AG illustrated

contents

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MISS AUBURNS—This year's Miss Auburn election included two candidates whose fathers are members of the College of Ag faculty. While neither daughter is enrolled in the College of Ag, we think of them as ours. Find out more about them on Page 12.

JUST A SWINGING—An Auburn University Challenge Course participant is all smiles as he swings to a stop on the courses' rope swing. Open seven days a week to a wide variety of groups, the course promises a challenging, fun-filled and safe experience. See the story on Page 3.

Change of Scenery

Hort Students' Design Could Put Fayetteville School in Spotlight

By Jamie Creamer

Pretend that money's no object, they were told. Just dream big.

So they did.

The five Auburn University horticulture graduate students dreamed up an amazing landscape plan for a small K-12 public school in Talladega County that would transform its stark campus into one of the most, if not the most, phenomenal school campuses in the nation.

In their detailed design, Fayetteville School's barren grounds would give way to hundreds of trees and ornamental shrubs and grasses that would yield a kaleidoscope of colors and textures almost year-round and create for the school's 650 or so students a world of wonder and outdoor learning.

The master plan would include a boardwalk over a wetlands section of the property, a tree grove where students could learn to identify trees, an amphitheater, a rain garden, a human sundial, a "dino-dig," a Peter Pan–Alice in Wonderland–Wizard of Oz–themed reading garden, a seniors-only garden area, a bird sanctuary, a sensory garden with plants students could see and feel and taste and hear, an ABC garden, a greenhouse and another dozen or so other features that would convert Fayetteville School's 17 acres into outdoor classrooms for students from primary grades to high school.

THE MASTER PLAN—Ann Fleener, left, and Laureanne Bond discuss details of the comprehensive landscape plan they and three fellow horticulture graduate students developed for Fayetteville School.

"We wanted to give the school more than just a great landscape," says Ann Fleener, who, along with fellow horticulture graduate students Ashley Baker, Laureanne Bond, Whitney Griffin and Matthew Wilson, created the landscape plan. "We wanted to make it as educational as possible."

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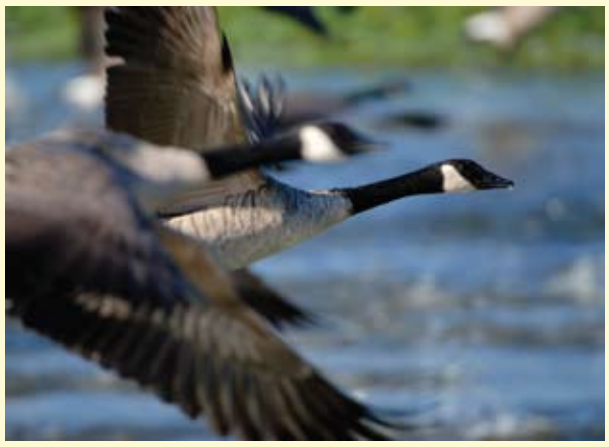

COLLISION COURSE—Flocks of Canada geese and other large birds that roost near airports pose serious safety threats to planes that are taking off and landing. A team of scientists at Auburn aims to develop a pond management system that will significantly reduce the ever-growing bird populations at airports. See the story on Page 5.

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
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Things One Learns from a Tornado:

Listen to the Animals

By Katie Jackson

GONE IN THE WIND—Curtis Jolly, chair of the Department of Ag Economics and Rural Sociology, stands in a doorway between two rooms in his house. Both rooms were once under one roof until winds from an EF2 tornado that hit on Feb. 28 took most of his roof away.

A frog probably saved Curtis Jolly's life.

At least it's a frog that Jolly, chair of Auburn's Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, credits for helping him survive an EF2 tornado that destroyed his house in Salem, Ala.

The tornado hit about 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 28, bringing winds of up to 130 miles per hour and cutting a 500-yard swath through Salem that destroyed or severely damaged more than 20 buildings.

Jolly has lived in Salem, a small community just a few miles outside Auburn, for 18 years in an 1800s-era house that he restored and filled with furniture, art, rugs, lamps, masks and other artifacts collected from his many years of international travels as an Auburn faculty member. It was not only his home, but also a favorite gathering spot for departmental celebrations.

The morning of the tornado, Jolly had postponed a trip to Birmingham because of severe weather reports and busied himself with housekeeping chores.

"I decided, okay, I'll clean the bathrooms," he says, "and while I was cleaning the second bathroom I heard a frog croaking so loudly it caught my attention. "

Jolly had never noticed a frog in or around his house before, and certainly never one that was so noisy. In fact, it was making such a racket that Jolly thought the amphibian was in the house, though it was actually outside on a porch screen.

"I went out of the room and the frog stopped, and I came back in the room and the frog started croaking again just as loud as possible so I thought 'Something is wrong,'" Jolly recalls.

Cued by the frog's frantic vocalizations, Jolly stepped into another room to look at the television weather report and heard that a tornado was in Salem. Jolly sprang, literally, into action.

He dove behind the sofa in a windowless interior room where, years ago, Jolly had safely weathered Hurricane Opal and the lights imme-

(continued on page 4)

Roosevelt Street *diary*

Ron Sparks
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries

Agriculture: Essential in Alabama

Alabama is in financial crisis and most state agencies are struggling and facing possible layoffs or furloughs. We need real solutions to our fiscal emergency and in the last two years, the Department of Agriculture and Industries has cut spending dramatically. Money has been saved while maintaining services to the public. If we cut deeper, state employees, the agriculture industry and our state's economy will all suffer as a result. Agriculture is Alabama's number one industry and our agency is an integral part of everyday commerce. The actions of our employees touch the lives of people in Alabama on a daily basis.

The good news for Alabama agriculture is clear in the results of the 2007 Ag Census. Consistently, the number of family farms has gone down by 500-1,000 each year; however, the 2007 census shows an 8 percent increase in the number of family farms in the state from 45,126 to 48,753, a significant increase. This shows the importance of having a proactive approach to helping farmers and promoting agriculture. Alabama has experienced some rough years with drought, hurricanes and a late freeze, but our farmers are resilient and ready to adapt. We stand ready to help them grow and succeed.

We cannot neglect our duty to protect Alabama's farmers, consumers and their families. We are making efforts to be fiscally responsible, but not at the risk of putting the public in danger or slowing commerce. We have a lot of responsibilities to the public. In the last 10 years, I have seen our staff unhesitatingly assist in some critical situations, even when they were not required to do so. The people who work at our department are not the kind that say "that's not in my job description." I hope that when the legislature proposes budget solutions, they remember these employees and the importance of agriculture in Alabama.

Ron Sparks can be contacted at ron.sparks@agi.alabama.gov.

Editor's Note: This column is excerpted from a column written in March by Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries Commissioner Ron Sparks to recognize National Ag Week. The original column included more detailed information about the many activities and efforts underway in Ag and Industries' divisions, such as animal and plant inspection, livestock health certification, pesticide management, weights and measures, diagnostic and laboratory services, agricultural and rural crime prevention and homeland security and emergency preparedness. The full-length column can be found at http://agi.alabama.gov/press_releases/2009mar04?pn=2.

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TRIUMPHANT SMILE—Smiles are a common sight on the Auburn University Challenge Course, especially when participants successfully conquer an intimidating obstacle. The course offers both high and low elements that help groups build team-working skills and that help individuals shine with confidence.

"WILD WOOSEY"—Stepping up to the challenge, these two try the "Wild Woosey," a low element for two people in which physical contact must be maintained as they move along two diverging cables as far as possible. Other group members spot and encourage the pair.

Witness to Change

Intern Watches Challenge Course Changing Lives

Do you need to challenge yourself? Are you part of a civic, corporate or church group that needs to do some team building and hone leadership and communication skills? You can do both, no matter your age or stage of life, and have lots of fun at the same time.

Some might say that's easy for me, a 25-year-old agricultural communications student, to say. But it's actually something I learned firsthand by working as an intern in the Ag Communications and Marketing office this semester.

It started when I began working with Laura Herring, coordinator of the Auburn University Challenge Course (often called the "ropes" course), helping develop various marketing pieces to promote the course.

A challenge course is an outdoor "classroom" that uses a series of adventure-based learning activities, such as low and high cables, ropes and wooden beams, to build teamwork and self-confidence.

I will never forget my first experience at the course. It was a frigid Saturday and a college group was tackling a few high elements 35 feet up. Strapped into a harness taking photos of the group at work, I was perched atop a structure that resembled a telephone pole to which all of the course's high elements are attached. My bird's-eye view didn't help my dropping body temperature as the wind nipped my fingers making it hard to even snap pictures of the group.

