

# College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment



Kreher Preserve & Nature Center

## FEATURE STORY

Kreher Preserve celebrates 30 years, new endowment, staff and facilities pg. 8-9

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CFWE NEWS • Spring 2023

Working with Nature for Society's Well Being

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### Upcoming Events

Summer Commencement Open House **8/5**  
Homecoming Open House **9/15**



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Rallying for sustainable communities



Extending appreciation to faculty and staff





# /// A message from THE DEAN



Greetings to all,  
With the wrap of another successful academic year at the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, we have so many reasons to be incredibly proud of our faculty, staff and students.

In this issue, we salute three retiring professors and former deans and welcome

five new assistant professors. Join us in congratulating Alabama Extension System Specialist and Mosely Professor Mark Smith on his recent appointment to the USDA's National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee to help shape policy regarding wildlife, public health and safety.

We are excited for you to learn about Assistant Professor Sanjiv Kumar's compelling research on soil moisture data to predict drought, one of the first climate studies to look at hydrology across two climate databases. Alumni Professor Christopher Lepczyk has also published a front-cover story in the journal "Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment," exploring the role of human perception and bias in listing threatened and endangered species.

You'll find a complete list of the students, faculty and staff recognized at the college's annual awards ceremony on April 19. We are also incredibly proud of two graduate students, both veterans, for their selection as finalists in the Presidential Management Fellows Program.

Finally, this issue will celebrate the outreach efforts of the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center, or KPNC, as it celebrates its 30th anniversary. With new facilities, an innovative building commencing this summer, and generous support from old and new friends, the KPNC has much to be proud of and even more to look forward to.

Thank you for your continued support as we seek to fulfill Auburn University's land-grant mission to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of citizens in Alabama and beyond.

War Eagle!

Janaki R. R. Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean

## Administration

### College honors faculty, staff and students during Spring 2023 awards celebration

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment held its annual award ceremony and reception on April 19, honoring exceptional students, faculty members and alumni who have made noteworthy contributions to the college, their respective fields and other areas. Among the award recipients were several students who were recognized for their academic achievements, leadership skills and dedication to their studies. **Student recipients included:**

#### COLLEGE RECOGNITIONS

The President's Award – Colby Cheaney  
Graduation Marshal – Ashlyn Cowgill

#### ACADEMIC AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Academic Improvement Award in Forestry – John Hammack

Alabama Wildlife Federation David K. Nelson Game Management Award – Reese Stogner

Alabama Wildlife Federation Robert G. Wehle Non-Game Management Award – Sarah Knutson

Geospatial and Environmental Informatics Student of the Year – Kyle Draper

Natural Resources Management Student of the Year – Avy Elmore

Sustainable Biomaterials and Packaging Student of the Year – Holden Lee

Weyerhaeuser Forest Economics Award – Josh Mullins

Wildlife Enterprise Management Student of the Year – Houston Hall

William Allen Carey Memorial Award for Outstanding Forest Pathology – Caemon Jernigan

Undergraduate Research Fellows – Ally Cobern, Mary Ashley Hughes, John-Michael Norris, Madeleine Park, Lauren Stevens and Ansley Strength

Harry Murphy Graduate Student Award – Youngfa You and Gina Lamka

#### LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Alabama Chapter of the Wildlife Society Student Leadership Award – Payton Brewer

Alabama Division of the Society of American Foresters Junior Leadership Award – Alex Warr

Alabama Forest Owners' Association Award – Rice Nichols & Riley Ketchum

Armistead and Woody Military Service Award – Phil Burchfield  
(17 years' service in the U.S. Army)

Association of Consulting Foresters Senior Leadership – Josh Mullins

F & W Forestry Services Inc. Rising Senior – Eric Eisenhard

Forestry Club Outstanding Member Award – Garrett Norton

Southeastern Society of American Foresters and Alabama Division Leadership Travel Award – Alex Warr

Lane Messer Summer Practicum Endowed Scholarship – Hunter Cochran

The Wildlife Society Outstanding Member of the Year – Colby Cheaney

Westervelt Rising Senior Award in Wildlife – Judson Thompson

The outstanding work of numerous CFWE faculty and staff was also recognized, along with alumni who have made notable contributions to the industry. Faculty/Staff and Alumni award recipients include:

#### FACULTY & STAFF RECOGNITION

SGA Honors Ceremony Outstanding Faculty Award – Todd Steury

Harold E. Christen Award for Service to Teaching – Heather Alexander

Harry Murphy Outstanding Staff Award – Elizabeth Bowersock & Michelle Straw

Harry Murphy Faculty Research Award – Soledad Peresin

Forestry Club Teacher of the Year – Tom Gallagher

The Wildlife Society Teacher of the Year – John Kush

Graduate Student Mentorship Award – Janna Willoughby

Best Publication Award – Lana Narine

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment also honored Dana Little '79 who received the 2023 Outstanding Alumni Award in honor of his lifetime contributions to the forestry industry.

Expressing the shared sentiment of the faculty and staff:

***"We are extremely proud of our students' diligence in their studies and their training in leadership skills for their future careers in natural resources, wildlife and forestry."***  
– Dean Alavalapati



Visit our [Flickr site](#) to view the 2023 Awards Celebration photo gallery.

### CFWE celebrates retirement of three forestry faculty, former deans

#### Scott Enebak, Dwain G. Luce Professor and Former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs September 1, 1995 – January 31, 2023



Retired Professor and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs Scott Enebak is shown center, his wife Debra to his left, with past and present employees of the Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative.

Dwain G. Luce Professor Scott Enebak, who was the associate dean of academic affairs from 2015-2022, has retired. He is an expert in forest pathology, mycology, forest regeneration and forest-seedling production systems. While at Auburn, Enebak taught Forest Health, Seedling Production and Forest Biology Forest Biology as part of the Forestry Summer Practicum at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center.

He also served as the director of the Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative for 18 years. This cooperative is a regional industry and state-sponsored research program examining the production of forest seedlings used in reforestation programs in the Southern U.S.

During his tenure as Forestry Club advisor, acorns were collected from the original Toomer's Oaks and sold as a fundraiser for undergraduate scholarships. A handful of the original 2003 Toomer's Oaks descendants were planted on Samford Lawn walkway to be enjoyed by future generations.

Over his 27 years employed by the college, Enebak received several

***"We recognize the time, resources and expertise that he has poured into the college and are grateful for his tireless work to further our mission."***  
– Dean Alavalapati

outstanding awards for undergraduate instruction, research and outreach. He was also recently added to the Alabama Foresters' Hall of Fame.

Enebak received a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and a master's degree in forest pathology from the University of Minnesota before earning his doctorate from West Virginia University in 1992 in plant pathology.

Enebak and his wife, Debbie, plan to remain in Auburn, where they will continue to manage their forestland. They also plan to visit their children and grandchildren around the country.

"The college has greatly benefited from Enebak's work in the classroom, with the Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative and as the associate dean of academic affairs," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

#### Edward Loewenstein, Associate Professor and Former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs May 1, 2002 – February 1, 2023



Edward Loewenstein, retired professor and former academic dean, is shown with his wife, Nancy Loewenstein.

Practicum at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center from 2008-22.

At the college, Loewenstein was honored with the Forestry Club Teacher of the Year Award in 2003 and 2011. He also received the Harold E. Christen Award for Service to Teaching in 2019 and the Harry Murphy Award for Excellence in Advising in 2021.

The primary emphasis of his research during his career focused on uneven-aged silviculture. His competitive research funding as either the principal investigator or co-principal investigator totaled over five million dollars. Loewenstein also peer reviewed more than 75 articles submitted to various scientific journals. Since 2011, he has served as an associate editor for the "Open Journal of Forestry."

