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June 2024

# News from Michigan EARTH



## Hello from Ann Arbor!

We've had a busy winter term here, with so many activities leading up to graduation! Here's the latest from EARTH.

Every March, we celebrate our top students at the annual John and Ruth Dorr Awards Dinner. The department recognizes undergraduate and graduate students who have distinguished themselves in academic and community activities, and GeoClub presents awards for best GSI and best professor. You can read more about this [here](#). Notably, this year we presented the first Mark Robbins Innovative Teaching Award, commemorating our late colleague Mark Robbins, who was particularly admired for his teaching skills and passion. We were honored to welcome Mark's mother to the inaugural presentation of this award to three of our graduate students.

A highlight of the winter term is MGU – the Michigan Geophysical Union Symposium: once again EARTH students co-organized this annual research meeting with CLaSP, supporting 64 poster presentations (graduate students) and seven talks (by Honors undergraduates) in two sessions in the lobby of the Biological Sciences Building. This year, for the first time, we began a promising new tradition: we hosted the Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) meeting on the day before MGU. Board members attended MGU, evaluated presentations, and conferred with students about career strategies. Going forward, we will hold the annual AAB meetings at this time (early April), rather than in the fall. We invite all alums to join us at MGU!

The April AAB meeting made great progress along a couple of fronts – connecting students with alums for career advice, and strategizing to support Camp Davis and experiential education. We will have more to share with you separately on both of those topics very soon! We welcome several new [AAB members](#) this term, along with a new chair - see the story below.

Our undergraduates are increasingly active in research, and in April we brought these activities into the limelight with an Undergraduate Research Symposium. We paired this event with a Master's Symposium where MS grads presented their work to the department. Unlike PhD students who

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In May, the ranks of EARTH alumni expanded, as students finished up and moved on from campus. Congratulations to all those new graduates! We saw 55 undergraduate majors and minors complete their undergraduate degrees, alongside two new MS and six new PhD graduates. We celebrated their accomplishments with a reception in early May, complementing the ceremonies hosted by Rackham, the Honors College, and of course the Big Event at the Big House.

Even as students are leaving, every spring we recruit a new cohort to join us. In the fall, we will welcome 22 new members of our graduate program – the largest incoming class in recent history. This growth parallels the recent increase in our undergraduate numbers. This fall our undergrad program broadens further, with a new minor in Geospatial Science to support data-intensive Earth and environmental training.

Even though the semester is over, May is a surprisingly busy month here, full of preparations for a summer ahead – fieldwork, Camp Davis, and opportunities for deep work that are rare in the academic year. The paleontologists are preparing madly for the upcoming [North American Paleontological Convention](#), which will bring hundreds of their colleagues to campus. This conference kicks off with a session on “Paleontology For All,” open to the public and streaming live. May is also Mental Health Awareness Month, which we recognize with weekly missives, to help us stay intentional and grounded, and EARTH-themed goodies to buoy the spirit. (You can find your own EARTH goodies at our new [EARTH Swag Shop](#).)

Our faculty and staff continue to garner well-earned recognition. Carla Huhn, Executive Coordinator, received a significant internal award, the Kay Beattie Outstanding Individual Award for staff excellence. Jonathan Overpeck, Dean of the School of Environment and Sustainability and Affiliated Professor in EARTH, was elected to the US National Academy of Sciences. We'll have detailed profiles in the next annual newsletter.

May you have a restful and rejuvenating summer, and we'll be back with more news from EARTH in the fall!

Warmly,  
Julie



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### Society

Congratulations to University of Michigan Museum of Paleontology alum Anjali Goswami on her election as a fellow of The Royal Society, the oldest and among the most esteemed scientific societies in the world. Anjali is an evolutionary biologist and Dean of Postgraduate Education at the Natural History Museum in London and holds an honorary professorship in paleobiology at University College London. You can read more about her work [here](#). Congrats on this prestigious honor!



### Brian Arbic's Leadership in Advancing Equitable Access to Ocean Science Through the UN Ocean Decade's Challenge 9

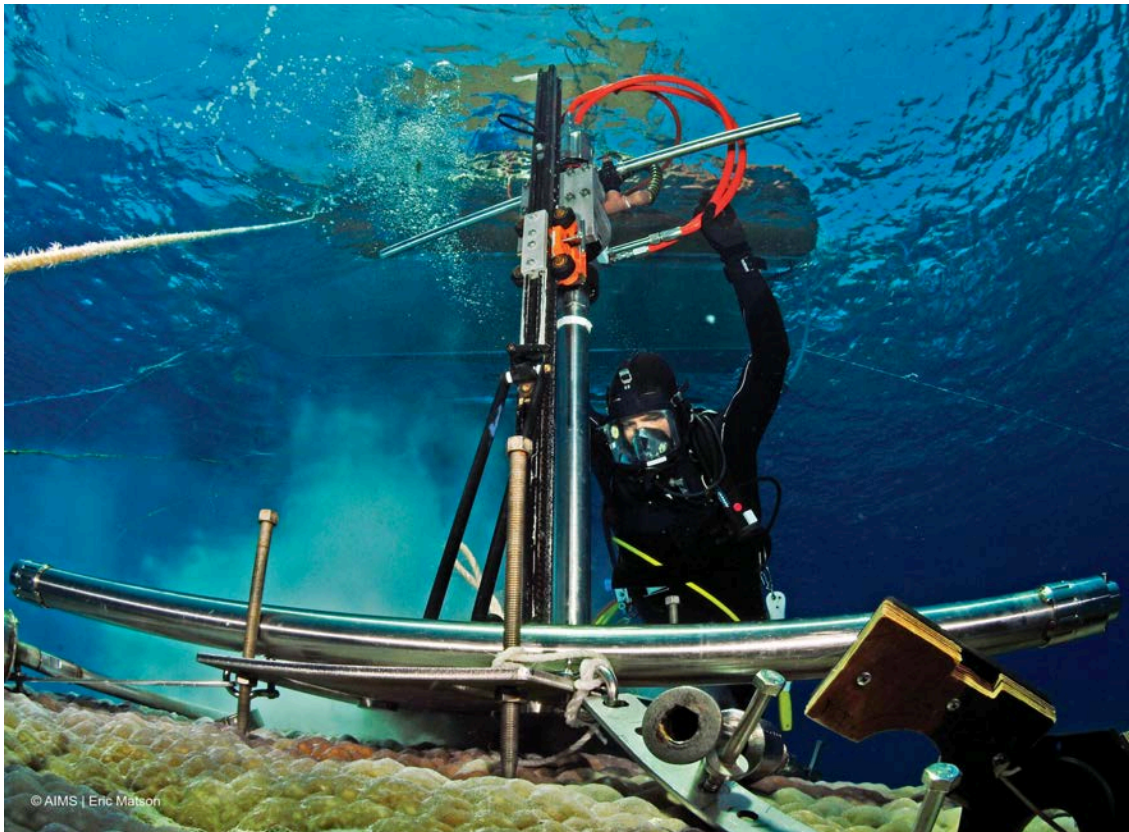
Ensuring that every person has an equal opportunity to pursue a career in scientific fields has historically been a formidable obstacle. The [United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for](#)

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Brian Arbic and Edem Mahu, a lecturer at the University of Ghana, co-lead Working Group 9. This collective aims to address the goals outlined in the Ocean Decade's [Challenge 9](#).

You can learn more about how Brian, Edem, and Working Group 9 are working to bring equity to all in the ocean sciences [here](#).

