

PARC
PARTNERS
IN
AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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 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 and aquariums, 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 26th year, and this report serves to share the advances and accomplishments of our network in 2025. Regional PARC meetings throughout the country promoted involvement in amphibian and reptile conservation and our task teams 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.

SUGGESTED CITATION

M.B. Youngquist, D. Olson, M. Christman, B. O’Hanlon, B. Cozad, and R. Walman (Eds.). 2026. 2025 Year in Review. *Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), Annual Report No. 16.*



4	Leadership in PARC Joint National Steering Committee	22	Ethical Herping and Observation Standards Task Team (ETHOS) Providing guidance for recreational herpers
6	Recovery in Practice An update from the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy	24	Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) Protecting native turtles from illegal collection and trade
8	Southeast PARC NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, TN, KY, MS, LA, AR	28	2025 Award Recipients Visionary Leader Award and The Allison Haskell Award for Excellence in Herpetofaunal Conservation
10	Southwest PARC TX, OK, NM, CO, UT, AZ, NV, CA	30	The Association of Zoos and Aquariums Safeguarding turtles and combating the illegal turtle trade
12	Midwest PARC ND, SD, NE, KS, MO, IA, MN, WI, IL, IN, OH, MI	32	Amphibian Week Celebrating amphibians in person and online
14	Northeast PARC WV, VA, MD, DE, NJ, PA, NY, CT, RI, MA, VT, NH, ME	32	Wild Turtle Week #EveryTurtleCounts
16	Northwest PARC NW CA, WY, MT, ID, OR, WA, AK, BC, AB, YT	32	Federal Agencies Steering Committee Interagency coordination for conservation
18	U.S. Department of War PARC Conservation progress across military lands	33	Links & Resources Learn more about PARC
20	Disease Task Team Uniting experts to combat emerging herpetofaunal diseases		

COVER: Ribbon Snake (*Thamnophis saurita*), courtesy of Melissa Youngquist.
ABOVE: American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*), courtesy of Melissa Youngquist.
PAGE 4 BOTTOM: Common Spotted Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis gularis*), courtesy of Paul Block.

PARC LEADERSHIP

* JOINED 2025, ^ COMPLETED TERM IN 2025



Melissa Youngquist*
Senior Co-Chair
Shedd Aquarium



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



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



Dede Olson*
Junior Co-Chair
U.S.D.A. Forest Service



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



Mark Mandica
DEI Representative
The Amphibian Foundation

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

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR PARC
David McNaughton, Representative
Chris Peterson, Representative
Rob Lovich, Representative

AZA REPRESENTATIVE
Shelly Grow^
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Sara Walker*
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

SOUTHWEST PARC
Cristina Jones, Sr. Co-Chair^
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jared Holmes, Sr. Co-Chair
Origin Ranch
Cassidy Lee, Jr. Co-Chair*
University of Arizona

NORTHEAST PARC
Amylynn Ephraim, Sr. Co-Chair
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Kevin Oxenrider, Sr. Co-Chair^
West Virginia Department of Natural Resources
Beth Schlimm*, Jr. Co-Chair
Maryland DNR

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

MIDWEST PARC
Jennifer Lamb, Sr. Co-Chair
St. Cloud State University

NORTHWEST PARC
Laura Sprague, Co-chair^
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Christine Parker-Graham, Co-chair^
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Daniel Trovillion, Co-Chair*
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Betsy Howell, Co-Chair*
U.S.D.A. Forest Service

TASK TEAM LEADS AND EVENT LEADS

COLLABORATIVE TO COMBAT THE
ILLEGAL TRADE IN TURTLES TASK TEAM
Kevin Oxenrider, Co-Chair
West Virginia Department of Natural Resources
Mike Ravesi, Co-Chair
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Julie Slacum, Vice Co-Chair
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bridget Macdonald, Vice Co-Chair
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

WILD TURTLE WEEK
Tessa Cafritz, Co-Lead
National Center for Ecological Synthesis
Dimitri Rucker, Co-Lead
Maryland Environmental Service

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

DISEASE TASK TEAM
Jenna Palmisano, Co-Chair
University of Central Florida
Corinna Hazelrigg, Co-Chair
University of Georgia
Colby Wells, Co-Chair
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Meg Kirchgessner, Co-Chair
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ETHICAL HERPING AND
OBSERVATION STANDARDS TASK TEAM
Michelle C, Becca C, Mark M, Brad O,
Jose G, Kevin O, and Amanda D are
all working hard for a formal launch in
2026!

A NOTE FROM THE 2025 SR. CO-CHAIR

It's no secret that 2025 was a challenging year for many members of PARC as we face a changed conservation landscape. During this year, it was my privilege to serve as PARC's Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC) Co-chair and to work with the amazing people leading herp conservation throughout PARC's Network. This year, the Executive Committee and JNSC began working with Foundations of Success to create a strategic plan to help PARC focus on areas where we can be most effective and efficient with our resources. During this time of strategic planning, we were thrilled to welcome Dede Olson back as a co-chair to lend us her expertise and experience. We look forward to implementing our nascent strategic plan over the next few years.

All the while, we are making an impact now. 2025 was a busy year for the PARC network. As you read this report, join me in celebrating the work of our Disease, Turtle, and Ethical Herping Task Teams; the work of our regional groups; and those few individuals who make outstanding impacts for amphibian and reptile conservation. I can only offer my sincere thanks to the many volunteers who keep PARC going!

