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*In Memory of*  
**Dr. Robert L. Fisher**

*We deeply mourn the loss of the station founder, and our friend. Printed below are excerpts from the tribute given by Dr. Ken Rockwell at the Celebration of Life on August 29, 2009. Ken was a colleague, neighbor, and friend of Bob.*

Bob had a deep passion for the living world and for the people who crossed his path. Though he was often "up to his a\*\* in alligators", he never saw "draining the swamp" as the solution. It was far too much fun to jump into the murky water and wrestle the problem into submission.

Central to Bob's professional persona was the imperative to observe living forms in their natural haunts. To that end he organized and pursued a long list of "field based" laboratory trips for his students, experiences which I suspect may constitute, for a number of you reading this, your most fond memories of him. In short, if your topic was the "out-of-doors", it was highly probable that Bob had looked at it, collected a



piece of it, scuba-dived to photograph it, flown over it, sent one of his dogs to fetch it, stayed up all night to think about it, thrown a net over it, stuffed it, swapped for it, tramped through it, hunted it, shared it with his students, or eaten and digested it.

The present Field Station facility and program is both a "monument" and a legacy that would not exist absent Bob's original vision and his long, and often lonely, commitment in time, sweat

and personal resource to set the College on the path to "field studies". Though others now stand in his place, he was the initiator and catalyst that brought the Station to a viable place among Juniata College's many resources.

*Continued on page 2*

***R.L. Fisher Memorial Arboretum***

As a memorial to Dr. R.L. Fisher, Juniata College is establishing a teaching arboretum at the Raystown Field Station Lakeside Center campus. The arboretum will include a labeled tree trail loop in the center of the campus, and will feature common and uncommon native species as well as flowering ornamentals. A display at the entrance will commemorate Bob as well as provide information about the arboretum. This living memorial will be used to support

botany, forestry and other Juniata classes as well as public outreach programs.

A donation of \$250 will support the planting and labeling of one tree, but contributions of any amount are welcome. Another way to support the memorial arboretum will be to participate in tree planting work days. Checks can be made out to Juniata College, and mailed to the Field Station Office.

## Directors' Notes

This has been a season of great joy and sorrow. We are deeply mourning the loss of our friend Dr. Bob Fisher, who is responsible for existence of the field station. At the same time, we celebrate the continued growth of programs at station and the continued improvement of the station facilities.

Some of the highlights of the past half year include three residential semesters, the start of a partnership with St. Francis University, and a new summer student research technician position. The facilities also continue to improve as another room in Grove Farm was renovated, as our facilities supervisor Chris Bomgardner brings his expertise to landscaping by Shuster Hall, and in the development of the Dr. R.L. Fisher Memorial Arboretum. We're glad that we can celebrate and remember Bob through this living teaching laboratory.

It's also time for Friends renewals. We were late last year due to the distracting birth of our daughter, but this year we're getting back to our fall renewal schedule. It's your support that allows us to continue improving the station, and we thank you for that. If you'd also like to contribute to the Memorial Arboretum, you can send a separate check made out to Juniata College with Fisher Memorial in the memo line in the same renewal envelope.

Thanks, and we hope to see you at the station soon!

Sharon and Chuck

## *Fisher continued*

Bob had a wonderful, gregarious capacity to meet people in both familiar and unfamiliar circumstances. It was part of his CORE. Bob knew all about "networking" before the word was invented. I have often wondered whether there was any place in the world where one could drop Bob off, and upon returning within 24 hours, not discover that he had called two of his close friends and "wrangled" an invitation to come over for a few drinks and an evening of conversation.

Let me end with a quote that struck me, when first I read it many years ago, as the very essence of Bob. That he was a Californian, who grew up in Los Gatos, then a small town on the southwestern slope of what we now call Silicon Valley, makes this, for me, even more apt.

From John Steinbeck's Sea of Cortez:

"We sat on a crate of oranges and thought what good men most biologists are, the tenors of the scientific world - temperamental, moody, lecherous, loud-laughing, and healthy. The true biologist deals with life, with teaming boisterous life, and learns something from it, learns that the first rule of life is living. Having certain tendencies, he must move along their lines to the limit of their potentialities. And we have known biologists who did proliferate in all directions."



## Residential Semesters at the Station

### Spring Semester

2009 marked the start of spring residential semesters at the station with the Ecology and Organismal Biology Semester. Including Vertebrate Zoology, Biostatistics, Animal Behavior and Ecology, this semester is perfect for biology and environmental science students interested in wildlife.

### Summer classes

Two 3 credit summer classes were offered during the month of June – Mammalogy and Ornithology. Students had lots of great hands



*Dr. Uma Ramakrishnan shows Mammalogy students a wood rat during a field trip.*

-on experiences, including field trips to trap bats and wood rats, and travel to the Pittsburgh Aviary and the Smithsonian. Next year's offerings will include Herpetology and Ornithology.

