

DECEMBER 5-9, 2022

SOUTHEASTERN STATE PARKS PROGRAMS SEMINAR • GULF STATE PARK

## Sessions

### Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>

#### 7:00 AM – 8:30 AM - Breakfast on your own

Two on-site options – Foodcraft offers both a buffet and a la carte options  
Roasted Oak for the coffee lovers

#### 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM - Conference Registration - Pick up packets in The Burrow

#### 9:00 AM – 4:15 PM - Pre-Conference Field Trips (Pick One)

##### Dauphin Island Excursion - (Weather Permitting)

**Drive Time:** 30 minutes by vehicle and 40 minutes by ferry; total 1 hour 10 minutes, one way

**Departure Time:** 9:15 AM **Return Time:** 4:45 PM – Meet vans in front of the Lodge at 9:15 AM

**Cost:** \$25.00/person

**Bring:** Comfortable clothing with sturdy, closed-toe shoes; rain gear, water, and a camera are recommended; other recommended items include binoculars, sunscreen, sun hat or ball cap, sunglasses, extra layers if weather requires.

**Description:** Embark on a ferry ride across Mobile Bay and explore the magic of Dauphin Island, a seventeen-mile barrier island that protects the mouth of Mobile Bay! We will start our excursion with a hot lunch at May's Café and then enjoy a tour of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Next, participants will tour the Alabama Aquarium at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, featuring a 10,000 square foot exhibit hall (housing over 100 native Gulf species), a 7,000-gallon stingray touch pool, and a Marsh Boardwalk. Then, visit Historic Fort Gaines, once a crucial southern holding during the Civil War, and now a location of commanding panoramic views of Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. If time allows, we will stroll through the island's Audubon Bird Sanctuary, featuring 137 acres of

Gulf habitat including maritime forests, marshes, dunes, and more. With 420 of Alabama's 445 avian species documented and the sanctuary's National Audubon designation as a "globally important" location for migratory birds, this field trip opportunity to Dauphin Island is one that participants will not soon forget!

**Trip Limit:** Registration is first come, first served with a 4 minimum and 12 people maximum

**Lunch:** Lunch included

## Gulf State Park - Pier Adventure

**Drive time:** None. Less than 1,000-foot walk

**Departure Time:** 12:00 PM **Return Time:** 4:00 PM – Meet at the boardwalk adjacent to the Dunes Terrace

**Cost:** Pier Fishing License only: \$13.00 Out-of-State; \$7.00 In-State. You can purchase your pier license online at [https://www.alabamainteractive.org/dcnr\\_license/welcome.action](https://www.alabamainteractive.org/dcnr_license/welcome.action)

**Bring:** Comfortable clothing with sturdy shoes; rain gear, water, and a camera are recommended; other recommended items include sunscreen, sun hat or ball cap, sunglasses, extra layers if weather requires.

**Description:** Soak in the magic of the Gulf of Mexico with the sensations of sand between your toes, gulf breezes lightly blowing across your face, and the scent of salty sea air in your nose as you explore the pier and beach of Gulf State Park! Participants will gather on the beach near the crashing waves to learn about one of Gulf's most crucial species (and SSPPS 2022 superstar), the sea turtle. Learn about this amazing species, its habits and nesting behaviors, and receive a crash course on "Share the Beach," a cooperative effort to safeguard sea turtles and their habitat. Next, take a stroll down the Gulf State Park Pier as you learn about the native wildlife that inhabit the Gulf of Mexico and find out "what's on the menu" as you engage with pier fishermen along the way. Lastly, after some hands-on instruction through Gulf State Park's Angler's Academy program, try your hand at a bit of pier fishing as the sun begins to dip beneath the horizon, the dolphins enjoy their evening hunting and play, and the shorebirds make their final late afternoon calls across the Gulf's rolling seaside dunes. (Fishing rods provided for use for SSPPS participants on a first come, first served basis; simply show your conference lanyard and staff will provide the gear)

**Trip Limit:** Registration is first come, first served with a 15 person maximum

**Lunch:** Lunch on your own





## Gulf State Park Guided Bike Tour

**Drive time:** None.

**Departure Time:** 1:00 PM **Return Time:** 3:00 PM.

Meet in the front of the Lodge by the Bike Share Program

**Cost:** Free. Download the Bloom App

**Bring:** Comfortable clothing with sturdy shoes; rain gear, water, and a camera are recommended; other recommended items include sunscreen, sun hat or ball cap, sunglasses, extra layers if weather requires



**Description:** Experience the Gulf Coast in a whole new way with a scenic bicycle tour through Gulf State Park. Utilizing the Bloom App, a bike share program housed at The Lodge at Gulf State Park, participants will explore over ten miles of paved and boardwalk trails around the park as they pedal past alligators, snakes, wintering birds, gopher tortoise habitat, historic dune habitat, and nesting bald eagles!

