

Mississippi Entomological Association (MEA)



Newsletter

March, 2011

President's Message:

I want to thank everyone who helped plan and everyone who participated in the 2010 fall MEA meeting. Last year's president, Jeff Gore, did a great job of coordinating a concurrent session with the Mississippi Weed Science Society. I think those of you who were able to attend the meeting will agree that it was a big success. Congratulations to the 2010 MEA distinguished service award winner, Harry Fulton, and to the 2010 MEA merit award winner, Fred Musser. These awards were well deserved. I want to also give a special thanks to Kathy Knighten who has chaired the local arrangements committee of the MEA for as long as I can remember and really makes everything run smoothly from year to year.

According to the "History of Entomology in Mississippi" document posted on the MEA website, the purpose of the MEA was to form an association "that would bring all facets of entomology together and strengthen the field within our state." I would like to encourage everyone to submit ideas to me or members of the executive committee for improving the organization and possible ways to encompass entomological groups that may not normally participate within the organization. The MEA has a rich history and it is up to us to keep it as strong as possible.

We are planning this year's fall meeting with concurrent sessions with the Mississippi Weed Science Society and the Mississippi Association of Plant Pathologists and Nematologists. This will involve a row crop round table with participation from all three societies.

It is a great pleasure and honor to serve as the MEA president for 2011 and I hope to see everyone at the fall meeting in October.

Clint Allen

Annual Meeting & 2011 MEA leadership:

Mississippi Entomological Association Meeting

The 58th Annual Conference of the Mississippi Entomology Association will be held at the Bost Extension Center on the Mississippi State University Campus on October 24 and 25, 2011. We hope to see you there.

The MEA committee chairs for 2011, approved by the executive committee include:

President – Clint Allen
Vice-President – John Riggins
Executive Vice-President – Scott Willard
Secretary – Jeff Gore

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Treasurer – Fred Musser

Directors – Angus Catchot, Melissa Siebert, Ryan Jackson, and Randy Luttrell

Committee Chairs:

Local Arrangements – Kathy Knighten

Nominations – Melissa Siebert

Public Relations – Meg Allen

Scholarship – Blake Layton

Hospitality – Rusty Mitchell

Membership and Rules – Chris Petersen

Research and Education – Chris Daves

Student Involvement – Will Scott

Historical – Mike Williams/Randy Luttrell

Legislative – John Gordon Campbell

Publications – Don Cook

Faculty Corner:

Entomology @ MSU

As many of you know a lot has happened in the past year here on the Mississippi State University campus, and I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself as well as provide some perspective on where things are headed with the entomology program. First and foremost is the merger of the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology with the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; which became effective in Fall 2010. While some may have seen this as a “non-traditional” merger of sorts, it in fact creates numerous opportunities for both faculty and students, and taps into strengths that both units bring to the table. This combined Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology (BCH-EPP for short) will continue to serve students at MSU through undergraduate education programs such as the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) concentration in Agronomy, and from within the Biochemistry degree track (with an entomology concentration/option within the Biochemistry B.S. planned for the near future). Of note in the areas of teaching and research are the planned re-establishment of an educational bee hive exhibit in the Clay Lyle entomology complex building, and the search is currently underway for a new faculty member in insect physiology, which we hope to fill for the coming academic year. The merger also brings together our graduate degree emphasis areas, which will remain essentially as they are (i.e., M.S. in Agricultural Life Sciences with concentrations in Entomology and Plant Pathology and Biochemistry, and Ph.D. programs in Life Sciences with a concentration in Entomology and Plant Pathology and our stand-alone Molecular Biology Ph.D. program), and as a department the merger collectively doubled the size of our graduate program. So, “by the numbers”, the academic side of the new BCH-EPP department now has over 200 undergraduates and more than 60 graduate students under our guidance. While not all in entomology, this represents a unique opportunity to expand interest in entomology within these now combined programs in numerous ways. In addition, as always, research remains a top priority in the department, and entomology remains a focal point with faculty being successful in granting, publications, and discovery research. Some faculty in the

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former Biochemistry and Molecular Biology department have worked on topics in entomology, such as pine beetle biochemistry and pheromone detection, genetic resistance of corn to fall army worms, and genome structures of flies as it relates to applications in forensic science (by the way, forensic science is another concentration within the biochemistry degree program that we hope to expand further using expertise in forensic entomology among the faculty). Finally, our extension and outreach programs remain strong and will continue to serve the clientele in the State of Mississippi and the region. Of note this past year is the IPM Working Together Team Award our extension-research faculty received for their efforts in row crop entomology, and initiatives by our extension faculty to address and inform the public on topics ranging from bed bugs to bees. I haven't even mentioned successes of our programs in the department that cross-over research, teaching and extension such as the Insect Rearing Center Workshop, collections of the Entomology Museum, Computational Biology initiatives, etc. In short, for those that may have worried that a merger between Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Entomology and Plant Pathology would diminish or dilute programs, this could not be farther from the truth – it expands both departments and programs and creates resources and opportunity for both that previously did not exist. We are now one of the top three largest departments in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State, both in the size of our undergraduate/graduate degree programs and in size of our faculty and staff. So this brings me to introducing myself to those in the MEA who do not know me. I'm not an entomologist, but I am a physiologist, and I've been engaged in teaching, research and extension since I came to Mississippi State University more than 12 years ago. I've been a Department Head for four years and I enjoy the challenges of facilitating our faculty, staff and students in their various pursuits, and supporting initiatives important to Mississippi. I was born in Ohio, grew up in the Northeast, attended educational institutions in Rhode Island, Texas and South Carolina, and I am proud to call Mississippi my home. I am equally supportive of our programs in plant pathology, biochemistry and molecular biology, and I believe this mix of intertwining disciplines along with entomology create broad, yet focused, platforms from which the department can flourish as we move to the future together. We may have merged, we may have consolidated, but we have also expanded and are charting new directions as a department and in our programs. I'm just getting to know the MEA and other entities affiliated with the department, and I look forward to meeting more of its members and championing the department and our programs in entomology across the state, regionally and nationally. Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on the department and to introduce myself. Your comments and thoughts are always welcome and appreciated (swillard@bch.msstate.edu).

