



February 15, 2022

New Year: New Challenges and New Opportunities

by Chris Lorentz, OBFS President

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As we move into the new year and the implementation phase of the strategic plan, I would like to offer my appreciation and gratitude for all those who served on the team and helped develop the new [OBFS Strategic Plan](#). We are extremely thankful for everyone's hard work and are excited to move forward with the Implementation phase.

I would like to congratulate and welcome the new incoming members of the OBFS Board and thank all those who accepted our nominations. In addition, I want to thank those who responded to the article on sexual assault and harassment at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. In particular, I want to acknowledge the IDEA+ Committee Chairs (Phoebe Jekielek and Tori McDermott), along with Elizabeth Long and Anne Kelly, all of whom took the lead on our discussions and our official response: [OBFS Statement of Solidarity and Commitment](#). We have a long way to go to ensure safe and productive environments for all, but we are grateful for the experience, expertise, and dedication of our members. If anyone would like to offer their input on these important issues, please feel free to do so at: [Member Feedback](#).

Lastly, I want to thank all the Committee Chairs and Board-appointed members who have worked so diligently over the past year. This is an exciting time for the Organization, and we are looking forward to launching many new initiatives. At the same time, we recognize that many members of our community face steep challenges stemming from the pandemic and other factors. The Board is committed to providing support, services, and relief throughout the upcoming year.

"I believe the best way to begin reconnecting humanity's heart, mind, and soul to nature is for us to share our individual stories."
 — J. Drew Lanham, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*

OBFS Board Statement: Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) Barro Colorado Island field station

The Organization of Biological Field Stations (OBFS) stands with women who have come forward about their sexual harassment and assault and commends you for your bravery to shine light on these injustices. Moreover, we want to support all those who have suffered similar experiences and to acknowledge the harm caused. The OBFS leadership and community are appalled and deeply disturbed by the recent reports of sexual harassment and abuses at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) Barro Colorado Island field station. We also recognize this is not unique to STRI, as 75% of field scientists and trainees have experienced harassment and assault.¹ As an organization, OBFS is committed to illuminating and supporting marginalized and often silenced voices, and is striving to end sexual harassment, assault, and discrimination in affiliated field stations and marine labs.

OBFS acknowledges our own shortcomings in taking responsibility for allowing this culture to persist and recognizes the need to look at our internal policies and practices that enable sexual harassment and assault. As stated in our mission, OBFS is working with community members around the world to enhance inclusivity, equity, diversity, and accessibility of field stations and marine laboratories. We seek to continually reflect on and prioritize these issues, as we begin implementing our OBFS Strategic Plan (2021-2026). Field stations and marine laboratories should not be spaces where sexual harassment and assault are allowed to occur. However, OBFS recognizes that the culture of field stations has enabled sexual harassment and assault.

We recognize that OBFS needs to take a proactive leadership role in ending sexual harassment and assault. We commit to the following steps going forward:

Action item 1: These reports have catalyzed our efforts to critically review our current policies and bylaws. We are reviewing our harassment prevention and response and membership policies to identify appropriate mechanisms for sanctions as well as criteria for station membership.

Action item 2: We continue to promote our community's expertise in harassment prevention and response. We strongly recommend all stations develop robust anti-harassment policies, reporting structures, and support for targets of harassment and assault. Stations are encouraged to read the Report of the Workshop to Promote Safety in Field Stations to understand current best practices in harassment prevention and response. We encourage stations and field facilities to ensure that all employees and visitors are fully aware of station policies, reporting mechanisms, and avenues for support.

Action item 3: We will prioritize increasing our offerings of resources and trainings surrounding diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion, as well as best practices for harassment prevention and response.

Action item 4: While STRI is not currently an OBFS station member, we nevertheless feel that OBFS should take a leadership role regarding all reports of harassment and assault at field stations. We are therefore reviewing all our options for how to hold STRI and other stations accountable, and how to best support targets of sexual harassment and assault.

We lean on the powerful statements of support and recommendations distributed by colleagues including the Association of Tropical Biology and Conservation, STRI Staff Scientists, and the Ecological Society of America condemning the behavior allowed and perpetuated at STRI. OBFS welcomes suggestions to continue to improve the culture and climate of the field station community. To offer feedback or for assistance with sexual harassment policies and related areas, please reach out to members of the OBFS Board and IDEA+ (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) Committee.

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Tori McDermott	IDEA+ Committee co-chair	vmmcdermott@alaska.edu
Phoebe Jekielek	IDEA+ Committee co-chair	phoebe@hurricaneisland.net

In conclusion, OBFS strongly condemns the behavior, policies, and culture that led to decades of sexual abuse and harassment on BCI and is striving to create safe, accessible, and welcoming field stations and marine labs for our entire community.

Sincerely, Members of the OBFS Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA+) Committee and the OBFS Board of Directors

¹Clancy, K. B., Nelson, R. G., Rutherford, J. N., & Hinde, K. (2014). Survey of academic field experiences (SAFE): Trainees report harassment and assault. PLoS ONE, 9(7), e102172. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102172>

Affiliates and Collaborations By Paul Foster, AIBS rep

iDigBio

The Field Museum in collaboration with iDigBio and the Natural Science Collections Alliance has announced the sixth annual Digital Data in Biodiversity Research Conference, to be hosted May 23-25, 2022. This year's event will be a virtual meeting. The conference will again provide an important opportunity to explore digital data tools, techniques, research protocols, discoveries, and outcomes across all biodiversity research domains.

NSF

The NSF reauthorization continues moving through Congress. In late January, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi introduced the America COMPETES Act of 2022. It retains the language supporting field stations and marine labs from the previous bill. The House and Senate now need to negotiate a compromise for President Biden to sign for the reauthorization to become law. Thanks to Jyotsna Pandey at AIBS for keeping us updated on the reauthorization's progress.

OBFS Code of Conduct for Meetings

OBFS is committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all meeting participants. All participants, including, but not limited to, attendees, speakers, volunteers, exhibitors, OBFS board members, service providers, and others are expected to abide by this OBFS Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct applies to all OBFS meeting-related events, including those sponsored by organizations other than OBFS but held in conjunction with OBFS events, in public or private facilities. Here is a portion of the Code of Conduct; the full statement can be found here: obfs.org/obfs-code-of-conduct

Expected Behavior

- All participants, attendees, and vendors are treated with respect and consideration, valuing a diversity of views and opinions.
- Be considerate, respectful, and collaborative.
- Communicate openly with respect for others, critiquing ideas rather than individuals.
- Avoid personal attacks directed toward other attendees, participants, and suppliers/vendors.
- Be mindful of your surroundings and of your fellow participants. Alert OBFS board members or site host staff if you notice a dangerous situation or someone in distress. Board members will have name tags with a ribbon or a star to distinguish them as reporting entities.
- Respect the rules and policies of the meeting venue, lodging, hosts, or any other venue associated with the meeting.

Reporting Unacceptable Behavior

- If you are the subject of unacceptable behavior or have witnessed any such behavior, please immediately notify an OBFS board member, an OBFS volunteer in a leadership position, site host staff, or local authorities.
- Or use this online reporting form: <https://obfst.memberclicks.net/obfs-misconduct-reporting>

Creating common ground to resolve misconceptions and prepare students for field experiences

By Cora Baird (UVA Coastal Research Center) and Angie Patterson (Black Rock Forest)



This work emerged from a 2021 partnership between OBFS members (the authors), the coordinator of the ESA SEEDS program, the communications coordinator for the LTER Network Office, and the Undergraduate Field Experiences Research Network (UFERN).

Broadening participation and alleviating “fears of the unknown” for underrepresented students engaging in field work requires solutions that bridge the differences found amongst students’ prior outdoor experiences, situational knowledge, and cultural backgrounds. These differences often contribute to disparate perceptions and expectations about what field station work and life is like. One feasible solution that can help realign students’ perceptions includes the creation of a short film or ‘pre-orientation site trailer’ for students and their families to learn about field station life and work associated with our programs.

A site trailer should address two elements:

1) Your program’s elevator pitch. What is the experience of doing research there and why would someone want to participate? 2) Identify concerns or misconceptions and preparation needs associated with the attributes of your program. What reality will visitors face at your site? What can you show in the video to help them understand and arrive prepared?

The reality is that each of us have had varied field experiences - some negative, some positive. So when planning your content, consider safety, including sources of risk and appropriate gear. Check your outlined contents against [Demery & Pipkin](#) and UCB’s [field safety planning template](#). Make sure to show your facilities, the local community, highlights of alumni experiences and advice they can offer visiting students, and how to access resources.

