NEW METEOROLOGY MAJOR
GENERATES A STORM OF INTEREST

Although the meteorology major in the college’s geography department is only weeks old, student interest has been swirling like a cyclone since July 2011, when the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia approved the new bachelor of science degree program to begin in January 2012. Many students have expressed interest in the program and more than 30 have switched to the new major, the first meteorology degree offered in the state. Six of those students are already on track to graduate in May. “There’s a lot of pent-up demand,” said Bill Carstensen, department head. “Many geography majors are becoming meteorology majors.”

Other students are coming into meteorology from a variety of fields — engineering, physics, crop and soil environmental sciences, chemistry, math, computer science, even theater. Some are adding meteorology as a second major, according to Carstensen. The timing couldn’t be better for student Dan Goff, who came to Virginia Tech knowing he wanted to be a meteorologist. Goff is the chief meteorologist at Virginia Tech’s WUSVT-FM radio station and also blogs and tweets as “Weather Dan” in the Richmond area (see related story p. 4). “I was hoping the program would be here before I graduate,” Goff said. “Now I’ll be able to leave Tech in May 2013 with degrees in both meteorology and geography.”

The new major plays to Virginia Tech’s existing strength in geospatial information technology, which incorporates geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing, and combines it with classical meteorology examining the physics of the atmosphere. While most other programs look primarily at atmospheric patterns, geospatial technology allows students to consider how landforms affect weather patterns. In this relatively new area of research, students learn to predict severe weather and to model and assess its impacts on landscape features and the human environment. “We look at what goes on in the atmosphere and on the ground,” said Carstensen. “We take the geospatial aspect further than any other university meteorology program.”

Graduate student Kathryn Provis is studying the effect of Appalachian topography on tornadic thunderstorms, including the one that hit nearby Pulaski County in April 2011. In her research, which involves correlating terrain with radar data to figure out how topography influences the low-level winds of thunderstorms, she uses GIS and remote sensing to look at a meteorological problem. Like Provis’s research, the new degree program has an interdisciplinary focus in geography. “Students graduating will have not only meteorology knowledge but also a skill set in geography,” said instructor Dave Carroll. “That will hopefully make them very attractive candidates for graduate school and employment.”

Students can apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world forecasting experiences through internships at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. The university’s close proximity to the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Blacksburg is another asset to the program. Students can apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world forecasting experiences through internships at the office.

Carroll’s Hokie Storm Chase course offers another hands-on experience operating weather equipment. The metereic rise in popularity over the past decade of the course’s annual trips to track storms across the Great Plains spurred the department’s interest in creating the meteorology major. For graduates of the new program, the combination of skills will open doors for employment with a host of federal and state agencies, as well as private weather forecasting companies, such as AccuWeather. Meteorologists also work for the military, commercial airlines, and other transportation companies, as well as news organizations and other agencies.

“Our degree program adds human and physical geography, and remote sensing to the meteorology mix,” Carstensen said. “We predict not only the weather, but what effect it will have — and that’s important.”
FROM THE DEAN’S PERSPECTIVE

2012 started off with a dash of four days of travel in Virginia and Washington, D.C., with our Leadership Institute students. What a great experience for me and faculty co-directors Steve McMullin and Brian Bond to be with these outstanding students and to visit with our state, federal, association, and non-governmental organization partners. Our students are emerging young professionals. They are smart, articulate, committed, and passionate about the environment, our resources, and global sustainability. I feel great about our future knowing that these students will one day be in leadership roles.

Our fall career fair was a complete success and feedback from participants and our students was very positive. We’ll plan to do it again and we welcome your participation.

As featured in this issue’s cover article, our new meteorology degree is in place; at press time, we had 32 students declared in the major. We have received approval to rename our wood science and forest products department as the Department of Sustainable Biomaterials and now have the opportunity to shift the paradigm in North America in this important academic arena.

