

THE Current

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Bill Schlotter

Ecologist William Murdoch Receives Top UCSB Faculty Award

William W. Murdoch, an internationally known ecologist and a UCSB faculty member since 1965, has been chosen to receive the highest honor the UCSB faculty can bestow upon one of its own: the annual Faculty Research Lectureship. The award is conferred by the UCSB Faculty Senate on the advice of a selection committee.

Murdoch, the Charles A Storke II Professor of Ecology in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology -- where he served four years as department chair -- was selected for his contributions to UCSB, the community and to science.

"Professor Murdoch has devoted 39 years at UCSB to research, teaching and service to the university and to the community," said selection committee chair Michael Goodchild, a professor of geography and last year's faculty lecturer. "He has grown in stature to become one of the foremost ecologists in the world and one of our most eminent faculty."

Murdoch said he was honored to be the committee's choice.

"I'm grateful to my colleagues for giving me this award and I am deeply honored by it," Murdoch said. "I have a great affection for UCSB and a loyalty to it. And that makes this award, for me, a really special one."

Murdoch's lecture is free and open to the public and will focus on "The Balance of Nature."

He will speak from 4 to 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 14 in the Girvetz Theater (Girvetz Hall, Room 1004).

"I am going to speak about the balance of nature," Murdoch said. "What is it that makes populations out there stable and not fluctuating all over the place.

And I am going to talk about a particular example that I have worked with for a long time: control of an agricultural pest, California red scale, by a little wasp that is a biological control agent.

It is a wonderfully stable system. Finding out how it works is one of the things that I have spent the last few years doing."

A native of Scotland, Murdoch came to UCSB after earning a Ph.D. in zoology at the University of Oxford in Britain and completing a post-doctorate assignment at the University of Michigan. In addition to his professorial duties at UCSB, Murdoch proposed establishment of the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis at UCSB and served as the center's first director. He currently is the director of the UCSB Natural Reserve System.

Away from campus, he has served on many scientific advisory committees, as well as on the Marine Review Committee of the California Coastal Commission and the board of governors of The Nature Conservancy.

Murdoch's research has focused on population dynamics, and the factors affecting the abundance of individuals in populations.

It combines empirical study with mathematical theory.

In addition to a Guggenheim Fellowship, his many honors and special distinctions include the President's Award, given by the American Society of Naturalists; the MacArthur Award, given by the Ecological Society of America; and the Huffaker Medal in Population Ecology, given by UC Berkeley.

He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2002.

"UCSB is honored to have Professor William Murdoch as a member of its faculty," Goodchild said. "It is proud to honor his many substantial and profound contributions to science, the university, and the community over the past four decades. And it is honored to have him as its faculty research lecturer for 2004."

About UC Santa Barbara

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