For the Birds
The Rewards and Challenges of Avian Field Research
from the President

I FEEL FORTUNATE to be able to live in a beautiful environment such as Humboldt County. Daily, I enjoy looking at the redwoods that surround and adorn the Humboldt campus and enjoy walks on the local beaches. Those of you who attended Humboldt State University can, I am sure, appreciate the local splendor of the area. Like many others, I am concerned that such a beautiful environment may not be available to my grandchildren or their children.

I am grateful that many students and researchers here at Humboldt State University recognize this as well and work tirelessly to improve the world around us. Those of you who attended Humboldt State university can, I am sure, appreciate the local splendor of the area. Like many others, I am concerned that such a beautiful environment may not be available to my grandchildren or their children.

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Many years ago, I married a behavioral ornithologist and had the pleasure of occasionally helping her gather data on the mating system of cardinals. I was most impressed by how difficult this science was and the cover story in this edition emphasizes this point well. As the work of my colleagues demonstrates, it is becoming increasingly important to study the ecology and behavior of avian species. Humboldt has outstanding faculty who, through their infectious passion for the environment, have inspired students to become the new leaders of efforts to preserve our natural world both for other species and for ourselves. Humboldt students, like none I have ever met, are committed to social and environmental responsibility and will be a part of the solution for our planet.

I want to thank all of you who have attended Humboldt State for the contributions you are making to the world. I am sure that, having been Humboldt State students, you share many of the same ideals that our current students hold dear. Please come and visit us from time to time and enjoy what Humboldt has to offer.

Sincerely,

Rollin C. Richmond
President
CHAMPS!

Jacks Claim Conference Title

Humboldt State’s football squad bested the Western Oregon Wolves 37-7 last November to secure the team’s first Great Northwest Athletic Conference (GNAC) championship title.

The win not only netted a conference title, it avenged the Lumberjacks’ only loss that season—also against Western Oregon in a 40-24 match in early October.

“There’s no doubt who the best team in the GNAC is this year—Humboldt State,” said Head Coach Rob Smith.

Conference laurels were not far behind. Smith was honored as the GNAC Coach of the Year. Mike Proulx, the Lumberjacks’ quarterback, was selected as Offensive Player of the Year, and Jona Faramo, a linebacker who led the Jacks’ defense, was chosen Defensive Player of the Year.

The recognition did not end with the GNAC. In January, Proulx and running back Lyndon Rowells were both named to the Don Hansen NCAA Division II All-America team. Meanwhile, defensive end Brandon Faubion was selected by the Austrian Football League to play and coach for the Salzburg Bulls beginning in March. Defensive back Guy Ricciardulli was drafted to the Carlstad Crusaders in Sweden. Defensive back Diamond Weaver signed with the Aibiene Ruff Riders in the Lone Star Football League. And the San Jose SaberCats invited defensive end Jonathan Wells and defensive back Jordan McGowan-Smith to the team’s training camp. The SaberCats are in the Arena Football League.

For the Jacks, the GNAC championship was the program’s first title since winning the now-defunct Northern California Athletic Conference in 1995. It’s the 10th conference championship in HSU football history, which dates back to 1924.

The league championship—capping off a 7-1 league record and a 9-1 overall record—was well deserved. But despite a winning conference championship, the Lumberjacks were left out of the NCAA Division II Playoffs.

The Jacks’ 2012 campaign kicks off on Aug. 30 against Mesa State. Keep up with all the action at hsujacks.com.

Brian Blumberg (37), Brandon Faubion (47), Jona Faramo (35) and their teammates celebrate after the Jacks secured the Great Northwest Athletic Conference title.

Understanding the Economics of Bee Demise

Brian Gross

When a mysterious illness struck the country’s honeybee population in 2006, scientists struggled to understand how billions of honeybees disappeared from their hives, seemingly overnight.

The phenomenon is called colony collapse disorder. Researchers still aren’t sure how to stop it—and other factors like mites, climate change and urbanization—from devastating the world’s honeybee population, which has experienced a 50 percent drop in the past half century.

At Humboldt State, Economics instructor Brian Gross is looking for answers. Gross, who joined the department last fall, is one of a handful of experts working on the Bee Informed Partnership, a national study of honeybees and beekeeping sustainability funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Over the next five years, Gross and a team of economists, entomologists, epidemiologists and agriculture experts will try to explain the decline.

It’s important work because of the critical role that honeybees play in the global food chain. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about $15 billion in U.S. crops—like apples, cranberries, melons and broccoli—benefit from honeybee pollination and one-third of every bite we eat is pollinated by honeybees. California-grown almonds—80 percent of the world’s supply—depend entirely on honeybees pollination. The almond industry brings bees from around the country to California’s Central Valley each spring, where they pollinate nearly 800,000 acres of almond orchards between Bakersfield and Red Bluff.

Last year, the Bee Informed Partnership conducted a census of U.S. beekeepers and currently, researchers are surveying beekeepers on issues like disease, colony mortality, pest control, labor costs and management decisions.

The goal, Gross says, is to identify the best approaches to reduce honeybee losses and inform the people managing them.

“You have an industry that’s really important for food production and the fact of the matter is we don’t know a whole lot about it or how it works,” Gross says. “Moving forward, what type of policies do we need to implement to make sure we have a resilient, sustaining honeybee population and beekeepers managing it?”

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Bee Informed Partnership, visit beeinformed.org.

RELATED > Humboldt State Alumna Maria Spivak was awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant for her innovative research on bees. Read more about her and this year’s other Distinguished Alumni Award recipients on page 34.

Campus Nixes Bottled Water

Humboldt State has stopped selling plastic water bottles on campus, making it the first public university in California and just the third in the nation to do so.

The ban came in response to concerns voiced by students. It includes all campus marketplaces and eateries, including the “J” cafeteria, as well as vending machines.

TC Comet, director of HSU’s Office of Sustainability, says the move makes sense for a campus with a long commitment to the environment. “We are proud to be one of the first campuses to do a phase-out of this magnitude,” he says.

Prior to this year, about 50,000 plastic water bottles were sold on campus each year. The peak in a single year was nearly 80,000. It’s estimated that the production, transportation, storage and disposal of those 80,000 plastic water bottles required about 43 barrels of oil and released over 35,000 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

On campus, there are still plenty of places to quench your thirst. There are drinking fountains in every building on campus, as well as two “Hydration Stations” in the Depot and Kinesiology & Athletics Building. The stations provide chilled, filtered water, and are designed for refillable beverage containers. The campus is currently retrofitting more water fountains to accommodate reusable water containers.

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FOR MORE INFORMA
YOU MAY HAVE CAUGHT adrenaline-junkie Andy Lewis (’08, Recreation Administration) showing off his slackline skills and sharing the stage with pop-icon Madonna at the Super Bowl XLVI halftime show.

“I’m a breakout star, apparently,” jokes Lewis, who caught national attention performing aerial acrobatics from a suspended two-inch nylon strap. Since then, he has received lots of media attention, including a prominent photo in The New York Times, an ABC interview and more. But personal fame was never part of the equation when Lewis signed on to perform. Rather, he hoped to bring a whole new level of public attention to his true passion, slacklining.

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In slacklining, athletes balance themselves on a flat strap of nylon webbing, as little as one inch wide. Whether 3,000 feet over a canyon floor (highlining) or three feet off the ground performing acrobatic stunts (tricklining) slackliners are constantly defying gravity, testing their personal limits and abilities, and having a lot of fun.

For two months, Lewis worked 60-to-80 hour weeks perfecting his 20-second routine. “I got to be my own choreographer,” he says. “I just wanted it to look cool and smooth.”

And he knew he accomplished that goal when he landed his backflip dismount on stage at the halftime show.

“I had about 20 houses cheering for me when it happened,” Lewis says of the friends and family that tuned in to support him.

Daredevil Alum Brings Slackline to Super Bowl

Biz School Steps Up Its Game

HSU’S SCHOOL OF BUSINESS is in the midst of an ambitious expansion, supported by recent major gifts from the Patricia D. & William B. Smullin Foundation and an anonymous donor.

Over the last year the School has hired new faculty, made extensive changes to the curriculum and partnered with local businesses for an expanded internship program. Even more is in the works as part of a larger strategy to boost enrollment and focus the School on entrepreneurship and sustainability.

“This is a really exciting time for the School of Business as we look to expand and create our signature identity, which is rooted in entrepreneurship and infused with sustainability,” says HSU Business School Chair Steve Hackett. In recent years, a number of business schools have started expanding the traditional curriculum to include classes in these areas, Hackett says.

The School’s expansion got off to a strong start last year after the Smullin Foundation pledged $2 million in additional state funding to the effort. “This is a really exciting time for the School of Business as we look to expand and create our signature identity, which is rooted in entrepreneurship and infused with sustainability,” says HSU Business School Chair Steve Hackett. In recent years, a number of business schools have started expanding the traditional curriculum to include classes in these areas, Hackett says.

The funding has allowed the School to hire three permanent faculty members in sustainability and entrepreneurship. Nancy Vizenor, a nine-year instructor in the school, was promoted to Assistant Professor in entrepreneurship, Michelle Lane joined the faculty to teach entrepreneurship and David Sleeth-Keppler and Sartia Ray Chaudhury were brought on to teach sustainable marketing.