COLLEGE NEWS

Sustainability Week 2011

The college was once again well represented during Sustainability Week activities on campus. Associate Professor Eric Wiseman and some of his urban forestry students helped plant 10 trees around the Drillfield. Associate Professor Dan Hindman led a strong effort by the wood science department to host a total of six classes, workshops, and competitions throughout the week — more than any other academic unit on campus — with the help of faculty members Barry Goodell, Tom Hammett, Laszlo Horvath, Young Kim, and Robert Bush. Goodell and Hammett also staffed a booth highlighting sustainable biomaterials at the Sustainability Fair across from the Blacksburg Farmer’s Market.

New License Plate Supports Community Trees

Virginians can now show their support for community trees by purchasing a new “Virginia Loves Trees” specialty license plate. The Department of Motor Vehicles requires that 450 plates be pre-sold before it puts the new plate into production, so advance orders are highly encouraged. As a revenue-sharing plate, $15 of the $25 plate fee will go to the sponsoring organizations after the first 1,000 plates are sold. Proceeds will benefit Virginia Tech’s urban forestry program and Trees Virginia, the state’s Urban Forestry Council.

“The value of the plate isn’t just supporting community trees monetarily, but also showing others that you care about trees in your community,” said Susan Day, assistant professor of urban forestry. “It raises people’s awareness of a valuable component of their community that many take for granted until it is gone.” For more information or to order a plate, visit www.valoveestrees.org.

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Zink-Sharp and Copenheaver Lead Wood Anatomy Workshop

Professor Audrey Zink-Sharp and Associate Professor Carolyn Copenheaver served as group leaders for the Wood Anatomy for Dendrochronologists workshop held during the 21st annual North American Dendrochronological Fieldweek (NADEF) at the Mountain Lake Biological Station in Pembroke, Va., in August. Participants in this year’s NADEF, which provides experience in field and laboratory-based techniques used in dendrochronological research, ranged from graduate students to research professionals from five different continents. Group leaders, who were assembled from top scientists around the country, were charged with helping their group develop, carry out, and report on a research project during the weeklong workshop.

This was the first year NADEF offered a group focused specifically on wood anatomy. “Most undergraduate and graduate programs around the country don’t offer tree-ring courses,” said Copenheaver. “Europe and Japan have a long history of collaboration between dendrochronologists and wood anatomists, but in North America, these two groups have not traditionally worked as closely. The workshop is meant to bridge connections between these two disciplines.”

Copenheaver and Zink-Sharp guided their group through the anatomy of several tree species as well as tree-ring cross dating, wood anatomy basics, techniques for free-hand and microtome sectioning, and digital image analysis with light and scanning electron microscopy. “This is a well-established opportunity for participants to learn how to use wood anatomy in dendrochronological research,” said Zink-Sharp. “It’s important to integrate anatomical and ecological response data into dendrochronology in order to better understand the relationships between tree growth and our natural environment.”

College Celebrates International Year of Forests

In observance of the United Nations’ International Year of Forests — a celebration of people’s actions to sustainably manage the world’s forests — the college hosted a public screening of “Green Fire,” a documentary about Aldo Leopold, father of the American conservation and wildlife management movement. In addition to the first screening in the state of this groundbreaking film, the event included a panel discussion on the global significance of local forests, student poster presentations, a reception, and a talk by Stan Temple, a renowned bird expert and Senior Fellow with the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Nearly 300 attended the celebration, which focused on forests, their benefit to the world, and the conservation pioneer who was moved to protect and manage forests and other natural landscapes.

“I was pleased with the turnout,” said Associate Professor Carola Haas, who helped coordinate the event with a team of faculty and students. “It was gratifying to see landowners and others who traveled quite a distance to learn more about Aldo Leopold and his land ethic, forest management, and what we’re doing at Virginia Tech.”

In Memoriam: Marianne Stern

The college mourns the recent passing of Marianne Stern, wife of longtime college faculty member E. George Stern, who passed away in 2002. Marianne was an ardent supporter of the college and University, and established a scholarship in memory of her husband. She added the name of her daughter, Jean Fromberg, to the scholarship after her passing a few years ago. “Marianne had an amazing life and will be missed by many,” said Dean Paul Winistorfer. For more information or to contribute to the newly renamed E. George and Marianne Stern and Jean Stern Fromberg Memorial Scholarship, please contact Bob Mollenhauer, director of development, at bobm5@vt.edu or 540.231.8859.