### Now in partnership with St. Francis University

The spring 2009 semester and future fall and spring semesters are being offered in partnership with St. Francis University. Students attend from both JC and SFU, and faculty from both institutions teach courses, with students registering and paying tuition to their own institution. This allows both institutions to offer a wider variety of course and creates excellent opportunities for collaboration. We've greatly enjoyed working with our colleagues at St. Francis and look forward to continued collaboration.



*Two students hold a chipping sparrow while bird banding as part of the spring Vertebrate Zoology class.*

### Fall semester

The fall semester is in full swing, with 10 students and a residential director living at Lakeside Center. Courses this semester include Forestry, Ecology, Geographic Information Systems, Environmental Literature, Sense of Place, and three optional 1 credit fine arts classes. Students are also doing research on a variety of subjects from the impact of the lake drawdown on dissolved oxygen and temperature to the use of the lake as a migratory bird pathway.



*Not all is serious in the summer classes, as Mammalogy students pretend to test the bait they are using for small mammal traps.*

## Leaping Lizards! Research of Dr. John Matter

Over the past 12 years, Dr. John Matter had been making quite the impact on both Juniata College and Raystown Lake, from his high energy teaching style to his love of anything with scales. Students who had him as their professor in Freshman Biology will remember that his examples for nearly every biological process, from evolution to digestion, involved a lizard in some way or another, while in his discussion sections it was not uncommon for him to reach behind his desk and pull a snake from a bag. It's that love of scaly creatures that led Dr. Matter to his current research on the lizard population at Raystown Lake. "To me, to be able to work with lizards is fulfilling a childhood fantasy," he laughed during the interview.



*Herpetologist Dr. John Matter (right) in the field with a student and snapping turtle.*

Dr. Matter, along with several students from the college, make the trek out to their study site bordering the shale barrens at least once a week to gather data on the population demographics of their local lizards. They have gathered so much data over the past 12 years that Dr. Matter believes they may soon be able to run controlled experiments in the field with the population. But that's only the first half of their research. Dr. Matter and his students also gather eggs from across their study site, which they bring back to their laboratory and treat with doses of the most common pesticides of the area to test their effects on the young lizards' developments. Their research will lead not only to conclusions about potential health hazards to local amphibian and reptile populations due to the pesticides, but may also reveal potential *human* health hazards as well.

With so much experience here at the lake, when asked his favorite memory, he was hard-pressed to pick just one. "I'd have to say it was one day when I was out gathering data with a few students on the shale barren when, lizard in hand, I started to slide down the hill. As I went to grab onto an indentation in a tree where a branch had fallen, a copperhead

snake stuck his head out and looked at me. Needless to say, I didn't grab him and just slid the rest of the way down the hill with the lizard. But what was awesome was that for three weeks, that guy just stayed there. It's so cool getting to catch a small glimpse into these animals' private lives."

The only drawback of the site being at the lake, as opposed to within walking

distance of the college, is that he and his students have to coordinate their schedules to travel to their research area. However, with the surge in popularity of the Field Station, he is hoping to involve one or two of the students spending the semester out there in his research so that he can get more consistent data. "If I could find someone who was interested, it would be like having a research assistant basically *living* in the lab!" he joked. Regardless, though, his research is still in its prime and will continue to utilize the lake and its lizards for years to come.

### Grove Farm Room Renovated

Many thanks to Dan and Shelia O'Sullivan for the renovation of the small third floor bedroom as part of the Adopt-a-room program. The room has been transformed into a lovely and homelike bedroom – thanks Shelia and Dan!

## Research Technician at the Field Station

Over the years, numerous professors have seen the Raystown Field Station as a unique opportunity for research. However, challenges of time and funding would often lead to data not being collected every summer. Many station researchers have long had the vision of the station as a long term research site, with continuous data collected over multiple years. It was from this vision that the research technician position was born at the field station.

The idea was for one student to spend a summer at the station

gathering field data for several different research projects,

thereby creating a consistent long term data set. With a technician to gather data each summer, not only would there be a steady stream of seasonal data to be used for research by professors, but students in classes such as Ecology or BioStatistics would also have access to it as well. They could then use it to compare

the data gathered in their classes to the data gathered in years past.

After its conception, the position was first filled this past summer by Kyle Blauvelt, now a senior at Juniata. When asked to describe his summer, he said: "The job entailed a number of

research projects. I collected field data for up to 6 different projects at one point. The data collection ranged from lizard and turtle measurements to water and freshwater clam research. I absolutely loved it! I had lots of independence and basically spend my summer running around the woods of Raystown."

