

THE BIOGEOGRAPHER

Newsletter of the Biogeography Specialty Group
of the American Association of Geographers

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Notes from the Chair

Jake Bendix, BSG Chair, 2015–17

December 2016



As with all environmental scientists, these are worrying times for biogeographers. As I write this, I am attending the Fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union – and my observations and conversations here convinced me to discard the cheerful disciplinary chatter that I had contemplated for these notes from the chair. From plenary panels to private exchanges, current events seem to dominate the discourse among scholars (not to be confused with scholarly discourse) in a way I've never

seen before. To be sure, wars, terrorism, and natural disasters have demanded our attention all too often in the past, but none of those events bore so directly on our own work as the recent election and its aftermath.

AAG President and biogeographer Glen MacDonald has already written eloquently on “Geography in a Post-Truth World” (worth reading: <http://news.aag.org/2016/12/geography-in-a-post-truth-world/>), and I do not intend to rehash all he had to say. But it does seem important to address the concerns that seem to be at the forefront for many biogeographers, along with our colleagues throughout the sciences. Although many of us are accustomed to keeping our political beliefs and inclinations separate from our scholarly careers, the election of Donald Trump seems likely to have unprecedented impacts on how we go about our jobs.

In the first place, of course, there is the hostility that the president-elect has evinced toward the scientific study of and conclusions regarding climate change. I don't need to tell you that climate change science underlies the current research that many of us are doing. Whether studying the direct response of species to changing climate parameters, exploring the links between climate and disturbance, or reconstructing past climate responses from the paleoenvironmental record, much of our work is motivated by (and often funded for the purpose of) the urgent need to understand how biotic systems are likely to change in a complex changing world. While I don't want to engage in fear-mongering, we appear to face a situation in which federal scientists who study these topics may be insecure, and in which there are concerns that federal funding for this kind of research may be curtailed. In recent years, there has been increasing study of resiliency in natural systems. Now we ourselves may need to display resiliency, as we pursue our research in a potentially funding-limited academic universe, and as we support junior colleagues who may find it more difficult to get the research grants that would bolster their tenure cases.

The recent election also has implications for our teaching as well. Many (most?) of us, as faculty and graduate students, teach a variety of large introductory physical geography or environmental science courses in addition to biogeography. The fact that we just had an election in which a) the winner has expressed disbelief in climate-change science, and b) climate change hardly seemed to matter because the issue was largely ignored in the campaign, suggests that there is much educational work left to be done. Glen's column that I cited above discusses some of the challenges of communicating controversial science, and I would suggest that we are among the geographers for whom educational introspection is most important. It is not enough that we teach the students (and public) who are bright and eager to learn what we have to explain. We need to think about how to communicate what we know in ways that will be convincing to those who are disinclined to believe us. One should not have to be a tree-hugger to understand that CO₂ molecules absorb longwave radiation, and we need to find ways to get that across.

None of these are new ideas, and many of you have been discussing these very points over the past few weeks. I raise them here to remind you that you are not considering them in isolation. Biogeographers within the AAG constitute a community, and we are nested within the larger community of our fellow physical geographers. It's my hope that we can serve as resources for each other, as we cope with events going forward. And it's my hope that we can move from discussions of how bad things are to more productive discussions of how we can respond.

-Jake Bendix

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Graduate Student Representative Column

Tommy Patterson, BSG Graduate Student Representative
2016–17

Fellow Biogeographers,

Thanks for electing me to serve on the board as the graduate student representative of the Biogeography Specialty Group. I am a North Carolina native and am completing my Ph.D. in geography from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

My research focuses on longleaf pine forests, and my dissertation examines how mast (i.e. annual cone crops) influences both ring growth and disease ecology throughout the Southeast. I would like to thank Chris Kaase for his service to the Biogeography Specialty Group as the graduate student representative during 2015–2016. Chris and I have become good friends since meeting at AAG in Tampa in 2014 and I look forward to his successes in the years to come. A component of this position is organizing a student-oriented panel discussion at the annual AAG meeting. This year I am recruiting biogeographers from a number of backgrounds to discuss how to become a biogeographer. My goal is to foster a discussion that covers topics that range from choosing courses to take, how to navigate graduate programs, and landing both academic and non-academic positions in our field. I have half of the panel seats filled but could use your help! If interested in serving and providing insight on becoming a biogeographer please email me at the address below. I welcome all to attend and strongly recommend all students in our group to come bearing questions for the panel. See everyone in Boston!

