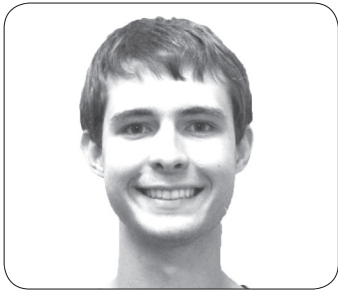


## There are things left to discover



Conor Gearin

A new species of frog was discovered in New York City last year, and this news should remind us how much there still is to discover.

New species are discovered every year. Even during the 21st century scientific discoveries occur not only far from home but within our most densely populated urban areas. The new species of leopard frog, *Rana kauffeldi*, is native to the threatened wetlands in Staten Island, a borough of New York City, according to an October 2014 study published in PLOS ONE. Findings like this should encourage students in all fields to seek out the gaps in current knowledge and find ways to add their own contributions.

Using information from genetics and from the calls the frogs make, the scientists determined *R. kauffeldi* is different enough from the other leopard frogs to be classified as its own species.

The researchers named the new species after Carl Kauffeld, a herpetologist who suggested during 1936 that such a species might exist among the string of cities in New York and New Jersey, according to the October 2014 study.

It is bizarre and encouraging that biologists left such an interesting idea unstudied for so long. It makes me wonder what other untested but potentially great hypotheses might remain for students. Certainly we never should complain there isn't enough left for us to research.

Sometimes cryptic species hide not just in nature but on museum shelves. By analyzing specimens already in collections, researchers described a new mammal species, the olinguito — officially known as *Bassaricyon neblina*, according to a study published in the journal *Zookeys*.

The olinguito, a smaller, fruit-eating relative to the raccoon, escaped careful study because it dwells secretively in the trees of the Andes Mountains in South America, according to the State University of New York's website. Its morphological features and genetics set the olinguito apart from close relatives. It took a researcher paying careful attention to museum specimens and confirmation through field work to describe the new species of mammal.

### Three Newly Discovered Animals in 2014

#### *Liropus minusculus*

A predatory skelton shrimp, this organism was discovered in a cave on Santa Catalina Island off California.

#### *Saltuarius eximius*

This gecko lives in a isolated rain forest on Australia's Cape Melville.

#### *Edwardsiella andrillae*

This sea anemone lives upside down on the Arctic Ross Ice Shelf.

Source: news.nationalgeographic.com

The olinguito is a good metaphor for the process of discovery in general. Often, the unknown waits within the well-known — within our assumptions about what we know for sure. It only takes questioning our knowledge, and asking questions in new ways, to expose new things about the world.

An estimated 7.5 million species remain undescribed, according to biology professor Chad Montgomery. However, human activities have increased extinction rates, meaning many species are vanishing before being identified — giving efforts to describe new species a special urgency.

“What this means to me is we actually know very little about the world we live in, but we continue to modify our environment without knowing the potential consequences of those changes,” Montgomery said.

While I have taken my previous examples from biology, the idea that much remains to be done holds true in other fields as well. Growing up, I thought all the great books already had been written, with a hazy notion that “Harry Potter” would become a classic of English literature. But through years of reading, I now am more able to see the gaps in the bookshelves. I can see more clearly which books still need to be written, and how many human experiences remain unexplored.

When I was growing up, I thought the big discoveries all had been made, and thought the

theoretical framework for understanding the world would not change during my lifetime, even if some small details had to be worked out. In a pessimistic mood, I might even consider the discovery of undescribed species as merely working out details, not changing fundamental categories.

However, it is important to remember even the fundamental categories can change — and have changed recently. Biologists continue to debate how to classify the very broadest groupings of life on Earth. Researchers have proposed new classification systems as recently as three years ago, according to a 2012 study in the journal *Protistology*.

And even though oceanographers have mapped the entire ocean floor, they have done so at a much lower resolution than astronomers have mapped the surfaces of Venus and Mars, according to an October 2014 *Scientific American* article. Who knows what exists within the spaces of our maps?

Conor Gearin is a senior biology and English major from St. Louis, Mo.

## Be a respectful temporary resident



Anna Grace  
Managing Editor

The word “townie” makes my skin crawl. Maybe it's because I'm from a town that makes Kirksville look like a bustling metropolis or maybe it's because now every time I hear the word I hear arrogance and barely-veiled classism in every letter.

My high school history teacher hated Truman State, which confused me as he was an alumnus of Tru-

man and a Kirksville resident. But as I spent time here, I began to see why he resented the town. During my freshman year I laughed at the “townies,” ignoring the fact they were similar to many residents of the town I was raised in and that I loved. As I met more Kirksville residents through working for the Index and volunteering at Kirksville's elementary school, I began to see the many great members of this community.

Those I met were more interesting and open-minded than some of the students that attend our acclaimed university. The more time I spent here, the more it began to trouble me. As I began dating a “cricker,” it truly hit me that people uttering the phrase “townie” in mockery were using that term to describe him — it disgusts me. Kirksville residents were born here, most Truman students weren't. Other than that, we're all here, we're all people.

Another thing that always astounds me about the disregard some students show to Kirksville community members is how often I hear “townie” slip cruelly out of the mouth of a student who otherwise is up in arms against prejudice and injustice. I am amazed at how their compassion somehow doesn't extend to what lies beyond their doorstep.

This goes hand-in-hand with how careless Truman students can be about their opportunities here. The great value of the education we get access to is something we shouldn't take for granted. Likewise, we should remember there would be no Truman as we know it without Kirksville. The restaurants we love, the schools we gain teaching experience at, the stores we shop at, the places we adopt pets from, the roads we drive on and the sidewalks we walk on would be nothing if Truman students were on their own. Many

of the professors we learn from raise their families in Kirksville, and if it weren't for the town we wouldn't have them either.

I'm not denying there are Kirksville residents who give the town a bad name. But using those outliers to write off the whole demographic is such bad math that a college full of students required to plow through STAT 190 should know better. We're better than this. The people who live here regardless of the academic calendar deserve our respect, which long has been denied.

What I really hear when you call a person a “townie” is how trashy perceived superiority makes a person, regardless of birthplace.

Anna Grace is a junior visual communications major from Albany, Mo.

## AROUND THE QUAD

### How often do you interact with Kirksvillians not associated with Truman?

Like, never. I did go to Red Barn, and occasionally I go to the shops downtown.

Lena Leuci  
Freshman



A lot, because I live in Kirksville. I'm from here.

Violet Odzinski  
Freshman



Very rarely. Sometimes at the grocery store, but it's been a long time.

Alex Scherr  
Junior



I'm doing Campus PALS, so I get to hang out with a little boy who lives here.

Sara Ruby  
Freshman

