IN VIVO

Newsletter of the University of Tennessee Division of Biology

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From the Director

by Dr. John Koontz

Friends:

This will be my last visit with you as Director of the Division. Ordinarily one reflects on the accomplishments achieved during their tenure in a position. I'm going to leave that for those whom I have served over the past two years. Their perceptions of what we have done are more important than my ramblings.

I will reflect on the nature of the position and then focus briefly on what makes it worthwhile. The position of Director of the Division is unique in the Arts and Sciences and probably the whole campus.

The Director is to exercise authority over the four departments and the support facilities associated with the Division. You have learned about these departments and support facilities in the various issues of *In Vivo*. While there are Directors of Programs or Schools or Research Centers in the administrative structure of the university, none of these positions has authority over and respon-

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Simberloff studies invaders at UT

While he works in statistics, evolution, and biogeography, **Dr. Daniel Simberloff**, professor in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB), regards himself as primarily an ecologist. His focus is the biology of introduced species. He does not limit himself to a particular plant or animal, but instead is interested in how exotic species survive, spread, evolve and impact native species.

He has many projects, but two in particular illustrate his body of work. He is involved in a study of exotic trees planted from 1910 to 1939 on Isla Victoria, a small island mainly comprised of a mountain ridge, in the Patagonian Andes of Argentina. This island is now part of the Nahuel Huapi National Park and can only be reached by ferry.

Isla Victoria originally had only two native species of trees, the ciprés and the coihue, which covered 95 percent of the island. The Argentine government planted 139 exotic species of trees in the center of the island to investigate the possibility of cultivating a lumber business. The project was soon abandoned, but the exotic trees were left in place to grow undisturbed.

Four years ago Dr. Simberloff learned of the island from his graduate student, **Diego Vazquez**, a native of Argentina. Now Dr. Simberloff spends his winters on the island charting the spread of the exotic trees. To his surprise, the Douglas fir and common juniper are the only species to have measurably spread and then only to open areas such as along roads or on the top of the mountain. Normally a species-poor community is susceptible to invasion; however, in this case, the ciprés and coihue seem to be holding their own.

In another project, Dr. Simberloff is studying the evolution of the small Indian mongoose as it has increased its range from Asia to include the West Indies, the Hawaiian Islands, Fiji, Mauritius, Okinawa and several islands in the Adriatic Sea. The mongoose was moved from its original habitat to other areas in an attempt to control rat populations that were harming sugar cane and other crops. However, the mongoose has proven to be more of a pest than the rats. It is omnivorous and has not only attacked chickens, native birds and mammals, frogs, and snakes, it has also eaten the crops it was charged to protect.

Dr. Simberloff is studying the changes that have occurred in the mongoose in the century that it has been in its new environment. In its native range, the mongoose is small. However, everywhere it was intro-

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A word from the Head

by Dr. Christine Boake

This has been another busy year for EEB, and the pace does not promise to diminish. As I write this, **Tom Hallam** is enjoying his last day as Head of EEB. On August 1 I will replace him in that role.

I have been Associate Head for the past four years. My early background is in behavioral biology, which I learned as a student at Cornell. During my postdoctoral years at Chicago I learned evolutionary quantitative genetics and developed an interest in speciation. My research focuses on mating behavior, speciation, and the nature of the genetic changes that accompany speciation.

Tom adopted a one-year old department that **Sandy Echternacht** had brought into the world. The department had a good start because of Sandy's care; Tom has successfully brought it through the pangs of its early years. I'm not sure if a department ages in human years or dog years, but given its rapid changes, it appears to be in mid-adolescence.

One of my goals as Head is to develop the seeds of an endowment so that EEB may be at least in part buffered from the state's financial turmoil. I particularly want to create a fund to support graduate education through research grants and summer stipends.

During Tom's term as Head we added six junior faculty members, not all of whom are on campus yet. **Paula Kover**, **Jake Weltzin**, and **Jason Wolf** are here now, and **Marguerite Butler** and **Aaron King** will be unpacking their boxes over the next few weeks. **Tom Near** will join us in the fall of 2003. Marguerite (see page 5) is a functional morphologist who was trained at Washington University, followed by postdoctoral research at the Institute of Statistical Mathematics in Japan and at Berkeley. Aaron (see page 4) is a theoretician who specializes in problems of population ecology; he received his Ph.D. at Tucson and was a postdoc at Davis.

This spring we said goodbye to two retiring faculty, **Dewey Bunting** and **Dave Fox**. They both contributed to the department in many ways, and are already being missed. We are fortunate that **Dave Etnier**, who retired a year ago, is working as hard as ever, although we see less of him because he is doing more of his work in Minnesota. Tom Near will eventually take over the fish collection. The department still has three vacant faculty positions, which we hope to fill soon.