Other initiatives include the creation of an online MBA to offer classes in East Asia.

The university is hoping to partner with local foundations, businesses and alumni to raise an additional $1 million.

Going forward, the School is exploring ways to broaden its reach to include national and international students. Ideas include the creation of an online MBA to offer classes in East or South Asia.

Other initiatives include an undergraduate internship class led by Business School Instructor Shari Duron, and a “Professor for a Day” program in which business leaders will be invited to interact with students and discuss current business issues.

By next year, the School also plans to start a speaker’s series featuring national business leaders.

Prof: Tiny Primates Communicate with Ultrasonic Private Channel

Marissa Ramsier

HUMBOLDT STATE ANTHROPOLOGY lecturer and alumna Marissa Ramsier (’03, Anthropology) has garnered international media attention for a recent paper published in the Biology Letters of London’s distinguished Royal Society.

In her research, which has been publicized on MSNBC, Discovery.com, National Public Radio and elsewhere, Ramsier discovered that the tarsier, one of the world’s smallest primates, probably has an ultrasound warning system within its social groups.

Ramsier and colleagues in the field conducted research with the elusive Philippine tarsier using state-of-the-art recording technology. Recordings made so far indicate that the tarsier’s vocalizations may represent a “private channel” of communication via ultrasonic signals. They are undetectable either by the human ear or by many of the monkey’s prey and predators.

Ramsier expects further research and analysis to determine what advantages the tarsier derives from its specialized sensory adaptation. But the evidence she and her colleagues have collected to date on the Philippine Islands have broader implications for all vertebrates.

That is because comparatively few mammals send and receive pure ultrasonic signals. Advances in non-intrusive recording technology now enable researchers to generate audiograms of wild animals without compromising their way of life or habitat. Ramsier and her colleagues expect future research to provide insights into the basic attributes that would promote high-frequency hearing in all vertebrates.

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The Smullin Foundation is pleased to be able to make a difference for undergraduate business students and North Coast communities through providing paid internships,” says Carol Anne Smullin Brown. “It is a privilege to support Humboldt State.”

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Text Questions Traditional Family

Professor Tasha Howe has published a textbook examining the biological, personal and social factors that make families tick. Howe asserts that, for many, the traditional family never existed and urges students to pay attention to their own family’s strengths.


“I’ve been teaching for many years and had always struggled to find an appropriate textbook for my class,” says Howe, who teaches the undergraduate course “Family Relations in Contemporary Society.”

The interdisciplinary textbook includes vignettes from Humboldt County families and encourages readers to analyze their own families using a “strengths-based approach.”

Howe says that many people emphasize a family’s structure—the fact that there are two fathers or a single mother—instead of focusing on family processes like love, openness and discipline. She also argues that the idealized American family of the 1950s, consisting of a breadwinner father, homemaker mother and two children, didn’t exist for most people.

“The truth is that there were no good old days like we envisioned on TV,” Howe says. “Regardless of how wacky or weird your family is, my goal with this book is to get students to focus on the strengths of their family and to analyze the process dynamics at a deeper level.” Howe specializes in family violence, developmental psychology and violence prevention at HSU. She is a Fulbright Scholar and nationally-certified trainer for the American Psychological Association’s Parents Raising Safe Kids program.

Secondary Ed Credential Program Expands Online

HUMBOLDT STATE’S PROGRAM for future middle school and high school teachers is now being offered online. The new format means that anyone who meets eligibility requirements can earn a California single subject preliminary teaching credential through HSU.

“We’re particularly excited for the opportunity this provides,” Fieldwork Coordinator Anna Thaler Petersen said. “It’s going to increase the diversity of our applicant pool and the diversity of our school site placements, allowing students to teach in urban as well as rural communities around the state.”

Through a combination of online instruction and experience in school classrooms, the one-year program prepares students to teach a single subject in grades seven through 12. Humboldt offers eight areas of specialization: art, English, social science, music, math, physical education, science and world languages.

It’s the latest program at HSU to go online. This fall, HSU launched an online certificate in faculty preparation for graduate students, faculty members and working professionals interested in teaching in higher education. And the university offers several certificates and other courses either partially or fully online.

HSU’s Secondary Education Credential Program currently enrolls about 50 candidates annually. Over 90 percent of graduates report positive career placement.

Profession Publishes 10-year-old’s New Molecule

WHEN KENNETH BOEHR asked his fifth grade class at Border Star Montessori School in Kansas City, Mo., to build molecules with modeling kits, he didn’t expect one of his students to make a scientific discovery.

But that’s what happened when Clara Lazen, 10, randomly arranged a unique combination of oxygen, nitrogen and carbon atoms. The result was a molecule that Boehr had never seen before.

He emailed longtime friend and HSU Chemistry Professor Robert Zoeller, a computational chemist who models the properties of molecules.

“Can sent me a picture of the molecule on my cell phone and usually I can tell right away if it’s real,” Zoeller says. This time, he couldn’t.

So he plugged the arrangement into Chemical Abstracts, an online database. Only one paper came up. Zoeller says it was for a molecule with the same formula but a different arrangement of atoms than Lazen’s.

Zoeller dug a little deeper and determined that not only was Lazen’s molecule unique, it had the potential to store energy. It contains the same combination of atoms as nitroglycerin, a powerful explosive. If a synthetic chemist succeeded at creating the molecule—dubbed tetraakis[nitroxy]carbon/methane—it could store energy, create a large explosion, or do something in between.

Zoeller says: “Who knows?”

Zoeller submitted a research paper on his findings to the January issue of Computational and Theoretical Chemistry. Both Lazen and Boehr are listed as co-authors.

In an interview with The Kansas City Star newspaper, Lazen said she never thought she’d be a published author by age 10.

“Most 10- or 11-year-olds don’t get their names in a science paper,” she told the paper.

The discovery has been featured on the Huffington Post, The Kansas City Star, Gizmodo.com and many others.

Grad Student, Professor Shine Light on Personal Locator Beacons

SINCE HITTING the market in 2003, personal locator beacons have saved hundreds of people from life-threatening wilderness situations.

The satellite-linked devices alert search and rescue teams to the precise location of a person in danger, and can often mean the difference between life and death.

But in recent years, a growing number of people have started using the devices for non-emergencies—alerting authorities about water that’s too salty, or making an emergency call for a snoring partner—according to research by HSU graduate student Kristen Pope (’11, Natural Resources) and Professor Steve Martin.

The research was detailed in the August issue of the International Journal of Wilderness. The article examines public perceptions of personal locator beacons, the false sense of security they can provide and the repercussions for land-use managers and the public.

Pope and Martin’s field research focused on public perceptions of technology use. They surveyed 235 visitors to California’s King Range Wilderness area in 2009 and found that 55 percent of respondents were “pro-technology.” These people were more likely to take risks and to use a satellite-linked emergency device to request a rescue than the remaining “anti-technology” respondents, many of whom were more experienced, had personal experience with a life-threatening wilderness situation, and believed technology should not take the place of skill, experience and knowledge.

“Devices like personal locator beacons are fantastic when used properly because they really reduce the challenges associated with doing search and rescue,” says Martin, who is chair of the Department of Environmental Science and Management. “But some people are using them as an inappropriate substitute for experience, skill and good judgment.”
Searching for Gravity’s True Nature

Physics Professor C.D. Hoyle has secured a $117,000 National Science Foundation grant to explore the nature of gravity with his students in HSU’s Gravitational Research Laboratory.

By Paul Mann

“The purpose of this research project is to conduct a world-leading test of gravity at extremely short distances and more precisely than has ever been done before.” C.D. Hoyle, HSU Physics Professor

STUDENTS AND PHYSICS Professor C.D. Hoyle hope to capture crucial evidence of what lies behind the origins of the universe, its accelerating expansion, and whether Einstein’s famous idea of gravitational force or quantum mechanics is the more accurate model of nature.

In a series of experiments that will continue through 2013, HSU undergraduates will put gravity on trial across distances half the thickness of a human hair—10-20 microns—to see if gravitational force breaks down at extremely short distances. If it does, Einstein’s celebrated theory might take second place to more recent string theory, which attempts to meld the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics into a single theoretical model of the universe. Quantum mechanics describes the structure, motion, and interaction of subatomic particles mathematically.

“In a nutshell, the purpose of this research project is to conduct a world-leading test of gravity at extremely short distances and more precisely than has ever been done before,” says Hoyle, principal investigator at the Gravitational Research Laboratory. “It may produce evidence that will either confirm or refute certain aspects of string theory.”

String theory is a unifying concept of physics which attempts to “explain everything in the universe” based on the extremely minute scales of quantum mechanics—atoms, molecules, magnetism, electricity and so on. (Einstein also strove to interlock all of nature’s forces in one holistic explanation.) What Hoyle and his students are searching for is experimental evidence that might help sort out the mathematical inconsistencies between the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. It should be possible to integrate the two, synthesize them, in a single consistent model that describes the universe.

