

# Under the Dock

MARCH-APRIL 2026



Newsletter of the Georgia Chapter of the  
American Fisheries Society

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## **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the American Fisheries Society and the Georgia Chapter is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals.

# GEORGIA AFS 2026-27 OFFICERS/EXCOM



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# Mark Your Calendar

**March 21**

**CoastFest**  
Brunswick, GA



**April 28 - 30**

**ACF Water  
Conference**  
Albany, GA



**June 10 - 11**

**Pond Mgmt.  
Workshop**  
Athens, GA



**Aug. 30 - Sep 3**

**156th AFS  
Annual Meeting**  
Columbus, OH



**Oct. 26 - 30**

**SEAFWA 80th  
Annual Meeting**  
Nashville, TN



**March 4 - 7**

**SDAFS 2027**  
Alabama AFS Host  
Location TBD

Georgia AFS maintains a calendar on its [website](#)

# NEWS & UPDATES

## 2026 Georgia AFS Annual Meeting - Several Firsts

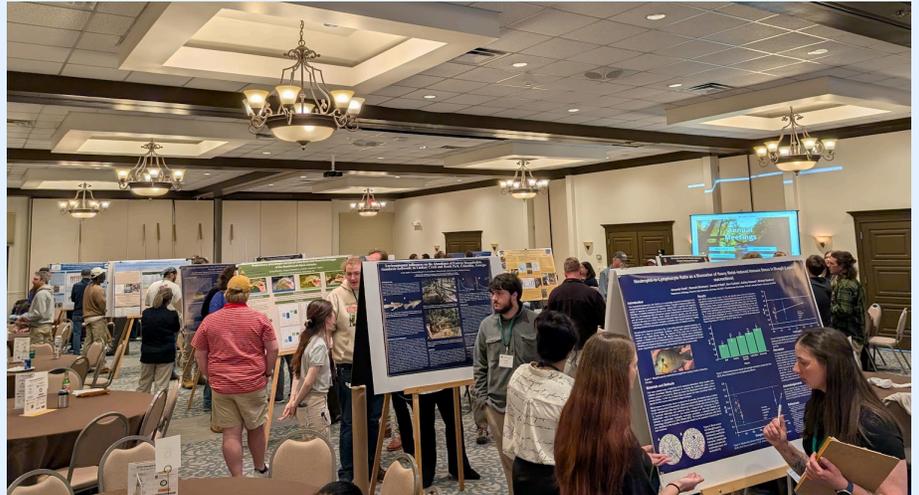


As the end of early-registration approached for the 2026 Georgia AFS annual meeting, there was a concern that we would exceed our seating capacity. We had 170 attendees for the 40<sup>th</sup> Georgia AFS annual meeting. This is the most people to ever attend a Georgia Chapter meeting when it was not a joint meeting with another organization.

## Other Georgia Chapter Firsts



First time to have 57 students attend the Chapter annual meeting  
(Pictured: students from Georgia Gwinnett College at Driftwood Beach)



This was the first time to have 28 student posters to judge during the Student Poster Social.

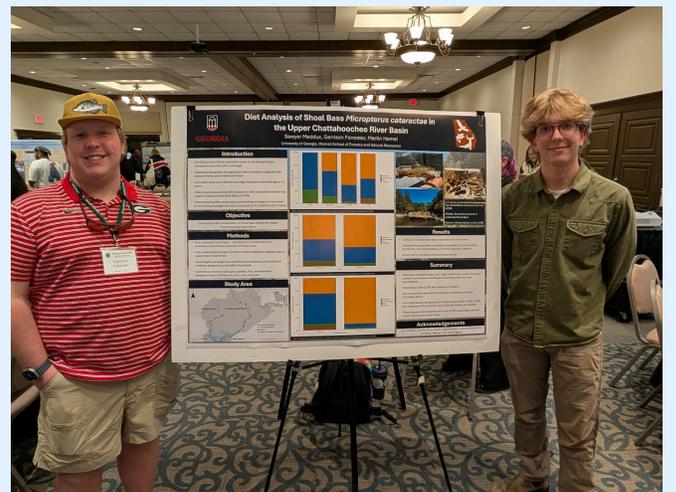
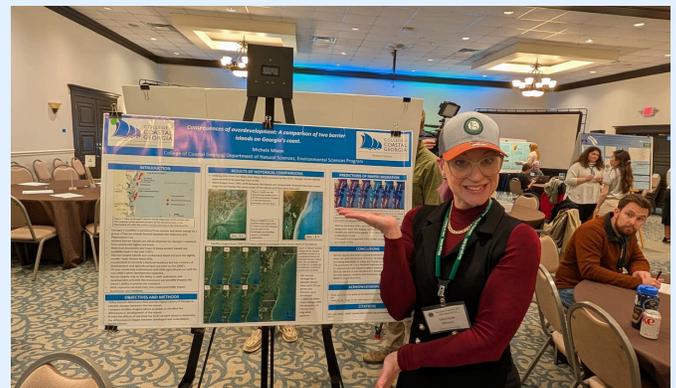


This year was our first experience with a news crew (WRBL News from Columbus) filming and conducting interviews with students regarding their research. The last time we had a news crew interview a few of our meeting participants was during the 2016 Columbus meeting.

# Georgia AFS 2026 Sponsors and Fundraiser Donors

Our sponsors play a critical role in advancing the quality and reach of our annual meeting. Their support enables us to offer meaningful networking opportunities while continuing to advance our mission. Because of their contributions, we can offset registration costs for college students who attend each year. This investment directly supports the next generation of professionals and strengthens their capacity to make a lasting, positive impact in the field.

Our chapter organizes an annual fundraiser during our yearly meeting to raise funds that support its mission. The proceeds from this fundraiser are allocated to various initiatives, including aquatic restoration projects, aquatic educational outreach programs, youth fishing events, and the professional development of fisheries scientists and students. This fundraiser plays a crucial role in advancing our chapter's mission and enabling us to make a positive impact in our community.



One way to support our sponsors and donors listed on the next two pages is to leave a comment on their social media platforms or hit the like button. (Some donations are from our members, which is why you do not see a logo.)

# 2026 Georgia AFS Sponsors

*Thank you for your Support!*

## Platinum



Georgia  
Power

## Gold



Warnell School of Forestry  
& Natural Resources  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



## Silver



Marine Extension and  
Georgia Sea Grant  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Sea Grant

EDWARDS-PITMAN



## Bronze



The Nature Conservancy



Lake Specialist



Kleinschmidt

In-Kind Donation

INSPIRE

# 2026 Georgia AFS Fundraiser Donors

*Thank you for your Support!*



Vera Bradley



# 2026 Georgia AFS Professional of the Year

## John Damer - Fisheries Management



It is our honor to recognize John Damer as the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society's Fisheries Professional of the Year in Fisheries Management. This award celebrates John's exceptional leadership, technical skill, and unwavering dedication to science-driven fisheries management within the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

John continues to excel as the lead for Georgia DNR's Coosa River Basin Lake Sturgeon Restoration Program, a role in which he has

demonstrated remarkable vision and coordination. Under his guidance into a strong, research-based recovery effort. He oversees propagation, annual stocking, and long-term monitoring, while also fostering productive partnerships with federal agencies, the University of Georgia, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and other state fish and wildlife organizations. These collaborations have strengthened both the scientific rigor and long-term viability of the restoration initiative.

John has also advanced lake sturgeon monitoring and management in meaningful ways. By refining sampling strategies—improving timing, methods, and site selection—he has increased capture efficiency for this challenging species. He developed a body-condition equation to better assess population health and helped implement a new production strategy emphasizing the stocking of larger fish to enhance survival. Additionally, he worked closely with the Summerville Hatchery Manager to conceptualize practical facility improvements that will boost operational efficiency.

Beyond sturgeon work, John successfully led Region Morone broodfish collection efforts, supporting statewide White Bass, Striped Bass, and Hybrid Striped Bass programs. His coordination of field crews and communication with hatchery staff have been exemplary. He also devoted significant effort to monitoring the Upper Coosa Basin striped bass population, providing data that directly informs stocking decisions and supports population recovery.

John's professional engagement has been equally impressive. He delivered presentations at the Southern Division AFS meeting and the WRD statewide meeting, and he served on several technical committees, including the Southeastern Lake Sturgeon Recovery Team, the Alabama Bass Working Group, and the MICRA Sturgeon/Paddlefish Committee. He also provided valuable field and technical support to UGA researchers.

Recognizing the importance of public involvement, John has prioritized outreach. He coordinates annual lake sturgeon release events for elementary students and contributed to 18 fisheries-related education programs this year, advancing Regional R3 goals.

