



The Association  
for the Study of  
**Literature &  
Environment**



# ASLE News

Spring 2012

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## President's Column: Retreat Summary & New Programs

by Joni Adamson

As I noted in my first presidential column, ASLE's Leadership retreated in February to sunny Oracle, Arizona, where they entered the futuristic-looking buildings of Biosphere 2 to plan for the organization's 20th year and beyond.



Participants at the 2012 ASLE planning retreat, Biosphere 2, Oracle AZ.

Officers and liaisons decided that *ASLE News* will begin publishing a very brief article on major decisions made at all officer meetings. These articles will then be posted on the ASLE website under Administration, where we also keep our bylaws and policies and information about our finances. This will allow future officers easier access to the history of previous meetings as they prepare for future meetings. We will also go back through previous *ASLE News* editions for previous EC reports to add to this site.

EC retreats tend to focus on the biennial conference and most of this year's discussion focused on the upcoming 2013 conference. Vice President Paul Outka reports below about the theme that

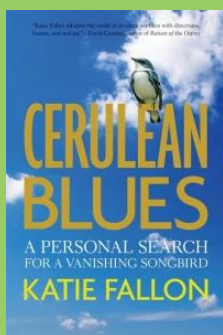
developed at the retreat. Also found below is an update on *ISLE* by Editor Scott Slovic, and future updates will be published yearly in the Spring editions of *ASLE News*. Amy McIntyre details other administrative and finance related items, while Salma Monani reports on Diversity Caucus news. I will focus on decisions that were made at the retreat regarding ASLE organizational matters. My thanks to Karla Armbruster, whose detailed minutes made this report possible.

The EC discussed some of the problematics of ASLE's current presidential structure. Presidents have a three-year term (VP, President, Past President), but each is president for only 1 year and thus has a limited amount of time to set the agenda for the organization and get things done, especially if that person is president in a conference year. There was some discussion of changes that would be needed to accommodate a two-year presidency (such as what would happen to the position of vice president), but no concrete proposal was developed.

## ASLE Bookshelf

The following works were recently published by ASLE members. If we've missed your publication, please send bibliographic information to Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)).

**Fallon, Katie.** *Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird*. Washington, DC: Ruka Press, 2011.



**Fisher-Wirth, Ann.** *Dream Cabinet* (poems). San Antonio: Wings Press, 2012.



**Garrard, Greg.** *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan: 2011.

**Lynch, Tom, Cheryl Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster, eds.** *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, Place*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

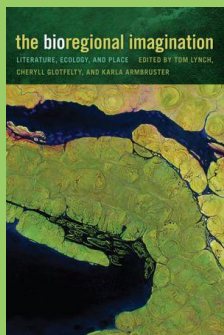
In the interim, what emerged was the idea of having "off-year" presidents (such as myself) focus on organizational matters while "on-year" presidents (such as 2013 President-Elect Paul Outka) would focus on the conference. The EC agreed to continue discussing how "on-year" presidents might be allowed to focus less on conference planning and more on organizational goals. In the meantime, I will focus for the next two years on matters that concern ASLE organizational structure, strategic goals and pilot projects while Paul will focus on the conference, then turn towards organizational matters in his past-presidential year.



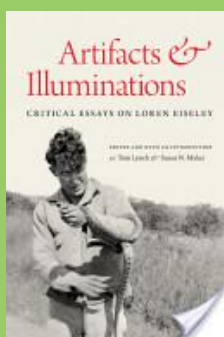
The meeting got off to an energetic start because of the attendance, via Skype, of 2008-2009 development campaign organizer, John Tallmadge, who led a discussion of how we might move forward with ASLE's strategic plans. John started with a short history: Under Dan Philippon's leadership (Dan was ASLE president at the time) and with assistance from Rochelle Johnson and Annie Ingram, a \$35,000 development fund was raised. This was not enough to create an endowment, so the money was set aside until goals and projects could be created that would advance the organization's mission and strategic goals. The five priorities for fund-raising at the time included: 1) making the managing director position more sustainable by increasing the number of hours of the position from 20 to 25 per week; 2) developing ASLE's commitment to sustainability; 3) further internationalizing ASLE; 4) further supporting graduate student members of ASLE; and 5) further supporting/promoting ISLE.

It was agreed that ASLE should always have a reserve of at least a year's operating expenses. The EC also agreed to set up a "rainy day fund" or long term investment fund. John suggested that we continuously add to this fund from any conference profits (maybe 10%). This motion passed unanimously. A new Budget Committee was appointed, consisting of myself, Paul, Anthony Lioi and Amy, and charged with selecting an investment fund into which to put the money.

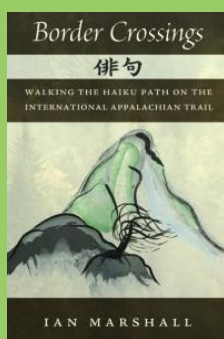
The EC also agreed to set aside some monies to develop new pilot programs. John pointed out that the 2008-2009 development committee was in favor of broadening our sense of ASLE's mission to support and develop the "environmental humanities." ASLE would seek to develop innovative humanities projects to help solve real-world issues arising from how humans think of themselves in relation to the nonhuman world. He urged the EC to follow through on our last campaign by designing projects that might put some of the previously raised money to work and, then, track the results so that we can report on these activities at the beginning of future development campaigns. The EC discussed the possibility of having a fund-raising event every 4-6 years, timed so they could be announced at the conference. A next development campaign might be announced at the 2015 conference after we gather data on the outcome of three pilot programs that will begin in 2012.



**Lynch, Tom, and Susan N. Maher, eds.** *Artifacts and Illuminations: Critical Essays on Loren Eiseley*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012.



**Marshall, Ian.** *Border Crossings: Walking the Haiku Path on the International Appalachian Trail*. Pawcatuck, CT: Hiraeth Press, 2012



**Mathex, Pascale.** *Voyage en forêt tropicale*. Lausanne, Switzerland: Favre Editions, October 2011.

The EC agreed to spend, from development campaign monies, a total of \$36,000 over 3 years (\$12,000 per year) on the 3 pilot projects described below. Small committees will guide each project by setting criteria, publishing a call for proposals, and reviewing applications. Only ASLE members (or members of international affiliates) may apply for each project.

#### **Pilot Project 1:**

ASLE will spend \$4000 per year for two book subvention grants of \$2000 each (for scholarly or creative work). More details and a call will be forthcoming in *ASLE News* and publicized on our listservs.

#### **Pilot Project 2:**

ASLE will spend up to \$3000 per year for translation grants for scholarly or creative works from other languages into English. More details and a call will be forthcoming in *ASLE News* and publicized on our listservs.

#### **Pilot Project 3:**

In order to facilitate more and stronger connections among faculty, students, and communities working in the environmental humanities to the public sphere, ASLE will seek proposals for grants of up to \$5000 per year that will work toward developing the environmental humanities. Preference will be given in conference years to proposals linked to conference site communities, but we will not rule out proposals that are not locally-oriented and will decide award amounts (up to \$5000) based on the project. This money could be divided up or given all to one project. Results of grant projects will be shared with the membership (possibly at the conference). More details and a call will be forthcoming in *ASLE News* and publicized on our listservs.

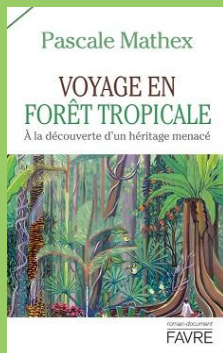
I will get these pilot projects going, and make sure our affiliated organizations get our Calls for Applications as well. We hope that these pilot projects will not only lead to the development of great projects in the environmental humanities but also encourage people to join ASLE.



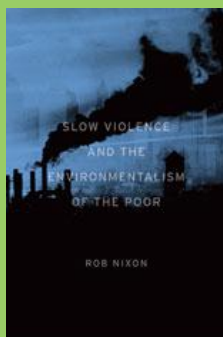
View of the Biosphere exterior, Biosphere 2, Oracle AZ.  
Photo by Priscilla Ybarra.

The EC also agreed to some additional spending from ASLE's general operating budget that would support strategic goals (Amy gives additional details about this in her report below):

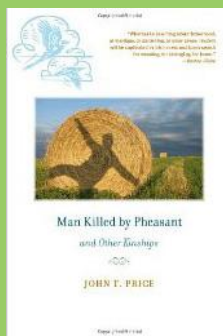
- 1) Fund 100 international membership grants
- 2) Double the amount awarded in travel grants for grad students and low-income scholars to come to ASLE, from \$2,500 to \$5,000



**Nixon, Rob.** *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.



**Price, John.** *Man Killed by Pheasant and Other Kinships.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012 (paperback reissue).



**Roberts, Suzanne.** *Almost Somewhere: Twenty-Eight Days on the John Muir Trail.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012.

3) \$1,500 increase in seed money to fund an additional off-year symposium (international)

Professional Organizations Liaison Tonia Payne reported highlights from her activities, which included entering into an affiliation with WLA, seeking a new liaison to PAMLA in 2013, facilitating a joint ASLE/ASAIL panel for the 2013 MLA, recruiting Janet Fiskio as liaison to IAEP (philosophy) and Salma Monani as liaison for IECA (communications), as well as seeking a liaison to MELUS. She reported that the MLA is currently reviewing their policies and won't take applications for division status for the next two years. In the meantime, ASLE will continue to sponsor a small reception at MLA as we did for the first time this year. We hope to collaborate with a co-sponsor next year to bring more constituencies together.

ASLE Awards coordinator Tom Lynch reported a lower number of submissions for awards in the past cycle; for example, he is concerned about books he sees being announced in the Bookshelf section of the newsletter but not submitted for the awards. *ASLE News* editor Catherine Meeks will begin reminding authors about the awards when they send in the announcement and ask them to remind their publishers to send copies to ASLE. Tom mentioned that moving the announcement of the awards to the authors' reception has helped sales of the award-winning books. ASLE will also now accept edited collections as submissions.

As I predicted in January, Biosphere 2 was indeed a fun and productive place to devise plans for meeting ASLE's strategic goals and supporting its mission "to promote the understanding of nature and culture for a sustainable world by fostering a community of scholars, teachers, and writers who study the relationship among literature, culture and the physical environment." As officers, we are very much anticipating moving forward with these plans in this, our 20th anniversary year!

## 2013 Conference Theme

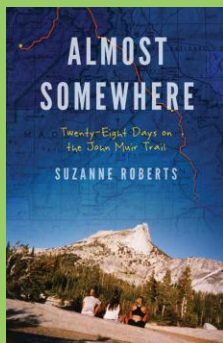
by Paul Outka, ASLE Vice President

In consultation with the ASLE Executive Council and Conference Hosts Priscilla Ybarra and Ian Finseth, I am pleased to announce the theme of the 10<sup>th</sup> (!) ASLE Biennial Conference: ***Changing Nature: Migrations, Energies, Limits.*** The theme is intended to reflect some of the most exciting current conversations in the environmental humanities, and to link those discussions to the transnational nexus of energy, labor, borders, and human and nonhuman environments that the conference location exemplifies.

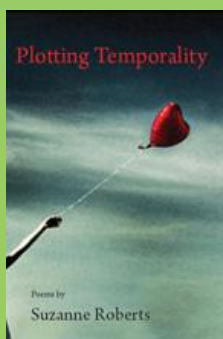
The official Call for Proposals will be released on July 15, 2012, and will include more detailed information about the conference theme, goals, and plenary speakers; proposals will be due in mid-November. As has been true in past calls, fully constituted panels will be given preference over single paper proposals. The



Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), Highbanks Metro Park, Delaware County, OH. Photo by H. Lewis Ulman



---. *Plotting Temporality*. San Antonio, TX: Pecan Grove Press, 2012.



---. *Three Hours to Burn a Body: Poems on Travel*. Cincinnati, OH: Cherry Grove Collections, 2011.



**Ryden, Kent C.** *Sum of the Parts: The Mathematics and Politics of Region, Place, and Writing*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011.

conference will be held at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX, from May 28 - June 1, 2013. See Priscilla's article below to find out more about the site.

## Introducing: Denton, Texas!

by Priscilla Ybarra

The University of North Texas, host for the 2013 ASLE Conference, makes its home in Denton, Texas. Much more than just a college town 40 odd miles north of Southfork Ranch and that other Texas city that starts with a "D," Denton boasts various attractions that will make your visit to the North Texas region appealing. Located in the contact zone of three different bioregions, Denton offers visitors access to the diversity of the North Texas area. The Post Oak Crosstimbers will be fully leafed out and green, while the wildflowers of the Blackland and the Grand Prairies will have bloomed--but with any luck some bluebonnets will still be around by the end of May 2013. As for local edible plants, you'll be sure to see some nopales (prickly pear cactus) and pecans around, and maybe even some blackberry bushes.

The Trinity River laces the area with streams and tributaries punctuated with reservoirs (locally known as "lakes") where locals often go for leisurely canoeing and kayaking. The North Texas area also has a series of connecting Greenbelts along the Elm Fork tributary where folks can go for bike rides and long walks, as well as run or ride horses. Lake Ray Roberts, a reservoir just 30 minutes north of Denton, also offers trails for hiking and horseback riding as well as plenty of campsites for those who prefer to pack a tent for their conference lodging.

For those interested in expeditions a little farther afield, the Dinosaur Valley State Park and the Lyndon B. Johnson National Grasslands make nice day trips. About an hour and a half away, the Dinosaur Valley State Park gives visitors access to the beautiful cool and clear running water of the Paluxy River, a tributary to the Brazos River. But why is this place called the "Dinosaur" Park? The limestone bed of the river hold imprints of dinosaurs who walked these lands 113 million years ago, including tracks of a sauropod being chased by a carnosaur. In addition to this exciting evidence of an ancient hunt, other tracks appear in the riverbed within easy access of the parking area. Hikers and birders will find that the park offers plenty of trails and opportunities for exploration as well as a chance to spot both resident and migrant birds including the endangered Golden-Cheek Warbler and the Black-Capped Vireo along with wild turkeys. About an hour away, the LBJ National Grasslands shows

visitors that North Texas is at the southern reaches of the Great Plains. Visitors can hike here and perhaps come across some of the local fauna including white-tailed deer, small mammals, coyotes, bobcats, red fox, waterfowl, bobwhite quail, turkey, and songbirds.



