

Forging proactive partnerships to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and the places they live.

WHAT IS PARC?

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) is an inclusive partnership dedicated to the conservation of the herpetofauna–reptiles and amphibians–and their habitats.

Our membership includes individuals from state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, museums, pet trade industry, nature centers, zoos, energy industry, universities, herpetological organizations, research laboratories, forest industries, and environmental consultants. The diversity of our membership makes PARC the most comprehensive conservation effort ever undertaken for amphibians and reptiles.

WHAT'S IN THIS ANNUAL REPORT?

PARC celebrated its 25th year, and this report serves to share the advances and accomplishments of our network in 2024. Regional PARC meetings throughout the country have promoted involvement in amphibian and reptile conservation, and our task teams have participated in national and international events, furthering the effectiveness of our network. All achievements highlighted within this report are the result of strong, diverse partnerships that form to further amphibian and reptile conservation.























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PARC Leadership * JOINED 2024, ^ COMPLETED TERM IN 2024



Brad O'Hanlon Senior Co-Chair Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



Becca Cozad Ex-officio Co-Chair Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy



Michelle Christman Federal Agencies Steering Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Mark Mandica
DEI Representative
The Amphibian Foundation



Melissa Youngquist* Junior Co-Chair Shedd Aquarium



Brian Zarate[^] Ex-officio Co-Chair New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection



Kerry Wixted[^]
State Agencies Steering Coordinator
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

JOINT NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
AGENCIES AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Dave Golden, Chair
New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife
Becky Gwynn, Vice-Chair
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PARC David McNaughton, Representative Chris Peterson, Representative Rob Lovich, Representative

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Team Representative Marilyn Sobel Kirsten Hecht ZOO REPRESENTATIVE Shelly Grow Association of Zoos and Aquariums

FEDERAL AGENCIES STEERING
COMMITTEE
Brad Jost, Sr. Co-Chair
Bureau of Land Management
Amy Commens-Carson, Jr. Co-Chair
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest
Service

MIDWEST PARC Travis Kurtz^, Sr. Co-Chair John Ball Zoo Jennifer Lamb, Jr. Co-Chair St. Cloud State University NORTHEAST PARC Luke Groff^A, Sr. Co-Chair Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Kevin Oxenrider, Jr. Co-Chair West Virginia Department of Natural Resources Amylynn Ephraim*, Incoming Co-Chair

NORTHWEST PARC Laura Sprague, Sr. Co-Chair U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Christine Parker-Graham, Jr. Co-Chair U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

West Virginia University

SOUTHEAST PARC
Ericha Shelton-Nix^, Sr. Co-Chair
Alabama Department of Conservation and
Natural Resources
Matthew Atkinson, Jr. Co-Chair
University of Central Florida
Houston Chandler*, Incoming
Co-Chair
The Orianne Society

SOUTHWEST PARC Cristina Jones, Sr. Co-Chair U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Jared Holmes, Jr. Co-Chair Origin Ranch

OTHER LEADERSHIP

SUPPORT STAFF
Adam Austin^, PARC Communications Specialist
Western Michigan University

AMPHIBIAN WEEK Michelle Christman, Lead U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

WILD TURTLE WEEK Kerry Wixted, Lead Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Ethical Herping and Observation Standards
Task Team

We don't have any formal leadership positions yet, so shout out to Michelle, Becca, Mark, Brad, José, Kevin, Adam, and Amanda!

COLLABORATIVE TO COMBAT THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN
TURTLES TASK TEAM
Scott Buchanan, Co-Chair
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Corinna Hazelrig, Co-Chair
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental
Protection

DISEASE TASK TEAM
Jenna Palmisano, Co-Chair
University of Central Florida
Corinna Hazelrig, Co-Chair
University of Georgia
Colby Wells, Co-Chair
Colorado Parks and Wildlife



A NOTE FROM THE 2024 SR. CO-CHAIR

It has been my privilege to serve as PARC's Joint National Steering Committee Co-Chair, and being able to work with so many wonderful folks on the JNSC and Executive Committee each week. To the JNSC: Thank you for putting up with my silly icebreakers and goofy jokes, including drawing and designing salamanders at our annual meeting! It's been quite a year, and I think we have done a great job balancing out the difficult conversations with sharing our accomplishments. To the readers of this report: I hope y'all enjoy reviewing PARC's many accomplishments from 2024. From phenomenal in-person meetings, to webinars, to celebrating Amphibian Week, and even all the way to attending international conferences, our PARC members have excelled in every way! I can only offer my most excited and sincere thanks to our many working group and task team leaders for leading the charge, and the many, many volunteers who came together to make big things happen. Y'all rock!

As we move forward into 2025 and beyond, I can only encourage folks reading this report to be involved with PARC, and to tell friends and colleagues to be involved with PARC. There are so many opportunities, from joining a regional working group, a task team, going to a regional meeting, or even just joining PARC webinars. Our network is strong, our drive for conservation is outstanding – and it can only be better with you!

With all of my thanks,

WELCOME DR. MELISSA YOUNGQUIST AS THE JUNIOR CO-CHAIR

This year we welcomed Melissa Youngquist as the Jr. Co-Chair for the Joint National Steering Committee. She's studied amphibian communities in the Midwest for the past decade and currently lives in Chicago, IL where she works as a Research Biologist at Shedd Aquarium. Melissa is a past Co-Chair of Midwest PARC and is honored to be elected into the National PARC leadership where she will serve the PARC community along with the rest of the JNSC and Executive Committee.

COMMON CHUCKWALLA (SAUROMALUS ATER)
Photo courtesy of Becca Cozad



ADVANCING CONSERVATION THROUGH POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS

The <u>Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)</u> is represented within PARC's network through two seats on the Joint National Steering Committee, held by the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Committee's Chair and Vice Chair. This committee is responsible for identifying effective means for AFWA member states, provinces, territories, and federal agencies to advance herpetofaunal conservation.

