



## FEBRUARY 2026



Student Logan Scroggins takes part in a prescribed burn at the Austin Cary Forest during a lab session of Fire Ecology & Management class. The course is taught by Associate Professor of Fire Ecology Raelene Crandall, Ph.D. Suzette Cook/SFFGS

## NEWS

The Gulf Research Program (GRP) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine announced late last year its 2025-2027 cohort of Early-Career Research Fellows in the environmental protection and stewardship and education research tracks, including two from SFFGS.

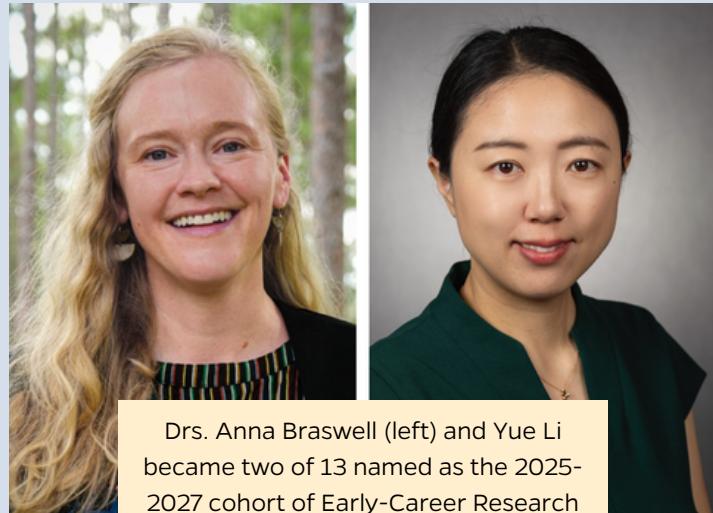
University of Florida Assistant Professor/State Extension Specialist Anna Braswell, Ph.D., is one of eight fellows on the environmental protection and stewardship track. They will be working toward advancing scientific knowledge in the design, implementation, and evaluation of nature-based solutions that enhance ecosystem health and community resilience to extreme weather in the Gulf region.

Assistant Professor of Environmental Education Yue Li, Ph.D., one of five fellows on the education research track, will be working to advance STEM and environmental education in the Gulf region or Alaska by considering the impacts of establishing sense of place in formal or informal learning environments.

• • •

Administrative and faculty moves at SFFGS in the late fall semester and early spring semester included the appointment of Joe Bisesi, Ph.D., as the associate director for the Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, along with Levente Juhász, Ph.D., coming on board as an assistant professor of Geomatics and director of the GATOR Lab.

Bisesi, moving over from the Department of Environmental and Global Health, will focus on promoting the development of safe and effective management strategies for aquatic invasive plants, strengthening CAIP's reputation through enhanced communication, and collaboration and growing existing relationships with state, federal and industry partners.



Drs. Anna Braswell (left) and Yue Li became two of 13 named as the 2025-2027 cohort of Early-Career Research fellows by the Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

## MORE NEWS

Juhász's work focuses on the convergence of geospatial science, artificial intelligence, and scalable computing. Key areas include developing frameworks for geospatial reasoning using Large Language Models (LLMs), interrogating the quality, bias, and malicious defacement of crowdsourced data (e.g., VGI and OpenStreetMap), and building scalable environmental decision support systems, such as the EPA-funded "Future Shorelines" project.

• • •

Rachel Herrington and Wes Wolfe joined the SFFGS staff in late last year as, respectively, our new Administrative Assistant III and Communications Specialist. We welcome them both.

continued on Page 3

## GATOR NATION GIVING DAY

Gator Nation Giving Day is set for Feb. 19, and it's a time to engage not only the UF community, but those specifically connected to SFFGS as well. Priorities for this year's campaign include the Tyce Hall Challenge and the Gator Geomatics Challenge.

The Hall family pledged to meet gifts to the Tyler "Tyce" Hall Endowed Memorial Scholarship up to \$1,000 total, and the Hyatt family is matching gifts up to \$3,000 to support the Geomatics program here at SFFGS.



**UF | IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

### Tyce Hall Challenge



Dave and Kristen Hall are matching gifts to the Tyler "Tyce" Hall Endowed Memorial Scholarship **up to \$1,000 total!**

In loving memory!

[GIVINGDAY.UFL.EDU](http://GIVINGDAY.UFL.EDU)

**UF | IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

### Gator Geomatics Challenge



Pam & Russell Hyatt are matching gifts up to **\$3,000** to support geomatics!

Let's map a brighter future!

2-BITS

[GIVINGDAY.UFL.EDU](http://GIVINGDAY.UFL.EDU)

# GRANT AWARDS

“Resolving fine-scale fire behavior to improve fire effects modeling in Southeastern pine forests” – \$49,791.50 Archer Early Career Seed Grant awarded to Carissa Wonkka, Ph.D., from UF/IFAS

“Feralization of ornamental fish across thermally stable and fluctuating environments: Implications for aquaculture production and species invasions” – \$48,199 Archer Early Career Seed Grant awarded to Quenton Tuckett, Ph.D., from UF/IFAS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- SFFGS-FAS Graduate Student Symposium, Austin Cary Forest, Feb. 13
- SESAF Annual Meeting (Gainesville) (John Gray Lecture), Sunday-Tuesday, March 1-3
- Society of American Foresters Accreditation Site Visit, March 24-27
  - Social: Thursday, Newins-Ziegler Hall Breezeway, March 26, 4 p.m.
  - Closing report: Friday, March 27, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- SFFGS-FNR Graduate Student Symposium, Austin Cary Forest, March 27
- Program Advisory Committee/Advisory Board Meetings, Thursday-Friday, April 9-10
  - Gator Trap and Skeet Club, Friday, April 10, 1-5 p.m.
  - Ichetucknee Springs Paddle Trip, Friday, April 10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
  - Evening Reception, Cypress and Grove Brewery, Friday, April 10, 5:30-8 p.m.
  - Spring Celebration at Austin Cary Forest, Saturday, April 11, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Forest SAT 2026 Association for Forest Spatial Analysis Technologies, Monday-Friday, May 4-8



Jiri Hulcr, Ph.D., gives a presentation on ambrosia fungi and bark beetles. His Forest Entomology Lab recently launched the world's largest bark beetle database. Suzette Cook/SFFGS

## MORE NEWS

The University of Florida's Forest Entomology Lab — led by Jiri Hulcr, Ph.D. — recently launched the world's largest database of bark and ambrosia beetles.

The site, Bark and Ambrosia Beetles of the World, contains 15,778 specimen records, 32,403 images, and 7,987 species — all of the world's species of bark and ambrosia beetles which are one group of insects, but bark beetles live under bark of dead trees, ambrosia beetles burrow deeper in the sapwood and inoculate it with symbiotic fungi which they then eat.

The project was funded by the 2024 Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation through a grant from the Florida Forest Service to the UF/IFAS Forest Entomology Lab.

Hulcr also recently spearheaded a short video series effort, My Florida Forest, to keep Florida forest landowners in the know. Topics that the video series address include prescribed burning, forest taxes, hunting leases, invasive plants, backyard forests, succession planning, working forests and the creatures supported by them, heirs property, conservation easements, the Florida Future Forests Program, and resources for forest landowners.

The videos feature Florida forest landowners from throughout the state who are members of the Florida Forestry Association and Florida Land Steward program as well as government agency representatives from the Florida Forest Service, the Audubon Society plus UF experts such as SFFGS Extension Forest Business Specialist Tamara Cushing.