



NORTH AMERICAN SECTION

### **2009 George C. Eickwort Student Research Award**

This award is given in memory of George Eickwort and is designed to recognize exceptional research and scholarly activity by students in the field of social insect biology. The award consists of a certificate, an honorarium, and a one-year subscription to *Insectes Sociaux*. The Eickwort Award Committee this year consisted of Andy Saurez, Heather Mattila, Anna Dornhaus and Kenna MacKenzie.

The nominees for the Eickwort Student Award this year were exceptional and as always, the final decision was hard to make. However, one individual stood out for his interesting and novel research, teaching achievements and outreach activities. The North American Section of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects is proud to announce that **Christian Rabeling**, PhD candidate, the University of Texas at Austin, was selected as the recipient of the 2009 Eickwort Student Award.

For his doctoral studies, Christian Rabeling, a student of Ulrich Mueller at the University of Texas at Austin, is studying the evolutionary biology of fungus-growing ants (Attini) with an emphasis the genus *Mycocepurus*, one of the poorly known “lower attine” groups. Integrating genetic, phylogenetic and population genetic approaches with traditional morphological and taxonomic methods, he has moved our knowledge of ant systematics and evolution forward. Notable among his research discoveries are the discovery and description of the oldest known living ant lineage, *Martialis heureka*; documenting the existence of obligate asexuality in the fungus-gardening ant *Mycocepurus smithii* and the discovery of the first obligate social parasite in “lower” fungus-gardening ants. His 2008 PNAS paper has changed the way we see the early evolution of ants; both E.O. Wilson and Barry Bolton (British Museum) cited this as a very significant finding. He is also a gifted teacher and mentor, an excellent field biologist, and has successfully secured funding for his research (nearly \$100,000 total). The Award Committee is very pleased to announce that Christian Rabeling is the recipient of the 2009 Eickwort Student Award.