

HYDE PARK HERALD

Website for the Hyde Park Herald



[HOME](#) | [OPINION](#) | [LETTERS](#) | [CALENDAR](#) | [REVIEWS](#) | [CLASSIFIED](#) |
[ARCHIVES](#) | [CONTACTS](#)



Photo by Yasmine Laasraoui

JUN 19, 2013

Teacher heads to Arctic

hph2012 / Front Page / 0 Comment

By DASHELL M. PHILLIPS
Staff Writer

Nell Kemp, 7th grade science teacher at Kenwood Academy High School's Academic Center, is taking a trip to Alaska to study the influence of wolf spiders on the structure and function of food webs in the Arctic.

From June 27 to Aug. 3, Kemp will work with a team of scientists at the Toolik Field Station at the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to examine the extent to which arctic wolf spiders influence the structure and function of food webs and measure whether their impact on the community is changing with Arctic warming.

The Arctic is warming faster than any other biome on the planet, which makes it critically important to understand the influence of warming on ecosystem processes in this region, according to Polar Trec, the program that funds teachers and researchers who collaborate to explore projects such as this one.

While arctic species are all well adapted to living in extreme environments, it is unclear how different species will respond to the environmental shifts that accompany climate change, according to Polar Trec's website. Stronger responses by some species within a community could lead to changes in the structure of the food web and its role in arctic ecosystems. In the Alaskan Arctic, wolf spiders are the largest and most abundant invertebrate predators. A shift in their ecological role could therefore have an important impact on the entire food web.

Kemp, who has been a science teacher at Kenwood since 2001, teaches environmental science. She has a bachelor's degree in behavioral neuroscience from Lehigh University and a master's degree in education from DePaul University. She began teaching biology and genetics at Kenwood's high school, but moved over to Kenwood's 7th/8th grade gifted and talented program four years ago.

Kemp, who said she pushes students to participate in project-based learning activities and inquiry investigations, said she hopes her experience with PolarTREC will show her students that "real" scientists complete their work in much the same way as they do, collecting evidence to support their initial research questions and hypotheses.

d.phillips@hpherald.com



« Students lauded for histories of Hyde Park

Local school budgets shrunk »

Leave a Reply

YOUR NAME *

YOUR EMAIL *

YOUR WEBSITE