Loewenstein has been a member of the Society of American Foresters, or SAF, since 1985. He served as the treasurer of the Alabama division from 2007-22, twice served as the chair of the local War Eagle chapter in 2010 and 2019 and served as chair of the Southeastern Division in 2012. He was elected an SAF Fellow in 2013 and currently serves on the Southeastern SAF fellows

selection committee. Loewenstein was also recently added to the Alabama Forester's Hall of Fame.

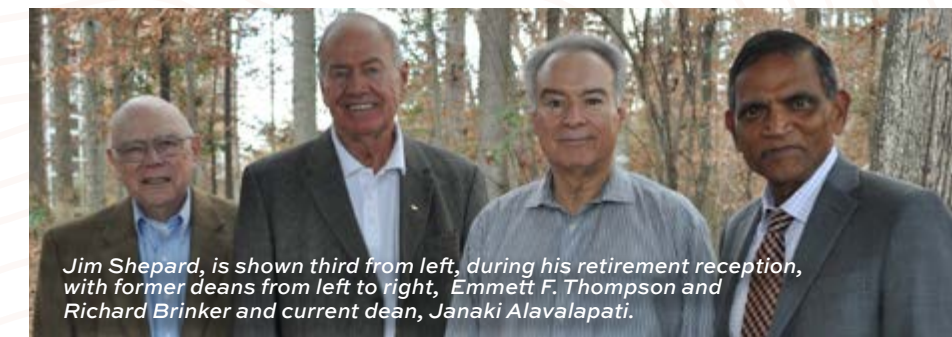
A graduate of the Auburn University Forest Biology master's program, Loewenstein earned his doctorate from the University of Missouri in 1996 in silviculture. He then served as a research forester for six years with the U.S. Forest Service.

Loewenstein plans to remain in Auburn with his wife Nancy Loewenstein, an extension specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

***"He has certainly left a positive impact on this institution, and the college is deeply grateful for his hard work and dedication."***  
– Dean Alavalapati

"Dr. Loewenstein has been a valuable faculty member in our college through his fostering of engaging classroom environments and successful research efforts in both writing and reviewing projects," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

#### Jim Shepard, Professor and Former Dean January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2022



Jim Shepard, is shown third from left, during his retirement reception, with former deans from left to right, Emmett F. Thompson and Richard Brinker and current dean, Janaki Alavalapati.

Jim Shepard, who is an expert in forest soils, forest ecology and wetlands policy, was a professor and the associate director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center at Mississippi State University before being appointed dean of what was then the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences in 2011.

Among Shepard's achievements as dean were the fundraising and construction of the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center in Andalusia, Alabama; the first official wildlife summer field practicum completed in 2012; and the establishment of the Natural Resources Management undergraduate degree.

Shepard served as dean for four years before returning to an academic role as professor of forest soils. He taught Forest Ecology, Forest Soils, Forest Wetlands Restoration Ecology and Natural Resource Policy. The primary emphasis of his research during his career has focused on natural resources policy and regulations, wetlands ecology and management and forest soils classification and mapping.

"In addition to his scholarly accomplishments in forest sustainability, environmental management and academia, we commend Dr. Shepard for his leadership to enhance the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center and the college's academic programs," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

***"With the construction of the state-of-the-art Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center, the Dixon Center has become one of the finest educational facilities of this type in the nation, offering an unparalleled learning environment."***  
– Dean Alavalapati

Shepard previously served as head of Mississippi State's Department of Forestry from 2005-08. He also served 14 years with the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement in Gainesville, Florida, in positions such as sustainable forestry program manager and forest wetlands program manager.

During this time, he worked for seven years as a courtesy associate professor in the University of Florida's School of Forest Resources and Conservation, where he helped initiate Florida's study abroad program with the Czech University of Agriculture's forestry school.

Shepard earned his doctorate from Mississippi State in 1985 in forest resources with a focus on forest soils. He then served as a research scientist for five years at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, where his work focused on the biogeochemical effects of atmospheric deposition.

Shepard plans to relocate to Gainesville, Fla., with his wife, Cathy.

### CFWE hosts Advisory Council meeting



The CFWE Advisory Council began their annual spring meeting, held March 14 and 15, with a tour of Auburn's new Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center. The next morning the meeting officially began with introductions by Council Chairman Alexander McCall, Auburn University Interim Provost and Senior Vice President Vini Nathan and Dean Alavalapati.

## College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment

### CFWE NEWS • Spring 2022

Dean .....Janaki R.R. Alavalapati  
Assoc. Dean of Academic Affairs..... Todd Steury  
Assoc. Dean of Research..... Daowei Zhang  
Extension Coordinator ..... Mark Smith  
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Contributing Writer.....Avanelle Elmore  
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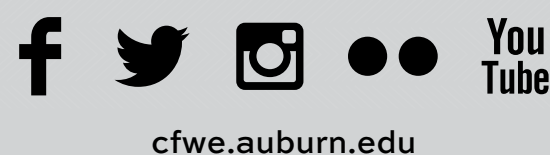
### Contact Us

The CFWE newsletter is distributed to alumni and friends of the college. Inquiries and suggestions concerning the newsletter should be directed to the college's Office of Communications and Marketing at the address below.

Auburn University  
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment  
Office of Communications and Marketing  
602 Duncan Drive • Auburn, AL 36849  
334-844-9248 • [cfwecom@auburn.edu](mailto:cfwecom@auburn.edu)

### Giving

Questions concerning the college's development program, including annual and corporate giving, planned gifts and estate planning should be directed to the Office of Advancement at 602 Duncan Drive, Auburn, AL 36849. Inquiries may also be made to Heather Crozier via email at [vannhea@auburn.edu](mailto:vannhea@auburn.edu) or by phone at 334-844-2791.



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# College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment

## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

### Academics & Research



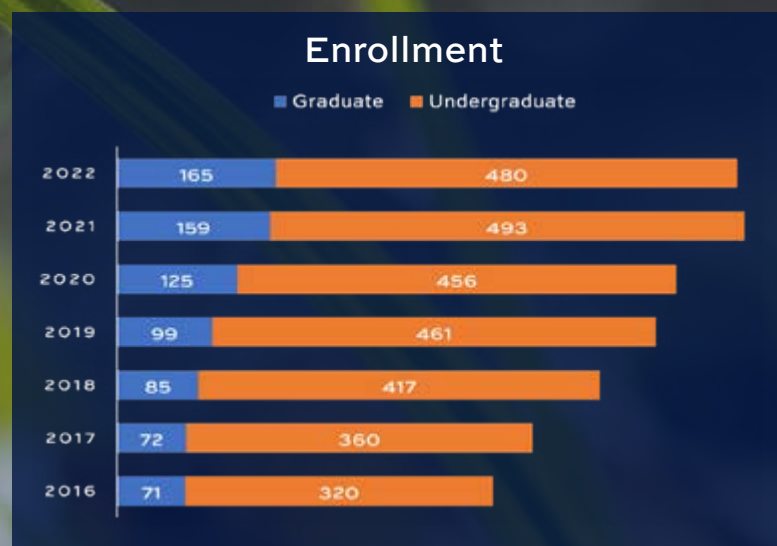
Hosted Lunch & Learn to provide guidance on applying for federal government jobs



Students meet prospective employers at CFWE's Annual Career Fair



Undergraduates assist with Deer Lab research



**77%**  
IN STUDENT CREDIT HOUR PRODUCTION **INCREASE**



EXPONENTIAL GROWTH IN UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE EDUCATION SINCE 2015

**48%**  
UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT **INCREASE**

**148%**  
GRADUATE ENROLLMENT **INCREASE**

**81%**  
STUDENT EMPLOYMENT RATE

**75%**  
INCREASE IN EXTRAMURAL FUNDING FROM 2021

**67%**  
OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES

**GRADUATED 56 M.S./PH.D. STUDENTS**  
IN 2022 RELATIVE TO 35 IN 2021 AND 20 IN 2020

### Outreach & Extension



Signed historic 10-year agreement to serve eight U.S. Army Bases



Organized first CLT conference in the Southern U.S.

