

46th Annual Gopher Tortoise Council Meeting

November 15-17, 2024

Eckerd College, 4200 54th Avenue S, St. Petersburg, FL 33711

Conference Center, Heron I and Heron II



Friday, Nov. 15

- 8:30-10:00 am *Registration (Lobby), Sign in Silent Auction Items (Pelican Room)*
- 10:00-10:10 am **Welcome & Meeting Logistics.** Eric Sievers, GTC Co-Chair, Wildlands Conservation
- 10:10-10:20 am **Brief introduction to the Gopher Tortoise Council** Kim Sash* and Michelina Dziadzio
- 10:20-11:20 am **Keynote Presentation: Biology and Conservation of Florida Turtles.** Peter Meylan, Emeritus Professor Eckerd College
- 11:20-11:40 am **Gopher tortoise movement and burrow selection in endangered scrub habitat in southwest Florida** Victoria Carter *[§] and Phil Allman
- 11:40-12:00 am **Assessing the reproductive ecology of the federally threatened gopher tortoise in Louisiana** Emily Mailhos*[§], Daniel U. Greene, Keri L. Lejeune, and Rachel Wallace Clostio
- 12:00-12:20 pm **Gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) along Florida's roads: Monitoring, mortality, and management** Eli McEuen*[§], J. Sean Doody, and George L. Heinrich
- 12:20 pm-1:30 pm **Lunch** (on your own or ordered during registration)
- 1:30-1:40 pm **Announcements**
- 1:40-2:10 pm **Introducing the Desert Tortoise Council with a Focus on the Ecosystems Advisory Committee.** Ed LaRue
- 2:10-2:30 pm **Gopher tortoise nest-site selection at burrows and the influence of nest environment on hatching success** Garrett R. Lawson*[§], Elizabeth A. Hunter, and Lora L. Smith
- 2:30-2:50 pm **'Scaling up' our understanding of ophidiomycosis: Urbanization, distribution, and novel hosts in southeastern snake populations** Shivam Shukla*[§], J. Sean Doody, Zachary Gray, Ashby Barbee, and Michael Shamblott
- 2:50-3:10 pm **Longleaf pine restoration, habitat management, and pathogen prevalence: Insights into upland squamate ecology in William B. Bankhead National Forest** Sam Robinson*[§], Donald M. Walker, Allison Cochran, and William B. Sutton
- 3:10-3:30 pm **Evaluating gopher tortoise behavior in southeast Florida** Charles Thériault*[§] and Evelyn Frazier
- 4:30-6:00 pm **Poster Session** (Boyd Hill Nature Preserve Visitor Center)
- 6:00-9:00 pm **Social and Dinner** at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve Visitor Center, 1101 Country Club Ways S., St. Petersburg, FL 33712

*Denotes presenter; [§] Student Award Presentation

Saturday, Nov. 16

7:30-9:00 am *Registration, Sign in Silent Auction Items (Pelican Room)*

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

Special Session – Hidden Networks: Disease Ecology of Gopher Tortoises and their Commensals

9:10-9:25 am **Collaborative gopher tortoise disease research within FWC Wildlife Health**
Rebecca Hardman*

9:25-9:40 am **Pathogen prevalence in gopher tortoises in the Red Hills** Deanna Riente*[§], Kim Sash, Rebecca Hardman, and Marcus Lashley

9:40-9:55 am **Analysis of the relationship between soft ticks (*Ornithodoros turicata*) living in gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) burrows and wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*) in Florida: Implications for African Swine Fever Virus introduction to the United States** Nicholas Canino*[§], Sebastian Botero-Cañola, Carson Torhorst, Lorenza Beati, Kathleen O'Hara, Angela James, Samantha M. Wisely

9:55-10:10 am ***Culex erraticus* (Diptera: Culicidae) utilizes gopher tortoise burrows for overwintering in North Central Florida** Timothy Daniel McNamara, Mba Mosore, Alex Urlaub, Markus Lashley, Nathan Burkett Cadena Larry Reeves, and Estelle Martin*

10:10-10:25 am **Special Session Panel Q & A**

10:25-10:40 am **Break**

10:40-11:00 am **WILD – CAM: Wildlife investigation landscape diversity using cameras around Miami** Emily M. Sanchez*, Kinga L. Brihamma*, Imani Douglas, Luke O. Poessy, Lucas Medina, Evelyn Garcia, Jason Lois, Gloria Binett, and Daniel A. Valle

11:00-11:20 am **Down the regulatory tortoise burrow: History and future of federal listing for gopher tortoises**
Elise Pautler Bennett* and Matthew J. Aresco

11:20-11:40 am **Conserving gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) populations on small public lands in urbanized central Florida** George L. Heinrich*, Jeffrey M. Goessling, and J. Sean Doody

11:40 am-12:00 pm **Demography of a coyote (*Canis latrans*)-induced mass mortality event of gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*)** Jeffrey M. Goessling* and George L. Heinrich

12:00-1:10 pm **Lunch** (on your own or ordered during registration)

1:10-1:30 pm **Habitat and body size effects on long-term space use of female gopher tortoises**
Rachel B. Fedders* and Betsie B. Rothermel

1:30-1:50 pm **A collaborative approach to save gopher tortoise habitat: A case study from the South Carolina sandhills** Peter Kleinhenz*

1:50-2:10 pm **Using gopher tortoise monitoring data to inform habitat restoration and translocations**
Lora L. Smith*, Colin P. Shea, Michelina C. Dziadzio, Jennifer M. Howze, Kyle Brown, and Katherine Richardson

*Denotes presenter; [§] Student Award Presentation

- 2:10-2:30 pm **Gopher tortoise nesting decisions and outcomes across the latitudinal range and implications for climate change** Elizabeth A. Hunter*, Kevin J. Loope, J. Nicole DeSha, Betsie B. Rothermel, Lora L. Smith, David C. Rostal, Alicia G. Arneson, and Kevin T. Shoemaker
- 2:30-2:50 pm **How does translocation affect the reproductive rate of female gopher tortoises?** Kevin J. Loope*, Derek B. Breakfield, Rebecca A. Cozad, Matthew J. Aresco, Kevin T. Shoemaker, J. Nicole DeSha, Joan Diemer Berish, David C. Rostal, Betsie B. Rothermel, Richard A. Seigel, and Elizabeth A. Hunter
- 2:50-3:10 pm **Vertical lead transmission in gopher tortoises** Kim Titterington*
- 3:10-4:00 pm **GTC Business Meeting**
- 4:00-4:30 pm **Pick up and pay for Silent Auction Items**
Committee business (as needed)
- 5:00-9:00 pm **Awards Dinner** at Tampa Bay Watch, 3000 Pinellas Bayway S., Tierra Verde, FL 33715

Sunday, Nov. 17

- 8:00 am **FIELD TRIPS:**
- **Boyd Hill Nature Preserve** (Details to be provided at meeting)
 - **Egmont Key** (Details to be provided at meeting)

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