

TERN TRACKS

Newsletter of The Environmental Resources Network, Inc. (TERN) ~ www.tern.homestead.com

Summer 2014

2013 TERN Outstanding Teacher Grant “Living Habitats of Georgia”

Steven B. King, Whit Davis Elementary School, Athens, Georgia

Whit Davis Elementary School teacher Steven B. King was awarded a \$1,250 TERN funded grant for submitting the top proposal for outstanding wildlife education programs in his school. The following is an end-of-project summary presented by Mr. King. Educators interested in applying for a TERN teacher grant should contact grant coordinator Linda May, linda.may@dnr.state.ga.us

Note of Appreciation:

Before beginning this summary, I would like to begin by expressing a heartfelt thank you to both the DNR and TERN for selecting me and my students with the benefits of this grant. Often as a teacher, there are special projects that I want to embark upon with my students and the lack of funds to complete the project hinders an exceptional learning opportunity. Through the generosity of this grant, I was able to witness my students develop a love for nature and specifically animals during the 8 month-long journey of exploring and learning set forth by this project. Many of my students live in an urban environment, are economically disadvantaged, and have very little connection with their natural surroundings. Through the lessons of this project, they became more aware of nature, made connections with nature, and overcame fears of animals as they had constant interaction with animals and their habitats in our classroom. Thanks so much for making these types of lasting impressions on our students through your generosity.

Project Overview:

- All 575 students in Grades K-5 benefitted from this grant.
- I was able to implement all lessons with a connection to the Georgia Performance Standards for each grade level.
- I worked with students to create natural habitats for the following animals which was purchased with grant funds or donated by a scientist at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia: two leopard geckos, eastern box turtle, bluegill sunfish, tropical fish, two red-eared slider turtles, green tree frog, grey tree frog, American toad, crayfish, slimy salamander, earthworms, and Southern Leopard frog tadpoles. Additional habitats were made with moss, bogs, and arid plants.
- Students in 3rd grade completed a nine-week long study of the Habitats of Georgia, created a project with 25-30 common animals of the habitat, researched a plant and animal in the habitat that they were not familiar with, and made presentations to the class.
- Students used iPads to conduct research and photograph wildlife on campus.

(continued on page 8)



TERN Officers

President

Brock Hutchins, *Peachtree City*

Vice President

Jim Candler, *Villa Rica*

Secretary

Leigh Callan, *Rome*

Treasurer

Eva Persons, *Forsyth*

TERN Board

Jerry Booker, *Columbus*
 Patty Deveau, *Atlanta*
 Oscar Dewberry, *Bainbridge*
 Jerry Donovan, *Eatonton*
 Stacia Hendricks, *Brunswick*
 Noel Holcomb, *Plainville*
 Walter Hoyt, *Atlanta*
 Jim Kluttz, *Tybee Island*
 Ron Lee, *Jonesboro*
 Dwight McLaurin, *Columbus*
 Sandy McLendon, *Perry*
 Brooks Schoen, *Atlanta*
 Charley Tarver, *Newton*
 Lindsay Thomas, Jr., *Watkinsville*
 Russell Wright, *Jasper*

Honorary Board Members
 Maurice Crenshaw, *Brunswick*
 Emmy Minor, *Townsend*
 Don Pfitzer, *Lithonia*

TERN Staff

Terry Johnson, *TERN Executive Director, Forsyth*
 Wanda Granitz, *Executive Sec.*
 Kitty E. Spivey, *Tracks Editor*

Jim Ozier, *NCS Program Manager, Forsyth*



T.E.R.N.

The Environmental Resources Network

Friends of Georgia's Nongame Conservation Section

The Environmental Resources Network, Inc. (TERN) is the official friends group of the Nongame Conservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Contributions made to TERN go directly to help fund important nongame plant and animal projects conducted in Georgia. To become a member or donate to TERN, visit:

www.tern.homestead.com

TERN Awards 2014 Outstanding Volunteer

Jim Ozier, NCS program manager

Greg Greer of Atlanta has been recognized as TERN's Outstanding Volunteer for 2014. Greg is an expert life-long naturalist who operates a "Reptile Roadshow" giving informative and entertaining live animal programs to groups of all ages. During his diverse career he has led natural history expeditions all around the world, served as Director of the Chattahoochee Nature Center, and as a herpetologist with Zoo Atlanta. He also worked extensively with peregrine falcons and other raptors in Virginia.

Greg has been sharing his reptile and bird expertise as an enthusiastic Nongame Conservation Section (NCS) volunteer for years, saving NCS biologists many hours of time and hundreds of miles of travel. One example has been his assistance with nesting peregrine falcons in Atlanta; the city is more than hour's drive each way for the nearest NCS biologist. Whenever called upon, Greg has responded promptly to "emergency" situations such as grounded and injured fledglings by quickly getting the birds back to the nest or to a veterinarian if they need medical attention, and he has worked with building owners and tenants in locating, monitoring, and protecting nest sites and in helping to band nestlings.



