



# News fEEB

Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Monthly Newsletter

September 2021 · Volume 4 · Issue 1

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## COVID 19 Resources

[TAMU Face Covering Guidelines](#)

[TAMU COVID-19 Guidance Website](#)

[Texas DSHS COVID-19 Website \(including case numbers and testing sites\)](#)

[Student Health Services: \(979\)-458-8310](#)

## Upcoming Seminars

**Sept. 13** EEB General Meeting

**Sept. 20** Graduate Students and Post Docs

**Sept. 27** Jeff Tomberlin (TAMU),  
*Why Fruits Rot, Seeds Mold, and Meat Spoils: Janzen, Death, & Applied Research*

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# EEB Spotlight

*We are excited to welcome a diverse and highly accomplished incoming cohort of twelve first-year PhD students this semester! To help us all get to know them a little better, we are highlighting the new cohort in this month's EEB Spotlight.*

**Keith Andringa** is from Aledo, Texas and is advised by Dr. Jacquelyn Grace in the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology. He is particularly interested in habitat fragmentation and urbanization as potential stressors in wild birds. His project focuses on the ecophysiology of Purple Martins and other breeding passerines with a focus on immunology along urban-rural gradients.”



**Audélia Mechti** is from Switzerland and is advised by Dr. Greg Sword in the Department of Entomology. She graduated with a master's degree in 2019, with specialization in animal behavior, evolution, and biodiversity. Her dissertation project will focus on the genetic basis of individual behavioral plasticity and group-level collective mass movement of locusts.

**Vivian A. Peralta Santana** is from the Dominican Republic and went to school in New Jersey. She is supervised by Dr. Hojun Song, in the department of Entomology. Her research interests include evolution, natural history, phylogenetics and genomics. Her dissertation research will focus on locusts and grasshoppers.



**Nicole Stevens** is from Tampa, Florida and did her undergraduate studies in Baltimore, Maryland. She is supervised by Dr. Lee Fitzgerald in the department of Ecology and Conservation Biology. She is interested in herpetological community dynamics and the conservation of anurans and squamates.

**Brooke Torjman** is from Southampton, Pennsylvania and is advised by Dr. Anna Armitage in the Department of Marine Biology located at the TAMU Galveston campus. She is interested in studying marine community ecology systems in coastal wetlands. Particularly, she is looking into how artificial structures could cause trait-mediated indirect interactions and how they could impact various food webs and trophic cascades.



**Chris Brennan** is from Denton, Texas and Western Australia and is supervised by Dr. Spence Behmer in the Department of Entomology. His research will focus on the impact of nutritional physiology and metabolism on phase polyphenism in locusts as a part of the collaborative behavioural plasticity research institute.

**Matthew Marano** is from Westchester, New York and is supervised by Dr. Heath Blackmon in the Department of Biology. His research interests include genome and trait evolution, the evolution and consequences of sex and mating systems, and phylogenetics as a means to investigate macroevolutionary patterns.



**Ali Lira Olguin** is from Mexico City and is advised by Dr. Jessica Light in the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology. She is interested in parasites, bats, systematics, evolution and host-parasites coevolution. Particularly, she is interested in cospeciation between bat flies and their host and its relationship with the diversification of these parasites in the Neotropics.

**Angela Haggard** is from Navarre, Florida and is advised by Dr. Kevin Conway in the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology. She obtained a bachelor's from Pennsylvania State University in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. She is broadly interested in systematics, phylogenetics, and comparative anatomy of bony freshwater fishes.



**Benton Fry** is advised by Dr. Winemiller in the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology. His project will focus on niche comparisons between two species of peacock bass in the Essequibo drainage in Guyana. He will complete this project by studying habitat and diet preference between these species where their populations overlap and where they exist alone.

**Andie Miller** is from Northwest Indiana and completed her bachelor's and master's degrees at Bradley University in Peoria, IL. She is supervised by Dr. Greg Sword in the Department of Entomology and is broadly interested in investigating ways to make agriculture more sustainable. Her research will focus on Fall Armyworm population dynamics, behavior, and management.



**Maria Alejandra Hurtado** is from Colombia and completed her bachelor's degree at Universidad del Valle. She is supervised by Dr. Lawing in the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology and is broadly interested in evolutionary ecology and conservation biology. Her research will focus on understanding the mechanisms that drive animal communities using an integrative approach and applying this knowledge to conservation biology.