



Organization of Biological Field Stations

Supporting environmental research, education, and public understanding

August 1, 2020

OBFS Editor: Sarah Oktay



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. President's Message
2. OBFS Statement to Membership
3. Shoals Marine Lab & Transitions
4. In Memoriam & News From our Affiliates
5. The Virtual Field & Human Diversity Award
6. Finca Las Piedras & Research News
7. Friday Harbor Lab's COVID adjusted REU program
8. Spotlight on Dr. Rocket

“A good half of the art of living is resilience.”

Above: 2018 OBFS annual meeting photo by Philippe Cohen

President's Message

By Chris Lorentz

During these unprecedented times, I am reminded of this quote (below, left) from Alain de Botton, Swiss-born British philosopher, and author. Our members have exhibited not only resiliency, but adaptability and innovation, as we adjust to life with COVID, with civil unrest, with political divisions and with an overdue reflection and reckoning of our cultural and societal values.

As our doors were closing in the spring, many of you quickly pivoted to offering alternative opportunities for our stakeholders and amended long-standing practices and policies. The *X-FSML Virtual Field Project*, led by Claudia Luke, Hilary Swain, and Kari O'Connell, is a prime example. Fifty-plus FSMLs are producing videos in the field to enhance online activities for students and remote instruction by faculty. This fall, a web-based platform, with these videos and much more will be launched – very exciting! Also, this fall will be our first-ever virtual Annual Meeting, led by Brett Biebuyck, Tom Bansak, and the Planning Committee—yet another example of resiliency and adaptability.

The “*Building Women Leadership at Field Stations and Marine Laboratories*” project, led by Jennifer Gee, Elizabeth Long, Victoria McDermott and Lisa Busch and expansion of previous diversity and inclusion initiatives like our Human Diversity Award by Amy Whipple, Elizabeth Long and others, are ways in which we are addressing barriers, challenges, and opportunities within the OBFS community and beyond.

We know that there are countless other efforts, big and small, throughout OBFS. It is our hope that this newsletter provides the opportunity to showcase such endeavors and provides a source of inspiration and solidarity throughout our community. As the Board embarks on a strategic planning process for 2021-2026, we are excited, inspired, and motivated by all that you do, under “normal” circumstances, let alone during times like these. Thank you and continued best wishes.

OBFS Statement to the Membership

By Chris Lorentz

Like so many, we are deeply saddened and disheartened by the recent events—racism, police brutality and other injustices—perpetrated against the Black community and other underrepresented individuals. These egregious acts of violence, discrimination, and racial bias, both seen and unseen, are pervasive throughout society, including in our own fields of study. We condemn these acts and call on all leaders, including academic, corporate, and political leaders, to listen to those demanding change and to take appropriate action.

We stand, in solidarity, with those protesting and those silenced. We recognize the urgency and importance of real actions, beyond our words. OBFS is committed to addressing these issues, challenging ourselves to do better, and striving to create a more open, inclusive, and diverse community within our organization, as we listen, learn, and support people of color and all those who are affected by social injustices. Our organization has lauded the efforts of our members who have made progress on increasing [Human Diversity](#), yet we humbly know that we have much more hard work to do.

The mission of the Organization of Biological Field Stations is to help member stations increase their effectiveness in supporting critical research, education, and outreach programs. We pursue this goal in a manner that maximizes diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, and transparency. As we reflect and act, as individuals, member stations and institutions, the Organization will examine all of our policies, procedures and practices, under a new lens of recognition and with a renewed intention to develop a diverse and inclusive community of scientists, educators, and students.



Attendees at the Annual OBFS meeting in Belgium in front of [Hasselt University's Ecotron](#) in Maasmechelen. Photo courtesy of Philippe Cohen.

Shoals Marine Lab

By Collin Love

Greetings from [Shoals Marine Laboratory](https://www.shoalsmarinelaboratory.org) on Appledore Island off the coast of Maine! Like many field stations across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted our operations. In a typical SML summer, we welcome students and faculty from across the country and world to take classes that focus on place-based learning in the Gulf of Maine. Although we have canceled all on-island programs, we are using an adaptive approach to bring field marine science to our students via live broadcasting and customized online educational resources.