Packaging Facility Hosts Cabinet Members, College Reps

College Development Director Bob Mollenhauer and Professor Robert Bush were invited to join members of Gov. McDonnell’s cabinet on a visit to a packaging facility in Staunton in September. Carded Graphics LLC, home to a state-of-the-art high-speed printing press and other cutting-edge technology, was selected by regional economic development partners to host the cabinet members, who requested that their trip to the Shenandoah Valley include a stop at a manufacturing facility.

Mollenhauer said, adding that the company could be a dynamic field. “This is a way to educate students who could possibly work here,” Mollenhauer said, adding that the company could be a dynamic field. “This is a way to educate students who could possibly work here.”
DeHart Joins Cast of ‘Aqua Kids’

Clark DeHart, a wildlife science major from Blackburn, joined the cast of “Aqua Kids” for the show’s seventh season. “Aqua Kids is a multiple Emmy- and Telly-award winning television program produced by George Stover III that shows young people the importance of preserving and protecting marine and aquatic environments,” explained DeHart.

This season he has visited marine centers from Wisconsin to Florida, talked with biologists about their research, and interacted with aquatic animals including sea lions, harbor seals, bottlenose dolphins, sea turtles, Asian carp, lake sturgeon, sting rays, and sharks. “The Aqua Kids visit different aquatic habitats and work with scientists who educate us about that environment and the animals that live there,” said DeHart. “I have a role on the show called ‘Clark Cam’ where I film close-ups of activities we work on, from curious penguins to baby sea turtles.”

In addition to his television work, DeHart has visited local elementary schools over the past two years, speaking with students about their local wildlife and how they can become wildlife filmmakers. He has made several of his own nature films stressing the importance of conservation and hopes to one day use his writing and filmmaking skills to protect animals and their environments. DeHart also writes a blog about his wildlife adventures. “Growing up in Blackburn, I fell in love with the wildlife and nature around me,” he said. “I feel I can help be a voice for animals around the world.”

Go online for more information about the show (www.aquakids.tv), to read DeHart’s blog (www.livingwiththwildlifeatclark.blogspot.com), or to view his wildlife videos (www.youtube.com/user/RoddyAndClark).

Fans Rally to Thank ‘Weather Dan’

Geography and meteorology student Dan Goft, the chief meteorologist at Virginia Tech’s WVU-FM radio station, has quite a fan following. He has served as a trusted online voice for all weather-related information in the Richmond area on Twitter as “Weather Dan” (@WvDan) for over three years, earning him a job offer in 2010 from RVAnews (rvanews.com), a Richmond-focused website providing news and entertainment features and a network of community-focused blogs.

“It’s a lot of work and sometimes not a lot of sleep,” commented Goft, “but it’s something I love to do, and it makes me happy to know I’m putting in a lot of energy to help keep other people safe and give them some peace of mind.” He splits his time between working at WVU-FM and writing for RVAnews. “I got my start in Richmond and that’s where most of my 2,500 Twitter followers are,” said Goft. “...but I’m building a rather large contingent in the New River Valley as well.”

Goff’s dedication was evident in his timely and accurate coverage of Hurricane Irene in August. He tweeted to Richmond-area residents about what to expect and offered reassurance to those waiting out the storm. In response, Twitter follower Job Hoge created a Facebook group called “WXDIAN Appreciation Society.” Other thankful followers took up the call, passing around a virtual hat and contributing over $1,000 to Dan via PayPal! Dan does something nice for the entire Virginia online community every day,” said supporter Nick Dawson. “Wanting to give a little back was almost reflexive — no hesitation. When I thought about how his [Hurricane Irene] coverage had touched us personally and professionally, it was a no-brainer.”

“...I was flattered,” Dodson said. “It’s hard to imagine myself as accomplished as other Udall scholars.”

Dodson, a member and past president of the Virginia Tech Environmental Coalition and a student representative on the University Energy and Sustainability Committee, hopes to work with the Watershed Alliance, a global movement of advocates who patrol and protect over 100,000 miles of waterways.

