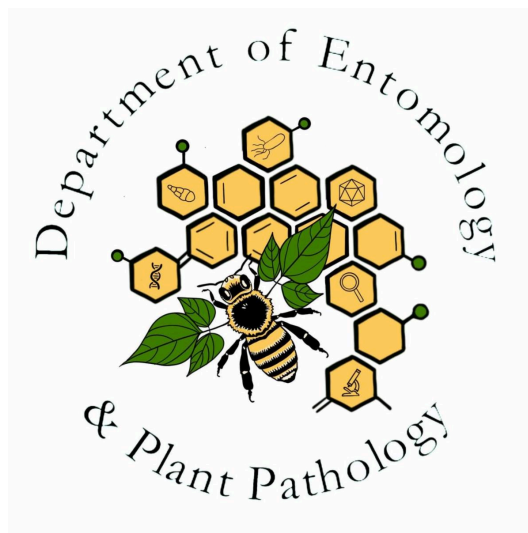




ENPL CONNECTIONS



Working to Make a Difference

Strength in Translational Research
Lab $\rightleftharpoons$ Field $\rightleftharpoons$ Food

Department Head Greeting

Greetings,

This summer has been a whirlwind of activity in the department. You will see in this issue just some of the many impactful outcomes of the work from our ENPL members.

An annual summer activity that always impresses and inspires is our hosting of undergraduate workers and those involved in research experiences for undergraduates. Through the hard work of our faculty, staff and graduate students, these undergraduates gain valuable skills in field and lab work. For most of these students, this is their first taste of what a job in plant pathology or entomology could entail. Some learn that they might be happier in a career of car sales or event planning. For others



Dr. Ken Korth
ENPL Department Head

though, they are motivated to continue learning and working in our discipline.

On campus this summer, we bid farewell to what for many of us could only be described as an old “frenemy”. The Agriculture Annex, built in 1906 as the University’s first agriculture facility, had a long and storied history. The building was razed this summer. At various times it was home to research, teaching, and administrative activities, and even served as the university infirmary. Many of you have shared stories with me about time you spent there either in offices or in the basement, which we used for lab and equipment space.

And although I sometimes cursed the collapsing foundation and the numerous rodent inhabitants, I sort of miss the building and it’s still strange to see the open space where the annex stood.

As alumni and friends of the Entomology and Plant Pathology department, we always appreciate your input and support. Feel free to reach out with your favorite Ag Annex story, to share information, or if you want to learn more about what is going on in the department.

Very best wishes,
Ken

Faculty Awards & Recognition

USDA Grant Supports Research on Emerging Cattle Disease

Dr. Emily McDermott, assistant professor in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, is leading a two-year, \$492,218 USDA-NIFA-funded project to address the spread of bovine theileriosis in Arkansas. The disease, caused by *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda and transmitted primarily by the invasive Asian longhorned tick, was first confirmed in the state in 2024 and has since been detected in 15 counties.

In collaboration with researchers from Animal Science and Cooperative Extension, the project will evaluate two commercially available control strategies—an anti-tick vaccine and the parasiticide eprinomectin—to provide producers with practical tools to reduce disease impacts.



Dr. Emily McDermott

The grant also supports statewide outreach efforts to educate veterinarians, extension agents, and cattle producers about disease identification, prevention, and tick management.



Dr. Asia Kud

[Read More](#)

Kud Receives USDA Grant for Soybean Cyst Nematode Research

Dr. Asia Kud, assistant professor of nematology in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, has received a \$298,913 USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant to advance research on soybean cyst nematode, a major pest responsible for more than \$1 billion in annual soybean yield losses in the United States.

The project focuses on understanding how nematodes use specialized proteins, known as effectors, to manipulate soybean roots and establish feeding sites. By identifying key interactions between nematode effectors and soybean proteins, Kud aims to uncover new targets for developing durable nematode resistance. The long-term goal is to support the development of improved soybean varieties using gene-editing and other innovative approaches that disrupt nematode infection while maintaining plant health and productivity.

Graduate Student Awards & Recognition

ENPL Students Receive Travel Grants for Livestock Insect Workers Conference

Congratulations to Evelyn Madrigal and Brayden Letterman, who were awarded student travel grants from the Livestock Insect Workers Conference to support their participation in this year's meeting, held June 28–July 1, 2026, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The travel grants enabled Evelyn and Brayden to present their research and engage with livestock insect researchers from across the nation. Their accomplishments reflect the high quality of student research and representation of ENPL at national scientific conferences.



From left to right: Evelyn Madrigal, Dr. Emily McDermott, and Brayden Letterman

ENPL Honors Outstanding Graduate Students

ENPL is proud to recognize two exceptional graduate students who were named the department's Outstanding Students during this year's annual Honors and Awards Reception in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences.