With humble gratitude,
Melissa B Youngquist

A NOTE FROM THE 2025 JR. CO-CHAIR

In Fall 2025, I was asked to once again join PARC in the role of National Co-Chair. That query immediately set off a lightning bolt jolting a part of my inner identity back to life, as so much of my professional growth 1982 to present has been from my past experiences to understand little-known species and develop conservation strategies for at-risk groups, especially herpetofauna. I am eager to contribute to renewed strategic planning for National PARC, as I look back with a nod to past steps in PARC's organizational growth, understanding novel challenges of today, and a look ahead to forge new partnerships and fill gaps in conservation successes.

A bit more of my backstory follows. I retired in Spring 2025, marking a career working with amphibians and

reptiles that began as a volunteer "lizardeer" with a study of *Uta stansburiana* when I was an undergraduate student at UC San Diego, back in 1975-1982. My first biology class at college was taught by Dr. Michael Soule' - who also worked on Uta. He taught about a new perspective for conservation that became the modern discipline of conservation biology - an ethic that is part of my foundation. I worked on anuran mating systems for my Ph.D at Oregon State University, and then a 35-year stint ensued as a Research Ecologist for the US Forest Service in Corvallis, Oregon. During that time I was afforded flexibility to foster science leadership. I attended the inaugural PARC organizational meeting in Atlanta, GA in 1999, serving as a USDA Forest Service representative as requested by the Washington, D.C. Office. They knew I was a coauthor of the 1995 field guide "Amphibians of the Pacific Northwest", among other work and publications with regional herps. Although PARC initiated regional working groups fairly readily across the eastern half of the USA, at that time I was involved with the leadership of the very active Pacific Northwest Amphibian and Reptile Consortium (PNARC) in my home region. PNARC was a subgroup of the Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology, a professional society that spans several US states and Canadian provinces. Myself and other previous regional leaders of the IUCN Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force (1991-1995) found common ground as we expanded that vision to reptiles. We convened annually, held annual herpetology workshops and sessions at our annual meetings, developed various publications for herpetology synthesis, conservation strategies and assessments, outreach and education, and we were rapidly growing our constituency for herp conservation. In 2008, PNARC members agreed to morph into the larger PARC vision and we became NW PARC. I served as regional Co-Chair until 2010, whereupon I was elected National Co-Chair, serving until 2012. I was honored with the 2012 Alison Haskell Award that last year of my term, a surprise and highlight of my career! As I think of that time now, I recall the national to international unity we inspired by our rotating image of "Year of" events: Frog, Turtle, Lizard, Snake, and Salamander. Now in 2026, I am back on board the PARC team. I see challenges ahead, but optimism reigns true.

Best regards,
Dede Olson





RECOVERY IN PRACTICE: TURNING PARCA STRATEGY INTO ACTION FOR AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

AN UPDATE FROM THE AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVANCY (ARC)

Across the US in 2025, ARC continued advancing the shared priorities of PARC by turning network strategy into coordinated, on-the-ground action.

ARC helps translate PARC’s science-driven priorities into partnerships and targeted interventions that support amphibian and reptile recovery. The PARCA (Priority Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area) strategy continues to guide where conservation action is focused and how limited resources are applied for the greatest impact.

In 2025, ARC and partners worked in 35 PARCAs nationwide, conducting 27,933 surveys and 4,093 site visits that helped direct our targeted actions. This work spans a wide range of landscapes, from longleaf pine ecosystems in the Southeast to desert river systems in

the Southwest and isolated high-elevation habitats in the Appalachians.

In each place, the goal is the same: match conservation action to what species need on the ground. Across the Southeast, that meant continued wetland restoration and habitat management to support imperiled amphibians tied to fire-dependent longleaf pine systems, including Frosted Flatwoods Salamanders and Carolina Gopher Frogs.

In the Appalachians, ARC led rapid response rescues for the imperiled Hickory Nut Gorge Green Salamander following a hurricane that devastated some of its most critical habitats. In the Southwest, teams responded to drought-driven habitat loss by helping partners relocate 1,400+ Chiricahua Leopard Frogs.

These actions are often urgent and time-sensitive, but they’re grounded in the same principle: coordinated action guided by shared science and long-term recovery goals.

ARC also continued strengthening recovery efforts on private lands, where many imperiled species persist outside of public protection. Working with ranchers, farmers, other landowners, and local partners, we supported restoration of streams, wetlands, and surrounding uplands, helping reconnect fragmented habitats across working landscapes.

This work is guided by long-term monitoring and a growing suite of tools, including eDNA sampling, acoustic surveys, and repeated site assessments, which help identify where species remain and where intervention will matter most.

In partnership with PARC and the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) ARC continues to support national efforts to stem trafficking of North American turtles. In 2025, ARC contributed to initiatives that included strengthening state legislation to reduce collection from the wild and developing guidance for protecting sensitive information that may make turtles vulnerable to illegal collection.

In 2025, ARC’s work reflected a continued commitment to PARC’s core approach: collaboration across institutions and science-informed, focused actions. Through this work, conservation planning does not stay on paper. It becomes partnerships and long-term recovery efforts in the most important places for amphibians and reptiles.