In August we will also say goodbye to our receptionist, **Linda McMillan**. She worked for the Ecology Program before EEB was formed. She was a part-time student for many years; now she has decided to attend UT full time in order to complete her Bachelor's degree. We will miss her and we wish her all the best in her studies.

When Tom became Head he said he would serve for three years, but he graciously agreed to serve a fourth. This year he was firm that he wanted to return to research. He and Sandy are responsible for our department being able to grow and prosper at a time when much of UT has been under tremendous pressure from outside. Their vision of EEB as a first rate ecology and evolution department and their tenacity on behalf of that vision have resulted in a department that I am honored to have the opportunity to lead.

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sibility for four individual and distinct departments. All department heads, including those in the Division, serve at the discretion of the Dean of the College. While the Director is to exercise authority over the resources for these departments, it is typically a question of balancing allocation of the few new resources targeted to our Division. The open communication between the Heads and the Director makes it all work.

The joy of this job is working with all the fine faculty, staff and students in the Division. It is a dedicated group of individuals working collectively to provide excellent instruction, to do outstanding research, and to serve as good citizens to the university and the community at large. It has been a privilege to work on their behalf as Director.

The new Division Director, at least on an interim basis, is **Dr. Otto Schwarz**. Otto is a Professor in the Botany Department who functioned as Associate Director for the past two years. You may recall reading about Otto in previous issues of *In Vivo*. In addition to his research program he has been heavily involved in activities related to a joint venture between the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education. This effort provides a hands-on, biology laboratory learning experience for science teachers in Tennessee. It is supported with funds from UT-Battelle.

In addition, Otto represented the Division and the College in working as a "Scholar in a School", a program where a UT faculty member works during the course of a whole school year with the faculty in one of the local public schools. It is clear that one of the attributes Otto brings to this position is an abiding interest in biology education.

Reporting on Otto's activities provides a segue into what I am doing now. I left the position of Director to serve the university in a different capacity. The Colleges of Education and of Human Ecology have gone through a reorganization and merger to form a new college. The resulting new college is called Education, Health and Human Sciences. I am serving as the interim Dean of this new college, working to forge an administrative structure to serve the needs of the stakeholders in this endeavor. This new college presents many challenges and opportunities.

While I am already deeply immersed in this new endeavor I am also privileged to have one last opportunity to communicate with you through this newsletter. Another of the joys of working as Director is receiving the updates from you on your current activities. You, as the alumni and friends of the Division, represent more than 5000 advocates for the Division. Each of you can be an important contributor to our activities. While many of you already provide support by contributing to one or more of the support funds indicated elsewhere in the newsletter your contributions can come in any form that you wish. We certainly appreciate those contributions and can put them to good use.

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duced it has become larger and more sexually dimorphic. And although it is on separate islands thousands of miles apart in three separate oceans, the population has gone through roughly the same changes. Dr. Simberloff is studying the genetic changes with his post-doctoral student **Dr. Carl Thulin**, who is from Sweden.

On the Croatian Islands in the Adriatic Sea he is also studying the interactions of the mongoose with a similar carnivore, the stone marten,with his doctoral student **Arijana Barun**, a Croatian. This is the only place where the mongoose has been introduced where it faces a potential competitor.

Additionally, he works on local projects. For example, Dr. Simberloff jokes, "the fire ant and I both arrived at the same time in Knoxville in 1997." His graduate student **Leah Gibbons** recently finished her master's degree by researching the impact fire ants have on native ant populations. In other work, his doctoral student, **Betsy Von Holle**, studies streamside native plants to test their tolerance to invasion and flooding.

Often natural enemies of introduced pests are themselves introduced to try to control the pests. Dr. Simberloff is quick to point out that introducing an exotic natural enemy to control an animal pest is effective only ten percent of the time, while the success rate for introductions to control weeds is about 20 percent. However, about three times as many of these introduced species survive long term, and some prove to be a threat that is difficult, if not impossible to control.

Dr. Simberloff is a distinguished member of the EEB faculty. He received his A.B. and Ph.D. from Harvard University and taught at Florida State University before coming to UT. He is the Nancy Gore Hunger Professor of Environmental Studies, an endowed chair, and Director of the Institute for Biological Invasions (**http://invasions.bio.utk.edu**). He also is a member of the U.S. National Science Board and a founding member of the U.S. Invasive Species Advisory Committee.