If you want perspectives from underrepresented individuals in your program, consider either 1) using individuation (‘What was your experience with safety in our program?’ rather than ‘What is our program like for a Black woman?’) or 2) inviting multiple members of an identity to have a shared conversation so that no one person is asked to speak on behalf of an identity group.

If you want to learn more about creating your own site trailer, visit these support links from The Virtual Field (OBFS) on [video creation best practices](#) and [post-production](#) and LTER’s [video storytelling and production](#) guides.

Check out this [example trailer](#).

Ecology Extended Art Project By Rita Leduc, Artist-In-Residence with Oika at Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest

[Oika Arts](#) is pleased to report much conceptual and creative progress in our pilot project called [Ecology Extended](#). This innovative Art-Sci collaboration between the NY-based artist, Rita Leduc, research ecologist at the USFS Northern Research Station, Lindsey Rustad, and Rich Blundell of Oika began last summer at the [Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest](#).

Ecology Extended explores novel pathways by which the ecological dynamics inherent in nature can extend into culture through visual art. Merging a scientist's curriculum of ecological principles with an artist's place-based, interdisciplinary practice, we are communicating a new eco-cultural paradigm through artworks, lectures, and social outreach.

The program places an artist trained in the principles of Ecological Intelligence into an active ecological research setting to create art imbued with the Ecological Intelligence of habitats in flux.

We have funding for more projects like *Ecology Extended*!

We want this project to grow! Please reach out if you are interested in learning more about *Ecology Extended*; we are actively seeking outlets to engage others in what we are doing via lectures, podcasts, casual conversations, etc. Additionally, Oika is pleased to announce that we have been awarded additional funding to launch more *Ecology Extended* projects in 2022. If you are a field station director or staff with an interest in hosting artists-in-residence please contact Dr. Rich Blundell at omniscopic@gmail.com. If you are an artist (or know one) who would like to apply for an Oika grant to develop an Oika Arts project, please contact Rita Leduc at Leduc.Rita@gmail.com.

