



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



# ASLE News

Spring 2011

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## Bloomington 2011: New Adventures in Ecocriticism

by Ursula K. Heise, ASLE President, Stanford University

One of the most fascinating things about putting together the program for a big conference is to see the snapshot it delivers of the state of the discipline. Reading the more than 850 submissions all of you submitted for Bloomington, selecting keynote speakers and putting together panels and thematic streams has made me think anew about the trajectory of ecocriticism since it emerged on the scene in the early 1990s. A trajectory of extraordinary success, unquestionably! From its initial core areas in British Romanticism and American nature writing, ecocriticism has spread out over many periods, genres, and regions; classes on environmental literature and ecocriticism are taught at a wide variety of universities; and Ph.D. candidates with an emphasis in the area often find jobs even in these recessionary times because their work stands out from that of their peers through its innovative perspective on the interface of writing and nature.

Much of this success has been achieved because ecocriticism has demonstrated its relevance to most areas of study in Departments of English and, as yet to a lesser extent, in Departments of Comparative Literature and other national or regional literatures. Our conference program shows this astonishing breadth, with panels that range from early modern literature to science fiction, from creative writing to ecopedagogy, and from African and Australian to Asian and Latin American literatures. Three of our keynote speakers, Zakes Mda from South Africa, Anacristina Rossi from Costa Rica, and Helen Tiffin from Australia, will help push our conversation about these areas and cultures further.

But there's also a different kind of diversity that is beginning to manifest itself in the work of ASLE members. It involves genres and media that are only beginning to be considered in English Departments and sometimes reach squarely beyond the printed text: children's literature in its rich engagement with animals, graphic novels in their exploration of metamorphic bodies, animated film with its emphasis on the agency of what we usually consider inanimate, bioart and green architecture in their fusions of organic and technological components, and the enormous range of innovative digital data sources and visualization techniques that are generating new forms of knowledge and imagination about nature. These areas of research aren't mere additions to the ecocritical canon; they transform how we think about our overall agenda. Take animated film, a genre that I confess I'm an enthusiast of: From Walt Disney's *Bambi* (1942) to Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and Gore Verbinski's *Rango* (2011), animation has reached millions of spectators around the globe with imaginative, in-depth explorations of animals, habitats and humans' relations to them. Who can resist being drawn into the lizard lawman's detective work on the "aquatic conundrum" of the Western desert landscape, which turns out to be ecological and

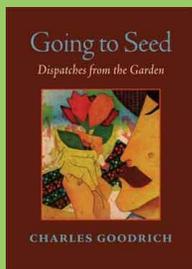
## ASLE Bookshelf

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).

**Borlik, Todd.** *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

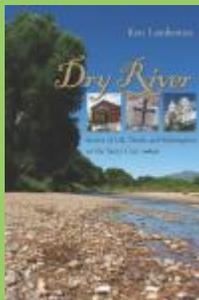
Cuadra, Pablo Antonio. *Siete árboles contra el atardecer*.  
**Steven F. White, ed.** Madrid: Veintisieste Letras, 2011.

**Currie, John (Ed).** *Environment and Ecology: Stories*. Toronto: Life Rattle Press, 2011.



**Goodrich, Charles.** *Going to Seed: Dispatches from the Garden*. Eugene, OR: Silverfish Review Press, 2010.

**Himmer, Steve.** *The Bee-Loud Glade*. Kensington, MD: Atticus Books, 2011.



**Lamberton, Ken.** *Dry River: Stories of Life, Death, and Redemption on the Santa Cruz*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011.

economic as well as political? By highlighting what aesthetic and cultural traditions such works draw on, how they represent and (often strategically) misrepresent nature, ecocritics reach into territory beyond established literary canons, and begin to draw a different map of the cultural landscape than the focus on the printed text alone is able to achieve. An exciting new venture indeed!

