

45th Annual Gopher Tortoise Council Meeting

November 17-19, 2023

University of Georgia Conference Center

15 RDC Rd.

Tifton, GA



Friday, Nov 17 *Denotes presenter; † Student Award Presentation

- 8:30-10:00 am *Registration, Sign in Silent Auction Items (UGA Conference Center, West Corridor)*
- 10:00-10:20 am **Welcome & Meeting Logistics.** Matt Elliott, GTC Co-Chair, Georgia DNR
- 10:20-10:50 am **Keynote Presentation: Thirty-five Years with Tortoises - The Short Version.** Lora Smith
- 10:50-11:10 am **Foraging Ecology of Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) within Boyd Hill Nature Preserve, St. Petersburg, Florida, USA.** Celina Ceballos*† and Jeff Goessling
- 11:10-11:30 am **Gopher Tortoise Nest-site Selection at Burrows and the Effects of Nest Environment on Hatching Success.** Garrett R. Lawson*†, Elizabeth A. Hunter, Lora L. Smith
- 11:30-11:50 am **The Influence of Soil Texture and Vegetation Structure on Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) Burrow Characteristics and Burrow Site Selection.** McKayla C. Susen*†, Steven B. Castleberry, Daniel Markewitz, Lora L. Smith
- 11:50 am-1:50 pm **Lunch** (on your own)
- 1:50-2:00 pm **Announcements**
- 2:00-2:20 pm **Experimental Effects of Wind Disturbance: Vertebrate Use of Pine Treefalls.** Jennifer M. Howze*, Jeffery B. Cannon, and Lora L. Smith
- 2:20-2:40 pm **The Prevalence of Lead in Florida Chelonians.** Kim Titterington*
- 2:40-3:00 pm **Seeing Blue: Seven Years of Eastern Indigo Snake Reintroductions in the Florida Panhandle.** Bradley O'Hanlon*, James Bogan, Michelle Hoffman, Michele Elmore, David Steen, Catherine Ricketts, Richard Barker, and David Printiss
- 3:00-3:20 pm **The Other Gopher: Summary of the Gopher Frog Headstarting Program in Georgia.** Vanessa Lane*
- 3:30-5:30 pm **Poster Session** (UGA Conference Center, West Corridor hallway)
- 5:30-9:00 pm **Social and Dinner** at ABAC Georgia Museum of Agriculture, East-West Conference Room & Atrium, 1392 Whiddon Mill Rd., Tifton, GA. Catering by Taqueria Hermanos Chavez.

Saturday, Nov 18

7:30-9:00 am *Registration, Sign in Silent Auction Items (UGA Conference Center, West Corridor)*

9:00-9:10 am **Announcements**

9:10-9:30 am **Techniques for Measuring Successional Vegetation Changes Following Introduction of Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) onto Reclaimed Mine Lands.** Joshua C. Billings, Kimberly M. Andrews, Oscar P. Thompson*, and James Renner

9:30-9:50 am **Groundcover Restoration on Public Lands in Florida - Time and Money.** Cyndi A. Gates*

9:50-10:10 am **Gopher Tortoises and Ecological Restoration at Alapaha River WMA.** Daniel Sollenberger* and Matt Elliott.

10:10-10:30 am **Candidate Conservation Agreement Update** (tentative)

10:30-10:40 am **Break**

Special Session on Gopher Tortoise Translocation

10:40-11:00 am **Where Did They Come From, Where Did They Go? Twelve Years of Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) Translocation in Florida.** Neal Halstead*, Eric Sievers, Nicole Kidd, Alex Nico, Julissa Ocampo

11:00-11:20 am **Mitigation Translocation of Gopher Tortoises in Florida: Spatial Ecology and Population Monitoring.** Max D. Jones*, Kevin J. Loope, Vivian Porter, Danielle K. Walkup, Wade A. Ryberg, Toby J. Hibbitts, and Elizabeth A. Hunter

11:20-11:40 am **Survival and Reproduction in Translocated Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*): Region-of-origin Effects and Outbreeding Depression.** Kevin J. Loope*, J. Nicole DeSha, Rebecca A. Cozad, Derek B. Breakfield, Matthew J. Aresco, Kevin T. Shoemaker, and Elizabeth A. Hunter

11:40 am-12:00 pm **Testing Population Consolidation and Headstarting to Restore a Non-viable Population of Gopher Tortoises.** Jeffrey M. Goessling*, Ericha Shelton-Nix, Micheal L. Hilton, and Craig Guyer

12:00-1:30 pm **Lunch** (on your own)

1:30-3:00 pm **GTC Business Meeting**

3:00-4:00 pm **Pick up and pay for Silent Auction Items**
Committee business (as needed)

5:00-9:00 pm **Awards Dinner** at ABAC Georgia Museum of Agriculture Atrium, 1392 Whiddon Mill Rd., Tifton, GA. Catering by 3 Beards BBQ.

Sunday, Nov 19

8:00 am-12:00 pm

FIELD TRIPS: Alapaha WMA and Doerun Pitcher Plant Bog (Details to be provided at the meeting)