For his leadership, service, and lasting contributions, we proudly honor John Damer as the 2025 Professional of the Year in Fisheries Management.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Professional of the Year

## Caroline Cooper - Runner-up Fisheries Management



It is our pleasure to recognize Caroline Cooper as the Runner-Up for the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society's Fisheries Professional of the Year in Fisheries Management, an honor that reflects her exceptional leadership, scientific expertise, and unwavering commitment to advancing fisheries conservation across Georgia. As a Fisheries Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Region Five, Caroline has distinguished herself through her professionalism, innovation, and dedication to improving aquatic resources and the communities that depend on them.

Caroline's commitment to professional growth is evident in her active engagement with regional and national fisheries networks. She attended the SEAFWA national meeting in Augusta, the Mid-Continent Warmwater Hatchery meeting in Iowa, and presented at the Tri-State Fisheries meeting with North and South Carolina. Her peers further recognized her leadership potential by nominating her as the 2026 President-Elect of the Georgia AFS Chapter, a testament to her statewide reputation and the confidence others place in her ability to guide the organization.

Her leadership extends deeply into her day-to-day work. At the Cordele State Fish Hatchery, Caroline has contributed to increased fish production through refined culture practices and innovative problem-solving, directly enhancing recreational fishing opportunities. As chair of the Bass Tournament Mortality Committee, she has coordinated stakeholders, analyzed complex data, and developed science-based strategies to reduce post-tournament mortality—efforts that have already improved fish health and angler awareness across the region.

Caroline is equally committed to education and outreach, participating in numerous public events to share fisheries science with students, anglers, partner agencies, and local communities. Her enthusiasm for conservation strengthens public understanding and inspires future fisheries professionals.

Her scientific contributions are substantial. She plays an active role in UGA's standardized sampling research using experimental gill nets, contributes to statewide crappie age-and-growth studies, and initiated a new crappie exploitation study on Lake Blackshear to address angler concerns about live-scope technology. Additionally, her work on the Lake Seminole Cuban bulrush task force integrates vegetation management with fisheries research to improve long-term population health.

Caroline Cooper's dedication, innovation, and leadership make her an outstanding and deserving Runner-Up for this year's Professional of the Year in Fisheries Management.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Professional of the Year

## Dr. Tyler Achatz - Fisheries Science and Research



The Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society is honored to present Dr. Tyler Achatz, from Middle Georgia State University, with the Professional of the Year in Fisheries Science and Research Award. Through his leadership and dedication, Dr. Achatz has advanced fisheries science through his ongoing research efforts, particularly in the field of parasitology.

Over the past year, research led by Tyler has made significant contributions to the fisheries profession. He has partnered with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to examine parasites in invasive snails (both apple snails and mystery snails). Alongside his students, his testing of snails from snail populations around the state led to the discovery of rat lungworm in both species, marking the first time this potentially deadly parasite has been found in snails in Georgia. Such findings are critically important from a human health perspective and provide the GA DNR with additional information needed to better advocate for public avoidance of these invasives. Tyler published his findings in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, and such information will be valuable to others seeking to pursue similar studies.

Beyond researching invasive snails this year, Tyler partnered with the GA DNR to study parasites in American eels. This research has led to new discoveries as well, including at least one new trematode and a new tapeworm. Such information may become invaluable to managers overseeing eel populations.

In an effort to expand his research capabilities and those of his students, Tyler was recently awarded funding to purchase a DNA sequencer for his lab. This tool will allow him to more rapidly generate DNA sequences to confirm infections. We applaud him for pursuing and acquiring such technology in his pursuit of advancing the scientific capabilities within his university.

Lastly, he has become an inspirational mentor for his students. His dedication to both teaching his students and challenging them to grow in their own research and academic pursuits is evident in their presentations and discussions. It is unquestionably apparent how much impact he has on them.

For his accomplishments and contributions to the science and research community, Tyler is richly deserving of the Georgia AFS Professional of the Year in Fisheries Science and Research Award.



# 2026 Georgia AFS Fisheries Conservationist of the Year

## UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant Shellfish Laboratory



The UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant Shellfish Research Laboratory Team is being honored as the 2026 Georgia Chapter American Fisheries Society Fisheries Conservationist of the Year in recognition of its exemplary leadership in fisheries conservation, applied research, and public engagement. The work of Tom Bliss, Justin Manley, John Pelli, and Hillary Sklar reflects a sustained commitment to integrative, science-based solutions that address complex environmental challenges while simultaneously delivering measurable economic and social benefits to Georgia's coastal communities.

At the core of the Shellfish Laboratory's success is a collaborative approach that bridges research, outreach, and policy. Through rigorous applied science, the Team has played a central role in revitalizing Georgia's oyster industry, advancing both scientific understanding and regulatory frameworks that support sustainable shellfish aquaculture. Their efforts have directly contributed to the establishment of six new oyster farms, strengthening local economies and creating new opportunities for coastal livelihoods rooted in environmental stewardship.

The environmental benefits of this work are equally significant. By promoting the expansion of oyster aquaculture, the Team has supported improvements in coastal water quality through the natural filtration services oysters provide, contributing to healthier estuarine ecosystems. Beyond the water, their outreach has increased awareness among coastal communities about the connections between upland land-use practices and marine resource health. As a result, communities near aquaculture production areas are increasingly supportive of environmentally sound practices, including improved wastewater and stormwater management.

Socially and educationally, the Shellfish Laboratory Team has demonstrated a strong commitment to cultivating the next generation of fisheries professionals and coastal stewards. Through student research opportunities, educational programming, and public engagement events, they have expanded access to marine science and conservation. Their signature annual event, Oyster Roast for a Reason, has raised nearly \$200,000 to support continued research and outreach, further amplifying their impact.

Collectively, the Team's collaborative efforts have produced more than a dozen peer-reviewed publications, multiple externally funded research projects, and policy briefs that have directly informed state regulations. Their leadership has also supported the creation of Shell to Shore, a nonprofit organization dedicated to oyster shell recycling and restoration. Together, these accomplishments exemplify the highest standards of fisheries conservation and underscore why the UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant Shellfish Laboratory Team is deserving of this honor.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Fisheries Team of the Year

## Georgia DNR Walton Fish Hatchery



The Walton Fish Hatchery Team, led by Tony Beck and Taylor Baker, is proudly recognized as this year's Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Fisheries Team of the Year for their exceptional professionalism, innovation, and dedication to advancing fisheries management in Georgia. Their work exemplifies the highest standards of the Fisheries Section, demonstrating how a small, highly skilled team can deliver statewide impact through expertise, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

Tony and Taylor have invested deeply in their professional growth, strengthening their capabilities to better serve Georgia's fisheries. Tony completed the WRD Mastering Management course, while Taylor advanced her technical skillset through the WRD Training Academy, electrofishing certification, ATV/UTV safety training, and GIS coursework—training that supported her promotion to Fisheries Tech II. Both team members also pursue independent research to refine fish-culture practices, directly contributing to the hatchery's consistent success in producing multiple species for statewide stocking.

Their teamwork is best exemplified by their leadership in expanding Georgia's walleye production capacity. Tasked with developing a new spawning system, Tony and Taylor researched successful models across the country, collaborated with hatchery managers, and designed a 7,000-gallon chilled, recirculating system capable of supporting 24 egg jars and six fry aquaria. Their dedication during production season resulted in more than 1.3 million walleye fry produced from only 24 brood females, a remarkable achievement that will benefit anglers and fisheries statewide for years to come.

The team also plays a vital role in public outreach, providing tours and demonstrations for schools, summer camps, WRD leadership programs, and statewide initiatives. Their support for the National AFS Tomorrow's Catch series and WRD's Hunting and Fishing Night showcases their professionalism and enthusiasm for sharing fisheries science with diverse audiences.

Tony and Taylor demonstrate leadership through initiative, accountability, and a collaborative spirit that strengthens the entire hatchery. Their innovations—including improvements to largemouth bass culture and expanded production capacity—have significantly enhanced Georgia's fish-production efficiency.

For their outstanding contributions, the Walton Fish Hatchery Team is truly deserving of recognition as the Fisheries Team of the Year.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Hidden Hero Award

## Zack Brock



Oftentimes, when we think of the heroes of today, we think of those on the front line: the ones battling the blaze; the ones responding to disasters; the ones administering first aid. But do we ever stop to think about the one who helped train that first responder? Do we think about that person who ensured that the responder was prepared and ready for when emergencies arise? Proper training doesn't happen by chance. It requires a leader, a coordinator who can work behind the scenes to put together a plan to ensure employees are ready for the task at hand. For WRD, Zack Brock is that leader.



Zack has been with the GA DNR for over 12 years. In his current role as Division Training Manager, he is responsible for ensuring staff receive the proper training needed to accomplish a multitude of tasks, from safe handling and operation of chain saws to ensuring everyone knows the basics of first aid and CPR in the event of medical emergencies. In one example, Region 6 staff were able to respond to the Sapelo dock collapse and implement some of the skills learned during a first responder training led by Zack.



Zack continuously shows a passionate desire to ensure that staff are provided with the most current and up-to-date information necessary to be prepared for what may lie ahead. He consistently excels in providing exceptional internal and external customer service, and the fruits of his labor are a well-trained, well-equipped staff ready to meet the challenges they may face when serving on the front line.



Regardless of the responsibilities that are placed upon him, Zack serves with passion and demonstrates a desire to pursue excellent results. For his continued work “behind the scenes” in serving to equip WRD staff with the training they need, we proudly recognize Zack with this Hidden Hero Award.



# 2026 Georgia AFS Distinguished Service Award

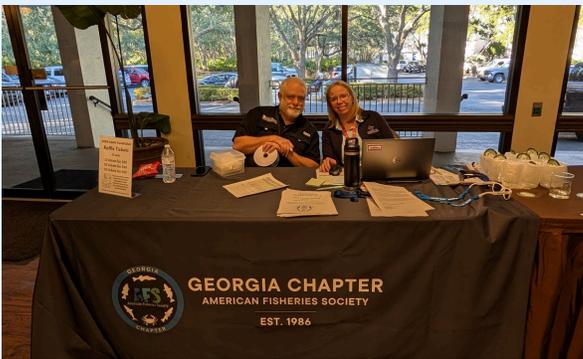
## Dawn Franco



The Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society proudly recognizes Dawn Franco with the Distinguished Service Award in honor of her exceptional dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to the mission and success of the Chapter.

Since 2020, Dawn has served as the Chapter's Recording Secretary–Treasurer, a role in which she has demonstrated extraordinary reliability, precision, and integrity. Her meticulous note-taking during business meetings and leadership sessions ensures that Chapter records remain accurate, transparent, and accessible. She also provides careful oversight of the Chapter's financial budget for annual meetings, offering thoughtful review and stewardship that supports responsible planning and long-term stability.

Dawn's service extends far beyond her elected role. As Co-Chair of the Policy, Bylaws, and Resolutions Committee, she helps guide the Chapter's governance with clarity and fairness. She contributes meaningfully to the Fundraising Committee, serves on the Chapter's newsletter editorial team, and plays an essential role in organizing annual meetings—coordinating meals and breaks, managing the registration table, and assisting with meeting setup and breakdown. Her behind-the-scenes work ensures that each event runs smoothly and reflects the professionalism of the Chapter.



Dawn also gives generously of her time to support students and the future of the fisheries profession. She volunteers each year to judge undergraduate posters, engaging students with genuine enthusiasm and offering encouragement that reflects her kindness and passion for mentorship.

Known for her warm demeanor, attention to detail, and remarkable ability to remain calm and positive even in stressful situations, Dawn embodies the spirit of service that strengthens our Chapter and inspires those around her.

For her exceptional contributions and steadfast commitment, the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society is honored to present Dawn Franco with the Distinguished Service Award.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Chapter President's Award

## Zack Brock



The President's Award is selected annually by the Chapter President and presented to a Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society member who exemplifies long-standing loyalty, dedication, and meritorious service to the Chapter, along with an exceptional commitment to its programs, objectives, and long-term goals.

This year's recipient embodies each of those qualities in full.

Zack Brock has long been a driving force within the Georgia Chapter, but over the past year his service has been especially noteworthy. Time and again, he has gone well beyond the customary expectations of volunteer leadership—often stepping in to assume responsibilities that would otherwise fall to the Chapter President. His reliability and initiative have been instrumental in ensuring the Chapter's continued success.

At the annual meeting, Zack's impact is both visible and behind the scenes. From early setup to final breakdown, he is consistently among the first to arrive and the last to leave. As co-chair of the Fundraising Committee, he led committee meetings throughout the year and spearheaded fundraising efforts that directly support Chapter initiatives. He has also provided steady support at continuing education workshops, stepping in wherever assistance was needed.

Perhaps most notably, Zack has served as hospitality suite coordinator for the past six annual meetings—a role that demands significant time, energy, and logistical coordination. His willingness to take on this responsibility year after year reflects a deep commitment to fostering collegiality and community within the Chapter. In addition, he has led the annual Fellowship of Christian Conservationists gathering, often following late nights with early mornings to ensure its success.

Simply put, whenever leadership, organization, or quiet follow-through has been needed, Zack has been there.

Please join us in congratulating Zack Brock, a truly deserving recipient of the 2026 Georgia AFS President's Award.



# 2026 Georgia AFS Career Contribution

## Dr. Susan Bennett-Wilde



It is with great respect and enthusiasm that we recognize Dr. Susan Bennett Wilde with the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award for a career marked by transformative research, applied conservation, and sustained service to aquatic resource management in Georgia and the southeastern United States. Dr. Wilde's work has fundamentally advanced the understanding of aquatic ecology, freshwater harmful algal blooms, and wildlife health, while directly informing how agencies manage reservoirs, invasive vegetation, and ecological risk.

Dr. Wilde holds a B.S. from the University of Illinois at Chicago and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Georgia. Her graduate research focused on trophic dynamics and zooplankton transport in southeastern rivers and reservoirs. Her master's work led to a seminal 1989 publication on picoplankton bacterivory, cited over 600 times, which helped establish the microbial loop's role in aquatic productivity and nutrient cycling.

A defining hallmark of Dr. Wilde's career is her perseverance in addressing long-standing and complex ecological challenges. Since the first reports of avian vacuolar myelinopathy (AVM) in Bald Eagles in 1994, she has led a sustained, interdisciplinary effort to identify its cause. Through collaborative leadership, Dr. Wilde brought together researchers, management agencies, and private partners across the Southeast and internationally, setting a standard for cooperative, solution-oriented science.

Over more than two decades, Dr. Wilde and her collaborators discovered the link between AVM and exposure to a previously unknown cyanobacterium, *Aetokthonos hydrillicola*. This work resulted in the identification and naming of a new species, isolation of associated cyanotoxins, and documentation of impacts across birds, mammals, amphibians, and fish. These findings culminated in a 2021 publication in *Science* and recognition with the Newcomb Cleveland Prize from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as the University of Georgia's Creative Research Medal in 2023. Collectively, this body of work reshaped the understanding of invasive plants as vectors of ecosystem-scale change.

Since joining the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources faculty in 2008, Dr. Wilde has demonstrated excellence in teaching and mentorship, earning four faculty teaching awards, mentoring or co-advising more than two dozen graduate students, and developing innovative courses that strengthen training in aquatic sciences.

For her enduring commitment to aquatic resource conservation and transformative contributions to aquatic science, it is a privilege to present Dr. Susan Bennett Wilde with the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Career Contribution

## Dr. Jay Shelton



It is with great honor that we present Dr. Jay Shelton with the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award in recognition of his extraordinary, decades-long commitment to the conservation, management, and stewardship of aquatic resources in Georgia and beyond. Over nearly four decades at the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, Dr. Shelton has established himself as one of the region's most influential fisheries professionals through sustained leadership, innovation, and service.

Since joining UGA in 1986, Dr. Shelton has devoted his career to advancing the understanding, restoration, and protection of Georgia's aquatic ecosystems. His work has addressed a broad array of critical fisheries and watershed issues, including fish passage, dam removal, watershed assessment, fisheries monitoring, aquatic nuisance species, and sportfish ecology. His leadership within the Georgia Aquatic Connectivity Team has been particularly impactful. By authoring key sections of Georgia's dam removal handbook and directing major projects such as the White Dam removal, Dr. Shelton has helped restore river connectivity and ecological function, producing lasting benefits for aquatic resources and communities across the state.

Dr. Shelton's scholarly and applied contributions include more than 80 research and extension publications. His work spans diverse topics such as sturgeon health and tagging techniques, robust redhorse early life history, hydrilla monitoring using remote sensing, exotic loach ecology, and applied fisheries management. In parallel, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to conservation education through the development of immersive, field-based Georgia Fishes courses and extensive public outreach on aquaculture, pond management, and stream restoration.

Mentorship has been a defining element of Dr. Shelton's career. He has guided hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students, early-career professionals, and agency partners through undergraduate research, senior theses, internships, field courses, and professional development programs for teachers, extension agents, and natural resource practitioners. His repeated recognition with teaching and outreach awards at UGA reflects his exceptional effectiveness as an educator and mentor.

