their old location next to the loading dock in the RN Robertson building 46. (see main photo).

RN Robertson refurbishment update

Nearly all the Ecology and Evolution, and Plant Sciences groups have moved into their new accommodation in the RN Robertson building. Artwork is being hung, the Eucalyptus room is being used for seminars, and the Robertson tea room has already been used for several functions, including a school barbecue to celebrate the opening of the building.

Scaffolding in place for the re-hanging of ‘Polynesia’, painted by John Coburn in 1968 and acquired by the ANU in the same year. Image Scott Keogh.

Women in Life Sciences Luncheon

The annual NSW Women in Life Sciences Luncheon hosted by AusBiotech is an
initiative that fosters a supportive community for women who work in the life sciences and inspires women to pursue professional goals and build their own success stories. This year AusBiotech launched the ‘Big Sisters’ program, which invited women advanced in their careers in the sector to sponsor a student to attend the event, as a means to provide support and encouragement to women in the early stages of their career in life sciences. Hannah Drieberg, Suyan Yee and Estee Tee from the Pogson lab (PS) were selected to be ‘Little Sisters’ of the program, and attended the luncheon on Friday the 9th of March.

DECRA Fellow profile: Jennie Mallela (Jennions group, E&E)

Research Background
I became interested in research as a first year undergraduate student at the University of Leeds in the UK whilst studying Environmental Bio-geo Science. Every year we had multiple opportunities to conduct independent, mini research projects and I found I gravitated towards those which led me into the field and subsequently the lab. It was great. I had access to world class facilities and academics across four different departments and we were able to conduct curiosity driven projects of our own design. I haven’t looked back since. I’ve been fortunate to combine my love for research, fieldwork and travel. I’ve worked in East Africa, where I built and lived in a mangrove hut for 18 months, assessing threatened species in Marine Parks. I’ve assessed the biodiversity of 2nd World War shipwrecks in Scapa Flow (Scotland), I’ve tracked eels across river catchments in Ireland, worked at Max Planck in Germany where we used stable isotopes to answer ecological questions, and assessed environmental impacts on coral reefs from the Caribbean to the Great Barrier Reef.

Current research interests
I was fortunate to be awarded an ARC DECRA to study the impacts of climate change and pollution on coral reefs. I currently conduct multidisciplinary research combining ecological, biological and geochemical research techniques to understand how environmental disturbance will impact reef function and health in the future.

What do you enjoy most about research?
I enjoy working on real world problems and conducting research that may one day input into potential solutions for ecosystem and species conservation. I enjoy interacting with, and learning from, a range of collaborators who have very different skills to me. I love that I still manage to combine research, fieldwork and travel.

New APPF logo and website
The Australian Plant Phenomics Facility (APPF) has a new website, which will be a useful resource for plant phenomics knowledge as well as a community portal for sharing plant science news, events, webinars, training courses and expertise - your input is welcome. New content will be added regularly, and the blog can now be found under ‘News’. They also have a new logo - if you need a copy for acknowledgements of facility use, please contact Aly Weirman (Borevitz group, PS).

New RSB video
RSB has a new recruitment video, starring a cast of many from the school, including Erin Andrew (Fahrer group, BSB), Zara Rashid (Atkin group, PS), undergraduate biology student Krish Sanghvi, RSB alum Danswell Stans, and Director Allen Rodrigo. It was produced by College of Science Deputy Communication Manager Jimmy Walsh and features permanently on the RSB webpage. You can watch it here.

Outreach news
On March 24th Kai Chan (Pogson group, PS) gave a keynote speech as ACT Scientist of the Year at CONSEACT 2018; the annual conference of the Science Educators’ Association of the ACT. Kai spoke about how different teaching and learning models have influenced his career as a plant biologist, and his current teaching practices at ANU.

Grants
Kai Xun Chan (Pogson group, PS) and Barry Pogson (PS) have received a second round of funding ($25,000) from the ANU-UC Connect Ventures’ Discovery Translational Fund to continue their work on developing novel agrochemicals that can enhance drought tolerance in plants.

Awards
Ben Long (Price and Badger groups, PS) received the Michael D Gale travel award for the Plant and Animal Genome Conference.

IN THE MEDIA
Adrienne Nicotra (E&E) was a speaker at the World Economic Forum in Davos this year. You can watch her presentation, ‘Employing genomics to track ecosystems’ response to a changing climate’, here.

Bill Foley (E&E) was interviewed about Konzo for the radio show Another World, on Eastside Radio in Sydney.
Adrienne Nicotra (E&E) and Cathy Franz appeared on ABC Gardening Australia, on 9 March 2018. Watch the episode here - the story about Adrienne and Cathy begins at about 31:17.

Paul Cooper (E&E) was interviewed by the Canberra Times for an article about increasing numbers of cockroaches being found inside houses in Canberra, during wet and stormy weather.

Andras Keszei (BTLC) was interviewed on a College of Science Facebook Live video, talking about first year biology practical classes. You can see the video on the Science at ANU Facebook page.

Welcome to new PhD students, Ayesha Akram. (left) who completed an MPhil in Biotechnology at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan, and Sharmin Akter Rima, (below left) who completed an MSc in Genetics and Plant Breeding at Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh. Both will be working in the Jones group (PS); Ayesha on the molecular interaction between flav and the flav rust fungus Melampsora lini, and Sharmin on the molecular interaction between tomato and the fusarium wilt fungus Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. lycopersici.

Imelda Forteza has begun her PhD project, working on microorganisms and combining wet and dry lab work. She will be supervised by Allen Rodrigo (CBBU).

Cüneyt Caglar has begun his PhD in the Adamska group (BSB). He will investigate sponge and coral regeneration.

The Evans group (PS) welcomes Yuki Nakamura, who is doing a Masters at Tohoku University under the supervision of Dr Hikosaka. She is here for 3 months on a Co-Labs exchange program and will be working on the effect of growth temperature on Rubisco in wheat.

PHDS SUBMITTED

Bonnie Flohr (Evans group, E&E) ‘Stabilising the flowering time of wheat in response to autumn rainfall decline’. Sara Milward (Whitney group, PS) ‘Interrogating plant Rubisco-Rca interactions’.

PHDS AWARDED

Bokyoung Choi (Linde group, E&E) ‘Systematics and evolution of Melaleuca sensu lato (Myrtaceae)’.


PAPERS ACCEPTED

Bröer S, Amino acid transporters as disease modifiers and drug targets, SLAS Discovery.

Danila FR, Quick WP, White RG, Kelly S, von Caemmerer S, Furbank RT, Multiple mechanisms for enhanced plasmodesmata density in disparate subtypes of C4 grasses, Journal of Experimental Botany.


Iglesias Carrasco M, Jennions MD, Zajitschek S, Head ML, Are females in good condition better able to cope with costly males? Behavioral Ecology.

Ng JLP, Mathiesius U, Acropalpia auctin transport inhibition is involved in indeterminate but not determinate nodule formation, Frontiers in Plant Science.

Phua SY, Pornsiriwong W, Chan KK, Estavillo GM, Pogson BJ, Development of strategies for genetic manipulation and fine-tuning of a chloroplast retrograde signal, 3’-phosphoadenosine 5’-phosphate, Plant Physiology.

Sun F, Roderick ML, Farquhar GD, Rainfall statistics, stationarity and climate change, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA.