COA Vision:
The faculty, students, trustees, staff and alumni of College of the Atlantic envision a world where people value creativity, intellectual achievement and diversity of nature and human cultures. With respect and compassion, individuals construct meaningful lives for themselves, gain appreciation of the relationships among all forms of life and safeguard the heritage of future generations.

Letter from the Editor

Some changes call attention to themselves—there’s the coming of the light in the morning and its glorious departure at night, and there’s the less frequent change of a president moving on, making a clear mark in our collective history. Change is a birthright at College of the Atlantic. It happens daily in class and conversation, from the small understandings granted by new facts to the crucial inner changes that come as we all—students, staff, and faculty alike—confront ourselves and cross-examine our preconceived notions.

I think of this issue’s cover, a detail from the painting of Jacob Wrestling the Angel by Catherine Clinger, our new faculty member in art and art history. I can’t help but feel that it is himself that Jacob is fighting, his demons, possibly his reluctance to change—after all, this contest results in Jacob’s becoming a fountainhead of a great nation. In Catherine’s depiction, it’s hardly even a wrestling match: the man is attacking the angel, as if Jacob were desperately trying to prevent change. How well I know that feeling!

There’s a lot between Catherine’s painting on the cover and our student Alice Anderson’s lovely watercolor on the back. Much of it reflects the transformations that life brings. But one particular sentence keeps tugging at me. Having just been named president emeritus at convocation, our founding president, Ed Kaelber, spoke to the assembled students saying, “No matter how well you do in class, not much can be done unless you find others with different points of view and figure it out together.”

The very creation of COA can be seen as the result of a civil, but intense wrestling with the academic establishment of that day. COA has since grown, evolving through its own internal struggles, but what amazes me is its stability. Think of the single degree, the internship term, the senior project, learning by doing, small seminar classes, COA’s democracy. These transformative academic approaches formulated by COA’s founders—surely in conversation with those who challenged their point of view, be they early trustees, faculty members, or first students—remain foundational after nearly forty years.

The key to this consistency might lie in Ed Kaelber’s words. COA incorporates debate into our very fabric. When important issues arise, such as the question of formalizing the college’s recent growth, the discussion is an open one. Come January, we’ll have a final decision as to whether COA will encourage growth by five to ten students per year for five years. The plan also calls for an additional faculty member for every ten new students, and an annual review of the impact of this growth.

So that all members of the community could voice their response to the plan, months of fervent discourse resulted in a special evening All College Meeting lasting nearly four hours. Students, especially, spoke about community, intimacy, connection to each other and to faculty. They were so passionate, so thoughtful and articulate, that I know I was not alone in believing that whatever change may come, our center holds true.

Donna Gold, COA Editor

P.S. There’s one more slight change to announce. For the past five years, the annual report has been folded into the autumn magazine. This year, it will be its own publication.
Letter from the President

COA Beat

A President Moves On & Other News from Campus

Howler Monkeys & Cane Toads
A field experience in Costa Rica

From The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating
By Elisabeth Tova Bailey ('78)

Nancy Andrews’ Beyond the Eyes are the Ears
An appreciation by Colin Capers ’95, MPhil ’09

A Bridge Between Worlds
Catherine Clinger, COA’s Allan Stone Chair in the Visual Arts

Oral History
Cathy Johnson ’74: First Graduate

LEARNING BY DOING:
COA’S INTERNSHIP TERM

Applying Sustainable Principles to Federal Buildings: Thomas A. Fisher ’77
Internship Revelations: Sarah Cole McDaniel ’93, Christie Denzel Anastasia ’92
For the Love of Lizards: Holly Furholmen Zak ’94
Finding a Life: Jesse Kowalski ’97
Asking the Right Questions: Tracey Hutton Thibault ’99
A Human Ecologist in Education: Jasmine Smith ’09

Donor Profile
Tom Cox — A beautifully functioning heart

Poetry
Cooking by Abigail Dunn ’13
Hollow by Sarah Wineberg ’13

Excerpt from The Reluctant Poet
A work in progress by Richard Hilliard ’09

Alumni and Faculty & Community Notes

In Memoriam

Q&A with Toby Stephenson ’98

Human Ecology Essay Revisited
An Encounter with the First People of Sri Lanka
By Nishanta Rajakaruna ’94, faculty member in biology
From the President

As many readers of this wonderful magazine know, in October we announced that I will be stepping down at the end of this academic year.

The trustees and Barbara and I have been discussing this change for some time, and while we are all content that the timing is right for a wide range of reasons, we certainly approach this decision with mixed feelings.

It is a tremendous honor and privilege to serve as president of COA. I hope each of you recognize that for Barbara and me it has been a labor of love... much of the time it has been great fun; most of the time it has been rewarding; and always it has been worthwhile. This is a precious and nearly unique alternative to most models of undergraduate higher education. Its value and its future are almost unlimited.

As a college, working together, we have much of which to be proud. Our finances are sound, our reputation is strong, and the quality of the educational experiences we offer, measured in every objective way, has never been better. Graduation and retention rates are at all-time highs. We have more faculty teaching a wider range of offerings than ever before. And we have maintained the sense of community that is, and always must be, a hallmark of College of the Atlantic.

Certainly there will be challenges... for a progressive institution seeking to be better, this will always be the case. And that is good news. COA will emerge stronger from each challenge.

Change happens, and regardless of how one feels about it, change always presents rich and positive opportunities. As we go through this transition, I will do all that I can to make sure that we recognize those opportunities for this wonderful college, and capitalize on them.

For now, however, the most important message I can send with this column—which I have dearly loved writing over the past few years—is that all is truly well with COA.

In my inaugural address, I noted that this college has an unyielding commitment to learn more, teach better, act more wisely, and cherish each other and this planet that is our only home. That is as true today as it was then. Every day we continue to ask our questions, test our answers, and do our part in preparing leaders to meet challenges we cannot yet fully imagine.

In closing this note, please let me express my deepest appreciation to each and every one interested in COA for all that you have done to make the last five years so fulfilling for Barbara and me.

David F. Hales, President
College of the Atlantic
David Hales Moves on with the Class of 2011  
By Donna Gold

The leaves were at their most brilliant on the October day that David Hales, College of the Atlantic president since June 30, 2006, announced that he will be moving on at the end of the school year.

Hales presided over a period of clarity, growth, and stability at COA. The college has fully come into its own in the last few years, gaining recognition for its academic strength and innovative sustainability, increasing admissions applications while becoming more selective, and balancing its budgets despite the difficult economy.

“College of the Atlantic is an amazing institution,” said Hales, 67. “I cannot imagine a place with more enthusiastic, creative, and intelligent students, more devoted faculty and staff, and a stronger mission. I am very proud of the accomplishments of the last four years, and it seemed to me and the trustees that this was the right time to begin a leadership transition for the college, allowing me to play an expanded role on some other issues about which I care deeply.”

Under Hales, COA became the first institution of higher education to be carbon neutral, gaining worldwide attention as one of the most sustainable institutions in North America. While other colleges have had to drastically cut back because of the failing economy, COA expanded its faculty and staff, diversified and strengthened its academic programs, increased faculty chairs, and saw its net assets grow from $26 million to almost $43 million. Meanwhile COA has remained committed to affordability, enabling full support to those most in need while providing financial assistance to more than 80 percent of its students.

Applications are up, as are the numbers of accepted students who enroll. COA had 280 students when Hales became president; today it has 330. Retention and graduation rates are at all-time highs. During Hales’ presidency, the Kathryn W. Davis Student Resi-

Ezra Silk of the Bar Harbor Times came by to speak with David Hales just after he announced his retirement. The following is an excerpt from the interview published in the October 22 issue.

**BHT:** What’s your vision for the school in the future?  
**DH:** It will be small.

**BHT:** How small?  
**DH:** I can’t put a number on “small.” Essentially, when we say small, we mean intimate. It’s less a case of the numbers than a description of the kind of relationships that members of the learning community have together. …It’s about creating an undergraduate educational experience that is intense for the student…that still has guidance and quality and wisdom coming from a faculty.

**BHT:** What is your nightmare vision of COA, if the school went wrong somewhere down the road?  
**DH:** It would lose focus on the student. It would lose a sense of integrity with its old values. It wouldn’t be practicing what it teaches.

**BHT:** Which values are you talking about?  
**DH:** Justice, Fairness. Sustainability in its broadest sense. …We need to find some new ways to help structure those relationships among humans and between humans and nature. That’s what sustainability is all about. It’s not just environment, that’s a part of it. Part of it is how we practice economics, not talk about it, but practice it. And part of it is about human justice and fairness. So for us if we as an institution aren’t wrestling with those problems in our daily behavior, then that will be inconsistent with our values.

**BHT:** How do students feel about the administration?
In the people who self-select to be here, starting with me, among the faculty and among the students, I think there’s a little bit of inherent suspicion of authority.

Are you suspicious of yourself?

Absolutely. Always. For sixty years, I have never thought that trust forms the appropriate basis for a relationship between a citizen and their society. Trust doesn’t enter into it. Verify. Watch power like a hawk.

According to a 2006 COA magazine profile, you told the then-board of trustees in your job interview that you weren’t sure if you wanted the job. Is that true?

Well, yeah, I guess it’s kind of interesting now, given that I’m leaving, I’ve never loved a place more. There’s just great joy in this job, most of the time, and it’s worthwhile all of the time. So yeah, I’m quite certain that for the time, it was the right thing for me to do.

So, what’s next?

I don’t know… I hope I will have opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way to things that I care about in the future, but I’m not in any position at the moment to comment on what those might be. My focus right now is to wrap up this job with efficiency and dignity and consistency, and make sure that when the next president arrives, he or she will be very happy with what the institution is, and ready to take it to the next step.

Any interest in returning to government?

I’m not really interested in any kind of a full-time job. I’ve got three grandchildren who are strangers. I’d like to get to know them. I want to spend more time at the YMCA, or out running, and regain a little bit of, just, personal health. So, no, in the sense of a full-time job. I’d be surprised if somebody enticed me to go on back to doing something for ten or twelve hours a day. I’ve been doing that for fifty years.

As Hales said in an interview with the Bar Harbor Times (see sidebar), “This college is on a roll. It’s very strong right now, and it’s a good point to stop and think, particularly if you’re well into your seventh decade, ‘How long do I want to do this?’ and ‘Would… a new leader with a new set of energy and visions and ideas… take [the college] to the next stage?’ I’m really happy with many of the things we’ve done. I’m not satisfied, but I could stay here twenty years and still be unsatisfied at the end. I don’t think that satisfaction is part of my DNA code.”

Reflecting on Hales’ decision, William G. Foulke, Jr., chairman of COA’s board of trustees, said, “David has been remarkable for his clear and focused vision of the college’s strength and potential. It has been a very successful tenure and it is with deep regret that the board anticipates his leaving at the end of this school year.”

COA has recently won the New England Board of Higher Education’s Robert J. McKenna Award for the school’s educational innovations, and the Paul Simon Spotlight award from NAFSA: Association of International Educators for its International Environmental Diplomacy work, and moved into the top tier of rankings by US News & World Report. The college also launched two endowed programs, Sustainable Business and Sustainable Food Systems, and a summer program for high school students, Islands Through Time.

Hales is COA’s fifth president, coming to the college from a long career seeking environmental change in the public sector, most recently as Counsel for Sustainability Policy to Worldwatch Institute. He directed environmental policy and sustainability programs at the United States Agency for International Development under the Clinton administration and served under President Jimmy Carter as Deputy Assistant Secretary at the US Department of the Interior. Hales has also moderated major international environmental conferences and represented the US in international negotiations. He followed founding faculty member Steven K. Katona, who served as president until June 2006.

Plans for a presidential search are underway with the expectation of a new president coming in at the beginning of the 2011–2012 academic year.
In the Air @ COA

Recognition for COA
A few of COA’s recent accolades:
• Top tier of all colleges: US News & World Report’s “America’s Best Colleges”
• Top five liberal arts colleges for international students: US News & World Report
• Princeton Review’s The Best 373 Colleges
• Top ten most environmentally aware and sustainable colleges: Princeton Review, Sierra Magazine, and the Fiske Guide
• “A” for sustainability in campus food, administration, and climate change and energy according to the Sustainable Endowments Institute

Top of the Top: National Survey of Student Engagement
We no longer have to say it ourselves, the National Survey of Student Engagement, or NSSE, says it for us, and with research to back it up: A COA education results in active, thoughtful students who have ample opportunities for real connections with their teachers. Students are so involved in their pursuits that they frequently carry discussions from classes into conversation with friends and faculty. In other words, COA students care about what they learn, and they continually use their knowledge—applying it to their daily life, to conversations, and to research.

The NSSE survey, taken last year by students at six hundred North American colleges, is considered to be one of the most comprehensive and objective assessments of higher education. For the fifth year in a row, COA ranks among the top of the top ten percent of all schools surveyed.

The survey, given to all COA first-years and seniors, asks eighty-five specific questions about how the students relate to their studies. Here are some examples of affirmations by COA students compared to those at all colleges surveyed by NSSE in 2010:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do your classes emphasize critical and analytical thinking skills?</th>
<th>COA</th>
<th>Other Colleges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you integrate ideas from other courses in class work?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you discuss ideas from class with students outside class?</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you frequently contribute to discussions in class?</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have your studies helped you to learn effectively on our own?</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Delta Project
In June, COA hosted the Delta Project, a think tank on sustainable campus environments. The conference brought together sustainability leaders from higher education, business, nonprofit, and governmental organizations to envision the greener institutional facilities and campuses of 2050.

Keynote speaker Janine Benyus of The Biomimicry Institute kicked off the conference with a discussion of how to apply to the built world the ideas of biomimicry—a concept encompassing everything from the way a lobster’s exoskeleton has inspired industrial design to the self-cleaning surface of lotus leaves. Applying nature’s solutions to problems can help us create better roofing tiles, paints, and other building materials for the future.

Throughout the three-day event, participants shared their experiences and challenges in transitioning to greener institutions, from design strategies to discussions of how people interact with the spaces where they live and work. Especially appreciated were the workshop sessions where participants had the time and space to discuss a wide range of ideas.
COA’s First President Emeritus

COA’s thirty-ninth year of classes opened with a celebration of Ed Kaelber, the college’s founding president, and now its first President Emeritus.

Ann Peach, Kaelber’s longtime assistant, sat with him on stage, the two clearly delighting in each other’s company. When David Hales handed Kaelber a large glass vase etched with the COA logo, Kaelber immediately turned to Peach, held the glass high, and remarked on the great beer stein he had been given.

In introducing President Emeritus Kaelber, Hales reminded the assembled students, faculty, staff, and some parents that this college does not have to be here. “It is easy to consider it inevitable,” he said, “but the presence of this college here today is the result of people who are willing to take risks.” Among them, of course, was Ed Kaelber.

When it came time for Kaelber to acknowledge his honor, he looked out at the many young faces in front of him and said, “Of all the things this college does well, it attracts bright, energetic youth.” He spoke about the self-confidence it takes to come to a college that is still rather small, one that asks students to take real initiative to formulate their own course of study within the human ecology degree. “It is a confidence wrapped in humility,” he added, closing with these essential words—ones that all of us, COA students, staff, faculty, and alumni might take to heart, “No matter how well you do in class, not much can be done unless you find others with different points of view and figure it out together.” Human ecology.

The Lucy Bell Sellers Stage

On Thursday, October 7, the stage at COA’s Gates Community Center was formally named for the woman who has been responsible for the most productions on that platform. COA now has the Lucy Bell Sellers Stage—though many of the performances she created actually predate the college even having an elevated platform. Instead, productions were created in Turrets Great Hall, or on a contrived, two-foot platform set at the end of the old Kaelber Hall.