Dr. Shelton's influence extends well beyond the classroom. He has been a dedicated leader within the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, contributing through presentations, mentoring the Warnell student subunit, supporting regional workshops, and advancing aquatic connectivity initiatives. His invited presentations at state, regional, national, and international venues further underscore his professional stature.

Dr. Jay Shelton's career exemplifies the highest standards of scientific integrity, collaborative leadership, and long-term service to fisheries conservation, making him a truly deserving recipient of the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Career Contribution

## David Higginbotham



It is with great respect that we present David Higginbotham with the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award in recognition of his exceptional and sustained service to fisheries science, education, and research in Georgia. For more than three decades, David's dedication, institutional knowledge, and quiet leadership have been foundational to the success of fisheries programs at the University of Georgia and to the professional development of countless students and colleagues.

David earned his Master of Science degree from the University of Georgia in 1991 and returned in 1994 as a research professional at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. Since that time, he has played a central role in supporting faculty research and student training through his long-standing management of the Whitehall Fish Laboratory. In this role, David has overseen fish cultures and facility operations, supported a wide range of research projects, and assisted undergraduate and graduate students with electrofishing, otolith sampling, pond management, and field-based capstone work.

As a research coordinator for multiple faculty members, David has provided indispensable support across all phases of research, including logistics, field sampling, equipment maintenance, staff and student training, data management, and troubleshooting. His problem-solving skills are widely recognized; when equipment fails, vehicles become stuck, or field facilities flood, David is the first call. His ability to resolve challenges efficiently has saved significant time, resources, and, in many cases, entire field seasons. Equally important has been his role in navigating institutional processes and serving as a trusted guide for new faculty and staff, for whom his institutional knowledge has been invaluable.

David goes above and beyond logistics, serving as a mentor and significant morale booster. He has guided countless students through complex projects, provided valuable feedback on their presentations and papers, and enriched their experience by sharing stories that connect them with Warnell's history. His lasting impact is evident as alumni continue to ask about "Hig" at conferences. Furthermore, his dry humor, particularly his highly believable April Fools emails, has often helped lighten the mood during stressful times.

David's service extends well beyond the university. He has been an active leader in the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, serving as Treasurer from 1996 to 1997 and President in 2002, and has been a long-time supporter of the student subunit. Through decades of service, commitment, and leadership, David Higginbotham has made enduring contributions to fisheries science and education, making him a most deserving recipient of the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Career Contribution

## Ted Will



It is our honor to present Ted Will with the Georgia Chapter American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award, recognizing a career that has profoundly advanced fisheries management in Georgia and strengthened the broader field of wildlife conservation through dedicated public service, collaborative leadership, and science-based decision-making.

Ted began his professional career as a fisheries biologist, where his applied research and extensive field experience improved understanding of key sport fish populations and directly informed effective management strategies. He later served as Fisheries Management Region Supervisor in Middle Georgia, overseeing a diverse portfolio of reservoirs, rivers, and public fishing areas. In this role, Ted ensured the consistent application of science-driven management practices while expanding public access and enhancing recreational fishing opportunities. These early positions laid the groundwork for a career defined by practical conservation outcomes and strong professional collaboration.

What truly distinguishes Ted's career is its exceptional breadth. In addition to his fisheries leadership roles, he served as Assistant Chief of Fisheries Management, Assistant Chief of Game Management, and Chief of Game Management. Through these positions, Ted gained comprehensive insight into both aquatic and terrestrial resource programs, enabling him to bridge disciplines, improve coordination across programs, and promote an integrated approach to natural resource management within the Wildlife Resources Division.

Ted's leadership continued at the highest levels of the agency as Assistant Director and, ultimately, Director of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division. In these roles, he has guided one of Georgia's most important conservation agencies, overseeing statewide programs that support fisheries management, wildlife conservation, habitat protection, public access, education, and outdoor recreation. Under his leadership, the Division has remained firmly committed to data-driven management, professional excellence, and strong partnerships with stakeholders, universities, and conservation organizations.

Equally impactful has been Ted's dedication to mentoring and developing conservation professionals. He has consistently invested in staff growth and encouraged innovation, helping to build a resilient, forward-thinking workforce prepared to meet emerging conservation challenges.

Ted Will's career reflects the very highest standards of public service, conservation leadership, and interdisciplinary collaboration. His lasting influence on fisheries management and the broader wildlife conservation community makes him a most deserving recipient of the Georgia Chapter American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award.

# 2026 Georgia AFS Career Contribution

## Leon Brotherton



It is not every day that an employee can claim over 40 years of service to one agency, but Leon Brotherton holds that impressive tenure as well as a wide range of accomplishments during his time with the GADNR.

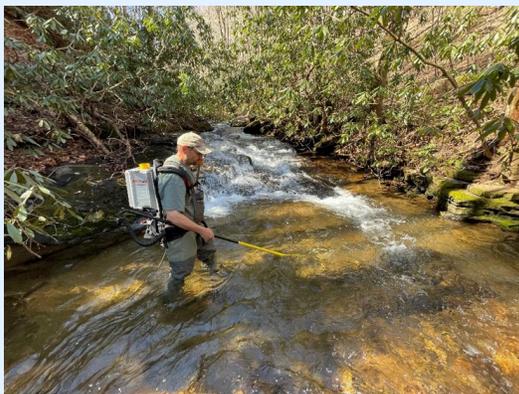
After graduating from Brenau University and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Leon began his career as a day laborer before climbing the career ladder to eventually become a hatchery technician in North Georgia, where he spent 19 years producing and stocking over 5 million trout from 1986 - 2005.

After nearly 20 years of doing hatchery work, Leon stepped into his current position as the wild trout technician for Northeast Georgia, a role that he has excelled in for over 20 years. Achievements in his current position include Leon's major role in developing the Georgia trout map to assist anglers in finding fishing opportunities; collaborating with Trout Unlimited and the US Forest Service for trout stream habitat work; deploying on debris teams across the state to aid others dealing with disasters; and working on several native Brook Trout projects.

In his tenure, Leon has displayed an eager passion to help and educate others, albeit through helping lead trout habitat workshops for the public or providing invaluable guidance in chainsaw classes for state employees. His impacts can be seen in the lives of anglers, students, and other professionals he has served. His mark has even been left on downed trees, where he continues to carve "Jesus fish" into trees in a unique way to let visitors know DNR Fisheries has been here.

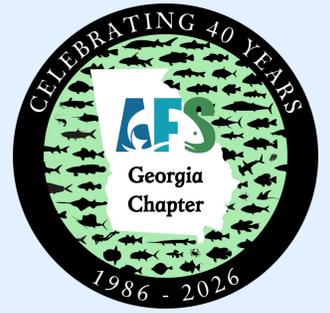
Leon Brotherton's career exemplifies sustained service, practical leadership, and a deep respect for Georgia's trout resources. His contributions to fisheries conservation, agency collaboration, and professional development make him a most deserving recipient of the Georgia Chapter American Fisheries Society Career Contribution Award.

In appreciation of his 40+ years of excellent service, we proudly recognize Leon with this Career Contribution Award.





# Georgia Chapter American Fisheries Society 2026 Student Presentation Award Recipients



Garrison Forrester  
First Place  
Student Oral Presentation



Michaela Collins  
Second Place  
Student Oral Presentation



Anna Cawthon  
Third Place  
Student Oral Presentation



Lesley Ramirez  
First Place  
Student Poster Presentation



Maggie Young  
Second Place  
Student Poster Presentation



Kaylin Regan  
Third Place  
Student Poster Presentation

# Student Presentation Award Winners

## Top Three Oral Presentations

### First Place

**Garrison Forrester** (University of Georgia): *Efficacy of Minimum Length Limits for Managing Black Crappies *Pomoxis nigromaculatus* in Georgia Reservoirs*

### Second Place

**Michaela Collins** (University of Georgia): *Host-Fish Identification and Glochidia Morphology of *Lampsilis splendida* in the Southeastern U.S.*

### Third Place

**Anna Cawthon** (University of Georgia): *Age and Growth of Spotted Sucker (*Minytrema melanops*) in the Savannah River Basin, Georgia*

## Top Three Poster Presentations

### First Place

**Lesley Ramirez** (Georgia Gwinnett College): *From Bayous to Backyards: The Red Swamp Crayfish Invasion in Metro Atlanta*

### Second Place

**Maggie Young** (Middle Georgia State University): *Detection of invasive *Aguillicoloides crassus* nematodes in American eels from Georgia*

### Third Place

**Kaylin Regan** (University of Georgia): *Validating fin spine age estimations from known-age Atlantic Sturgeon, *Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus**



## Robert E. Reinert Undergraduate Travel Award Winners

- Ajani Amedee
- Kymani Amedee
- Nahom Estifanoes
- Lesley Ramirez
- Lindsey Stowell
- Sawyer Maddux
- Melissa Garcia
- Evelyn Ivy
- Isabella Munoz-Arroyave
- Keenen Ruffin
- Tyler Bulot

Students completed an application and wrote an essay that was evaluated by a panel of judges. Students selected for the RER Award received accommodations during the annual meeting and had their meeting registration covered by Georgia AFS.

# Andrew Lyons Awarded Ronnie J. Gilbert Scholarship



Andrew Lyons is highly deserving of the Ronnie J. Gilbert Scholarship because he exemplifies the values of leadership, service, and scientific excellence that define the award. As a PhD student at the University of Georgia, he conducts impactful research on elasmobranch ecology while mentoring students in both field and classroom settings. His background as a scout and outdoor educator shaped his commitment to stewardship and community-centered science. He has built strong partnerships with

Georgia DNR, angler groups, and coastal organizations, ensuring his research directly supports management needs. Scholarship support will enhance his research capacity, outreach efforts, and continued mentorship of future fisheries professionals.

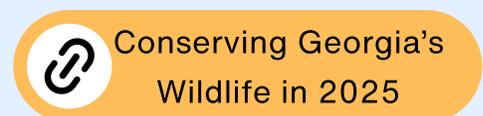
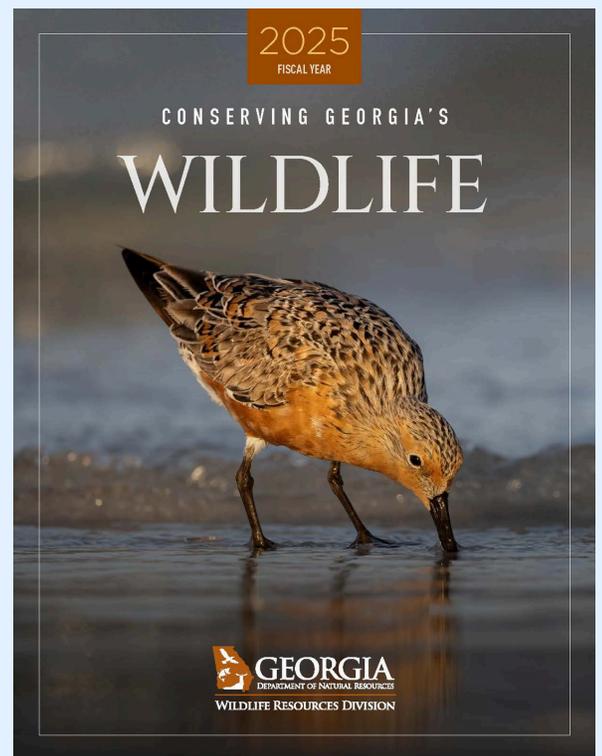


## Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan

Georgia supports an amazing diversity of wildlife species and natural habitats and is among the most diverse areas in the country for several taxonomic groups, such as freshwater fishes and mussels, reptiles, amphibians, and plants.

Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a statewide strategy to conserve populations of native wildlife species and the natural habitats they need before these animals, plants, and places become rarer and more costly to conserve or restore.

Explore Statewide SWAP Information to learn about threats and conservation actions for Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.



# Congratulations Caroline and Laura

## Welcome to the Georgia AFS EXCOM



**Caroline Cooper**  
**Georgia DNR WRD**

Georgia AFS  
President-Elect



**Laura Wenk**  
**Georgia DNR WRD**

Georgia AFS Recording  
Secretary-Treasurer



## ACF Water Conference - Albany



Registration is now open for the ACF Waters Conference in Albany, Georgia! Join colleagues, partners, and stakeholders from across the Apalachicola–Chattahoochee–Flint River Basin for three dynamic days of conversation, collaboration, and connection focused on the future of one of the Southeast’s most important river systems.

One of the most anticipated events during the ACF Waters Conference is the Poster Session being held on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 29th. They invite anyone with work relevant to the conference, e.g., water quality, quantity, conservation, management, aquatic biota, modeling, land management, remote sensing, or other topics relating to ACF water issues, to submit a poster abstract.



# 2026 Trash2Art Contest Winner



Laura Wenk has done it again. She crafted this stunning piece of art from discarded materials she gathered while working at different locations. Even though she was the sole participant this year, her sculpture showcased exceptional creativity.

This spring, we will be revising our guidelines for the Georgia AFS art contest in order to encourage more individuals to participate. Email Rebecca Brown if you would like to be part of the discussion or if you have suggestions on how we can increase participation.



## 2026 Georgia AFS Photo Contest

We had nine entries for the 2026 Photo Contest. The theme, “Human-Water Connection”, celebrates the deep, diverse, and often complex relationships between people and aquatic environments. Whether through work, tradition, recreation, or stewardship, humans have long depended on water for survival, culture, and identity. We asked our members to submit photos that capture those connections in compelling and aquatic ways.

### What the judges were looking for:

- How well the photo conveys the theme “human-water connection.”
- Does the photo present the theme in a unique, engaging, or unexpected way?
- Does the caption explain why the photo represents the theme?

Winners were selected based on a combined scoring system that included the average score from the panel of judges and the results of an online popularity vote. Because of time limitations during the annual meeting, judging was completed prior to February 3. The judges’ average score accounted for 60% of the final score, while the online popularity vote comprised the remaining 40%.

**Check out all of our entries  
along with their captions.**



# Bubba Bass Goes Back to School

Once upon a time, a solitary Bass returned home with Rob Weller after the Georgia Chapter AFS annual meeting in 2010. That year, Mr. Bass, who would later be affectionately known as Bubba Bass, spent time with Rob and his colleagues at a GA DNR WRD Regional Office, where he discovered what it takes to thrive in fisheries science. At the 2011 annual meeting, Rob prepared a PowerPoint presentation to highlight Bubba's adventures from the previous year. Each year, a new individual or group volunteers to host Bubba, allowing him to travel across the state, explore various jobs, and even enhance his fisheries knowledge by attending different colleges and universities throughout Georgia.



Bubba Bass is headed to Middle Georgia State University. As an MGA Knight, he will study fish parasitology and assist students with field and laboratory data collection for their research projects. Maybe he will even get to meet the Duke, the MGA mascot.



# Are you a member of the American Fisheries Society?

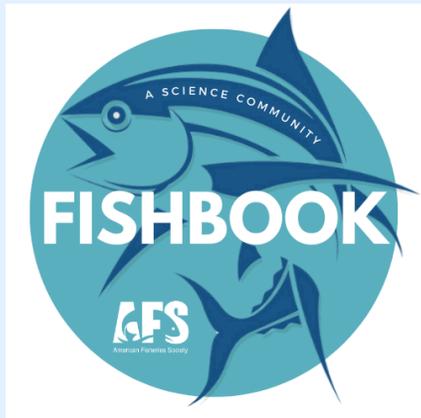


American Fisheries Society

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) is the world's oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to fisheries science and management. Founded in 1870, AFS advances conservation, research, and education to sustain aquatic resources. The Society supports professionals and students through publications, conferences, certification, and collaborative networks.

In 2026, the American Fisheries Society returns to the city of Columbus, Ohio, for the first time since 1933. President Gary Whelan, the North Central Division, and the Ohio Chapter invite you to join us August 30 – September 3, 2026, on the banks of the Scioto River.

[afsannualmeeting.fisheries.org](https://afsannualmeeting.fisheries.org)



A new networking platform now allows fisheries professionals to share and collaborate on research projects, as well as form networking groups. The Fisheries Collaboration Network, nicknamed **Fishbook**, is now open for all to create accounts. Join existing groups, or form your own! Upload your research projects in progress or even those still in the conceptual stage, and receive comments and find collaborators.



***Tomorrow's Catch: Securing our Future Fisheries*** is an ambitious digital series produced by the American Fisheries Society in partnership with Content With Purpose. At a time when freshwater and marine ecosystems face mounting threats, this series explores how fisheries science is leading the way in protecting biodiversity, advancing sustainability, and restoring the health of our waters.

# Applying for a Job or Internship

Your resume gets you through HR. Your interview will determine if you get the job.



A resume is often the first impression an employer has of a potential candidate. A well-crafted resume can set an applicant apart in a competitive field.

In an interview, the impression you create often overshadows your qualifications.