**MANAGED 22,000+ ACRES OF AU FORESTED LANDS**

#### DIXON CENTER MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

**\$1.2 Million** ROAD RENOVATION COMPLETED  
**132** ACRES CLEAR CUT  
**66** ACRES PLANTED  
**1,628** ACRES OF PRESCRIBED FIRE  
**10,628** RECORDED USERS DAYS

**KREHER PRESERVE AND NATURE CENTER**  
 provided **68,000**  
 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CONTACT HOURS

**EXTENSION ACHIEVED**  
**\$1.3 Million**  
 IN DAMAGE REDUCTION FROM WILD PIGS PROGRAM  
**5,054**  
 HOURS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS



Richard Cristan leading forest landowner demonstration



Mark Smith and Bence Carter conducting a wild pig workshop

### Development



Dean Janaki Alavalapati visits with friends of the college



Scholarship donors and recipients mingle at annual dinner

**2021-2022 \$2,624,135 TOTAL RAISED**  
**175%** OF GOAL RAISED  
**\$1,977**  
 AVERAGE GIFT AMOUNT INCREASE OF NEARLY **\$500**



## CFWE welcomes new faculty and staff, diversifies college expertise



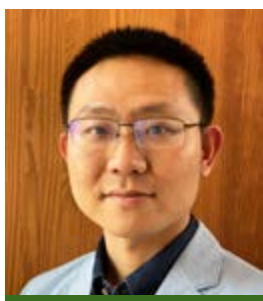
**Georgios Arseniou**  
Assistant Professor &  
Extension Specialist  
of Urban Forestry

Georgios Arseniou is an expert in urban forestry, forest measurements and modeling, tree biomass quantification and laser scanning technologies. His research interests and teaching responsibilities focus on Urban Forestry. Arseniou earned a doctorate from Michigan State University in forestry, specializing in forest measurements and modeling and urban forestry.



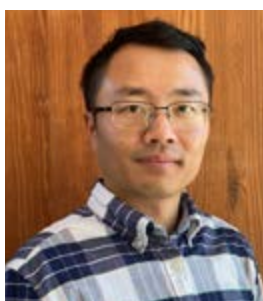
**Aniruddha Belsare**  
Assistant Professor of  
Disease Ecology  
Wildlife

Aniruddha Belsare is an expert in agent-based modeling, disease modeling, epidemiology, human-wildlife conflict, One Health and wildlife immobilization and restraint. In addition to his research, he will teach Disease Ecology. Belsare earned a doctoral degree from the University of Missouri in fisheries and wildlife.



**Hao Chen**  
Assistant Professor in  
Forestry Genomics/  
Biotechnology  
Forestry

Hao Chen, an assistant professor in forestry genomics/biotechnology, received his doctorate and postdoctoral training from North Carolina State University. His current research goal is to develop forest trees that exhibit high productivity of cellulose-based biofuels and enhanced environmental resilience using a gene-editing approach.



**Chen Ding**  
Assistant Professor of  
Forest Ecophysiology  
Forestry

Chen Ding is an expert in tree improvement, tree physiology, tree genetics and genomics. His teaching responsibilities will include Forest Tree Physiology, and he will lead Auburn's Southern Nursery Management Cooperative. He earned a doctorate from the University of Alberta, Canada.



**George Matusick**  
Director, Center for  
Natural Resources  
Management on  
Military Lands

George Matusick's expertise is in forest biology and ecology. He has professional experience managing forest ecosystems for multiple objectives, including drinking water protection, biodiversity conservation, military training and timber production. He earned a doctorate from the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University.



**Ajay Sharma**  
Assistant Professor of  
Silviculture  
Forestry

Ajay Sharma's research is in the development of novel silvicultural and restoration approaches for multifunctional management of forest ecosystems, including the management interventions to enhance forest productivity, health, diversity and resilience to disturbances. He earned his doctorate in forest resources and conservation at the University of Florida.



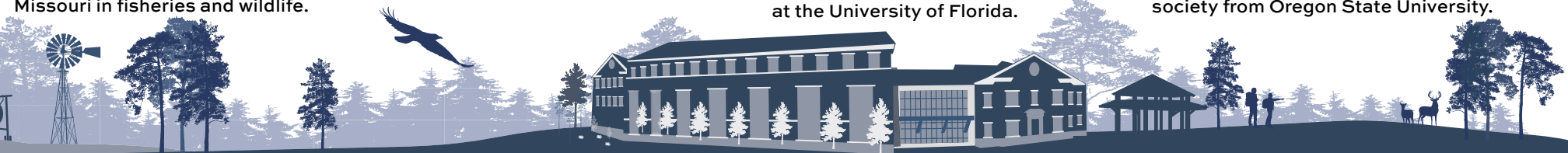
**Samuel Tate**  
Forest Systems  
Management  
Manager

Samuel Tate oversees the forest management activities on land owned or managed by Auburn University. He is a registered forester with extensive experience in timber management and markets across Alabama. Tate earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from Auburn University.



**Jonathon Valente**  
Assistant Unit Leader  
& Research Professor  
Al. Coop Fish and  
Wildlife Research

Jonathon Valente is an expert in avian ecology, landscape ecology and quantitative ecology. Valente's research focuses on understanding the factors impacting the distributions and population dynamics of individual species and entire communities. He earned a doctorate in forest ecosystems and society from Oregon State University.



## College creates new position to support student career development and employment

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment is excited to announce a new staff position — career services coordinator — to help students navigate the transition from academic life to the professional world.

Elizabeth Bowersock will serve in this new role. She has been a part of the college for 18 years, splitting her time between serving as an outreach administrator for the Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative and providing administrative assistance to the CFWE.

Bowersock hopes to alleviate students' anxieties as they transition from academic life to the professional world. She emphasizes the importance of facilitating decision-making discussions and providing students

with clear expectations of the ever-evolving workforce. She said, "While graduating college is an exciting time for most students, it can also be overwhelming and even somewhat scary to take that next step."

The career services coordinator will be crucial in assisting CFWE students in finding career opportunities and developing the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.

Some of the initial responsibilities of this position include being a central point of contact for companies and organizations to promote their employment opportunities within the college, facilitating on-campus interviews, and coordinating with the university's Office of Career Discovery and Success to help with resumes and interview preparation.

Bowersock will also host the CFWE Career Fair each fall and provide career counseling to inform students of job expectations and support them with decision-making throughout their academic years in CFWE.

*"The college is delighted to have Elizabeth Bowersock as the new Career Services Coordinator and eagerly anticipates the positive impact she will make on our students' career paths."*

– Dean Alavalapati



## Grindle wins Auburn Graduate School's Rebecca Roden Award

Graduate programs and research administrative specialist Audrey Grindle was awarded the Rebecca Roden Award, which recognizes an Auburn staff member for their excellence in service to graduate education. This award, established in May 2021, honors the 41-year service of the former associate dean of the Auburn University Graduate School, Rebecca Roden.

Daowei Zhang, the associate dean of research with whom she works and closely collaborates, praised Grindle for her work in service to graduate students at the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment. "Ms. Grindle is very dedicated and committed to graduate education," said Zhang.