Cheers,

Tommy Patterson
twpatter@uncg.edu

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BSG Board Elections

Brenden McNeil, BSG Board Member 2016–18 and Elections Organizer

The Biogeography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers invites nominations for board members. During this election cycle, we will elect a new **BSG chair** and two new **board members** to take the place of Matt Bekker and Melanie Stine. Additionally, the **student representative position** on the board is also open for nominations. Service as chair and board members is for two years, and the student representative serves for one year. Please send nominations for any of these

positions to Brenden McNeil at Brenden.McNeil@mail.wvu.edu no later than **31 January 2017**. Also, please specify the position of interest for each nomination.

Voting will take place between Monday, 6 February and Monday, 6 March 2017. Election results will be announced at our annual BSG specialty group board meeting in Boston

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Awards and Competitions



James J. Parsons Award for Distinguished Career in Biogeography & Henry Cowles Award for Excellence in Publication in Biogeography

Matt Bekker, BSG Board Member 2015–17 and Awards Organizer

The James J. Parsons Award, named in honor of long-time University of California-Berkeley professor James J. Parsons, was created in 1998 to recognize outstanding lifetime achievements in the field of biogeography. Criteria used to assess a candidate’s merit for this award include a distinguished research career, remarkable dedication to the development of undergraduate and graduate students in biogeography, and outstanding service to the discipline. Application packets for the Parsons Award should include 1) a formal nomination letter and 2) at least two supporting letters. Parsons Award nominations should be submitted as a single packet.

The Henry Cowles Award was established in 1998 to honor Henry Cowles, who published the first paper to appear in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*: “The causes of vegetation cycles” (1911). The award recognizes the best biogeographical paper or book of the year. Applications for the Cowles Award should include the name of the person(s) you are nominating along with the citation for the paper or book that was published in 2016.

Applications can be submitted via postal or electronic mail to:

Matt Bekker
Department of Geography
690 SWKT
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602
Email: matthew_bekker@byu.edu
Phone: 801.422.1961

Please consider nominating deserving colleagues for these awards. For a list of previous award winners, please see the BSG Website (<http://www.biogeographer.org/>).



Student Presentation Awards

Maria Caffrey, BSG Board Member 2016–18 and Student Presentation Awards Coordinator

We are now taking applications for the 2017 student presentation competition to be held at the AAG annual meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. The annual meeting is an opportunity to showcase your research and discuss your findings with other experts in your field. By taking part in the student presentation competition you not only get to add this accomplishment to your CV, but also get valuable input from fellow biogeographers on your work. The student presentation competition consists of two awards:

- Best undergraduate or master's student presentation, and
- Best Ph.D. student presentation.

This competition is open to all undergraduate and graduate students. You must be the primary author and presenter of the paper. Individuals who received their degree one year prior are also eligible. Illustrated poster presentations are not eligible.

If you would like to participate in the competition please email Maria Caffrey (maria.caffrey@colorado.edu) a copy of your abstract and a copy of the application form on the following page (also available at www.biogeographer.org). **The deadline for submissions is Monday, 6 February.**

APPLICATION FORM: 2017 BSG STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

Name:

Mailing Address:

E-mail Address:

Phone:

Title of Paper:

Department and University of student:

At the time of application, I am enrolled as [check one]:

- an undergraduate
- a masters student
- a Ph.D. student
- completed Ph.D. defense within the past year

I am [check one]:

- the sole author
- the principal author of the paper

Co-authors of the paper are:

My PIN for the AAG meeting is:

Please enter my paper in the BSG student paper award competition.