Saguaro Cactus, Sabino Canyon, Tucson AZ. Photo by Amy McIntyre



**Williams, David.** *Searching for God in the Sixties.* University of Delaware Press, 2010.



## ASLE Seeks Officer Nominations

Candidates are being sought to run for ASLE Executive Council (EC) and Vice President (VP), for terms beginning January 2013. EC members serve a 3-year term, as does the VP: one year as VP, one year as President, and one as Immediate Past President. If you or another member you know would like to run for an ASLE office, please contact 2012 President Joni Adamson ([joni.adamson@asu.edu](mailto:joni.adamson@asu.edu)) by August 1, 2012.

The nearby areas of Dallas and Fort Worth provide ample diversions for those with a more urban sensibility. Dallas's recently expanded Cultural Arts Center in the city center offers the Dallas Museum of Art as well as the Nasher Sculpture Center within walking distance of two new world-class performing arts venues that play host to internationally renowned artists: the Winspear Opera House and the AT&T Performing Arts Center. Fort Worth's Cultural Arts District offers the Kimbell Art Museum, designed by renowned architect Louis I. Kahn, the Modern, designed by Tadao Ando, and the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, designed by Philip Johnson, all within easy walking distance of one another. The remarkable architecture of these museums alone merit a visit, but each also houses impressive collections and hosts traveling exhibits.

Born and raised in North Texas, I can tell you that this is just a snapshot of all the great experiences on offer here. As the conference approaches, Ian Finseth and I will offer more information about our campus and the area. We look forward to welcoming you to UNT!

## ISLE Update

by Scott Slovic, Editor

As the journal *ISLE* nears the end of its second decade of existence (having been established by Patrick Murphy in 1992, three years prior to becoming the official journal of ASLE), we find ourselves in the editorial office at the University of Nevada, Reno, fielding questions from readers that we never would have anticipated in the mid-1990s. For instance, one reader recently asked no longer to receive the paper version of the journal, stating that the electronic format is entirely sufficient and wondering, in fact, why anyone in 2012 might need to clutch the paper journal in his or her hands.

Believe me--I've sometimes wondered myself whether we actually need the paper format today. Our financial and ecological footprint would certainly be a lot lighter if we leaped entirely into the digital age. I do think the electronic publishing format has greatly enhanced the accessibility of *ISLE* to readers (and contributors) around the world, many of whom have only online access to individual articles or complete issues. But, at the same time, as I confer with colleagues throughout the country and abroad, I often hear from people who also appreciate the fact that the paper version exists, as they find this format much easier to browse through and entire collections of paper issues easier to use for research purposes. I think having the paper edition is particularly helpful for newcomers to ecocriticism and environmental literature, as such people sometimes don't even know what the field is all about until they page through a few paper issues of *ISLE*. For this reason, I appreciate immensely Oxford University Press's willingness to publish the paper and electronic editions of *ISLE* simultaneously, and I do hope we'll continue with the dual publishing formats for the foreseeable future. At the same time, if any readers simply prefer to receive only the electronic versions of the journal (perhaps as a way of clearing up overcrowded offices!), the ASLE office can arrange this for you. Just e-mail Amy McIntyre at [info@asle.org](mailto:info@asle.org) with your request.

Since I have this brief space to offer an update about *ISLE*, let me mention as well that we continue to receive an abundance of excellent submissions, and we have some exciting material in the publication pipeline and due out in the coming issues. In addition to independent articles and creative work, we anticipate publishing special clusters of scholarly articles on such topics as Material Ecocriticism and East Asian Food Literature in the coming year. If any *ISLE* readers would like to propose additional topics for potential special clusters, please do feel free to communicate with me about your ideas. We try not to publish too many of these clusters because we are attempting to see other accepted material into print without excessive delay, but we can always begin planning ahead for future possibilities.

I should also mention that one of our most pressing needs at *ISLE* is for people with time and interest to help us evaluate and comment on submissions. This is

## ASLE 20th Anniversary Plans

2012 marks the 20th anniversary of ASLE's founding. To celebrate and mark this event, we have made the following plans:

### Birthday Party at WLA

It is fitting that ASLE will celebrate its 20 year anniversary with a birthday reception at the 2012 Western Literature Association meeting in Lubbock, TX. As many of you know, ASLE was conceived and born at the WLA conference in 1992. WLA is helping us plan a reception on the opening day of the event. We are also pleased to co-sponsor the plenary presentation that Annette Kolodny will give at the conference. Annette is a longtime ASLE mentor and member of our former advisory board.

### New ASLE Logo Contest

To mark our 20th year, and acknowledge and build upon the mature and expanded vision of our organization as encompassing the environmental humanities more broadly, the EC has decided to sponsor a new logo contest. Details are still being firmed up, but look for more information very soon.

especially true because of the increase in submissions that has occurred since we joined up with Oxford three years ago and began accepting manuscripts through the online Manuscript Central process. If you'd like to help out as a manuscript reader, please do get in touch with me.

