



## OBFS: A FULL PLATE—President’s Corner

— BY LARA ROKETENETZ

I had the opportunity to present at The Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology (SICB) Annual Meeting in Austin, TX in January. The topic of the presentation was “IDEA+ and OBFS: Using transdisciplinary strategies to create more inclusive spaces” and was a collaboration between myself, Drs. Tori McDermott, Phoebe Jekielek, and Rhonda Struminger. It was part of a symposium titled “Envisioning a Diverse, Inclusive & Safe Future for Field Biology” organized by Drs. Vanessa Hilliard Young, Robin Verble, and Corinne Richards Zawacki.

Topics for the day varied widely but also complemented each other in affirming and cohesive ways. I told the organizers that to me, the talks felt like the perfect potluck dinner where no one knows exactly what the others are bringing but the final meal is perfectly balanced. The introduction was by Nia Morales, plenary speaker for OBFS’s Annual Meeting in 2020.

Talks that followed included ones specific to LGBTQ+, women, and Black experiences in the field, as well as talks about increasing accessibility for other marginalized groups with both visible and non-visible disabilities.

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### ANNUAL MEETING 2023: COSTA RICA!

*Banner photo: University of Wyoming NPS Research Station*



*Photo: Lodge fireplace at UW-NPS Research Station.*

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I was so impressed with the wealth of knowledge and experience in the room, and was particularly inspired by the student presenters who, quite frankly, sounded like total professional speakers!

I know I never sounded that confident and full of expertise when I was a student. It makes me hopeful for the future of our field, where everyone can feel included and seen and represented in nature and scientific research.

Presenting at the end of the day on the IDEA+ initiatives happening at OBFS made me all the prouder to be a part of this organization. From the Advancing Equity and IDEA+ Innovation awards, to the multi-faceted inclusive approach happening in the International Committee, to our Strategic Planning, membership survey, website redesign, collaborations, federal initiatives for advocacy, etc., OBFS has continued to step up to be a leader in creating a sense of belonging in the field. I look forward to our continued growth in this area and welcome your expertise and insights as we navigate this together.

## UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RESEARCH STATION—BY MICHAEL DILLON

Nestled on the shore of Jackson Lake at the historic AMK Ranch, the UW-NPS Research Station sits at the heart of Grand Teton National Park. Surrounded by distinctive natural features, vibrant histories, and diverse cultures, we aim to inspire discoveries, elevate experiences, and connect communities in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Established in 1946, UW-NPS is the oldest station operating within US national parks (<https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biw053>).

Maintaining a research facility housed within a historic landmark presents special challenges. Recent renovations are preserving ranch history while updating amenities for researchers. The station will reopen this summer with updated infrastructure, including a new drinking water and wastewater system, renewed building exteriors, new roofs, and beautifully refinished floors in the Berol Lodge. We are also delighted to announce that fiber optic internet will be available in most buildings.

The UW-NPS team is excited to enter 2023 with Dr. Michael Dillon acting as the new interim director. Dr. Dillon will oversee station activities as we initiate a search for a new Director this year. We are preparing to reopen for the first time since 2019 and look forward to housing researchers and hosting the [Harlow Summer Seminar Series](#).

Exciting new research is already underway. UW-NPS is a key partner in [WyACT](#) – a 5-year \$20 million NSF EPSCoR project to understand and prepare for effects of climate change on water availability. UW-NPS will support and promote cutting-edge hydrological research with applications built from collaborative decision making by diverse stakeholders. Additionally, UW-NPS will house Terrestrial Ecosystems and Aquatic Technicians to evaluate changes in water flow and the consequences that follow.

Researchers can [apply for small grants](#) to jumpstart work at the station, [request housing](#), familiarize themselves via online [annual reports](#), or just stop by if you are in the park – see our website ([uwnps.org](http://uwnps.org)) for more information.







## VIDEO TRAILERS DEMYSTIFY THE FIELD AND REDUCE STUDENTS' "FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN"

—BY CONNER PHILSON

In the February 2022 OBFS Newsletter, Drs. Cora Baird (UVA Coastal Research Center) and Angie Patterson (Mt. Holyoke College), authored a story titled “Creating common ground to resolve misconceptions and prepare students for field experiences”. Cora and Angie outlined how field stations can, and should, create short videos highlighting what field station work and life is like. These short video trailers can help bridge the differences found amongst students’ prior outdoor experiences, situational knowledge, and cultural backgrounds...in other words, what to expect when living and working at your field station!