From scuba diving into subtidal kelp beds to trekking through the raucous gull colonies on our rocky shores, we are providing students a virtual Appledore experience (minus the salty air and gull poop). Many of our courses have allowed students to engage with island resources utilizing the help of newly installed interactive cameras. Whether it be zooming in to view up-close anatomy during a dogfish dissection, or counting seals on the neighboring islands, they have been able to record data and navigate the scientific process themselves! In addition to online courses, we are operating a select few undergraduate research projects from remote off-island locations. If you are interested in attending a live marine science talk or viewing additional educational resources, please check out our website.

<https://www.shoalsmarinelaboratory.org/shoals-live-stream>



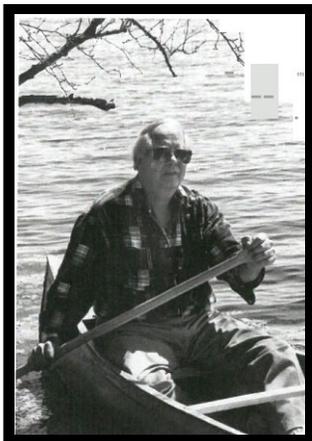
Transitions

This September, Dr. Aimée Classen is starting as the [new director of the University of Michigan Biological Station](#). Dr. Knute Nadelhoffer has held the position for the previous 18 years and is retiring after this summer. Dr. Nate Sanders will become the new Director of the [E.S. George Reserve](#) at the University of Michigan on September 1. Dr. Matt Larsen retired as Director of the [Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute](#) in June. Joy Baccei became the Director of the University of California Merced [Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve](#) in March and Breezy Jackson is the new director of the University of California Merced [Yosemite & Sequoia Field Stations](#). Dr. Anne Kelly has joined the California State University, Fullerton's [Desert Studies Center](#).

Pictured left to right: Nate Sanders and Aimée Classen, Knute Nadelhoffer, Joy Baccei, Breezy Jackson, Matt Larsen, and Anne Kelly.



Send comments,
suggestions, and
articles to
newsletter@obfs.org



In Memoriam (by John J. Moriarty of the Wildlife Society): Dr. John R. Tester, pictured at left, died at his home in St Paul, Minnesota on November 16, 2019 at the age of 89. Tester stayed at the University of Minnesota for his entire career. [An early pioneer](#) in the use of radio telemetry to study animal movements, he was one of the founders of the radio telemetry lab at the University's [Cedar Creek Natural History Area](#).

He served as the head for a department he created, the Ecology and Behavioral Biology Dept. from 1973 to 1976. He also served as director of the Cedar Creek Natural History Area from 1984 to 1992 and was a lead professor at the University of Minnesota's [Lake Itasca Field Station](#) for many years, where he introduced hundreds of students to field biology and conservation before he retired in 1998. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Joyce, and two sons. Donations may be made to the University of Minnesota's [John Tester Itasca Research Fund](#) which will benefit research at Itasca Biological Field Station and Lab.

News from our Affiliates by Paul Foster

AIBS: With OBFS board approval, President Chris Lorentz signed a letter that the [American Institute of Biological Sciences](#) (AIBS) drafted endorsing efforts to increase federal funding in response to COVID-19, the Research Investment to Spark the Economy Act (RISE Act).

The annual AIBS council meeting will be held via Zoom December 9-10, 2020. This year's theme is "Strengthening the Bioeconomy." Bioeconomy is defined as "economic activity driven by research and innovation in the life sciences and biotechnology, and that is enabled by technological advances in engineering and in computing and information sciences."

The guiding questions for the Council meeting are: Do we have a research and education environment that optimizes the conversion of biological information into economic benefit? What role can professional societies play in supporting the bioeconomy? Are we preparing the workforce to sustain and grow the bioeconomy? More information can be found at https://www.aibs.org/events/2020_aibs_council_meeting.html

Questions? contact Paul Foster, OBFS rep to AIBS (pfoster@bijagual.org)

NSF: The Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) saw a nearly 40% drop in submissions between FY 2019 and FY 2018 following the implementation of rolling deadlines across most programs: (<https://oadblog.nsfbio.com/2020/06/02/analyzing-the-impact-of-no-deadlines/>). While figures for the Field Station and Marine Lab (FSML) program are not available, FSML Program Officer Peter McCartney, writes "Regardless of how many you are competing against, or how much money you're competing for, your chances of getting funded are zero if you don't apply."

