



# the D.O.G. byte

A Newsletter of the Department of Geography  
California State University, Northridge

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RONALD DAVIDSON AND JULIE LAITY, ROVING REPORTERS AND EDITORS  
CHAD MARCH + GRAPHICS EDITOR

## GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

*By Darrick Danta, Department Chair*

“A Great Department!” This is how we were described recently by Jenny Zorn, Professor of Geography and Vice Provost at CSU San Bernardino, one of the External Reviewers that were here as part of our Program Review. Held every 5 years, a Program Review is an opportunity for departments to take stock of the things done well, and the areas that deserve more work.

What became clear to all involved in the process is that Geography is not only alive and well at CSUN, but is thriving. Currently, we’re revamping our Undergraduate GIS Certificate and developing one at the Graduate level (run through Extended Learning), while strengthening offerings in Environmental Geography and keeping our commitment to field studies. We’re also trying to expand internship opportunities



and increase the number of applied geography courses that aid in career development. The number of faculty grants keeps increasing, and with them opportunities for student involvement.

This spring I complete my first 3-year term as Department Chair. It’s been a real pleasure working with our fine faculty, staff, and students, and I look forward to the next term. Of course California, along with the CSU, faces unprecedented budget woes, but there are still bright spots on the horizon.

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California State University  
**Northridge**

# MEET A GEOGRAPHER: HELEN COX AND THE SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE

**Helen Cox** arrived in the U.S. for a one-year stay in 1978 and forgot to leave. She originally comes from Elton John's hometown, Watford, which is located 15 minutes northwest of London, England. California's wonderful climate, beaches, and mountains were attractive to this highly active skier, bicyclist, swimmer, and runner, who has completed multiple marathons in recent years. Indeed, Helen likes to do things in a big way: she earned five degrees before coming to CSUN, including a B.A. and M.A. in Physics from Oxford University; an M.S. degree in Computer and Information Science from U. Penn; and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Atmospheric Sciences from UCLA. In addition to serving as an Associate Professor in Geography, teaching classes in The Atmosphere, Remote Sensing, Global Warming, and Spatial Analysis, Helen has recently agreed to become the second Director of CSUN's Institute for Sustainability, which was established by Provost Hellenbrand in October 2008. In this capacity, she is directing projects that focus on campus and community sustainability. Remarkably, CSUN generates 25% of its own electricity, but improvements still need to be made in water efficiency and commuter transport, with 80% of people arriving on campus in single-occupancy cars. We'd like to highlight a few of the projects in which Helen is involved. One of the first was mapping the



*Taking it easy, Helen hiked from one coast of England to the other on the Coast to Coast Walk - a mere 190 miles.*

existing campus trees, which employed 12 geography students, including **Roger Motti** and **Kevin Ulrich**, who helped to identify the different species (video and article links below). And what do you think is the most common tree on campus? (Hint: we have an orange grove.) Other abundant species include the evergreen pear, the Canary Island pine, and several species of palms. Palm trees are planted for structural and symbolic reasons, but provide little shade or habitat, and tend to require a great deal of water. Another objective of the Institute is to promote cleaner commuting methods. To this end, undergraduate Areeya Tivasuradej is looking at bicycling as an alternative method of transport. In the summer, the campus will be putting in a new bicycle compound in parking structure B-3, with greatly increased security. Furthermore, a bus transit hub is in the works for the campus and a

student Ride Share program is being evaluated that would enable students to network for carpooling possibilities. The Institute is also interested in edible plants on campus. It has coordinated orange picking with Food Forward, a non-profit that donates to local food banks and shelters. How many oranges can you pick at CSUN in one day? The answer might surprise you... Food Forward gathered 10,000 pounds! The next big picking is on Earth Day (April 22). Finally, one of Helen's biggest tasks is to propose a new minor in Sustainability, which will include a practicum (applied work) on campus issues, such as how to reduce waste. Helen's work at the Institute has had an effect on her personal life as she endeavors to put her beliefs into practice. She dries her laundry on an outside line, has planted native vegetation in her garden and is removing most of her lawn, drives

a Prius, and monitors her water and energy bills closely. “I have pretty small bills,” admits Helen, averaging \$20 each for gas and electric. Finally, when not trying to save the planet, Helen enjoys home improvement (plumbing and electrical) and is a woodworker, making tables, bookcases, and cabinets. The money she saves with her frugality goes towards “sustaining” her three children and their college educations in mathematics, engineering, and medicine.

