



The Association  
for the Study of  
**Literature &  
Environment**



# ASLE News

Fall 2011

A Quarterly Publication of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment

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## President's Column: Ecocriticism and the Challenge of New Fields

by Ursula K. Heise

I came away elated from our conference last June, as I kept running into ASLEans on the shuttle, at the airport, and all the way through security until we finally had to part ways. Bloomington brought with it the "high" that comes from seeing a huge number of friends and colleagues in just a few days and catching up on a whirlwind of news and ideas, but also from seeing our discipline flourish with more conference participants (about 750 this time!) and a greater range of topics than ever before. I was impressed not only by some of the discussions in sessions I attended, which seemed to me to reach a new level of energy, innovation, and sophistication, but also was thrilled at how many panels and presentations brought environmental criticism into dialogue with new areas of research in and around literary and cultural studies. These connections brought home to me an interesting reversal: in the 1990s, ecocriticism was the emergent field that sought to make links to existing fields of research; by 2011, with its staying power and appeal no longer in question, ecocriticism itself has become a body of scholarship that newer areas refer to.

Given our conference topic, "Species, Space, and the Imagination of the Global," it was no surprise that Animal Studies would top that list--a vibrant interdisciplinary field on the rise, with important overlaps but also interesting divergences from our own. Animal Studies as well as Food Studies, another new area, link concerns about



Sunset on Moskey Basin, Isle Royale National Park, MI.  
Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

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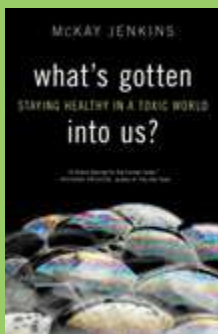
## ASLE Bookshelf

The following works were recently published by ASLE members. If we've missed your publication, please send bibliographic information to Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)).

**Goodbody, Axel and Kate Rigby.** *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011.



**Jenkins, McKay.** *What's Gotten Into Us? Staying Healthy in a Toxic World*. New York: Random House, 2011.



**Newman, Lance, ed.** *The Grand Canyon Reader*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011.

species relations and socio-economic structures with culture and aesthetics, and both of them were generously represented in large sets of panels and in Una Chaudhuri's, Helen Tiffin's, Zakes Mda's, and Marc Bekoff's keynotes. They were complemented by a smaller but powerful set of presentations around botany and "The Question of the Plant," not perhaps as much on our minds as that of the animal but nevertheless crucial for environmental thinking as well as daily decisions on what we eat and wear. (Environmental historians have started to talk about "charismatic megafloa" such as baobabs and sequoias--move over, gorillas and pandas!) Jennifer Meta Robinson's banquet address on farmers' markets--with Jim Warren's unforgettable assistance--helped to bring these issues vividly across.

Our other key concept for the conference, space, has deep roots in environmental thinking. Notions such as place, locality, (bio)region, nation, hemisphere and planet have long structured our engagement with questions of ecology and environmental justice; borders and boundaries have shaped our relations with members of our own species as well as with those of others, as Rubén Martínez's and Robert Fischman's keynotes, as well as, in a very different way, the performance of Scott Russell Sanders's work and Subhankar Banerjee's photography showed. New fields such as Spatial Humanities and Digital Humanities challenge us to think about places, borders, and networks at all of these different scales in light of an abundance of new spatial data, many of which now come in digital form. How does the detailed quantitative and empirical information we can now get from Geographic Information Systems sync with the humanistic emphasis on qualitative approaches, interpretation, and meaning? What understanding can new methods of visual knowledge presentation generate? When do computers help us develop new dimensions of environmental thinking, when do they get in the way? It was exciting to see ASLE members take on these fascinating questions, which are sure to become even more prominent in our work and at our conferences in years to come.

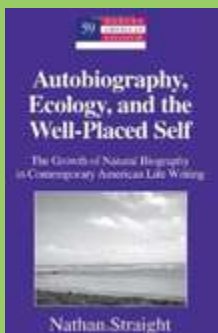
This exploration of new areas combined with a cultural and geographic diversity that had already grown visibly over the last few ASLE conferences. African, Asian, Australian, and European literatures were all discussed in Bloomington, and two well-attended panels on Iberian and Latin American literature and film took place entirely in Spanish, an ASLE first. With a vast range of different cultures on their intellectual radar, ecocritics and postcolonial scholars have increasingly made connections between their fields over the last half-decade and have often converged on questions of environmental and climate justice; these convergences were central to a good many panels as well as several of the keynotes, as were links to theories of globalization, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism. There's no question that in our intellectual journeys beyond North America and Britain, and beyond English, we still have a ways to go. But seeing so many ASLE members undertaking these ventures was nothing short of awesome, and I'm grateful to all those of you who worked hard to bring this breathtaking range of perspectives to our conference.

Our next biennial conference at the University of North Texas in Denton in May 2013 is already in the works, and will no doubt surprise us with further developments in all these and other areas. Many thanks to all those of you who participated in our post-conference survey and gave us feedback - that'll help us tune the next conference even more to what our members would like to see. In the meantime, our next President, Joni Adamson, and the Executive Council will be in touch to keep you posted on a variety of initiatives we're working on to keep increasing ASLE's diversity, reducing our carbon footprint, and getting closer to the strategic goals Dan Philippon set a couple of years ago. We look forward to working with all of you to develop further the vibrant community and intellectual energy that was so palpable in Bloomington.



**Straight, Nathan.**

*Autobiography, Ecology, and the Well-Placed Self: The Growth of Natural Biography in Contemporary American Life Writing.* New York: Peter Lang, 2011.



**White, Sharon.** *Eve & Her Apple* (poems). Harbor Mountain Press, 2011.



**November 5  
Deadline for ASLE**

## Note from Our 2011 Conference Host

by Christoph Irmscher, Indiana University

A warm thanks from me, your local host, and my wonderful team of graduate student volunteers. Keeping as many as 21 concurrent workshops on track on a campus that is as vast as it is beautiful often seemed challenging, and we are truly grateful to the many ASLE members who cheered us on and showed that they appreciated our efforts. We, too, felt the intellectual energy the conference generated and only wish we'd had more time for conversations with participants.

