

Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Academy

Practical Training for Practitioners

February 17-21, 2020
Fort Walton Beach, Florida



Welcome to Fort Walton Beach!



2020 Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy Planning Team

- Deniz Aygen, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Travis Blunden, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Cheyenne Dubiach, Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Anne Glick, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Sarah Kendrick, Missouri Department of Conservation
- Jerrie Lindsey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Carrie McClelland, Yukon Department of Environment
- Jeff Meyers, Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Shelly Plante, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Liz Schold, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Liz Sparks, Retired Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

2020 Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy

| Monday, February 17, 2020 | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 7:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | Optional Pre-Academy Fieldtrip: Natural Wonders of Florida's Panhandle | Registration Desk Open |
| 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. | | BREAK |
| 1:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. | | Registration Desk Open |
| 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. | BREAK | |
| 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. | Welcome Reception | Registration Desk Open |

| Tuesday, February 18, 2020 | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 6:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | Free / Breakfast On Your Own |
| 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | Welcome to the 2020 Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy Shelly Plante: Chair, Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Working Group Kipp Frohlich: Director, Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission |
| 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Plenary: Elsa Haubold Guiding our Way – The Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | BREAK |
| 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | Relevancy Panel and Discussion Julie Wraitmell: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at National Audubon Alix A. Pedraza: A Walk in Nature with Non-traditional Audiences Rosezetta Bobo: Understanding Implicit Bias |
| 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | LUNCH |
| 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Using Bi-National Survey Results on Birdwatchers to Inform Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Programs |
| 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | BREAK |
| 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | The Power of eBird: Relevancy through Quantifying Birders and Birding |
| 5:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. | BREAK IGNITE SESSION Dessert Buffet |

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

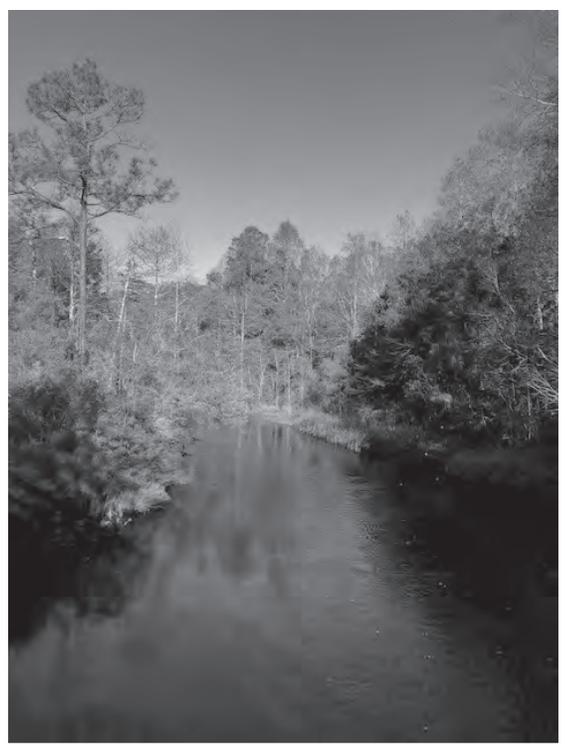
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|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 6:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. | Guided Sunrise Beach Walk (Sign-up at Registration Desk) | |
| 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | Free / Breakfast On Your Own | |
| 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Streaming Wildlife Cameras | Manatee Manners – Managing Wildlife Viewing Opportunities |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | BREAK | |
| 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | I Bird NY: Expanding Outdoor Recreation Opportunities through Wildlife Viewing | Public Education, Marketing, and Tour Guide Training about Marine Protected Areas- Case Study |
| 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | Backyards and Beyond | Immersive Wildlife Observations: Crafting an Experience of Response |
| 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | LUNCH | |
| 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Connecting People to Bats: Tools for an Immersive Experience | Attracting New Users to Bird & Wildlife Trails with Print Marketing: Three states, three approaches in design and partnerships |
| 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | BREAK | |
| 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Developing a State-wide Wildlife Viewing Plan through Stakeholder Engagement | The City Nature Challenge: Exploring Urban Nature for Engagement and Conservation |
| 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. | BREAK | |
| 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. | Wildlife Trivia Night: \$15.00 payable at the door. Pizza, Salad and Drinks Florida Themed Prizes | Evening On Your Own |

Thursday, February 20, 2020

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| 6:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | Free / Breakfast On Your Own | |
| 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Diverse Programming to Ecotourism, Wildlife Viewing and Environmental Education in Nature: Texas Tech University Llano River Field Station | Advancing Resource-based Recreation in Florida: A Tale of Trails, Parks and Economics |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | BREAK | |
| 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 a.m. | Different Perspectives, Same View: Following the Sandhill Crane Migration from Texas to the Tintina Trench | Leveraging Funding from Wildlife Viewers: Three Innovative Programs from Three States |
| 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | LUNCH | |
| 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Dip In! Freshwater Snorkeling as a Tool for Nature-based Tourism and Learning | Diversity and Inclusion in Outdoor Recreation |
| 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | BREAK | |
| 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. | Wildlife Viewing Hackathon! | |
| 4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | WVNT Academy 2022 – Welcome to Arizona | |
| 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. | BREAK | |
| 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. | Closing Banquet at Boshamps Seafood and Oyster House | |

Friday, February 21, 2020

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|------------------------------|--|
| 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. | Optional Post-Academy Fieldtrip: Conservation Success Stories |
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2020 Academy Presentations

Monday, February 17, 2020

7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Optional Pre-Academy Fieldtrip: Natural Wonders of Florida's Panhandle

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Opening Reception

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Welcome to the 2020 Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy

Shelly Plante: Chair, Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Working Group

Kipp Frohlich: Director, Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Plenary

Guiding our Way – the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap

Dr. Elsa Haubold, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services

Urbanization and the increasingly diverse population of the United States are leading to greater complexity in American's wildlife value orientations. These forces are also affecting how people spend time outdoors and their outdoor pursuits. They also affect how much people engage in or think about conservation. In 2016 the Blue Ribbon Panel on "Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources" made two recommendations to address these issues:

- Examine the impact of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation, and
- Make recommendations on how programs and agencies can transform to engage and serve broader constituencies.