### Oxford Journals includes *ISLE* Selections in Special Article Collections

Oxford University Press Journals has put together two special collections, one in honor of Poetry Month and one to celebrate Earth Day. Selections from *ISLE* are included in each, and you can access them by clicking on the headings:

[Poetry Month](#) (available till May 30)

[Earth Day](#) (available till May 25)

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## Managing Director's Report: Finances, Bylaws, Lifetime Memberships

by Amy McIntyre

I hope this strange spring finds you all well; in the short term I have enjoyed the abundant warm sunshine on my shoulders, but it also makes me shiver with the chill of realizing that it is yet another sign of global climate change accelerating at a rapid pace. Yet another busy year has passed for ASLE, with much to tell. As the overseer of all things financial and administrative, I will give a quick recap of some numbers and some minor changes to our bylaws.

After another successful conference in Bloomington, ASLE was able to end the year with assets totaling just over \$214,000. For a more complete picture of the yearly finances, please see the website finances page (<http://www.asle.org/site/about/finances/>). We have exciting plans in the works to spend some of this money, including an International Grants program that will give 100 free memberships to scholars in other countries who would like to join ASLE but are unable to pay the membership fees. Joni Adamson details in her column for this newsletter the other new programs that are intended to launch in the coming months that will give members a number of scholarship opportunities and enrich and expand our field. We also have voted to put about \$70,000 into a socially responsible fund with TIAA-CREF as a long-term investment, which should happen over the next couple of months.

I am happy to announce that we are planning to launch a Lifetime Membership Program, in which members can pay a fee of \$1,500 (payable over 3 years) to become a member of ASLE in perpetuity. The Executive Council voted to implement this program at our retreat, and look for more information on this to come your way and be added to the website very soon.

To keep up with our current methods in the organization, the bylaws needed to be changed in a few places to reflect minor operational changes, though not profound



*Bottlenose Dolphin, Intracoastal Waterway, Gulf Shores, AL. Photo by Amy McIntyre*

changes of mission or duties. The following changes were voted upon and approved by ASLE officers at the recent annual retreat in February, and these changes have been updated online at our website (<http://www.asle.org/site/about/policies/>). We removed the frequency of publication from Article 2.1.3, since we no longer publish the newsletter and *ISLE* only twice a year, but did not specify the current quarterly schedule to give room for potential future changes without having to change the articles again. We modified Article 7.2, describing the term and work of the budget committee, to specify a two-year term for members and a two year cycle for budget creation to give continuity to committee members and more accurately reflect our conference/nonconference year flow of funds. The statute that delineates our election process has been modified to reflect that we now conduct voting mainly online (Article 8.2). And lastly, we created in Article 9 (on Terms of Office) a specific article stating the term of office for the Diversity Officer and the subsequent year as Past Diversity Officer (Article 9.5), something that was delineated already in Article 6.6 but not reinforced as for other elected officers in Article 9; articles after 9.5 were also renumbered to allow for the addition of this article.

Finally, look for a new member benefit beginning in May: ASLE is partnering with Ashgate Publishers so that they may offer our members a 20% discount on all titles. We will send you an exclusive member discount code and links to the ASLE partner page on their website in the next week.

I look forward to hearing from any of you about ASLE business large and small, and am already looking ahead to our next meeting in Texas with great anticipation!

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## Only Connect! News from the ASLE Mentoring Program

By Mark Long, ASLE Mentoring Program Coordinator

Since the inception of ASLE the Mentoring Program has sought to connect graduate students with experienced faculty mentors beyond their home institutions. Mentors offer advice regarding reading lists and scholarly resources; they provide feedback on course syllabi and writing; they provide an interested colleague to listen to ideas or professional concerns; they sit on exam or dissertation committees; and they share advice regarding the job market or publishing.

The Mentoring Program has grown with the organization as well. We now offer conference-based mentoring and we actively collaborate with others to offer generative mentoring experiences to the members of ASLE:

***Biennial Conference Mentoring Sessions:*** the Mentoring Program has offered one-on-one job information sessions at the past four conferences. These sessions are designed to welcome new members to the organization as well as to meet the needs of graduate students--including preparing for academic jobs and the job market, seeking out professional opportunities beyond the academy, balancing teaching and publishing, and making visible the working conditions in the range of academic departments and programs;

***Collaboration with the Graduate Student Liaisons:*** the Mentoring Program has co-sponsored preconference workshops and concurrent sessions on negotiating the relationship between professional aspirations and realities, the prospects of interdisciplinarity, the futures of academic disciplines and programs, the range of academic positions and institutions, as well as the life trajectories of careers of ASLE members unfolding outside the college and university;

***Collaboration with the Staying Alive Project:*** the Mentoring Program has extended the ASLE mentoring network to colleagues at any stage in their careers. While traditionally focused on graduate students and younger faculty, we now offer conference workshops and maintain an online conversation so that interested ASLE members can explore the opportunities and challenges of an academic career. An

archive designed to share wisdom and resources for living an emotionally, ethically, and spiritually healthy life in academia is available at [www.onstayingalive.wordpress.com](http://www.onstayingalive.wordpress.com);

**International Mentoring:** the Mentoring Program has responded to interest from our affiliated organizations for mentoring by developing mentoring relationships with the help of ASLE members who have worked or taught outside the US. Scholars and teachers based in the US provide intellectual contacts and mentors for graduate students and professors working outside the US; and scholars and teachers in the US continue to seek forms of mentoring from scholars and teachers in our ASLE-affiliated organizations.



