

MAX HENRY BARNHART

Writer, science and health reporter, and plant biologist

maxhenrybarnhart@gmail.com

[LinkedIn - Max Barnhart](#)

[Writing Portfolio](#)

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I am freelance science writer and PhD student with six months of global health and development reporting at [National Public Radio](#), two years of experience as Editor-in-Chief at the [Athens Science Observer](#), and a [2022 AAAS Mass Media Fellow](#). My specialties include writing science stories that emphasize the human impact of research and mentoring others in good science communication practices. I am also a professional biologist with seven years of graduate level training conducting research in plant biology and the evolution of ebolaviruses. U.S. Citizen.

EXPERTISE

- Science & Health writing
- Editing for non-academic audiences
- Pitching local and global stories
- Reporting & Investigating Science Studies
- Interviewing Scientists
- Science communication mentorship
- Blog Management
- Academic writing
- Biology, plants, genetics, & evolution
- Experimental design and problem solving

SCIENCE & HEALTH WRITING EXPERIENCE

Global Health & Development Reporter: [Goats & Soda, National Public Radio \(NPR\)](#)

Washington, D.C. and Athens, GA

June to December 2022

Goats & Soda covers topics related to the health and development of countries classified as low- or mid-income by the World Bank and any science or health stories that have a global impact. I initially began working at NPR via the AAAS Mass Media Fellowship, was hired into a part time role after the fellowship period ended and continue to write for them on a freelance basis. My responsibilities in that role include:

- Writing stories about new research papers and other topics
- Conducting interviews with scientists and non-scientists
- Covering breaking news related to disease outbreaks, ex. COVID-19, ebola, and mpox
- Getting outside comments to validate claims made in research articles
- Editing weekly newsletter

Editor-in-Chief, Writer: [Athens Science Observer \(ASO\)](#)

Athens, GA

June 2020 - June 2022

The Athens Science Observer is a graduate student run science blog that publishes articles intended to be read by a non-academic audience. I began writing and editing for ASO in 2018 and eventually became Editor-in-Chief in 2020, revamping the entire blog and publishing process. My responsibilities with ASO included:

- Writing articles on science topics and local issues
- Editing dozens of articles written by graduate students
- Designing and managing a wordpress website and blog
- Developing, editing, and publishing a zine with funding provided via the ASPB BLOOME Grant
- Running an organization with over two-dozen members

EDUCATION

PhD Student in Plant Biology | *Research on abiotic stress tolerance of sunflowers*

University of Georgia

2018 - Present

During my PhD, I studied how the expression levels of RNA in multiple tissue types change when sunflowers are exposed to heat and drought stress using a variety of computational biology and statistical methods.

MS in Biological Sciences | *Research on the evolution of ancient ebolaviruses*

SUNY University at Buffalo

2016 - 2018

During my MS, I studied genetic fossils left by viruses in mammalian DNA and what they could tell us about the evolution and distribution of ancient relatives of ebolaviruses.

BS in Biological Sciences | *Research on coral-algal symbionts and translational cofactors*

SUNY University at Buffalo

2012 - 2016

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Barnhart MH, Masalia RR, Mosley LJ, Burke JM (2022) Phenotypic and transcriptomic responses of cultivated sunflower seedlings (*Helianthus annuus* L.) to four abiotic stresses. PLOS ONE 17(9): e0275462. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275462>

Barnhart MH, McAssey EV, Dittmar EL, Burke, JM. (2022) Transcriptomics of developing wild sunflower seeds from the extreme ends of a latitudinal gradient differing in seed oil composition. *Plant Direct* 6(7): e423. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pld3.423>

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, & GRANTS

2022 AAAS Mass Media Science and Engineering Fellowship

This fellowship is given by the American Association for the Advancement of Science that places scientists at media outlets around the country, training them to become science journalists. I was placed at National Public Radio in Washington, D.C., and wrote 8 articles over the fellowship period from June to August, then was hired into a part-time role to continue reporting. My [first article about the origins of the “Black Death” plague](#) was a major success generating over 1.2 million pageviews with high reading engagement time.

2020 ASPB BLOOME Grant: The BLOOME grant awarded by the American Society of Plant Biology provides funding for outreach activities that are meant to connect the general public with the plant scientists. I was awarded this grant as a Co-PI for \$5,000 USD to produce and disseminate short science “zines” under the *Athens Science Observer* (ASO) banner and to revamp the ASO online presence and writer training program. To date we have produced 3 zines with a 4th issue upcoming and launched a new and improved website with dozens of contributors from the UGA community.

2018 UGA GREAT Fellowship

This fellowship is awarded to a select number of incoming UGA graduate students and provides support for 3 years of study.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Undergraduate Liaison

Summer 2022 – Present

University of Georgia Department of Plant Biology

In this role I have served as the voice between undergraduates in the UGA Plant Biology major and minor and the department faculty. I have helped the undergraduate students revive their department student association, the PBUSA, help connect students with undergraduate research mentors, advertise and recruit for the major.

Head of Science Communication

Jan 2022 – Present

ASPB Early Career Plant Scientists Section (ECPS)

In this position I help coordinate the outreach activities for ECPS, including but not limited to planning workshops and events for the annual meeting and working to promote plant sciences in the local communities of our members. I also organized and hosted a Three-Minute Thesis competition for the 2022 conference and will be doing so again for the upcoming 2023 conference.

Outreach and Teaching Chair

Fall 2019 – Summer 2020

University of Georgia Plant Biology Graduate Student Association

I was elected to this role primarily to coordinate the outreach efforts of the Plant Biology department, however due to the beginning of the COVID -19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions, my role became one where I helped to coordinate virtual events for graduate students to help maintain student mental and emotional health, and to relate concerns of those students to the department head and graduate coordinator.

WRITING SAMPLES

Here are links to five articles I wrote for NPR which showcase the broad range in content and format I have written in. I am especially proud of the first two pieces as they highlight my ability to showcase how newly published research impacts the lives of different people.

- [Why do some people get UTIs over and over? A new report holds clues.](#)
- [A box of 200 mosquitoes did the vaccinating in this malaria trial. That’s not a joke!](#)
- [The doctor who warned the world of the mpox outbreak of 2022 is still worried.](#)
- [A deadly disease so neglected it’s not even on the list of neglected tropical diseases.](#)
- [Scientists say they’ve solved a 700-year-old mystery: Where and when Black Death began.](#)