Student Research Grant Competition

Melanie Stine, BSG Board Member 2015–17 and Student Research Grant Coordinator

The goal of the Biogeography Specialty Group (BSG) Graduate Student Research Grant competition is to provide partial support for graduate students to conduct quality biogeographic research projects for their master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. The awards are competitive, and proposals are judged individually on the basis of: (1) scientific merit of the project, including biogeographic significance of the research question, adequacy and quality of the methods, and originality of the research; (2) organization and clarity of the proposal; and (3) qualifications of the student to conduct the proposed work. Each applicant must be a student member of both the AAG and BSG, and the proposed project should be part of her/his thesis or dissertation research. Students may join the AAG and BSG now and become eligible for the grants competition if not already a student member. Normally, awards are made to one master's student for \$500 and one doctoral student for \$1000 each year, but an additional award may be made if the proposals are exceptional and funds are available. A committee of four to six biogeographers from different institutions will evaluate the proposals. Applications (Word or PDF) must be emailed by **1 March 2017** to Dr. Melanie Stine at mstine@sbc.edu. Please name all files beginning with your last name (i.e., Stine_CV.docx)

Please see further instructions on the following page.

Graduate Student Research Grant Application Instructions

Name all application files with your last name first. Each applicant should submit a proposal according to the following format:

1. Cover sheet

Include the following information on the cover sheet:

- Date
- Name of applicant
- Department
- University
- Mailing address
- Phone number
- E-mail address
- Indicate if the proposed study is for Ph.D. or Master's Degree.
- Anticipated date of graduate (month, year)
- Title of project
- Amount requested
- Indicate if student member of both AAG and BSG
- Electronic signature of applicant

Copy and paste the following statement to your cover sheet: "Proof of student eligibility: I certify that the applicant is currently a graduate student under my supervision and that the proposed project is part of her/his thesis research.

Name of Advisor:

Advisor's Electronic Signature: (please type)

E-mail address of advisor so that we may confirm your signature on this proposal:

2. Project description

This section should contain a clear description of the research objectives, the expected significance, and the research methods. The text should not exceed two single-spaced pages.

3. List of cited references

Use only most relevant citations.

4. Itemized budget and budget justification (no more than one page)

Note: No salaries or indirect costs are allowed, only direct costs such as travel expenses and essential field supplies. The awards are usually \$1000 for doctoral work and \$500 for master's work.

5. One-page abbreviated curriculum vitae

Note: In the CV, please briefly list past and current funding (both the agency and the dollar amount) that has supported this proposed research. Awards given by the BSG are partially based on demonstration of need for BSG funding. Failure to disclose your past and current funding (including funding that may have arrived during this competition) for this research could result in disqualification from this competition.

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Recent Publications

Articles:

1. Bakaj, F., Mietkiewicz, N., Veblen, T. T., and Kulakowski, D. 2016. The relative importance of tree and stand properties in susceptibility to spruce beetle outbreak in the mid-20th century. *Ecosphere* 7(10): e01485.10.1002/ecs2.1485
2. Bekker, M.F. and Naylor V.J. 2016. Dendrochronology and the complex history of the William Hawk Cabin, Salt Lake City, UT. *Tree-Ring Research* 72(2): 91–102.
3. Harley, G., Maxwell, J., Larson, E.R., Grissino-Mayer, H.D., Henderson, J., and Huffman, J. 2017. Suwannee River flow variability 1550–2005 CE reconstructed from a multispecies tree-ring network. *Journal of Hydrology* 544: 438–451.
4. Kim, D. and Kupfer, J.A. 2016. Tri-variate relationships among vegetation, soil, and topography along gradients of fluvial biogeomorphic succession. *PLOS ONE* 11: e0163223. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0163223](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0163223)
5. Kim, D. and J.J.N. Campbell. 2016. Effects of tree size, shade-tolerance, and spatial pattern on the mortality of woody plants in a semi-natural urban woodlot, central Kentucky, USA. *The Professional Geographer* 68: 436–450.
6. Kitzberger, T., Perry, G.L.W., Paritsis, J., Gowda J., Tepley A.J., Holz, A., and Veblen, T.T. 2016. Fire-vegetation feedbacks and alternative states: common mechanisms of temperate forest vulnerability to fire in southern South America and New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 54: 223–246. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2016.1151903>.
7. Kulakowski, D., Veblen, T.T., and Bebi, P. 2016. Fire-severity controlled susceptibility to a 1940s spruce beetle outbreak in Colorado, USA. *PlosOne* 11(7): e0158138. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0158138](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0158138)
8. Larson, E.R., and Rawling III, J.E. 2016. Developing new sources of proxy climate data from historical structures in the Lake Michigan-Huron basin. *Journal of Great Lakes Research* 42: 328–335.
9. Tepley, A.J., Veblen, T.T., Perry, G.L.W., Stewart, G.H., and Naficy, C.E. 2016. Positive feedbacks to fire-driven deforestation following human colonization of the South Island of New Zealand. *Ecosystems* 16: 1325–1344. [doi:10.1007/s10021-016-0008-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10021-016-0008-9)
10. van der Sleen, P., Dzaugis, M.P., Gentry, C., Hall, W.P., Hamilton, V., Helser, T.E., Matta, M.E., Underwood, C.A., Zuercher, R., and Black, B.A. 2016. Long-term Bering Sea environmental variability revealed by a centennial-length biochronology of Pacific ocean perch *Sebastes alutus*. *Climate Research* 71(1): 33–45. [doi:10.3354/cr01425](https://doi.org/10.3354/cr01425)
11. Veblen, T.T., Gonzalez, M.E., Stewart, G.H., Kitzberger, T., and Brunet, J. 2016. Tectonic ecology of the temperate forests of South America and New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 54: 223–246. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2015.1130726>
12. Wang, L., Young, S.S., Wang, W., Ren, G., Xiao, W., Long, Y., Li, J., and Zhu, J., 2016. Conservation priorities of forest ecosystems with evaluations of connectivity and future threats: implications in the Eastern Himalaya of China. *Biological Conservation* 195: 128–135.

