



MEET THE MVZ

A newsletter highlighting members of our community



WELCOME TO THE MVZ

Please help us welcome the newest members to the MVZ! Read on to learn more about our new graduate students, affiliated members, and post-doctoral fellows!

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS!



SIMON SCARPETTA

Postdoctoral Fellow, McGuire Lab

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I am a herpetologist and paleontologist originally from New Mexico, and I recently finished my PhD at UT Austin. I love being outside, especially in deserts of the southwest and temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

I am currently studying the phylogenetic, biogeographic, and ecologic history of iguanian lizards. I am also broadly interested in divergence time methods and fossil identification practices.

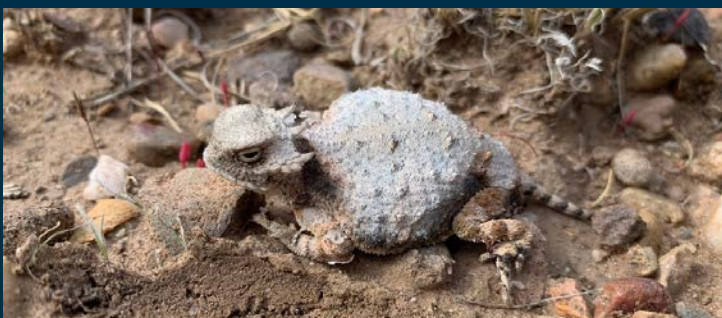
WHAT WORK OUTSIDE OF YOUR RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

I have enjoyed talking to middle and high school students about fossils and scientific careers at events like Darwin Day, Fossil Fest, and the High School Research Initiative at UT Austin. I would also say that the most meaningful part of my time as a graduate student was research mentorship of undergraduates.

FAVORITE DEI INITIATIVES YOU ARE CURRENTLY FOLLOWING RIGHT NOW?

@GeoLatinas,
#BlackInGeoscience/@BlkinGeoscience

**Simon's favorite vertebrates
are Phrynosomatid lizards,
alligator lizards, and *Aneides*
salamanders!**



GENEVIEVE MOUNT

Postdoctoral Fellow, Tarvin Lab

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I'm currently living in Logan, Utah co-advised by Molly Womack at Utah State University. I love cats, vegetables, audiobooks, football, and other weird and unique people. As a California native I loved living in Baton Rouge for my PhD. Geaux Tigers!

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

I am focused on how research methods impact the conclusions we draw, especially in phylogenetics. I am inspired by the problems that arise when taxa are lacking genomic resources, like herps. My research involves both developing and testing new methods along with empirical projects focused on amphibian conservation and phylogeography. Also, I like toads.

HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY?

First I learned about cane toads in Australia, which drew me towards conservation biology. As an undergrad at UC Davis I took an upper level molecular phylogenetics and evolution class and fell in love. It was so hard to understand some of the statistical phylogenetic concepts (and still is) but I continue to be compelled to understand and develop the methods. And I like herps a lot.



Genevieve's favorite vertebrates are toads (and herps)!



YOCELYN GUTIERREZ

Postdoctoral Fellow, Nachman Lab

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

In the last 10 years, I have been interested in evolutionary genomics in vertebrates such as prairie dogs, bats, hummingbirds and now mice. I love coding, reading, outdoor activities and I am learning to surf.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

My research is focused on the study of environmental adaptation along latitude clines in populations of *Mus musculus domesticus* from North and South America. I have also been studying dietary evolution in bats and hummingbirds using comparative genomics.

WHAT HAS BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE MVZ MEANT TO YOU OR YOUR CAREER?

Being part of the MVZ is a very enriching experience to consolidate my professional development in evolutionary biology, and the possibility of establishing collaborations.

WHAT SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT BLOWS YOUR MIND?

Convergence, co-evolution, plasticity

BESIDES THROUGH YOUR RESEARCH, HOW DO YOU PROMOTE SCIENCE?

I love teaching bioinformatics and genomics.



**Yocelyn's favorite
vertebrate is *Ambystoma
mexicanum*!**



INGA E. CONTI-JERPE

Postdoctoral Fellow, Tarvin Lab

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I am originally from New Jersey but I spent three years in North Carolina and seven years in Hong Kong before moving to the Bay Area. I love traveling, eating new foods, and spending time in or on the water.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

I am a coral reef ecologist interested in the function and evolution of nutritional symbioses across systems. I primarily use stable isotope tools to map and quantify nutrient transfer and assimilation, and I'm excited to broaden my skillset at UC Berkeley to include advanced molecular techniques.

FAVORITE DEI INITIATIVES YOU ARE CURRENTLY FOLLOWING RIGHT NOW?

Hollaback!'s free Bystander Intervention Training focusing on harassment issues specific to different minority groups (AAPI, LGBTQ+, and Latinx, among others)

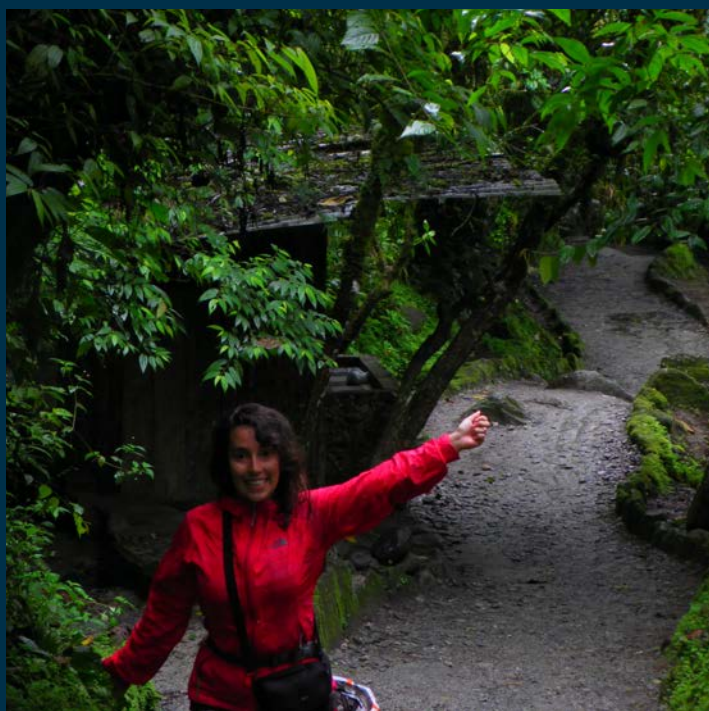
BESIDES THROUGH YOUR RESEARCH, HOW DO YOU PROMOTE SCIENCE?

I enjoy mentoring young people through independent research projects. I find that guiding high school students through their own questions and experiments helps them build critical thinking skills they can use in all aspects of their lives. I primarily mentor through Headwaters Science Institute, a science education non-profit based near Tahoe. You can also find me sharing my thoughts on all things science, nature, and academia on Twitter.



Inga's favorite vertebrate is *Bolbometopon muricatum*, the humphead parrot fish!





M. FERNANDA (FEÑA) PALOMINOS

Postdoctoral Fellow, Martin Lab

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I'm currently working on a PhD in Neuroscience at the Universidad de Valparaíso and I will be an incoming Postdoctoral Scholar in Chris Martin's lab. I'm moving to Berkeley from the longest and narrowest country on Earth, Chile.

**Feña's favorite vertebrates
are "endless fish most
beautiful!"**



WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

I'm interested in the genetic basis of sensory systems evolution and its consequences on the acquisition of craniofacial novelties.

BESIDES THROUGH YOUR RESEARCH, HOW DO YOU PROMOTE SCIENCE?

Doing outreach to kids in the upper most hills of Valparaíso. I participate in Ciencia Al Tiro, a program run by PhD students that seeks to teach the science and logic behind our daily life activities.



KANNON PEARSON

PhD Student, Tarvin Lab

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I am originally from El Paso, Texas but I have lived in the Bay Area for seven years. I transferred to UC Berkeley from Foothill Community College as an undergrad, and am so excited to be back for my PhD! In my spare time, I enjoy cooking for others and sketching.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

I'm broadly interested in the evolution of toxin sequestration/synthesis in amphibians. In particular, I'm curious to explore the relationship between certain amphibians and their skin-associated microbes, some strains of which supply or modify toxins used by the amphibians in antipredator defenses. Other areas of interest are the adaptive significance of amphibian toxin cocktails and the evolutionary repurposing of endogenous hormones as chemical defenses in toads.

WHAT HAS BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE MVZ MEANT TO YOU OR YOUR CAREER?

It may be a bit cliché, but the MVZ has the most positive, supportive, and intellectually stimulating community I have encountered in my research career thus far. Additionally, I anticipate the collections will be an invaluable resource for my research.

"when threatened, [*P. waltl*] can flex their bodies such that the sharp tips of their ribs tear through their skin and injure predators!" →



Kannon's favorite vertebrates are *Pleurodeles waltl*; other recent favorites include *Atelopus*, *Rhabdophis tigrinus*, and *Zenaida macroura*!





Michelle's favorite vertebrates are Felids in particular, Carnivora in general!



MICHELLE DAVILA

California Conservation Genomics Project Coordinator

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I grew up in the Bay Area! I love boba and croissants.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

I'm interested in most scientific pursuits, but I am most captivated by behavioral ecology and ethology. Differences in behavior can alter how every other facet of biology manifests.

HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY?

I've always loved observing animals; some of my earliest memories are watching animals at home and outside. It was a pretty easy leap from general interest to in-depth interest, especially because of the general diversity of life. I appreciate all taxa!

WHAT SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT BLOWS YOUR MIND?

I'm really impressed by how nudibranchs can retain nematocysts from ingested Cnidaria, potentially developing immature nematocysts as well.

FAVORITE DEI INITIATIVES YOU ARE CURRENTLY FOLLOWING RIGHT NOW?

#autisticpride, #shareblackstories, #blackhair, #blackmammologists, #blackbirders, #asianpride, #transpride, #indigenouspride, #indigineousculture, #indigenousknowledge, #representationmatters