Greg also assists with reptile issues whenever asked. He has loaned NCS animals for programs, and helped find suitable placement for various exotic species that find their way into NCS hands. He has also contributed extensively to the Herp Atlas and assisted with alligator snapping turtle surveys.

Greg is an effective and appreciated ambassador for wildlife conservation in Georgia, and NCS is glad to see him receive this recognition from TERN.



Outstanding volunteers are always needed! To lend a hand for Georgia's wildlife, contact NCS at 478-994-1438.

Summer 2015 Camp ACE (Adventures in Conservation Education) (\$8,000) – These funds will assist the Wildlife Resources Division’s (WRD) Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center in hosting an advanced wildlife conservation camp for middle school students with an interest in nongame species of Georgia. Twenty participants will be accepted based on submitted applications reviewed by WRD staff. Students spend five days immersed in Georgia wildlife education via hands-on activities and day trips during summer 2015. Students will experience outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, birding, and canoeing as well as learn basic conservation biology techniques used by real NCS biologists. They will also participate in activities based on Project WILD and WILD Aquatic curriculum that will enhance their understanding of ecological systems. Students will be required to maintain a written journal of data collected and terms learned while on day trips. Because Camp ACE is an advanced camp modeled after the OWLS teacher workshop, students must apply and be accepted to participate. If accepted into the program, students will only pay \$100 and the rest of the camp fees will be paid by the TERN grant. For more information on how to participate in the 2015 Camp Ace, contact camp coordinator Rusty Garrison, rusty.garrison@dnr.state.ga.us



25th Annual Give Wildlife a Chance Poster Contest (\$5,000) — The annual Give Wildlife a Chance Poster Contest (GWPC) is a conservation art competition that is open to all kindergarten through 5th-grade students in public schools, private schools and home-school groups in the state of Georgia. The participants enter the contest at the local school level with artistic drawings and paintings that depict their observations of Georgia’s native nongame animals and plants. The top first-place, school-wide winning posters in each of four divisions (kindergarten, 1st/2nd grade, 3rd/4th grade and 5th grade) proceed to the state-level contest at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens. The state level winners are judged on close correlation to the theme, quality of art, originality and visual impact. The winning artwork is displayed at the Go Fish Education Center in Perry, and canvas tote bags featuring the GWPC theme and winning artwork are produced and distributed to student winners, parents, teachers, and as limited promo giveaways. State level winners receive award medals and their sponsoring teachers receive full registration to attend the Georgia Outdoor Learning Symposium. School level participants receive place-level ribbons and certificates. In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Poster Contest, this TERN grant will sponsor the purchase of a nongame wildlife license plate for all state level winners to be placed on their parent or guardian’s car as well as a nongame wildlife license plate for all state level winner’s sponsoring teacher. For more information on how to participate in the 2015 GWPC, contact contest coordinator Linda May, linda.may@dnr.state.ga.us



\$10,000 will be evenly distributed (percentage need based) to the following statewide NCS prescribed fire projects: CISMA communication equipment, UTV fire equipment, UTV partial purchase, prescribed fire cache, State Parks eco-burner equipment.

\$2,000 were designated to assist with the promotion of the new Nongame Conservation Section wildlife license plate.

To find out more on the progress of these TERN funded projects and other wildlife conservation programs conducted by the Nongame Conservation Section, visit www.georgiawildlife.com and sign-up for the Georgia Wild e-newsletter.

2014-2015 TERN Funded Projects

(Continued from page 3)

2015 Youth Birding Competition (\$7,900) – This 24-hour birding competition challenges students in grades K-12 to compete against others their age to identify as many bird species as they can in Georgia. The competition culminates in a banquet, live animal program and awards ceremony that includes presentations of binoculars, field guides, bird feeders and other prizes designed to increase students' knowledge of birds, wildlife and the outdoors. This program has generated significant interest in birds and bird conservation over the last 9 years, and the TERN funds will continue to make it participation free. For more information on how to participate in the 2015 Youth Birding Competition and contest dates, contact YBC coordinator Tim Keyes, tim.keyes@dnr.state.ga.us



Tracking Bald Eagles to Monitor the Effects of AVM (\$8,500) – NCS biologists plan to capture 4-5 bald eagles at Lake Thurmond in the early fall and fit them with Cellular Tracking Technologies transmitters. This will allow staff to monitor the birds' locations almost constantly to determine habitat use, foraging behavior, and survival throughout the year. Biologists expect to learn more about the bald eagles in an area known to have a high incidence of Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy (AVM), a mysterious disease that has killed numerous coots, bald eagles, and other birds across the Southeast over the past decade and a half. This will enable staff to better determine the impacts of the disease and develop a management strategy to decrease these impacts.