Congratulations to Soumya Unnikrishnan, Outstanding M.S. Student, and Devi Balakrishnan, Outstanding Ph.D. Student, for their outstanding academic achievements, dedication to research, and contributions to the department.

Their hard work and commitment exemplify the excellence of ENPL graduate students, and we are proud to celebrate their well-deserved recognition.



Devi Balakrishnan receiving award



Soumya Unnikrishnan receiving award

Recent Events

Kud Lab Present Research at Society of Nematologists Meeting

Members of Dr. Asia Kud's laboratory represented the ENPL at the Society of Nematologists (SON) 2026 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. Graduate student Anmolpreet Kaur received both the GSIE Presentation Travel Grant and the GPSC Travel Award, and her research abstract was selected for a 3-Minute Talk. Cristina Raya Vaca presented a research poster during the meeting. Kaur and Raya Vaca also earned second place in the N.A. Cobb Bowl (Nematodes in Jeopardy) competition. Congratulations to the Kud Lab on these outstanding accomplishments and for representing ENPL on the national stage.



Participants receiving awards during meeting



From left to right: Dr. Asia Kud, Dr. Payal Sanadhya, Anmolpreet Kaur, and Cristina Raya Vaca



From left to right: Dr. Asia Kud, Dr. Payal Sanadhya, Cristina Raya Vaca, and Anmolpreet Kaur

ENPL Department Enjoys Summer Picnic



Faculty, staff, students, and their families gathered on June 18 at AgriPark for the annual ENPL summer picnic. The picnic provided an opportunity for department members to relax, connect, and celebrate another successful year of research, teaching, and outreach.

Attendees enjoyed a wide variety of homemade pot-luck favorites and picnic classics, alongside burgers and hotdogs cooked by Virgil and Dr. Korth.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was a game of Family Feud, featuring questions about ENPL. Two teams of students, faculty, and staff tested their knowledge of insects, plant pathology, departmental traditions, and campus life. The game sparked plenty of laughter and friendly rivalry.



Students and staff playing games at the picnic



Dr. Ken Korth hosts ENPL "Family Feud" at the picnic



Dr. Korth and Virgil cooking hamburgers and hotdogs



ENPL "Family Feud" teams battling it out

Inspiring Young Scientists Through 4-H Entomology Outreach



Dr. Austin Jones presenting from the ENTO Roadshow trailer

Dr. Austin Jones, ENPL Instructor and Director of Undergraduate Education & Outreach Coordinator, recently led educational entomology workshops for 4-H youth in Polk and Conway counties, providing hands-on learning experiences that introduced participants to the fascinating world of insects and their important roles in natural and agricultural ecosystems.

The workshops featured interactive activities and discussions designed to help students explore insect diversity, understand the significance of entomology, and gain a greater appreciation for the impact insects have on everyday life. Participants also learned about educational and career opportunities within agriculture, entomology, and environmental sciences.

By encouraging curiosity, discovery, and scientific exploration, these outreach programs reflect ENPL's ongoing commitment to youth education and community engagement. Through

partnerships with local 4-H programs, the department continues to inspire the next generation of entomologists, plant scientists, agricultural professionals, and environmental leaders.



Children participating in the half-day workshop with chaperones - photo by Claire Williamson



Children participating in some ENTO Roadshow activities - photo by Claire Williamson



Children exploring the outside with insect nets - photo by Claire Williamson



Children participating in the half-day workshop with chaperones

Firefly Fling Lights Up the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks

On June 27, 2026, Dr. Austin Jones led the annual Firefly Fling at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, giving community members a unique opportunity to learn about one of Arkansas's most captivating insects. Participants explored the fascinating biology, behavior, and ecology of fireflies while discovering the important roles these insects play in healthy ecosystems. The evening combined education with hands-on exploration as attendees observed fireflies in their natural habitat and learned how to identify different flashing patterns and species. The event highlighted the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology's commitment to engaging the public through science outreach and fostering an appreciation for the incredible diversity of insects found in Arkansas.



Children participating in the half-day workshop with chaperones



The ENPL booth setup at the Firefly Fling

Students Gain Industry Insights at J&M Mushroom Farm



Attendees left to right: Dr. Jim Correll, Marselle Sandoval, Miranda Sifuentes, Sean Miller, Muhammad Muneeb Ullah, Renukak Khanal, Ola Gorka, Dominika Golinska, Aleksandra Grabowska, Raul Cifuentes, and Evelina Tsourakaki

Led by Dr. Jim Correll, students from the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology recently traveled to Miami, Oklahoma, for an educational tour of J&M Mushroom Farm on June 3. During the visit, the group learned about commercial mushroom production, as well as the disease and pest management challenges involved in maintaining a large-scale operation.