Kirsten Miller, a geography major from Malvern, Pa., received one of five scholarships from the National Society of Collegiate Scholars for her commitment to integrity. “I can relate to the topic of integrity,” said Miller. “A lot of the world is about getting to the top, but to me, having integrity is about more than that.”

“I was very impressed with Kirsten’s essays,” said Bailey Kaisten, Scholarship Review Committee member, of the two essays Miller submitted on embracing integrity. “Kirsten thoroughly explained how integrity plays a vital role in her daily life.” Miller used the scholarship to go to Africa last summer to work with The Zambia Project, which supports many community improvement and education projects. “The experience taught me a lot about how to better serve my own community and those not at all like mine,” she observed.
Hull Honored as Engaged Scholar

Bruce Hull

Professor Bruce Hull was named the Engaged Scholar for July by the university’s Outreach Council for his involvement in projects aimed at promoting sustainable land use and his role as advisor to a number of organizations, including the Southern Urban Wildland Interface Council, Model Forestry Policy Program, New River Valley Planning District Commission, and New River Valley Sustainable Communities Consortium.

New Director of Center for Unit Load Design

Laszlo Horvath, who joined the faculty in 2010 as an assistant professor of practice, has been named director of Virginia Tech’s Center for Unit Load Design. Based in the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products, the center develops technologies to optimize material handling efficiency and services as the outreach arm of the packaging science program by offering short courses and workshops, and providing testing services to the packaging industry. Horvath will work to expand the center and open up new dimensions for packaging distribution research. “Dr. Horvath is well positioned to take the reins of the center and provide dynamic leadership,” said Department Head Barry Goodell.

“I am currently leading the center through a lean transformation in which the layout will be optimized to improve organization and provide additional space for future growth,” said Horvath. “We are also standardizing testing procedures and maintenance schedules. Once the lean transformation is finished I plan to revitalize the academic and industrial research conducted by the center.”

The undergraduate curriculum in packaging science, which is being redesigned to better reflect the scope of the industry and prepare graduates to work in a broader range of positions, includes a strong focus on sustainability, emphasizes experiential learning, and teaches continuous improvement principles such as lean manufacturing. “One of my goals is to create a student-friendly center where trained undergraduate students can be part of some of the non-proprietary testing and research projects,” stated Horvath.

Trauger Receives Science Teaching Award

Professor Emeritus David L. Trauger received the Washington Academy of Sciences Leo Schubert Award for teaching science in college. Founded in 1898, the academy has been honoring distinguished scientists who work in the greater Washington, D.C., area since 1940. “I am honored and humbled to receive this prestigious award,” Trauger said. “This recognition means a great deal to me and I thank all for nominating and supporting me.”

Trauger spent 32 years working for natural resource agencies in the Department of the Interior, including appointments as chief of the Division of Wildlife Research for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and director of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. He served as director of the college’s natural resources program in the National Capital Region from 2001 to 2008. He also served as associate dean for the Graduate School in the National Capital Region and director of the Northern Virginia Center before retiring in 2010.

“David, almost single handedly, buoyed up our graduate program in the National Capital Region and established a strong foundation for us to build on,” said Dean Paul Winistorfer. “We are thankful for his contributions to our program and the many students he has worked with. This award is a fitting recognition for his contributions.”

Smith Selected for Forestry Research Council

Bob Smith, associate dean of engagement, has been appointed by the secretary of agriculture to the Forestry Research Advisory Council, representing the interest area of forestry schools and state agricultural experiment stations. Smith is serving a three-year term on the council, which is composed of 16 to 20 voting members selected from government agencies, forestry schools and institutions, and volunteer public groups across the country. “It is an honor to be chosen,” said Smith. “The committee assists the agriculture secretary in deciding forest research policy for the nation. As research funding becomes reduced and more targeted, having an input on the direction of future research efforts is important for our educational community.”

WEI Unveils 2012 Product

The Wood Enterprise Institute, a student-run entrepreneurial venture that uses a concept-to-marketing business approach, is offering a three-in-one product for sale! This year’s students have designed a wooden napkin holder that includes salt and pepper shakers and a set of coasters. Customers can select from a variety of laser engraving options and wood species.