New theoretical paradigms are part and parcel of this reconfigured landscape. Digital humanities and medical humanities are emergent areas of research that overlap with ecocriticism in important respects, but—due in part, no doubt, to our conference topic—it is animal studies that stands out on our program by the sheer number of submissions we received. Animal studies is unfolding in an as yet unsettled disciplinary terrain, with footholds in biology, philosophy, anthropology, history, cultural studies and literary criticism. Dozens of panels at our conference will explore how recent reconfigurations of the animal in these disciplines transform our ideas about what it means to be human and not to be, about how to use other species and to be used by them, about how and what to breed and eat, and how to be inhabited and consumed by nonhumans. A smaller set of panels running in parallel reminds us that plants, too, need to form part of such a fundamental reimagining of our relationship to other species.



American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) in winter plumage, Franklin Cty, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

What this adds up to is an image of a research area truly coming into its own - drawing on the concepts, methods and strengths of traditional literary and cultural studies, but also venturing into new intellectual and critical territory that requires innovative conceptual maps. No longer just an interesting new supplement to the study of literature, ecocriticism is beginning to reconfigure the basic disciplinary lay of the land. I can't wait to explore these new terrains with you in Bloomington.

## Notes from the Managing Director

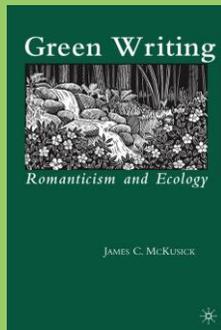
By Amy McIntyre

It seems difficult to believe that our conference in Victoria was nearly two years ago, and that our next one is right around the corner. Since it is the only time I get to interact face to face with some of ASLE's members, I look forward to it with great anticipation each time. This year I will see more faces than ever before, as we expect approximately 800 participants to descend upon Bloomington!

ASLE membership continues to hold steady, and we are constantly getting new members from far corners of the globe, which is very exciting. Some newer members hail from Brazil, Cameroon, and Thailand, so scholars there are becoming aware of us and of the interesting work to be done in the field of environmental literature. Last year, I wrote that we had members from every state but North Dakota; now we have three members who live there!

Thanks to the dedication of our membership, we have also been able to remain stable in our finances. At the end of 2010 ASLE held total assets of nearly

**Maloo, Joan.** *Among the Ancients: Adventures in the Eastern Old Growth.* Washington, D.C.: Ruka Press, 2011.

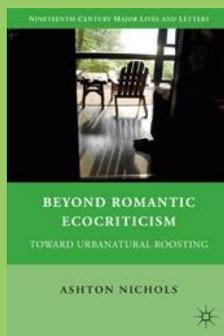


**McKusick, James C.** *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.



**McMillin, T.S.** *The Meaning of Rivers: Flow and Reflection in American Literature.* University of Iowa Press, 2011. (Part of the University of Iowa's *American Land and Life* series)

**Nichols, B. Ashton.** *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting.* New York: Macmillan, 2011.



\$165,000, within about \$1000 of the previous year's total.

I am always interested in hearing from our members, either with more detailed questions about the organization, or with suggestions for improvements we can make, or with ideas about new programs the organization should consider. Feel free to call or email me anytime to talk about ASLE. I can be reached at [info@asle.org](mailto:info@asle.org) or 603-357-7411.



*Beaver dam, Battelle-Darby Creek Metro Park, Franklin Cty, OH.  
Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

## Graduate Student Page

If you want to suggest a topic of interest to our graduate student members, please contact Graduate Student Liaisons Sarah Jaquette Ray ([siray@uas.alaska.edu](mailto:siray@uas.alaska.edu)) or Jill Anderson ([jeander1@olemiss.edu](mailto:jeander1@olemiss.edu)).

### Conference Opportunities for Graduate Students

The 2011 ASLE Conference will offer exciting opportunities for graduate students and new members of the profession.