To date there is no experimental evidence for string theory that can be measured and reproduced over and over again in the laboratory. And the idea presents complications of its own. In Hoyle’s words, “it predicts a whole bunch of weird things like extra dimensions and multiple universes and the fact that gravity should behave differently when particles are very close together.”

Working at the cutting edge of laboratory physics, Hoyle’s students have built their own highly sensitive torsion pendulum that measures infinitesimal alterations in gravitational pull. A torsion pendulum rotates rather than swings and is akin to hanging a dumbbell from a fiber. The degree of twist in the fiber measures the strength of gravity. Researchers gauge whether the predictions of gravity’s behavior are correct or whether new effects are at work.

Although a torsion pendulum is straightforward in concept and function, taking accurate tabletop measurements of gravitational forces is a demanding task. First of all, Hoyle’s students will be measuring distances that are almost impossibly small. The pendulum’s fiber may twist by an angle of no more than a nano-radian. How small is that?

Hoyle offers this illustration: imagine a lone pea on the ground in San Diego. The angle subtended by that pea all the way from the city to the Gravitational Research Lab in HSU’s Science A Building is approximately one nano-radian.

Another thing: you don’t go down to the local hardware store to buy a torsion pendulum that functions at the one-micron level. Hoyle’s physics students are building their project from scratch. They are putting in a lot of time developing the required hardware and techniques. “You can’t even buy the needed optical system to measure nano-radians of deflection,” Hoyle says.

So his students are picking up valuable experience in designing and building optical systems of their own. They are making their own electronic circuits to “read” and record physical and environmental parameters in the lab such as temperature, magnetic fields, and seismic activity. They are getting hands-on experience with computer-aided design, software programming suites, software/hardware interfaces, data analysis, and science displays.

“There is so much groundwork to be done,” says physics student Holly Leopardi. “You don’t just walk into the lab, push the start button and begin analyzing data. You have to build the whole thing first.”
Humboldt State’s Focus on Fire Science Continues to Produce Key Findings of Long-Term Importance to the Redwood Coast Region (see “Fire on the Mountain,” Humboldt magazine, spring 2009). The most recent studies have found that spreading tree disease could be a dangerous contributor to forest fires.

By Paul Mann

Hugh Scanlon (’88, forestry), chief of Cal Fire’s Alder Conservation Camp, helped co-author the paper with Valachovic and Varner. He comments, “In many cases, modeled wildfire conditions in sudden oak death-affected forests exceed safety thresholds for handcrews. This can mean more heavy equipment, aircraft use, indirect lines and more area burned with higher intensity.”

This is partly because of the deadly link between fire intensity and flame length. As flames grow longer, their intensity increases exponentially. According to Varner, “When a tree crown is on fire, it’s not just that the flame is twice as long, it’s that the heat intensity is many times greater.” Fighting fire by hand under these conditions is neither safe nor feasible.

Heavy rains and consecutive wet springs speed up the spread of sudden oak death. After the wet spring of 2010, pathogen spread in Humboldt County has been more prevalent than in previous, drier years.

The pathogen survives on the branches and leaves of most affected plants and is easily dispersed. Laboratory tests are required for diagnosis because the symptoms of sudden oak death mimic those of other agents, like insects, fungi or bad environmental conditions.

These unnatural fuel arrangements can lead to fires so intense that you can’t combat them with standard, ground-based firefighting tactics,” Varner says. “You just have to move back, and let them die down.”

This is one of the principal findings of a paper published by Varner and Yana Valachovic, adjunct HSU faculty member and UCCE Forest Advisor, in the journal Forest Ecology and Management (posted at elsevier.com/locate/foreco).

Their second key finding is that fallen tanoaks contribute greatly to fuel loading on the forest floor, and it can take years for those fuels to break down. As Valachovic says, “In this way, the disease creates a hazardous fuels situation that is passed on to firefighters during wildﬁre—they must combat blazing downed trees, patches of increased winds and fire behavior and other physical and logistical obstacles.”

Scientists call tanoak one of the most flammable oaks in California and the hottest burning hardwood in North America.
Staying the Course: 1938–1962

Humboldt State's Centennial year is just around the corner, and Humboldt magazine is counting down with a timeline stretching through four issues.

1938 Forestry Club organizes

1942 President Arthur S. Gist begins writing “Humboldt News Letter” for men and women in the armed services

1944 Founders Hall (known then as the Main Building) is camouflaged with paint and ivy to avoid detection by the Japanese

1946 Students build bleachers for Redwood Bowl

1950 Jenkins Hall, completed

1951 Marching band forms

1958 Registration and grade recording now involves IBM punch cards

1959 Lucky Logger is adopted as mascot

1959 Parking fees established—$13 per semester

1958 Registration and grade recording now involves IBM punch cards

1959 Lucky Logger is adopted as mascot

1960 Football games are held in Eureka High School’s Albee Stadium, as crowds are too big for Redwood Bowl

1962 Forestry Building and Library are completed.

Sources: "A View from the Hill" by HSU History Professor William R. Tanner and "Humboldt State University: The Campus History Series" by HSU alumna Katy M. Tahja (’70, Communication). Photos and Memorabilia Courtesy of the HSU Library, Humboldt Room; University Advancement Yearbook Collection; Humboldt Alumni.
HSU JUST UNWRAPPED a major renovation of the Telonicher Marine Lab’s wet lab and public display area. The work was funded by alumni, grants and private donations. Located on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Trinidad, Calif., the marine lab was established in 1965.

“What we’ve been able to do is literally tear down the walls and start with a blank slate,” equipment technician David Hoskins said. “It’s really exciting for us, for our students and for the thousands of visitors we get each year.”

The public display area now includes a 12-foot by 5-foot tank for viewing local marine organisms, smaller tanks highlighting local marine environments and LCD screens feature videos and photographs by Emmy Award-winning cinematographer Rick Rosenthal (’67, Zoology).

Upgrades to the wet lab include new water tank stands, a research area for visiting scientists and an enhanced electrical system.

The lab has a circulating seawater system, lecture rooms and labs for oceanographic research.
ULTIMATE!

Forget Lazy Days Playing Catch in the Park. Generations of HSU Students Have Taken Discs to a Whole New Level.

By Arianne Aryanpur
The sun is shining on Redwood Bowl. Thirty casually dressed players take to the field for another weekend practice. Some stretch, others do knee lifts, as an ’80s-style boom box plays hip-hop music in the background. Players chase a disc as it gracefully glides across the field.

On the turf, someone does a cartwheel. “Go Buds!” an enthusiastic spectator yells from the sidelines. This is Saturday morning practice for the HSU men’s Ultimate Disc team—the Buds. Once considered a fringe sport, Ultimate has been popular at Humboldt State for years and has recently become more mainstream around the country. At HSU, both the men’s team and the Hags—the women’s team—have attracted a devoted following.

To the uninitiated, Ultimate’s laid-back style belies the intensity and athleticism required of its players. The sport combines the speed and endurance of soccer with the transitions and handling of basketball. The objective is similar to American football.

In Ultimate, two teams of seven take their place at both end zones of a 70 x 40 yard field. One team launches a 175-gram plastic disc toward their opponent, similar to a kickoff in football. The goal? To pass the disc down the field and catch it in the opposing team’s end zone for a point. A typical game lasts 90 minutes and is played to 15 points.

Unlike most competitive team sports, Ultimate is self-officiated, meaning there are no referees. The game relies on a unique honor system called The Spirit of Game, which requires that players uphold the sport’s integrity and rules of conduct. Foul and contact rules are similar to basketball: no contact is allowed and players must stop and pivot before passing the disc to another player. There is also a 10-second limit on holding the disc.

Surprisingly, the game got its start on a high school field in New Jersey, according to USA Ultimate, the sport’s national governing body. In the summer of 1968, a group of three friends were playing a casual game of Frisbee when they decided to add some rules. They drafted a rulebook, created a school club and dubbed the new sport Ultimate Frisbee. Today, it’s simply known as Ultimate due to the “Frisbee” trademark.

With its unconventional rules and laid-back style, Ultimate quickly developed a following among East Coast college students. In 1972, Rutgers and Princeton played the first collegiate game.

Jamie Eickhert (’92, Construction Technology) recalls that Humboldt’s teams emerged in the late 1970s shortly after the first California teams began cropping up in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. “We were one of the first Northern California teams that started, along with a handful in the Bay Area like Stanford and Berkeley,” says Eickhert, who played for the Buds in the late ’80s and early ’90s. “During that time, he says, the team nearly qualified for Nationals and also experienced an unfortunate, but briefly lived, name change to the Storm Trolls. With no regrettable name changes, the Hags have appeared in Nationals once since the 1980s.

Over the years, the teams’ competitiveness has waxed and waned as seasoned players graduate. To participate, students register for a two-credit course. For new players, the learning curve is short, says Coach Colin Morgan-Outhisack (’11, Studio Art/Art History). And he would know: He had never played Ultimate or any other sport until joining the team as a sophomore. “I wasn’t very active and had never been part of a team,” Morgan-Outhisack says. “It was like a family for me.”

