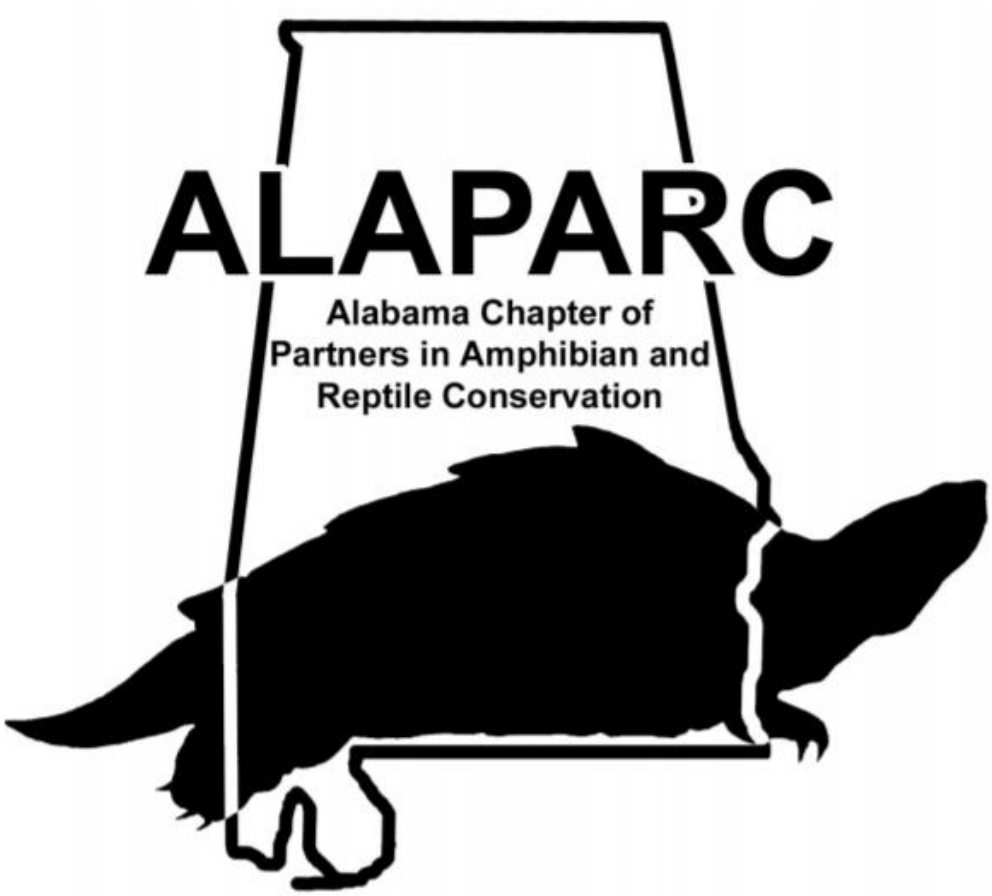
50 Years of
"The Reptiles and Amphibians of Alabama"