- Prepare Early
- First Impression
- Sell Yourself
- Ask Questions
- Follow Up

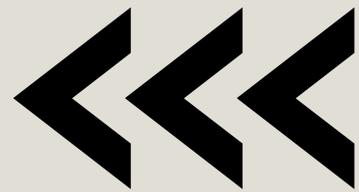
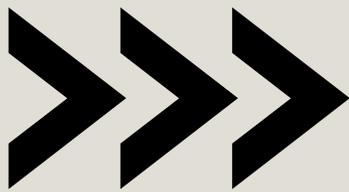


## Resume Writing and Interviewing Tips



Georgia AFS is here to help you with your interviewing skills. We have experienced biologists who will conduct a virtual (or in-person) mock interview with you and provide feedback. Contact Rebecca Brown to learn more about this opportunity.

GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com



## The benefits of being a member of the American Fisheries Society:

- **Build your professional network support:** you have access to more contacts, more resources, and more information; chances are, someone in AFS has “been there/done that”; you can participate in one of the AFS Sections to connect with others who are likeminded and/or working in the same niche you are
- **Demonstrate your professionalism:** your membership demonstrates a commitment and dedication to your profession; you serve as a role model for those entering the field as well as have an opportunity to share your own insights and expertise with peers and colleagues
- **Build your own skills:** AFS has opportunities for you to take on a leadership role that might not yet be available at work; participate in AFS workshops and webinars; present at conferences; write a newsletter article; become a mentor
- **Have a voice:** one of the important roles AFS is advocacy - that is, helping decision makers understand what members do in the workplace and why it is important; a larger group has a louder voice
- **Give yourself an advantage:** build your professional reputation and boost your credibility; build your resume; connect with more experienced professionals



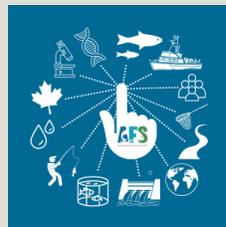
## MORE ABOUT AFS



**AFS PUBLISHES  
JOURNALS**



**AFS ADVISES  
POLICY**



**AFS HAS A VARIETY  
OF SECTIONS YOU  
CAN JOIN  
DEPENDING ON  
YOUR INTERESTS**



**AFS SUPPORTS THE  
HUTTON JUNIOR  
FISHERIES BIOLOGY  
PROGRAM**



# Reeling in Reminders



## **Membership and Student Affairs Committee**

Have you paid your Georgia AFS Chapter membership dues? Your [membership](#) supports Georgia AFS programs that help the chapter achieve its mission.

Are you a member of the Parent Society? Membership in an AFS Chapter does not automatically make someone a member of the American Fisheries Society (AFS). Learn about how being a member of AFS can benefit you. [fisheries.org](https://www.fisheries.org)

## **Planning Committee**

The committee is already underway searching for the venue to host the 2027 Georgia AFS annual meeting.

## **Fundraising Committee**

Do you have something you want to donate to the Georgia AFS [annual fundraiser](#)? Contact Rebecca Brown (GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com) or Zack Brock (zack.brock@dnr.ga.gov) if you have something you would like to donate.

Would you like to join the Fundraising Committee? Contact Zack Brock.

## **Communications Committee**

Would you be interested in writing an article for the Georgia AFS newsletter? We welcome a broad range of submissions that address research and ideas relevant to marine and freshwater finfish and shellfish and their respective fisheries and environments. Additionally, we welcome articles about navigating graduate school, grant-writing basics, advice on publishing and presenting, leadership in natural resources, communicating science to stakeholders and policymakers, and success stories. Contact Rebecca Brown (GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com) if you are interested.

# Membership Dues

The Georgia AFS mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. Your paid membership helps us achieve that mission.

Georgia AFS  
Annual Membership Dues

**\$ 10**



What are some benefits of becoming a member of Georgia AFS?



**Developing Relationships**



**Leadership Opportunities**



**Supporting Aquatic Conservation**



**Enhancing Your Resume**



**To vote on Chapter business/elections you must be a member of AFS.**

## AFS Membership Information

Membership in an AFS Chapter does not automatically make someone a member of the American Fisheries Society. To serve as an officer of Georgia AFS you need to be a member of AFS.

Consider joining the American Fisheries Society (AFS), the world's largest professional organization for fisheries scientists.



# Plugged In

*Do you listen to podcasts while driving? Exercising? Working?*



## Virginia's Walleye/Sauger Hybrid: Saugeye!

Get to know the Saugeye! You'll get extensive tips how to angle for this fish, how it tastes, and what goes into producing this hybrid for fun fishing opportunities in Virginia. Katrina and Guy are joined by two guests from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.



## Coolwater Powerhouse: Table Rock Fish Hatchery

From walleye to muskellunge and beyond, discover how Table Rock Hatchery fuels fishing across the state. Corey and Ben sit down with Assistant Superintendent Matthew Bodenhamer to explore the powerhouse behind many of North Carolina's most sought-after sportfish.

## Northern Snakehead and other Virginia non-natives

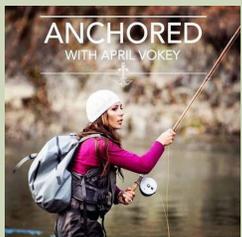


Preston chats with John Odenkirk from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. They discuss John's involvement with the Northern Snakehead introduction into the Potomac River. They also discuss aquatic species that have been introduced to Virginia that received less publicity, but have shown more negative impacts to Virginia's native populations than what can be attributed to snakeheads.



## The River in Pieces with Shana Jones and Mark Risse

Mark and Shana's experiences span many things important to Shell to Shore, ranging from Georgia's growing aquaculture industry to the importance of coastal resiliency.



## Clark "Cheech" Pierce on Innovation and Fly Fish Food

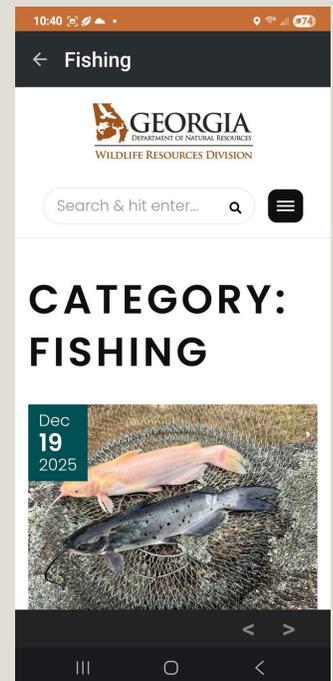
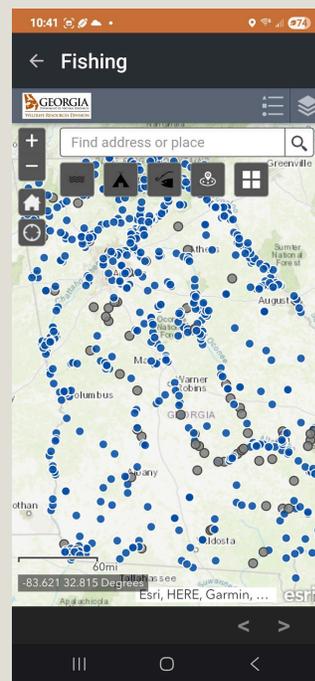
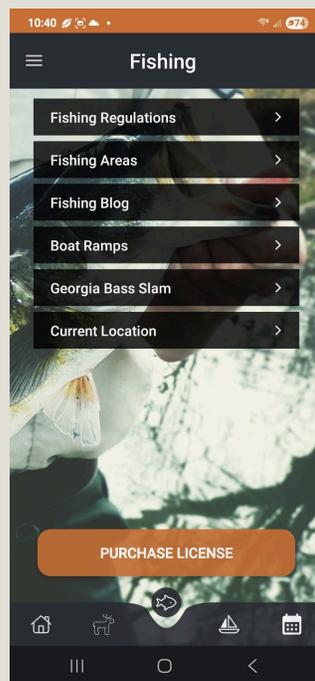
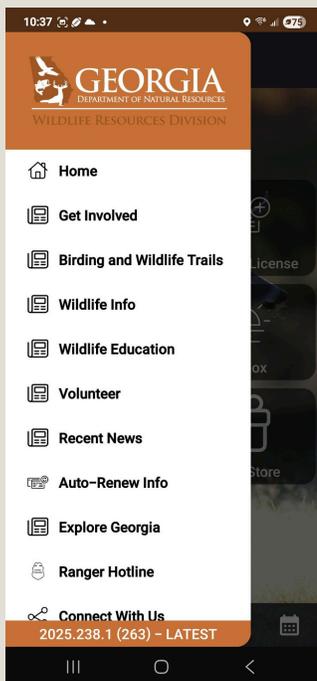
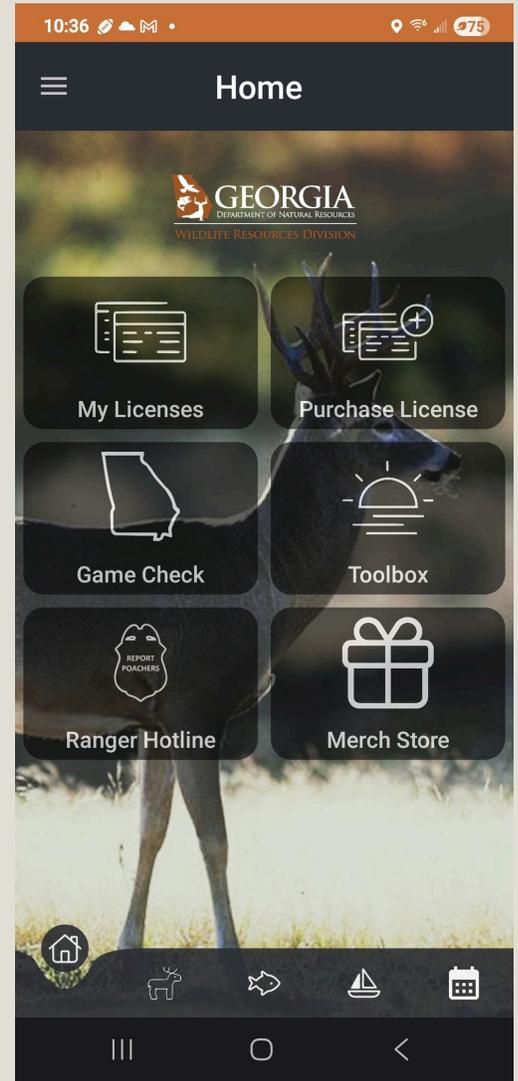
Clark "Cheech" Pierce is a fly tyer, educator, and co-founder of Fly Fish Food, one of the most influential fly-tying brands in the industry. Known for his creative patterns, clear instruction, and trademark sense of humour, Cheech has helped modernize fly tying for a new generation of anglers.

