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Working with Nature for Society’s Well Being

On Campus & Beyond
Celebrating our graduates
Rallying for sustainable communities
Extending appreciation to faculty and staff

Visit our Flickr site to view our photo gallery or cfwe.auburn.edu for more stories.
College honors faculty, staff and students during Spring 2023 awards celebration

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment held its annual awards gala on April 16, honoring exceptional students, faculty members and alumni who have made significant contributions to the college and its mission. Among the award recipients were several who were recognized for their academic achievements, leadership skills and dedication to their studies. Student recipients included:

- Association of Consulting Foresters Senior Leadership – Josh Mullins
- F & W Forestry Services Inc. Rising Senior – Eric Eisenhard
- Forestry Club Outstanding Member Award – Gerson Garza
- Southeastern Association of Foresters and Alabama Division Leadership Travel Award – Alphonso None
- Lana Massier Summer Practicum Endowed Scholarship – Hunter Cochran

The following faculty and staff members have been honored:

- The Wildlife Society Outstanding Member of the Year – Colby Bohl
- Westervelt Rising Senior Award in Wildlife and Forest Biology – Kyle Droege
- Sustainable Biomass and Packaging Student of the Year – Holden Lee

- Natural Resources Management Student of the Year – Anya Degen
- Temporary Faculty of the Year – Kyle Deere
- Young You and Gina Lamka

- Alumni Society Student Leadership Award
- Parton Brewer
- Alabama Division of the Society of American Foresters Junior Leadership Award – Alex White
- Alabama Forest Owners’ Association Scholarship – Ricchi Nicholas & Riley Ketchum
- New and Woody Military Service Award – Phil Draper
- CFWE Distinguished Alumnus Award – John Kuykendall

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CFWE News • Spring 2022

Dean • Janaki R. Alavalapati
Assoc. Dean of Academic Affairs • Todd Snider
Assoc. Dean of Research • Donna Zheng
Extension Coordinator • Richard Brinker
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Contributing Writer • Allison McCall
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CFWE hosts Advisory Council meeting

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment has celebrated the retirement of Edward Loewenstein, who is the former associate dean of academic affairs and associate professor of silviculture. Loewenstein is an expert in unmanaged forest management, silviculture and forest ecology. After serving as associate dean for academic affairs for four years, Loewenstein returned to an academic role as a professor of silviculture. He taught Environmental Ethics, Sustainable Forest Management projects, undergraduate seminar and leadership training in natural resource policies, and the co-instructed forest biology as part of the Forest Summer Practicum at the Southern Forest Research Education Center from 2008-09.

At the college, Loewenstein was honored as the College Teacher of the Year Award in 2011 and 2019, and he also received the Harold E. Christen Award for the Outstanding Service to Teaching in 2019. The primary emphasis of his research during his career has focused on natural resource policy and regulations, wildlife ecology and management of forests with classification and mapping. In addition to his scholarly accomplishments in sustainable forest management, environmental management, and academia, we commend Dr. Shepard for his leadership to enhance the School of Forest Resources with support and the college’s academic programs,” said Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

Scott Enbak, Dwain G. Luce Professor and Former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
Scott Eubank, who was the associate dean of academic affairs from 2014-2020, has retired. He is an expert in forest pathology, mycology, forest regeneration and forest-feeding production systems. While at Auburn, Eubank taught Forest Pathology and Forest Biology, and Forest Biology Forest Ecology as part of the Forestry Summer Practicum at the Southern Forest Research Education Center.

“We recognize the time, resources and expertise that he has poured into these roles and are grateful for his tireless work to further our mission.” – Dean Alavalapati

Jim Shepard, Professor and Former Dean
The outstanding work of numerous CFWE faculty, staff and students continues to manage their forestland. He also was most recently added to the Alabama Forest Resources Hall of Fame. Jim Shepard, professor and former dean, has been an unparalleled learning environment for the state of the art and the Teton-Dixon Foundation Learning 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 University’s Forestry Research from 2006-08. He also served 14 years with the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement in Gainesville, Florida, in a sustainable forestry program manager and wetlands program manager. During this time, he worked for seven years as a faculty associate professor in the University of Florida’s School of Forest Resources and Conservation, where he also led Florida’s study abroad program with the University of Agricultural Forestry school. Shepard earned his doctorate from Mississippi State in 1996 in forest resources with a focus on forest soils. He then served as a research scientist for the Florida Department of Agriculture for five years at the State University of Florida College of Forestry and Science and Forestry, where his research has focused on the ecological effects of atmospheric deposition. Shepard plans to relocate to Gainesville, Fl., with his wife, Cathy.
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

Outreach & Extension

- Signed historic 10-year agreement to serve eight U.S. Army Bases
- Organized first CLT conference in the Southern U.S.

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

EXTENSION ACHIEVED

- $1.3 Million IN DAMAGE REDUCTION FROM WILD PIGS PROGRAM
- 5,054 HOURS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

Development

- Dean Janaki Alavalapati visits with friends of the college
- Scholarship donors and recipients mingle at annual dinner

Exponential Growth in Undergraduate and Graduate Education Since 2015

- 48% increase in undergraduate enrollment
- 148% increase in graduate enrollment
- 81% increase in student employment rate
- 75% increase in extramural funding from 2021

Graded

- Graduated 56 M.S./Ph.D. students in 2022 relative to 35 in 2021 and 20 in 2020

2021-2022

- $2,624,135 total raised
- 175% of goal raised
- $1,977 average gift amount increase of nearly $500
The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment is excited to announce a new role for student career development and employment. Elizabeth Bowersock will serve in this new role. She has been a part of the college for many years, and her commitment to serving students and faculty will be crucial in assisting CFWE students with their academic years in CFWE. The career services coordinator will act as an advisor, mentor and resource for all students. She will also work closely with faculty and staff to ensure that students are aware of the opportunities available to them. As a result of her efforts, CFWE students will be better prepared for their future careers.

