



CSUCI Faculty Member Works With Award-Winning Stanford Professor on Turkish Wetlands Project

Camarillo, Calif., July 7, 2008-California State University Channel Islands faculty member Sean Anderson is working with researcher Çagan Sekercioglu, of Stanford University, who recently earned the Whitley Gold Award, on a wetlands restoration project in Turkey. The Whitley Gold Award is a top award for grassroots nature conservation presented by a United Kingdom-based charity, the Whitley Fund for Nature. The award includes approximately \$120,000 in unrestricted grant money to continue their project.

Anderson, Assistant Professor of Environmental Science and Resource Management, is collaborating with project leader Sekercioglu, and Kafkas University, an institution in Turkey, on the Kars-Igdir Biodiversity Project. This project is centered on bringing and teaching environmental stewardship to the bird-rich but heavily disturbed riparian and wetland regions of the borderlands of eastern Turkey. Currently their project is centered in Kars and Igdir provinces, but their overall area of study spans the region from the Black Sea in the north to Mount Ararat in the south along the border with Iran.

Sekercioglu began work in 2005 with Anderson joining the project in 2006 to head up their wetland conservation efforts. Anderson now travels to Turkey twice a year to direct their restoration design, construction, and assessment efforts, and to assist with the education and inventorying of bird species and meetings with village elders living in and around their project sites.

"We believe our work will lead to increased bird density and diversity as this region is where most migratory birds going between eastern Europe and North Africa funnel through, and in turn lead to more birding ecotourists, and in turn provide an economic stimulus to the local villagers," Anderson explained. "The idea is to give locals a tangible, monetary benefit for preserving ecological communities."

To date, restoration experiments have been conducted at two wetland sites: Kafkas University Wetland, a seasonal wetland, and Kuyucuk Lake, a year-round water body fed by glacial melt.

"Nothing approaching such wetland restoration efforts has, to our knowledge, ever been considered much less attempted in this region of Anatolia, and we have begun with basic ecological monitoring and initial, small-scale restoration experiments," Anderson said.

The project is considered long-term, and Anderson said there is hope to one day to develop an exchange program between CSUCI and Kafkas University. In addition to their

funds from the Whitley Award, the project has been funded to date by the Christensen Fund, the United Nations, the Society for Conservation Biology, and CSUCI.

For media inquiries about Anderson's involvement with the Kars-Igdir Biodiversity Project, contact Ceal Potts, Communication Specialist at CSUCI, 805-437-8940 or cecilia.potts@csuci.edu.

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Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and service learning, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.