**Preconference workshop:** Graduate Students and experienced faculty will explore the opportunities and challenges of an academic career. In "A Workshop for Graduate Students and Academic Professionals" facilitators and participants will offer practical advice and shared wisdom for living an emotionally, ethically, and spiritually healthy life in academia. Read the full description at <http://www.indiana.edu/~asle2011/pre1.shtml>.

**Concurrent sessions:** On Wednesday afternoon there will be a panel on entering the profession, "Building your Professional Identity: Funding, Publishing, and Conferencing," and on Friday morning the session "Adapting to the Changing Academic Market" will discuss the academic career in literature and environment and ways to think about a career path. See the full program at: <http://www.indiana.edu/~asle2011/program.shtml>.

**Individual Mentoring:** The Mentoring Program, a cornerstone of ASLE's community-building efforts since the inception of our organization, will once again co-sponsor one-on-one professional mentoring meetings with experienced faculty and department chairs. The one-hour meetings offer mentees an opportunity to ask specific questions about the ASLE community, preparing for the job market, working conditions at small and large institutions, the relationship between

**Redoute, Karolyn.** *Prayers of the Shaman*. Austin: Plain View Press, 2011.

**Wall, Eamonn.** *Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011.

**Weltzien, O. Alan.** *To Kilimanjaro and Back (Poems)*. Nacogdoches, TX: Stephen Austin University Press, 2011.

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## ASLE Seeks GSL

We are currently seeking a new Graduate Student Liaison (GSL) for a two-year term. GSLs serve ASLE by representing the interests and concerns of graduate students at meetings of the EC, and they work closely with ASLE's Graduate Mentoring Program Coordinator in shared pursuit of this goal. The term is two years, one as junior GSL and the second as senior GSL with voting privileges on the ASLE EC. For a full description of GSL rights and responsibilities, see the website at <http://www.asle.org/site/about/policies/liasons/>.

If you would like to be considered for a GSL position, please submit a formal letter of application to current president Ursula Heise ([uheise@stanford.edu](mailto:uheise@stanford.edu)) by May 31 for a term beginning in July 2011. Please include a statement that describes your specific interests in serving ASLE, the length and nature of your involvement in the organization, a description of your professional interests (particularly as they connect to literature and environment), and the names and contact information of three faculty references.

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scholarship and teaching, and non-academic work options. Beginning graduate students benefit from hearing about work in the field as they begin to imagine a professional horizon beyond graduate school. Graduate students nearing completion of their programs, or those who are seeking academic positions, ask questions or talk about preparing a job portfolio. One-hour conferences take place throughout the week, mostly during concurrent session slots that do not conflict with community events, including plenary talks and dinners. If you are interested in arranging a professional mentoring meeting, please contact the Coordinator of the ASLE Mentoring Program, Mark C. Long, at [mlong@keene.edu](mailto:mlong@keene.edu).

Remember to use the Grad Student Blog (<http://aslegrad.wordpress.com/>) to make arrangements for the conference -- get help with travel, dorm-sharing inquiries, and whatever else you might want to discuss before getting to Bloomington.

## Graduate Program Spotlight: Ecocriticism, Environmental Studies and Interdisciplinarity at the University of North Texas

by Ashley Reis

Deeply invested in interdisciplinary Environmental Studies, The University of North Texas takes pride in its numerous environmental and sustainability initiatives, as well as its commitment to addressing economic, social, and cultural environmental issues. In keeping with this mission, the English department provides undergraduate and graduate students with ample opportunities to study literature from an environmental, ecological, and/or ecocritical standpoint.