LEFT: Carolina Gopher Frog (*Lithobates capito*), courtesy of ARC/Ben Morrison.
RIGHT (FROM TOP TO BOTTOM): Relocating Chiricahua Leopard Frogs (*Rana chiricahuensis*) in Arizona, courtesy of ARC/Becca Cozad; ARC Biologist with Frosted Flatwood Salamander (*Ambystoma cingulatum*) eggs, courtesy of ARC/Devin Welch.





Alabama Caribbean Georgia Kentucky Louisiana Mississippi North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee

SEPARC

Members of Southeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation met in March 2025 at Lake Guentersville State Park in Alabama. The 2025 annual meeting brought together nearly 300 herp conservation professionals, students, and interested attendees.

During the conference, they hosted three workshops

and 56 presentations. Approximately 78 individuals participated in the Regional Task Team breakout sessions at the annual meeting; these included breakout sessions for the Education and Outreach Task Team, Gopher Frog and Crawfish Frog Task Team, Disease Task Team, Invasive Species Task Team, and Hellbender Task Team.

The Steering Committee had a very productive year! They continued to add functionality to the SEPARC website and dramatically increased their social media presence through the close work with the new Social



Media Coordinator. Leadership added clarification to the bylaws to create advisory positions that will better serve the needs of the steering committee.

And, in the interest of meeting localized needs, SEPARC continued their support of the Herpeton Conference, which is being used as a jumping off point to facilitate the resurrection of FL PARC. SEPARC's senior co-chair attended guided discussion on what FL PARC should look like. You can look forward to more news on this front in 2026!



LEFT: Crawfish Frog (*Lithobates areolatus*), courtesy of J.D. Wilson. ABOVE (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Group photo of meeting attendees; participants playing herp trivia; poster presentation session; Jim Godwin (right) receives 2025 Conservation Hero Award from outgoing co-chair Ericha Shelton-Nix.



Arizona California Colorado Hawaii Oklahoma Nevada New Mexico Texas Utah

SWPARC

SWPARC has worked to maintain and expand the herp conservation network in the Southwest. In 2025, we held an in-person meeting in Albuquerque, NM from August 15-17 at the University of New Mexico, with a welcome social hosted at the ABQ BioPark. Over 90 participants joined to share and connect at our Meeting and Networking Extravaganza, and we presented our Charlie Painter Memorial Award to Tom Jones. At the 2025

meeting, we also held an Invasive Species Working Group, as well as a task team dedicated to planning for a 2026 Lizard Week campaign. Congratulations to our student presentation award winners!

Members of SWPARC represented the region at several other meetings including the Joint Annual Wildlife Societies of Arizona and New Mexico and Texas Herp Society. These meetings offer our members opportunities for career growth, professional development, and more knowledge to bring back to the SWPARC team.

SWPARC also recruited several new members and welcomed a new co-chair, Cassidy Lee.



LEFT: Gila Monster (*Heloderma suspectum*), courtesy of Becca Cozad.

ABOVE (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Photo contest winners from the meeting pose with co-chairs Jared Holmes (far left) and Cristina Jones (far right); behind the scenes meeting the tortoises during the welcome social at ABQ BioPark; meeting participants checking out vendor and sponsor tables; reusable pint glass with the 2025 Annual Meeting logo. Logo designed by Irene Dickinson (@standingbeetleart).



Illinois Indiana Iowa Kansas Michigan Minnesota Missouri Nebraska North Dakota Ohio South Dakota Wisconsin

MWPARC

CO-HOSTING WITH THE KANSAS HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

For the first time, Midwest PARC and the Kansas Herpetological Society (KHS) collaborated to co-host the 52nd Annual KHS Meeting. Midwest PARC organized two workshops, each with around 10 registrants. One focused on community outreach using

herps, led by workshop hosts (and MWPARC Advisory Board Members) Nicole Palenske Ladner and Dreux Watermolen. The second was an introduction to niche modeling, hosted by Mona Papes (U. Tenn. Knoxville). PARC Co-chair, Melissa Youngquist, gave a national PARC update at the meeting, and Jen Lamb, MWPARC

Chair, gave a brief MWPARC update. We also awarded a one-time-only Brodman Student Travel Award to graduate student Matthew Klein at the meeting. This award was created to help offset the costs of travel to the conference that year.



STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS

Four “Fueling Student Field Experiences” grants were given out to undergraduate, graduate, and recently graduated students working with herps in the midwest region. Research topics ranged from documenting Ringed Salamander (*Ambystoma annulatum*) reproductive activity in Missouri, to monitoring the spread of the non-native Common Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) in Indiana and Kentucky. Reports from student winners are available as PDFs on [MWPARC's Awards page](#).

WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP

Elections in November herald a big turnover in leadership at the start of 2026. Midwest PARC is excited to welcome new Co-chairs, Dr. Callie Klatt-Golba (Curator of Turtle Conservation at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum) and Michael Rohde (Ph.D. candidate in Wildlife Ecology at Iowa State University). We will add several new faces to our advisory board, including Tayler MacDonald, Emma Buckardt, Jacob Schaefer, Matthew Klein, Kevin Green, and Anna Slocum.

LEFT: North American Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), courtesy of Chris Petersen. ABOVE: Melissa Youngquist presenting at the joint meeting of Kansas Herpetological Society and MWPARC.; Common Ringed Salamander (*Ambystoma annulatum*), courtesy of Jeff Briggler; Education Workshop at the joint meeting.