Sometimes I still look back on the Bloomington conference with a mixture of retroactive anxiety (what could we have done better? what should we have anticipated but didn't?) and embarrassed relief (nothing *really* bad happened, right?). More often, though, I now feel like the character in one of the songs from Scott Russell Sanders's *Wilderness Plots*, who only remembers how great the honey tasted, not how hard it was to get it: "But the pancakes sure were good!" Thanks again to all of you.

## Save the Date: Conference 2013

As announced at the banquet of the 2011 conference, the Tenth Biennial ASLE Conference will be held in Denton, TX, at the University of North Texas. The dates have now been confirmed and the conference will be from **May 28-June 1, 2013**. Mark your calendars and we hope to see you there!

## 2011 ASLE Officer Elections: Cast Your Vote

Each autumn, ASLE members are invited to elect a new vice president and two new executive council members. The vice president serves one year as vice president, the subsequent year as president, and the year following as past president. Executive council members are selected for three year terms. Once again, we have a fantastic slate of candidates whose statements are printed below.

As instituted in 2008, this year the election will primarily be an online voting process. To cast your vote, log in at the ASLE website as a member with your email and password at <https://www.asle.org/site/members/login/>. Once you are logged in, you will see a link in the right hand column under the heading "2011 Election for Vice President & Executive Council" that says "Cast Your Vote." Click on this link and the slate of candidates will appear and you can make your selections. There is also a link to review the same candidate statements published below. The secure system will ensure that each member can vote only once.

Online voting will begin November 1 and will close at 11pm EST on December 1, 2011. You will receive an email with instructions in the next few days as well. If you would like a paper ballot sent to you, or have questions about online voting, please contact Amy McIntyre at [info@asle.org](mailto:info@asle.org) or 603-357-7411.

Read the statements from our candidates for vice president and executive council below, make your selections, and vote online or send your paper ballot--  
**postmarked by December 1, 2011--to:**

Karla Armbruster  
Webster University English Dept.  
470 E. Lockwood Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63119-3194

## Off-Year Symposium

We invite paper and panel proposals for the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment's Off-Year Symposium, "Environment, Culture, and Place in a Rapidly Changing North," to be held June 14-17 at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau. Proposals for creative work or scholarship related to the field of literature and environment broadly, or to the symposium theme specifically, should include a 250-word abstract, paper title, your name, and affiliation. Proposals for pre-organized panels are also welcome. Submit proposals to Sarah Jaquette Ray ([sjray@uas.alaska.edu](mailto:sjray@uas.alaska.edu)) and Kevin Maier ([kevin.maier@uas.alaska.edu](mailto:kevin.maier@uas.alaska.edu)) by November 5, 2011.

Please visit the symposium's website for more information about the theme, plenary speakers, travel logistics, accommodation, and graduate student and international travel awards: [www.uas.alaska.edu/asle](http://www.uas.alaska.edu/asle), or email Sarah or Kevin with any inquiries.

## Sustaining & Patron Members

These members have given above and beyond their basic dues to help support ASLE's mission. We thank them and applaud their generous spirit!

**Sustaining (\$100-\$149)**  
Joni Adamson



*Broad-winged hawk over Brockway Mountain, Keweenaw Peninsula, MI. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

## Candidates for Vice President

**(vote for one)**

### Paul Outka, University of Kansas

I am honored by this nomination and excited by the chance to contribute to an organization and a field that are critically important to literary studies and that have been central to my scholarly identity for more than a decade.

However we name the nexus of representation, nature, politics, science, aesthetics, and identity within which we work, it's clearly a set of concerns that is growing rapidly and shifting ecocriticism from an important subspecialty to a central critical paradigm with global influence in and out of the university. At the recent ASLE conference in Bloomington, that shift was clearly evident: the breadth of people (generational, ethnic, racial, national) and approaches testified to the powerful vitality of the field. ASLE remains a collectivity united in its commitment to planet and locality, but it brings difference to its conversations far more often than it has in the past. If elected, my actions will be guided by a deep commitment to develop this emerging strength, working hard to make it larger and more diverse, to help ecocriticism talk in a range of literal and theoretical languages, to not impose, explicitly or implicitly, a false consensus, but to strive for real ones.

Let me list five specific possibilities that might expand our membership and dialogue further. First, I would like to explore the fraught question of technologically mediated communications and the environment, and use that conversation as way to guide ASLE's increasing presence on the web and in social media. Second, I would like to increase the organization's engagement with non-textual environmental representation including digital media, film and other time-based art, photography, and sound. Third, I would consider encouraging the formation of interest group caucuses within ASLE, built around common languages, cultural, ethnic or sexual identification, and/or theoretical and aesthetic

Stacy Alaimo  
Bruce Allen  
Lorraine Anderson  
Thomas Bailey  
Michael Branch  
Kate Chandler  
Ann Fisher-Wirth  
Ursula Heise  
Marc & Helen Hudson  
Richard Hunt  
McKay Jenkins  
Jenny Kerber  
John R. Knott  
Mark Long  
Susan Maher  
Steven Marx  
Sarah McFarland  
Ashton Nichols  
Stephen Norwick  
Paul Outka  
Daniel Patterson  
Anne Raine  
Sheryl St. Germain  
Lisa & Elizabeth Slappey  
John Sitter  
William Stowe  
William Stroup  
Alison Swan  
Bill D. Toth  
Rick Van Noy  
Fred Waage  
Kathleen Wallace  
Alexa Weik von Mossner  
Monica Weis  
Priscilla Ybarra  
& J. Baird Callicott

**Patron (\$150 and over)**

Annie & Randy Ingram  
Rochelle Johnson  
John Lane  
Allen K. Mears  
Priscilla Paton  
Jeri Pollock  
Cate Sandilands  
Peggy Shumaker &  
Joseph Usibelli  
H. Lewis Ulman  
Laura Dassow Walls  
Jim & Julianne Warren  
Louise Westling

interests; caucuses might in turn sponsor panels or roundtable discussions at the convention that would help connect the broader membership to these concerns. Fourth, I would like to build stronger connections between ASLE and the activist environmental community. Finally, as the former graduate placement director at Florida State, I would like to explore how to better support our members on the job market - senior members might, for example, serve on a placement committee to vet applications and offer advice about projects, and members might be encouraged to serve on graduate dissertation committees at universities other than their own.