The Mentoring Program will continue to support the members of ASLE through these and other activities. If you are a graduate student looking for a mentor, or wondering how the mentoring program might benefit you; if you are an ASLE member with ideas about how the program might foster meaningful mentoring relationships; or if you are an ASLE member interested in serving as a mentor, please be in touch by e-mail, [mlong@keene.edu](mailto:mlong@keene.edu), or by phone, 603.358.2695.

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## ASLE Needs a New International Liaison

Wes Berry has ably served ASLE as its first and only International Liaison for many years. Now Wes has decided it is time to pass the torch, and ASLE is looking to fill the post, an appointed position. After appointment, the ASLE International Liaison will serve for two years, at which time she or he will be reviewed for possible reappointment by the current president. Duties for this position include the following:

- 1) Field queries from scholars or students from other countries who wish to teach or study in the USA.
- 2) Organize and head the International Membership Grants Panel which reviews applications for ASLE's International Career Development Grants (funding for one-year membership grants).
- 3) Compile a list of international members willing to mentor graduate students or help field inquiries about starting an ASLE affiliate organization.
- 4) Consult with the Managing Director about how to answer inquiries about conference travel grants to ASLE conferences.

5) Keep a current list of officers and contact people for each of ASLE's international affiliates; invite officers of each affiliate to nominate someone for ASLE's conference travel grant.

6) Assist with the organization of ASLE's international reception, held at the biennial conference.

7) Attend meetings with ASLE's Executive Council at the biennial conference and off-year retreats as a non-voting member.

If you are interested in this position, please submit a letter of application to Joni Adamson ([jeni.adamson@asu.edu](mailto:jeni.adamson@asu.edu)) by June 1, 2012. In your letter please indicate your current engagement in the field through scholarship, teaching and/or writing, length of association with ASLE, and what types of experiences you have had working with scholars and students from other countries, either in the U.S. or abroad.

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## In Memoriam: Martin Murie

Long-time ASLE member, prolific and provocative writer, and beloved teacher and friend Martin Murie died January 28, 2012, after a brief illness. He was 86 years old. Murie hailed from a family of avid and prominent early environmentalists; his father, Olaus, was a founding member and president of the Wilderness Society, and his mother, Mardy, wrote about exploring the Arctic with Martin along as a one-year-old in her book *Two In The Far North*. As tributes from friends attest, Murie was well-known for his intense dedication to defending the natural world, coupled with his broad and disarming smile. To read a beautiful obituary written by a former student of Murie's, please visit <http://ysnews.com/news/2012/02/martin-murie-2>.



*Desert Spoon (dasylirium wheeleri), Biosphere 2, Oracle AZ. Photo by Priscilla Ybarra.*

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## Diversity at the 2012 ASLE Executive Council Retreat

by Salma Monani, ASLE Diversity Officer

ASLE's Executive Council (EC) met during the weekend of February 17-19 at the University of Arizona's Biosphere 2 facilities to conduct organizational business. As the Diversity Coordinator I attended, and am delighted to report that the EC's commitment to diversity remains strong and focused.

While a slot was formally scheduled to discuss diversity, it was quickly clear that diversity is interpolated with almost all aspects of ASLE's agenda. For example, discussions of the upcoming conference raised comments and questions about diversity of plenary speakers, and diversity in conference participants with particular

attention to funding for low-income and graduate student attendees. Similarly, discussions of professional affiliates brought up conversations on the importance of attracting organizations with recognized diversity, such as that of The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS) and Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL). And comment on the upcoming off-year symposium in Juneau highlighted its attention to diversity (including the inclusion of two Diversity Caucus panels).

In effect, I might suggest that ASLE is already well on the road to meeting four of its six tasks as outlined in [Goal 2 of the organization's Strategic Plan](#). (To continue reading Salma's article, published on the ASLE Diversity Blog on March 2nd, 2012, please click [here](#) - and spend some time exploring the blog while you're there!)

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## Update from ASLE-UKI

by Adelline Johns-Putra, Chair, Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK and Ireland

This past year has been an eventful one for [ASLE-UKI](#). Our Annual General Meeting in September 2011 ushered in a number of changes, including a fond and grateful farewell to Greg Garrard as Chair. The AGM also voted in a new constitution, to ensure that members in our rapidly growing organization continue to be fairly represented. Among other things, the constitution allows for an expansion of the Executive Committee; the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Postgraduate Representative are now joined by a second Postgraduate Representative, two members without portfolio, and the Immediate Past Chair (Greg therefore stays on to assist in this capacity). Another important decision reached at the AGM was our affiliation with the UK branch of the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA), which mirrors the affiliation between ASLE and SFRA across the Atlantic.