The evening began with a slide show of the many wonderful performances Sellers created, and included tributes from trustees, members of her family, actors, and David Hales. Trustee Bill Newlin, brother to Sellers, donned the bear head he wore for A Winter’s Tale, and then, sans head, read some of his sister’s writing. It included this letter, penned in verse and sent to her 1991 students who had decided that it wasn’t enough to perform Hamlet—they also needed to add Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead:

“What do I think as I head to the south?
I think of the plays and of you,
And I feel most exceedingly down at the mouth
When it hits me again that we’re through.
So I cheer myself up, while I’m still on the go
By playing again in my brain
A sort of interior video show
Called Shakespeare and Stoppard in Maine.”
When the First Family visited Bar Harbor in late July, it was remarkable how many points of contact there were between the Obamas and COA. The whole family stayed just down the road from the college, passing COA by land and by sea. When they went for ice cream, it was at Mt. Desert Island Ice Cream, owned by Linda Parker, the wife of faculty member in government and polity Jamie McKown. And when the President and First Lady had their night out, they ate at Havana, owned by Michael Boland ’94. Rumor had it that they almost visited the Bar Harbor Whale Museum, too, but it seems as if their lobster dinner kept them overtime.

The Obamas are not the only leaders greeted by COA folks. Natalie Barnett ’11 and Stephen Wagner ’11 were at the Organic Research Centre at Elm Farm in the United Kingdom, one of our transatlantic partners, when Prince Charles came to celebrate the farm’s thirtieth anniversary last May. He stayed long enough to hear an explanation of human ecology from the students.

And Jian Wang ’07 met Archbishop Desmond Tutu while working with the Olympic Committee in advance of the 2012 London Olympics, assisting the accessibility manager in making the games more accessible for both disabled and non-disabled people.

From top: President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama with Michael Boland ’94 and wife Deirdre Swords after dining at Boland’s restaurant Havana. Jamie McKown, Linda Parker, President Obama after the Obamas chose their treats at Mt. Desert Island Ice Cream. Prince Charles visits the Organic Research Centre, meeting with Roger Hitchings, Elm Farm’s head of advisory services, Stephen Wagner ’11 and Natalie Barnett ’11. Bottom: Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Jian Wang ’07 look at a photo together.
On a whim, Norwegian tourist Freddy Johansen took a whale watch cruise while scuba diving in Madagascar in 1999. About a decade later, he decided to scan his photograph of a diving humpback whale, and upload it onto Flickr.

The result has been a near-tsunami of attention to College of the Atlantic, thanks to citizen scientist Gale McCullough of Hancock, Maine, an Allied Whale associate who frequently cruises Flickr for whale images. McCullough found that this very whale—Number 1363—had also been photographed by longtime collaborators working in the waters off Brazil, a quarter of the globe away.

The journey from Brazil to Madagascar is the longest distance a mammal has been known to travel, ever. Except, of course, the human mammal.

When McCullough called Allied Whale with the news, research associate Peter Stevick ’81 knew she had made an important connection. Humpbacks do travel north and south between winter breeding grounds in warm tropical waters and the nutrient-rich colder waters where they feed in summer. But they don’t tend to move east-west between breeding grounds.

Even so, when his scholarly paper on the discovery was published in the United Kingdom’s Royal Society journal British Letters (co-authored by COA registrar and longtime Allied Whale researcher Judith Allen, along with Johansen and four others) they had no idea this journeying whale would capture the imagination of the entire world—especially that part of the world that is known as the blogosphere.

Articles appeared in The New York Times, Boston Globe, USA Today, Nature.com, Scientific American, Smithsonian, the websites of BBC, ABC, CBS, and in papers throughout the world, including India, Japan, Taiwan, New Zealand, Ireland, France, Britain, Canada, and Brazil. Stevick spent the better part of a week writing and speaking with reporters. Rosemary Seton, Allied Whale research assistant, was interviewed for an Australian radio station.

Its gender is as unusual as the distance traveled: this whale is a female. In the few documented cases of whales venturing beyond their breeding groups, says Stevick, it’s been males who did the straying, but this female traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, around Africa and well into the Indian Ocean, a minimum of 6,090 miles—nearly twice as far as the annual humpback migration.

This journey has implications for understanding and managing whale populations worldwide. Says Stevick, “While the journey of this one whale is extreme, her example shows us that we should pay attention; whales may not always do what we expect, or remain in tidy groups. The picture of their behavior is messier, and their east-west movement could be more important than we have previously recognized. Because of that, our management focus needs to be more expansive.”

The finding also underscores the importance of the whale fluke and the discovery—made by founding faculty member and former president Steve Katona and Scott Kraus ’77—that each humpback whale tail is distinctive, thus individuals can be identified. Knowing this has revolutionized whale studies, en-
able scientists to follow individual whales with a camera and telephoto lens. Since then, Allied Whale has been curating extensive photographic catalogs of humpback whales. These matches, says Stevick, who serves as a scientific advisor to both the North Atlantic and Antarctic Humpback Whale Catalogs, are part of “a long, tedious, and time-consuming process.” COA student interns do a lot of this work, as well as citizen scientists like McCullough.

Obtaining the photographs to match is the result of extensive international collaboration and the willingness of scientists and individuals to share data. This very collaboration that allowed for the discovery has already been recognized. At the 2009 Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Katona was singled out for his encouragement of large-scale cooperation in research. Stevick and Allen were also noted as outstanding organizers and collaborative researchers.

Why this whale made this journey remains a mystery. As Stevick told a reporter for Our Amazing Planet, “We cannot know what motivates an animal, but occasionally exploring new habitat is something that animals must do if they are to adapt to changing conditions and to their own and other populations. She may well represent an extreme case of this type of exploration.” On the other hand, he added, “it could be that the animal got very lost.”

**Bone Brigade**

Columbus Day, 2010 saw some intrepid COA folks heading out to Drisko Island, off Jonesport, Maine, where a right whale had washed up weeks before. This right whale was right dead, not a pretty picture—not a perfumed one. Allied Whale researchers and students gamely necropsied the behemoth, finding clear propeller lacerations—though whether they occurred before death or after, is still unknown. As you will read on page 48, Toby Stephenson ’98, Bar Harbor Whale Museum director and whale restorer extraordinaire, now has the skeleton. Bone by bone, he will eventually reassemble the huge creature.

Clockwise from top: Rosemary Seton, Allied Whale research assistant, carries the right whale’s upper jaw, known as its rostrum, up the ramp from COA’s dock; the right whale’s collected bones; Barbara Beblowski ’14 and Rachel Sullivan-Lord ’14 push a mandible-laden dolly up the ramp.

**The Rock is Back**

After being devastated by the storm surges of Hurricane Bill in August 2009, Mount Desert Rock is back in action. The lightkeeper’s house and the outhouse are now fully restored. In late August, the college held a small flag-raising ceremony to thank those friends of the rock whose donations made possible the repairs. Present were Matt Drennan ’86, Scott Swann ’86, MPhil ’93, Tony Naples ’04 and Dan Dendanto ’91, along with four interns who had been living on the remote island, new students, and even some reporters. Stage II of the repairs—to either replace or repair the generator building that was severely damaged by the storm—is on the horizon. All that’s needed is the funding.

The flags are raised: The American flag up top, and the Earth flag below; Sean Todd, director of Allied Whale, works with researcher Dan Dendanto ’91 to install the flag pole. Students Christopher Spagnoli ’12 and Sara Beth Golaski ’12 prepare to hoist the flags.
HOWLER MONKEYS & CANE TOADS
A FIELD EXPERIENCE IN COSTA RICA

Immediately after graduation this past June, students in Steve Ressel’s Applied Amphibian Biology class joined students in John Anderson’s Neotropical Conservation Biology course to experience tropical biology firsthand through a ten-day trip to two very different Costa Rican field stations.

Students spent most of their time conducting small-scale research projects at Tirimbina Rainforest Center in Heredia Province, then headed to the Pacific coast for a two-day visit to Curu Wildlife Reserve on the Nicoya Peninsula, thus comparing the biota of wet and dry tropical forests. Their time in the field was quite concentrated, as can be noted from the following field log kept by Robin van Dyke ‘11.

This page from top: A red-webbed tree frog at night in wet tropical forest; birding along the Sarapaqui River (left to right): Robin van Dyke ‘11, Anna Perry ‘10, Luka Negrete ‘10, Jessie Reed ‘10, John Anderson, Sarah Colletti ‘10, Marston Leff ‘11, Jordan Chalfant ‘12, Alice Anderson ‘12, Steve Reed, Lillian Weitzman ‘10, and Tirimbina naturalist Melqui Gamba-Rios; early morning sun shining into forest after a night of rain at Tirimbina Rainforest Center.

Facing Page clockwise from top: Rebecca Abuza ‘11 holding a boa constrictor; white-faced capuchin monkey: Jordan Chalfant ‘12 working on her field journal; John Anderson admiring an anole lizard; Steve Ressel using a pole and string to noose lizards; Pacific longtail snake wrapped around the finger of a student. Field drawings by Alice Anderson ‘12.
First Excursion, Day 1, Tirimbina

2:00 pm Found a large cane toad and a litter toad on the trail.

2:11 pm   Saw a huge rainbow-colored insect on leaf. Found a dead snake, a lowland forest racer, with large eyes and very long tail.

2:27 pm   Passed leaf cutter ants crossing trail.

2:31 pm   Found a little brown frog (a Fitzinger`'s rain frog?) and set up a game camera along the trail.

2:50 pm   Becca [Abuza] saw a whiptail lizard and a juvenile casque-headed lizard that ran into the undergrowth.

2:57 pm   Heard parrots calling.

3:09 pm   Jordan [Chalfant] spotted a small (about 1 cm-wide) fer-de-lance in the trail, and a strawberry poison frog.

3:15 pm   Saw a Leptodactylid frog, very small.

3:18 pm   Light rain.

3:21 pm   Heard howler monkeys howling.

3:25 pm   Saw peccary tracks on trail, set up second game camera to try and get pictures of them.

3:30 pm   Found a tarantula nest, with tarantula inside, on a tree trunk. Jordan found a very calm hog-nosed viper on the trail.

3:30 pm   Saw another Leptodactylid frog, very light-colored.
From *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*
By Elisabeth Tova Bailey (’78)*

1. Field Violets
   *at my feet when did you get here? snail*
   ~ Kobayashi Issa (1763–1828)

   In early spring, a friend went for a walk in the woods and, glancing down at the path, saw a snail. Picking it up, she held it gingerly in the palm of her hand and carried it back toward the studio where I was convalescing. She noticed some field violets on the edge of the lawn. Finding a trowel, she dug a few up, then planted them in a terracotta pot and placed the snail beneath their leaves. She brought the pot into the studio and put it by my bedside.

   “I found a snail in the woods. I brought it back and it’s right here beneath the violets.”

   “You did? Why did you bring it in?”

   “I don’t know. I thought you might enjoy it.”

   “Is it alive?”

   She picked up the brown acorn-sized shell and looked at it. “I think it is.”

   Why, I wondered, would I enjoy a snail? What on earth would I do with it? I couldn’t get out of bed to return it to the woods. It was not of much interest, and if it was alive, the responsibility—especially for a snail, something so uncalled for—was overwhelming.

   My friend hugged me, said good-bye, and drove off.

   At age thirty-four, on a brief trip to Europe, I was felled by a mysterious viral or bacterial pathogen, resulting in severe neurological symptoms. I had thought I was indestructible. But I wasn’t. If anything did go wrong, I figured modern medicine would fix me. But it didn’t. Medical specialists at several major clinics couldn’t diagnose the infectious culprit. I was in and out of the hospital for months, and the complications were life threatening. An experimental drug that became available stabilized my condition, though it would be several grueling years to a partial recovery and a return to work. My doctors said the illness was behind me, and I wanted to believe them. I was ecstatic to have most of my life back.

   But out of the blue came a series of insidious relapses, and once again, I was bedridden. Further, more sophisticated testing showed that the mitochondria in my cells no longer functioned correctly and there was damage to my autonomic nervous system; all functions not consciously directed, including heart rate, blood pressure, and digestion, had gone haywire. The drug that had previously helped now caused dangerous side effects; it would soon be removed from the market.

   When the body is rendered useless, the mind still runs like a bloodhound along well-worn trails of neurons, tracking the echoing questions: the confused family of whys, whats, and whens and their impossibly distant kin how. The search is exhaustive; the answers, elusive. Sometimes my mind went blank and listless; at other times it was flooded with storms of thought, unspeakable sadness, and intolerable loss.

   Given the ease with which health infuses life with meaning and purpose, it is shocking how swiftly illness steals away those certainties. It was all I could do to get through each moment, and each moment felt like an endless hour, yet days slipped silently past. Time unused and only endured still vanishes, as if time itself is starving, and each day is swallowed whole, leaving no crumbs, no memory, no trace at all.

   I had been moved to a studio apartment where I could receive the care I needed. My own farmhouse, some fifty miles away, was closed up. I did not know if or when I’d ever make it home again. For now, my only way back was to close my eyes and remember. I could see the early spring there, the purple field violets—like those at my bedside—running rampant through the yard. And the fragrant small pink violets that I had planted in the little woodland garden to the north of my house—they, too, would be in bloom. Though not usually hardy this far north, somehow they survived. In my mind I could smell their sweetness.

*Elisabeth Tova Bailey chose to use a pen name for her book because she continues to deal with chronic illness. COA alumni will remember her as the Beth who lived in Seafax when she was a visiting student in the spring of 1978. She would love to hear from alumni and is easily reachable via her author website contact page: www.elisabethtovabailey.net.*
Before my illness, my dog, Brandy, and I had often wandered the acres of forest that stretched beyond the house to a hidden, mountain-fed brook. The brook’s song of weather and season followed us as we crisscrossed its channel over partially submerged boulders. On the trail home, in the buggiest of spots, perched on tiny islands of root and moss, I found diminutive wild white violets, their throats faintly striped with purple.

These field violets in the pot at my bedside were fresh and full of life, unlike the usual cut flowers brought by other friends. Those lasted just a few days, leaving murky, odoriferous vase water. In my twenties I had earned my living as a gardener, so I was glad to have this bit of garden right by my bed. I could even water the violets with my drinking glass.

But what about this snail? What would I do with it? As tiny as it was, it had been going about its day when it was picked up. What right did my friend and I have to disrupt its life? Though I couldn’t imagine what kind of life a snail might lead.

I didn’t remember ever having noticed any snails on my countless hikes in the woods. Perhaps, I thought, looking at the nondescript brown creature, it was precisely because they were so inconspicuous. For the rest of the day the snail stayed inside its shell, and I was too worn out from my friend’s visit to give it another thought.