Teammates were crossing the different high elements when one young woman in the group sat down on the zip line ledge. She listened to the facilitator's instructions intently, but in that moment, her nerves crippled her with fear. Her face showed it as she processed just how to conquer her fear of heights. Her teammates soon began voicing words of encouragement and support and, after a few more moments to process the encouragement being shouted her way, she began to inch forward, closer and closer to the edge.

"I can do this," she said, trying to convince herself. Three, two, one! She slid off the ledge and zipped to a feeling of triumph and relief. She was all smiles as her feet came closer and closer to the ground. She'd done it!

Who knew you could watch someone become so empowered from a simple challenge course experience? But it's true. I saw it time and again when I visited the course to take photographs and video. I've loved getting to see just how effective group communication along with pushing one's physical and mental limits, produces nothing but smiles on every face that experiences the challenge course.

Even though Herring operates the course with a "challenge by choice" mentality, each time I've been to the course, participants choose to step up to the fun, safe and exciting challenge. Herring's staff is qualified, knowledgeable and treats each group with professionalism. With each group member that came out, I could see an obvious shift in their attitude from the time they started to the time they finished. This was in large part because Herring's staff is also committed to facilitating a unique and empowering experience.

Some challenge course programs are extremely structured, leaving little flexibility to completely satisfy unique goals and needs a group might have. It's Herring's promise never to let this happen. Whether yours is a high school, college, civic, church or corporate group, this challenge experience is a unique and beneficial way to bring members of your group together.

The Auburn University Challenge Course began construction in 2007 and its first group braved the elements the spring of that same year. This course was designed by Project Adventure and offers a variety of different challenge initiatives with plenty of acreage available to expand it further.

Some are low-element initiatives such as the "Wild Woosey," "Moby Deck," the trust fall steps and the free-standing wall. These elements are usually used for group-oriented challenges and are located on or near ground level and do not require any special safety system.

The high elements are also team-oriented but commonly consist of individual or small group challenges 35 feet in the air and require protective climbing equipment and a belay system for safety. Whether it's traversing "Burma Bridge," flying through the air on the "Flying Squirrel" or testing your strength on the "Dangle Duo," these elements allow participants to reach above and beyond their perceived limits.

THE WALL—A classic activity in the field of challenge courses, the "Initiative Wall" stands 12 feet tall and the groups are challenged to get up and over the wall within specific safety and spotting parameters. Physical strength and group communication are vital for groups to conquer this element.

Every element at the Auburn University Challenge Course allows participants to come away with a clearer understanding of their strengths and communication skills. I saw a renewed outlook emerge in many and a willingness to take on new challenges in their lives.

So, if your "team" needs a challenge that will make every member of the team feel 100 feet tall and ready to conquer the world, check out the Auburn Challenge Course by visiting www.auburn.edu/ropes or e-mailing ropes@auburn.edu. I can tell you personally, it's an amazing experience.

By Zach Benson,
Ag Communications
and Marketing Intern

> "'I can do this,' she said, trying to convince herself. Three, two, one! She slid off the ledge and zipped to a feeling of triumph and relief. She was all smiles as her feet came closer and closer to the ground. She'd done it!"

(SCHOOL, *from page 1*)

And now, as you'll soon see, the design team's dream plan is on its way to becoming reality.

But first, here's a little background on Fayetteville and its school and how the landscape-overhaul project began.

Community Support Fayetteville sits 10 or 12 miles southwest of Childersburg and about that far due west of Sylacauga. It isn't an incorporated town, just a small, rural community. If it weren't for Fayetteville School, the youths of the community would be riding buses to and from either Childersburg or Sylacauga schools. That's largely why Fayetteville residents so appreciate and support their school, says principal Patsy Lagen.

The community's main claim to fame these days is that it's the home of FarmLinks, an 18-hole, multi-award-winning public golf course that Fayetteville's Pursell family built in the early 2000s on a chunk of Pursell Farms land. The FarmLinks entrance adjoins Fayetteville School property, and the school could not ask for a better neighbor.

Last spring and summer, in fact, the team of landscape and turf professionals responsible for FarmLinks' pristine fairways and immaculate greens designed and installed for the school its first-ever football field—one that Lagen contends outshines all other gridirons in Alabama. And when the Fayetteville Wolves took the field for the first game of the '08 season, it marked the first home football game in the school's 91-year-history.

Then the FarmLinks crews gave the school its first softball field that, like the one for football, is off the charts in terms of the Wow! factor.

But FarmLinks chairman Jimmy Pursell was a little concerned by how forlorn the rest of the school grounds looked up against the new sports fields and started giving that some thought.

The Path to AU FarmLinks is the nation's only golf course that welcomes research on products and practices that could benefit course managers, and the research is how Pursell, an AU business alum, came to know a few horticulture faculty at Auburn. So, about this time last year, Pursell approached Joe Eakes, Auburn horticulture professor and interim department head, about the possibility of assigning a few students, or even an entire class, to a real-life project—designing a complete, detailed master landscape plan for Fayetteville School.

Eakes said not a problem, and he and Carolyn Robinson, assistant professor of landscape horticulture/sociohorticulture, selected Fleener, Baker, Bond, Griffin and Williams to take on the project.

Three onsite visits and countless hours of brainstorming and researching and high-fiving and debating and sketching out designs and tossing those sketches out the window later, the designers produced their dream master landscape plan and took it to Fayetteville for a formal presentation. Fayetteville School faculty, the county board of education, the school's PTA and anybody else who caught a glimpse of the plan were sold. This may be your dream, they told the design team, but we're going to make it happen.

And that was clear on the first Saturday in March, at a community planting day that officially kicked off the landscape challenge. About 175 Fayetteville teachers and students, along with parents, siblings and grandparents of students and enthusiastic community residents (Pursell included) showed up at the school with shovels and rakes, chomping at the bit to get the wheels rolling.

In three hours, the volunteers had planted 100 trees—not saplings but substantial trees three and four inches in caliper—and 100 three-gallon-and-up shrubs, almost all of which nurseries from Birmingham to Montgomery either donated or sold at cost. All the trees and ornamentals are low-maintenance, drought-tolerant species, so once they put down roots, they won't need a lot of attention.

Coordination Central Design-team member Fleener is managing the project's initial phase. She received her master's degree in December and then, thanks to private funding, headed to Fayetteville for a six-month post as campus landscape coordinator, a post she had lobbied hard for. Thus far, she has organized and launched the project, earned the nursery and landscape industries' support and generated tons of enthusiasm. But still, the workday turnout blew her away.

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS—Volunteers plant one of the 100 trees that they and 175 fellow volunteers set out on Fayetteville School's campus during the project's first workday in March.

"I'd been saying I'd be thrilled if 50 people showed up," she says. "Never would I have imagined 175."

Fleener can't say enough about FarmLinks' massive role in getting things off the ground. FarmLinks crews have graded land, installed drainage and otherwise expertly prepped the site. Oh, and those 100 trees and 100 shrubs planted at the March workday? FarmLinks had all holes dug and everything positioned according to the design plan before the first volunteers arrived.

"We couldn't have made it to this point without FarmLinks," Fleener says.

However—and it's a giant however—the completion of the landscape project over the next five years is up to the school and the rest of Fayetteville.

"Auburn designed the plan and is getting things established, and FarmLinks has gone above and beyond to help, but this is not a FarmLinks deal," Fleener says. "When the final phase wraps up, Fayetteville School's campus undoubtedly will be a model for schools across the nation.

"But everything hinges on how completely the community takes ownership of things," she says.

Design-team members and AU horticulture faculty will be following the progress, and wherever her career takes her, Fleener will be cheering from afar.

Visit www.campuslandscapeproject.wikispaces.com to learn more about the Fayetteville School landscape project.

(TORNADO, *from page 1*)

diately went out. Minutes later, Jolly heard a big bang, felt the house shake and then saw water pouring through the ceiling and light fixtures.

Yes, Jolly says, it did sound like a train, "like a big freight train just hit the building and shook it."

SKYLIGHTS THE HARD WAY—Thanks to a tornado packing 150-mile-per-hour winds, Curtis Jolly's house now has several rooms open to the sky. The roof and ceiling of this room, where Jolly was standing when he first heard a frog's frantic warning, partially blew away and partially collapsed inward, chimney and all.

Three to five minutes later, the shaking ended. When Jolly climbed from behind the sofa he discovered that much of his roof was gone; one bedroom was completely open to the sky. In the room where Jolly had been standing when he heeded the frog's warning, the ceiling and a chimney had collapsed. Other rooms in the house were relatively intact, but completely soaked.

Outside, Jolly's yard was filled with snapped, toppled and twisted trees, many intertwined with sheets of tin and other debris. While Jolly was assessing the damage and checking on his across-the-road neighbors, a firefighter showed up to check on him followed by a Red Cross worker. Jolly assured them he was unharmed and sent them on their way, though Jolly remained essentially stranded in his wrecked house for much of the day because fallen trees blocked his driveway.

Later that afternoon, Jolly's son, who lives in Georgia, arrived with food and was able to take his father to drier, more hospitable surroundings.

When Jolly returned a day or two later, Mother Nature had left another surprise for him. Several inches of snow blanketed the scene, including laying a cold coverlet on a bed in the roofless room.

The house was uninhabitable, but the Red Cross put Jolly up in a local hotel for three nights and one of Jolly's students helped him find a vacant apartment in Auburn where he can stay through May.

Jolly's not sure whether he will try to rebuild his house or not— it's too soon to make that decision, he says. But he did salvage much of his art collection and enough clothes to get by. "I probably had too many clothes already," he laughs, saying this is one way to downsize one's wardrobe.

Mostly, though, Jolly is simply thankful. Amazingly, no one in Salem was severely hurt by the tornado and the experience reminded Jolly how many friends he has, many of whom came to his aid.

A native of Dominica, where hurricanes pass through regularly on their way from Africa, Jolly is no stranger to severe weather. "I've seen rivers rising, high tides, hurricanes, but this one is different," he says.

"One cannot believe that it could do so much damage in such a short time. It is a shock because you think that you almost died (had he not left the room where the ceiling and chimney collapsed he could have been badly injured) and also because every time there is a tornado you think it is somewhere else," he adds.

Jolly learned two valuable lessons from this experience.

One: Be prepared.

The other: Listen to animals.

"I had never noticed the frog before. You hear animals all the time, but there are times an animal catches your attention and tells you something, that something is wrong. This frog was telling me that something is not going right," he says.

"Every time I hear a frog I will listen. It is not a matter of superstition, it's just a matter of something catching your attention and I will never forget that frog."

The frog, by the way, has been back to visit since the storm. Its croaking has been much quieter, though.

BIRD WATCHERS—Brian Fox, left, and Wes Holland stop at one of the 40 Lee County ponds they have visited repeatedly since August 2007 to collect data for an Auburn research project aimed at reducing bird populations at airports.

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

- Airport bird populations are growing due to urbanization, in that birds have adapted to people places; increased air traffic; and quieter planes that have two engines, not three or four.
- About 60 percent of bird-plane collisions occur during landing, 37 percent during takeoff and climb. And almost without exception, bird strikes happen at or below 3,000 feet above ground level, with most of those at or below 100 feet. The nation's record high, though, is 32,500 feet.
- Repairs to strike-damaged planes cost the airline industry $473 million a year; economic losses due to downtime adds another $155 million.
- The first-ever plane-bird collision was in 1908 in Dayton, Ohio; Orville Wright was the pilot. The first known strike fatality came in 1912, when, during a beachside demo flight, ace pilot Cal Rogers' Wright Flyer hit a seagull and crashed.

It's a Bird! It's a Plane!

And AAES Scientists are Chasing a Crash Solution

By Jamie Creamer

The cool, calm veteran pilot who made that remarkable, life-saving crash landing of US Airways Flight 1549 into the frigid waters of the Hudson River in mid-January was just a minute into the flight when his plane and a flock of geese had a head-on collision that knocked out both of the plane's engines.

Though he might not remember every detail that happened from then until he and his passengers were back on solid ground, the pilot, known to the world as "Sully," won't ever forget the sickening sound of those geese slamming into his airplane. "Loud thumps," he said, like baseball-sized hail pelting the plane. "It was shocking," he said.

What will live in history as the Miracle on the Hudson was an ultra-dramatic illustration of the dangers that threaten every time planes and birds meet in mid-air. And almost every year, the number of bird-strike incidents goes up.

Federal Aviation Administration data from 1990 through 2007 show that 1,738 strikes were reported in 1990 but by '07, that had soared to 7,439—a whopping 328-percent jump. And even then, some in the aviation industry estimate that only about 20 percent of strikes are reported each year.

More bird strikes are occurring because populations of large birds—geese, turkey vultures, ducks, gulls and such—at airports are multiplying rapidly. For birds, big airports must be the ultimate roosting spots. Airports offer plenty of shelter, for one thing, but most important, there is an abundance of food, especially in and around those retention ponds airports build to catch and purify stormwater flowing from runways and parking lots. They're like round-the-clock all-you-can-eat buffets for birds.

Auburn's Mission To date, no scientifically proven airport-bird-aversion strategies have been developed, but the FAA is looking to a team of Alabama Ag Experiment Station scientists at Auburn to change that.

In an FAA-funded research project, the researchers aim to design a pond that birds don't like. The pond will collect and adequately clean stormwater runoff, but it will be devoid of typical pond characteristics that beckon birds.

The researchers collaborating in the project are Auburn wildlife sciences professor Jim Armstrong, biosystems engineering professor Kyung Yoo, fisheries professor and water-quality specialist Claude Boyd, forestry associate professor Latif Kalin and federal wildlife scientist Brad Blackwell.

Before they can design that prototype pond, the scientists need extensive information on which pond characteristics or combination of characteristics are most appealing to birds. That's the goal of the first phase of the project, which Armstrong is leading and which began about two years ago.

This segment of the study involves the collection of staggering amounts of data, particularly on bird sightings, from stormwater retention ponds of varying parameters, and it is the most tedious, monotonous, time-consuming and seemingly never-ending phase of the project. Armstrong readily acknowledges that Brian Fox, one of his graduate students, and federal biology technician Wes Holland have done every bit of the fact-collecting work.

Armstrong, Fox, Holland and Blackwell first established a schedule that would take Fox and Holland to 40 ponds near Auburn twice a day for five days every month. They would visit 10 ponds one Monday through Friday, 10 other ponds the next week and so on. They made their first visits to their first 10 ponds in August 2007, making a five-minute stop at each pond early every morning and another visit to each in late afternoon, recording data on bird species roosting at each pond and characteristics of the pond, such as surface area, depth, bank slope, any vegetation around it and any sightings of wildlife other than birds.

Volumes of Data As of last month, they had put more than 12,000 miles on their service vehicle, with five months to go. And this August, when the glorious moment arrives and they drive away for the final time from their final visit at their final pond, they will have visited and taken notes at those 40 ponds a grand total of 10,400 times.

That massive number of numbers will be crunched, and the final analyses of the data will be the foundation for the remainder of the long-term, comprehensive project.

Boyd's chief research focus in the project is water quality. Specifically, he will determine the pond parameters and water-purifying systems that are most successful in filtering common airport pollutants, such as oil and de-icing fluid, from airport ponds that collect runway runoff. He and Yoo already are conducting preliminary research using several ponds at Auburn's E.W. Shell Fisheries Center north of town.

LIFTOFF—The jet that crashed into the Hudson hangs suspended above the river during recovery efforts. (Used by permission/Federal Aviation Administration)

Yoo, the soil and water engineer for the project, will incorporate Boyd's water-quality results into the original pond data from the study's first phase and will design a prototype pond that significantly minimizes characteristics that could provide a habitat for birds and that purifies the water so that it meets federal and state water-quality standards.

Using scientific modeling, Kalin will evaluate the prototype pond's hydrologic functions and pollutant-reduction capabilities and how changes in pond characteristics affect water quality. His work also will predict how effective and efficient the model pond would be at the larger dimensions required for airport retention ponds and at varying drainage areas, waste loads and rainfall patterns.

In the project's final phase, the researchers will construct the prototype pond at an Auburn fisheries research site south of town, put the pond through further stringent testing, tweak the design as needed and then present it to the FAA as a scientifically proven, highly effective bird-deterring, water-cleansing stormwater-retention-pond model that airport managers can consult and incorporate into their bird-management programs. The end result: safer flying.

Living-Learning Groups Help Freshmen Transition

Leaving high school and heading to college can be a daunting transition, but Auburn University and the College of Agriculture are trying to make that transition a little easier for college freshmen by giving them their own on-campus "communities."

Learning and Living-Learning Communities are special groups comprised of 20-25 students with similar interests and goals surrounding a particular major, theme or interest. Students in these communities not only get to know other like-minded freshmen, they are connected with a network of supportive peers and professors who can help them with everything from academic issues to social networking.

