

2026 JOINT ANNUAL MEETING



THE ALABAMA AND GEORGIA CHAPTERS OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Shared Science, Shared Landscapes: Advancing Conservation in Georgia and Alabama

**Chattahoochee Valley Community College
Phenix City, AL**

FEBRUARY 18-20, 2026

*****all times are listed in Eastern time*****

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Wednesday, February 18

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 10:00 – 10:50 AM | Registration |
| 10:50 - 11:00 AM | Welcome and Instructions
Mark Bailey, Alabama TWS President
Michel Kohl, Georgia TWS President |
| 11:00 – 11:20 AM | State Agency Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chris Lewis, Director, Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division
Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources• Chris Harper, Director, Wildlife Resources Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources |
| 11:20 – 12:20 PM | KEYNOTE
Carpe Diem: Our Conservation Legacy
Jimmy Bullock, Resource Management Service |
| 12:20 – 1:20 PM | BREAK - LUNCH ON YOUR OWN |
| 1:20 – 1:35 PM | Supportive but Skeptical: Hunter Perceptions of Wild Pig Eradication Efforts on Blackbeard Island NWR
Travis Stoakley, University of Georgia |
| 1:35 – 1:50 PM | An Undergraduate Course to Engage Non-wildlife Biologists in Conservation
Robert Hampton, Emory University |
| 1:50 – 2:05 PM | Temporal Shifts in Northern Bobwhite Distributions Across Alabama's Wildlife Management Areas: Multi-scale Habitat Drivers of Persistence
Lucas Parvin, Auburn University |
| 2:05 – 2:20 PM | Novel Use and Optimization of an Automated Tracking Grid in a Terrestrial System
Michael Brennan, University of Georgia |
| 2:20 – 2:45 PM | Poster Session - Day 1 (see last page for all presentation titles & authors) |

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Wednesday, February 18 (continued)

2:45 – 3:15 PM

INVITED SPEAKER

The Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership: Celebrating 15 Years of Conservation Collaboration along the Fall Line

LuAnn Craighton, The Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership

3:15 – 3:45 PM

LIGHTNING ROUND TALKS

1. Bias in Occupancy Estimation from Species Movement and Observer Learning

Kevin Shaw, The University of Alabama

3. Examining the Relationship Between Wild Pigs and Animal Species Richness

Dennasia Bellamy, University of West Georgia

4. Determining Mesopredator Monitoring Efficacy Using Occupancy Models

Lexie Dingerson, University of Georgia

3:45 – 4:00 PM

Georgia's 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan: Species, Conservation Actions, and Partnerships for Success

Trina Morris, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

4:00 – 4:15 PM

Changes in Avian Community Composition Across Longleaf Pine Seral Stages in William B. Bankhead National Forest

Kern Freesland, Alabama A&M University

4:15 – 4:30 PM

Conspecific Attraction as a Wildlife Management Tool for Increasing Alabama's Northern Bobwhite Populations

Kylie Blake, Auburn University

4:30 PM

Day End Wrap-up

Mark Bailey, Alabama TWS President

Michel Kohl, Georgia TWS President

6:00 PM

Networking & Welcome Social

@ Chattabrewchee Southern Brewhouse

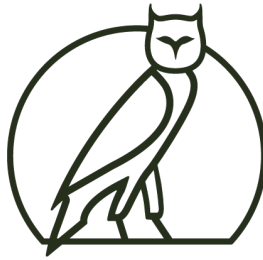
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Thursday, February 19

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 8:30 – 9:00 AM | Registration |
| 9:00 – 9:15 AM | Welcome and Instructions
Mark Bailey, Alabama TWS President
Michel Kohl, Georgia TWS President |
| 9:15 – 9:45 AM | INVITED SPEAKER
More Than Manuscripts and Meetings: How Can The Wildlife Society Benefit All Wildlifers?
Mike Conner, The Jones Center and Vice president of The Wildlife Society |
| 9:45 – 10:00 AM | Conservation Opportunity Areas and Multistate Corridors
Matt Elliott, Georgia Department of Natural Resources |
| 10:00 – 10:15 AM | Prevalence of <i>Leptospira</i> spp. in Mesocarnivores from North Carolina
Adam Rose, University of Georgia |
| 10:15 – 10:20 AM | Ecosystem Services and Habitat Quality: Tradeoffs and Synergies under Management Strategies Across Southeastern United States
Hazhir Karimi, The University of Alabama |
| 10:30 – 11:15 AM | Poster Session - Day 2 (see last page for all presentation titles & authors) |
| 11:15 – 11:30 AM | Detection and Molecular Characterization of <i>Ursicoptes americanus</i> in Georgia, USA Black Bears (<i>Ursus americanus</i>): Clinical Presentations, Prevalence, and Phylogenetic Pnalysis
Jillian Broadhurst, University of Georgia |
| 11:30 – 11:45 AM | Using Habitat Suitability Models to Refine Conservation Priority Areas for Alabama's State Wildlife Action Plan
Katelyn Lawson, Auburn University |
| 11:45 – 12:00 PM | Stopover Ecology of Fall Migratory Birds at Chapman Mountain Nature Preserve of North Alabama
Kira Williams, Alabama A&M University |
| 12:00 – 1:30 PM | LUNCH - PROVIDED |

