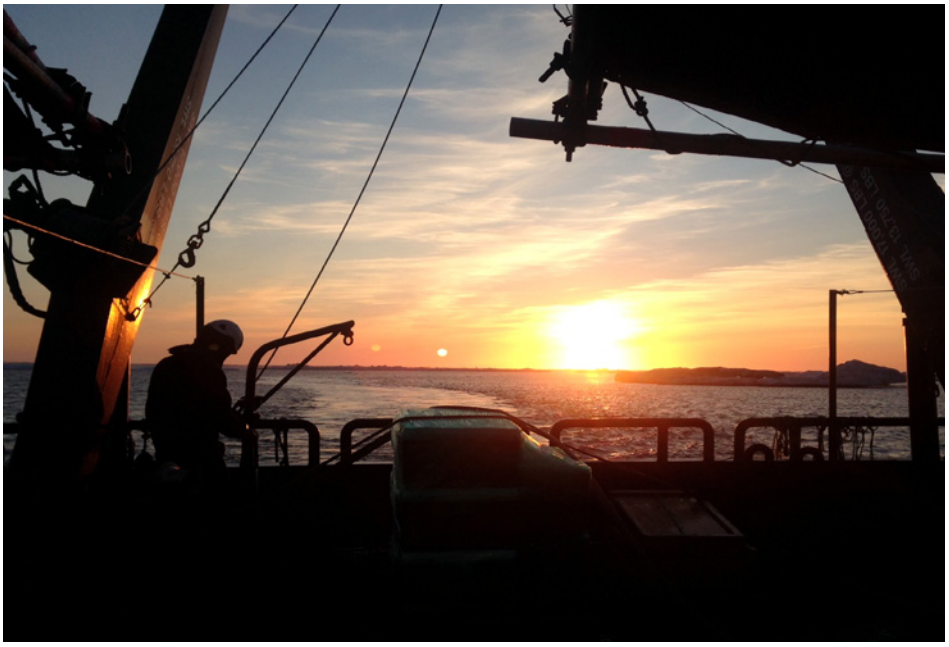
Issue 3



Marine Science News

University of Texas at Austin
Marine Science Institute
Activities and Events

March 2015

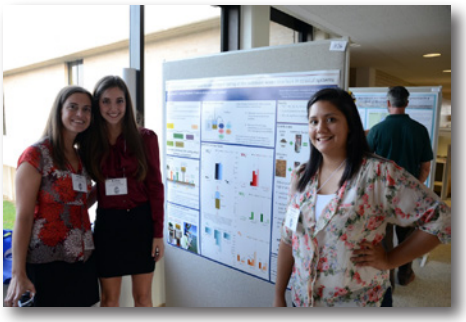
DISCOVERY STARTS HERE

Administrative Services

Land Lease Ends and a New Opportunity Begins for Ocean Health

The beginning of March signaled the conclusion of a 2.7-acre land lease between the University of Texas and AgriLife Research, Texas A&M University. The site will be refurbished and re-purposed to address regional and national interests in ocean health and the related economics of our coasts and communities. This unique ocean health program will be a natural extension of the Institutes' leading-edge research and education programs in marine science.

The 2.7 acre land-lease on Port street adjacent to the Fisheries and Mariculture Laboratory is outlined in yellow.



Veronica Aguilar and Audrey Wohlrab (undergraduates) win first place for the best student poster at the Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting. Pictured with mentor Dr. Amber Hardison, far left.

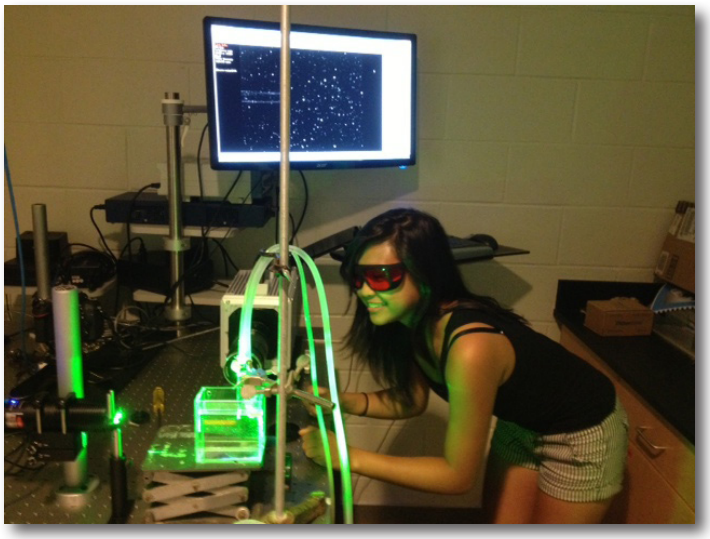
2014 Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting Deemed A Success