The Community Diversity Committee at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL) took this to heart, funding a student, Abi Zuber, in [RMBL's Summer Education Program](#) to co-create a trailer about the program. We focused on housing, dining, and life while spending a summer at RMBL. The video includes a drone tour of the station and videos of the sleeping accommodations, meals, shower and restroom facilities, research happening at the station, and recreation opportunities. A special thank you to Abi for all their hard work, the RMBL Community Diversity Committee for funding, RMBL staff for their support, and Cora and Angie for their suggestion. [Find the RMBL video here!](#)

Following Cora and Angie’s call to action, we too advocate that OBFS member stations, and all FSMLs, create a video trailer unique to their station, ecosystems, and experience to help inform new students who may have never been to the field before. 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](#), [LTER's video storytelling and production guides](#), and another [example video](#).

*Conner Philson (photo, right) is the Communications Chair for OBFS.*

### Photos for Web Site Wanted

OBFS is revamping its web site! Share some of your best photos of people, highlights, activities and scenes from all types of stations. Send pictures via this form: <https://forms.gle/KdiNKAEUAUG4TM8iLA>

- Paul Wetzel, Treasurer



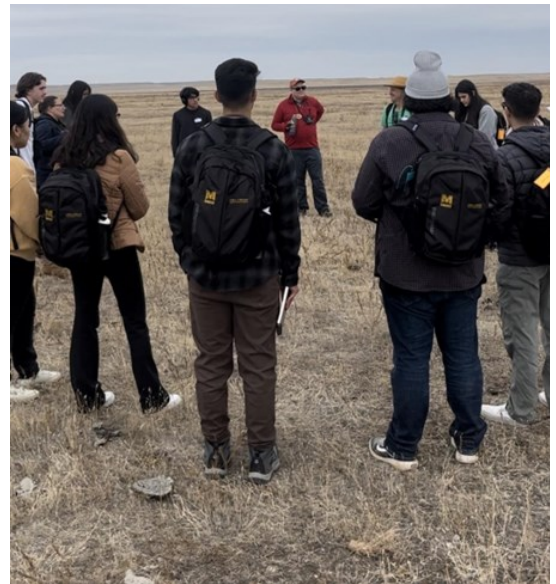
## EMPOWERING UNDERGRADUATES: UC MERCED'S '¿FIELD CURIOUS?' PROGRAM—BY CITLALI PEREZ MORALES

Imagine being an undergraduate student and getting the transformative experience of delving into pristine wildlands accompanied by experienced researchers. Would that experience have encouraged you to explore careers in field research? The goal of ¿field curious? is to enhance undergraduate students' sense of belonging in the field and encourage them to ask questions about the natural world.

When Dr. Jessica Malisch, Associate Director of the UC Merced Natural Reserve System (UCM NRS), noticed strong student interest in field research but also a lack of applicants for the Swarth Fogel Undergraduate Research Fellowship, she knew something needed to be done. With the help of the UCM NRS team, she crafted a weekend-long immersion experience that included a “starter pack” of research tools, visits to two UCM NRS sites, and interaction with natural science professors, writers, and artists.

Malisch recalled that in early discussions with the concept team they all remembered their first field backpack and field notebook. “We want students to feel like they have the basic tools to feel comfortable applying for opportunities in the outdoor arena,” she stated. Thanks to generous donations from Patagonia and Rite-in-the-Rain, students were outfitted with a backpack and field notebook along with items from UCM NRS including a knit hat, bucket hat, water bottle, sunglasses and sunscreen.

The weekend began with a visit to the Merced Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve, where participants received guidance on field journaling from Dr. Tom Hothem and gained a deeper understanding of grassland ecology from Dr. Jay Sexton and Reserve Director Joy Baccei. They received hands-on training in skills such as data collection, observation, and hypothesis generation. The group were then greeted by the Yosemite Field Station Director, Dr. Breezy Jackson. They enjoyed a collegial dinner of veggie chili and cornbread, fostering friendships and teamwork among participants. *(Continued on page 6)*



*Photos: The group visits the giant sequoia (left) and the Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve (right). Credit: Citlali Perez Morales*



