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# THE COMMUNICATOR

NEWS FROM THE NEBRASKA COOPERATIVE FISH & WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT

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Volume 9, Issue 2

December 2013

## New and Changing Faces

We welcome **William (Will) Smith** and **Allison Zach** to the Coop Unit.

**Will** is a master's student in fisheries who comes to us from New York and is being advised by Kevin Pope.



**Allison** is the new Nebraska invasive species program coordinator. Prior to joining the Coop Unit, Allison worked at the Nebraska Department of Roads for five years where she was responsible for writing Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, managing projects, training and supervising staff, and development of public guidance documents and web pages. ❖



## Mark Your Calendar!

On Tuesday, September 30, 2014, The Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit will celebrate our ten year anniversary as part of the USGS Cooperative Research Units program. Events will include a celebration along with our annual meeting (location to be determined). ❖

## Research Highlight

### *Canid Distribution and the Potential Impacts of Energy Development in Nebraska*

Animal-environment interactions drive patterns of habitat use by individuals and subsequent species distribution. Species distribution patterns are fundamental to the ecology of animal populations because they affect social structures, mating systems, demography, and the distribution of prey and competitors.

In canid systems, there is clear evidence that intraguild interactions shape species use of suitable habitat. Intraguild interactions may be particularly important for specialist species, if changes to the ecosystem favor increases in dominant habitat generalists. For example, the distribution and likely densities of generalist canids including coyote (*Canis latrans*) and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) have increased throughout North America, while grassland obligate species such as swift fox (*Vulpes velox*) have decreased. In Nebraska, the swift fox is classified as an at-risk species and little is known about its current distribution and the health of its populations. Therefore, understanding where species exist and how they use habitats are crucial to address various issues regarding its conservation and management.



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The project is concentrated in the western third of Nebraska within the historical range of the swift fox. The study area includes all, or portions of, twenty-four counties, encompassing more than 26,000 square miles. We are developing habitat suitability models to map the predicted location of the species within the area, and then documenting the species occurrences in a number of locations within the study area using camera traps (i.e., remote-triggered cameras).



**GOALS:** The purpose of this project is to develop species distribution maps of the canid species in Nebraska. Our main goal is to document the occurrence of swift fox and identify the anthropogenic and ecological factors that limit their distribution in the Nebraska.

**CURRENT STATUS:** A pilot survey is being conducted this fall to validate the methodology proposed. We will start surveying in spring 2014.

**GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT:** Lucia Corral

**PROJECT COORDINATOR:** Joseph J. Fontaine

**FUNDING:** Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Lucia's research project was recently featured in *NEBRASKALand* magazine and a Nebraska Educational Television News (NET) article. To find out more about this project, read the *NEBRASKALand* article, "Getting the Picture of Swift Fox," <http://digital.outdoornebraska.gov/i/188712/10> and the NET news article, "Citizen Scientists Study Endangered Species in Nebraska," <http://netnebraska.org/signature-stories-on-demand?page=1>. ❖

## Graduate Student News

M.S. Student, **Robert Kill** successfully defended his thesis in August and in November, M.S. student, **Jason DeBoer** successfully defended his thesis. Robert will graduate in December, Jason will graduate in May 2014. M.S. students **Lucas Kowalewski** and **Justin Williams** successfully defended their theses in December and will graduate in May 2014. **Dustin**

**Martin** defended his dissertation and will receive his Ph.D. in December.

*NEBRASKALand's* magazine *Trail Tales*, Winter 2013, featured a story by **Kelly Turek**, "Why I love my job as a fisheries biologist." *Trail Tales* is a Nebraska-specific magazine geared towards fourth grade students, which is produced and distributed four times a year to Nebraska's fourth grade classrooms. Each edition focuses on Nebraska's wildlife species, science concepts and outdoor sports. ❖

## Honors and Awards

**Kent Fricke** was accepted into the Graduate Fellows Program at the UNL Center for Great Plains Studies. The program provides space for selected graduate students to work, meet, obtain support, learn from fellow students and benefit from the Center's resources as they work toward their degrees.



**Caroline Jezierski** was the recipient of the Fall 2013 School of Natural Resources Staff Recognition Award. The award is given to staff who are nominated by their peers for outstanding job performance.



**Jessica Laskowski** was awarded the Meritorious Graduate Student Award from UNL School of Natural Resources. The award "honors the best SNR students and recognizes their academic achievements, research, teaching contributions, leadership



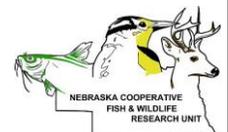
*Honors and Awards, continued on Page 3*

Editor, Caryl A. Cashmere

Welcome to the Nebraska Coop Unit newsletter! The newsletter will be distributed two or three times a year.

Questions or newsletter ideas can be directed to [ccashmere2@unl.edu](mailto:ccashmere2@unl.edu), or 422 Hardin Hall, 3310 Holdrege, Lincoln NE 68583-0984.

The University of Nebraska—Lincoln is an equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

NEBRASKA COOPERATIVE FISH & WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
422 Hardin Hall, 3310 Holdrege Street  
Lincoln NE 68583-0984  
402-472-0449, FAX 402-472-2722  
<http://snr.unl.edu/necoopunit/>

Craig R. Allen Leader 402-472-0229 allencr@unl.edu	Kevin L. Pope Assistant Leader 402-472-7028 kpope2@unl.edu	Joseph Fontaine Assistant Leader 402-472-0339 jfontaine2@unl.edu
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Valerie Egger Admin.Asst. 402-472-0449 vegger1@unl.edu	Caryl Cashmere Staff Assistant 402-472-0559 ccashmere2@unl.edu
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Allison Zach Program Coord. Invasive Species 402-472-3133 invasives@unl.edu	Caroline Jezierski Project Coord. Wind and Wildlife 402-472-8188 cjezerski2@unl.edu	Chris Chizinski Project Coord. Creel Project 402-472-8136 cchizinski2@unl.edu
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*Honors and Awards continued from Page 2*

accomplishments, service and personal qualifications.” Jessica also received the American Ornithologist Union Student Travel award.

