

**UCLA**

College | Life Sciences

**Ecology & Evolutionary Biology**

**3rd Annual**  
**Research Day**  
**Celebration**



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Hershey Hall 158



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June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026



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**Ecology & Evolutionary Biology**

# Research Day Program

1:30–3:00pm – Judged Poster Sessions\*

3:30–5:00pm – Lighting Talks

5:00–5:30pm – Awards Ceremony

6:00PM – Reception & Public Viewing of  
Posters

\*closed to the public

***Lighting Talks*****Undergraduate Presenters**

**The relationship between early life adversity and alarm calling  
in marmots**

Annabel Long

Blumstein Lab.

**Fine Scale Patterns of Genetic Diversity in Northwestern Pond  
Turtles in Sequoia National Park**

Erica Ro

Shaffer Lab

**Getting to the Root of Forest Gain in the Central Africa**

Lindsay Land

Ordway Lab

**Halophilia decipiens biodiversity and distribution in relation to  
freshwater output in Moorea, French Polynesia**

Sophie Eilerson

Marine Biology Quarter

**The Case of the Missing Shells: how hermit crabs alter  
gastropod taphonomy on a Mo'orea reef flat**

Marlo Taylor

Marine Biology Quarter

***Lighting Talks*****Graduate Presenters****A Function-valued Approach to the Evolution of Reflectance**

Nick Ruffolo

Alfaro Lab

**A century of shifting weekend effects on urban bird detections  
mirrors the cultural delineation of the workweek**

Sierra Glassman

Yeh Lab

**Bringing Real-Time Sequencing to Undergraduate Field Courses**

Diego Lera Lozano

Medina Lab

**Stress-induced seed dispersal shifts in an annual grassland**

Lauren Glevanik

Kraft Lab

**Less angry birds: long-term behavioral change in songbirds in  
response to UCLA's pandemic lockdown**

Marlene Walters

Yeh Lab

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***Lighting Talks***

**Post-Doctoral Fellow/ Scholars**

**A recessive lethal haplotype drives embryonic lethality in Devils  
Hole pupfish (*Cyprinodon diabolis*)**

David Tian

Chen Lab

**The once and future puzzle of seed banks in *Clarkia***

Gregor Siegmund

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***Lighting Talks***

**Faculty**

**Jays of our lives**

Nancy Chen

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**3 Minutes of Ancient DNA**

Ben Peters

**The 8 codons of death for deleterious mutations.**

Peter Nonacs

**Poster Presenters**

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
G1	Alexandria Cisneros Carey	Crowded Out: When Competition Drives an Alpine Plant to Population Collapse
G2	Nicholas Ruffolo	A function-valued approach for the comparative analysis of color evolution
G3	Eugene Hopkins	Combined neural network and individual-based model provides insight into evolution of heterospecific competitor recognition
G4	Erika Ono-Kerns	Can wildlife rehabilitation centers act as proxies for wild population processes?



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## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
G5	Kristen Schott	Factors influencing fadeout following environmental disturbance in an endemic wildlife pathogen
G6	Alessia Avesani	Seasonal bacterial microbiome variation in two Mediterranean gorgonians with contrasting responses to environmental stress
P1	Jenna McCullough	Is Structural White Color Rare in Birds—or Have We Missed It?

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U1	Sophia Lavallee, Lorena Johnson, & Sofia Brown	Environmental drivers and growth dynamics of edible macroalgae <i>Caulerpa</i> spp. in Mo'orea, French Polynesia
U2	Emma Pfister & Grace Kieffer	Use of terrestrial vegetation and effects of phytoliths on the sea urchin <i>Tripneustes gratilla</i>
U3	Lily Callaghan & Savannah Ruiz	Fierce Shrimp Goby Distribution Behavior Abstract
U4	Maximum Odie, Sophie Eilersen, & Sylvia Ainsley	Fish at Night: Understanding and characterizing diel shifts in spatial distribution and behavior of nocturnal fish on the north shore of Moorea



## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U5	Mahaha Peter-Frank & Marlo Taylor	Diversity and distribution of Porifera across the north shore of Moorea, French Polynesia
U6	Keenan Liou, Peter Durand, & Mark Avila	Distribution of Polynesian Freshwater Eels in Moorea with Altitude
U7	Divine Adeboye	Chemical Interference in California Grasslands: Investigating the Allelopathic Effects of Pennisetum setaceum on Native Grasses
U8	Max Reines	An investigation of Coyote brush ( <i>Baccharis pilularis</i> ) facilitation of native plant post-fire recovery in the Santa Monica Mountains



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## Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

### Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U9	Paul Min	Spatial Patterns of Endemic Plant Diversity in the Santa Monica Mountains
U10	Brooke Branneman, Hannah Gray, & Nicholas Liang	Kelp Time
U11	Lorena Johnson, Sofia Brown, Peter Durand, & Mark Avila	Life After Death: Post mortem diversity on coral heads using photogrammetry
U12	Grace Zhang, Kennedy Jimenez, & Shania Jin	Unconventional Predator Prey Dynamics: Mathematical Modeling of CAR T-Cell Immunotherapy in Stage III Osteosarcoma
U13	Sydni Bednarek, Cordelia Kuiper Rauch, Travis Crane, & Megan Ashabranner	Human Presence at a Site Explains More Variation than Site MPA Status in Dusky Damselfish ( <i>Stegastes nigricans</i> ) Antipredator Responses to Humans

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U14	Sydni Bednarek, Dean Lewis, Keira Prouty, Zoe Desser, & Catherine Tran	Why is the brown alga <i>Turbinaria ornata</i> (Phaeophyceae) spreading across coral reefs of the South Pacific? Using functional traits to quantify ecological strategies that can shift with human impacts
U15	Madeleine Cheung	Topographic Wetness Index as a Metric to Predict Post-Fire Vegetation Recovery Time in California
U16	Annabelle Conti	Metagenomics of Crustose Coralline Algal Biofilms Associated with Abalone Larval Settlement
U17	Joseph Dekel	Hyperspectral Imaging of Avian Plumage: Evaluating Illumination Effects Across Four Color Classification Types

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U18	Matilde Martinez-Navarrete	Precisely quantifying Jamaican streamertail bill phenotypes in the world's narrowest avian hybrid zone
U19	Cordelia Kuiper Rauch	Animal species that may have evolved adaptations to counter iron-overload induced cirrhosis
U20	Simra Mirza	Vocal Fold Scar Tissue Differentiation through Dynamic Optical Contrast Imaging
U21	Elly Wurts	Temporal and Spatial Variation in Northern Flicker Plumage Patterns and Hybridization
U22	Colleen De Allaume	<i>S. occidentalis</i> distribution as it relates to the feral cat populations resulting from urbanization and the impact this has on stress

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U23	Mackenna Dere	The Impact of Forest Fragmentation on Yellow Fever Incidence in the Amazon and Brazilian Atlantic Forest
U25	Lauren Kao & Serena Kim	The King Tides and Santa Monica Sand Dunes: The Impacts of Abiotic Factors on Coastal Biodiversity and Abundance
U26	Brian Booher, Allie Kim, & Joah Lee	Shifts in Algal Community Trait Distributions - Natural Seasonality or Response to Human Impacts?
U27	Michael Griffin	Examining variations in proliferative zones of humeral growth plates across mammalian clades

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U28	Natalya Cummings	Analyzing the Effect of the Wildland Urban Interface on Post Fire Vegetation Recovery in California
U29	Xavier Bushbacher & Megan Lynch	Identifying Phenotypic Differences in Cryptic California Rubyspot Damselflies
U30	Vivian Glennie	Coexistence or Exclusion? Spatial Distribution Between Native and Invasive Tree Squirrels
U31	Sydni Bednarek	Using jump performance to assess potential indicators of fitness and validate breeding methodology in the endangered Mountain Yellow-legged Frog ( <i>Rana mucosa</i> )

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U32	Nikita Burger	Variation in the Foliar Trait Landscape Across the Chronogeographic Continuum of the Central California Coast
U33	April Martinez	2020 California Wildfires: Comparing Pre- and Post-Fire Height and NDVI to Track Recovery
U34	Hudson Billock	Expanding Hyperspectral CWC Estimates over California using Deep Learning Methods
U35	Noah Kamps	Evaluating the Performance of Bioacoustic Indices Across Gradients of Ecosystem Degradation in Peru

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U36	Danny Huynh	Variation in plant vein length per area across sites and climates in North America
U37	Sophia Brown	Evaluating NGO Project Distribution Around the Dja Faunal Reserve: Do Reported Activities Reflect On-The-Ground Land Use Change and Implementation Realities?
U38	HaTan Nguyen, Kenneth Vu, & Leah Acosta	Correlation Between Litter Characteristics and the Foraging Behavior of Gulls at Santa Monica Beach
U39	Gauri Vishnoi	Ambient temperature is positively associated with perceived risk in urban birds

## Poster Presenters

Poster #	Name of Presenter/(s)	Title of Poster
U40	Arya Gothoskar	Identifying Core Biomineralization Proteins in the Phylum Mollusca
U41	Ronen Castillo, Esmeralda Polanco, & Samuel Wu	Squirrels Gone Wild! Do Santa Monica Squirrels Show Behavioral Responses to Human Foot Traffic?
U42	Amelie Wang & Catherine Tran	Standardized imaging practices in fixed fish specimens for the analysis of color and color patterns
U43	Kaelin Manzoni	Importance of carotenoids in jellyfish development
U44	Evanceline Tang	Examination into histology of <i>Orbicella faveolata</i> polyp from a prebleaching collection

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**Thank you for joining!**