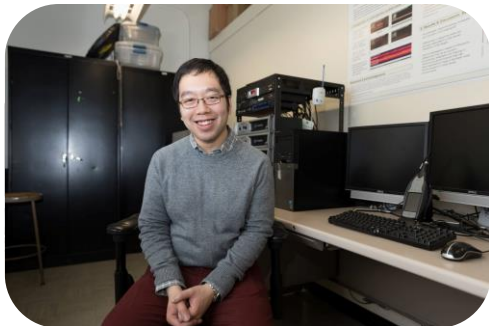


2ND MESSENGER



Winter at Regents Hall

New faces in the Biology Department



Dr. Norman Lee

Dr. Norman Lee completed the majority of his education – Undergraduate through Ph.D – at the University of Toronto. He then spent 5 years at the University of Minnesota doing postdoctoral research, before joining the St. Olaf Biology Department in August of this year. Dr. Lee specializes in neurobiology, studying how sensory systems process information. Specifically, he researches how animals

communicate acoustically and can distinguish important sounds from amongst other noises in their natural environments (often referred to as the cocktail party effect). Dr. Lee has been studying the behavior and associated neurons of a particular type of fly in response to cricket sounds. For this parasitic species, it is essential that the female flies can recognize and find host crickets through their songs, making them a very interesting pair to study. This fall Dr. Lee taught our Foundations course (BIO 150.) This spring he will be teaching Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience (NEURO 239.) We are thrilled to have Dr. Lee on the Biology team!

Kathie Towler is our new AAA. Kathie joined us midway through August, as Joy and her family moved on to new ventures in the Dallas, TX area. She came to us after closing her in-home daycare, and insists that working with the Biology Department faculty and staff is NOTHING like running a daycare. (There may have been a wink in there!) Kathie is a well-travelled addition to the Biology Department. She was born and raised in Ethiopia, Africa. After High School in rural Minnesota, two years of college and four years in the Navy (as the wife), she and her husband finally settled in the Twin Cities to raise their five children. Kathie loves her new role at St Olaf. She and her husband are new to Northfield and are enjoying exploring the area. Stop in and say hi if you are on campus. You can ask her about tukuls, bassoons, crosswords and knitting...you know, all the science stuff! (Another wink!) You'll find her in Regents Hall 360.



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COWS: A joint effort to bring the community together around science.

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Catch up with 2017-18 studies off campus

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Follow Linda Olsvig-Whittaker's work, as it evolves from ecology to archaeology.

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Where are they now?

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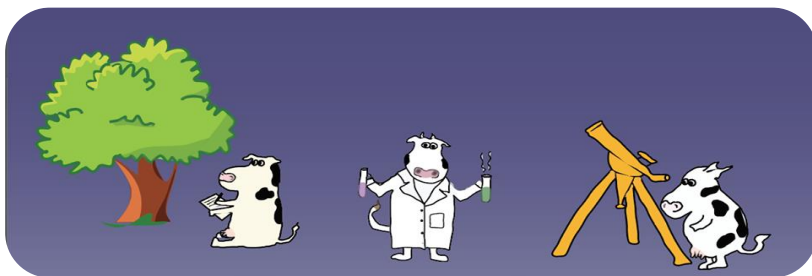
Like us on Facebook:
"St. Olaf Biology"



Kathie Towler

COWS: Conversations On the Wonders of Science

COWS is a Carleton and St. Olaf joint effort intended to engage the greater Northfield community in a monthly conversation about science, where all community members feel welcome. Each month, a scientist gives a short, engaging presentation (10-15 minutes.) The main goal is to create an informal, dynamic atmosphere that encourages all participants to feel comfortable asking questions or volunteering ideas. Next time you are in town, join us at the Hideaway Café downtown. Most events take place on the second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. "Like" us on Facebook (search "COWS") to stay up-to-date on the topic of the month. We hope to see you there!



COWS is a monthly science café which brings together the Northfield community for a short presentation and discussion about science.

Students and Faculty proudly represent St. Olaf off campus and abroad



The mountain view from inside the yard of our elementary school-turned-clinic in Willoq, Peru

From Ben Quiram ('20), Peruvian Medical Experience, Interim 2018:

[January 15, 2018] marked our first clinic day in the mountain village of Willoq. The diverse groups of patients we saw, much different from those of the Cusco orphanage, offered some new challenges. The people of Willoq, especially the adults, speak primarily Quechua; oftentimes, this means that an extra interpreter is required in each exam area. Additionally, the dental clinic in particular had to adapt to a culture that is comfortable with the cleaning of teeth, but wary and unsupportive at the very mention of their extraction. Despite this, however, the welcoming attitudes of the people in the village and their excitement to consult our group with their medical concerns demonstrated the trust that has been built over the many years that St. Olaf has visited this community.