To order, visit www.wei2012.com or contact Earl Kline at vt.woodenterprise@gmail.com or 540-231-8841. Orders must be received by April 13, 2012. Show your Hokie spirit while supporting this unique program!

Join us in Blacksburg for a series of weekend programs designed for Virginia Tech alumni, family, and friends.

Specially reduced lodging is available in The Inn at Virginia Tech.

Learn more at www.alumni.vt.edu

2012 Drillfield Series

May 4 – 6, 2012
Focus on Photography II
For all photography skill levels

June 1 – 3, 2012
Hokie Fitness, Health and Wellness
Learn from experts and through fun activities on and near campus in the beautiful New River Valley

July 5 – 8, 2012
HokieCation: Family-fun vacation, Hokie-style
Make Virginia Tech your summer vacation venue

VIRGINIA TECH CNRE NEWS
Eric Hallerman, head of the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, discusses the use of genetically modified animals in food production, a hotly debated issue, in a commentary recently published by the Council on Agricultural Science and Technology, a nongovernment organization that informs elected officials and the public on emerging issues in agriculture. The goals of genetic engineering include improving animal health against disease, creating products for human therapeutic use, and developing animal models for research.

The commentary evaluates the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s regulatory process for approving the production of genetically modified animals. Hallerman and his colleagues highlight many concerns, notably the lack of sufficient plans to handle a possible breach of containment by a genetically modified animal. Overall, however, the commentary concludes, “forgoing access to [genetic engineering] technology may jeopardize future access to improved genetic lines resulting from new technological developments.”

The commentary uses AquaAdvantage Salmon by AquaBounty Technologies as a case study. This genetically modified salmon has the potential to grow to market size in half the time of conventional salmon. The FDA is soon expected to approve it for limited-scale production, which would constitute the agency’s first approval of a genetically modified animal for food.

As part of the promotion for the commentary, Hallerman gave three talks in Washington, D.C., over the summer. “There is a great need to educate congressional staff, federal officials, and others about the issues regarding genetic engineering of animals,” he said. Despite obstacles, Hallerman is confident that “the production of genetically engineered animals will become commonplace. It will, however, require effective confinement of the animals for species where escape and interbreeding with wild populations is at issue.”

NEW COLLEGE FACULTY

W. Mark Ford

Unit Leader, Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation

B.S. (1987) University of Tennessee
M.S. (1989) Mississippi State University
Ph.D. (1994) University of Georgia

Dean Stauffer, wildlife professor and associate dean of academic programs, is the primary editor of “Ecology and Management of Appalachian Ruffed Grouse,” a comprehensive overview of grouse ecology and management in the central and southern Appalachians. “This book represents the culmination and synthesis of six years of field work conducted by scores of individuals from a diversity of state and federal agencies, universities, and private organizations,” noted Stauffer in regards to the Appalachian Cooperative Grouse Research Project, in which investigations captured, released, and followed the fate of over 3,000 grouse from Rhode Island to North Carolina. “We summarize the findings from 18 theses and dissertations in a way that is accessible to all who may be interested in grouse.”

Academic Interests

Wildlife habitat interactions (forest management and prescribed fire); white-tailed deer management; ecology and management of bats, non-volant small mammals, and woodland salamanders; high-elevation/relict forest management and restoration in the Appalachians

Michael Sorce

Assistant Professor of Recreation Management and Recreation Planning
Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation


Academic Interests

Natural resource recreation; recreation specialization; human dimensions of natural resource management; conservation on private lands; incentive programs and conservation policy; human-wildlife interactions; land ownership demographics and land use; attitudes and social norms; behavior assessment

Andrew Ellis

Associate Professor of Geography
Department of Geography


Academic Interests

Hydroclimatology; climate variability and change; drought; water resources

Downing Honored for ‘Generation Next’

Extension Agent Adam Downing, Michael LaChance of Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Michael Santucci of the Virginia Department of Forestry recently earned national acclaim for their dedication to helping preserve family forests. They received the “Most Innovative” award from the U.S. Forest Service and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay in the inaugural Chesapeake Forest Champion contest created as part of the U.N. International Year of Forests. Their “Generation Next” short course provides forest landowners with tools to ensure a smooth intergenerational transfer of their property while keeping critical forests intact.