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Thursday, February 19 (continued)

1:30 – 2:00 PM

INVITED SPEAKER

Reflections on Nearly Forty Years of Conservation Work with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Lessons Learned and Applications

Chuck Hunter, Southeastern Grasslands Institute

2:00 – 2:25 PM

LIGHTNING ROUND TALKS

1. **Validation of Automated Bird Classification Software in an Urban Environment**
Reese Brown, University of Georgia
2. **Vertebrate Diversity Within and Near Streamside Management Zones in Private Working Forest Landscapes**
Roxanne Pourshoushtari, University of Georgia
3. **Lost No More: Current and Future efforts to Conserve the Flattened Musk Turtle, *Sternotherus depressus***
Seamus O'Brien, Auburn University
4. **Anthropogenic and Ecological Drivers of African Lion and Spotted Hyena Habitat Selection in Etosha National Park, Namibia**
Jessy Patterson, University of Georgia

2:25 – 2:40 PM

Population Ecology of Eastern Chicken Turtles (*Deirochelys reticularia reticularia*) in the Conecuh National Forest

Andrew Coleman, Samford University

2:40 – 2:55 PM

Investigating Habitat Influences on Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) Occupancy Rates for Breeding and Non-breeding Seasons

Blake Rainwater, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

2:55 – 3:15 PM

BREAK

3:15 – 3:30 PM

Use of PIT Tagging to Monitor a Reintroduced Red-cockaded Woodpecker Population

Domonique Hill, University of West Georgia

3:30 – 3:45 PM

Evaluating Effects of Sampling Duration on Small Mammal Diversity Estimates in Southeastern Forests

Darcey Gans, Auburn University*

3:45 – 4:00 PM

Individual Identification of Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) Through Noninvasive Genetic Sampling

Caitlin Jackson, University of Georgia

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Members Meeting

Updates from AL & GA Chapters - all encouraged to attend

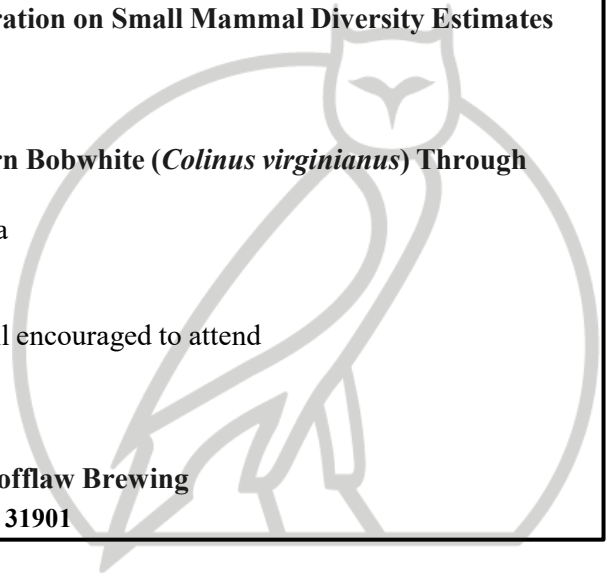
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Silent Auction Ends

6:00 PM

Networking & Awards Social @ Scofflaw Brewing

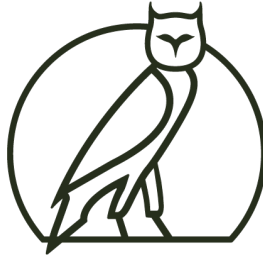
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Friday, February 20

LANDOWNERS & LONGLEAF

10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. ET (9:00 – 12:00 CT) | Sehoy Plantation, Hurtsboro, AL

No participant limit

Sehoy, just south of Hurtsboro, Alabama, is one of the oldest and best-known quail hunting properties in the state. Land management favors not only Northern Bobwhites but also Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman's Sparrows, and other species of conservation concern. Participants will tour the property with the land manager and discuss wildlife management strategies as well as Sehoy's history.

