

FLORIDA CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Paul Moler Herpetological Conservation Award

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society is pleased to announce that **Dr. Peter Meylan** is the recipient of the 2024 Paul Moler Herpetological Conservation Award.



Peter grew up near the Passaic River in New Jersey, exploring the waters and woods while catching and keeping turtles. He reminisces that during third grade, his mother enrolled him in a herpetology course at the Morris Junior Museum and he was “blown away that someone could be a herpetologist.” He worked there all through high school. After considering the Universities of Arizona, Kansas, and Florida, Peter chose the latter and earned three degrees at UF. Upon his arrival in Gainesville, he volunteered at Florida State Museum’s “herp range,” leading to his many-year position as Collections Manager. After a post doc closer to home at American Museum of Natural History in New York City, he joined the faculty at Eckerd College, beginning as a Visiting Assistant Professor and rising to an Endowed Professor.



Eckerd College is an undergraduate institution. In the Natural Sciences Collegium there, Peter taught an array of biology courses, including Herpetology as an intensive "Winter Term/Autumn Term" course Ecology of Amphibians and Reptiles, Biology of Amphibians and Reptiles, Biology and Conservation of Marine Turtles.

Also Biodiversity - a two-semester sequence covering the history of life designed to meet objectives of a botany, invertebrate, and vertebrate course, which were a Botany semester and zoology semester.

During his career, Peter gave hundreds of his students hands-on experience, inviting them to assist in his long-term study of turtles in Rainbow Run, Marion County:

<https://www.eckerd.edu/news/blog/eckerd-32-year-turtle-survey/>

https://www.drellenrudolph.com/turtles_research.html

<http://www.storage2wo.com/blog/2016/3/somewhere-over-the-rainbow>

Relevant Eckerd Senior Theses directed by Peter:

1996 Jennifer Cox, Estimating the density of gopher tortoises on Egmont Key
2003 Diana Huestis, Larval life history of two-lined salamanders (Eurycea)
2004 Sonja Skovsted, Growth and longevity in Gopherus on Egmont Key
2004 Ryan Argo, Basking behavior and habitat preferences in five deirochelyine turtles
2007 Rebecca Xiques, Movement and home range of the corn snake
2007 Nichole Collins, Survivorship of the freshwater turtle *Pseudemys concinna*.
2010 Eric Brucks, The life history of the loggerhead musk turtle, *Sternotherus minor*, at Rainbow Run, Marion County, Florida.
2016 Brigid Carr, Using stable isotopes to study patterns and foraging ground fidelity in the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*)
2017 Lark Heston, The Reproductive Biology of the loggerhead musk turtle in Central Florida: evidence for miniaturization in the Subfamily Kinosterninae.

Peter organized a symposium at Eckerd: Status and Conservation of Florida Turtles in April 1994 and October 1999.

This led to the project very most relevant to this award: his editorship of *Biology and Conservation of Florida Turtles*, a 376-page monograph published by Chelonian Research Institute in 2006.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Nongame Wildlife Program provided \$10,000 to support publication.

Within it, Peter co-authored the Dedication to Walter Auffenberg (1928-2004) longtime professor at UF, curator at Florida State Museum, and his advisor.

He authored the overall Introduction and Habitats and Ecosystems utilized by Florida turtles.

Peter also introduced the snapping turtles: Family Chelydridae, the sea turtles: Family Cheloniidae, the leatherback turtles: Family Dermochelyidae, the softshell turtles: Family Trionychidae, the mud and musk turtles: Family Kinosternidae, the New World pond turtles: Family Emydidae, and the land tortoises: Family Testudinidae.

He co-authored accounts for *Chelydra serpentina* -- Snapping Turtle, *Apalone ferox* -- Florida Softshell Turtle, and *Clemmys guttata* -- Spotted Turtle.

The most relevant of Peter's ~120 peer-reviewed publications:

Meylan, P. A. 1984. The northwestern limit of distribution of *Rhineura floridana* with

comments on the dispersal of Amphisbaenians. *Herpetological Review* 15(1):23-24.

Meylan, P. A. 1985. *Heterodon simus*. Catalog Account, Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

Layne, J. N., T. J. Walsh, and P. A. Meylan. 1986. New records for the mole snake, *Lampropeltis calligaster*, in Peninsular Florida. *Florida Scientist* 49(3):171-175.

Meylan, P. A. 1989. Archie Carr as taxonomist. pp. iv-vi In: King, F. W. and R. L. Burke (eds.) *Crocodilian, Tuatara and turtle species of the world, a taxonomic and geographic reference*. Association of Systematics Collections. Washington.

Berry, J.F. and Meylan, P. A. 1992. The spotted turtle, *Clemmys guttata*. pp. 191-195 In: P. Moler ed. *Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida, Amphibians and Reptiles*.

Meylan, P.A., C. Steven, E. Dohn, and M.E. Barnwell. 1992. Observations on the turtle community of Rainbow Run, Marion Co., Florida. *Florida Scientist* 55:219-228.

Meylan, P.A. 1996. Review of: *Turtles of the United States and Canada*. by C.H. Ernst, J.H. Lovich and R. W. Barbour, 1994. Reviewed in *Herpetological Review* 27(1):41-42.

Szelistowski, W.A. and Meylan, P.A. 1997. *Regina alleni*. Predation. *Herpetological Review* 27:203-204.

Barnwell, M., P.A. Meylan, and T. Walsh. 1997. The spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) in Central Florida. *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* 2(3):405-408.

Meylan, A. B., and P. A. Meylan. 1999. Introduction to the evolution, life history and biology of sea turtles. Pp. 3-5 in Eckert, K.L., K.A. Bjorndal, F.A. Abreu-Grobois, and M. Donnelly (eds.), *Research and Management Techniques for the Conservation of Sea Turtles*. IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group Publication No. 4.

Huestis, D.L. and P.A. Meylan. 2004. The turtles of Rainbow Run (Marion Co., Florida): Observations on the genus *Pseudemys*. *Southeastern Naturalist* 3:595-612.

Mitchell, J.C., C. Ruckdeschel and P.A. Meylan. 2009. *Ophisaurus compressus* (Island Glass Lizard). Predation. *Herpetological Review* 40:223-224.

Chapin, Kenneth J. and P. A. Meylan. 2010. Turtle populations at a heavily used recreational site: Ichetucknee Spring State Park, Columbia County, Florida. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 6(1):51-60.

Ackley, J.W. and P. A. Meylan. 2010. Watersnake eden: population size and density of mangrove salt marsh snakes (*Nerodia clarkii compressicauda*) in two urban retention ponds. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 5(1):17-22.

Service:

Research Associate, Sea Turtle Conservancy, Gainesville, 2003 to present.

Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 1992 – 2000

Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 1992 – present

Editorial Review Board, Chelonian Conservation and Biology, January 1995 to present.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Marine Turtle Grants Program Committee 2001 – 2003.

Honors:

1985 Oliver Austin Award, Florida State Museum, for excellence in research accomplishments while a graduate student

2008 Richard R. Hallin, Endowed Professorship in Natural Sciences, Eckerd College

2009 Chapin Award from Eckerd College for excellence in scholarship

2018 The Archie Carr Lifetime Achievement Award (with Dr. Anne Meylan) awarded by the Sea Turtle Conservancy

Dr. Peter Meylan may be best known for his work on turtle paleontology and sea turtles outside of the USA, but as detailed above, during his Eckerd College career, he taught hundreds of undergraduates, involved them in research, and produced an important book about Florida turtles. These accomplishments have earned him the 2024 Paul Moler Award for Herpetological Conservation.

