Instructor Directory

MaineHealth Institute for Research – Lyme & Vector-Borne Disease Lab

Curtis Bartiromo, BS – Research Assistant II

Curtis Bartiromo is a Research Assistant II at the MaineHealth Institute for Research, working in the Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory (VBDL). He graduated from the University of Glasgow, Scotland in 2021 and has prior work experience in clinical diagnostics and parasite management in mackerel fisheries. In his current role, he performs annual mosquito and tick surveillance for the state of Maine (collection, identification, and testing), is involved with the lab's ongoing study on Ixodes scapularis diapause, and is improving his skills in data analysis and visualization through assisting in surveillance data management.

Susan Elias, MS PhD – Staff Scientist

Susan Elias is a Staff Scientist at the Lyme & Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory at the MaineHealth Institute for Research. She completed her doctoral degree in Earth and Climate Science at the University of Maine. Her major research interests include ecology of tick and mosquito vectors and emergent vector-borne disease agents (such as Borrelia, Babesia microti, Anaplasma phagocytophilum, Powassan virus, eastern equine encephalitis virus) as related to climate, hosts, habitat, and human behavior; modeling environmental spatio-temporal disease risk using multivariate approaches; and disease risk communication through a One Health framework.

Charles Lubelczyk, MPH – Vector Ecologist

Charles "Chuck" Lubelczyk is a Vector Ecologist at the Lyme & Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory at the MaineHealth Institute for Research. His work has focused on interactions between ticks and mosquitoes and their host and habitat requirements, as well as integrated pest management (IPM) approaches to reducing exposure to vector-borne diseases. He is currently working on projects relating to the surveillance of mosquito-borne viruses, like eastern equine encephalitis and Jamestown Canyon virus, in Maine and New Hampshire; the use of community-based strategies to control deer ticks on Maine's island communities; the role of migratory birds in the ecology of Lyme disease; and development of pesticide resistance in mosquito vectors.

Molly Meagher, BS – Field Biologist

Molly Meagher is a field biologist in the Vector-borne Disease Laboratory at the MaineHealth Institute for Research. She has a BS in Environmental Science from the University of Southern Maine. Molly works on an array of projects within her lab, but currently time is spent conducting field work for a tick-control study using rodent and deer targeted acaricides on an offshore island in Maine, working with trappers to examine the role of furbearers as hosts for Ixodes scapularis, and working on public health surveillance of ticks in Maine and New Hampshire. Molly's interests include ecology, Integrated Pest Management, tick and mosquito diapause, and the role of wildlife hosts in cycles of vector-borne disease.

Rebecca Robich, PhD – Staff Scientist

Rebecca Robich is a Staff Scientist at the Lyme &Vector-borne Disease Laboratory at the MaineHealth Institute for Research. She is interested in better understanding how changes in the natural environment impact the transmission of vector-borne diseases to humans. Recent research focuses on mapping the geographic distribution of Powassan virus in Maine, which is transmitted by the deer tick, *Ixodes scapularis*. Her work also aims to determine whether or not Powassan virus is associated with environmental habitat type, including wildlife and plant species composition. She also aims to understand how disease vectors such as ticks and mosquitoes survive the harsh environmental conditions associated with summer and winter, both at a molecular and ecological level.

Robert P. Smith, MD – Infectious Disease Physician, Director of the Lyme & Vector-Borne Disease Lab

Robert Smith is a board-certified infectious disease physician, Director of the Division of Infectious Diseases and MaineHealth Institute for Research and the Lyme and Vector-Borne Disease Laboratory, and Professor of Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine. He has research interests in molecular epidemiology and ecology of emergent vector-borne diseases (Lyme, Babesia, Anaplasma, Powassan Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus), as well as clinical recognition and diagnosis of emergent vector-borne diseases. Dr Smith has been recognized for over twenty consecutive years by Best Doctors in America and by America's Top Doctors. He has served as a physician panel member on the federal DHSS Tickborne Disease Working Group as well as on review committees for the CDC and the NIH. Dr. Smith graduated from Johns Hopkins Medical School and trained in infectious diseases at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Hospitals.