My interest in how ASLE and ecocriticism might grow and diversify further stems from a longstanding engagement with the organization and the field. I've presented or chaired five panels at ASLE conferences, presented at ASLE panels at the ALA and MLA, helped organize an off-year ASLE conference in Maine, published in *JSL*, and given interviews about ecocriticism and the Amazon published in Peru and Australia. At the 2009 conference, I had the good fortune to win ASLE's biennial prize for my book *Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance*, which examines the historical genealogy of the segregation of natural experience. Most recently, in Bloomington, I had the privilege of speaking at Lawrence Buell's celebration and then participating with him and several others in the roundtable discussion "Cosmopolitics and the Radical Pastoral." I currently teach at the University of Kansas with a senior appointment in literature and science, with an ecocritical focus on nineteenth-century US literature and culture.

This is an exciting moment in ASLE's history; in the next few years, we have the opportunity to advance the diversity of our concerns and to pursue vigorously our entwined commitments to scholarship and to activism. It would be a great privilege to help lead that growth.

**H. Lewis Ulman, Ohio State University**

Most members refer to ASLE by its acronym, which is just as well, given that the official title is hard-pressed to contain all that we are and do. We began as one association (and remain so organizationally) but now work closely with nine international affiliates. While our name emphasizes the study of literature, our members' work extends well beyond literary criticism and the teaching of literature, also encompassing creative work in various literary genres and other media, the teaching of writing, community environmental advocacy and action, and scientific study of non-human natural environments--to name just a few areas in which members are active. And while ASLE grew out of discussions among students of literature, members now focus on cultural production in various forms, including political discourse, advertising, folklore, music, film, art, Web sites and other digital media--again, to name just a few examples. Finally, while early on the term "environment" most often brought to mind wilderness land and wild animals, work in ecocriticism now encompasses rural, suburban, urban, and even virtual environments as well as domesticated animals and livestock, typically understood in bioregional and global contexts and in relationship to one another. However, "Associations for Sustainable Critical and Creative Engagement between Human and Nonhuman Environments and Species" is way too long, so ASLE we remain.

My review of ASLE's evolution points to an important aspect of the organization: over the past two decades, ASLE has steadily become more diverse. Most notably, the Diversity Caucus has helped diversify ASLE's membership and provide forums for work reflecting cultural diversity (e.g., conference sessions and forums, a listserv, and a blog). Additionally, options for conference sessions, plenary sessions, recognitions of members' work, and field trips have become more varied (e.g., paper jams, two-speaker plenaries, service-learning field trips, and so on). If

## ASLE PhDs

**Kevin Trumpeter** recently defended a PhD in English at the University of South Carolina specializing in 20th Century American Literature. The dissertation is entitled "Refuse: The Aesthetics of Waste in American Fiction" and the committee consisted of David Cowart (Director), Laura Walls and Brian Glavey (committee members), and Kevin Elliot (outside reader).

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lected to serve as president, I would look forward to working with the officers, Executive Council, project coordinators, and members to develop further and sustain ASLE's "big tent" approach to our collective work.

I have been a member of ASLE since its establishment, served as editor of the ASLE Online Bibliography for ten years (2000-2010), and am a frequent contributor of photographs to *ASLE News*. As a project coordinator, I worked with the Executive Council at conferences and off-year retreats, participating in discussions about ASLE's budget, bylaws, award programs, staff, and conferences, so I am familiar with a broad range of the organization's operations.

As a faculty member in English at The Ohio State University, I regularly team-teach an interdisciplinary undergraduate capstone course on environmental citizenship, as well as courses on American nature writing (special topics have included women's voices in American nature writing, environmental autobiography). As do many of our members, I also work in other fields. In my case, those include digital media, rhetoric, literacy studies, and textual editing. Typically, I find myself drawn to the ecotone between those other fields and ecocriticism. For example, I have published an essay and delivered public lectures on virtual landscapes in video games and other digital media, and I have written about the rhetoric of American nature writing. Similarly, in conjunction with the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives, which I co-founded and co-direct, I am facilitating a collection of literacy narratives focused on reading the landscape. My tendency to gravitate toward such boundary work no doubt explains why I have found ASLE such a sustaining academic home for twenty years, and why I would welcome the opportunity to serve it further.

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## Candidates for Executive Council (vote for two)

### **George Handley, Brigham Young University**

My professional career has never been the same since I serendipitously came into contact with ASLE scholars in the 1990s. Thus began a focus on ecocriticism in my research, my activism, and to the degree that curricular obligations allow, in my teaching. Because I have leaned so heavily on ASLE conferences, *ISLE*, and on the ASLE website over the years for my ongoing education and because many ASLE scholars have inspired me as exceptionally well integrated and balanced in their teaching, citizenship, and scholarly endeavors, I feel I owe ASLE a tremendous debt. I wish to continue to internationalize ASLE and to push ecocriticism into new frontiers of postcolonial and comparative literatures. I am also interested in deepening its interdisciplinarity, building stronger ties with the sciences, social sciences, and religious studies. I have been well prepared after a successful turn on the Executive Council of the International American Studies Association, where I served for two years as program chair.

About me: I received my BA from Stanford University and my MA and PhD from UC Berkeley, all in comparative literature, with a focus on the literatures of the Americas, comparative race studies, and postcolonial theory. Most recently, I have authored *New World Poetics: Nature and the Adamic Imagination of Whitman, Neruda, and Walcott* (Georgia 2007) and a bioregional memoir about Utah, *Home Waters: A Year of Recompenses on the Provo River* (Utah 2010). I have also co-edited two books of ecocriticism, *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (Virginia 2006) and *Postcolonial Ecologies* (2011). I am a fierce and outspoken advocate of environmental causes in Utah, and in the process I have become a specialist in negotiating the tensions between religion and environmentalism. I am centrally involved in ongoing efforts at my home institution to improve environmental education.