The department has been building ecocriticism as one of its focus areas and now offers courses addressing fundamental issues of this growing field of literary study (such as "Literature and the Environment") as well as courses with a more specific focus that address particular areas of ecocritical interest (like "Chicana/o Environmental Thought"). More specifically, professors Priscilla Ybarra and Ian Finseth both have noted interests in the intersections between environmental history and environmental studies, including canonical as well as ethnic American literary traditions. Specifically, Dr. Ybarra--former ASLE Diversity Coordinator--integrates more diverse approaches to the natural environment, focusing particularly on the development of Chicana/o environmental thought. Furthermore, following the work of prominent environmental scholars, Dr. Ybarra's work problematizes certain fundamental frameworks of ecocriticism such as definitions of "nature writing" and concepts such as "wilderness." Dr. Finseth specializes in nineteenth-century American and African American literature, with particular research interests in race, ecocriticism, science, and religious history. His first book, *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1770-1860* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), examines the role of environmental thought and images of the natural world in the debate over human bondage in the early American republic. His current book project will introduce an analysis of literary representations of ecstasy and dissociative experience, focusing on the cognitive and neurophenomenological dimensions of the human encounter with nature.

The English department also promotes interdisciplinary work more broadly. Graduate students can take advantage of courses offered by the department of Philosophy and Religious Studies which hosts the nation's leading program in Environmental Ethics and Philosophy--home to such prominent scholars as J. Baird Callicott, Eugene Hargrove, Patricia Glazebrook, Robert Figueroa, Irene Klaver, and Ricardo Rozzi--and the Center for Environmental Philosophy. Students may also take courses within the department of Anthropology, which offers a focused graduate degree in Environmental and Ecological Anthropology.

More generally, UNT's Office of Sustainability fosters campus-wide awareness of environmental challenges while collaborating with students, faculty, staff, and administration to advance sustainable practices and behaviors, most specifically the University's goal to achieve carbon-neutrality; and the student-run North Texas Energy and Environment Club promotes environmental awareness, hosts environmental fairs and workshops, promotes initiatives from the Office of Sustainability, and encourages student involvement in environmental issues.

Furthermore, UNT has recently partnered with many organizations in the North Texas region to implement numerous environmental initiatives. Such initiatives include, but are not limited to, the Waterways Project, a biennial water conference at UNT which takes an interdisciplinary approach to addressing critical water issues; the Trust for Land, which works with North Texas communities to preserve natural areas and create parklands; the Prairie and Timbers chapter of the Audubon Society, which offers programs related to wildlife, ecology, conservation, and birds; and the Cross Timbers Group of the Sierra Club, which works to protect the wild spaces of North Texas.

For more information about environmental literary studies at UNT, please feel free to contact Dr. Ybarra ([Priscilla.Ybarra@unt.edu](mailto:Priscilla.Ybarra@unt.edu)), Dr. Finseth ([finseth@unt.edu](mailto:finseth@unt.edu)), Ph.D. student Ashley E. Reis ([AshleyReis@my.unt.edu](mailto:AshleyReis@my.unt.edu)), or visit the English department's website at [www.english.unt.edu](http://www.english.unt.edu).

***Is there a Grad Program you want to see spotlighted?***

College and University programs related to literature and the environment, like the field itself, are emerging and shifting all the time. Help us keep up and share with the ASLE community what is going on where you are, or find out more about what is happening in other places. Is there a program you know and love and want to share with ASLE members? Is there a particular program you want more information about? Please e-mail *ASLE News* editor Catherine Meeks at [catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu).



*After the spring floods, Big Darby Creek, Franklin Cty, OH.  
Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

