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Wildlife at Home on Campus

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Atlanta is often called the "city in a forest" because of its lush canopy of trees, uncommon for a major city. In the heart of that forest sits Georgia Tech's 400-acre campus. And within campus lies a variety of wildlife that has made Georgia Tech its home.

"I don't think most people are aware of wildlife on campus," said Emily Weigel, senior academic professional in the School of Biological Sciences. "They might see a feral cat here or there, but they don't really think about all the other animals that live on campus. Georgia Tech is the animals' home base, and they probably don't know anything other than they were born in this area. They don't know they're in the middle of a city."

Included in the biodiversity surveys of the area are squirrels, possums, raccoons, rats, and birds. Several months ago a couple of coyotes were spotted, but they were just passing through campus. At least two foxes live in the glade, a densely forested area behind the president's residence on the north side of campus.

Ben Seleb, a Ph.D. student in quantitative biosciences, is developing an open source camera for studying the

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Photo by Yumiko Sakurai

A house finch perches on a serviceberry tree near the College of Computing building.

Volunteer for Commencement

The Commencement Office is looking for volunteers for this semester's Commencement ceremonies. Fall Commencement will take place Friday, Dec. 17, and Saturday, Dec. 18, at Bobby Dodd Stadium. View a full schedule of events at **commencement.gatech.edu/schedule**.

A variety of shifts and responsibilities are available, including guest services, graduate assistance, and distributing Ph.D. hoods and honor cords. Fill out the volunteer form at **c.gatech.edu/commencementvolunteer** to sign up for your spot. If you have questions, contact Jillian Cruser at **jillian.cruser@gatech.edu**.

Meet Laura Czyzewski, Jack-of-All-Trades

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Photo by Allison Carter

Laura Czyzewski, pictured in the Coda Building, supports Georgia Tech's Quantitative and Computational Finance Program.

Laura Czyzewski is the associate director of Graduate Programs for the M.S. in Quantitative and Computational Finance (QCF) program, which produces graduates who work in various sectors such as investment banks, hedge funds, proprietary trading firms, and government or regulatory agencies.

"I describe my job as a bit of Jack-of-all-trades for this program," said Czyzewski, who oversees admissions, student services, and operations. The interdisciplinary program has faculty from the Ernest Scheller Jr. College of Business, the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, and the School of Mathematics. It is supported by four full-time staff members, one part-time staff member, and Faculty Director Sudheer Chava.

Czyzewski previously served as a program coordinator for the Graduate Office in the Scheller College of Business. She has served in various roles across campus, beginning as a Tech Temp in the Bursar's Office in 2005.

"A typical day depends on the time of year," she said. "If we're in the middle of our admission cycle, a lot of times I'm doing marathon interviewing of applicants. And there are days where I get up at 5 o'clock in the morning because I'm virtually interviewing people from around the world."

Before the pandemic Czyzewski would travel to other universities to present information sessions about the program. Because of Covid-19 travel restrictions the staff turned to virtual meetings for recruiting students and for engaging with companies."In a way, it put us on an even playing field," she said. "Obviously Atlanta is not one of the larger financial centers like New York or Chicago. Programs in those cities could invite professionals to just hop on a train and come over to meet with their students. We couldn't do that."

During the pandemic Czyzewski and her colleagues began asking company representatives to just hop online and have an information session with the students.

"They're more willing to do that now rather than spend time and money to send somebody to Atlanta. It definitely created some opportunities that we didn't see coming."

Like almost everyone else, Czyzewski said working during the pandemic has been challenging.

"We pride ourselves on fostering a true sense of community among the faculty, the staff, and the students," she said. "Not being able to actually interact in person really did affect that. I interviewed people [virtually] a year ago that I don't recognize now because I didn't get to actually meet them and develop a relationship. So, it has been difficult to get to know the students because everybody was remote."

The most rewarding part of her job is working with students from around the globe.

"We just completed our five-year academic program review. One of the statistics I was most excited about is that in the past five years we had students from 21 different countries attend our program," she said. "We had students from Nigeria, the Netherlands, Guatemala, China, the U.K., Brazil, and others. It was a rewarding experience to learn from them and get to support students from all around the world. That's pretty big."

In her time away from Georgia Tech, Czyzewski is the lead vocalist of metro Atlanta rock cover band named Yesterday Calling. The four-member band includes Czyzewski, two guitarists, and a drummer, and they perform classic rock songs from the '60s through 2000.

"We cover bands and solo artists like Fleetwood Mac, Heart, Led Zeppelin, REM, and Pat Benatar," said Czyzewski, whose favorite song to perform is "Me and Bobby McGee" by Janis Joplin.

"I absolutely adore Janis Joplin because she's a legend, an icon. The song is also very vocally challenging, so it's one that I've worked on over the years."

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FACULTY AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

Professor **Adjo Amekudzi-Kennedy**, associate chair for global engineering leadership and entrepreneurship for the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, was selected for the 2021 Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) Distinguished Alumni Award by the Carnegie Mellon Civil and Environmental Engineering Awards Committee. This honor recognizes Carnegie Mellon CEE alumni who have one or more major achievements that have improved the work of professional engineers or have improved people's lives.

Professor **Andrés J. García**, director of the Petit Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience, has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine. One of the highest honors in the field of health and medicine, election to the academy recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service.

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has named **Marta Hatzell**, associate professor in the George W. Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering, a 2021 Moore Inventor Fellow. Hatzell and four other fellows will each receive $825,000 to further the development of new tools and technologies that promise to accelerate progress in the foundation's areas of interest: scientific discovery, environmental conservation, and patient care. The fellowships honor Silicon Valley pioneer and Intel co-founder Gordon Moore.