**Christoph Irmscher, Indiana University, Bloomington**

I have been connected with ASLE for over a decade, and I was privileged to serve as the local host for the 2011 Bloomington conference. In my own work, I have long been interested in the ways in which human artifacts (texts, paintings, prints, photographs) challenge the notion of the human point of view as a lens through which to view the so-called nonhuman world, and this interest has led to books, editions, and essays dealing with the work of John James Audubon and nineteenth-century natural history writing in the United States and Canada. In recent years, I have enjoyed extensive collaborative relationships with art historians, historians of science, and biologists, with the goal of developing, in constant conversation with the sciences, a workable concept of environmental humanities. The first product of these immensely fruitful dialogues was an anthology I co-edited with art historian Alan Braddock, *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*. My new book, *Louis Agassiz: The Making of American Science*, will be published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt next year. As a member of ASLE's Executive Board, I would love to help ASLE embrace what I see as the main challenge of the future of our organization-- confronting the new academic and international relevance our work has acquired while staying true to our informal, unorthodox roots. I think ASLE can and should remain productively different from similar professional organizations even as it keeps growing, and I would like to be a part of trying to figure out how.

**Stephanie Lemenager, University of California, Santa Barbara**

I began my involvement with ecocriticism in the mid-1990s as a graduate student under the mentorship of Lawrence Buell. Like many Americanists working in the 90s, I found myself thinking about the consequences of globalization through cultural histories of US imperialism. This was a moment of heightened self-consciousness within American Studies, when the insights of post-colonialism began to radically shift the field imaginary. Post-colonial influences produced the idea of "resistant environments" that organized my first book, *Manifest and Other Destinies* (Nebraska 2005), where I consider how ecologies inimical to agricultural practice affected the formation of US empire. I followed Ramachandra Guha's now classic counter-narrative to US environmentalism (1989) into a version of environmental critique where war figures as a primary threat to the bios, and where neoliberalism stages itself as war on multiple fronts. My current book, *Living Oil*, offers a series of meditations on twentieth-century petroleum culture in the United States, with contextual asides about offshore petrostates like Alberta and Nigeria. The book argues for the importance of the environmental humanities and arts in the era of peak oil and the aftermath of the American century, when the self-reflexive rhetoric of corporate media and "unconventional" or dirty energy mining wear away at ecological and social relationships. The importance of social ecology, civic responsibility, and what I call eco-sociability in my own environmental practice makes me an advocate of clear and accessible academic writing, collaborative teaching and research, and professional kindness. My experiences with ASLE, which I officially joined in 2003, suggest that this is an organization where all three of these latter goals are normative. Practically speaking, I would bring to ASLE emphases on direct engagement with corporate culture, activist publication in the digital commons, and collective arts practice in the service of ecological goals.

**Heather I. Sullivan, Trinity University**

Seeking to forge additional affiliations to international programs here in the U.S. and abroad would be one of my primary goals if I were elected to the ASLE Executive Council. I have been a member of ASLE since 2002, and have attended every conference since the 2003 meeting in Boston. Additionally, I am a member

of the European ecocriticism group, EASLCE, and I would like to work on expanding our interactions with the existing associations across the world as well as building new connections. In the face of global climate change, I think it is essential to expand our environmental perspectives so that they include even more international and interdisciplinary voices.

In my German and comparative literature coursework, I work to educate students about local environments as they are imbricated within larger regional and international systems. I teach a "world literature and the environment" course that is partnered with a biology course on "global ecology," and I also teach "science fiction and the environment." My publications focus on the science and literature of Goethe and the German romantics, and I have also written on the environmental science fiction of the British author Karen Traviss. I am author of *The Intercontextuality of Self and Nature in Ludwig Tieck's Early Works* (1997), numerous articles in ecocritical, interdisciplinary, and German journals, and I contributed an essay to the new volume on *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches* (Eds. Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby).

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## Graduate Student Page

by Jill Anderson, Middle Tennessee State University, Senior Grad Student Liaison

Just like conferences in the past, the 2011 ASLE Conference in Bloomington, IN featured helpful discussions, workshops, and presentations for graduate students. Led by Mark Long (Keene State College), John Tallmadge, Tom J. Hillard (Boise State University), Rochelle Johnson (College of Idaho), and Sarah Jaquette Ray (University of Alaska, Southeast), the first workshop combined issues of graduate



*Southern Leopard Frog, Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve, Monroe County, IN. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

programs and the academic field to offer graduate students the chance to talk about making the transition from grad student to professional. Later, two panels addressed specific concerns for graduate students in the current work climate. "Building your Professional Identity: Funding, Publishing, and Conferencing," led by Jill E. Anderson (Middle Tennessee State University) and featuring Allison Carruth (Stanford University), Kevin Maier (University of Alaska, Southeast), H. Emerson Blake (Orion Magazine), and Carmen Flys-Junquera (GIECO-Instituto Franklin-Universidad de Alcalá), addressed ways for graduate students to professionalize themselves. Topics including networking, publishing, finding funding for various projects, and general advice about how to begin establishing yourself in the field early. The panel entitled "Adapting to the Changing Academic Market" was led by Sarah Jaquette Ray (University of Alaska, Southeast), and the speakers included Arlene Plevin (Olympic College), Tristan Siple (Kew-Forest School), Robert Melchior Figueroa (University of North Texas),



and Robert Boschman (Mount Royal University). The panel focused on alternative and varied career paths outside of traditional academia (community college, college prep schools, etc.) as a way of giving graduate students an idea of what lies outside the conventional narrative of degree- and job-seeking.

At the meeting of the Graduate Working Group, we reiterated the importance of grad students to ASLE as a whole. Our top priority was figuring out the best way to communicate with the ASLE grad students as a whole. The vote was split three ways: a Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/ASLE-Graduate-Students/205287739513823>), the ASLE Grad Student Blog (<http://aslegrad.wordpress.com/>), and a listserv (to be added to this listserv, contact me at [DrJillElizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:DrJillElizabeth@gmail.com)). We will continue to communicate through these three avenues, but each one has their own purpose. Be sure to visit each medium and have a look around. And although no single avenue of communication won out over the others, I will try to keep each one updated and fresh as new information and issues come up.

For suggestions for future panels at conferences, to get more information about how to become involved in ASLE, to suggest ways ASLE can help you as a grad student, or to just join the conversation and the ASLE Graduate Working Group, please contact Jill E. Anderson ([DrJillElizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:DrJillElizabeth@gmail.com)) or Andrew Hageman ([hagean03@luther.edu](mailto:hagean03@luther.edu)).