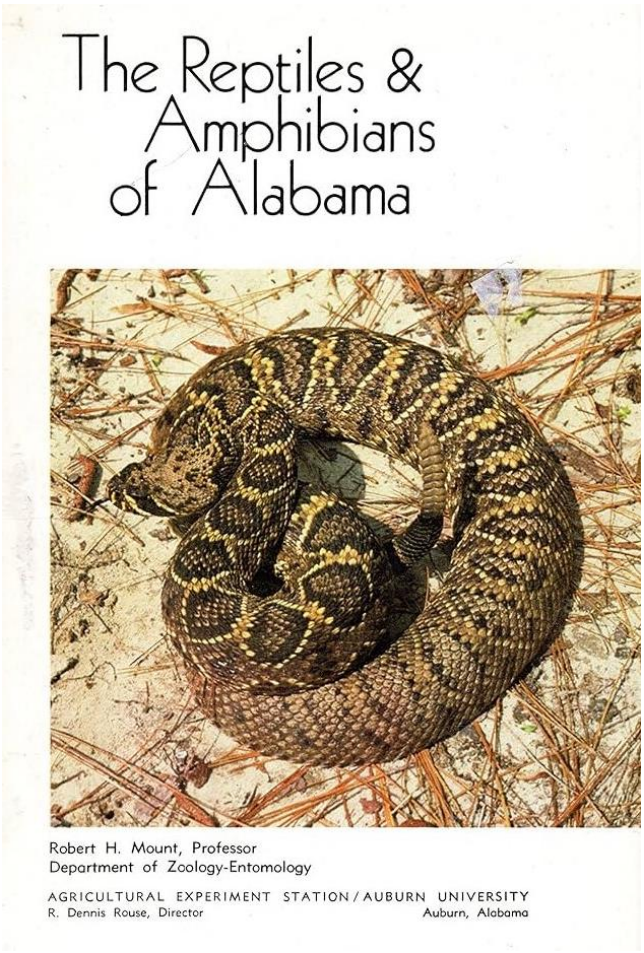
14th Annual Meeting

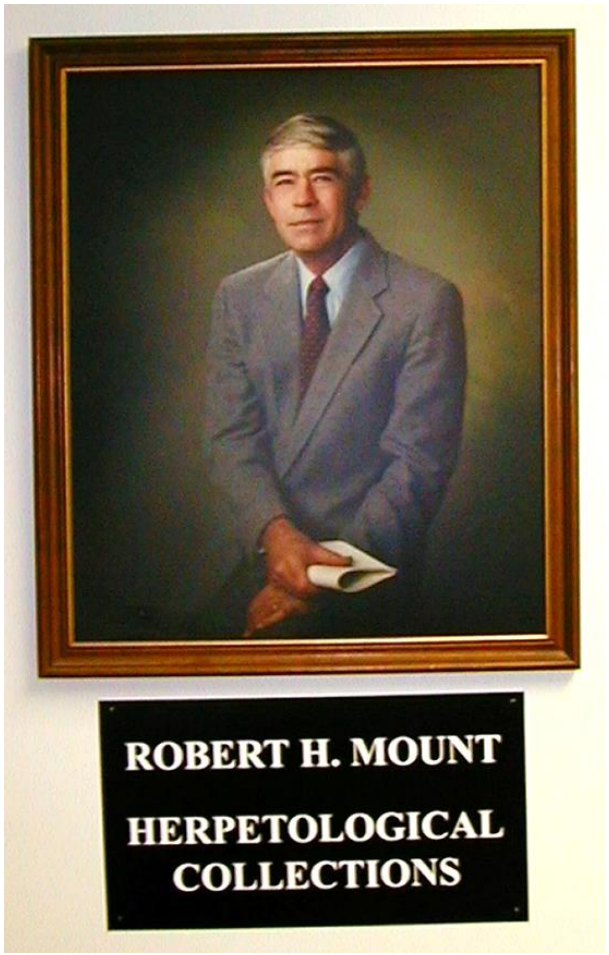
October 3rd-5th 2025
Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, Andalusia, AL

PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

2025 ALAPARC Meeting

Welcome to the fourteenth annual meeting of the Alabama Chapter of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ALAPARC) at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center in Andalusia, Alabama. This year's meeting is a special one! We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the publication of Bob Mount's seminal book "The Reptiles & Amphibians of Alabama" which laid the groundwork for herp conservation in our state!





About Our Meeting

Accommodations
Please check in at the Dixon Center Auditorium. Solon Dixon will furnish sheets, pillows, blankets, wash cloths, and towels. The towels are not very absorbent, so you may prefer to bring your own. They do not provide soap, shampoo, hair dryers, or any other personal items. Please make sure to bring a flashlight/headlamp. Camping is not allowed on campus but is allowed in the Conecuh National Forest.

Meals
All meals will be served at the Dixon Center dining hall.

Internet Access
The Dixon Center does have wireless internet for most buildings.

Sustainability
Please consider bringing your own coffee mugs and beer steins to our meeting so that use of disposable cups will be minimized.

Website
For more information about the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, please visit https://sdfec.auburn.edu/

Field Outings
Field outings will be planned but are contingent on weather. Please make sure to bring a flashlight/headlamp. Decontaminated equipment is mandatory for outings in/near aquatic habitats. Please adhere to ethical herping etiquette and return all items to their original location. Please also refrain from destructive herping methods such as bark stripping, digging, and remember the handling of protected species, without proper permits, is prohibited.

Check-Out
Please help us by cleaning up after yourself. Guidance on check-out procedures will be given at the meeting.

SCHEDULE

Friday October 3rd

Time	Event
3:00	Check-in (Longleaf Auditorium)
5:00	Dinner (Cafeteria)
6:00-6:20	Introductions, Housekeeping, & Update on Alabama Partners in Amphibian and Reptiles Conservation (ALAPARC). **Seamus O'Brien, Francesca Erickson** (Longleaf Auditorium)
6:20-9:00	Keynote Session: Honoring Bob Mount with **Mary Dansak, Ralph Jordan Jr. Craig Guyer, and Mark Bailey** (Longleaf Auditorium)
9:00	Poster Viewing/Social/Silent Auction Begins (Rec Building)

