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2024 Richard and Minnie Windler Award Recipients

SYSTEMATICS

Ashley B. Morris, Clayton Visger, Shelby Watkins, and Cathy Pollack

ECOLOGY

Michaella Ivey and Lissa M. Leege

The Richard and Minnie Windler Award recognizes the authors of the best systematics and ecology papers published in *Castanea* during the previous year. For 2024, authors of two articles were selected as winners: Ashley B. Morris, Clayton Visger, Shelby Watkins, and Cathy Pollack for their article, "Extremely Low Levels of Genetic Variation and Predicted Shifts in Suitable Niche Space for a Geographically Disjunct, Federally Endangered Legume, Leafy Prairie-Clover (*Dalea foliosa*)" (Castanea 88[1]:91–110), and Michaella Ivey and Lissa M. Leege for their article, "Life After Privet: Plant Community Dynamics in a Forested Wetland Following Removal of the Invasive *Ligustrum sinense* Lour" (Castanea 88[1]:49–60).

Leafy Prairie Clover (*Dalea foliosa*) is a federally endangered limestone endemic with an unusual disjunct distribution. Populations occur in the prairies of northern Illinois, but also limestone glades of northern Alabama and Middle Tennessee. In a population genetic study, Ashley Morris and her colleagues found less diversity in northern populations indicating that these populations were established by migrants from more southerly populations and may have experienced additional loss of diversity during repeated cycles of glacial emergence and retreat. Unfortunately, the prognosis for

Michaella Ivey

Lissa M. Leege

the northern populations looks grim. Ecological niche modeling indicates that warmer, wetter climates, the results of anthropogenic climate change, will present a challenge to these populations in the form of encroachment by woody species.

Botanists of the southeastern US have long contended with invasions from Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), which are especially damaging to native diversity of southeastern wetlands. Unfortunately, removal of Chinese Privet may result not in the re-establishment of native diversity, but rather provide disturbed habitat for invasion by other alien species. Michaella Ivey and Lissa Leege performed a two-year study in which they monitored a residential wetland in Bulloch County, Georgia. Removal resulted in an increased species richness of native herbs, though non-native species richness was not affected. Although, there was no substantial difference in species composition of established trees, woody seedlings in removal plots represented common wetland tree-species that were not well represented in the overstory of control plots. Though removal of Chinese Privet was beneficial for native diversity in this study, the authors urge caution; following privet removal, it would be wise to monitor against other wetland herb-layer invaders such as Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*).

THE RICHARD AND MINNIE WINDLER AWARD COMMITTEE

Christopher P. Randle (Sam Houston State University), and the subject editors of *Castanea*, Wayne Barger (Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), Jennifer Boyd (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga), Pum Grubbs (Winthrop University), Jonathan Horton (University of North Carolina at Asheville), Daniel Koenemann (Caflin University), and Alexander Krings (North Carolina State University).