**Trip Limit:** Registration is first come, first served. 10 people maximum

**Lunch:** Lunch on your own

## Guided Paddling Tour of Lake Shelby

**Drive time:** None.

**Departure Time:** 1:00 PM **Return Time:** 3:00 PM. Meet across the street at Lake Shelby

**Cost:** Free.

**Bring:** Participants are encouraged to wear quick dry clothing and items that will hold heat when wet – fleece, wool, or nylon; sturdy shoes; rain gear, water, and a camera are recommended; other recommended items include sunscreen, sun hat or ball cap, sunglasses, extra layers if weather requires.

**Description:** Enjoy a leisurely paddle on the waters of Lake Shelby, a 592-acre brackish water lake nestled within the heart of Gulf State Park. This beginner-friendly kayaking trip is the perfect way to relax, unwind, and enjoy the unique and rich ecosystem found just inland from the sandy beaches. Along the way, keep your eyes peeled for native wildlife, including bald eagles, osprey, various wading bird species, alligators, and aquatic turtles. Kayaks and life jackets are provided.

**Trip Limit:** Registration is first come, first served with 10 people maximum

**Lunch:** Lunch on your own

## Other Options on Your Own – No transportation provided



- Big Beach Brewery
- Geocaching – Lots of fun geocaches in the park.
- Hike Jeff Friend Trail
- Relax on the beach
- Shop Souvenir stores

## **5:30 PM - Welcome Reception and Low Country Boil**

*Gulf State Park Nature Center and Amphitheater*

On behalf of Alabama State Parks Division and our Director, Greg Lein, we are pleased to welcome you to Gulf State Park for SSPPS 2022! We hope that you spend this week soaking in the seaside sunshine, catching up with old friends and making new, and learning innovative and exciting ways to engage with your park guests through programming, partnerships, and projects. To kick off what we know will be a spectacular week, we invite you to join us for an old-fashioned low country boil at the Gulf State Park Nature Center and Amphitheater. Enjoy Gulf Coast delicacies as you mingle with the park's interpretive staff and teacher-creatures under the sparkling moonlight along the shores of Middle Lake. (Vegetarian and non-seafood options will be available)



## **9:00 PM to 11:00 PM - Hospitality**

# **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 AM – 8:00 AM - Breakfast**

**8:00 AM – 8:15 AM - Announcements, Housekeeping**

Gulf State Park Superintendent, Matt Young, welcomes you!



**8:15 AM – 9:00AM – Guest Speaker – Keena Graham – "Inclusive Interpretation Is Interesting Interpretation"**

Keena Graham was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She received her bachelor's degree in history from the University of Alabama and her master's degree in public history from Western Michigan University. Her career with the National Park Service started over 20 years ago at Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial in the middle of Arlington National Cemetery. During her career, she has worked on the National Mall, the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument and Russell Cave National Monument. She has worked on special projects at other Civil War and Civil Rights sites as well as helping to commemorate the Trail of Tears and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the March from Selma to Montgomery. Keena spent four years working for the US Fish & Wildlife Service in New Jersey. She has also conducted public history research projects in France and in Germany. Today, she is the first permanent superintendent of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument in Jackson, Mississippi and very happy to be back in the southeast.

**9:15 AM - 11:00 AM – State Showcases**

**11:00 AM - 12:00 PM – Keynote Speaker - Dr. James B. McClintock - 'From Penguins to Plankton – the Dramatic Impacts of Climate Change on Antarctica and the Implications for the Southeastern U.S.'**



Dr. James B. McClintock is the Endowed University Professor of Polar and Marine Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California (1978) and his doctoral degree from the University of South Florida (1984). In 1987 he joined the faculty of the Department of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. McClintock's research has encompassed studies of the impacts of rapid climate change and ocean acidification on Antarctic marine algae and invertebrates. He has published 292 peer-reviewed scientific publications, edited, and written numerous books, and his research has been featured in a variety of public media. He has been the recipient of multiple awards and distinctions and serves on numerous boards including The Cahaba River Society, Forever Wild, and is an elected Fellow of the Explorer's Club.

As one of the world's foremost experts on Antarctica, Dr. James McClintock has spent his career exploring and documenting the unprecedented impacts of climate change on the animals and oceans near the South Pole. Through his program, Dr. McClintock will lead participants on a journey through the unique and fragile ecology of the Antarctic Peninsula, sharing his decades of research and exploration in an easy to digest and dynamic fashion. He will then give participants tangible tools to take the concept of climate change back to their parks and share it with the public, with an eye toward engagement, understandability, and, most importantly, hope for the future.

**12:00 PM – Commute to Learning Campus**

**12:15 PM – 1:00 PM – Lunch at The Learning Campus**

**1:00 PM – 1:15 PM – State Showcase**

**1:15 PM – 2:00 PM – AmeriCorps Presentation - *Tamika Eaton***

An overview of AmeriCorps, the only federal agency dedicated to national service and volunteerism, and the different streams of service will be discussed. Participants will learn about how AmeriCorps NCCC has partnered and supported state parks throughout the Southeast. Insight will be gained on ways to partner with AmeriCorps to meet goals and address needs at state parks with projects targeting initiatives such as environmental stewardship and conservation, infrastructure improvement, and disaster recovery. Participants will be able to brainstorm ideas, ask questions, and explore details of the AmeriCorps NCCC application process.



## 2:10 – 4:45 PM - Concurrent Sessions

### 2:10 PM – 2:55 PM - Session 1

- **Session A - Trouble on the Half Shell**

*Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies/Partners in Amphibian & Reptile Conservation*

Turtles are ancient reptiles that serve important roles in our ecosystems and cultures, but many species are in decline. This session will cover *turtle-ly* awesome adaptations, life history information, why *#EveryTurtleCounts*, and threats to turtle species. Information will be provided on the illegal trade in turtles and how it is happening on public lands. After a brief presentation, participants will get a chance to model a hands-on activity that delves into the troubles that sea turtles and land turtles face and how simple individual and community actions can help local turtles. All participants will receive access to a Google Drive with an easy-to-adapt lesson plan and additional resources to teach about and *shellebrate* local turtle species.



- **Session B - Providing to Preserve: Interpreting Sensitive Habitats and Animals**

*Alabama State Parks (Oak Mountain)*

Does your park have a sensitive habitat or amazing animals that you want to share in programming? Hear from Lauren Massey, Park Naturalist of Oak Mountain State Park, as she walks you through the steps of preserving these habitats and utilizing animals (stress free) while still providing meaningful interpretive programs. With examples from Vernal Pool exploration, Teacher Creatures, and encountering endangered tree species and plants in Alabama State Parks, Lauren will help you feel more confident exposing guests to these amazing resources in a safe and conservation-minded way. Featuring field equipment, live animals, and other fun examples.

- **Session C - Finding Your Way to Orienteering**

*Alabama State Parks (Gulf)*



Would you like to introduce visitors to compass and map navigation, but are unsure where to start? In this session, Johanna Gertsch, Park Naturalist at Gulf State Park, will discuss Gulf State Park's journey to create an introductory orienteering programming. This development process was a wonderful collaboration between the Park, Orienteering USA, and our local city schools. We will discuss the many resources that helped us along the way and how they can help you to introduce visitors to navigation in a fun and captivating way.

### 3:05 PM – 3:50 PM - Session 2

- **Session D - Integrating Enchanted Themes to Spark Wonder and Curiosity in Nature Programs**

*Alabama State Parks (Cheaha)*

For a few moments, put aside the constraints of the modern world and embrace the possibilities of the unknown...and believe in the legends of your childhood. Let your imagination run wild and join Mandy Pearson, Naturalist of Cheaha State Park, as she shows you how Cheaha transforms ordinary programs into magically, memorable themed weekend adventures that allow guests to immerse themselves in an "enchanted" forest full of adventures.