In October, UTMSI, with the help of Dr. Ken Dunton, hosted a biennial meeting of the Gulf Estuarine Research Society. Researchers and students traveled from across the Gulf of Mexico to share their discoveries and their knowledge on the lagoons, bays, and estuaries along the Gulf of Mexico. Presentation topics ranged from effects on fauna with the opening of Cedar Pass to the latest and greatest tools and techniques. Keynote presentations were made by, Dr. Michael Osland of the USGS National Wetlands Research Center and Dr. Maggie Walser with The National Academies. The meeting was highlighted with a Halloween costume-themed poster session.

UTMSI Leads In Gulf Of Mexico Oil Spill Research

A UTMSI-led consortium of seven institutions was awarded $9.2 million on November 14th to continue research on the impact of oil spills and dispersants on the Gulf of Mexico and public health. The award was made by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI), a ten-year $500 million research program funded by British Petroleum following the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. GoMRI selection of the UTMSI-led consortium for renewed support for Dispersion Research on Oil: Physics and Plankton Studies (DROPPS) reflects the highly successful research from initial funding in 2012 and the research leadership of Dr. Ed Buskey, lead scientist for the consortium. Dr. Buskey is joined by UTMSI scientists

Drs. Zhanfei Liu, Brad Gemmell, and Deana Erdner. The previous work of the UTMSI-led DROPPS consortium made outstanding progress in understanding how dispersants affect the breakup of oil by turbulence, surface waves and other physical forces. The newly funded project will continue efforts to model the processes affecting the fate of crude oil spills, including physical breakup and dispersion of oil patches, interactions of petroleum with plankton and microbes, biodegradation of oil and the impact of aerosolized oil on public health.

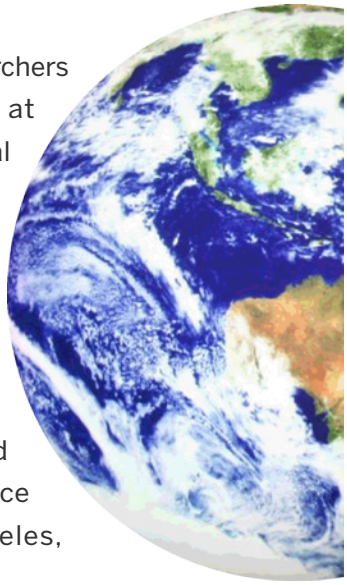


The UTMSI-led DROPPS consortium brings together experts from seven institutions and disciplines, including marine biology, chemistry, physics, computational modeling, imaging and healthcare professions.

In addition to the DROPPS consortium, UTMSI scientist Dr. Andrew Esbaugh is a Co-Principle investigator in another consortia funded by GoMRI. Dr. Esbaugh's research will focus on the effects crude oil has on fish. Early life-stages of fish are particularly susceptible to crude oil, which can jeopardize their ability to swim, capture food, elude predators or reproduce. Effects on fish surviving crude oil exposure can be persistent even after 30 days of recovery. Dr. Esbaugh's research will examine the physiological effects of oil exposures in open ocean (mahi-mahi) and coastal (red drum) species. His studies will range from molecular and cellular studies to whole animal physiology and behavioral observations. All of these newly funded University of Texas projects total over $10.3 million and will directly benefit the Gulf of Mexico and its natural resources that we rely upon.

Where We've Been

- In September, researchers attended and presented at the Western International Forest Disease Work Conference in Cedar City, Utah; and the Bio-Logging Science Symposium in Strasbourg, France. Dr. Tracy Villareal conducted research aboard R/V Pelagia in Cape Verde and Barbados, Dr. Ed Buskey presented a seminar at Texas A&M-Galveston on DROPPS research, and Dr. Bryan Black attended a meeting in Petaluma for a National Science Foundation award.