# Have you tried the Go Outdoors GA app?

The Outdoors GA app, free in [Google Play](#) or [Apple store](#), has multiple uses.

- Fishing regulations - some rules change each year
- Boating rules - know before you go
- Fishing locations
- Boat ramps - plan your next kayaking adventure
- Tide information
- Purchase your fishing license (don't forget your SIP)
- Store your fishing license - avoid awkward moments
- Event calendar - find a KFE near you
- [Georgia DNR Fisheries Blog](#)
- And it has hunting stuff too

**DOWNLOAD THE APP TODAY!**



# What's Cooking?

Are you looking for some delicious, budget-friendly fish recipes? We are too! Send us your favorite fish recipe ([GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com](mailto:GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com)).

*Shrimp and grits are on my mind. I stopped at Anchored Shrimp Co. on the way home from the annual meeting and brought home 10 pounds of frozen Georgia shrimp.*



## GRAND DINING ROOM'S SHRIMP AND GRITS

Award-winning shrimp and grits recipe from [Jekyll Island Country Club](#)

### Step 1

#### Cheese Grits

- 1 1/2 cups stone-ground grits
- 5-6 cups chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 stick unsalted butter

Bring broth to a boil and add grits. Turn heat down and cook slowly for about 40 minutes, stirring often. Add cheese and butter and adjust seasonings with salt and white pepper.

### Step 2

#### Shrimp Butter

- 1 stick (4 oz.) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 tbsp. bacon fat
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. chopped thyme
- 1/2 tsp. chopped parsley
- 1/2 tsp. chopped oregano

Mix all ingredients together and set aside.

### Step 3

#### Shrimp Sauce

- 2-3 oz. shrimp butter
- 1 bundle green onion, diced
- 1/2 lb. Andouille sausage, diced
- 1 lb. Georgia white shrimp, peeled & deveined
- 1 tbsp. flour
- 3 oz. white wine
- 1 juice of lemon
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- Old Bay seasoning to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the shrimp butter in a sauté pan. Add sausage and onions. Sauté 2 minutes over medium. Add shrimp, wine and lemon juice, cook for 2 minutes. Sprinkle flour on top and mix well. Add Old Bay and cream. Simmer until shrimp are cooked and cream has reduced a little bit. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Spoon grits into a bowl and top with shrimp sauce, garnish with scallions.



**March 21 (10am - 4pm)**

**Mary Ross Waterfront Park  
Brunswick, GA**

CoastFest is an exciting free annual event hosted by the Coastal Resources Division, dedicated to celebrating and educating the public about Georgia's coastal heritage and natural resources. Expect hands-on learning, live wildlife, exhibits, and fun for all ages.

CoastFest is free and open to the public. Food and T-shirts will be available for purchase.

Explore exhibits from local, state, and federal environmental agencies and partner organizations. Learn about marine life, coastal ecosystems, and conservation through hands-on displays.



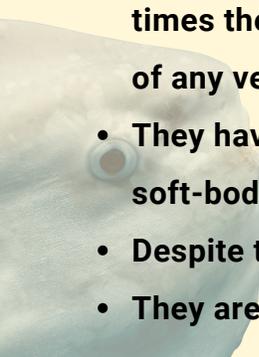
# DID YOU KNOW?

The *Mola mola*, or Ocean Sunfish, is one of the most remarkable and bizarre creatures in the ocean.



## Why Sunfish are remarkable:

- They are the heaviest bony fish in the world (can exceed 2,000 kg).
- They have a very short, reduced spine and no ribs.
- They lack a true caudal fin; instead, has a clavus (a truncated, rudder-like structure).
- They produce more eggs than any known vertebrate (~300 million per spawning event).
- They are frequently observed lying on their sides at the surface of the water, "sunning" themselves. This behavior is thought to serve two purposes: regulating their body temperature after diving into deep, cold water, and allowing seabirds to eat parasites off their skin.
- Their larvae are only 2.5 mm long (less than a gram). As adults, they can grow to be 60 million times their birth weight, which is considered one of the most extreme growth transformations of any vertebrate.
- They have teeth fused into a parrot-like beak that stays permanently open, perfect for eating soft-bodied prey like jellyfish.
- Despite their slow appearance, they can leap up to 10 feet into the air.
- They are known to host over 50 different species of parasites on and inside their bodies.



# **Fishy News**

## **Around the World**

*Click on title to access article*

### **WALKING SHARKS BREAKING BIOLOGY REPRODUCTION RULES**

New research from James Cook University has made the extraordinary discovery that epaulette sharks can reproduce and lay eggs without any measurable rise in energy use.

### **CHARACTERIZATION OF AEROMONAS HYDROPHILA ISOLATED FROM FRESHWATER FISH WITH CONTROL TRIAL**

In the present study, two freshwater fish species Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) and Mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) collected from various fish farms in Kafrelsheikh Governorate, Egypt. The fish samples were examined to determine *Aeromonas hydrophila* presence (*A. hydrophila*).

### **DEEP-SEA MINING TEST IN THE PACIFIC DRASTICALLY REDUCED BIODIVERSITY AND ANIMAL POPULATIONS**

The Metals Company wants to be the first firm to commercially mine the seafloor. The study it funded suggests that mining vehicles harm creatures in the machines' paths.

### **HOW AN ANCIENT SEAFLOOR TURNED ARKANSAS INTO "SHARKANSAS," A SHARK FOSSIL HOTSPOT**

Recent research highlights northwestern Arkansas's Fayetteville Shale as a significant site for rare, three-dimensional shark fossils dating back over 300 million years.

### **YANGTZE RIVER FISHING BAN HALTS SEVEN DECADES OF BIODIVERSITY DECLINE**

To restore fisheries resources, the Yangtze River Fishing Ban was implemented in 2021 to cease all basin-wide commercial fishing. Xiong et al. examined fish abundance and diversity before and after the ban and found promising signs of initial recovery in biomass, diversity, body condition, and even threatened species.

### **DEEP-SEA FISH LARVAE REWRITE THE RULES OF HOW EYES CAN BE BUILT**

A study published in Science Advances, shows deep-sea fish larvae have evolved a unique way to maximize their vision in this dusky environment – a finding that challenges scientific understanding of vertebrate vision.



