

Ecology

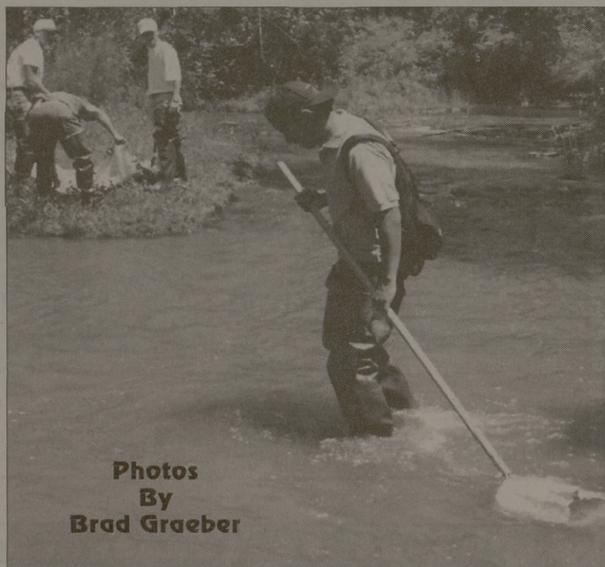
SHAKING HANDS

By LEAH TEMPLETON
Staff writer

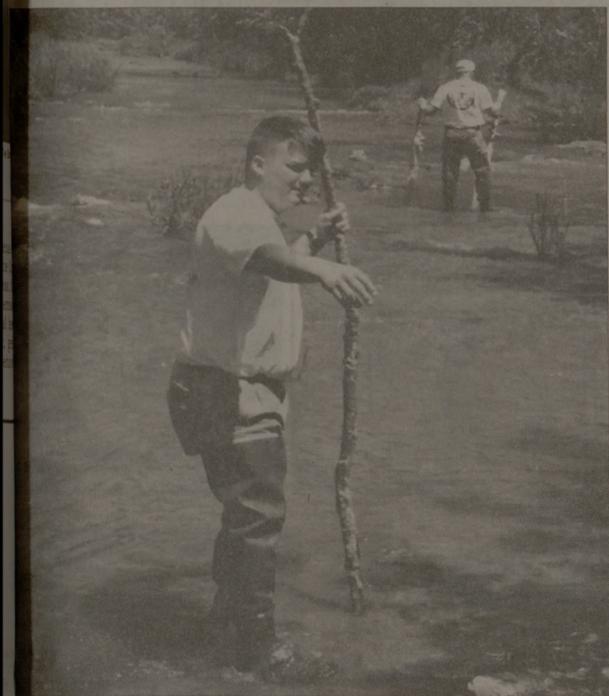
Everyone has mandatory classes they dread having to take. Whether it be chemistry, biology, a math or English class, students would rather transfer to the University of Texas than take certain classes in their major. So it is rare that a class comes along that is both interesting and exciting to students. The class is Principles of Ecology and the lab that goes along with it is different than many other labs at the University. For those of us who went through Biology in high school, here's a quick recap on the subject. Ecology focuses on how plants and animals are distributed throughout an area," Paul Jurena, a graduate student and teaching assistant for the Department of Rangeland Ecology, said. The ecology lab is designed to take students on field trips to ponds and



WITH



Photos
By
Brad Graeber



lakes in College Station. These trips help students learn how to correctly use certain tools and methods in gathering data for lab experiments.

"The ecology lab gets students accustomed to the procedure we use to study physical and chemical properties and sampling vegetation of plants and animals," Jurena said. "In the class we take the students out and show them ways of sampling vegetation."

Adam Whisentet, a junior wildlife and fisheries science major, said he enjoys the experience of getting out of the classroom for a while and putting his ecology knowledge to use.

"We've been going out to the pond the last month or so to study the plant and animal community," Whisentet said. "We put on a weightier to get into the water and get wet; it's pretty fun."

Whisentet also said the class, which consists of about 15 students, divides into groups of three and each perform different



MOTHER NATURE

tasks. While one group may check measures and the pH of the water, the others use nets with lead weights attached that run along the floor of the pond to collect specimens.

Jurena said the class takes samples in many different places, but the main focus is on a pond in Lick Creek Park in College Station and an aquatic system in a range area located near the airport in Bryan.

"The range area is a pond where students measure physical and chemical characteristics of water from the surface of the pond to the bottom," Jurena said. "They also sample organisms on the bottom of the lake and use nets to sample for fish life."

After the data has been collected, Jurena said the students then write up the results of their findings and explain the conclusions they found.

Principles of ecology is a sophomore-level class generally taken by wildlife and fisheries science majors, but is open to all majors. Jurena said there are many avenues students can pursue with ecology, including forest service, national park services, fish and wildlife services and graduate programs.

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