"She serves as the sole liaison and assistant for all 160+ graduate students at our college, communicating well with prospective students, organizing incoming student orientations and handling most daily business associated with all these graduate students from course registration to study plans, personal issues, oral defenses and graduation. She always handles these matters in a timely and professional manner."

In addition to her work involved with facilitating graduate education, she is dedicated to addressing the needs of students and is committed to building positive relationships while assisting them in achieving their desired learning outcomes.

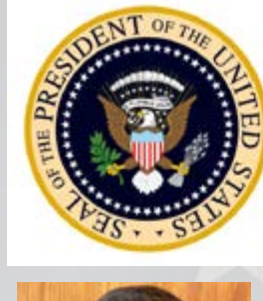


As a result of her efforts, CFWE students graduate with an increased understanding of their values, a sense of social responsibility, intellectual development and a solid foundation for positive academic decisions.

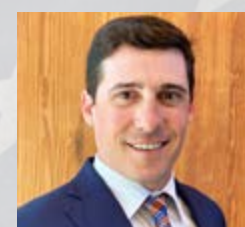
*"I am working towards defending my Ph.D. at the end of this year, and I plan to acknowledge Audrey in my acknowledgment section because she has helped me so much. Every time I had a problem or hurdle, she was there for me. She was always receptive and available. She is an amazing asset to the college, and I couldn't make it through graduate school without Audrey."*

– Henrique Hass, doctoral candidate

## Student veterans named finalists in Presidential Management Fellows Program



**PMF** PRESIDENTIAL  
MANAGEMENT  
FELLOWS PROGRAM  
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



Two College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment student veterans have been named finalists in the Presidential

Management Fellows, or PMF, Program. The PMF Program is the federal government's flagship leadership development program for advanced degree holders who have a clear passion for public service. As described on the program's website, its mission is to "recruit and develop a cadre of future government leaders drawn from all segments of society."

The fellowship finalists — Greg Johnson, a third-year doctoral student, and Daniel Morris, a second-year master's student — work with Kelly Dunning, assistant professor of conservation governance, within the CFWE Conservation Governance Lab.

*"This highly selective program invests in the next generation of top talent in federal government."*

– Kelly Dunning

"The college and especially our lab is proud of these students' success



in earning this prestigious fellowship."

Before Johnson and Morris were selected, there had not been any PMF finalists from Auburn University since 2018.

In February 2022, Dunning invited employees of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct an online seminar for the lab to discuss ways in which students could help with projects within the Ecological Services Office in Daphne, Alabama. "One of the Fish and Wildlife employees was an Air Force veteran, like me, and he shared a few different opportunities to work in Fish and Wildlife, which included the Directorate Fellows Program and the PMF Program," Morris said. "I let Greg know about the PMF Program, and we kept tabs on the website to learn more about the opportunity, eventually submitting applications in September."

Johnson had been looking for an opportunity exactly like the PMF Program.

"It was an opportunity to work in policy and influence positive change, all while getting leadership development from senior government officials in natural

resource management," Johnson said. The fellowship is open to students completing a graduate degree or higher and entails a two-year commitment to a full-time, paid fellowship with a federal agency.

Before coming to Auburn University to pursue a doctorate in natural resource management, Johnson received a bachelor's degree and a master's in public administration from Indiana University. He served in the National Guard for 13 years, completing rigorous leadership training and a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to serve with North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, partners.

His research on water quality and its impacts to human and ecological communities in the Gulf of Mexico is funded by a grant from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

"As a PMF, I'd like to learn more about policy analysis and policy formulation in real-time," Johnson said. "So far, all my policy knowledge has come from research, has been more theoretical and has looked back in time after something has already taken place. Being involved in the policy-making process sounds amazing."

He also looks forward to mentorship and leadership development opportunities with senior leaders in the federal government and connecting with the vast network of current and alumni fellows.

Morris earned a bachelor's degree from Auburn and then served in the Air Force for 10 years, including advising the Afghan military in

support of Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan, or NTM-A.

"I have always been drawn to serving the public, and during my time in the U.S. Air Force, I learned of the opportunities and benefits that working for the federal government provides," Morris said. "Once my service ended, I decided I wanted to return to federal service as a civilian working in a position related to the amazing natural resources our country has to offer."

He returned to Auburn on the GI Bill initially to earn a second bachelor's degree. During this time, he volunteered weekly to code qualitative data for then master's student Sabine Bailey's research in the Conservation Governance Lab. Morris' hard work was recognized, and he changed course to earning a master's in natural resource management.

Morris' research, funded by the National Center for Atmospheric Research, centers on how the National Marine Sanctuaries system is adapting to climate change through examining user groups including anglers, divers, boaters and senior leadership in state and federal government.

"Once I found out about the fellowship and how it would allow me to continue learning and developing as a leader, while working towards a permanent position in one of the resource management agencies, I thought it would be a perfect fit," said Morris. "As a PMF I hope to continue serving the people of the United States as a public servant while working in a field that I am passionate about."

## Kumar finds soil moisture is key to understanding drought, flood risks



Understanding soil moisture changes may help with regional water resources planning for drought and flood risks, according to a study by Sanjiv Kumar, an assistant professor in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment.

His findings, recently published in the journal "Earth's Future," used a very large number of climate realizations and data from two different climate models to assess hydroclimate variability and predictability in a changing climate.

Hydroclimate refers to understanding climate and hydrology together and the way the water cycle, in turn, affects climate. The study is among the first on this scale to integrate precipitation variability with water storage in soil and vegetation-atmosphere interaction processes. Kumar's team found that measuring soil moisture could be a key part of water resources planning in North America.

Projections of drought and flood risk on a regional scale have

been highly uncertain in the past, Kumar says, prompting a need for deeper understanding of regional hydroclimate. One key finding was a reduction in land surface memory, meaning that, as the climate continues to warm, the soil loses its moisture more quickly on average.

So, even as rainfall patterns vary more widely, they didn't find a corresponding swing in soil moisture levels. This effect continued across both climate models.

"An important implication is that the regional mean state (soil moisture) changes are the primary drivers of future drought and flood risks," said Kumar.

Given the increasing frequency of drought conditions — such as the 22-year megadrought affecting Lake Mead in Nevada that endangered the water supply for millions in the U.S. Southwest — the continuing changes in global climate make understanding the regional drivers of drought and flood a vital part of planning for the future.

*"Despite the uncertainties presented by climate models, this study's findings could enhance our ability to adapt to climate change."*

– Dean Alavalapati

## Lepczyk authors study finding human bias influences listing under Endangered Species Act

A researcher in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment has led a study that suggests human perception could influence when at-risk species are listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The study, recently published and featured on the cover of "Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment," suggests that the ecological indicators associated with human perception have shifted over time. The first study to look at measures of detection that relate to human perception, the research addresses a gap in our knowledge about how and which species are selected for listing as threatened or endangered.

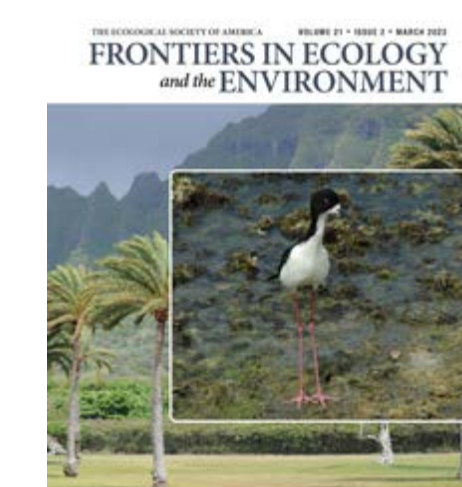
The Endangered Species Act mandates that listing decisions be based on the best scientific and commercial data available, but the simple facts of whether humans know a species exists and how easily that species can be detected and assessed can introduce bias.

Working with data beginning in 1967, a team led by Alumni Professor Christopher Lepczyk compiled a database that included each species' geographic range, body mass, and calling and congregating behaviors — all of which affect the likelihood of humans observing and assessing a species. Each of these measures relate to how easily a species could likely be observed in nature.

The study revealed that initially, species were larger and easier to identify or observe, but listings over time have gradually shifted to smaller and less conspicuous species.

The team's research could be beneficial to managers and policymakers.

"Ultimately, using improved methods and acknowledging current biases will enhance our ability to identify species that may be at greater risk than presently considered," Lepczyk said. "Even acknowledging that human perception plays a role in the listing process could improve the approaches used for listing in the United States and other nations."



POTENTIAL BIAS IN LISTING OF AT-RISK SPECIES: SEVERAL PROPERTIES ON BIOGEOGRAPHY LINKED TO BIAS IN 30-YEAR CLIMATE CHANGE HISTORY



# Celebrating 30 years of the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center



Shown during the property dedication are standing, Assistant Professor Katherine Flynn and then dean of the School of Forestry, Emmett F. Thompson and sitting are Frank Turner and Louise Kreher Turner.

The sound of children’s laughter rings out amid the trees most days at the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center. Kids are encouraged to climb, run and dig in the dirt under a leafy green canopy, pausing now and then to listen to the insects trilling and birds calling. A native pitcher plant bog greets visitors who wander down the path toward the nature playground, a unique play space that encourages digging holes with sticks as much as climbing, balancing and sliding.

This outreach and education landmark of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment is celebrating three decades of nature education and outreach in 2023. Among the events planned to mark this milestone are a photo contest, camp and Forest Friends reunions and a 30th anniversary social.

*“For 30 years, the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center has been enhancing the lives of the Auburn community, creating a haven for wildlife and providing a platform for outreach and education to Auburn University students.”*

– Dean Alavalapati

“This gift of land has provided thousands of students and local families with unique and invaluable experiences.”

The Kreher Preserve and Nature Center, or KPNC, began with a gift of forest land from Louise Kreher Turner and her husband, Frank Allan Turner, to what was at the time Auburn University’s School of Forestry. The Turners wished to see their 119 acres, nestled in the heart of Auburn, remain an intact nature preserve and become a source of environmental education. Its students would be the Auburn community, welcoming everyone to study, appreciate and enjoy the natural world.



Shown during an art program held at the Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve in 2007 are Margaret Holler, the nature center’s first coordinator, and benefactor, Louise Kreher Turner.

After donating the land to Auburn University in 1993, Turner developed its first public programming around 1998 and continued to manage the property through the year 2000 as the Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve. In 2001, management shifted to a volunteer-run outreach program by the preserve’s coordinator, Margaret Holler — who still enjoys working in the KPNC’s many gardens — under the direction of Richard Brinker, dean of what had become the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.



Pictured during the grand opening of the Pond Pavilion on Thursday, May 4, are from left to right are Bess Lord, former board member of the F. Allen and Louise K. Turner Foundation, Jennifer Lolley, former Kreher Preserve and Nature Center outreach administrator, Becky Richardson, City of Auburn parks and recreation director and Margaret Holler, who is the center’s first coordinator and is a long-time volunteer and supporter of the Kreher Preserve.

In 2007, the college hired Jennifer Lolley, a 1986 Auburn University graduate, as the first full-time administrator to help further develop the land and its availability as an outreach resource. With her tireless and enthusiastic management, the preserve became fully accessible to the public seven days a week, year-round.

As programming expanded under Lolley’s guidance, she noticed a gap between public perception and what the property offered to the public. “The word ‘preserve’ caused some confusion,” said Communications Manager Jamie Anderson. “People understood that it was a conservation area but didn’t necessarily feel welcomed.”

A rebranding effort in 2015 changed the name from Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve to the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center with the hope that “nature center” better reflected the variety of experiences available there. The new, shorter name also ensured that the Kreher name continued to be associated with Louise Kreher Turner’s gift.

In 2009, KPNC volunteer and Auburn University alumna Sarah Crim saw a need and an opportunity in the community for outdoor educational activities for parents with young children. She helped launch Forest Friends, the first of the preserve’s nature education programs for children and caregivers. The program has since blossomed

into Tree Tots for toddler-age children and Nature Babies, geared toward infants. In 2019, Crim proposed expanding their early childhood offerings to an innovative nature preschool.

Along with Lolley and KPNC manager Michael Buckman, Crim consulted and collaborated with faculty from the early childhood department at Auburn to develop the pedagogy and curriculum. The Woodland Wonders Nature Preschool is in its fourth year and still works closely with the Auburn University College of Education to provide learning opportunities for students alongside the innovative nature-based learning it provides to its students.

The anniversary events kicked off in March with media announcements and street banners posted within the community. In April, the KPNC hosted a reunion for everyone who has experienced its nature education programs from Forest Friends to Woodland Wonders.

In May, the KPNC held a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open the new pond pavilion, completed in winter 2022. Later this year, the KPNC will host a groundbreaking ceremony for a project that has been long in the works—the new Environmental Education Building, or EEB. In addition to being the new home to the center’s nature preschool, the building will house the KPNC’s animal residents and other learning resources.

The education building will be constructed using cross-laminated timber, or CLT, which is a sustainable forest product made with southern pine and other softwoods abundantly found in the region. This earth-friendly, cost-effective, fire-resistant and versatile material offers numerous environmental and economic benefits and is a growing market for the forest industry within Alabama and the Southern U.S.

The award-winning Boston firm Leers, Weinzapfel and Associates submitted the award-winning design chosen for the project, which will include classrooms, office space, exhibits, restroom facilities and covered deck space for instruction and public use. The architecture and interpretive signage on display within the building will showcase the aesthetic beauty of CLT as well as its versatility and utility for sustainable residential and commercial construction.

“The Environmental Education Building will be a window for people to see into the CLT industry—how it’s used and will be used, and its potential as a building material to replace concrete and steel,” said Buckman.

Looking ahead, the new additions and a recent grant from the Turner Foundation will expand the breadth of programming and resources—as well as the reach, with scholarships for underserved schools—that the KPNC is able to offer.

“The KPNC is a wealth of possibilities, and we want to remain adaptable and ready to meet the community’s environmental education needs as well as offering a place of recreation and peace from the busyness of life,” said education director Sarah Crim.

The 30th anniversary celebration will conclude this fall with a social open to the public. Administration and staff hope to see all former and current friends and supporters of nature education at the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center to wrap up the year’s events.



Staff and volunteers who currently teach programs, lead nature hikes, maintain grounds, serve as advisors, and see to the operations of the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center are shown from left to right are: Sarah Bowling, Margaret Holler, Sarah Crim, Kayla Wilson, Emily Kling, Clari Gregson, Max Nemeroff, Caleb Sauls, Jessi Byrd, Amanda Prince, Cyndi Czerkawski, Michelle Simpson, Emily Howe, Starlyn Teel, Michael Buckman, Richard Brinker, former dean of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, and Janaki Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment.

## Auburn professor emeritus establishes KPNC Fund for Excellence

Professor Emeritus Glenn Glover has joined his wife Flavin in creating the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center Fund for Excellence.

Established with a recent donation, as well as a planned estate gift, the fund will support the operations and long-term maintenance of the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center. The goal for the fund is \$1 million, which when fully funded, will provide about \$50,000 per year to support the KPNC and its programs.

Glenn Glover holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from the college and held research, teaching and extension appointments. Glover taught forest measurement and wood procurement to scores of Alabama foresters. He also served as biometrician and director of the AU Silvicultural Herbicide Cooperative, retiring in 2006 as professor emeritus.

