Kansas Herpetological Society

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# Kansas Herpetological Society



53rd Annual Meeting

6-8 NOV 2026

Sedgwick County Zoo

Artwork by Cheyanne Tull. (Instagram: @earth2chey)

SEDGWICK COUNTY ZOO

WiFi (SG-Guest) • KSHerpGuest/KSherp556!?

7:00 AM **Registration**

8:00 AM **Poster Session I**

9:40 AM **Welcome** - *Thomas M. Luhring*

PRESENTATION SESSION I – *Thomas M. Luhring*

10:00 AM **The 'silent' half: Diversity, function, and the critical knowledge gap on female frog vocalizations.**
*Johana Goyes Vallejos, Erika M. Santana, and Angela Mendoza-Henao*
University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri

10:15 AM **Context-dependent vocal variation in the Emerald Glass Frog (*Espadarana prosoblepon*).**
*Natalia Mejía Cepeda and Johana Goyes Vallejos*
University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri

10:30 AM **Clear as mud: Habitat usage of Yellow Mud Turtles (*Kinosternon flavescens*) in Nebraska.** [T]
*Megan Soldatke and Dennis Ferraro*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

10:45 AM **Microhabitat use in *Sceloporus consobrinus* populations in Nebraska.** [F]
*Jay Cleveland*
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

11:00 AM **Goodness *graciosus*: Genetic barcoding of *Sceloporus* lizards in Nebraska and Wyoming.** [F]
*Nicholas G. Kowal*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

11:15 AM **Thermal and maternal influences on hatchling body size across the geographic range of *Sceloporus consobrinus*.** [T]
*Garret P. Peterson, Tiffany R. Hegdahl, Owen D. Conroy, Brandon Wolfsohn, Jay Cleveland, Benjamin D. Haussmann, and Travis R. Robbins*
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

11:30 AM **KHS group photograph** - *Johnny Carte*

11:45 AM **Lunch**

LIGHTNING PRESENTATIONS – *Travis W. Taggart*

1:15 PM **The importance of implementing field opportunities in ecological curricula.**
*Brady Baxter and Thomas Luhring*
Wichita State University Department of Biological Sciences, Wichita, Kansas

1:20 PM **The skin microbiome of *Eurycea spelaea*: Implications for amphibian health in the Western Grotto Salamander.** [F]
*Zoey Clower*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

1:25 PM **Presence of *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* in anuran species in McDonald County, Missouri.** [F]
*Ellie Allgood*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

1:30 PM **Epidural swabbing for DNA as a method for monitoring a *Plethodon* species in the western Ozarks.** [F]
*Roland Wardlaw*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

1:35 PM **Potential collection of *Lithobates catesbeianus* eDNA from Ozark invertebrates.** [F]
*Abigail Richards and Lily Reeves*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

1:40 PM **Efficacy of different survey techniques when detecting *Acris blanchardi*.** [F, T]
*Dominick Trimble*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

1:45 PM **Observation by design: An experimental stream system for individual-level responses to chemical pulses.** [T]
*Hadley A. Copeland, John C. Maerz, and Peter D. Hazelton*
University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

1:50 PM **Ecological and behavioral trends in relation to variable land management strategies in a population of Ornate Box Turtles (*Terrapene ornata*).** [C, F, T]
*Kyra Jantzen and Benjamin Reed*
Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

1:55 PM **Urban turtle assemblage and mark-recapture rates in an urban lake.** [T]
*R. Reed McClure and Corey Roelke*
University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas

PRESENTATION SESSION II – *Dennis Ferraro*

2:00 PM **Rare phenotypes in *Bogertophis subocularis* and what the wall could mean.**
*Thornton R. Larson[1], Dusty Rhoads[2], and Dean Williams[3]*
[1]Midland College, Midland, Texas; [2]University of North Texas, Denton, Texas; [3]Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas

2:15 PM **How a lizard re-evolved its digits: Insights from comparative genomics.**
*Taylor Probst[1], Gunter Wagner[2], Paul Frandsen[3], Carlos Infante[4], Brant Faircloth[5], and Cameron Siler[1]*
[1]University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; [2]Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; [3]Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; [4]University of Colorado, Denver, Colorado; [5]Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

2:30 PM **Reduced migration rates create a myriad of phylogeographic structure in Flying Dragons (*Draco spilopterus*).**
*Regan L. Warren[1], Christian E. Supsup[1,2], Cameron D. Siler[3], Rafe M. Brown[1], and Jimmy A. McGuire[4]*
[1]Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas; [2]Aurora State College of Technology, Aurora Province, Philippines; [3]University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; [4]University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California

2:45 PM **Break**

PRESENTATION SESSION III – *Richard E. Glor*

3:00 PM **Assessing putative hybridization between *Graptemys pseudogeographica* and *G. ouachitensis* populations in Kansas.** [C, F]
*Dawson Kosmicki*
Sternberg Museum of Natural History, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas

3:15 PM **All a'board': How land management practices in a restored prairie impact the diversity and abundance of snakes.** [C, F]
*Jordan Adams, Jerod Thomas, Brett Riffel, Sydney Falcon, Krista Ward, Shania Burkhead-Harris, Dexter Mardis, Parker Binns, Molly Russell, and Thomas Luhring*
Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas

3:30 PM **Integrative identification of a naturally occurring hybrid of a Mojave Rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*) X Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*).** [F]
*Amelia Coykendall, Ed Meyers, and Jackson Roberts*
Sternberg Museum of Natural History, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas

3:45 PM **Statewide call surveys reveal a rapid range expansion of the green treefrog (*Hyla cinerea*) in Oklahoma.**
*Owen M. Edwards[1], Kaleb M. Banks[2], Hannah P. Eichelberger[3], Taylor S. Probst[4], and Cameron Siler[1]*
[1]Oklahoma Biological Survey, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; [2]Department of Biology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma; [3]Sam Noble Museum of Natural History, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma

4:00 PM **Biogeographic history and Bergmann's Rule, not genetic isolation, drive genetic and morphological differentiation in Crawfish Frogs (*Rana areolata*).** [C, F, T]
*Neil R. Balchan[1], Owen M. Edwards[1,2], Yucheol Shin[3], Kaleb M. Banks[1], Michael S. Reichert[1], Lisa N. Barrow[4], and Damien Esquerré[5]*
[1]Department of Biology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma; [2]Oklahoma Biological Survey, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; [3]Richard Gilder Graduate School and Department of Herpetology, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, New York; [4]Department of Biology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico; [5]University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia

4:15 PM **Citizen science at work: Using iNaturalist in the classroom.** [C]
*Tyler Balsters*
Campus High School, Haysville, Kansas

4:30 PM **Dinner** 5:45 PM **Evening social and refreshments**

6:15 PM



Keynote address:

**THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY: LESSONS FROM THIRTY-TWO YEARS OF HERPETOLOGY ON BEING A BETTER HERPETOLOGIST**

***Dr. John Maerz*** is the Dennis and Sarah Carey Distinguished Professor of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. His research focuses on how environmental change affects amphibians, reptiles, and other wildlife, and how ecological knowledge can improve conservation and management.

7:15 PM **KHS awards ceremony** - *Daniel D. Fogell* 7:30 PM **KHS live auction**

## SUNDAY · 8 NOVEMBER 2026

7:00 AM **Registration**

8:00 AM **Poster Session II**

9:30 AM **Break**

PRESENTATION SESSION IV – *Josh Mead*

9:45 AM **Take a deep breath: Submersion and acclimation behavior in the Alligator Snapping Turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*).** [T]
*Alex Rapp[1], Denise Thompson[2], Ben Thomas[3], Ralph Simmons[3], and Day B. Ligon[1]*
[1]Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri; [2]Drury University, Springfield, Missouri; [3]Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery, Tishomingo, Oklahoma

10:00 AM **Comparing wild juvenile Cottonmouths (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) to captive-reared head-starts: Preliminary findings.**
*Nathan D. Wendland and Brian D. Greene*
Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

10:15 AM **Metamorphic reallocation: Compositional changes in the ionome of *Lithobates sphenocephalus* across ontogeny in variably filled wetlands.** [C, T]
*Jerod B. Thomas, Jordan K. Adams, Parker L. Binns, Molly G. Russell, Clay Prater, and Thomas M. Luhring*
Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas

10:30 AM **Break**

PRESENTATION SESSION V – *Jerod Thomas*

10:45 AM **Gopher Tortoise basking behavior response to disease.** [F]
*A. Proudfoot*
Archbold Biological Station, Venus, Florida

11:00 AM **Accurately characterizing riverine turtle communities: Timing is everything.** [T]
*Derek L. Bateman[1], Kevin B. Babbitt[1], Alexander Edmond[1], and Day B. Ligon[2]*
[1]University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas; [2]Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

11:15 AM **Ecological associations and competitive outcomes among gecko invaders in a large metropolitan city in Texas.** [T]
*Maddox P. Moran and Daniel F. Hughes*
Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

11:30 AM **Student presentation awards** - *Daniel D. Fogell*

11:45 PM **KHS business meeting and officer elections**

**Local Committee:** *Thomas M. Luhring, Sydney Falcon, Parker Binns, Jerod Thomas, Brett Riffle, and Dexter Mardis.*

**Sponsors:** *Sedgwick County Zoo, Eva Clark, Travis W. Taggart, Michal and Chad Whitney, and Grassland Groupies.*

**Award eligibility:**

**[T]** ***The George Toland Award*** is a $200 award presented annually to a student who delivers an outstanding research presentation on the ecology of North American amphibians and reptiles at the Kansas Herpetological Society annual meeting. The recipient is selected by the KHS Awards Committee and must be present to receive the award.