In fact, that camaraderie is what attracts many former high school and college athletes to the game. For many, the Buds and the Hags provide intercollegiate discipline and competitiveness of varsity sports like track and soccer.

That’s what prompted Theo Williamson (’12, Economics) to drop soccer and join Ultimate when he transferred to HSU his sophomore year. “I got tired of the idea of being an ‘athlete,’” says Williamson, now the team’s only fifth-year player. “With Ultimate it’s not all about winning, it’s about having fun.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Warming up before a Saturday morning game. • Pink skirt, pink shoes, no problem. • Worn cleats for a serious athlete. • Theo Williamson (’12, Economics) makes an impressive layout (Ultimate lingo for dive). • A regulation size field is 70 x 40 yards.
Kristin “Charlie” Eide (’12, French), was originally recruited to play softball for Humboldt State. She chose Ultimate.

Now, Eide helps create game strategy and lead practice for the Humboldt Hags. On a recent evening, she walked players through a complicated play, referring to a hand-drawn diagram on white paper.

“The dragon is trying to get the disc going under on the dead side,” she summarizes, using jargon that would confuse anyone but a serious player.

**Rigorous Schedules, Lighthearted Attitudes**

Both teams hold three-hour practices, four times a week. Sessions take place at the Redwood Bowl and the Student Recreation Center and focus on building cardio, strength or strategy. It’s a level of dedication that breaks the stereotype of Ultimate players, says Sean O’Connell (’14, Business). “You have to have the speed and hands of a football player and the endurance of a track and soccer player,” says O’Connell, who ran four years of track in high school.

The mood on the field is lighthearted: One hallmark of Ultimate is that players often wear zany outfits, and the Hags are no exception. During a recent practice, Eide sported a sequin skirt over Spandex and pink socks. The outfit didn’t seem to affect her performance. After three hours of running drills, she was already planning the next practice.

The players’ commitment is also expressed in its travel itinerary. The teams participate in several regional tournaments each year against schools like Stanford, UC Davis, Chico and Berkeley. A lighthearted rivalry exists between all of them, says Emiliano Rodriguez (’14, Recreation Administration). “We joke that the Cal players are just a bunch of rich guys,” Rodriguez says, adding, “We’re definitely better.”

“Ultimately,” Morgan-Outhisack says, “there’s nothing like spending two days at a tournament with someone to create a sense of camaraderie.”

Hosting teams, for instance, typically help provide housing for their visitors. “You pretty much see the same guys, the same faces, every time you go to these tournaments,” Morgan-Outhisack says. “There’s nothing like spending two days at a tournament with someone to create a sense of camaraderie.”

Naturally, the ribbing goes both ways. At a recent tournament, Chico’s players sauntered onto the field dressed as Lumberjacks, and rivals often create cheers mocking each other. Even so, there’s an unspoken etiquette between opponents. Hosting teams, for instance, typically help provide housing for their visitors. “You pretty much see the same guys, the same faces, every time you go to these tournaments,” Morgan-Outhisack says. “There’s nothing like spending two days at a tournament with someone to create a sense of camaraderie.”

Like cycling and crew, Ultimate is a club sport at HSU. Funding comes from Associated Students and student fees, while the Recreational Sports Department will match any funding comes from associated Students and student fees, while Ultimate’s popularity grows, while the recreational Sports Department will match any fundraising done by the team. As Ultimate’s popularity grows, the Buds and Hags hope it will bring some much-needed attention to the sport they love.

“We’re just out there trying to win and bring a good name for Humboldt,” Morgan-Outhisack says. Ø

**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Kristin “Charlie” Eide (’12, French) blocks a pass during practice. Ø The Buds huddle for an impromptu post-game cheer. Ø Buds Coach Colin Morgan-Outhisack (’11, Studio Art) stops to analyze a play.

Disc golf, another flying disc sport, has a more recent history at HSU—though it has a long history in Humboldt County. HSU’s co-ed club was started in 2010 by a couple of students interested in turning the casual affair into an official sport. So far, the club has attracted 25 members.

Top members from the club try out for the team, which recently participated in its first intercollegiate conference at CSU Monterey Bay last fall. This spring, team members will travel to Estacado, Ore., to compete against other teams for a bid to play in nationals. As its name implies, disc golf combines the skill of golf with the strategy of disc throwing. The purpose is to throw a disc into the hole—typically a round metal basket on a pole—in the fewest shots possible. Courses are nine or 18 holes long and often include natural elements like trees and shrubs. Obstacles and changes in elevation make the course more challenging.

As the course progresses, players utilize different discs, similar to the different clubs used in golf. Smaller and heavier than the discs used in Ultimate, discs vary based on weight, plastic and aerodynamic design. The four most common types are putters, mid-range, fairway and long-range drivers.

“The discs all do different things, so learning that is huge,” says Curtis Gregory (’12, Forestry), who participated in shot put, discus and hammer throw in high school. “It’s also learning to pull through and use your whole body instead of snapping your wrist.”

Humboldt State houses the Redwood Curtain, one of the most popular and challenging disc golf courses in the country. Nestled in the Arcata Community Forest, the 18-hole course winds through ferns, stumps and a canopy of redwood trees. The course is managed by Par Infinity Disc Golf Club in Arcata, whose President, Caleb Gribi, is also the HSU club team’s coach.
For the Birds
The Rewards and Challenges of Avian Field Research
by Desiree Perez

AT HUMBOLDT STATE, professors and students study all types of critters. But one step inside the Wildlife Building and it’s hard not to be impressed with the vast collection of birds. These specimens are used to train the next generation of ornithologists, but before students can earn their feathers, so to speak, they’ve got to overcome the challenges of conducting research on a flying, migratory and extremely intelligent creature.

Vanessa Blount, a student in a Wildlife Management class, has her first personal encounter with a red-tailed hawk.
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Jamaica’s famed Blue Mountains are home to some of the finest coffee in the world. They’re also home to hundreds of wildlife species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

- Coffee beans are actually the seeds within these mature coffee berries.
- Tiny insects cause major destruction for coffee farmers. Female coffee borer beetles lay their eggs in coffee berries. During the larval stage, these pests feed on the seed, or coffee bean, significantly damaging farmers’ yields.
- Studying warblers, like this tropical parula, Matthew Johnson discovered a common interest: bugs.

The insects the birds were feeding on happened to be destructive pests. Among them, the coffee borer beetle—a coffee farmer’s worst enemy. The beetle is singled out as the most harmful pest of coffee crops, affecting more than 70 countries, Jamaica included. Without bird habitat nearby, the farmers depended on expensive and potentially harmful pesticides to protect their crop.

After identifying the link between birds and bugs, Johnson and his students presented their findings to Jamaican officials, including the Coffee Industry Board and Ministry of Forestry, with hopes that land managers there would encourage more shade-grown coffee production. Now some of their recommendations to these officials have become on-the-ground changes. During their last excursion, Johnson and his students found workers planting native trees along the edges of coffee farms as bird habitat, courtesy of the Ministry. “It was one of those rare cases of a win-win situation, where what’s good for the farmer can also be good for the wildlife,” he says.

Long-distance Relationships

FOR WILDLIFE PROFESSOR and Department Chair Matthew Johnson, the main challenge in his research is distance. Once a year his passion for birds takes him and a handful of students thousands of miles away to the tropical climate of Jamaica’s famed Blue Mountains, where the team studies the relationship between coffee plantations and the birds that inhabit the area. The work is part of a three-year project funded by the National Science Foundation.

He schedules his fieldwork between semesters, which adds another layer of challenge: Not only are Johnson’s research subjects 3,200 miles away, he and his students have a limited timeframe in which to do their work. In addition to a semester’s worth of developing and refining research questions and hypotheses, Johnson and his students spend roughly 50 hours on logistics. From securing local housing and vehicle rentals in Jamaica, to packing spare batteries for their GPS units, success is in the details. “Unlike with a local project,” he says, “You can’t go back and measure later. You have to make sure you get every bit of data you need before you leave. And you have to have everything ready to go before you even arrive.”

Still, research challenges aside, the focus remains on the birds and the people who share the mountain habitat. And Johnson says that when it comes to the conservation of a species, success depends on meeting the needs of the people in the community as well as the needs of the wildlife.

For the species Johnson and his students have been studying—including the rufous-throated solitaire, the Blue Mountain vireo and migratory warblers—much of their habitat was being destroyed to make room for coffee farms, which provide a reliable source of income for the community. Johnson sought a way to integrate those seemingly competing requirements. And after getting to know the community of farmers and doing preliminary research on the native birds, Johnson discovered a common interest: bugs.

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Unrequited Love

IT GETS MORE CHALLENGING to help endangered wildlife when there aren’t such clear benefits.

Mark Colwell, Wildlife Professor and expert on shorebirds, values the snowy plover. It’s not uncommon for Colwell and his students to walk miles along local beaches studying the plovers amidst their habitat. The persistence is worth it, as the small shorebird is threatened with local extinction. But, unlike Johnson’s pest-eating tropical birds, the plover has few direct benefits to offer Humboldt County’s human population besides a pretty face. “In losing plovers, we lose an increment of life on Earth,” Colwell says. He’s dedicated 12 years of his decades-long career to the plover, and works tirelessly with his students to better understand the ecology of the threatened shorebird. “The world is a less beautiful place without them.”

