



It's that time of year, when the world...

Ah yes, it will be winter in just a couple of short weeks, with Christmas just a few days later. Peacocks, you're almost there. Study hard for your finals, and remember to love and give back... Break is coming soon!

'Tis the season but remember: only buy what you need and recycle paper and plastic, no matter how inconvenient. The Earth is our only home and we must be proactive if we want to combat the climate crisis. The COP 28 climate conference is currently taking place in Dubai, and Pope Francis was in attendance. See more on the conference below. Ensuring the health of our planet is a crucial part of the Jesuit commitment to fostering social justice and equality across the globe. For more, [check out these facts on the crisis](#).

The Sustainability Council membership consists of faculty, administrators and students. We would like to welcome new students into our active group. If interested, please contact the founder and chair, Dr. Eileen Poiani at [epoiani@saintpeters.edu](mailto:epoiani@saintpeters.edu).

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**Save your soft plastics, Peacocks! Recycle and we will get a cool TREX bench on campus.**



*These containers will be popping up on campus soon! Please recycle!*

Saint Peter's University faculty, staff, administration, students and friends: take the **TREX CHALLENGE!**

TREX is a sustainability conscious manufacturer of decks, flooring and other items that are made from recycled materials. Saint Peter's University is partnering with TREX to recycle 1,000 pounds of plastic. If successful, SPU will receive a FREE beautiful outdoor bench made from the materials we've gathered.

SPU must collect 1,000 pounds of soft plastics (NOT plastic bottles or other hard plastic) by November 2024 in order to receive the bench for our campus. Examples: plastic bags, saran wrap and bread or other food bags from the grocery store.

Keep an eye on your inbox, this newsletter, [@spustainers](#) and all over campus for information on the location of recycling bins, coming soon! For now, start collecting your soft plastics!

-Dr. Eileen Poiani, Chair of the Sustainability Council

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**SPU receives grant to support and study Avian biodiversity on campus**





*Dr. Katherine Wydner is pictured with students Anthony Santonastaso and Catherine Saldana by the bird feeding station in the native plant garden outside Gannon Hall. Photo courtesy of Dr. Wydner.*

Saint Peter's University has been awarded a grant of \$2,760 from the Society for Biodiversity Preservation (SBP) to support "Project FeederWatch: Supporting Avian Diversity and Attraction of Native Species." The grant funding covers supplies such as seed for the birds, infrastructure/equipment such as feeders and a bird bath, nest boxes and a video camera system (powered by a solar panel) that will be installed in Spring 2024 as an additional way to study the birds that visit the bird feeding station next to Gannon Hall.

As author and project manager for this grant, I have been supervising Project FeederWatch (PFW) on the Saint Peter's campus with a team of students since November 2014. PFW is a population survey of winter birds that runs from November to April each year. Managed nationally by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, PFW monitors trends in bird abundance and distribution across North America. We have been doing a multi-year study on the birds that winter on our urban campus in Jersey City, but data collected is also submitted to Cornell. An earlier grant from SBP funded a project to restore habitat in a portion of the PFW count area next to Gannon Hall through creation of a native plant garden for birds and pollinators. Thanks to this transformation that began in 2018, we have been able to examine the effect of habitat restoration in increasing the diversity of species on campus, especially native species. During each PFW season, students made weekly observations of the species and numbers of birds that are attracted to resources, including bird feeders, in the PFW area. The number of students on the team varies each year, but current members are Anthony Santonastaso, Catherine Saldano, Danilo Rocenovic, Helberth Quisbert and Katherine Rodriguez. Any students who would like to join the PFW team and participate in our research are invited to contact me at [kwydner@saintpeters.edu](mailto:kwydner@saintpeters.edu).

Our current goal, in addition to counting birds, is to support and encourage the return of native species to campus. Our research in this regard was recently presented as a poster at the University of Bridgeport (Bridgeport, CT) for the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual MACUB (Metropolitan Association of College and University Biologists) Conference on November 4, 2023 and was awarded 2<sup>nd</sup>

Place in the category of Environmental Biology and Ecology. The title of the research poster was "Project FeederWatch, Habitat Restoration, and Native Species: If You Build It, Will They Come?"

-Dr. Katherine Wydner, Associate Professor, Biology

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## Update on COP 28: Happening now

COP 28, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, is taking place in Dubai right now. Pope Francis was in attendance. COP 28 stands for the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Sustainability Council has been following this global conference as it has played out. Unfortunately, there has been a pall over the proceedings due to the fact that the conference president, Sultan Al Jaber, is also the CEO of Adnoc, the United Arab Emirates state-oil company. There is some controversy over the language of "phasing out" fossil fuels versus "phasing down" fossil fuels as well, with environmental activists arguing that eliminating the usage of fossil fuels is necessary and oil, coal and gas-industry linked attendees saying lowering usage is enough. Interestingly, [the number of delegates attending this year's conference who are linked to the fossil fuel industries has quadrupled since last year.](#)

There is of course more to learn. Stay tuned.

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## Follow us on Instagram! @spusustainers

Are you following [@spusustainers](#) on Instagram? Well, you should be!

This month, senior Jazmyne Andujar took the reins of our social media channel. She will be creating thought-provoking content about issues of sustainability as well as keeping the campus up to date with Council and non-Council sponsored events. Join us!



### Words to inspire action...

**“I have become convinced that climate change is the biggest threat to human rights in the 21st century.”**

**-Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland**

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- *Our Vision: The Sustainability Council supports a broad, holistic vision of sustainability, framing our work in pluralism and integrating the right of well-being today to that of future generations.*
  - *Our Mission: The Sustainability Council, composed of a broad representation from the university community, initiates and implements institutional, academic and community programs that identify, inspire and foster sustainable practices and behaviors.*

Your feedback, photos, event notices and story ideas are always welcome. Please email them to Peacock Planet editor Georgia Kral at [gkral@saintpeters.edu](mailto:gkral@saintpeters.edu)

Saint Peter's University Sustainability Council

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