- In October, several researchers attended and presented at the American Physiological Society Intersociety Meeting in San Diego, California; the 5th International Otolith Symposium in Mallorca, Spain; and the Society for Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science Conference in Los Angeles, California.
- In November, several researchers attended and presented at the NERRS Annual Meeting in Shepherdstown, West Virginia; the 2nd Kemp's Ridley Symposium in Brownsville, Texas; the Lone Star Regional Chapter of the Society of Toxicology in Austin, Texas; the 5th International Bonefish and Tarpon Symposium in Dania Beach, Florida; the 67th Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in Christchurch, Barbados; and the Restore America's Estuaries Conference in Maryland.
- In December, several researchers attended and presented at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea Workshop in Hamburg, Germany; the 7th Aquatic Animals Model Meeting for Human Disease Conference in Lost Pines, Texas; and the American Geophysical Union Conference in San Francisco, California. In addition, Dr. Lee Fuiman and Erin Frolli returned from their research expedition in McMurdo Sound, Antarctica.

o In January, several researchers attended and presented at the Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology in West Palm Beach, Florida; the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool Workshop in Gloucester, Virginia & Georgetown, South Carolina; the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in Anchorage, Alaska; the South East and Gulf Regions Annual Coastal Management Regional Meeting in Orlando, Florida; and the Texas Aquaculture Association Meeting in Fredericksburg, Texas

o In February, several researchers attended and presented at the International Symposium on Reproductive Biology of Fish in Rennes, France; the NERR Tech Training Workshop in Pawley's Island, South Carolina; the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference in Houston, Texas; and the Aquaculture America 2015 meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Faculty Facts

Committees & Honors

o Dr. Bryan Black led an International Workshop where participants from around the globe met to discuss growth-increment chronologies in marine fish and how they can be used to date biological events. This biochronology gives giving scientists a powerful tool to look back through history.

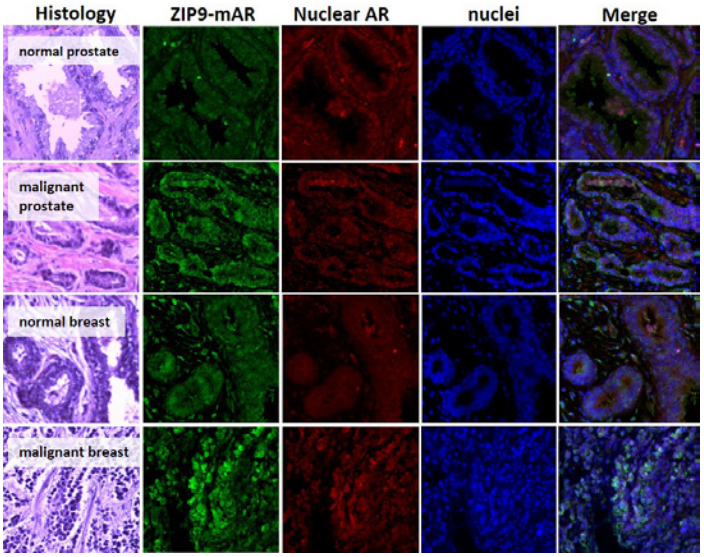
o Dr. Ben Walther was re-appointed as a Technical Advisor to the U.S. Section of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

o Dr. Brad Erisman was appointed to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Coastal Resources Advisory Council.

Note-worthy Manuscripts & Reports

Two Papers Released in Endocrinology Make New Discoveries

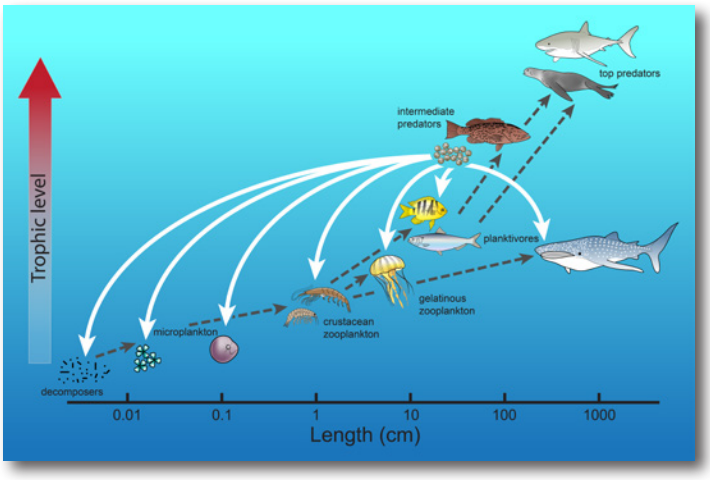
In the fight against cancer there is an unlikely hero: a small coastal fish, the Atlantic croaker. Dr. Peter Thomas and researchers in his laboratory have used this fish model to identify the membrane androgen receptor. They found that activation of the receptor by testosterone in human breast and prostate cancer cells causes the cancer cells to die. This discovery suggests new drugs can be developed that target this receptor to treat breast and prostate cancer. The revelations don't stop there. Thomas and his team also found that the croaker membrane androgen receptor is very unusual because it also transports the essential metal zinc into cells. This is the first evidence that a steroid receptor also functions as a zinc transporter. Zinc is a critical molecule for cell because it has essential roles in numerous cellular processes. This new discovery sheds new light on how steroid hormones can influence zinc signaling in cells.



