

Biologist begins tracking albatross across the globe

Thousands of students across the country are following the project, anyone can join the experiment online

By Laura O'Connor
Contributing Reporter

David Anderson, an assistant professor of biology, will soon lead thousands of students across the United States in tracking two species of albatross that nest on Tern Island in Hawaii.

The National Science Foundation has granted \$200,000 to the university Albatross Project.

Anderson hopes that the project will provide valuable information about the albatross. Discovering the answers to how the availability of food affects albatross reproduction and how the populations can be protected from fishing fleets can help to protect the albatross.

"My motivation for doing this is three-fold," Anderson said. "First, there are basic science questions that the data will help us answer. We know that the albatross populations seem to be declining worldwide because of contact with fisheries, and if we can determine where the feeding zones are, they can be targeted for some action.

"Second, I am interested in pre-college education and this project seemed the perfect opportunity to engage school-age kids with our work."

Bill Schmitt, the director of Galaxy Classroom, which provides programming in science and language arts to classrooms, said that one of the goals of the project is to help students learn science through participation in the process.

"Through the Albatross Project, students will be doing science right along with scientists in the field," Schmitt said.

Anderson's third motivation for doing the project is personal. "The albatross has long been an interest to me as an evolutionary biologist because of their extremely slow reproduction," he explained.

High-tech orbiting satellites and transmitters smaller than a dollar bill will be combined with the world of classroom learning.

As the albatross fly over the northern Pacific Ocean, the Argos System's satellites will scan for signals emitted from the transmitters on the birds. If a positive contact is made, the satellite will record the latitude and longitude of the signal, the time it receives the signal and other information. Then the satellite will transmit the data to receiving stations.

These receiving stations are located in Fairbanks, Alaska; Lannion, France, and Wallops Island off the coast of Virginia.

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David Anderson
Assistant professor of biology

A processing station in Toulouse, France, will send information about the project from the university computer network to schools and individuals subscribing to the Albatross Project's listserve.

"Every person who subscribes and gets some benefit makes me happy," Anderson said. "Who would have thought a kid could, in their class or at home, collect data on chlorophyll concentrations in the open ocean and see what is different about the places the birds go and where they don't go?"

Galaxy Classroom will distribute the data from Anderson's study to 600 subscribing

elementary schools in the continental United States, to another 600 fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms in the Hawaii State Teleschool and to several schools in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County system.

"This is really one of the most exciting projects for kids at this age level that I've seen because it's almost impossible to get the opportunity to do that," Schmitt said.

The Albatross Project will give children the opportunity to use, and benefit from, the Internet.

Patty Miller, a Hawaii State Teleschool teacher, said, "I think The Albatross Project is cool. What teachers say is that it gives them (the children) a reason to get in and use the Internet."

Students will be able to plot the paths of the birds against surface water temperature maps of the ocean and maps showing chlorophyll concentrations. This comparison has been found to be a factor in where the birds feed.

In addition, students will be able to post questions to scientists; read researcher's field notes, learn about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge on Tern Island; calculate the energy cost to birds to fly with the 30-gram transmitters taped to their backs and use a spe-

cial program which will design a bird that could fly faster and farther than a real bird.

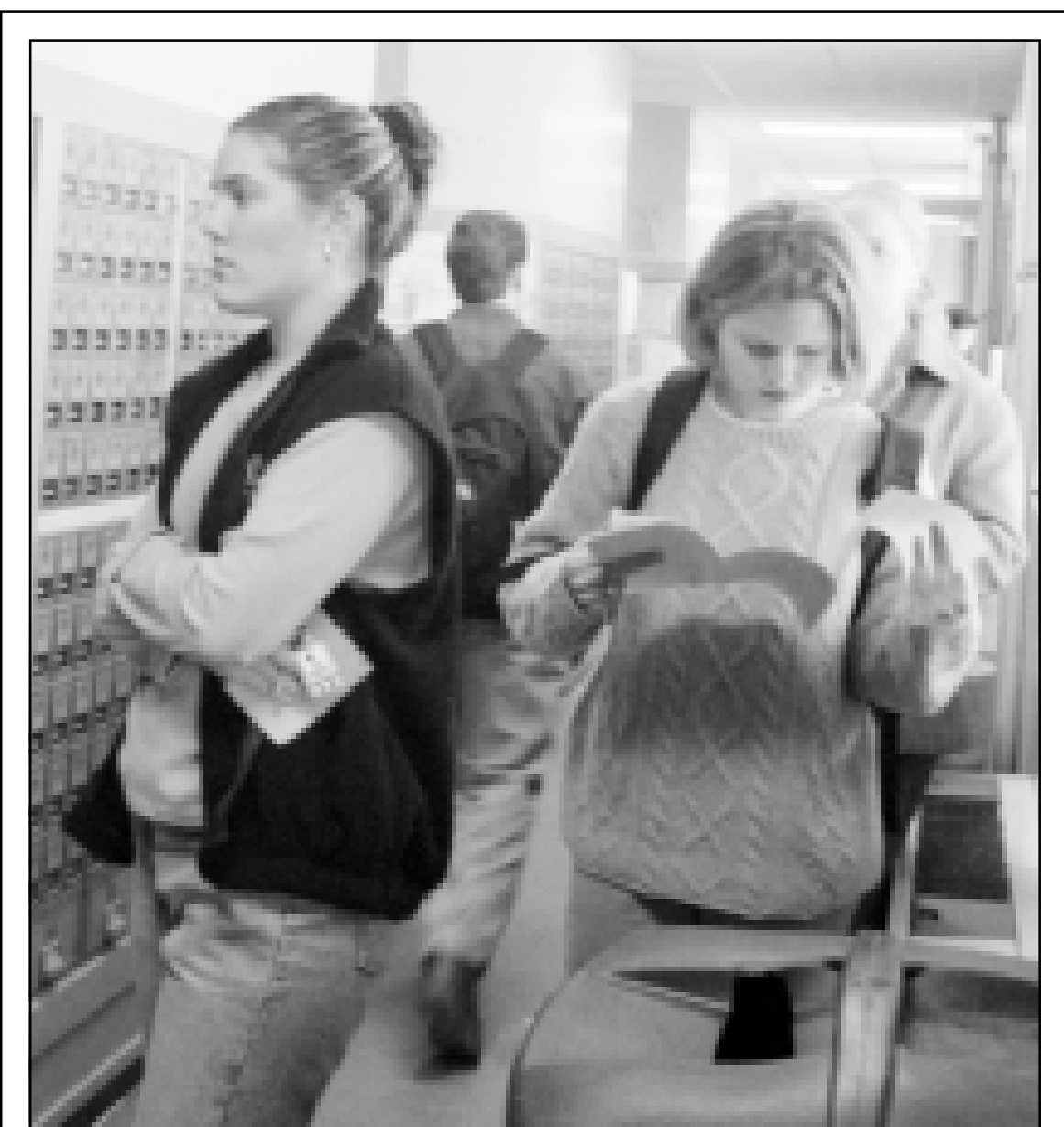
According to Paul Sievert, a postdoctoral student at University of Massachusetts who will place the transmitters on the birds, the first transmissions from the albatross are not expected until mid-January.

A special adhesive tape will be used to place the transmitters between the wings in the center of the albatross' backs to avoid disrupting their balance. The transmitter batteries are expected to last as long as five or six months.

Satellite tracking has proved to be the most effective way to observe and track birds. Boats are too slow to follow birds. Also, biologists cannot observe from boats the sex or age of the birds and whether they originate from Tern Island or another nesting area.

Airplanes are too fast and need to be refueled too often, so they prove less effective in pacing birds on foraging trips that can last weeks.

Anyone can participate in the study by typing "subscribe albatross" in the body of an e-mail message to listserv@wfu.edu or clicking on "Join the Project" at the Albatross Project's web site at <http://www.wfu.edu/albatross>.



Kim Robinson/Old Gold and Black

Junk mail

Students wait in line to pick up packages during their spare time. Credit card applications and orange cards announcing packages from home are commonly received in student mail boxes.

Divinity School receives two large grants for programs

By Travis Langdon
Old Gold and Black Reporter

The university's School of Divinity, which is scheduled to open for the fall semester of 1999, recently received two grants that pushed the school's total amount of contributed funds or pledges to over \$10 million. The projected budget is set at \$15 million.

The first of the two new grants, which was announced in December and totaled \$150,000, was provided by the Henry R. Luce Foundation Inc., an agency that funds a variety of educational and community development programs.

The subgroup of the Luce Foundation that made the grant specializes in theological education and was attracted to the university's attempt to educate future ministers through the divinity school while offering a diverse curriculum that is necessary to meet the concerns of religious congregations in modern society.

"(The Luce Foundation) was very interested in our effort to link students with the broader university from the beginning — that is, they thought it was very important to begin a school that drew on the resources and the specialties of the faculty in the broader university and allowed students to participate and be in classes with law students, medical students, management students and other graduate students. The interdisciplinary nature of the proposal was what interested them," said Bill Leonard, the dean of the divinity school.

The second grant, donated by Stanford L. Steelman of Hickory, was announced this month. The endowment is called the Margaret A. Steelman Lectureship, in honor of Steelman's wife, and will pay for an annual speaker to visit the campus starting next fall, before the Divinity School opens.

Although, at this point the first speaker has yet to be decided, but the lecture will be open to the entire student body.

After deciding to offer such an grant, Steelman

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Stanford L. Steelman
Contributor

looked into several colleges with the guidance of his local pastor. What eventually led him to give the grant to the divinity school here was the diversity that the program offered as well as the multitude of theological experiences made available to the university's students through The Year of Religion in American Life.

"I am more moderate in my theological thinking and thought they would do a reasonable job of presenting both sides of the coin. I think we should have input from all the various religions and denominations; otherwise, we get too dogmatic in our thinking. I hope that the lectures will give them (students) an appreciation for the importance of religion in their everyday life," Steelman said.

The administration at the Divinity School is enthusiastic about both of the new grants, because, since it was the multi-faceted nature of school's proposal that attracted the new monies, it will be able to continue its planned curriculum with additional resources.

"Our approach to providing a broad spectrum of opinion and interaction was what Dr. Steelman appreciated, and his money fosters what we want to do. As a matter of fact, I think both the Luce money and the Steelman grant are important ways of affirming the kind of proposals that we are setting forth," Leonard said.

The Divinity School will be located in Wingate Hall, and will begin hiring faculty this spring. Upon the school's opening, 30 to 40 students and four to six faculty members are expected.

SG looks toward referendum

Executives hope to put judicial reform proposal to student vote

By Dan Durand
Contributing Reporter

Student Government wrapped up 1997 with a torrent of activity, including laying the groundwork for the role students will play in curriculum review, the establishment of a house for study in Washington and judicial reform.

While SG accomplished many things concerning these issues, planning for these initiatives are expected to extend well into the spring semester.

SG hopes to involve the student body in decisions concerning judicial reform and curriculum review beginning early this semester with a referendum on judicial reform.

This type of referendum is without precedent and will open a new avenue for student involvement in campus legislation.

"(The referendum) is important because the decision will come from the students and not only the administration," said junior Tina Carlucci, SG speaker of the house.

Several representatives will continue to play an active role with faculty during the curriculum review process.

Meanwhile, the Curriculum Re-

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SG Speaker of the House

view Committee will continue its policy of open meetings in Reynolda Hall on alternate Thursdays and Fridays.

These meetings permit all students wishing to voice their concerns to participate in the ongoing process of curriculum reform.

One of the most popular programs begun last semester is the proposed house in Washington D.C. The program, yet to be realized, would afford university students wishing to intern or study in the D.C. area a place to stay.

Approximately 60 percent of the students polled answered that they would be interested in such an opportunity to study "abroad" in the capital.

Carlucci; senior Scott Plumridge, SG president; and several committee chairmen are scheduled to

present the program first to Sandra Boyette, the vice president for university advancement, and then to President Thomas K. Hearn Jr. and the board of trustees for final approval.

During the fall semester, SG tried to achieve a new, positive image among the student body.

Hot debates on issues such as curriculum reform, housing preference in the yet-to-be-completed Polo Residence Hall and funding for various programs characterized the biweekly sessions of the full legislature.

With elections looming in only three months, there is no end in sight for the newfound enthusiasm of the campus politicians.

Both representatives and executive members said they thought that SG had transformed itself from an organization centered on special projects to a self-sustaining legislative body lobbying for student interests with the administration.

"There is a general feeling that if we continue on with the same effort as last semester, this Student Government can truly assert itself as an influential advocate of every student's needs," said freshman representative Jacob Kline.



Kim Robinson/Old Gold and Black

Checking out

Senior Jennifer Jenkins and junior Lora Davenport work at the circulation desk in the Z. Smith Reynolds Library. Students work in all departments of the library through work-study or a desire for cold, hard cash.