WELCOME TO SECOND SEMESTER - especially if you have just joined the program!

I hope the Bachelor of Environmental Science newsletter helps you plan your courses and find ways in which to prepare for life after your BEnvSci degree. This edition covers familiar ground; recent experience of Environmental Science students on exchange overseas, activities of Environmental Science volunteers, information on advising sessions and information on research centres associated with UQ (for possible projects and work experience). I have collated views and advice from past students in the program, with comments on the value of the honours year and hints for your future employment prospects and preparation.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to the newsletter, or suggestions of what you would like covered in the newsletter, please contact me, Gimme Walter (g.walter@uq.edu.au).

Best wishes

Gimme

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Great Artesian Basin Springs Conservation Trip

In April an excited and enthusiastic group of iROO’s led by Dr Rod Fensham and Jen Silcock journeyed to Edgbaston Reserve near Aramac to assist in the conservation of a fish species endemic to the springs of this arid area in western Queensland. The red-finned blue-eye is a native fish species in these artesian springs, which stems from the Great Artesian Basin.

In the 1980’s eight springs within Edgbaston were known to house these fish, however only three springs act as red-finned blue-eye habitat due to the threat of a Mexican fish known as plague minnow or gambusia and the encroachment of the introduced parra grass within the springs. This weed reduces the amount of area in which the red-finned blue-eyes can survive, decreasing spring depth and reducing the amount of native plants within these springs. During this trip the iROO’s assisted in weeding parra grass from one of the larger springs on the property. We were also lucky enough to swim in the beautiful rock holes atop the escarpment and help those from Bush Heritage perform wildlife surveys by building pitfall traps.

Despite having to construct hybrid tents after our camp site was trampled by rogue horses; the unusual beauty of the landscape, the chin deep mud and unexpected oases dotted around the reserve made a few days without showers most definitely worthwhile. I know that all the iROO’s cannot wait to return to Edgbaston and again experience the special sort of fun that can only be had doing dirty, but extremely rewarding work.

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advising session
STARTING HONOURS NEXT YEAR!

Gimme Walter is arranging a general advising session and social for Thursday 16th, September room 302, Parnell (#7), 5.00-6.00 pm, with pizza and drinks on the roof of Goddard (#8) at 6.00 pm. In the meantime, all students who intend to start honours in Semester 1, 2011, please ensure you find a supervisor for your honours project. A good general rule is to focus on the area of Environmental Science that interests you most. Approach academics who work in that area for potential honours projects. Academics are used to students screening them in this way, and most will have had some experience with Environmental Science honours projects.

Get a Graduation Check. Please request one from Lynette Cowan (l.cowan@uq.edu.au) in the Science Faculty office.

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FUNDRAISER
BBQs
Friday 10th Sept
Tues 14th Sept

Two fundraiser BBQs: Friday 10th Sept and Tuesday 14th September, Physics Annexe. Keep the days free. We need people to help organise these BBQs (organising the shopping and who is doing what, when and so on). This is good to develop your organisational skills and good for your cv.

Contact iroos.hq@gmail.com.

These upcoming BBQs are essential for raising money for the September Bridled Nailtail Wallaby monitoring trip. The wallabies need your help to make these BBQs a success.
Last Idalia trip

“Nine students, some iROOS veterans and others new to Idalia, set off to spend a week in the park with Rosie and Gimme during the mid-year break. Having been to Idalia twice before I knew only to expect the unexpected, but for this particular trip it is fair to say that this has never been truer.”

Rebecca McPhee

During the holidays just past I was one of the lucky few iROOS who got the chance to go out and volunteer at Idalia National Park. Having never been any further west than Stanthorpe before, I had no idea what to expect of the week to come, let alone what kind of work we were required to do. The thirteen hour bus trip was long and tiring, but soon after arrival I realised that the journey had been well worth it. Idalia is such a beautiful place, nothing like I’d ever seen before and the week the iROOS spent there seemed to pass so quickly. We achieved a fair bit; we set traps, pulled fencing and, perhaps most exciting, helping to demolish the old interpretation centre. Most of us, having never held a crowbar in our lives, had become experts at smashing out walls once dusk rolled around. As usual the week was also filled with many wildlife sightings, including a stripe-faced dunnart, brolgas, spinifex pigeons and a multitude of velvet geckos.