His other graduate students are **Michael Collins** and **Tad Fukami**, who is shared with **Dr. James Drake**. His other post-doctoral student is **Dr. Todd Campbell**. Dr. Simberloff likes to teach the Biogeography course with **Dr. Sandy Echternacht** and participates in guest lecturing for various courses.

While he stays busy with his advising position in Washington, D.C., lecturing around the world, and teaching at UT, he prefers to spend his time working on his various research projects.

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Mathematician uses skills for biology

His tools are not those of most ecologists. **Dr. Aaron King**, a new assistant professor in EEB, designs mathematical models, statistical analyses, and software programs to try to understand ecological systems.

Dr. King studies the dynamics of biological populations at both ends of a spectrum: he has created simple models to capture the most important interactions in both very simple laboratory and very complex natural populations.

His dissertation work focused on the northern forest ecosystem, where many species show pronounced population fluctuations. Snowshoe hare populations, for example, fluctuate in a very regular way. These oscillations have peaks which are hundreds of times greater than lows and which occur every eight to 11 years in populations all across the northern forests of Canada and Alaska. Dr. King designed a model of the basic forces acting on the animal populations involved and simplified it to uncover the root cause.

"Tennessee is well known in my field for its theoretical ecologists and evolutionists"

"Some of the clearest patterns in ecology are fluctuations in animal abundances, both through time and across space. Yet explaining these patterns in terms of the biological mechanisms which produce them remains one of the most difficult problems ecologists face," he said.

In tracking down these mechanisms, King said, "populations of animals in the laboratory are invaluable because in the laboratory, we can also try out new ideas and techniques, techniques that will eventually find their place in field ecology."

Although he does not himself work in either the lab or the field, Dr. King works closely with colleagues who do. He's looking forward to working with his new colleagues in the EEB department.

Indeed, they are what attracted him to UT.

He said, "What's great about this university and the ecology department is the wide variety of really interesting things going on. From **Sandy Echternacht's** work with anole lizards to **Sue Reichert's** interest in social spiders, I saw the potential to do groundbreaking, interdisciplinary work with strong theoretical and experimental components."

He is particularly impressed with the mathematical ecology group. Dr. King said, "Tennessee is well known in my field for its theoretical ecologists and evolutionists. The group is not so big that people are over-specialized and yet there enough really good people here to cover the spectrum." He feels strongly that "effective research in population ecology is necessarily interdisciplinary." Here at UT he will have no shortage of colleagues doing top-notch research, with which to interact.

Dr. King, originally from west Texas, received his bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Rice in 1989. He completed his master's degree, also in Mathematics, at the University of Hawaii in 1992 and in 1999 received his Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics at the University of Arizona.

"My formal education was at first almost entirely in math, but I gradually found that I had the most fun using my mathematical skills to think in new ways about real-world problems. Biology is especially challenging because it's really only beginning to be explored using mathematics."

Since leaving Arizona, he has been funded by a National Science Foundation Mathematical Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of California at Davis. He looks forward to teaching mathematical ecology and courses in mathematical modeling.

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It's tough being a mother

Females in the human world have enough trouble coping with pregnancy. Carrying the extra weight and decreased lung capacity are minor inconveniences at best. But female animals have the added danger of outmaneuvering predators while carrying their precious cargo.

Dr. Marguerite Butler, a new assistant professor in EEB, is primarily an evolutionary biologist interested in why males and females of a particular species might differ in the way they look or behave. For example, sometimes males and females can be quite different in size, which raises the questions; is it because males and females have different roles in reproduction or is it because males experience greater competition for mates?

Using field research, Dr. Butler is concentrating on exploring the first possibility, namely that females may have evolved particular morphologies for coping with bearing large or numerous offspring.

In the past she has used broad-scale comparisons, usually comparing differences among a group of species that differ in specialization to different habitats. However, so little is known about the physical effects of pregnancy in animals that she had to go into more detail in just one focal species. Dr. Butler has chosen to study how reproduction affects the functional biology of locomotion in the *Iguana iguana* or green iguana.

Running ability, a basic requirement for survival, is important for many species as a mechanism for escaping predators. However, this can be particularly difficult if an animal is pregnant because this condition can increase body mass by up to 50 percent. The iguanas may be functionally impaired from running as fast or as long as non-pregnant animals by the increased load that they must cope with, or they may be limited by the reduced lung volume since they get extremely fat with eggs. For example, a female weighing 1.6kg recently had a clutch of 53 eggs weighing 1 kg. Dr. Butler is trying to determine which aspects are most limiting, the functional biology of running, or the limitations on breathing and respiration which in turn may limit running.

Dr. Butler's work takes place both in the field and in the laboratory. She is interested in how natural selection has influenced morphological evolution, so she is interested in how animals cope with their environments in a natural setting. She conducts behavioral observations of animals in the field, as well as collecting animals to bring back to the lab for experiments.

