



SOCIETY ACTIONS

ESA Awards for 2005

Murray F. Buell Award
Sean Menke
University of California,
San Diego

Murray F. Buell ascribed great importance to the participation of students at meetings and to excellence in the presentation of papers. To honor his dedication to the Ecological Society of America and to the younger generation of ecologists, this award is presented to a student for the outstanding oral paper presented at the Society's annual meeting.



The winner of the **Murray F. Buell Award** in 2005 is Sean Menke for his paper “Abiotic factors control invasion by ants at the community scale,” which is based on his doctoral research at the University of California, San Diego, under the supervision of David Holway. The Buell judges noted that Sean presented a clear, creative, and well-designed study of the influence of abiotic factors on the ability of the introduced Argentine ant to invade native communities. Judges noted that Sean clearly described the background and motivation for this study based on both natural history and principles of community ecology. In his presentation, in a clear and unforced manner, he described the connection between pure ecology and management. Sean provided a thorough explanation of the factors influencing Argentine ant invasion of communities in California. He took an experimental approach to investigate the problem and determined that water, and indirectly, plants, can influence colonization of habitats by Argentine ants. As Argentine ants increased in abundance, Sean could demonstrate that they were more likely to spread to native habitats and to displace native ants. Based on this research, Sean could predict future sites of invasion as a basis for managing xeric habitats under threat of invasion. Sean received his M.S. in Zoology from the University of Oklahoma in 2002, and his B.A. in Biology from the University of Minnesota–Morris in 1999.

The Buell-Braun Award Selection Committee also selected one student for Honorable Mention for the Buell Award. This recognition was given to Benjamin Houlton of Princeton University for his presentation on “Isotopic constraints on nitrogen acquisition by plant communities across tropical rainforests,” which was co-authored by Lars Hedin and Daniel Sigman.