
EVOLUTION, ECOLOGY, AND ORGANISMAL BIOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

IN THIS EDITION ...

Topic	Page
<u>Announcements</u>	1-2
<u>Accolades</u>	3
<u>Recent Publications</u>	3-5
<u>EEOB in Action</u>	6-7
<u>Closing Remarks</u>	8



BOYD DEEP CANYON RESEARCH CENTER
PHOTO BY JENNY WONG

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations to our newest **Ph.D. graduates** who defend their dissertations Winter/Spring 2026

- **Marina Vollin** (Higham Lab): "Life after tail loss: Consequences of caudal autotomy on gecko locomotor performance and behavior "
- **Michael Remington** (JDEB): "Basking in the Warmth of the Red Queen: Agent-Based Modeling of Predator-Prey Dynamics between Kangaroo Rats and Rattlesnakes"
- **Tito Abbo** (Litt Lab): "'L'enfer de Michel Adanson: adventures in diverse, rare, endangered, hybrid and sometimes even paraphyletic manzanitas"

ANNOUNCEMENTS (CONT.)

Congratulations to our newest **Ph.D. graduates** who defend their dissertations Winter/Spring 2026 (CONT.)

- **Gary Qin** (Regan Lab): "Assessing California's Freshwater Health: Ecosystem integrity, Services, and Governance"
- **Marie Palanchon** (Purcell Lab): "Evolution of Selfishness within Social Supergene Polymorphisms in Ants"

Congratulations to our newest **M.S. graduates** who defend their thesis Winter/Spring 2026

- **Zach Cadima** (Higham Lab): "From Tree Trunks to Sand Dunes: The Effects of Surface Roughness, Compliance, and Incline on Gecko Locomotor Performance and Kinematics"
- **Swopnil Adhikari** (Campbell Lab): "Evolution of multicopy genes in vole (*Microtus*) Y chromosomes"

Ria Ghosh is reviving **UCR's chapter of SEEDS** (Strategies for Ecology Education, Diversity and Sustainability), the award-winning flagship program of the Ecological Society of America. It is a fantastic opportunity for undergrads to gain research experience, networking, and leadership skills. Want to get involved? Reach out to Ria at rghos012@ucr.edu.

The **EEOBuddies Mentorship Program** just wrapped up a great pilot year! The program successfully paired six first-year and senior EEOB graduate students, building community through monthly check-ins and quarterly socials.

The **Garland Lab** was featured in **Popular Science** for their research on animal behavior. Read the full article, "Hamsters run on wheels for a surprisingly joyful reason," on the Popular Science website.

ACCOLADES

Jenny Wong received the **Ficken Research Grant** from the **American Ornithological Society**, the **Reynolds Desert Symposium Student Research Award**, and the **Mathias Graduate Student Research Grant Award** from the **University of California**.

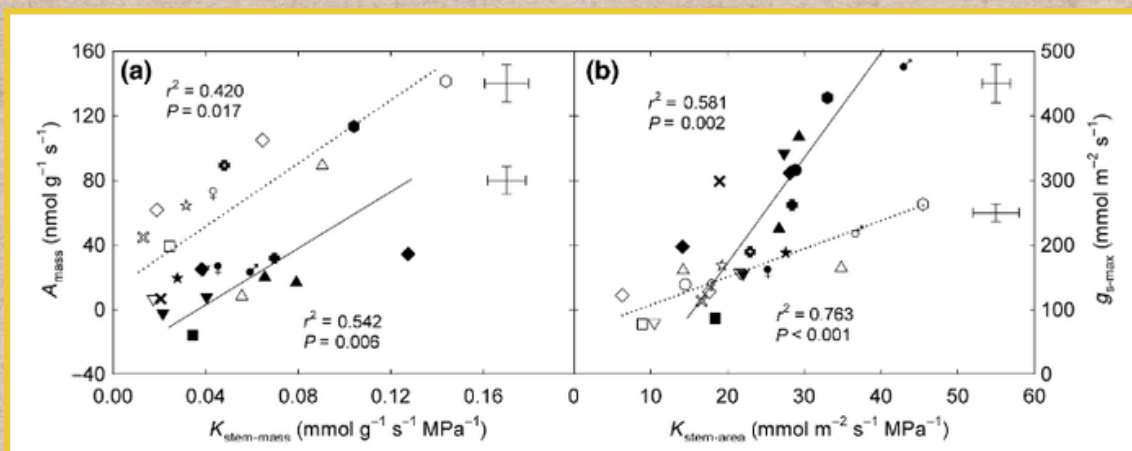
Brittney Nguyen was awarded the **Graduate Student Mentorship Network Fellowship**.

Emily Maynard was awarded the **2026 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship**.