Adam Downing with his son, Nathan

“This issue has been the ‘elephant in the room’ for many years,” Downing said. “It is an honor to be part of a team that works tirelessly to help landowners prepare for such important and far-reaching changes.” A dedicated cadre of professionals from both public and private entities has assembled for each of the past three years to engage family landowners in this challenging issue. “The quality and impact of this program is directly due to the substance and passion shared by the instructors,” noted Santucci.

NEW FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

“Modeling Forest Trees and Stands,” co-authored by University Distinguished Professor Harold Burkhardt and Margarita Tomé, a forestry professor at Portugal’s Technical University of Lisbon, draws upon past research and results to provide a comprehensive summary of state-of-the-art methods for empirical modeling of forest trees and stands. “The book, which focuses on applied topics in forestry, opens by providing methods for quantifying individual trees, progresses to an overview of whole-stand, size-class, and individual-tree modeling approaches, and moves on to incorporating silvicultural treatments and wood characteristics in growth and yield models,” Burkhardt said. “With its international focus and theoretical basis, it is ideal for graduate-level forestry courses as well as a reference for researchers working in growth and yield modeling.”

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Academic Interests

Global change; fish ecology; freshwater mussels; fisheries management; river ecology; coastal marine ecology; macroecology; growth rates; ecosystem services

J. Michael Kelly

Dean Emeritus

J. Michael Kelly co-authored “Getting Published in the Life Sciences” to make it easier for scientists, especially those new to scientific writing, to write about their results and get their manuscripts accepted in peer-reviewed journals. It uses a new “backwards” approach to manuscript development, teaching writers to construct a manuscript beginning with conclusions and ending with the abstract, leading to a more focused, compact manuscript that has a greater chance of getting published. “Quick communication of research results in a clear and concise manner is essential for success in today’s highly competitive environment,” Kelly remarked. “Having a clear picture of the take-home message from the start provides the writer with focus and facilitates expedient development of the manuscript.”

“Generation Next” short course provides forest landowners with tools to ensure a smooth intergenerational transfer of their property while keeping critical forests intact.

WINTER 2012
It didn’t take Shawn Hash (‘91 B.A. in geography) long to figure out how to turn his love of the outdoors into a career path. Shortly after graduating, he and his brother opened Tangent Outfitters (www.newrivertrail.com). With locations in Pembroke and Radford, Va., the retail and outfitter company provides guide services specializing in canoeing, kayaking, rafting, mountain biking, and fishing, as well as equipment rentals and a shuttle service for sits along the New River, New River Trail, Appalachian Trail, and Blue Ridge Parkway.

When asked how college helped prepare him for his career, Hash responded, “It was a time to do things on your own and learn how to manage your time and do fun things like kayaking and skiing while still being responsible. The culture of college—how to work with people, professors, and within the confines of the university structure—helped me learn how to operate in the outside world where you deal with the confines of the government.”

Hash is happy to be able to do the things he is passionate about while sharing experiences with his clients. He has encountered many returning graduates who wish they had gotten involved in the area’s outdoor opportunities while they were students. One of Hash’s goals is to open people’s eyes to the beauty of the surrounding land and to get students to take advantage of and enjoy the numerous outdoor activities available. “It is a great place to be,” said Hash. “We help people who fly in from everywhere to do trips. It’s a very special area and there are so many things to do.”

Hokie Oaks

Charlie Wade (’97 B.S. and ’10 M.S. in forestry) and Scott McKee (’09 B.S. and ’11 M.S. in forestry) started Collegiate Nurseries in 2009, offering a way for students, fans, and alumni to take a piece of campus home with them. “We had heard about similar programs at other schools, where alumni could purchase seedlings from campus trees, and thought Virginia Tech would be an excellent place to try it out,” explained Wade. “The campus is full of beautiful trees and Hokie Nation is full of diehard fans.”

Dubbed “Hokie Oaks,” the seedlings are grown from the oaks of campus around campus. The business currently offers seedlings from the bur oak on the Drillfield, white oaks near the president’s residence, and red oaks around Alumni Mall and the chapel. “We are currently in the second year of production” said McKee. “Once we get more established, we hope to expand and take our idea to new schools and really build our company.” For more information, visit www.collegiatenurseries.com.

