



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

FOR AND BY ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES STUDENTS AT
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY



NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

The ENVS Student Newsletter has some exciting news for everyone, we are now officially a student organization! I quickly wanted to thank our faculty advisors Dr. Kaplan and Dr. Ward for their help with the newsletter. Also, I would like to thank our newest co-editor, Alyssa Lortie! And equally important is our team of Sav Herald, Miles Powell, Andrew Shenal, and Tessa Stevens. Without them this newsletter would not be what it is today. Without further ado, please enjoy the first edition of the ENVS Student Newsletter of 2023!

Kathryn Burns - Co-Editor-In-Chief



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Internship Spotlight -
Hana Esber [2]

Alumni Interview - Molly
Thomas [3]

Faculty Spotlight - Dr.
Roxburgh [7]

Grind2Energy [9]

Field Course to South
Africa [11]

"IN THEIR OWN WORDS..."

INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT: HANA ESBER

by: Hana Esber

Over the summer, I was able to work for Enviroscapes Landscaping Company. I was stationed at the branch in Paris, Ohio. My role was a Bed Matience Crew Member and I worked closely with a Crew Leader and the manager of bed maintenance. My duties included pulling weeds, planting, watering, fertilization, pond care, general bed patience, and fulfilling the special requests of our customers. Enviroscapes prides itself on "Growing Good" which means they specialize in bringing joy and notification to people's landscapes. I had the opportunity to learn more about the local flora and fauna of Northeast Ohio. Each property was customized to the owner which required a different level of service and approaches each time. This role was hard work, but it open my eyes to a different approach to working in the environment.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: MOLLY THOMAS

by: Tessa Stevens

Currently Interviewing: **Molly Thomas** *Environmental Education Program Manager at Camp Christopher*

1. What is your undergraduate degree?

Major: Environmental Studies

Minor: Sustainability

Graduation Year: Winter, 2021

2. What were you drawn to about the Environmental Studies program at Kent State University?

What drew me to the major at KSU was that it was very focused. So when I began looking at colleges, I looked between UC and KSU, the UC's program was a lot of science and I already knew that I wanted to focus a lot on human issues and learn more about how I could best relay environmental issues to others.

3. Are there any courses or activities that you would like to recommend to students who are currently in the program?

Two classes specifically that I will still talk about to this day were *Environmental Education and Conservation* and *Cities and Urbanization*. They weren't necessarily for the ENVS major, but they counted toward my sustainability minor. In *Environmental Education and Conservation*, I learned so much just in general, but also how to work with people and how to connect them in a way that they are able to make a personal connection to the planet and environment. In the other class *Cities and Urbanization*, I took with Dr. Emariana Widner, I hope she still teaches it. She was incredible and it really taught me so much about how making changes within our cities and the structure of how we build is so important and we can make cities more environmentally friendly nowadays. I live in Akron so when I drive down the road downtown Akron, seeing the walkability and how they are improving it so that people walk more would have been something that I wouldn't pay attention to before taking this course. But because of that class, I am so much more focused on all the different ways that we as a society can be more sustainable.



4. What was something that you liked to do in your free time while in school?

As a student my freshman year I was in the Charge program and made friends that way. Then in the spring of my sophomore year is when COVID hit, so I didn't have too much of an on-campus social life because of that, I moved home shortly after that. In 2020, I began to teach dance classes in Akron and continue to teach there one night a week. Since I was 18, something that I kept up with in college was working at Camp Christopher in Bath, Ohio, which is where I have my full-time job now. I worked there during the summers and then during the school year teaching environmental education classes, but now I run the program!

5. Explain your career journey after graduation. How did you find out about your current position? What made you decide on this particular field?

I didn't know that I wanted to do environmental education specifically until I started teaching the courses when I was 18 years old. At the end of my first summer working at Camp Christopher they mentioned having Fall and Spring work opportunities teaching environmental education classes to local schools. I already had determined the major in environmental studies and truly even now I don't know where my career will take me. The opportunities are endless with the degree, but Environmental Education is what spoke to me the most.