Elizabeth Schneider, MPH – Research Assistant

Elizabeth "Libby" Schneider is a researcher at the MaineHealth Institute for Research Vector-borne Disease Lab. Her personal research interests focus on better understanding the environmental and ecological factors among disease vectors, hosts, and habitat through a One Health framework. She has worked on vector ecology studies focusing on arboviral surveillance, the emergence of tick- and mosquito- borne diseases on Maine's landscape, and insecticide resistance in mosquitoes.

Sage Tocci – Student Intern

Sage Tocci joined the MaineHealth Vector-Borne Disease Lab in the Fall of 2022 as a student intern. Since then, she has been given the opportunity to continue this experiential learning as a student researcher, assisting on both mosquito and tick field projects. Throughout her time at MHIR, Sage has performed regular tick and mosquito surveillance throughout Maine and New Hampshire, as well as lab identification of these species. She has helped conduct Cervid surveys across Maine and has also participated in small and meso-mammal trapping. While working at MHIR, Sage is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science with a minor in Chemistry.

Megan Porter, DVM, - Public Health Educator

Megan Porter is a Public Health Educator at the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Megan has a strong background in vector surveillance techniques, particularly focused on tick surveillance and identification. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Zoology from Northern Michigan University in 2012, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Michigan State University in 2017, and a Master of Science in Comparative Medicine and Integrative Biology from Michigan State University in 2019. Megan joined the Maine CDC in 2020 and serves as a tickborne disease educator for the state of Maine.

Sara Robinson, MPH – Director of Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program

Sara Robinson is an epidemiologist with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Sara earned a Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan in 2008. She joined the Maine CDC in 2008, serving as the Influenza Surveillance Coordinator and Vector-Borne Surveillance Coordinator for the state of Maine. Sara currently serves as the Director of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program at Maine CDC and coordinates state activities around prevention tick and mosquito-borne diseases.

University of Southern Maine

Jessica Bonthius, MPH – Research Associate II

Jessica Bonthius is a Research Associate II at the Catherine Cutler Institute and Muskie School of Public Service where she works as an epidemiologist as part of an Epidemiology Team that is embedded within the Maine Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Augusta, Maine. She has been with the University of Southern Maine since November 2014, providing data analysis and epidemiology surveillance support for Maine CDC programs. Her projects are supported by federally-funded CDC grants and focus on identifying and tracking environmentally-related diseases in Maine. Jessica earned her MPH in Environmental Health from Yale University.

Megan Linske, PhD – Agricultural Assistant Scientist II

Megan Linske is an Agricultural Assistant Scientist II in the Department of Entomology at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Megan's areas of research include, but are not limited to monitoring tick abundances, tick testing for human pathogens, climate impacts on established and emerging tick populations, assessing temperature-dependent physiological responses in overwintering ticks, and implementing and assessing the efficacy of available tick control strategies while also developing and applying novel, innovative control strategies for ticks and tick-borne diseases. Her thorough working knowledge of such factors can aid in the prediction of outbreaks of ticks and tick-borne diseases as well as aid in the efficiency of current and future tick control strategies. She earned her doctoral degree from the University of Connecticut in Natural Resources and the Environment.

Scott C. Williams, PhD – Chief Scientist / Department Head

Scott Williams is the Chief Scientist/Department Head of the Department of Environmental Science and Forestry at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. His field of expertise is wildlife biology. He has been working specifically with overabundant white-tailed deer herds and their impact on native and managed ecosystems, orchards, gardens, and landscape plantings. He is also knowledgeable about other Connecticut wildlife including songbirds and other migratory birds, game birds, small and medium sized mammals, and fish. Dr. Williams earned his doctoral degree from the University of Connecticut in Natural Resources and has worked for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station since 2000.