To appreciate the scale of production, J&M Mushroom Farm harvests an impressive 77,000 pounds of mushrooms every day, 365 days a year. The tour provided attendees with valuable insight into the intensive management practices required to support continuous production while protecting crop health.

The group enjoyed an engaging and informative experience, asking thoughtful questions and gaining a firsthand look at one of the region's largest mushroom production facilities.

ENPL Continues Summer Outreach at Local Farmers Market



From left to right: Vanshika Jindal, Insha Shafi, Anmolpreet Kaur, Raul Cifuentes, Habeeb Yinka Atanda



Vanshika Jindal and Raul Cifuentes at the ENPL booth

Members of the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology continued their community outreach efforts at the local Farmers Market during the summer of 2026 where they connected with visitors of all ages through conversations about insects, plants, and the important role they play in Arkansas agriculture and natural ecosystems.

The outreach booth provided an opportunity for community members to ask questions, learn about ongoing research and Extension activities, and gain a greater appreciation for the beneficial impacts of entomology and plant pathology. Events like the Farmers Market help strengthen the department's commitment to public education while inspiring curiosity about the natural world.

Recent Graduates

ENPL Summer 2026 Graduates

M.S. Graduates:

Anmolpreet Kaur, M.S., Plant Pathology
Advisor: Dr. Asia Kud

Anderson Fletcher, M.S., Entomology
Advisor: Dr. Ben Thrash

Ph.D. Graduates:

Cassandra Steele, Ph.D., Entomology
Advisor: Dr. Emily McDermott



Dr. Cassandra Steele



Anmolpreet Kaur



Anderson Fletcher



Anmolpreet Kaur's defense; from left to right: Dr. Asia Kud, Dr. Rich Adams, Anmolpreet Kaur, Dr. Travis Faske

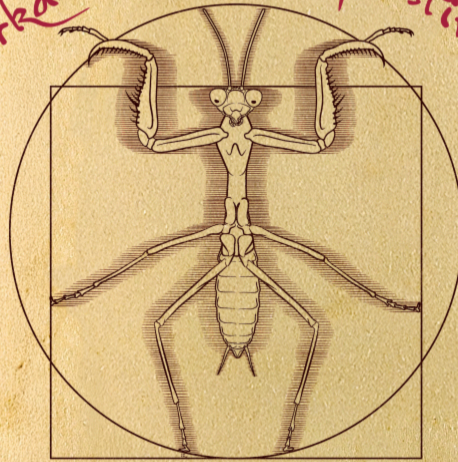
Upcoming Events

Save the Date: Arkansas Insect Festival 2026



scan for more details

Arkansas Insect Festival



September 12, 2026

A free for all ages, one-day family-friendly event where visitors discover the value, beauty, and fascinating lives of insects through hands-on exhibits, live critters, and expert guidance from local entomologists.

See • Touch • Learn
about insects & arthropods

Location:

Pauline Whitaker Animal
Science Center
1335 W Knapp Dr,
Fayetteville, AR 72704

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

(sensory-friendly hour from
9 - 10 AM for guests who
prefer a quieter environment)

Mark your calendars for the Arkansas Insect Festival on Saturday, September 12, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Center in Fayetteville.

This free, family-friendly event invites visitors of all ages to see, touch, and learn about insects and arthropods through interactive exhibits, live specimens, and hands-on activities led by faculty, students, and community partners.

Highlights include a live arthropod zoo, butterfly house, honeybee displays, and fan-favorite cockroach races—plus opportunities to connect with entomologists and explore how insects impact agriculture, the environment, and everyday life.

Interested in getting involved? If you would like to volunteer or participate as an exhibitor, please sign up at the link below.

[Volunteer](#)

In Remembrance

Remembering the Agricultural Annex Building

The Agricultural Annex may be gone, but it remains a fond part of the University of Arkansas's agricultural history—and the history of the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology.

Originally built in **1905 as Agriculture Hall,** the building is one of the oldest on campus. Over the years, it served many purposes, including housing agricultural programs, Agricultural Engineering, and the campus infirmary. Its halls and rooms were also part of the backdrop for generations of students, faculty, and staff whose work helped shape Arkansas agriculture.

For members of ENPL, the Annex was a familiar part of campus and a place connected to the department's long history of teaching, research, and service. After more than a century, the aging building was recently demolished and replaced with grass.

While the Annex may no longer stand, the memories made there—and its place in the history of agriculture at the University of Arkansas—remain. Sometimes, even an old building can leave a lasting legacy.



The Agricultural Annex in its final years



The Agricultural Annex during its farewell



The Annex site at the close of an era



Gone, but not forgotten: the Agricultural Annex's former home, now a campus lawn

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Give to the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology

Alumni, we would love to hear from you! Reach out to us with updates or let us know how you are using your ENPL degree at enpl@uark.edu. We would love to feature you in our department newsletter.



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