For information about the infrastructure improvement and planning grant solicitation visit: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5449.

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The Virtual Field: A Mitigation Strategy for the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing massive disruptions in higher education. Faculty across disciplines are struggling to quickly transition to virtual classrooms. Nowhere has this been more difficult than in the field sciences, where first-hand experience with the complexity of the natural world is essential for learning identification, observation, and research skills. In response to research and educational land closures, a FSML coalition has begun working together to develop digital experiences at these sites that boost observation and research skills.

Supported by a National Science Foundation RAPID grant (NSF # 2031815), a team of 50 field sites in 26 states and 6 countries has launched the “Virtual Field Project” this summer to:

1. Create ecosystem exploration videos to teach students to find and observe evidence of key ecological concepts.
2. Host live-streaming cross-site events with researchers to discuss the process of field research with students.
3. Share existing virtual materials and events with faculty at universities across the U.S. produced by a variety of organizations. A virtual field portal will act as a signpost, catalog, and calendar for faculty, students, and community.
4. Evaluate the efficacy of virtual field materials to set the stage for further cross-site virtual field learning initiatives

The project emerged from a grassroots effort by the Organization of Biological Field Stations, and is led by Claudia Luke, [Center for Environmental Inquiry at Sonoma State University](#), along with Hilary Swain at [Archbold Biological Station](#), and Kari O’Connell of the [STEM Research Center at Oregon State University](#).

Field trips created and shared by the Virtual Field will give students experience with a diversity of ecosystems around the world, encourage participation by a broader diversity of university courses, and expand opportunities for students with disabilities.

The project is highly collaborative and is seeking to share approaches, resources and ideas with field sites, institutions and initiatives interested in enhancing research, education, and connection to the earth. Contact: Claudia Luke, Director, Center for Environmental Inquiry, Sonoma State University at lukec@sonoma.edu for more information and to get involved. Submitted by Claudia Luke.

Promoting Human Diversity in Field Science 2020 Annual Human Diversity Award

Send nominations and support material to Victoria McDermott
(diversity@obfs.org)

DETAILS to apply are at <https://www.obfs.org/human-diversity-committee>

NEW Deadline August 25, 2020

Finca Las Piedras; a new Peruvian Field Station

By Geoff Gallice

[The Alliance for a Sustainable Amazon](#) (ASA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit whose mission is to conserve biodiversity and other natural resources in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon. Our field station, Finca Las Piedras (FLP), was founded in 2016 and is the base of operations for our projects that span biological research and monitoring, reforestation and agroforestry research, and environmental education and community engagement. The site is located at the edge of the agricultural frontier that expanded upon completion of the Interoceanic Highway in 2011, which now connects Peruvian and Brazilian road networks and ports on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

To the west of FLP is a mosaic of active and abandoned agricultural land, including the ASA's experimental plots; to the east, concessions for the sustainable harvest of Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*) stretch unbroken to the Bolivian border, after which lies the ca. 750,000 hectare [Manuripi Reserve](#). The station, therefore, is ideally situated to study intact rainforest ecosystems as well as how they are impacted by human activity. In the roughly three years since its founding, Finca Las Piedras has hosted hundreds of local and international researchers, students, and other visitors who have contributed to the ASA's mission and produced more than 30 publications in peer-reviewed journals, popular science outlets, and other platforms. Learn more about Finca Las Piedras and the ASA's work in southeastern Peru: <https://www.sustainableamazon.org/finca-las-piedras>



Photo by Shinichi Nakahara, University of Florida Department of Entomology and Nematology butterfly systematist
<https://www.shinichinakahara.com/>