We look forward to seeing and speaking with graduate students and their advocates in 2013!

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## Diversity News

by Salma Monani, Gettysburg College, ASLE Diversity Coordinator

This year I began my tenure as ASLE's Diversity Coordinator, and was expertly guided into the position by outgoing coordinator Priscilla Ybarra, who has shepherded the Diversity Caucus these last three years. At ASLE's biennial conference in Bloomington, Indiana this June, I also conversed with and learned from other Caucus stalwarts such as Annie Ingram, Joni Adamson, and Greta Gaard and sat in at the Executive Council meetings for the first time. In all, Bloomington proved productive in bringing me up to speed with ASLE's current diversity agenda.

I also recently attended a forum here at Gettysburg College focused on paying attention to diversity on campus. While in this case diversity was more specifically focused on the concept of "internationalization" (a mouthful but nonetheless the term used), I found the discussion pertinent to thinking about ASLE's diversity. Specifically there were two points that I see as analogous: it is important to recognize our achievements thus far, but it is also important to keep in mind that there is still much work to be done.

In keeping these two points in sight, I am happy to announce the new ASLE Diversity Caucus blog, which is linked through the organization's home page but can also be found at <http://www.aslediversity.org/>, as a place that highlights the Caucus's history, its integral role in ASLE's continued development, and most importantly, the voices of Caucus members. Currently, the blog features seven regular contributors who have been active in posting a number of entries on calls for papers, new publications of interest, and other relevant resources. Joni Adamson's recent post, "Looking back, and looking forward" (October 15) is an excellent example of how Caucus members are articulating their sense of ASLE's

diversity and the function of the Caucus. While individuals post regularly, the blog also serves as a general repository of resources. Its resource tab specifically points to disciplinary diversity through the list of organizations with which its members are affiliated, and the plenary speaker wish list points to members' continued hope for disciplinary as well as racial, ethnic, gender, and myriad other types of diversity.

Complimenting the blog is a Caucus listserv. While mostly quiet as news gets transmitted through the blog, it serves a vital function in reaching members through a different electronic forum and allowing members to communicate with me as well. Various Caucus members have sent pertinent news or event postings my way through this email mode. *All* contributions are vital to the life of the blog. I cannot stress how keen I am to see more people

share their thoughts and ideas on this space; I strongly encourage *all* ASLE's members to be part of this process of sharing resources and articulating their sense of how to navigate the complexity of organizational diversity.

Ultimately, the blog is a meeting place to not only highlight ASLE's diversity agenda (<http://www.aslediversity.org/about/>) and generate conversations, but to also remind us of the tasks ahead. In recognizing that ASLE has a current diversity agenda that is integral to its Strategic Plan, we can be proud that we have come a long way from the first Caucus meeting in Kalamazoo. However, while we have made progress in some areas of our six-pronged agenda--for example, our members boast organizational and disciplinary diversity, our conference plenary speaker line-up is vibrantly varied and diverse, and exciting off-year symposia such as the upcoming *Environment, Culture, and Place in a Rapidly Changing North* highlight diversity themes--we must also consider addressing goals we have as yet not tackled. For example, how might we recruit more undergraduates to our field? What does this next generation have to offer us, and we to offer it in understanding the complex world of environmental issues? What will it take to generate an endowment to fund low-income individuals to join ASLE? These questions are not necessarily easily answered but they should nonetheless be asked, and as part of the organization's strategic plan they should be kept in the foreground.

If there is one hard truth to the issues of diversity, it is that commitment to diversity rings truest when we are able to look around us and without hesitation know we are in a place vibrant with polyphony, where no matter what our discipline, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, or politics we feel comfortable being present, and know we can speak openly and listen attentively and carefully to the voices of others. ASLE's Diversity Caucus is a space to work towards this ideal, and to move forward towards common goals that we have conceptualized together. I look forward to the Executive Council Meeting in February and to all your contributions in the meantime.



Morning dew, Crooked Lake, Pinckney Recreation Area, MI.  
Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

## In Memoriam

We are saddened to share news of the passing of **Dr. James Tarter**, an Associate Professor at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho. Jim was an important member of our intellectual and political community. His writing on the topics of feminist environmental justice, particularly in relation to issues of health, pollution of water and air, and Native American literature were very influential for many scholars and particularly important to his Nez Perce students in Idaho. Many of us have depended on his clear, complex writing to stir the imagination and understanding of our students. Jim was a gentle and caring person, committed to activism, who gave endlessly of his time and labor for the well-being of his family (including his dog), his students and his community. We have also heard from Chen Chi-szu at Tamkang University, where Jim spent a Fulbright semester, that the mountains and rivers of the four directions, and especially Jade mountain, which he hiked, are missing our dear friend.

We would like to compose a longer tribute for Jim to be published in the Winter Newsletter. If you would like to contribute, please send your brief memories to Joni Adamson at [Joni.Adamson@asu.edu](mailto:Joni.Adamson@asu.edu).



*Muskrat at the Olentangy River Wetlands Research Park, Franklin County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

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## Host an International Scholar

by Patrick Murphy, University of Central Florida

An increasing number of international faculty members, especially from China, are receiving government grants to conduct research abroad for periods ranging from one semester to twelve months. Some of these faculty members are enthusiastic about conducting research or translation work in ecocriticism and are therefore seeking invitations from host universities where they can work with an ASLE member.

For many of these scholars, expenses are covered through some combination of government grant, home university support, and personal funds, requiring no financial support from their host university. They do, however, require an invitation letter, assistance with the obtaining of a J-1 visa, and an official location for their stay in the U.S.

Many larger institutions already have an office that handles the paperwork for the

J-1 visa application. This paperwork is necessary for international students as well as visiting faculty wishing to study at our universities. At UCF it is handled by the International Services Center (<http://www.intl.ucf.edu/>) and a quick review of that website would provide an idea of what is required. ASLE cannot provide administrative or institutional support of any kind for this endeavor; it serves exclusively as a point of contact information.

