



Robert Fisher/USGS

## New 'Bumblebee' Gecko Discovered in Papua New Guinea

WERC scientist **Robert Fisher** and National Museum of Natural History scientist George Zug have described a new species of gecko from Papua New Guinea. Named *Nactus kunans*, it was described from two specimens collected in 2010 by Fisher and the Papua New Guinea National Museum from a remote village on Manus Island. The species epithet *kunans* means "bumblebee" in the local Nali language.

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3172>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/19/us-gecko-idUSBRE83107G20120419>

<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/sciencefair/post/2012/04/new-gecko-lizard-species-discovered-papua-new-guinea/>

<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/tree-snake-research-leads-to-manus-gecko-find/931634>

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/04/120423-bumblebee-gecko-new-species-science-papua-new-guinea/>

## NEW JOURNAL ARTICLES

Muzaffar, SB, NJ Hill, JY Takekawa, WM Perry, LM Smith, WM Boyce. 2012. **Role of bird movements in the epidemiology of West Nile and avian influenza virus.**

*Human-Wildlife Interactions* 6(1):72-88.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/ProductDetails.aspx?ID=4695>

Nussear, KE, CR Tracy, PA Medica, DS Wilson, RW Marlow, PS Corn. 2012. **Translocation as a conservation tool for desert tortoises: survivorship, reproduction, and movements.** *Journal of Wildlife Management*. doi: 10.1002/jwmg.390

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/ProductDetails.aspx?ID=4693>

## AWARDS

The **American Red Cross Santa Cruz County Chapter** has nominated WERC scientist **Josh Adams** for this year's **Red Cross Animal Rescue Hero award**.

Adams and his wife Hannahrose Nevin, a seabird ecologist with CDFG, were nominated together for their dedication to scientific research on oiled and injured seabirds along the central California coast.

[http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci\\_20449539](http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_20449539)

## EVENTS

**April 17-28, 2012 (Sausalito/Merced, CA)** WERC scientist **Nathan Stephenson** and scientist emeritus **Jan van Wagtenonck** gave invited talks on climate change and fire history at the **2012 National Parks Institute hosted by UC Merced**. The seminar gathers park managers internationally for professional education.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/Event.aspx?ID=106>

**April 18, 2012 (Irvine, CA)** **Nathan Stephenson** gave an invited seminar at **UC Irvine** on the environmental controls of forest biomass and productivity.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/Event.aspx?ID=103>

**April 20-23, 2012 (Zzyzx, CA)** WERC scientist **Kristin Berry** presented at the **26th annual Desert Symposium**, on the populations of the desert tortoises *Gopherus agassizii* and *G. morafkai*.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/Event.aspx?ID=100>

**April 24, 2012 (Sacramento, CA)** **John Takekawa** hosted **Luo Ze** of the **Chinese Academy of Sciences** for a guest lecture on the **Sacramento State** campus. Luo spoke on the Academy's computer technology use in migratory bird research in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/Event.aspx?ID=104>

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## NEW WERC PUBLICATION BRIEFS

### A Case of Uphill Distribution Shift in Plant Species Shown To Be Unrelated to Climate Warming

In a study published in *PLoS ONE*, USGS fire ecologist **Jon Keeley** and Texas Tech ecologist Dylan Schwilk respond to a report of climate-driven vegetation shift published in *PNAS*. The authors demonstrate that the reported “marching upslope” of *Ceanothus greggi* in California is likely an artifact of fire history, not due to climate warming. <http://www.werc.usgs.gov/ProductDetails.aspx?ID=4691>



Project Crevette



Project Crevette

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## Ecological Science Helps Tackle Devastating Human Parasite

Caused by a trematode parasite, schistosomiasis leads to internal organ and tissue damage in humans, creating distinctive distended abdomens in infected individuals. The disease is especially prevalent in Africa, and the non-profit group **Project Crevette** has been testing the biocontrol of the *Schistosoma* parasite in Senegal using a native prawn species. WERC scientist and parasite ecologist **Kevin Lafferty** has been advising the effort, working with a UC Santa Barbara postdoctoral researcher to design a study testing the native prawn *Macrobrachium volleihenii* as a biocontrol agent for the parasite's intermediate host — snails. The prawn had previously been decimated due to a river dam project which altered the native ecosystem, allowing schisto-vector snails to thrive.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/outreach.aspx?RecordID=133>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wns\\_WhoD86w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wns_WhoD86w)

## EVENTS (CONT'D)

**April 25, 2012 (Honiara, Solomon Is.)**  
WERC scientist **Robert Fisher** presented a session on endangered Fijian iguanas (*Brachylophus* spp.) at the **IUCN Pacific Islands Species Forum**.

<http://www.werc.usgs.gov/Event.aspx?ID=105>

**May 19-20, 2012 (Menlo Park, CA)**  
The upcoming **USGS Open House family science festival** in Menlo Park will feature WERC research, including South Bay restoration science and sea otter studies.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/173418226108525/>

## IN THE NEWS

### The Japanese Nuclear Meltdown May Have Reduced New Zealand's Mutton-bird Population (Radio New Zealand)

Research led by WERC scientist **Josh Adams** is mentioned in this update on sooty shearwaters returning to New Zealand. To examine whether these migrating birds may have been exposed to radiation from Japan's Fukushima incident, Adams and New Zealand colleagues collected feather samples from approximately 300 shearwaters in April. Adams and the **USGS Pacific Coastal and Marine Science Center** will attempt to analyze the Cesium-137 levels of these specimens.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/104545/muttonbird-numbers-lower>

**Metal Threat for Rails? / The Bird Laboratory (Estuary News)** Two WERC projects are mentioned in the latest newsletter of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership.

**Josh Ackerman's** recent study on mercury effects on California clapper rail body condition is highlighted in the news briefs. Another article interviews **Laura Valoppi**, who spoke on bird usage of experimental islands at Pond SF2 of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.

[http://www.sfestuary.org/PDF/newsletters/Estuary\\_04\\_12\\_6\\_Web.pdf](http://www.sfestuary.org/PDF/newsletters/Estuary_04_12_6_Web.pdf)

## OUTREACH NEWS

On May 1, WERC scientist **Laura Valoppi** will join high school students at **Dinner with a Scientist**, a career development event. The evening will be hosted by the **Sacramento Area Science Project**, which is organized by UC Davis and Sac State.

<http://sasp.ucdavis.edu/news/dinner-scientist>