Scott T. Willard Ph.D.

Professor and Head

Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology

Student Corner:

The Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology received four new graduate students. Under the guidance of Dr. Fred Musser are Andrew Adams, Arun Babu and Derreck Taylor. Under the guidance of Dr. Angus Catchot and Dr. Jeff Gore is Ben Von Kanel. Our Entomology and Plant

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Pathology Club will have new redesigned hats and t-shirts for sale in the near future. The club will be working with Christian Stephenson while he hosts local elementary schools here at museum this summer. Local recipients of scholarships this past year are Lucas Owen and Wes McPherson whom both won the H.C. Mitchell Award at the 2010 Mississippi Entomological Association meeting. Also Brian Adams and William Scott both won the Mississippi Agricultural Consultants Association scholarship award at MACA's 38th annual conference in 2011.

Submitted by Will Scott, Student Involvement Chair

News Articles:

Kristine Edwards to Take Reigns of Midsouth Entomologist

During 2011 Kristine Edwards, a postdoctoral research associate in the insect genetics lab (Mike Caprio/Jerome Goddard) will take over the editorship of Midsouth Entomologist from Chris Peterson, research entomologist for the Forest Service, who has served as the journal's editor since its inception in 2006. The editorship of the journal is a five-year term and the transition comes at a time when the journal is established in the minds of the MEA membership and is poised to become a premier regional journal. Kristine and Chris will work closely to ensure a smooth transition and to continue the journal's tradition of providing quality articles to the entomologists in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Alabama. The journal has been a positive benefit to the MEA, and provides free, open access research articles, reports, and special features. The journal's homepage can be found at www.midsouthentomologist.org.msstate.edu and the blog at www.midsouthentomologist.wordpress.com

Submitted by Chris Peterson and Kristine Edwards

Mississippi Entomological Museum Introduces Anthropological Entomology

The Mississippi Entomological Museum (MEM) has a new addition to its website, the Anthropological Entomology page. This page was developed to focus on items in the MEM collection that are not insects, but are insect related materials. Currently the webpage covers two areas of anthropological entomology, wild silk textiles and movie posters and memorabilia. The webpage will be expanded to include additional movie memorabilia, silk rattles, and other material in the future.

The silk textile page has been developed to focus on the wild silk moths and the different textiles that are produced from their silk. Today eleven species of Lepidoptera in the families Saturniidae, Notodontidae, and Lasiocampidae are being used for wild silk production. Species in Saturniidae include *Antheraea assamensis* (Helfer), *A. paphia* (L.), *A. pernyi* (Guérin-Méneville), *A. yamamai* (Guérin-Méneville), *Attacus atlas* (L.), *Samia cynthia* (Drury), and *S. ricini* Anonymous. Various of these species are used in the production of muga, tussah, fagara, tasar and eri silks. In West Africa wild silk is produced from members of the species *Anaphe* and *Epanaphe* in the family



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Notodontidae, the larvae of which produce communal silk nests. A few species of Lasiocampidae are used in Africa and Madagascar including *Borocera cajani* Vinson, *Gonometa postica* (Walker), and *G. rufobrunnea* Aurivillius, the latter two are also used in the production of dance rattles. The web page features 29 different textiles, which were donated to the museum by Richard S. Peigler. The 29 silk textiles represent examples of 11 different types of silks, with pages dedicated to each of the 11 silk producing species.

Insects, spiders, and other arthropods have been a major staple of eco-horror and science fiction films that feature snakes, sharks, and other animals that attack humans. Most of these movies, usually relegated to the B-movie category, were made following WWII and the actual horrors of that war. Movie screens during the 1950's were filled by giant spiders (Tarantula) to fire belching cockroaches (Bug, 1975). Two technological developments have fostered the rise of such films that often featured mutated spiders, insects and other animals. The first is the development of atomic energy coupled with fear of the side effects of radiation that could cause mutants. The second is the development of genetic manipulations that could result in a super-organism immune to the laws of nature. The use of insects and spiders in such films has especially been successful because of the phobias of these animals by many people, especially in western societies. The movie poster webpage features lobby cards and movie posters for 82 movies in which insects play a major role.

The Anthropological Entomology web page can easily be accessed by going to the MEM webpage, <http://mississippientomologicalmuseum.org.msstate.edu//index.html>, and clicking on Anthropological Entomology or by going directly to <http://mississippientomologicalmuseum.org.msstate.edu//museumsites/AnthropologicalEntomology.html>.

Submitted by Jennifer Seltzer and Richard Brown

A final word from the editor:

Happy Spring!! This newsletter is for and about YOU, the members. Newsletters are posted on the MEA website is <http://mea.org.msstate.edu> – please visit frequently and provide the site address to potential new members. If you or someone you know is not getting MEA communications via email, please update contact information with me, Meg Allen meg.allen@ars.usda.gov. Newsletter articles should be relatively short (longer articles might be better suited to Midsouth Entomologist), concern current topics, and of course be relevant to entomology. Ideas for articles may include member achievements, student activities, cartoons or photos, short essays or poetry, updates from a location or project; be creative! The next newsletter is planned to be compiled for distribution prior to the Annual Fall MEA meeting.

Submitted by yours truly, Meg

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