In 2024, the committee produced several new and updated products, including guidance for including the illegal and unsustainable trade of reptiles and amphibians into State Wildlife Action Plans, guidance for including threats from *Batrachochytrium* salamandrivorans (Bsal) into State Wildlife Action Plans, and updated Appendices A and B of the 2012 State of the Union laws and regulations compilation: state rules for commercial collection, and state rules for personal collection. PARC, Midwest PARC, the

Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles, and AFWA also collaborated to host a Midwest Illegal Turtle Trade Workshop focused on enhancing partnerships to combat poaching and trafficking. Information on all of these products are available here.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies also celebrated the 25-year anniversary of PARC by issuing a resolution of support at its 2024 annual meeting held in Madison, Wisconsin.



RECOGNIZING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF
PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION (PARC)

WHEREAS, since 1999 a broad coalition of State and federal agencies, conservation organizations, museums, pet trade representatives, zoos and aquaria, universities, and other non-governmental stakeholders joined together as Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation ("PARC") to advance a mission of conserving amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats; and

WHEREAS, PARC's focus on keeping common species common and protecting habitats is more essential than ever, with habitat loss and degradation, disease, invasive species, climate change, overexploitation, and illegal trade posing substantial threats to quickly-declining populations of native amphibians and reptiles; and

WHEREAS, through its Department of Defense, Southeast, Northeast, Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest regional working groups established between 1999 and 2008, PARC has issued best practices and guidelines for agencies; provided numerous trainings and symposia; and conducted species risk assessments and contributed to the development of State Wildlife Action Plans, which cumulatively include over 400 species of amphibians and reptiles; and

WHEREAS, in recognition that illegal and unsustainable trade are some of the top threats facing North American turtle species, PARC and its conservation partners have made notable progress in addressing these threats through partnership initiatives such as the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles; and

WHEREAS, to support the work of management and conservation practitioners to address significant threats of extinction of North America's amphibian species, PARC has worked tirelessly over the past 25 years to provide a variety of products ranging from disinfection protocols to Habitat Management Guidelines, increasing public awareness of herpetofauna and their conservation, and worked closely with the North American Bsal Task Force to prevent introduction of Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans (Bsal) into native North American populations; and

WHEREAS, State fish and wildlife agencies, as public trust managers of most species of herpetofauna, have supported and benefited from collaborative conservation approaches including PARC since its inception, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies ("Association") established the forerunner of its Amphibian and Reptile Conservation ("A&RC") Committee in close connection with PARC's activities; and

WHEREAS, the leadership of the A&RC Committee serves on PARC's Joint National Steering Committee, which guides PARC's activities and helps to maintain the longstanding and successful linkage established between agency professionals and the broader field of herpetofauna conservation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association celebrates the substantial accomplishments of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation in growing unique, purpose-built conservation networks at the regional, national, and transnational levels to address a wide range of threats to North America's herpetofauna.



FROM PARCAS TO POLICY: SAFEGUARDING IMPERILED SPECIES ACROSS THE US AN UPDATE FROM THE AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVANCY (ARC)

From the wetlands of the Southeast to the deserts of the Southwest, <u>2024</u> was a year of action for amphibians and reptiles. Across the US, ARC worked alongside partners to restore habitat, monitor populations, and implement targeted efforts to protect some of the most imperiled yet overlooked species.

ARC is helping advance two of PARC's highest priorities: the <u>PARCA (Priority Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area)</u> project and the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT).

At the heart of this work is our leadership of the PARCA initiative in collaboration with the PARC network. In 2024, ARC and partners identified 9 new PARCAs, bringing the nationwide total to 322, with active work underway in 22 PARCAs across 14 states. This year, the ARC team conducted more than 12,000 surveys and visited over 1,000 sites in the country's most vital habitats.

Highlights included the release of 350+ headstarted, federally Threatened Frosted Flatwoods Salamanders into Georgia wetlands and the program's expansion into Florida via new partnerships with private landowners.

In Florida, we collected thousands of eggs in 2024 to raise and release in 2025.

In the Southern Appalachian PARCAs, our team and partners advanced the recovery of the southern population of the <u>Bog Turtle</u> using predator exclusion cages around nests, headstarting, habitat restoration, and long-term monitoring. In the Gila PARCA of New Mexico, we restored wetlands and removed invasive species to support three federally Threatened species: the <u>Chiricahua Leopard Frog</u>, northern Mexican Gartersnake, and <u>Narrow-headed Gartersnake</u>.

In response to the PARC network's focus on the growing threat of the illegal trade, ARC appointed Dr. Brooke Talley as our first Turtle Conservation and Policy Director. Talley is now coordinating CCITT's multi-agency efforts to disrupt trafficking networks and protect vulnerable species.

These successes were possible due in large part to partnerships within the PARC network. PARC is a project of ARC, and together, we bridge on-the-ground action with big-picture policy and conservation planning.

In 2024, ARC also supported DoD PARC with surveys at Robins and MacDill Air Force Bases and participated in SEPARC working groups for the Gopher Frog and Eastern Hellbender. Additionally, we partnered on national outreach efforts, including Amphibian Week, Wild Turtle Week, Every Turtle Counts, and the ETHOS (Ethical Herping) initiative.

In 2025 and beyond, ARC remains committed to long-term, place-based, science-informed conservation strategies that protect not only species but the ecosystems they need.





LEARN MORE BY FOLLOWING THE LINKS BELOW





CELEBRATING THE 25TH ANNUAL MEETING

Members of Southeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation met from February 29th (what's a frog's favorite day?) through March 3rd at Camp McDowell in Nauvoo, Alabama, to celebrate 25 years of SEPARC. The 2024 annual meeting brought together over 275 herp conservation professionals, students, and interested attendees. At the meeting, Jimmy Bullock, Senior Vice President of Forest Sustainability for Resource Management Services, LLC, addressed the audience as keynote speaker. His talk highlighted the value of working private lands and holistic conservation strategies. The SEPARC meeting also featured three workshops, seven task team breakout sessions, and 40 student and professional presentations on amphibian and reptile conservation.