ASLE would like to facilitate hosting international scholars by adding a page to our website with information on people who are willing to host a visiting scholar. We would also like to post information on visiting scholar currently being hosted who may be available for speaking engagements at other US institutions. Members of ASLE who would be interested in hosting a visiting scholar should provide the following information so that interested international faculty will have a list of people to contact in order to pursue their goal of conducting research in the United States: name, institution, department, area of scholarly expertise, email address or phone number, and dates they are available to host. For members of ASLE currently hosting a scholar, please send in your name and institution, your scholar's name, home institution and area(s) of research, and where to best contact that scholar regarding a possible speaking engagement at another institution. Please send this information to [info@asle.org](mailto:info@asle.org). We will update the page on an ongoing basis.



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## Conference Updates

### **Society for the Study of Literature, Science, and the Arts**

by Helena Feder, East Carolina University

The annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Literature, Science, and the Arts (SLSA) was in Kitchener, Ontario, September 22-25. The conference featured two plenaries on this year's theme, "Pharmakon": Isabelle Stengers gave a talk entitled "Reclaiming the Pharmakon" and Bernard Stiegler discussed "A Pharmacology of the University." Abstracts for these plenaries and dozens of paper presentations, on topics ranging from killer apes to mathematical modeling, are available through the conference website:

<http://litsciarts.org/slsa11/program.php> . There were several panels on animal studies, biopolitics/biopower, phenomenology, extinction, agency, epidemics, invasive species and other topics of immediate interest to many ASLE members. Next year's SLSA will be held September 27-30 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

### **The Life Work of a "Southern Female Audubon"**

by Wes Berry, Western Kentucky University

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Emma Bell Miles Symposium on Southern Appalachian Culture and Nature met at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga on September 9-10, 2011. Centering on the gifted naturalist Emma Bell Miles--one of those rare "outsider" artists who wrote and illustrated her own books (*The Spirit of the Mountains*, *Strains from a Dulcimer*, and *Our Southern Birds*), published 15+ short stories in magazines like *Harper's*, and finished a number of paintings during her 40-years of life--the symposium brought together Appalachian old-time musicians and ballad singers; painters, quilters, and fabric artists; poets, storytellers, literary scholars and regional food enthusiasts. Miles reminds me of Walter Anderson of Mississippi's gulf coast--an artist driven by an obsession with wildlife (especially birds) who painted hundreds of watercolors and recorded his observations in journals (published post-mortem as *The Horn Island Logs of Walter Inglis Anderson*). Miles, however, managed her impressive artistic output while simultaneously raising children and struggling to feed a family with limited financial resources. At the symposium, which seemed more like a family reunion than a scholarly conference (much in the spirit of ASLE), scholars positioned Miles's work in the context of her contemporaries and also studied the roles of women in Appalachia, changing Appalachian foodways, and the transformation of landscapes as mountains are turned into gated developments for the wealthy and into moonscapes from the strip mining of Appalachian coal. Keynote speakers included Appalachian scholar Grace Toney Edwards, food scholar Elizabeth Engelhardt, and Miles's biographer Kay Gaston. Also, three members of the symposium planning committee--Catherine Meeks, Katerina Prajznerova, and Laurie Perry Vaughn--are ASLE members. It was a joyful gathering, despite the heavy topics (poverty, social injustices) that honest discussions of Appalachia bring about. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual symposium, to be held September 7-8, 2012, is already in the making. Y'all come. In the meantime, check out <http://www.lib.utc.edu/emmabellmiles.html> for more information.

### **American Society for Environmental History**

By Kate Christen, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

Environmental historians Kate Christen (Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute) and Mark Madison (National Conservation Training Center) gathered a mixed flock of researchers and practitioners from the natural and social sciences for an invited panel discussion on April 14 at the 2011 Annual American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) conference in Phoenix, AZ. The panel, titled "The Ends of Extinction: Perspectives and Long-Term Analysis from Conservation Biology, History and Literature," convened environmental historians, environmental literature experts, and conservation scientists, including ecologist Paul Beier (Northern Arizona University), who is the incoming President of the Society for Conservation Biology; ASLE's Immediate Past President, Annie Ingram (Davidson University); longtime ASLE and SCB member and environmental historian Julianne Warren (New York University); as well as environmental historian John Soluri (Carnegie Mellon University) and the two panel organizers. Our panelists considered the shared lessons and insights that might be gained from more interdisciplinary studies focused on extinction, a topic that has already been a focus for much work in conservation biology, environmental history, and

environmental literature. ASLE members may be interested in attending the 2012 American Society for Environmental History conference in Madison, WI; the conference website is: <http://www.asehmadison2012.com/>

## 2011 Report from ASLEC-ANZ

by Lesley Instone, President ASLEC-ANZ

This year the ASLEC-ANZ committee has seen a number of changes with our tireless CA Cranston stepping into the past president role, Deborah Jordan taking over the Treasurer reins from Barbara Holloway, Jesse Blackadder coming on board as ASLEC's student rep, and Lesley Instone taking on the President's role.

In Australia the mining boom is spawning a new environmental politics as farmers and environmentalists join forces to resist to expansion of new mines and coal seam gas projects. Issues of water, food security and access to land are key concerns, especially as significant areas of prime agricultural land are now coming under threat. Communities are 'locking the farm gate' to prevent exploration activities in sensitive areas, and are



*Black Rat Snake, Highbanks Metro Park, Delaware County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

seeking information from the (not very hopeful) experience of coal seam gas in the US. Issues of water have also been of concern in NZ as communities debate the management of rivers and fresh water policy. In settler nations such as Australia and NZ, the process of decolonising property and land relations is an ongoing task. In New Zealand, a report dubbed 'one of the most important set of documents ever issued on the legal status of indigenous knowledge in a multicultural settler society' was released in July towards moving NZ society in the direction of valuing rather than contesting Maori culture and identity: <http://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/news/media/wai262.asp>. As the report notes: "The environmental issues raised by the Wai 262 claim pose one essential challenge: how can the voice of matauranga Maori, etched as it is in the land, still speak in our changed circumstances? That is the question we attempt to answer ...". However, overshadowing other events has been the earthquake in Christchurch, NZ. The initial quake hit on Sept 4<sup>th</sup> last year, but was followed by a disastrous aftershock in February this year with the loss of 181 lives and extensive damage to the city including the iconic cathedral and Arts Centre.