Unfortunately the week was interrupted by several downpours, which gave the iROOS plenty of time to perfect their card-playing skills (Cheat and Masters & Slaves being the games of choice). Although the rain continued throughout the week, nobody expected to be woken on Friday morning to be told that we had to leave the park as soon as possible. More rain was predicted and the tracks were soon bearing resemblance to the perfect place to bog a four-wheel drive. So after a mad two-hour scramble the iROOS were packed and ready to leave, escaping to Blackall to spend the last night in town. Although we were disappointed at having to leave early, a good night in the pub was had by all; a fitting end to the trip before we left for Brisbane early the next morning.

Check out Entox

Entox – that is the National Research Center for Environmental Toxicology is located in the Queensland Health Complex at Coopers Plains. It is Australia’s leading research centre for Environmental Toxicology and focuses its activity on research in human and environmental health. Entox provides excellent opportunities for motivated and outstanding students with interest in various aspects related to environmental pollutants.

The research that is carried out at Entox covers many aspects of environmental pollution and toxicology from developing better tools for measuring pollutants and all aspects of exposure assessment to understanding the toxicology of specific chemicals. Students obtain a broad range of skills from developing sampling programs to application of state of the art analytical techniques and data modeling.

We work in close collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders from government such as Health Authorities, EPAs and agencies such as Water Authorities and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as well as private companies and industries. Our students are motivated and want to make a change. One of the main goals of Entox is to support and train highly motivated students and provide experience, knowledge and skills through working in a research facility.

We try to provide an environment and team spirit that should progress students towards a career in environmental science. Not surprisingly our postgraduates have been very successful to progress their careers in government, industry and academia. If you like to know more about the type of projects that we carry out and like to visit us – I recommend dropping me an email where you specify your interests so we can arrange a meeting where you can meet a few members of Entox.

Come and check us out: J.mueller@uq.edu.au

Jochen Mueller (Prof)
So there I am, 5 minutes to 4pm, the Goddard receptionist prying my Environmental Science honours thesis from my hands – time’s up! As the carp I studied so fiercely invade Queensland river systems, so too do graduating honours students to bars and BBQs.

The next few hours are hazy with celebration until reality hits – university is over and you need a job. Here comes my first tip – if you’re up to standard, people who you liaise with throughout your honours can be vital for your future. I was lucky enough to be recommended for a temporary policy officer position in then, the Department of Natural Resources and Water (now Department of Environment and Resource Management or DERM) Water Quality and Accounting unit, by one of my supervisors (Yes, I had five in total). I was able to land the job, thus getting a ‘foot in the door’ at the department. Thus, I arrive at my second tip – getting a ‘foot in the door’ in the State Government is a big advantage as it gives you access to internal job advertisements. Multiple internal advertisements are mailed to your inbox every week enabling you access to jobs that may be more in your area of interest. These internal ads include shout outs for people to assist with temporary fieldwork across the state.

For me, I have remained in the original unit where I was first offered a temporary position. This leads me to my third tip – understand that when you are working in a project based unit, your position is based on the availability of funding. Case in point, I have worked in my unit for almost 1.5 years on temporary contracts – these can range from a few weeks to months. As I do not have a mortgage, I still live at home for almost 1.5 years on temporary contracts – these can range from a few weeks to months. As I do not have a mortgage, I still live at home for almost 1.5 years on temporary contracts – these can range from a few weeks to months. As I do not have a mortgage, I still live at home for almost 1.5 years on temporary contracts – these can range from a few weeks to months.

As a graduate fresh out of uni employers are waiting for one problem to be worked out you will not make steady progress. You don’t want to have no data with two weeks to go before the thesis is due. However, be proactive and look for ways to increase efficiency and make change – you will have a good perspective arriving fresh into a unit.

