



DISCOURSE

Royal Irish Academy Public Lecture Series

Speaker: Dr Larisa DeSantis, Vanderbilt University, USA

Respondent: Paul Giller MRIA, University College Cork

Monday July 18, 2022, 8pm (GMT) UCC and Online

Decoding the past to conserve our future



Mammalian communities have undergone dramatic ecological and evolutionary changes throughout time. While it can be difficult for us to recognise and perceive the magnitude of these changes in a human lifetime, conservation paleobiology leverages the fossil record to provide critical insights into mammalian responses to climate change across the globe. From the study of ancient animals like sabertooth cats and marsupial lions, ancient life serves as “canaries in the coal mine”—alerting global citizens to the consequences of climate change for life on Earth. This talk will explore how dietary information locked in fossilised teeth is decoded, and how the ancient past can reveal cautionary conservation lessons and even warn us about our potential future. This event is part of the 66th Annual Meeting of the Palaeontological Association at UCC which is being held from 18th to 24th July 2022.

Our Speaker:

Larisa DeSantis is a Chancellor Faculty Fellow and associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, and the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. She studies fossilised mammals to determine their response to ancient climate change, potential reasons they went extinct, and the long-term consequences of climate change and large-animal extinctions on a diversity of plants and animals. She earned her degrees from the University of California–Berkeley (BS), Yale University (MEM) and the University of Florida (PhD). DeSantis is the recipient of a National Science Foundation CAREER Award. She studies mammals on all continents except Antarctica, and much of her work is explicitly aimed at helping conservationists to better understand ecosystems—past and present.

Booking: <https://bit.ly/394mNZ7>