Connecticut Delaware D.C. Maine Maryland Massachusetts New Hampshire New Jersey New York Pennsylvania Rhode Island Vermont Virginia West Virginia

NEPARC

2025 NEPARC ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKING GROUP COORDINATION

NEPARC held its annual meeting August 10-12, 2025, at the Poconos Environmental Education Center in Dingman's Ferry, Pennsylvania. A total of 177 people attended making it the largest NEPARC meeting to date. Charles Bier of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

delivered the keynote presentation, "Slowly Shifting Paradigms: A Career in Biodiversity Conservation." The primary goal of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for the NEPARC Working Groups, both new and established, to meet and plan for the coming year. New NEPARC Working Groups included: Advancing

Education Working Group, Habitat Management Guideline Working Group, Road Crossings Working Group, Herp Salvage Guidelines Working Group, and Student Working Group.

Three students were given awards for their outstanding scientific presentations and posters: Stephen Bredin



(Cornell University), Brianna Fruehauf (Canisius University), and Harrison Goldspiel (University of Maine). Additionally, Steve Faccio (Vermont Center for Ecostudies) and Scott McDaniel (Suquehannock Wildlife Society) were honored with the 2025 Community Conservation Award.

OUTREACH AND SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS

From March 6 through April 14, NEPARC continued their successful "Marsh Madness" outreach campaign from 2024, with this round featuring a 'Year of the Snake' theme. During this event, NEPARC members on social media (Facebook and Instagram) voted on their favorite Northeast Region snake species in a tournament to crown the region's favorite snake. 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 snakes. The Marsh Madness outreach campaign was extremely successful, generating

976 interactions on Facebook and 4813 interactions on Instagram. This year, the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*) was crowned the 2025 NEPARC Marsh Madness Champion, narrowly beating the Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) in an "overtime" vote. In addition to Marsh Madness, posts that did well on our social media included a "guess the herp" post based on a series of emoji clues and personal highlights of our Steering Committee members and award winners.

LEFT: The winner of 2025's Marsh Madness competition - the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*), courtesy of Andy Adams.
ABOVE (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): Group photo from the 2025 NEPARC Annual Meeting; participants at a presentation during the Annual Meeting; the runnerup of 2025's Marsh Madness - the Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), courtesy of Jared Handley.



Alaska Alberta British Columbia Idaho Montana NW California Oregon Washington Wyoming Yukon

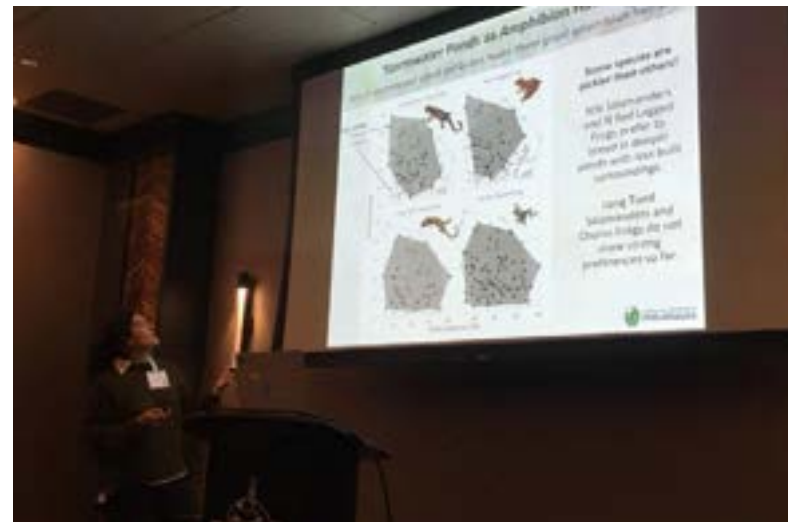
NWPARC

NWPARC's 2025 Joint Annual Meeting was held in Tulalip, WA in collaboration with the Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology, the WA Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and the Tulalip Tribes. Tribal members performed a beautiful welcoming ceremony and blessed the gathering. The meeting featured over 20 presentations on the latest in herp research from the Pacific Northwest.

A workshop on NW amphibian monitoring was held with a working group formed to generate a database and maps of amphibian monitoring projects to be hosted on the [NWPARC website](#).

WELCOMING NEW STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

NWPARC welcomed two new members to the steering committee, Daniel Trovillion and Wesley Sheley. After long and productive tenures as Co-chairs, Senior Co-chair Laura Sprague and Jr. Co-chair Christine Parker have passed the reins to Daniel and previous co-chair Betsy Howell, and Wesley has filled the role of treasurer.



AMPHIBIAN MONITORING

Federal, state, and university NWPARC members continued to conduct amphibian surveys to investigate an unknown source of mortality and emaciation in Rough-skinned Newts (*Taricha granulosa*) on the Olympic peninsula. The investigation is ongoing, but thankfully Bsal was ruled out by diagnostic testing at the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. NWPARC's Chris Cousins of Oregon State University recently shared the first ever photographs of a Cascade Torrent Salamander (*Rhyacotriton cascadae*) egg mass (pictured on previous page). This exciting discovery is only the 2nd ever observation of egg masses for the species and was recently published in Northwestern Naturalist.

LEFT: Cascade Torrent Salamander (*Rhyacotriton cascadae*) egg mass, courtesy of Chris Cousins.

