

LUCAS FITCHEN RAPISARDA

Department of Biology

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EDUCATION

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, MN

2021-2025

Ph.D., Conservation Sciences

Thesis title: Nature for New Minnesotans: The impact of place-based natural history on the social integration of international immigrants in Minnesota

Dissertation committee: Dr. Robert Blair (Advisor), Dr. Kristen Nelson, Dr. Gillian Roehrig, Dr. Ingrid Schneider

Delta State University, Cleveland, MS

2017 - 2019

M.S., Natural Sciences; physical science emphasis

Scholarships & Awards: Teach for America Graduate Fellow

Thesis: Incorporation of metals in Termite mandibles in the New World

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

2011 - 2015

B.S., Wildlife Ecology

B.S., Community & Environmental Sociology

Scholarships & Awards: Robert McCabe Student Academic Excellence Award; ISP Study

Abroad Scholar; ROSE Award

COURSES TAUGHT

2025

Visiting Assistant Professor, Ornithology (BIO344/345), Gustavus Adolphus College

- 5 credits, 11 students (majors); integrated lecture & lab
- Topics: Natural history, evolution, morphology & behavior of birds
- Activities: Experiential field activities, data collection & analysis, research projects

Visiting Assistant Professor, Introduction to Biology (BIO110), Gustavus Adolphus College

- 4 credits, 40 students (majors)
- Topics: Cell biology, genetics, evolution & natural selection

- Activities: Lecture, small group discussion, inquiry activities

Visiting Assistant Professor, Introduction to Biology Lab (BIO111), Gustavus Adolphus College

- 1 credit, 2 sections, 18 students per section (majors)
- Topics: Cell biology, genetics, evolution & natural selection
- Activities: Lab experiments, small group presentations, lab reports

Guest lecturer, Conservation Challenges (ENVR151), St. Thomas University

- Four class sessions, 20 students (majors & non-majors)
- Topics: Environmental justice, environmental policy, socio-ecological systems
- Activities: project-based learning, small group discussion, independent reflection

2024

Graduate teaching assistant, Field Methods in Research & Conservation (FW3108), University of Minnesota

- 4 credits, 20 students
- Topics: Conservation biology, wildlife monitoring field methods, field identification
- Activities: Field-based experiences, research projects, group work

2021-2024

Instructor, Migratory Urban Bird Institute, University of Minnesota

- 0 credits, 20-30 students per year (K12 educators)
- Topics: How to incorporate birds into K12 natural science classrooms
- Activities: Project-based learning, field identification of birds (professional development)

Instructor & Curriculum designer, Nature for New Minnesotans, University of Minnesota

- 0 credits, over 500 students (adult English language learners)
- Topics: Place-based natural history, access to natural areas, foundational and academic English
- Activities: Inquiry activities, scaffolded activities, outdoor experiences

2020-2021

Adjunct Professor, Introductory Chemistry (CHM131), Central Piedmont Community College

- 4 credits, 20 students per class
- Topics: Atomic theory, chemical reactions & bonding
- Activities: Lecture, small group discussion, virtual lab

2015-2017

High school teacher, West Bolivar Consolidated School District (Rosedale, MS)

- Five courses: Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy, Physical Science, Physics

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2021-2025** Program Director, Nature for New Minnesotans, University of Minnesota
- Primary liaison between the University of Minnesota, eight community-based English learning centers, twelve environmental learning centers, and 20-30 volunteers
 - Developed & implemented statewide communication strategy
 - Executed a three-year \$293,000 state grant
 - Responded to requests from news media and professional societies to share findings with the public in local newspapers, 11 statewide and national conferences, and peer-reviewed journals
- 2017-2019** Director of Operations, Rosedale Freedom Project
- Independently developed strategic 3-year fundraising and communication strategy to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability
 - Facilitated monthly community engagement meetings to successfully recruit over 100 students, increase donor base, and raise over \$50,000 in private donations
 - Managed over \$350,000 in state and regional grants
- Graduate Research Assistant, Delta State University
- Conducted paired T-tests to determine statistical differences between inner and outer mandible metal concentrations in North American termite mandibles. Wrote annual reports briefing the US Department of Agriculture and University researchers assigned to the project.
 - Served as contact between the US Department of Agriculture and Delta State University Chemistry department to facilitate projects on agricultural pest management.
- 2016-2018** Science Content Leader, Teach for America
- Mentored 16 1st and 2nd year middle- and high-school science teachers in Mississippi
 - Developed over 70 hours of professional development focused on inquiry curriculum for students performing below grade level
- 2014 - 2015** Undergraduate Research Assistant, University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Utilized radio telemetry mark/recapture methods to monitor wild Canid populations in Madison, WI

RESEARCH

Research Interests: I ask solutions-oriented questions about how equitable access to the environment impacts sense of place, natural resource use, and engagement in community science for public health and conservation.