Madison Elowitz was awarded the **Bloom Hays Ecological Research Grant**.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Ávila-Lovera, E., Santiago, L. S., & Tezara, W. (2026). Stem photosynthesis and hydraulics are not coordinated in photosynthetic stems in a tropical xerophytic scrub. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2026.1819553>



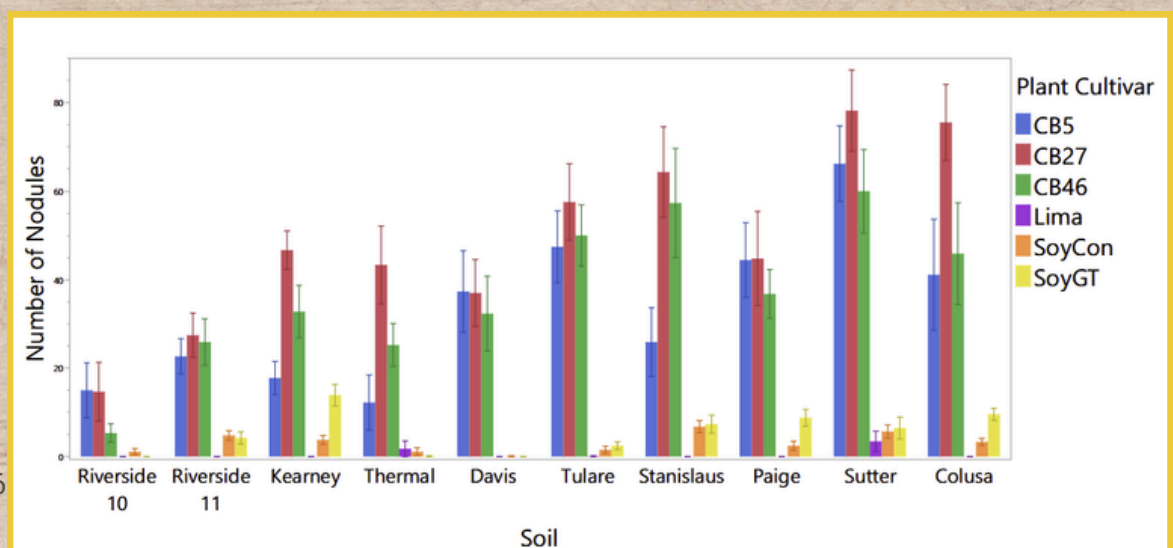
Ávila-Lovera et al.
2026 – Figure 1

Ávila-Lovera, E., Gracia, L., Rosero, F., Duarte, A., Santiago, L. S., & Winter, K. (in press). Testing the carbon starvation hypothesis using a late-successional Neotropical tree species with green photosynthetic stems. *Plant Physiology*.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS (CONT.)

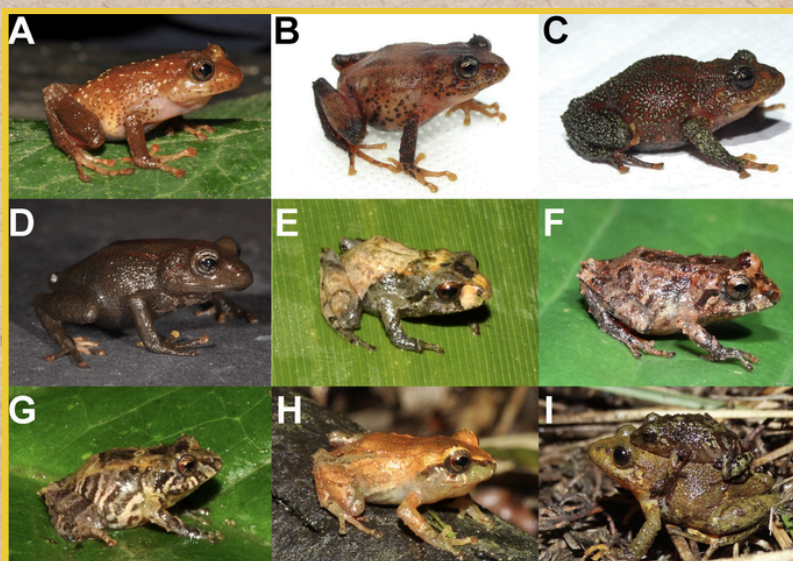
Carlew, T. S., Atherton, A. A., Shim, A., Parada Rojas, C., Buchanan, R. A., Chang, J. H., Sachs, J. L., & Belin, B. J. (in press). *Aeschynomene americana* induces terminal bacteroid differentiation in *Bradyrhizobium* sp. USDA3516, a novel model for Dalbergioid-rhizobia symbiosis. *BMC Plant Biology*.

Crust, R. M., Fronk, D. C., Macedo, F., Huynh, B-L., Light, S., Clark, N. E., & Sachs, J. L. (2026). Growth response of crop legumes to soil microbiota is linked with soil nutrients and planting history. *Plant-Environment Interactions*, 7(2), e70130. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pei3.70130>



Crust et al. 2026
– Figure 3

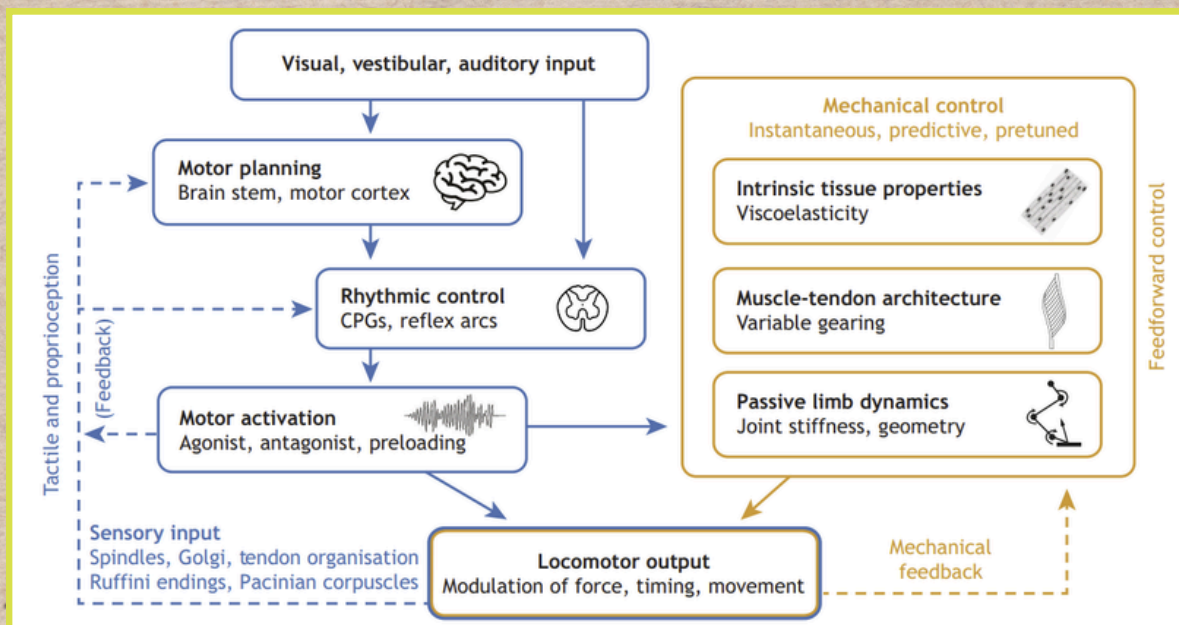
Cuellar-Valencia, O. M., Bolaños-Molina, B. E. & Bolívar-García, W. (2026). Two new rain frogs of the *Pristimantis leptolophus* species group (Anura: Strabomantidae) from the high elevations of the Cordillera Occidental, Southwestern Colombia. *Zootaxa*, 5807(2), 305-338. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5807.2.4>



Cuellar-Valencia et al. 2026 – Figure 4

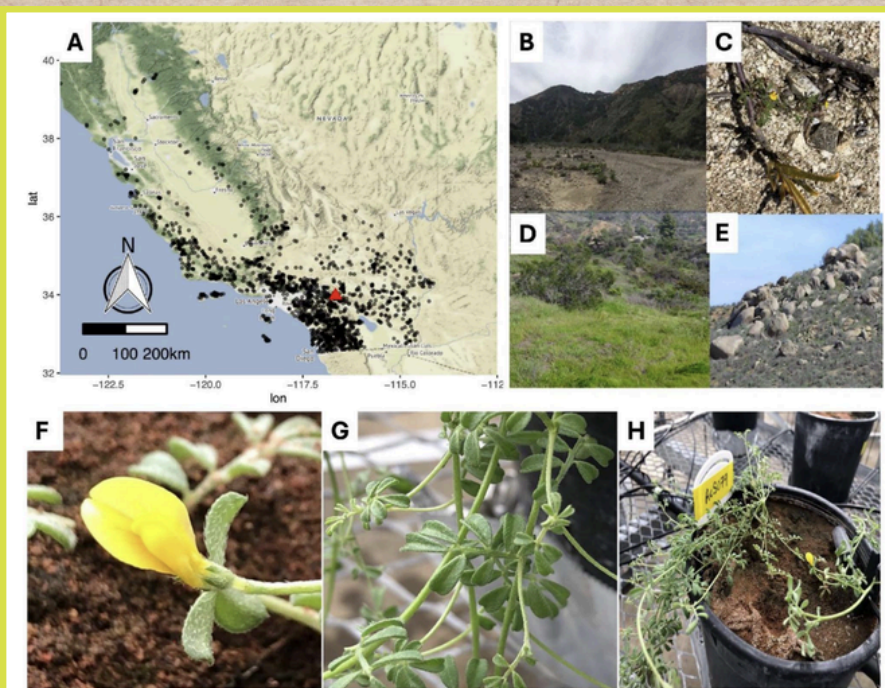
RECENT PUBLICATIONS (CONT.)

Reynaga, C. M., & Azizi, E. (2026). Mechanical control: Parallel pathways for modulating movement. *Journal of Experimental Biology*.



Reynaga and Azizi. 2026 – Figure 1

Torres-Martínez, L., Escalona, M., Toffelmier, E., Miller, C., Sahasrabudhe, R., Marimuthu, M. P. A., Nguyen, O., Chumchim, N., Beraut, E., Sacco, S., Seligmann, W., Fairbairn, C. W., Cooper, R. D., Shaffer, H. B., Purcell, J., & Sachs, J. L. (2026). Chromosome-level reference genome of a foundational California native legume, *Acmispon strigosus*. *Journal of Heredity*, esag007.

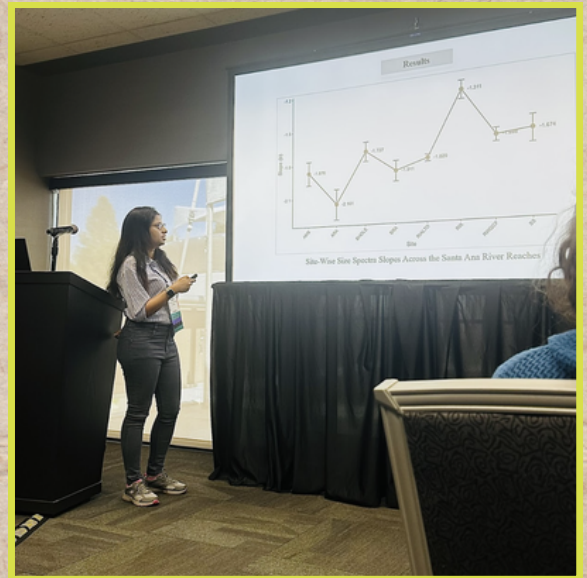


Torres-Martínez et al. 2026 – Figure 1

EEOB IN ACTION



Ria Ghosh represented the **Anderson Lab** at the 2026 **Society for Freshwater Science Annual Meeting** in Spokane, Washington, where she gave an oral presentation titled, "Assessing Spatial and Temporal Variation in Size Spectra of Benthic Macroinvertebrates in the Urban Santa Ana River," chaired the Eutrophication and Harmful Algal Blooms session, and participated in the Science Communication Fair.



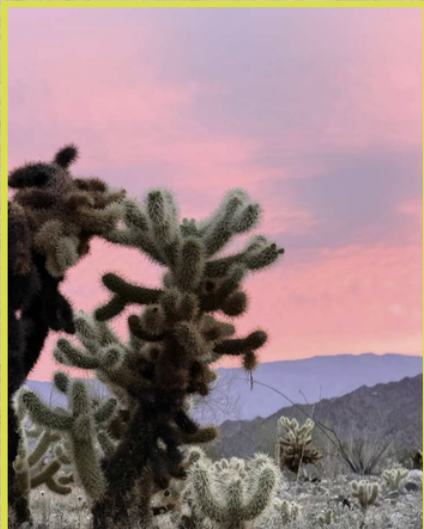
The **Clark Lab** attended the **Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology** conference in Portland, Oregon in January 2026.

EEOB IN ACTION

EEOB Graduate students: **Teddy Reitman, Elisabeth Leung, and Max Zeltsar**, attend the **Inland Empire Science Festival**.



EEOB Outreach panel at the Riverside Youth Student Advisory Program.



Snapshots from the field: The **Clark Lab** at the **Boyd Deep Canyon Research Center**



In Memoriam: Dr. Adriana Romero-Olivares

The Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology wishes to honor the memory of Assistant Professor Dr. Adriana Romero-Olivares.

Dr. Romero-Olivares joined the EEOB faculty as a specialist in mycology and global change ecology, bringing a dedicated commitment to scientific research, education, and student mentorship. Our thoughts and deepest condolences remain with her family, loved ones, and students.

**Future Submissions:**

Upcoming events, resources, new publications, grants, award stories, photos, etc.

Please send them to me to be included in the next newsletter!

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