To begin implementing these recommendations and help more people connect to wildlife and meet the needs of changing societies, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Wildlife Management Institute convened a team and enlisted the help of over 60 individuals from state, provincial and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribes, business, industry, academia, and private citizens. This group developed the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap recently adopted by directors at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference in September 2019. Join Elsa Haubold of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a member of the coordinating team that led development of the roadmap as she guides us through the Relevancy Roadmap. Elsa will also lead us in an interactive discussion of how wildlife viewing and nature tourism is essential to transforming conservation organizations so they can achieve enhanced conservation through engagement with broader constituents.

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Relevancy Panel Discussion

A Walk in Nature with Non-traditional Audiences

Alix A. Pedraza, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources created a Diversity Outreach program, expanding opportunities for and participation in SCDNR programs to non-traditional audiences. With “Nature Walks” hosted by the SCDNR Diversity Outreach staff, the department introduces non-traditional audiences (mostly Hispanic) to the wonders and beauty of South Carolina. While walking in nature, participants learn about the agency, the different type of properties, and the wildlife and the history around the state. This presentation will highlight the initial steps taken to create the SCDNR Diversity Outreach Nature Walks, current elements of the program, lessons learned and future growth.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at National Audubon

Julie Wraitmell, Florida Audubon

The National Audubon Society was formed out of a grassroots effort to end the persecution of Florida’s wading birds for use in the plume trade. More than a century later, grassroots efforts? continue to be at the heart of our work, which makes it that much more important that our community reflects the demographics of the larger American society. While we have a long way to go, Audubon is pursuing equity, diversity and inclusion with great intentionality. Hear about some of our efforts, failures, successes and lessons learned as we work to own and grow a more representative grassroots conservation power.

Understanding Implicit Bias

Dr. Rosezetta Bobo, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Implicit and unconscious biases are in all of us. These unconscious beliefs and attitudes towards others form throughout our lives. These biases apply characteristics and qualities to all members of a group – in essence, stereotyping. They influence how we communicate with those around us. Furthermore, they can impact program development to the point where individuals may feel excluded. In this session, we will learn how to identify implicit biases and how to mitigate against them.

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Using Bi-national Survey Results on Birdwatchers to Inform Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Programs

Nicholas Cole, U.S. Geological Survey

Ashley Dayer, Virginia Tech

Human dimensions research plays a key role in making informed decisions about managing recreational experiences and developing strategic communication efforts. In 2017-2018, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Human Dimensions Working Group conducted the first ever bi-national, continental-scale human dimensions study of birdwatchers. Our survey of birdwatchers (n = 36,908) from the U.S. and Canada resulted in regional-level insights that can serve as an invaluable resource for wildlife viewing and nature tourism practitioners. The survey applied social science theories and perspectives to gather information about conservation attitudes, behaviors, identity, social networks, recreational experience preferences and funding mechanisms. Further, we conducted a complementary survey of hunters (n=9,004) to allow for comparisons in responses of the two groups. This training session will provide human dimensions insights in five modules of 10 minutes, interspersed with two hands-on and discussion sessions of 15 minutes. The hands-on sessions will include activities and discussion prompts to ensure participants leave the session with specific ways they can apply the data in their current or future efforts to work with birdwatchers. A complete list of ideas for ways to utilize the findings will be generated and shared with participants following the workshop.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Power of eBird: Relevancy through Quantifying Birders and Birding

Sarah Kendrick, Missouri Department of Conservation

Scott Anderson, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

eBird is a massive, unparalleled online database of birder checklists from across the world. Since its inception in 2009, eBird has grown to be the largest citizen science effort ever created. eBird gathers over 100 million bird records every year (and growing) and has begun to inform large-scale research and monitoring efforts. Birdwatching is one of the fastest-growing outdoor pursuits in the U.S. eBird is one of the only ways that any state or organization can quantify outdoor use, use of our public lands and wildlife-viewing use. Come and learn how your state or organization can harness this huge dataset to quantify birder use and birding activity to help further illustrate wildlife viewing's relevancy.



7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Ignite

Join your fellow Academy participants for our first ever Ignite session. Five-minute Ignite talks will be jammed packed full of useful information.

Feast on yummy desserts as you listen to the presentations.

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

6:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Guided Sunrise Beach Walk (Optional)

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Streaming Wildlife Cams – An Overview

Jeff Myers, Arizona Game and Fish Department

The focus of this talk will be to discuss and elucidate the various elements involved in planning, installing and maintaining a streaming wildlife cam. Costs, service providers and peripheral items to consider will be addressed. Managing the wildlife cams for the Arizona Game & Fish Department has given me some insight into the aforementioned processes with cams, including their successful use as an outreach and cost-recovery tool. We will also cover which social media campaigns have proved most effective in increasing out digital engagement numbers and donations, as well as provide a few things to potentially avoid when pushing your new cams.

Track 2: Manatee Manners – Managing Wildlife Viewing Opportunities

Michelle Pasawicz, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Millions of people visit Florida each year and many enjoy opportunities for up-close-and-personal experiences with wildlife. Getting on the water and seeing manatees in their natural environment is an exciting and memorable experience. But for wildlife managers, managing the humans who adore charismatic megafauna is where things can get tricky. Learn how the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and their partners, work to find a balance between promoting manatee viewing opportunities and preventing disturbance to manatees in critical habitats.

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track: I Bird NY: Expanding Outdoor Recreation Opportunities through Wildlife Viewing

Kayla Baker, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

I Bird NY was announced in the 2017 New York, State of the State and launched later that spring at the unveiling of a new observation viewing tower in the City of Utica, NY. The goal of I Bird NY is to bring new participants to outdoor recreation, specifically those close to urban and suburban areas, through birding. New York State is working to build on the increasing opportunities to access the state's vast natural resources through promoting birdwatching as a low-cost, accessible way to explore and connect with

nature. As part of the implementation of I Bird NY, a multi-pronged initiative was launched, which includes development of new materials for beginner participants to get started bird watching; a central website with getting started resources; promotion of guided bird walks and experiences; and improvements to signage at priority Bird Conservation Areas near urban and suburban areas to better identify opportunities for the public to bird watch. After the initiative was announced, Adventure NY outreach staff worked with Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists to develop a birding challenge that encouraged New Yorkers from each region of the state to identify birds not only in their hometowns but to visit public lands and find new species. Participants in this session will learn how to run beginner bird-watching programs, identify simple ways to incorporate wildlife viewing in existing programming and how to collaborate across agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations to promote bird watching.

Track 2: Public Education, Marketing and Tour Guide Training about Marine Protected Areas-Case Study

Frank Burris and Miles Phillip, Oregon State University Extension & Sea Grant

Frank and Miles will present an educational program and model used to improve resident, visitor and commercial-guide understanding of the relatively new Oregon Marine Reserve/Protected Area System and its component sites. Through a collaborative effort between Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Sea Grant/ Oregon State University Extension Tourism Program and the Oregon Coast Visitors Association, this unique educational program was developed. The program consists of six short (<30 minute) online courses, a mobile trivia game and awards of guided tours by Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP)-certified guides for members of the public that complete the trivia questions correctly. These courses are modules made available at no charge as well as additional knowledge modules for our professional guide training program, the GORP program, which includes online and in-person training. The GORP program can be offered as a custom program to any state or local region. Participants in this session will understand and describe the protected area education program described in Oregon, evaluate opportunities for using the described protected area education program for their location, know how to participate in the GORP training program and have local course content developed.

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Backyards and Beyond

Judy Gillan, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

A 2017 study titled “The Nature of Americans,” identified back yards as a key place for people to connect with nature. For this reason, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) embarked on a campaign to connect people to our natural lands in Florida by first connecting them to their back yards. For over a year, staff in FWC’s Public Access Services Office gave workshops on the benefits of creating backyard habitat, set up iNaturalist projects to facilitate people making species observations in their yards and partnered with many local organizations to spread the message throughout the Tallahassee region. This ambitious campaign met with many successes and some challenges as it sought to transition people from connecting with nature in their back yards to encouraging them to explore nature beyond just their yards. Judy Gillan, a section leader within the Public Access Services Office, will describe the program and offer tips for those seeking to do something similar in their regions.

Track 2: Immersive Wildlife Observation: Crafting an Experience of Response

Andrew Duggan, studioOutside

Chris Snyder, University of Southern Mississippi Marine Education Center

Matt Wallace, Lake Flato Architects

Truly immersive wildlife experiences place visitors into the animal habitat they have travelled to observe. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for orchestrating such encounters – each must respond to the nuance of place, habitat, seasonality and the types of wildlife available to see in different seasons. The presentation team will discuss how designers can integrate site and structure to work together programmatically, structurally, ecologically and aesthetically to deliver an immersive experience rooted in the context of place. Hear how a nature center director has capitalized upon site and facility design opportunities to propel the organizational mission and reach new visitor groups.

Takeaway values include: design team collaboration; program integration; and owner perspective on the operations of such facilities. This presentation will further address the following: the Environment - Habitat and supporting ecotones; the Observer-Human Ergonomics; the Story-Understanding of larger context/ migratory system; and the Experience Phenomena-How the wildlife informs the act of viewing.

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Connecting People to Bats: Tools for an Immersive Experience

Megan O'Reilly, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Erin E. Cord, and Melquisedec Gamba-Rios, Bat Conservation International

Bats worldwide face many threats, including habitat loss, hunting and anthropogenic disturbance. In North America, bats are additionally threatened by mining, wind turbines, climate change and diseases, such as white-nose syndrome. To face these challenges, any successful conservation effort requires the involvement of the community and education of the general public. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Bat Conservation International will present our initiatives to create awareness, from traditional ecological education to a more personal experience, sparking a connection with bat conservation. Furthermore, we will discuss the use of newly-affordable technology to provide hands-on experiences that visualize the hidden world of echolocation. We will address how to scale these initiatives at both local and national levels, and demonstrate how these initiatives provide everyone the opportunity to connect with bats.

Track 2: Attracting New Users to Bird & Wildlife Trails with Print Marketing: Three states, three approaches in design and partnerships

Liz Schold, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Brian Moyer, Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries

Shelly Plante, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Learn how to partner with other organizations to create marketing collateral that will compliment and promote your birding and wildlife trail programs. Texas, Virginia and Florida have found ways to leverage partnerships with outside organizations to create printed pieces that reach broader audiences and provide a springboard for beginners to discover their wildlife and birding trails. State birding and wildlife trails take many shapes and forms, but all have a shared goal: to make it easier for people to get outside to view and enjoy the wildlife around them. With printing costs on the rise, and budgets typically not increasing to match, it can be daunting to create new print pieces. Bringing in partners with shared goals can help offset costs and staff time, and lead to a mutually-beneficial piece. For Texas, Virginia and Florida, there was a need for a practical, “grab-and-go” wildlife-viewing piece that was free, easily accessible, and would offer tourists and locals all the information they need. The birding and wildlife trail coordinators of these states were able to utilize different methods to fill this need, creating either statewide or regional brochures. They will review their methods and offer replicable tools for your state and program.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Developing a Statewide Wildlife Viewing Plan through Stakeholder Engagement

Ashley Dayer, Virginia Tech

Brian Moyer, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

The inclusion of the public in the planning processes of state and federal natural resource management agencies is increasingly necessary and, in many cases, required by law. Stakeholder engagement is believed to fulfill a normative imperative to include the public in the management of public resources; improve trust and understanding between agencies and their constituents; and produce more robust and informed decisions. However, planning mandates often provide little specific or practical guidance on how to design effective participatory processes. Additionally, a wide implementation gap exists between research on stakeholder engagement and the execution of engagement processes in practice. This gap represents a critical training need for natural resource agencies because when poorly implemented, stakeholder engagement can be counterproductive, resulting in disillusionment, entrenchment, and deeper mistrust on the part of both practitioners and the public (Reed, 2008). Strengthening agency capacity related to stakeholder engagement is particularly important as wildlife agencies turn their attention to groups of stakeholders they have not traditionally served. With R3 initiatives to recruit, retain and reactivate participants in outdoor recreation, state and federal wildlife management agencies have the potential to engage with new stakeholders in new ways. Given changing patterns in participation in wildlife recreation, birdwatchers and other wildlife viewers are key to growing constituencies for funding and otherwise

supporting wildlife conservation. However, more actively engaging with and prioritizing the needs of these stakeholders challenges the norm of state agencies focused primarily on serving hunters and anglers. Effectively engaging with wildlife viewers will require creative thinking, new skills and collectively learning from experiences in other states. In this interactive training, participants will be introduced to a multi-faceted R3 planning effort with wildlife viewers in Virginia and will identify how insights from the process can be applied to their own approaches to stakeholder engagement.