From Sophia Skoglund ('18), Field Paleontology in Florida, Interim 2018

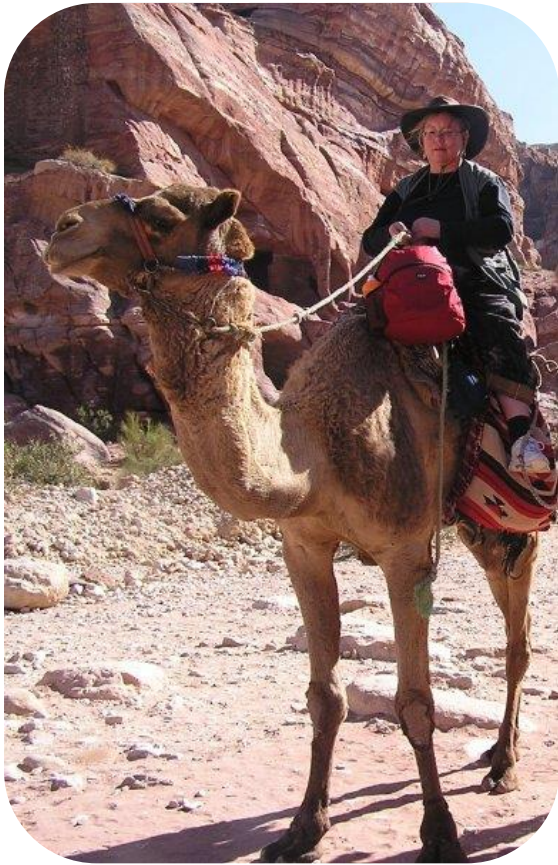
For the month of January, we assumed the role of paleontologists and explored the deep history of Florida's biota from the Miocene, Pliocene, and Pleistocene epochs. After accumulating some important knowledge on campus, we headed to Florida for two weeks of digging for fossils. From rafting down the Peace River to carefully working through the dirt of a land site, we improved our identification skills and found excitement in important finds. We went from constantly asking Professor Freedberg, "fossil or rock?" to confidently announcing that we'd found a fragment of a horse tooth. As we discussed by campfire, we all found awe in the fact that the specimens we uncovered swam or walked, millions of years ago, across the places we now traversed. The experience brought everything from silly adventure to deep respect for our place in the hard-to-fathom history of our planet.



Fossil or rock? Student paleontologists explore Florida's biota

(Continued on page 6)

From the Biology Department Stockroom to an “encore career” in Landscape Archaeology



*Dr. Linda Olsvig-Wittaker ('75)
in Petra, Jordan*

Although she started out in pre-med, Linda Olsvig-Whittaker ('75) found herself on a course toward being an ecologist early in her undergraduate years at St. Olaf. “Gene Bakko was my undergrad advisor and encouraged me; and I was a teaching assistant for Howard Orr so I found myself well settled in the biology department stockroom. We had a small gang of field biologists. Our area of interest was rather new at St. Olaf at that time, so a lot of what we learned was done in independent studies and extra courses at [the] University of Minnesota’s field station at Itasca,” Linda writes via email. She continued in ecology, utilizing her first NSF grant, while still an undergrad at St. Olaf, to study wildfires.

After graduating from St. Olaf, Linda got an NSF graduate fellowship to continue in ecology at Cornell University where she earned her Ph.D. and married her husband, also an ecologist. In 1981, after the death of her husband, she moved to Israel where she did a postdoc, then settled in to a position as a desert ecologist at the Sede Boqer Campus of Ben Gurion University of the Negev. From there she moved into

government work, spending 20 years with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, with the responsibility for biological monitoring and survey.

Retirement for Linda in 2014 launched her “encore career” in archaeology. Today, she is associated with the DEIAHL (German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in the Holy Land), located on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, conducting fieldwork in landscape archaeology in northern Jordan and on the Philistine Plain in Israel. She is currently publishing in landscape archaeology, with one of her papers [available online](#).

You can catch up with Linda at the International Landscape Archaeology Conference, spring of 2019, in Istanbul, Turkey.

