

Murray F. Buell Award



Murray F. Buell ascribed great importance to the participation of students at meetings and to excellence in the presentation of papers. To honor his dedication to the Ecological Society of America and to the younger generation of ecologists, this award is presented to a student for the outstanding oral paper presented at the Society's annual meeting.

The winner of the Buell award for 2010 was **Divya Uma** for her presentation entitled *Chemical mediation of prey recognition by spider-hunting wasps*, given at the 2009 meeting in Albuquerque.

This research was part of her dissertation at Georgetown University, under the supervision of Professor Martha Weiss. The presentation described work examining two alternative hypotheses about the factors that determine susceptibility of spiders to predation by mud-dauber wasps. The standard hypothesis is that web architecture is the key factor-- spiders with 3-dimensional webs are more susceptible than spiders with one-dimensional webs, but Divya also tested whether chemical cues mediate the ability of wasps to recognize and discriminate among spider species as prey. Using what one judge referred to as a “fantastic series of experiments”, she discriminated between these hypotheses and showed clearly that cuticular chemistry provides the key cues for these predatory wasps. She gave an exceptionally clear presentation and answered questions thoroughly and knowledgeably.