Massachusetts Mosquito Control Projects

Priscilla Matton, MS – Superintendent and Entomologist

Priscilla Matton is Superintendent and Entomologist at the Bristol County Mosquito Control Project in Massachusetts. She also serves on the board of the American Mosquito Control Association as the North Atlantic Director, representing 9 states in the northeast. Priscilla earned her Bachelor of Science in zoology at the University of Rhode Island, where she worked at the Tick Research Lab. She earned her Master of Science in Entomology at Rutgers University with an emphasis on medical entomology in 2004. Priscilla has been with the Bristol County Mosquito Control Project in Massachusetts since 2005, first as the entomologist and currently the Superintendent. She is a Category 47 pesticide license holder in MA. Priscilla is a member of the Northeastern Mosquito Control Association and served as President from 2015-2017 and the current Secretary. She is also a member of the New Jersey Mosquito Control Association and the AMCA in good standing.

Gabrielle Sakolsky, MS - Superintendent and Entomologist

Gabrielle "Gabi" Sakolsky is Superintendent and Entomologist at the Cape Cod Mosquito Control Project in Massachusetts. She earned her Master of Science in Entomology from University of Massachusetts – Amherst in 1993. Upon completing her degree, she was hired as the fulltime project entomologist at Cape Cod Mosquito Control Project where she served as Staff Entomologist, Assistant Superintendent, and currently Superintendent. She has conducted and directed the mosquito arbovirus surveillance program for Barnstable County, MA, over the past 31 years. She has developed or improved new trapping methods for Greenhead files, designed a new trap to study mosquito populations, and has worked on several international studies in Canada and Africa.

 Cornell University

Jake Angelico, BS - Master of Science in Entomology graduate student, Cornell University

Jake Angelico is a Master of Science in Entomology graduate student in the Harrington lab at Cornell University Department of Entomology. Jake graduated from the University of Southern Maine with a BS in Human Biology in 2020; after which, he worked in a lab focused on the ecology of mosquito and tick-borne disease in Maine. He is interested in the dynamics of infectious disease and how ecology influences disease risk and transmission.

Lindsay Baxter, MS – Research Support Specialist

Lindsay Baxter is a Research Support Specialist in the Department of Entomology at Cornell University, and the Program Coordinator for the Northeast Regional Center for Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases Pesticide Resistance Monitoring Program. Baxter earned a Bachelor of Science in Mico and Molecular Biology from Portland State University in 2012, and a Master of Science in Entomology from Cornell University in 2021. Prior to entering her current role, Baxter worked as a Research Technician in the Harrington Lab at Cornell University, with responsibilities centered on mosquito rearing and colony maintenance, and implementation of research protocols focused on mosquito mating and pesticide resistance monitoring. Her current efforts focus on resistance bioassays to detect pesticide resistance in mosquitoes of public health importance in the Northeast USA, as well as field efficacy trials for approaches to mosquito control.

Amelia Greiner Safi, PhD – Professor of Practice, Public & Ecosystem Health

Dr. Amelia Greiner Safi is Professor of Practice in the Department of Public & Ecosystem Health at Cornell University. She is a social and behavioral scientist with expertise in multilevel influences on health, strategic public health communication, health disparities and intervention planning. A common thread in her work is translational work – linking research to practice and policy. For the past 15 years, Dr. Safi participated in and led collaborative, multidisciplinary, and engaged research. She has often served as a bridge across disciplines, professions to find common interests in order to advance health and environmental outcomes. Much of this work has a health disparities, vulnerability or equity focus. Dr. Safi earned a PhD in Social and Behavioral Sciences from Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health in 2011.

Nicole Foley, MS – Medical Entomologist

Nicole Foley is an ORISE Entomology Research Fellow with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Vector-Borne Diseases in Ft. Collins, CO. Nicole earned her Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health from Western Carolina University in 2020, and earned her Master of Science in Entomology through Cornell University in 2022. Her current work focuses on surveillance and control of vector-borne diseases, with a focus on mosquito-borne disease. Nicole currently serves as the Chair of the Young Professionals Committee for the American Mosquito Control Association.