“Gene Bakko was my undergrad advisor and encouraged me; and I was a teaching assistant for Howard Orr so I found myself well settled in the biology department stockroom. We had a small gang of field biologists. Our area of interest was rather new at St. Olaf at that time, so a lot of what we learned was done in independent studies and extra courses at [the] University of Minnesota’s field station at Itasca.”

Where are they now?



Nora Flynn ('15) is doing some very interesting research at Colorado State, investigating deficit irrigation. Go [here](#) (p.22) to read more about it.

This past fall, **Krista Ehlert ('11)**, started her second year in an endowed postdoctoral fellow position at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. In 2017, she also successfully defended her Ph.D. in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, which she completed at Montana State University.

Marc Pisansky ('09) is currently a post doc in the neuroscience department at the University of Minnesota studying impulsivity and opioid addiction. He was recently published for his graduate work in Nature Communications. The paper showed that oxytocin could enhance a measure of empathy in mice. For more information on this paper, follow [this link](#).

During her undergraduate years at St. Olaf, somehow **Marla Fox ('06)** discovered a way to research sea turtles in Costa Rica - perhaps as an escape from the cold Minnesota winters on the Hill. Since then her passion has grown from documenting the status (or demise) of a species, to conserving wild places and imperiled wildlife. Over the past 3 years Marla has worked from Portland, Oregon for WildEarth Guardians, an environmental nonprofit. As the Rewilding Attorney, she seeks to reconnect wildlife habitat and restore waterways in our national forests across the West. Much of her efforts focus on returning unneeded forest roads to the wild to reduce habitat fragmentation and protect water quality.



Marla working on Mt. Hood forest road re-wilding

Timothy E. Gundlach, ('81), has been an anesthesiologist at Aurora Health Care Medical Group since October 2016 and on January 1 was named president of the anesthesia division. He now will be spending half his time on administrative work and half on clinical duties and is very excited to work to help improve Aurora Health Care.



Emma Hornick ('09) - second from the left in the front row - just successfully defended her doctoral dissertation January 4, 2018 and will soon start work in **Gail Bishop's ('77)** - far right in the front row - University of Iowa cancer research lab. Emma is not the only Ole who will have worked in Gail's lab. **Claire (Buchta) Rosean ('08)** - not pictured - earned her Ph.D. with Gail several years ago and is currently doing postdoctoral fellowship work at the University of Virginia.

For two years, **Michael Rogan ('94)** used his biology degree as a "Junior Scientist" at the U of MN working in the Microbiology Department doing research on HIV/SIV viruses. After finishing medical school, Michael became an interventional radiologist. He and his wife, Jennifer, have 3 kids and live in Fort Collins, CO.



"As a physician I use my biology degree everyday, with anatomy and biochemistry being the [two] specific areas that help me in my job."

Laura Baratto ('84) recently celebrated 20 years with Penguin Random House as a District Sales Manager with the Knopf Doubleday Group, a job she still absolutely loves. *"I guess you can do anything with a Bio major!"* She has the good fortune of being able to travel for her job - mostly in the Midwest - but, this year she has a month-long sabbatical and plans to travel somewhere a little more exotic than Michigan! Nonetheless, her most wonderful personal news is that her heart has been warmed by this lovely little rescue.



Your gift, your way

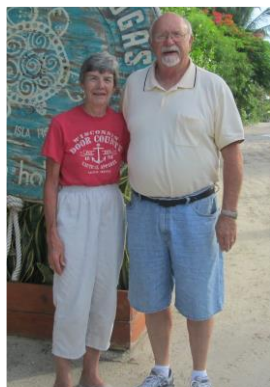


A note to Alumni

Gifts to the St. Olaf Fund are used to support financial aid for current students, strengthen academic programs all over campus, and enrich life for those who live and work on the Hill. But did you know that you can designate your philanthropic support to a specific program or department? (May we suggest the Biology Department?)

That's right! You can make your annual gift to the St. Olaf Fund and show the world how much you love biology at St. Olaf. These are the resources that let us do the extra things for students like travel to conferences and consortiums and annual events like the Biology Senior Banquet.

Will you visit stolaf.edu/giving and designate your gift to the "Biology Department?" And if you are celebrating a reunion this year, your gift will be counted in your class gift as well!