ABOVE (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): NWPARC members distributing publications during the Joint Annual Meeting, courtesy of Betsy Howell; Jessica Sandoval presents research on the use of stormwater ponds by amphibians, courtesy of Daniel Trovillion; Betsy Howell monitoring the health of amphibians such as this Northwestern Salamander (*Ambystoma gracile*) on the Olympic Peninsula. Courtesy of Daniel Trovillion.

DOW PARC



YEAR IN REVIEW 2025: ENHANCING CONSERVATION EFFORTS FOR AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

For the 16th consecutive year, the Department of War (DoW), through its Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) network, has remained committed to supporting the mission and objectives of its network members. The vital work conducted to manage and conserve amphibians and reptiles on military lands is essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health, but most importantly supporting healthy landscapes for military training and testing. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the DoW Legacy Resource Management Program (DoW Legacy Program) for their continued financial support, which has facilitated numerous projects and deliverables.

Please note our name change from Department of Defense PARC to Department of War PARC.

In 2025, DoW PARC worked on publishing management resources, publishing public education resources, and a variety of herp conservation research projects. Below you will find a summary of these mission critical project:

MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

- *DoW Mission Sensitive Species Report*: In December 2025, DoW PARC released an updated version of the Department of War Herpetofaunal Mission-sensitive Species Priority List report. Developed in

partnership with Military Services, this report serves as a tool for senior DoW leadership and natural resource managers to prioritize species and habitat conservation and management actions to help reverse decreasing population trends and/or prepare installations for potential listings. Key changes in the 2025 update included removing the Northern Red-bellied Cooter (*Pseudemys rubriventris*) and Florida Pinesnake (*Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*) from the priority species list and adding the Southern Hog-nosed Snake.

- *Southern Hog-nosed Snake Best Management Practices*: In 2025, DoW PARC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the Southern Hog-nosed Snake, completing BMPs for all amphibian and reptile mission-sensitive species. Previously developed BMPs can be downloaded from the DENIX DoW PARC website.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

- *Species Profile Videos*: Our latest episode highlights the Mediterranean Chameleon. All 19 videos are available on the DOD PARC YouTube Channel and milTube, collectively amassing over 47,000 views.
- *DoW PARC Coloring Book*: Completed in May 2023, DoW PARC's coloring book quickly became one of our most popular products to date. One thousand copies of the coloring book were printed and distributed in 2025 to several hundred military personnel at Earth Day, Amphibian Week, and other outreach events. More hard copies will be printed in 2026.

CONSERVATION RESEARCH

- *Bioacoustic Recorders Initiative*: In 2025, DoW PARC loaned bioacoustic loggers to ten military installations to document frog and toad species presence. These installations recorded over 2,500 hours of data from spring to late summer. DoW PARC analyzed these data at no cost and provided the results to the participating



ABOVE: California Academy of Sciences biologists at Travis Air Force Base.

installations for integration into their Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs). Interested installations can reserve bioacoustic loggers for 2026 by contacting Chris Petersen (Christopher.e.petersen4.civ@us.navy.mil).

- *Western Pond Turtle Surveys*: To support ongoing conservation efforts for the Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys pallida/marmorata*), a DoW mission-sensitive priority species, standardized surveys were conducted across 13 military installations in California during 2023-2024. In 2025, the University of Illinois completed a comprehensive demographic and life-history analysis, providing a detailed assessment of population status across these DoW sites. This updated understanding of Western Pond Turtle status on military installations can directly inform management actions to address demographic constraints, and contribute to coordinated, range-wide conservation planning.
- *Using Genomic Resources to Monitor Imperiled Species*: This project investigates the genomics of

nine mission-sensitive species across approximately 30 military installations. The goal of this project is to evaluate the current genomic health of populations on and adjacent to DoW sites by estimating recent population trajectories, levels of genetic diversity among populations, effective population sizes, and migration levels among populations. In 2025, genetic samples were collected from 28 installations for six species. The Year 1 and 2 (2024/25) reports will be available in 2026.

- *California Conservation Genomics Project*: In 2025, DoW PARC and the California Academy of Sciences, along with various partners, collected herpetofauna specimens from military bases across California. Specimens will be accessioned in perpetuity for science to fill gaps in collections from military lands, and a subset of species will have their genomes sequenced. The genetic results will provide a modern investigation of the overall biodiversity of amphibians and reptiles for the entire state of California.

PARC'S National Disease Task Team facilitates and guides communication and collaboration on herpetofaunal diseases among PARC regions, federal and state agencies, and other partners.

DISEASE TASK TEAM

The PARC Disease Task Team (DTT) continued managing the Herpetological Disease Alert System, hosted two webinars with hundreds of attendees each, and began planning a workshop for the 2026 Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease conference.

HERP DISEASE ALERT SYSTEM 2025 YEAR-IN-REVIEW

The [Herp Disease Alert System \(HDAS\)](#) received 10 unique reports in 2025—an increase from five reports per year in 2023 and 2024. The HDAS provides a vital service by giving the public an effective way to report sick, dying, or deceased amphibians and reptiles. By contacting the PARC DTT through HDAS, reporters ensure that critical health data reaches the appropriate wildlife health officials for a timely response.

