



Department of Biology Online Master of Science Program

MASTERS DISTANCE MONITOR

May 2025

Issue 51

WELCOME

New Online Masters Students for Summer 2025:

Erica Anderson, OH; Rheanna Anderson, NE; Sierra Arnold, NE; Dakota Becerra, MN; Kathleen Blackford, OH; Gerard Dela Cruz, NY; Melek Elmali Alkhatib, DE; Madeline Gay, SD; Jessica Hidalgo, NY; Alexandra Kanuszewski, KY; Sara Leisten, CT; Kay Meysenburg, NE; Ashley Moss, TX; Ken Pfeffer, WI; Henry Richard, ME; Hannah Schneekloth, MI; Sam Speir, IL; Patty Stewart, NE; Morgan Summer, TX; Lindsey Tolhurst, NC; Makayla Walker, NE; Cheyanne Zelei, NE

CONGRATULATIONS

May 2025 Graduates:

Courtney Chronister, Mikaya Franklin, Thomas Grace, Jennifer Gray, David Hansen, Andrew Hyun, Bodhi Jelinek, Erika Karassik, Alexandria Keiler-Klein, Terianne Knott, Hunter Lehane, Karin Nilsen, Faith Omage, Kyle Schroeder

Six graduates were able to attend the commencement ceremony on May 16th at 10:00 am in the Health and Sports Center. UNK Online hosted a meet + greet after the ceremony. Below are some pictures from the events.



Pictured left (left to right): Brian Peterson, Bohdi Jelinek, Andrew Hyun

Pictured below: Mikaya Franklin



Pictured below: Brian Peterson, Mikaya Franklin, and Dr. Yipeng Sui



Pictured right: Andrew Hyun and Dr. Letty Reichart





Pictured left (left to right): Dr. Keith Geluso, Dr. Nick Hobbs, Andrew Hyun, Karin Nilsen, Alexandria Keiler-Klein, Dr. Yipeng Sui, Dr. Jayne Jonas-Bratten, and Dr. Austin Nuxoll



Pictured above: Dr. Austin Nuxoll, Dr. Joe Dolence, Mikaya Franklin, Dr. Nick Hobbs, Andrew Hyun, Bodhi Jelinek, Alexandria Keiler-Klein, Brian Peterson and Dr. Yipeng Sui

Grants, Meetings, Publications

Meetings

- Alex. L., M. Wuellner, and K. Koupal.** February 2025. Spatial and monthly water temperature and dissolved oxygen patterns in Lake Ogallala. Nebraska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Aurora, Nebraska. Oral Presentation.
- Allison, R., and M. Wuellner.** February 2025. Population structure and dynamics of Smallmouth Bass in Lake McConaughy, Nebraska. Nebraska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Aurora, Nebraska. Oral Presentation.
- Allison, R. D., M. R. Wuellner, and K. D. Koupal.** January 2025. Stock-contribution comparisons for Walleye over time in Lake McConaughy, Nebraska. Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. Poster Presentation.
- Dunbar, O., **L. Zebro, M. Wuellner**, A. Engel, and **K. Koupal.** February 2025. Effects of winterkill on Alewife population dynamics in Lake McConaughy (Best Student Poster Winner). Nebraska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Aurora, Nebraska. Poster Presentation.
- Goff, J., M. Lewis, M. J. Weber, and M. Wuellner.** March 2025. Effects of habitat additions on stocked Muskellunge. Iowa Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Boone, Iowa. Oral Presentation.
- Huber, T., and **K. Geluso.** February 2025. New county record! Observations on the Striped Bark Scorpion in Nebraska. Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Kearney, Nebraska. Poster Presentation.
- Huber, T., **A. Keiler-Klein, K. Koupal, and M. Wuellner.** January 2025. Comparisons of zooplankton communities before and after chemical renovation in Lake Ogallala, Nebraska. Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. Poster Presentation.
- Huber, T., **A. Keiler-Klein, K. Koupal, and M. Wuellner.** February 2025. How different are Lake Ogallala zooplankton communities before and after rotenone application? Nebraska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Aurora, Nebraska. Poster Presentation.
- Keiler-Klein, A., M. Wuellner, K. Koupal,** and J. Hodge. January 2025. Comparison of sport and nuisance fish communities by gear type in Lake Ogallala, Nebraska. Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. Oral Presentation.
- Keiler-Klein, A., M. Wuellner, and K. Koupal.** February 2025. Comparisons of gears and months assess or remove Common Carp *Cyprinus carpio* and White Sucker *Catostomus commersonii* in Lake Ogallala. Nebraska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Aurora, Nebraska. Oral Presentation.
- Kosmicki, D.V., J.W. Paysen, C. Kruse, and **K. Geluso.** February 2025. Submergence behavior for female Ornate Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata*) in June from southern Kansas. Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Kearney, Nebraska. Poster Presentation.
- Kosmicki, D.V., J.W. Paysen, C. Kruse, and **K. Geluso.** April 2025. Submergence behavior for female Ornate Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata*) in June from southern Kansas. Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Association of Naturalists. Albuquerque, New Mexico. Poster Presentation.
- Koupal, K. D., and M. Wuellner.** March 2025. Walleye are king: How RAD is that? Iowa Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Boone, Iowa.

- Lenning, H., M. Wuellner**, S. Fopma, **K. Koupal**, and **J. Jonas-Bratten**. January 2025. Response of fish communities to backwater restoration in the Upper Mississippi River. Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. St. Louis, Missouri. Oral Presentation.
- Lenning, H., M. Wuellner**, S. Fopma, **K. Koupal**, and **J. Jonas-Bratten**. March 2025. Beyond the backwaters: Response of pool-wide fish communities to restoration. Iowa Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Boone, Iowa. Oral Presentation.
- Pagel, K., **M. R. Wuellner**, **J. Kreitman**, **K. D. Koupal**, and A. Engel. February 2025. Comparisons of zooplankton communities before and after the 2019 flooding in Harlan County Reservoir, Nebraska. Nebraska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting. Aurora, Nebraska. Poster Presentation.
- Paysen, J.W., and **K. Geluso**. April 2025. County-level distribution maps for the reptiles and amphibians of Oklahoma. Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Association of Naturalists. Albuquerque, New Mexico. Poster Presentation.
- Paysen, J.W., D.V. Kosmicki, and **K. Geluso**. February 2025. Reproduction and roost sites of Silver-haired Bats in western Nebraska. Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Kearney, Nebraska. Poster Presentation.

Publications

- Bahe L.M., D.D. Fogell, and **K. Geluso**. 2025. Additional geographic records of Dekay's Brownsnake (*Storeria dekayi*) in Nebraska, including a late seasonal observation and likely range expansion. *Transactions of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences*. 45: 1–5.
- Brown, J. H., Vijayan, J., Rodrigues de Queiroz, A., Figueroa Ramos, N., Bickford, N., **Wuellner, M.**, Buan, N. R., Stone, J. M., Glowacka, K., and Roston, R. L. 2025. Coenzyme M: An Archaeal Antioxidant as an Agricultural Biostimulant. *Antioxidants*. 14(2), 140. <https://doi.org/10.3390/antiox14020140>
- Cheku, S., **Rokusek, B.S.**, Pattabiramann, M., and **Carlson, K.A.** 2025. Enhancing drug administration in *Drosophila melanogaster*: A method for using solid dispersions for improved solubility and bioavailability. *Fly*. 19(1): 2497565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19336934.2025.2497565>
- Chen, Y., Sunojkumar, P., Spicer, R.A., Hodel, R.G.L., Soltis, D.E., Soltis, P.S., Paton, A.J., Sun, M., **Drew, B.T.**, and Xiang, C. 2025. Rapid Radiation of a Plant Lineage Sheds Light on the Assembly of Dry Valley Biomes. *Molecular Biology and Evolution*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/molbev/msaf011>
- Dvorak, T., Hernandez-Sandoval, H., Cheku, S., Mora Valencia González, M., Borer, L., Grieser, R., **Carlson, K. A.**, and Cao, H. 2025. Development of a Rapid-Response Fluorescent Probe for H₂S: Mechanism Elucidation and Biological Applications. *Biosensors*. 15(3), 174. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bios15030174>
- Nikolaou, P., Krochuk, B.A., Rodrigues, P.F., Brzeski, K.E., Mufumu, S.L., Malanza, S.E., Tonra, C.M., **Cooper, J.C.**, Wolfe, J.D., and Powell, L.L. 2025. Insights on avian life history and physiological traits in Central Africa: ant-following species have young-dominated age ratios in secondary forest. *Frontiers in Conservation Science*. 6:1504320. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcosc.2025.1504320>
- Ostrom, B.L., Harner, M.J.**, and Caven, A.J. 2025. Monitoring Grassland Bird Communities with Acoustic Indices. *Birds*. 6(1): 11. <https://doi.org/10.3390/birds6010011>
- Rue, J.W.** and Ranglack, D. H. 2025. Pronghorn habitat suitability in the Flint Hills of east-central Kansas. *Western North American Naturalist*. 85(1): 9.
- Xu, Xm., Liao, By., Liao, Sj. Qin, Qm., He, Cy., Ding, X., Wu, W., Wang, Ly., Zhang, Fq., Peng, Lx., **Drew, B.T.**, and Li, Yq. 2025. Next-generation sequencing-based population genetics unravels the evolutionary history of *Rhodomyrtus tomentosa* in China. *BMC Plant Biology*. 25, 338. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12870-025-06364-6>

Zebro, L. R., G. G. Sass, M. R. Wuellner, and K. D. Koupal. 2025. Evaluating the contributions and economic costs for Walleye fry and fingerling stocking in a large Midwestern reservoir. *Fisheries Research*. 281: 107207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2024.107207>

Continue to send us updates on any meetings, publications, grants, or awards that you have been involved with. Please email details to msbiology@unk.edu.

Director's Desk from Dr. Austin Nuxoll

Greetings!