Flavin Glover worked as an arts and crafts therapist, program director of adult day treatment and director of clinic operations for East Alabama Mental Health Center from 1972 until her retirement in 1998.

In recent years, Glover has been a frequent presence at KPNC as a volunteer, often accompanied by heavy machinery. He has continued to share his knowledge by volunteering at the nature center and by pitching in with his hands and tools when needs arise, says Michael Buckman, director of the KPNC.



“Glenn is a huge help from a volunteer perspective. He brings his tractor out for road work and does all kinds of physical maintenance – retaining walls, all of it,” said Buckman.

The Glovers planned their gift in a way that will allow funds to be used where they are most needed.

“My wife, Flavin, and I were revisiting our planned giving allocations in 2022 and wanted to support the KPNC,” said Glover. “The only established endowments were for specific purposes or programs. So, we decided to create a KPNC endowment that would support a broad range of needs and be open to anyone to contribute. Flavin and I will contribute in 2023 to kick start the endowment, but encourage others to contribute through one time, annual or planned giving options.”

“The KPNC is a great resource for the community and there are many needs relating to educational programs, maintenance and growth of facilities and programs,” said Janaki Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean. “We hope this endowment will open the door for KPNC users and supporters to contribute toward making the facility even better.”

## Kreher Preserve and Nature Center celebrates opening of new facility



The KPNC and the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment celebrated the grand opening of its Pond Pavilion with Auburn Mayor Ron Anders Jr. on May 4.

The Kreher Preserve and Nature Center celebrated the grand opening of its Pond Pavilion on May 4.

Situated in the northern region of the 120-acre nature center, the new pavilion is accessible from the Farmville Road north entrance, only a few miles from Auburn University’s campus. The structure, which offers a restroom and wood benches, will house many of the center’s educational programs and other activities focused on the nearby turtle pond, butterfly and vegetable gardens, and historic homestead.

The pavilion will also serve as a rest stop for visitors who travel to the north section of the Kreher Preserve to enjoy its densely forested landscape and other natural features such as the hidden waterfall and creek. When not in use for center programs, the facility will be available to the community as a rental space for special events or other activities.

The grand opening celebration and ribbon cutting was coordinated by the Kreher Preserve and Nature

Center with the assistance of Auburn’s Chamber of Commerce. Before cutting the ribbon to officially open the facility, Ron Anders Jr., mayor of the City of Auburn, gave a few remarks praising the nature center for its commitment to serving the community through environmental education.

“I’m thrilled to be here today to celebrate the grand opening of the Pond Pavilion at the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center,” said Mayor Anders. “This beautiful new facility is a testament to the nature center’s dedication to environmental education and conservation. I have no doubt it will become a cherished resource for the Auburn community and beyond.”

Welcome remarks were given by Janaki Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, who discussed the importance of the center’s mission to provide environmental education, outdoor recreation and outreach programs for the university and surrounding communities.

## Sarah Crim becomes new KPNC education director



Auburn University alumna Sarah Crim has joined the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center as education director, responsible for all nature-education programming at the KPNC. Crim succeeds Jennifer Lolley, who retired in 2022 after a successful tenure as outreach administrator.

Crim is a longtime volunteer and staff member at the KPNC, notably as the founder of the popular Forest Friends program in 2009 and the Woodland Wonders preschool in 2019. Crim earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Auburn University’s College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment and later served as director of student services for the college.

Crim worked part-time for several years with the KPNC’s caregiver-and-child education programs, and after some time away, she returned full time as education director at Lolley’s request. Crim says the challenges and opportunities presented by her new responsibilities often overlap.

“The biggest challenge is balancing the many opportunities to enhance the lives of people who visit,

maintain a haven for wildlife and also restore health and grow a well-managed forest,” she said.

Crim is also pursuing a doctorate in early childhood education at Auburn University, focusing her research on the Woodland Wonders Preschool.

“The positive benefits of being outside in nature are numerous,” Crim said. “It’s good for your health; it helps develop fine and gross motor skills; it is good for our cognitive and spiritual health. The benefits are for the whole child.”

For the whole family, Crim has also focused on more workshop offerings, including classes on flower arranging, campfire cooking, and water-quality monitoring. Many are offered in collaboration with local partners who share similar goals and vision.

“Sarah Crim will continue to grow the KPNC as an invaluable learning resource. She has a passion for environmental education, which will benefit the Auburn community for years to come,” said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

community, and we look forward to sharing it with visitors from near and far,” said Buckman.

Contributors to the pavilion construction and grand opening include:

- Auburn University McWhorter School of Building Science Service Learning Program**
- Auburn University Facilities Management**
- Building & Earth**
- Cutting Edge Lawn Service**
- Dilworth Development Inc.**
- Galik Plumbing LLC**
- Martin Marietta**
- Potting Shed**
- Publix**
- Pythoge**
- Stacy Norman Architects**
- Sunrise Rotary**
- Thalamus LLC**
- Thompson Carriers**



# Extension & Outreach

## Smith Appointed to National Wildlife Advisory Committee

Mark Smith, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System specialist and Mosely Professor in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, has answered the call of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or USDA, National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee, or NWSAC. Recently appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Smith will serve a two-year term on this panel to assist those protecting U.S. agricultural resources.

The NWSAC serves as a guiding entity for the USDA's Wildlife Services program. Housed under the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, or APHIS, this committee will meet to provide input on future policies regarding wildlife, public health and safety.

"I am truly honored to serve on this committee," Smith said. "The work Wildlife Services does is essential for the coexistence of humans and wildlife. It serves as the cornerstone of contemporary wildlife management in this rapidly changing world. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the goals of the NWSAC."

Smith began his service with Alabama Extension and Auburn University in 2007 as an Extension specialist and assistant professor of wildlife sciences. He specializes in wildlife damage management but also works with game and nongame habitat management. His research helps

people sustain abundant wildlife populations and the environment.

"Mark serves as team program coordinator of our forestry, wildlife and natural resources team and has been active in Alabama Extension," said Becky Barlow, Alabama Extension assistant director for agriculture, forestry and natural resource programming. "He is an expert in wildlife management—especially regarding wild pig damage management. We are pleased that Mark has this opportunity to represent Extension in this capacity."

Wildlife can ruin crops and other agricultural resources through predation and property damage. The USDA Wildlife Services program focuses on research, programming and educational activities aimed at resolving conflicts between wildlife and people. The resources provided by Wildlife Services guide policies created by the USDA—ultimately affecting a variety of stakeholders.

The 19 NWSAC members will meet biannually to hear the public's input on wildlife challenges and concerns. Acting as a forum for the secretary of agriculture, the committee will continue working with diverse industries and stakeholders.

"The nomination of Dr. Smith for this appointment is an honor and recognition of his contributions to the field of wild pig damage management through his many



*"We are proud of his selection by Secretary Vilsack and confident he will be effective in representing our stakeholders' diverse environmental, conservation and academic interests as a member of the NWSAC."*

– Dean Alavalapati

years of teaching, research and Extension activities," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

In the coming years, Smith and the committee will work to help manage wildlife for the betterment of the environment. To learn more about national wildlife policies, legislation and programming, visit the APHIS web page at [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/).

(Written by Cole Sikes)

## Extension Spotlight Ryan Mitchell, REA for the Southwest region



Ryan Mitchell is the Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources regional extension agent for Alabama

Cooperative Extension System in Southwest Alabama. He earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife and a Master of Natural Resources from Auburn University. Mitchell strives to provide science-based solutions to problems encountered by anyone managing southern forests and the associated wildlife. He has a passion for educating landowners and professionals on prescribed fire and empowering them with the tools needed to conduct their own burns. Mitchell is a Certified Wildlife Biologist® with The Wildlife Society, a certified prescribed burn manager in Alabama, a board member at large for the Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society, a past president of the Alabama Chapter of the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals and a past president of the Alabama Prescribed Fire Council. He and his wife Kathryn and their daughters, Amelia and Crosby, live in Stockton, Alabama. They spend time managing their forests and enjoying the abundance of natural resources on the Gulf Coast.