Saturday October 4th

Time	Event
8:00	Breakfast (Cafeteria)
9:00-9:10	Re-introductions/Housekeeping (Longleaf Auditorium)
9:10-9:30	*Turtle Surveys Beyond Alabama: Surveys from Ponce de Leon Springs State Park, FL and Belize* **Andy Coleman**
9:30-9:50	*State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Updates.* **Traci Wood**
9:50-10:10	*Tech Upgrade: Using Automated Tag Recorders to Monitor Eastern Indigo Snakes in Conecuh National Forest.* **Francesca Erickson**
10:10-10:30	Break
10:30-10:50	*Current and Future Status of Nonnative Herpetofauna in Alabama.* **Wesley M. Anderson**
10:50-11:10	*Population consolidation and head-starting as demographic rescue for low-density Gopher Tortoise populations.* **Jeff Goessling**
11:10-11:30	*The collections of Henry Peter Löding: the earliest attempt to inventory the herpetofauna of Alabama.* **M. Worth Pugh (mwpugh@ua.edu)**
12:00	Lunch (Cafeteria)

1:00-1:20	*Population Genomics and Status of the Flattened Musk Turtle (Sternotherus depressus) in the Locust Fork of the Black Warrior River*. **Seamus O'Brien**
1:20-1:40	*Scale, Drivers, and Importance of Turtle Diversity in the Southeastern United States.* **Michael Skibsted**
1:40-2:00	*Curating Mount's Legacy: The Herpetological Collections at the AUMNH.* **David Laurencio**
2:00-2:20	ALAPARC Housekeeping: Next year's meeting & new co-chair selection
2:30-5:00	Field Outings: Mini Marble Bowl! Decide your allegiance between Turtles, Snakes, Salamanders, or Frogs and add as many observations to iNaturalist as you can!
4:45	Low Country Boil (Cafeteria) courtesy of **Jimmy Stiles, Joe Jenkins, and Aidan Jenkins**
6:00-7:00	Special viewing of *Salabama*, a Southern Exposure Film Fellowship documentary by **Nicholas Hess** (Longleaf Auditorium)
7:00	Herp Trivia with **Seamus O'Brien** (Rec Building)
8:00	Poster Viewing/Social (Rec Building)
9:00	Silent Auction Benefitting ALAPARC Ends (**Debit/Credit Cards Only**)

Sunday October 5th

Time	Event
8:00	Breakfast (Cafeteria)
10:00	Check-Out

Keynote Speakers

Mary Dansak

Mary Dansak is a retired science teacher, accomplished writer, and the daughter of Bob Mount. As her father did in his time, Mary frequently contributes to the local newspaper by writing columns in which nature is a common theme. Bob's adventures told by his colleagues, graduate students, and friends are legendary. His dedicated passion for the state of Alabama and its critters, especially snakes, is well known. Mary offers another side of Robert H. Mount, that of father. Her presentation, "Second to Snakes," will share stories of her unorthodox childhood as the daughter of the Snake Man himself.

Ralph Jordan Jr.

Ralph Jordan Jr. worked as a biologist for Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), eventually assuming responsibility for managing natural resources on all TVA's public lands. One of Bob's early graduate students, Ralph completed his master's in 1975 describing the natural history and ecology of Red Hills salamanders. His work was among the foundational research concerning this newly discovered species. As the son of legendary Auburn University football coach, Shug Jordan, Ralph has deep ties to Auburn University and remained involved in the university over the years serving on alumni and leadership council boards where he advocated for building the Biodiversity Learning Center to permanently house the museum collection Bob (and others) had built. Ralph will talk about the early years of Bob's reign at Auburn and—most importantly—the launch of Bob's initiative to write "The Reptiles and Amphibians of Alabama."

Craig Guyer

Craig Guyer, emeritus professor of biological sciences at Auburn University, came to Auburn as Bob's successor in 1987. The Guyer Lab carried on Bob's legacy by conducting conservation-centered research on Alabama's herpetofauna as well as maintaining and expanding the specimen collection that the Mount Lab built. Craig Guyer and Mark Bailey are revising Bob's book as a series of books about the herpetofauna of Alabama. Although Craig cannot make it to ALAPARC this year, he has provided a recorded address for the meeting. In this presentation, Craig will reflect on Bob's career and efforts to build the herpetological collections at Auburn.

Mark Bailey

Mark Bailey and his wife, Karan run Conservation Southeast, conducting research and providing conservation-focused consulting. In graduate school at Auburn University, Mark studied gopher frog migration, completing his master's in 1989 as one of Bob's last graduate students. Mark is working alongside Craig Guyer to revise Bob's book, "The Reptiles and Amphibians of Alabama." Mark will share stories about the later years of the Mount Lab and discuss his and Craig's work over the past 15 years to revise the book.