## Affiliated Conferences Reports

### ASLE-Affiliated Panel at MLA: Queer Ecology

At the MLA Convention this January in Los Angeles, Sarah McFarland of Northwestern State University of Louisiana moderated an ASLE-sponsored panel on Queer Ecology organized by ASLE-MLA Liaison Scott Knickerbocker of the College of Idaho. The panel included Katie J. Hogan of Carlow College presenting her paper "Green Angels in America: Aesthetics of Equity," which explores Tony Kushner's play, *Angels in America*. She looks at "how the play enacts an expanded definition of the environment by presenting a searing political critique of injustices aimed at sexual and racial minorities while also honoring human diversity in deeply imaginative and creative ways, demonstrating what environmental justice scholar Mindy Thompson Fullilove calls 'aesthetics of equity.'" Also on the panel was Jill Anderson, of the University of Mississippi, presenting her paper "'Warm Blood and Live Semen and Rich Marrow and Wholesome Flesh!': A Queer Ecological Reading of Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man*," and Sarah Ensor, of Cornell University, presenting "Spinster Ecology: Rachel Carson, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Nonreproductive Futurity." In her paper, Ensor contends "that a 'spinster' might exemplify a different environmental ethic of care, one that slants the otherwise privileged directness of biological lineage." Lastly, Eric Siegel of the University of Iowa presented his paper "Queer Nature Writing: The Queer Ecological Relations in Reinaldo Arenas's *Before Night Falls*," which "analyzes the memoir of the gay Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990), who lived during one of the most repressive eras of the Cuban revolution; under Fidel Castro, an oppressive set of state policies around masculinity and homosexuality marginalized Arenas."

### Society of Early Americanists: Green Early America

by Thomas Hallock, U. South Florida St. Petersburg, President, Bartram Trail Conference

The Society of Early Americanists ([www.societyofearlyamericanists.org](http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org)) held its biennial meeting last March at the Sheraton Society Hill in Philadelphia. ASLE was well represented by a joint panel, sponsored by the two groups, convened in a conference room that ran over an old creek bed. But the breadth and quality of the papers commanded more attention than the musty smell (or sound of jackhammers outside), testifying to the possibilities for "green" scholarship on early America. Karen Aumann, a doctoral candidate in History at New York University, kicked off the session with her talk, "Salzburger Kitchen Gardens in Early Georgia." Kathy O. McGill, from George Mason University (also an historian) shed new light on a familiar figure with "'I Am My Self Head Gardener': Eliza Lucas Pinckney and Communication through Horticulture." And Greta LaFleur, a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Pennsylvania, explored intertwined constructions of sexuality and botanic science with her paper, "Precipitous Sensations: Toward a Botanical Reading of the 'Unsex'd Females' of Early National Fiction." This session marked the third such ASLE-sponsored session at the SEA.

After the session, ideas for further collaboration continued to circulate. "Why not a shared off-year conference?" some asked. What further steps can we take to expand the dialogue? As the liaison between the two groups, I welcome your suggestions. Next October 21-23, the Bartram Trail Conference will gather in Macon, Georgia for its biannual meeting. The BTC offers still one more option for cross-pollination between ecocritics and students of the early republic. To learn more about the upcoming conference, go to the BTC website, [www.bartramtrail.org](http://www.bartramtrail.org).

## Asian Conferences on Environmental Literature and Ecocriticism: Korea and Taiwan

by Bruce Allen, Seisen University, Executive Council, ASLE-Japan

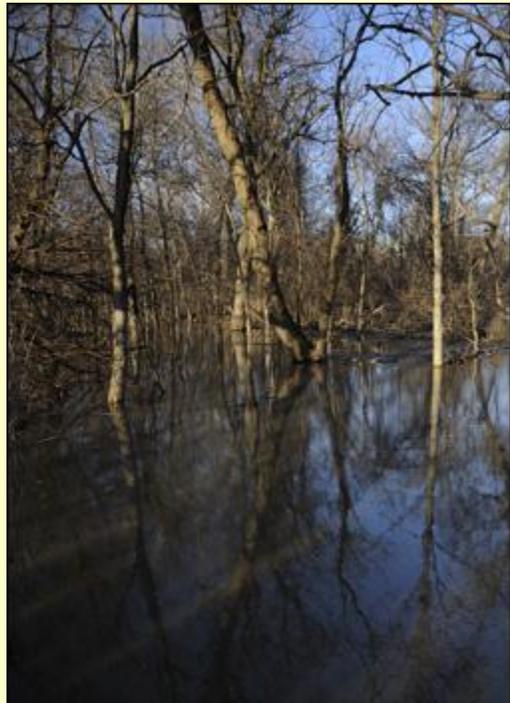
Two major international conferences held in Korea and Taiwan during the last two months of 2010 demonstrated the remarkable growth of the study of ecocriticism and environmental literature in Asia. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ASLE-Korea and ASLE-Japan Joint Symposium on Literature and Environment, titled "Ecology, Consumption, and Otherness" was held at Sungkyunkwang University in Seoul from Oct. 30-Nov. 1. And, as Greta Gaard reported in the last issue of the newsletter, the 5<sup>th</sup> Tamkang International Conference on Ecological Discourse, titled "Ecocriticism in Asia: Reorienting Modernity, Reclaiming Nature?" was held at Tamkang University in Tamsui, Taiwan from Dec. 16-18.