- **Session E - Cherokee Flower Printing/Leaf Pounding Class**  
*Alabama State Parks (DeSoto)*



Experience an activity that is steeped in history! Brittney Hughes, DeSoto State Park Naturalist, teaches this simple and stunning technique that was historically used by Cherokee women to decorate fabric. In this class, Brittney will guide you on a quick walk to identify leaves that can be used for leaf pounding, discuss natural dyes, then give you a chance to unleash your creativity to make a beautiful and unique piece of fabric to take home. Participants can also bring their own fabric like t-shirts, handkerchiefs, pillowcases, etc. as long as it is 100% cotton. This class is for ages 8 to adult and can easily be adapted to your own park.

- **Session F - Partners in Paddle Sport Safety**  
*Tennessee State Parks*

With the increasing popularity of paddle sports, the rates of accidents have increased accordingly making Tennessee a state with one of the highest rates of boating accidents and fatalities. In 2022 Tennessee State Parks partnered with the American Canoe Association and volunteer instructors from local paddling clubs across the state to provide low-cost introduction to kayaking classes. This session will explore building partnerships, increasing access to safe boating, and the ripple effects that are benefitting park visitors.

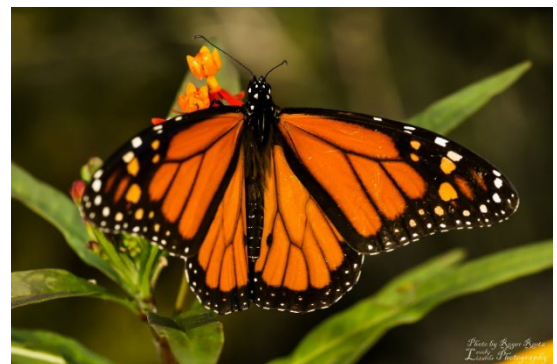
#### **4:00 PM – 4:45 PM - Session 3**

- **Session G - Engaging Seasonal Employees in Long Term Projects**  
*Tennessee State Parks*

In 2015, Tennessee State Parks implemented a Cumberland Trail Work Week program for Seasonal Interpretive Rangers (SIRs). This mid-season training/workshop provides an opportunity for the SIRs to learn a new skillset through building trails, and work towards completing one of the state's most ambitious long-term projects, completing the 300+ mile Cumberland Trail. The week provides outstanding networking and camaraderie amongst peers and is consistently a highlight of the SIR experience through meaningful work that park visitors will benefit from for decades to come. Park Manager Anthony Jones and Regional Interpreter Katie Wisniewski will provide insight into what has made the partnership between the SIR Program and Cumberland Trail State Park successful and how you can replicate it in your area.

- **Session H - Interpretation for All – An Interpretive Self-Assessment**  
*Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites*

In Fall of 2021 Georgia State Parks launched a statewide internal self-assessment of all interpretive media to assess the cultural, scientific, and historic messages. The goal of the self-assessment was to shift from a reactive response to complaints to a proactive approach of correcting items and increasing representation of cultures, peoples, and stories. A year into the project we have funded 91 items, 23 of which are already completed. The practice is now guiding all exhibit prioritization and interpretive development. This presentation reviews how we launched it, how we use the assessment to gain buy-in and funding, and what we hope it means for our organizations DEI efforts long-term.



- **Session I – What’s the Buzz? Pollinator Conservation in Maryland State Parks**  
*Maryland Park Service*

During 2022, the Maryland Park Service launched a new initiative for pollinators called "Project Butterfly & Bumblebee." Through Project Butterfly & Bumblebee, the Maryland Park Service is committed to increasing pollinator habitat on public lands, educating the public about pollinators, and supporting programs and events that highlight the important role pollinators play in maintaining the nation’s food supply and healthy, diverse ecosystems. This new program solicited donations to directly support pollinator plantings and education on State Parks. The Maryland Park Service has increased the amount of essential pollinator habitat, including host plants and nectar sources on State Park lands, as well as creating demonstration areas ranging in size- from small gardens to large fields and even meadows for the public to visit. Additionally, pollinator related park events have been added to our calendars, including native plant sales and pollinator festivals to increase education and outreach. The 2022 Park Quest program (now in its 15th season!) also had a pollinator theme and was as popular as ever! Learn how you can increase pollinator conservation at your park from Maryland's "Project Butterfly & Bumblebee"!