Cover image on the November issue of *Endocrinology*. Stained cross sections of tissues: normal human prostate (top row) malignant prostate tissue (2nd row), normal human breast (3rd row) and malignant breast tissue (bottom row). Colored sections show the localization of the new protein discovered ZIP9 (green), nuclear androgen receptor (red) proteins, nuclei (blue) and merged images (far right). Increased expression of this novel membrane androgen receptor protein in cancer tissues was accompanied by elevated ZIP9 mRNA levels.

Fish Eggs Turn Conventional View Of Ocean Food Webs Upside Down

Drs. Lee Fuiman and Jim McClelland and colleagues revealed in the journal *Ecology* how the flow of nutrients in the ocean can also go in reverse, from larger animals to smaller ones. This new understanding has implications for conservation and fisheries management. In a reverse food web, marine animals release extremely large numbers of eggs when they spawn. Organisms from microscopic plankton to the largest fish in the ocean consume most of these eggs. Many of the egg consumers are smaller than the animals that released the eggs, representing a reversal of the food web. The researchers demonstrated that the eggs of marine animals have very high concentrations of essential fatty acids – tens to hundreds of times more than animals their size. Many fish populations produce trillions of eggs each year. Many species form huge spawning aggregations to coordinate the timing and location of their spawning. This results in an "egg boon" – an immense but temporary concentration of highly nutritious fatty acids.



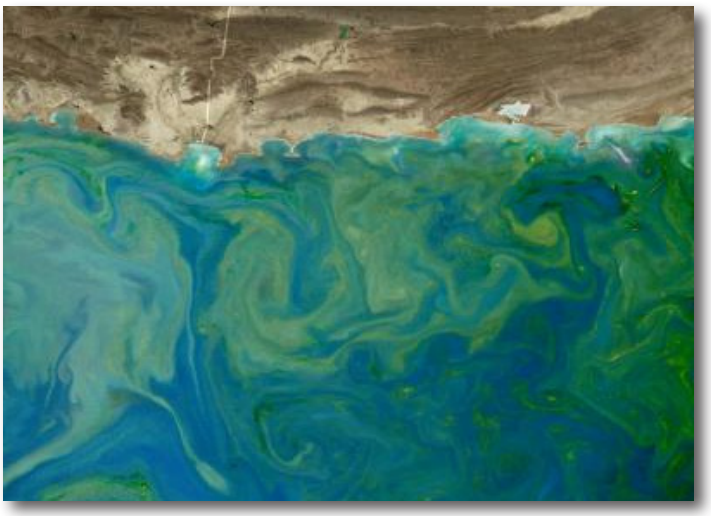
How egg boons can change flow of energy in a food web. Broken gray arrows show traditionally recognized pathways. Solid white arrows show flow through egg boons. Original illustration courtesy of UTMSI (Dr. Lee Fuiman) and coloration by Marianna Grenadier.

New Report Released on Estuarine Issues

A report has recently been released by the *Our Global Estuary* U.S. National Workshop Steering Committee that discusses estuaries worldwide and why they are critical ecosystems in need of attention. In October 2013, with primary financial support from the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation, Inc., the *Our Global Estuary* U.S. National Workshop convened estuarine scientists, resource managers, coastal and ocean observing system managers, and educators, as well as experts in urban planning, Native American culture, and environmental law to discuss the state of estuary science, technology, management, and policy. The new report discusses why estuaries deserve more attention and provides six consensus points and three recommendations from the U.S. National Workshop. Dr. Ed Buskey was an integral member of the *Our Global Estuary* U.S. National Workshop Steering Committee.

Shift in Arabia Sea Plankton May Threaten Fisheries

Dr. Ed Buskey and colleagues published a story in *Nature Communications* that documented how a growing "dead zone" in the middle of the Arabian Sea has allowed plankton uniquely suited to low-oxygen water to take over the base of the food chain. The phytoplankton's rise to dominance over the last decade could be disastrous for the predator fish that sustain 120 million people living on the sea's edge.



Winter blooms of *Noctiluca* are so vast they can be seen from space. Image courtesy of The Earth Institute at Columbia University.

