BioS Reports

Glimpse into the activities of the
Master's course "Biology in Society"

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EXCURSIONS AND OTHER NEWS

Small insights in BioS points of view, field trips, and other stuff we do.

Unlocking a New Environment - Diving Excursion in the Red Sea

Emilie Walda und Laura Nentwich

This March, Professor Zierau invited BioS students, and other Biology faculty students, to join his 12th biological diving excursion. Over the course of two weeks we explored the marine life of the Red Sea.

Before this excursion, the ocean was a completely new territory for us. Our previous experience was limited to swimming, occasional snorkeling, and visits to aquariums, which only offered a brief and artificial impression of marine life. Therefore, we both started this excursion as complete beginners in scuba diving.

To prepare for the excursion, each participant became familiar with a specific field, such as soft corals, anemones, or marine reptiles. This shared knowledge proved extremely helpful in recognizing organisms underwater. Everyone's enthusiasm, even for the smallest creatures, made a big difference. Without others pointing them out, many details would probably have gone unnoticed in the overwhelming underwater world.

We spent the first week of the excursion at the Roots Red Sea dive camp, where we took on the challenge of completing our Open Water 20 certification. Other participants of the excursion were already working towards their Advanced Open Water certification, or exploring the house reef on their own, creating an inspiring learning environment and offering a glimpse into what could come next. However, the environmental conditions this year also posed a challenge. Strong winds created currents. We clearly remember holding onto the descent line and struggling against the current; at times, we even questioned our own physical strength and realizing the immense power of the ocean. Nevertheless, there was still time to play rock-paper-scissors underwater. With a lot of fun, we all successfully achieved our goal and acquired our Open Water licenses.

Throughout the training, communication underwater became an essential part of the experience. Because communication was mainly limited to hand signals, expressing our enthusiasm required a surprising level of creativity. At the same time, we realized how difficult it would be to translate these experiences into words afterwards. In fact, our excitement sometimes literally got the better of us as laughing underwater occasionally caused our masks to flood. Fortunately, thanks to the OW20 training, we knew exactly how to react and were able to solve these situations calmly.

Once we had become more comfortable with our movements and equipment, we could fully immerse in our surroundings, which led to a constant state of amazement. Interestingly, the underwater environment created an unexpected acoustic experience. Although it initially seemed silent, it soon became apparent that it was not silent at all. Corals and reef organisms produced subtle crackling and snapping sounds, and even schools of fish could generate surprisingly loud noises. Together, these sounds created a distinct and unfamiliar underwater soundscape.

Overall, this excursion was an intense, overwhelming, and fascinating experience. It not only allowed us to explore a completely new environment but also challenged us physically and mentally. We are both left with a strong desire to return next year to continue exploring the underwater world and improving our diving skills. We would highly encourage others to take on this challenge and discover the unique environment of the ocean for themselves.

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The Student Research Exposition - Taking Research to the Next Level

Philine Lea Hampe

Some of the most exciting student research never makes it beyond university walls. Papers are submitted, graded, and quietly archived – but what happens when student research is given a public stage instead?

On May 7, the Alte Mensa opened its doors for the ninth Student Research Exposition (StuFoExpo), an event that brings student research into the spotlight and encourages interdisciplinary exchange. The opening panel discussion repeatedly returned to these themes. Alongside practical advice on topics such as approaching PhD projects, the moderators also emphasized the role of science communication: a presentation should not only explain a topic, but also why it matters to society. Hence, the panel's takeaway was, quite literally, to have a takeaway message. But did all of the participants heed the advice?

The first round of contestants took on the challenge of pitching their research in only 2 minutes. It was exciting to see how differently everyone used their valuable time: while some built their presentations around personal stories - for example, a single-parent in need of housing - others relied on historical references or even brought a cute salamander as a prop. One contestant was particularly clever: he derived his presentation's title only in the course of his talk, thereby underscoring his central message regarding the value of carefully chosen words.

To leave more room for discussion, a poster session followed. In perfect harmony with the venue, the session was accompanied by incredibly good catering. Carrying focaccia in one hand and coffee in the other, people wandered from poster to poster, asking questions - and conversation flowed.

Coming together again for the last challenge, a Science Slam, the contestants were given a little more time. And how well this time was used!

The audience was treated to a series of smart and funny presentations, including meme-filled explanations of very-low satellites, a role play about the process of making gluten-free bread, and even a more serious mock court proceeding in which humans were sued for the declining health of horses. This particular presentation was given by Jana Skrobanek, a graduate of the BioS program! It was yet again exciting to see how students carry on after completing their master's degree.

I would love to write more about all of the 18 contestants - who, by the way, fought their way through more than 40 applicants - but perhaps I should follow their example and keep this short.

On that note, congratulations to the winners of both the audience and jury awards: Lisa Schley, Niclas Speri, Emma Menzel, Anne Flechsig, Lisa Lang, Philipp Wilkendorf, Helen Lindemann, Antonia Kricke, and Antonia Xenodochius.

SCIENCE UNPACKED - THE BIOS PODCAST

Marit Scheuringer

Get ready to see flies in a completely new light! In this episode, Marit and Philine talk with Dr. Arianna Thomas-Cabianca and Hedda Wern about the fascinating world of Diptera: from pollination and museum collections to forensic entomology and ancient DNA. Tiny, buzzing, and far more important than you might think.

Recorded together with the Diptera section at the Senckenberg Society for Nature Research in Dresden.

EXCURSIONS AND OTHER NEWS

Say Hello to Our New BioS Reports Members!

We're happy to welcome our new members to the BioS Reports team! Each of them brings a unique story, fresh view, and a shared passion for making science accessible and engaging.

Rachel moved to Dresden after school for a bachelor's in biology. While she was writing her thesis on the populations of endangered plant species, she realized how much damage is done because crucial information doesn't make it to decision-makers. To hone the skills for building those needed bridges, she joined BioS Reports in April of 2026. She's a member in multiple nonprofit organizations, working towards an open minded society and ecological awareness. Whenever there is a smidge of free time you'll find her squatting in a field, pointing at a pretty fern in a forest or building habitats in her garden.

Cicek packed up her life in Turkiye and moved to Dresden with her husband and 5-year-old son to embark on a brand-new journey. Driven by a passion to become a science communicator for society rather than a scientist confined to a lab, she knew this unique program (Biology In Society) was the perfect fit. Having previously managed a scientific instagram page, she is especially excited to bring that experience here and make a real impact in digital storytelling. Her dedication to BioS Reports was clear from the start–even before officially joining the team in April 2026, she had already contributed articles to two of our issues as a fresh Master's student. Outside her studies, Cicek loves organizing fun science-discovery activities for her son's classmates and taking family trips to explore the beautiful nature in and around Dresden.

Science was **Jovana**'s first love long before she moved from Serbia to Germany and ended up at the TU Dresden. Right now, she is part of the Biology in Society Master's Program, where she most enjoys interdisciplinary fields that improve people's lives or push the boundaries of what's possible. In her free time, she loves to read and write and works as a book editor. She joined BioS reports to connect these two passions and translate science into fascinating stories that the public might find more accessible.

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