Alumni Profile
Shawn Hash

Shawn Hash as a board member of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, which helps localities, regions, and individual businesses develop tourism products. Hash focuses on tourism development and works with his colleagues to direct entrepreneurial programs to aid in the creation of small businesses. “It’s not every day that you are going to have a Beach Gardens, King’s Dominion, or a Virginia Beach,” explained Hash. “But, especially in the western part of the state, there are unique artisans, mountain towns, and outdoor activities that provide tone to support the growth of tourism-related businesses to be developed.” One of the board’s goals is to put entrepreneurs in touch with lenders that understand the opportunities available to them in these areas.

Hash and his fellow board members also want to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit in Virginia Tech students. “We need an environment where creative thinkers can step out and make mistakes but ultimately move toward creating their own businesses,” he explained. Reflecting on his own path, he said, “It’s neat to see something real being created instead of getting out of college and working for some other company.” Hash, who describes business ownership as a labor of love, is proud to have become part of the community, creating jobs and adding to the well-being of the area.

Groschel Named Idaho State Forester

David Groschel (’91 M.S. in forestry) has been named state forester by Idaho Department of Lands Director Tom Schultz. “We are lucky to have someone of David’s caliber to take over the reins as the state forester,” Schultz said. “He brings experience from the private sector and other parts of the country, adding to his extensive forestry background in Idaho to help us succeed in our endowment mission to maximize these resources for the beneficiaries of the state.”

As state forester, Groschel oversees Idaho’s Fire Management, Forest Management, and Forestry Assistance bureaus. He joined the Idaho Department of Lands in 2008 as administrator of the Forestry and Fire Division and was appointed acting state forester in July 2011.

Groschel has very fond memories of his tenure at Virginia Tech. “My time at Tech further fueled my passion for forestry and a lifelong desire to learn and grow,” he said. “It’s a great school and I’m proud to be a Hokie!”

IN MEMORIAM: John T. Harrington

In addition, he served on a multitude of federal, state, and regional committees related to forest management, restoration, and ecology throughout his career. The Society of American Foresters named him a Fellow in 2009.

“John was my first graduate student, and I couldn’t have asked for a better student to get me going in my career,” said his advisor, Professor John Seiler. “He was highly motivated, a self-starter, and a hard worker. I was never surprised to hear how well he was doing in his career, and it was truly heart breaking to hear of his passing.”

An active member of his community, Harrington was a former member of the Nepali-Rocadia Volunteer Fire Company and San Miguel Search and Rescue. He had a great love for the outdoors and was an avid marathoner, participating in over 100 marathons and ultra-maro- thons. Harrington is survived by Anne Marie Wagner, his wife of 20 years.

John T. Harrington (’77 M.S. in forestry of Rocadia, N.M., passed away on June 6, 2011, at the age of 49. Harrington received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and his doctorate in 1991 from New Mexico State University, where he went on to serve as a professor of tree physiology as well as superintendent of the Mora Research Center.

Harrington took a six-month sabbatical in 2006 to work for the U.S. Forest Service Research Policy Analysis group in Washington, D.C., and went to Afghanistan in 2010 to work with USAID, the U.S. military, and the Afghan government to help restore that country’s watersheds and forests.

Harrington and friends along the Gason Trail, one of his favorites, in the Santa Fe National Forest. Photo courtesy of Tammy Parsons

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Alumni Events Calendar

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 2, 2012
Virginia and Virginia Tech Chapters of the American Fisheries Society Joint Annual Meeting Inn at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va. faculty.virginia.edu/vacfs/meetings.html

FEBRUARY 24-28, 2012

FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 1, 2012
National States Geographic Information Council Midyear Meeting Loews Annapolis Hotel, Annapolis, Md. www.nsgic.org/2012-nsgic-meeting

MARCH/APRIL 2012
American Fisheries Society Student Chapter 29th Annual Mudbug Tournament Duck Pond; Time; Date TBD; Blacksburg, Va.

