COLSA Awards Outstanding Work at 2021 URC

Funds from Jack ‘55 and Pat Weeks make recognition possible

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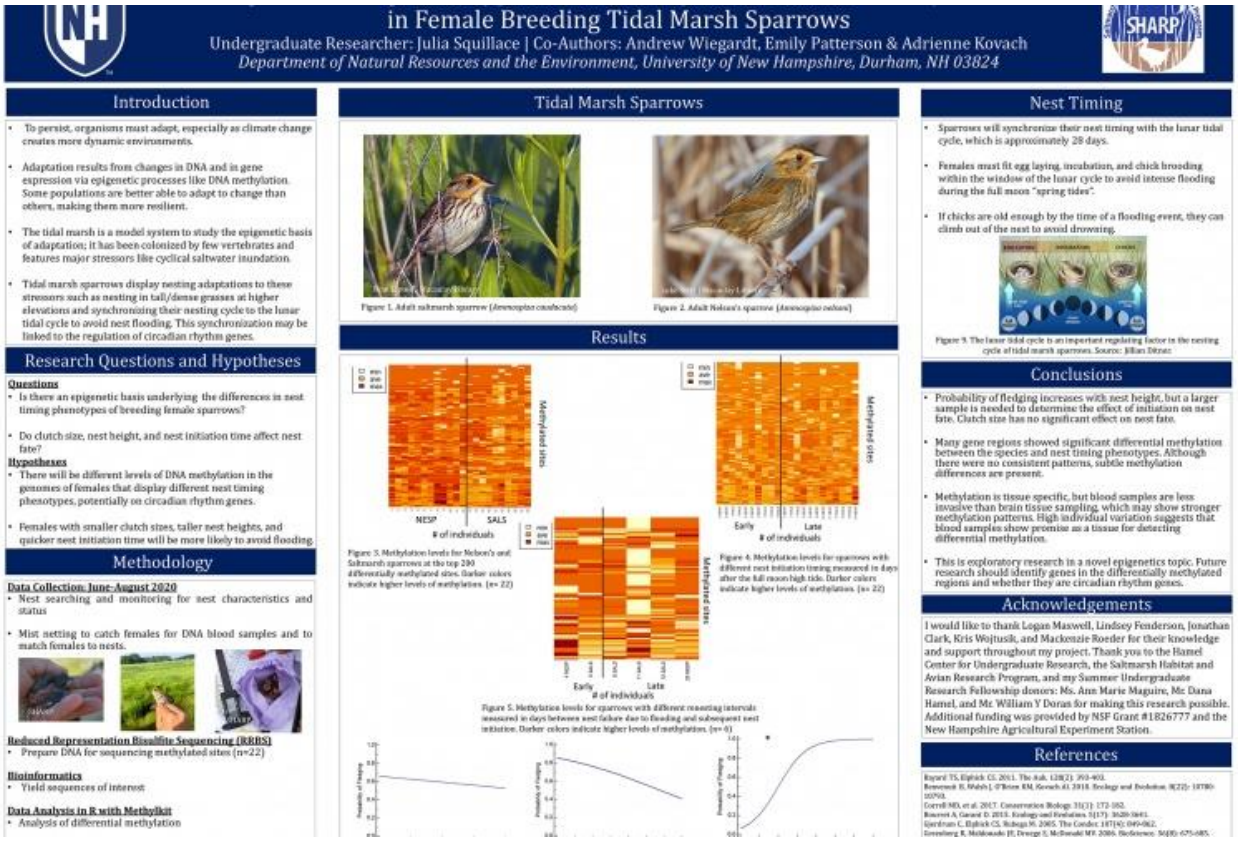

JULIA SQUILLACE'S WINNING URC POSTER

For the first time in the 30-year history of the UNH Undergraduate Research Conference, the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture has recognized 10 students with monetary awards totaling $3,000.

COLSA Dean Anthony S. Davis announced eight $250 prizes for excellence and two $500 prizes, one for outstanding oral presentation and one for outstanding poster presentation, during a virtual awards ceremony following the conference. The students' work was reviewed by a diverse group of 68 COLSA postdoctoral researchers and graduate students. The judges ranked posters and presentations based on criteria that included visual appeal, overall clarity and the presenter's ability to frame their research in a real-world context.

The eight recipients of awards of excellence were Lillian Delgado '21, Donnelly Hutchings '21, Troy LaPolice '21, Lauren McDowell '24 and Cate Wardinski '21 (joint project), Elizabeth Miller '21, Robyn Parker '21, McKenna Wells '21 and Emily Williams '21. Hayleigh Hildebrand '21 won the outstanding poster award for her research on agricultural nutrient cycling titled How Does Agricultural Management Affect the Distribution of Organic Nitrogen Into Different Soil Pools? and Julia Squillace '21 won outstanding oral presentation for her research titled Linking Nest Timing Phenotypes to DNA Methylation of Circadian Rhythm Genes in Female Breeding Tidal Marsh Sparrows.

"Winning this award has made me very proud of the hard work I have accomplished as an undergraduate," says Squillace, a wildlife and conversation biology major and budding bird researcher. "This experience has shown me a potential career path that I can pursue."

For Hildebrand, an environmental sciences and Russian dual major, the URC represents an extension of her broader UNH education.

"I think events like the URC are important because they help students prepare for the future while learning about something that they love, and it gives students a chance to really demonstrate the skills that all of their classes have been helping them develop," she says.

The awards were made possible by the generosity of Jack Weeks, Jr. '55 and his wife Pat, who established the Weeks Family Fund at UNH in support of COLSA. Weeks was a member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors, a founding member of the UNH Foundation Board of Directors, and an alumni representative to the University System Board of Trustees. The Weeks family also established the Herbert C. "Dinty" Moore Memorial Fund at UNH in honor of a favorite professor and are avid supporters of 4-H. In 1990, Weeks received the Alumni Association's Meritorious Award and in 2002, he received the UNH Profile of Service Award.

"This past academic year has been one of many challenges and added hurdles — especially to conduct and complete these projects," says Jesse Stabile Morrell, principal lecturer in the department of agriculture, nutrition and food systems and a member of COLSA's URC committee and the awards subcommittee. "We are so grateful that the

Weeks' support helped us acknowledge the resiliency, perseverance, hard-work and creativity displayed by our COLSA students."

COLSA's URC committee also includes Andre Brito, Leslie Curren, Molly Doyle, Jessica Ernakovich, Vicki Jeffers, Subhash Minocha, and Paul Tsang and co-chairs Pamela Wildes and Wil Wolheim. Curren, Jeffers and Ernakovich joined Morrell on the awards subcommittee that coordinated the poster and presentation evaluations, recruited judges and organized the results.

This year's COLSA URC showcased the work of 81 undergraduate students, representing roughly 60 academic advisors. The URC was originally founded as a science-based conference in 1991 and has expanded in the 30 years since, evolving into a university-wide display of undergraduate research across numerous disciplines. It is the oldest and one of the largest undergraduate research conferences in the country.

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COLLEGE OF LIFE SCIENCES & AGRICULTURE

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