I hope the spring semester went well and everyone is enjoying the start of summer! As we transition to summer, I want to take a moment and celebrate our recent graduates. This spring, we celebrated fourteen students completing their degree, six of which we had the joy of meeting in person and watching them be hooded at commencement. Again, a big [congratulations](#) to everyone completing their degrees!

As many of you are aware, we have some major changes occurring to the program beginning this fall to improve flexibility and reduce the time it takes for students to complete the degree. We are reducing the credits required to complete the degree from 36 to 30 as well as reducing the required core courses to 9 credits.

The core courses will consist of:

Biol 802: Organic Evolution

Biol 848: Scientific Literacy and Communication

One statistics course (Biol 827: Concepts of Biological Statistics or Biol 849: Advanced Biological Statistics).

If you're currently enrolled under a catalog year prior to Fall 2025, you'll have the option to switch to the new curriculum. Students who have completed BIOL 820 and at least one credit of BIOL 881 will have those counted in place of BIOL 848. If you're curious about how these changes might affect your plan of study, feel free to contact us at msbiology@unk.edu or 308-865-1589.

Lastly, I want to remind everyone that if a class is full, you can email msbiology@unk.edu or me, at nuxollas@unk.edu to be placed on a waitlist. As classes get underway, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

I hope everyone has a great summer!
Dr. Nuxoll

Faculty News



Dr. Joseph Dolence, Associate Professor, was selected as a National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) Fellow. The NSRI Fellows program was launched back in May 2021 and includes faculty from across the University of Nebraska System. He, along with three other UNK faculty, were highlighted in the University of Nebraska News; click on the following link to view the full article: <https://unknews.unk.edu/2025/03/28/four-unk-faculty-members-join-national-strategic-research-institute-fellows-program/> (pictured left)

Dr. Mary Harner, Professor, received Graduate Research Mentor of the Year at UNK Graduate Student Research Day held on April 17th (pictured right with Dr. Mark Ellis, Dean of Graduate Studies and Academic Innovation)



Dr. Nick Hobbs, Associate Professor and Alexis Hobbs, Lecturer, welcomed their first child. Calliope Elizabeth was born on October 10th. They really enjoyed their first holiday season as a family of 3! (pictures below and right)



Student News

Maire Rose Bieck (December 2017 graduate) recently earned a certificate in Cancer Registry Management from Hutchinson Community College and will begin working for Saint Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri as a Cancer Registrar.

Amy Gatlin Williams (May 2016 graduate) was accepted to pharmacy school and begins in the fall.



Cody McGregor (current thesis student) received first place for Oral Presentation at UNK Graduate Student Research Day held on April 17th. (pictured left)

Ryan Mahlberg's (July 2013 graduate) lab at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, just had two papers accepted in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, one in Clinical Electrophysiology and one in Basic to Translational Science. They also had one Nature Partner Journals Regenerative Medicine paper accepted.

Emily Robertson (May 2021 graduate) was accepted to Veterinary school and will be attending Kansas State University in August. (pictured right)



Chaya Rothschild (current student) welcomed her son, Ben, in December 2024. (pictured right)



Please let us know what is going on in your lives; email us your news at msbiology@unk.edu.

Office Space

Still looking to register for a class this summer? The following courses are offered during the 2nd and 3rd summer session and have a few spots left:

June 2 – July 25 session:

BIOL 830P – Six Global Mass Extinctions (3 hrs)

BIOL 830P – Neglected Tropical Diseases (3 hrs)

BIOL 881-01 – Current Issues (1 hr)

June 16 – August 8 session:

BIOL 881-03 – Current Issues (1 hr)

Students can register for open classes on MyBlue up until the first day of the class.

Reminder: If you haven't registered yet for Fall 2025 classes, we encourage you to do so ASAP. Classes fill-up quickly so if there is a course you really want/need to take, you should register now. Fall 2025 classes begin August 25th.

Remember, if a class you are interested in taking is full, contact Brian or Robyn at msbiology@unk.edu to be put on a waitlist. Should a spot become available you would then be contacted via your loper email account.

Students planning to graduate this August 2025 must apply for graduation on MyBlue. Even if you do not plan to attend ceremony you must apply in order to receive your degree. The deadline to apply for summer graduation is June 15th. There is a \$25 application fee which can be paid on-line during the application process. Commencement ceremony will take place at 10:00 am on August 8th in the Health and Sports Center. Please consider making the trip to Kearney to walk in graduation and if you do, please let the Biology Department know.

We want to meet you!



Brian Peterson, Online Program Coordinator, hosted a booth at the Nebraska Academy of Sciences Annual Meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska on April 25th and was able to visit with one of our current MS Biology students, Mohammed Hassan (pictured left). We always enjoy meeting our online students in-person so please stop by if we are hosting a booth at a conference you are attending!

SAVE COURSE MATERIALS

All online non-thesis students are required to complete and pass a comprehensive exam covering the coursework within their program.

- Students should **save** materials from all courses applying to their program to study to prepare for the exam.
- Most Canvas courses will close at the end of a semester and students may not be able to access them in the future.