MARCH 12-17, 2012
Wildlife Management Institute 77th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference Hilton Atlanta, Atlanta, Ga. www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org

MAY 1-3, 2012
SmallWoodConference Little America Hotel, Flagstaff, Ariz. www.smallwoodconference.org

MAY 6-10, 2012
International Research Group on Wood Protection 43rd Annual Meeting Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia ig43.my

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2012
University Commencement Noon at Lane Stadium, Blacksburg, Va.

SATURDAY, MAY 12, 2012
College of Natural Resources and Environment Graduation Exercises 2:30 p.m. at Squires Student Center, Blacksburg, Va.

MAY 18-19, 2012
Virginia Forest Products Association 33rd East Coast Sawmills and Logging Equipment Expo Richmond Raceway Complex, Richmond, Va. www.exporichmond.com

JUNE 3-5, 2012

AUGUST 27-31, 2012
Society of Wood Science and Technology 56th International Convention Beijing, China www.swst.org/meetings/AM12

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STAY IN TOUCH WITH VT NEWS
On a humid, summer morning, students gear up for a day of field work, ready to put their newly honed skills to the test. This is far from a typical day in the woods. The students — participants in a residential field experience at the Mountain Lake Biological Station — spend the day setting mist nets, shooting dart guns, positioning camera traps, and capturing, tagging, and releasing wildlife.

The experience is the culmination of Associate Professor Marcella Kelly’s Wildlife Field Techniques course. Students spend the spring semester in the classroom, learning how to identify tracks, set traps, and use a compass and topographic maps. In August before the fall semester begins, they set up residence at the biological station in Giles County and spend 10 days working directly with faculty, graduate students, and wildlife professionals from a range of agencies.

“We tried it as a lecture and lab before, but it’s been a field course since 2004,” Kelly remarked, adding that students did not get nearly the same experience from a weekly lab section. Senior wildlife science major Cari Lynn Squibb observed, “The setup of the course helped my understanding and comprehension of the material more than any other course.”

At the biological station, students begin with a series of workshops presented by wildlife professionals and then engage in live capture-mark-release methods of assessing wildlife populations, practicing with dart guns, mist nets, radio telemetry, and other capture methods. “I learned about pest control and management, how to set traps for large mammals such as bears, and how to set up a cannon net to catch birds of prey,” Squibb said. “We also learned a variety of chemical immobilization techniques and practiced using blowpipes and CO2-inject darts on a decoy.”

Scheduling the practical field experience in the summer offers students exposure to a greater variety of species. “One group that did small mammal trapping caught two flying squirrels and even came across a timber rattlesnake on their trapping grid,” explained Ashley Love, a senior in biological sciences. “We also captured a variety of interesting images on the camera traps, ranging from hikers to deer, a mother bear and her cubs, bobcats, and even a coyote!”

The program partners with Virginia Tech’s Conservation Management Institute (CMI), the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, giving participants a chance to learn from professionals in their field and to explore career opportunities with these agencies, as well as gain experience that will be valuable in their professional careers. “Recruiters often call me to ask if a student would be a good fit for a job,” Kelly said.

Students describe the course as one of their best academic experiences. “We spent several long nights collecting data and putting the presentation together, but in the end it was all worth it,” Squibb concluded. “Seeing our hard work take the form of descriptive graphs and tables was very rewarding. The data collection was quite exciting and I found out how truly terrifying being in the dark woods with a swarm of angry hornets can be!”

“With this experience, we can show interested employers that we are prepared for the real world,” added Kelly.

Graduate student Chris Latimer (L) explains to Kristen Booher how to properly load a pole dart for chemical immobilization. Classmate Jasmine Bryant practices using a blow dart for chemical immobilization.

Alexis Reeder holds a northern watersnake that was captured using a cover board. Graduate student Kara Kosarski (R) tries her hand at shooting a dart pistol, which is used to chemically immobilize mammals. Assisting her are student Robert Nave (L) and Vance Nepomuceno, a course veteran who volunteered to help with the field experience.

The Virginia Tech Alumni Association has launched Hokie Nation Network, a social and professional networking site designed exclusively for Virginia Tech alumni, faculty, staff, and students. Log on to www.alumni.vt.edu/hnn to join.