**[F]** ***The Dennis Ferraro Award*** is a $300 award presented annually to the student who delivers the best presentation on the conservation of North American amphibians and reptiles at the Kansas Herpetological Society annual meeting.

**[C]** ***The Suzanne L. and Joseph T. Collins Award***, valued at a minimum of $1,000, is presented in even-numbered years to a KHS member for an outstanding presentation or published paper on the systematics, ecology, or conservation of amphibians and reptiles native to Kansas during the preceding two calendar years. Presentations at the 2026 KHS annual meeting are eligible for the 2028 award, provided the research includes fieldwork or observations conducted in Kansas or systematic data based in part on Kansas specimens.

# Poster Presentations

Session I - Saturday 8:00 - 9:30 AM • Session II - Sunday 8:00 to 9:30 AM

**[F]** ***The Dennis Ferraro Award*** is a $200 award presented annually to the student who presents the best poster on the conservation of North American amphibians and reptiles at the Kansas Herpetological Society annual meeting.

**[M]** ***The Walter Meshaka Award*** is presented annually for the best poster on amphibian and reptile ecology at the Kansas Herpetological Society annual meeting.

**Postmortem and genetic investigation of neoplasia in wild Prairie Lizards (*Sceloporus consobrinus*).** [F]
*Thi Tran (thitran@unomaha.edu)*
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

**Preliminary examination of burrowing and tail-display behaviors in Nebraska populations of the Prairie Lizard (*Sceloporus consobrinus*).** [M]
*Hunter Purvis (hpurvis@unomaha.edu)*
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

**Distinguishing ecological morphologies of the Western Milksnake (*Lampropeltis gentilis*) in Nebraska.** [M]
*Lucas Futey (lfutey@unomaha.edu) and Travis Robbins*
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

**Investigating the effect of substrate types on the survival of Prairie Ringneck Snakes (*Diadophis punctatus arnyi*).** [F]
*Emily Deming (edeming598@gmail.com) and Dennis Ferraro*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

**Utilizing the North American Snapping Turtle as a sentinel species, assessing multi-generational impacts of "Forever Chemicals" in the Kansas Lakes.** [F]
*Satomi Kohno (s_kohno@fhsu.edu)*
Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas

**Occupancy analysis of *Plestiodon obsoletus* in Lancaster County, Nebraska.** [F]
*Owen Chaffin (ochaffin2@huskers.unl.edu)*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

**An illustrated catalog of the holotypes of Caecilians (order: Gymnophiona) in the University of Kansas herpetology collection.** [M]
*Ava Viscek[1] (avaviscek@ku.edu) and Ana Motta[1,2]*
[1]University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas; [2]University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan

**Where the snakes settle: Testing microhabitat preferences using coverboard designs and camera monitoring.** [M]
*Jonnie Mahrt (jonnie46m@gmail.com) and Kendall Stemper*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

**Saving Mizzou's frogs: Triage and transfer of an at-risk natural history collection.** [F]
*Gabriella Dutcher (gmdm9p@umsystem.edu) and Johana Goyes Vallejos*
University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri

**Out of their shells: Assessing and rehoming Testudines from the Dean Metter Herpetological Collection at the University of Missouri.** [F]
*Ashleigh Porter (ap7hx@missouri.edu) and Johana Goyes Vallejos*
University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri

**Using occupancy modeling to trace correlates of colonization in an invasive gecko: *Hemidactylus turcicus* on an urban campus in central Texas.** [F]
*Ellie Phelps (ellphelps127@gmail.com), Adam Smith, Hannah Thompson, Sarah Christensen, Kaylee Winegarner, Caralyn McCollum, Avery Chapple, Renee Garza, Maddox Moran, Bilal Mustafa, Emily Devine, Natalie Hall, Danielle Gonzales, and Daniel F. Hughes*
Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

**The snap that smiles back: Ontogeny of anatomy and performance in the Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*).** [F]
*Gavin Payne[1] (payneg001@mymail.mssu.edu), Lillian Rand[1], Donnie Flowers[1], Julia Molnar[2], and David Penning[1]*
[1]Missouri Southern State University, Joplin, Missouri; [2]New York Institute of Technology, New York, New York; [3]University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, Missouri

**Investigating demographics and dynamics of a Bullsnake (*Pituophis catenifer*) population after a rodent population surge.** [F]
*Evy Isom (eisom3@huskers.unl.edu) and Matthew Flyr*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

**Investigating the behavioral responses of Bullsnakes (*Pituophis catenifer*) to chemosensory stimuli.** [F]
*Sarah Springer (sespringer23@gmail.com)*
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