The College of Ag is currently coordinating four such supportive communities for 2009-2010. Two are general Learning Communities for all majors in the college and a third is a Pre-Veterinary Medicine Learning Community. The fourth is a university-wide Living-Learning Community coordinated by the College of Agriculture and the College of Liberal Arts called AU Gives Back for students who are passionate about giving back to their communities.

"By participating in a Learning Community, students are involved in an environment that helps them transition to college through faculty interaction, which improves student retention and academic success," says Deborah Solie, a member of the College of Ag Student Services team who is helping coordinate the AU Gives Back Living-Learning Community.

While organizers fully believe in this concept, students also sing its praises.

"The College of Ag Learning Community provided the perfect transition for me from a small high school to a large university where I could find my place and meet people interested in the same educational path that I was," says Suzanne Free, an alumna of the Pre-Veterinary Learning Community. "It was a vital part of my own 'Auburn Experience' where I made friendships that I hope will last a lifetime and learned many valuable lessons applicable outside of the classroom."

"Being in the program made my freshman year a smoother transition from high school. The College of Agriculture Learning Community not only allowed me to meet a close niche of friends, that to this day I still call my close friends, but provided me guaranteed registration in classes prior to official class registration," says Katlin Mulvaney, College of Agriculture Learning Community alumna. "I would highly recommend it to any student questioning applying."

Students interested in joining or learning more about the Learning and Living-Learning Communities can go to www.auburn.edu/lc or contact the College of Agriculture Student Services Office at 334-844-3201.

LEARNING BY SEEING—The College of Agriculture's Learning and Living-Learning Communities offer students opportunities to network and to expand their horizons. This group toured the Auburn University Poultry Farm where they saw research under way in support of Alabama's poultry industry.

Faculty Accomplishments

Animal sciences professor **Russell Muntifering** was named one of five 2008-2009 Outstanding Graduate Mentors at the recent Auburn University Graduate Student Council scholars awards ceremony for his exceptional skills as a graduate professor. Outstanding Mentors are nominated by graduate students in their departments and selected for going above and beyond what is expected of graduate professors.

Dale Coleman, animal sciences associate professor, was recently named Outstanding Advisor of the Year, 2008-2009, for Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership honor society and named ODK Region III's Outstanding Faculty Secretary for 2009.

Six College of Ag faculty members recently were awarded promotions. Among those, both **Carol Johnston** of fisheries and allied aquacultures and **Nannan Liu** in entomology and plant pathology are now full professors. Faculty receiving promotions to associate professor and gaining tenure are **Jesse Chappell** in fisheries and allied aquacultures and **John Fulton**, **Puneet Srivastava** and **Yifen Wang**, all in biosystems engineering.

Dale Monks, agronomy and soils professor and Extension cotton specialist, was named the 2008 Extension Cotton Specialist of the Year.

Tim McDonald

Several biosystems engineering faculty and staff recently participated in the annual meeting of the Technology and Maintenance Council of the American Trucking Association held in Orlando, Fla. Representing Auburn were **Tim McDonald**, associate professor; **Steve Taylor**, professor and department head; **Christian Brodbeck**, research engineer; and **Jonathan Griffith**, engineering technician. McDonald also served on an invited panel that discussed the use of biodiesel in commercial trucking fleets and was featured with other industry experts on the Dave Nemo XM radio show "Tech Talk."

Back in 1985, **Bob Taylor**, Auburn's Alfa Eminent Scholar in Agricultural Economics and Public Policy, co-authored a book that was published by John Wiley & Sons called *The Economics of Production* that became a best-selling textbook in the U.S., Canada and elsewhere. The book recently was updated and reprinted by Kreiger Publishing Company of Malabar, Fla.

Don Ball, agronomy and soils professor and Extension forage crop agronomist, was inducted into the Alabama Livestock Hall of Fame in recognition of his many contributions to the state's livestock industry over the past 33 years.

Valentina Hartarska, associate professor in agricultural economics and rural sociology, was appointed as a visiting faculty member for 2008-2009 with the School of Economics and Management at the University Mons-Hainaut, Belgium, and as a faculty member with the Center for European Research in Microfinance at the Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

John Liu, associate dean for research in the College of Ag and alumni professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures, was recognized by USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service for his contributions to and participation in the National Animal Genome Research Program and his dedicated service as coordinator of the program's Aquaculture Genome Committee.

Charles Mitchell and fellow Extension specialist **Dennis Delaney**, both in the Department of Agronomy and Soils, teamed with **Kip Balkcom** from the USDA Soil Dynamics Lab in Auburn to write the article "A Historical Summary of Alabama's Old Rotation (circa 1896): The World's Oldest, Continuous Cotton Experiment" that ran in the September 2008 issue of Agronomy Journal.

Global Water Watch, which is based in Auburn's International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments, has received a $299,999 grant through the Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program to work on livestock water quality protection issues in the U.S. and Mexico. This three-year project will be led by **Bill Deutsch**, research fellow in fisheries and allied aquacultures and director of Global Water Watch at Auburn, with assistance from **Sergio Ruiz-Cordova**, a research assistant in fisheries and allied aquacultures.

Bill Deutsch

Three new faculty members recently joined the College of Ag family. They include: **Brenda Ortiz**, who joined the agronomy and soils department as assistant professor and Extension specialist; **Denis Nadolnyak**, a former research associate and now assistant professor in agricultural economics and rural sociology; and **William Walton**, who joined the staff of the AU Shellfish Laboratory in Dauphin Island as an Extension specialist and assistant professor.

Omar Oyarzabal, professor of poultry science, was awarded a $240,000 competitive research grant by the USDA to help improve food safety through development of a highly sensitive nanotechnology-based system designed to rapidly detect pathogens in food.

Biosystems engineering assistant professor **Yifen Wang**, an expert in food engineering and food safety, recently returned from an academic interchange with the Chiang Mai University in Thailand where he conducted research and gave lectures on various topics in food safety, food processing and food engineering.

LEADING FUN—The Auburn University Ag Ambassadors recently attended a regional Ag Ambassador Conference, called LEAD, hosted by the University of Kentucky. During the conference, ambassadors toured Kentucky landmarks such as Keeneland race track to learn more about the region's agriculture. They also learned about leadership development, career preparation and exploration and shared ideas with other Ag Ambassador groups from the universities of Florida, Georgia and Mississippi and from Purdue University. And they had some time for fun, too. Pictured at one event are, from left, Auburn Ag Ambassador adviser Deborah Solie, University of Florida Ag Ambassador adviser Charlotte Emerson and Auburn Ag Ambassador Katlin Mulvaney.

Student Accomplishments

Tyler McMurtrey, a junior majoring in agronomy and soils and specializing in turfgrass management, will intern at the prestigious Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in the town of South Hampton on Long Island, N.Y., the oldest formal organized golf club in the U.S. which has hosted four U.S. Open championships, seven U.S. Golf Association championships and one Walker Cup.

Anna-Marie Murphy, **Chris Marble** and **Paul Jackson**, all graduate students in the Department of Horticulture, won awards for oral presentations they made in competition at the Southern Nurserymen's Association meeting held recently in Atlanta. All three students are working under the direction of horticulture professor **Charles Gilliam**. At the American Society for Horticultural Science's Southern Region Annual Meeting, Murphy also won first place for another presentation and grad student **Katie Werneth**, who is working under the direction of horticulture associate professor **Amy Wright**, placed third in the Norman F. Childers M.S. Competition.

Kyle Grubbs, a graduate student in animal sciences, was recognized recently as one of 10 top Auburn University Outstanding Master's Students for 2008-2009 by the Auburn Graduate Student Council. Winning students are nominated by their advisers or major professors and selected for the exceptional quality of their scholarship.

Agronomy and soils graduate students **Michael Flessner** and **Mark Doroh** received first and second place honors, respectively, in the poster competition of the Southern Weed Science Society meeting held recently in Florida. Both students are master's candidates working with agronomy and soils assistant professor **Scott McElroy**.

Scott Moore, Nick Sekora and Juan David Castillo

Three plant pathology graduate students made a clean sweep of the awards in the graduate student oral presentation competition at the Beltwide Cotton Conferences in Texas recently. **Nick Sekora** won first place, **Juan David Castillo** won second place and **Scott Moore** clenched third place in the competition. All three students are working under the direction of plant pathology associate professor **Kathy Lawrence**.