She also does experiments to test the performance capabilities of the animals. Her current experiments involve high-speed videotaping of lizards running down a racetrack and measuring ventilation of the exercising lizards. She also studies anatomy and attempts to relate morphology to functional biology.

A native of Hawaii, Dr. Butler completed her undergraduate and graduate work at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. She then received her Ph.D. in Evolutionary and Population Biology at Washington University in St. Louis.

She served as a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Statistical Mathematics in Tokyo, Japan and then later at the University of California Berkeley before coming to UT. She plans to teach comparative vertebrate biology and seminars in evolutionary biology once she gets her laboratory in order.

She is looking forward to working with EEB faculty as well as others on campus. She said, "I hope to collaborate and interact with many folks studying reptiles, ecology and evolution, modeling, and physiology. EEB contains an extremely diverse group of biologists. I also hope to interact with folks in the Exercise Science program."

Dr. Butler is pleased with her decision to come to the Division. She said, "I was extremely impressed with EEB. I am very fortunate to join such an accomplished, diverse, and interactive group of biologists. So many of the faculty have strong interests in both ecology and evolution, I hope that I will fit right in."

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Dedicated staff keeps EEB going strong

Few departments at UT enjoy a low turnover rate in their staff, but those that manage to hold on to "the good ones" are particularly appreciative. Case in point, **Phyllis Bice** has been the center of EEB's universe for 29 years.

Phyllis supervises an office staff comprised of **Cheryl Lynn**, **Linda McMillan**, and **Anne Mintz**, who have devoted much of their professional lives to the Division. Phyllis is a Senior Administrative Services Assistant and as such monitors the department's 50 research grants, oversees the class time tables, supervises the staff and assists the department head. She also recently received her Certified Professional Secretary award.

She was a part of the EEB staff when it was the department of Zoology and has served under seven different department heads. They were **Dr. Joseph Daniel**, **Dr. Arthur Jones**, **Dr. Roland Bagby**, **Dr. John Abel**, **Dr. Sandy Echternacht**, **Dr. Thomas Hallam** and now **Dr. Christine Boake**, the first female head.

She has two daughters. One is a science teacher at West High School and the other manages a supply warehouse in Clearwater, Florida. She also has one grandson.

Back, Cheryl Lynn and Linda McMillian
Front, Phyllis Bice and Anne Mintz

Phyllis says that EEB is an interesting department to work for and that she has learned a great deal about ecology, "sometimes more than I want to know about some things."

She gets calls from the general public asking for information on frogs that eat birds, how to identify snakes, and how to donate one's body to science. She came to work one day to find an opossum waiting outside her door and has been overrun with snakes that escaped from one of the neighboring herpetology laboratories.

Dr. Tom Hallam said, "EEB, as a new department only five years old, has needs that other departments have worked through over a long period of years. Even now, we are still setting traditions to govern operations. Phyllis Bice's expertise and experience have guided our efforts and have been a stabilizing force for operating the Department throughout this process. EEB could not have made the strides it has without Ms. Bice at the helm."

Dr. Sandy Echternacht said, "I've worked with Phyllis my whole career here at UT, over 27 years. Six years as Associate Head and 13 as Head. She is about as close as anyone is to being irreplaceable and she made my job as Head a whole lot simpler than it would have been without her. If she had quit, I'd probably have turned in my resignation the next day."

A Tribute to Dr. Liles

by Dr. Mary Ann Handel

Dr. Jim Liles was a gentle man, a gentleman and a scholar – and a lover of life and its challenges. By training an insect physiologist at the University of Tennessee, he was an enthusiastic, demanding and caring teacher, making physiology accessible and clear to hundreds of students. He passed away May 10, 2002 of a heart attack.

In the years preceding his retirement, Jim gave unstintingly of himself teaching the physiology core courses, thus freeing the younger faculty to build their research programs. Always a scholar, Jim turned his interests in colonial and post-colonial US history and the natural environment into an investigation of traditional methods for dying.

This avocation moved into the laboratory, where Jim had many pots of dye in various stages of fermentation. His detailed and scientific study led to a scholarly monograph, "The Art and Craft of Natural Dyeing: Traditional recipes for modern use" published in 1990 by the University of Tennessee Press.

After "retirement," Jim was busy on the lecture circuit, speaking and giving practical demonstrations to groups interested in traditional crafts, fabric making and dying. Jim and his wife **Dale**, both lovers of the outdoors and committed to resource conservation own a farm in Scott County, and here Jim grew many of the native plants (such as flax) needed for making and dying fabrics by traditional methods. This carefully tended farm is a lasting legacy to the citizens of the state of Tennessee.

