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Three Cornell studies receive New York State Turfgrass Association environmental stewardship grants

By Joe Ogradnick

Geneva, NY: Three Cornell faculty members are among recipients of grants funded by a \$175,000 state appropriation for the New York State Turfgrass Association's (NYSTA) Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund. Senator Catharine Young, chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, supported the appropriation, which was included in the 2006-07 and 2007-08 state budgets.

Daniel Peck, an assistant professor of entomology at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y., received a grant for his project entitled "Prospecting for Resistance to the Annual Bluegrass Weevil in Improved Cultivars of *Poa annua*." He will study improved annual bluegrass cultivars developed by Pennsylvania State University for resistance to the annual bluegrass weevil. The study may lead to the development of integrated pest management alternatives to the use of insecticides.

Peck and Ping Wang, associate professor of entomology at Geneva, received a grant for "Development of Molecular Techniques for Identification of Invasive Pest Crane Flies in Turfgrass." There are two harmful invasive species of European crane flies as well as a native crane fly species that is not harmful. European crane fly larvae cause damage below the soil that resembles that caused by white grubs, while the damage they cause aboveground is difficult to distinguish from that of black cutworms. Peck and Wang are using DNA barcode technology to accurately identify the pest crane flies in a variety of field samples.

A. Martin Petrovic, professor of horticulture on Cornell's Ithaca campus, received a grant for the project "Benefits of Turf: Reasons Why Pesticides and Fertilizers Applied to Turf are Not Just for Cosmetics." The study will directly measure the benefits and risks to water quality from the use of pesticides and fertilizers and compare the economic costs associated with applying vs. not applying pesticides and fertilizers to lawns.

The Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund is distributed in the form of grants with a preference toward research that will have a positive impact on the environment through the development of methods to protect water quality, integrated pest management strategies for reducing reliance on pesticides, and biological control practices that improve research and technology information dissemination and promote the value of turfgrass to the citizens of New York.

NYSTA is an organization of 1,600 green-industry professionals who share technology, promote environmental stewardship, support education, advance research and disseminate research findings. For more information, call Denise Lewis, NYSTA's public relations coordinator, at 518-783-1229.

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European crane fly adult.

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