CONSERVATION ALONG THE CHATTAHOOCHEE FALL LINE

8:30 A.M. – 12:30 P.M. ET | Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA, Marion Co., GA

Limit: 20 participants

Many conservation partners including The Nature Conservancy, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and Georgia Forestry Commission are working collaboratively around Fort Benning on both public and private land to create a buffer of well-managed conservation lands near the boundary of the Installation. The buffer helps sustain the military mission of Fort Benning, creates a landscape-scale conservation corridor, and advances the restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem. During this field trip you'll meet the partners involved in this diverse work and discover more about the land protection, prescribed fire, forestry, rare-species, wildlife management, habitat restoration, and private landowner outreach projects underway.

FISHERIES TECHNIQUES

9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. ET | Rotary Park (Bulldog Boat Launch), Columbus, GA

Limit: 15 participants

Electrofishing is a common technique used by fisheries biologists to sample freshwater fish populations to assess species composition, size structure, and detect invasive species. During this field trip, you'll learn about electrofishing gear, the science behind using electricity for sampling, participate in a survey, and learn to identify common species. You'll also take part in an otolith extraction lab to learn how to age fish. Otoliths or "ear stones" are small, calcified structures in a fish's inner ear that aid in balance and hearing. Their visible growth rings make them one of the most reliable tools for determining a fish's age.

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Poster Presentations

A Mouse on the Edge: What We Know About Alabama Beach Mouse Habitat

Sinka Khadijah Abubakar, Auburn University

Understanding Impacts of Landscape Fragmentation on Grasslands Using Citizen Science Tools

Cassandra Bell, The University of Alabama

Comparing Species Diversity Across Atlanta and Athens, Georgia

Reese Brown, University of Georgia

Leptospira in White-tailed Deer: Evaluating Historical Trends in Exposure

Kira L Buford-Rucker, University of Georgia

Backyard Birds and Disease: Investigating Pathogen Transmission at the Human-Wildlife Interface in Central Alabama

Alex Fisher, Auburn University

Species Distribution Modeling of Invasive Wild Pig Populations in Current Southeastern United States Climates

Alison Garland, University of Georgia

Multi-Method Herpetofaunal Surveys Reveal Habitat Associations Across Contrasting Alabama Forest Sites

Todd A. Griffith, Auburn University

Patterns of Bat Activity Across Heterogeneous Habitats: Implications for Management on Public Lands

Justin Hall, Auburn University.

Night Moves: Measuring Diel Activity Patterns of Mammals in Three Growing Urban Areas in the Southeastern U.S.

Indiana L. Hawkins, University of North Georgia

The Eagle-Killer 30 Years Later: Recent Developments and Future Directions for Vacuolar Myelinopathy Research

Tobias Haymes, University of Georgia

Caught in the Drift: Detecting Rare Small Mammals in Georgia with AHDriFT Camera Systems

Samuel Holst, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Managing an Endangered Bird Through Socially Facilitated Habitat Selection Could Create an Ecological Trap

Willow Kay, Auburn University

Occupancy Patterns of Red Squirrels in Georgia's Blue Ridge Ecoregion

Emmie Lucas, University of West Georgia

Modeling Infectious Hematopoietic Necrosis Virus Movement and Heterogeneity in Susceptibility in Pacific Salmonids

Annabelle Majerus, The University of Alabama

Short-Term Effects of Mechanical Mulching on Snake Communities in Alabama

Hannah Mayo, Auburn University

Temporal Trends in Body Weight and Kidney Fat index of White-tailed Deer in the Southeast

Ella Owen, University of Georgia

Exploring Familiarity With Genetic Data and Perceptions of Its Use in Wildlife Conservation

Andrea Miranda Paez, Auburn University

Feature-based Camera Trap Placement: Influence of Microsite Characteristics on Detection Rates in a Multi-species Camera Trap Study

Austin Pomeroy, Auburn University

Comparing Methods for Estimating Abundance of White-tailed Deer on Blackbeard Island, GA

Sarah Shayeb, University of Georgia

The Case for Range-wide Protections for Gopher Tortoise Burrows

Lora Smith, Jones Center at Ichauway and the Gopher Tortoise Council

Species Richness and the Prevalence of Disease in Avian Communities

Grace Southerland, Auburn University

Establishment of a Snake Mark-Recapture Study in the Alabama Piedmont to Assess Forest Management

Caroline Yarbrough, Auburn University