Amidst the wide range of issues discussed, common themes included the need for expanding the environmental literature canon to include more non-Western, specifically Asian writing, and the need to expand our conceptions of ecocriticism to deal with the challenges of globalization and world literatures. These challenges were nicely brought into focus by a question raised by Prof. Wong-Chung Kim of Sungkyunkwan University, retold by Scott Slovic in his keynote address in Taiwan; "We cite America, but America doesn't cite us. Why don't you quote us?" Considerable effort was made at both conferences to address this question and to try to remedy the unbalance it reveals as we seek to make ecocritical studies more adequate to global realities.

The conference in Korea gave particular attention to questions regarding our ways of eating and consuming, and their connection to ecological sustainability. Patrick Murphy's keynote speech "Consumption as Addiction, Sustainability as Recovery" placed these questions in the framework of a global literature that offers hope for recovery. The Taiwan conference, in turn, marked an important step toward international recovery and reconciliation as a large delegation of 12 eminent Chinese scholars was allowed to attend a conference in Taiwan. Historical tensions involving Asian and Western countries were examined in the wider context of shared environmental and ecological threats.

In Taiwan, Linda Hogan spoke on a related theme of problems of consumption and addiction.

She started by telling of her experiences with Native American culture and then connected them to the global scale, asking us to consider what happens to both humans and nature in cultures that have a "lack of nourishing." She challenged us, as academics, to go beyond a complacent attitude toward our "falling and cracking" world and to make our work an "offering" to the world.



*Vernal pool, Olentangy River Wetlands Research Park, Franklin Cty, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

These two conferences gave strong testimony to the tremendous surge of interest in ecocritical issues and writing in Asia, and to the expanding possibilities for building bridges toward international cooperation.

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## ALECC Update

by Catriona Sandilands, York University  
President, Association for Literature, Environment and Culture in Canada

From August 19 to 21, 2010, ALECC held its inaugural conference, "The Ecological Community," at Cape Breton University in Sydney, Nova Scotia; (now) past-president Richard Pickard and local coordinator Afra Kavanagh developed an outstanding program of events that included provocative plenary lectures, memorable readings by and conversations between Nova Scotia authors, thoughtfully-organized paper sessions and excellent field trips ranging from hiking in Cape Breton Highlands National Park to a toxic tour of the (in)famous Sydney Tar Ponds. Thank you to ASLE for providing seed money for this conference, to the many staff and volunteers from CBU (especially Sheila Christie) who laboured long and hard to make the conference such a success, and especially to Richard and Afra for their leadership.

Certainly, it will be a daunting task to attempt to equal this success in our second biannual conference, which will be held in August, 2012. A call for conference proposals is imminent, and we look forward to being able to invite you to a different part of the country next summer. This year, of course, many of our members will be attending the ASLE conference in Bloomington in June, and we

welcome anyone interested in ALECC to our Annual General Meeting, currently scheduled for Thursday, June 23 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.



*Distinctive Pileated Woodpecker holes,  
Battelle-Darby Creek Metro Park, Franklin  
Cty, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.*

For 2011, we welcome to the Executive Board--and to the task of conference organizing, among other things--our new Vice President Keri Cronin from Brock University (whose wonderful new book, by the way, will be on display at the ASLE authors' reception), as well as Members-at-Large Nancy Holmes and Rhona McAdam. We also acknowledge the important contributions of our departing Executive members, Brian Bartlett, Anne Milne, and especially Pamela Banting, whose advocacy has played such a significant role in bringing us to the point at which we find ourselves now: a truly growing and thriving community.