The Plants of Acadia National Park
By Linda L. Gregory ’89, Glen H. Mittelhauser ’89, Sally C. Rooney, and Jill E. Weber

Considered the definitive guide to plants found in and around Acadia National Park. This guide, created by COA alumni and visitors, uses much of the research of the late Craig Greene, COA faculty member in biology. (2010)

Serpentine: Evolution and Ecology in a Model System
Co-edited by Nishanta Rajakaruna ’94 and Susan Harrison

Serpentine soils have long fascinated biologists for the specialized floras they support and the challenges they pose to plant survival and growth. This volume focuses on what scientists have learned about major questions in earth history, evolution, ecology, conservation, and restoration. (2011)

Soil and Biota of Serpentine: A World View
Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Serpentine Ecology
Co-edited by Nishanta Rajakaruna ’94 and Robert Boyd


living must bury
By Josie Sigler ’99

Josie Sigler’s most recent book of poetry is the winner of the 2010 Motherwell Prize. (2010)

Calamity
by Josie Sigler ’99

Josie Sigler’s chapbook. According to the writer Dorothy Allison, Josie Sigler writes to, “give some child, some thirteen-year-old, the hope of the re-made life, to nourish the covenant of truth.” Available at www.proempress.com. (2009)

Music

Cora Rose
By Cora Rose Lewicki ’10

Songs written and performed by Lewicki, with the help of a host of COA musicians. Available at www.corarose.com (2009)

Films

On a Phantom Limb
By Nancy Andrews, faculty member in video and performance art

A film examining the journey of a human-made hybrid, a surgical creation—part woman, part bird—passing through death, purgatory, and returning to life. The boundaries of reality, fantasy, documentary, and fiction are blurred in this reprise of classic themes, dilemmas, and consequences of reanimation. “The monster did not choose this for her self, to be an amalgam for alchemy.” With feature interviews and an essay by Jim Supanick (http://supanickblog.blogspot.com). Andrews’ The Ima Flume Trilogy is also available for $20 or whatever you can afford. Visit www.nancyandrews.net/ or contact Andrews at PO Box 142, Seal Harbor, ME 04675.

The Vanishing of the Bees
Co-executive producer Peter Heller ’85

The Vanishing of the Bees is a documentary about colony collapse disorder, the mysterious disappearance of honeybees throughout the planet. Peter Heller co-executive producer. (2010)
Whenever we use our cell phones to text, call, or access the internet, we leave data traces that can then be stored, collected, and analyzed. This data, archived by cell phone companies, has recently been made available to researchers who are developing techniques to mine it so as to better understand contemporary societies.

Amy Wesolowski ’10 joined these researchers for her senior project “Mobility, Migration, and Mobile Phones.” At COA, Wesolowski worked closely with Dave Feldman, faculty member in physics and mathematics. He introduced her to Nathan Eagle, a postdoctoral fellow at the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico. Wesolowski and Eagle, who is also a visiting assistant professor at MIT, collaborated on a research project using cell phone data to examine Kenyan migration patterns and the social and economic networks of slum dwellers.

Over one billion people live in slums around the world, a number that grows daily as rural dwellers seek to improve their lives by moving to cities. Slums are usually characterized by dense, substandard housing and the squalor caused by the absence of social infrastructure, public facilities, and such basic services as clean water, electricity, and sanitation. To even begin to make inroads into this chaos, aid workers need to understand migration patterns: who is moving where, when, and for how long.

Wesolowski and Eagle obtained anonymous mobile phone data for one year from Kenya’s largest cell phone company, Safaricom. By mapping the geographic locations of the towers of the caller and called of over twelve billion calls from more than ten million people, they could quantitatively infer places of work and migration patterns in and out of Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi, Kenya’s capital.

Since the records included caller, called, date, duration, and such information as fund transfers, Wesolowski could also see who was sending money and where the recipient and sender were located. Looking at money sent and airtime purchased, she could also infer information about the economic status of the cell phone user.

Through these records, Wesolowski and Eagle could begin to answer questions such as: When people move into the city are they moving into the slum? If so, do they ever leave? Is Kibera a stepping stone to enter Nairobi’s formal work force? Are people in Kibera only calling other slum dwellers? Are these people connected to specific Kenyan tribes? Do people who live in slums typically transfer money via their cell phones? Do people who move to cities send money back to rural areas?

Wesolowski and Eagle found that close to half of the people they followed moved every month, either to another part of Kibera or elsewhere, and the majority of people with cell phones live in Kibera for less than two months. This is significant, as it undermines the common belief that slums are traps out of which people almost never escape.

Now, as a graduate student at Carnegie Mellon University, Wesolowski is considering whether cell phone data can be useful in studying the spread of malaria. Although Kenyans are eradicating the disease, it can be reintroduced by mosquitoes transferring diseased blood to healthy individuals. With the mobile phone data, Wesolowski can trace the travels of more than twelve million people and graph the chances of the disease being reintroduced by mapping people’s movements from regions where malaria is prevalent, to areas where it is not.

Because this disease-risk map is the first to use mobile phone data to assess a region’s vulnerability, Wesolowski is creating methodologies for other researchers doing similar work. She is also creating ways to geographically model the spread of other diseases.

While this work raises questions about privacy, Wesolowski explains, “This data could be used for bad things, but we try to stay on the side of good.” In this case, “the good” takes the form of mathematical and statistical techniques that can help governments develop policies and services, and assist NGOs as they make decisions regarding school systems, urban planning, and public health. Applying math to movements—quintessential, if unusual, human ecology.
An Appreciation
Nancy Andrews’ Beyond the Eyes are the Ears

By Colin Capers ’95, MPhil ’09

A mix of 16mm, animation, found footage, and live-action footage. The filmmaker, faculty member in video and performance art, began the project by writing a song cycle; imagery was then developed through a series of drawings.


When one reaches "beyond the now"—a phrase used by Dr. Sheri Myes in Nancy Andrews’ motion picture Behind the Eyes are the Ears—one risks slipping out of step, out of time, out of control. These three states are all explored in this work which, like the scientists Andrews’ work frequently considers—and like the artist herself—focuses on the self as a research object.

Though the protagonists in Andrews’ works form a continuing sequence of misfits, outcasts, mutants, and mavericks, they always seem content to be as they are and manifest a sense of empowerment that seems to increase in each new movie Andrews creates. Although Dr. Myes is charged by the authorities with “inappropriate expression” and “interfering with the order of nature,” she has the confidence—paired with clarity of vision—to continue her experiments in hybridizing her own consciousness with the perceptive organs of a range of insects, spiders, and mega-fauna.

Dr. M. appreciates the fact that there is much that the rational mind cannot understand, that to open oneself to fantasy—in particular the reality of an other which we may only be able to comprehend as fantasy—is to have a fuller, more participatory experience of life, to potentially understand across a broader range of perception and scale.

This motion picture, like its main character, embraces the full scope of the unknown—from the sinister to the rhapsodic—understanding that some paths are illusory, but also that the illusion is important because it sets up the reveal, Aristotle’s anagnorisis: the context for realization and meaning-making.

The spiral is of increasing significance in Andrews’ work—both as a symbol of loss of control and as a hypnotic tool. Tempering the spiral is the Rorschach inkblot, which becomes more continuous and organic in each movie. As Beyond the Eyes are the Ears concludes, we are taken beyond concerns of character, narrative, the human. Andrews & Myes, apothecarists, take us within the widening blot... and farther out, beyond. The now-familiar Rorschach is consumed/subsumed by an unknown, other-dimensional entity growing inward from the sides of the screen—making the peripheral central, conflating analog and digital into a warm, comforting, enigmatic, oily stain of a talisman. Together we experience a hushed, epiphanic singularity.
A Bridge Between Two Worlds
Artist Catherine Clinger

As an artist/scholar, thought and practice meet at a place outside of the self upon a surface of linen or paper. This surface is a hidden landscape, measured within metes and bounds.

However, an artwork’s existence beyond itself is not a small world limited by edges. Art has always functioned as a bridge between worlds for me; a path not a place. Bridges are products of human ingenuity. These channels unify and separate—and art can do the same. I pursue the spatial poles of arrival and departure in relation to the notion of journey. My paintings and prints are stages along a secreted trail of experience.

Catherine Clinger, Allan Stone Chair in the Visual Arts
The Fall (detail), oil on linen, 12x18 in.
Ursula’s Dream, color etching, 8x10 in.
Donna Gold: So Cathy, you were a transfer student to COA?
Cathy Johnson: Yes, I transferred from Yale.

DG: What did your parents say about that?
CJ: They actually declined to pay for my education at COA, so I took out loans, and worked, and did it myself.

DG: That was a decision—
CJ: In a way it was a huge decision. You know, “You’re throwing away a Yale degree—why would you do that? You only have one more year…”

DG: How did you even hear about COA?
CJ: I had a job with the Youth Conservation Corps working at Acadia National Park. The second summer I worked with one of the original summer students [from COA’s summer pilot program] and I forget exactly how it happened, but I was very interested in law and the environment and I ended up going down to COA and talking to Dan Kane [founding faculty member in law]... There was a big French door that opened out towards the water in the old building and there were these stairs, and a little wall. I remember sitting there with Dan Kane and we probably talked for an hour and a half, maybe two hours. I remember thinking, this is perfect for me. I have to do this. And sort of knowing that, “Hmm, my parents might not like this, but… I gotta do this.”

I can’t remember exactly what happened after that; I know I had to tell my parents—my Dad was the Dean of the Yale Divinity School—and I know my father said, “We’re just not prepared to pay for that.”

The college was very accommodating—they had thirty-one students: sixteen boys and fifteen girls, so I was going to nicely even that out. I got a little bit of money from Yale as the child of a professor, and I had some money saved because I had worked every summer, and then I just took out a student loan and worked part-time for Maine Coast Heritage Trust—it was upstairs in the old building, and I did some painting during holidays, and picked up odd jobs and lived very cheaply.

DG: And how did you become COA’s first graduate?
CJ: I finished my classroom work in June of ’73, which is when I would have graduated from Yale. But COA didn’t have the ability to give degrees at that point, because they weren’t accredited, so I stayed on at COA and worked as an assistant in the admission office. I spent that next year traveling around to high schools. I’d be on the road every other week, recruiting. Sometime in November they got the ability to award degrees; I have a letter dated November of 1973 that said you’ve graduated—because I wanted to apply to law school and I needed something that showed that I’d graduated from college. The following June, Bill Ginn finished and so Bill and I were given degrees at the same time. That’s why I always maintain that I’m actually the first graduate, even though in the ceremony, since his name starts with “G,” they handed him the first diploma.

DG: So what was your senior project?
CJ: I was looking at the downeast Maine coast and proposing a national park for the area from Ellsworth down towards Eastport. I did a lot of land use planning. I think my actual product was draft legislation...
for a new national park.... It did not come into fruition, although there has been a lot of land conservation in that area. The Machias River was really sort of the focus of it, and the whole Machias—at least the stem itself—is protected now, not the backlands.

DG: And were you always interested in law—
CJ: I was somewhat interested in it, but didn’t really know anybody and I think that’s why meeting Dan and having him talk about how the law can help protect the environment—that really sort of put two interests together. I took courses with him all year. That was definitely the highlight for me.

DG: What about what we now call “student life?”
CJ: The college was basically my life. I lived in the Bluenose Motel with the other students who were single. I remember great soccer games that we used to play on the grass, it was kind of a ritual all fall. A number of the faculty would participate as well. I remember skiing. We did have some snow that winter. And singing. I’m a big musician and I had played multiple instruments. I started a madrigal group—I don’t know how many of us there were... probably sixteen or so?

DG: Half the school!
CJ: We were pretty good. We’d have soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and some people would go out in the hall and practice there, and I’d kinda go around between the groups and help people learn their parts and then we’d get back together and sing them. I remember that as being a lot of fun. I loved music, and that was the one thing that I probably missed at COA because I was very much into music and there wasn’t really much opportunity for that.

...My favorite memories probably were the escapades that Dan led downeast, canoeing all these different rivers and streams. We’d get lost in the marsh somewhere or trudge through the brush...”I’m sure the river’s over there somewhere.” And paddling the Machias. That was my first introduction to canoeing, and I totally loved it.

DG: Other memories?
CJ: We haven’t talked about The Turrets, which was this completely boarded up, cobwebby thing that was always a fun place to go scare each other. It was illegal, I believe, but we went in there regularly and kind of snuck around and made noises and scared each other. I can’t remember how we got in, but I remember walking around on the creaky stairs and being upstairs where the windows weren’t boarded up, and looking around the building on multiple occasions. For the life of me now, I think maybe I went in there with a boy once, and we did a little smooching.

DG: What was the energy of the college at that time?
CJ: There was a sense of excitement, we’re doing something really different here, putting together the academics and this new way of education... I was definitely a part of that. Being able to integrate law and science. I wanted to take some science [at Yale] but in those days if you weren’t pre-med, they didn’t really welcome you into the biology class. And I wasn’t really all that interested in molecular stuff, I was more interested in nature: How do plants work, and how do they interact, and how do animals act and that kind of stuff. The last term at COA I took a quite intensive class with Kathy Hazard ’76, just with Steve [Katona, founding faculty member and former president]. We kind of went through a whole year of college biology in one term.

I was less a part of the energy, which I sensed, which was we’re running this community ourselves. I do remember lengthy conversations about the dining hall and what kind of food they would serve. But I wasn’t that involved because I was so poor. At the end of my summer at the conservation corps, they had some big metal containers of peanut butter left over, and big bags of noodles. I ended up with two or three of these big gallon cans of peanut butter, and an endless supply of noodles. That entire year I went down to the grocery store and bought bread and creamy soups of various sorts, and for lunch I would have a peanut butter sandwich, and for dinner I heated up a can of soup and threw in as many noodles as I wanted.

But the faculty basically turned over their entire lives to the college, too. From what I saw, it didn’t appear that they had particularly separate lives either. They were inviting students over to their houses for dinner a lot. I remember I ate a lot at different folks’ houses, particularly Dan and Marion [Kane]. So it wasn’t like that’s all I ate for the entire year.

DG: Now colleges are really much more integrated and it’s easier to have interdisciplinary majors. It’s hard to think how unusual it was at COA—
CJ: Oh, it was completely unusual. I mean, it really is the single thing that made me leave Yale. People would say, “There are only four faculty members? And you take classes from three of them? All year?” I just thought all three of them walked on water. Bill Carpenter was teaching literature, and even though it was the same three teachers each term, I thought each of them was absolutely fabulous and I learned a huge amount from each of them.

DG: So you didn’t regret leaving Yale?
CJ: I have never regretted leaving Yale.
Learning by Doing
The Internship Term

A term-long internship is central to COA’s educational approach of digging deeply—immersing one’s hands in the field of one’s dreams. For some, that dirt is actual soil—maybe the fields of Beech Hill Farm or a garden dug with elementary-aged students. Other students have delved into other depths—a storehouse of Andy Warhol paintings, the dense pages of international treaties, a birthing center in the mountains of Mexico, the alligator-filled waters of a large southern swamp—to name just a few. As Jill Barlow-Kelley, our longtime internship director notes, “These ten-week supervised experiences allow students to test their knowledge and skills gained through coursework in the world of work. Interns develop new skills, clarify future goals, and establish important career contacts. Internships have led to additional internships, senior project ideas, and job offers.” Equally important, they also can offer early warning signs that one’s dream job may not be as radiant as one hoped.

Whether the internship was something a student loved or disliked, the experience is frequently a powerful, life-changing one, as revealed by the following profiles.

Christine Denzel Anastasia ’92 in the field at Denali National Park and Preserve talking to Cook Inlet Tribal Council youth.
Applying Sustainable Principles to Federal Buildings

Thomas A. Fisher ’77, AIA, LEED® AP
By Donna Gold

Tom Fisher transferred to College of the Atlantic in 1974 with a love of the outdoors, dance, craft, and Nietzsche. What he found at COA was a wave of fascination with alternative housing concepts, propelling Fisher to an interest in building and ecological design.

At the time, Ernie McMullen, faculty member in ceramic design and art, had begun designing homes, including a solar-powered one for the late Dick Davis, COA’s first philosophy faculty member. When construction began, Fisher joined the crew. Architect Roc Caivano was also teaching at COA. Fascinated by working with Caivano, McMullen, and Davis, Fisher took a summer 1976 internship at the NaCul Environmental Design Center in Amherst, Massachusetts. That, says Fisher, set him on his life’s course.

