

Eric Shershen Ph.D. Candidate

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RESEARCH FOCUS

Plant physiology, histology, ecology, conservation biology, and species distributions using ecological niche modeling. Herbarium specimens and personally collected specimens used to determine past, present, and future distributions of selected taxa to guide conservation and land management decisions to preserve the biodiversity of ecosystems. Models incorporate plant physiology tolerances and physical attributes of selected taxa to better predict the ranges in which a species may be able to survive.

PROFESSIONAL PREPERATION

Ph.D. Ecology and Evolutionary Biology University of Tennessee Knoxville, Knoxville, TN Dissertation: in progress	2019-present
B.A. Biology and Environmental Studies Augustana College, Rock Island, IL	2014-2018

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2019- Dennis Breedlove Award- Covered fieldwork expenses for a field-based project. **\$1,000**

2020- Dennis Breedlove Award- Covered fieldwork expenses for a field-based project. **\$1,000**

2021- Dennis Breedlove Award- Covered fieldwork expenses for a field-based project. **\$800**

2021- Ray Holton – Award recognizing a PhD student working in the plant sciences area who demonstrates excellence in scholarship and research. **\$2500.00**

2021 – Sharp Award/Fund – Award dedicated to supporting bryological research. **\$10,000**

2022 – Graduate Student Senate Travel Award – Award to support travel to a professional conference, Botany 2022 Plants at the Extreme in Anchorage, AK. **\$1,000**

2022 – Plant Research Center Travel Award – Award to support travel to a professional conference, Botany 2022 Plants at the Extreme in Anchorage, AK. **\$500**

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Rock Island County Survey

Spent the summer of 2017 in Rock Island County hiking and kayaking to collect specimens for a county inventory of the bryophytes. The last update to the county record was conducted circa 1904, and my fieldwork added 19 new taxa to the county checklist, documenting significant changes to the bryophyte communities.

Dissertation – Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Continuing to use historical studies as a springboard for my own research, my dissertation uses a study from 2008 (Stehn et al. 2008) to examine how the bryophyte communities have changed in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP). Throughout the summer of 2020 and 2021, I hiked in the highest elevations, the spruce-fir zone of GSMNP, and have collected over 300 specimens. Through the summer of 2021 to present I have set up and monitored data loggers within the GSMNP.

GRA – Water Relations Grant

Spring of 2021 I was a Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Jessica Budke where I set up and monitored data loggers across five sites in Eastern Tennessee to identify their fundamental niche.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Field Botany – Course identifying vascular plants across multiple families both in the field and lab – Teaching Assistant
Bio Literature – Discussion based course to improve scientific literacy – Teaching Assistant
Introduction to Botany - Laboratory class covering fundamental concepts of botany - Teaching Assistant/Lecturer

AmeriCorps Naturalist - Various ecology, botany, and zoology themed hands-on courses taught to various schools ranging from Pre-K to adults at Nahant Marsh, Davenport, IA

UNDERGRADUATE MENTORING

Susanna Diamond – Mentored Susanna with research, leading to her presenting her project: Investigating Changes in Canopy Cover and Tree Community Composition in High Elevation Ecosystems in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park at a conference held at University of Tennessee: EURēCA where she won an Award of Excellence

RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Budke – Spring 2021:

- ❖ Programmed, set up, and monitored iButton data loggers in urban-wilderness field sites.
- ❖ Analyzed and generated figures depicting temperature and humidity data trends for several species of mosses monitored.
- ❖ Generated maps using ArcGIS to determine general climatic differences in potential field sites ranging from Southern Tennessee to Northern Minnesota.

Shershen – Fall 2022-Spring 2023:

- ❖ Funding through the Sharp Award to analyze data for my dissertation and write and publish two of my chapters

OUTREACH

Graduate Researchers in Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution (GREBE) President Spring 2020 – Spring 2021

- ❖ Facilitated conversation and acted as the bridge between faculty and graduate students
- ❖ Organized both social events to foster a sense of community within the department as well as professional development seminars to support graduate students
- ❖ Attended faculty meetings and voiced graduate student concerns as well as relayed information to graduate students about policies and procedures.

Graduate Student Representative on the Collections Committee Fall 2021 – Fall 2022

- ❖ Evaluated proposals for various grants and awards throughout the year
- ❖ Attended meetings regarding collection spaces at the University of Tennessee Knoxville.

PUBLICATIONS

Published:

2020

Gibson N, Elizabeth Green E, Guido A. Herrera G, Love S, Turner S, Weatheron M, Faidiga A, Luo A, Ngoh M, **Shershen E**, Yoon H, Blum M (submitted). Towards an ecology of disasters: a primer for the pursuit of ecological research on disasters, Ecology and Society

2018

Eric Shershen, Carissa Gilliland, and Rafael Medina "Bryophytes of Loud Thunder Forest Preserve, with an Updated Checklist of the Bryoflora of Rock Island County, Illinois," *Evansia* 35(2), 36-42, (1 June 2018).

<https://doi.org/10.1639/0747-9859-35.2.036>

GRADUATE COMMITTEE

Dr. Jessica M. Budke (advisor), Dr. James Fordyce, Dr. Mona Papeş, Dr. Laura Thompson