ABOVE: Annual meeting logo design by Mark Mandica, recreated from the very first PARC logo. It features a dip net inset with a few of the SEPARC annual meeting logos of the past decade. RIGHT: Dirk Stevenson, SEPARC's 2024 Conservation Hero Award winner. At each SEPARC annual meeting, an exceptional conservationist is recognized through the Conservation Hero Award. SEPARC's Conservation Hero Award celebrates individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in the Southeast but may not typically receive recognition for their efforts. In 2024, Dirk Stevenson was selected as SEPARC's Conservation Hero for his substantial work with numerous imperiled reptiles and amphibians and student educational outreach in the Southeast. Dirk also regularly contributes natural history columns to organizations like South Carolina Wildlife, The Gopher Tortoise Council, and the Savannah Morning News. Congrats Dirk!













Participants at the 2024 Annual Meeting of Southeastern Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation held in Nauvoo, Alabama.



DID YOU KNOW THAT SEPARC HAS A NEW WEBSITE?

Check out the fresh <u>www.SEPARC.org</u> address for information on upcoming meetings, and ways that you can be involved.



The collaboration between students at Arizona State University and SWPARC to draft Conservation Action Plans continued to be productive. In 2024, students drafted a plan for the Rio Grande Leopard Frog (*Lithobates berlandieri*), which awaits final review.

REVAMPING THE WEBSITE AND WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP

The SWPARC steering committee accomplished a number of in-house needs this year. One big achievement was restoring the SWPARC website and continuing to improve our user experience. If you haven't visited our website in a bit, check it out! The committee also recruited five new members and welcomed a new co-chair, Jared Holmes.

SWPARC REPRESENTS AT 2024 EVENTS

SWPARC has worked to maintain and expand the herp conservation network in the Southwest. In 2024, we held an in-person meeting August 15-17 at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson with a keynote presentation by Craig Ivanyi (one of SWPARC's early co-chairs!). Over 90 participants joined to share and connect at our Meeting and Networking Extravaganza. Congratulations to our student presentation award winners!

Members of SWPARC represented the region at a plethora of other meetings including: DoD PARC, North American Wildlife and Natural Resources, the Joint Annual Wildlife Societies of Arizona and

New Mexico, and the Gila Symposium. These meetings offer our members opportunities for career growth, professional development, and more knowledge to bring back to the SWPARC team.

ABOVE: SWPARC meeting poster designed by Audrey Owens.

OPPOSITE PAGE (FROM LEFT-RIGHT): Co-Chairs with 2024
Student Presentation winners; presentation at 2024 meeting by
Paul Meier; Rock Rattlesnake (Crotalus lepidus) seen during
a meeting field trip; SWPARC meeting participants at one
of the field trips; meeting participants during a tour at the
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum; Greater Short-horned lizard
(Phrynosoma hernandesi) found during one of the meeting
field trips.















and support amphibian and reptile conservation. Members of MWPARC began the year in South Dakota at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. There we hosted a symposium titled, "Habitat for Herps: Case Studies of Amphibian and Reptiles in Restored and Created Habitats", and had an exhibit table to talk with more folks about our work. In the summer, members met again at the SSAR/PARC/MWPARC meeting in Ann Arbor, MI. Midwest PARC organized a student workshop titled "Scale-up your career", hosted a student social and organized a silent auction. We also coordinated with PARC to host Dr. Earyn McGee as our keynote speaker for the conference. We held a competition for 2024 MWPARC logo designs. MWPARC's winning 2024 logo design included a Kirtland's Snake and was included on MWPARC merchandise.

On the virtual front, MWPARC completed a major objective: creating state-specific resource pages for each of the 11 states in the MWPARC region. These pages are the result of collaborations between members of our Advisory Board and professionals across states working in herpetology and conservation and include links to field guides, state regulations, and more. In the last year, the website drew just over 1400 new visitors.

STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS TO SUPPORT HERP CONSERVATION RESEARCH

We are pleased to announce the recipients of our *Student Travel Grants: Fueling Student Field Experiences*, which are awarded to current and recent graduate and undergraduate students who conduct field work that advances herp conservation: Kayla Coggins, Kevin Green, Alyssa Robers, Grace Allen, Luke Tonsfeldt, and Kerri Beers. These grants support research involving problematic species, rare amphibians and reptiles, disease, and general ecology and natural history. <u>Students have submitted reports for these grants which are available on our website</u>.







TOP: Keynote speaker, Dr. Earyn McGee, at the SSAR/PARC/MWPARC joint meeting. BOTTOM: Trivia night social





April 6, NEPARC had a successful outreach campaign titled 'Marsh Madness, piggybacking off the NCAA college basketball March Madness. During this event, NEPARC members on social media (Facebook and Instagram) voted on their favorite NE Region amphibian or

reptile species in a tournament to crown the NEPARC champion. Short informational pieces were developed for each species involved in the tournament, as well as a photograph of the animal to help educate viewers about the northeast's numerous species of amphibians and reptiles. The Marsh Madness outreach campaign was extremely successful, generating 1,360 interactions on Facebook and 5,740 interactions on Instagram. The tournament ultimately ended with the Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) being crowned the 2024 NEPARC Marsh Madness Champion.

2024 NEPARC MEETING FOCUSES ON SCIENCE, STRATEGY, AND VERNAL POOL **CONSERVATION**

NEPARC held its annual meeting July 28 through July 30 at the Schoodic Institute in Winter Harbor, Maine. A total of 112 participants enjoyed a number of great scientific presentations, a workshop on turtle rehabilitation, a panel discussion on "Prioritizing for Change: Pivoting to Practice," and a keynote address by Dr. Aram Calhoun on "Conserving Vernal Pools as Keynote Ecosystems: Easier Said than Done." Additionally, meeting participants were able to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Maine coastline and coastal forest, all while networking and growing ideas for improving amphibian and reptile conservation in the Northeast.



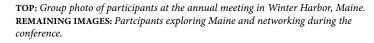
NEPARC DEVELOPED A NEW PRODUCT TO SHARE

Protecting Northeast Turtles and their Habitat: A Guide for Suburban and Urban Landowners brochure.