The name NaCul combines nature and culture. Its founder, the Italian architect Tulio Inglese, studied with the famous designer Paolo Soleri. Beyond the introduction to energy efficiency in design, and integrating natural systems into architecture, Fisher learned about the basic functioning of an architectural office. “As a human ecologist trying to break into the design world,” he says, “I was exposed to architects at various levels in their careers. It was a good way of giving a reality check to what is really a very cerebral, academic environment.”

As Inglese worked on designing communities similar to large-scale cohousing developments, Fisher developed maps of the region, identifying the watersheds and other environmental features while also working on actual design ideas. To Fisher, the experience confirmed that “this was something I could possibly be good at; something I could possibly do as a career.”

The hands-on aspect of house creation still intrigued him, so after graduation Fisher worked construction before embarking on an architectural career. He now holds a master’s degree in architecture with a minor in landscape architecture from the North Carolina State University School of Design where he received the American Institute of Architects’ Certificate of Merit Award for integrating architecture, ecology, coastal land development, and computer modeling tools—surely human ecology in action. After several years spent working in architecture firms, Fisher started ENVIRON Design Collaborative, providing architectural services for numerous projects using straw bale, solar, and site-responsive strategies.

Today Fisher is the sustainability manager for the Department of Labor’s Job Corps facilities program, and a regionally known green building expert in the Washington, DC area. His work took on greater intensity—and personal excitement—after an executive order from President Barack Obama required all federal agencies to implement a broad range of high-performance, environmentally responsive initiatives that also serve to mitigate climate change. Fisher not only implements these directives, but also advocates for them.

Fisher has found such fertile ground working toward developing design and operations processes that adhere to known principles of sustainability, that he has not been otherwise active as a designer in recent years. “It’s really exciting being here in DC, working with some of the top architects and engineers, designing to LEED requirements, and helping to manage integrated design and certification processes,” says Fisher who is an accredited professional with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. He is also involved with the United States Green Building Council, which developed the LEED standards.

“I get the sense that I’m in the crux of things here, and the world is waking up to the need to seriously implement a green paradigm. The federal government is actually a leading force now,” says Fisher. “I never would have gotten here without the environmental thinking, literature, and values that I was able to absorb at COA.”
When Christie Denzel Anastasia ’92 meets interns at Denali National Park, she is always certain to tell them, “This is an experience, you’re here for the experience; a conservation career may not be your ultimate path.” She should know. She discovered some great drawbacks to the career promised by an internship to which she had looked forward. So did Sarah Cole McDaniel ’93. Their experience reminds us all that an internship is a learning experience—and learning what isn’t right is just as valuable as learning what clicks.

**SARAH COLE MCDANIEL ’93**

Even in high school, Sarah McDaniel, then Sarah Cole, was on the science track. Her sister had told her about a small, sciency school near Acadia National Park. McDaniel visited, fell in love, and applied early decision.

Expecting to become a field biologist, she collected and examined coyote scat in Acadia, and arranged for an internship helping a post-doc student at Texas Tech University track the mule deer herd. Though she only needed to spend ten weeks on the internship, she signed up for six months.

McDaniel joined a team of researchers with doctorates and master’s degrees. She was the youngster. They worked around the clock, eight hours on, eight hours off, riding around the high desert in ATVs, attempting to track the movements of individuals among a herd of radio-collared deer. But first the deer had to show.

“I found I didn’t have the personality characteristics to sit around in a hot, dusty desert and wait for deer to walk by,” says McDaniel, who has been a COA trustee since 2004. “Being on an ATV was cool, but listening for beeps and writing down where they occurred was not a satisfying job experience.” Not in isolation; not when two members of the small team were a couple who were not getting along—to put it mildly.

“I didn’t have the personality that could tolerate that dysfunction for very long,” McDaniel says. Isolated among tense, angry teammates, bored with the work, uncomfortable with the competition among the researchers, she was absolutely miserable. One night she headed off-site to a public phone, called biology faculty member John Anderson, reached his wife Karen, and burst into tears. After twelve weeks, she left. “Quitting is not something I do lightly,” she says.

Fortunately, having been at COA, McDaniel had been taking a wider range of classes than just biology. Though she continued her work in Acadia looking at coyote scat and went ahead with her plans for her senior project surveying mammals on Isle au Haut (work that was published in the *Maine Naturalist*), she began shifting her focus, taking more classes in conservation with Ken Cline, faculty member in law and policy, than in biology.

After COA, McDaniel received a master’s degree in environmental studies at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, then a law degree from Harvard University, where she served on the Harvard Environmental Law Review. Still regarding herself as “an animal person,” she has happily transferred her desire to protect animals to protecting their habitat. She is most proud of helping to preserve a missing link in the Hundred-Mile Wilderness previously owned by Plum Creek by representing the Appalachian Mountain Club in its purchase of the thirty-thousand-acre Roach Pond Tract near Greenville, Maine.

“Never, walking in here, did I think I was going to be a lawyer,” she says. And if she hadn’t had the internship? “I would have taken some field job. It would have been a painful learning experience.”
Christie Denzel Anastasia’s experience was nearly the opposite to that of Sarah Cole McDaniel’s. Not that Anastasia (known as Christie Denzel at COA) came to COA to do law, but she planned on working inside, doing scientific research at a laboratory. But her internship—a coveted and fascinating genetic research project at The Jackson Laboratory—caused her to know herself better. She realized she needed a job that would allow her to be outdoors, at least some of the time.

Anastasia’s journey has been one of revelations. She still remembers the moment when she decided to apply to COA. Raised in an urban environment in southern Connecticut, she didn’t even know that national parks existed before she came to COA.

But as a first-generation college student, she was hesitant about going to a small college so far away. Admission staff at COA encouraged her to visit; it was not in her realm of thinking. COA landed in her “do not apply” pile.

It gnawed on her until one night she woke up at 3 a.m. and moved the application from the “do not apply” pile to the “yes, apply” one.

Her first and last summers at COA, Anastasia worked at Acadia National Park. In the middle, she took paid internships at the Jackson Lab, researching autoimmune diseases one summer, spending another summer trying to understand what elements of environmental disasters remain in the atmosphere.

A crisis came when the scientist she was working with decided to move his lab to the University of Cincinnati and invited Anastasia to go with him. “Here’s my ticket to a free grad program,” she recalls. “It was a dream invitation.” But something had gnawed at her. One day, the scientists had decided to collect the DNA of poplar trees outside the lab, gathering DNA from each of the poplars. Though they were scientists, they didn’t understand that this sampling would not offer variety, as all the trees would be genetically identical.

This experience catalyzed the realization that she never wanted to be such a specialist that she would miss seeing the big picture.

Furthermore, Anastasia says, “I realized that while I loved the very organized, controlled environment of a lab, and working with smart dedicated people on big projects with big implications, it didn’t win out over my need to be outside and ‘grok’ the broad interconnectedness of things.”

She passed on the job invitation. It was not easy. In fact, it was so difficult that at the time, she felt it was the wrong decision. “But if I listened really down deep inside, my conscience told me not to go.”

Anastasia had help from her internship team, including former COA librarian Marcia Dvorak and John Anderson. She also felt quite bolstered by an unexpected remark from Ken Cline. “Someday you’ll be a superintendent in a national park,” she recalls him saying. That remark, both off-hand and extraordinary, is what COA so often offers, she says, “inspiring others to see what is in their hearts.”

Anastasia went into the National Park Service and worked her way up from interpreter to educator, getting a master’s in business psychology along the way. Just as this magazine was going to press, she wrote to say that she was promoted from managing a science center in Alaska’s Denali National Park and Preserve to the position of management and program analyst for the park. Adds Anastasia, “Very exciting human ecology work to be done even deep in the interior of Alaska!”

While she doesn’t spend as much time working outside now, the big picture is hard to miss. “My home is right next to over six million acres of wilderness. This is wilderness with a capital ‘W.’ I know it really well, and my kids are growing up in it.”

Then she adds, “I’m really glad I woke up that night and moved the application package.”
As a young girl, Holly Furholmen Zak was fascinated by reptiles. She raised lizards of her own, and when she saw a television program about people working with alligators, she turned to her father and said, “That’s what I want to do.” She retained this dream, coming to COA in 1990 to study biology. Twenty years later, she is still sharing her excitement for outdoor biology with others.

Like many COA students, Zak had not one but two internships. Jill Barlow-Kelley, director of internships and career services, encouraged Zak to look through a national wildlife refuge database for a place where she could pursue her interest in herpetology, and she quickly found Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia. Although the refuge had never had an intern before, they thought Zak would make a good addition to the team, contributing to the refuge and learning in the process. In 1993, Zak became their first intern.

For three months, she acted as a regular employee working on advanced research projects. She studied red-cockaded woodpeckers, black bears, frogs, marsh/wading birds, and…alligators! One night, she even found herself stranded in a motorboat, surrounded by the reptiles, with an angry female alligator trying to chase her away. This experience, as well as the other challenges Zak faced as she air-boated through the waterways, only confirmed her desire to jump into the world of biological research.

For her second internship, Zak worked in Louisiana taking morphological measurements of harvested alligators, analyzing two hundred alligator stomachs for food content. Then she returned to Okefenokee for her senior project, performing red-cockaded woodpecker surveys and mapping their colonies. After graduating, Zak returned to Okefenokee yet again to work on wildlife surveys and a contaminant study as a temporary biological science technician. In 2003, she received her master’s in biological sciences at Northern Illinois University.

More recently, Zak has focused on jobs with flexible schedules so she can spend time with her three children, Jenna, twelve, Brandon, five, and Savannah, four. Now, Zak’s love of reptiles, combined with her COA education, her internships, and her experiences as a mother are being directed toward a new project: launching an outdoor day camp, Research 4 Reptiles.

Research 4 Reptiles will bring children enrolled in 4-H programs to the prairie to do hands-on field research studies with native reptiles. They will collect important data for Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie to help them make decisions regarding conservation.

Zak wants students to understand that snakes and turtles are not gross and slimy creatures, and that they play crucial roles in our ecosystem. Through reptiles, Zak hopes to show the students how we are all connected, and that our actions have consequences.

As she says, “We need people to think about the consequences of their actions, and that’s why human ecology is so important.”

Holly Furholmen Zak ’94

“We need people to think about the consequences of their actions, and that’s why human ecology is so important.”

Holly Furholmen Zak ’94

For the Love of Lizards

Holly Furholmen Zak ’94

By Julia De Santis ’12

For the Love of Lizards

Jesse Kowalski’s internship didn’t only point him in the right direction, it became his direction; some might say it became his life. In the fall of 1996 Kowalski interned at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Barely two weeks after his internship was over, his supervisors called him wondering if he could return for six months to work on the young museum’s first major traveling show. They wanted him in March; he wasn’t graduating until June, but fortunately, Kowalski’s senior project was about Andy Warhol, so in the best COA fashion, it all worked out.

When the traveling show was assembled and out the door, the museum found another job for him, and then another, and Kowalski is there today, having advanced from project assistant to curatorial assistant to his current position as director of exhibitions.

And yet, museum work certainly wasn’t in Kowalski’s mind when the high school chemistry whiz from Wichita, Kansas chose to attend COA. Mostly, he says now, he was seeking something different. Having taken music rather than art in high school, the closest Kowalski came to Andy Warhol was a book he had found in a bargain bin in Kansas.

Still, that book intrigued Kowalski enough to stop at the museum when he reached Pittsburgh—halfway between Wichita and Bar Harbor—on his first journey to Maine; only the museum had yet to open. That first term at COA, Kowalski was still seeking new experiences. He took biology and a class with Joanne Carpenter, former faculty member in art and art history. When he did “horribly” in biology, but totally took to the art, he started to question his focus: “Maybe art’s my thing,” he recalls thinking. He took another course and was hooked. “Joanne Carpenter mentored me, she turned me onto art,” he recalls.

As for Andy Warhol, what intrigued him was the artist’s dual nature. “He’d go to church every Sunday, but he’d create films that were pretty racy.” Warhol was also expansive, working in film, print, drawings, and television. “He was very creative, intelligent, well-rounded,” says Kowalski.

When Kowalski applied for an internship, the museum was only in its second year. He had a variety of duties, from creating a mailing list database to helping install shows to undertaking curatorial research. Kowalski left the museum excited about a career in the field. “I figured I’d move to New York City and do something there.”

Kowalski found more than a career through his internship. In 1998, a student named Heather came to intern at the museum. She left, but she and Kowalski stayed in touch—and then some. In 2004 Heather Kowalski was hired by the Andy Warhol museum as their registrar. “It’s fun,” he says. “We don’t report to each other, but we have traveled together.” Currently, however, their two children, ages two and four, have put a crimp in that particular pleasure.

Jesse Kowalski ’97 curating a gallery of Warhol’s Marilyn works.
Tracey Thibault had always loved playing in the woods. As a child, she joined the Girl Scouts and in high school worked as a camp counselor. When Thibault’s mother heard about College of the Atlantic, she knew the interdisciplinary, experiential program would intrigue her daughter. When mother and daughter made the trip from New Hampshire to Bar Harbor, Thibault thought it felt like a perfect fit.

Looking at the course descriptions, she noticed the focus on primary source materials and the emphasis on applied outdoor learning experiences. One class in particular, The Maine Woods, caught Thibault’s eye. Co-taught by Ken Cline and Davis Taylor, faculty members in environmental policy and economics, respectively, The Maine Woods required students to spend a week in the woods before the start of the term. Thibault made sure to sign up. Reflecting on it fifteen years later, Thibault remembers, “The class introduced me to COA and taught me how people of a different time period really valued the land, and how that tradition has stayed alive in Maine.”

Throughout her time at COA, Thibault continued to study and appreciate the land. Working with Gordon Longsworth ’91, COA’s Geographic Information Systems lab director, and Isabel Mancinelli, faculty member in planning and landscape architecture, Thibault dove into the world of GIS and land use planning.

During the summer between her junior and senior years, Thibault interned in Augusta with the Land Use Planning Program of Maine’s State Planning Office. She engaged in a variety of activities from redesigning the website to educating community members about Maine’s overboard discharge program. Learning on the job, she traveled around to the state’s boat docks, telling fishermen that if they removed human waste properly, the state would pay some of the costs.

Thibault also helped review comprehensive plans for cities, and supported those involved with smart growth—the anti-sprawl movement that advocates compact development and open space. At the time, every town was required to have a comprehensive plan to receive funding, dictating public policy for transportation, utilities, land use, and housing.

The time spent with the State Planning Office confirmed Thibault’s interest in land use planning. She knew she wanted to work in cities and towns, but she still wasn’t sure in what capacity. After graduation, she took a number of planning positions including mapping work at the James W. Sewell Co. of Old Town, Maine; and a position ensuring land zoning laws for Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection. Thibault now lives in New Hampshire, where she is the associate planner for the City of Lebanon—and she just hired her internship boss as a consultant for the master plan she is currently creating.

Thibault says she uses the environmental skills she learned at COA daily, “to help the conservation commission decide what would be appropriate land to buy, what the policies should be about camping, and whatever other issues might arise.” The tenets of human ecology are guideposts when she has conversations or presents on sustainable development.

And when she makes decisions, she approaches every issue from many different directions, looking for the connections and trying to ask the right questions: “Is this decision good for the jobs in the town?” and, “What are all the different ways this decision will affect how the residents and visitors work, play, and live in the community?”

***

A HUMAN ECOLOGIST IN EDUCATION: KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW THE WORLD

Jasmine Smith ’09

Photo and story by Julia De Santis ’12

Jasmine Smith never had any doubt in her mind that COA was a perfect fit for her. Aware of the powerful connection between sense of place and education, she describes her first visit to COA: “It just felt right. The island. The people. The interdisciplinary approach to academics. It felt and still feels like home.”