About Our Chapter

Alabama PARC, co-chaired by Francesca Erickson and Seamus O'Brien, is a chapter within Southeast PARC (SEPARC), co-chaired by Matthew Atkinson and Houston Chandler. All PARC organizations are fiscally sponsored by the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC). For more information about SEPARC visit www.separc.org. ALAPARC's website is www.alaparc.org. National PARC's website is https://parcplace.org. ARC's website is https://arcprotects.org.

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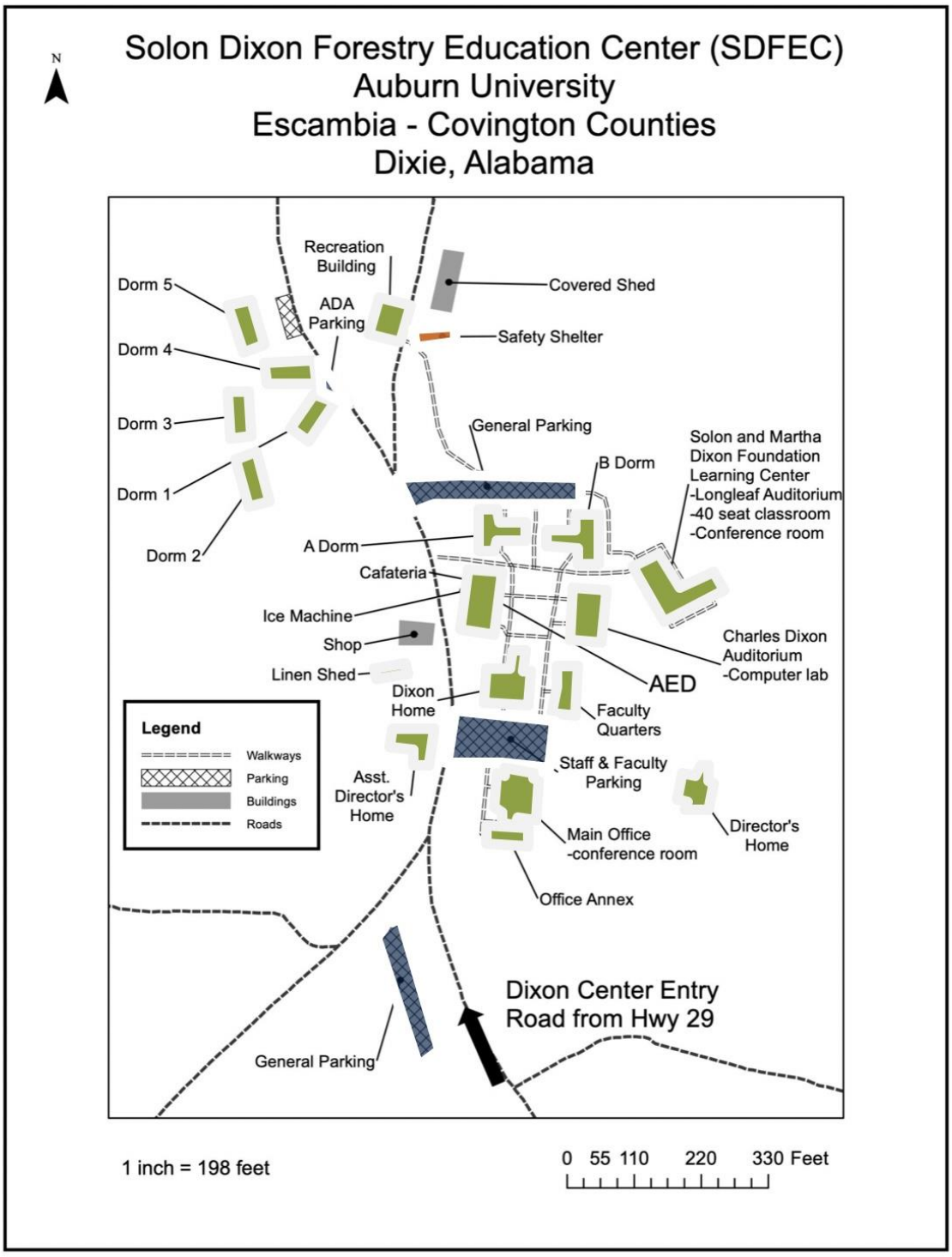
ARC Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

Solon Dixon Center Campus Map
(https://sdfec.auburn.edu/campus-map/)



Abstracts

Oral Presentations

Andrew T. Coleman (urbanturtleproject@gmail.com), Samford University.

Turtle Surveys Beyond Alabama: Surveys from Ponce de Leon Springs State Park, FL and Belize

Survey efforts in Ponce de Leon Springs State Park, FL were initiated in July 2020 to gather demographic data on the recently described Intermediate Musk Turtle *(Sternotherus intermedius*). Capture methods included both hand captures via snorkeling and baited minnow traps. Most captures to date have been classified as juveniles, but this may be an artifact of sampling. Fifty-nine individuals have been captured and marked so far, including six recaptures. Baseline data are important to gather for this population because of its limited species range and its use of a threatened habitat type. Survey efforts in Belize's Sibun River watershed as well as Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary was initiated in 2023 as part of a study abroad program with Talladega College. Pond and creek habitats were sampled using baited minnow traps. Captured turtles were identified to species, measured, and marked before release at point of capture. Of the 9 documented aquatic species, only 3 have been captured in the present study, White-lipped Mud Turtles (*Kinosternon leucostomum* n = 27), Red-cheeked Mud Turtles (*Kinosternon scorpioides* n = 2), and Northern Giant Musk Turtles (*Staurotypus tripocatus* n = 10). Overall, the aquatic turtle populations of Belize are historically understudied, so any knowledge gaps that can be addressed contribute to the conservation of these species.

Francesca Erickson (fte0001@auburn.edu), Jim Godwin (Alabama Natural Heritage Program, Auburn University), Wade Ryberg, Danielle Walkup, Vivian Porter, Robert Bilbow, Corey Fielder, Toby Hibbitts (Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, Texas A&M University), Jeremy Preston, Justin Johnson (Natural Resources, Eglin Air Force Base, US Air Force), Derek Colbert (Conecuh National Forest, USDA Forest Service), Michele Elmore (Georgia Ecological Services, US Fish and Wildlife Service), James Bogan (Orianne Center For Indigo Conservation, Central Florida Zoo), Robert Hill (Zoo Atlanta), Traci Wood (Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources)

Tech Upgrade: Using Automated Tag Recorders to Monitor Eastern Indigo Snakes in Conecuh National Forest

The Eastern Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) was declared extirpated from Alabama in the 1970's and added to the Endangered Species List as threatened in 1978. As the indigo snake is an iconic species of Alabama, a reintroduction program began releasing captive-raised indigo snakes in Conecuh National Forest (CNF) in 2010. To date, over 300 individuals have been released back into CNF, but knowledge of the population's viability remains difficult to ascertain. Long-term monitoring is a vital component of reintroduction programs and determining project success, but can be challenging, especially with cryptic, wide-ranging herpetofauna such as the Eastern Indigo Snake. Various monitoring methods and technology have been used to monitor this population, including radiotelemetry, visual encounter surveys, box traps, gopher tortoise burrow cameras, and, since 2022, drift fence/trail camera arrays. To further bolster monitoring efforts, we deployed 57 Biomark automated PIT tag readers in April of this year, pairing a reader with each camera in the existing drift fence/trail camera array. In just five months, the readers have identified 17 of the 40 captive-raised indigo snakes released

this past May, as well as three individuals from prior releases. Additionally, the readers have scanned gopher tortoises and other species tagged during previous projects. We aim to validate the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of automated tag recorders and test this method for long-term monitoring in CNF and other future Eastern Indigo Snake reintroduction sites. This method, combined with drift fence/trail camera arrays, allows us to detect tagged and untagged (presumably wild-born) individuals, and ultimately learn more about survival and recruitment in the CNF indigo snake population.

Wesley M. Anderson, Auburn University

Current and Future Status of Nonnative Herpetofauna in Alabama

Since the publication of Dr. Bob Mount's seminal book The Reptiles and Amphibians of Alabama, the herpetofaunal composition of the state has changed. Some species, such as the southern hognose snake and reticulated flatwoods salamander, have likely been extirpated from Alabama. The species richness of the state, however, has increased over time and continues to increase due to the introduction and establishment of nonnative reptiles and amphibians. An updated comprehensive review of nonnative species encountered in the state is warranted. Some nonnatives, including brown anoles, Mediterranean house geckos, and greenhouse frogs, are firmly established in parts of the state. Whereas the Cuban treefrog has been documented in multiple counties, establishment of this species is currently uncertain, but appears likely in Baldwin County. In total, at least 11 species of nonnative reptiles and at least four species of nonnative amphibians have been documented in Alabama. Records were compared across iNaturalist, EDDMapS, GBIF, and iDigBio platforms. Known and potential impacts along with invasiveness are discussed. Finally, nonnative species that have never previously been documented in Alabama,but have a significant chance of being introduced in the future are considered. As the state's herpetofaunal communities continue to change, periodically reviewing the status of these nonnative species remains important, not just from a natural history perspective, but also to better evaluate risks these species pose to native wildlife and ecosystems.

Jeff Goessling, Eckerd College (goessljm@eckerd.edu), Craig Guyer, Auburn University, Mike Hilton, Eckerd College, and Ericha Shelton-Nix, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries.

Population consolidation and head-starting as demographic rescue for low-density Gopher Tortoise populations.

Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) are a keystone species of southeastern North America due to their historically high density, grazing habits, and the burrows that they maintain across upland landscapes. Seminal research from Alabama populations of Gopher Tortoises has revealed that many populations are demographically nonviable due to low population density and/or population size. Additionally, management for this species frequently utilizes measures such as translocation and head-starting to either remove populations from sites slated for habitat development or to bolster local non-viable populations. Between 2020-2024, we used short-distance translocation to consolidate a low-density resident population of Gopher Tortoises and monitored spatial biology and apparent survival in the translocated animals in south-central Alabama. We also conducted head-starting of tortoises collected as eggs from the same site and

manipulated head-start release conditions to test if soft- vs hard-release impacted apparent survival. Both wild and head-started tortoises were tracked via radiotelemetry for one-year during and one-year after penning and apparent survival was determined approximately 1.5 years after all enclosure pens had been removed. Home ranges of free-ranging tortoises were approximately the same in the enclosure pen as after the enclosure pen was removed, but apparent survival of free-ranging tortoises at the study site was only 56% after the enclosure was removed. Male adult tortoises had higher apparent survival in the site than females, and translocation distance was a negative predictor of apparent survival. Head-started tortoise apparent survival was not impacted by release condition, and overall apparent survival of head-started tortoises was 70% two years after release. Population consolidation may be an effective means of bolstering population viability, though consolidation efforts should consider translocation distances and adult density as an important component of project success.

M. Worth Pugh (mwpugh@ua.edu), The University of Alabama

The collections of Henry Peter Löding: the earliest attempt to inventory the herpetofauna of Alabama

Henry Peter Löding (1869-1942) was a Danish immigrant and resident of Mobile, AL who was profoundly interested in the natural beauty of Alabama. Löding worked as a florist, owning and operating the Little Gem Floral Garden, but learned general practices of scientific collection as an active member of the Charles Mohr Society of Natural History in Mobile. Staying true to his vocation, he began his studies collecting plants and insects that lived on his flora of interest. In the 1910s, Löding set out to create a checklist of amphibians and reptiles native to the state. With no public funding available, he conducted this project at his own expense and with the help and expertise of prominent herpetologists such as Frank Blanchard and Emmett R. Dunn and state naturalists including Herbert H. Smith and Walter B. Jones. Recent collection improvements in the University of Alabama Herpetological Collection (UAHC) have allowed for the inventory and digitization of his collections used to write his 1922 publication “A Preliminary Catalogue of Alabama Amphibians and Reptiles”. Here I review the contents of that collection which includes some surprising, perhaps forgotten, records of herpetofauna in the state. Although Löding is primarily known as an authority on beetles (Coleoptera) in the gulf states, his efforts to document herpetofauna in Alabama are significant and should not be overlooked. More importantly, Löding was among some of the earliest Alabamian biologists that vigorously advocated for the conservation of native forests and an end to the senseless killing of herpetofauna.

Seamus Conor O'Brien (sobrien1@stu.jsu.edu), Grover James Brown (gjbrown@jsu.edu), Jacksonville State University

Population Genomics and Status of the Flattened Musk Turtle (Sternotherus depressus) in the Locust Fork of the Black Warrior River

Alabama is home to some of the highest endemism in the continental United States and has some of the highest numbers of endangered and extinct species. One of the most endangered vertebrates nationally is the Flattened Musk Turtle (FMT), only found in the Black Warrior River Drainage of Alabama above the Fall Line. The FMT is listed as "Threatened" by the United State Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act and is considered Critically Endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to drastic declines in populations since the 1980s. Declines have been attributed to several factors, including coal mining, fecal/fertilizer runoff, collection for the pet trade, disease, and a deterioration in water quality across the drainage. While protected populations of the species on public lands have been well-studied, very little work has been conducted on private lands, which comprise the majority of the species' range. To bridge this gap, we have worked to gain access to private land, mostly through networking at public outreach events in the area (for ~5,000 people) and building relations in the community. By networking with locals, we have been able to access multiple creeks and tributaries on private property. These surveys have been successful in capturing FMTs, documenting >20 individuals in the Locust Fork Watershed – a milestone not seen in over four decades of surveys. The objectives of this study were to 1) build a network with the local community, 2) locate extant populations, 3) understand population genomics for the region, and 4) give relevant information to stakeholders for the management of the species.

Russell A. Mittermeier[1, *], Michael Skibsted[2, *], James C. Godwin[3], Kurt A. Buhlmann[4], Tracey D. Tuberville[4], Peter Paul van Dijk[1], Michael G. Mittermeier[5], A. Joseph Jenkins[3], and Anders G.J. Rhodin[6]

Scale, Drivers, and Importance of Turtle Diversity in the Southeastern United States

It is imperative to recognize areas of high species richness and taxonomic diversity to prioritize conservation actions and develop conservation strategies. Much of the Southeastern United States harbors an incredibly rich turtle assemblage. Herein we quantify the turtle diversity (species and subspecies) in five select Southeastern U.S. states that make up a large proportion of the North American Coastal Plain Biodiversity Hotspot. We compare turtle diversity within these states to entire turtle-rich countries. Alabama harbors 39 turtle taxa, less than only the entire United States, and the nations of Mexico, India, and Indonesia. Florida, Mississippi, and Georgia have 38 and 35 turtle taxa, respectively, ranking each of them among the top 11 turtle-rich countries, with similar turtle richness as Brazil, China, Vietnam, and Australia. Louisiana, with fewer taxa (33), still ranks among the top 11 turtle-rich countries. When turtle richness in the Southeastern United States is scaled to area (taxa per 10,000 km^2), the five highest taxa to area ratios are represented by each Southeastern U.S. state included in our analysis. Mississippi has the highest turtle taxa to area ratio at 3.03, followed by Alabama (2.87), Louisiana (2.43), Georgia (2.27), and Florida (2.23). The next closest sufficiently large country is Bangladesh at 2.1, after which the ratio quickly decreases to <1.00. We highlight the environmental variables that have contributed to the extreme turtle diversity of the Southeastern United States. We propose the concept of conservation-minded "turtle-watching" as a potential creative way to garner broader human interest, increase environmental awareness and concern, and generate revenue through local community engagement to support conserving these increasingly threatened reptiles. Further, we note that the impact of turtle-watching expands beyond solely generating interest and funds for turtles but would have a positive impact on numerous other

Southeastern U.S. freshwater species, especially taxonomically rich and underappreciated groups with equally or more impressive diversities in the Southeastern United States.

David Laurencio, Auburn University Museum of Natural History

Curating Mount's Legacy: The Herpetological Collections at the AUMNH

While the Auburn University Museum of Natural History (AUMNH) herpetological collections trace their roots to Dr. "Jack" Mecham in the late 1940's, it was during the tenure of Dr. Mount that it developed into the premier collection of Alabama amphibians and reptiles. At his hire, the collection numbered approximately 5,000 specimens. Since, it has grown to approximately 50,000 specimens and has expanded to include a tissue collection, as well as curated collections of photo vouchers and ecological databases. Collectively, the AUMNH herp collections house a wealth of information on the state's herpetofauna, and support research, education, and conservation efforts across the southeastern United States.

It is my hope that this talk will serve both as an introduction to those not familiar with the collections, and as an invitation for use of the collections and collaboration. I will summarize the collection's diverse holdings, discuss their use in research and conservation efforts, and describe the museum's resources that are available for researchers and managers. By connecting the museum's strengths in documenting biodiversity information with modern research methods and collaborative conservation practice, the AUMNH herpetological collections, and the legacy of curators like Bob Mount, will remain vital tools for the preservation of Alabama's incredible herpetofaunal diversity.

Poster Abstracts

Kristin A. Bakkegard (kbakkega@samford.edu), Samford University.

Diet of Eleutherodactylus rogersi (Bahamian Flat-Headed Frog) via DNA metabarcoding of fecal pellets

Eleutherodactylus rogersi (Bahamian Flat-headed Frog) is The Bahamas only endemic frog and one of three native species. Data on E. rogersi are limited to the 1955 description by Goin, thus little is known about this frog. It is a smaller species of frog (to 38mm SUL; slightly larger than *E. planirostris*) and lives on the ground. DNA barcoding to determine the diet of anurans is relatively new technique and avoids mortality via dissection (100% fatal) or stomach flushing (researcher skill dependent). I observed that *E. rogersi* produced discrete fecal pellets when kept overnight. Thus, the goal of this study was to use this non-invasive method to study the diet of *E. rogersi*. I sampled on four islands (Cat Island, Eleuthera, Long Island and San Salvador) of The Bahamas in 2023, collecting frogs by hand, keeping overnight, then collecting the fecal pellets the next morning. In 2024, fecal pellets (at least 10 / island; 82 total) were mailed to the Northern Arizona University Bat Ecology & Genetics Lab "Species from Feces" for DNA barcoding per their protocols. They amplify a short section of cytochrome oxidase subunit I (COI) using the ANML primer. These sequencies were compared against reference libraries derived from the Barcode of Life Database (BOLD). This analysis was limited to identifying arthropods only.

