

VOL. 1 | MARCH 2021

BIOLOGY (NUCLEO)TIDINGS

News from the Biology Department at Northeastern Illinois University



Stay in touch! Email us at biology@neiu.edu with news, updates, and stories you'd like to share!



Department Happenings

- **March 2nd:** SCSE Womxn in STEM Panel and Networking Event
- **March 8th:** Advanced registration begins, abstract submission deadline for the Student Research and Creative Activities Symposium
- **March 15th-20th:** NEIU Spring Break
- **March 22nd:** SCSE Summer Research and Professional Training Program Student Applications due (Faculty apps due March 15th)
- **March 23rd:** MARC Seminar. Dr. Carrie Diaz Eaton will give a talk via Zoom at 11:00AM.
- **March 27th:** Open registration begins



Students in STAM 203: Design in Nature stand near a project they constructed this fall. The class is co-taught by faculty in Biology and Art+Design.

OVERVIEW:

- Undergraduate Student Highlight: Haider Mehdi
- Graduate Student Highlight: Rachel Scianna
- Faculty & Staff Highlight: Pam Geddes
- Deans List
- Greenhouse News

Welcome to the first monthly newsletter of the NEIU Biology Department! We will use this newsletter as a way to keep students, alumni, and supporters of NEIU Biology in the loop.

Undergraduate Student Spotlight



Haider Mehdi is a junior Biology major and McNair Scholar.

What made you choose Biology as a major? After flip-flopping between degree choices for most of my first 2 years as a college student, I sat down to ask myself what field I actually want to spend my adult life in. I love the natural world,

and I hated seeing it get slowly destroyed in this current climate. The biodiversity on our planet is something that I've loved since I could see, and gaining knowledge to understand and protect all that life is what I knew I would love to spend most of my life doing. Thus, I chose a Biology degree as I knew that would be the only field that would personally fulfill me.

Tell us about your research!

My research at NEIU centers around the fuzzy Woolly Bear caterpillars, aka *Pyrrharctia isabella* larva. The purpose of this project is to test a folktale about the caterpillar's ability to predict weather severity based on their hair color, and to possibly discover a new correlation between their hair and their external

habitats. I am still early on in this project, and the methodology revolves around analyzing pictures of real-life sightings of these insects. The goal is for me to write a published research paper, my first official paper as a "Biologist", and present my findings at McNair's research presentation in the fall of 2021.

You can find Haider Mehdi on LinkedIn.



A woolly bear caterpillar, Haider Mehdi's study species.
PC: IronChris, Wikimedia

Faculty & Staff Highlight



Dr. Pam Geddes is an Associate Professor of Biology specializing in invasion ecology. She recently received a Teaching Excellence Award from NEIU.

What is your lab known for working on? I've been called "the cattail lady" before... 😊

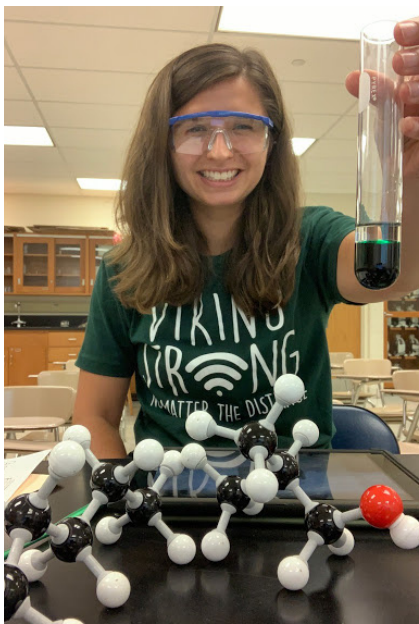
What is your favorite part of research? Designing experiments and building stuff for their setup! I absolutely love the setting up phase and finding the right

materials at Home Depot.

How has your research influenced your classroom?

I feel my research and classroom complement each other. To this day, I find myself providing examples, stories, and anecdotes for almost all the classes I teach about research projects I did as an undergraduate, a master's student, a doctoral student, and as a post-doc. I hope these lived experiences infuse my teaching so that students can more easily connect the concepts we learn in class.

Graduate Student Spotlight



Rachel Scianna is a Masters student in Biology at NEIU and is a high school biology teacher at William Fremd High School.

Why are you getting your Masters? I am getting my Master's in Biology through NEIU to further my understanding of the

content I teach students everyday and to be able to expand the types of classes I can teach to students.

What do you think is the most exciting thing about learning Biology? The most exciting thing about learning biology is diving into all the current biotechnology being used to help others in this current moment. The idea that we can manipulate the machinery of other organisms such as bacteria or viruses in order to manipulate genes and potentially cure diseases is fascinating. CRISPR/Cas9 and the recently developed mRNA vaccine are just a few examples of this.

You can follow Rachel on Instagram @scianna_science and see what's happening in her science classroom @fremd_science

Deans List

Congratulations to all Biology students who made the Deans List for Fall 2020! These students maintained a GPA of 3.8 or above.

Tariq Abutaleb	Elizabeth Lopez
Jennifer Adams	Usaid Mahmud
Sarah Al Sulaimawi	Arleen Matos
Luis Aldama	Maira McWhorter-Pusateri
Rogelio Alvarado	David Menendez
Hanna Baral	Aseel Mohammad
Vada Becker	Denny Nguyen
Patrick Brogan	Kimberly Nu-Tall
Elvia Camargo	Ezekiel Oluyadi
Tenzin Chosang	Shreejana Paudel
Colleen Dowell	Will Peiser
Ginger Dragon	Helena Puccini de Castro
Jack Eckhorn-Martinez	Martin Raheem
Christian Fajardo	Guadalupe Ramirez
James Frale	Guadalupe Ruiz
Jonathan Garcia	Dana Salamah
Jared Gattis	Gorav Saluja
Marissa Giolas	Rebecca Sheley
Yoshi Gonzalez	Ravi Sullivan-Freeman
Anna Gutmanovich	Linh Tran
Zoe Hickey	Kevin Urquiza
Amani Islam	Mahum Wazir
Jabbar Jabbari	Marcus Yee
Mahnoor Jeewa	Carlos Zamudio
Kamer Kassim	
Adeeba Khan	
Sana Khatoon	
Alexis Leach	
Kelsey Littrell	



Greenhouse News

Though the weather outside is frightful, the NEIU Greenhouse is still green and active! Greenhouse staff are hard at work planting seedlings for spring. So far they've planted herbs (chives, basil, and oregano), bedding plants (black dragon

coleus, rainbow coleus, impatiens), and native wildflowers like wild onion, zig-zag goldenrod, and wild ginger. Stay tuned for info about the Spring Plant Sale!

Follow us to learn more about what is happening in Biology!



@NEIUBiology