At a young age, Smith knew she wanted to go into the field of education, and developed her passions for ecology, natural history, and the outdoors at COA while taking classes to be certified as a secondary teacher. COA’s own interactive and interdisciplinary curriculum served as a model for the kind of education Smith now strives to create for others.
She remembers how one class, on the natural history of Atlantic salmon, co-taught by Ken Cline and Todd Little-Siebold, COA faculty members in policy and history, respectively, showed her how to create an explorative learning environment while approaching issues from different perspectives and through different lenses. Another class, Curriculum Design, with education faculty member Bonnie Tai, prepared Smith to engage learners with diverse interests, abilities, and preferences.

COA’s education program asks students to become human ecologists as they acquire certification. Future teachers learn to explore the relationships between separate disciplines, a skill they can then share with others wherever they go. Many COA education courses offer field components, and students learn by working in classrooms around Mount Desert Island. Smith took full advantage of this program.

For her internship and student teaching placement, Smith taught middle school science at Mount Desert Elementary in Northeast Harbor. The school participated in a program called Fish Friends which provided salmon eggs to the class. Using what she learned from her COA classes and her senior project—for which she created a guide to public participation in dam removal processes—Smith developed an interdisciplinary experiential curriculum for her students. The unit focused on salmon, dams, energy, and river ecology, while touching on many of the traditional academic disciplines. Smith organized field trips to the Leonard Lake dam in Ellsworth on the Union River, the Craig Brook Fish Hatchery in Orland, and culminated the unit with a class-wide mock town meeting to demonstrate their learning.

After graduating, Smith moved to northern California to teach at The Woolman Semester School, a small boarding school for students wanting an alternative semester focused on environmental sustainability, peace, and social justice. There she was the resident Environmental Science teacher. She brought her students all over the state to study the food systems, to the reaches of the Yuba River Watershed to study hydrology, politics, and place, and to Mexico to study desert ecology and immigration policy.

While this experience confirmed her desire to be a teacher, she realized that MDI is really where she wanted to be. Currently, Smith is a homeschool teacher for three children on the island. Her students enjoy an integrated curriculum similar to those she taught before; since September, they have been studying the science of the fall season along with island history and ecology. They do art projects influenced by Hudson River School artists and research bog ecology. They pick cranberries, observe the changing leaves, draw photosynthesis diagrams in the sand, and learn the island’s history as they explore it.

“COA really fostered, supported, and modeled what I believed in and what I thought education should be,” says Smith. “Now I regard so many things in life as an integrated curriculum. I can’t think in any other way. No other college experience would have prepared me as well.”

She is currently collaborating with Nick Jenei ’09 to create a model educational program in Bar Harbor focused on the theme, “sense of self, sense of place.” The idea comes from the notion that students cannot know how to create change, fully understand world issues, and identify with their sense of place if they do not look inward and know themselves first. The program would encourage motivated students to struggle with the big questions: What is my purpose and what are my passions? How can I create meaningful, authentic relationships with people and place? The students could then articulate and act upon what compels them, inspiring a sense of environmental stewardship and positive action.

Smith and Jenei are committed to having the program on MDI because of the unique natural environment and the resulting politics and economics. They hope to collaborate with existing island establishments to make the best use of underutilized resources and space. The project is ever-evolving. As Smith explains, “The kind of education COA provides and the tools it gives people should not be limited to COA students. What this world really needs is more human ecologists. Look at the things COA grads are doing. The more young human ecologists, the better.”
Donor Profile
Tom Cox—A beautifully functioning heart
By Donna Gold

A large Buddha with long-hanging earlobes meditates between windows looking out onto the deck of Tom Cox’s home, a peach-hued hibiscus settled before its crossed legs. White lilies and roses, and white and peach carnations stand in vases around the light-filled room, while a fraught tapestry by the French artist Lucien Coutaud hangs over the mantle of his gran- ite fireplace. This piece’s more joyous companion—a celebration of music and wine in post-war Paris—takes up one wall of the library wing.

Last summer, during a COA reception at his home, food was served on Italian hand-painted plates designed by an artist with a PhD in biochemistry, each plate featuring a different function of the heart. “It’s an example of the mixing of the disciplines of science and art,” said the soft-spoken Cox, whose quiet, patient demeanor has an element of the Buddhas he lovingly collects.

The same interweaving of appreciation—for art, science, and the environment—that led Tom Cox to create his light-filled home in Seal Harbor, connects him to College of the Atlantic, where he has been a trustee since 2008, and a supporter in ways that prove there’s no problem with the functioning of his heart.

Cox’s environmental leanings were fostered early by family visits from his Fort Smith, Arkansas home to the nearby Ozark Mountains, where his mother insisted that he should always leave a place in better condition than when he arrived.

After receiving a degree in Asian art at Oklahoma University, Cox spent three years on a destroyer in the Pacific as a commissioned naval officer. Discharged too late in the year to apply to graduate school, Cox headed to New York City to find a job. “I started in alphabetical order, beginning with Bankers Trust,” he says. “And that’s as far as I went.” In 1970, Cox left Bankers Trust and became a private trustee. Semi-retired now, he still keeps a few clients—serving the fourth and fifth generations of several families.

The gift to COA by David Rockefeller that established The David Rockefeller Family Chair in Ecosystem Management and Protection at College of the Atlantic offered Cox a further opportunity to connect with COA. Years before, when Cox sought to protect his land on Sutton’s Island, he worked closely with Rockefeller’s wife Peggy (whose two farm properties on Norway Drive were also donated to the college). “She was my mentor,” Cox says, “guiding me through the learning process of creating easements.” So when Lynn Boulger, dean of development, asked donors to accompany the Rockefeller chair with a fund to support professional development, fieldwork, information resources, and other program needs, Cox stepped up, establishing the T.A. Cox Fund for Ecosystem Management and Protection.

Cox’s generosity extends from the grand—initiating, for instance, the $25,000-minimum President’s Circle—to something as small and deeply appreciated as boxes of Texas 1015 onions and Florida grapefruits for COA staff and faculty. Clearly this financial expert also has an artist’s sense of the telling detail, an awareness that a grand project such as a small college of human ecology must be supported by scores of hands working together—and that these efforts take heart from the kindness and nourishment of an unexpected bit of sunlight in the midst of winter’s chill.
These poems are two of a spectacular collection of poetry written by students in Bill Carpenter’s Poetry and the American Environment class in the spring of 2010.

**COOKING**
By Abigail Dunn ’13

My stomach rumbles, at 1:30
in the morning
with you

I make us pasta, while you
take my egg-skull and
crack it against the side of a bowl,
whisking my thoughts around and
carefully scooping out the small sharp bits of my shell

when the strawberry rhubarb pie
bubbles over the crust and
leaves its sweet burning juices on the
oven floor, and the smoke billows around
the oven-light, you reach inside
and try to scrape it away
with a plastic spatula which melts when it touches the heat

and looking at you crouching there
with your blue shirt sleeve rolled up
and the organic apple label I stuck
to your elbow, I think about
how you draw all the burning things
toward you and then shine your
light through their smoke.

and later
when you stand with
your legs on the arms of
the chair, holding the ceiling
for support and read me
poetry
so loud and fierce
it’s terrifying—

then, then, I understand
why the rocks let themselves
get worn down by the sea.

**HOLLOW**
By Sarah Wineberg ’13

Silent feet in land of sleep
wingbeats leak into outer dreams
I dreamt I was a weaver finch
building my home in your
collarbones.

Weaving through pillars of my dreams
I snip and sweep, the
frayed edges of
your mind asleep

I gather bright and broken things.

Bits of teacups, bits of string
a heart is made of broken things,
I build a home that beats and screams.
This excerpt from the novel The Reluctant Poet is published here in Maine under my name for reasons of intellectual posterity, but the author should nonetheless be recognizable to the COA community as a recent graduate from southern North America and possible master’s candidate. The work is presented in literal form, that is to say, the form in which I received it; scrawled thin and black with few verifiable typographical errors. The obvious miscues have been corrected by our proofreaders at the magazine. Contradictions and alien languages have stayed put.

There will be doubts about spatial authenticity. History intrudes often. Can we trust a man who has been his own translator? If delusions about the practice of justice in the United States derail the author’s realism, the reader must remember the author’s senior thesis, “Freudian Mysticism in Administrative Society.” Is this a journal entry or a letter? Is it both? Whether the author has lost his desire for poetry or murdered it, melodrama remains a central figure.
nothing to do,

There is a drink in the lexicon here named the Car Bomb and probably everyone is familiar with its nature. *Car Bombs/12:30/The Student Theater/Ghosts of Tomorrow (2046)* read the posters. Left to right we have subject, time, space, and the last item is presumably a film (phantasmal, I suspect). For the truth about the film, you would have to ask Van, the man behind the scenes, but I have never seen a film played start to finish at the student theatre. Even if it is a real film, the year is wrong, because as we all know, cinema moves backward easily, but moving it forward is simply impossible.

As I have said, there is a drink in the lexicon here called the *coche bomba* (back home an *irlandés* dangles from the end) and this drink, like cinema, is irreversible. “Party” appears nowhere on the posters, indeed, no one has used that word for the last month. But only the word is taboo, the act remains a vital part of the mourning process. Once sobriety is sufficiently exploded, the reverie will skip over mourning and give way to gossipy gospels of our dearly departed Estelle’s intimate relationship with Prof. Staller (poetesses, both) and her motives for suicide.

It is only a Thursday and most do not have class tomorrow. Still, it is not a large crowd. I have another meeting with my new advisor (Staller is on professional leave) about the poems I should be writing (though poetry, as you can imagine, is giving me more trouble than I give to it).

The party takes the usual formations, groups fall to their usual geometries: the high moderns of Dr. Youlean are getting high up in the balcony, Freddie Tuft and Ellen occupy the landing of the only staircase for the School of Human Ecology (lately their building is rebuilding and they are fond of staircases and corridors). The plebes and the post-humanists mingle on the ground floor.

Hillary, one of the elite English joint MFA-PhDs is wearing a minimalist nurse’s outfit completed (and perhaps promoted) by a naval officer’s cap. She is passing by, passing out her Jello Shots. I have an Absolute Cranberry and Helena, standing next to me with a Tequila Lime, quickly, pretextually, brings up a paper Hillary recently wrote on the *libertinage diététique* of the Marquis de Sade—a paper which Helena has not read, but asserts she will eat.

Often do I start my evenings drinking with Helena and the *Pomolitkritic* (*¡qué alemán!*), because they are the most self-conscious (self-destructive). Everyone always told me that Americans “can’t hold their licker” [sic!], but in New York the worldly folk drink like landless peasants. During an argument about the Beatles in which some unfortunate undergrad mentions the anxiety of influence, Helena explodes. There is an overabundance of shared opinion. I slip away invisible like Gringo Starr, the rupture pushing me towards the stairs.

On my way up Freddie tells me (though I already know, we all know) that he has heard that his short story “Anger or Cool?”*, the only coursework he did at all last term, is to be published in the dean’s pet magazine, *Monastery*. Now that is efficiency, I say, moving along.

Upstairs, I see the screen large and blue, swimming with fish framed close on the quivering gills. Immediately I am thinking to myself that this certainly cannot be *Ghosts of Tomorrow*, since my good friend Richard Hilliard told me all about it, stressing that it had been the only film he’d even seen that year (though Ricardo is always saying things like that), and this movie does not at all match his confusing and recursive description (where are the telepathic triplets?).

Whatever the film is, the music is much louder. Van has picked songs that center on cars and/or bombs and the gender studies kids are dancing on the stage (is it clear that by “kids” I mean to show endearment?). Van, when I tell him that I may leave soon, assures me that the night “hasn’t really even started yet” and he offers me a red glass pipe stuffed with something called Black Steel, Black Ice or maybe even Ice Storm. I manage mostly not to laugh and I pat him on the back. Back to the film.

The flitting flexing fish have gone and a white woman, 1958*, middle-aged, house-frocked, 1960?, mixes vibrant rose-colored drinks in a cozy kitchen, and carrying these with a polypropylene tray proceeds the camera and me out into a courtyard that might as well rest back in Coyoacán, 1999, and the drinks, exposed in the afternoon sun, are transforming into poisonous characters in their own right. I turn to Van and say, indicating the screen with my hand, Van, this strongly resembles a dream I have been having recently and Van looks at me for a few moments and mutters out pale exhaust, you’d better watch carefully then, or, you’d better watch carefully man. Turning back, the screen strolls along and I follow, trying to pick up the threads (men with umbrellas, puppies with children), but dreams are slippery and Van shouts to me (Hosay!)
Students on opposite sides of the table stared each other down like they would rather die than blink, well, at least until the time had come to break for lunch and the room dissolved.

I tell her that my very good friend Richard Hilliard has in fact written a novel about a painter, though this one is a completely fictive character and I tell her that the book is done in a “pornographic realist” style, even using my fingers to make the quotation marks in the air, a cultural inheritance that I am not proud of, but perhaps the phrase lingers in the air just a moment longer, buzzing.

Have you read his book? I ask, but she says no, she does not read contemporary fiction and I laugh and tell her that is what Richard tells me; you and he share sympathies, I say. But I continue heedlessly, the painter becomes obsessed with a subject of his, I say, and that is all quite usual, and his neurosis is grounded in a particular model, a young girl of course, which makes even more sense if you know my friend Richard, but what is strange about his little book is that the painter, going rapidly blind, becomes obsessed with the painting of an enormous scene from the Passion in which every single face, including that of the Christ, is somehow also the face of the painter himself. You can perhaps imagine how that logic would be very problematic. I am not going to spoil the end, I say, but it is really a fine book.

Oh, um, good, don’t spoil it, she says and after a moment we both turn to listen to Van who is telling June and Hillary a story about Freddie I believe I have heard before. I try not to listen and again I am staring at the screen over Van’s shoulder (a hip-hop video?), and remembering with displeasure my unwritten poems, the meeting I have tomorrow (later today?) with my new advisor and wondering how best to tell him that very few, let alone I, are capable of writing poetry in English. I even entertain thoughts of telling him that Staller was going to let me write in Spanish (ou français, pourquoi pas?).

Van is offering the pipe to Lucy. I don’t smoke pot, she says. It leads as easily to tragedy as comedy, I say. Her eyes say, “you don’t look Mexican.”

I go into the bathroom and when I am washing my hands I just let the water run over them thinking that tonight will be one of those nights that the water never heats up and I stand there with the water running, staring at my hands helplessly testing the temperature and hoping that the water will warm even just a fraction of a degree, please...

When I come back out to the balcony, Lucy has either dematerialized or has actually transformed into Nestor the locksmith, who stands now holding Bomb above Car with Van, Hillary, Freddie, and suddenly me. Down, down, and down we go.

Nestor, a wily Columbian who has Human Resources convinced that he is two different people (who get two different pay checks), tells us that we might want to turn the music down “because it’s kind-of loud” and also because in ten minutes he is supposed to let the dean into Opal Hall across the quad.

It does not take much. Soon the music is low, white noise, Van is talking to Nestor and June but everyone else is going or gone. I am helping Hillary clean up.

There are no more Car Bombs, she says. It was good timing, I say. I need a cigarette, she says. Alright, I say, and then we can walk home. When Hillary and I reach the roof of the theatre the air is freezing and I give Hillary my
jacket to cover up her legs and we sit, watching the grounds stir here and there. A white campus security vehicle idles by Opal Hall. The moon is mostly obscured by streaks of cloud. Soon Nestor is walking up to the building and waving to the campus guards. A black Lexus drives up beside the white.

