



2009 E. Lucy Braun Award

Emily Farrer

E. Lucy Braun, an eminent plant ecologist and one of the charter members of the Society, studied and mapped American forests and described them in her classic book *The Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*. To honor her, the E. Lucy Braun Award for Excellence in Ecology is given to a student for the most outstanding poster presentation at the ESA Annual Meeting. The 2009 recipient is Emily Farrer for her poster entitled “The balance of positive and negative interactions in driving community dynamics.” This work is based on Emily’s doctoral research at the University of Michigan, under the supervision of Deborah Goldberg of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

By fitting population dynamic models to spatio-temporal plant survey data, Emily tested whether facilitative or competitive interactions dominate in the stressful dry sand prairie ecosystem. The results suggested that most direct interactions among plants were competitive; facilitative interactions occurred in this system, but they were time lagged. These time-lagged interactions were likely due to leaf litter, which produces “islands of fertility,” and this suggests that lagged density dependence may be more widespread in plants than previously thought.

Emily’s research was fascinating and effectively combined theoretical and empirical approaches in a sophisticated and comprehensive analysis. She summarized a great deal of complex material in an easy-to-read presentation.