

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONNECTIONS

## THOUGHTS ON WILDERNESS

I SEE HUMAN BEINGS as torn between two perspectives. When we adopt the *naturalist perspective*, we see ourselves as mere parts of the natural world, as products of evolution, and as components of ecological systems. When we adopt the *exceptionalist perspective*, we see ourselves not as mere parts of nature but as having some special status. The tension between these two perspectives is even reflected in the Genesis story (which, if not an accurate account of what happened in the past, still contains some insights). On the one hand, Genesis affirms that human beings are dependent creatures just like any other living things. That is the naturalistic

perspective. But Genesis also insists that humans are not mere creatures: We alone were created in the image of God. That is the exceptionalist perspective.

Many environmentalists seem to think that the naturalist perspective is good while the exceptionalist perspective is bad. The exceptionalist perspective allegedly gives us a sense of entitlement, or a sense that things in nature are just “resources” for us to use. Some see this sense of entitlement as the source of our environmental problems. But things are not so clear-cut. Even within environmental thought, one can see the tension between these two perspectives.

For example, according to the usual

definition, the wildness of a place varies inversely with the degree of human impact. The wilder the place, the lesser the impact. This conception of wilderness, as William Cronon and others have pointed out, supposes that human beings are separate and distinct from wild nature. That’s the exceptionalist perspective again.

At the same time, if we think about what draws people “into the wild,” often what we look for in wild places is the experience of being a mere part of nature. Recently a friend of mine said that he defines wilderness as any place where there is still something out there that can eat you. Whatever you think of that definition, the threat of being eaten by something is a powerful reminder that you are merely a part of nature.

The concept of wilderness itself reflects this tension between the naturalist and the exceptionalist perspectives. Thus, thinking about wilderness takes us straight into what, for me, is the deepest problem of environmental philosophy. To borrow a metaphor from the philosopher Wilfrid Sellars: How can we bring the exceptionalist perspective and the naturalist perspective into stereoscopic view?  
— Derek Turner, Acting Associate Director, Associate Professor of Philosophy



Photo by Lauren Gorham



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Ann Devlin, *Psychology*  
James Downs, *History*  
William Frasure, *Government*  
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Chad Jones, *Botany and Environmental Studies*  
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Established in 1993, the Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment is an interdisciplinary program that draws on the expertise and interests of faculty and students in the liberal arts to address contemporary ecological challenges. The center strives to integrate all areas of learning to deal with the issues of sustainability and the natural environment. Building on a scientific understanding of the natural world, the center invites the social sciences, the humanities and the arts to help understand and solve difficult environmental issues.



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## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**THE WONDERFUL THING** about studying the environment is its natural interdisciplinarity. Take any environmental issue — for example, climate change — and you quickly see that it can be tackled from a broad range of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to understanding its scientific intricacies, the issue brings in international politics; it raises serious philosophical questions about who is responsible; the changing geographic landscape inspires poetry, literature and visual representations; and economists debate the potential impact of the problem and competing solutions. Whether it's the natural and physical sciences, humanities, social sciences, or the arts, environmental issues can be viewed through multiple disciplinary lenses, and *must* be in order to reach a nuanced and useful understanding of these complex issues.

Given the College's longstanding commitment to environmental studies (being one of the first in the country to offer a major, in 1969) and the founding of the Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment in 1993, with an explicit mission of bringing together students and faculty across diverse disciplines, the goal of interdisciplinary study of the environment has already been significantly advanced and the breadth of course offerings is impressive. However, there's always room to go further and always disciplines that have yet to join the environmental fold. While new faculty and courses keep expanding curricular options, the College is preparing to take a giant leap forward through a very generous two-year grant from the Christian Johnson Foundation.

The Christian Johnson Foundation has challenged us to tackle the issue of global environmental justice (GEJ) from as many disciplines as we can muster and to pursue a program of faculty study that will result in new approaches to environmental justice (and thus, the environment) being incorporated into courses, majors and disciplines, creating new options for environmentally oriented students and bringing a new and diverse group of students and faculty into the environmental field. While six of the 18 participating faculty are already fellows of the center, the other 12 are newcomers to the environmental field and will enrich our offerings by bringing in perspectives from sociology, human development, German studies, history, gender and women's studies, economics, Hispanic studies, the visual arts, literature, neuropsychology, and Asian poetry. Our interdisciplinarity is growing in leaps and bounds!

The 18 faculty are participating in a three-semester GEJ seminar, starting only with a common definition of environmental justice as a "fair and equitable distribution of environmental benefits, burdens and decision-making power." Faculty have been challenged to explore and share how this concept might be translated into their own disciplines. Focusing specifically on environmental justice issues in three countries — India, South Africa and Peru — the seminar will be followed by 10-day field study travel to these three countries in early 2013.

The work of the GEJ initiative will culminate in a sharing of faculty findings with the entire College community through a very special biannual GNCE Conant Conference on the Environment (April 19-20, 2013), bringing together the center and the GEJ project participants. The joint conference will include outside speakers as well as panel presentations by faculty returning from their field study trips and their two-year scholarly exploration of the interdisciplinary concept of environmental justice. Finally, a curriculum development workshop will be held to facilitate the creation of new courses and modules incorporating aspects of global environmental justice.

What all this amounts to is a continuing effort to enrich our already strong interdisciplinary offerings linked to the environment and to broaden our cohort of GNCE fellows to disciplines not yet represented. It is an exciting time for the center and the 18 faculty immersed in a field of study that is new to most. The College's commitment to the environment is thus not only apparent in the impressive sustainability measures taken over the past several years, but also in providing our students with strong interdisciplinary training in the environmental field, built on the belief that interdisciplinarity is at the very heart of understanding and addressing the environmental challenges facing the world today.



*Jane I. Dawson, Acting Director*  
*Virginia Eason Weinmann '51 Professor of Government and Environmental Studies*

## CERTIFICATE SEMINAR THEME FOR FALL 2011: WILDERNESS

**THE GOODWIN-NIERING** Center Certificate Seminar functions partly as a student research workshop. At the beginning of the semester, the seniors gave presentations on their recently completed internships and spoke about how their internship experiences set the stage for their senior integrative research projects. Toward the end of the semester, the juniors shared their internship plans for the coming summer and sketched their research plans for next year.

This semester is the first time I taught the certificate seminar, and the students left me with the sense that the seminar is something special — a collegial space for us to discuss and help advance their work, and where the camaraderie of the center goes hand in hand with a commitment to intellectual seriousness.

In addition to discussing each student's work, we also spent a portion of the semester exploring a designated theme. The theme was inspired by senior integrative projects completed by two incredible Goodwin-Niering students in previous years: Katie Kozin '02 interned at the Appalachian Mountain Club and did a senior project on the Leave No Trace ethic. More recently, Jeff Nemec '09 completed a project on the wilderness debate. Katie and Jeff helped me to realize what a rich topic wilderness could be — so thanks to both of you, if you are reading this newsletter!

We began our investigation of wilderness by reading and discussing Jon Krakauer's book "Into the Wild." Later in the semester, we screened and discussed Werner Herzog's film "Grizzly Man" and spent some time on historian William Cronon's important critique of the wilderness idea.

Professor of Government (and Goodwin-Niering Center fellow) MaryAnne Borrelli visited the seminar to discuss the national park system and to help us think about the tension in the park service's mandate to protect wild areas while at the same time making the parks accessible to the public. Leo Kelly, a master educator with the Connecticut Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club, joined the seminar one evening to guide us through the ins and outs of Leave No Trace. Another highlight of the semester was a

visit from Anthony Irving, who chairs the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed Coordinating Committee. Irving described the process by which he and other local activists succeeded in obtaining the "Wild and Scenic" designation for the Eightmile River watershed in the nearby towns of Salem, Colchester, Lyme and East Haddam.