# Alumni & Friends

## Henson and Kirkland Charitable Foundation endows scholarship



Edward Henson '64

pursuing natural resource careers in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment.

This endowed scholarship is intended to ease the financial burden of a college education for those who wish to responsibly steward and conserve today's resources for future generations.

The Henson and Kirkland Charitable Foundation has established an endowed scholarship for students

"We are pleased to contribute to scholarships at Auburn University, both to honor the wishes of our founding trustee, Mr. Edward Henson '64, and to help provide the best possible education for the bright students coming from Washington County," said foundation trustee Milton Schell '84.

"We think the degrees offered in the College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Environment will appeal to students who want to turn their love of the outdoors into a career, and we think Auburn's CFWE leadership is uniquely gifted to help them achieve that in a practical and forward-thinking way."

In honor of Henson's life and accomplishments, the scholarship gives preference to students from Washington County and to military veterans or those participating in the ROTC program.

The Henson and Kirkland Charitable Foundation was established in 2012 for the purpose of providing grants and charitable contributions to organizations with a focus on education and economic development within and near Washington County, Alabama.

"None of the foundation's current board members are graduates of Auburn's CFWE, but we all grew up



Milton Schell '84

in Washington County with much of our livelihood and leisure time tied to the land," said Schell.

"Washington County is largely covered by forest and timberland, and its residents can't escape the wonders of the outdoors: we have an innate understanding of the value of our natural resources."

"We are pleased the Henson and Kirkland Foundation chose to invest in educating the future stewards of our land and natural resources," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

## KPNC receives grant from F. Allen and Louise K. Turner Foundation

A recent grant from the F. Allen and Louise K. Turner Charitable Foundation will broaden the scope of nature education offered by the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center.

Initially established in 1993 through a gift of land and an endowment from Louise Kreher Turner and Frank Allen Turner, the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center has steadily grown into a hub for nature education that is unique to the area. In addition to trails and programs for all ages, the KPNC offers the first nature preschool in the region, the Woodland Wonders Nature Preschool.

"Louise Turner grew up going on camping trips with her family

which developed her love of the outdoors," said Alesia Davenport on behalf of the Turner Foundation.

"Before she donated this property, she had already sketched out the trails based on the topography of the land. Her goal was to help others create an attachment to land and nature. Thanks to the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment for continuing to carry out her philanthropic legacy."

Michael Buckman, manager of the KPNC, says the grant proposal included funding for several much-needed updates, including educational supplies such as binoculars and specimens, teacher training, teaching kits and educational and program

signage. The grant also provides for improvements to living conditions for the KPNC's resident animals and gardening supplies for landscaping as well as teaching and sensory gardens.

Buckman is most excited about the scholarships that will be provided by the grant. "There are schools in our region who want to offer field trips to the KPNC, but they can't afford the cost per student plus transportation," he said. "This grant will make it possible for schools to visit that have never been able to before."

The grant will have an even bigger impact with the construction of the Environmental Education Building, which will begin in summer 2023.

"This grant will improve the KPNC's



Shown on the left, Dean Alavalapati and on the right, Brian Walker.

ability to fulfill its core mission and Louise Kreher Turner's original vision for the property – nature education," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati. "We look forward to seeing these programs grow and provide a richer experience for visitors."

# Alumni & Friends

## Alumni, family and friends establish the Lane Messer Summer Practicum Endowed Scholarship



Alumni of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, along with friends and family of Judy Lane Messer, have established the Lane Messer Summer Practicum Endowed Scholarship.

This scholarship is intended to provide tuition expenses for one student each year to attend the college's summer practicum at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center.

Lane Messer, affectionately known by students as "Ms. Lane," worked at Auburn for over 23 years as secretary to the Students Services Office in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment. Messer helped students apply for scholarships and organize their schedules, and often assisted with club activities. Upon her retirement in 2012, the alumni, professors and students honored her with a scholarship in her name.

The scholarship was fully endowed this year by Messer's twin sister, Belinda Jane Jones.

"She is paying it forward because someone helped her get the education she needed. Hopefully, the students who receive this scholarship can someday do the same," Messer said. "It's my hope that this scholarship will help enrich and bless the lives of those that are honored to receive it for many years to come."

Lane and her twin sister, Jane, grew up in Dadeville, Alabama. Lane is enjoying her retirement in Opelika, with her husband Norman and frequent visits from their two children, two grandchildren and great-grandkids. She spends her time knitting prayer shawls for people who may need a little encouragement and she loves to read.

The college's summer practicum is an immersive, hands-on learning experience. Taken before the junior year for forestry students, it is the foundation of learning the forester's craft, wildlife ecology and management students complete practicum before their senior year as one of the final, unifying pieces of their Auburn education. Messer's friends, family and former students hope the Lane Messer Endowed Summer Practicum Scholarship will continue her legacy of helping students far into the future.

"Jane and Lane are extraordinary ladies and an inspiration to all. For over 23 years, Lane was the backbone of our Student Services office. She greeted thousands of visitors and touched countless lives during her time in the CFWE and has continued to

remain engaged since her retirement," said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

*"Her legacy will continue to impact the next generation of students attending summer practicum."*

– Dean Alavalapati

## 2023 Tiger Giving Day a success

Auburn University hosted its annual Tiger Giving Day on Feb. 22. Tiger Giving Day is a 24-hour university-wide crowdfunding initiative. More than 50 diverse projects were showcased during this campaign. This year, the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment celebrated the funding of three exciting projects: providing laptops for underprivileged students; creating free venomous-snake safety workshops for first responders, Extension personnel and community members; and raising funds to expand and enhance the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center's Nature Playground.

"The campaign to provide laptops to underprivileged students in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment raised \$16,575, representing 110% of its initial goal.

"A total of \$10,725 was raised for the campaign to create venomous-snake safety workshops for first responders, Extension personnel and community members, representing 107% of its initial goal.

"In the campaign to expand and enhance the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center's nature playground, \$16,820 was raised, representing 112% of its initial goal.

"We are incredibly grateful for the support of our generous donors who made this year's Tiger Giving Day a tremendous success. Thanks to their commitment to our college, we can continue to provide transformative experiences for our students and positively impact our community and beyond," said Heather Crozier, director of development.



## Professor emeritus establishes endowed fund to support graduate education

Art Chappelka, Emeritus Alumni Professor in the College of Forestry Wildlife and Environment, has joined his wife Laura in establishing the Chappelka Family Fund for Excellence in support of graduate education.

*"Graduate education has always been important to us."*

– Art Chappelka

Chappelka, who served as major professor for five doctoral candidates, was a committee member for approximately 30 graduate committees and served on numerous fellowship and travel award committees. "I've seen the immense value of monetary awards and how they help deserving students achieve their goals."

Chappelka grew up in a loving, blue-collar household in Stuart, Florida. His mother, a social worker, and father, a heavy equipment operator, taught him the value of hard work and obtaining a quality education. He graduated from Martin County High School in 1972 and Indian River Junior College in 1974. At the University of Florida, he earned a bachelor's degree in forestry and also met Laura, who would later become his wife. After graduation, Chappelka pursued a graduate degree and received a Master of Science in Forest Pathology in 1976. After earning his master's degree, he worked as a research biologist in the Entomology Department until 1982 and then earned his doctorate

from Virginia Tech in 1986.