Over the past six months ASLEC-ANZ members have been busy winning awards and generating publications. Our postgrad rep, Jesse Blackadder, has recently been awarded the 2011-12 Antarctic Arts Fellowship and will be leaving for Antarctica for a round trip voyage to Davis Station

(<http://www.antarctica.gov.au/media/news/2011/fellowship-to-tell-story-of-first-woman-to-see-antarctica>). You can follow Jess on her blog at [www.jesseblackadder.me](http://www.jesseblackadder.me). As well, Geoff Berry has been awarded a post-doctoral fellowship to research utopian thinking from an ecocritical perspective at the Ralahine Centre at the University of Limerick in Ireland. Keith Westwater, from Lower Hutt New Zealand, has been awarded a publication prize by Australian literary publisher Interactive Publications (IP) as winner of its 2011 'IP Picks' Best First Book competition for his collection of poems, *Tongues of Ash*, that will be published later this year. Alison Ballance won the NZ Royal Society science writing prize for *Kakapo: Rescued From the Brink of Extinction*.

Other member publications include Jesse Blackadder's novel *The Raven's Heart*, as well as Deborah Bird Rose's *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction*, now available from University of Virginia Press. Deborah Bird Rose and Thom Van Dooren produced a special issue of *Australian Humanities Review* entitled "Unloved Others: Death of the Disregarded in the Time of Extinctions" (<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/>) that also includes a contribution from Kate Rigby. Kate also has a forthcoming book *Ecocritical Theory: New European Perspectives*, co-edited with Axel Goodbody, UP of Virginia, and she launched Anne Elvey's poetry chapbook, *Claimed by Country* (Berry: PressPress 2010). Anne Elvey's second scholarly book, *The Matter of the Text: Material Engagements between Luke and the Five Senses* was published by Sheffield Phoenix Press in May. Founding ASLEC-ANZ member Dinah Hawken has released a new book of poems titled *The Leaf-Ride*.

A number of ASLEC members participated in ASLE conference in June, with Australian Helen Tiffin (co-author, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, 2010) a plenary speaker. As well, ASLEC members took part in the Watermark Literary Society biannual muster exploring the nature and place of the backyard. Presenters included Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin among others (<http://www.watermarkliterarysociety.asn.au/archives/muster2011.html>).

Lastly, in the pipeline is a new Australian ecocriticism journal. The "Green Grammar Dictionary" championed by CA is ongoing, and options for the next ASLEC conference in 2012 are at an early stage.

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## ASLE-India National Conference on New Bearings in Ecocriticism

by Dr Murali Sivaramakrishnan, President, ASLE-India

The National Conference on New Bearings in Ecocriticism organized by the Department of English, Pondicherry University, at Pondicherry, from the 20th to the 21st October 2011, drew considerable response from scholars, teachers, students and activists all over the Indian subcontinent. The various sessions focused on issues relating to the theory of ecocriticism, the psychological aspects, ideas and issues in ecofeminism(s), the eco in economics, fiction, poetry and drama, resistance and reciprocity, the self, subjectivity and nature. In all, the invited scholars and academics from outside the state and also from within, proffered a cross-section of Indian Ecocritics currently engaged in this direction.



The conference was inaugurated by Prof. B.P. Sanjay, Vice Chancellor of the Central University, Tamil Nadu, a scholar of international repute in the field of media policy, who in his inaugural address drew attention to the significance of media in our times and how it engages with humans and nature alike. Professor Murali Sivaramakrishnan, Professor and Head of the Department and also the

President of ASLE-India, gave the keynote address--an overview of a new direction in critical thinking that explored the historical and theoretical contexts of human-nature nexus while attempting to invoke certain conceptual issues and the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the environment. The ground beneath our feet is shrinking, he said, and the earth as we have understood it thus far is showing signs of decay. We are faced with crises in a hitherto unimagined scale--what are the literary and aesthetic connotations of this?

The coordinators of the Conference, Dr.T. Marx and Dr. Clement Lourdes, spoke on the occasion welcoming the gathering and presenting the relevance, scope and overview of the Conference.

In the following various academic sessions of the conference, teachers and research students from across the country and also from Sri Lanka (Indrajee De Zoysa) and North America (Mark A. Shryock, a research scholar currently working for his PhD with Professor Murali Sivaramakrishnan in the Department of English, Pondicherry University) presented papers and deliberated across various forums. All the faculty and students of the Department of English were also active participants--the debates and extramural discussions with delegates and scholars were quite animated and enthusiastic.

The findings of the conference could be summed up thus: Ecocriticism in its modes and modalities of theory and praxis has certainly come of age in the Indian subcontinent as revealed by the intimate preoccupations in this direction by a large number of Indian academics. The scholar from Sri Lanka who focused attention on the indigenous nature of the theory called forth for a new native orientation for a closer analysis of the human-nature nexus. There was considerable anxiety that, unlike a host of other theories that were developed over the last century (postmodernism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, new historicism, etc.) which have easily visible, accessible key-texts and key-thinkers who have helped to originate critical thinking and concepts in those directions, ecological criticism cannot yet be as easily identified. We need to recognize that this aspect of ecocriticism perhaps only points toward, and accounts for, its multiplicity and hybridity in diverse cultural contexts and locales.

This Conference "New Bearings" has been a search for alter/native critical thinking from/for the current times. As such it has been quite successful--the history and archeology of the human-nature nexus and divide were inquired into, the theoretical concepts and tools were closely examined, and finally, seminal texts were interrogated and their contexts analyzed.

The abstracts are available at the [ASLE-India website](#).



In the Annual general body meeting of ASLE-India held alongside, four Regional Zonal Joint-Secretaries were also elected to continue the work of ASLE India from different parts of the country: Rishikesh Kumar Singh (New Delhi), Poonam Dwivedi (New Delhi), Mir Nurul Islam (Hyderabad), and Tanveer Hasan (Mysore) (also a Member of the Executive Council).

The Two-Day National Conference came to a close at 6.30 p.m. on the 21st after a Valedictory Session where all participants were awarded Certificates of Merit.