This year sees an exciting development for our journal *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*. The editorial board, led by John Parham, is negotiating the journal's move to the publishers Taylor and Francis, which, we hope, will lift the journal's circulation and reputation even more, and give it the readership it deserves. Negotiations are well advanced at the moment, so watch this space. In another profile-raising move, a new ASLE-UKI website is in the works. Greg Garrard and new Executive Member Louise Squire have been hard at work to ensure a summer launch for the website.



Our 2011 postgraduate conference, "Emergent Environments," held at Queen Mary, University of London, in September, was a huge success, thanks to organizers Kate Parry (ASLE-UKI postgraduate representative), Deborah Lilley and Sam Solnick.

Keynotes by Timothy Clark, Robert McKay, Timothy Morton, and Kate Soper all chimed with the conference's theme of forging new directions in environmental criticism. And the guided walk along the city's canals and new Olympic site was an unexpected highlight, affording a glimpse of the wildlife (both human and nonhuman!) of London's East End. All in all, the many rich contributions to the conference augur well for the future of environmental criticism.

The aim for ASLE-UKI this year and the next, then, is to continue to encourage fresh perspectives, to welcome new members, to enhance our profile further, and to seek out opportunities for affiliation. We look ahead to our biennial conference, "[Composting Culture](#)," at the University of Worcester in September 2012 and hope to see as many of you there as possible!

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## ASLE Sessions at 2012 MLA Convention

by Rosario Michelle Ramirez Matabuena, MLA Liaison

The ASLE panel at the 2012 MLA Convention, "Inter-nature-nality: International Perspectives on Environment" was moderated this year by ASLE's MLA liaison, Rosario Michelle Ramirez Matabuena. The panel brought together a wonderful group of academics that shared their papers on a variety of international topics. The first paper was given by Justine McGhee from the University of Rochester. Her talk, "Noisom Stinks: Aphra Behn's Explorations of Paradise" focused on the novella *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn and looked at the ways in which the author "collapses temporality and geography to read the Caribbean as an anti-Edenic site of depravity, uncontrollable fecundity, and decay." Bishopal Limbu from Portland State University presented his paper "Catastrophe, Internationality, and the Environmental Divide" which argued that "by interrogating the boundary between human and animal, *Animal's People* reveals the existence of an 'environmental divide' that relies on powerful strategies of dehumanization to silence the subaltern." Finally, Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez of Bradley University and Fada Mahmoudi of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (skyped-in live from Iran, an MLA convention first) presented "'Dígar na áb ast ín' ('It is not water that flows'): A Comparative Ecocritical Analysis of the Poetry of Fereydoon Moshiri and Simon J. Ortiz." The paper looked at the poetry of Moshiri and Ortiz highlighting their "parallel concerns about the underlying constitutive psychologies of conquest that have wrought unmitigated horrors throughout the planet." The panel was very well attended and received.

ASLE was also proud to co-sponsor a panel with the Division on Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth-Century American Literature entitled "Economies of Waste in Late-Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century US Literary Culture." The panel was held on January 7th. Later that night, ASLE hosted an informal gathering that allowed all those interested in environmental matters the opportunity to mingle and wind down after a very exciting and eventful convention.

In 2013, the MLA Convention will be held in Boston, MA. The featured ASLE panel will be "Environment and Media." ASLE will also be co-sponsoring a collaborative panel with the Association for the Study of American Indian Literature (ASAIL) entitled "Native American Literature, Indigenous Scientific Knowledge, and Environmental Justice." For more information on next year's MLA, be sure to visit [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org). There are many exciting and diverse panels on environmental topics coming up in 2013 and we hope to see you in Boston next January!



Sabino Creek, Sabino Canyon, Tucson AZ.  
Photo by Amy McIntyre.

### Division Status Update

This fall ASLE officers voted to move forward with pursuing Division Status at the MLA Annual Convention. The field of ecocriticism has grown in depth and breadth and this type of affiliation would more properly reflect that status. Professional Liaison Coordinator Tonia Payne and MLA Liaison Rosario Michelle Ramirez Matabuena began to pursue the application process, but were met with disappointing news. The MLA has issued this statement regarding new

applications:

"As part of its continuing efforts to make the MLA Annual Convention more responsive to members' needs, at its May 2011 meeting the MLA Executive Council began the process of examining the division, discussion group, and allied organization structures. MLA Second Vice President Marianne Hirsch has agreed to convene a small group of members who will study the current structures and make recommendations to the council on how to proceed. The council will then solicit comments from the full membership.

While this study is taking place, over approximately two years, the council will not accept applications for division, discussion group, and allied organization status."

So it appears ASLE will have to wait another year or so to be able to complete this change in status with the MLA. The ASLE leadership will continue to pursue this application when we are allowed, and keep members posted as to the results.