MEETING

In 2024, NWPARC's Joint Annual Meeting was convened in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho with the Washington Chapter of The Wildlife Society, the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society, the Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology, and the Idaho State Chapter of PARC.

During the meeting, three NWPARC Award recipients were honored.

Unsung Hero Awards were presented to: Susan Barnes, for her 20-year service as a non-game biologist with Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. Her service resulted in multifaceted support of amphibian and reptile conservation efforts.

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Wildlife Management Program, for their rescue efforts to restore populations of the Northern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates* pipiens) in the Flathead Indian Reservation. This work has included 20 years of efforts to translocate egg masses from tribal lands in eastern Montana to western Montana, which resulted in the first documented breeding of these frogs in the Flathead Reservation in over 30 years.

The Luminary Award was presented to: *Dr. Allan* Pessier, Associate Professor at WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Pessier is the Northwestern United States herpetofaunal disease diagnostician, helping to identify the cause of dead animals in the wild across our region. Globally, he also is a significant contributor to the understanding of emerging infectious diseases in amphibians and reptiles, and the control of diseases in conservation programs over the last 30+ years.





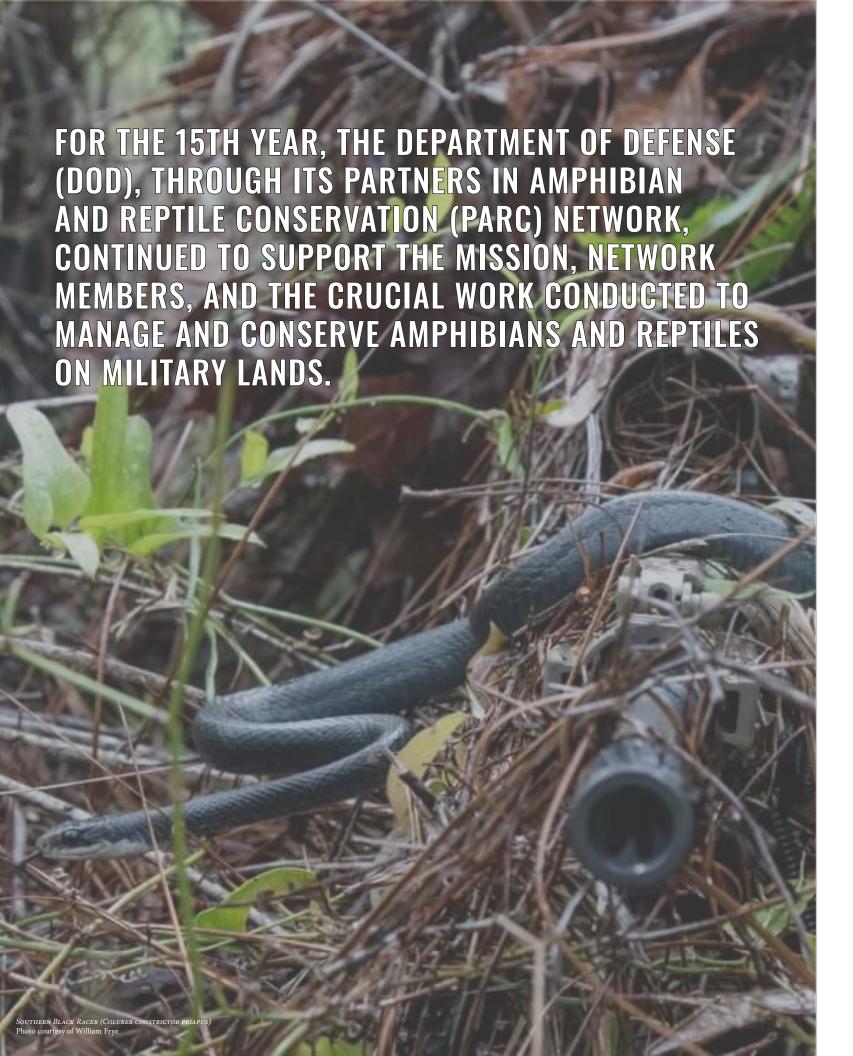




TOP: Joint 2024 Annual Meeting with Idaho and WA chapters of The Wildlife Society. MIDDLE: Dr. Charles Petersen giving a presentation.

BOTTOM: NWPARC Steering Committee after presenting the Luminary Award. From left to right: Betsy Howell, Laura Sprague, Dr. Allan Pessier (recipient), Mark Thompson, Dr. Wendy Estes-Zumpf and Dr. Charles Peterson.





The DoD PARC network is grateful to the DoD Legacy Resource Management Program (DoD Legacy Program) for providing funding to support the many projects and deliverables produced.

