

Bethany Woodworth Shares Her Journey Through Environmental Studies

University of New England Professor Bethany Woodworth talks about her many experiences with environmental research and how she brings it into the classroom.

(Photo from UNE website)

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April 7 2025

Bethany Woodworth is currently in her last semester as a professor at UNE and plans to retire in May of this year. Teaching environmental studies classes at UNE fulfilled a passion she had for teaching.

Professor Woodworth started her journey at UNE in the fall of 2007 and has been teaching classes in environmental studies, climate change, biodiversity preservation, and environmental pollution.



“When I was nine, we had our first earth day in 1970, and I had this great awakening of environmental awareness during my youth.” Woodworth added that she always wanted to be able to study the ecology of animals of some kind no matter the species.

Woodworth graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1985 at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where her love of wildlife conservation started. “When I went to college, I took a class in field zoology where we were catching bats. And I said, ‘Wow, this is so cool.’”

After that point she decided she wanted to help conserve wildlife. So that passion took her to working for a land trust three years after college. Her journey working for a land trust made her decide to go back to graduate school and learn to do the research that focused on conservation.

Woodworth’s love for the environment took her to many places, like Africa, and Central America, but she also spent a lot of time living in Puerto Rico. She has been able to bring these experiences into the classroom.

“I love being able to hear about what she has previously done and researched, it is interesting to dive into her experiences.” Says first-year, Bio-Med major, Grace Gray.

“I think that Professor Woodworth is an incredible professor and makes class interesting with her ways of teaching, like either watching segments from a show, doing whole class activities, and going on field trips.” Says Gray.

Woodworth has been able to keep students engaged in class by discussing real world problems and what they can do to solve them.

“When we talk about climate change, which tends to be depressing seeing how the world is getting worse unless we do something, Professor Woodworth always backs up those problems with solutions that anyone can take part in.” Says Gray

In 1993 Woodworth created a project for herself in Puerto Rico, one reason she did that was because her soon to be husband was studying tropical fish, and they needed to find a place where they could both live. So we went to Puerto Rico, and she studied the ecology and conservation of a bird that's only found in Puerto Rico.

Woodworth served as monitoring ecologist for Frankfurt Zoological Society. This job enlisted her to do aerial surveys for things like buffalo, elephant, wildebeest and all the other things that are there.

“Eventually, that research and that experience took my husband and I to Africa to work for what's called the Tanzania wildlife conservation monitor, which is a project of the Frankfurt Zoological Society.”

When Woodworth came back from her three year long life in Africa, She realized she wanted to work on bird conservation. That passion for birds took her to Hawaii. Where she became a research wildlife biologist. She also spent her time studying how to conserve endangered birds.

Woodworth and her Husband eventually moved back to Maine after their time in Hawaii. So in the fall of 2007, she was hired at UNE for Environmental Science. She loved the extent of Environmental studies and how it included Social Science at UNE. That love for teaching carried on for the next eighteen years, where she inspired students to do their part in saving the environment.

Currently, she also coordinates the environmental program's first-year experience, the Blue-Green Learning Community. Lastly, she developed and oversaw the Interdisciplinary Minor

in Climate Change Studies. Woodworth has proven her expertise with environmental science in many ways throughout her time at UNE. She will be missed by many students and faculty.

“I knew that UNE was the place for me. So when a full time job came up, I jumped at it. I have always loved teaching.”