
EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Ecology, Evolution and Behavior (expected 2022)

- University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN; 4.0 GPA

Bachelor of Arts in Conservation Biology (May 2016)

- Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, GA
- Minors in English & Urban Ecology; 3.8 GPA, *magna cum laude*, dean's list (all semesters)

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH, AND DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Action Task Force Member (June – September 2020)

- Organized with graduate students and postdocs to write and publish an open letter to Ecology, Evolution and Behavior department faculty on issues of racism and anti-Blackness in the department (see publications)
- As elected task force member, worked with faculty to create anti-racist action items for department implementation

Market Science Invertebrate Week Contributor (July 2020)

- Contributed activities and intro/Q&A videos to encourage interest in insect behavior for Market Science's invertebrate week

Research Assistantship in Biomimicry Outreach (August 2019 – May 2020)

- Introduced 7th grade life sciences students to micro and macroevolutionary concepts through specimen collection, adaptation analysis, and microscopy work
- Coordinated with classrooms around the country and imaged student specimens under light and scanning electron microscopes, eventually conducting live microscopy sessions to show students various adaptations in each specimen

Mentor for Minnesota Academy of Science FORSE Program (October 2017 – May 2020)

- Mentored middle school students at Bdote Learning School (Dakota & Ojibwe immersion learning program) through the development, implementation, and presentation of novel science fair projects

Program Assistant, Minnesota Academy of Sciences (October 2019 – December 2020)

- Recruited volunteers and mentors for STEM programs run by the Minnesota Academy of Sciences
- Developed & edited curriculum, manuals, and programs for science teachers, volunteers, and students
- Oversaw STEM programs, led program mentoring sessions and tracked progress of program participants
- Reviewed research and qualifying paperwork for science fair competition

Broadening Representation & Equity with Science (BREWS) Planning Committee Member (September 2017 – Summer 2020)

- Started & served on a committee that hosts seminar speakers on different issues of equity within Ecology, Evolution and Behavior for data-driven discussions
- Maintained the BREWS website

President of Graduate Students of Color Alliance (GSOCA) (August 2017 – May 2020)

- Revived GSOCA, a discontinued graduate student organization that promotes community building and advocacy as a way of navigating the hurdles associated with being students of color
- Hosted regular community service, dialogue series, skill-building workshops, advocacy and peer support events

Volunteer for University of Minnesota InSciEd Out Program (August 2017 – May 2020)

- Classroom guest speaker and assistant for 2nd grade students in STEM education modules, exposing young students to diverse scientists and concepts
- Presented zebrafish toxicity module at Minnesota State Fair contact table (August 2018)

Market Science Volunteer (July 2019)

- Presented invertebrate learning module at Minnesota Midtown farmers market, teaching with hands-on insect examples

Science Fair Judge, Minnesota State Science Fair (January 2019)

- Reviewed, assessed, and scored middle school science fair projects at the MSSF

Online Orientation Advisory Board Member (January – May 2019)

- Developed content for an accessible and inclusive University of Minnesota online graduate orientation
- Contributed to the script and filmed material for online orientation

Diversity Lunch at the International Society for Behavioral Ecology Meeting (July 2018)

- Hosted a lunch during the ISBE meeting to discuss issues of accessibility for diverse populations in the Academy and society

Animal Behavior Society Outreach Fair (July 2018)

- Presented hands-on module about insect communication/song to 100+ children

Steering Committee, Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Alliance for Diversity and Inclusion (November 2017 – May 2018)

- Collaboratively developed strategy for a more diverse and inclusive campus climate for graduate students and postdocs

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant for Foundations of Biology, Evolution section (BIOL 1951 & grading for BIOL 1951) (January – May 2021)

- Taught 20+ students, lecturing on important research skills necessary for biological careers
- Facilitated student development of research proposals in the area of evolutionary biology

Biology, Chemistry, Algebra, and Geometry Instructor, Brightmont Academy (August 2020 – March 2021)

- Provided one-on-one innovative and comprehensive math and science education to middle and high school students in single-student classroom setting
- Developed personalized lesson plans and course objectives for students who struggle in traditional classroom settings

Guest Lecturer, University of Minnesota EEB 8201: Foundations in Ecology, Evolution and Behavior (October 2019)

- Lectured on classical competition theory and Lotka-Volterra models for predicting competitive outcomes

Guest Lecturer, University of Minnesota BIOL 3700: Evolution in the Anthropocene (October 2019)

- Facilitated student development and presentation of research projects

Teaching Assistant for Animal Behavior (EEB 3411 & EEB 3412W; September 2018 – May 2019)

- Taught 40+ students in lab per semester, lecturing on the main areas of inquiry in animal behavior and overseeing lab work
- Facilitated student research through development, implementation, data analysis, and pre-publication

Guest Lecturer, Oglethorpe University BIO 215: Animal Behavior (October 2017)

- Lectured on sexual selection, sexual signal evolution, and my current research

Oglethorpe University Supplemental Instructor for Chemistry & Biology (August 2015 – May 2016)

- Served as an undergraduate teaching assistant for general chemistry & biology classes
- Held 2-3 weekly group tutoring sessions for each subject and tutored up to 20 students per session
- Developed worksheets and quizzes, held exam reviews, and reviewed lecture material to supplement classroom instruction

POSTERS, PAPERS, & PUBLICATIONS

Posters

Kota, M. (2018, May). *Why Does Same-Sex Sexual Behavior Persist?* Presented at the 2018 Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Foundations poster session.