That’s Staller and the dean, Hillary says. I cannot see through the distance. Hillary tells me that Estelle’s parents have been trying to get the local police to investigate their daughter’s poetry to see if it contained criminally self-destructive thoughts. Hillary thinks that Staller even wanted to talk to Estelle’s parents, or well, at least let them read her poetry, but the dean “won’t let her, doesn’t want her speaking to anyone until he finishes his ‘investigation’.”

Staller is quite far away, too far to know that it is her. But I imagine that I can see her face and a look of powerlessness, or regret, or maybe divine anger. Soon she follows Nestor and the dean into the building.

So he’s confiscating poetry? I ask.

Do you want to know why I think Estelle killed herself? Hillary asks me, shivering. I say nothing. She continues, “I think that her parents knew she was a lesbian.”

Fragments of Estelle’s poetry are surfacing ecstatically: her eyes were green in March and blue in July, and he feeds on embroidered time and make he most / of machine or of ghost / time will still unwind him and I cannot connect them correctly to one other or stop them circling around in their tracks, they just continue over and over, and it is Estelle’s voice reading them to me which is particularly fantastic since she never read her poetry aloud (though Staller read them, once or twice). The campus security vehicle spins its tires and rockets out of the parking lot. The past is written where the future is lost.

I am thinking that I am a terrible poet.

Why did Estelle walk into the lake when she could have jumped from a bridge? You can look where you want for that answer, but you will still have to dredge for it.

“Are you going home for Christmas, Jose?” Hillary asks me, and not knowing what it means to use the formal tense, she could also not know that I might have liked to hear her say José Luis, no matter how her speech might stumble.

I say no.

Everyone is still inside Opal Hall, or maybe they have left by some other door. There is, as the Americans say, “nothing to see here.” The plot of the night has revealed itself and so I may begin my acceptance of it, even feeling ready to commit attempted poetry. Mostly, though, I am ready to

Hillary tells me that Estelle’s parents have been trying to get the local police to investigate their daughter’s poetry to see if it contained criminally self-destructive thoughts.

I walk Hillary down the night-steeped hill, down into the prickly lights lining the tiny city (English!) and I say to her, as plainly as I can manage, “Look, I was admitted to this school on my poetic merits...” but the words come out too fast, unhinged. I think my English prose was spent on Lucy (what a terrible language!). Hillary puts her arm in mine, but she too is elsewhere so I mostly watch our shadows circle us as we move beneath street lamps and leafless trees.

I leave Hillary at her steps and say goodnight and when I get myself back to my apartment, I somehow manage to seat myself to write, and happily what comes out is not poetry,

Richard, Ricardo, Riquito, ¡chavo giratorio!

One month ago, the only MFA in poetry here worth anything killed herself, but she did not jump into a gorge, she walked into a lake. I know it sounds fictional, but really it was poetic.

When I was thinking of leaving last night’s party (and the country) I observed a poetry raid, or so it appeared to be (a foreigner’s first). But I was reminded of our second winter in Maine.

“make he most / of machine or of ghost / time will still unwind him”

Do you remember that film “Ghosts of 2morrow?” I saw telepathy but no triplets. Do you remember the last time you were “in town” and we spoke about moving to China? Mexicans may build their space-age railways, at least such is the subject of “The Reluctant Poet,” the sublime science fiction I will mail to you once I have it written. I am finished with poetry, being so lucky as to have stayed invisible. You see how confession always comes after profession? In the Orient we could even pass for brothers. Do you remember that you promised to write?

your friend,

José Luis F.M.

December 7, 2012
1977

Tom Fisher is making his home in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is currently directing the National Job Corps Facilities Sustainability program as a sustainability manager.

Mary Levanti-Cuellar left her teaching position at the Ashwood Waldorf School in Rockport, Maine last year and now helps to run Catama Video Productions. She is also a volunteer teacher at Portland Adult Education, a program geared primarily toward the immigrant population.

1978

Bruce Phillips is currently serving on the board of the Clean Air Task Force, a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing atmospheric pollution through scientific research, advocacy, and private sector collaboration. He recently returned from a trip to China on its behalf, visiting Shanghai, Beijing, and Inner Mongolia.

1979

Loie Hayes was excited to see a shout-out to her work with Boston Climate Action Network in a recent article in The Nation (www.thenation.com) about the Green Justice Coalition that BostonCAN helped found. When not in meetings or working to create a local power base for a global shift to sustainability, she’s busy learning about Alzheimer’s through helping her spouse, Julie, care for her mother, learning about colleges today as she helps her eldest daughter decide where to apply for 2011, and learning about eighth grade in the wireless age from her younger daughter.

Looking for the Pony, a play by Andrea Lepcio, is a finalist for the Dramatists Guild Hull-Wariner Award, along with Ruined, The Orphan Home Cycle, Circle Mirror Transformation, and The Brother/Sister. It was produced at Venus Theatre in October and will be at Detroit Repertory Theatre in July 2011. Her play Tunnel Vision will be workshopped at Wellfleet Harbor Theatre in collaboration with New Perspectives Theatre in April. She is also working on commissions from the Tenement Museum with America-in-Play.

1980

Saejit Wendy Greene writes “My partner and I moved from Colorado to Asheville, North Carolina in the spring of 2010 to launch a new chapter of our lives. We’re loving Asheville and have started teaching astrology workshops together. I’ve integrated my skills as a counselor, astrologer, and expressive arts therapist to help people live with greater authenticity, passion, and purpose. I work with the ecology of the soul on its human journey.”

1981

Terry Good ’80, Pancho Cole, and Jaki Erdoes ’80 traveled together from Bar Harbor to Washington, DC to attend the Rally to Restore Sanity 2010.

1982

Greg Stone, chief scientist for Oceans at Conservation International, gave a talk about the establishment of the second largest marine protected area for the TED Mission Blue Voyage. The talk has been posted on www.ted.com.

1983

DeWitt Kimball is part of an effort to build Brunswick, Maine’s first green housing community. The venture involves building nine Gold LEED-rated homes on Collinsbrook Road.

1984

John Dandy is a master electrician for Dandy Solar Electric. He stays busy promoting energy efficiency while installing solar power.

Matthew Hare accepted a position as an associate professor at Cornell University in the Department of Natural Resources.

1985

Peter Heller married international belly dance performer Tara Harper this September in a New York City ceremony that included several COA alumni and friends from the MDI area. Peter continues his work as an executive producer of films and consultant to non-profit organizations—a skill he first picked up in the COA development office. He recently produced the film The Vanishing of Bees, which was screened at COA’s Family and Alumni Weekend.

1986

Barclay McCurdy continues to love being a physical therapist and spending two months in southwestern Costa Rica each year.

1988

Dorie Stolley recently accepted a position as a refuge biologist at the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Bets Swanton is a self-employed exhibition designer. She makes her home in Bar Harbor.

1990

Emily Bracale opened her home-based healing/art studio in Bar Harbor this fall. She practices Reiki and includes the option of art-making for her clients. Her own trials with Lyme disease have
given her a particular interest in offering support for people dealing with this disease. See her online exhibit, In the Lyme-Light: Portraits of Illness and Healing at www.inthelyme-light.org.

1991

David Hiltz is a member of a crew featured on the Discovery Channel’s reality show, Swords: Life on the Line. A lobster fisherman on Isle au Haut, he was excited to join Linda Greenlaw for the swordfishing season on the Grand Banks.

1992

Angela DelVecchio is busy working as a family nurse practitioner at Mount Desert Island Hospital.

1993

Jennifer Mazer recently wrote to say, “I am deeply saddened by the passing of Shane Davis (’93) and Martin Koeppel, beautiful souls. Shane was a student at COA for two years. He was always fun to talk to with late night sessions and occasional playing of Turrets piano at 1 a.m. Martin taught at COA from 1990 to 1996 in media arts and education. He made the mundane so beautiful and was always willing to listen. I raise a cup of coffee in their memory and hope that we ‘pay it forward’ what we learned from them.”

Sarah (Cole) McDaniel has been selected for inclusion in the 2010 New England Super Lawyers® list in the Rising Star category. Sarah celebrated her first year in her own firm, Maine Land Law LLC, PA. Based in Gorham, she works statewide focusing her practice on property law issues including boundary disputes, easement litigation, land conservation, permitting, and appeals.

CedarBough (Blomberg) Saeji and husband Karjam are enjoying a year in Korea while CedarBough does doctoral research with the support of fellowships from Fulbright-Hays, University of California Los Angeles International Institute, and the Asian Cultural Council. Her research is on issues surrounding the protection and transmission of cultural knowledge focusing on three mask dance dramas.

1996

Dr. Ann Clemens joined the staff of Bend Memorial Clinic’s urgent care department. She is a graduate of Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and completed her family medicine residency at the University of New Mexico. She recently moved from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Bend, Oregon with her husband and two-year-old daughter, and writes that she is thrilled to be living in such a beautiful place!

Mike Staggs and his wife Lynne celebrated their tenth anniversary on Prince Edward Island looking at wind generator operations and potato farms.

1997

Kim Ballard is the new membership coordinator and office manager of GrowSmart Maine, a non-profit in Portland that promotes economic development and job creation while conserving Maine’s natural and working landscapes—true human ecology! She moved to a gorgeous old home in downtown Gorham with her boyfriend, Chris, and cat, Gus. She encourages all COA alum and staff to become GrowSmart members and/or come visit her!

1999

This fall Heather Albert-Knopp became COA’s new Director of Summer Programs.

Jessica Damon is still living in the Washington, DC area with husband James, two-and-a-half-year-old son Jack, and ten-month-old daughter Eleanor. She is working part-time as an environmental consultant providing environmental compliance and pollution prevention support. The family bought a house last year and turned their suburban backyard into gardens. Jessica and James recently resumed coursework toward their master’s degrees.

Ben Lord and Laura Casey ’01 have settled down on twenty-five acres of Vermont goodness with an assortment of people and domesticated animals. Their daughter, Eva Grace Lord, was born November 7, 2008. Ben is a middle school teacher; Laura is a mother. Together they are the Foraging Family and blog about their experiences eating wild foods. Check them out at foragingfamily.blogspot.com.

2000

Genevieve Soloway Angle is working for the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect endangered species and their habitats. She works and lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband and two daughters, Madeline, five, and Kate, three.

Corinne Harpster and husband Dave welcomed a daughter, Naia, last November. Corinne started a naturopathic residency focusing on pediatric and women’s health this fall at Mother and Child Natural Medicine in Carnation, Washington.

Sara Wilson Etienne has sold her first novel to G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers. Currently titled The Harbinger, it is due for publication in spring of 2012. Set in a near-future world in which a diminishing oil supply has led to chaos and mass rioting, the book’s sixteen-year-old heroine must uncover secrets before they destroy her and the world she lives
in. Sara admits “that the ‘prison-like school’ in my book (though as different from COA as you can imagine) is located on an island off the coast of Maine. And one of the main buildings in the book is definitely Turrets inspired.”

2001

Mike Zwirko and Erin Heacock ’04 were married on July 24 in the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts. Mike proposed to Erin on COA’s campus on October 9, 2009, and they vacationed in Bar Harbor following the wedding. Mike is a paralegal on ERISA litigation matters at Fidelity Investments. He remains actively involved in both state and national political campaigns. Erin completed her master’s degree in urban and environmental policy and planning at Tufts University in 2009 and currently works for Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. as an environmental planner focused on transportation projects. Erin and Mike live in Melrose, Massachusetts with their cat, Bruce.

2002

Jen (Dupras) Dussault and her husband Jason, along with their two awesome adopted dogs, live in a tiny Cape Cod house they call their own thirty miles north of Boston. After teaching high school math for three years, Jen decided to try her hand at a new career; she now works as the Humane Education Coordinator at the Massachusetts SPCA at Nevins Farm—the largest animal care and adoption center in New England, www.mspca.org/nevins. Over Columbus Day weekend, she and her husband connected with Brianne (Press) Jordan and her husband Brian in Philadelphia for a fun-filled time visiting the bizarre Mutter Museum and eating traditional Philly fare. Jen and Jason are very excited to welcome their first baby, due in early May.

Jody Kemmerer recently premiered her documentary film Sky Dancer in Amsterdam at the Buddhist Film Festival Europe. The screening was sold out several days before the event and received a great response both from the audience and in the press. Sky Dancer will show at festivals through Europe, North America, and Asia. Jody was thrilled to work with fellow alum Zach Soares ’00, who mixed sound for the project. The next public American screening will be at the International Buddhist Film Festival in San Rafael, California on December 5.

Joshua Machat left New York for California to join his girlfriend, an assistant professor in the music department at University of California San Diego. After a blissful eight months off, he is now working for the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles on Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A.1945–1980, a major initiative of the museum.

2003

Finn Pillsbury and wife Drake ’03 welcomed daughter Elizabeth Watson Pillsbury on May 20, 2010 in a joyful home birth. Libby was a healthy 9lbs. 5oz. Older brother Hawkes was surprised to come home from school to a new member of the family, but is excited to have a baby sister. The family would like to thank loved ones for their love and support!

2004

Bri Duga and husband Seth graduated from Life University with their doctorates in chiropractic in September. They also welcomed their second daughter, Luna Azalea, on July 8, 2010 and are currently living in South Berwick, Maine.

Andrew Moulton and Amanda Muscat Moulton ’06 were married at the San Anton Gardens in Malta on June 27, 2010. It was a lovely wedding attended by friends and family from around the world including Ian Illuminato ’06 and Carmen Bedard-Gautrais ’07. The couple reside in Northeast Har-
Michael Pledl on August 28, 2010

Julianne Kearney will begin work in southern Georgia as a North Atlantic right whale aerial observer with EcoHealth Alliance (formerly Wildlife Trust) this winter. She will assist in conducting research on the location of endangered North Atlantic right whales while in their southern calving grounds.

Hannah Semler has started her first semester at COA’s transatlantic partner Kassel University. She writes, “In the International Food Business and Consumer Studies course I sit next to chemical engineers, food technologists, nutritionists, food engineers, artificial flavour experts, and (thank you COA) one other human ecologist.

Dustin Eirdosh ’04 and I are extremely happy to have the opportunity to assert ourselves in the midst of a microcosm of what the global food system is made up of at this very moment.”


Amy Zader, MPhil, returned to MDI for the weekend of October 16–17 to run in the 2010 MDI Marathon. She writes, “Running the scenic course from Bar Harbor to Southwest Harbor brought back wonderful memories of the island.” Aside from running, Amy spends her time completing her dissertation in human geography at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Sophie Pappenheim married Michael Pledl on August 28, 2010 on Oconomowoc Lake in Wisconsin. The couple live in Minneapolis, Minnesota with their mischievous beagle, Willa.

As the coordinator of the refugee gardens in Oakland, California, Zack Reidman is very busy finding garden space for refugees from Bhutan, Burma, and Cambodia. His work was recently featured on the front page of the Oakland Tribune (www.insidebayarea.com).

Seth Carbonneau left the Dana Farber Cancer Institute this fall to work with Novartis as a research associate studying epigenetically regulated disease. He has been having fun competing in strongman contests throughout New England—hauling monster trucks, lifting boulders, and bench pressing beer kegs. He lives in Boston with his partner and fellow COA alum William Luther ’09 and their two Boston terriers, Nasdaq and Harley.

Sarah Boucher is a project scientist for Stantec Consulting Service, Inc., a company that performs pre- and post-construction environmental studies for wind power projects throughout the country. Recent projects include avian and bat studies.

Sophie Pappenheim married Michael Pledl on August 28, 2010 on Oconomowoc Lake in Wisconsin. The couple live in Minneapolis, Minnesota with their mischievous beagle, Willa.

