

Natural History and Conservation of Florida Turtles

**19th Annual Summer Workshop for
Formal and Non-formal Educators**

18 - 21 June 2012

**Boyd Hill Nature Preserve
(St. Petersburg, Florida)**



Florida is geographically located in the second richest center of global diversity for turtles and its wide variety of habitats support over 8% of the world's known species. Twenty-five (45.5%) of the 55 species found in the United States also occur in Florida, with 18 (72%) of those considered by turtle biologists to be in need of conservation attention. Florida's significant habitat diversity and species richness not only make the state a chelonian hotspot, but critical to the conservation of many species as well.

Turtles are ancient creatures that walked the earth with the dinosaurs and today are important and visible elements in many ecosystems. Some species serve as barometers of the environment (providing information on the health of their habitat), while others serve as keystone, umbrella or flagship species. Conservation efforts on their behalf are also beneficial to the ecosystems in which they are found. Certainly, the threats to Florida turtles and their associated ecosystems present broad conservation challenges. However, despite the apparent urgency of the situation, the opportunities for conservation remain great. Consequently, turtles are an excellent group to use for teaching both ecology and conservation.



Objective: This workshop is designed to provide educators with a solid introduction to the ecology and conservation of Florida turtles through both classroom presentations and first-hand field experiences. Participants are introduced to the diversity of Florida turtles, basic identification techniques, natural history, causes of decline, and conservation measures, as well as educational activities and resources. Highlights include field trips to upland, riverine and coastal habitats where participants have an opportunity to study several species in the wild. Our goal is to provide a lifetime experience that will allow educators to return to their formal and non-formal educational settings and excite others.

Target group: Designed for teachers, environmental educators and conservationists.

Primary instructor: George L. Heinrich owns and operates Heinrich Ecological Services, a St. Petersburg-based company conducting wildlife surveys and research, natural history programming, and nature-based tours. A graduate of Memphis State University, his research interests include southeastern upland and brackish wetland ecosystems, conservation challenges facing Florida's non-marine turtles, and the role of education in conserving herpetofauna. He has worked for a number of years on the conservation of gopher tortoises and has studied the ecology and conservation needs of diamondback terrapins as part of a University of North Florida research team since 1995. George has taught ecology to students of all ages for over twenty years. He has served twice as co-chair of the Gopher Tortoise Council (an uplands conservation organization) and is the founding president of the Florida Turtle Conservation Trust. George has received a number of awards from state and regional NGOs for his conservation work, the most recent being the Crystal Vision Award from the League of Environmental Educators in Florida. Other Florida turtle biologists and conservationists provide additional instruction.

Registration: \$225 (includes workshop materials, equipment and admissions). Registration is limited to twelve adults. See attached registration form for deadline and other pertinent information.

Additional expenses: Participants should expect to cover their expenses for lodging, transportation and meals.

Field trips: We will make plans for car-pooling during the day prior to each field trip.

Component points (for teacher recertification): Contact the Science Supervisor or the Office of In-service Training in your school district for instructions on how to obtain component points for attending the workshop.

Info: www.heinrichecologicalservices.com / george@heinrichecologicalservices.com / (727) 865-6255



2012 Workshop Schedule

This workshop includes a little bit of everything, from gopher tortoises to riverine species to nesting marine turtles. Past workshops have provided opportunities to see over ten species of turtles, as well as visit several different habitats.

Monday, 18 June (8:00 am - 8:00 pm): Workshop introduction. Presentations on gopher tortoises and their associated upland ecosystems and Florida's riverine turtles. Session on the basic identification of Florida's non-marine turtles. Easy, two-mile evening hike through several turtle habitats at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve; includes opportunities for a close-up look at gopher tortoise burrows and to learn about predation at a Florida softshell nesting site.

Tuesday, 19 June (7:00 am - 8:30 pm): Field trip to Rainbow Run (Marion County) where we will canoe/snorkel on this spring-fed river and learn about riverine species, such as loggerhead musk turtles and Suwannee cooters. On our return trip, an easy two-mile hike through a classic sandhill at the Perry Oldenburg Mitigation Park (Hernando County) will provide an introduction to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Mitigation Park Program.

Wednesday, 20 June (9:00 am - after midnight): Presentation on the natural history and conservation of diamondback terrapins. Field trip to Mote Marine Laboratory (Sarasota County) for a presentation on the conservation of marine turtles and to visit the aquarium. Evening field trip to a Sarasota County nesting beach where we will join a marine turtle researcher and look for nesting loggerheads; requires up to a five-mile moderate hike on the beach.

Thursday, 21 June (11:00 am - 3:00 pm): Session on teaching turtle ecology and conservation; includes an introduction to educational activities and resources.

Please note: Schedule may change due to unforeseen circumstances, such as inclement weather.



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Registration Form

Please note: Registration is limited to twelve adults. Registrations cannot be processed unless completed forms are accompanied by full payment. Registration deadline: 11 June 2012. Refund requests must be in writing and postmarked by the same date. A \$25 handling fee will be charged for all processed refunds.

Name: _____

School/affiliation: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone: Hm. (_____) _____ Cell (_____) _____

E-mail address: _____

Emergency contact (name and numbers): _____

Insurance provider and policy #: _____

Can we provide your name/contact info to other symposium registrants? yes no

Can you swim? _____ If yes, please circle one: poor fair good excellent

Liability and Medical Release Form

I request George L. Heinrich allow me to participate in activities offered through Heinrich Ecological Services. It is my understanding that such activities may include hikes, field lectures, wildlife observations, and inadvertent exposure to potentially dangerous wildlife and/or vegetation, as well as many other activities. In consideration of George L. Heinrich allowing me to attend a Heinrich Ecological Services workshop and participate in the related activities, I assume any risk connected with the participation of such activities related to personal or bodily injury and agree not to bring suit against George L. Heinrich, his agents, or employees, for damages arising from any injury.

In the event that I may require medical treatment for any reason while attending a Heinrich Ecological Services workshop, I authorize George L. Heinrich and his agents to admit me for treatment at any licensed medical facility. George L. Heinrich and his agents are requested to arrange for transportation, at my expense, to the medical facility chosen to provide treatment and to administer first aid if deemed necessary.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mail completed registration form, liability and medical release form, and check for \$225 made payable to George L. Heinrich to: *George L. Heinrich, Heinrich Ecological Services, 1213 Alhambra Way S., St. Petersburg, FL 33705-4620.*



Support provided by:

City of St. Petersburg Parks Department
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Florida Turtle Conservation Trust
Gopher Tortoise Council
Mote Marine Laboratory
Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department

