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ESA announces the recipients of the 2018 Student Awards

Posted by **Zoe Gentes** on May 23, 2019

Awards recognize students for exceptional research and outstanding presentations given at the 2018 Annual Meeting

May 23, 2019

For Immediate Release

Contact: Zoe Gentes, 202-833-8773 ext. 211, gro.ase@setnegz

The Ecological Society of America recognizes Sara P. Bombaci, Jacqueline J. Peña, and Joshua Scholl for awards for outstanding student research. The Murray F. Buell and E. Lucy Braun awards are given for exceptional oral and poster presentations at the 103rd Annual Meeting of the Society in New Orleans, Louisiana in August 2018. The Forest Shreve Research Fund award supports graduate or undergraduate student ecological research in the hot deserts of North America.

Murray F. Buell Award: Sara P. Bombaci

Murray F. Buell had a long and distinguished record of service and accomplishment in the Ecological Society of America. Among other things, he ascribed great importance to the participation of students in meetings and to excellence in the presentation of papers. To honor his selfless dedication to the younger generation of ecologists, the Murray F. Buell Award for Excellence in Ecology is given to a student for the outstanding oral paper presented at the ESA Annual Meeting.

Award panel members honor Sara P. Bombaci, a postdoctoral researcher at Clemson University, with the 2018 Murray F. Buell Award. In her talk, “Restoring animal populations in fenced mammal-free sanctuaries increases bird-mediated seed dispersal in New Zealand,” she presented part of her PhD research from Colorado State University, addressing how the removal of invasive mammal predators in New Zealand’s fenced reserves result in cascading effects on native wildlife and their ecological interactions. Bombaci’s research provides some of the first data on the effectiveness of fences for restoration on large islands. She uses a variety of models, spatial tools, and bioacoustics to address her research questions and advance wildlife conservation. Additionally, she is dedicated to conservation education and diversity outreach activities, is active in research and advocacy to increase representation of distinguished women speakers at professional meetings, and is a National Science Foundation Research Fellow and a Ford Foundation Fellow.



Lucy Braun Award: Jacqueline J. Peña

Lucy Braun, an eminent plant ecologist and one of the charter members of the Society, studied and mapped the deciduous forest regions of eastern North America and described them in her classic book, *The Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*. To honor her, the E. Lucy Braun Award for Excellence in Ecology is given to a student for the outstanding poster presentation at the ESA Annual Meeting. Papers and posters are judged on the significance of ideas, creativity, quality of methodology, validity of conclusions drawn from results, and clarity of presentation.



The 2018 E. Lucy Braun award winner is Jacqueline J. Peña, a PhD student at the University of Georgia. Her poster, “Plant evolutionary response to climate change: Detecting adaptation across experimental and natural precipitation gradients,” presented part of her MS research from the Utah State University. She examined how climate change affects genetic diversity of Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*) populations in a sagebrush plant community in eastern Idaho. Peña is passionate about understanding the evolutionary consequences of climate change in order to explore genetic mechanisms of adaptation in natural populations. Currently, she is an NSF Bridge to the Doctorate Fellow, which builds on the university’s Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) – she was a former undergraduate student in this program at Boise State University. Peña is interested in continuing her involvement with advancing opportunities for underrepresented students in STEM through UGA’s Peach State LSAMP program.

Forest Shreve Research Award: Joshua Scholl



Forest Shreve was an internationally known American botanist devoted to the study of the distribution of vegetation as determined by soil and climate conditions, with a focus on desert vegetation. The Forest Shreve Research Fund award supplies \$1,000-2,000 to support ecological research by graduate or undergraduate student members of ESA in the hot deserts of North America (Sonora, Mohave, Chihuahua, and Vizcaino).

ESA awards Joshua Scholl with the Forest Shreve award. Scholl is a PhD candidate at the University of Arizona working under the mentorship of Dr. Lawrence Venable. He is studying how germination and fitness of individual morphs of *Pectocarya heterocarpa* vary with inter-annual variability in precipitation in order to determine how well bet-hedging theory predicts the life history strategy of *P. heterocarpa* in a variable environment. Scholl will use his award to perform a field experiment in the Sonoran desert, studying plants that simultaneously produce two visually distinctive seeds with different dormancy levels and their success under manipulated climate treatments.