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

Abigail Lubahn has recently been accepted to the graduate program in somatic psychology to receive a certificate in dance and movement therapy at Naropa University. She began her studies in August. She is an after-school yoga and dance movement instructor for third through fifth graders at Erie City elementary schools.

Sarah Short and Sam Heller were recently engaged in the San Juan Islands. Sam is working for Hitachi

Tanner B. Harris co-authored a paper in the April edition of the Journal of Environmental Pollution with journal editor William J. Manning titled “Nitrogen Dioxide and Ozone Levels in Urban Tree Canopies,” looking at the viability of using trees to remove some of the nitrogen oxide in city air. He also successfully defended his master’s thesis in July at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

After two years of working at Brother’s Brother Foundation, a Pittsburgh-based medical charity, Ilva Letoja is working on a master’s degree in European studies: transnational and global perspectives. She is studying at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, one of the oldest and best universities in Europe. She writes, “So far my time in Belgium has been nothing short of wonderful. Since it’s a one-year programme, it’s pretty intense. I am taking classes concurrently with writing my thesis. However, it’s also an interdisciplinary programme, which means that I’m learning a lot more than I would in a traditional political science programme. I’m hoping to stay in Brussels after I graduate, though I’ve still got plenty of time to decide for sure.”

Abigail Lubahn has recently been accepted to the graduate program in somatic psychology to receive a certificate in dance and movement therapy at Naropa University. She began her studies in August. She is an after-school yoga and dance movement instructor for third through fifth graders at Erie City elementary schools.

Sarah Short and Sam Heller were recently engaged in the San Juan Islands. Sam is working for Hitachi
Consulting in Seattle and Sarah is completing her master’s of education in science education. Sarah, Sam, and Sarah Jackson had a great visit with Linda Mejia in the spring.

2010

Taj Schottland is currently working for the environmental consulting firm Cardno Envitron conducting ornithological surveys for the Natural Resource Damage Assessment in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

2011

At the recent Maine Press Association Awards, an article written by Blake Davis during his internship with the Mt. Desert Islander received a third place award in the category of education for weekly papers.

Luka Negoita has been named the 2010–2011 winner of the Garden Club Federation of Maine Horticulture Scholarship. He also received the National Garden Clubs scholarship and the Nell Goff Memorial Scholarship from the St. Croix District of the GCFM for his extensive work in botany. He inventoried the flora of Little Duck Island, a botanically unexplored eighty-acre island eight miles south of MDI, one of the few medium-sized islands on Maine’s mid-coast that apparently does not have a history of human habitation.

Class year in parentheses indicates a visitor or a student who has not graduated.

Family and Alumni Weekend 2010

With gorgeous foliage colors blazing and a crisp breeze blowing off the bay, fall was in its glory for Family and Alumni Weekend, October 7–11. Parents of current students joined alumni and their families for a full weekend of activities, ranging from a nostalgic slideshow at the dedication of the Lucy Bell Sellers Stage to forward-looking conversations about food systems. Nearly two hundred alumni and parents hiked, paddled, danced, viewed alumni art, attended classes, and celebrated their connection to COA.

If you would like to join the planning team for next fall, please contact Dianne Clendaniel at 207-801-5624 or dclendaniel@coa.edu.

The Peregrine

Sent throughout the year, this electronic newsletter features submissions from alumni including articles, op-ed pieces, poetry and other reflections. You can also read updates from the Alumni Association, news from campus, and announcements of interest to alumni. If you haven’t received an e-newsletter, sign up on the website www.coa.edu/alumnienewsletter.

Stay Connected to COA!

As an inquisitive and passionate human ecologist, your life is likely to take several twists and turns. Send us updates on your life changes and choices.

You can update your information three different ways:
1. Phone: 207-801-5624
2. Email: alumni@coa.edu
3. Website: www.coa.edu/alumni

COA Alumni Career Services

Resources include:
• Alumni Mentorship Program
• Career Information and Guidance
• Graduate School Information
• Networking Opportunities
• Relocation Information
• Résumé, Cover Letter, and Job Search Assistance
• Searchable Employment Databases

Interested in providing an internship, guidance, job leads, or mentoring current students and/or other alumni? Contact Jill Barlow-Kelley, director of internships and career services, at jbk@coa.edu or 207-801-5633. Services provided by email, telephone, or appointment.
Kylee Allen, coordinator of international student services, received the Paul Simon Spotlight Award for COA’s International Environmental Diplomacy Program at the annual conference of NAFSA, National Association of International Educators, last June. In November she presented at NAFSA’s conference in Providence, Rhode Island on the topic, “Small Campuses: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally” with colleagues from Wheaton and Endicott colleges. All three colleges have been working to internationalize their campuses through faculty engagement, curriculum incentives, co-curricular activities, and community outreach.

Allied Whale’s research group’s bioacoustic program continues to see significant success. Working with Cornell University’s Bioacoustics Research Program, Sean Todd, Allied Whale director and Steven K. Katona Chair in Marine Mammal Studies, implemented a tethering system appropriate for the stormy Gulf of Maine. This year Allied Whale achieved full recovery of the bioacoustic buoys known as “pop-ups.” A buoy retrieved from the Jordan Basin/Outer Fall region, one hundred miles offshore, is yielding unparalleled information about winter breeding activity of North Atlantic right whales. Co-led with one of Sean’s graduate students, Jacqueline Bort, MPhil ’11, this project will likely result in important implications for managing this extremely endangered species.

Also, the Marine Mammal Stranding Response Group (MMSRP) received a $100,000 grant from the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Stranding Assistance Program to continue operations along Maine’s downeast coast. Says Sean, who directs the program, “Our success is highly unusual; this is the eighth consecutive competitive grant we have received from this federal program. I think this underscores the value of what we do for stranding response in this region.” This year’s activity included a response to a dead right whale carcass headed by Toby Stephenson ’98, curator of the Bar Harbor Whale Museum, stranding coordinator Rosemary Seton (photo), and Jacqueline Bort, MPhil ’11, assistant stranding coordinator. The bones of this animal have been retrieved for articulation at the Bar Harbor Whale Museum.

John Anderson, faculty member in biology and the William H. Drury, Jr. Chair in Evolution, Ecology and Natural History, is overseeing the work of students involved in the Acadia Fellows Program, which has given $26,000 to student stipends for work in the park. He also is fulfilling a $99,000 grant from the National Park Service to predict the impact of sea-level rise on seabird nesting islands and another grant from EPSCoR for $25,000 assessing the potential impacts of offshore wind farms on mid-water seabird populations. At the Ecological Society of America meetings in Pittsburgh last August, John presented a paper on Gilbert White and climate change. Also offering papers were alumni Jacqulyn Gill ’05, Yasmin Lucero ’99, and current students Hale Morrell ’12 and Franklin Jacoby ’12. John also team-taught the first joint Eco League course, Humans in Place, with Tom Fleischner of Prescott College and Meriel Brooks of Green Mountain College. The course, based at the Alice Eno Field Research Station on Great Duck Island, included four COA students.

In July, Molly Anderson, who holds the Partridge Chair in Food and Sustainable Agriculture Systems, joined Russell Libby, executive director of Maine Organic Farmers and Growers Association or MOFGA, in the college’s summer Coffee & Conversation series. In August, Molly traveled to England and Germany with students in the class Our Daily Bread: Following Grains through the Food System, co-taught by COA’s transatlantic partners at Elm Farm Organic Research Centre and the University of Kassel. In September, she gave a presentation on building strong, multi-stakeholder partnerships at a conference at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, England, and participated in a conference on Food Security at the Ditchley Foundation in England. October brought the Community Food Security Coalition’s annual conference in New Orleans on Food, Culture and Justice: The Gumbo that Unites Us All; Molly is vice president of the board. She also co-facilitated a forum on research for community food security.

Video and performance art faculty member Nancy Andrews presented the New York premier of her latest film, Behind the Eyes are the Ears at the Anthology Film Archives in New York City to a sizeable audience. The film was also screened at the Maine International Film Festival in Bar Harbor at Reel Pizza. Though Nancy directed, edited, and animated the film, was the primary cinematographer, and wrote the music and performed much of it, she had assistance from numerous members of the COA community.
including Zach Soares ’00, COA’s audio-visual technology specialist, who collaborated with Nancy on the music and recorded and mixed the soundtrack. COA faculty member in government and polity, Jamie McKown, added his sonorous voice to the film; Dru Colbert, faculty member in art and design created the masks. Also involved was Michael Bennett who teaches drumming at the college. Nancy completed this video and her previous one, On a Phantom Limb, with the support of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a grant from LEF Moving Image Fund. On a Phantom Limb was screened at last February’s Transmodern Festival in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival in Michigan last March.

The Burning Tree, the restaurant Allison Martin ’88 runs with her husband, Elmer Beal, faculty member in anthropology, was rated four and a half stars out of five in a review in the Maine Sunday Telegram. The restaurant serves an amazing array of New England seafood: fourteen different species. Wrote reviewer N.L. English, “dinners at Burning Tree stand out for their fresh taste, lively flavors and an experienced creativity that never strays from what people love to eat.”

Rich Borden, the Rachel Carson Chair in Human Ecology, is serving as co-chair of the XVIII International Conference of the Society for Human Ecology. The theme is Human Responsibility and Environmental Change—Planning Process and Policy, to be held at MonteLago Village Resort in Henderson, Nevada this April. Borden has also been invited to take part in a series of planning meetings in Germany for an international College of Human Ecology in Europe. The proposed college—inspired by COA’s interdisciplinary human ecology model—will be an entirely new kind of institution in European higher education. Additionally, Rich was quoted in a special New York Times edition for teenagers on the history of the environmental movement.

Last August, Bill Carpenter, faculty member in literature and creative writing, introduced poet Charles Simic (photo) when he gave a reading at COA. Bill also was filmed for a YouTube spot (see it at www.ndiniwako.org) to help advance Baobabs in Heaven, a senior project novel written by Tawanda Chabikwa ’07.

Ken Cline, faculty member in law and policy, gave the talk, “International Environmental Diplomacy and The Road to Copenhagen—Engaged Learning at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference” to the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences conference last June in Portland, Oregon. With him was Doreen Stabinsky, faculty member in international studies and global environmental politics. Just before that Ken served as moderator for the panel, “The Future of Climate Change Negotiations” at COA with Ambassador Bo Liddegard of Denmark, an honorary degree recipient at graduation; Carl Pope, former head of the Sierra Club and our 2010 graduation speaker; Doreen; Oliver Bruce ’10; Matthew Maiorana ’10; and Lauren Nutter ’10. He also moderated panel discussions after the showing of Tapped, a film about water, in both Bar Harbor and Ellsworth in May. As the first holder of the David Rockefeller Family Chair in Ecosystem Management and Protection, Ken was invited to the Annual George B. Hartzog, Jr. Lecture at Clemson University in September where he met with four past directors of the National Park Service and several academics from around the country who specialize in park management and research.

Shortly after moving to Maine to take COA’s Allan Stone Chair in the Visual Arts, Catherine Clinger spoke with trustee Suzanne Folds McCullagh about art at COA for an August Coffee & Conversation series event. In September, just after convocation, she spent an evening in a public conversation with Alan Jenkins, a distinguished British poet who had come to COA to present his work.

Faculty members Gray Cox, political economy, Don Cass, chemistry, Davis Taylor, economics, and Ken Cline are involved in fulfilling a grant through the National Science Foundation and its Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research or EPSCoR to study the woodshed of Hancock County. Working with fourteen students, Craig Ten Broeck, COA’s sustainability consultant, and Gordon Longsworth ’91, GIS director, the group is exploring whether burning more wood for home heating in Hancock County is a good idea, and if so, how to make that happen. As part of that grant, Gray and Don attended a three-day “tree camp” in August run by trustee Sherry Huber’s Maine Tree Foundation to learn more about the Maine woods industry. Says Don, “Our group was even filmed and might be on an episode of American Loggers.”

“It was over the top, really,” says COA chef Lise Desrochers, co-director of food services, who joined famed chef Thomas Keller
in September to prepare one of his $250-a-plate tasting menu dinners. This one benefited the Island Culinary & Ecological Center in Stonington, run by Ingrid Bengis-Palei, a purveyor of seafood who taught at COA in the early years. It usually takes over a year to get into one of Keller’s tasting dinners, and was sold out by the time Lise called for a reservation. But when Ingrid heard of Lise’s COA connection, Lise was invited to help cook the dinner, serve, and attend Keller’s demonstration, which was limited to ninety people.

Math and physics faculty member Dave Feldman and Anna Demeo, lecturer in physics and engineering, received an $18,000 grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency to hold a weeklong workshop on the science of renewable energy for area elementary science teachers next July. Additionally, Dave was a lecturer at a two-day workshop “Exploring Complexity in Science and Technology from a Santa Fe Institute Perspective,” sponsored by the Santa Fe Institute and held at Portland State University last May. The workshop was attended by business and government managers, industrial and medical researchers and engineers, and university faculty and students. Dave gave a series of three lectures on dynamical systems, measuring complexity, and complex networks.

In May, Jay Friedlander, the Sharpe-McNally Chair in Green and Socially Responsible Business, moderated a panel at a leadership conference on Maine food systems and gave a presentation at the spring conference of Maine Businesses for Sustainability. In August, Jay met with other Ashoka Changemaker Campuses in Washington, DC for a summit focused on building social entrepreneurship curricula. In addition, the Sustainable Business program received a $100,000 grant from the WP Carey Foundation to support its work building the program and the Sustainable Ventures Incubator. Finally, Jay facilitated an August brainstorming event at which incubees Jordan Motzkin ‘10, founder of Big Box Farms™, and Noah Hodgetts ‘10, founder of MDI 2030, presented their ventures to a group of business and non-profit leaders. This effort was made possible by trustee Nina Moriarty and former trustee Lisa Nitze. Kate Macko, the sustainable business program administrator, was instrumental in organizing this event.

At the end of October, David Hales, COA president, moderated the multi-stakeholder discussion at the Delhi International Renewable Energy Conference (DIREC 2010). At this, the fourth in a series of conferences on international renewable energy, Hales asked participants to consider renewable energy as part of a broad social revolution.

Helen Hess, biology, worked with Marissa Altmann ‘13 to write a small Maine Space Grant Consortium (MSGC) grant to pilot a project on marine snails and their trematode parasites last spring. She also worked with Robin van Dyke ‘11 (photo) on a larger grant from MSGC to expand and continue the snail-parasite work through the summer and fall of 2010. Chris Petersen’s Marine Biology class helped with some of the field work on this project during the fall.

James Johnson, a recent graduate of Husson University, has joined COA’s IT staff as systems manager. When not peering into computers, he drives stock cars at the Speedway 95 in the Sport 4 Division in Bangor and teaches in Bucksport’s adult education program.

Former COA President Steven K. Katona received a lifetime achievement award from the Cetecean Society this November. He is working with Greg Stone ’82 at Conservation International, creating an Ocean Health Index, seeking to understand what creates a healthy ocean—and how to measure it. Susan Lerner, former faculty member and Ethel H. Blum Gallery curator is on the board of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society, busily planning events for the Celebrate MDI 250 in 2011, and serving as an artist/curator for the Acadia Senior College. Having visited their son Nick Katona who had a fellowship to Coop Himmelblau, the Architecture Institute of Vienna, Steve and Susie went on to Budapest to visit Bori Kiss ’03 and Andres Jennings ’08 in Prague.

Todd Little-Siebold, faculty member in history, has been exploring options for internationalizing his classes. He spent a week in Catalonia with alumna Hannah Semler ’06, looking into a possible site for a future class with a focus on Mediterranean agriculture. They visited producers of wine, olives, grains, and historic apples. He is planning to head to the United Kingdom over winter break to consider adding a travel component to his History of Agriculture: Apples class. Additionally, Todd has been elected to the board of the Maya Educational Foundation.

