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For Immediate Release

University of Alaska Foundation awards migratory bird research grant

The University of Alaska Foundation announces the winning proposal for the 2020 Angus Gavin Memorial Migratory Bird Research Grant.

Rachel Gingras, a post-graduate student in biological sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage, received \$15,000 to support her proposal entitled “Assessing Breeding Origin and Migratory Pathways in a Declining Aerial Insectivore.” The project concentrates on the study of the breeding site variability and migration patterns in tree swallows, which are a declining songbird species.

Gingras’ research will look at isotopes within feathers to study the places that the birds have been which will fill gaps in migratory connectivity knowledge of Alaskan birds for the Migratory Connectivity Project. The goal of the Migratory Connectivity Project is to advance the conservation and understanding of animals throughout their full life cycle.

The Gavin Grant is awarded annually to support research on bird species found either permanently or seasonally in Alaska or its coastal waters, including their biology, general ecology and habitat relationships. This specific project will assist in understanding how climate change may affect Alaska’s avian population over time.

The Gavin Grant, part of the UA Foundation’s consolidated endowment fund, was established in 1981 with a gift from the Atlantic Richfield Co. to honor the memory of Angus Gavin, an environmental scientist and advisor to ARCO. Gavin was hand-picked by ARCO Chairman Robert O. Anderson to observe, categorize and quantify the little-known flora and fauna of Prudhoe Bay in 1969. Gavin’s work was instrumental in helping ARCO and the scientific community draw conclusions, pro or con, about the impact of oil field development on the ecology of the North Slope and to recommend operational changes that would minimize or negate any adverse effects on the environment.

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