

Public Lecture Offerings

Oaks: An evolutionary success story now in jeopardy

Oaks are the most abundant and diverse tree taxa in North American forests. They evolved in the warm paleo-arctic over 50 million years ago and migrated southward as the planet cooled, diversifying into hundreds of species across North America, Asia, and Europe. This talk will discuss the evolutionary history of oaks, describe some genomic features of oaks that have facilitated their success, and finish with evidence that oaks are in jeopardy due to global warming and how we might manage tree populations to help them survive.

The story of acorns: Talking trees, climate change, and humans

Acorns are not only essential for the viability of oak populations but they provide a valuable food source for humans, wildlife, and insects. This talk will address related questions about the biology of acorns. Why and how do trees produce acorn crops synchronously—do they talk to each other? What is the impact of climate warming on future acorn production? How are acorns dispersed and how far do they go? What is the role of acorns in indigenous cultures?

Classroom Discussion Topics

Importance of recognizing indigenous groups

Native Americans have lived in North America for more than 10,000 years, caretaking the land without depleting its natural resources. Since Europeans arrived many ecosystems have been modified or transformed and many species have become threatened or gone extinct. The open-ended class discussion will address questions

about our Euro-centric view of ecology and lack of respect for the traditional caretakers of the land.

Building Inclusive Classrooms: obstacles and paths for success of all students*

As dean of life sciences, we developed programs to enhance student experience, improve pedagogy in the classroom, and educate faculty about their implicit biases that affect student learning. The outcome was increased diversity in the life science undergraduate student body by improved retention. The goal of this talk is to help administrators consider strategies for creating a more inclusive culture at their institutions that will increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.

*This topic is intended for administrators, deans, and chairs or faculty