

# The Buzz

Spring 2024

PHD BIOLOGY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

**PhD Symposium  
News**

**PhD FIKA  
Seminar**

**Meet our  
PhD in the  
spotlight**



**READ NOW**

**Why a newsletter?** The PhD Biology school has recently been re-launched to bring together PhD students across three departments ICM, IOB, and IEG. We aim to create a community among PhD students where we can thrive and grow together. In order to do this, we need to be able to communicate with you effectively. Thus, the idea of having a monthly newsletter was born. Throughout the year, we hope to be a continuous presence. If you would like to be featured or have any ideas for the upcoming editions please feel free to contact us.

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## Rep News

### Konstantinos Papachristos (ICM)



I am on my 3rd year of my PhD studies in Uppsala university and by using bioinformatics, I am trying to understand the role of the endosymbiotic bacterium Wolbachia in the speciation process of Neotropical *Drosophila* flies. Also, I have a broad interest in evolution, data analysis and statistics. I wish to contribute to the PhD student education by organizing talks and workshops that are relevant for our studies, so if you have topics that you are interested in please reach out to me!

### Sahra Gibson (IEG)

I am a first year PhD student researching the links between plant functional groups and water quality in rewetted peatlands. When I'm not collecting *Sphagnum* species in a bog, I enjoy playing folk and classical music on the violin. I am excited to be coordinating the 2024 PhD Symposium Day and other future events that bridges our research together.



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## Since we last spoke... you've been very busy!

We congratulate:

**Emil Hägglund** who defended his thesis "*Evolution of biological systems linked to complex cell architectures in Planctomycetota*" on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January!

**Pedro Morell Miranda** who defended his thesis on "*Following the herd: Population genetics of European sheep in time and space*" on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December!

We are currently looking to recruit an IEG rep

## Upcoming Events

### **Biology PhD School Seminar Fika: *January 26<sup>th</sup>***

Kicking off the semester, we have a new seminar series designed for PhD to showcase their research in a fun and exciting way. We also want this to be an opportunity for the three departments to interact while showcasing fantastic research. This seminar series will happen three times an academic year, with ICM hosting first. The second seminar will be held on the **26<sup>th</sup> January**. Those willing to present a short 15 min presentation will be rewarded with credits. After the presentations, there will be time to interact with each other and enjoy some yummy fika.

### **PhD Symposium**

Welcome to another PhD symposium on March 8<sup>th</sup>! After the incredibly successful symposium last year we are repeating the same concept but with the ambition to make it even better this year after listening to your feedback! We will have presenters from several hot topics and we also encourage anyone who wants to practice a presentation or just have input to sign up for our poster session. We will finish the evening with a dinner in Uplands nation which anyone is welcome to join in case you can not join the full symposium. Sign up here:

<https://forms.gle/mNFWuiQnZxeYK1ca6>



**When:** March 8<sup>th</sup>

**Where:** Gysinge herrgård, close to Färnebofjärden national park

## Upcoming Workshops

We are happy to announce that Lucas Du Priest from FORMAS will join us the coming month to hold a webinar/workshop on their new “Early career/post-doc” grant which you can apply for up until seven years after finishing your PhD. Book your calendar for the **17<sup>th</sup> of February** at **10-11:30 AM!**



Behind the scenes, we are working hard to organize courses and workshops for the upcoming semester. Who knows better what courses would benefit you but YOU! So, we would like to hear what courses/workshops you would like to have offered by the Biology PhD School. Add your suggestions to the below file (link):

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1u2sNhm5ZhNICa3DieAJouWvJsq2acD\\_cX6V6qksTRn](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1u2sNhm5ZhNICa3DieAJouWvJsq2acD_cX6V6qksTRn)

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## Upcoming PhD Defenses and Half-times

### IEG

Linnea Smeds – PhD defence titled “*Conservation genomics in inbred Scandinavian wolves using bioinformatics methods*” on the 16<sup>th</sup> Feb at 10:00 in the Zootissalen at EBC.

Sofa Papadopolou - half-time in limnology on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February at 10:00 in room 1003.

### ICM

Nour Aldin Kahlous - half-time on “*Computational Studies of G Protein-Coupled Receptors*” on the 31<sup>st</sup> of Jan at 13:15 in room C8:301.

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## PhD in the spotlight

**Name:** Konstantinos Vaziourakis

**Department:** IEG: Limnology

**Started PhD:** 2020



- **What is your research about?**

My research is about organic matter cycling across ecosystems where I focus on factors that control decomposition and are related to biogeochemistry of different materials in soils, sediments and water. More specifically, we try to evaluate how important the energy content of the organic matter is for the respiration and mineralization combining methods such as gas analysis, bomb calorimetry and microbial substrate utilization.

- **What motivated you to start a PhD and what did you do before your PhD?**

My main motivation was the curiosity about the processes and specifically biogeochemistry because it is an interface between chemistry, biology and ecology. In a changing environment we need to contribute with the experience and knowledge that we have to better understand how our ecosystems will respond to these changes.

I started with a bachelor in geology and moved onto working with degradation first in my master in environmental oceanography where I worked with hydrocarbon degradation in coastal sediments.

- **What are your tips of things to consider when choosing PhD courses? How did you divide the course credits?**

To me, there are two important building blocks which are a good which are a statistical background together with programming skills. If you lack either of these I would suggest to start with such courses. More general courses are good to start with in the beginning where you usually have more time and depending on what you discover that you need throughout the PhD you might choose courses to support more specific methods or analyses. Along the way you might find consultation within specific areas a useful addition to courses.

My courses were split where half made up a theory block and half were more specialized on methods and analyses in addition to the mandatory courses that we have within our program. As I had more time available in the beginning of my PhD I finalized all courses within the first two years.

- **How do you maintain a healthy work/life balance throughout the PhD? How do you keep motivated?**

It's important to always aim to have a healthy balance between your work and the life outside. All of us need to find our individual balance which we can self-sustain in how we handle breaks or more intense working periods. It's never healthy to avoid breaks just to become more efficient in the working task. We can all struggle to achieve the perfect balance when we have more intense workload but then it's important to have longer breaks to reset. Another important tip is to find a hobby or activity that completely disconnects you both physically and mentally from work.

Every year is different where you start your PhD very eager and interested to understand your specific role and the endless possibilities there are. But of course, we need to be honest and realize that along the way motivation can fluctuate a lot! There can be days where we lose all interest in what we do and this can be a hard struggle, especially when we have many external global issues that add an additional stress. Importantly, I feel like I'm in a space where I can freely express myself, independent if I have a good or bad day in terms of motivation. One key concept that keeps me motivated is that our work is essential to contribute to the community on a bigger scale and is not driven by our personal achievements.

***Do you want to be the next PhD in the spotlight? Reach out to us on:***  
***[Ellinor.jakobsson@ebc.uu.se](mailto:Ellinor.jakobsson@ebc.uu.se) or [Rachel.dwane@ice.uu.se](mailto:Rachel.dwane@ice.uu.se)***