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

Understanding soil moisture changes may help with regional water resources planning and guiding development. According to a study by Sanjay Kumar, an assistant professor in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, his findings, recently published in the journal Water Resources Research, revealed a very large number of climate-related questions at two different climate models—data sets for hydrological modeling for predicting extreme rains and floods. Hydroclimate refers to understanding the processes that influence the way the water cycle changes, in turn, affects climate. The study is aiming at the fact that climate change on this scale will have a significant impact on the management of water resources.

The study revealed that initially, species were larger and easier to track. As the environment changed over time, they have gradually shifted to smaller and more cryptic species. The study is the first to look at measures of hydrological modeling for predicting extreme rains and floods.

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

A researcher in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment has linked the perception of which species might face extinction due to climate change with human behavior. In a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, he found that people may be less likely to notice species that have been identified as at risk under the Endangered Species Act.

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Celebrating 30 years of the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center

Shown during the property dedication are, from left to right, Janaki Alavalapati, Emmett F. Turner, and Louise Kreher Turner.

The sound of children’s laughter rings out amid the rustling leaves of trees in the Auburn University’s Kreher Preserve and Nature Center. Kids are encouraged to climb, run and dig in the dirt under a leafy green canopy. Pigeons roost in sycamore trees, butterflies flutter, and birds call. A native pittrick plant provides great-natured attention from kids. Parents and guardians are shown while they follow the nature playground, an open play space that encourages digging holes with sticks as much as climbing and balancing.

This outreach and education landmark of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment is celebrating three decades of education and outreach in 2023. Among the events planned to mark this milestone is 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 opportunities for outreach and education to Auburn University students.

Dean Alavalapati

“This gift of land has provided thousands of students and faculty with an opportunity to learn and gain invaluable experiences,” said Dean John Alavalapati.

The Kreher Preserve will continue its mission to provide educational opportunities for students and faculty, as well as the public, through outreach and research.

The Kreher Preserve and Nature Center opened in 1994 with the goal of providing an educational and research facility for the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment. The center is located on a 120-acre property near the entrance to the Auburn University campus. The center offers numerous environmental and economic benefits, including the preservation of natural habitats and the enhancement of public awareness about the importance of conservation.

In 2007, the college hired Jennifer Lolley, a 1986 Auburn University graduate, as the first full-time administrator to help further develop the KPNC and its mission. Lolley worked for the college for 11 years and was succeeded by Buckman in 2018.

The KPNC is now home to the Wildlife and Environmental Science Building, or WESB, which was completed in 2016. The building houses the KPNC’s department of wildlife and natural resource management, as well as the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment’s Department of Forestry.

The building contains state-of-the-art facilities, including a 2,500-square-foot lab space, a 4,000-square-foot greenhouse, and a 1,000-square-foot lecture hall. The KPNC also has a 1,200-square-foot library and a 400-square-foot museum.

In 2019, the KPNC opened the new pond pavilion, which was completed in 2019. The pavilion features a 2,000-square-foot covered deck space for instruction and public use. The pavilion is home to the KPNC’s Early Childhood Education Program, which provides early childhood education opportunities for children in the Auburn community.

The KPNC also offers a variety of outreach and education programs, including a popular Forest Friends program in which children can explore the preserve and learn about nature. The KPNC also offers a variety of workshops and seminars for adults, as well as a popular Forest Friends program in which children can explore the preserve and learn about nature.

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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 other alumni and friends of 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 Lane Messer Summer Practicum at the Solon Doggett, Jr. Forestry Science Center. Lane Messer, affectionately known by students as “Mr. Lane,” worked at Auburn for over 26 years as a secretary to the Students Services Office in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment. Messer helped students apply for scholarships and was a familiar figure who was often assisted with club activities. Upon her retirement in 1999, Messer was named a college professor and received numerous awards and recognition for her service.

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

2023 Tiger Giving Day a success

Auburn University hosted its annual Tiger Giving Day on Feb. 28. The university-wide crowdsourcing initiative, which supports programs and projects across the campus through the funding of three exciting projects: providing laptops for 11,000 students, creating free venomous-snake safety education programs, and expanding Auburn’s field school.

"In the campaign to expand and enhance the Kreher Preserve and Natural Resources Education Center, $155,426 was raised, representing an incredible 54% of the goal," said Phil Beck, vice president of development.

"The support we received during Tiger Giving Day was overwhelming. Combined with the ongoing support of our donors, we will continue to make a difference for our students and positively impact the future of natural resources education beyond," said Heather Crozier, director of development.

Henson and Kirkland Charitable Foundation endows scholarship

The Henson and Kirkland Charitable Foundation has established an endowed scholarship for students pursuing natural resources in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment.

This endowed scholarship is intended to ease the financial burden for those who wish to responsibly steward forests and wildlife for future generations, practical and forward-thinking ways.

"We are pleased to contribute to students currently in the program, both to honor the wishes of our founding trustee, Mr. Edward Henson, and to establish the best possible education for the future leaders of our region," said Johnny Kirkland, of the Washington County, Alabama.

"The Henson and Kirkland Charitable Foundation was established to help our future leaders. It gives us a chance to support students who want to turn their love of the outdoors into a career," said Auburn’s CFWE leadership is uniquely gifted in helping us have the best students.

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

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Alumni & Friends

Crooked Oaks Legacy Foundation awards scholarships for dedication to research

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 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 multipart 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.

Ally Cobern

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

“"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

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 he 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. Roberts 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 woodland.

“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

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 2022 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.

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