

# DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY McMASTER UNIVERSITY

## WINTER 2017

# NEWSLETTER



A semi-annual publication by the Department of Biology at McMaster University that reaches, connects and updates Alumni of departmental events.

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Thank-you for taking the time to read McMaster Biology's second alumni newsletter. I sincerely hope our third will appear in a timely fashion. We are delighted to have been twice identified as the second best Biology department in Ontario (after Toronto) and fifth in Canada by Maclean's magazine. Given that we are also the smallest department in the top 10, we're consistently punching above our weight. Change has been thrust upon Biology in many ways over the last year, and we are moving forward in promising ways while at the same time restructuring in response to financial changes at

McMaster. McMaster has adopted a form of "activity-based" budgeting that tracks funding from teaching to the department level, which then pays the University for the services (like the library or physical plant). One aspect of restructuring has been to reduce the numbers of administrative and management staff. Our department manager, Marge Geroux has left for Geography and George Bijelic has rapidly developed into an effective and trusted department manager. Other office staff have left due to hiring or retirement. For example, Lori Baker now works for the University Secretariat. We have

also re-defined the job titles and responsibilities of our existing teaching support staff and this transition is now in progress. Altogether, Biology is working to build a tighter department, preserving our outstanding record in teaching and research.

Thanks for your continued interest in your Department, and for your



support in the enhancement of our teaching and research enterprises.

- Dr. Roger Jacobs  
Professor and Chair

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Join us **February 23, 2017** for our **4<sup>th</sup> annual Graduate Research Day** in the Ewart Angus Centre and HSC 1A6!



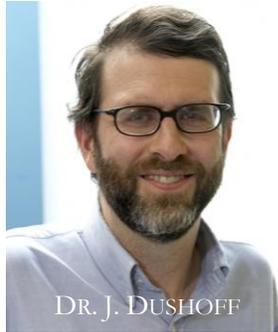
Art in the Greenhouse harvesting bamboo.

## PASSING OF ART

We are sad for the passing of Art Yeas, the Greenhouse technician, in 2015. It has been gratifying to see both staff and students come together to keep the greenhouse running (kudos to Sinah Lee and Susan Dudley as coordinators and trainers) while gearing up to promote and fund a new greenhouse closer to LSB. We also witnessed the blooming of three Titan Arum plants, acquired by Art in his last year with us. Our third bloom, Feb 1, 2017, is named Arthur, in his honour.



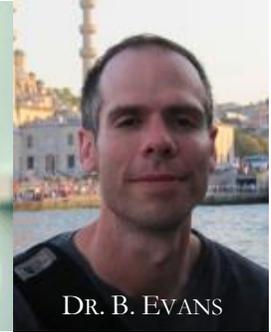
PASSION FLOWER  
Photo from McMaster Greenhouse Facebook



DR. J. DUSHOFF



DR. M. ELLIOT



DR. B. EVANS

## FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Our faculty continue to excel in teaching and research. Marie Elliot is one of McMaster's first crop of "University Scholars" – an elite recognition for McMaster's most accomplished mid-career academics. Graham Scott now holds a Canada Research Chair, and received the 2017 Canadian Society of Zoologists New Investigator Award. Rosa DaSilva has been awarded a MacPherson Teaching Fellowship to study first year student learning and Drs. Juliet Daniel and Joanna Wilson have received YWCA Women of

Distinction Awards over the last two years. We're also pleased to recognize the promotions of Drs. Dworkin, Kajiura and Harvey to Associate Professor and Drs. Dushoff, Elliot, Evans, Gupta, and McClelland promoted to full Professor over the last two years. We also congratulate Dr. Colin Nurse on his retirement. Further, congratulations to Dr. Pat Chow Fraser and Dr. Joanna Wilson on their funding with the Global Water Futures project. And to Dr. Susan Dudley on her Highway Infrastructure Innovation Funding.



DR. I. DWORKIN



DR. C. HARVEY



DR. L. KAJIURA

## PRESIDENT'S ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

We congratulate Marvin Gunderman on his award and unquenchable spirit as an entomologist and teacher in our department.



## UPDATES AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

Not only have our faculty been busy, but so have the multiple facilities that are a part of the Biology Department. New this school year, the aquatics facility in the basement of LSB has been updated and now includes a new multi-stressor unit for aquatic experiments.

At McMaster Forest, the tree census is nearing completion. 15.6 hectares of the 20-hectare plot have been measured and tagged, with over 21,000 trees counted! Approximately 8,000 trees are left to measure in the forest, with completion close to the summer. All trees that are 1 cm diameter at breast height are included in the census.

Over in Burke Science Building, McMaster iGEM, an undergraduate team for the International Genetically Engineered Machine

competition in synthetic biology, was busy all summer working on a project in Biology's Undergraduate Cell Biology Lab. This student-led team is supervised by Dr. Rosa da Silva and Alison Cowie, with support from Hamilton Health Sciences, the McMaster Faculties of Health Science and Science, as well as the Department of Biotechnology. Each year McMaster iGEM designs and develops a project within the field of synthetic biology to compete at the international Giant Jamboree in Boston. This is the second year the team has participated, and won bronze at the conference for their work on designing Lactic acid bacteria as a targeted immunotherapy for gastrointestinal cancers. Although still in its infancy as a club, McMaster iGEM are excited to have earned international recognition in its first year of formal competition and plan to expand the scope of their projects and outreach to demonstrate the importance and potential of synthetic biology research!



Photo from McMaster Greenhouse Facebook

McMaster's third Titan Arum, Arthur. Keep up to date with the Biology Greenhouse on [facebook!](#)

## BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT AMBASSADORS

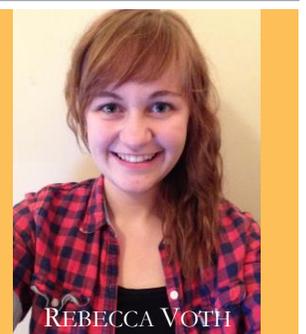
New this year to our department, Biology Graduate Student Ambassadors are here to answer questions for potential and new students interested in graduate studies in our department! Special thanks to Sarah (left), Paul (middle), and Caroline (right), for kicking off the ambassador program!



## SPARKUHL STUDENT SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

The award committee, consisting of Dr. Evans, Dr. Dworkin, and Dr. Golding, evaluated all of the applications and were very impressed with the quality and thoughtfulness of all the applications.

The committee had only one award available and this year it was awarded to Rebecca Voth! She worked this past summer in Dr. Gupta's lab, where her project involved CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing in the nematode *C. briggsae* to establish the technique in the Gupta lab and explore the roles of unknown genes in this species.



REBECCA VOTH