

Ecological Society of America announces 2021 award recipients

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The Ecological Society of America is pleased to announce the winners of its 2021 awards, which recognize outstanding contributions to ecology in new discoveries, teaching, sustainability, diversity, and lifelong commitment to the profession.

“This year’s award recipients have shown remarkable leadership and creativity,” said Kathleen Weathers, ESA President. “On behalf of the Ecological Society of America, I congratulate the award winners and thank them for their significant contributions to building both ecological knowledge and the community of ecologists.”

ESA will present the 2021 awards during a ceremony at the Society’s upcoming Virtual Annual Meeting, which will take place from Monday, August 2, to Sunday, August 6, 2021. [Learn more about ESA awards.](#)

2020 Annual Meeting Student Awards

Murray F. Buell Award: Mahi Puri

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 2021 Buell Award goes to Mahi Puri, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida, Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, for her outstanding oral presentation at the 2020 ESA Annual Meeting. In her talk titled “The balancing act: Maintaining leopard-wild prey equilibrium could offer economic benefits to people in a shared forest landscape of central India,” Puri addressed a pressing management issue that has high ecological and societal relevance: the conservation of large carnivores in human-dominated landscapes. The work also has potential applications for the conservation of other large predators.



Honorable mention for the Buell Award goes to runner-up Nicole Nova, Ph.D. candidate at Stanford University, Department of Biology for her oral presentation at the 2020 ESA Annual Meeting, “Empirical dynamic modeling reveals ecological drivers of dengue dynamics.” Nicole Nova applied empirical dynamic modeling methods to a timely research area: uncovering ecological drivers of an infectious disease, dengue. Nova developed models that out-performed other disease models, and her results are relevant for human public health.



Lucy Braun Award: Katherine S. Rocci

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.



Katherine S. Rocci, a Ph.D. student at Colorado State University, is the 2020 E. Lucy Braun Awardee for the most outstanding poster presentation at the 2020 ESA Annual Meeting. Her poster, entitled “Not all soil carbon is made equal: Using meta-analytical techniques to understand differential effects of global environmental change on soil organic matter components,” presented a meta-analysis that clarified how numerous global environmental change factors impact carbon sequestration in soil organic matter pools in distinct ways.

Honorable mention for the Braun award is given to-runner up Caitlin P. Mandeville, Ph.D. candidate at Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Natural History. In her 2020 poster, “A systematic review of opportunistic species occurrence data in the literature: Data sources, structure, and analysis methods,” Mandeville used topic modeling to show how ecologists utilize presence-only data. These quantitative reviews are a powerful way of prioritizing future work in ecological science.

