

Department of Anthropology

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Greetings from the [Department of Anthropology](#)! I hope that this newsletter finds you and yours well.

The Spring semester is in full swing, and we are beginning to adjust to a life with COVID. We all know that the circumstances may change again quickly, but for now faces in our classes can be mask-free. It feels unusual and will take time to adjust to this “new normal,” but a new phase has certainly begun. Today I am happy to share some of the latest news and accomplishments for the Department, our alumni, students, and faculty.

With the good news also comes a great sadness as we mourn the sudden and unexpected passing of Dr. Richard Leakey, professor and chair of the Turkana Basin Institute (Jan. 02) and of Dr. Isaiah Nengo, Kenyan paleontologist and research assistant professor in the Turkana Basin Institute (Jan. 23). You will find a tribute to Richard and Isaiah at the end of this message.

With best wishes,

Andreas Koenig, Professor and Chair

As always, please send us your updates so that we can include them on our forthcoming Alumni News page! We welcome the opportunity to connect and to tell your story!

Alumni spotlight Jonah Ratsimbazafy '02

[Dr. Jonah Ratsimbazafy '02](#) was honored with two postage stamps, one featuring him and another featuring the newly-discovered mouse lemur, *Micocebus jonahi*, named after him. Jonah completed his PhD on black-and-white ruffed lemurs in 2002 advised by Dr. Patricia Wright and has



since become one of the most renowned primatologists in Madagascar. He is currently the President of the International Primatological Society (IPS).

Undergraduate Student Spotlight Sydney MacGregor '22

Sydney MacGregor '22, who is a candidate for the Human Evolutionary Biology BS with Honors, was recently selected as a 2022 recipient of the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence (General Category). Sydney is working under the supervision of Dr. Gabrielle Russo and PhD candidate Abigail Nishimura. She is also a candidate for the Health, Society, and Medicine Minor, President of the Undergraduate Anthropology Society, and a member of the Red Watch Band CARE Team.



Undergraduate Curriculum Spotlight Study Abroad Opportunities

Stony Brook students and particularly Anthropology and Human Evolutionary Biology majors and minors have new and continuing study abroad opportunities. Just before COVID hit, Dr. Jason Lewis offered a winter program in [Ecuador](#), which can now be offered again.



Recently, Jason initiated a new program, the [Mandarin Archaeological Field School](#) in France. This program will be offered this summer for the first time. Together with the existing programs in the [Turkana Basin](#) in Kenya and the [Centre Val Bio](#) in Madagascar, SBU students can again experience Anthropological field work in various settings on different continents.

Graduate Student Spotlight Marcy Ekanayake-Weber, Marlee Harris, Amanda Rowe, Nicolas Wiggerhauser, Jack Winans

Congratulations to our recent awardees:

[Marcy Ekanayake Weber](#) (advisor: Dr. Andreas Koenig) was awarded a Monique Braude/ Nell Mondy Fellowship (Graduate Women in Science) for her work: "Why do Primates Live in Groups?"

[Marlee Harris](#) (advisor Dr. Sonia Harmand) was named one of the winners of the 2022 SUNY Graduate Research Empowering and Accelerating Talent (GREAT) award.



Amanda Rowe (advisors: Dr. Andreas Koenig, Dr. Patricia Wright) received a research grant from re:wild for her work: “Understanding the Patterns and Drivers of Natural Resource Exploitation for Effective Conservation Strategies of Eight Lemur Species in Zombitse-Vohibasia National Park, Madagascar.”

Nicolas Wigganhauser (advisor: Dr. Jeroen Smaers) was the recipient of an NSF DDRIG titled “The Evolution of the Neural Basis of Learning and Behavioral Control.”

John (Jack) Winans (advisor: Dr. Catherine Markham) was the recipient of an NSF DDRIG titled “Social Responsiveness in Female Savannah Baboons: Individual Heterogeneity, Group-Level Outcomes, and Fitness Consequences.”

Faculty Spotlight Jason Lewis

Dr. Jason Lewis was part of an international team of researchers whose work is challenging previous assumptions of the arrival time of anatomically modern humans in Europe suggesting that the arrival happened 10,000 years earlier than previously assumed. Also part of the team was Dr. Marine Frouin, faculty member in the Department of Geosciences and member of the IDPAS.



[Read more about this story here >](#)

Slimak L, Zanolli C, Higham T, Frouin M, Schwenninger J-L, Arnold LJ, Demuro M, Douka K, Mercier N, Guérin G, Valladas H, Yvorra P, Giraud Y, Seguin-Orlando A, Orlando L, Lewis JE, Muth X, Camus H, Vandevelde S, Buckley M, Mallol C, Stringer C, Metz L. 2022. Modern human incursion into Neanderthal territories 54,000 years ago at Mandrin, France. *Science Advances* 8:eabj9496. DOI: [10.1126/sciadv.abj9496](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abj9496)

Faculty Spotlight Gabrielle A. Russo

Dr. Gabrielle A. Russo was part of an international team of researchers studying the fossil vertebrae of *Australopithecus sediba*. The study highlights the transitional nature of the locomotion of this australopithecine with rather modern bipedalism and ape-like climbing.



[Read more about this story here >](#)

Williams SA, Prang TC, Meyer MR, Nalley TK, Van Der Merwe R, Yelverton C, Garcia-Martinez D, Russo GA, Ostrofsky KR, Spear JK, Eyre J, Grabowski M, Shahed N, Bastir M, Schmid P, Churchill SE, Berger LR. 2022. Arboreality and bipedality evidenced by a

nearly complete lower back in *Australopithecus sediba*. eLife 2021;10:e70447.
DOI: [10.7554/eLife.70447](https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.70447)

Faculty Spotlight

Elizabeth A. Sawchuk, Jason Lewis

Dr. Elizabeth A. (Ebeth) Sawchuk, was co-first author and Dr. Jason Lewis was co-author of a *Nature* paper on population changes in the Later Stone Age in Africa. Using ancient DNA, the study highlights the complex population structure indicating complex human migration and the development of exchange networks.



[Read more about this story here >](#)

Lipson, M, Sawchuk, EA, Thompson, JC et al. 2022. Ancient DNA and deep population structure in sub-Saharan African foragers. *Nature* 603, 290–296.
DOI: [10.1038/s41586-022-04430-9](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04430-9)

Faculty Spotlight

Elizabeth A. Sawchuk

Dr. Elizabeth A. (Ebeth) Sawchuk, was part of an international team studying and discussing ethical questions related to the collection and use of ancient DNA. In a paper published in the journal *Nature*, the authors proposed global guidelines for aDNA research.



[Read more about this story here >](#)

Alpaslan-Roodenberg, S, Anthony, D, Babiker, H et al. 2022. Ethics of DNA research on human remains: five globally applicable guidelines. *Nature* 599, 41–46 (2021).
DOI: [10.1038/s41586-021-04008-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-021-04008-x)

Tribute to Richard Leakey and Isaiah Nengo

The Department of Anthropology suffered two huge losses at the beginning of 2022. On January 2, world renowned Paleoanthropologist Richard Leakey died at his home outside Nairobi. Three weeks later his



protégé, colleague and friend, Isaiah Nengo, died in hospital in Nairobi after a short illness.

[Please click here to read tributes](#) to Richard Leakey and Isaiah Nengo.

Resources for faculty and students support and strengthen the educational experience. The Department of Anthropology depends on our alumni and friends to expand field opportunities for our students and provide seed money for senior honors theses and summer research experiences.

Your generosity, whether it's the renewal of your support or the decision to give for the first time, allows us to do what we do best – innovative, creative research and teaching that's the hallmark of a great public research university. I hope you'll consider investing in our faculty and students by [making a gift today](#) or speaking with the College's Advancement Representative, Assistant Dean Hodan Hassan, hodan.hassan@stonybrook.edu, or (631) 632-6178.

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