Research at FLP: Our flagship project is a long-term study of Lepidoptera (butterfly and moth) diversity and biology, the goals of which are to document the diversity of butterflies and moths throughout the region, understand their host plant relationships, and monitor changes in populations over time. To date we have documented the occurrence of more than 500 Lepidoptera species in southeastern Peru, identified a number of butterfly and moth host plants, and begun a long-term trapping study to explore the impacts of climate change on seasonal butterfly population dynamics. Learn more at <http://www.sustainableamazon.org>

REUs in the Age of COVID at Friday Harbor Labs

By Megan Dethier

Like probably every field station in the country, the [University of Washington's Friday Harbor Labs](#) has been faced with the challenge of finding a way for visitors to safely work and study on site in the midst of a pandemic. FHL's situation provides some advantages in this regard: 1) it's located on an island whose small population has recorded only six positive coronavirus cases; 2) its campus is on a ~500-acre preserve at the end of a dead-end road, providing a level of isolation from the rest of the island; 3) its facilities include over 40 small, self-contained housing units, each with bathroom and kitchen; and 4) a local healthcare provider has agreed to run viral tests on all arrivals.

With these circumstances, we felt confident that we could safely run a limited summer program for researchers, students, and interns. To this end, we created a COVID-19 Prevention Plan based on the concept of 'pods': small groups that each function as a household whose members share housing and research space, travel together in vessels/vehicles, and maintain distance from other pods. The goals are to minimize the risk of disease introduction by visitors when they arrive (mandated initial quarantine and testing) and while they are here (severe restrictions on off-campus travel); to minimize the risk of disease transmission within the FHL community (strict distancing between pods, enhanced cleaning and disinfection); and to have ready plans for contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine in the event of a confirmed or suspected case. Now with the summer under way, we are proud to be one of the few REU sites holding in-person internships and delighted to be hosting a cadre of hardy researchers doing science at FHL!



Part of our REU team having their own Black Lives Matter march at FHL in June.
Photo by Stacy Farina.

Spotlight on: Dr. Rocket (Lara Roketenetz) by Lisa Busch

When Lara Roketenetz, was working on her PhD, her advisor asked her what she wanted to do when she was done with her degree. “I told him I could see myself working in academia, for a non-profit, or in the private sector. He told her that’s fine, but she can’t do all three. “You’ll likely have to choose,” he said. As a field station manager at University of Akron, Lara (also known as Dr. Rocket) gets to do all three. “I work with the general public in our outreach programs like non-profits do; I facilitate research with academia; and I advocate as in the private sector.”

Roketenetz, 44, is celebrating her fifth year as [University of Akron Field Station](#) manager. She holds a BA in Biology from Case Western Reserve, an MS from John Carroll University and a PhD from University of Akron. There is a university-based Director for her field station, but Lara is essentially the only person who works full time at her field station. “It’s been challenging to learn that you have to be a little good at a lot of things.” She points out that doing facility maintenance, assisting with student research, helping with the garden, putting on exhibits, designing curriculum and working with a breadth of community partners is a broad job description but are the “good kind of challenges.”

The University of Akron Field Station was awarded the OBFS Diversity Award in 2017 for their work bringing K-12 students from Akron Public Schools to the field station. Roketenetz does a lot of the groundwork to make these outreach activities happen - she develops the curriculum, works with the schools, and does the teaching herself. “This is the most rewarding part of my job” she says of the K-12 work. Through these programs she is helping a new generation get comfortable with the outdoors, appreciate the natural world, and learn about observation and listening techniques critical to field work.

Dr. Rocket says that her station’s affiliation with OBFS has been a lifeline for her during the pandemic. Through two NSF grants to field stations she has made new connections to her field station colleagues at a time that could otherwise be quite isolating. “It’s nice to have that support system and it feels more important now than ever,” she says. She feels that attending annual meetings has made a big difference in her ability to be a field station manager and she is glad that OBFS is still planning to meet virtually in the fall.



Lara Roketenetz

BULLETIN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Promoting inclusion in ecological field experiences: Examining and overcoming barriers to a professional rite of passage

Nia Morales, Kari Bisbee O’Connell, Stacy McNulty, Alan Berkowitz, Gillian Bowser. And Michael Giamellaro Maria N. Miriti

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