Track 2: The City Nature Challenge: Exploring Urban Nature for Engagement and Conservation

Tania Homayoun, Texas Parks & Wildlife

Liz Schold, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The City Nature Challenge is a global, city-scale BioBlitz event hosted on iNaturalist that frames a biodiversity survey as a friendly competition between cities or metropolitan areas. This event provides a variety of opportunities for connecting people with nature in and around these areas, whether at local nature-tourism and wildlife-viewing venues or in their own back yards. Additionally, City Nature Challenge participants contribute to nature stewardship through collection of valuable citizen science data. This session will present two coordinators' perspectives on the value of taking the City Nature Challenge: a statewide view of the event's value to biodiversity monitoring across multiple, fast-growing metro areas in Texas and a focused look at lessons learned at the local level in Leon County/Tallahassee, Florida. We will discuss key outcomes from the event, ways it can build local partnerships and engagement with nature, and how the data generated can contribute to biodiversity conservation and resource management.



6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Bird Brain Trivia

On Wednesday evening, join us for a wild night of trivia! Liz Schold and Travis Blunden, of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be hosting four fun rounds of wildlife-themed trivia, challenging your knowledge of North American fauna. Questions will be about creatures from all over the continent, so we encourage you to team up with folks from a different region for a competitive advantage! Don't miss this opportunity to meet and mingle with new people and compete for the glory of winning our grand prize. Additional \$15.00 charge, at the door, for pizza, salad, and snacks. Drinks will be available for purchase at the hotel bar. Team Sign-up at the registration table.

Thursday, February 20, 2020

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Diverse Programming to Ecotourism, Wildlife Viewing and Environmental Education in Nature: Texas Tech University Llano River Field Station

Brett Mosley and Melody Plumley, Texas Tech University, Llano River Field Station

Texas Tech University Llano River Field Station (LRFS) in Junction, Texas serves as a destination for scientific land/water research, nature and ecotourism, watershed management, and education programs. In 2011, LRFS developed 3.2 miles of land trails bordering a 4-mile paddle trail that highlight different habitats of the Hill Country. The Discovery Point Trail, in partnership with National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, public/private stakeholder groups, is an interpretive experience:

- 1) through demonstrations of BMPs: native plant gardens, brush control, wildlife guzzlers, invasive-species management, riparian restoration and renewable energy technologies;
- 2) integrating K-12 watershed education with research programs at LRFS; and
- 3) educating about plants, bird, wildlife, invasive and trust species in the context of BMPs and demonstration projects.

Future projects are prescribed burn and plant restoration/succession areas, riparian improvement projects and butterfly/monarch gardens. The trail benefits state/federal staff, NGOs, teachers/students and ranchers, as LRFS hosts training workshops and scientific/educational conferences. New additions to our programming include a Texas Youth Deer Hunt, a spring birding festival with the South Llano River State Park, bird blinds, an updated web page, game cameras and our Outdoor School Curriculum Units that use the trail – benefitting more than 2,000 students and teachers a year. Learning objectives include:

- 1) nature trails facilitate ecotourism and environmental education;
- 2) principles of partnership science and engaged learning multiplier effects;
- 3) how broader impacts of research are embedded into public engagement;
- 4) how informal/formal Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education is incorporated into trails; and
- 5) how interpretative nature trails provide rural-urban connections to cope with Nature Deficit Disorder.

Track 2: Advancing Resource-Based Recreation in Florida: A Tale of Trails, Parks and Economics

Doug Alderson and Robert Barrett, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Florida is a paradise for wildlife watching and other forms of nature-based tourism. The Sunshine State's network of parks, conservation lands, beaches, waterways and other protected areas, along with abundant fish and wildlife resources, make many forms of nature-based recreation possible. Nature-based recreation is a major driver of tourism in Florida. Because of Florida's climate, diversity of natural landscapes, and award-winning state parks and trails, the state offers a tremendous selection of outdoor experiences for residents as well as visitors. Linking these individual opportunities into a larger recreation and conservation

system is essential to maximizing the value of our public lands. Learn about ways Florida's State Park System is capitalizing on these nature tourists: Florida's 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Florida Greenways and Trails System and programming that empowers first-time and casual recreators to become lifelong advocates of natural spaces.

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Different Perspectives, Same View: Following the Sandhill Crane Migration from Texas to the Tintina Trench

Andrew Duggan, studioOutside

Carrie McClelland, Yukon Environment

Bill Taddicken, Rowe Sanctuary

Every year, sandhill cranes make a long migration from the sand hills of Texas to central Alaska and even over to Siberia. Throughout their journey these large birds give us spectacular viewing opportunities in many different forms. From spotting small groups on wintering grounds in Texas to the deafening chorus of thousands feeding in Nebraska, special viewing platforms and blinds allow us to watch these birds at rest. When the birds reach Yukon, the only opportunity to see them is as they fly overhead. As wildlife professionals we have the privilege and responsibility to provide respectful viewing experiences to the public to promote the conservation of our natural wonders. This presentation will explore site specific approaches to spot, panoramic and flyover viewing experiences. Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary is a 2,800 acre preserve on the Platte River in central Nebraska. During the spring migration, 800,000+ sandhill cranes stop on their way north to breeding grounds. For 47 years, Audubon has been offering sunrise and sunset viewing experiences to observe the cranes as they roost for the night. Other efforts in the mining town of Faro are promoting unique natural attractions like the crane migration.

Track 2: Leveraging Funding from Wildlife Viewers: Three Innovative Programs from Three States

Brian Moyer, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Shelly Plante, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Jeff Meyers, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Learn how three states have created programs to increase wildlife-viewing participation, financial support and metrics to support their work. Arizona, Texas and Virginia have all implemented innovative programs to engage new audiences, share their conservation story, and raise awareness in ways that allow them to quantify participation and/or economic impact of these audiences for their agencies. These programs provide concrete examples of how agencies can move the needle in meaningful ways regarding relevance with non-consumptive audiences.

Wildlife viewing programs have a long history in Arizona. Since the program's inception in 2006, Arizona has provided innovative and compelling programming to engage the public with wildlife and promote Arizona Game and Fish Department while operating under a cost-recovery model, demonstrably proving that the non-hunting and fishing public can and will pay for wildlife conservation with state wildlife agencies. We will discuss and see examples of the programs and how AGFD has incrementally increased buy-in from both the Commission and staff within the agency.

Texas will share how it has streamlined management of its annual birdwatching tournament, the Great Texas Birding Classic, over the past 23 years while also reaching (and often exceeding) the outreach and conservation fundraising goals each year. Not only has the event grown to almost 1,000 participants while donating close to \$1 million to conservation grants over the years, the event is also run with a bare-bones budget and limited staff. Find out how it's done!