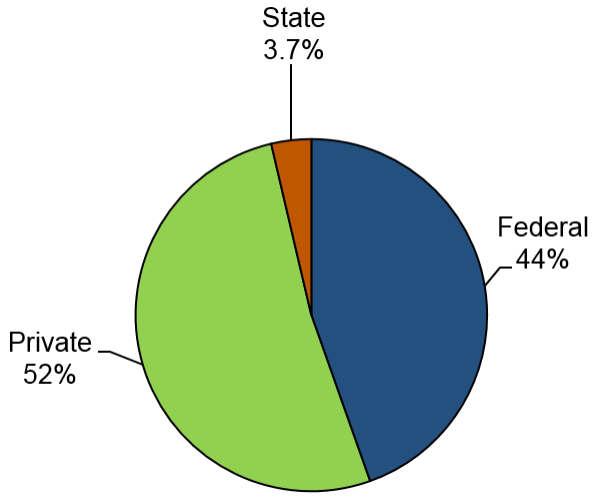
Global Status Report on Fish Spawning Aggregations Just Released: Suggests Widespread Declines

This October, Dr. Brad Erisman and colleagues at the International Coral Reef Initiative & Science and Conservation of Fish Aggregations Meeting launched the most up-to-date information on how the world's fish spawning aggregations are faring with a global status report. The report, which analyzed 888 records of fish spawning aggregations for over 200 species from 44 families in 52 countries, has revealed important information for science and management of fish aggregations and the fisheries they support. Despite the limited information available on the level of management and monitoring of these aggregations, current information suggests that only about 35% of the fish analyzed have some form of management in place such as marine protected areas or seasonal protection from fishing, and only about 25% have some form of monitoring.

New Funding Received Since September

(Primary funding organization in parenthesis)

- NERR operations – Jace Tunnell, Carolyn Rose and Ed Buskey (NOAA)
- Collaborative research on climate change & upwelling: Current & Future Responses of the California and Benguela Ecosystems - Bryan Black (NSF)
- Where a river slows: the oscillic freshwater zone - Jim McClelland and Amber Hardison (NSF)
- Seagrass Monitoring - Ken Dunton (GLO, CBBEP, Padre Island Nat. Seashore, Naismith Engineering, Inc.)
- Sustainable Management of Fisheries and Spawning Aggregations in the Gulf of California - Brad Erisman (UCSD)
- *Rangia* clam investigations in Matagorda, Trinity, Galveston and Lavaca Bays - Bryan Black (National Wildlife Federation)
- Gulf of Mexico Teachers on the Estuary Workshops - Carolyn Rose (NOAA)
- Citizen Science: Larval Blue Crab Monitoring - Ed Buskey and Colleen McCue (Texas State Aquarium)
- Nueces Delta Landform Modifications Study - Ken Dunton (Naismith Engineering, Inc.)
- Nitrogen Cycling in Arctic Coastal Sediments - Amber Hardison (Office of VP for Research)
- Validating Atlantic tarpon scale chemistry to track migration in Texas waters - Ben Walther (Texas State Aquarium)



For fiscal year 2015, $8,272,716 in research awards has been awarded with the majority of the funds coming from private and federal sources.

External Affairs

The Texas Legislative Session Begins

UTMSI administration and the Marine Science Advisory Council have been busy visiting with our elected officials to welcome them to their office and talk about the importance

UTMSI welcomes Chairman of Calendars Committee, Honorable Todd Hunter, during the swearing in of the 84th legislature.

of the Marine Science Institute. Advisory Council members recently visited with many members of the House of Representatives and Senate.

Members of the Marine Science Advisory Committee met with several Texas legislators including staff members from the office of Speaker of the House, Honorable Joe Straus.

Senator Lois Kolkhorst Visits Bay Education Center

On February 20th, Texas Senator Lois Kolkhorst toured the Bay Education Center in Rockport, where she learned about the educational programs and large number of partnerships with the University of Texas, National Estuarine Research Reserve, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, City of Rockport, and Aransas County Navigation District that make the Center a successful operation.

Texas Senator, Honorable Lois Kolkhorst puts the world in her hand at the Bay Education Center in Rockport, Texas.

Ocean Week in Washington D.C.

In early March, UTMSI administration and NERR Director, Jace Tunnell, visited our nation's capital to attend the NOAA program manager meeting and National Association of Marine Laboratories. While in D.C., the team visited with federal congressman and senators about the research and education programs at the National Estuarine Research Reserve and UTMSI.

