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Professor heralds unsung pioneer of evolutionary biology in LeConte Lecture

September 23, 2015



James T. Costa, Ph.D., director of the Highlands Biological Station and professor of Biology at Western Carolina University, will present a lecture titled “Indefatigable Naturalists: Wallace and Darwin on the Evolutionary Trail” on Monday, Sept. 28, at 7 p.m. in the Biological Sciences Building, Room 1109.

Contrary to popular thought, Darwin was not the first to propose that species change with time and that natural selection is the primary mechanism promoting this change. Costa’s lecture will highlight the parallels in thinking between Darwin and his sometime rival, friend and colleague, Alfred Russel Wallace. His insights will portray the two naturalists as “true equals,” heralding the significance of Wallace’s accomplishments, which have been largely overshadowed by Darwin’s.

Costa is the author of *The Annotated Origin: A Facsimile of the First Edition of On the Origin of Species, On the Organic Law of Change: A Facsimile Edition and Annotated Transcription of Alfred Russel Wallace’s ‘Species Notebook’ of 1855–1859* and most recently *Wallace, Darwin, and the Origin of Species*. Costa’s fieldwork and scholarship range from social evolution and behavior to the history of evolutionary thinking.

Hosted by the Department of Biology and the Institute for Coastal Plain Science, Costa’s visit is funded through the LeConte Scholars Program, the oldest endowed visiting scholars program at Georgia Southern. Named for Joseph LeConte, a prolific naturalist and scholar who was born and raised in nearby Liberty County, this program has hosted such world-renowned scientists as Eugene P. Odum, Paul Ehrlich, Edward O. Wilson and Rita R. Colwell. Costa is the 25th speaker in the series.

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