However, with graduate

school looming before him on the horizon, he doesn't think he will be able to re-apply for the position this coming summer. Therefore, it is open to another aspiring student who wants to spend a summer doing field research and living at the field station.



*Researcher Roy Nagle holds a turtle while collecting data. This project was one of the many that Kyle collected data for this summer.*



There was a great turnout for the October 10 workday, with 20 students working to plant perennials for the new bird garden, and plant trees and mulch the trail for the Dr. R.L. Fisher Memorial Arboretum. A tremendous amount of work got done in a short time, thanks to the many willing hands!

## Sustainability Action - Where's that water go?

*RFS is deeply committed to preserving the environment and moving towards a sustainable future. Because of that, we'll pass along action items YOU can do easily in each newsletter.*

When rain falls in a town or city, it flows across sidewalks and streets into a storm drain and disappears. But where does that water go? In most cases, it flows directly to the nearest water body (river, bay or lake) without any treatment. So any pollutants or litter carried by the water are also transported directly into the stream or lake. The good news is that you can help reduce storm water pollution.



*Don't wash your car on the street, or in your driveway if it drains to the street.* Washing your car in the street is like washing it directly in the river or lake that receives the storm water. Instead, wash your car in your yard (where water will infiltrate) or at carwash, where the water is collected and treated.

*Pick up after your pets.* Just like we wouldn't want raw sewage in our waterway, we don't want dog waste either. Dog waste has harmful pathogens and is an oxygen demanding waste.

*Don't litter.* Litter can wash into the storm drains and into the river or lake. This includes cigarette butts, which do not biodegrade and contain toxic chemicals.

*Minimize use of fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn.* These chemicals can wash off your lawn into the rivers and lakes.

*Never dump anything on the street or in the storm drain.* Don't pour used oil, any kind of waste water, or anything into a storm drain or on the street.

### Events Schedule

#### November 7 Workday

Work will focus on firewood for campfires, fireplaces, and sugaring season. We'll be working 9 AM- 3 PM, with lunch provided. Free housing is available in Grove Farm for volunteers if you'd like to come for the weekend. Join us for a fun and productive day! Please RSVP for food or lodging to [rfs@juniata.edu](mailto:rfs@juniata.edu).

#### Looking ahead to sugaring

Alumni Sugaring Weekend - March 13-14

MapleFest - March 20

## Raystown Conservation Education Program has a successful summer

*Taken from the Friends of Raystown Lake newsletter*

If you were visiting the lake this summer chances are pretty good that you bumped into “RayCEP” at some time during your stay. The Raystown Conservation Education Partnership is a group of organizations and business around that lake that support fun, hands on environmental education through student internships at Juniata College.

This year marked RayCEP’s 3rd year in action and boy were they busy. Through out the summer, the two internship students provided 148 programs around the lake speaking to an estimated 4,051 people! The RayCEP program helped 2 boy scout groups earn merit badges and families understand a variety of different topics. They shared with youngsters and seniors alike important conservation messages on monarchs, bats, beavers, deer, bears, snakes, frogs, turtles, trees, wildflowers, recycling, and energy conservation just to mention a few—imagine if we mentioned them all!

Visitors have shared with us and the interns the impact that the Ray-CEP program has had on them—and we would like to share them with you! A couple from Altoona last year listened to a RayCEP program on Bald Eagles at the lake; since then, they make regular trips to monitor the eagles, and didn’t miss the RayCEP Eagle program this year. Other folks have mentioned that they had high hopes for RayCEP this summer and they hit the target with delivery of high quality educational programs. Finally, the interns couldn’t count the number of times they heard, “hey, I remember you guys & where will you be next” - which means that folks are getting out and getting to RayCEP programs!

The two interns also commented on the impact the program had on them personally. The interns told us that the experience provided them both with valuable teaching experience and

practice, helped them gain confidence and feel comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people and helped them to develop their leadership and organizational skills. Also, it taught them how to be flexible, “rain and wind can change what you had planned pretty quickly, but you still have to make it work at the last minute”.

RayCEP is supported by organizations such as the Friends of Raystown, Juniata College, the Corps of Engineers, the Friends of the Raystown Field Station, Science in Motion, Trough Creek State Park, and by businesses including the Seven Points Marina, Mead Westvaco, Lake Raystown Resort, Heritage Cove Resort, and Lake Raystown Family Camping.

*Tara Carl, a RayCEP intern, talks with youth visitors on tree identification, aging, paper making, and forest conservation.*



## What's Inside

Page	Article
1	R. L. Fisher Memorial Arboretum
2	Directors' Notes
3	Residential Semesters
4	Research Article: John Matter
5	Research Technician Position
5	Workday
6	Sustainability Action
6	Events Schedule
7	Raystown Conservation Education

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