**4:55 PM – 5:40 PM - Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork: Partnering to Strengthen our African American Story - Virginia State Parks**



Virginia State Parks has been working with the US Forest Service and the University of Minnesota on a student led project that digs down into our interpretation of black history, stories and narratives through interviews of park staff that looks at barriers, opportunities and successes. In this session we will present findings, discuss next steps, and have a round table panel discussion where everyone would get a chance to ask questions about the process and share successes and barriers in their own agencies on interpreting underrepresented stories.

**6:00 PM – 8:30 PM – Dinner at Woodside Grill - Firepits, games, entertainment, smores**

**9:00 PM - 11:00 PM - Hospitality**

## **Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> - Field Trip Day**

**6:45 AM – 7:45 AM - Breakfast**

**7:45 AM – 8:00 AM – Load Buses**

**8:00 AM – Buses Depart**

**8:00 AM – 5:30 PM - Field Trips to Ft. Morgan/Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve**

Enjoy a field trip day filled with the lush natural resources and rich cultural heritage that coastal Alabama has to offer! This field trip will have 2 stopovers.

One stop will be at Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, a 9,317-acre wildlife haven managed by the Alabama State Lands Division. Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is a field laboratory and research facility that encompasses upland and bottomland hardwood forests, salt and freshwater marshes, submerged aquatic vegetation and unique bog habitats. Participants will explore the Weeks Bay watershed via pontoon boat, immersing themselves in the ecology, flora, and fauna of this





precious wild habitat. You will also tour the educational center, classroom, take a walk along the marsh boardwalk, and participate in a hands-on art project to take home. All Reserve education and outreach activities are designed to enhance public awareness of estuarine systems and foster stewardship of coastal resources.

The other stop will be The National Historic Landmark, Fort Morgan, a bayside masonry fort that served as a crucial Confederate holding during the Civil War that is managed by the Alabama Historical Commission. At Historic Fort Morgan, you will experience history come alive through a scavenger hunt adventure, a guided beachside excursion led by Dr. Simpson, a Civil War Era escape room, and a living history guided tour. Lunch will be held picnic style on location.

**6:30 PM – 9:00 PM - Dinner on your own**

**9:00 PM - 11:00 PM - Hospitality**

## **Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 AM – 8:00 AM - Breakfast**

**8:00 AM – 8:15 AM– Announcements, Housekeeping**

**8:15 AM – 10:45 AM– State Showcases**

**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Guest Speaker – Heather Montgomery– ‘It’s All About Inquiry! Giving Curiosity a Jump-Start’**

An award-winning author and educator, Heather L. Montgomery uses yuck appeal to engage young minds. She has taught (both inside and outside the classroom), interpreted at a state park, and directed an environmental center. Her books include: *Something Rotten: A Fresh Look at Roadkill*, *Bugs Don’t Hug: Six-legged Parents and Their Kids*, and *What’s in Your Pocket? Collecting Nature’s Treasures* which celebrates childhood passions that cultivate critical thinking. Heather has a B.S. in Biology and an M.S. in Environmental Education. If she’s not writing, you’ll find her leading kids up a mountain trail, knee-deep in a creek, or painting kids’ faces with weathered sandstone. Learn more at [www.HeatherLMontgomery.com](http://www.HeatherLMontgomery.com)

**12:00 PM – 1:00 PM – Lunch on your own**

Food Trucks across the street at Lake Shelby

**1:00 PM – 2:00 PM – Interpretive Chiefs Meeting**

**1:00 PM – 4:00 PM - Choose your Gulf State Park Adventure**

A list of exciting adventures will be provided. Pick your activity and explore Gulf State Park on your own or with your newly found friends.



## Thursday Evening con't

**5:30 PM – Banquet Social**

**6:00 PM – 7:00 PM - Banquet Dinner – “A Dinner to Dye For”**

Banquet Attire – Wear your most creative tie dye attire and jeans.

**7:00 PM – 9:00 PM - Silent and Live Auction**

**9:00 PM - 11:00 PM - Hospitality**

## Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>

**7:00 AM – 8:00 AM - Breakfast – On your own**

**8:00 AM \*\* Safe Travels Home\*\***