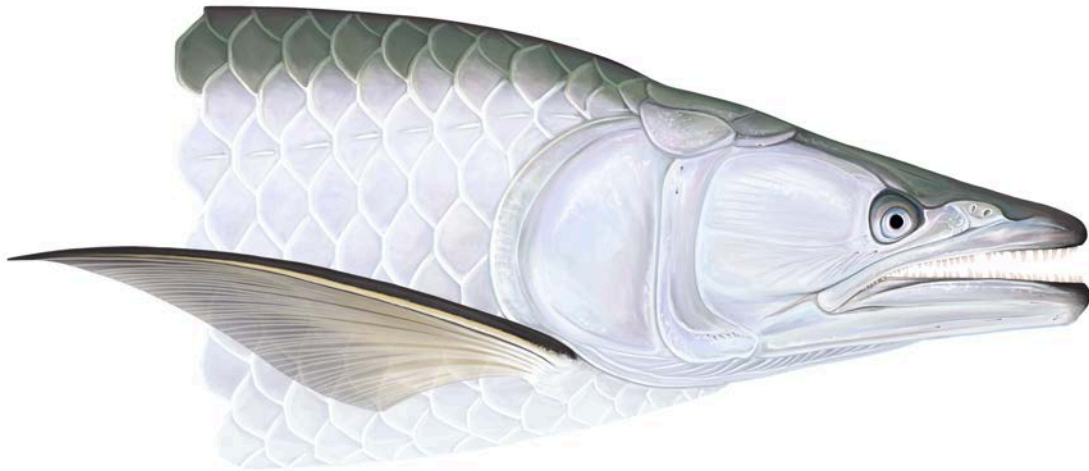
# IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS



## **Kelsey Dyez and Julia Cole, Rainfall Variability Increased With Warming in Northern Queensland, Australia, Over the Past 280 years,**

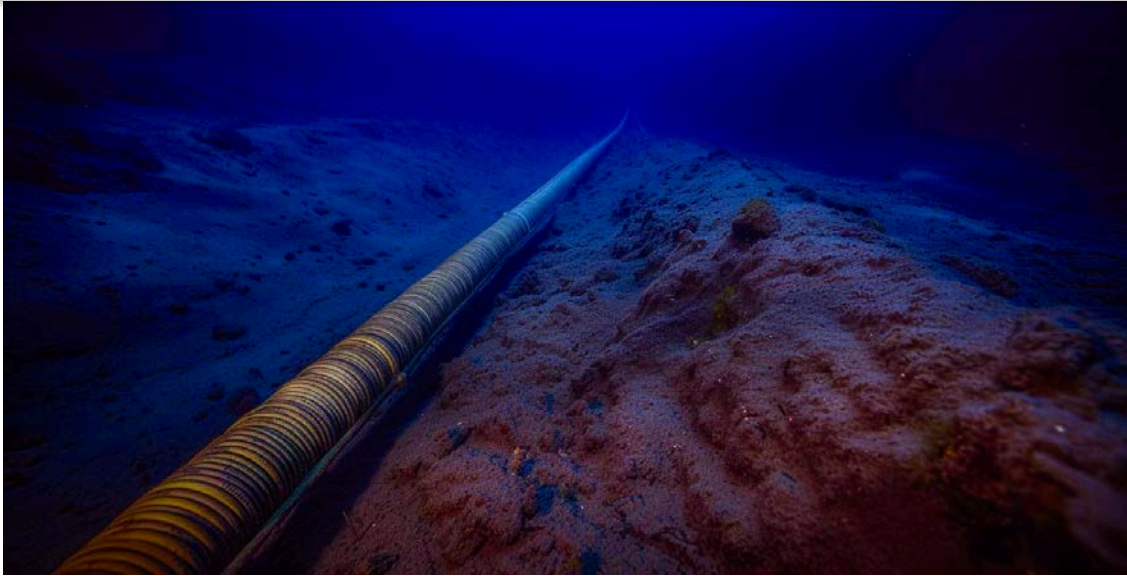
# Environment

A study by Kelsey Dyez and Julia Cole using coral from the Great Barrier Reef, used geochemical records from a Great Barrier Reef coral to create a record of rainfall in northern Queensland since 1746. Their data shows that wet-season (monsoon) rainfall has risen by about 10% since 1750, with increased variability as wet years get wetter and dry years stay dry. More extreme rainy seasons, which tend to occur during La Niña years, are expected in a warming climate and pose significant impacts for local populations. [Read more here](#) and [here](#).



## Matt Friedman and Alessio Capobianco, A Long-Snouted Marine Bonytongue From the Early Eocene of Morocco and the Phylogenetic Affinities of Marine Osteoglossids, *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*

Matt Friedman, alum Alessio Capobianco, and Samir Zouhri from Hassan II University of Casablanca report a new bonytongue fish from ~50 million year old marine rocks in Morocco. Named *Macroprosopon* in reference to its long snout, it belongs to a group of fishes that today only live in freshwater settings like lakes and rivers. Anatomical evidence shows that *Macroprosopon* and many other ancient marine bonytongues are most closely related to the living arapaima, a denizen of South American rivers and one of today's largest freshwater fishes. The marine habitat of *Macroprosopon* points to greater ecological diversity in extinct bonytongues, and signals a more complicated geographic history for the group. [Read more here](#).

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## Zack Spica, Fiber Optic Cables Effective Way to Detect Tsunamis, *Geophysical Research Letters*

Zack Spica, with colleagues from Caltech, used distributed acoustic sensing (DAS) to create a more cost-effective and widespread resource for monitoring natural disasters: the extensive network of approximately one million miles of fiber optic cables laid along the ocean bottom. Trials off the Oregon coast successfully captured these wave signals, suggesting DAS's potential to improve coastal safety. Ongoing research is essential to fully leverage DAS for tsunami monitoring and preparedness. [Read more here](#) and [here](#).





## Alumni Advisory Board Meeting

The annual AAB meeting was moved from fall to spring this year and will continue to meet in spring going forward. This past April 4-5, we welcomed AAB members in person and virtually for a two-day meeting. Day one kicked off with a discussion of department highlights from the 23-24 year, consideration of alums nominated for inclusion in the AAB, and conversation about fundraising for experiential learning opportunities, including Camp Davis. In the afternoon, a student engagement focus group worked on ways to leverage our alumni network for enhanced student-alumni interactions. The day ended with a student-alumni networking event for AAB members to interact with students and provide career advice, and for students to learn about UM career resources. The AAB spent the second day at MGU. Alumni connected with students as they presented their research and served as judges for poster presentations.

The AAB welcomed four new members this year: Franek Hasiuk (PhD, 2008) is a geologist at Sandia National Laboratories. Cristina Shoffner (BS, 2016) works on US energy policy and advocacy at Breakthrough Energy. Grace Hilbert (BS, 2015) is a Program Analyst at the National Park Service. Alex Janevski (PhD, 2011) is an independent consultant. We look forward to working with you all!

Finally, the AAB elected a new chair, Jessica Bleha (BS, 2004), a senior hydrologist at Limnotech. She follows in the footsteps of Bill Zempolich, who has provided commendable leadership during his tenure. Bill will remain an active board member. We extend our warm gratitude to Bill for his dedicated service and leadership, and we are excited for Jessica to pick up the reins.



## Florida Field Trip Recap

In just 11 days, a group of 13 students, two instructors, and the field trip leader and organizer, Kacey Lohmann, traveled from Ann Arbor all the way to Key West and back.

Along the way, they explored a series of coral reefs and carbonate deposits along the North American continent ranging in age from the Ordovician, to the Eocene, to the Pleistocene, to modern. Students examined these environments, learned about the evolution of the continental platform over time, collected fossils and rock specimens, observed coastal processes, and swam and snorkeled in the beautiful waters of Southern Florida on both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

Along the way, they also learned to camp (including setting up tents in the dark), drive in a caravan, take field notes, and make observations when looking at rocks and outcrops. They also managed to eat more Mexican food than previously imagined, get to the southernmost point in the continental US, have a great time along the way, and learn from Kacey's extraordinary knowledge of the region.



**RECENT****EVENTS**

## John and Ruth Dorr Awards Dinner

The Dorr Awards Dinner this year was another tremendous success! Our department saw an impressive turnout as students, staff, postdocs, faculty, families, and friends convened at the Graduate Hotel to celebrate the remarkable achievements of this year's award recipients.

This year's award winners include:

- John Dorr Graduate Academic Achievement Award: Colleen Yancey
- Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award: Allison Curley, Alex Quizon, and Xue Su
- Outstanding MS Research Award: Kaitlin Koshurba and Michael Machesky
- Outstanding Graduate Student Service Award: Allison Curley and Ethan Shirley
- Mark Robbins Innovative Teaching Award: Sydney Gable, Jiaqi Lu, and Alex Quizon
- Gold Star Award: Sanaa El-Sayed, Lucas Gomes, Cecilia Howard, Tara Lonsdorf, Cameron Tripp, and Diana Velazquez

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- GeoClub Best GSI Award: Tara Lonsdorf
- Undergraduate Academic Excellence Award: Samantha Davies, Katherine Harpenau, Caroline Peck, and Hadley Vande Vusse
- Award for Academic Excellence in Earth and Environmental Sciences: Eric Waters
- Alumni Undergraduate Award: Samantha Davies
- Camp Davis Field Studies Award: Flora Luo, Rachel Mintz, and Anna Scheck
- Outstanding Minor Award: Mya Welch

We extend heartfelt congratulations to this year's honorees! Their exceptional accomplishments and dedication significantly contribute to our department's success and signal the contributions they'll make in their careers. They all make EARTH a department to be proud of!

We are deeply grateful to the late John and Ruth Dorr, and to their children, whose gift enables this special annual event.



## 20th Annual Michigan Geophysical Union Symposium

On April 5, students, faculty, and AAB members gathered for the annual MGU symposium. This grad student-organized one-day conference brings together students and faculty from EARTH, CLaSP, and Chemistry to present research relating to a wide range of geoscience topics. Sixty-four posters were presented in two sessions, punctuated by a midday break to enjoy lunch and short talks by talented undergraduate researchers. The day concluded with a reception and awards presentation for the top posters and talks.

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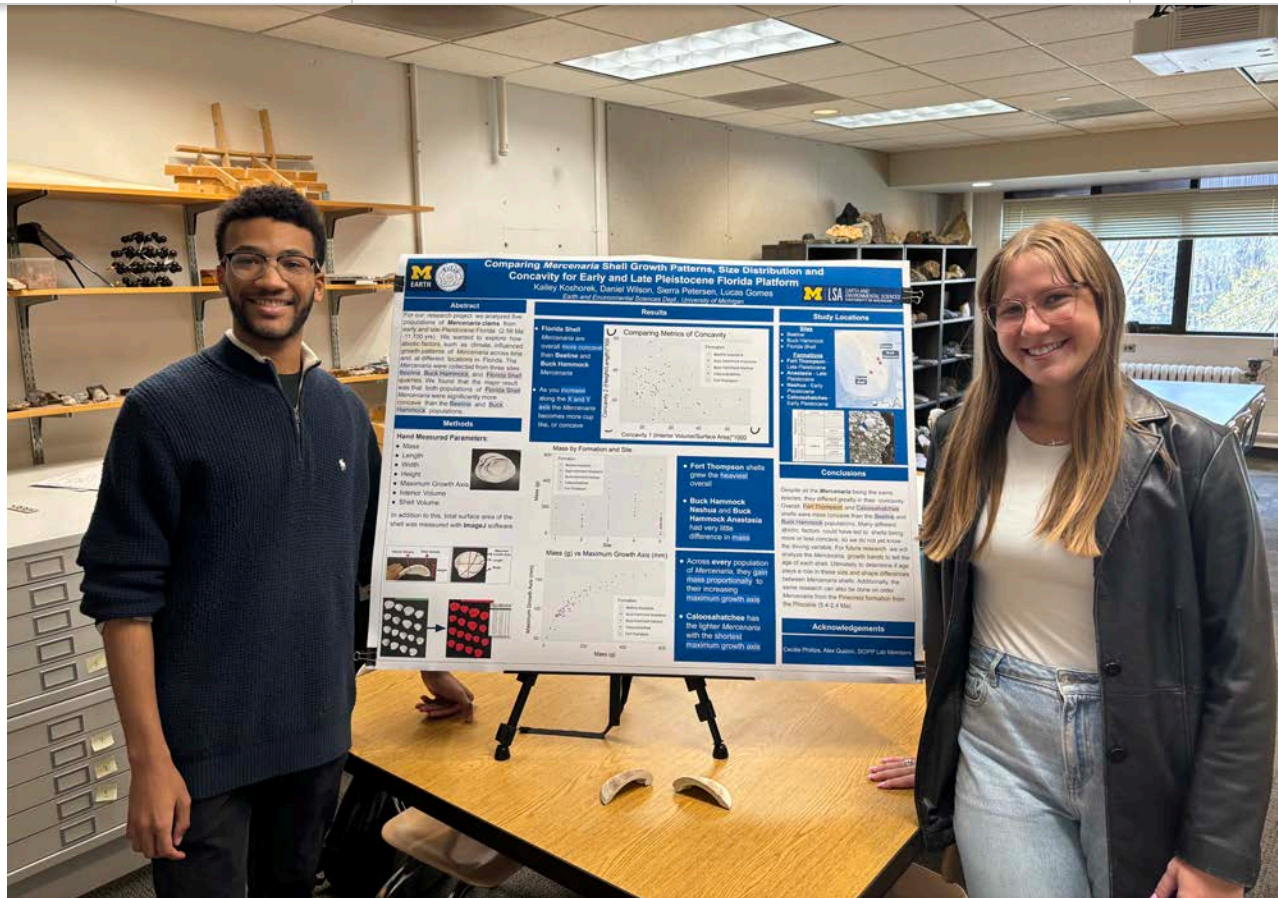
Sciences Building with a giant *Quetzalcoatlus* model flying overhead. The new venue was deemed a great success and we plan to return. We really valued the contributions of AAB judges and plan to continue that tradition in the future. This event is a great way to highlight student research in our department and connect students with alumni.



## GeoClub Spring Banquet

GeoClub's annual Spring Banquet was held on April 6 at Cobblestone Farm. EARTH community members and guests gathered over tasty tacos and beverages. After dinner, the entertainment commenced with amusing and creative skits presented by faculty and students, including a pitch for Taylor Swift as the department's next hire, Sierra Petersen's hilarious newflash updates, and Assistant Professor Robert Holder's *The Great British Baking Show* win. Congratulations to Sierra for winning the award for best skit this year!

The event included two new games: matching various faculty and staff to their baby photos (shout-out to winners Jenna Munson and Sierra) and their research-themed table centerpieces (congrats again to our winners, graduate students Tara Lonsdorf and Jing Ci Neo). The night ended with music and dancing. We're really thrilled to see the EARTH community coming together and rebuilding with a spirit of joy and levity post-COVID.



## Inaugural EARTH Symposium

On April 10, the department hosted the first-ever EARTH Symposium. With roughly 75 attendees, the symposium showcased poster presentations from 18 undergraduate students and oral presentations from two MS students. Undergraduate work ranged from first-year Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) research to senior thesis projects. Project descriptions can be found [here](#). Attendees also enjoyed a delicious lunch from Zingerman's Deli and received custom lunch box sets to help reduce the use of single-use products. The department looks forward to expanding this event in the coming years!



## Commencement Reception

On May 3, we celebrated the accomplishments of our graduating students at the 2024 Commencement Reception. Students and their families mingled with department members over a delicious spread of hors d'oeuvres and treats, in this annual traditional event.

Congratulations to the Class of 2024 for their inspiring academic accomplishments. They are now equipped to tackle global environmental and Earth science challenges with the expertise and passion fostered during their studies. Best wishes to these graduates as they embark on their careers, primed to continue making a positive impact on our world.

We invite readers to reach out to graduating students and other alums on [UCAN](#), UM's alumni connection platform. Go Blue!

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