Laura grew up in Miami, Florida, as the oldest daughter of a nurse and a truck driver, both of whom worked hard to provide well for their children. After graduation from Carol City High School in 1974, she attended Miami Dade Junior College and then the University of Florida, where she earned a bachelor's degree in recreation in 1981. She married Art Chappelka that year and they later became the proud parents of two sons, Skipper and Chris.

Chappelka was an active faculty member in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences from 1987 to 2018. He has authored or co-authored 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, and edited one book, three special editions of peer reviewed journals and 12 book chapters. In addition, Chappelka served as Interim associate dean for research in the school from 2014-2015, was a reviewer for several international journals and contributed to numerous national peer-review panels.

During his tenure, Chappelka taught classes at the undergraduate and graduate levels in urban forestry, Introduction to Natural Resources, Natural Resource Policy, Chemical Climate Change Effects to Forested Ecosystems and Technology and Culture.

The Chappelka Family Fund for Excellence was established to support graduate students enrolled in the Master of Natural Resources, non-thesis curriculum, primarily



Kathryn Flynn is shown with Art and Laura Chappelka during Chappelka's 2018 retirement reception.

in the form of graduate awards. If there is not an eligible student

*"The Master of Natural Resources degree is a great program, and its graduate students often don't have access to the same financial incentives that other programs do. We wanted to give back to the university with a gift that would strengthen this graduate program and help a deserving student complete their graduate education."*

– Art Chappelka

for the funds to support graduate student travel awards for expenses relating to academic conferences.

"Art and Laura understand the importance of a quality education. As a faculty member, Art has witnessed over his career how impactful philanthropic support has been by assisting deserving students in achieving their goals," said Janaki Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment. "We are grateful for their investment in the Master of Natural Resources degree program."



Crooked Oaks Legacy Foundation awards scholarships for dedication to research



Shown at the Crooked Oaks Farms receiving their scholarship awards from the Crooked Oaks Legacy Foundation, are left to right Ally Cobern, Wanda Dye, Foundation board member and daughter of Coach Dye and Catherine Cummings.

Two College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment students have been awarded the Crooked Oaks Legacy Foundation Scholarship.

Ally Cobern, a junior studying Wildlife Ecology and Management, and Catherine Cummings, a second-year doctoral student, were awarded the scholarship at a ceremony held on April 6.

The Crooked Oaks Legacy Foundation was established by former Auburn University football head coach Pat Dye and Dr. Nancy McDonald upon Coach Dye’s passing in 2020.

The Foundation is named for Coach Dye’s farm, now a destination for quail hunting, weddings and gardens specializing in the cultivation of Japanese maple trees. The Foundation has a multiprong purpose of continuing the mission of Crooked Oaks Farm to include providing educational opportunities through wildlife and habitat conservation, public use and enjoyment of the land and gardens, for the retirement and rescue of qualifying animals and for the study of nature.

Created to highlight the research and academic performance of Auburn University students, the Crooked Oaks Legacy Foundation Scholarship provides recipients with financial support for their studies. This is the second year the scholarship has been awarded.

Ally and Catherine visited Crooked Oaks Farm, where they were presented with the awards by Wanda Dye, Foundation board member and daughter of Coach Dye.

“The Crooked Oaks Foundation Board is honored and humbled by the tremendous research projects Catherine Cummings and Ally Cobern are undertaking. We are hopeful that these awards will contribute to their future endeavors in wildlife conservation, environmental policy and public health,” said Wanda Dye.

Ally is a member of the Auburn University Honors College, the CFWE Student Ambassadors program, and is an undergraduate research fellow studying the harmful effects of free-ranging dogs on native biodiversity. After graduation, Ally plans to travel and pursue a master’s degree to continue research and learn more about wildlife policy. With this knowledge, she will strive to influence environmental policy that will promote biodiversity.

“With this award, I now have the resources to advance my invasive species research here at Auburn and begin looking for higher education opportunities. I plan to pursue a master’s degree to conduct and lead my own research that will influence environmental policy and promote biodiversity,” said Ally.

Catherine works in the Conservation Governance Lab under the direction of Kelly Dunning, associate professor of conservation governance within the CFWE. Catherine’s dissertation research focuses on the human dimensions of chronic wasting disease, or CWD. She surveyed hunters in states with recent cases of the disease to understand how hunters respond to a positive detection. Her research will



provide state wildlife agencies and universities information regarding stakeholder engagement with CWD. She also serves as a teaching assistant for undergraduate wildlife courses at Auburn University. Upon receiving her doctorate, Catherine intends to pursue a state or federal agency career in human dimensions research.

*“It is truly an honor to receive this award. I am so appreciative that the board has chosen to contribute to my research on the human dimensions of chronic wasting disease. This scholarship will allow me to further my career goals towards becoming a professional in wildlife conservation and management.”*

– Catherine Cummings

“We are so pleased the Crooked Oaks Foundation has recognized the hard work of these high-achieving students. Their ongoing support of Auburn University and the fields of wildlife conservation and environmental policy is a testimony to Coach Dye’s legacy,” said Emmett F. Thompson Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

Alumni Spotlight on Doug Roberts ’82

Doug Roberts, an ‘82 forestry graduate, is the owner of Coal Freight Forwarding. When he was planning his future, he knew he wanted to stay close to home – both for college and in his future career.

Home for Roberts was a small town in rural Alabama, where you might find more trees than people. He chose Auburn University, and eventually the forestry program, as a course that would prepare him for a career in a well-established industry in his home state.

During his time at Auburn, Roberts had the privilege of being in the very first class to attend Summer Practicum at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center. He remembers being greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Dixon themselves upon arrival at the property: “It was fun to see their enthusiasm for the development of their property into an educational opportunity for future foresters at the university.”

After graduating from Auburn, Roberts worked in sales at Thompson Tractor Company, and that position provided him with the opportunity to purchase Coal Freight Forwarding from a customer he met there. He credits his Auburn degree for those opportunities as well as the skills to make his business a success.

Roberts is a private landowner as well, and the principles he learned at Auburn continue to influence the decisions he makes for his forestland.

*“There was a large focus on business education in my studies, and our professors discussed real assets in class. That real - life application was valuable, and I still use that foundation of knowledge today.”*

– Doug Roberts

“The stewardship aspect of conservation is very important to me. For my property, I believe in the principle of ‘leave it better than you found it,’” Roberts said.

When considering his objectives, Roberts wanted to be sure that both the land and his family would benefit. He wanted to leave the property better off and to provide for his family’s enjoyment of the outdoors in a lasting way. “That’s why I implemented a conservation easement,” he said. “This practice establishes a long-term plan for the property that will live beyond my influence.”

One of the reasons Roberts supports the advancement of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment is to show how much it means to him to be an alumnus of the college. “My knowledge of forest management has only gotten more valuable as the world has become increasingly aware of the role nature plays in our lives.”



Doug Roberts ’82 is shown with his wife, Joni and Aubie at the CFWE’s 75th anniversary gala at the Gogue Performing Arts Center in 2022.

Among his past contributions in support of the CFWE, Roberts says the most meaningful was his gift to the Emmett F. Thompson Deanship, established in 2021 by Thompson’s children Chuck, Meri and Juli. When Roberts was enrolled at Auburn, Thompson was the head of the Department of Forestry, then under the College of Agriculture. Only two years after Roberts graduated, Thompson succeeded in helping establish the department as a school, and his clear passion for the students under his care made a lasting impression.

*“Don't be afraid to accept new challenges even if it means changing jobs. I had no idea where i would be today when I graduated, and that acceptance of risk worked out very well for my career”*

– Doug Roberts