In keeping with tradition, we held our first meeting at Buck Lodge in the Arboretum. We had a bit of a wildlife encounter in the middle of that first gathering when a noisy family of flying squirrels started scurrying around the rafters. We ended the semester with a sustainable potluck at



*Left: Professor Derek Turner. Right: Seminar guest speaker Anthony Irving, chair of the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed Coordinating Committee*



my house. Jane Dawson started hosting year-end sustainable potlucks for the class a few years ago, and I was happy to continue the new tradition. — *Derek Turner, Acting Associate Director*

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## JOSH STOFFEL, CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR

**JOSH STOFFEL** is Connecticut College's new sustainability coordinator, a redefinition of the position held by Campus Environmental Coordinator Amy Cabaniss for the previous six years. Josh will help the College continue to be a leader in campus sustainability by coordinating and advancing energy conservation and efficiency, renewable energy, waste minimization, student and community engagement, curriculum development, and other sustainability projects. As an indication that sustainability is increasingly important to the College's future, Josh's position now reports directly to the Dean of the Faculty, rather than being a staff member in the Goodwin-Niering Center.



Josh came to the College after serving as the University of Massachusetts-Amherst's first sustainability coordinator for two years, where he helped to build the foundation for the campus-wide sustainability initiative that exists today.

While at UMass Josh co-chaired the institution's Sustainability Committee, helped to design a master's degree in sustainability science, coordinated millions of dollars in energy-efficiency work, and created comprehensive Sustainability Internship and Eco-Rep Programs for undergraduate students. After leaving UMass he worked for GreenerU, a sustainability solutions firm, where he helped a wide variety of colleges and universities achieve their campus sustainability goals.

Josh holds a B.S. in environmental science and a master's of higher education administration from UMass, where he concentrated on integrating sustainability practices into higher education.

## GREAT BEGINNINGS AND A BRIGHT FUTURE: SUSTAINABILITY AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

**THIS YEAR**, the College celebrated its Centennial both by honoring 100 years of great beginnings and looking forward to a second century that is sure to be even brighter than the first. The capstone for the Centennial celebration was the “Big Event,” which consisted of nine TEDx-like presentations about core values that were central to the establishment of the College in 1911 and are still pillars of its mission today (<http://bigevent.conncoll.edu>). One value brought up numerous times through these presentations — and that was the focus of the final presentation — was sustainability.

Though not always called sustainability, the College has always had a robust and continuous dedication to environmental stewardship, societal equality and economic stability. Sustainability brings together these three spheres of human endeavor, and as it continues to gain respect and merit throughout the globe, Connecticut College is at the forefront of committing to sustainability in the realm of higher education.

In recent months, the College has taken major steps toward a future that embodies the central tenants of sustainability:

- With the renovation and expansion of our oldest building, New London Hall, the College has invested in a geothermal system that will utilize the consistent temperature of the Earth’s crust to heat and cool the building, avoiding the need for fossil fuels to run this vital building system.

- “Rusty,” the 1930-era, prefabricated steel house located on the southern edge of campus, has been sent out to be refurbished and will be reconstructed on its original foundation later this spring. The restored steel building will house my office and all student organizations related to sustainability, serving as the physical epicenter for the College’s commitment to sustainability.

- A Common Purposes Committee was established this semester to discuss ways to help support societal equality on campus for people of all genders, cultural and economic backgrounds, and sexual orientations,



*New London Hall Construction — visit the construction webcam to view the progress: <http://www.conncoll.eduscience12123.htm>*



*Geothermal drilling on Tempel Green*

especially those from historically underprivileged groups.

- An endowment was established to support student-initiated campus sustainability projects.