Fifty dietary taxa (OTUs) were detected from the 82 fecal pellets. Of these, five were identifiable only to phylum (Arthropoda), four were identifiable to class (2 Arachnida, 2 Insecta), and 19 to order (6 Araneae, 4 Sarcoptiformes, 1 Symphypleona, 3 Lepidoptera, 1 Amphipoda, and 4 Isopoda). Twenty-two OTU's were identifiable to genus or species. The general pattern that appears is that *E. rogersi* consumes small, terrestrial prey items with spiders (Araneae), isopods (Isopoda) and ants (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) being the most common, composing 56% of all prey items detected. Only two taxa, Arachnida and Isopoda were common to all four islands, with ants consumed on 3 of 4 islands. Surprisingly, only one beetle (just identifiable to family, Chrysomelidae), and no centipedes or millipedes were detected. Other prey items detected included lepidopterans (could be either adults or caterpillars), hemipterans (2), and dipterans (1). This is similar to *E. goini* and *E. planirostris* except those two species prefer ants whereas *E. rogersi* ate more spiders. However, a direct comparison of diet between species is problematic in that these studies were from 3 different countries and habitats where prey composition may be dissimilar. While identification of prey items to species is limited to published sequences, DNA barcoding can detect rapidly digested soft-bodied prey and is non-lethal.

Jordan Bralley (jpb0131@auburn.edu), Katelyn Lawson, Kelly Homan, Juniper Sosa, Auburn University

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Priority Areas.

This poster will showcase the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Priority Areas (CPAs) developed for the 2025 Alabama State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Revision. Habitat Suitability Models (HSMs) were created for 18 herptile Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Because of time and modeling constraints, not all SGCN could be modeled; instead, we selected a subset of species that collectively represent a variety of habitat types, co-occur with other SGCNs, and span the full extent of Alabama. HSMs were created using the Maximum Entropy modeling approach, as well as ensemble models for certain species. Expert feedback was incorporated throughout the process, including input from the 2024 ALAPARC meeting, 2025 SEPARC meeting, and follow-up email consultations. Final HSMs were combined with occurrence data, expert-identified areas of importance, and land cover information with the spatial prioritization software Zonation, which ranks every pixel in the state from 0 to 1 based on conservation value. The top 15% of this output was then processed to produce the final Amphibian and Reptile CPA map. This output was combined with CPA maps from each of the other taxa groups to create comprehensive terrestrial and aquatic CPA maps for the 2025 SWAP.

Fisher Parrish, Troy University, Ethan Jones (ejones215184@troy.edu), Troy University, Dr. Alvin Diamond, Troy University

Catch Me if You Can: A Survey of the Turtles in an Isolated Urban Pond

We initiated a mark–recapture survey of freshwater turtles in an isolated urban pond on the campus of Troy University in Pike County to establish a long-term monitoring program. Mullis Pond is a 1 ha man-made impoundment constructed in the 1950's that is spring fed and receives significant urban runoff. It drains into an unnamed tributary of Walnut Creek, the westernmost tributary within the upper Pea-Choctawhatchee River drainage system and lies adjacent to the Conecuh River watershed. We began sampling in April 2024 and surveying was completed April 2025 utilizing a combination of funnel traps baited with cat food, sardines, or peanut butter and basking traps. We documented 53 unique individuals representing 4 species, of which 41 were pond sliders (*Trachemys scripta*), 3 were common musk turtles *(Sternotherus odoratus*), 5 eastern mud turtles (*Kinosternon subrubrum*), and 4 common snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*).

Peyton Wilson, Grover Brown, Jacksonville State University

Intermediates or intermedius? An Examination of Lotic Sternotherus in Baldwin and Mobile Counties

The Southeast is a biodiversity hotspot for freshwater turtles, and those of the family Kinosternidae are no exception. Alabama is home to all species of *Sternotherus*, including the recently described Intermediate Musk Turtle (*Sternotherus intermedius*) described in 2018. A recent taxonomic analysis found the species to be sister to *Sternotherus minor*, and very little research has been done on *S. intermedius* sensu stricto. It was thought that the Perdido River was the western boundary of *Sternotherus intermedius*, however, recent evidence found questionable individuals in several small drainages feeding into the Mobile-Tensaw, bringing its actual range into question, as well as if this species has hybridized over time with Stripe-Necked Musk Turtles (*S. peltifer*) in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, AL. In this study, our objectives are to survey drainages across these counties for lotic *Sternotherus* in order to collect and analyze specimens genetically and morphologically. Ultimately, we hope to determine the true geographic distribution and interaction of these species in South Alabama.