In addition to our first formal conference as an organization, ALECC members have played important roles in several other exciting events since last spring. Notably, in October, 2010, Robert Boschman and Mario Trono

from Mount Royal University in Calgary hosted the highly successful conference "Under Western Skies: Climate, Culture and Change in Western North America," which included scholars and activists from an international range of locations and disciplinary traditions. Also in the spirit of fostering interdisciplinary exchange, Lisa Szabo and Liza Piper from the University of Alberta hosted a very rich workshop in March, 2011 that brought together ALECC members with members of the Network in Canadian History and the Environment (NiCHE) for a three-day workshop entitled "Cross-Pollination: Seeding New Ground for Environmental Thought and Activism across the Arts and Humanities." ALECC was proud to be a formal co-sponsor of this latter event.

In 2011-12, we are undertaking several new initiatives to continue to build ALECC's presence in Canada both as a scholarly organization and as a larger body for the study and promotion of literature and the environment in Canada. We are redesigning our website to make it more interactive and responsive to the needs of our membership, which includes faculty, students, and members of the larger Canadian literary community (we may even venture into the complex world of social media, so watch for us on Facebook and Twitter!). In the same spirit of outreach, we are planning a public reading series that will highlight the works of Canadian authors and bring questions of literature and environment further into an audience beyond academia; at present, we are planning local events in Nova Scotia, Southern Ontario (bilingual), and on Vancouver Island. These readings will be podcast on our redesigned website. An ALECC-relevant October, 2011 event in Toronto hosted by York University, "Green Words/Green Worlds: Environmental Literature and Politics in Canada," will also include a public panel on environmental poetry and/as politics, part of a roster of presenters that boasts a significant ALECC presence.

No discussion of our outreach would be complete, however, without a mention of our exceptional online publication, *The Goose*, which can be accessed at <http://www.alecc.ca/goose.php> and includes thoughtful essays, regional features, poetry and photography, and a great selection of book reviews from the vibrant literary and scholarly culture we have in Canada circulating around questions literary and environmental. Thanks, here, to Lisa Szabo and Paul Huebener for their ongoing hard work in editing this publication; we encourage all ASLE members to read it and to consider contributing to these conversations in the future.

We look forward to seeing you at ASLE in Bloomington, and to inviting you back into our back yard in August, 2012.

PS: For those who are interested in the UVIC bunny saga, all of the campus rabbits are now gone (officially: mostly, but not only, relocated). But the drama now has international implications: the rabbit sanctuary in Whitehouse, Texas to which about 280 of them were sent is under threat of being declared illegal. See the February 15, 2011 story in the *Victoria Times-Colonist* at <http://www.timescolonist.com/technology/UVic+rabbits+face+eviction+Texas/4284818/story.html#ixzz1KfMABbBs>

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## OSLE-India Update

by Rayson K. Alex, Secretary, OSLE-India

Creating a strong base for ecocriticism in Indian academia, the Organisation for Studies in Literature and Environment-India (OSLE-India) continues to supervise research scholars. OSLE-India believes this engagement is the most important one in developing an understudied discipline in India like ecocriticism. Two research scholars from Madras Christian College affiliated with the University of Madras, Tamil Nadu (the place where ecocriticism was born in India), Ms. S. Susan Deborah and Mrs. Aleena Manoharan, have submitted their doctoral dissertations to the University of Madras. Ms. Deborah's dissertation titled *An Ecocritical Analysis of the Oral Narratives of Aravanigal at T. Kalluppatti, Madurai District, Tamil Nadu*, which was completed after conducting extensive fieldwork, analysed the patterns of home of a group of transgendered persons in relation to *tinai*, a social order of the early Tamil people. Mrs. Manoharan submitted a dissertation titled *Bioregional Reading of Select Plays of Jack Davis*. OSLE-India provides academic resources and research assistance to a number of research scholars from various parts of India.

OSLE-India has also been providing guidance in making ecocriticism syllabi and providing study materials for Universities and Colleges in India. As part of the syllabus of ecocriticism in Women's Christian College, Chennai, OSLE-India in collaboration with its affiliate, Mudugar-Kurumbar Research Centre, Kerala State, organized a study tour for eighteen students of ecocriticism, at Attappady, a tribal belt of Kerala. The students spent two days with a Mudugar tribal community researching on ecological aspects of various topics like Mudugar songs, architecture, social structure, totems, children's games and myths. Read the report that *The Hindu*, a leading newspaper in India, published on the ecotrip here: <http://www.go-nxq.com/?p=8628>



Muskrat, Olentangy River Wetlands Research Park, Franklin County, Ohio. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman.

Also during the past year, Dr. Nirmal Selvamony (President, OSLE-India), Mr. Rayson K. Alex (Secretary, OSLE-India), and Ms. S. Susan Deborah (Study Circle Convenor, OSLE-India) designed a new three-semester course for students of the Integrated Masters Programme in Sciences at the Central University of Tamil Nadu at Thiruvavur, South India. The extensive use of multimedia (video and audio) documents, mixture of ecocritical and environmental science

concepts, and the methodology of ethnographic fieldwork are the distinct highlights of the course. The objectives of the course are to create ecological consciousness among the students and to encourage using ecological concepts to analyze culture. Dr. Nirmal Selvamony also taught a course this past year on Indian Ecocriticism, Indian aesthetics and Indian Art in the University of Cleveland, Ohio. OSLE-India considers this engagement as an International ecocritical collaboration with the West.

The Media Wing of OSLE-India, The Ecomedia Team, has initiated an ecological

and cultural study of the language of Mudugar with a fund from Firebird Foundation, U.S.A. For the past year OSLE-India has been doing a project on documenting the oral traditions of Mudugar and Kurumbar (tribal communities) living in Attappady, Kerala State. The project is nearing completion with the production of five documentaries on the life and culture of the Mudugar community. The Principal Researcher of these projects, Mr. Rayson K. Alex (Secretary, OSLE-India), teaches at the Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvavur, South India. The various activities and engagements of OSLE-India's Media Wing can be viewed at <http://mkrcentre.blogspot.com/>.

Lastly, the third issue of the *Indian Journal of Ecocriticism*, published by Sarup and Sons, New Delhi and OSLE-India, Chennai, was out in September 2010. Some of the contributors in the issue include Freya Mathews, John Seed, Patricia Monaghan, Xiaojing Zhou, Peter I-min Huang and Swanalatha Rangarajan.

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## Member News

ASLE co-founder **Mike Branch** is writing new monthly blog essays for *High Country News*. These "Rants from the Hill" are short, mostly comic essays on the challenges and pleasures of life in the high-elevation desert of the western Great Basin, and so far have covered topics including how to wave properly from a steering wheel, what to do when your home is invaded by millions of mating harvester ants, and how to enjoy throwing things in frustration off a mountaintop. Mike's "Rants from the Hill" may be found at the *High Country News* site ([www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org)), but below are direct links to several sample Rants:

"Customer Cranky" (November, 2010)

<http://www.hcn.org/blogs/range/customer-cranky>

"Them! and Us" (October, 2010)

<http://www.hcn.org/blogs/range/them-and-us>

"A Thousand-Mile Walk to Home" (August, 2010)

<http://www.hcn.org/blogs/range/a-thousand-mile-walk-to-home>

Two poems from **Charles Goodrich's** new book, *Going to Seed*, have been read by Garrison Keillor on "The Writer's Almanac," and one of them will be included in Keillor's next anthology, *Good Poems, American Places*, due out in the fall of 2011.

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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.

## **Contact Information**

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