For more information on Helen’s work with the Institute for Sustainability please see:

**Students work with geography department to measure, catalog, CSUN’s Tree Population.**

Video: [3,600 Shades of Green: A Survey of CSUN’s Trees](#)

## OUT AND ABOUT

*In this section, we highlight some of the geographical journeys of our faculty, students, and alumni. As you can see, some are real, and some are virtual!*

### “VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP”

Steve Graves has resumed work on The American Landscape Project, a free, online photographic archive of photos and slides chronicling the built landscape of the United States. After overcoming some technological hurdles, Steve is set to upload several thousand photographs of interest to geographers and students of

American history. Prominent among the slides are images of folk housing, gas stations, agricultural scenes, and other vernacular landscapes. Each photo is labeled with several “tags” that allow visitors to quickly find other photos with the same tag. Many photos are also “geotagged,” meaning that visitors can also see the location where the photo was taken on a map that pops up alongside the photo. Eventually, Steve will throw open access to the collection, allowing other landscape enthusiasts to add to the repository.

### “REAL FIELD TRIPS”

Professor **Yifei Sun** was awarded the 2009-10 CSUN College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Fellowship for his project, “Building Industry Clusters in Peripheral Regions: A case study of Jian Bu County, Jiangsu Province, China.” He travelled to China in summer 2009 to conduct interviews with various firms. In Beijing, he took his family to see such famous 2008 Olympic venues as the “Bird’s Nest” and the “Water Cube.” He also traveled to

*Dr. Sun and his family visited the “Bird’s Nest” (Beijing National Stadium) in Beijing.*



*A home in Angeleno Heights, part of Steve Graves’ American Landscape Project. Visit [this site](#) to learn more about [American landscapes](#), topics, regions, and eras!*



*Dr. Yifei Sun at Longmen Grottoes in Henan Province. The Longmen Grottoes are located in the southern suburb of Luoyang in Henan Province, China. Along about one kilometer of the river bank stand more than 100,000 Buddha statues, some of which were carved over 1,500 years ago. They range in height from < 2 cm to over 17 meters. The Longmen Grottoes was added to the [UN World Heritage List](#) in 2000.*



several cities along the Yellow River in Henan Province where Chinese civilization originated.

**Greg Schwartz** took over 100 students to Tierra Miguel organic farm in Temecula, CA to plant, harvest, and taste some beautiful food.



Greg Schwartz (3rd from left) and his students learn about organic farming.



A New Year's holiday in Death Valley. Doug Fischer and his son Jasper show that you are never too young to study fluvial geomorphology and desert landforms.

## FACULTY AND STAFF ALUMNI NEWS ACTIVITIES

**Steve Graves** has a forthcoming article on 'Crime Rates and Predatory Lending' in the journal *Criminology*.

**Jim Craine, Ed Jackiewicz, Steve Graves** and former graduate student **Mike Pesses** have published chapters in the book *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*. This well-reviewed book puts the CSUN Geography Department at the forefront of "music geography" in the United States. **Julie Laity** has published an article 'Ventifacts on Earth and Mars: Analytical, field, and laboratory studies supporting sand abrasion and windward feature development' in the journal *Geomorphology* and a book chapter 'Landforms, landscapes, and processes of aeolian erosion' in the book *Geomorphology of Desert Environments*.

**Yifei Sun** has been working hard this semester as the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Fellow.

**Tracy Hurst** attended a climate conference in Daejeon, South Korea with her husband before exploring aeolian and karst landforms in New Mexico. **Greg Schwartz** published his first book, titled *5 Ways to Save the Planet (in your spare time)*. **Samantha Kadar's** World Regional Geography students will yet again be creating their maps in competition for prizes from Walt Disney. **Ron Davidson** is practicing his backstroke in tennis. Tennis anyone?

