

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Geography covers more ground than ever

The sixth annual 2009 School of Geography and Environmental Studies Conference takes place next week on **Monday 6 July 2009**.

Head of the UTAS School of Geography and Environmental Studies, Professor Elaine Stratford, said the conference was a chance to celebrate and share the work produced in the School.

There will be presentations from Honours, Masters by coursework and Research Higher Degree candidates, as well as staff and Honorary Research Associates.

“Our research interests cover a wide range of issues through which we are able to contribute essential knowledge to geography, environmental studies and spatial information science,” Assoc.Prof. Stratford said.

“Often our research benefits from funding and in-kind support from public, non-government and private sectors and, in turn, we are able to make significant contributions to the knowledge needs of those sectors.”

Conference highlights include:

**“Surface to Satellites: studying changing ecosystems on sub-Antarctic islands”
Dr Arko Lucieer: 0437 003 891**

Australia's unique sub-Antarctic World Heritage Areas are experiencing rapid climate change and their biodiversity is under threat from alien species invasion.

On Macquarie Island, rabbit numbers have recently increased, causing major ecosystem devastation. Heard Island is experiencing some of the fastest climate change in our region, which is evidenced by extensive changes in vegetation communities and glacial retreat.

Arko's research projects are designed to strategically enhance management of these sub-Antarctic ecosystems using high-resolution satellite imagery for change detection and mapping.

“Neat concrete corners or green leafy avenues? Trees in urban Australian landscapes - why the great divide?”

Anna Egan

Literature trying to understand the spatial geography of trees in cities has linked their presence with (among other things) the socioeconomic status of different neighbourhoods. Global studies all suggest that wealthier neighbourhoods are greener and poorer neighbourhoods tend to have more concrete and less trees.

Is it true that those of lower socioeconomic status do not love trees? What are their reasons for this? Similarly, why is it that those in the higher socioeconomic strata live in regions of cities with greater tree cover?

“Macroalgal assemblages as indicators of the broad-scale impacts of fish farms on temperate reef habitats”

Elizabeth Oh

This project investigates the extent and nature of the fish farming impacts on subtidal reef habitats in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Wedge Bay (Tasman Peninsula).

Fish farming is now a significant source of nutrient pollution within these areas, yet the effects of altered water quality on nearby reef habitats are relatively unknown.

Since macroalgae are foundational components of reef systems and have a range of responses to nutrient and sediment pollution, their community composition can be indicative anthropogenic impacts affecting a reef system.

In this project, photographic and manual samples of the macroalgal community were taken at several distances along the coastline from salmon farm sites, in order to describe the extent and nature of fish farming impacts on shallow reef.

“Towards a Phenomenological Description of Meaningful Experiences on a Wilderness River Journey”

Marcus Morse, PhD candidate

An update on a research project that explores the “meaningful experiences” of individuals as they journey down the Franklin River, on a nine-day wilderness river journey. Using interviews, journals, observations and follow-up emails from 32 participants, the project moves from the individual to the collective, to identify and describe the qualities and essences of possible meaningful experiences on a wilderness river journey.

“The Forbidden Question: a History of the Limits to Growth Debate”
Kerryn Higgs , PhD candidate

Since the middle of the 20th century, the scale of the human enterprise has rapidly escalated. Though the roots of this explosion lie in the history of the last 500 years at least, the disruption of the global biosphere by the scale of human activity has become critical only over the last few decades. This work as a whole looks at the processes by which the warnings of scientists in the 1960s and 1970s were sidelined.

“Communities' responses to post-disaster housing in Aceh”
Catherine Elliott

In the aftermath of the 2004 Asian tsunami more than 500,000 people needed shelter. Four and a half years later little is known about communities' responses to post-disaster housing projects. Reviews of post-disaster housing in Aceh predominantly focus on the quantity of houses completed.

Rather than focus on housing as infrastructure, this research considers how housing policies affect the wellbeing of communities.

“Sea level, crustal hazards and continental hydrology: Where are we at with GPS and Environmental Geodesy?”
Dr Christopher Watson

Environmental Geodesy refers to the measurement of phenomena such as how much the sea and land levels are changing, how much the Australian continent is changing shape and is affected by Earthquakes and where and how much water resides in the Earth's crust.

These things are measured using satellite techniques like GPS. Another satellite technique called GRACE effectively weighs the Earth from Space. This talk presents some new results that show we can use both of these satellite techniques to measure hydrology over the Earth's crust.

For more information about the conference and to view the whole program of abstracts, please click on the School Conference link at:
<http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/scieng/geog/>

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