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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ECU BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES DARWIN'S 200TH BIRTHDAY:  
NEW SPIDER SPECIES TO BE NAMED FOR SUPPORT OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS**

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Dec. 5, 2008) — East Carolina University biologist Jason Bond received international attention this summer for naming two of his newly discovered trapdoor spiders after musician Neil Young and talk show host Stephen Colbert.

Now, in celebration of evolutionist Charles Darwin's 200th birthday, Bond and the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Department of Biology are offering the public a chance to become part of evolutionary history.

From Dec. 10 through Feb. 4, individuals or organizations can make donations to support scholarships for students who conduct biodiversity research at ECU.

"We want this event to be a lot of fun, as well as informative," says Dr. Jeff McKinnon, chair of the biology department. "Plus, we hope it helps us connect with both our alumni and the community."

The largest donor to the fund will win the opportunity to name one of Bond's trapdoor spiders, McKinnon said. Bond discovered the new species of trapdoor spiders in late 2007 and is in the process of naming the spiders. Other species in Bond's collection have been named after Nelson Mandela, Neil Young, Angelina Jolie, and Bond's wife, Kristen. For more information, including applicable donation and naming rules, and to make a donation, visit <http://www.ecu.edu/biology>. The winner will be announced at the department's February 12 open house Darwin Day celebration.

Darwin, who named many species before his death in 1882, is famous for developing the theory of evolution, a theory that helps to explain the planet's remarkable biodiversity. The Open house will honor Darwin and his contribution to biodiversity Feb. 12, 2009.

In addition to the announcement of the winning spider name, the department will offer tours of the Howell Science Complex on the ECU campus from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., beginning outside room B103. Tours will offer participants a chance to see and learn about spiders, fish embryos, bird behavior, exotic greenhouse plants, biotechnology and more.

At 7:30 p.m., in B103 Howell Science Complex, Bond will present “Spiders, Biodiversity and the Future of Life.” The presentation will focus on biology, the biodiversity crisis and the links between biodiversity and human welfare. Bond says human actions have a tremendous impact on the earth’s biodiversity and it is the small things that run the world’s ecosystems.

“The services provided by ecosystems are invaluable to our planet and to us. Many organisms, like spiders, insects, bacteria, plants, fungi and other species, are directly and/or collectively responsible for our clean air, clean water, food crops, nutrient cycling, medicines, etc. and thus have incredible economic value,” Bond said.

The Darwin Day open house event is free and open to the public. Grade school teachers and students are encouraged to attend, as well as all ECU students, faculty, staff and alumni. Biology faculty members also will offer workshops from 4-6 p.m. to elementary, middle and high school teachers on the topic of how to teach evolution in the classroom.

For additional information, contact the Department of Biology at 252-328-6718 or [biology@ecu.edu](mailto:biology@ecu.edu). To make a scholarship donation to the department and have a chance to win the naming of the next trapdoor spider, go to <http://www.ecu.edu/biology>.

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