# Communicating Scientific Knowledge

Workshops\* on presenting scientific research to your peers

2023 Jan 19, Feb 16, & Mar 16  
@2:00pm US Eastern Time



Created by Claire Jones  
from Noun Project



Created by Royyan Wijaya  
from Noun Project



Created by banurezki  
from Noun Project

Live Zoom sessions with Aaron Ellison & Manisha Patel  
Details at <https://ssforss.com/workshops>

\$50 (USD) per person  
Register now at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)

\*Each workshop = 0.5 CEU for Professional Certification @ESA\_org



**Sound Solutions** for Sustainable Science

<https://ssforss.com>

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

### Virtual Café

February 24, 2023 13.30 ET  
Dr. Kelly Swing will discuss conservation opportunities at the Tiputini Biodiversity Station in Amazonian Ecuador.

Log in to join us:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85383718705?pwd=Vzg5bEpXN3J5OQo44bnIoQXVocFFWUTo9>



### Coming Virtual Events

- ◆ Africa/Europe meeting about collaborations  
Friday, March 3
- ◆ Latin America  
Friday, March 17
- ◆ Canada - TBD

*Continued p. 6*

Dr. Aaron Ellison, who recently retired as Deputy Director of the Harvard Forest in 2021, and collaborator Manisha Patel, have created a consulting company, Sound Solutions for Sustainable Science. S4 provides programmatic support and professional development workshops to field stations, undergraduate and graduate students, and individual researchers.

S4 is offering a series of online professional development workshops aimed at graduate students, post-docs, and others interested in gaining key skills needed for successful scientific careers. For more details, visit <https://ssforss.com/workshops/> and register on Eventbrite.

*Disclaimer: OBFS does not endorse particular products or organizations but does promote the voices and work of OBFS members, past or present.*

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE (CONT.)

We are accepting registrants for the **2023 Matching Program**.

Partner with other stations to share knowledge, establish a mentorship, or anything you like!

We provide some funding to help your vision come to fruition.

Must be an OBFS member in good standing and complete this form by Friday, February, 17, 2023: <https://forms.gle/4XUEiYcnACeg9CW18>

*Photo: Marisol Anzures and Enkhtuvshin Amarbal journaling about their surroundings during the mariposa grove tour.*

*Credit: Citlali Perez Morales*



## STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE—BY CHRIS LORENTZ

The Board Committees recently assessed progress for Year 1 of the OBFS Strategic Plan (2021-2026), set priorities for Year 2, and are continuing to implement initiatives, including an overhaul of the website (Membership Committee), a Matching Program for International Field Stations (International Committee), and a Station Exchange program (Collaborations Committee).

The Outreach & Communications Committee will continue the work of the Ad-Hoc Advocacy Committee to finalize an infographic fact sheet to inform policymakers about field stations and a communications toolkit to empower and support field stations to engage policymakers on their local and state levels. A spring webinar will be scheduled soon to roll out these deliverables and offer training on how best to utilize them. The Annual Meeting Planning, IDEA+, Development, and the Governance & Sustainability Committees are also implementing actions items to achieve the goals and reach our vision to be an indispensable resource for the field station community, enhancing the value and sustainability of its members with fairness, integrity, transparency, and inclusivity.

If you would like to learn more about the Strategic Plan or get involved with one of the Committees, please contact the respective chairs at: <https://www.obfs.org/governance>. Thank you.

## '¿FIELD CURIOUS?' — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Day two was spent exploring Yosemite National Park. After breakfast, the group traveled to the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias and met artist Andie Thram and wellness expert Dennis Eagan. Andie and Dennis led a slow meander of the forest as they shared how they use the outdoors for wellness through painting, meditating, and sketching. The tour included natural history and research information by Dr. Jackson. The students were able to gain new perspectives, learn from experienced researchers and connect with nature in a way that they may have not had the chance to do otherwise.

Second-year chemistry student Mauricio Hernandez said, "My experience at the research experience weekend, ¿field curious?, was exuberating and insightful on the possible routes of research I can take." The weekend was summarized in a digital publication that participants could use as a reference to reach out to possible research mentors and to highlight next steps in their field research careers.

Dr. Malisch and the Natural Reserve System recently secured funds for an additional eight cohorts and are excited to move UC Merced toward the goal of becoming a Research 1 level university. "We want to empower students from diverse backgrounds and remove barriers that impede student success" said Malisch, "¿field curious? is more than just a weekend trip – it's the beginning of a new career trajectory".