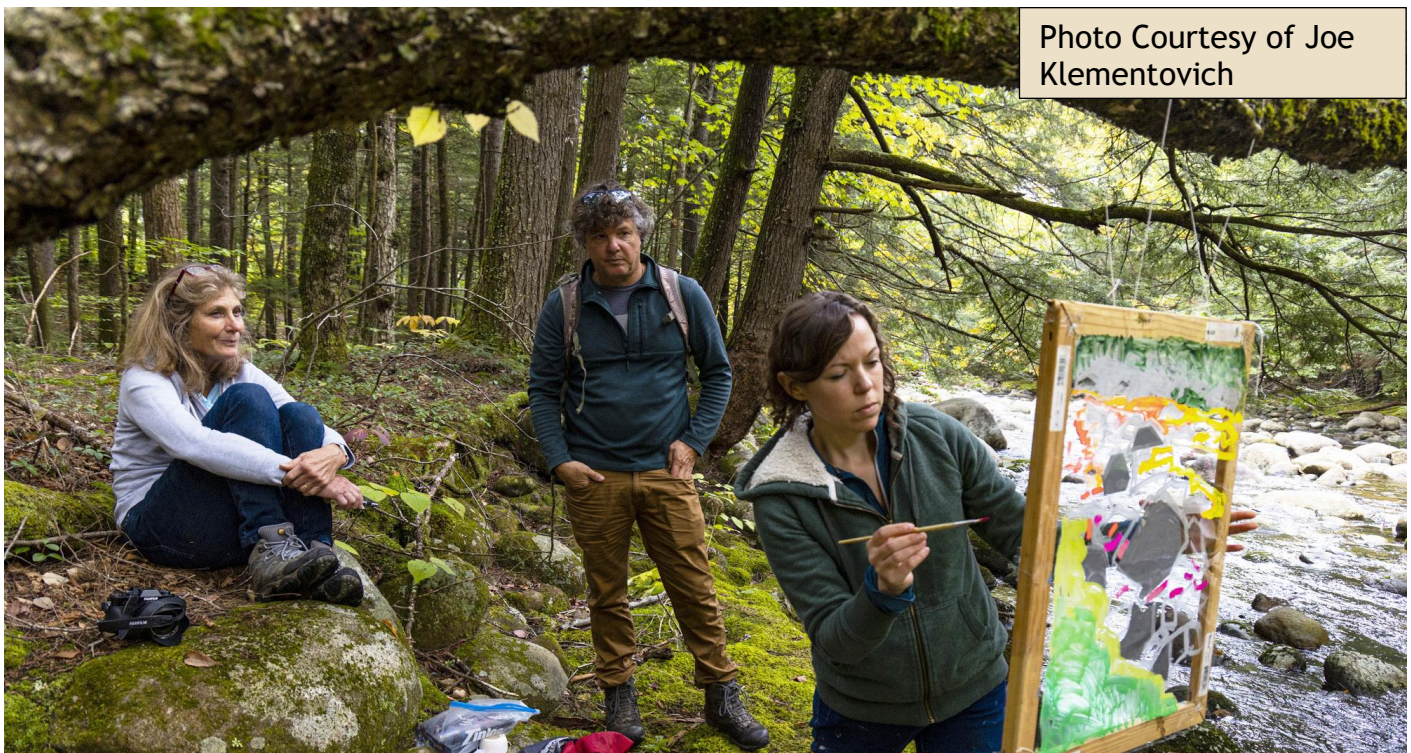


Photo Courtesy of Joe Klementovich

Station Profile: Scientific Station Nkweseko By Claudia and Andreas Hemp

Scientific Station Nkweseko is located in Tanzania, Africa in the Kilimanjaro Region (Hai District, Machame area, 3°11'04" S, 37°14'26" E) at 1700 meters above sea level. It is one of few field stations in Tanzania and East Africa and is located at the lower border of the montane rain forest surrounding Kilimanjaro, protected as a National Park and a designated UNESCO world heritage site. The station itself lies in the so-called Chagga Homegardens, a sustainable agroforestry system with high biodiversity, rich in former forest species and a high degree of endemics.

From 1989 to 1996 researchers conducted ethnobotanical and ethnozoological projects, including later projects on vegetation and Orthoptera, all financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG). From 2010 to 2018 the research unit "KiLi" was established, again financed by the German DFG. Climate and soil data as well as monitoring selected groups of plants and animal groups resulted in a wealth of data from all major habitats.

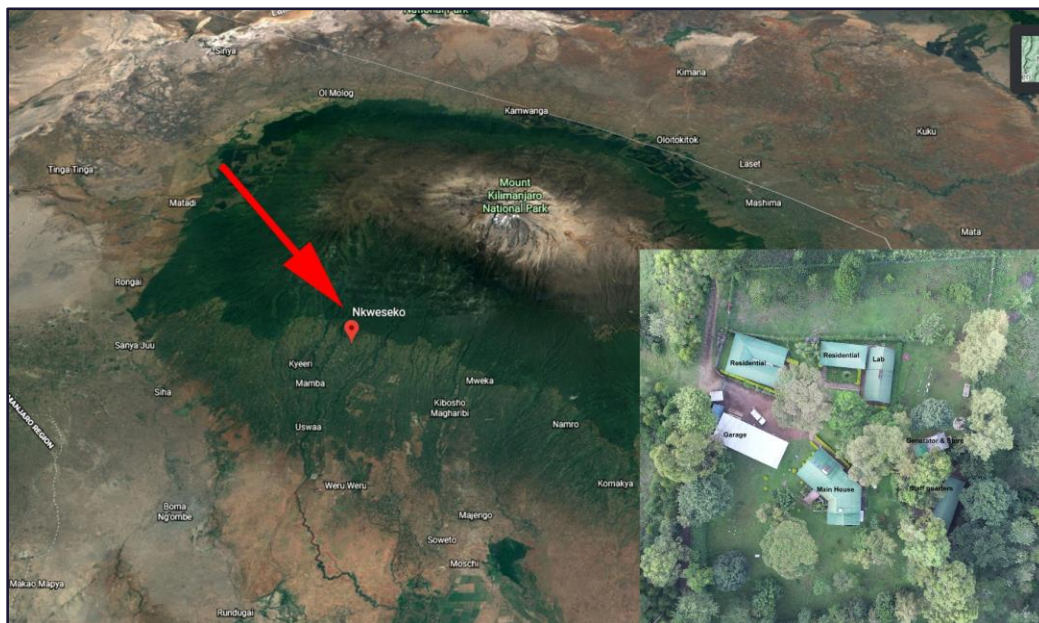
A booklet summarizing the results and providing more insight into study design, participating Universities and Institutes in Tanzania and Europe, and available data can be downloaded at:

<https://kili-ses.senckenberg.de/en/publications/literature/>

In the frame of the KiLi Project a rain map together with a high-quality physiographic map as a base for ecotourism, nature conservation and land planning at a scale 1:100,000 for the entire Kilimanjaro massif was developed.