The year's observations began in February with two salamander mortality events of Northwestern Salamanders and a Long-Toed Salamander in Washington State, both of which were investigated by one of the state wildlife veterinarians. Between April and June, eight additional reports were submitted regarding individual snakes exhibiting external lesions or behavioral abnormalities. These cases spanned South Carolina, New York, Virginia, Washington D.C., Maryland, and Tennessee, and included: a Northern Water Snake, an Eastern Garter Snake, an Eastern Racer, Eastern Kingsnakes, as well as Gray and Black Rat Snakes.

All 2025 reports were promptly forwarded to the relevant state authorities. Along with follow-up on the two salamander cases, wildlife health contacts were responsive in six of the eight snake-related cases. These reports are crucial for facilitating early detection and prompt response actions, while also enhancing our understanding of the scope and severity of emerging infectious diseases. Please continue to spread the word about the HDAS. Everyone's vigilance helps protect native biodiversity.

REPORT A CASE



**HERPDISEASEALERT@
PARCPLACE.ORG**

*Include: location, species,
life stage, observation,
reporter's name and contact
information*

WEBINARS

HEALTHY HERPS TO HOMES: SAFE TRADES AND FRESH STARTS

Disease screening is crucial to the trade process, and amnesty programs make exotic pet surrender safe. In this webinar our two speakers, Dr. Matt Gray and Veronica Vargas, described how the amnesty programs they're leaders of support ethical pet ownership, promote animal health and welfare, and strive to provide animals a home with responsible owners.



ANOTHER FUNGAL DISEASE IN REPTILES? THE EVOLVING STORY OF *EMYDOMYCES* CAUSING SHELL EROSION LESIONS IN TURTLES

In this webinar, Dr. Matt Allender, Dr. Karen Terio, and Dr. Krista Keller, taught us about a new fungal pathogen, *Emydomcyes testavorans*. Turtles have a long history with ulcerative shell lesions, historically associated with bacteria. *Emydomcyes testavorans* has been detected in over 60 species of turtles and has played a major role in conservation actions of Western Pond Turtles and Blanding's Turtles. The speakers summarize the ecology, epidemiology, disinfection, and management of *Emydomcyes*.



PARCPLACE.ORG/SPECIES/HERPETOFAUNAL-DISEASE-RESOURCES/

THE ETHICAL HERPING AND OBSERVATION STANDARDS TASK TEAM

The Ethical Herping and Observation Standards (ETHOS) Task Team had a productive 2025, and is aiming to launch its first products in 2026. The purpose of this task team is to develop and provide guidance to recreational herpers: those individuals who have an interest in finding and observing wild amphibians and reptiles. To promote mindful herping, task team members gave opening remarks at regional PARC working group meetings which included how to mindfully interact with amphibians and reptiles during PARC field trips and beyond. Task team members also hosted listening sessions and workshops to focus the direction of the team at several regional meetings.

During the year, the ETHOS team finalized text for our five Ethical Herping Tenets and Gold Standards for Ethical Herping and Strategies to Maximize Compatibility. The tenets represent the highest possible standard for mindfully interacting with wild amphibians and reptiles, and the gold standards provide in depth guidance for when observers choose to interact with herptiles.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Demonstrating Ethical Herping Tenants when interacting with and photographing wildlife; the resulting photo of an Eastern Ribbonsnake (*Thamnophis saurita*). Photos courtesy of Brad O’Hanlon.

Looking forward to 2026, the ETHOS Task Team is excited to publish these products which will have expanded information on our tenets, launch a webpage, and expand the ethical herping discussion. The team will also be presenting information at the 2026 Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease Conference in Knoxville, Tennessee.



ETHOS’ FIVE ETHICAL HERPING TENETS:

1. Respect Amphibians, Reptiles, and their Habitat
2. Follow the Law, Regulations and Permits
3. Minimize the Spread of Diseases and Pathogens
4. Minimize the Sharing of Locations
5. Respect Others and the Amphibian and Reptile Community



CCITT

COLLABORATIVE TO COMBAT THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN TURTLES

STRATEGIC PLAN

[The first CCITT Strategic Plan was officially launched in 2025.](#) This document outlines priority goals and objectives for the years 2025-2030 to advance efforts to reduce the illegal trade in turtles and create a more sustainable and ethical environment around trade. This document is the end result of several years of input, planning, discussion, and writing by a large team of dedicated individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds. This product reflects a superb collaborative effort. Below are the five priority goals detailed at length in the strategic plan:

- *Goal 1:* Build and maintain strategic partnerships to support the CCITT's mission to address the illegal turtle trade.
- *Goal 2:* Understand how people affect and are affected by the turtle trade and apply evidence based approaches to reduce illegal trade in an ethical and culturally sensitive manner.
- *Goal 3:* Build capacity and secure dedicated resources to accommodate confiscation and repatriation or permanent placement of turtles.
- *Goal 4:* Develop a model legal framework and resources to effectively combat the illegal trade in turtles.
- *Goal 5:* Strengthen support for effective enforcement of the illegal turtle trade through resource development, collaboration, and tailored training.

GUIDANCE ON INFORMATION SENSITIVITY AND SECURITY FOR NORTH AMERICAN TURTLES

The CCITT Research and Data Working Group finalized an important guidance document on information sensitivity and security for turtles, with input and approval from PARC's Joint National Steering Committee. [This document outlines the problem, and offers several practices that any stakeholder, whether citizen or scientist, can use to protect sensitive information about at-risk turtles.](#) This effort was spearheaded by Dr. Nancy Karraker.

ANNUAL SURVEY

CCITT's first Annual Membership Survey was administered in early 2025. The planning and construction of this survey project was conducted in 2024. As such, the 2024 CCITT Annual Report to PARC also detailed this effort.

The intent of the survey was to collect information on member satisfaction, to measure how members are engaged with the organization, to assess thoughts and experiences related to illegal turtle trade, to inform strategic planning, and ultimately to strengthen the CCITT community. Information provided by respondents will help CCITT improve its efforts in the future. The goal is to ask a subset of the same questions every year to gain insight into trends over time.



LAW ENFORCEMENT WORKING GROUP CHALLENGE COIN

Challenge coins are a collectible, commemorative medallion often utilized in the military, law enforcement, and related fields. These coins can be awarded for exemplary efforts and accomplishments, they may commemorate a particular team or effort, and they are frequently traded by recipients. The coins come in all shapes, designs, and sizes. CCITT designed and produced its first of a series of challenge coins in 2025, recognizing the important effort that the Law Enforcement Working Group plays in combatting the illegal turtle trade. The coin was designed and



ABOVE: Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) confiscated by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement. Photo by USFWS.

produced in 2025, with orders and distribution taking place in 2026. CCITT Strategic Coordinator, Dr. Brooke Talley, was instrumental in the design and order production process. These have been a popular item amongst membership, especially law enforcement personnel. The plan is to feature a different North American turtle species on future challenge coins.

CCITT STRATEGIC COORDINATOR POSITION

CCITT's Strategic Coordinator, Dr. Brooke Talley, continued to serve as an impetus for key CCITT objectives in 2025. Brooke helped the organization make progress through the Law Enforcement Working Group engagement and future training, led ongoing collaborative efforts focused on reducing demand for illegally traded turtles, and worked to help organize the illegal turtle trade data. Brooke was instrumental in innumerable additional CCITT activities and objectives and represented the organization during the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), Southeastern AFWA (SEAFWA), and the AFWA Investigations and Intelligence meetings in 2025. We are grateful for another productive year made possible by partnerships with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC), PARC, and additional financial support.

RESEARCH AND DATA WORKING GROUP

- CCITT member, Dr. Max Jones, conducted an analysis of LEMIS turtle import data collected between 2000-2022 to describe the species being imported to the U.S., their origins, and trends over time. The paper is now in review at Biological Conservation.
- Working group co-chair, Dr. Elizabeth Hunter, facilitated a Structured Decision-Making workshop to identify the priority tasks for a CCITT data specialist position that will be hosted at ARC. The top two priorities were developing a database of confiscated turtles being held in facilities and creating a database of turtle sales via web-scraping of online sources.
- CCITT member, Dr. Ryan Almeida, created a framework for collecting data at wildlife expos to begin monitoring the species being traded at these events. An online webform is being used to integrate data across multiple users and allow for standardized reporting. This system will be tested at expos in 2026, and a companion guideline document will be made available to users (*continued on next page*).

(CCITT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25)

**HUMAN DIMENSIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS
WORKING GROUP**

- After serving as working group co-chair for two years, Emily Horton stepped down as she moved on from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Emily’s expertise and contributions to CCITT were substantial during her tenure. Dr. Willa Chaves stepped into the co-chair role. Willa is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech, where she focuses on the human dimensions of fish and wildlife conservation.
- The working group elected to begin a stepwise process to map out actors involved in illegal collection and trade at each point on the supply chain, identify relevant characteristics (motivations, barriers, behavior-change levers), prioritize actors for intervention based on feasibility and potential impact of engagement, and develop results chains for proposed interventions. This process is underway.
- The working group finalized a concise two-page communication guide for CCITT members that provides guidance on communicating with sensitivity, tips on working with the media, and overarching key messages.



RIGHT PHOTO: Spotted Turtles (*Clemmys guttata*) confiscated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, courtesy of USFWS.

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.

All of our congratulations to Dr. Molly Bletz, our 2025 Visionary Leader Award winner!

Molly, who calls NEPARC home, is an extremely talented herpetologist with a dedicated focus on amphibian diseases. Molly brings her expertise to PARC and beyond, and has been instrumental in producing many PARC resources, including disinfection guidelines, which are widely used by wildlife professionals. She also shares her wisdom with the North American Bsal Task Force, where she serves as a co-chair on their Technical Advisory Committee.

Through her work with the Bsal Task Force, Molly ensures coordination with the PARC Disease Task Team and other entities to promote disease surveillance efforts. One key publication, “Amping Up Biosecurity for Herps”, was published in the November 2023 issue of The Wildlife Society’s magazine, The Wildlife Professional. These accomplishments go above and beyond and profoundly promotes the importance of wildlife disease monitoring, prevention, and disinfection procedures.

Continuing with the amphibian theme, Molly is a key contributor to PARC’s Amphibian Week campaign. Molly has created several amphibian week outreach materials, and served as an in-person panelist for the 2024 Amphibian Week film screening of Wild Hope in Washington D.C.

Molly’s efforts – a collaborative blend of applied research, knowledge-sharing, and drive – not only prepare biologists for addressing emerging disease issues, they also help inspire her peers while Propelling PARC’s mission to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats. Congrats Molly!

CENTER: Molly Bletz (left) and Erin Muths (right) with their awards, presented at the Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists.