## IDEA + SPOTLIGHT

Often, Black and African American scholars face discrimination and racialized violence when [conducting scientific fieldwork](#). From cultural isolation due to a lack of representation and repeated microaggressions to hostile threats and physical violence, the consequences of these experiences don't just have lasting negative effects on one's career, but can be [life-threatening](#). Moreover, [societal injustices against the Black community](#), including [disproportionate effects of COVID-19](#), have compounded the effects of racism that underlie the academy.

It's time we expand our collective approach to field safety to include mechanisms to prevent and respond to racism. This includes undergoing a culture shift to create more inclusive spaces [at field stations](#). Conduct an annual racial risk assessment to better understand how your field station can prevent some of these barriers before they occur. We need to learn from and listen to the scholarship and calls for change authored by Black and African American colleagues to work to dismantle systems of oppression in field-based institutions. Celebrate and support the community efforts of scientists such as [Fieldwork Inclusive, Inc.](#) or [Black in Marine Science](#).

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*“As stated by ecologist Christopher Schell, ‘Our non-Black colleagues must fight anti-Black racism and white supremacy within the academy to authentically promote Black excellence. Amplifying Black excellence in ecology and evolution is the antidote for white supremacy in the academy.’”*

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*Photo: Students enjoy the field.  
Credit National Park Service, Fort  
Dupont 208. CC BY 2.0*



*If you are interested in additional resources, have content that to submit for the IDEA+ Spotlight, or are interested in joining the IDEA+ committee please email [diversity@obfs.org](mailto:diversity@obfs.org) or reach out to Tori McDermott ([ymmcdermott@alaska.edu](mailto:ymmcdermott@alaska.edu)), or Phoebe Jekielek ([phoebe@hurricaneisland.net](mailto:phoebe@hurricaneisland.net)).*

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E-mail: [editor@obfs.org](mailto:editor@obfs.org)**IDEA + SPOTLIGHT — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7**

To learn more about Black and African American experiences in the field and the way forward forward, read the following articles and share them with your staff, students, and peers.

- ◆ [Ali, H. N., Sheffield, S. L., Bauer, J. E., Caballero-Gill, R. P., Gasparini, N. M., Libarkin, J., ... & Schneider, B. \(2021\). An actionable anti-racism plan for geoscience organizations. \*Nature Communications\*, 12\(1\), 1-6.](#)
- ◆ [Anadu, J., Ali, H., & Jackson, C. \(2020\). Ten steps to protect BIPOC scholars in the field. \*Eos\*, 101\(10.1029\).](#)
- ◆ [Halsey, S. J., Strickland, L. R., Scott-Richardson, M., Perrin-Stowe, T., & Massenburg, L. \(2020\). Elevate, don't assimilate, to revolutionize the experience of scientists who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour. \*Nature Ecology & Evolution\*, 4\(10\), 1291-1293.](#)
- ◆ [Ramírez-Castañeda, V., Westeen, E. P., Frederick, J., Amini, S., Wait, D. R., Achmadi, A. S., ... & Tarvin, R. D. \(2022\). A set of principles and practical suggestions for equitable fieldwork in biology. \*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences\*, 119\(34\).](#)
- ◆ [Schell, C. J., Guy, C., Shelton, D. S., Campbell-Staton, S. C., Sealey, B. A., Lee, D. N., & Harris, N. C. \(2020\). Recreating Wakanda by promoting Black excellence in ecology and evolution. \*Nature Ecology & Evolution\*, 4\(10\), 1285-1287.](#)

**RECENT PUBLICATIONS***Click the link to access***[A Tool for Designing and Studying Student-Centered Undergraduate Field Experiences: The UFERN Model](#)**

We are excited to announce that our paper about designing and studying student-centered undergraduate field education is now fully available on the Bioscience website.

In addition to guidance for fostering effective undergraduate field education, the paper includes a comprehensive literature review about the distinctive aspects of field education that OBFS members will likely find useful. Access to [complete article](#) is available in Bioscience.

See also the [UFERN website](#) for examples of how OBFS members applied the UFERN model to reflect on their undergraduate field courses.

Please contact Dr. Kari O'Connell at [kari.oconnell@oregonstate.edu](mailto:kari.oconnell@oregonstate.edu) or see <https://ufern.net/> for more information.