# Bubba Bass Video Picks

## Leadership

*This is Why Real Leaders Don't Give Orders*  
– Seth Godin



Tim Ferris



## Interviewing Tips

*How to Introduce Yourself - and Get Hired |*  
Rebecca Okamoto



TEDx NorthwesternU

## Conservation

*Conservation Lecture: "Reintroducing River Otters"*

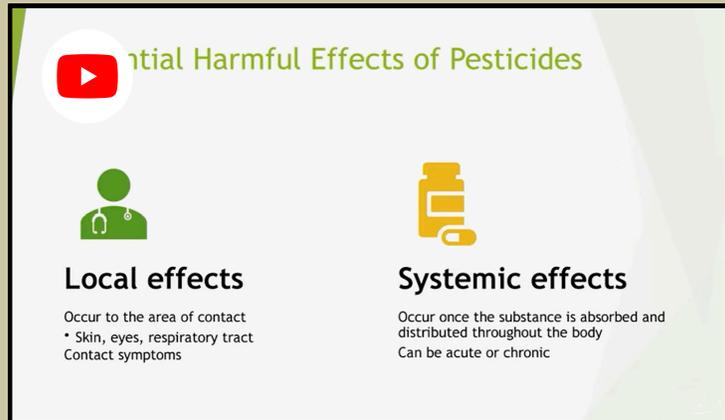


USFWS

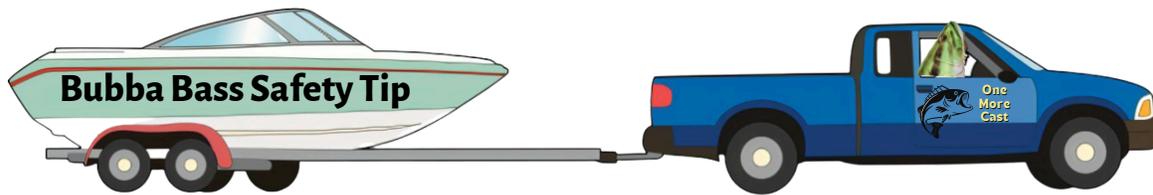


## Fisheries

*National Pesticide Applicator Certification*  
- Ch 5: Pesticide Hazards And First Aid



Elevate Applicate

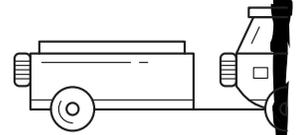


## KNOW BEFORE YOU TOW

### Driving Tips for Towing Safely

- Be sure to go through your pre-departure checklist prior to leaving
- Turn on the tow/haul switch in your vehicle, if applicable
- Create longer following distances between you and the vehicle in front of you
- Provide plenty of space and time for stopping
- When turning, swing the tow vehicle wider, giving yourself ample room for curbs, corners, or any other obstacles on the inside corner
- Your larger vehicle combination has a larger impact on airflow and will cause both your vehicle and the vehicle being passed to sway or move more than usual, plan accordingly, ensuring enough roadway space for both vehicles.
- DO NOT attempt to control sway by turning the steering wheel as it will only make the issue worse.
  - Gas off, brake off, steer straight and wait.

**Safe and proper driving is a critical piece of trailer safety. Drivers should be focused and limit or eradicate distractions.**



### Bubba's Friends: Blackbanded Sunfish (*Enneacanthus chaetodon*)

The Blackbanded Sunfish are found in the U.S. ranging from New Jersey to central Florida. In Georgia it's a rare, small native fish found in specific, isolated habitats within the Coastal Plain, particularly in the Savannah River, Okefenokee Swamp (St. Marys/Suwanee rivers), and the Alapaha River system. They are highly localized, preferring shallow, heavily vegetated, and quiet water environments.

- Maximum recorded length is around 4 inches.
- Feed on small invertebrates associated with aquatic vegetation.
- Population at risk due to their fragmented distribution and specialized habitat needs.
- People have collected/purchased these fish for their aquariums
- As part of an effort to prevent local extinction in Maryland, MD DNR released hatchery-spawned Blackbanded Sunfish into native habitats last September.



Image: Virginia DWR

# Fin and Games: Collective Nouns

## Georgia Wildlife Edition

Below is a list of names for groups of animals. Match a name with an image.

[Answers on last page](#)

\_\_\_ Committee

\_\_\_ Scold

\_\_\_ Passel

\_\_\_ Yard

\_\_\_ Rafter

\_\_\_ Battery

\_\_\_ Gaze

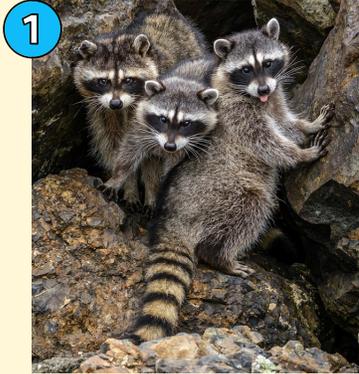
\_\_\_ Construction

\_\_\_ Fever

\_\_\_ Parliament

\_\_\_ Bale

\_\_\_ Congress



# AFS/SDAFS MEETINGS

## Future AFS Annual Meetings



American Fisheries Society

- 2026 Columbus, OH: August 30 - September 3
- 2027 Pittsburgh, PA: September 26 - 30
- 2028 Honolulu, HI: May 14 - 19

## Volunteer to Serve on an AFS Committee

Any active member of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) is welcome to serve on AFS Committees.

[MORE INFO](#)



The Southern Division  
of the American Fisheries Society

[sd.fisheries.org/](http://sd.fisheries.org/)

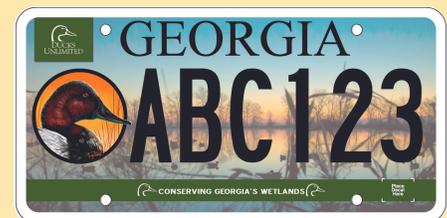
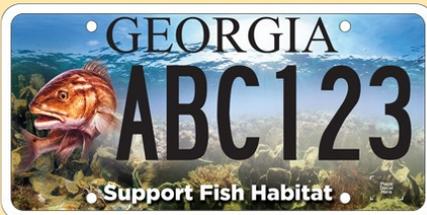
## Future SDAFS Meetings

- 2026 New Orleans, LA: March 5 - 8
- 2027 Alabama (March 4 - 7; Location TBD)
- 2028 Mississippi (Location and date TBD)
- 2026 Florida (Location and date TBD)

# General Information

## Support for Fisheries Conservation and Sustainability

Do you have a specialty license plate that supports the conservation of Georgia's fisheries and aquatic ecosystems?



*Click on the license plate for more information*

It is only \$25 more than the standard plate! (\$20 is a standard charge applied to all plates.) 80 percent of that \$25 fee goes directly to wildlife programs (\$19 the first year, \$20 with every renewal). Only \$5 goes to the State of Georgia General Fund. For more information:

<https://gadnr.org/license-plates>

### Certified Fisheries Professional

There are many reasons for seeking professional certification. For some it represents achievement of a career goal while for others it represents a credential necessary to perform their job.

[Frequently Asked Questions about certification](#)

[AFS Application Process and due dates](#)

### Pesticide Applicator License

If you wish to purchase or use a restricted use pesticide (RUP), you or your supervisor must have a pesticide applicator's license from the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

[UGA Extension Pesticide Safety Education](#)

[Pesticide License Exam Study Videos](#)

### Job Hunting

AFS maintains an excellent Career Center page on its website. AFS provides several resources to help you find that fisheries job you want.

[AFS Career Center](#)

Do you want to improve your chances of getting that dream fisheries job?

[Georgia AFS Interviewing Tips](#)

### Internships

Internships are a great way to gain valuable work experience employers look for in potential new hires.

Georgia AFS maintains a list of internships for fisheries students on its webpage.

[GAAFS Internship listing page](#)

# Science Worth Sharing. Stories Worth Telling.

The Chapter newsletter aims to highlight the exciting work of fisheries professionals and students, share details about upcoming meetings and events, and offer other valuable information relevant to the fisheries community. We encourage a wide variety of submissions related to research, ideas, and developments in marine and freshwater finfish and shellfish, along with their respective fisheries and environments. Contributions can range from a short paragraph to three pages in length. If you have an idea for an article but are unsure whether it's a good fit, feel free to reach out, we're happy to discuss it. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the areas listed below.

- Fisheries science research updates or innovative ideas
- Articles with advice for students and young professionals
- Accomplishments such as recently publishing a research paper, giving a talk at a community event, being interviewed for a podcast series, and anything in the realm of communications and outreach
- Environmental concerns related to fisheries and aquatic ecosystems
- Safety tips for fisheries professionals and students

*Send your submissions to Rebecca Brown at [GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com](mailto:GeorgiaAFS@gmail.com).*

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### Newsletter

#### Editorial Board

Rebecca Brown

Jamie Roberts

Marion Baker

Kevin Cavallaro

Jim Page

Brent Hess

Dawn Franco

Camm Swift

### Answers to Fin & Games

1. Gaze of raccoons

2. Congress of salamanders

3. Fever of rays

4. Construction of cranes

5. Passel of possums

6. Committee of vultures

7. Battery of Barracuda

8. Parliament of owls

9. Scold of jays

10. Rafter of turkeys

11. Bale of turtles

12. Yard of deer