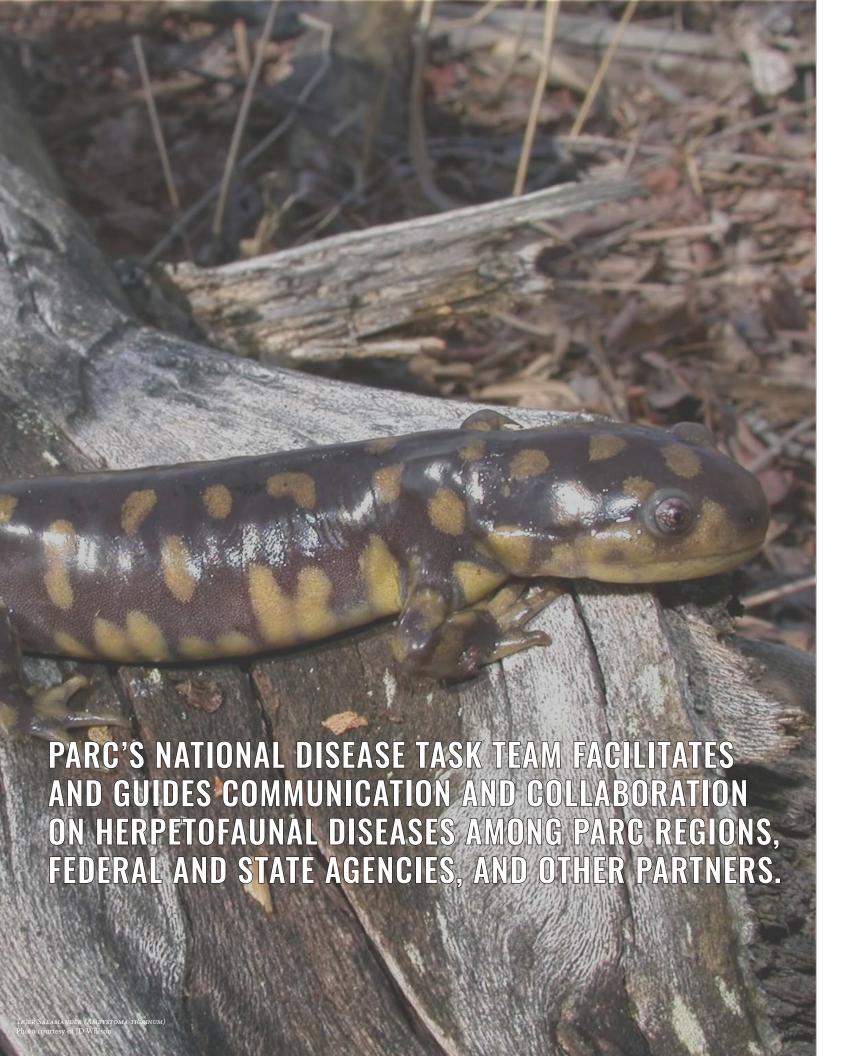
DoD natural resource managers and partners work diligently to achieve conservation on military installations around the world. A detailed review of DoD PARC accomplishments in 2024 and their annual report (and other resources) can be found at this link. A few highlights include:

- In 2024, DoD PARC added two episodes to the "Herpetofaunal Project Highlights and Successes" podcast series, which launched in 2022. This year's episodes focused on Reticulated Flatwoods Salamander research and management on Eglin Air Force Base, and Diamondback Terrapin nesting surveys at Naval Air Station Patuxent River. Check out the podcasts on the DoD PARC YouTube Channel. While there, be sure to check out the Species Profile Video Series.
- DoD PARC collected and analyzed over 2,000 hours of data from acoustic loggers deployed at eight military sites, including: Canaveral Space Force Station, Naval Support Activity Mid-South, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, Fort McClellan, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, Army Pueblo Chemical Depot, and Air Force Research Laboratory.
- In cooperation with the University of Illinois and Smithsonian Institute, DoD biologists helped to capture and mark hundreds of Southwestern Pond Turtles on 11 military sites in California. This is a DoD mission sensitive species, and this work provides critical information on this at-risk species, while also supporting the installations Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans and military missions.

- DoD PARC, the California Academy of Sciences, and other partners surveyed and collected herpetofaunal species on approximately 12 military sites in California to fill species occurrence gaps from military lands. A subset of these animals will be used for further genetic research.
- DoD PARC, DoD Partners in Flight, and the newly emerging DoD Small Mammal Initiate networks collaborated for multispecies surveys across installations in Florida and California. These species help to better understand the biodiversity of the military sites and occurrence of DoD mission sensitive species.
- DoD PARC and Tangled Bank
 Conservation continued a study to use
 genomic resources to proactively monitor
 imperiled species on DoD lands. Target
 species on approximately 20 installations
 included Gopher Frogs, Northern Redbellied Cooters, and Alligator Snapping
 Turtles. Additional species that will
 be targeted in 2025 include Eastern
 Diamondback Rattlesnakes, Florida
 Pinesnakes, Gopher Tortoises, Spotted
 Turtles, Blanding's Turtles, and Wood
 Turtles.
- DoD PARC's sixth in-person strategic planning meeting was held at the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site in Colorado. The team discussed new DoD PARC initiatives, conservation and management, and products to support military readiness. They also conducted field surveys to document amphibians and reptiles on the Army installation.
- One thousand copies of the DoD coloring book were given away in 2024 to military personnel at Earth Day, Fleet Week, Amphibian Week, and other outreach events.

Vi Hig

Visit the DoD PARC YouTube Channel to listen to the "Herpetofaunal Project Highlights and Successes" podcase as well as the Species Profile Video Series!



In an outstanding 2024, this team achieved a high level of conservation success by organizing a symposium at an international meeting, hosting highly attended webinars, developing informational products, and continuing to run and improve the Herpetological Disease Alert System (HDAS).

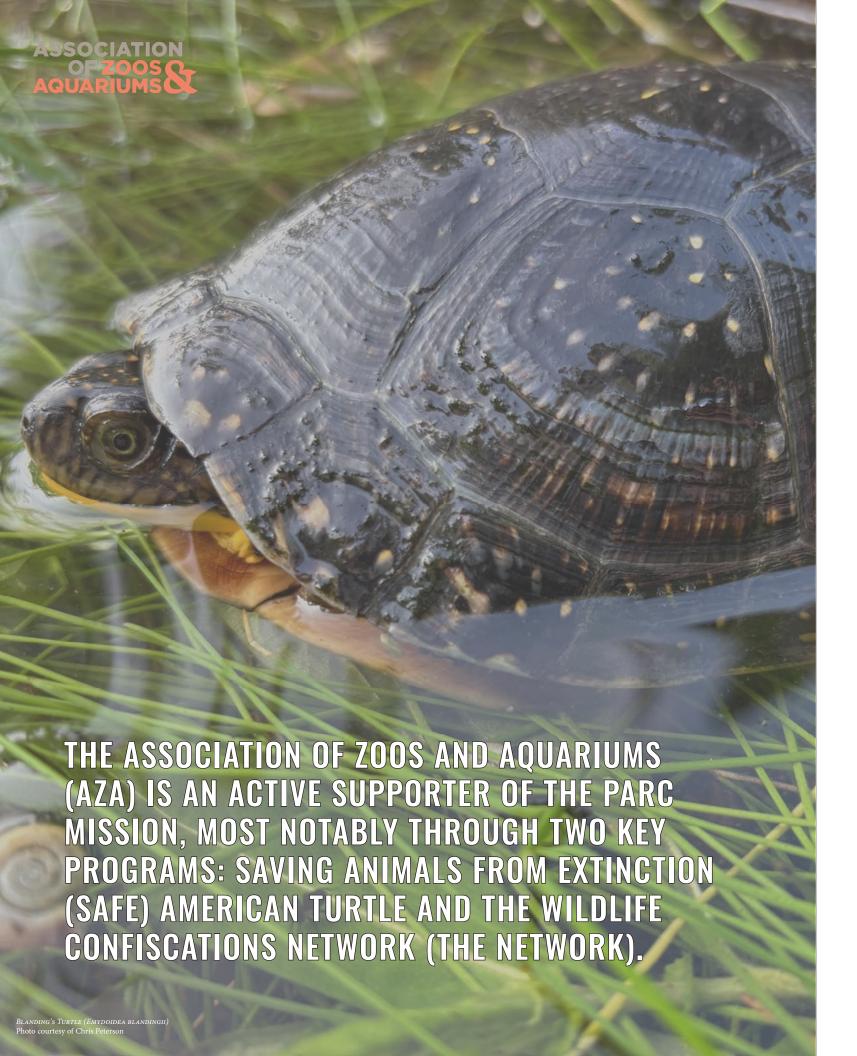
Disease Task Team members attended the 10th World Congress of Herpetology in Borneo, held in early August. While contributing to a global perspective on disease ecology, the team also contributed to a scientific article, "Global view of diseases from the 10th World Congress of Herpetology, Kuching, Malaysia, Borneo", which has been accepted to Herpetological Review for publication.