- The Community Organizers for Sustainability Transformation (COST), a leadership training

program for students, will officially launch at the beginning of the Spring 2012 semester to train students to become active change agents on campus, with a primary responsibility of fostering the adoption of sustainability-minded behaviors across campus.  
— *Josh Stoffel, Campus Sustainability Coordinator*

## THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGE ARBORETUM AT 80

2011 was not only Connecticut College's Centennial, it was also the 80th anniversary of the founding of the College Arboretum. Originally conceived as an educational and recreational facility for both the College community and the public, the Arboretum encompassed recently abandoned farmland west of the main campus. There was already the beginning of a four-acre pond, and its rock outcrops provided stone for the College's first buildings: New London Hall and Blackstone, Plant and Branford houses. The major land uses established in 1931 on the original 60 acres were nearly evenly divided between an area devoted to the display of native plants and a "bird sanctuary," later to become the Bolleswood Natural Area.

Over the years the small Arboretum staff initiated publications and education programs, expanded its land holdings, and fostered student and faculty ecological research. Under Director Richard Goodwin's guidance, Arboretum property grew to surround the main campus on three sides, from lands north of Gallows Lane to Mamacoke on the Thames River. These acquisitions greatly expanded the diversity of natural habitats and teaching and research options for the academic program. The availability of these lands led to an emphasis on ecological research in the botany and zoology departments starting in the early 1950s when Professor Bill Niering joined the College. This research and teaching focus helped incubate the conservation and environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which locally led to establishing the College's interdisciplinary human ecology

major. It also influenced state and federal environmental legislation and regulation as well as private land conservation initiatives such as The Nature Conservancy. In the early 1990s, the College established an academic center — eventually named the Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment — as a means to bring greater focus to the many facets of environmental interest on campus. Human ecology became environmental studies, now one of the College's most popular majors.

tions included more than 5,600 tree and shrub specimens. The Arboretum is still a primary teaching and research asset for environmentally oriented faculty. It also serves students and professors in anthropology, history, English, physics, art and other departments. Our public programs have expanded over the past decade to include environmental education for children and to emphasize environmentally friendly gardening and land management by homeowners and professionals. By



*Outdoor Theater circa 1936 by Harriet Creighton*

By the late 1990s, when the Arboretum encompassed about 450 acres around the developed central campus, a master planning committee decided that all Connecticut College property should be considered "Arboretum." Thus the entire main campus became an arboretum collection featuring plants from around the world that the staff regularly inventories, interprets and enhances.

In 2011, we find the Arboretum still managing plant collections and natural areas, but in the context of relatively new threats such as the burgeoning deer population and oncoming waves of invasive exotic organisms. At last count the collec-

utilizing a dedicated corps of volunteer docents, the Arboretum is able to offer free public tours of our collections on a weekly basis.

Although I doubt she dreamt that the College would become an environmental education powerhouse 80 years later, we clearly owe a debt of thanks to President Katharine Blunt for having set things in motion in 1931 by dedicating a portion of college property to the study and enjoyment of the natural world.

— Glenn Dreyer, Center Executive Director, Charles & Sarah P. Becker '27  
Director of the Arboretum  
<http://arboretum.conncoll.edu>

## CLASS OF 2012 SUMMER INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES WERE RICH AND VARIED

**KELSEY COHEN**, an architectural studies major, spent the summer in New York City at Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. Founded in 1975 by Fred Kent, PPS has completed projects in 2,500 communities in 40 countries and all 50 states. They not only focus on common outdoor park or public seating areas, but also civic centers, squares, downtowns, campuses, waterfronts and transportation. “This internship allowed me to explore my interest between college campuses and their surrounding area, as well as appreciate the importance of design in fostering a space that attracts a community.”



**BRYSON COWAN**, a government and environmental studies double major, interned at the Small Planet Institute in Boston. The nonprofit institute aims to educate and empower people to make positive change through environmental decision-making and democratic participation. Founded by Frances Moore Lappé, author of “Diet for a Small Planet,” the institute spreads information and stories of hope through various forms of media, from bestselling books and regular speaking engagements to articles, short video clips and educational Web pages. “I had the ability to work on a wide range of projects, and I gained a unique perspective on the sustainable food movement while acquiring a strong set of research and marketing skills.”



Environmental studies major **ZOE DIAZ-MARTIN** interned at the Cocha Cashu Biological Station (CCBS) field

station in the heart of the Amazon basin in Manu National Park, Peru. “Through my internship I was able to take part in a long-term ecological study monitoring the regeneration of the rainforest through the collection of seed fall traps.” Due to its remote and pristine location, CCBS has become widely recognized as an important location for conducting field studies and research has been done in various areas of tropical ecology, ranging from the social behavior of primates to the community composition of lowland Amazonian mature floodplain forest.



English major **STEPHEN DWORKIN** interned at E: The Environmental Magazine in Norwalk, Conn., one of the oldest nonprofit publications in the United States that focuses on environmental news and issues. Along with research and fact checking, Stephen was pleased with the opportunities afforded throughout his summer internship. “I worked as an editorial intern for E, which gave me the opportunity to explore and write about relationships between politics and environmental initiatives. I was also able to publish several pieces on E’s website and learn about what it means to be a progressive part of the developing online media community.”



Architectural studies major **LUCY FRYE** spent the summer with Carpenter & MacNeille in Essex, Mass., an architectural firm that works primarily with 100- to 150-year-old homes and has strong connections to the environment as well as the historical integrity of the New England area. “Through working with C&M, I gained crucial experience and exposure to the architectural world and the design/build process. My internship allowed me to combine my own interests

with my daily tasks. For the majority of the summer I worked on a research and design project that dealt with preserving historic buildings while at the same time bringing them up to speed in terms of sustainability and energy efficiency. C&M provided me with valuable connections and excellent learning opportunities.”



Environmental studies major **LIZ NOONAN** interned in the Environmental Affairs Department of Staples in Framingham, Mass. Liz’s internship responsibilities included performing background research, starting recycling programs, attending meetings and communicating with marketing teams. “Having the opportunity to intern in the corporate office of a Fortune 100 company while still in college was an incredibly valuable learning experience. I learned a great deal about a wide range of things, from how to conduct oneself in a large office to how things go from ideas to reality in a large system. Being able to meet with and talk to some of the top executives in the company and hear their perspectives on sustainability and business in general was extremely interesting and proved to be incredibly valuable.”



**DANIEL SEEHAUSEN**, an environmental studies major, interned in Germany with Intelligent Renewable Energy (Intelligent-RE) during the spring semester and summer of his junior



year. With multiple locations in Germany, Intelligent-RE offers a wide range of services ranging from IT solutions to environmental consulting focusing on green development and specializing in photovoltaic energy information dissemination. Daniel worked closely with CEO Rian van Staden as a researcher, author and translator researching green development strategies that could be effectively implemented in southern Serbia, as well as compiling various information regarding renewable feed-in tariffs in Europe. "I can confidently say that I have learned more than I ever expected during my time abroad. Not only was I able to explore and satiate my original curiosity, I was also introduced to new concepts related to my interests, including green development, information flow and energy security."

Biological sciences major **LEAH VARGA** spent the summer working at the Aquarium of the Pacific, in partnership with the Cascadia Research Collective of Olympia, Wash. Researching the populations



of blue and gray whales along the Pacific coast of North America, their main goal is to help conserve these species using dorsal fin and fluke photo identification methods to follow individuals and groups as they migrate. As one of four marine mammal photo identification/research interpreter interns, Leah photographed the animals off the California coast, recording the time, GPS position coordinates, daily conditions, number, species and behavior. "My internship provided me with valuable knowledge on marine mammals, the Pacific Ocean, conservation efforts surrounding marine ecosystems, and unforgettable experiences in the field studying cetaceans."

## AMY CABANISS, CENTER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

**AFTER SERVING** for six years as campus environmental coordinator, Amy Dyer Cabaniss was promoted to assistant director of the Goodwin-Niering Center. Amy's primary responsibility is the administration of the center's undergraduate certificate program. She focuses on coordinating the overall program and tracking each student's progress through the program. She actively participates in the center's Certificate Seminar as well as conference and event planning and operation. Additionally, Amy actively participates in the center's communications and outreach efforts that include this newsletter and various electronic media.



Amy was the College's first full-time professional campus environmental coordinator, fostering environmental initiatives on campus that addressed energy conservation and efficiency, renewable energy, and waste management, and hosting events such as RecycleMania and Earth Fest. She co-led the Environmental Model Committee and worked with committees and consultants on the College's first comprehensive Environmental Sustainability Baseline Assessment, wind feasibility study and Renewable Energy Assessment. These efforts led to the formation of the

Sustainability Steering Committee and first steps toward developing a comprehensive campus Sustainability Strategic Plan, which is now in progress.

Prior to her time at Connecticut College, Amy operated her own environmental education consulting firm, served as the regional recycling coordinator for the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency, and coordinated public education programs at the Mystic Aquarium, among many other professional activities. She is active in the environmental community, attending and presenting at conferences and serving as chair of the New London Environmental Educators Coalition and president of the New England Chapter of the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association.

Amy is a Ph.D. candidate in environmental studies at Antioch University, New England, where she is finishing her dissertation that applies behavioral theories to community-based social marketing messages to increase household hazardous waste program participation. She received her M.B.A. in management and organization from the University of New Haven and her B.S. in environmental conservation from the University of New Hampshire.

### Save the Dates!

**50th Anniversary of 'Silent Spring': Rachel Carson's Legacy  
Oct. 18, 2012**

This half-day event will feature guest speakers including Naomi Oreskes and Sandra Steingrabber discussing the lasting effects of Carson's groundbreaking book. Cosponsored by the Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives and the Shain Library.

**Elizabeth Babbott Conant Interdisciplinary Conference on the Environment  
*The Quest for Global Environmental Equity in an Increasingly Inequitable World*  
April 19-20, 2013**

## WELCOME THE CERTIFICATE CLASS OF 2014

The Goodwin-Niering Center is very pleased to welcome 10 new sophomores into our certificate program.

### MARY BUCHANAN

**Major:** *Biological Sciences*

**Environmental interest:** Biological science and environmental policy connections with emphasis on wildlife conservation

### AMANDA CRAWFORD

**Major:** *Atmospheric Science-Astrochemistry (self-designed)*

**Environmental interest:** Coronal mass ejections and solar weather

### AVA FOSTER

**Majors:** *Botany and Architectural Studies*

**Environmental interest:** Sustainable architecture in Danish and traditional New England designs

### EMILY GOLDSTEIN

**Major:** *Architectural Studies*

**Environmental interest:** Sustainable architecture in new and existing homes

### BARRY KE

**Major:** *Environmental Studies*

**Environmental interest:** Wind power industries in U.S. and China

### JESSIE MEHRHOFF

**Majors:** *Environmental Studies and Economics*

**Environmental interest:** Mountaintop removal in Appalachia

### EMILY NIXON

**Majors:** *Environmental Studies and Hispanic Studies*

**Environmental interest:** Deforestation and forest conservation in Ecuador

### CHELSEA PARISH

**Major:** *International Relations*

**Environmental interest:** Australian policy and creation of national parks with investigation of impacts on Aborigines

### KATIE SURREY-BERGMAN

**Major:** *Environmental Studies*

**Environmental interest:** Endangered species conservation methods

### MOLLY VATIS

**Major:** *Environmental Studies*

**Environmental interest:** Human-wildlife conflict mitigation strategies with focus on community involvement

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