Biosystems engineering graduate students **Daniel Mullenix** and **Ajay Sharda** recently attended the 2009 Agricultural Equipment Technology Conference in Louisville, KY, to present posters on research efforts looking at technology to improve the application of agricultural and forestry inputs.

Several graduate students in the Department of Agronomy and Soils won awards for their posters and oral presentations at the 2009 Southern Branch American Society of Agronomy Meeting held recently in Atlanta. They include **Alex Johnson**, **Richard Brown** and **Mike Mulvaney**, all of whom are working under the direction of agronomy and soils professor **Wes Wood** and all of whom won first place awards for their posters or oral presentations. **Reji Mathew**, a student of agronomy and soils associate professor **Yucheng Feng**, won second place for his poster and **Monika Saini**, a student of National Soil Dynamics Laboratory scientist and affiliate assistant professor of agronomy and soils **Andrew Price**, won a first place in the oral competition.

Two Department of Horticulture students recently took home honors from the Auburn University Graduate Scholars Forum. **Xing (Mark) Ma**, who is working under the guidance of assistant professor **Elina Coneva**, placed second in the poster competition for the sciences out of 32 submissions. **Paul Jackson**, who is working with horticulture professor **Charles Gilliam**, placed third in the oral presentation competition for sciences out of 14 speakers.

College of Ag Lands Multicultural Scholars Grant

The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded the College of Ag a $96,000 Multicultural Scholars Program grant that will be used to recruit four qualified minority students interested in pursuing pre-veterinary undergraduate degrees to the college by offering to cover their full tuition and related educational costs for four years. Animal sciences associate professor and student development director Donald Mulvaney, poultry science associate professor Omar Oyarzabal, fisheries associate professor Yolanda Brady and student services coordinator Deborah Solie submitted the grant proposal and are the principal investigators. Other faculty members who will be involved in the recruiting and mentoring processes include animal sciences professor Tom McCaskey, ag econ and rural sociology professor and department head Curtis Jolly, horticulture professor James Brown and poultry science assistant professor Yewande Fasina. The goals of USDA's competitive Multicultural Scholars Program are to enhance the multicultural diversity of the scientific and professional workforce in the fields of food and agricultural sciences and to advance the educational achievements of all Americans.

MEET AND GREET—College of Ag students were able to meet and greet a wide range of employers at the annual College of Ag Career Fair held in February at the Alfa Farmers' Pavilion in Ag Heritage Park. This year a record number of companies participated, offering students a glimpse at the job opportunities available in the fields of agriculture and natural resources. Students who participated were able to network with professionals, learn more about specific employers, line up interviews and even land internships and full-time jobs.

College of Human Sciencces

Auburn Hosts University Hunger Summit

"Ending Hunger...Yes We Can!" was the theme of the fourth annual University Hunger Summit, which was held in Auburn in late February and early March and which brought hunger activists from across the country to the Auburn campus.

The summit brings together members of the Universities Fighting World Hunger coalition, which works in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme and includes more than 80 higher education institutions around the globe committed to implementing short-term grassroots approaches and long-term academic solutions to ending hunger.

Summit highlights included keynote addresses by Alabama Congressman Spencer Bachus; Jonathan Blum, vice chairman and president of Yum! Brands Foundation; and Alan Jury, director of U.S. Relations for the World Food Programme. Featured also were award-winning student initiatives focused on developing high-impact solutions to ending hunger and poverty, a panel of domestic and international humanitarian aid professionals and models for implementing and maintaining grassroots student hunger initiatives and disciplinary approaches to ending hunger.

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN—The Auburn University Early Learning Center raised $1,292 for the East Alabama Food Bank through its annual Penny Harvest. Each year preschoolers at the ELC collect pennies and other change from home. The Auburn University Bookstore allows the Early Learning Center to place collection containers at its registers for customers to make donations. This year the funds collected at the registers and through the children's donations represented the highest donation to date. Pictured above is the four-year-old class that visited the food bank to deliver the check and take a tour.

Wayne Shell, professor emeritus and former head of the Auburn Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, also presented a historical perspective on the Auburn fisheries program.

Lead sponsor for the summit was Yum! Brands, the world's largest restaurant company and parent organization of Taco Bell, Pizza Hut and KFC. Cosponsors were The Alliance to End Hunger, the World Food Programme and Auburn University.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences

Center to Include Forestry Demo Sites

INTO THE WOODS—Forestry and wildlife professionals from Mississippi and Alabama visit a site at the AU Natural Resources Education Center and listen as Bobby Watkins brings them up to date on herbicide uses for habitat creation and forest management. Watkins is retired from BASF, the world's leading chemical company.

In 2008, the Alabama Ag Experiment Station gave what long had been the Lower Coastal Plain Substation a new name—the Auburn University Natural Resources Education Center—and a new mission: to provide research and demonstration sites aimed at teaching Alabamians how to properly manage and conserve the state's valuable resources.

For forest landowners, the forestry and wildlife research and demonstration sites at the NREC will let them see firsthand how to manage multiple income-producing practices on their properties.

Two School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences faculty members and Extension specialists are taking the lead role in planning those sites. Becky Barlow, forestry, and Mark Smith, wildlife sciences, have developed an array of innovative forest and wildlife management practices that will be showcased at the center.

Some of the demonstration sites will feature biological and economic effects of different thinning regimes on timber volume and wildlife habitat, management of mid-story hardwoods in pine plantations using prescribed fire and herbicide applications, agroforestry and establishing and managing longleaf pine and native warm season grasses.

Barlow and Smith said outreach and extension programs will focus on getting important information to private landowners and natural resource professionals.

Although only in the early stages of development, the Natural Resources Education Center will exemplify sound, science-based management and conservation of natural resources for the benefit of all Alabamians.

HOOFIN' IT—Hoof rehab specialists Pete Ramey and his wife, Ivy, left, travel to Auburn regularly to work with Debra Taylor, right, a clinical sciences associate professor at CVM's John Thomas Vaughan Large Animal Teaching Hospital and in the community. The Rameys and Taylor, along with several of Taylor's students, were in Beauregard recently to treat this horse's laminitic hoof.

College of Veterinary Medicine

Vet Med Students Focus on Hoof Care

A two-week elective rotation in the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine is giving students the chance to focus solely on horses' hooves.

In the equine podiatry rotation, which is spearheaded by clinical sciences associate professor Debra Ruffin Taylor, students concentrate on the health of the equine foot and learn about various shoeing and trimming techniques.

For the program, Taylor lines up fellow CVM faculty members and outside experts as speakers, and usually during the elective, the Department of Clinical Sciences hosts a continuing education symposium for veterinarians.

Students also take field trips to see different methods of horse husbandry and hoof care. Earlier this semester, Taylor and her students traveled to nearby Beauregard to work with noted hoof rehabilitation specialist Pete Ramey to treat a horse suffering from laminitis, a debilitating disease of the equine hoof that frequently occurs in obese horses.

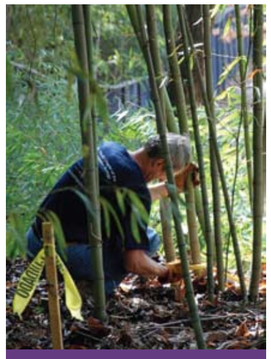
Ramey, a farrier by trade, is known throughout the equine industry for his expertise in using natural hoof care to rehabilitate lame horses. He and his wife, Ivy, who live in the north Georgia mountains, have held hoof care clinics nationwide but now are taking a break to research and write a textbook.

College of Sciences and Mathematics

Sustainability Works at the Davis Arboretum

With participation from the community and across campus, COSAM's Donald E. Davis Arboretum is offering programs to educate the public about sustainable practices in Alabama and the Southeast.

In February, the arboretum sponsored a Starboretum Wars State Arbor Day Program. This themed event garnered community support to remove alien bamboo inside the arboretum. In the spirit of "reduce, reuse and recycle," the facility plans to reuse the bamboo for erosion control and staking of new plants.



BYE BYE TO BAMBOO—Robert Boyd, COSAM professor, removes bamboo at the Davis Arboretum's Starboretum Wars State Arbor Day Program held during February. This themed event garnered community support to remove alien bamboo inside the arboretum.

"Water management is a major issue for the arboretum, and the bamboo is just one more tool we can use to slow down waterflow and prevent loss of soil and mulch," says Patrick Thompson, arboretum specialist.