In October, the Disease Task Team hosted a symposium at the 31st annual meeting of The Wildlife Society in Baltimore, Maryland. The session, titled "Managing Herpetofaunal Health" had 80 attendees. The symposium explored critical conservation challenges, including diseases and toxins affecting amphibians and reptiles. Twelve experts also shared insights on collaborative management strategies for managing and better understanding amphibian and reptile diseases. Select presentations from this symposium are available on the PARC YouTube channel.

Sharing information and data on prevalent and emerging diseases is a cornerstone of the Disease Task Team, and in 2024, they hosted two public webinars. The first, "Protistan Pathogen Perkinsea Webinar" had over 60 attendees, and the second, "Hissssstory and Current Knowledge of Snake Fungal Disease" attracted 380 interested viewers. Both webinars are currently available on the PARC YouTube channel.

The Herpetological Disease Alert System (HDAS) supports early detection and rapid response to emerging amphibian and reptile diseases. In 2024, it received five reports from California, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Mexico, and New York, which were promptly forwarded to state authorities by HDAS lead Colby Wells. Of these, only the cases in New Mexico and New York warranted further investigation, with reports ranging from large die-offs of tiger salamanders to individual abnormal amphibians, including an Eastern Newt, an American Toad, a Sierran Tree Frog, and an unidentified salamander.

To report a disease case: email herpdiseasealert@parcplace.org
or visit parcplace.org/species/herpdiseasealert



The SAFE program was established in 2020 to focus conservation efforts from multiple stakeholders to support wild populations of native turtles including Bog Turtle, spotted turtle, wood turtle, Blanding's Turtle, and all Terrapene species. The Network launched a pilot program in Southern California in 2023 through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Network provides a coordinated and cooperative response to USFWS law enforcement when the agency confiscates live wildlife from illegal trade. Through a robust vetting process, the Network now has over 50 qualified animal care facilities committed to supporting law enforcement and caring for the victims of illegal trade. A single point of contact coordinates the response for law enforcement officers located in the pilot region.

Though the Network will assist the USFWS with any illegally traded species of any taxa, the coordinator relies on taxonomic experts to help advise when certain species may have a chance at repatriation. The SAFE program, in coordination with the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT), has been an invaluable resource to

the many cases of native turtle species being smuggled out of the country. Together, the Network coordinator and the SAFE program leader have been able to assist the USFWS and state wildlife agencies with the care and placement of over 1,400 individual turtles confiscated since 2018. Nearly one third of those individuals were confiscated in the past twelve months. The SAFE program, in collaboration with the CCITT has developed a best practices resource for law enforcement and care givers to set turtles up for success on a pathway to eventual release back to the wild. Funding for disease screening and genetic analysis was provided through a 2022 Competitive State Wildlife Grant "Addressing Population Declines Due to Loss of Adult and Juvenile Turtles to Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Eastern United States".

To date, a total of 150 turtles representing four species have been reintroduced to the wild under the care and observation of seven state wildlife agencies. This would not have been possible without the incredible partnership of all of the organizations and agencies involved with AZA's Wildlife Confiscations Network and the SAFE American Turtle program.



A confiscated box turtle seized by the USFWS. The AZA provides many types of support to the USFWS and other agencies to care for confiscated wildlife.

Ethical Herping and Observation Standards

IN 2024, PARC MEMBERS CREATED THE ETHICAL HERPING AND OBSERVATION STANDARDS TASK TEAM (ETHOS), WITH A GOAL OF EXPANDING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ETHICAL HERPING WITHIN THE PARC COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.

Early goals of this team are to offer guidance for recreational herpers, or those individuals who have an interest in and enjoy finding wild amphibians and reptiles, and to continue to develop the scope of this team. To help focus the goals and objectives of this team, ETHOS members and regional representatives hosted listening sessions at several regional PARC meetings to connect with conference attendees and learn how this team would benefit the herping community. Based on feedback from the listening sessions, the ETHOS team prioritized developing tenets and gold standards for ethical herping. In 2025, the task team will be looking forward to creating these guidelines and sharing them with the PARC community for additional feedback. Special thanks to Adam Austin for designing our supercalifragilisticexpealadocous logo!

A participant at SWPARC photographing a herp observed on a field trip. The participant is following ETHOS guidance, photographing the animal in situ, and maintaining appropriate distance from the animal.





SCALING UP THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL TURTLE TRADE

In 2024, the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) continued to grow. Thanks to focused efforts, the group's membership reached over 220 individuals (due to the sensitive information discussed within CCITT, membership is heavily vetted). The CCITT had many notable firsts in 2024, including an annual membership survey, hiring the first Strategic Coordinator, and participation in international meetings.