Graduate student and Colwell’s teaching assistant, Luke Eberhart-Phillips, has conducted research that suggests the plovers could go extinct locally in the next 50 years if wildlife management practices don’t change. “Asking people to care more for the plovers is difficult, because they have no tangible instrumental value to society. If anything, conservation can be said to come at a cost,” Colwell says.

And so, in working to protect the birds, Colwell and his students highlight another angle to this challenge: Should land managers use the carrot or the stick? That is, does one coax the public into caring for these birds or should punishments be doled out to those who disturb their habitats?

What makes the snowy plovers so vulnerable is that they don’t build elaborate nests or perch in trees. Rather, they create shallow scrapes in beach sands where they lay their camouflage eggs. In addition to threats from predators and a loss of habitat, their nests are vulnerable to the accidental creation of shallow scrapes. In addition to threats from predators and a loss of habitat, their nests are vulnerable to the accidental or inattentive actions of beachgoers. During the plovers’ reproductive season, segments of Humboldt County beaches where plovers breed and encounter humans are cordoned off to the public. In other places, beach use is restricted and activities such as horseback riding and off-leash dogs are prohibited. This is conservation at a cost, as Colwell described.

Yet another option for land managers is threatening people with the consequences of violating the Endangered Species Act. But Colwell finds boosting community awareness (the carrot, not the stick) is a more productive method of protecting the plovers.

Regardless of method, Colwell’s work has a multi-pronged affect. By getting his students involved in the challenge of saving the snowy plover, he’s exposing them to the real-world struggle of protecting an endangered species, all while focusing on the fundamentals of conducting research on shorebirds.

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Getting Close

YOU MIGHT THINK of ornithology as a spectator sport best suited to those content to admire from afar. But in order to gather meaningful data, bird researchers have to find ways to get close to their subjects. And no matter how determined the scientists are, tracking, capturing and handling birds can present a serious challenge.

Consider Wildlife Professor Luke George’s efforts with red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks. The hawks seemed to present a great training opportunity for George’s undergraduate students. The birds are large, making them easier to spot and handle. They’re also magnificent specimens. Data gathered by students could help determine the size of the hawks’ home range and rates of survival from year to year.

Getting close to the birds of prey, however, turned out to be much more difficult than expected.

Without proper training, students cannot capture or band hawks. But George hoped the large birds would be an easy species for students to re-sight and track once handled by professionals. The problem, he says, is that after those raptors were caught and banded, they became very skittish—especially around slow moving vehicles associated with researchers putting out traps. “Ninety percent of our students that have not held birds in the past can safely hold, even inexperienced handler-in-training?” George says. “Even students that have not held birds in the past can safely hold, observe and release this very beautiful, powerful animal.”

So how can hawks be too skittish for most students to study after banding, but calm enough to be held by an inexperienced handler-in-training?

“it’s like having a suspect in custody,” George says. “When they have been caught and cuffed, they don’t try to get away because they know the game is up. When you release them, however, they get away as fast as they can and run the other way every time they see a police cruiser approaching.”

So the challenge persists. How does a wildlife professor like Luke George get his students interacting with birds, especially species appropriate for students who might not have the carefully trained hands of an experienced researcher? “The hawks’ size and demeanor are attributes that made them ideal candidates for this job, but they proved too wary of researchers. “In one case, George and graduate student Amy Scarpignato decided to go after a species known for its wits—the raven—which meant the researchers would need to outsmart one of the smartest animals on the planet. A challenge indeed.

In order to conduct her research, Scarpignato needed to fit the birds with radio transmitters and that meant first capturing the birds.

The pair tried a number of traps to capture the ravens: filament nooses to snare the birds’ ankles, nets to envelope the birds, and even a trap laid with delicious live bait.

Regardless of method, the birds came to recognize Scarpignato and her vehicle. As a result, to track the pair, she had to bring in an assistant and use another method of capture: mist netting. These gauzy nets are difficult for birds to see—almost as transparent as a pane of glass—and are strung up between trees or posts to safely ensnare birds. To persuade the ravens to fly into the mist net, the team mounted a mechanical great-horned owl near their nest.

“The ravens were livid,” George says. “They were screaming, calling, flying and diving around—but not toward the mist net.” Then the innovative birds began to use tools to catch the menacing owl from its perch near their home. “They started breaking off twigs and pinecones and throwing them at the owl,” he says, and when the mist net caught the twigs it became visible to the ravens.

The owl rouse had dropped. It wasn’t until Scarpignato met a nearby resident that her luck with the ravens took a turn.

The neighbor, who had a chicken coop on the property, reported that the pair of ravens often flew down in the early morning to scavenge the chicken scratch. With this new information, Scarpignato sensed a positive end to her 140-hour research ordeal. She set up a trap near the chicken coop before dawn, and within five minutes of the ravens’ arrival, the pair was snared. Challenge met.

Scarpignato’s research helped her determine, among other things, that ravens have stable home ranges and territories, which they defend. It also proves, says George, that ravens regard some areas as dangerous and behave with greater suspicion and care in those areas. In other areas, like the chicken coop, the birds let their guard down.

“What really surprised me is, when we actually caught them and had them in hand, the ravens were calm,” George says. “They were watching. Processing. It really felt like you were dealing with another intelligent being.”

Sidebar Photos Courtesy of Chris West

California Condors
The Struggle Continues

CHRIS WEST (’09, Wildlife), senior wildlife biologist for the Yurok Tribe, has worked tirelessly to help reintroduce the endangered California condor to the state’s North Coast. Although his efforts have seen some progress, the biggest challenge is keeping this iconic bird’s precarious recovery tipped in the right direction.

The California condor, prey-go-to research in Yurok, is an integral part of Yurok religious ceremonies. Once, says West, the massive scavengers, with an average wingspan of nearly 10 feet, thrived along the North Coast, feeding on beached marine animals and large land animals such as elk. By the early 1980s, only 22 survived in the wild.

Currently, the condor population has bounced back to a total of nearly 370, with just over half living in the wild, but the species isn’t out of danger.

While West and his partners study the birds’ ecology, food sources and habitats to better understand risks in the environment and causes of mortality, the number one threat to condors is lead poisoning from ammunition.

Lead ammunition fragments inside animals when shot. When condors scavenge remains, they ingest very small amounts of lead, which is extremely toxic to the birds. Condors don’t reach reproductive maturity for six or seven years and only lay one egg every other year, so poisonings can have a huge impact on the population’s stability.

Hunting with non-lead ammunition is an effective tool for condor reintroduction as gut piles that hunters leave behind provide a clean source of food.

Captive breeding has also helped to bolster the population’s numbers, but, according to West, 38 percent of released condors haven’t survived in the wild. In addition to lead, these remaining birds face threats from poachers, ingested toxins such as DDT and loss of habitat.

After the day’s lesson on raptor banding techniques, this Wildlife student releases a magnificent red-tailed hawk.
Words for the Wild
Promoting Conservation and Student Careers Through Creative Writing

By Corey Lee Lewis, Professor of English

In my field—environmental literature and writing—we commonly see a link between our love of words and our love of the natural world. This field—called ecocriticism, or literary ecology—arose during the 1990s because of the significant impact that environmental writers were beginning to exert on our literary tradition and our larger culture, and it has led to innovations in both teaching and publishing.

Although I could concoct a properly impressive, but highly fictional, story about how I came to be an ecocritic and environmental writer, the unvarnished truth is: ever since I was a little kid, I liked getting lost in the woods and coming home to tell stories about it later. For most of us who love the outdoors—whether we hunt, fish, hike, backpack, peak bag, rock climb, or bird watch—we love swapping stories about being in the backcountry just as much as we love being out there. Whether it’s sitting around a campfire, perched on a barstool, or curled up on a couch, we savor those words and stories that reconnect us with that wild world.

My most recent professional project—editing and publishing “The Pacific Crest Trailside Reader,” an anthology of stories about hiking the Pacific Crest Trail—was also a personal one, a project that has not only connected me to my own personal history but also much more deeply with the Humboldt State community.

When I came to Humboldt State in 2005, I already had established a close connection to the Pacific Crest Trail. The 2,650-mile-long trail runs from Mexico to Canada, following the high lines of the Sierra, Klamaths and Cascades through California, Oregon, and Washington. For years I had been working with trail crews on the PCT and teaching classes in environmental writing along its length, and wrote my first book, “Reading the Trail,” about these experiences. I did not, however, hit upon the idea for producing a collection of stories about the PCT until I met Rees Hughes, a colleague here at HSU, and another lover of the PCT. Rees and I worked together at the time, supervising HOWL, HSU’s outdoor orientation program for incoming freshman. When he suggested the collaboration and the idea for “The Pacific Crest Trailside Reader” was born.