Kaye Husbands Fealing, dean and Ivan Allen Jr. Chair in the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, was recently appointed vice chair of the National Science Foundation (NSF)'s Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering for the next two years. The committee was established by Congress to advise the NSF concerning the implementation of the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act and other policies and activities to encourage the full participation of women, underrepresented minorities, and people with disabilities in scientific, engineering, and professional fields.

Professor **Kimberly Kurtis** was inducted into the University of California-Berkeley Civil and Environmental Engineering Department Academy of Distinguished Alumni. The academy was established in 2012 to recognize alumni and their notable accomplishments and contributions to societal well-being and development, both in the U.S. and around the globe. Kurtis is the associate dean for faculty development and scholarship in the College of Engineering and a professor in the Schools of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Materials Science and Engineering.

Xiaoli Ma has been elected to the IEEE Signal Processing Society Board of Governors in the capacity of member-at-large for the 2022-24 term. She is a professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has recognized the exceptional creativity of **Chethan Pandarinath**'s research approach with a 2021 Director's New Innovator Award, the agency's most prestigious program for early career researchers. Part of the NIH's High-Risk, High-Reward Research program, Pandarinath's $2.4 million grant will support his team's launch of a clinical trial this fall, implanting sensors into the brains of ALS patients. Pandarinath is an assistant professor in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering.

Jianjun (Jan) Shi, Carolyn J. Stewart Chair and professor in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, has been selected for the Society of Manufacturing Engineering's 2021 College of Fellows. This is an honor given to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the social, technological, and educational aspects of the manufacturing profession, with 20 or more years of dedication and service to the field.

Gordon Stüber has been elected to the IEEE Vehicular Technology Society (VTS) Board of Governors for the 2022-24 term. This is the eighth consecutive term that Stüber has served with the IEEE VTS. The Society's board consists of 15 elected members who serve three-year terms. The Society's areas of interest include land transportation; railroad/mass transit; mobile communications; vehicular electrotechnology; and land, airborne, and maritime mobile services. In addition to serving on the IEEE VTS Board of Governors, he is the Society's awards chair.

Laura Taylor, professor and chair of the School of Economics, will join the 2021-22 University System of Georgia Executive Leadership Institute. Thirty-four participants were chosen for the six-month program, where they will engage in leadership development curriculum that includes personal reflection, job shadowing, and cross-mentoring.

The National Institutes of Health recently announced that Associate Professor **W. Hong Yeo** from the George W. Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering has been awarded a Trailblazer Award for New and Early Stage Investigators. The award is for a project titled "Development of Nanomembrane Electronics and Machine-Learning Algorithms for Quantitative Screening of Dysphagia Therapeutics" and comes with $645,000 in funding over three years.

Shimeng Yu has been named as a Distinguished Lecturer for the IEEE Electron Devices Society for at least a two-year period. Yu is an associate professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, where he leads the Laboratory for Emerging Devices and Circuits.

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foxes and other wildlife. He and his colleagues at Tech4Wildife, a course and campus organization devoted to the conservation of wildlife, have been monitoring the foxes.

"We had some suspicions that foxes were in the glade," Seleb said. "It's a very secluded area with dense vegetation, so it's a great spot for campus wildlife to hide during the day and then come out at night."

To confirm their suspicions, they set up cameras inside the glade and left them for a couple of weeks. When they reviewed the images, they had captured two foxes on camera at the same time.

"We know there could be more, but we've only seen two foxes at one time. They're difficult to tell apart, but we're working on identifying individuals," he said. "There are a number of other animals on campus, and the glade is where many of them live. We have seen raccoons, possums, and a couple of feral cats that travel in and out of the glade."

The glade connects to Tech's new EcoCommons, a lush 8-acre woodland area near the center of campus, providing a pathway for wildlife to travel into campus at night, while still giving them the cover of vegetation. Georgia Tech generally offers a handful of classes related to wildlife or ecology, but the amount of wildlife on campus is creating new research opportunities.

"I'm happy to see programs giving students opportunities that they may not have been aware of," Seleb said.

Birds, Birds, Birds

The lush vegetation on campus provides birds with a source of nutrition as well as a good place to build nests. Horticulturalist Steve Place, who can usually be found working near The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design, helps to create a native habitat to support the birds.

"We're reintroducing native plants to recreate the habitat for the native birds," Place said. "When you move away from the native landscape it encourages 'generalist' birds that are more tolerant of what they can eat. We want to encourage the reemergence of the rarer species of birds that are dependent on particular grasses and berries."

The campus landscape team is removing ivy and other invasive non-native plants near The Kendeda Building. They're building a sustainable and regenerative ecosystem that can support itself and the endemic species in the area. Place said that people who visit the area regularly will begin to notice the variety of birds.

"If you're observant and patient enough you'll see different behaviors, hear different songs, and observe mating rituals," he said. "There is a lot going on with the birds. It's just a matter of being quiet and paying attention."

The Kendeda Building and the adjacent EcoCommons are part of a wildlife sanctuary certified by the Georgia Audubon Society, making Georgia Tech the first university in the state to receive the designation.

Photo by Allison Carter

Steve Place near The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design.

Tips for Coexisting With Campus Wildlife

Emily Weigel, senior academic professional in the School of Biological Sciences, offers the following guidance.

- In general, if you see wildlife on campus, keep your distance and just observe. Take in the sights and sounds.
- If possible, record the encounter and post it to iNaturalist, noting when and where the animal was spotted, for Tech's students and team of scientists studying wildlife.
- Many animals will purposefully avoid you, but if an animal seems to be unafraid or approaches you, do not interact. Keep yourself and any children or pets away.
- Do not feed wildlife. This can cause some animals to stray too far into high traffic areas (in search of food) and potentially get hit by cars. In some cases feeding the animals robs the adults of the ability to teach their young to forage effectively.