Isabel Mancinelli, COA’s Charles Eliot Professor of Ecological Planning, Policy and Design, par-
In conjunction with an independent study by Leland Moore ’10, faculty member in government and polity Jamie McKown completed a project to digitize the Town of Eden’s original print records. This is the first digital archive of these records. He also served as the Pollie Award judge for the American Association of Political Consultants annual convention—the academy awards of political advertising.

Suzanne Morse, the Elizabeth Battles Newlin Chair in Botany, is developing a collaboration between Norwegian and north central US universities for holistic and experiential learning in agroecology, having attended a conference about the subject last May in Ames, Iowa. She also presented at the New World Agriculture meeting in Chapingo, Mexico last June and served as an advisor for gardens at the Bay School in Blue Hill, Healthy Acadia on MDI, and the Northeast Harbor School. Additionally, Suzanne gave a presentation on organic gardening to MOFGA, served on the board of Food for Maine’s Future, judged the California Botanical Society’s graduate student meeting last winter, and explored a potential exchange situation with Izamar Alvarez of the Simón Bolívar United World College of Agriculture in Venezuela.

Faculty member in botany, Nisanta Rajakaruna ’94 is the coeditor (with Susan Harrison, University of California Davis) of a major book on serpentine environments, Serpentine: The Evolution and Ecology of a Model System, issued by the University of California Press. A reviewer called it an “outstanding volume” bringing together “leading experts across a broad range of disciplines to bring serpentine into focus, as never before, as a window to understanding major natural processes and patterns in nature.” Nishi has two essays in the book. See more at www.ucpress.edu/book. Additionally, “Ornithocoprophilous plants of Mount Desert Rock,” the paper Nishi co-wrote with Nathaniel Pope ’07, Jose Perez-Orozco ’09, and Tanner B. Harris ’07 for Rhodora, Vol. 111, received the Merritt Lyndon Fernald honorable mention. For Rhodora, Vol. 112, Nishi and Tanner were secondary authors on the article that evolved from Nathaniel’s senior project, “Vascular Plants of Adjacent Serpentine and Granite Outcrops on the Deer Isles, Maine.” They found differences in species composition between serpentine and granite outcrops as well as greater tolerance to heavy metals and nutrient imbalances in species found on serpentine soils.

In August, Steve Ressell and John Anderson, faculty members in biology, co-organized the third annual Eco League faculty retreat at COA. Faculty from the four other Eco League institutions (Alaska Pacific University, and Green Mountain, Northland, and Prescott colleges) joined Steve, John, Rich Borden, and Sean Todd for two days of meetings and field trips. Steve also attended the Northeast PARC (Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation) regional meeting held at the Schoodic Education and Research Center along with Robin van Dyke ’11 and Sarah Colletti ’10. Sarah presented a poster on her senior project, “Establishing a Volunteer-based Salamander Monitoring Program in Acadia National Park.”

Natalie Springuel ’91 who runs the Maine Sea Grant extension at COA, recently returned from a trip to Korea where she spoke at a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Korea Sea Grant workshop about best practices in marine outreach, particularly as they relate to sustainable tourism and working waterfords. Korea National University was especially interested in the memorandum of understanding between the University of Maine and COA, a model for placing university extension agents in relevant communities where students from both institutions have the opportunity to become involved in real world issues.

For her sabbatical, Doreen Stabinisky, faculty member in agricultural policy, international studies, and global environmental politics, worked on improving her French and Spanish by studying French in Vichy, and spending time in Bolivia. She also attended the Global Conference on Agricultural Research in Montpellier, France, as well as ongoing climate negotiations in Bonn, Germany, and the four-day climate summit in Cochabamba, Bolivia in her ongoing work toward her new course, Climate Justice. Doreen attended several intergovernmental meetings this fall, including the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Nagoya, Japan and the Hague Conference on Agriculture, Food Security, and Climate Change, where she gave a presentation on the development of markets for agricultural soil carbon.

For a delightful morning hour, Candice Stover, COA lecturer in literature, spoke with former poet
laureate Charles Simic in Deering Common to a large crowd of community members as part of the college’s popular summer series, Coffee & Conversation.

Working with other grantees seeking to eradicate childhood obesity and promote sustainable and healthy local food systems, Bonnie Tai, faculty member in educational and human studies, presented the findings from the fourth year of a US Department of Agriculture grant for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps) in collaboration with Healthy Acadia. She also attended the annual meeting of the Critical Exploration in Teacher Education Group, which she founded several years ago.

Faculty member in economics Davis Taylor and Alyssa Mack, former Beech Hill Farm manager, were married on October 20 at the top of Penobscot Mountain. With them were Mike Staggs ’97. Sarah Baker, dean of admission, officiated.

Staff members at The Thorndike Library have been busy getting items from the collection ready for digital archiving. There are now 307 senior projects available for viewing online, numerous annual reports, and even the college’s very first catalog. Visit www.archive.org and search under College of the Atlantic.

Katharine Turok, lecturer in writing and literature, organized and co-judged an essay contest for scholarships from Downeast Audubon which sent nine middle school children to nature camp. Thanks to the participation of students in Dru Colbert’s design class, more children than usual submitted essays. Katharine also brought Chewonki natural history programs into Hancock County schools this year, and helped coordinate a day of nature and environment activities for sixty kids at Holbrook Island Sanctuary, and class trips to Birdsaacre in Ellsworth.

Karen Waldron, faculty member in literature, spoke with Roxana Robinson, author of Cost and other works of fiction and nonfiction, during COA’s summer Coffee & Conversation series. The two spoke for an hour to a standing-room-only crowd about writing and the creative process.

---

Join us at COA this summer!

Experience the incomparable beauty of College of the Atlantic, Acadia National Park, and Mount Desert Island this summer through COA’s summer programs:

- **Interdisciplinary Courses for High School Students**
  Earn college credit while exploring Maine’s islands and rivers.

- **Field-Based Courses for Teachers and Other Adults**
  Ornithology, geology, poetry, art, and more.

- **Family Nature Camp**
  Spend a week exploring nature as a family, joined by expert guides.

- **Summer Field Studies for Children**
  Send your children to COA’s ecology day camp, filled with fun and field explorations. Grades one through twelve.

- **Alumni Symposium — New for 2011**
  Alumni join COA faculty for a week of digging into new topics through a human ecological perspective.

- **Conferences and Events**
  COA’s beautiful oceanfront campus can host your small conference, event, class, or wedding.

Learn more: www.coa.edu/summer
In Memoriam

Elmer “Buzzie” Beal
(December 22, 1920–August 15, 2010)
COA Trustee 1972 to 1977

When I arrived in Bar Harbor in January, 1970 to take part in the development of a new college, it became apparent that a first step was to gain support for the idea of a college from MDI residents. And not just those from Bar Harbor. Les Brewer, Father Jim Gower, and other founding trustees suggested that I talk to Buzzie and his wife Prue Beal about gaining support for COA in the Southwest Harbor area. Buzzie and Prue were most supportive and offered to host a gathering. The gathering was held; in addition to Buzzie and Prue and me, six other people showed up. I gave a little talk. Afterwards, Buzzie, sensing how disappointed I was at such a small turnout said to me, “Well, you can’t expect to get a whole string of fish with just one cast.” Of course he was right, and it was just what I needed to hear. Buzzie joined COA’s board of trustees where his wisdom and gentle persistence were key to bringing COA from an idea to a reality.

Ed Kaelber, COA president emeritus

David Demeré
(April 18, 1959–November 1, 2010)

I didn’t know David as a COA student, but as a neighbor who helped us upgrade our old home just before our son was born. One day, for some reason, he came to help with our lawn. With his own toddler on his shoulders and his four-year-old walking in front, the three Demeré lads mowed our lawn, making parenthood, chores, and learning-by-doing seem as fluid and natural as walking down the road. David was a beautiful craftsman who sought to live a meaningful, simple life of work, giving, and personal exploration. He died of bone marrow cancer at home, with friends and family beside him, more than seven years after hearing he had six months to live.

Donna Gold, editor COA magazine

Marian P. Everdell (’08)
(December 7, 1981–June 2, 2010)

Molly was a mountain poet during Spring 2005, when John Visvader and I team-taught The Mountain Poets of China and Japan. To share one of Molly’s translations (or, as John calls them, “renderings”) of the poems we worked so closely with that term captures, I think, an element of the spirit she brought to our community and where she traveled. Here are Molly’s words for a poem from Chiyo-ni, the 18th-century Japanese woman haiku master and Buddhist nun:

- Moonflower in shade
- Beautiful hidden shadow
- give light to darkness

Candice Stover, lecturer in literature

Stephen Papazidis ’78
(December 20, 1948–November 18, 2009)

When I heard this sad news, Steve’s image came to mind as if he’d been in the office the day before. His unusually dark hair and eyes gave him a look of fierce intensity that was matched by his intellectual dedication. He was a “non-traditional” student, a little older than the rest. Stephen was the first in our long line of senior project novelists. He worked as the overnight desk clerk at the Atlantic Oakes Hotel, and took full advantage of that lonely occupation. He spent his whole shift writing and in the morning he would bring in his night’s labor, which, over the course of the winter and spring, amounted to a full-length book, Sometimes I Wonder. By finishing this novel within a term or two, his focus and ambition set a standard for subsequent seniors, helping define what a senior project could be. Though he was already determined on a nursing career, he was a true human ecologist in balancing that choice with a devotion to literature and writing. The community has lost a man of energy and vision who helped shape the COA of his time.

Bill Carpenter, faculty member in literature and creative writing

Jonathan Wolken
(July 12, 1949–June 13, 2010)

A dancer with a love of ideas and powerful verbal skills, Jonathan Wolken was a human ecologist all the way. Pilobolus, the creative dance company he and fellow Dartmouth students founded, is named for a very lively fungus. Jonathan taught at COA for a term in the 1990s, and I remember how much COA’s cross-disciplinary approach appealed to him, and how his teaching style inspired freedom of mind and movement for trained dancers and novices alike. We were very sad to learn that Jonathan died from cancer this past summer.

Susan Lerner, former faculty member and Ethel H. Blum Gallery curator
Q: How did you get involved in the museum?
During the fall of 2002 Eben Salvatore of Ocean Properties called up Allied Whale to see if they had naturalists who could train their whale watch crew. I was working for a competing whale watch at the time. When I was told that they also wanted to give a percentage of ticket sales to support Allied Whale, I said, “I’ll be your man.” Then he asked if we were interested in fixing up their whale museum, which had fallen into disrepair. Judy Allen [COA registrar and longtime Allied Whale volunteer] and I saw it as an opportunity to raise money for our field season at Mount Desert Rock; Steve Katona, president at the time, saw the wisdom and gave us the authorization we needed to order supplies, and Judy and I stayed up late nights to get it going. We opened in 2003. In 2004 Mindy Viechnicki took on the gift shop (she’s now the museum manager) and sales doubled. In 2005, they doubled again.

Q: You put so much into this museum. What compels you?
The primary reason is my dedication to marine conservation and education. But I also noticed that all the local whale watch boats were making money offering an environmental experience from the knowledge naturalists had gained studying material that was gathered by researchers and scientists for a very different reason. Nothing came back to the scientists. As soon as I saw that the Walshes were willing to support the research, I was there. They have donated $20,000 a year to Allied Whale since. It’s a great model to show how for-profit and nonprofit can blend together. Very human ecological!

Q: You’ve assembled, or articulated, a number of the museum skeletons, right?
Yes. Several are senior projects, the rest were installed with students. We’ve also accumulated skeletons that were too big to fit here, but are waiting for a new facility. A few years ago we collected a sperm whale skeleton. This fall we collected a right whale off Drisko Island. It’s now in a compost pile in my garden, where insects and microbes will eat away the remaining flesh. In the spring I’ll pull it out, bleach it in the sun, and hopefully assemble it in a new museum.

Q: What’s the museum’s future?
We’ve never been under the illusion that we had a guaranteed future, but we certainly have a vision for a very nice facility for downtown Bar Harbor—if we have the community support to bring that to realization. It would be absurd if Bar Harbor, the mecca of eco-tourism for coastal Maine, didn’t have a place like this. Unfortunately it will come down to the bottom line.

Q: Can you tell us your most satisfying moments?
The students I work with, the staff, and faculty. And it’s been personally enriching to be able to offer a very cool experience to so many—in eight years we got human ecology across to half a million people. That’s nothing to shake a stick at!
An Encounter with the First People of Sri Lanka

By Nishanta Rajakaruna ’94, faculty member in biology

It took me forty years to come face to face with the Veddas, the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka. They were a thriving people when my ancestors, the Sinhalese, arrived in Sri Lanka some six thousand years ago. As elsewhere, the rest has become a history we have conveniently tried to forget. I am not sure how I should feel about waiting this long to make the visit but this meeting with the “first people” of my land has humbled and haunted me in more ways than I can describe.

While the two recent colonizers of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese and Tamils, were fighting for their right to land and practices, drawing worldwide attention, the Veddas were silently struggling, their land engulfed by development and encroachment, and their traditional ways cast aside by us as primitive. Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam were the religions I grew up with, not the deep philosophies of the Veddas.

Sadly, the plight of the Veddas is just one element of a global phenomenon. Cultures and languages are disappearing at an alarming rate. Just as many of us don’t want the landscape to be all corn fields or the skies filled only with crows, do we really want a world where we speak just one language and follow a single way of life?

When walking the streets of Sri Lanka I try to look away when I see parents taking their kids to McDonald’s and young couples having their first dates at Pizza Hut, but I can’t escape the fact that kids in the cities speak in English more than in their native tongue and parents are preparing their children to be leaders in a world dominated by dollar signs. In Sri Lankan villages, as in other remote places, kids strive to leave for a “better” life in the city.

What are we trying to become? The average American spends less than twenty minutes a day outside while the average American father spends less than eighteen minutes a day with his child. The !Kung, a hunter-gatherer people of Africa, only spend two to three days per week working; the rest of their time is spent with family and friends. Children grow up knowing their parents, families, and surroundings.

While my professional life is driven by my passion to study plant evolution, through teaching I have developed a strong interest in ethnobotany, human ecology in practice, allowing me to explore vanishing cultures and glimpse the role of plants in their complex societies. When I teach ethnobotany I am not the teacher but a keen learner appreciating human diversity alongside my students.

As an ethnobotanist I see the world through many windows—biologist, anthropologist, sociologist, humanitarian—someone willing to appreciate the unknown and believe in the many ways of being. Through ethnobotany I take a step back from thinking that science is the one way of knowing. The age-old secrets of native peoples are those that we should cherish and preserve even though we don’t have the tools to understand them.

This brief encounter with a proud culture at the brink of extinction echoes my first visit to Sinharaja—Sri Lanka’s only remaining tropical, lowland rainforest—almost twenty-seven years ago. My week-long visit as a thirteen-year-old focused my life toward a passionate exploration of how plant diversity is generated and maintained. I still remember staring in awe at all the shapes and forms of plant life that filled the rainforest and asking myself how they came about and how they can all co-exist? I have spent much of my professional life trying to answer this question. This recent visit with the Veddas, I hope, will be the beginning of my life’s next calling.

Nishanta Rajakaruna ’94, faculty member in biology, visiting with the Veddas of Sri Lanka.

Born in Sri Lanka, Nishi came to COA as an undergraduate, then headed to the University of British Columbia, receiving an MSc in botany and plant ecology in 1998 and a PhD in botany and evolutionary ecology in 2002. For more on the Veddas, visit www.vedda.org.
Warszewiczia Coccinea
Wild Poinsettia