Rees and I decided to organize the collection geographically, so that the stories start in the south (just as most PCT hikers do) and move north, with each story and its location on the trail identified. In order to keep pack weight down, and to follow the precedent set by the PCT Guidebooks, we decided to publish the collection in two volumes: one for California, and one for Oregon and Washington. And, in order to adequately cover the trail and its long history, we decided to include three types of stories: first, what we call boot-tested trail tales, these are real stories of people hiking the PCT, stories of hardship and rescue, and tales of wildlife and wild weather; second, historical accounts of immigrants and early explorers in the region, such as the Donner party’s ill-fated expedition orWasco creation stories; and third, selections from well-known regional writers like John Muir, Mary Austin, Gary Snyder and others.

We wanted to create a literary testament to the trail, something that could capture the significant meaning it has had in many of our lives. So we sent out calls for submissions to writing groups and hiking organizations; we sifted through volumes of historical accounts of exploration and regional writing. And, we identified HSU faculty and students who could contribute to the collection, colleagues such as Walker Abel, Director of the Sierra Institute, and Professor Jim Dodge, author of “Fur,” “Rain on the River” and other works. We were fortunate enough to have our own talented pool of student writers here at HSU, those with the backcountry ability and writing experience required for the project, and were able to assign each a specific section of the trail to go hike and write about. This allowed us to get better geographic coverage of every section of the trail, and to promote our deserving students and their writing through publication. Five HSU alumni have pieces in the collection: Ryan Forsythe, Mike Cipra, Chris Hall, Amanda Carter and Anicia Cox.

In addition to promoting the writing of our graduates and colleagues, we wanted our stories to give back to the trail itself, so the profits from the sales of the books are all going to the protection and preservation of the PCT. Rees and I, and all of our HSU authors, invite you to pick up a copy of “The Pacific Crest Trailside Reader” and to join us on a variety of backcountry adventures that can be taken from the comfort of your own home, and that give a little something back to HSU and the wild western mountains we all love.
MARLA SPIVAK  •  Beekeeping has long been a passion for Marla Spivak (’78, Biological Sciences), an internationally renowned entomologist and expert on honeybee health. Spivak, who is currently a Distinguished McKnight Professor in Entomology at the University of Minnesota, recently received the John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation “genius award” for her pioneering work to protect honeybees from decimation by disease.

One of Spivak’s most-practiced achievements is the breeding of the Minnesota Hygienic, a strain of bees that uses olfactory to “sniff out” infected pupae and remove them from the hive before they can spread disease to the rest of the colony. In addition to supporting her research, the MacArthur award has enabled Spivak to launch the Bee Squad, a program that trains, educates and assists beekeepers and bee supporters in the Twin Cities area. Her goal is to help maintain healthy populations of honeybees by providing hands-on mentoring to people interested in supporting bees.

During her undergraduate studies at HSU, Spivak took a semester off to volunteer with Steve Taber, a renowned honeybee researcher. Taber ignited Spivak’s interest in studying bees, and as soon as she completed her degree, she traveled to South America to conduct research on honeybee health. Spivak, who is currently an Endowed Chair Professor of Radiology and Pharmacological Sciences and Director of the Positron Emission Tomography—or PET—Facility at the University of Pittsburgh, recently received the John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation “genius award” for her pioneering work to protect honeybees from decimation by disease.

CHESTER MATHIS  •  Chester Mathis (’72, Chemistry) came to HSU as a pre-med student, but found he had a greater interest in chemistry than medical school. Still, he found a way to study both by pursuing medically related chemistry.

His decision turned out pretty well for the field of Alzheimer’s research. Mathis is currently an Endowed Chair Professor of Radiology and Pharmacological Sciences and Director of the Positron Emission Tomography—or PET—Facility at the University of Pittsburgh. Recently, he and his geriatric research partner William Klink developed a radiolabeled dye that makes it possible to identify amyloid—a substance found in the plaque associated with Alzheimer’s disease—in a living brain.

Mathis’ research earned him a slew of awards, and he is continuing his work. He is now using the same technique to identify tau, another protein that destabilizes healthy neural tissue. His goal is to develop a diagnostic tool that could be used to detect Alzheimer’s disease early, before symptoms appear.

KENNETH DAVLIN  •  As a member of the University’s American Foundation Board, Kenneth Davlin is part of a team that helps increase charitable giving and manages the university’s endowment.

Davlin studied engineering at HSU from 1959-1962 and received a degree in civil engineering from the University of Utah. His engineering career has included work on hydroelectric, wastewater, housing and alternative energy projects. Davlin is President of Oscar Larson & Associates, a California-based engineering consulting firm.

As part of the 29-member American Foundation Board, Davlin is particularly interested in expanding the university’s business and engineering programs. He says: “Both contribute to better future organizations, wiser infrastructures, present and more responsible financing programs.”

Looking ahead, Davlin envisions a board that has a broader geographical base of membership. “I’d also like to see expansion of the foundation so that it can better serve every department, college and facet of the university,” he says.

Submit a class note: humboldt.edu/classnotes or email: alumni@humboldt.edu
Valeria Van Zanten
98 Years Young

ON AUG. 19, 2013, Valeria Van Zanten, a 98-year-old Humboldt State University alumna, will celebrate her 100th birthday, the same year Humboldt State University reaches its centennial.

Van Zanten started at HSU in 1930 at 16. “It was Depression time, and we didn’t have very much money.” Van Zanten says. “I was very lucky to be able to go to school.” Van Zanten and a friend lived off-campus in an Arcata apartment with a monthly rent of about $17. “I recall attending HSU for a little over $25 per month,” Van Zanten says. The Crescent City, Calif., resident also recounts being excluded from a biology class at Klamath Union School. “I was fascinated by all of my life, I was excluded by my teacher because I was a girl.” Van Zanten says. “I was very lucky to be able to go to school.” Van Zanten says.

TIM live in Kneeland and are planning a “hoe down” to celebrate his 60th birthday. Brian Akre, 1980 Journalism & Mass Communication, is currently taking it easy while recovering from open-heart surgery last July. “I feel I’ve had a very good life,” Van Zanten says. “I had a career I was able to go to school.” Van Zanten says. “I was very lucky to be able to go to school.” Van Zanten says. “I was lucky to have a wonderful family. I have five and seven, with their piano lessons.

BONNIE JEANNE KOSKI, 1974 Nursing and 2009 Music, retired from her 28-year profession as a public health nurse in Humboldt County and returned to HSU to pursue a bachelor’s degree in Music. Koski is currently taking it easy while recovering from open-heart surgery last July. “I was depressed and in the meantime, I enjoy helping her two young granddaughters, ages five and seven, with their piano lessons.

TIM SPERRY, 1975 Natural Resources, teaches science and health in the Los Angeles Unified School District, and is getting ready to retire within the next few years.

PATRICIA KUSHNER, 1976 Teaching Credential, is a retired elementary school teacher who laws for working for the U.S. Forest Service as a seasonal instructor and collection officer in El Dorado National Forest.


BONNIE MITCHELL-DUNLAP, 1976 Journalism, has been an English teacher at Fortuna Union High School since 1994. Three years ago, she married Robert Dunlap and is now retired. Between them, they have ten grandchildren, ages eight to three.

JILL PERRY, 1976 Geology, has been the curator of the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden, which has more than 1,500 varieties of roses and has been in San Jose since 2005.

LUIGI PINNA, 1977 Economics, took an involuntary early retirement in 2008, after 18 years at 3M, 12 years at Bellcore, and two years at Bell Atlantic. Luckily, he was working in international business in Italy at the time, so he was able to remain in Europe. He is now a lecturer in Corporate Governance and Mergers & Acquisitions at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

ED TRIGEIRO, 1977 Health & Physical Education, became a volunteer firefighter with the Arcata Volunteer Fire Department while still attending Humboldt State University. After graduation, he became an athletic trainer at College of the Redwoods, where he took care of both men’s and women’s athletic team’s injuries. He was hired by the Arcata Fire District in 1982, working his way from firefighter to engineer, to captain, and retiring as an assistant fire chief in April 2009. He developed a Fire Technology Degree program at College of the Redwoods. His wife, Ana, works at the HSU University celery Business Office, and they have been married for 30 years. They have one son, Joe, who lives in Colorado.

MARILYN TAYLOR, 1977 Math, has switched sports from running his horseback riding and is retired.

Marilyn Yospe, 1977 Art, lives in Eureka, restoring a Victorian home. She retired from a career as a social worker and currently making jewelry to sell at local craft fairs.

JOEL D. EIS, 1978 Theatre Production, recently had his book, ‘A Full Investigation of the Historical Performance of the First Play in English in the New World,’ The Case of Ye Barre and Ye Cubbe, 1665,” translated to the stage by Shotgun Players, a Berkeley, Calif., theatre company. The play is titled ‘God’s Plot,’ and is one of among three theatrical adaptations of his book. Eis, now living in San Rafael, Calif., where he and his wife Tony run the Rebound Bookstore, is finishing another book for Edwin Matson Press, on the Greek theatre, due out in early 2012.

DANIEL HALE, 1978 Speech Pathology, says his years at HSU prepared him for his success in his chosen field of special education speech pathology, and changed his life forever.

BOB AASERUDE, 1979 Fisheries and Environmental Resources Engineering, is the recently named senior vice president with AWWA Global, a 100-city infrastructure provider of environmental engineering, construction and consulting.

