

https://www.midfloridanewspapers.com/highlands_news-sun/around_town/archbold-educator-wins-second-in-contest/article_11a5e406-61c8-11ec-ad14-2bdbd4940937.html

Archbold educator wins second in contest

Special to Highlands News-Sun Courtesy Archbold Biological Station
Dec 22, 2021



Award-winning photo of Chelsea Moore scoping a gopher tortoise burrow.

COURTESY/DUSTIN ANGELL

VENUS — When you think of a “scientist,” your first thought might be someone in a lab coat holding beakers; however, the “Faces of Biology” photography contest seeks to break those stereotypes. This contest — sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology — integrates art with science to illustrate the range of research practices. Additionally, creative mediums, such as photography, allow scientists to connect with the public and policymakers to showcase the importance of their work.

Archbold Biological Station’s Director of Education Dustin Angell won second place in the 10th

annual competition. First place went to Christopher Brown's photo showing college students waist deep in a pond learning how to catch sunfish with a net.

Angell's winning photograph depicts research assistant Chelsea Moore "scoping" a gopher tortoise burrow. Moore uses a scope with the attached camera because burrows can be up to 30 feet long. In this photo, the scope wasn't necessary since the tortoise greeted her at the entrance. Gopher tortoises are an important keystone species, as their burrows are home to variety of insects, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Moore's work is part of more than 50 years of ongoing tortoise research at Archbold.

"I use photography primarily to teach about local science and conservation. It is rare for me to submit photos to competitions, but this was the second time I entered Faces of Biology," Angell said. "What they are trying to do, showing what scientists and science really look like, aligns exactly with what I've been doing here in Florida. I'm so grateful that this photo of Chelsea will be seen across the country. I hope it inspires people to go outside and experience nature, and maybe even become researchers or volunteers themselves."

Inspired by Archbold's researchers, Angell has been taking photo portraits and action shots of researchers, along with other professionals and volunteers, in his ongoing Florida Stewards Project since 2014. This project, now at over 100 portraits, aims to document the people, places, and careers related to conservation in the Headwaters of the Everglades. Most are associated with Archbold, but others are with state and federal agencies, other non-profits, or work independently. Each subject is photographed in their work clothes and holding the tools of their trade. Angell seeks to highlight both researchers and the habitats where they work.

Archbold's natural laboratories and research have inspired other artistic projects in recent years, too. Michele Oka Doner, best known for her 1.25-mile installation "A Walk on the Beach" at Miami International Airport, first visited Archbold in 2019. Within a year of that visit, she had completed a large drawing of slash-pine tree rings using red iron oxide and based on a cross-section borrowed from Archbold. Fine artist Deborah Mitchell partnered with Archbold to put on a virtual art event in 2021 called "Wild Observations at Archbold Biological Station."

The live-streamed presentation included Mitchell's interviews with Archbold researchers as well as her multi-media art based on science and conservation in Florida. And in 2018, Robert Chambers created an entire art exhibit based on Archbold's research. "Serepens: Serenoa repens" was held at Everglades National Park and even included a 3D printed saw palmetto. ■

Angell explains that all this art is for a purpose. “Ultimately, I wish for future generations of Floridians to share and pass along a home that is alive with wild places and healthy ecosystems. These portraits are for them: a reminder of the community of people who, at a critical time in our history, oriented their lives and careers toward the stewardship needed to deliver that future,” Angell said.

Angell’s winning photo will be featured in the upcoming April issue of BioScience.