

Ottawa-Carleton Institute of Biology

23rd Annual Symposium

April 27th-28th, 2026



Networks in Nature

Symposium Program



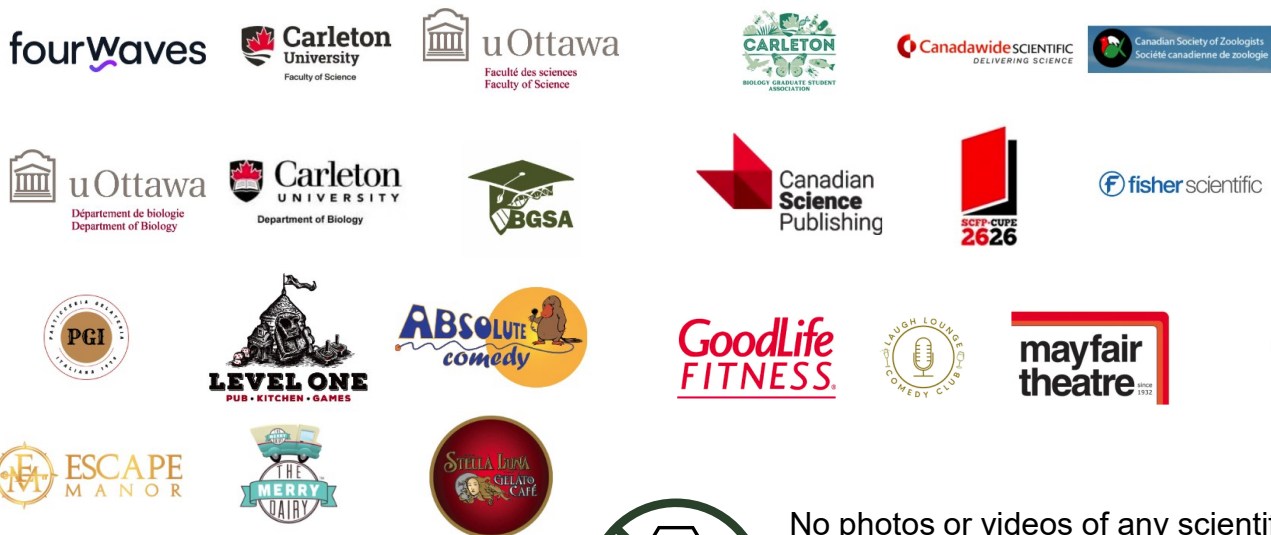
Welcome to OCIB 2026!

The Ottawa-Carleton Institute of Biology is a collaboration between the Biology Departments at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa. OCIB members span across multiple disciplines of biology, such as neuroscience, cellular and molecular biology, biochemistry, physiology, evolution and genetics to name a few. The OCIB facilitates interdisciplinary research, and collaboration between these two universities, as well as external partners.

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No photos or videos of any scientific presentation, including posters, without permission from the presenters



Monday, April 27th, 2026

11:00 AM – 12:45 PM	Registration Desk Open	Health Sciences Lobby
12:45 PM – 1:00 PM	Opening Remarks	Health Sciences 1301
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Keynote – Dr. Heather Kharouba	Health Sciences 1301
2:00 – 2:20 PM	3 Minute Thesis Presentations	Health Sciences 1301
2:20 PM – 2:45 PM	Coffee Break	Health Sciences Lobby
2:45 – 3:45 PM	Poster Session – Even Numbers	Health Sciences Lobby
3:45 PM – 4:00 PM	Coffee Break	Health Sciences Lobby
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Poster Session – Odd Numbers	Health Sciences Lobby
5:00 – 5:20 PM	Closing Remarks	Health Sciences 1301

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026

8:00 AM – 8:45 AM	Registration Desk Open	Health Sciences Lobby
8:45 AM – 9:00 AM	Opening Remarks	Health Sciences 1301
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Keynote – Dr. Christina Davy	Health Sciences 1301
10:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Coffee Break	Health Sciences Lobby
10:15 AM – 11:30 AM	Animal Behaviour Animal Physiology 1 Cellular and Molecular 1 Conservation and Ecology Plant Sciences	RB3224 RB3220 RB3202 Health Sciences 1301 RB3228
11:30 AM – 1:30 PM	Lunch Break	
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	Alumni Panel – Where are they now?	Health Sciences 1301
2:30 PM– 3:45 PM	Animal Physiology 2 Cellular and Molecular 2 EVO DEVO Genetics Undergraduate Talks	RB3224 RB3228 RB3202 Health Sciences 1301 RB3220
3:45 PM – 4:15 PM	Coffee Break	Health Sciences Lobby
4:15 PM – 4:45 PM	Closing Remarks	Health Sciences 1301
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	PubTalk – Dr Rajendhran Rajakumar	House of Targ

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Heather Kharouba

Monday, April 27th, 2026

Associate Professor, University of Ottawa

Finding glimmers of hope in insect conservation.



Dr. Heather Kharouba is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Ottawa and holds a University Research Chair in Global Change Biology. She leads The Meadow Mosaic Lab which focuses on the conservation of meadow ecosystems in a changing climate. They study how plants and insects respond to climate change and land-use change, how these responses can be anticipated, and how meadow habitats can be more effectively managed under ongoing environmental change. The lab's work spans multiple spatial and biological scales, integrating field surveys and experiments with data synthesis and modelling approaches. A central goal of their research is to understand the factors that structure species' distributions, phenology (the timing of life-history events), and interactions between plants and insects.

Her research program emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together ecological science with social sciences and the arts to address ethical, cultural, and decision-making dimensions of conservation in human-modified landscapes. By linking ecological theory with applied conservation questions through these collaborations, the lab's research seeks to improve predictions of biological responses to climate change and to inform evidence-based strategies for meadow conservation and restoration.

Dr. Christina Davy

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026

Associate Professor, Carleton University

Integrative research approaches to support wildlife conservation



Dr. Christina Davy is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology at Carleton University, where she and her students study conservation science. Their research integrates disease ecology, behavioural ecology, and conservation genomics to inform the recovery of species at risk, especially bats and reptiles. Christina previously worked as a Research Scientist with the Government of Ontario and served as on the Board of Directors for the Canadian Herpetological Society from 2017-2024. She serves on the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and is happiest when wandering around in wetlands looking for turtles.



Pub Talk – House of Targ

Dr. Rajendhran Rajakumar

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026, 6:00 pm

Associate Professor, University of Ottawa



I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology, and cross-appointed in the Department of Cellular & Molecular Medicine, at the University of Ottawa. I received my PhD at McGill University working with ants with Dr. Ehab Abouheif in the areas of developmental genetics & epigenetics within the emerging field of Ecological Evolutionary Developmental Biology (Eco-Evo-Devo). I next did an NSERC postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Florida with Dr. Martin Cohn, expanding my expertise to include vertebrate developmental genetics and Evo-Devo. Finally, I did a CIHR postdoctoral fellowship and a Charles A. King Trust Postdoctoral Research Fellowship with Dr. Norbert Perrimon where I trained with the classic genetics model *Drosophila melanogaster*. During this time, I also did a Visiting Fellowship at the Konrad Lorenz Institute (KLI) in Austria.



The Pub Talk will be held at House of Targ, 1077 Bank St. Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 3W9, (right across from the Mayfair Theatre)



Alumni Panel – Where are they now?

Tuesday April 28th, 1:30 pm, moderated by Rebecca Dean, OCIB co-chair and PhD Candidate for Carleton University

Dr. Matt Muzzatti

Postdoctoral Fellow, Cornell University and Carleton University, Carleton University Alumnus



Dr. Matt Muzzatti is a Mitacs Postdoctoral Research Fellow split between Cornell University and Carleton University. He is an applied entomologist, and cares deeply about leveraging insect physiology, nutrition, and ecology to transform global food systems. Matt's academic journey has taken him from studying how to control insect pests in agricultural systems to optimizing how we grow insects at scale. His current research now focuses on understanding how environmental conditions shape insect feeding, metabolism, and growth in mass-rearing systems. Outside the lab, Matt is usually chasing plastic on an ultimate frisbee field or portaging through the Canadian wilderness with his wife and dog.

Dr. Kristin Eccles

Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa, University of Ottawa Alumnus



Dr. Kristin Eccles is a computational toxicologist whose research focuses on understanding the health impacts of complex environmental chemical mixtures. She currently leads the Computational Toxicology Research Group at Health Canada, where they use methodologies, including high-content imaging and mixture modelling, to support human and risk assessment. In August, Dr. Eccles is transitioning to an Assistant Professor and Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in One Health & Toxicology at the University of Ottawa, where she will continue her research program linking mechanistic toxicology to real-world environmental exposures. Her work aims to generate actionable science that informs regulatory decision-making and protects population health.

Dr. Alex Wong

Associate Professor, Carleton University, Carleton University Alumnus



Alex Wong is an Associate Professor of Biology at Carleton University. He holds a BA in Biology and Philosophy, as well as an MA in Philosophy, from Carleton, and a PhD in Genetics and Development from Cornell University. He studies the evolution and genomics of microbes, with particular interests in the impact of genetic background on evolutionary processes, the genetics of antimicrobial resistance, and genomics-enabled pathogen surveillance. In addition to his research, Dr. Wong participates in international policy and science efforts around antimicrobial resistance and infectious disease.

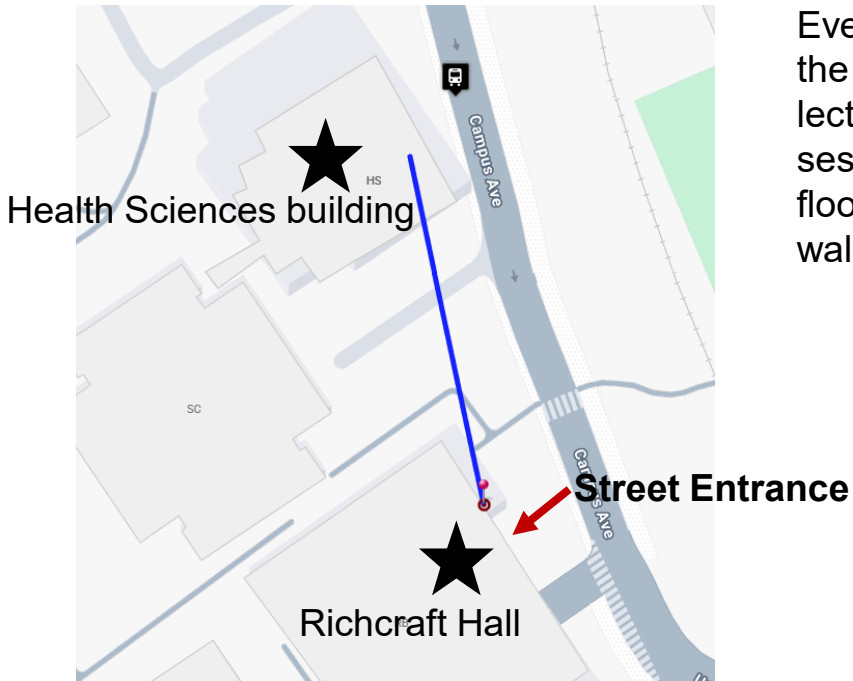
Dr. Jane Allison

Postdoctoral Fellow at Carleton University, University of Ottawa Alumnus



Jane is a conservation physiologist and toxicologist studying how abiotic stressors, like pollution, influence invertebrate health. For her current postdoctoral fellowship with Dr. Heath MacMillan, she investigates the impacts of microplastic form and additives on insects, using an integrative approach spanning whole animal to subcellular responses. This is her second time attending OCIB and she is looking forward to connecting with students exploring future academic pathways.

Locations

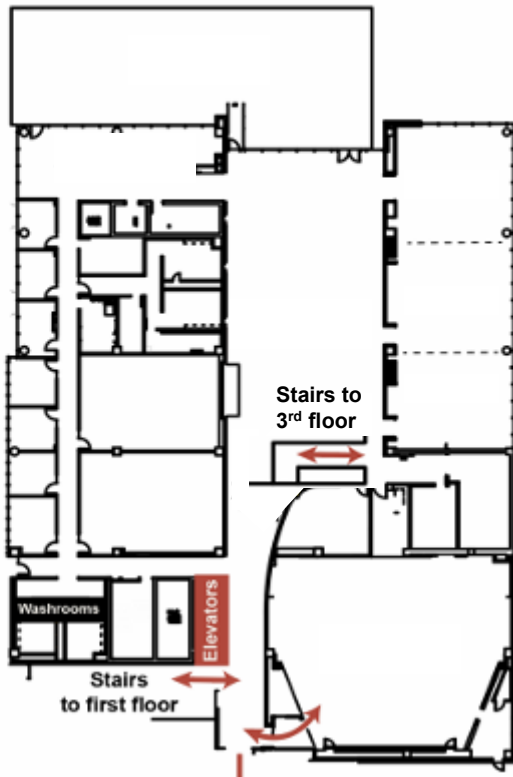


Events in Health Sciences will take place in the main space, in the first-floor lobby and lecture hall. See below for the concurrent session rooms in Richcraft Hall on the 3rd floor (up the stairs across from the living wall).

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



Presentation Program

3 Minute Thesis | HS 1301

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 2:00-2:20 pm

Session Chair: Sarah Green

2:00 PM - 2:05 PM	Development of an Automated Calyculin-A induced Premature Chromosome Condensation (PCC) Assay for Biodosimetry	Hailey Adams
2:05 PM - 2:10 PM	Teaching yeast to love terephthalic acid using CRISPR-Cas9	Ryan Lancaster
2:10 PM - 2:15 PM	Brewing a solution to plastic pollution	Flor Ali Salehie Barbosa

Animal Physiology 1 | RB 3220

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 10:15-11:30 am

Session Chair: Karen Kadamani

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Seasonal Remodeling of Bee Mitochondria	Adèle Léger
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	d13 neurons mediate spinal motor learning	Emam Khan
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	Sustained dexamethasone exposure induces insulin resistance in mice, increases proliferation and DNA damage in β -cells and alters their function	Lili Grieco-St-Pierre
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	Quantifiable metrics of saccadic eye-movement improve with time in concussed subjects	Katherine Wiebe
11:15 AM – 11:30 AM		

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Aryl hydrocarbon receptor activation by environmental pollutants induces genotoxic stress during stem cell-derived islet differentiation	Bailey Laforest
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Understanding Symbiotic Gene Regulation Through lncRNAs in the Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungus <i>Rhizophagus irregularis</i>	Fiona Hutchinson
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	The 3D genome of <i>Gigaspora margarita</i> unveils stable chromatin and nucleolar organization and symbiont-dependent genome dynamics	Ken Mugambi
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	Engineering <i>S. cerevisiae</i> for the upcycling of Polyethylene terephthalate (PET)	Flor Ali Salehie Barbosa
11:15 AM – 11:30 AM	Formulating Hybrid Nanoparticles for Efficient miR-486-5p Delivery to Treat Acute Kidney Injury	Äli Oliver Maadelat

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Earth to Caterpillar: Substrate-borne vibration receptors in the masked birch caterpillar (<i>Drepana arcuata</i>)	Hanna Peters
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	They're not bugged by plastic - Crickets fail to avoid microplastic-contaminated feed	Emma Brown
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	Vibration Nation: Exploring the rich vibroscape of an arboreal arthropod community	Fraser Schellhorn
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	Walk This Way: The Role of Sensory Feedback in Amphibious Locomotion	Kennis Ross
11:15 AM – 11:30 AM	Testing adaptive bias: how prior beliefs shape behaviour under uncertainty	Katherine Di Iorio

Presentation Program

Plant Sciences | RB 3228

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 10:15-11:30 am

Session Chair: Dean Whitehead

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	From small details to a big picture: Utilizing micro-morphology to circumscribe taxa in Cyperaceae	Cassandra Bradshaw
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Characterization of Tar Spot Resistance in Maize	Emily Marion
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	Characterising barley sensitivity to a fungal cyclic lipopeptide virulence factor	Siddharthan Lakshmanan
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	Loci contributing to yield resilience in soybean: breeding for a sustainable future in the face of a changing climate	Simon Lackey
11:15 AM – 11:30 AM	AMF identity and plant host species interact to determine soil bacterial community structure	Robert Ferguson

Conservation and Ecology | HS 1301

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 10:15-11:30 am

Session Chair: Meaghan Harper

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	When is habitat fragmentation bad for biodiversity?	Ivana Cardoso
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Evaluating the Effectiveness of Recovery Measure Implementation in Downlisting Aquatic Species Listed Under the Species at Risk Act	Laurence Godin
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	Examining the Legacy Effects of Watershed-Scale Upland Timber Harvesting on Freshwater Macroinvertebrate Health and Diversity in Quebec Canada.	Felix Chan
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	What is a Charismatic Species and Who Says?	Emily McKnight
11:15 AM – 11:30 AM	Exploring Indigenous-led land caring in urban areas for bird conservation	Kristen Vlahiotis

Presentation Program

Undergraduate Talks | RB 3220

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 2:30-3:00 pm

Session Chair: Anthea Mavridis

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	Tissue-specific gene-expression responses to benzo[b]fluoranthene in mouse testis and bone marrow	Sofea Prabakaran
2:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Two Mutations, Two Assays, Too Much Resistance: Development of a qPCR Assay for Molecular Detection of VKORC1 Gene SNPs Indicating Anticoagulant Resistance in Canadian House Mouse Populations	Celine Larose

EVO DEVO | RB 3202

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 2:30-3:45 pm

Session Chair: Mahmoud El-Saadi

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	Evolutionary Conservation and Divergence of Epigenetics across Glomeromycotina	Novellus Washington
2:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Actinodin gene evolution and divergence timing during the fin to limb transition.	Jeremy Atho
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	The Role of the Hippo-Yorkie Pathway in Caste Development in Ants	Thalia Molloy Charette
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	DNA Viruses Generally Show Higher Phylogenetic Divergence in Polar Regions and Remain Underrepresented in Current Databases	Vaibhav Kulkarni
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	A multi-generational experiment demonstrating rapid adaptation in arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi to environmental stressors	Kevin MacColl

Presentation Program

Animal Physiology 2 | RB 3224

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 2:30-3:00 pm

Session Chair: Rebecca Dean

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	House crickets tolerate water loss during desiccation	Jacinta Kong
2:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Insects as natural recyclers; tolerance of bioplastics in the diet of farmed crickets (<i>Acheta domesticus</i>)	Sophie Kasdorf
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Diet quality modifies thermal performance but not upper thermal limits in the house cricket <i>Acheta domesticus</i>	Émile Vadboncoeur
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	Naked Immunity: Naked Mole-Rat Microglia do not Retain a Neotenic Morphology	Karen Kadamani
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	From Micro to Nano: Insect-Driven Transformation and Persistence of Plastic Particles	Marshall Ritchie

Cellular and Molecular 2 | RB 3228

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 2:30-3:45 pm

Session Chair: Dr. Gursel Gur

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	Deciphering potato wart associated microbiomes: first insights into biocontrol potential and ongoing characterization of pathobiomes from Dutch and Canadian samples	Ishraq Akbar
2:45 PM – 3:00 PM	How to Make a Soldier: The Role of Hormones during Caste-Specific Development in Ants	Olivia MacMillan
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Proteomic mapping of the stress responsive MYB41 regulatory network in Arabidopsis.	Kassandra Fugard
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	Characterizing and comparing closely related novel Arctic and Antarctic green algal species	Allison Szenasi
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Could microbially-derived bioplastics be used to detect extant or extinct life on another planet?	Kyla Malo

Presentation Program

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 @ 2:30-3:00 pm

Session Chair: Dr. Bahram Samanfar

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	Identifying Local Environmental Adaptation in Jack Pine (<i>Pinus banksiana</i>) to Inform Predictions of Maladaptation under Future Climate Conditions.	Grace Gardner
2:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Evolutionary responses of metal resistance genes to glacial runoff in High Arctic soils (Lake Hazen, Nunavut)	Franck Ouedraogo
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Genetic and epigenetic diversity in AMF: a key to herbicide tolerance?	Arturo Angeles Padilla
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	Keeping an Eye on Plasticity Genes: Insulin/TOR Pathway Components Mediating Nutritional Plasticity of Eyes Within and Between Sex	Sarah Heffernan
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Exploring Cross-Kingdom RNAi in White Mold: miRNAs Targeting Soybean Immunity	Amirali Moin

Posters

Even Session | HS Lobby

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 2:45-3:45 pm

2	Effects of dietary protein availability and octopamine on cannibalism and survival in the house cricket (<i>Acheta domesticus</i>)	Avery Borris
4	Understanding how land use disturbances flow through watersheds: The key to effective freshwater protection in Canada?	Marion Morissette
6	Response of vegetation variables to wetland restoration in temperate North American wetlands: a meta-analysis	Amy Bachhuber
8	Alleviation of waterlogging stress in barley using novel plant growth-promoting microbes	Asher Kim
10	Designing Synthetic Microbial Consortia for PET Plastic Degradation	Marcus Leclerc
12	Novel β -Galactosidase Improves Lactose Fermentation in <i>S. cerevisiae</i>	Dana Graves
14	Actinodin genes phylogenetic evolution	Jeremy Atho
16	Investigation of endocrine crosstalk between thyroid hormone and the somatotrophic axis in Atlantic salmon, <i>Salmo salar</i>	Elizabeth Brown
18	Recommended folic acid doses achieve optimal folate status independent of MTHFR 677C>T SNP genotype	Jana Palaniyandi
20	Investigating the impact of temperature, nutrition, and hormone on caste-specific development in <i>Camponotus floridanus</i>	Shikun (David) Qiu

Posters

Even Session | HS Lobby

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 2:45-3:45 pm

22	Identifying the exact genomic location of the e1-nl deletion and investigation of underlying candidate gene for the E7 maturity locus in Glycine max using large-scale next generation sequencing data	Mohamad Elian
24	Surveillance of viral and bacterial pathogens using built environment swabbing	Aaron Hinz
26	From Forest to Streams: How Spruce Budworm Outbreaks Change Insectivorous Bird Assemblages	Eric Maquignaz
28		
30	A qPCR SNP genotyping assay for the analysis of a chronic wasting disease resilient mutation in white-tailed deer	Shelby Atkinson
32	Towing the line: Examining the roles of dlx genes in zebrafish (Danio rerio) lateral line formation in early development	Gabrielle Quenneville
34	From flies to ants: Interorgan signalling and allometric potential in developing wings	Edie Olender
36	Investigating the functional impact of miRNAs on caste-specific development in Camponotus floridanus.	Davina Ntanga
38	No longer winging it: Integrating automated tracking and acoustics to inform forest management for bat conservation	Taryn Muldoon
40	Evolutionary responses of metal resistance genes to glacial runoff in High Arctic soils (Lake Hazen, Nunavut)	Franck Ouedraogo

Posters

Even Session | HS Lobby

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 2:45-3:45 pm

42	Molecular ontogeny, localization and function of serotonin and serotonin transporters in the gut of zebrafish	Brenna Scott
44	Hypoxia-associated changes in TNF, LDH, and EGLN expression in the epaulette shark: implications for immune-metabolic trade-offs	Zaynab Rachini
46	Visualization of Glioma Using Silicon Quantum Dot / DNA Aptamers Conjugates	Maureen Lintag
48	Adaptive laboratory evolution of <i>Spathaspora passalidarum</i> for increased ethanol tolerance	Ana Lima

Posters

Odd Session | HS Lobby

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 4:00-5:00 pm

1	Low-Level Tetracycline Exposure Promotes Long-Term Salmonella Persistence and Plasmid-Mediated Gene Transfer in a Dysbiotic Murine Gut Model	Amer Abdelgany
3	Investigating transcript localization of chm and foxo3a/b in developing zebrafish: A role for hypoxia	Benjamin Harrison
5	Identifying Cancer Cachexia Humoral Factors Affecting Muscle Stem Cell Regeneration Capacity	Matteo LoFaro
7	The Role of Secretoneurin in Zebrafish Oocyte Maturation and Ovulation	Emma Oguamanam
9	Analyzing the Swimming Kinematics of the Polychaete Worms, Nephtys Caeca and Arenicola Marina in Different Viscosity Environments	Karina Calder
11	The role of ovarian nonapeptide receptors in regulating female zebrafish reproduction	Marina Spitz
13	Concussion Impairs Balance	Morleigh Mckenna
15	Effects of dlx gene knockouts on PV+ interneuron development in the zebrafish forebrain	Maïka Harvey
17	Light-Mediated Trends in Palmelloid Formation Across Polar Chlamydomonas	Danielle Bowman
19	Effect of acclimation on body water content and latent injury in cold-stressed Drosophila melanogaster	Mahmoud El-Saadi

Posters

Odd Session | HS Lobby

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 4:00-5:00 pm

21	Upcycling of spent brewer's yeast for sustainable brewing practices	Carolyn Scott
23	Growth rates during early development in zebrafish mutant lines	Kyana Lim
25	Taking out the trash - Investigating Microbial Communities associated with Electronic Waste	Danielle Jenkins
27	Novel Agrobacterium Mediated Transformation Protocol of Psychrophilic Antarctic Green Algae <i>Chlamydomonas priscui</i>	Diana Constantinescu
29	Targeting dl3 neurons to promote locomotor recovery after spinal cord injury	Shahriar Nasiri
31	Investigating hypoxia-driven transcript localization of foxo3a and foxo3b in zebrafish: A framework for developmental stress regulation	Nour Tebourbi
33	Investigating Signatures of Selection Associated with Eye Phenotypes Across the Ant Phylogeny	Nicholas Clancy
35	Form to Function: The locomotor output of <i>A. marina</i> and <i>N. caeca</i>	Eshal Uddin
37	Characterizing novel methylketones synthases obtained from bioprospecting in potato	Ian Russett
39	A morphometric analysis of the poplar leaf aphid, <i>Chaitophorus populicola</i> (Hemiptera: Aphididae)	Kit Coristine Anderson

Posters

Odd Session | HS Lobby

Monday, April 27th, 2026 @ 4:00-5:00 pm

41	Chromosome-level Assembly and Epigenetic Analysis of the Honeybee Parasite <i>Nosema ceranae</i>	Catrina Lane
43	Impact of warming on floral ultraviolet (UV) pigmentation	Jordan-Anne Rich
45	Trehalase (TREH) Genetic Variation in Mountain Pine Beetle Range Expansion	Isabella Mayol Giannotti
47	An ERP Investigation of Semantic Richness in Healthy Older Adults and Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment	Romina Mirsaeidghazi

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