

## **Soil Ecology : The link between Biodiversity, Ecosystem Function and Climate Change**

### **The 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Soil Ecology Society Conference**

The 14<sup>th</sup> biennial meeting of the Soil Ecology Society was held in an urban setting at Rutgers University in Camden NJ, USA. The meeting June 11 to 14, 2013 was co-sponsored by the International Society of Microbial Ecology and was attended by over 120 people with an interest and backgrounds in soil ecology. The delegates were from 9 countries and 50% were students. We had a large contingent (10) of delegates from China in addition to delegates from Canada, Puerto Rico, S. Korea, Ireland, UK, Germany, Finland and the Czech Republic. The local organizing committee Drs. John Dighton, Dennis Gray, Samantha Chapman, and Jennifer Krumins provided an excellent program with oral and poster sessions that were non concurrent. The atmosphere was very conducive for interaction between practicing scientists and students. The committee also organized numerous social activities and events highlighted by the field trips near the Camden area.

The technical sessions were very diverse including soil feedbacks to nitrogen, the relationship of soil C pools to microbial communities, nitrogen deposition, mites and man, herbivore activity, urban jungle soil, biochar, nematode communities, and soil warming. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Feng Hu. As part of an initiative to increase the international recognition of our society and participation in society activities from other countries our invited keynote speaker was Prof. Feng Hu of the Nanjing Agricultural University, Nanjing, China. Dr. Hu is currently steering the Soil Ecology section of the Soil Science Society of China and is an eminent soil ecologist. He provided an overview of the state of soil ecology in China to highlight where international collaborative efforts would be welcomed.

Again this year we are proud to announce that with the sponsorship of the International Society of Microbial Ecology we were able to fund 8 travel grants. The students were judged on their abstract, advisor letter of support and statement of research and career interest. The winners were Ma Chao, Caley Gasch, Bridget Hilbig, Katerina Jandova, Zhengyang Wang, Thea Whitman, Kristin Williams, Karl Wyant

During the conference there was a good deal of activity including scientists and students. These activities included a society photograph, Frisbee tournament, BBQ field trips and business meeting and award ceremonies. The highlight being the beautiful field trips to:

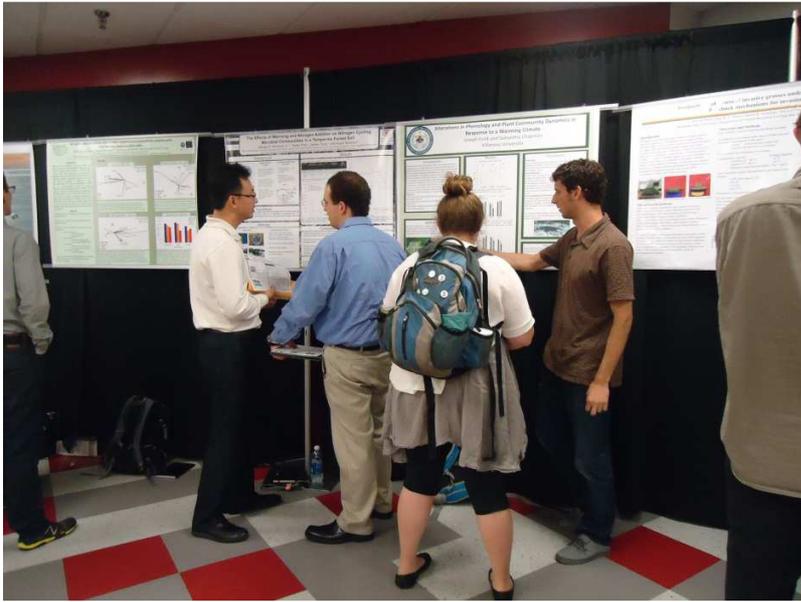
New Jersey pine barrens – as an example of one of the first state protected areas for which a state body (the Pinelands Commission) was generated to oversee its protection. It is the largest contiguous forest in NJ covering about one third of the state's area. It has unique vegetation and fauna and is home to a number of rare and endangered species. Delegates learned of research on the effects of fire on the ecology and soil, the emerging problems of increased forest harvesting practices on soils and sustainability.

Liberty State Park – as the meeting was held in an urban setting, this trip highlighted the restoration of brown-fields, which are abundant in NJ. Delegates were able to see the results of restoration efforts and research being done on soil pollution.

Ridley Creek State Park, PA – an example of a forested area that has undergone changes due to management and invasive plant species. The delegates were able to see experimental sites of studies involved with the impact of invasive plants, nitrogen deposition and soil warming.

At the end of the meeting the conference the judges of the student oral and poster competition announced the winners. Salla Selonen, University of Helsinki, Lahti, Finland was the first place winner in the oral competition with her talk titled “title unavailable”. The second place winner was a tie between 2 students Christopher Fernandez with “ Towards a mechanistic understanding of ectomycorrhizal litter decomposition dynamics” and Thea Whitman with “ When Does 2+2=4? Testing mechanisms for microbially- mediated priming of soil organic carbon by black carbon”. The poster competition winner was Chelsey Tellez showing “ The biogeochemistry of ornithogenic soils from a penguin rookery in Antarctica”. The second place winner was George Hamaoul Jr. showing “ The effects of warming and nitrogen addition on nitrogen cycling microbial communities in a temperate forest soil”. Each of the winners was awarded a cash prize.

The geographic location of the next conference of the SES Society has not yet been chosen.



The first poster session at the 2013 SES meeting



Student travel award winners for the 2013 SES meeting.



Delegates to the 2013 SES meeting at Rutgers.



Chinese delegation to the 2013 SES meeting.



Second poster session at the 2013 SES meeting.



Soil Ecology in China: Progress and Perspective : Feng Hu, Manqiang Liu, and Huixin Li