**Lindsey Messinger** received a \$400 travel grant to help cover costs for attending The Wildlife Society, 2013 Annual Conference in Milwaukee, WI. ❖



## Outreach Activities

In October, **Kent Fricke** was a symposium organizer and moderator for a session at The Midwest Wildlife Society meeting, in Milwaukee, WI titled “Professional Development in the wildlife profession: What is the Wildlife Society’s role?” Kent was also a discussion panel organizer and moderator for

another session at the conference titled “Uncertainty of an Undergrad: navigating the maze of employment and career opportunities.”

In addition to being a guest lecturer at many events, and having outreach and education booths, **Caroline Jezierski** was a session planner for Renewable Energy Working Group at The Midwest Wildlife Society Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, WI.

**Kent Fricke** and **Dan Uden** continue to mentor a local high student in the UNL chapter of Upward Bound EnvironMentors program. The EnvironMentors program pairs mentors with local undeserved youth who are interested in conducting research and helps them to explore environmental education in college. **Emma Brinley Buckley** and **Caroline Jezierski** are, as well, mentoring a high school student in the EnvironMentors program.

**Emma Brinley Buckley** and **Caroline Jezierski** participated in the Naturepalooza event, hosted by the School of Natural Resources, September 24. Emma was a welcome table volunteer and Caroline had a wind and wildlife booth. The various games and hands-on activities helped visitors gain a better understanding of Nebraska’s natural resources and ways to protect them.

In May, **Jessica Laskowski** volunteered at the Trenton, NE high school where she taught students about conservation, management tools and habitat preference through an activity and trivia game. ❖

## Announcements

Congratulations to Research Assistant Professor and angler survey project coordinator, Chris Chizinski on the birth of his son Elvis Elan. Chris’ wife Lindsey, a graduate of the Coop Unit, delivered Elvis on December 16. Elvis weighed 6 lbs 13 oz. and was 19 ¾ inches long. ❖

## ANNUAL MEETING

The 2013 annual Coordinating Committee of the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit was held on Tuesday, September 24 at NET. Approximately 48 university and agency guests joined the Coop Unit scientists, staff and students to discuss unit progress and research programs. Research presentations were given by fifteen students. Following the meeting, there was networking, posters, and BBQ from Phat Jack’s.

## Conferences/Meetings/Workshops

Emma Brinley Buckley and Dan Uden attended the Water for Food Global Conference, May 5-8 in Lincoln, NE. “Potential impacts of a perennial bioenergy feedstock on groundwater withdrawals under scenarios of future change” was the title of the Dan’s poster presentation. “Applications of time-lapse photography for communicating complex system changes” was the title of Emma’s presentation.

July 29, Jessica Laskowski and Lindsey Messinger attended the Animal Behavior Society Conference in Boulder, CO. “Temporal carry-over effects of perceived predation risk on reproductive investment” was the title of Jessica’s presentation. Lindsey’s presentation was titled “Pheasant behavioral responses to hunting pressure and management actions.”

“Getting more out of your animal location data” was the title of the presentation Lucia Corral, Lindsey Messinger and Nathan Stewart gave at the Nebraska Game and Parks Division meeting, August 9.

Jessica Laskowski attended the Nebraska Game and Parks State meeting in September and had a poster titled, “The influence of hunting on reproduction in pheasants.”

September 4-5, Kent Fricke, Dan Uden, and Noelle Hart attended the Nebraska Natural Legacy Conference in Nebraska City, NE. Dan was a co-author of an oral presentation delivered by Noelle Hart, titled “Oak regeneration in the context of adaptive management.”

Kent Fricke, Caroline Jezierski, Jessica Laskowski, and Lindsey Messinger attended The Wildlife Society Annual Conference October 5-9 in Milwaukee, WI. “Adaptive management of invasive woody plants in the Niobrara River Valley, Nebraska”

was the title of Kent’s poster. Jessica’s poster was titled “Examining the influence of land-use on next survival.” Lindsey’s poster presentation was titled “Behavioral responses to variation in hunting pressure.”

“Applications of time-lapse photography for communicating complex system changes” was the title of Emma Brinley Buckley’s presentation at the Crane Trust Symposium, October 18 in Wood River, NE.

October 24-27, Emma Brinley Buckley attended the Midwest Society for Photographic Education 2013 Conference in Lincoln, NE.

Caroline Jezierski and Dan Uden attended the Rural Futures Conference, November 3-5 in Lincoln, NE. “Renewable energy development and wildlife in Nebraska: Striving for co-existence” was the title of their poster presentation.

Caroline Jezierski attended The Nebraska Wind Conference November 13-15 in Lincoln, NE. In addition to being a presenter, she was also, a moderator, a session planner, and had an Outreach/Education Booth at the conference. ❖

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### *Our Mission*

*Train graduate students for professional careers in natural resources research and management*

*Conduct research that will create new information useful for management of natural resources*

*Provide technical assistance to cooperators*

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### OUR COOPERATORS