MORGAN EATON, 1979 Geophysics, is living it up in the dry side of Washington State and is looking forward to retirement soon.

RUTH FLOCCHINI-EDWARDS, 1979 Speech Communication, looks back on the HSU experience as one of her greatest accomplishments, and is now a senior project manager at her place of business. She owes all of her great opportunities along the way to her Speech Communication degree.

CHRIS PLATS, 1979 Mechanical Engineering, for California State Parks from 1977 until 2012 as a state park ranger. After graduation, he worked as an official for high school and college wrestling for 20 years. He married in 1988 and now has four wonderful children. In October of 2008, Chris had his left hip replaced for the induction of his 1978 HSU wrestling team into the HSU Athletic Hall of Fame. He helped more than 100 Boy Scouts complete their Eagle Scout service projects. He lives in San Diego for a year and lived in Catalunya, just outside Barcelona.

EIS: I will definitely visit the town of Kauai in October to celebrate his 60th birthday.

Thomas B. Jones, 1974 Physical Education, is an assistant principal at James Monroe High School in North Hills, Calif. Tom has spent 34 years with the Los Angeles Unified School District as a teacher, coach and dean. He is a current member of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Advisory Committee for Wrestling, and a member of the L.A. City CIF Section Athletic Committee. Tom has been married to his wife Mary for 33 years, and they have four daughters. Their youngest graduated from HSU in ‘06, and two are married with children.

STEPHANIE FREDIANI EWAN, 1975 Geography, has greatly benefited from her Geography degree in extensively traveling the world. She has worked for Pacific Bell for six years and Pacific Gas & Electric for 20 years.

BONNIE KOSKI, 1974 Nursing and 2009 Music, retired from her 28-year profession as a public health nurse in Humboldt County and returned to HSU to pursue a bachelor’s degree in Music. Koski is currently taking it easy while recovering from open-heart surgery last July. “I was depressed and in the meantime, I enjoy helping her two young granddaughters, ages five and seven, with their piano lessons.

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BEING CALLED A “fish-head” would be an insult to most people, but not to a special group of HSU alumni. These Fisheries grads have been coming together for the past decade to share their love of fisheries, Humboldt State and fishing on the open sea. They affectionately dub themselves the HSU Fishin’ Lumberjacks.

They call their outings “pelagic surveys,” which is a technical way to say “searching for fish in the open sea.” And it’s true, there’s certainly a technical angle to what they do. It’s not uncommon to catch them comparing professional notes as well as personal tips out on the deck. In addition to their commitment to sustainable fishing methods, they pay attention to weather patterns, the color of the water and general oceanography. If one of them hooks a unique species, all hands are on deck examining the catch, trying to figure out what it’s been eating and more. But for the most part, these voyages are about friends, fun and building community.

The idea for the group came when Fisheries alumni Craig Heberer (’85), Dave Itano (’79) and Eric Pedersen (’84) were working together studying tuna. As they got to know each other on the job and during fishing trips to the Sea of Cortez, they realized their shared ties to Humboldt State and to the call of the open ocean. From there, the trio teamed up with Dave’s brother Glenn Itano (’77), and Ben Meyer (’78), all HSU Fisheries grads, to plan their first pelagic fish survey.

“We decided it would be fun to go out together and do what we love to do—fish,” Heberer says. The four decided to call as many Fisheries alumni as they knew and invite everyone on a weekend-long outing for deep-sea fishing. At the time, they had no idea they would create an enduring tradition that would bring together generations of Lumberjacks. The Fishin’ Lumberjacks a unique and close-knit crew. “Gregg Koonce has to be one of the best anglers on board,” says Heberer, “but he gets more pleasure out of showing someone how to tie a knot or putting his arm around someone who just lost a fish. There’s a Zen to this spirit of community that makes the Fishin’ Lumberjacks a unique and close-knit crew.”

The Fishin’ Lumberjacks Alumni Hooked on Fishing  by Desiree Perez

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Cedros Island in Baja California, Mexico, is one of the Fishin’ Lumberjacks’ favorite destinations.
Tomodachi Daiko. Her other hobbies are yoga and Arts for excellence in community arts leadership.

Ink People has facilitated over 200 community arts projects and currently oversees more than 60 ongoing projects. In 2011, Maynard received the 2011 Community Arts Leadership Award from the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts for excellence in community arts leadership.

**STORY SUBMITTED PHOTO**

On May 19, 2011, Suzanne Larson graduated from HSU and received the highest educational honor given at HSU for a speaker. Her commencement address was well-received by attendees and picked up by the Arcata Times. She currently serves as the Director of Marketing and Development for the University of California Los Angeles writers’ program.

**SUZANNE LARSON, 1983 Journalism,** was also a commencement speaker for the 2011 class. Larson is currently a practicing attorney and the Maryland Branch Director of the Ninth Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals.

**IN REVIEW:**

A Light from the South, a documentary film written and directed by Becky and her husband, is currently in post-production. They are working with their local film director, Community Manager Derek Lactaoen (’11), based in Seattle, Wash., to complete this film. The film is taking place some of the guerilla work with ConsumerBel, a website she started in 2010 that tracks product recalls, sends consumer safety alerts and allows people to apply for manufacturer refunds online.

The company has tracked hundreds of cases including last year’s recall of cantaloupe tainted with Listeria bacteria, mold growth in Capri Sun and defective cribs that pose a risk of suffocation. Last year the company was featured in Fortune magazine as one of the top 100 female entrepreneurs of 2011.

Cachette’s passion for consumer safety began when she was just a child. Her father and thousands of other people were infected with HIV from a manufactured blood product that was later recalled.

The incident compelled Cachette to begin advocating for consumer safety, but it wasn’t until she graduated from HSU that she decided to really do something about it.

With help from fellow HSU alum Stephanie Haller (“08, Journalism”), Cachette launched ConsumerBel in San Francisco in 2010. Last year, she relocated the company to New York City and hired two HSU alumni, Community Manager Derek Lactaoen (“11), based in Seattle, Wash., and Product Manager Ryan Milenhan (“10), in New York City. Both have graduated from HSU’s Department of Journalism & Mass Communication.

Lactaoen, who monitors the web for product recalls, says it’s rewarding to work for a company that’s positively changing the world.

“ConsumerBel taught me to be conscious of what I use and try to do good things for my community and really feel like I’m doing that work,” he says.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: consumerbel.com
Bruce Jackson: Space Bound

NOT TOO LONG ago, space travel was reserved for a select group of those wealthy enough to charter a private trip to space. But in recent years—a growing number of companies have started offering commercial space travel to the paying public.

Bruce Jackson (’84, Political Science) is among those leading that effort at Virgin Galactic, a company that he helped to establish while working as an international trade consultant for a company in Germany and at a startup that was acquired by the U.S. Department of Commerce, he took a position as an international trade consultant. He spent the past 27 years in international trade, with a focus on export technology control requirements that apply to its aircraft, WhiteKnightTwo, with plans to launch sub-orbital flights to space in the next couple years.

As Vice President of Trade Controls and Export Strategy, Jackson is responsible for ensuring that Virgin complies with federal export and technology control requirements that apply to its aircraft. He recently received his master’s degree in international trade and global environmental sustainability. He obtained his certification as a Global Trade Operations Professional from the American Society of International Law.

In 2005, Jackson returned to Humboldt State to earn his master’s degree in political science. He was classmate with Professor John Mulvehill, who was also earning his master’s degree in political science. Mulvehill lives in Long Beach, Calif., and teaches world history at a large, urban high school.

He earned a master’s degree in environmental policy from the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and in private practice. He has two young boys, Kolbe and Nibo.

LAURA BAKER, 2000 Nursing, lives in the San Mateo County area where she was raised. She has worked as a staff nurse in labor and delivery since 1991. Baker recently transitioned out of patient care services into the clinical informatics department where she is on a team to build and implement an electronic health record system. Baker has been married for eight years, has two daughters, one chocolate lab, and two cats (from the Humboldt County Humane Society).

TIM FLETCHER, 1999 History, and wife, Sylvia, just celebrated their son Nick’s first birthday. Mulvehill lives in Long Beach, Calif., and teaches world history at a large, urban high school.

Journalism and English Language Arts

ELEANOR KELLY, 2012 Environmental Sustainability and acting director of the Office of Sustainability and environmental studies, said that her new role is “exciting and challenging.” She plans to continue her work at Humboldt State University with a focus on sustainability and the environment.

NORAH RUBINSTEIN, 1999 Psychology, has worked with individuals, couples and families for the last 12 years in various social services, counseling, and consultation roles within different communities, including mental health clinics, residential treatment centers, emergency shelters, hospice organizations, home-based therapy programs, summer camps, the Los Angeles Unified School District and in private practice. She has two young boys, Kolbe and Nibo.

JASON SCHUGAR, 2000 English Literature, and wife, Kari, recently published an article in the Spring 2011 issue of the Journal of American Culture. Schugar is the author of a novel and has been active in the local writing community. He is also a member of the Truckee River Sanctuary and in the Sierra mountains of California.

