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# Ecological Society of America announces 2020 award recipients

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The Ecological Society of America (ESA) will present the 2020 awards recognizing outstanding contributions to ecology in new discoveries, teaching, sustainability, diversity, and lifelong commitment to the profession during the Society's Annual Meeting August 2-7. ESA is weighing whether to hold an in person meeting in Salt Lake City that includes a virtual option or whether to hold a totally virtual meeting instead to protect human health due to the pandemic. Either way, an awards ceremony will be held. Check the ESA [Annual Meeting website](#) for updated information.

## 2019 Annual Meeting Student Awards

### **Murray F. Buell Award: Gaurav Sunil Kandlikar**

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.



The 2019 Buell Award goes to Gaurav Sunil Kandlikar, PhD candidate at the University of California Los Angeles, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, for his outstanding oral presentation at the 2019 ESA Annual Meeting in Louisville, KY. In his talk titled “How microbially mediated fitness differences influence plant diversity,” he addressed coexistence theory in the context of microbially-mediated fitness differences. Kandlikar is an engaging speaker, and his research provides further knowledge about the role of microbes in plant diversity, and it contributes to understanding the origins, maintenance, structure, and consequences of diversity.

Honorable mention for the Buell Award goes to runner-up **Anna Sjodin**, PhD candidate at the University of Connecticut, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. In her 2019 talk, “Do host traits affect viral transmission? Accounting for imperfect detection when exploring individual level heterogeneity,” she discussed the role of individual traits and imperfect detection on viral transmission in bats. Sjodin’s research provides important insights into the roles that ecology, and specifically individual traits, play in affecting the diversity and distributions of viruses. The work has important implications both for bat conservation and human health.



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## **Lucy Braun Award: Agostina Torres**

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 2019 award goes to Agostina Torres, a PhD candidate at the Research Institute of Biodiversity and the Environment, for her poster at the 2019 ESA Annual Meeting in Louisville, KY. In her poster, “Inverse priority effects: Order of invasive species removal affects early plant community assemblage,” she addresses management of invasive plants while also testing plant community assembly theory. Torres’s work is highly significant and the findings could impact both academic and management communities. She had interesting insight into the findings, limitations and applications of her research, and had a profound understanding of ecological processes relevant to the study. Her research advances understanding of the role of historical contexts in understanding community disassembly, and is particularly relevant to informing management of invasive species and species losses in the face of global change.

Honorable mention for the Braun award is given to runner up **Lin Meng**, a PhD candidate at Iowa State University, Department of Geological and Atmospheric Sciences. In her 2019 poster, “Characterizing spatiotemporal changes of spring green-up under climate change and urbanization, she discussed the timing of green-up in urban environments. The topic is timely and important, and it provides context for relating climate change and ecology to people’s everyday lives in urban environments. Meng’s research advances understanding of mechanisms involving spring air temperatures that drive phenological changes in complex urban environments in response to warming.