Anyway, tips aside, in terms of my role at DERM (business is all about acronyms) I undertake a variety of tasks in the Program Evaluation and Reporting team. As of this year I am the coordinator of the Annual report for Water Resource Plans (the copy of last year’s report which I was involved in is available here: http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wrp/annual_reports.html). I also coordinate permit applications from DERM aquatic biologists such as fisheries permits and animal ethics permits. I have also been involved in the production of two reports identifying ways to better integrate monitoring and reporting programs within Queensland. For one of these projects, I conducted a stocktake of all the water quality, water quantity and aquatic ecosystem monitoring and reporting programs implemented by DERM across the state. I will wrap up in saying that although there are no pictures of me in the field and that I work in an office at present, I now have a great understanding of the framework in which water is managed across Queensland. I wouldn’t overlook the benefit of developing theoretical knowledge and decision-making skills in your first years out of uni.

Because although you might have finished, you will still have a lot to learn – just don’t be afraid to ask questions; Speaking of, if you would like to ask me any further questions contact me: leighbennett@hotmail.com
Student exchange is an unforgettable and absolutely thrilling experience!

For anyone who has ever felt less than 100% motivated when it comes to studying or has dreamt that university life could be the best time they’ve ever had or simply just wondered ‘what might be? I would encourage you to go on exchange!

Arriving in beautiful Vancouver, Canada on the 5th of September was a moment which hung suspended before the great unknown of the semester at UBC that lay ahead of me. In that very first week I met so many wonderful people, and had no idea at the time how special and significant they would end up becoming to me. Canadians are exceptionally friendly, helpful and happy, so much so that I sometimes wondered if I was in one of those cheery Christmas movies that make their appearance each year in December. I loved every day from the start!

UBC is a top-ranking university and seems very desirable as a place of study to people from all across the world. My fellow uni-goers with whom I experienced countless fun nights, study periods and days exploring my new territory with, were mostly from overseas - from western and eastern Europe, Latin America, Bangladesh and many places in between. I am delighted to have had the opportunity to exchange to Canada and to encounter, befriend and learn from these people (Thank you UQ Abroad!). I was also very pleased that during the exchange, specific grades were not a priority as long as every course was passed, thus allowing the focus to shift from serious study to making the most of this exciting time abroad. Despite this ‘break’ which I thought I really needed, I found myself re-motivated within a new environment where libraries are open 24 hours a day and study desks look out high over the beautiful campus and snow-topped mountains.

The site of UBC’s Point Grey campus is probably one of the prime locations in the world. It is surrounded on 3 sides by a huge ocean bay, the Strait of Georgia. The cliffs along the edge are frequently populated around the sunset hours and lead down to rocky beaches. Wreck Beach is a popular place for taking a break, whether to enjoy the peace or the company of friends around a camp fire. It was very easy to stay on campus for weeks at a time because that was where home was, as well as a large grocery store, many small shops for anything you’d need, markets in the Student Union Building, a diversity of libraries for individual or group study (and passing out to sleep!), restaurants, cafés and chill-out spaces. There are a number of gyms and sports facilities comprising an indoor and an outdoor pool and the UBC Thunderbird Arena with ice rinks, and this is where many Olympic ice hockey games actually took place! And although UBC is so well-equipped with every conceivable amenity, it was well worth venturing off campus for an incredible array of options. Amongst these, Whistler -a well known ski resort- is only an hour from Vancouver itself and the local slopes at Mt Seymour and Cypress Mountain are even closer. Staying at Whistler during the Christmas holidays was amazing! I was also lucky enough to be there for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics!

I would highly recommend going on exchange to anyone! You will expose yourself to new cultures, find yourself at ease in a hitherto unfamiliar region of the world, participate in different opportunities, learn one hell of a lot and experience something unique. For me personally the exchange experience was life-changing and irreplaceable.

For more: www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad/