

## ***FEATURED FACULTY INTERVIEW***

### **Danielle Levesque, Assistant Professor of Mammalogy and Mammalian Health**

#### ***Do you think one can find work-life balance in academia?***

Part of it is finding work-life balance and making it work for *everyone*. At the moment in the US, women have to make a choice regarding maternity leave. If it's a choice, people will feel obligated to stay, and there are consequences to that as well. It's the fact that it's even a choice, as opposed to it is **expected** that you take leave (like it is in Canada) and you can opt back in- *that's* what's crazy. But I do feel positive about the direction things are going.



#### ***What brought you to UMaine?***

I came here because of the collaborative work environment as well as the high level of commitment to both research and teaching. There are some great researchers in the School of Biology and Ecology and it's a great environment to bring grad students in. For what I do, having access to the resources of the Climate Change Institute is fantastic, and I'm excited to be part of the new Center for One Health. All the new One Health hires are women and my department is 50/50 women and men all the way up, even at the full professor level; that's exciting. I think we are starting to get gender balance in science!

What I've been studying is basically research into fundamental, non-applied temperature regulation in mammals and the evolution of endothermy. And it just so happens that because of climate change that it is, all of a sudden, topical, relevant and applied.

#### ***Is the interdisciplinary approach to studying climate change creating more opportunities for women?***

Yes, in general, because the post-doc/PhD populations that are doing the quick adapting to new ideas is skewing female.

I'm really lucky because basically, I work at the interface between ecological physiology energetics and evolutionary physiology, which should give us an understanding of how animals work, to help us predict the impact of climate change. Part of what appealed to me so much about this position with the Center for One Health was their focus on climate change and heat stress. It was a really nice, kind of smooth transition. I had a choice there – I wasn't desperate for a job so I needed to make sure that when I did take a job I wouldn't have to compromise my core research.

### ***Talk about finding funding for your research.***

People get rewarded for collecting other people's data and publishing big data sets, but nobody gets rewarded or incentives to go out and collect the data. It's hard to find money to go because that sort of "stamp collecting," as it is dismissively called, is looked down on as a lesser form of science. But we're at the stage now where we are trying to put together a picture of how things work and we're missing important data and there's just no money. So I am trying to incorporate unusual ways to do that, and this is the biggest learning curve in becoming faculty – to find unconventional ways to do what you actually want to do as opposed to what the funders want.

### ***Do you have a mentor at UMaine?***

Someone jokingly asked me my second week here, "Did you get the new faculty manual?" I said, really excited, "Oh, there's a manual?" and she just laughed.

But I am really lucky, I have 2 mentors here, one in Marine Science and one in my department. It's nice to have mentor meetings to say *here's what I have been doing – am I missing anything?*

### ***What do you wish you had known or been told before you arrived at UMaine?***

Maybe a big checklist to make sure you are doing this, this, and this. But the great thing is that for every question, I've had 5 offers to help!

### ***Do you have any advice for young women in STEM fields?***

Women have always undersold their abilities – don't count yourself out. Let those who are supposed to be evaluating you do it: **Don't NOT TRY**.

Women prefer to state their faults at the beginning and then go forward, but you don't have to do that. It's not being misleading if you don't. I learned that early on, and it has helped me big time!

### ***Is there a female role model you identify with?***

There are a couple of women leaders in ecology and zoology, but Patricia Wright (Stony Brook University) is one of the first that comes to mind. She is an incredible woman who has now established an NGO and a large research station in Madagascar. She was there in the 70s and 80s, when there was next to no research infrastructure with the attitude ***It can be done***. Now, things are still challenging, but the inroads made by Dr. Wright, as well as others like Alison Jolly, make research there much, much, easier.