



Disturbance Ecology Class to Study, Shape Future of Fox Island after '22 Derecho

A new course taught by Scott Bergeson, assistant professor of biology, will give some Purdue University Fort Wayne students an opportunity to help determine how Fox Island County Park recovers from a major ecological event. Parts of the park were obliterated during a June 13, 2022, derecho, damaging more than 3,000 trees which had to be removed.

“The derecho offers a really cool opportunity because I get to study this thing again and again to see how the environment pushed the reset button and what happens after that,” Bergeson said. “We’re going to be able to see how all of the community changes as you get the trees growing back from the barrenness that is left over.”

A derecho is defined as featuring straight-line winds causing large swathes of damage. The winds that day reached 98 mph. Bergeson has taught at PFW for six years, and plans on being here for 30 more—just enough time to see how the recovery effort develops.

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Cute Canine's Service to Others No Trick

No matter how Emily Wentland moves her head or hands, Gunner's eyes never leave her face. Conversely, she can never tell those eyes "No." The miniature American shepherd would ignore his master anyway and try again until he gets the treat.

But usually, Wentland, a Purdue University Fort Wayne senior, makes Gunner earn his prizes by helping others. The duo loves visiting schools, libraries, and retirement homes where the licensed therapy dog entertains and brings smiles to everyone.

Wentland is a biology major studying pre-veterinarian courses. This 2023 **Top 50 designee** started training Gunner to do tricks when he was 9 months old, beginning with playing dead. He's 8 now and his catalog includes around 100 tricks, some of which are crowd stunners.

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DAC Director's Heroic Actions Helpful after Accident

Only because his mother asked him to bring something sharp, Ryan McCombs had his pocket knife that day. Fulfilling mom's simple request might have helped save someone's life.

At approximately 3 p.m. on Oct. 28, the director of Purdue University Fort Wayne's Disability Access Center was leaving home to drive to the Michigan state line and meet his parents who had been caring for McCombs' 1½-year-old Newfoundland dog, Sitka. McCombs' mother had asked him to bring a knife to cut open a bag of dog food.

As he was climbing into his truck, McCombs looked up to see a car crash without slowing into another vehicle at the corner of Lake Avenue and Old Maysville Road, flipping the first car onto its side and shoving part of it into the oncoming lane. The car that was hit held a mother and her two children, ages 6 and 3, who were coming back from a birthday party.

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Fitness Center and Pantry Finalize Adjusted Schedules

Over the next few weeks, the Fitness Center and both FRIENDS of the University Pantry locations will be operating under different hours and/or closed on specific dates.

Fitness Center

- Dec. 16 | 8 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Dec. 17 | noon–5 p.m.
- Dec. 18–21 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
- Dec. 22–Jan. 4 | Closed

- Jan. 5 | 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
- Jan. 6 | 8 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Jan. 7 | noon–5 p.m.

FRIENDS of the University Pantry

Student Housing Clubhouse

- Dec. 18–19 | noon–2 p.m.
- Dec. 20–Jan. 7 | Closed (special appointments can be made by contacting the on-call RA)

Walb Student Union, Room G36

- Dec. 21 | 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Dec. 22–Jan. 3 | Closed
- Jan. 4 | 10 a.m.–2 p.m.



Forecast Calls for Blizzard of Dons

It's going to be cold, snowy, and fun, from Jan. 29 to Feb. 4, 2024. That's when homecoming—Blizzard of Dons—returns. Mark your calendar and get ready to celebrate during a week of events and giveaways so big, there'll be something for every Don. Specifically block out time for the Blizzard of Dons Celebration on Saturday, Feb. 3, at 5 p.m. in the International Ballroom at Walb Student Union. One word: barbecue. Be on the lookout for more info on this developing story.



Stream the 2023 PFW Home for the Holidays Concert

The broadcast of the Purdue Fort Wayne Home for the Holidays concert is now available online.

This annual collaboration between the PFW College of Visual and Performing Arts and PBS Fort Wayne was broadcast live from the Auer Performance Hall on Dec. 4. The concert, featuring the School of Music's choral ensembles and the University and Community Orchestra, has become a holiday favorite for area music lovers and viewers. This year there were over 1,000 in the audience, the largest school ensembles attendance to date.

You can stream the concert for free through the [PBS website](#), as well as smart TVs, mobile phones, computers, and tablets using the PBS Fort Wayne app.

Important Information for December Graduates

There is no winter commencement at Purdue Fort Wayne; however, the university's spring commencement is held each May and open to all students who have achieved their degree during the previous year, regardless of which semester they graduate. If you graduate in December, you will be able to take part in the ceremony on May 8, 2024.

Here are some deadlines and details to keep in mind if you want to participate in the annual observance at Allen County War Memorial Coliseum:

- If you would like to see your name in the commencement program, remember to apply to graduate by March 31. Complete the application in [goPFW](#) under Registration Tools in the Enrollment section.
- After you apply to graduate, [register yourself and your family](#) for the event. Tickets aren't needed, but sharing an estimated number of your family and friends who will be attending the ceremony and after party is very helpful for PFW's advance planning.

- **Order your cap and gown here.** All orders will be shipped directly to the address that you enter, along with a return shipping label. December graduates who aren't planning to attend commencement in May can order a cap and gown for pictures.
- Visit the **commencement website** often for important information, reminders, and updates.

Need Last-Minute Holiday Gifts?

If you've procrastinated on holiday shopping, you're not alone! Don't panic—there's still time to grab some fab PFW-related merchandise from these vendors:

- **PFW Mastodon online store** (Amazon)
- **Mastodon Campus Store**—both on campus and online
- **PFW student-athletes NIL store** (Athlete's Thread)

Don Life on Hiatus

Today's *Don Life* is the final regularly scheduled edition of 2023. Publication will resume on Wednesday, Jan. 10. While you're away, please continue to monitor your university email account and PFW's social media channels for special editions and breaking news.

News Spotlight

A sampling of external news coverage of Purdue University Fort Wayne.

'Shoe' Us How It's Done, Rasheed: PFW's Bello Delivers Top Viral Moment of Young Hoops Season

National and Fort Wayne-area media | Thursday

Purdue Fort Wayne hosts *FIRSTLEGO* League Semi-State Tournament

21Alive | Saturday

Mastodon Moments

Seen and noted around campus. Monitor our university social feeds for more great moments of Mastodon life.



Senior Sam Hiles was one of many students who stood in a long line on Wednesday for the latest and biggest Student Activities Board bingo event in the International Ballroom. In addition to great prizes, the holiday-themed session also featured an ugly sweater contest for the best (worst?) dressed.

Athletics



Don Dates



News Center



Don Life is an official university communication sent weekly on Wednesday to all currently enrolled students. Don Life Special Edition is a supplement to the regularly scheduled newsletter. It covers breaking news and time-sensitive information directly related to university operations.

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