I taught environmental education at Camp Christopher in the fall of 2018 and the spring and fall of 2019. During the summers I worked as a regular camp counselor. When COVID hit, it was that weird limbo of where I needed an internship but wanted to continue my work at Camp. I decided to email our director and asked if I could update the courses in our Environmental Education program. The program hadn't run (because of covid) from 2020 spring until the fall of 2021, so I knew that it would need revamped before we could offer the program again. We always had workers who would return to teach the courses, with a few new staff members here and there, but I knew once the program started up again, it would be a whole new playing field with all new staff members.



So I updated the program, and that summer (2021) I worked as a summer resident camp program coordinator for Camp Christopher, I was higher up in that position but was still just a seasonal employee. Once that summer ended and the fall came around, that's when I was going to be graduating. I met with our director again and told her I was really interested in working for camp and that I would have a BS degree, and a month or two later I got a full-time job offer. In March of 2022, I was offered the position of Environmental Education Program Manager! It was pure convenience of the time, because of how life played out throughout covid and coming out of that time, I think it all lead to me being given the opportunity to continue working at Camp Christopher.

6. How long have you been in this position?

I have been working for Catholic Charities Camp Christopher for almost 6 years now. 2018 and 2019 I worked as a regular camp counselor. 2020 I was a head counselor, running the high ropes course. In 2021 I was a resident camp program coordinator, With those seasonal positions, I was always teaching environmental education classes when I could/when they were offered. 2022-Present I am the Environmental Education Program Manager. I am just around the corner from being in this position for one year.

7. What does a day-to-day workday look like for you?

The job that I do specifically is very dynamic; the environmental education program runs in the Fall and Spring. During those times, I am calling schools, putting together schedules, and getting staff trained. In the Summer, I run our Day Camp program. Throughout our off-season, I am updating summer schedules, getting everything ready for the spring environmental education programming, and overall getting things prepped for camp to be back in full swing. It is hard to say what a "typical day-to-day" looks like because my job is so fluid. Purely speaking of the Environmental Education program, I am contacting schools sending them our course information, making their schedules, and getting our staff in to work and the new staff training.



8. Do you have any long-term career goals that you would like to accomplish?

I want to impact as many people as I can. The more that I experience this job, now coming up to a full year in this position, I'm really starting to see the impact that my job can literally have on hundreds of kids. Even if half of them don't know me by my face or name, I know that the work I am doing can really impact them. Getting more schools out here is always a goal of mine. Generally speaking though, my long-term goal is to expose as many people as possible to environmental education and just help them make a connection to some part of nature. It doesn't have to be every aspect of it, but if a kid picks up a rock and says "this is the coolest thing I've never seen" and they hold on to it for years and years, that is enough to create a connection with nature. It's some of the little things that start making a bigger connection, so the impact is my overall goal.

9. Is there other advice you would like to share with students?

Yeah! For things that seem bad like getting a bad grade, or getting in a fight, don't let it stick with you too long. My college experience was cut short because of COVID, and I always wish I could go back and take in every moment, to not get as mad about the little things. The silly things in life are not worth wasting your energy on. Take ownership of the things that are keeping you down. If you get a bad grade, talk to the professor and see what you CAN control in the situation. Ask the question, and ask for help, which is how you are going to get to the next step. Everything will be all right is what I am really trying to say. Do things that make you happy. Something we try to tell our summer staff at camp is: just work one more summer" -- it is such a fun job and working just one more summer won't do anything but make more memories and stronger bonds. Your job or internship will be there and you will get where you need to be, so do something that makes you happy if you feel your heart pulling you that way.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. SUSAN ROXBURGH

by: Andrew Shenal

Dr. Roxburgh holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Toronto with some of her main areas of interest including medical sociology, the stress process, and mental health across race and ethnicity. Outside of her work in sociology, Dr. Roxburgh loves photography and loves to spend time in her garden at home.

One of the courses that Dr. Roxburgh teaches at Kent State is the *Sociology of Food* which fulfills a social science elective for environmental studies students. The course is open to anyone at KSU and is taught once annually in the spring semester. The course is broken up into three main sections. The first one is mainly focused on the culture of food, with an example being the influence of ecological settings on the organization of food in our society. The second part focuses on the relationship between food and identity in areas such as social class, religion, and gender. The third and final area of the course explores the production of food in different contexts with topics such as monopolies in food production and how what we eat contributes to environmental problems. Environmentally related topics are integrated throughout each of the three areas, posing a great benefit for environmental studies students.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. SUSAN ROXBURGH CONTINUED



When asked to give her best tip for students wanting to be more environmentally friendly and sustainable with their eating habits, Dr. Roxburgh suggests choosing one area to work on at a time. Sustainability can feel very overwhelming, and food is often an area of difficulty for college students. She mentions there are multiple organic community gardens in the Kent and Akron areas which make great options for students to get involved or just to get some healthy, sustainably sourced food. Further, Dr. Roxburgh acknowledges that stress in students often leads to isolation and spending more time on social media and streaming platforms. To combat this, she gives her personal advice for students to dedicate some time to reading.