The map is obtainable at: https://www.hochgebirgsforschung.de/weitere_karten.php.

The finding of the tallest trees of Africa on one of the research plots of KiLi attracted world-wide attention (Hemp et al. 2016). In 2020, a second research unit was granted by the DFG with the first phase starting just now and running until 2024. In the second research group, in addition to continuing recording long-term climate and vegetation data, is a focus on socio-economic topics. Scientific Station Nkweseko hosted numerous smaller projects from various European, American, and Asian countries collaborating and supporting scientist teams in logistics, and facilitating field work.



Scientific station Nkweseko (red arrow) located at the southern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, at the lower border of the rain forest. Inset shows housing and laboratory.

Source of satellite image: Google Earth.

Image courtesy Claudia and Andreas Hemp.

Meet Your New OBFS Officers

Congratulations and welcome the following individuals to their new positions beginning April 1, 2022!

The new officers are (photos below, left to right):

President: Lesley Knoll

Secretary: Beth Norman

Member-At-Large: Teresa Schueller

Member-at-Large (Early Career Rep.): Scott Thomas

Thank you to everyone who ran on the ballot and to voting members who participated in the 2021 OBFS Election.



Thank You and an Invitation

Sarah Oktay deserves OBFS' sincere acknowledgment for her many contributions to this organization. Sarah has served on the board in varied capacities, most recently as Editor; she now passes that baton to Stacy McNulty. Sarah will remain active with OBFS as Co-Chair of the Development Committee with Brian Kloeppe. Thank you, Sarah!

With the launch of the new Strategic Plan, international matching program, IDEA+ initiatives, and training opportunities in Development, among other projects, it is an exciting time for OBFS and a great time to get more involved with the organization.

Committee invitation: please consider joining one of the OBFS standing committees. Reach out to the chair(s) of the committees in which you are interested: obfs.org/governance.

In particular, we would welcome individuals to work with Jason Tallant as Network Coordinator, Mary Hufty as Historian, Lisa Busch & Vanessa Trujillo with Outreach and Communications, and Paul Foster with the Collaborations Committee.

Send your news and articles for the next edition to newsletter@obfs.org
by April 15th

In the News

Recent Publications

Click the link to access; some may require sign-in

[Beltran, R. S., E. Marnocha, A. Race, D. A. Croll, G. H. Dayton, and E. S. Zavaleta. 2020. Field courses narrow demographic achievement gaps in ecology and evolutionary biology. Ecology and Evolution 10:5184–5196.](#)

[O'Connell, K., K. L Hoke, M. Giamellaro, A. R. Berkowitz, and J. Branchaw. 2021. A Tool for Designing and Studying Student-Centered Undergraduate Field Experiences: The UFERN Model. BioScience. biab112.](#)

[O'Connell, K., Hoke, K., Giamellaro, M., Berkowitz, A., & Branchaw, J. \(2021\). Designing and Studying Student-Centered Undergraduate Field Experiences: The UFERN Model. BioScience, Preprint.](#)

[Race, A. I., R. S. Beltran, and E. S. Zavaleta. 2021. How an Early, Inclusive Field Course Can Build Persistence in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Integrative and Comparative Biology 61:957–968.](#)

[Race, AI, De Jesus, M, Beltran, RS, Zavaleta, ES. 2021. A comparative study between outcomes of an in-person versus online introductory field course. Ecology and Evolution 2021; 11: 3625– 3635.](#)

[Shortlidge, E. E., A. Jolley, S. Shaulskiy, E. Geraghty Ward, C. N. Lorentz, and K. O'Connell. 2021. A resource for understanding and evaluating outcomes of undergraduate field experiences. Ecology and Evolution. Vol. 11, Issue 23. Pages 16387-16408.](#)

[Swing, K., E. Braker, P. Fiedler, I. Billick, C. Lorentz, and D. Wagner. 2021. Growing Threats to the Scientific and Educational Legacies of Research Stations and Field Courses. BioScience.](#)

[Zavaleta, E. S., R. S. Beltran, and A. L. Borker. 2020. How Field Courses Propel Inclusion and Collective Excellence. Trends in Ecology & Evolution 35:953–956.](#)

Mark your calendars - the Annual Meeting is in the US Great Lakes!



OBFS 2022
Central
Michigan
Biological
Station,
September
14th – 17th.

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