Another aspect of water management in the arboretum will be addressed this spring with installation of pervious concrete, which captures stormwater and allows it to seep into the ground, reducing runoff and erosion. Plans are to repave the B zone parking area in pervious concrete while leaving the C zone area in asphalt, an impervious surface. A class from building science will install the pervious concrete with assistance from Auburn's Facilities division. Biosystems engineering students will design and help install the water monitoring system that will compare pervious versus impervious surfaces, and landscape architecture students will create a plan for re-landscaping the area.

"We hope to invite the community to see some of the processes involved in using pervious concrete. It's another more sustainable solution that is available to deal with stormwater issues," says Dee Smith, curator. Visit the arboretum Web site (www.auburn.edu/arboretum/) to see when the pervious concrete installation process will be open to the public.

Study Finds Native Rain-Garden Plants

For homeowners looking to make their landscapes "greener," rain gardens are an ideal choice.

Rain gardens are shallow depressions that are planted with perennial trees and shrubs and located in areas that will catch rainwater coming from a roof or driveway.

Amy Wright, horticulture associate professor at Auburn, says the most challenging part of building rain gardens is choosing the right plants for them. Rain gardens are meant to be self-sustaining, and for plants, that means they only get watered when it rains. So, rain-garden plants must be able to withstand weather extremes, from parched soils that come with droughts to waterlogged soils during heavy or extended rains.

Native plants often are recommended for use in rain gardens, Wright says, because they're low maintenance, non-invasive, relatively pest-free and usually drought tolerant.

Wright and graduate research associate Katie Werneth have developed a method for screening plants by exposing them to repeated, alternating intervals of flooding and drying. So far, they have successfully evaluated three native shrubs that are commonly known as possumhaw, inkberry and sweetspire.

THE RAIN-GARDEN TEST—Katie Werneth looks over a new crop of sweetspire plants she will use in her efforts to identify native plants that thrive in rain gardens.

"These species are suitable for use in rain gardens, and they all have outstanding ornamental attributes, too," Werneth says. "Our plan is to continue to screen other native plants in a similar manner and also to evaluate the plants' long-term success in rain gardens."

Meanwhile, general lists of recommended plants for Alabama, native Alabama plants and nurseries that sell native plants are available online as components of Alabama Smart Yards, a new program that offers extensive information about practices that help create environmentally conscious landscapes. Find it at www.ag.auburn.edu/landscape/Alabama_Smart_Yards.html.

Alabama Satsumas Going Mainstream

In the early 1990s, horticulture researchers at Auburn set out on a challenging mission to resurrect Alabama's once-booming satsuma industry. Starting from scratch—would satsumas even grow here? And if not, why not?—they set in motion an all-encompassing satsuma research project that continues today.

But that original mission? It's ever so close to being accomplished, because this year, tons of sweet, seedless Alabama-grown satsumas are going mainstream, entering the competition for a share of the fresh-fruit marketplace.

Actually, they already are a presence there. Last year, an organized group of satsuma growers in Mobile and Baldwin counties filled a major order—their first—from a Fortune-500 produce-sourcing company.

"The door is now wide open for us," says Monte Nesbitt, a research associate at the Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center in Fairhope and one of the too-many-to-list researchers who have been involved in the long-term project.

Years of research are behind the move to the marketplace. Throughout the entire project, researchers have looked at the big picture, taking a comprehensive approach to investigating every step in the process of building an industry.

Alabama enjoyed a thriving satsuma industry along the coast in the 1920s, but back-to-back-to-back fruit-killing freezes brutally crippled it. The final nail in the coffin came in the '40s, when an extreme overnight temperature plunge wiped out not only that year's crop but the trees themselves.

From the outset of the industry-revival project, then, researchers knew that finding some way to protect satsumas during frigid temperatures was essential. They developed a solution in the form of a microsprinkler irrigation system that extensive testing proved highly effective, and gradually, small-scale farmers in the Gulf Coast region decided to give satsumas a go.

At last count, 13,000 satsuma trees were thriving in Alabama. They're mainly in Mobile and Baldwin counties now, but successful trials in the Wiregrass and in high-tunnel greenhouses in Clanton indicate the state's satsuma belt could be expanding.

Coming Soon: Catfish Genome Map

As recently as five years ago, Auburn alumni professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures John Liu was convinced it would be 20 to 30 years before the catfish genome project he launched in 1997 would yield the final physical map of the entire catfish genome. "When we have the whole genome sequence of catfish," he'd say, "I will be old enough to retire."

But major advances in sequencing and computing technology since then have so accelerated research at the Molecular Genetics and Biotechnology Lab in Auburn that Liu, one of the world's top fish geneticists, now says the finished version of the catfish genome sequence will be unveiled within the next two years.

"And I will not then be even close to retiring," Liu, who also is assistant director of the Alabama Ag Experiment Station, says now.

In his genome research, Liu has used the premium "AU Hybrid" catfish that Rex Dunham, a fellow Auburn fisheries scientist who, like Liu, is recognized internationally, developed. By the time Liu and his research team complete the genome sequence, they will have discovered and identified all 28,000 catfish genes, determined the sequence of chemical base pairs that make up catfish DNA and located genes associated with particular traits—in essence, all the biological information needed to build a catfish.

The presentation of the whole catfish genome map, however, will not bring the project to a close. In fact, Liu and collaborators Huseyin Kucuktas, a fisheries research fellow at Auburn, and Geoff Waldbieser with USDA's Ag Research Service have just been awarded a $745,000 grant to analyze 24,000 single nucleotide polymorphisms in order to discover DNA sequence variations between different catfish species.

In layman's terms, that means the scientists will take different lines of catfish that outperform the others in a specific trait—the fastest-growing line, for instance, or the most feed-efficient species, or the one most resistant to disease—and, through the wonders of science and technology, locate in each of the species the precise gene or genes responsible for those traits.

Ultimately, the comprehensive catfish genetic data will allow researchers to develop a catfish that is superior in all traits crucial to catfish producers, and that, of course, is what the whole project is about: offering growers not only a top-quality, high-yielding catfish but one that is significantly cheaper to produce.

Such improvements are crucial, Liu says, if the U.S. catfish industry is to remain competitive in the world marketplace.

RESEARCH FOCUS—Auburn is a leader in research to strengthen the U.S. catfish industry. Studies range from an intense, long-term project that soon will yield a complete map of the catfish genome sequence to a new project investigating a potential new use for gelatin made from catfish skins.

Catfish Gel Could Mean Fresher Shrimp

Although shrimp is the perennial seafood of choice in the U.S., the industry could be more profitable if not for a couple of technical problems in the processing stage.

The issues, which shrimp share with virtually all seafood products, are the short shelf life of fresh and frozen shrimp and the drip loss of frozen shrimp when thawed. Drip loss causes a 10- to 15-percent loss of liquid and a decline in quality.

An effective preservation technique that would keep fresh and frozen shrimp—both wild-caught and farm-raised—fresher longer and also reduce drip loss in the frozen and save industry millions of dollars.

Auburn biosystems engineering associate professor Yifen Wang has a study under way to evaluate catfish gelatin as a potential solution to the shrimp industry's dilemma.

Catfish gel is a new value-added product that, in fact, Wang, fellow faculty member Oladiran Fasina and scientists at Tuskegee and Alabama A&M universities developed recently. The product is an economical, high-quality gelatin that is made from catfish skins and that offers the food and pharmaceutical industries an alternative to beef and pork gelatins.

In the current study, Wang and collaborators will test several catfish gel/preservative formulations to determine their effectiveness in extending shelf life and improving quality when sprayed on shrimp or when shrimp are dipped into it during processing.

If successful, the product would be a boon not only to the shrimp industry—which includes five west Alabama farm-raised-shrimp producers—but to catfish producers and processors as well.

Cumbie Returns to the Plains

By Katie Jackson

There's a new face in the College of Ag Development Office, though some may recognize him from his past life here as a student.

That face belongs to Wes Cumbie, a graduate of the Department of Ag Economics and Rural Sociology who joined the development staff in November 2008 as a development officer II.

Cumbie is a native of Apopka, Fla., which is near Orlando and is a major farming region producing, among other things, eggs, nursery and indoor plants and fresh-market vegetables. Though Cumbie was not reared on a farm, living in that area gave him a connection to agriculture.

One of his first jobs was delivering plant sleeves to the nursery industry and, from there, Cumbie went to work on a "muckfarm," one of many huge farming enterprises located on mucky—what Cumbie describes as "black gumbo"—soil near Lake Apopka. During the summers in high school and college, Cumbie worked on one such farm packing coolers and loading trucks.

Wes Cumbie

When he first graduated from high school, Cumbie went off to Western Kentucky University on a football scholarship. However, an injury that first fall season ended Cumbie's football career, so he returned to Florida to attend a local community college.

Cumbie's good friend from Apopka, Matt Taylor, was attending school at Auburn in agriculture and invited Cumbie up for a visit. Next thing Cumbie knew, he and four other Apopka boys were enrolled at Auburn, most of them majoring in agricultural economics.

Cumbie graduated from Auburn in 2000 and went to work at White Oak Plantation, a hunting and outdoor recreation facility in Macon County. It was a perfect fit for Cumbie who loves to hunt, and also provided a chance for him to further his education.

His boss, Robert Pitman, encouraged Cumbie to go back to graduate school. Pitman was establishing two big lakes stocked with a specially bred and highly aggressive tiger bass that promised to provide exceptional fishing opportunities for their clients. For his thesis work, Cumbie studied how to set up such ponds, their profit potential and the rules and regulations needed to make them successful.

Cumbie earned that master's degree in 2005 and soon after left White Oak to work with the Alabama Poultry & Egg Association in Montgomery where he was membership director. After three happy years with AP&EA, the chance came to return to Auburn in the development position, which Cumbie says was not something he planned but was an opportunity he could not turn down.

"To have the opportunity to come back to Auburn is an exciting and new challenge. I have a passion for Auburn and a passion for agriculture, so now I get to combine the two and get paid to do it," he continues.

Cumbie admits that the current national economy makes fundraising a challenge, but he believes in the work they do and the generosity of the Auburn family.

"We are sensitive to the times and we know what folks are facing out there, especially in the ag markets," he adds. "But at the same time we know we still have to move forward to the future and, even at times like this, we need to position ourselves to keep agriculture a top program at Auburn and in the state," he says of his development duties. "We're going to get after it."

Richard Guthrie, College of Agriculture dean and AAES director, says Cumbie's experience will be an asset.

"We are extremely pleased that Wes has joined our development team," Guthrie says. "His background in agriculture and natural resources, both as a student here and out in the working world, will be invaluable in his efforts to raise funds that benefit not only our students and faculty but the agricultural industry and the public as well."

Want to help Cumbie keep Auburn agriculture on top? Contact him at 334-844-3472 or e-mail him at cumbijw@auburn.edu.

AG ALUMNI HONOR FIVE—Five men who have made major contributions to Alabama agriculture and agribusiness were honored recently by the Auburn University Ag Alumni Association during the association's annual Hall of Honor ceremony. Three individuals—Ronnie B. Holladay of Trickem, who was chosen for his work in the production agriculture category; Richard L. Guthrie of Auburn, the education/government award winner; and Wyeth Holt (Chuck) Speir Jr. of Daphne, winner in the agribusiness category—were inducted into the Hall of Honor, which recognizes living Alabamians for their contributions to Alabama agriculture. Also during the ceremonies, the association presented its 2009 Pioneer Awards, which are presented posthumously to Alabama agriculture leaders, to the late Samuel H. Booker and Ralph W. Martin Jr. Pictured at the ceremony are, from left, Holladay, Guthrie, Speir and Ag Alumni President Jim Tollison.

Campus Club, PLANET Host Plant Sale

The Auburn University Campus Club is gearing up for its eighth annual A-Day weekend plant sale, set for Friday and Saturday, April 17 and 18, in the parking lot at the intersection of Samford Avenue and South College Street.

This year, PLANET, a student landscape-horticulture organization at Auburn that in years past has held a sale a couple of weekends after the Campus Club's, is merging that event with the A-Day weekend sale. For shoppers, that will mean a larger plant selection to choose from. Credit cards will be accepted.

Hours for the Campus Club/PLANET sale will be 9 a.m. to dark on April 17 and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the following day.

All sale proceeds will go toward an endowment that funds the Campus Club's First Ladies Scholarships in Horticulture program. Each year, that program awards $1,000 scholarships, all in the names of past Auburn University first ladies, to deserving horticulture majors.

Bill Warren Family Endows Leadership Award in Animal Sciences

Warren Family at endowment signing

The family of the late William Michael (Bill) Warren, former chairman of the AU Department of Animal Sciences, recently endowed an Undergraduate Student Leadership Award program for students in the Department of Animal Sciences.

Warren, a native of Michigan, was a graduate of Michigan State University (bachelor's degree), Texas A&M (master's degree) and the University of Missouri (Ph.D.) and joined the Auburn faculty in 1955. He became department chair in 1956 and served in that position until 1979. During those 23 years he guided some 425 students through their bachelor's degrees, another 45 through their master's and seven through their doctorates.

He retired from Auburn in 1980 to become executive director of the Santa Gertrudis Breeders International in Kingsville, Texas, retiring from that job in 1988. He and his wife, Carolyn, then returned to Texas A&M, where Warren worked as director of the International Stockmen's School through the Texas Extension Service and in conjunction with the Houston Stock Show, a position he held from 1989 until 1993.

Warren, who died in 2006, was the first recipient of the Alabama Cattlemen's distinguished chair in animal sciences at Auburn, was a life member of the Alabama Cattlemen's Association and was honorary vice president of the American Quarter Horse Association.

To honor Warren, his widow and his six sons have pledged $250,000 to endow the leadership award program, which will make awards annually to a freshman ($1,000 per year), sophomore ($1,500), junior ($2,500) and senior ($5,000) student majoring in animal sciences. The students must have a minimum 3.2 GPA on a 4.0 scale, must have demonstrated leadership in the field of animal sciences through their extracurricular activities and must have a desire to work in the field of animal sciences upon graduation.

Additional donations to the fund are welcome. To learn more about the endowment or to contribute to it, contact Mark Wilton at 334-844-1198 or wiltomt@auburn.edu.

Scientists Battle New Threat to Alabama Citrus

Satsuma mandarins are a growing commodity in Baldwin and Mobile counties, but as members of the citrus family, they're vulnerable to citrus greening, a devastating disease that's carried by a tiny insect called the Asian citrus psyllid.

The psyllid has been in Florida and Texas for several years, but citrus greening, which weakens and eventually kills citrus trees, had been found only in Florida orchards until June 2008. That's when Louisiana identified both psyllids and greening-infected trees.

Because citrus nurseries in Louisiana have been a major source of Alabama satsuma trees, the appearance of the disease and the vector there brought scientists and professionals from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Auburn University, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries and the U.S. Department of Agriculture together to identify production and management practices that can prevent psyllids and citrus greening from taking hold in Alabama.

Henry Fadamiro, an AU entomology faculty member who serves as Extension's state coordinator for integrated pest management and is a psyllid team member, says that currently, there is no effective cure for citrus greening.

"The only way to prevent the disease is to control the insect that spreads it," Fadamiro says.

The psyllid has been detected in Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and California, and in August, Alabama joined that list when the insect was found in several locations in Baldwin County.

Because the insect was found in the state last year, the USDA has added Alabama to the list of states quarantined for the psyllid—but only citrus trees are affected, not the fruit itself. Alabama satsumas are not restricted in any way. Citrus plants can be transported only to other quarantined states and even then must be treated with insecticide, inspected by the USDA and tagged before they cross state lines.

Quarantined for both the insect and citrus greening are the entire state of Florida and Louisiana's Orleans and Washington parishes, and it is illegal to ship citrus plants out of those areas to areas of the country where the disease is not present, including all of Alabama.

Fadamiro says there's no need for commercial producers and homeowners with citrus trees to panic, but he does advise producers to begin scouting their orchards regularly for psyllids, paying particular attention to soft and immature leaves and stems, where the insects tend to congregate.

Immature psyllids resemble aphids. Monte Nesbitt, a research horticulturist at the Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center in Fairhope, said photos of the insect are available online and in psyllid fact sheets available at the GCREC and at the Baldwin and Mobile County Extension offices. Citrus growers who see psyllids should contact their Extension agent or the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.

"It is important for all of us to know if and to what extent this insect is building up in Alabama, so we encourage both commercial and hobby growers alike to contact us if they suspect they have psyllids," says Nesbitt.

The psyllid team is planning workshops to bring producers and gardeners up to speed on the insect and on citrus greening.

For more information, contact Fadamiro at 334-844-5098 or fadamhy@auburn.edu, or Nesbitt at 251-990-8147 or nesbiml@auburn.edu.

Program Making Home Grown Produce a Reality

The dismal economy could be why a growing number of folks in Alabama, and nationwide, are buying shovels and hoes and planting their own vegetable gardens.