Research skills: Survey design & implementation, semi-structured interview design and implementation, focus group facilitation, participatory research methods (design-based research,

community-based participatory action research), thematic coding analysis, egocentric and sociocentric network analysis, Quantitative survey analysis (descriptive, linear regression, ANOVA, paired T-test)

Computer software/frameworks: ArcGIS Pro, ArcGIS Pro story maps, UCINET, Microsoft suite, R (data analysis), nVivo, Atlas.ti

DISSERTATION

Rapisarda, L. F. (2025). *Nature for New Minnesotans: The Impact of Place-Based Natural History on the Social Integration of International Immigrants in Minnesota*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (3272512781).

<http://login.ezproxy.lib.umn.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/nature-new-minnesotans-impact-place-based-natural/docview/3272512781/se-2>

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Rapisarda, L., & Forsberg, B. (2025). Nature for New Minnesotans: A Minnesota Master Naturalist program connecting adult English language learners to the outdoors. *The Journal of Extension*, 63(2). <https://doi.org/10.34068/joe.63.02.18>

Rapisarda, L. (Accepted). Case Study: Nature for New Minnesotans. *Diversity & Inclusion in the Recreation Profession: An Organizational Approach (5th Edition)*.

NON-PEER REVIEWED REPORTS & CURRICULUM

Rapisarda LF. “Nature for New Minnesotans” Curriculum modules

- [Birds and Migration](#)
- [Plants in Minnesota](#)
- [Fishing in Minnesota](#)
- [Climate and Seasons of Minnesota](#)

Rapisarda LF, Fields, JF. “Nature for New Minnesotans: Final Report”. September 2024. [\[link\]](#)

CONTRIBUTED ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Rapisarda LF. “Nature for New Minnesotans: “Incorporating place-based natural history curriculum into an English language classroom”. September 2024. *The Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs annual meeting*.

Rapisarda LF, Shultz, J., Jones JJ. “Nature for New Minnesotans: Using place-based nature to learn English”. March 2024. *ATLAS Metro Regional ABE Conference*.

Rapisarda LF, Shultz, J., Jones JJ. “Nature for New Minnesotans: Educators workshop”. October 2023. *University of Minnesota – Extension Master Naturalist*.

Rapisarda LF, Shultz, J., Jones JJ. Nature for New Minnesotans: Using place-based nature to learn English”. January 2023. *ATLAS Language & Literacy Conference*.

Rapisarda LF, Forsberg, B. “Teaching techniques for Environmental Education of adult EL

learners”. May 2023. *Gathering Partners Conference, University of Minnesota Extension Master Naturalist*

Rapisarda LF. “Nature for New Minnesotans”. September 2023. *The Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs annual meeting.*

Rapisarda LF. “Nature for New Minnesotans”. May 2022. *Gathering Partners Conference, University of Minnesota Extension Master Naturalist*

Rapisarda LF. “Connecting adult ESL learners to the outdoors through science content & place-based experiential learning”. November 2022. *Minnesota Naturalist Association.*

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Rapisarda, LF. “Social Knowledge Networks of Karen Refugee Hunters”. June 2025. *Association of Environmental Studies & Sciences (AESS).*

Rapisarda, LF. “Nature for New Minnesotans”. November 2024. *North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).*

Rapisarda LF. “Incorporation of metals in Termite mandibles in the New World.” March 2019. *Mississippi Academy of Sciences.*

INVITED TALKS & PANELS

Effective science communication techniques to engage with adult ESL learners in Minnesota. *University of Minnesota Extension Master Naturalist.* July 2025.

Implementation of nature-based inquiry in the adult ESL classroom. *ATLAS Language & Literacy Conference.* Panel host. January 2025

Outdoors for All: Increasing representation in the outdoors and career & internship Opportunities. *Dream Big Summit.* Invited panelist. April 2024

Rapisarda LF. Nature for New Minnesotans: *Connecting adult English language learners to the outdoors through place-based natural history.* Invited public presentation for St. John’s University Latino/Latin American Studies lecture series. March 2024. [\[link\]](#)

Rapisarda LF. *Poverty and Place; addressing historic social, economic, and educational racism in Rosedale, MS.* Invited to speak to undergraduate students in the Community & Environmental Sociology Department at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. November 2018.

PRESS

Rapisarda LF. Part II: “Embedded Teaching: A socio-cultural approach to language learning through science”. January 2024. *Minnesota ABE Connect.* [\[link\]](#)

Rapisarda LF. Part I: “Embedded Teaching: A socio-cultural approach to language learning through science”. January 2024. *Minnesota ABE Connect*. [\[link\]](#)

Stock K. “Nurturing Nature”. January 2023. *Featured Stories: College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Science Newsletter*. [\[link\]](#)

Rapisarda LF. “Teaching Minnesota’s Natural History in an EL classroom”. September 2022. *Minnesota ABE Connect*. [\[link\]](#)

Eldred SM. “Minnesota’s green spaces haven’t been welcoming to many people of color. A new outdoor education program seeks to unlock the great outdoors”. September 2022. *Sahan Journal*. [\[link\]](#)

Rapisarda LF. “Nature for New Minnesotans: Making the case for Teaching Minnesota’s natural history in EL classrooms”. September 2022. *Minnesota ABE Connect*. [\[link\]](#)

Miller N. “Catch up with Lucas Rapisarda BS’15 Community and Environmental Sociology and Wildlife Ecology”. 2019. *GROW Magazine*. [\[link\]](#)

Wright A, Betz KD. “Teacher shortages force districts to use online education programs”. February 2019. *Mississippi Today*. [\[link\]](#)

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS (\$88,270)

2025	Advocate and Partner Award of the Year , Literacy Action Network Nominated by adult ESL instructors for development and stewardship of the Nature for New Minnesotans program
2024	Council of Graduate Students Research Grant , University of Minnesota (\$500) Catalyzing Advocacy in Science and Engineering Fellow , American Association for the Advancement of Science J. Wilkie Fund Natural History Award , The Bell Museum, University of Minnesota (\$2,500) Conference Scholarship , Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs (\$350) Conservation Sciences Travel Grant Award , University of Minnesota (\$600)
2023	Conference Scholarship , Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs (\$750) Conservation Science Travel Grant Award , University of Minnesota (\$600)

2021 - 2022	IonE Ecosystem Health Graduate Fellow , University of Minnesota (\$200)
2017 – 2019	Graduate Fellow , Teach for America (\$32,870)
	LEE Venture Fellow , Leaders for Educational Equity (\$50,000)

UNIVERSITY, PROFESSIONAL, & COMMUNITY SERVICE

2025	Extension Educator Search Committee , University of Minnesota Extension
	President, Conservation Sciences Association of Graduate Students , University of Minnesota
2023 - 2025	Fundraising & Communications Chair - Board of Directors , Freedom Project Network
2020 - Present	Vice President, Associated Alumni of Fundamentally Sound , University of Wisconsin - Madison
2022 - 2025	Vice President, Conservation Sciences Association of Graduate Students , University of Minnesota
2019 - 2023	Financial Chair & Board President , Rosedale Freedom Project

SELECTED GRANTS (ADDITIONAL AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST)

2025	Nature for New Minnesotans Support Grant , Friends of the Minnesota Valley Refuge (\$30,000)
2023	Building fund for the Arts - LEAD Center , Mississippi Arts Commission (\$60,000) Funding secured for infrastructure renovations. As part of role as Fundraising & Communications chair for the Freedom Project Network.
	Music for Freedom , Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Grant (\$15,000) As part of the role as Fundraising & Communications chair for the Freedom Project Network.
2022	Nature for New Minnesotans , Institute on the Environment mini grants (\$3,000) Funding secured to provide free participation to and from culminating experiences for adult English language learner participants and their families.
2017 - 2019	Rosedale Freedom Project: Programming support grant , The GO Campaign (\$12,709) Funding secured as part of role as Director of Operations at the Rosedale Freedom Project (RFP)

MiDAC Collegiate Education Grant, Woodward Hinds Education Foundation (\$40,000)
Funding secured to support collegiate prep programming for youth education organizations in the Mississippi Delta.

Gardening Education Program, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation (\$10,000)
Funding secured as part of the role as Director of Operations at the RFP.

Organizational support Grant, Kings, Daughters, & Sons Circle#2 (\$12,000)
Funding secured to support organization costs at the Rosedale Freedom Project.

TRAINING

2025	Teaching Faculty Job – Preparing Future Faculty Program, University of Minnesota Graduate School Title IX Training, Gustavus Adolphus College FERPA Training, Gustavus Adolphus College
2024	Teaching in Higher Education, University of Minnesota Preparing Future Faculty Program
2022	Research involving Human Subjects training, CITI Social / Behavioral or Human Research Investigators and Key Personnel Training, CITI