Endowed with a thin and wiry frame, Jim seemed a natural for bicycling and paddling. Indeed, he was a keen cyclist and for many years a member of the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen. Always the scholar, he segued this into research on exercise physiology. He learned the finer aspects of canoe paddling on the Tennessee River from **Dr. Gordon Carlson**, former Head of Zoology, and it became a life-long recreation enjoyed with his entire family.

Jim will be sorely missed not only by his wife Dale and their three sons, but also by scores of students and the many faculty members whose lives were enriched by his.

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Alumni News

1961 Paul Urso, Ph.D.
Received his doctoral degree from the former Zoology department as it was affiliated with the Department of Radiation Biology at ORNL. He was a senior scientist and professor at The Morehouse School of Medicine before retiring and now resides in Conyers, GA.

1979 Brian Boom, Ph.D.
Has been appointed Associate Director for Research and Adjunct Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Environmental Research Conservation, headquartered at Columbia University. He will also be teaching and mentoring students within the newly created Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology.

1991 Karen Baker, D.M.D.
Has a solo dental practice in Nashville.

1996 Michael Gregory Abel, Ph.D.
Received his degree from Microbiology under **Dr. Jeff Becker**. After five years as a postdoctoral fellow/junior faculty member at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, CO, he is the Director/Lab Head of the Research and Development mRNA lab at Source Precision Medicine in Boulder, CO. He is excited about the new job but a little apprehensive of a corporate position after such a long time in the academic arena. He said, "I'm sure I will be successful, I was trained in a great department by a world class faculty."

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Remembering Dr. Burgess

by Dr. Sandy Echternacht

In 1961, I was in my first year of graduate school at Arizona State University and taking my first ecology course. It was a plant ecology course taught by **Dr. Robert L. Burgess**. As part of a lab exercise on vegetation sampling, I was laying out a transect with a string and, despite Bob's warning to the class about such stupidity, backed into a cholla cactus, coming away with a good part of it firmly attached to my butt.

With little ceremony, and more enthusiasm than I would have preferred, Bob jerked the cholla and its spines out with a snake stick. Part of me came out with the spines and I couldn't afford to lose the weight. That was my first "up close and personal" contact with Bob Burgess.

Bob died in Syracuse, New York on March 16, 2002 of complications associated with lung cancer. He was a Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York at Syracuse where he had been Chair of the Department of Environmental and Forest Biology from 1981 to 1999.

He had received his B.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee and both M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He was just a year into his first faculty position when I met him at Arizona State. Subsequently, Bob held a faculty position at North Dakota State University and was a Visiting Professor at the University of Pennsylvania and Pahlavi University in Shiraz, Iran before joining the staff of the Environmental Sciences Division of Oak Ridge National Laboratory in 1970.

While at Oak Ridge between 1970 and 1981, Bob was a Program Manager, Section Head, and member of the Senior Research Staff. He was Deputy Director of the Eastern Deciduous Forest Biome project of the U.S./International Biome Project (IBP). Between 1972 and 1981, he was an Adjunct Professor in the Graduate Program in Ecology at UT and he and I became colleagues when I arrived in 1975.

Working primarily at the ecosystem level, he was very active as a professional ecologist but he was equally interested in the preservation of our natural heritage. He held a number of important positions in the Ecological Society of America (ESA), including service on the Board of Editors of the journals Ecology and Ecological Monographs. He was Co-Chair of the IV International Congress of Ecology.

He received a Distinguished Service Citation from the ESA in 1988. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Chapter of the Nature Conservancy (Chair in 1976-1977) and, later, of the Board of the New York Chapter. In 1988, he was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

For Bob, research and teaching were inextricably associated. While at Syracuse, he taught a large freshman course on environmental science and directed graduate student research until he retired in 1999. Things came full-circle for me when his son, **Steve**, enrolled in the population biology class that **Dr. Gary McCracken** and I were teaching at UT.

I didn't know that Steve was Bob's son and I didn't find out until after Bob had died. I'm glad that I didn't know because Bob set a very high bar as a teacher and as an ecologist and the thought that I had to meet those standards would have been overwhelming. For me, and I'm sure for others, Bob was a role model. He will be greatly missed.

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Graduate Student Symposium

Friday afternoon, October 4, 2002
Location to be announced – contact EEB for details

This symposium offers graduate students in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology a chance to present their research (results and/or ideas) to fellow graduate students and faculty in both EEB and other departments. Students will give 12 minute presentations with three minutes for questions. If this year goes well then we would like other biology departments to join us next year.