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Ruth Varner, Research Associate Professor, Ocnas and Space, COLSA, travels to Sweden

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Ruth Varner

Research Associate Professor of Earth, Oceans and Space - College of Life Sciences and Agriculture

Professor Varner traveled to Sweden this summer to establish partnerships for research training in monitoring the effect of climate change in high latitude wetlands.

As a research faculty member, I rarely get the opportunity to visit research sites before I propose a project. Travelling to Sweden this summer was this kind of opportunity, to build collaborations with scientists and visit field stations to broaden my pursuit of addressing the evolving feedbacks between high latitude wetlands and climate change. My travel included meetings with faculty from Stockholm, Gothenburg and Uppsala Universities and visits to two field research sites, one in south-western part of the country and the second, my first foray north of the Arctic Circle.

My visit was hosted by several colleagues, including my longtime research collaborator Dr. Patrick Crill, Professor of Biogeochemistry and Director of the Geochemistry program in the Department of Geological Sciences at Stockholm University (SU). I met with Dr. Alasdair Skelton, Chairman of the Department of Geological Sciences at Stockholm University (SU), who is extremely supportive of building a program for student exchange and setting up collaborations between UNH and SU.



Ruth Varner in in Abisko Stordalen mire

A day trip to Uddevalla on the western coast of Sweden provided me an opportunity to visit a research site that is just being set up for long term measurement of carbon exchange, a site prime for IROP and graduate student opportunities. I met with Professor Leif Klemedtsson, Coordinator of the Tellus program for research education (<http://www.tellus.science.gu.se/>) at the University of Gothenburg. He is supportive about my plans to bring students to this unique research site to study the exchange of carbon dioxide and methane, two important greenhouse gases, in peatland and aquatic ecosystems.

I also spent five days at the Abisko Scientific Research Station (Abisko Naturvetenskapliga Station, ANS; (<http://www.linnea.com/~ans/ans.htm>) at 68.3°N, a research station that has been actively collecting meteorological data since 1913. It is a region in the subarctic that is currently being impacted by climate change. Much of my time at Abisko was spent on Stordalen mire, a site monitored for emissions of methane and carbon dioxide (see photo); participating in field work, building a boardwalk and installing instrumentation. While at ANS, I met with Dr. Christer Jonasson, Deputy Director, to discuss plans for bringing undergraduates to ANS to do research in the summer. Dr. Jonasson was enthusiastic about the prospect of expanding the international research opportunities especially for undergraduates at ANS and is supporting my proposal to the National Science Foundation's Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program. If funded, I will bring undergraduates from US institutions to ANS to participate in research on the impact of climate change on northern ecosystems.

In addition to broadening research and educational opportunities for myself, current and future students, I experienced for the first time 24 hours of daylight which allowed for long field days and not much sleep. I also shared in some local traditions including reindeer stew and a dip in the glacier-fed Lake Torneträsk, Sweden's second deepest lake that is generally covered in ice from December until June. I look forward to my return to this unique landscape.



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