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## Member News

**Joni Adamson, Elizabeth Dodd, and Dave Rintoul** rescued a tiny, bedraggled kitten abandoned at the Goose Pond bird sanctuary during the ASLE Field Trip led by Lee Sterrenberg. Taken to the Bloomington Animal Shelter, "Lilypad" was too young for immediate adoption, but within six weeks was spayed and adopted.



*Young Lilypad. She is being held and warmed by rescuer Joni Adamson.*

**Lilace and Jimmy Guignard** started the blog **Greetings from Pipeline Road 7** about the struggles of living local in rural PA over the Marcellus Shale--smack in the heart of the natural gas boom in the northeast. The couple is combining their backgrounds in rhetorical analysis, narrative scholarship, sense of place, and social and environmental justice with their real lives as parents and homesteaders trying stand up for a place and community. You can visit the blog at [pipelineroad7.wordpress.com](http://pipelineroad7.wordpress.com) and join in the conversation. You can also visit their [Facebook page](#) to explore the relevant articles and other resources gathered there.

Current ASLE President **Ursula K. Heise** was awarded a 2011 Guggenheim Fellowship for her project **Cultures of Extinction: Narrative, Database, and Biodiversity Loss**. She writes the following about her project:  
"At the beginning of the third millennium, humankind is witnessing a species extinction of a magnitude that has only occurred five times before in the 3.5 billion years of life on Earth. Biologists estimate that up to 50 percent of currently existing species may disappear by the end of the century, with consequences possibly more serious than climate change. *Cultures of Extinction* explores how this crisis manifests itself culturally across a range of genres and practices. Over the last three decades, a flood of popular-scientific books, novels, poems, feature

films, documentaries, photographs, paintings, musical compositions, installation artworks, and computer games have engaged with species extinction. How do such works rethink scientific findings in aesthetic forms of various kinds? What relationship do they establish between human history and the history of other species? What view of modernization and globalization processes and their risks do they imply? What challenges do they formulate for our current conceptions of the human, and what vision for the future? Examining these questions is ultimately meant to contribute to current debates over how environmentalist thought and writing might be able to move beyond narratives of nature's decline that have shaped them for the last two centuries.

*Cultures of Extinction* explores the basic science of biodiversity loss and some of its conceptual and methodological difficulties. In the public discussion, the scientific findings are often conveyed by tragic and elegiac modes that are both effective and problematic for environmental advocacy. But global biodiversity databases and red lists of endangered species, very different cultural genres, also engage with species loss in a kind of 'nature writing' that can usefully be understood as a new form of epic, and that expresses both ecological and cultural risk perceptions. Contemporary theories in disciplines such as anthropology, literary studies, philosophy, and political science that revolve around the concept of 'posthumanism' engage at a more abstract level with relationships between species and with human-caused biodiversity loss. Such a reconceptualization of the 'human' broadly understood leads to a new perspective on inequality among very differently situated humans in global and cosmopolitan contexts, and promises to reshape humans' relationship to nonhuman species."

Member **Shoko Itoh** of Hiroshima University writes: "The Society for Ecocriticism Studies in Japan (SES-Japan) published a critical companion book in 2011, *Listening to Alternative Voices: Reading Contemporary Ecocritical Literature: 103 Works from the Viewpoints of Ethnicity and Gender* (in Japanese), through the Japanese publishing company Otowa-Tsurumi (Tokyo). This book, the fifth publication from the Society after the translation of *The Future of Environmental Criticism* by Lawrence Buell, consists of 10 chapters, with introductory essays covering various ethnic groups. It presents 73 works, with outlines, information about the authors, critical analyses, citations, and bibliographies. In addition, 30 columns provide views on the current state of ecocritical studies, mainly based on academic research, nonfictional ecocritical works, and documentaries. This guide to the history of ecocritical literary studies covers 103 Anglophone works, including works by Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, Nadine Gordimer, N. Scott Momaday, Gary Snyder, Ruth Ozeki, Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson, the Eagles, and Spike Lee, as well as the movies *Deep Impact* and *Avatar*, among many others. As indicated by its subtitle, the book features perspectives on ethnicity and gender. The ten chapters consider the following subjects, which transcend ethnicity: pollution and bodies, the rediscovery of nature, nature and colonialism, the history of land and its loss, narrating life, food and agriculture, the collapse of the ecosystem, activism and environmental justice, cities and border crossing, and ecocritical music and film. This book is expected to be read by general readers and college students, as well as students of environmental studies, and contributes to developing ecocriticism and environmental literary studies in Japan as well as for international readers For more information, please see: <http://ns1.shudo-u.ac.jp/~shiotah/ecoc.html>."

Nature writer **Bill Sherwonit's** book *Changing Paths: Travels and Meditations in Alaska's Arctic Wilderness* has been featured in the online discussion forum "America's WILD READ." Sherwonit acted as the forum's guest moderator for four weeks beginning in mid-October 2011. For those who haven't yet heard about it, WILD READ was born in spring 2011 and connects a growing community of writers, readers, teachers, students, scientists, conservation activists, and other

"nature enthusiasts" who wish to explore and discuss our species' complex relationships with wild nature, using books (and essays) as the starting point. To date the forum has included discussions of writings by such notable authors as Aldo Leopold, E.O. Wilson, and Robert Michael Pyle. Those interested can learn more about America's WILD READ at <http://wildread.blogspot.com>.

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## ASLE News Notes

### Member News

Whether you got a new job, won an award, or did something interesting, enlightening, or exciting, we want to know what you're up to! If you have some news to share with other ASLE members, and it doesn't "fit" into the Bookshelf, PhD, or Emeritus categories, please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)) with the Subject heading "Member News."

### ASLE Emeritus

ASLE News honors those ASLE members retired or retiring from teaching. If you would like to acknowledge someone in this new feature--or if you yourself will be retiring during the coming academic year--please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)). We will include a brief account of scholarly interests, the institutions of employment and years taught in the next newsletter.

### ASLE PhDs

Have you or one of your students recently defended a dissertation? If so, ASLE News wants to know. Each issue, we include announcements commemorating those members who have recently completed their doctoral work. If you would like to be included in this feature, please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)) with the dissertation title, degree-granting institution, and committee members.

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