The CCITT is pleased to welcome Dr. Brooke Talley as its first Strategic Coordinator, in partnership with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC), and made possible by an anonymous philanthropic donation. Brooke is a long-time CCITT member, having first joined the team in 2019. Brooke earned her Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University, where her work focused on disease ecology and herpetology. Most recently, Brooke served as the Alligator Management Program Coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Prior to that, Brooke served as the Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Coordinator for the same agency. These roles developed her expertise in managing and coordinating multi-year, large-scale herpetological projects, undertaking regulatory actions, training and coordinating law enforcement personnel, and working with multiple user groups such as breeders, hobbyists, and researchers. PARC is thrilled to have Brooke's positivity, creativity, and energy in this position!

On the international stage, a team that included CCITT representatives and partners planned and hosted a symposium titled Reducing the Illegal and

Unsustainable Trade in Reptiles and Amphibians at the 10th World Congress of Herpetology (WCH) in Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo. This symposium helped introduce CCITT to an international audience, developed communication and learning from the global herpetological community, and supported networking and relationship building. The symposium was open to all WHC attendees and live online streaming. Breakout sessions at the meeting focused on laws and regulations, confiscations and repatriations, demand and demand reduction, and next steps. PARC is grateful for the CCITT effort to make this symposium a success!

Other notable achievements for the CCITT included several members publishing various articles in a special issue of Chelonian Conservation and Biology, hosting a writing intensive workshop focused on CCITT's strategic plan, hosting a Midwest workshop on the illegal turtle trade, and a successful #WildTurtleWeek #EveryTurtleCounts campaign.



ABOVE: CCITT at the World Congress of Herpetology in Borneo.





Chris Peterson, the recipient of the 2024 Visionary Leader Award. Chris played an important role in developing the Timber Rattlesnake Conservation Action Plan.

VISIONARY LEADER AWARD

IN 2011, PARC INITIATED THE VISIONARY LEADER AWARD. THIS AWARD RECOGNIZES AN INDIVIDUAL IN NORTH AMERICA WHO EXEMPLIFIES EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP, VISION, AND COMMITMENT, SPECIFICALLY TO PARC, IN A MANNER THAT HAS CARRIED PARC TO NEW HEIGHTS AND HAS SIGNIFICANTLY FORWARDED THE PARC MISSION.

We are thrilled to recognize Chris Petersen for the 2024 Visionary Leader Award!

For over a decade, Chris has continued to serve in multiple leadership roles, including leading DoD PARC, serving as the National Representative for DoD PARC on the Joint National Steering Committee and the Federal Agencies Steering Committee—where he not only served as active member over the years, but also as the cochair of each. Chris has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to the organization's mission and has been instrumental in shaping the trajectory of not only DoD PARC but also National PARC.

One of Chris's notable achievements is his pivotal role in the establishment of DoD PARC in 2009. His vision was not only to protect the amphibians and reptiles inhabiting military installations but also to integrate conservation efforts seamlessly with the military's operational needs. This foresight set the foundation for developing a strategic plan that goes beyond environmental conservation, honoring the commitment to military training while also protecting herpetofauna on military lands.

Under Chris's leadership, DoD PARC has achieved remarkable milestones. The comprehensive update of herpetofauna species lists for the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Army showcases the thoroughness and attention to detail that Chris brings to his role. Chris has also worked on development of online training modules, including a venomous snake and safety video. Moreover, Chris has helped facilitate herpetofaunal disease surveys across military installations within the United States. DoD PARC continues to serve as a model for other federal agencies and partners on creating and leveraging a network within a network that supports agency mission, agency managers, and herpetofaunal conservation.

Outside of DoD PARC, Chris has also shined with National PARC. In particular, he was one of the main editors for *The Timber Rattlesnake: Life History, Distribution, Status, and Conservation Action Plan* which was published in 2021. He has held positions as a co-chair of the National PARC Executive Committee and served multiple years as an active Ex-Officio lead.

Thank you, Chris, for your many years of service to PARC!

THE ALLISON HASKELL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN HERPETOFAUNAL CONSERVATION

THE AWARD IS PRESENTED ANNUALLY BY PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION (PARC) IN MEMORY OF ALISON HASKELL (1956 – 2006) TO RECOGNIZE AN INDIVIDUAL IN NORTH AMERICA WHO EXEMPLIFIES EXTRAORDINARY COMMITMENT TO HERPETOFAUNAL CONSERVATION, AS DID ALISON.

We are excited to announce Noelle Rayman-Metcalf as the 2024 recipient of the Alison Haskell Award for Excellence in Herpetofaunal Conservation!

Noelle was selected for the Haskell award due to her exemplary leadership, dedication, and commitment to the recovery of the federally threatened Bog Turtle over the past decade. Her efforts have led to the formation of a strong and effective recovery team, inclusive of state agency partners, and the establishment of partnerships with federal agencies, NGOs, and consultants. Noelle played a crucial role in developing programmatic Section 7 consultations, resulting in enhanced habitat restoration across the species' range. Additionally, she contributed significantly to the development of a Species Status Assessment (SSA), Best Management Practices (BMPs), and a Conservation Plan for the bog turtle, guiding essential recovery actions. Noelle's proactive approach also involved securing funding for critical equipment like pit tags and camera traps, aiding in combating illegal trade and supporting survey efforts.

Despite her demanding workload, Noelle also contributes to a number of other facets of PARC and NEPARC, including the Fundraising subcommittee, leading the Hellbender and Mudpuppy Working Group, and supervising our social media positions, as well as active leadership roles in CCITT and the PARC Turtle Networking team. She has provided exceptional leadership and support to NEPARC and CCITT, orchestrating impactful workshops like the Northeast Illegal Turtle Trade Workshop in 2022 and fostering increased communication between biologists and law enforcement nationally. These achievements reflect Noelle's unwavering dedication to herpetofaunal conservation, making her a deserving recipient of the Haskell award.