13. Westerling, A.L., Brown, T., Schoennagel, T., Swetnam, T., Turner, M., and Veblen, T. 2016. Briefing: Climate and Wildfire in Western U.S. Forests. Pages 43–55 in Sample, V. Alaric and Bixler, R. Patrick (eds.). *Forest Conservation in the Anthropocene*. University Press of Colorado.

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News

2017 Annual Meeting of the AAG, Boston, Massachusetts

The Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers is one of the largest geographic conferences in the world. Our next meeting, 5–9 April 2017, is being held at the Hynes Convention Center, Marriott Copley Place, and the Sheraton Boston. Registration is still open. Please see the AAG Annual Meeting webpage for further information and updates: <http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting>

Larson Interviewed by Wisconsin Public Radio

Evan Larson, associate professor of geography at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, recently discussed research he conducted on oak trees in southwest Wisconsin that could improve predictions about climate change. Larson’s interview on WPR Newsmakers can be heard here: <http://www.wpr.org/shows/newsmakers-december-8-2016>

Notes

Miscellaneous:

1. Back issues of *The Biogeographer* are posted on the BSG website (www.biogeographer.org).
2. Please consider adding the **BSG domain** to your favorite links and promote it on your homepage, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. (www.biogeographer.org).
3. The BSG Facebook page is managed by Arvind Bhuta and is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/141655989204924/>
4. John Kupfer is presently managing the BSG website (www.biogeographer.org). If you have links (or other materials), send up to 2–3 pages to John, including syllabi for biogeography courses. You can contact John at kupfer@mailbox.sc.edu
5. Communications among BSG members is usually by email through the AAG’s discussion forum. For instructions to access and post messages on the BSG forum, login to the AAG website (www.aag.org), then:

Select “Memberships”
Select “Specialty Groups”
Scroll down to Biogeography and select “learn more”

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Submission Guidelines

Chris Underwood, Editor, *The Biogeographer*

Submissions to *The Biogeographer* should be sent directly to the editor (underwoodc@uwplatt.edu) as email attachments in Word format. Please spell-check and proofread your submissions carefully. Submissions should be concise and written in a style consistent with the rest of the newsletter.

Notes and News Items

Notes are intended to convey topical information of interest to the BSG community. *Notes* topics may include: (1) **Research Notes** – new projects and progress reports or general research-related ideas and issues; (2) **Field Notes** – recent field work or field trips or retellings of classic tales from the field; (3) **Course Notes** – news, announcements, or articles related to teaching biogeography or pedagogical issues affecting the discipline; (4) **Book Notes** – book reviews or announcements; and/or (5) **Miscellaneous Notes** – anything that doesn't fit in any of the other categories.

News items can be personal, departmental, institutional, or any other biogeography-related happenings that have occurred since the last edition of *The Biogeographer*. These can be self-authored items or press releases.

Recent Publications

Only publications that have actually appeared in print or online will be listed; please do not submit in-press items until you have page numbers or a permanent URL.

Kind regards,

Chris

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