Dee Dee Mullinax, 2001 Creative Writing, is working as a freelance writer and editor. She has recently been published in several literary magazines and has been the recipient of a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She is currently working on a novel and hopes to complete it in the near future.

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BRIAN EISENHAUER, 1997 Sociology, was a research assistant at the Center for Applied Research in the Social Sciences, where he conducted research on political participation and social capital. He is currently working on a project that examines the role of social capital in political mobilization.

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KEVIN BOREN, 2000 History, is a staff writer for the Journal of American Culture. He has been published in several literary magazines and has been the recipient of a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. He is currently working on a novel and hopes to complete it in the near future.

LESLIE DEAN, 1996 Geography, is a staff writer for the Journal of American Culture. She has been published in several literary magazines and has been the recipient of a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She is currently working on a novel and hopes to complete it in the near future.

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JENNIFER POLSE PAYNE, 2001 Psychology and
10 years: Colvert spent several years working as a
students have the opportunity to study two years at
Colvert also worked aboard the National Oceanic
is now engaged in the representation of public
KALISTA HICKMAN, 2002 Psychology,
KATHY DILLE, 2003 Biology, has owned and
appendage, and community
JOSHUA BROOKS, 2004 Geography, is working for Bandelier National Monument as a lead helitack crew member. Helitack refers to
celste has worked with the Yosemite toad, which has been disappearing over the past 30 years. She is attempting to
cIndia's coastline. KRISTINA PAULO, 2002 Liberal Studies Elementary
is happily married to
JOSHUA DER, 2003 Botany and Biology,
HERBERT LANDOLFI, 1999 Chemistry, was selected for the SIUC Alumni Association Outstanding Student Awards Ceremony
April 19 • 3 p.m.
Kate Buchanan Room
HSU Softball Home Games
April 6 • 1 p.m.
vs. San Francisco State
April 7 • 11 a.m.
vs. San Francisco State
April 13 • 1 p.m.
vs. Cal State East Bay
April 14 • 11 a.m.
vs. Cal State East Bay
For full schedule, visit: HSJacks.com
Humboldt Alumni Reception at New York Aquarium
April 14 • 1 p.m.
alumni.humboldt.edu
Humboldt Alumni at the Crabs
June 12 • 12 noon
alumni.humboldt.edu/homecoming
Homecoming & Family Weekend
October 19 & 20
humboldt.edu/homecoming
 kineticgrandchampionship.com
Humboldt Alumni Commencement
May 12 • 8:30 a.m.
Redwood Bowl
humboldt.edu/commencement
Outstanding Student Awards Ceremony
April 19 • 3 p.m.
Kate Buchanan Room
Humboldt Alumni Reception at New York Aquarium
April 14 • 1 p.m.
alumni.humboldt.edu
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Redwood Bowl
humboldt.edu/commencement

See More HSU Events at: humboldt.edu/events
FRANCIS SHAWN BAWDEN, 2006 History, graduated with a Master of Library and Information Science, Archival Studies, from San Jose State University in December 2010. Bawden is currently employed with the U.S. National Park Service at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Southern California.

JOSHUA COLE, 2006 English, and his wife, also a Humboldt grad, traveled to the UK where he went to business school and worked in finance. After their daughter was born, they returned to the San Francisco Peninsula. Triska and his wife, also a Humboldt grad, are employed with the U.S. National Park Service at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Southern California.

JAMIE BORNING, 2006 International Studies, Art and French, hiked 800+ miles over sections of the Pacific Crest Trail and Appalachian Trail, trekked to Kauai, led teenagers on backpacking and canoe trips in the Maine woods, volunteered with children in Peru, visited Machu Picchu on the Inca trail (a lifelong dream), and just got engaged.

ZACHARY CINEK, 2008 Journalism, worked for two years after graduation for the Utah Daily Journal, then set off on a road trip across America. He fell in love with Denver when visiting his cousin and decided to move there permanently. Zach now works for a camera store in Broomfield, Colo., but confesses he misses the hands-on interaction of being a reporter and writer and programs and events. He was also soon as he can land the job with the right paper.

ARIEL MARIE GRUNTHAL, 2008 Psychology after graduating from HSU, moved to Lancaster, U.K., in 2009 with a Masters of Science. She is an intern at the Cleveland Clinic with the Humboldt County Coroner’s Office as a death investigator.

CAITLIN HOY, 2008 Theater Arts, has been working for a worldwide engineering company for three years. She just returned from a six-month computer-aided design coordination assignment in Israel.

LAURA MAUCHNIGHT, 2008 Communications, moved to Arcata and enrolled in the Humboldt State University, a Vermont State College, as a student activity coordinator. Laura now lives in San Diego, Calif., with her husband, Michael, and a two year old named Kieran Pan. She plans to attend graduate school in the next year for Higher Education.

JUSTIN NASH, 2008 Music, is finishing his Master of Fine Arts degree with an emphasis in Music Performance, Fall Performance, at Mills College in Oakland, Calif. He also performs professionally as a pianist and piano accompanist through various channels. Last year Justin hosted a tutored recital of music and raised $3,000 for a nonprofit organization benefiting victims in Western Samoa. Justin plans to live and teach in the Bay Area after finishing his degree.

ARIC ANDERSON, 2009 English, joined the AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America program, working on poverty reduction with the California Conservation Corps. He created transition programs and professional development for groups ages 18 to 25. Upon completing his contract Anderson joined the California Conservation Corps as a special corps member working with the Corps to improve it.

RICHARD ESPINOSA, 2009 English, immediately started in a pharmacy technician program from 2009 to 2010. Upon completion in May, he was hired for a full-time position at a community based pharmacy.

GARRETT SCHAR, 2007 Journalism & Mass Communications, had freelance camera work for KCSI (City of San Bernardin) from February 2008 to April 2009. He has also had work for the Empire Wrestling Federation with his first match on March 15, 2008. Schar now is a part of a new pro wrestling show called “Wrestling Revolution,” which began taping in October.

JAMES ROBINSON, 2010 Environmental Resources Management, is pursing a career in maritime archaeology.

JOHN P. HILL, 2010 History, is currently a fulltime teacher at Santa Maria High School teaching advanced placement world history and modern world history.

BECKIE MENTEN, 2007 Politics, works at the California Energy Commission as an energy efficiency specialist. She is currently working on programs to increase the energy performance of residential and commercial properties, including identifying financing mechanisms for homeowners.

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Something is always happening on the University Center Quad. One day you might find circus performers, the next a packed clubs fair.

MATTHEW THOMPKINS ('12, Business) is from the other side of California, South Central, Los Angeles, to be precise. “HSU was far away from home and a fresh start,” Thompkins said. He started out as a marketing major, but that quickly changed with his experience at the Career Center, as well as the Center for International Programs. He is now set to graduate this spring with a degree in Business and a minor in Chinese Studies. After studying abroad last spring and summer semesters in China, learning Mandarin Chinese, Thompkins decided he wanted his international focus to be on business, while improving his language skills. Through his time at HSU, Thompkins has had three internships as a legal intern, marketing intern and a term with the State Department working in trade and investments.

MOST MEMORABLE TIME AT HSU “All the times I went to the Career Center, where they helped me set my goals. The Career Center helped me get the U.S. State Department internship where I worked with the Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs. I worked specifically on trade and investments in India. It was a very lavish internship where I got to meet ambassadors, CEOs and Hillary Clinton.”

FAVORITE THINGS TO DO ON CAMPUS “Running on the track at night helps me clear my head. You can see the stars and hear nature. It allows you to really focus. I also love going to the BSS building and studying on the top floor because the view is nice.”

FAVORITE THING ABOUT HSU “It’s a tranquil place where you can study and enjoy nature. And we are an eco-friendly school. There are not a lot of schools in the country that have that liberal, open-minded perspective.”

THE COURSES THAT STOOD OUT Three courses really shaped Thompkins’ experience at HSU: Business Law, International Business and Chinese. “If those were the only three classes I ever took, they really prepared me for my study abroad experience in China and D.C.”

A BIT OF ADVICE “Take courses that will challenge you because it builds character and it builds skill. Also, adventure out, always.”

BELOW: Matthew Thompson paints three Chinese characters, fa ming jia, which translates to inventor. Thompson spent two semesters studying in China as part of his Chinese Studies minor and hopes to return to pursue an alternative energy business.
Smullin Gift Creates Business Intern Program

Over the next five years, 150 undergraduate students in the School of Business will benefit from a recent gift of $400,000 from the Patricia D. & William B. Smullin Foundation. This gift creates the Smullin Undergraduate Business Internships to compensate undergraduates for hands-on work experiences in local businesses, nonprofits, and government in Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity counties. The Foundation hopes the advantage of internship experience combined with actual monetary compensation will help the students establish their resumes and diminish their own debt while also benefitting the local entities that provide the internships.

This continues the Smullin Foundation’s commitment to HSU. The Foundation supports The Smullin Scholarship Endowment established in 1987, which now provides scholarships to eight students each year to cover most of their university fees.

HSU sincerely thanks Carol Anne Smullin Brown, her son Kevin Smullin Brown, and the entire Board of the Smullin Foundation.

To learn how you can support Humboldt State University visit humboldt.edu/giving