Noelle Rayman-Metcalf, the receipient of the 2024 Alison Haskell Award for Excellence in Herpetofaunal Conservation

Stay tuned, in 2025, PARC will be launching a new award for collaborative partnerships! Partners is in our name, and we are excited to begin recognizing extraordinary partnerships that forward herpetological conservation!



In anticipation of the 2024 Summer Olympics our Amphibian Week theme was Extreme Athletes: Amphibian Edition. And we went for Gold!

During the first full week of May, amphibians and their "athletic" achievements were shared and celebrated around the world both in-person and online. Things were hopping in Washington DC, where events were well attended around the National Mall and National Zoo. The National Museum of Natural History saw over 800 visitors to their Q?urios Exhibit; the Reptile Discovery Center at The National Zoo had upwards of 700 participants at their in-person event, which was hosted by six different federal agencies; The National Zoo also hosted virtual amphibian program as part of their Conservation Classroom that reached over 1000 students and hosted a screening of the Wild Hope film, The Frog Ark, for 200 guests courtesy of HHMI's Tangled Bank Studios. In California, our partners at the

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Sea Center hosted a month-long amphibian bioblitz with online and in-person activities; and volunteers around the globe hosted amphibian walks, art competitions, and presentations that engaged people about their local amphibians and natural habitats.

While not everyone could host or attend an in-person event, we leaped to the challenge with our updated Social Media Toolkit and organized two online competitions. We held a K-12 art contest and had 30 amazing works submitted, showcasing the athleticism of amphibians and artistic talents of the next generation. We also crowned the ultimate amphibian athletes, proposed by our regional groups and federal partners, voted on by all members. The Gold went to the Rough-Skinned Newt, Silver to the American Bullfrog, and Bronze to the Spotted Salamander!







BANNER: Drawings from the K-12 art contest. From left-right: Axolotl by Tyler, Cope's Gray Tree Frog by Clay, and an African Bullfrog by Ben.

PHOTOS: A celebration of amphibians at the National Mall with volunteers from various agencies and even a frog mascot!

OPPOSITE PAGE: Drawing of a Javan Tree Frog by Vienna and a Red-eyed Tree Frog by Emilia.



A HOPPING SUCCESS: INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION SUPPORTS AMPHIBIAN WEEK

PARC's Federal Agencies Steering Committee (FASC) is comprised of 11 Federal agencies who foster and engage in interagency cooperation on matters relating to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats. In 2024, FASC member agencies helped scale up Amphibian Week through significant contributions showcasing the nexus of science, the conservation of amphibians and their habitat, and agency missions online, locally, and in the D.C. area. PARC thanks the FASC for helping make Amphibian Week a hopping success!

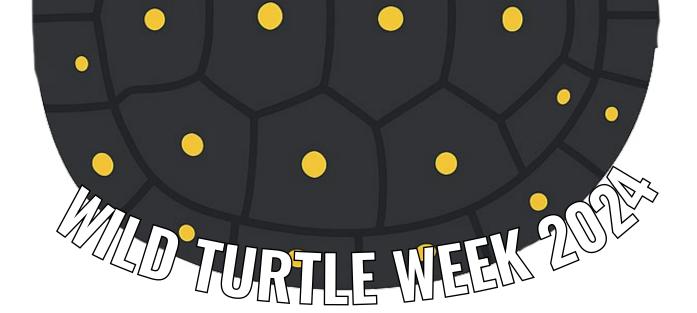












PARC celebrated #WildTurtleWeek in July, and it was turtles all the way down. Wild turtle week is primarily a social media campaign to share that #EveryTurtleCounts, and every state was able to get in on the fun through the 50 states of turtles promotion. Did you miss the story? No worries, you can scute your shell over here and check out the fun!

The five days of Wild Turtle Week shellebrated daily themes. They were:

- Turtley Awesome: Why turtles are species
- Turtles Need our Help: Threats turtles face
- Every Turtle Counts: Turtle populations can't afford extra losses
- Turtle Power: Turtles play important roles in their ecosystems
- Be a Good Turtle Neighbor: Everyone can play a role in helping turtles

Wild turtle week was created by the Human Dimensions and Communications working groups of the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles in 2022. This year, the #WildTurtleWeek tag reached nearly 9 million viewers, and the #EveryTurtleCounts tag had an audience of nearly 3.5 million viewers. The various tags were used by over 65 organizations, including state and federal agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations. In total, the reach of the 2024 campaign had a 97% increase over the 2023 statistics.

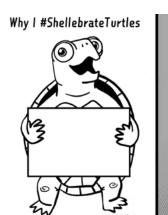
Want to explore the turtle pond? Visit <u>our website</u> to keep up with the slow and steady (and tortally awesome) news!

LEFT PHOTO: Sabrina, a student in Maryland, created an art piece featuring several turtle species in the area along with threats and conservation information.

LEFT GRAPHIC: During Wild Turle Week, people were invited to write, draw, and/or photograph why they love wild turtles. Graphic courtesy of Rachel G with @creatures ink

courtesy of Rachel G with @creatures.ink
RIGHT PHOTO: Callan (center) was
highlighted for who receiving a grant to study
Western Pond Turtles in California. His
project was titled, 'Return from the burn'Documenting Reptile and Amphibian PostWildfire Recovery At Arroyo Hondo Nature
Preserve. Also pictured: his sister in the middle
with Tessa Cafritz (left) and Kennedy Rivera
(right) at the Santa Barbara Natural History
Museum and Sea Center Amphibian BioBlitz
this past May.









Links and Resources

PARC CHAPTERS

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Midwest PARC

Northeast PARC

Northwest PARC

Southeast PARC

Southwest PARC

DoD PARC

PARC TASK TEAMS

National Disease Task Team

Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade In Turtles

PARC RESOURCES

Herpetofaunal Disease Alert System

PARC YouTube Channel

PARTNERS

Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies - Amphibian and Reptile Committee

SUGGESTED CITATION

 $Partners\ in\ Amphibian\ and\ Reptile\ Conservation\ (2024),\ 2024\ annual\ report.\ https://parcplace.org/reports/annual-reports/$

