MASON SCIENCE COMMUNITY

Sara’s return to the lab

Read how Sara is helping to develop a new diagnostic test for breast cancer. Learn how to support and engage your lab family.

MASON SCIENCE

RESEARCH & DISCOVERY

Singing in a silent spring: birds respond to a half-century soundscape reversion during the COVID-19 shutdown

By Tracy Mason

Two research collaborations led by George Mason University and University of Tennessee ecologists have been investigating how songbirds react to a newly emptied acoustic space resulting from fewer people on the road due to COVID-19.

With millions of people remaining at home, there is a new soundscape—without cars and trucks, the sounds of human activities have receded. This change presents an opportunity to study the role of human noise in shaping wildlife communities, and to understand if and how this change might have impacted birds in the U.S.

The research teams used this opportunity to evaluate if and how songbirds might respond to a half-century soundscape reversion during the COVID-19 shutdown. The two separate studies, which are ongoing, are testing the hypothesis that respondents to this reversion to a quiet soundscape will differ from those to the historically noisy one.

The preliminary results from the two studies, which are ongoing, will be shared at a future Mason Science Conference. Stay tuned for more updates.

IN THE NEWS

The Today Show features Mason scientist with special edition COVID-19 immune study

By Padhu Seshaiyer

The Today Show appeared on the Today Show recently to demonstrate how droplets from a sneeze can linger in a newly emptied indoor acoustic space that results from fewer people on the road due to COVID-19.

The segments are both sparking interest and raising awareness about new research conducted by Mason scientist David Luther, an assistant professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Responding to the current reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Luther and his colleagues at the University of California, Northridge, and the University of Tennessee, collaborated with a team of fellow ecologists from Mason University and Elizabeth Derryberry, Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee, to evaluate if and how songbirds might respond in the newly emptied acoustic space that results from fewer people on the road due to COVID-19.

The research teams used this opportunity to evaluate if and how songbirds might respond to a half-century soundscape reversion during the COVID-19 shutdown. The two separate studies, which are ongoing, are testing the hypothesis that respondents to this reversion to a quiet soundscape will differ from those to the historically noisy one.

The preliminary results from the two studies, which are ongoing, will be shared at a future Mason Science Conference. Stay tuned for more updates.

Events

College of Science Virtual Town Hall

2020 College of Science All Faculty Meeting

Tuesday, October 6, 2020

College of Science

The College of Science will hold its annual meeting this year with virtual presentations and discussions. New tenure-line faculty and tenure-line faculty who will soon enter the RPT cycle are encouraged to attend. No registration or RSVP is needed. If you are unable to participate, a recording will be made available for viewing after the session. Send questions to Kim Eby at facaffs@gmu.edu.

More information

For more information on other upcoming College of Science events and engagements, please visit the College of Science Calendar online.