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.

Congratulations to Dr. Erin Muths, the 2025 recipient of the Alison Haskell Award for Excellence in Herpetofaunal Conservation!

Erin is an outstanding biologist and research zoologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, based out of Fort Collins, Colorado. Her work is focused on amphibian demography, disease ecology, and conservation. Through the USGS Amphibian Research and Monitoring Initiative (ARMI), she has assisted with Boreal Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) reintroductions in the Rocky Mountain National Park, studied chorus frogs in Colorado and Wyoming, and has investigated salamander diseases in the US southwest and Mexico.

Her experience and dedication to amphibian and reptile conservation is apparent through her 145+ peer-reviewed publications and many book chapters. Erin uses this experience to support important connections and collaborations locally, regionally, and nationally to support applied science with management objectives.

Within PARC, Erin is a member of the Disease Task Team, and has shared her expertise through many contributions to PARC’s Amphibian Week efforts. Amphibian conservation initiatives, including the USGS ARMI mission, were showcased during Amphibian Week 2024 in Washington, D.C. Erin organized and prepared events at the Smithsonian National Zoo, the National Museum of Natural History, and at the National Mall.

Erin’s drive for amphibian conservation is extraordinary, and embodies the spirit of the Alison Haskell Award for Herpetofaunal Conservation. Congrats Erin!

In 2025, PARC launched a new award, the Collaborative Conservation Partnership Award. In the spirit of PARC - where the P stands for Partners - this award recognizes outstanding multi-organizational partnerships that conduct work in an active PARC area, and achieved significant outcomes that supports PARC’s mission to “forge productive partnerships to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and the places they live”. Stay tuned for the inaugural award winner announcement in 2026!



ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

THE ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS (AZA) IS AN ACTIVE SUPPORTER OF THE PARC MISSION, MOST NOTABLY THROUGH TWO KEY PROGRAMS: SAVING ANIMALS FROM EXTINCTION (SAFE) AMERICAN TURTLE AND THE WILDLIFE CONFISCATIONS NETWORK (THE NETWORK).

The SAFE program was established in 2020 to focus conservation efforts on supporting 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 response to USFWS law enforcement when the agency confiscates live wildlife from illegal trade. Through a robust vetting process, the Network now has over 60 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. Since August 2023, the Network has helped arrange care and placement for 3,500 reptiles and amphibians from nearly 60 trafficking cases for the USFWS.

Though the Network will assist the USFWS with any illegally traded species across all 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 in responding to the growing number of 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 2,700 individual turtles confiscated since 2023. The SAFE program, in collaboration with the CCITT has developed a best-practices resource for law enforcement and animal care professionals to set turtles up for success on a pathway to eventual release back to the wild. Finding enough space to place animals after initial confiscation is a growing challenge. It can take years for turtles to meet the criteria for wild release. In an effort to alleviate the strain on zoological facilities, AZA and the USFWS awarded over \$2 million in federal grants to support capacity building projects that will provide emergency and/or long term care for confiscated wildlife. Over half of these projects will provide space for turtles.

In 2025, a total of 439 turtles representing four species have been reintroduced to the wild under the care and observation of seven state wildlife agencies. These individuals were head-started at eight different AZA accredited facilities throughout the Northeast and the Midwest. 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.



WILD TURTLE WEEK

Do you love turtles? We do. If you haven't seen it yet, check out the [50 States of Turtles](#) linked at the Wild Turtle Week page on PARC's website. This ARCGIS storymap allows visitors to learn about turtles from around the United States, and is a fun way to celebrate and learn about turtles and why we love them. Also, did you know that Wild Turtle Week will now always be celebrated during the second week of June, every year? Get ready!



AMPHIBIAN WEEK

This year during #AmphibianWeek we celebrated our slimy, jumpy, and altogether amazing amphibian friends with Amphibians: Masters of Two Worlds. From posts from Science Magazine on a cover story about how the axolotl can regenerate its brain to having fun talking about bioluminescence with #AmphibianGlowUp, there was no shortage of enthusiasm or creativity celebrating amphibians around the world!



FEDERAL AGENCIES STEERING COMMITTEE

PARC's Federal Agencies Steering Committee (FASC) continues in its purpose of interagency coordination and cooperation and serving as an advisory committee to PARC. In 2025, the FASC explored barriers and potential strategies that would benefit amphibian and reptile conservation across federal agencies. The output from this work helped inform the initiation of PARC priority action review and strategic planning efforts.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: 50 States of Turtles webpage on PARC's website; Western Spadefoot Toad (*Spea hammondi*), courtesy of Marisa Ishimatsu; Carolina Pigmy Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus miliarius miliarius*), courtesy of Dane Conley.



Broadhead Skink (*Plestiodon laticeps*)
Courtesy of Paul Block.

Links and Resources

PARC CHAPTERS

[Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#)

[Midwest PARC](#)

[Northeast PARC](#)

[Northwest PARC](#)

[Southeast PARC](#)

[Southwest PARC](#)

[DoW PARC](#)

PARC TASK TEAMS

[National Disease Task Team](#)

[Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade In Turtles](#)

[ETHOS Task Team](#)

PARC RESOURCES

[Herpetofaunal Disease Alert System](#)

[PARC YouTube Channel](#)

PARTNERS

[Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy](#)

[Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies - Amphibian and Reptile Committee](#)