UTMSI administration and NERR Director, Jace Tunnell, visit with federal legislators (Honorable Congressman Blake Farenthold pictured in center) during Ocean Week.

Other Meetings of Note

- UTMSI made a presentation to Corpus Christi Key Club.
- UTMSI was invited to meet Texas General Land Commissioner George P. Bush at a small gathering at the Port of Corpus Christi.

Members of the Marine Science Advisory Committee met with several Texas legislators including Representative Donna Howard (center). Pictured with J. McCartt and David Dunham.

Around Campus

Undergraduate Facilities Renovations Start Cookin'

Undergraduate students are getting their own dining facility! The lower level of Dorm B has been enclosed and is in the final stages of being converted to a kitchen and dining room. Undergraduate students assigned to dormitories will soon have a place to store, prepare and eat their own food - rather than having to head out to restaurants. As part of this process, the air conditioning, plumbing services, and electrical system for the dorm has been upgraded, and a new student laundry will be constructed.

The bottom of Dorm B gets a major renovation with the addition of a kitchen and dining area.

Landscaping Facelift

Look around the campus and you'll notice planters around the trees and beds, nicely trimmed palms, and a more manicured appearance to the foliage. The Grounds crew has been busy, and their pride is showing. Four guys and 72 acres—how's that for workload?

We applaud all of our support staff and recognize their dedication and commitment to quality. We would not be what we are today without them.

Hundreds Of Sea Turtles Get A New Lease On Life

Over 200 sea turtles were released back into the wild this January with the help of many volunteers and several agencies. With the help of 50 plus volunteers, the Animal Rehabilitation Keep loaded all of the sea turtles that were ready for release at University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas. Then a convoy 25+ vehicles full of turtles and volunteers made the trip down to the Padre Island National Seashore, where the sea turtles had their own runway to the ocean roped off from the public. A large crowd greeted the turtles to wish them well on their journey and new lease on life. The turtle release was made possible from staff and volunteer support from the Animal Rehabilitation Keep at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute and the Padre Island National Seashore.

This green sea turtle is ready to go.

Green Team Updates

The UTMSI Green Team is a volunteer group of faculty, staff, and students that is dedicated to improving the environmental sustainability at UTMSI. This past fall and winter the Green Team has been busy. They worked with the library to sponsor the marine debris art contest at the 4th Annual Library Arts and Crafts Holiday Party, hosted a silent auction fundraiser, and organized a movie series in collaboration with Keep Port Aransas Beautiful.
www.utmsi.utexas.edu/greenteam

Mission-Aransas Reserve and Education

Missionaransas.org

UTMSI Marine Education and Outreach: The Integration of Reserve Education and MES

The UTMSI Marine Education Services (MES) program and NERR education have been merged into one synergistic unit - the Marine Education and Outreach program, under the direction of the Reserve Education Coordinator. Since both former programs share the same education mission, this merger will strengthen our educational and outreach activities by increasing communication and fostering collaboration. We look forward to continuing to provide programs that enhance ocean, coastal, and estuarine literacy and stewardship among K-12 and public audiences.

New Faces

The faces at the Mission-Aransas Reserve have changed since the last newsletter. We are pleased to welcome a new Reserve Director (Jace Tunnell), Stewardship Coordinator (Katie Swanson), Coastal Training Program Coordinator (Colbi Gemmell), Education Specialist (Neli Spurrell), and Researchers (Collin Croulet and Hunter Samberson). All of them have hit the ground running and demonstrate the capacity to accomplish many achievements in the upcoming years.

UTMSI welcomes new NERR staff members Neli Spurrell, Jace Tunnell, Katie Swanson, and Colbi Gemmell in addition to Collin Croulet and Hunter Samberson (not pictured).

Workshops

Mission-Aransas Reserve has been busy providing technical guidance and training to local coastal decision-makers. Here are a few of the events that have been hosted since September:

- Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Research Forum Meeting
- Stormwater Management Workshops
- Vulnerability Assessment Workshop
- Resiliency Forum with Texas General Land Office
- Little Bay State of the Bay
- *Teachers on the Estuary* Professional Development Workshop
- Gulf Streaming Teacher Workshop and Texas Marine Educator Association Meeting

Teachers practice measuring water quality at the *Teachers On the Estuary* workshop.