Overall, the design of the entire course has been a passion project for Dr. Roxburgh. Many students leave the course at the end of the semester with a new perspective on food in their life. Food opens many doors for environmental studies students to learn more about themselves, the environment, and society as a whole.



GRIND2ENERGY AT KENT STATE

by: Miles Powell

Photos provided by Susan Roxburgh

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an estimated **30-40 percent** of food is wasted in the United States. Here at Kent State, the Office of Sustainability is working to make an impact on that figure with the Grind2Energy system.

Located in both the Eastway and Design Innovation Hub dining halls, Grind2Energy converts post and pre-consumer food waste into energy and fertilizer. During preparation and when people are done eating, leftover food waste is collected and sent through what is essentially an industrial garbage disposal, and mixed with water. This mixture is stored in a tank on campus when full is picked up by Quasar, a third-party energy company, and taken to an anaerobic digestion facility.

“The product of anaerobic digestion is natural gas and a biosolid that is used as a fertilizer,” says Melanie Knowles, University Sustainability Manager. “The natural gas either goes into a compressed natural gas fueling station or goes into a turbine and makes electricity that goes into the grid.” She adds that the trucks that pick up the food waste from the dining halls are fueled by the same natural gas they are helping to produce.



GRIND2ENERGY AT KENT STATE

The biosolids produced are used as fertilizers across Ohio and are injected into the soil instead of being applied on top, helping prevent nutrient runoff into nearby waterways. Knowles says that farmers have reported a 30 percent increase in yield where the fertilizer is used.

The Grind2Energy system was built into the DI Hub when it opened in September 2020. After seeing the success of that system, the university applied for and got a grant from the Ohio EPA to be able to add one to Eastway, which was completed in November 2021. Data from these systems can be tracked at the Office of Sustainability, and since the fall of 2020, Grind2Energy has diverted 179.3 tons of food waste from landfills. This has reduced the number of greenhouse gasses produced by the Kent campus by 123 tons of CO₂ equivalent since September 2020, created enough energy to power 36 homes for a month, and has produced 10 tons of fertilizer.

The Office of Sustainability is looking into how to expand the Grind2Energy system by diverting food waste from other parts of campus. There is also a lot of work going into composting. While composting has some downsides compared to the Grind2Energy system, Grind2Energy can't take compostable containers, so using both of these systems around different parts of campus could make an even bigger impact on the waste produced. "If all of the concessions at the stadium were in compostable containers when people leave, you might have a recyclable bottle or can and the rest could be composted," Knowles said.

You can read more about the Grind2Energy system and other sustainability efforts at Kent State on the university's sustainability page. Also, Kent State is currently in the middle of the Campus Waste to Zero Waste, a national competition between college campuses to reduce the waste they produce. Everyone on campus is involved, and you can read more about it more on their website: www.kent.edu/sustainability



"IN THEIR OWN WORDS..."

