

# NEWS NOTES

## MSU Graduate Students Sweep Research Competitions

Four wildlife and fisheries science graduate students in the College of Forest Resources are top winners in recent regional research competitions.

Heather J. Theel of Aurora, Ill., Nathaniel C. "Nate" Hodgins of Sioux City, Iowa, and Amy B. Spencer of Columbus, Ohio, competed at the annual meeting and technical conference of the Mississippi American Fisheries Society. Others involved in the Vicksburg program represented the universities of Southern Mississippi and Louisiana at Monroe.

Theel received the first-place award. Her presentation dealt with the effects of hydrilla, an invasive, nonnative aquatic plant found in many waterways that alters aquatic habitats and fish foraging behavior, among other major impacts. Her work is directed by associate professor Eric Dibble.

Hodgins took second place for his report on the growth of black carp at different water temperatures. Also a nonnative species, the fish is negatively impacting native mussel and snail populations, its primary foods of choice. Professor Hal Schramm directs his research.

Spencer won third place for presentation and second in the people's choice category. Her investigation, also directed by Schramm, used spatial analysis in a visual display explaining aquatic habitat changes along the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

In a separate event at Destin, Fla., Tyler S. Harris of Louisville took first place in the visual display competition at the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network and Colloquium on Conservation of Mammals in the Southeastern United States.

Harris' research, directed by associate professor Jeanne Jones, deals with the effects of herb-eating mammals on hardwood reforestation in the lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley.

## MSU Forestry Students Honored for Research at Professional Meeting

Current and former graduate students in MSU's College of Forest Resources were top winners at the recent 14th Biennial Southern Silvicultural Research Conference.

Forestry majors Michael R. Guttery of Leoma, Tenn., and David W. "Dave" Wilkinson of Dayton, Wash., were among students from 15 universities competing at the conference.

Guttery, who completed a master's degree in May, received the outstanding student paper award. His research evaluated regeneration and waterfowl forage potential in an Arkansas greentree reservoir; specifically, the production of willow oak acorns. Professor Andrew Ezell directed his work.

Wilkinson, a current doctoral student, received the outstanding student visual display award. Directed by associate professor Robert Parker and professor Tom Matney, his work measured the response of thinned pine plantations to competition following a fertilization treatment.

## Mississippi Wildlife Federation Honors MSU Faculty and Student

The Mississippi Wildlife Federation recently honored associate extension professor Debbie Gaddis and undergraduate student Amber Breland.

Gaddis was recognized as the 2006 Forest Conservationist of the Year by the organization. She is a specialist on timber taxes. Gaddis offered 40 workshops following Hurricane Katrina on casualty losses for tax purposes. Her tax documents were recognized by a U.S. Forest Service tax specialist as, "the most up-to-date tax information on casualty losses and involuntary conversion available anywhere."

Gaddis is active on Boards and Committees of the Mississippi Forestry Association, Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Association of County Agricultural Agents and Forest Landowners Tax Council.

Breland was recognized as the 2006 Youth Conservationist of the Year. A native of Maben, she is majoring in wildlife science in the College of Forest Resources.

In addition to her studies, Breland volunteers at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, where she helps check and maintain wildlife nest boxes, set nets for capture of rare Wood Storks and identify wildlife food and cover plants.

## Biological Engineering Student Receives National Recognition

A Mississippi State biological engineering major is a top winner in a national essay competition sponsored by the Institute of Biological Engineering.

Sophomore Thomas D. Ware of Brandon placed third in the 2007 Bioethics Contest developed by the professional organization to encourage inquiry and interest in biological engineering.

Ware's essay, titled "Transgenic Crops: Human and Ecological Health in the Balance," was among 83 submitted from universities throughout the country. Students from Cornell and Ohio State universities earned first- and second-place honors, respectively.

As part of the recognition ceremony, Ware and other authors of the top five essays were required to formally present their works and answer questions about their research—another part of the organization's goal to expose the students to practicing professionals in the academic field.

Ware said his idea for the essay originated while thinking about organic and natural foods sold in grocery stores. He was considering whether the organic and natural foods he bought were worth the extra cost.

"I bought it before and wondered if I spent my money wisely," he added.

Ware's essay will be among those featured in a future edition of the IBE's newsletter.

## D'Abramo Honored for Shellfish Industry Contributions

A senior Mississippi State aquaculture scientist has received a major honor from an international professional society.

Louis R. D'Abramo was presented with a meritorious award recognizing outstanding leadership and dedicated service to the National Shellfisheries Association at the organization's annual meeting.

A specialist in crustacean and fish aquaculture and nutritional ecology, D'Abramo is a professor in the university's wildlife and fisheries department and a scientist with the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station.

NSA is a professional organization for researchers, industry officials and others dedicated to proper management of the world's shellfish resources.

D'Abramo's 23-year MSU career has focused primarily on the development of efficient and environmentally friendly management strategies for alternative species, including freshwater prawns, crayfish and hybrid striped bass. His work has yielded several dietary regimens for shellfish and finfish that lower feed costs, as well as a better understanding of the nutrition of crustaceans and mollusks.



Russ Houston

Presenting Louis D'Abramo, center, the 2007 Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award were MSU vice presidents Vance Watson, left, and Kirk Schultz.

He also played a key role in breakthrough research toward the use of formulated feeds to replace high-cost, labor-intensive live feeds in the culture of larval fish and shrimp. His work is recognized as a significant step in overcoming a major limitation to the growth of global commercial aquaculture.

In March, D'Abramo also received the 2007 Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award, MSU's highest research honor.

29



Jim Lytle

Mississippi State University was honored at a dinner in Washington, D.C., on March 21 for its successful partnership with the Congressional Awards Program. Taking part in the evening's festivities were (from left) MSU graduate Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn.; Rep. Chip Pickering, R-Miss.; Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss.; MSU President Robert "Doc" Foglesong; Rep. Roger Wicker, R-Miss.; and Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss. Congress established the awards program in 1979 to encourage leadership and personal development in youth from 14 to 23 years.