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## Member News

In July, **Ashton B. Nichols** will begin his new appointment as Chair of the Environmental Studies and Environmental Science Department at Dickinson College. Nichols told *ASLE News*: "Dickinson has one of the earliest and strongest Environmental Studies/Science Departments in the country, having been founded by Professor Candie Wilderman (a student of Steven J. Gould's at Harvard) in 1974. Dickinson has a long history of a very interdisciplinary approach to the study of the environment, and in 2008, the school established the Center for Sustainability Education (CSE), headed by Neil Leary, one of the leaders of the 2001 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007." Nichols's ecocritical publications include: *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting*; *Romantic Natural Histories: Wordsworth, Darwin, and Others*; and his hypertext project: <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/romnat/>, which has been praised by the New York Times: <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/romnat/2011/07/20/new-york-times-review/>.

Nichols writes, "The idea of a long-time English professor bringing a new set of skills and interests to the chairing of a vigorous, large (and still growing) Environmental Studies and Science Department seems like news in which ASLE might be interested." To learn more about Dickinson's Environmental Studies and Science department, please visit: <http://www.dickinson.edu/academics/programs/environmental-studies/>

**Rob Nixon's** book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard UP) was awarded two prizes this month. The International Studies Association chose *Slow Violence* as the winner of the Harold and Margaret Sprout Award for 2011. The prize goes to the best book in international environmental studies, a book that makes an "original contribution to theory and interdisciplinarity, shows rigor and coherence in research and writing, and offers accessibility and practical relevance." Nominations were solicited from 170 publishers. This is the first time in the forty years of the award that it has gone to a scholar from the humanities.

*Slow Violence* has also just won the Transdisciplinary Humanities Book Award for 2011. The award goes to the book, published anywhere in the world, that "best exemplifies transdisciplinary, socially engaged humanities-based scholarship on a topic of social or cultural importance-past, present, or future." The prize is an initiative of the Institute for Humanities Research at Arizona State University.

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## ASLE News Notes

### "Save the Earth" Poetry Prize 2012

This prize is now offered for the first time, in response to John Felstiner's book *Can Poetry Save the Earth? / A Field Guide to Nature Poems* and sponsored by Charles Weeden, with The Weeden Foundation. American high school students, grades 11 & 12, are invited to enter. Poems submitted should, in any way possible, bring alive humankind's awareness of the natural world. No source except the writer's imagination is called for. [Can Poetry Save the Earth?](#) contains examples of such aliveness. One submission per student, please. There's no restriction on form or length. Please include in your email your name, school grade, high school with town and state, and name of your English teacher. Poems should be submitted in Microsoft Word or .PDF. Send submissions between March 1st and April 30th, 2012, to [savetheearthpoems@gmail.com](mailto:savetheearthpoems@gmail.com). No entry fee. Seven winners of the 'SAVE THE EARTH' POETRY PRIZE will be notified on September 15th, 2012 and receive \$200 each. Their poems will be featured on the *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* website: [canpoetrysavetheearth.com](http://canpoetrysavetheearth.com).

### New Journal Launched

Deborah Rose and Thom van Dooren, on behalf of the *Environmental Humanities* Editorial Team, are pleased to announce the pending launch of a new open-access, interdisciplinary journal: *Environmental Humanities*. This [introduction](#) provides some basic information about the journal, including the list of eminent scholars who have agreed to serve on the Editorial Board. Further information about the journal can be found at their new website: [www.environmentalhumanities.org](http://www.environmentalhumanities.org).

The first volume is due out in November 2012. The Editorial Team would like to take this opportunity to issue an open and ongoing call for papers for the journal. The journal aims to publish the best interdisciplinary scholarship on the environment coming out of the humanities and the editorial team is confident that the growing and vibrant international community of environmental humanities scholars will support this effort.

There are various ways to keep up to date with relevant news and new issues of the journal. Please see the 'About EH' page of the website, or contact the editors at: [editors@environmentalhumanities.org](mailto:editors@environmentalhumanities.org).

### Member News

Whether you got a new job, won an award, or did something interesting, enlightening, or exciting, we want to know what you're up to! If you have some news to share with other ASLE members, and it doesn't "fit" into the Bookshelf, PhD, or Emeritus categories, please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)) with the Subject heading "Member News."

### ASLE Emeritus

*ASLE News* honors those ASLE members retired or retiring from teaching. If you would like to acknowledge someone in this new feature--or if you yourself will be retiring during the coming academic year--please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)). We will include a brief account of scholarly interests, the institutions of employment and years taught in the next newsletter.

### ASLE PhDs

Have you or one of your students recently defended a dissertation? If so, *ASLE News* wants to know. Each issue, we include announcements commemorating those members who have recently completed their doctoral work. If you would like to be included in this feature, please contact Catherine Meeks ([catherine-meeks@utc.edu](mailto:catherine-meeks@utc.edu)) with the dissertation title, degree-granting institution, and committee members.