**Anomalous skinks and the efficacy of existing keys in *Plestiodon* identification in Kansas and Missouri.**
*Jonathan Johnson (johnsonj@ku.edu) and Richard E. Glor*
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

**Comparing trophic niches of freshwater turtles using stable isotopes and fecal analysis.**
*Kaitlyn M. Bryant (kkt715@live.missouristate.edu), Kevin B. Babbitt, Riley L. Austin, and Day B. Ligon*
Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

**Death of a Kansas rattlesnake den, and how we can prevent it in the future.**
*Cody Van Dyke (c13vandyke@yahoo.com)*
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

**Slope and aspect of *Crotalus* observations across the contiguous United States.**
*Sam Harrison (samfharrison@outlook.com) and Richard E. Glor*
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

**Variation of testes morphology in Casque-headed Tree Frogs (Anura: Hylidae: Lophiohylini).**
*Lauren McKinley (laurenmckinley@ku.edu), Ana Motta, and Victor Goyannes Dill Orrico*
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

**Shell shocked: Turtle rehabilitation and the confiscation crisis.** [F]
*Ashlyn Kanakis, Natalie Rodriguez, Josephine Crisp, Keely Keeton, Kaitlyn Keller, David Penning (penning-d@mssu.edu)*
Missouri Southern State University, Joplin, Missouri

**Ranging behavior and exploration tendencies in Ornate Box Turtles (*Terrapene ornata*) in western Nebraska.**
*Shailey Holland (shailey.holland@washburn.edu), Nathan Consbruck, Emily McCrackine, Cade Thompson, Emma Wertz, Evvie Yendra, and Benjamin Reed*
Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

**Risk runs downstream: Non-target salamander responses to forest pest management.** [M]
*Hadley A. Copeland (hadley.copeland@uga.edu), Rachael M. Bryson, John C. Maerz, Elizabeth McCarty, and Peter D. Hazelton*
University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

**Beyond venom and constriction: Bite performance and trophic ecology in the genus *Drymarchon*.**
*David Penning (penning-d@mssu.edu) and Johnathan Evenson*
Missouri Southern State University, Joplin, Missouri

**Examining the relationship between resource availability and home range philopatry in Ornate Box Turtles (*Terrapene ornata*).**
*Caroline LeJuerrne (caroline.lejuerrne@washburn.edu), Grace Peterson, and Benjamin Reed*
Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

**Chonk census: Counting Arkansas Alligator Snapping Turtles.** [M]
*Kevin B. Babbitt (kbb76e@missouristate.edu), Riley L. Austin, Derek L. Bateman, and Day B. Ligon*
Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri

**Investigating potential causes behind an isolated mass die-off in an Ornate Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata*) study population.**
*Serena Schmitz (serena.schmitz@washburn.edu) and Benjamin Reed*
Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

**Developing DNA profiling for Ornate Box Turtles.**
*Myrrah Awwad (myrrah.awwad@washburn.edu), Anna Gaito, Benjamin Reed, and Joan Klages*
Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

**Examining drivers of Ornate Box Turtle ranging activity: A supplemental feeding study.** [M]
*Peyton Samek (peytonsamek@gmail.com), Jadyn Falley, Brookelynn Powell, Grace Peterson, Caroline LeJuerrne, Sage Dennis, August Weishaar-Wilson, Erin Carter, Kyra Jantzen, Ash Van Dalsem, Serena Schmitz, and Benjamin Reed*
Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas

**Evaluating autologous fecal microbiota transplantation methods in Eastern Fence Lizards (*Sceloporus undulatus*).** [F]
*Mary Rivera*
UUniversity of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

**Is a brief cold snap enough? Oxidative DNA damage following short and prolonged cold exposure and rewarming in Prairie Lizards.** [F]
*Safa Jabarkhil, Mary Rivera, and Travis R. Robbins*
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

**McDonald County's presence of *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* in anuran species.** [F]
*Pahlie Xiong (pahliex@gmail.com) and Ellie Allgood*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

**Epidural swabbing for DNA as a method for monitoring a *Plethodon* species in the western Ozarks.** [F]
*Roland Wardlaw (rolandardlaw999@gmail.com) and Justice Washam*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

**The skin microbiome of *Eurycea spelaea*: Implications for amphibian health in the Western Grotto Salamander.** [F]
*Zoey Clower (q.rhamy09@gmail.com) and Quinlyn Rhamy*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

**Potential collection of *Lithobates catesbeianus* eDNA from Ozark invertebrates.** [F]
*Abigail Richards (richards.ag.09@gmail.com) and Lily Reeves*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

**Turtle temps** [F]
*Terah Mitchell (tmitchell3711@gmail.com)*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

**Efficacy of different survey techniques when detecting *Acris blanchardi*.** [F]
*Dominick Trimble (Dominick.Bullard@hotmail.com)*
McDonald County High School, Anderson, Missouri

Notes: