

Ecologist Helps Protect Habitats



John Urquhart

DEVELOPMENT ALMOST ALWAYS affects the environment, but John Urquhart is trying to minimize its impact on wildlife and their habitats.

After working in the conservation field for several years, the ecologist decided to start his own environmental consulting business, called Blazing Star Environmental.

“My job is to find a way to work with the government and the developer to make sure the species benefits,” says Urquhart, B.Sc. '05 and M.Sc. '09. “In theory, it can be a win-win.”

His business aims to help government organizations and landowners “do good things for species and ecosystems” by helping developers not only meet but exceed legal requirements for protecting the environment. “Let’s make sure that when we have an impact, we more than compensate for it,” he says.

If a developer finds an endangered species of turtles on its land, for example, Urquhart will suggest methods to reduce the impact on the turtles’ habitat by building nesting grounds or passages under roads for the turtles to cross safely. If a wetland needs to be drained, he will help capture and relocate the turtles.

Before starting his own business, Urquhart worked at Ontario Nature, where he managed 24 nature reserves, focusing on protecting species-at-risk. Prior to that, he worked at the Toronto Zoo, where he bred endangered ferrets and marmots for release into the wild.

New Associate Dean of Graduate Studies Appointed

INTEGRATIVE BIOLOGY

Professor Teresa Crease has been appointed associate dean of graduate studies for a three-year term beginning May 1.

After joining U of G in 1991, she began a research program to study the impact of meiosis loss on the evolutionary process.

“Teri brings a wealth of experience in all aspects of graduate studies,” says Anthony Clarke, assistant vice-president, graduate studies. “Her deep personal commitment to the quality of graduate education makes her a great fit for this role.”

Crease also serves as adviser to both master’s and doctoral students, as well as postdocs. She previously served as acting chair of the former Department of Zoology and the current Department of Integrative Biology, as graduate co-ordinator for both departments, and as chair of both departments’ graduate studies and awards committee.

As an elected member of Senate, Crease served on the Senate committee for university planning and on the Senate honours and awards committee. More recently, she was a member of the admissions and progress committee of the Board of Graduate Studies from 2008 to 2013 and served as its vice-chair for the past two years.