TERN Outstanding Teacher Award (\$1,250) – An elementary school teacher (or team of teachers) will be chosen for creating new programs to support the life science standards while focusing on nongame animals and Georgia plant species and their habitats. Preference will be given to teacher(s) who incorporate outdoor activities into the lessons. The TERN funds will cover registration and travel cost for the winning teacher to attend the annual Environmental Education Alliance (EEA) of Georgia conference, a plaque to be presented at the EEA annual banquet and award money to be presented to the winning teacher at the beginning of the school year to support purchases for their new educational program. For more information on how to nominate an educator for the TERN Outstanding Teacher Award, contact NCS education coordinator Linda May, linda.may@dnr.state.ga.us

Longleaf Pine Habitat Restoration Brochure (\$900) – Destroying groundcover diversity while 'restoring' longleaf pine is a restoration failure, and is especially tragic because it often happens despite the best intentions of the land owner. Many natural resource professionals have only a vague understanding of the importance of groundcover, and often landowners and land managers alike do not clearly understand how to achieve longleaf pine restoration while conserving plant and animal diversity. By giving land managers and land owners the information they need through this brochure, they will conserve groundcover, thus improving wildlife habitat on thousands of acres of public and private land by successfully establishing longleaf pine without destroying plant diversity. For more information on how to obtain a copy of the Longleaf Pine Habitat Restoration brochure, contact sr. wildlife biologist Nathan Klaus, nathan.klaus@dnr.state.ga.us



(continued on page 7)

Fourteen Nongame Conservation Section Projects Funded at Annual Membership Meeting

Another successful annual TERN membership and board meeting was held on Saturday, May 17 at the Persons' River Cabin in Forsyth, Georgia. The membership voted to fund 14 projects totaling \$60,650 to support the Nongame Conservation Section's (NCS) efforts in 2014-2015. The cumulative total awarded to the Nongame Conservation Section since the establishment of TERN in 1992 totals **\$1,051,287!** Thanks again TERN members for a job well done in supporting nongame wildlife conservation in Georgia! Through your membership dues and fundraising efforts at the Weekend for Wildlife you made a difference in "Giving Wildlife a Chance" in Georgia.

Wintering Golden Eagle Tracking (\$9,300) – Very little is known about golden eagles wintering in the Southeast. The TERN funds will provide Cellular Tracking Technologies transmitters for 2 golden eagles, and the remote tracking data collected will allow NCS biologists to better understand golden eagle activities and help contribute to any necessary conservation strategies. Additionally, blood samples will be taken to allow staff to determine lead exposure, which is proving to be a significant risk factor in golden eagles. Tracking results should be available online virtually real-time.



Summer 2015 Outdoor Wildlife Leadership School (OWLS) (\$6,000) – These funds will assist the Wildlife Resources Division's (WRD) Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center (CEWC) in hosting the summer 2015 Outdoor Wildlife Leadership School. Twenty education professionals will be accepted each year based on submitted applications reviewed by WRD staff. Participants will spend five days immersed in Georgia wildlife education via hands-on activities and day trips. They will experience outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, birding, and canoeing while learning basic conservation biology concepts and field techniques that can be used with their students. Classes will be taught by CEWC staff and other NCS biologists, as well as biologists and educators from the Fisheries Management, Game Management sections of WRD and from Dauset Trails and Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge. Attendees will also become certified Project WILD and WILD Aquatic educators and be given curriculum guides to use in their classrooms. Educators will be required to maintain a written journal of data collected and terms learned while on day trips as well as ideas to use with their classes. If accepted into the program, participants will only pay \$100 and the rest of the camp fees will be paid by the TERN grant. All participants will receive Professional Learning Units (PLU's) to assist in maintaining their teaching certificates. For more information on how to participate in the 2015 Outdoor Wildlife Leadership School, contact OWLS coordinator Rusty Garrison, rusty.garrison@dnr.state.ga.us

Forest Management for Gopher Tortoises Brochure (\$1,800) – Many of the private lands inhabited by gopher tortoises, a candidate species for federal listing as "threatened," are actively managed for timber production. Management for these two purposes (timber and tortoises) can be quite compatible if done properly, and many landowners are willing to accommodate the needs of tortoises in their management planning. Most landowners and managers, however, are relatively uninformed about what can be done to minimize impacts to tortoises while pursuing timber operations. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (and other agencies and non-governmental organizations) will be able to easily provide recommendations to landowners and land managers on ways to manage their properties for the benefit of gopher tortoises simply by handing out or mailing this brochure. This will arm such owners and managers with great information that they can apply to their lands, and hopefully pass on to friends, colleagues, and neighbors. For more information on how to obtain a copy of the Forest Management for Gopher Tortoises brochure, contact sr. wildlife biologist John Jensen, john.jensen@dnr.state.ga.us



(continued on page 6)

Wildlife License Plate FAQ

How do DNR's wildlife license plates help wildlife?