FIELD COURSE TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

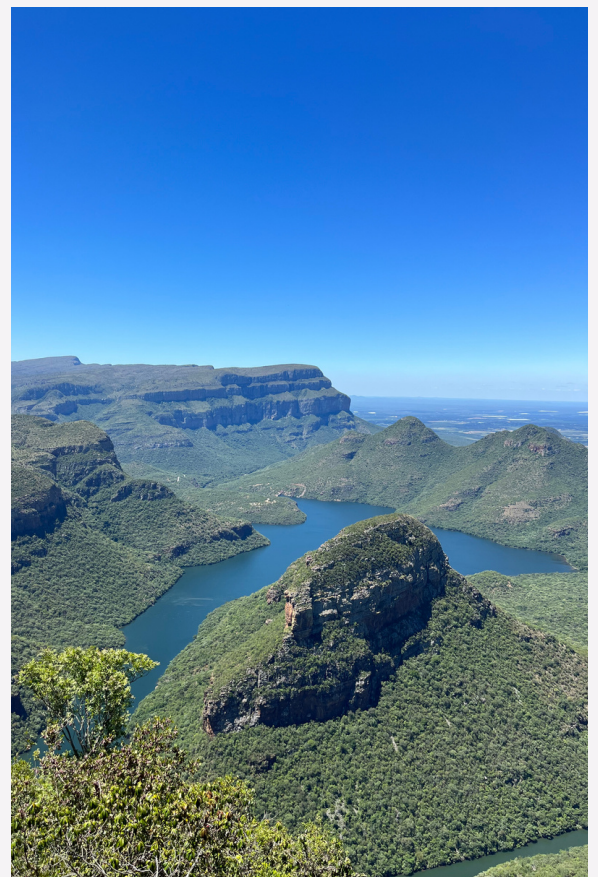
by: Alyssa Lortie

This past winter break I had the opportunity to participate in the Field Course to South Africa (BSCI 40378). This course was led by Dr. David Ward and Ph.D. candidates Matthew Wuensch and Taylor Micheal. It was a 15-day course with roughly 8 days of field project work. Other days included travel days, visiting Kruger National Park, and time spent in Cape Town. Each student was paired up, and assigned a project. For my project, I studied the effects of elephants on vegetation in African savannas, specifically on marula trees and aloe plants. In order to do this, we measured tree browsing height, overall height, diameter, and damage index of the plants in three locations. The locations were within the Wits Rural Facility which is where we stayed for the majority of the trip, Thornybush Game reserve, and in the Wits Rural Facility along the fence line of Wits and Thornybush. We chose these locations because, in the Wits Rural Facility, there are no elephants, in Thornybush there are a large number of elephants and along the fence line is where the Thornybush elephants broke into Wits several years ago. Other projects included studying vervet monkey response to predator calls, studying impala behavior, looking at termite mounds as islands of fertility, studying gall wasps and galls on silverleaf trees, and looking at whether animals prefer linear (roads, powerlines, etc) or non-linear methods of travel.

"IN THEIR OWN WORDS..."

FIELD COURSE TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

When we were not working on our projects, we were either relaxing by the pool or off on various excursions. We had the opportunity to visit Kruger National Park twice. Kruger is one of Africa's largest game reserves, at 7,523 square miles. For reference, the entirety of Kent campus is encompassed in 1.49 square miles. While we were not able to see all of the big 5, we were able to see two of them: elephants and buffalo. We also had the opportunity to travel to Moholoholo Rehabilitation Center, which focuses on rescuing sick animals. All of the animals they have at the center are unable to be released due to various health reasons.



"IN THEIR OWN WORDS..."

FIELD COURSE TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

We took a day to visit Bourke's Luck Potholes and the Three Rondavels, both of which are absolutely stunning. Personally, I feel as if no picture is able to do it justice. For the last leg of our trip, we traveled to Cape Town, the more well-known area of South Africa. While here, we were able to experience more of the local culture, visit Boulders Beach to see the African penguins, visit Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and just take in the whole experience.



"IN THEIR OWN WORDS..."

FIELD COURSE TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

I would strongly recommend this course or any similar course to any Kent student interested in Environmental Studies or any other Bio Science related field. Most of the students on the trip were Zoology majors, however, environmental studies play many key roles in much of what we saw. Now that we are back in Kent, we are working on analyzing our data and will be presenting our projects at the annual Undergraduate Research Symposium in April. I truly think this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and am so thankful to Kent for offering opportunities like this. While you will be able to travel post-graduation, Kent does help to give you the best experiences and opportunities that otherwise might not be possible. If you would like to learn more about the South Africa field course or any other field courses offered through the Biological Sciences department, please visit: <https://www.kent.edu/biology/study-abroad>



For more information, please contact:



Kathryn Burns
Co-Editor-in-Chief
kburns35@kent.edu



Alyssa Lortie
Co-Editor-in-Chief
alortie@kent.edu

ENVS Student Newsletter Team

Sav Herald
Miles Powell
Andrew Shenal
Tessa Stevens
Dr. David Kaplan *faculty advisor*
Dr. Aimee Ward *faculty advisor*

**You may also visit the official program
website for additional information:**

<https://www.kent.edu/geography/environmental-studies>