News from **Patrick Kahn** (M.A. 2009):

"I am currently completing the first year of my Ph.D. program at UCLA and am having a great time. I've enjoyed success in a number of excellent courses including Advanced Remote Sensing and Programming, Spatial Statistics, Soils, Hydrology, Physical Aspects of Quaternary Studies, and Plant Physiology. My studies at UCLA focus on spatial modeling in geomorphology and my dissertation will likely involve modeling aeolian sediment transport using rare earth minerals. Currently, I'm working on the publication of two papers - one pertaining to my CSUN Master's thesis on alpine karst environments and another with Julie Laity on classifying desert pavements.

In April 2010, I will begin a 10-week research assignment in southern Israel, simulating an aeolian environment in a wind tunnel. Sand will be blown at 10 species of desert shrub from the Negev Desert to investigate the effects of sand abrasion on photosynthesis, transpiration and cuticular conductance. This study is relevant to the larger scale phenomenon of desertification, and is being jointly conducted by my advisor, Greg Okin, and Haim Tsoar of Ben Gurion University."

News from **Giorgio Hadi Curti** (M.A. 2005):

Giorgio recently defended his dissertation in the San Diego State University – University of California, Santa Barbara Joint Doctoral Program in Geography. Giorgio’s dissertation, titled “The Body Geographic: Affect, Imagination and the Relationality of Be(com)ing, or Movements Through Spinozan Earth-Writings,” focuses on the work of philosopher Benedict de Spinoza and argues that his perspectives offer especially constructive ways to approach contemporary and emerging issues in geography. Giorgio has published a wide range of scholarly work, dealing with subjects as diverse as Japanese and Russian film, urban landscapes, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the body. An example of his recent scholarship is: *The ghost in the city and a landscape of life: a reading. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2008, volume 26, pages 87 – 106.

Giorgio is currently editing a book on media and geography and a special issue of the journal *Aether* on media geography and the Middle East. He is teaching two classes at SDSU and looking for a tenure track job.

News from **Brian H. Bell** (M.A. 1969): “The education I received in the Geography Department at CSUN was thorough, of excellent quality, and useful for my career. It was fun - the department was small enough that faculty, staff and students socialized and took field trips together to places like Joshua Tree, Mitchell Caverns,

Northern California and Baja California.

After finishing a Bachelors and Masters in Geography at CSUN, I went on to PhD work in Geography at LSU - Baton Rouge. For this Californian, Louisiana was an adventure! Lowland swamps, the Mississippi Delta, French and Anglo-Saxon cultures melding and clashing. Bugs and humidity. Amazing food – great shrimp and crawfish. The one true religion, football, was practiced on Saturday nights in Tiger Stadium, complete with live tiger!

On returning to California in 1972, I was a Project Manager for an environmental consulting firm during the earliest years of EIRs and EISs. The holistic, wide-ranging education in Geography (Geology minor) at CSUN let me dive into my work with confidence. This was when my interest in birds and birding started.

My next step was the California Energy Commission’s Facility Siting Division. The Commission was relatively new, and we were establishing the application requirements for new power plants. My geography background was valuable for reviewing these applications. My interest in birds came in handy when I was recruited by our biologists to take part in a year-long study of nesting raptors along proposed transmission lines. When I retired, I’d reviewed more



*Brian Bell birding at Juanita Bay Park, Kirkland WA, June 2005*

than 30 power plant applications, including nuclear, coal, steam, geothermal and solar. The ability to consider the parts and the whole was essential during my ‘working’ career. What was initially a hobby of birding became a second career. My passion became showing folks birds and elements of natural history. As a Birding and Natural History Guide, I thoroughly enjoy guiding people around the Pacific Northwest and California.”

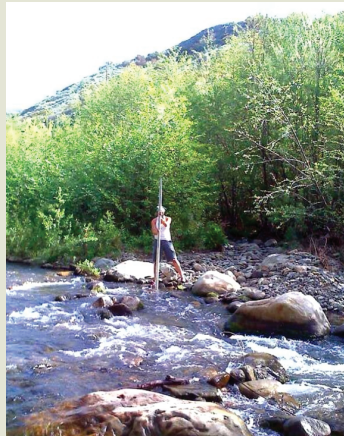
For more information on Brian’s birding trips contact:  
 Brian H. Bell  
 Birding and Natural History Guide  
 425-485-8058  
 www.peregrinenorthwest.com  
 bellasoc@isomedia.com

*If YOU are a CSUN graduate with an interesting job in geography, we would like to hear from you! Please contact either Ron Davidson (rdavids@csun.edu) or Julie Laity (julie.laity@csun.edu).*

# STUDENT NEWS

## Fieldwork

Fieldwork has always been an important part of CSUN's Geography Department. The photographs below show members of Dr. **Amalie Orme's** geomorphology class taking advantage of sunny March days and abundant runoff. They are learning to survey river cross sections using an automatic level and to measure water velocity with an electronic current meter. These skills are valuable tools for future employment in hydrology, water resources, and watershed planning



## 2009 Geography Department Awards

We would like to congratulate the following winners:

Ross Scholarship:

Doron Weinstein

Geography Undergraduate Awards:

Joel Osuna

Eric Myers

Robert and Karen Newcomb

Fellowship:

Jose Huerta

Tamburro Scholarships:

Mark Jacobi

Matthew Hoggan

Areeya Tivasuradej

Jenna M. Blake

# GEOGRAPHY COUNCIL NEWS

By Areeya Tivasuradej, Geography Council President

The Geography Council is designed for students interested in all branches of geography. Participants explore and expand their geographical knowledge. Activities include hiking in the local mountains, participating in GIS Day, attending Bowling Nights, and going to monthly lectures held by the Los Angeles Geographical Society.

The Council is currently establishing a speaker series, "Real Geographers in Action." We invite alumni and representatives from local organizations or businesses to talk about career and internship opportunities as well as their careers outside academia. If you are interested in being one of our speakers, or know someone who might be, please contact Areeya Tivasuradej at [tareeya@gmail.com](mailto:tareeya@gmail.com).

We were pleased to give this year's "Geography Council Award", which was set up by alumni John Hess and Robert O'Keefe, to Tory DeBiaso for his strong interest in geography and his participation in many Council events.

The Council is going green. We are participating in this year's Earth Day at CSUN and volunteering with local environmental groups.

Our upcoming plans include

attending the California Geographical Society (CGS) Conference (April 30-May 2) in Fullerton and going camping after final examinations. Getting involved with the Geography Council is a way to express your ideas, build relationships and learn, while having a great time with fellow students. Click the "Geography Council" link at the [Geography Department home page](#) to learn more about upcoming activities or join the Council.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Geography Careers Colloquia Series:

Dr. Jim Hayes has organized the colloquia to give students in our department the opportunity to hear alumni speak about their professional lives. The inaugural schedule for this program is as follows:

1. **Veronica Rojas:** ESRI, Software Documentation Specialist and Product Engineer.  
Thursday, March 25th 4:00 PM - Sierra Hall Rm. 164

Veronica, now working at ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute), discussed preparation for a career in the GIS field. Her talk will draw on her own experiences, from her education at CSUN to her current work as Software Documentation Specialist and Product Engineer. Veronica will discuss how the broad experiences of geographers are an asset in career development and

preparation.

2. : CEQA Environmental Review Consultant.  
Monday, April 12th 7PM - Sierra Hall Room 209

3. Monique Wilber: Governor's Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy  
Thursday, April 22nd 4PM - Sierra Hall Rm. 164

For more on the colloquia, contact:

**Dr. James Hayes**

Department of Geography  
James.hayes@csun.edu

**-Consider joining the International Geographic Honor Society, Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU).** If you are a geography undergraduate or graduate student and would like to join, see Professor Hayes.

### **-Los Angeles Geographical Society Free Public Lecture Series**

Please see the website for a full listing of the Fall 2009-Spring 2010 talks.

### **California Geographical Society**

The CGS Meeting is in Fullerton April 30 through May 2nd, 2010.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Geography offers scholarships, field studies/special courses, and many lab courses. Please consider making a contribution to the Department so that we can continue to augment our program offerings and student opportunities. Your donation is tax deductible, and can be directed toward the Department's General Fund, or any of the following:

- Center for Geographical Studies
- Robert Howard Field Studies Fund
- Geography Student Scholarship
- Michael Tamburro Scholarship
- Shoshana Sokol Memorial Award
- Robert and Karen Newcomb Fellowship
- Stanley Ross Scholarship

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