Nature Challenge

UTMSI and the Mission-Aransas Reserve participated once again in the Texas Nature Challenge. The goal of the Texas Nature Challenge is to get families and kids outdoors by visiting as many participating parks and nature areas in Texas as they can. At the UTMSI Visitor Center, challenge participants explored the new Estuary Explorium with activities that helped them discover why estuaries are economically and ecologically important. Challenges ranged from developing an estuary-themed puppet show to explore the research that UTMSI scientists conduct. The closing ceremonies for the Nature Challenge were hosted at the Wetlands Education Center this year.

2015 Loggerhead Challenge Competition

On February 7, 2015, ten teams from eight schools throughout South Texas competed for the opportunity to win the Loggerhead Challenge. The Loggerhead Challenge is the Southern Texas Regional competition of the National Ocean Sciences Bowl (NOSB) and is hosted by Texas Sea Grant, Mission-Aransas Reserve, and University of Texas Marine Science Institute. In this competition, students demonstrated their knowledge of marine and coastal science by answering questions ranging from biology, physics, chemistry, geology, geography, mathematics and the social sciences. The NOSB is one of the few ways students gain exposure to all of ocean science and related careers as they are beginning to chart their course in life.

Congratulations to Chaparral Star Academy (Team A) for their first place award. Image courtesy of Texas Sea Grant (Rhonda Cummins).

Scientist-in-Residence Program co-hosts Port Aransas Science Fair

The Port Aransas Science Fair was a culmination of six weeks of research and experimentation by 4th and 5th graders of the Port Aransas Independent School District. UTMSI's Scientist-in-Residence graduate students, Carrie Harris and Meredith Evans, provided assistance for the science fair and to science teachers throughout the district, with a focus on grades 4-9. Each student designed, executed, and analyzed the results of their own science experiment. Students presented a poster detailing their experiments to 20 judges from UTMSI (faculty, post-doctoral scientists, and graduate students). Student projects spanned a range of topics from 'what materials insulate ice the best' to the 'diet preferences of pets' to 'determining what brand of paper towels is the most effective.' The Science Fair was a big success and couldn't have been done without assistance of the Scientist-In-Residence program, which is supported by the Port Aransas Independent School District, Mission-Aransas Reserve and UTMSI.

New and Improved Programs

Marine Science Education Film Series and Discussion

The format of the afternoon movies for the public was changed this fall to incorporate a discussion session. It is our hope that this new format will create a more educational and engaging experience for visitors and to better serve our educational mission.

Science on a Sphere Programs

The Bay Education Center's public *Science on a Sphere* programs have been revised to reach our goal of increasing environmental literacy among public audiences. Our new education specialist, Neli Spurrell, is developing new programs that are thematically driven and designed to leave public audiences with a take home message of how they can help protect the natural world. This summer a full repertoire of new programs will be in place.

Public Lectures – Bay Talks and Public Lecture Series

The public lecture series in Port Aransas and Rockport are in full swing this winter season. Lectures are provided free of charge and open to the public. Participants learn about the ocean, coastal, and estuarine systems, both near and far, during these public presentations. Just to give you a feel for the numbers, there had been 240 visitors at Bay Talks up through February 20th.

Whooping Crane Festival

Attendees at the 19th Annual Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas "whooped it up" during four days of festival activities. Over 700 registered participants from 36 states and five countries attended the event. UTMSI was pleased to host the speakers for the event. Friday's evening session, featuring speakers from the International Crane Foundation, set a record attendance for any presentation during the festival's history.

Spotlight on Students

UTMSI Research Fellowships

- Tracy Harvey was awarded tuition for fall 2014
- Sara Wilson was awarded full support for fall 2014 and spring 2015
- Matt Khosh and Shuting Liu were each awarded full support fall 2014, spring and summer 2015
- Aubrey Converse was awarded full support for spring and summer 2015
- Stephanie Smith was awarded full support for summer 2015

CCA Scholarships

- Kathryn Ondricek and Matt Seeley were each awarded $5,000 towards tuition

Graduate School Recruiting Fellowships

- Christina Bonsell was awarded full support for fall 2014
- Corinne Burns, Craig Connolly, Joshua Lonthair and Yida Gao were awarded full support for summer 2015

External Fellowships

- Claire Griffin remains on National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow
- John Mohan remains on Environmental Protection Agency STAR Fellow
- Claire Griffin and John Mohan were each awarded $1,000 & tuition waiver from Graduate Dean's Prestigious Fellowship Supplement
- Matt Khosh and Shuting Liu were awarded $1,000 & tuition waiver from Graduate School Continuing David Bruton, Jr. Fellowship
- Nick Reyna was awarded full support for spring, summer, and fall 2015 from Graduate School Diversity Mentoring Fellowship