Kota, M. (2016, April). *Coloration of Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) as an Honest Indicator of Fitness.* Poster session presented at the 2016 Oglethorpe University Liberal Arts & Sciences Symposium.

Kota, M., Northrup, J., Wagener, B., & Warden, D. (2016, April). *Dear Enemy or Nasty Neighbor: Territorial Male Cardinal Response to Playback Calls.* Poster session presented at the 2016 Oglethorpe PRISM (Presentations in Science and Mathematics) symposium.

Boldon, A., Choudhry, L., Gregerson, J., & **Kota, M.** (2015, April). *Effort or Distance: Testing Efficacy of Communication in Honeybees.* Poster session presented at the 2015 Oglethorpe PRISM (Presentations in Science and Mathematics) symposium.

Almeida, A., Gregerson, J., **Kota, M.**, & Scott, B. (2014, April). *Edge Effect: Nest Predation Rates in a Forest Fragment.* Poster session presented at the 2014 Oglethorpe University Liberal Arts & Sciences Symposium.

Paper Presentations:

Kota, M. (2019, July). *Spermatophore retention may accommodate signal loss in pacific field crickets.* Paper presented at the 2019 Animal Behavior Society & International Ethological Conference.

Kota, M. (2014, April). *Traces of Scientific Influence in Ancient Literature.* Paper presented at the 2014 Oglethorpe University Liberal Arts & Sciences Symposium.

Publications:

Heinen-Kay, J.L., Robinson, K., **Kota, M.V.**, & Zuk, M. (2021) *How does plasticity in cuticular hydrocarbons mediate tradeoffs between natural and sexual selection in Teleogryllus oceanicus?* *In prep.*

Kota, M.V., Heinen-Kay, J.L. & Zuk, M. (2021) *Geographic Variation in Cuticular Hydrocarbon Profiles in Pacific Field Crickets.* *Ecological Entomology, in press.*

Kota, M.V., Urquhart, E. & Zuk, M. (2020) *Spermatophore Retention May Accommodate Sexual Signal Loss in Pacific field cricket.* *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 74(95):1-8.

Pusdekar, S., Griffin, J.A., Hammurland, S.P., King, R.A., **Kota, M.V.**, Kuhs, M.A., Mistrick, J., Mittag, E., Mueller, T.L., Seehafer, K., Smith Jr., L.B., Waananan, A., & Wilcots, M.E. *An Open Letter to University of Minnesota Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior Faculty of Diversity and Inclusion (Version 1.0).* Zenodo. [not peer reviewed]

Kota, M.V. & Olzer, R. *Insect Communication.* In: Vonk J., Shackelford T. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Animal Cognition and Behavior*, Cham. [not peer reviewed]

Kota, M.V. (2019). *Signal loss and compensation in Pacific field cricket* *Teleogryllus oceanicus.* *Metalaptea, Orthopterists' Society Newsletter*, 39, 16-17. [not peer reviewed]

Kota, M. V. (2018). *Diversity Discussions at ISBE 2018- A Review.* *ISBE Newsletter*, 30, 19-20. [not peer reviewed]

Heinen-Kay, J.L. & **Kota, M.V.** (2018) *Beauty in the eye, or brain, of the beholder.* Review of the book *A Taste for the Beautiful: The evolution of attraction* by Michael J. Ryan]. *Evolution*, 72, 2268. [not peer reviewed]

Kota, M. (2016). *Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine: Decolonizing Text or Postcolonial Jane Eyre?* *Oglethorpe Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 6(2), 1-8.

Kota, M. (2016). *The Hybridizing Nature of Ancestor Presence in Morrison's Sula.* *Oglethorpe Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 6(2), 1-14.

Kota, M. (2014). *Gender and Class Differences in 19th Century French Prostitution.* *Oglethorpe Journal of Undergraduate Research*. 3(1), 1-27.

GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Summer Research Award (Summer 2021)
- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Summer Fellowship (Summer 2021)
- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Summer Fellowship (Summer 2020)
- Animal Behavior Society Outreach Grant (Jan 2020)
- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Research Grant (Summer 2019)
- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Travel Grant (Summer 2019)
- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Summer Fellowship (Summer 2019)
- Animal Behavior Society Diversity Travel Award (Summer 2019)
- Society for the Study of Evolution R.C. Lewontin Graduate Research Excellence Grant (May 2019)
- Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Summer Fellowship (Summer 2018)
- Orthopterists' Society Theodore J. Cohn Research Grant (April 2018)
- Diversity of Views and Experiences (DOVE) Fellowship (August 2017 – August 2018)
- EEB Excellence Fellowship (August 2017 – August 2018)

SKILLS

- Multilingual (fluent in English, Telugu, Spanish)
- Website management
- Mist-netting & bird banding
- Statistics & graphing in RStudio
- Recording bird and insect songs
- Cricket husbandry & colony maintenance
- Insect and arachnid collection, identification & specimen prep
- Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry techniques & analysis
- Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) imaging & specimen prep
- Podcast recording & voice acting (contributor for Om Sweet Om podcast)
- Sound analysis via Raven Pro (trained at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, October 2018)
- Creation of synthetic auditory stimuli (such as insect song) via MATLAB and Audacity

ACADEMIC SOCIETIES

- International Society for Behavioral Ecology (joined 2018)
- Animal Behavior Society (joined 2017)
- Orthopterists' Society (joined 2017)
- Society for the Study of Evolution (joined 2017)