The Wildlife Resources Division has five plates that benefit wildlife conservation and management.

Sales and renewals of the two bald eagle designs and the ruby-throated hummingbird plate support Georgia's Wildlife Conservation Fund. Created by state law, the fund benefits endangered and nongame wildlife and plants through conservation, education, land acquisition and recreation projects. The nongame plates make up more than half of all contributions to the Wildlife Conservation Fund, providing vital funds the division's Nongame Conservation Section has used to conserve wildlife such as gopher tortoises and bald eagles, and help acquire thousands of acres of wildlands open to Georgians.



The bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer and wild turkey plate contributes directly to the Bobwhite Quail Initiative, which has created critical habitat for quail nesting, feeding and cover. The program positively affects more than 20,000 acres for quail and songbirds.

Why is it important to by these license plates?

No state appropriations are allocated for Wildlife Resources Division work focused on quail and nongame – or wildlife not legally fished for or hunted. Tag sales and renewals are the main source of local funds.

The Trout Unlimited license plate supports Georgia's trout conservation and management programs. These efforts impact trout production, stocking and stream restoration throughout North Georgia.

What is the cost compared to a standard Georgia plate?

A law change that took effect July 1, 2014, rolled back the price of DNR's wildlife plates to \$25 at purchase and renewal. (For all plates, including standard tags, there is also a \$20 registration fee each year, plus applicable ad-valorem taxes when purchased.)

How much goes to the targeted wildlife program?

Since the law change, \$19 of each purchase and \$20 of each renewal goes to help wildlife. That's as much as 80 percent of the license plate fees dedicated to the Wildlife Resources Division programs that depend on them.

Why did the fees change?

Because of the efforts of the TERN board, the 2014 General Assembly passed the license plate legislation sponsored by Rep. Bubber Epps (R-Dry Branch) and Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) and aimed at supporting wildlife conservation.

If I already have a wildlife plate, does the law change lower my renewal fee?

Yes. Renewals of wildlife plates now cost only \$25 (plus the additional standard registration for all tags). Of that specialty plate fee, \$20 goes to the wildlife program.

Where do I buy a plate?

License plates are available for purchase online and at your local county tag office.

What else is new with these wild plates?

In 2013, WRD unveiled new wildlife tags featuring eye-catching designs of the eagle, trout and quail. Showing your support for wildlife in Georgia looks even better than before!

"I purchased the wildlife license plate because I want to support our state's wildlife conservation programs, and the new design looks great on my car!"

-proud TERN member

Many thanks to the TERN board for all their hard work and dedication to help conserve and protect Georgia's nongame wildlife!



(Top left photo): TERN board members and their spouses on Sapelo Island for summer board meeting. *(Top right):* TERN board members assisting NCS biologist Mark Dodd with loggerhead sea turtle nest surveys. *(Left):* TERN board members discussing 2014-2015 projects at May meeting in Forsyth.



Friends of Georgia's Nongame Conservation Section

TERN is a 501 (C)(3) corporation. All donations to TERN are 100% tax-deductible.



2013 Outstanding Teacher Grant Summary *(Continued from page 1)*

- Students created a photo journal page that included animals and information about the animal that were then collated and bound into a booklet to share with others.
- Students made nature walks on our campus, engaged in bird watching lessons, and identified plants and animals on our campus.
- Dr. Bob Rataczak from the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources came and spoke with the students about his job and plants and animals in our state.
- Students assisted with the habitats in the classroom and helped maintain them throughout the year.
- Students created a large mural in the hallway of their work pertaining to the five habitats of Georgia: Beaches/Reef, Coastal Plain, Piedmont, Swamps/Marshes, and Mountains.
- Students created and used a field guide of over 100 animals and plants found in our state. These were laminated and will be used with classes in the future.



- Students furthered their learning of ecosystems by completing seven lessons from Project Learning Tree.
- All 4th grade classes went on a field trip in April to the Georgia Aquarium after learning about ocean animals. Special connections were made to those living on Gray's Reef off of the coast of Georgia.
- Students in 5th grade completed an insect collection of native insects found in our community. They used classification procedures for identification.
- Fifteen birdhouses were constructed by students and placed around our campus to improve our bird studies and provide habitats for native birds.