Virginia launched a membership initiative in 2019, called Restore the Wild. The membership aims to broaden support for Department of Game and Inland Fisheries through a targeted funding mechanism with associated branding that is relevant to wildlife viewers and outdoor enthusiasts, fosters relationship-building and provides a call to action. Virginia will share the details of this membership initiative, how it was developed, its success thus far and next steps.

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Track 1: Dip In! Freshwater Snorkeling as a Tool for Nature-based Tourism and Learning

Kim Winter, U.S. Forest Service

Getting wet on National Forests is enjoyed by millions of people through aquatic recreation, yet few opportunities match the learning experience of full immersion, freshwater snorkeling in the clear streams of a healthy watershed. Take a dip into the Forest Service-North Bay partnership to find out where freshwater snorkeling programs are developing and currently underway, explore how we engage visitors in water stewardship and how to set up and run a snorkeling program as a tool for learning. It's all about having fun and enjoying our waters with partners – join us to help start your own program!

Track 2: Diversity and Inclusion in Outdoor Recreation

David C. Jones, Florida Disabled Outdoors Association

Florida Disabled Outdoors Association (FDOA) has been enriching lives through accessible inclusive recreation since 1990. Staff will provide a background on accessibility and a lively hands-on session where attendees will learn about including people of all abilities into recreation and active leisure. Areas covered will include the difference between “accessibility” and “inclusion” and what this means to recreation providers, agency staff, and wildlife and tourism professionals. We will break down into simple terms how to be welcoming to families and groups that include a person with special needs. Disability etiquette and

“People First” language will be addressed. Additionally, we will explain how to avoid outdated language and instead use words and phrases that will provide an indication to people with a disability that they will have a positive experience. Suggestions for modifying activities will be reviewed. Adaptive equipment and recreation-assistive technology that can be used in an outdoor setting will be explored. We will also provide examples of equipment currently being used and talk about trends in the development of adaptations. Potential funding sources for adaptive technology will be noted. The session will close with an open discussion including questions from the audience.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Hack-a-Thon

We’re hacking the hack-a-thon. Though originally for computer programmers to come together and ‘code’ a project, hack-a-thons are being applied to a whole new range of problem-solving projects. It’s a time to bring people together who have a variety of skills and blitz some creative solutions to complicated problems.

In our profession many of us work alone, covering a huge range of habitats, ecosystems, audiences, and geography. This is a chance to have a team of professionals tackle the problem. Academy participants should get ready to think outside the box. There are no bad ideas except the ones you never thought of. We’ve all had some experience trying to build a problem with \$100, some construction paper, a paperclip, and a shoelace, so be prepared to share your best strategies with the group.

4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Academy – Get ready for 2022



6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

2020 Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Closing Banquet at Boshamps Seafood and Oyster House

Join your Academy colleagues at Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House, located on the beautiful Destin Harbor, for one last night of camaraderie, conversation, beautiful scenery, and local seafood. Bus departs from the hotel at 5:45 p.m. and returns at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, February 21, 2020

7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Optional Post-Academy Fieldtrip: Conservation Success Stories

Speakers



Doug Alderson

Doug works as the assistant bureau chief for the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails, part of DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks, helping coordinate the planning and promotion of non-motorized trails throughout the state. Prior to his current role, he mapped the 1,515-mile Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail and he continues to coordinate the state's designated paddling trails. In his free time, he is an avid cyclist, hiker and paddler. He also is an award-winning author of several published books, including *A New Guide to Old Florida Attractions*, *Wild Florida Adventures* and *The Great Florida Seminole Trail*. In 2015, he was awarded the first-ever Environmental Leadership Award by Paddle Florida.



Scott Anderson

Scott grew up in Texas, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Connecticut before attending University of Delaware and earning a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science. After spending three years working field jobs on northern goshawk, three-toed woodpecker, burrowing owl and marine mammals, Scott worked as a database manager and computer software trainer. To move back toward a career in the natural sciences, Scott completed a Master of Science in Wildlife Science from Oregon State University investigating foraging habits of Caspian terns in the Columbia River Estuary. After graduation, he began as a database manager for the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Scott is currently a statewide bird biologist for the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (ncwildlife.org) and coordinator of the North Carolina Birding Trail (ncbirdingtrail.org).



Kayla Baker

Kayla is a Public Participation Specialist with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Kayla joined DEC in 2017 as an Excelsior Service Fellow, working on Adventure NY – a multi-year initiative that supports improvements and enhanced access to recreational facilities, as well as builds on efforts to provide a high-quality outdoor recreation experience for New Yorkers of all ages and abilities. Prior to this, Kayla interned at Open Buffalo throughout the completion of her master's degree from SUNY Buffalo State and served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at ReNU Niagara.



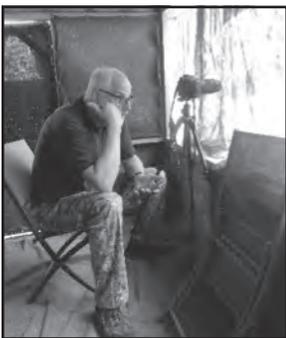
Rob Barrett

Rob has been the Interpretive Services Programs Manager for the Florida Park Service since August 2012 and has spent that time working with parks and partner organizations to create recreation, interpretive and professional development programs. A graduate of Florida State University, he has a bachelor's in biology and has worked as a naturalist, summer camp counselor, teacher and wildlife rehabilitator. He is proud to have turned a lifelong connection to the outdoors into a career that will hopefully help ensure the continuation of protected spaces for the next generation. He lives just outside of Tallahassee and, when not traveling to various state parks, you can find him at home with his chickens, watching wildlife, knitting or working on some project in the yard.



Dr. Rosezetta Bobo

Rosezetta is a nationally-recognized expert with over 20 years of experience in mediation, cultural competence, diversity and inclusion, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and community engagement for a diverse range of organizations and community settings. She has provided training and consulting services to governmental agencies, colleges and universities, school districts, community-based organizations, and private and non-profit agencies national and internationally. In addition to providing training and consulting services she has served as mediator, negotiator, program designer, administrator, center director and trainer in several organizations including the Florida Supreme Court. She has extensive experience designing, directing and executing experiential learning programs for universities, private, profit and non-profit organizations. Over the course of her career, she has delivered training on three continents and seven countries, including countries in Africa, South America and the Caribbean. Rosezetta has served on the Florida Supreme Court Mediation Ethnicity Advisory Committee; provided mediation services to lawyers, judges and justices, plus designed, developed and delivered dozens of programs, mediations and conflict-related courses locally, nationally and internationally for business and industry, governmental agencies, NGOs, universities and non-profits around the world. She currently serves as the Diversity Officer for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



Frank Burris

Frank has served as Watershed Management Educator for the Oregon State University Extension Service and Oregon Sea Grant since 2000 and has been a county leader of the Curry County OSU Extension office since 2007. His interests include: water quality; wetlands and estuary education and restoration; Tourism and Economic Development; and Low Impact Development. Frank has a half-time special assignment with the Association of Oregon Counties working to improve and complete the Oregon Coast Trail and serves on a statewide Oregon Outdoor Recreation Tourism Network. He lives in Gold Beach, Oregon with his lovely wife, Jan, and their dog, Maddy.



Dr. Nicholas Cole

Nicholas is a postdoctoral researcher in the Social and Economic Analysis Branch of the United States Geological Survey. There he assesses the human dimensions of wildlife-related outdoor recreation and natural resources. His scholarship highlights the complex relationships between participating in wildlife-based recreation and people's perceptions of conservation, natural resource management and human-animal interactions. Nicholas seeks to communicate results and implications across broad scales of governance and user groups through reproducible science and high-quality graphics. Nicholas is also an avid outdoor recreator who enjoys getting outside, exercising and watching wildlife whenever he can.



Erin Cord

Erin joined the Bat Conservation International staff in 2019 and is thrilled to be coordinating BCI's new Bat Walk Program. Erin double-majored in Wildlife Conservation and Entomology from the University of Delaware and received her Master of Science in Wildlife Ecology from the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. She has a special affinity for pollinators and is excited to have the opportunity to focus on bats! Erin has over 10 years of experience working as a wildlife biologist and running environmentally-focused volunteer programs. She is happiest working at the intersection of science communication and citizen empowerment. Erin loves working with volunteers and getting people excited about environmental stewardship and wildlife conservation.



Dr. Ashley Dayer

Ashley is an Assistant Professor of Human Dimensions in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech and Affiliated Faculty with the Global Change Center. Her conservation social science research focuses on conservation behavior of wildlife recreationists, habitat conservation by private landowners, human disturbance of shorebirds and science application by managers. She earned her PhD in Natural Resources from Cornell; her Master of Science in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from Colorado State University, and her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Science & Public Policy from Harvard University. In between degrees, she was the Education Director for a bird observatory, where she led birdwatching trips, contributed to the design of birding trails, and taught thousands of children about science through bird banding. Ashley continues to be actively involved nationally and internationally in bird conservation, aiming to build the capacity of organizations to apply conservation social science to improve bird conservation outcomes.



Andrew Duggan

Andrew is a landscape architect with Studio Outside and has been active in environmental education and nature center planning for 20 years. As a father of four, he is passionate about creating meaningful experiences for children of all ages out in nature. He has worked with numerous environmental education and nature conservation clients including state parks, Audubon, 4H, YMCA and several large public gardens and arboreta. Through his projects, he seeks to forge a connection between the organization's mission and an inspiring experience of natural systems.



Melquisedec Gamba-Rios

Melqui has studied the ecology and conservation of bats for over 10 years. Originally from Colombia, Melqui conducted his undergraduate and most of his research work in Costa Rica. He recently completed his doctorate from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, where he investigated antipredator behaviors in bats and the implication of these behaviors in bat communication and sociality. He is a passionate ecologist interested in conservation and behavioral ecology. He has published work on topics including species distribution, habitat selection, and roost requirements for multiple bat species, with a particular emphasis in the neotropics. Melqui joined Bat Conservation International as a research fellow leading the Florida bonneted bat conservation program. In this role, he will lead BCI's outreach and conservation activities in Florida related to Florida bonneted bats and address fundamental questions about roost ecology, habitat use, anthropogenic habituation and urban ecology of this endangered species.



Judy Gillan

Judy is an experienced conservation educator who has developed and implemented programs across several media platforms, topics and age groups. She graduated from the University of South Florida with bachelor's degrees in biology and science education. Judy's first job was in the zoo department at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay where she honed her communication and curriculum development skills. Desiring a more direct connection to wildlife conservation, Judy joined the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as the Nongame Wildlife Education Coordinator. She developed projects about schoolyard wildlife, declining species and human-wildlife interactions. In addition, she was instrumental in establishing the wildlife viewing program and the Great Florida Birding Trail. Judy currently develops interpretive materials for visitors to wildlife management areas, leads the agency's Education and Outreach Standing Team and oversees the Chinsegut Conservation Center. Judy is a past-president and lifetime member of the League of Environmental Educators in Florida.



Dr. Elsa Haubold

Elsa is passionate about working with partners and stakeholders to find common ground and solutions to seemingly insurmountable conservation challenges, and her career path has reflected this. She is a fish and wildlife administrator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Science Applications Program. She most recently served the USFWS as the national Landscape Conservation Cooperative coordinator where she coordinated a network of thousands of partners working toward establishing and implementing a common conservation vision across state and international boundaries. Before joining the federal government, she worked for 12 years for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) on many controversial, collaborative wildlife diversity and endangered species issues at the state, regional and national level as well as coordinated Florida's wildlife responses to and after Deepwater Horizon. For the first five years with the FWC she was the administrator for Florida's marine mammal and marine turtle research program and helped create the University of Florida's Aquatic Animal Health Program. Elsa also has nongovernmental organizational experience, having coordinated the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network. She has a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Science and a MS in Veterinary Anatomy from Texas A&M University, a Ph.D. in Pathology from University of Texas Medical Branch, and an MBA from University of Houston Clear Lake, is a proud Fellow of the National Conservation Leadership Institute, and is a certified Project Management Professional. Elsa enjoys spending time outdoors diving, hiking, kayaking, and fishing with the love of her life, Tony, to whom she has been married 25+ years.



Dr. Tania Homayoun

Tania is a Texas Nature Tracker Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Through Texas Nature Trackers, she engages naturalists of all interests and ability levels in collecting citizen science and crowd-sourced data on Texas' unique flora and fauna with a particular focus on species of greatest conservation need. Previously, Tania worked for Audubon Texas, with the Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center and later the Conservation Science Team as its Urban Conservation Program Manager where she worked to develop and deliver conservation plans, educational programs/trainings, and activities supporting biodiversity and sustainable communities. Tania holds bachelor's degrees in Ecology/Evolution/Conservation Biology and Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin and a Doctor of Philosophy in Conservation Biology from the University of Minnesota, where she studied the impacts of urbanization on landbird communities. She is an avid birder and always has room for one more native plant in her patio garden.



David Jones

David is the Founder of the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association. It is rare that someone can take a “tragedy” as an opportunity to change their life and help others. That is exactly what David did. His injury became a personal commitment to help others. In 1988, David was shot in a hunting accident, resulting in a serious head injury that left him with permanent paralysis of his left leg, limited mobility and no use of his left hand. David used a wheelchair for one year and gradually increased his mobility to the point where he could walk with a walker and now walks with a slight limp without any device. He remains paralyzed in one arm. In the process of his rehabilitation, he became aware of the importance of recreation for rehabilitation – not only to improve mobility but to improve mental well-being. David saw this event in his life as a challenge and an opportunity to assist others. This life-changing event developed into his personal crusade. David went back to school and received his Bachelor of Science in marketing from Florida State University. David overcame the challenge of his disability utilizing sports for himself and others by forming the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association in 1990. This organization came out of the positive experience David had from using sports and recreation for his own rehabilitation.



Sarah Kendrick

Sarah is a Missouri native who earned a master’s degree in fisheries and wildlife from the University of Missouri, focused on eastern wood-pewee breeding demography and winter bird populations in the Missouri Ozarks. Sarah performed avian survey data analysis for publication after graduation and worked with the Missouri Department of Conservation as an outreach and regulations coordinator. While in this position, Sarah was given freedom to integrate her passion for birds into her work, so she worked to develop a statewide birding trail. After partnering with a nonprofit, the Great Missouri Birding Trail was officially launched two years later. Sarah accepted the state ornithologist position in March 2017 and is continuing to grow the Great Missouri Birding Trail and expand birder outreach efforts to recruit birders with an emphasis on youth.



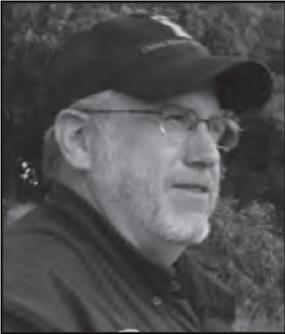
Carrie McClelland

Growing up in the suburbs of Toronto, Carrie developed a love of nature by spending summer days building tree-forts in the local urban park. She was then drawn to northern Ontario where she attended Lakehead University and received an Honours Bachelor of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism, then a Master of Environmental Studies in Nature-based Recreation and Tourism. In 2007, research for graduate school took her even farther north to Whitehorse, Yukon, and she forgot to leave. Carrie has been working for Yukon government’s Wildlife Viewing Program since 2009. Staff work directly with biologists to engage and inspire people to learn more about Yukon’s wildlife. In her spare time, you can find her figure skating, canoeing, rock or ice climbing, curling or taking on more wood-working projects that never get finished.



Jeff Meyers

Jeff grew up in western Massachusetts but has been a resident of Arizona for more than 25 years, where he attended Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University for his undergraduate and graduate degrees, respectively. It was during his undergraduate work studying physical anthropology, and while attending a field school in South Africa, that he realized his true passion was with mammalian carnivores and not members of the Hominini. He then went on to earn his master's in quaternary sciences with a primary focus on the taxonomic validity of a Pleistocene marten (Mustelidae) using geometric morphometric analyses. After spending several years teaching earth science, he left the sciences for more than half a decade to work as the Director of Intellectual Property for a medical device company. Returning to his passion, Jeff is now a wildlife biologist for the Arizona Game & Fish Department, managing the Watchable Wildlife Program, and enjoys working to educate the public about wildlife and habitat conservation. He oversees a multifaceted program that engages the public through a statewide lecture series, hosting public field events and activities that range from bat netting to bighorn sheep viewing aboard pontoon boats, and a series of live streaming wildlife cams.



Brett Mosley

As Co-director of the Texas Tech Outdoor Learning Center, Brett is committed to getting children excited, engaged and reconnected to the natural world around them. The Outdoor Learning Center, within the Texas Tech Llano River Field Station in Junction, Texas, provides him with the perfect environment to teach students and educators alike the nature-oriented concepts lacking in many science classrooms. His professional interests involve getting more students and teachers excited and involved in the outdoor experience, raising the environmental IQ of his students, and working to reverse the symptoms of Nature-Deficit Disorder found in our younger generation. His hobbies include fishing local rivers, hiking and generally being outdoors. Brett has a Bachelor of Science in Multidisciplinary Science from the University of Texas at San Antonio and has taught middle and high school science.



Brian Moyer

Brian currently serves as the Assistant Director of Outreach with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Prior to this position he served as the Recreation Program Manager where he was responsible for managing Virginia's watchable wildlife program, public access opportunities for hunting and fishing, Virginia's statewide Birding and Wildlife Trail, and outreach efforts to promote hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing. Brian has an undergraduate degree from Liberty University in biology and an master's from Murray State University in wildlife management.



Megan O'Reilly

Megan received her master's degree in fish and wildlife management in 2012 from Montana State University where she devised methods for conducting occupancy surveys for mountain ungulates. Megan has worked in various parts of Montana, Antarctica and Africa. She is currently a wildlife biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Billings, Montana. In addition to repeated survey work, she thoroughly enjoys reaching out to educate the community about local wildlife species and more.



Michelle Pasawicz

Michelle is the Manatee Rules Coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Much of her work involves establishing regulatory protections, engaging stakeholders, community outreach, and data analyses primarily focused on the conservation of Florida's State Marine Mammal. Michelle grew up in urban New Jersey where she dreamed of one day migrating south and protecting wildlife in a tropical and coastal environment. She took a pit-stop in Delaware for a dual-degree in Pre-Veterinary Medicine and Wildlife Ecology and then continued on her mission to the Sunshine State. Michelle then received a Master of Science in Marine Biology from Nova Southeastern University and worked for several years in sea turtle conservation and research prior to joining FWC.



Paige Pearson

Paige is currently the Marketing and Public Relations Manager for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Included in her responsibilities for DGIF Paige oversees all internal and external communications; digital and print advertising and marketing; social media; videography; photography; Virginia Wildlife Magazine and Calendar; hunting, fishing, boating and waterfowl regulations; and events. Paige also served as the lead contact for the agency rebranding in 2017. Prior to her current position, Paige served as the Community Relations Manager for Kalkomey, Inc. Kalkomey is the prime vendor for state fish and wildlife agencies online education out of Dallas, Texas. Before she made the move to online education and software, she served as the Director of Communications and Operations for the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports, a coalition of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Washington, D.C. She worked for Gannett Healthcare Group, a subsidiary of Gannett, Inc. in multiple roles such as Online Content Manager, Online Account Manager and Social Media Manager. Paige hails from Raleigh, North Carolina but spent her college years in Wilmington, attending the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. She enjoys traveling the world, being on the water and spending time with friends and family.



Alix Pedraza

Alix serves as the Diversity Outreach Manager for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. She holds an Associate Degree in Wildlife Management and a Bachelor of Science in Biology. Originally from Colombia, South America, Alix facilitates SCDNR communication and education initiatives that connect Spanish-speaking and African-American communities to natural resources information, public events, opportunities and advisories. Alix was honored by The Wildlife Society, receiving the 2016 Diversity Award for her invaluable contributions to South Carolina's Hispanic outreach efforts, and by the Association for Conservation Information with the 2018 Education Award for her program "Caminatas Ecológicas."



Miles Phillips

Miles is on the extension faculty of the Tourism and Business Development College with Oregon State University and Oregon Sea Grant. He is in the OSU College of Business and currently works in supporting tourism with the "triple bottom line" along the coast of Oregon.

He combines the many facets of the tourism industry to bring visitors to the southern Oregon Coast to improve the economy and to promote conservation of its natural resources. He previously worked for the Texas A&M University Extension where he created a cohesive and sustainable tourism program.



Shelly Plante

Shelly is the Nature Tourism Manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, working in the Marketing Group. She believes community-based conservation, education and partnerships are critical to the future of our natural resources and works throughout Texas to connect people to the outdoors through birding, paddling and other forms of nature tourism. Shelly has coordinated the annual Great Texas Birding Classic for more than 20 years, and she coordinates and helped develop the statewide Texas Paddling Trails Program. She markets and promotes state parks and works with private landowners and communities on nature tourism development. Shelly also became an adjunct professor and lecturer at Texas State University in 2013, teaching Planning and Development of Nature and Heritage Tourism. She holds a Master of Applied Geography with a focus on Nature and Heritage Tourism from Texas State University and a Bachelor of Art in Plan II/Geography from the University of Texas-Austin.



Melody Plumley

Melody is Co-director of Texas Tech Outdoor Learning Center at Texas Tech Llano River Field Station in Junction, Texas. She has been in the education field 17 years and enjoys teaching students about their natural environment. Melody is committed to engaging students to learn in an outdoor setting and fostering a love and connection to nature while working at Texas Tech Outdoor Learning. She holds a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in Reading from Sul Ross State University.



Liz Schold

Liz is the coordinator of the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, where she promotes and facilitates birding and wildlife viewing activities and education across the state. She has earned a bachelor's degree in evolutionary biology from Harvard University and a master's degree in biology from Virginia Commonwealth University. Liz has been working in ornithological research for nearly a decade on topics ranging from phylogenetics to behavioral ecology but her passion has always been educating others about science and conservation. She is always seeking new opportunities to connect people with the natural world and foster the next generation of environmental advocates.



Chris Snyder

Chris has been the Director of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's Marine Education Center since September of 2009. Chris previously held the positions of Public Information Officer for GCRL, Co-director of GCRL's Summer Field Program, and Marine Education and Media Specialist at the Marine Education Center. During his career, he has developed and implemented conservation and resource protections regulations, conducted public information programs, produced media products, and managed innovative hands-on educational programs focused on Mississippi's coastal habitats and the animals that call them home. Most recently, Chris has been directly involved with the development and rebuilding of the Marine Education Center at the Laboratory's Cedar Point site. The MEC reached over 9,000 students, teachers and residents with hands-on experiential STEM-based educational programs.



Bill Taddicken

Bill is director of Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary and has a degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He, his wife, Autumn, and daughter, Aurora, live on Rowe Sanctuary. Bill and Autumn have had the pleasure of raising their daughter amidst America's greatest migration, and the influence of volunteers and visitors from around the world. Bill has worked at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary for the past 20 years. While at Rowe Sanctuary his prior duties included; Temporary Crane Season Coordinator, Director of Conservation and Assistant Director. Bill now oversees all the operations on the 2,400-acre Sanctuary and has worked extensively on conservation of the Platte River for sandhill cranes, whooping cranes and other wildlife while at Audubon.



Matt Wallace

Matt is co-leader of the Lake Flato’s Eco-Conservation studio, which fulfills his passion for championing projects that encourage environmental stewardship. He studied under Pritzker Prize Laureate Glenn Murcutt, who taught him the importance of sustainable practices. Since acquiring this philosophy, Matt has implemented it in a number of projects ranging in scale and locale, from the northern landscapes of Montana and Illinois to the arid deserts of Arizona and Texas, all while respecting each region’s climate and context. Matt, an outdoor recreation enthusiast, is passionate about water resource conservation. He can be found along the San Antonio River every day promoting environmental education, stewardship and sustainability.



Kimberly Winter

Kimberly is the NatureWatch National Program Manager for the U.S. Forest Service in Washington, D.C. She earned a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology and Management and a master’s degree in Ecological Anthropology from the University of Georgia and has dedicated her career to engaging diverse audiences with the wonders of nature. Kim seeks ways to bring conservation and stewardship home by developing and promoting new programs like freshwater snorkeling; special celebrations like Bat Week and Pollinator Week; and through media such as wildlife critter cams, story maps, and youth-engagement apps. Kim spends as much time as possible outdoors and traveling internationally with her daughter.

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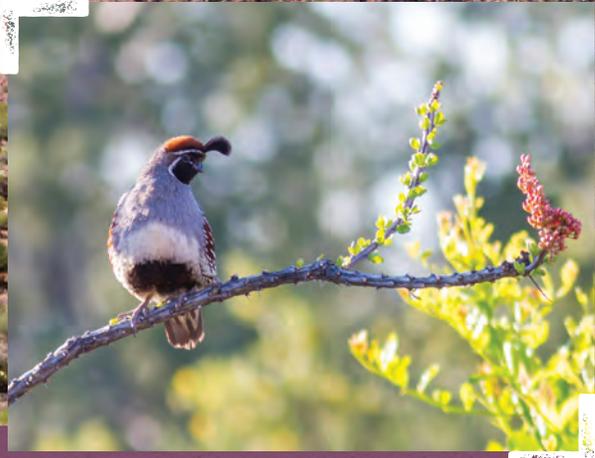
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