Dan ('65) & Jacquie Call

Dan Call ('65) grew up in the small, Norwegian town of Strum WI and graduated from St. Olaf in 1965 with degrees in Biology and Chemistry. He went on to graduate school at the University of South Dakota, and earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees there in Biology. After teaching Biology at Panhandle State College in Oklahoma for 3 years, followed by 4 years of environmental research and teaching at South Dakota State University, he moved to Superior, WI. There he was active in environmental toxicology research at the Center for Lake Superior Environmental Studies/Lake Superior Research Institute (University of Wisconsin-Superior) for 23 years, serving as Director of Research there from 1993-1999. The Center/Institute

last October. Following

moved to Dubuque, IA,

Associate Professor of

2010, he founded an

company that has

involved in the area of environmental publications over the years have dealt with the chemicals in the freshwater environment on retired, as Professor, from full-time teaching, yet

course each semester in introductory environmental science. He also started working as an editor for a journal called the *Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology*. It celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016, and the first issue of Volume 100 is being published January 2018. He is honored to have co-authored editorials for these special milestones of this journal. He fondly remembers all of his Biology Professors at St. Olaf and is especially appreciative of the fact that Drs. Howard Orr and James Zischke introduced him to the fields of ecology and research, encouraging him to go on to graduate school.

I fondly remember all of my Biology Professors at St. Olaf. I especially appreciate the fact that Drs. Howard Orr and James Zischke introduced me to the fields of ecology and research, and encouraged me to go on to graduate school.

celebrated its 50th anniversary his tenure at UW-Superior, he to assume a position as an Environmental Science. In environmental consulting allowed him to continue to be toxicology. His research and availability and effects of aquatic life. Also in 2010 he continues to offer a short-term

Neal Holtan ('69) writes: On June 30th of 2017, at age 70, I retired from practicing medicine and public health. My interest in writing this message is to remind present and recently graduated biology majors that your investment of time, energy, and hard work is the beginning of a life-long asset and opportunity. For me, the journey started at St. Olaf, then medical school, residency in internal medicine, and after that a public health degree. I spent the last 30 years as the half-time medical director of a large urban public health department, primarily treating tuberculosis. In addition, I had a private practice of preventive medicine, consulting for various public and private health and public health organizations. Another message for those just starting out is to remain open to doing what you love and what makes you happy. For me, the beginning of that was also at St. Olaf, in the introductory course History 11. I learned then that history made me happy. Mid-career, I had some time between jobs and used it to start a degree in history of medicine. Twelve years later, I defended my dissertation and received the PhD. I knew that in retirement, I would have plenty of opportunity to work on my passion for history. To all, I send best wishes and encouragement to build on your biology degree, help people and our environment, and pursue your dreams.

My interest in writing this message is to remind present and recently graduated biology majors that your investment of time, energy, and hard work is the beginning of a life-long asset and opportunity.



Laurie Kallevig ('84) has a humanitarian music project in Kolkata, India, called [Survivor Girl Ukulele Band: bringing restoration and hope to survivors of human trafficking through the healing power of music and love](#). For six months of the year, Laurie lives and works inside a shelter home for girls who have been rescued from forced prostitution and other vulnerable situations -- and she teaches those girls how to play the ukulele! Over the past two years, Laurie brought some of her top students to recording studios in Kolkata and recorded vocal and ukulele tracks for four songs, and then worked with studio musicians in Los Angeles for backing tracks. The resulting CD, *Survivor Girl Ukulele Band -- Volume One*, was released in January 2018. Check out their enchanting CD (a link is available on their website.)

Study Abroad (Continued from page 2)

From Anna Pendergast ('19), Biology in South India, Fall 2018

Our group studied invasive plant species (specifically looking at how they compete with one another and with native species) in Mudumalai National Park and Tiger Reserve. I lived very simply with my fellow Ole, Kelsey Mayer ('18), in a field station in the small town of Masinagudi. Every morning we woke up greeted by cool, fresh air, grazing cows and goats, and beautiful mountains. We spent our days going to various field sites and the evenings elephant-watching from an open Jeep. It was amazing to be so close to elephants--my favorite animal! We saw them in their natural habitat, free, without the restrictions of fences or enclosures.

Being in Mudumalai was an awesome chance to see another side of India--the side with less people and roads and more animals and nature. We felt more connected even though we were farther removed. We learned so much from our surroundings and research project and met many amazing people during our time at the field station. I'm so thankful for my time at Mudumalai, and I hope to return some day.



A highlight of the Biology in South India class: observing elephants in their natural habitat.



Welcome Freddy!

Congratulations to Professor Emily Mohl and family on their new addition, arriving December 29th at 7:20 a.m. before the doctor made it to the hospital! Early signs suggest that he will be an avid reader and naturalist.

Contact us (we love to hear from you!):

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