Awards

- Semester-by-the-Sea Undergraduates, Veronica Aguilar and Audrey Wohlrab, received first place at the Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting for their poster "Controls of organic matter quality on nitrogen cycling at the sediment-water interface in coastal systems."
- Graduate student, Sara Wilson, received first place at the Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting for her presentation "Four years of seagrass monitoring reveals a dramatic change in seagrass percent cover and species composition in Upper Laguna Madre, Texas."
- Graduate student, Meredith Evans, received second place at the Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting for her presentation "Using ramped pyrolysis-gas chromatography-mass spectrometry to evaluate weathering intensity of the oil in Louisiana salt marshes following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill."
- Semester-by-the-Sea travel awards were provided to undergraduate students, Wayne Hall, Kelley Savage, and Sara Garcia. Wayne and Kelley attended a week-long national field course with the North American Dendroecology Fieldweek. Sara Garcia attended The Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology meeting in West Palm Beach, Florida.
- Recent graduate, Kimberly Bittler, received the national 2014 Walter B. Jones Memorial Award for Excellence in Coastal and Marine Graduate Study.

Semester-by-the-Sea Undergraduate students, Andrew Kang (left) and Sara Garcia, receive awards from the North American Marine Environmental Protection Association and the American Salvage Association Education Committee in their annual Marine Science Competition.

Graduations

Amanda Fitzgerald (Peter Thomas's student) graduated with a Master's fall 2014.

Other News

The new officers for the Graduate Student Association are Claire Griffin (President), Christina Bonsell (Vice President), Carrie Harris (Treasurer), Matt Khosh (Recreational Center Coordinator) and Matt Seeley and Meredith Evans (Social Chairs).

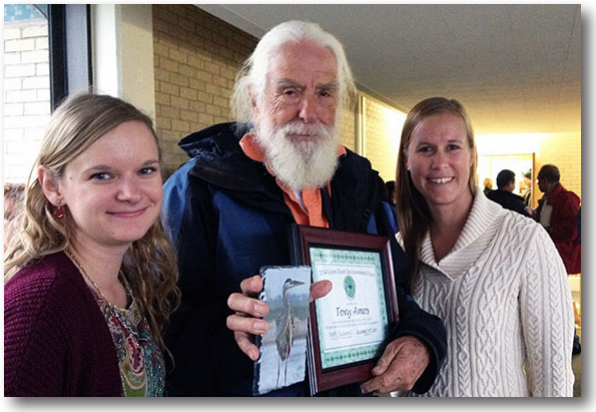
Welcome & Celebrations

Awards

o Beatrice Limon was awarded a 2015 UT Outstanding Staff award. Only 30 of these awards are given each year and Bea was selected from over 200 nominations.

Bea has worked at UTMSI since 2010 in the custodial department and since that time she has helped make the facilities shine.

o Tony Amos received the UTMSI Green Team's Environmental Hero Award for his exemplary leadership and sustained commitment to the creation of an eco-friendly and sustainable working environment.



Tony Amos is presented the 2014 UTMSI Green Team's Environmental Hero Award by Stephanie Smith (Award Chair) and Katie Swanson (President).

o Dr. Chris Shank received the 2015 College of Natural Sciences Teaching Excellence Award for his steadfast dedication to our students education and welfare. He is also the recipient of one of fourteen faculty selected for the Provost Teaching Fellowship which includes a $25,000 grant to pursue specific projects to improve teaching and learning in their departments, schools or colleges.

Dr. Chris Shank's service to the University and its students has made an impact through his involvement with the Semester by the Sea Program, UT Reading Round-up and Campus Conversations on Undergraduate Experience (to name a few).

Holiday Celebrations

UTMSI celebrated the holidays with two events – a Holiday Staff Party at the Community Center and the 4th Annual Library Arts and Crafts Holiday Party. The art theme this year was marine debris and the UTMSI Green Team sponsored an art contest. There were over 11 entries and it was a fun way to celebrate the holidays and help raise awareness about the impact of litter and plastic pollution to our marine and coastal environments.

New Employees

Welcome! Genoa Black, Admin. Assoc., Buskey Lab; Corey Henry, Guard, Security; Kiley Seitz, Research Scientist Asst., Baker Lab; Tracy Weatherall, Research Scientist Asst., NERR; Ben Dickey, Research Scientist Asst., Buskey/Gemmell Lab; Virgil Ellis, Mechanic/Technician, Maintenance.

Would you like to be added to our newsletter mailing list? E-mail Sally Palmer at sally.palmer@utexas.edu