Alabama Cooperative Extension System horticulturist Kerry Smith says there's just one problem with that: experience, or, rather, the lack thereof.

"Many of the people who are most excited about trying their hand at vegetable gardening really have no experience at all," Smith says. "What they do have are a lot of passion and a lot of questions."

But never fear. Extension has launched a new statewide program initiative that has the answers. It's called Home Grown, and it's a series of gardening workshops that Extension professionals have been leading across the state since March.

The first workshops focus on the basics.

"We are talking about things such as site selection, soil testing, raised-bed construction and container gardening," says Shane Harris, a regional Extension home grounds agent. He adds that many of the workshops include demonstrations and hands-on components.

The first series of workshops, open to all but designed with beginners in mind, began March 2 in Hartselle and by the time the final one is held April 23 in Brewton, the spring Home Grown workshop that focuses on summer vegetable production will have hit 15 different cities scattered throughout Alabama.

But that won't be the end of Home Grown. Extension professionals are working now to develop a second workshop that is scheduled to make the rounds in June, and a third, which will focus on fall vegetable production, to be offered in August and September.

Smith says everyone interested in attending the summer and fall workshops can either contact their county Extension offices to check on dates and locations or visit www.aces.edu/homegarden/HomeGrown.php for schedules for the summer and fall workshops that will be posted as soon as they are finalized.

Smith says the growing interest in vegetable gardens could be linked to a number of factors other than the economy, including food safety issues and the "going green" movement.

"But most of these people are interested in becoming more self-reliant and helping create a more sustainable environment around their homes," Smith says. "Many are remembering the stories their parents and grandparents told them about raising their own food and preserving. Now they're learning those skills and passing them on to their own children."

Bill Gazaway: Plant Doctor Keeps Working

Bill Gazaway

"I couldn't have asked for a better job than working in Extension," says Bill Gazaway, retired Extension cotton plant pathologist and nematologist. "I couldn't have asked to work with better people."

Gazaway officially retired as a professor in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology at Auburn in 1999 and received emeritus status. But he kept right on working with Extension, conducting research on plant diseases in cotton and working with growers throughout Alabama. It wasn't until fall of 2008 that he relinquished his "plant doctor" role with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Known by growers statewide for his work in a variety of forage and field crops, Gazaway especially liked working with the folks in Extension.

"When I worked for Extension, it was a team effort," he says. "We worked together to solve problems. There were usually two or three of us—myself, a weed specialist, an insect specialist along with a county agent—out in growers' fields helping them solve a problem. I learned a lot from these folks. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

As he looks back over his 30-plus years with Extension, some of the highlights he recalls were his role in preventing Alabama's wheat crop from being quarantined in the 1990s and the construction of the ALFA Agricultural Services and Research building. He received awards for his service to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Southern Soybean Workers. He also was inducted as a member of the first Farm Press Researchers Hall of Fame.

Although he is officially retired for the second time, Gazaway still has an office at Auburn University, consults with growers and conducts research on cotton and soybeans.

"It might sound corny," he says, "but I look forward to coming to work on Monday mornings."

Master Gardeners Endow Scholarship in Record Time

Members of the Alabama Master Gardeners Association are famous for making invaluable contributions to their communities. Now they are famous for funding—in record time—a new scholarship in the College of Ag.

The AMGA launched a campaign in 2008 to fund an annual undergraduate scholarship—the Alabama Master Gardeners' Horticulture Scholarship—for Auburn students majoring in horticulture or related fields.

June 13, 2013, was the deadline to reach the $25,000 needed to fully endow the scholarship program, but thanks to generous contributions and speedy fundraising, $25,094 has already been raised—enough to provide the first $1,000 scholarship in fall 2010.

"The fact that they fulfilled this endowment in less than a year is miraculous," says Kerry Smith, AMGA state program coordinator.

The endowment was created by an AMGA initial gift of $5,000. In addition to AMGA, contributions have been made by the Shoals, North Alabama, Capital City, Wiregrass, Jefferson, Etowah, Dekalb, Marshall, Shelby, St. Clair and Tallapoosa area and county MGAs.

Auburn horticulture professor Jeff Sibley notes that, in addition to contributing to the statewide scholarship, several of these groups continue to fund separate scholarships for students from their areas.

Mark Wilton, College of Ag development director, hopes to continue to build this fund and one day award full-tuition scholarships. To contribute to this endowment contact Sibley at 334-844-3132 or sibleje@auburn.edu or Wilton at 334-844-1198 or wiltomt@auburn.edu.

calendar of events

April 13-15
Davis Arboretum Photo Contest deadline - *Auburn*
5:00 p.m.

This contest offers six categories for people to submit photos taken at the arboretum or photos of animals, plants and landscapes. It is open to any amateur photographer and includes a youth division for first- through seventh- graders. Mail submissions to the arboretum or drop them off anytime from April 13-15, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the arboretum or at Camera Graphics in Auburn.

Contact: www.auburn.edu/arboretum/news-and-events/photo-contest.htm or 334-844-5770

April 17-18
Campus Club/PLANET plant sale
Samford Avenue/S. College Street parking lot - *Auburn*
9:00 a.m. – dark April 17, 8:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m. April 18

Proceeds from this annual A-Day weekend event go to a Campus Club endowment that funds horticulture scholarships in the names of past AU first ladies.

Contact: Jeff Sibley at 334-844-3132 or sibleje@auburn.edu

April 18
Ag Ambassadors Reunion
Alfa Pavilion
Ag Heritage Park - *Auburn*
Noon

This event celebrates the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the AU Ag Ambassadors.

Contact: Deborah Solie at 334-844-8900 or das0002@auburn.edu

May 9
Dairy U
Stanley P. Wilson Beef Teaching Unit - *Auburn*
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

This event is a dairy awareness introductory resource for Youth U, an educational hands-on workshop for youth ages 9-19. The registration fee is $10 and registration deadline is April 29.

Contact: Boyd Brady at 334-844-1562 or bradybo@auburn.edu or ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/conference/dairyu2009/

May 9
Graduation Breakfast
Ham Wilson Arena - *Auburn*
9:00 a.m.

Spring 2009 College of Agriculture graduates and their families are honored at this breakfast hosted by the AU Agricultural Alumni Association and sponsored by the Alabama Poultry and Egg Association.

Contact: Ann Gulatte at 334-844-2345 or gulatam@auburn.edu

May 20-21
Ag Classic - *Auburn*

This event offers golfing, fishing and sporting clay tournaments and helps fund AU College of Agriculture scholarships.

Contact: Katie Hardy at 334-844-1475 or katie@auburn.edu

May 21
The Market at Ag Heritage Park - *Auburn*
Thursdays 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The Market at Ag Heritage Park is a grower-only farmers' market featuring fresh local produce, goat cheese, honey, stone-ground grains, plants, baked goods, educational exhibits, cooking and gardening demonstrations and much more. It is open to the entire community and is held weekly through Aug 27.

Contact: Dani Carroll at 334-749-3353 or carrodl@auburn.edu or visit www.ag.auburn.edu/themarket

May 21
Summer Classes Begin at Auburn

May 25
Memorial Day Holiday

July 17
Discover Your World: Auburn Edition - *Auburn*

This one-day program highlights opportunities in agriculture for students in grades 10 through 12. Through hands-on programming students learn about pre-vet, environmental quality, science, global positioning systems and much more.

Contact: Deborah Solie at das0002@auburn.edu or www.ag.auburn.edu/goplaces/events and click on "Summer Program"

Daddies & Daughters

Two accomplished young women with ties to the College of Agriculture–Codi Runge and Liya Huluka–were among the top five candidates in the 2009 Miss Auburn election. Codi is majoring in communication disorders and Liya is an accounting major, but the College of Ag gets to lay a little claim to them as well. Liya is the daughter of Gobena Huluka, an associate professor in the Department of Agronomy and Soils, and Codi is the daughter of Max Runge, an Extension economist in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. Miss Auburn serves as the official hostess for Auburn University and is chosen by the Auburn student body during spring Student Government Association elections. Young women from across campus are nominated for the position and undergo a grueling interview procedure before the top five candidates are chose for the actual election. Just making it to the top five is an amazing accomplishment. While Codi and Liya did not win the actual title of Miss Auburn, their contributions to Auburn University as students, volunteers and leaders are exceptional and will continue to benefit Auburn in whatever positions they hold. Their fathers, mothers and other members of their immediate AND the College of Ag family are proud to call them "ours." Pictured, from left, are Codi Runge, Max Runge, Gobena Huluka and Liya Huluka.

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