Dear OE3C Attendees,

Welcome to the 2024 Ontario Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution Colloquium (OE3C) hosted by the University of Waterloo! Over the last 50 years, OE3C has become a staple conference among Ontario biologists. It serves as an opportunity to share our research, collaborate with colleagues, and discuss issues at the forefront of our respective fields. Without the backing of an academic society, OE3C is made possible by the dedication and commitment of a rotating organizing committee, as the conference bounces between Ontario institutes. This year’s committee is excited to uphold the reputation of OE3C as an inclusive, educational, and exciting event.

The first ever Colloquium was held in 1974 at York University (then referred to as the Ontario Ecological Colloquium – OEC) and has been held annually ever since (with the exception of 1975). The Colloquium quickly grew to include ethology in 1977 (OEEC) and transitioned to OE3C with the inclusion of evolution in 2011. Throughout the decades, OE3C has been held at 13 Ontario universities (and once by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment). It has served as the first conference experience for hundreds of students, including those who have continued in academia and are now professors with students that attend the event. The University of Waterloo is proud to host the 50th gathering of OE3C, while also marking the 40th anniversary of the last Colloquium held in Waterloo.  
  
OE3C has become known as a conference for students, by students. It serves as an opportunity for emerging scholars to present their research and network with scientists outside their home institutions. This year is no exception. With **64 Oral and 41 Poster Presentations** by students, the next generation of scholars are well represented across **12 Ontario Universities**. With a range of research topics, sessions include Habitat Selection, Environmental Change, Signals & Models, Symbiosis, and Community Ecology. We look forward to diving into the incredible research in ecology, ethology, and evolutionary taking place across the province.

Consumed by technological advancement, humans today are more disconnected from the natural world than ever before; so much so that we have become the leading contributor to global environmental change. Across biology, a discipline rooted in life, there remains a lack of connectivity to the very world we aim to understand. For today’s students, biology happens in the classroom as opposed to in nature. Societies today prioritize highways and residential developments without consideration of preserving natural landscapes. Homeowners are obsessed with maintaining fresh green lawns and filling their gardens with non-native species. When did we, as a society, lose touch with the natural world? Why do we continue to fear nature’s wonders as opposed to embracing them? Where does this biophobia stem from?

This year, we are excited to welcome you as we build awareness to current issues and work towards **Dismantling Biophobia**. Join us as our keynotes walk us through the evolution of plant-bacteria mutualism, explore the pollination preferences of solitary bees, and untangle the mysteries of acoustic variation in bats and insects. Discussions from our **Sustainability Panel** will build on this theme as our experts provide insight on how we can help re-integrate nature into our personal and professional communities.

Thank you for joining us at OE3C 2024. We are happy to join the OE3C family, a legacy that has been 50 years in the making.

Cheers to a great conference!

Michela & Lucas