

Mount Allison Science students win awards at Science Atlantic conference

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SACKVILLE, NB — Three Mount Allison University students took home honours at the recent Science Atlantic Undergraduate Biology, Aquaculture and Fisheries, and Environment Conferences.

The annual event, which showcases the best undergraduate research in biology, and best undergraduate and graduate research in environment, and fisheries and aquaculture, was held at Mount Allison this year from Mar. 2 to 4.

“The annual Science Atlantic conferences are wonderful opportunities for our students. They provide them with the chance to present their research to a large body of their peers and network with leading researchers from the region,” says event organizer and Mount Allison biology professor Dr. Margaret Beaton. “This year was particularly special since Mount Allison hosted the tri-conference, so even more students than usual participated in the weekend activities. Several

students took on key responsibilities in organizing the event and the success of the conference was in no small part due to the incredible efforts of our student organizers and volunteers.”

Emma Davis, a fourth-year environmental science major, won the award for top undergraduate oral presentation in environment and fourth-year biology major Louise Tunnah was the honourable mention in the same category. Fourth-year biology major Amy Brown took first place in the biology conference poster presentation.

Davis’s presentation, “Taking shelter from climate change: An analysis of shelterbelt species in the Canadian Prairies,” looked at tree-ring growth in nine species of trees commonly used in shelterbelts or windbreaks to determine how climate is impacting them. Tunnah’s research looked at the effects of environmental stressors on the protein structure and function of the spiny dogfish shark, while Brown’s poster discussed the results of bacterial infections on gene expression in fruit flies.

Davis’ research is part of a four-year project that has the long-term goal of helping farmers and land owners plant tree species that will sequester the most amount of carbon, potentially serving as a carbon credit to offset a portion of the greenhouse gas emissions associated with agriculture.

“Conferences like Science Atlantic are an extremely valuable opportunity for student researchers. They help to build confidence when giving oral presentations, and are also an important way of getting feedback and new perspectives on your research,” says Davis, who is from Port Hawkesbury, NS. “Being able to communicate scientific information is an essential skill for science students to leave university with.”

About 130 students from a dozen universities across Atlantic Canada took part in the conferences. Keynote addresses were delivered by Dr. Ian Mauro, Canada Research Chair in Human Dimensions of Environmental Change at Mount Allison University, and Dr. Paul Snelgrove, Canada Research Chair in Boreal and Cold Ocean Systems at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

*PHOTO CAPTION: Emma Davis collects samples in Saskatchewan for her honours research project on shelterbelts.*