

# The Shellcracker

FLORIDA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY



## Fall 2024

### President's Message:

Happy Fall, Ya'll. I hope this newsletter finds you and yours healthy and well – and hopefully ready for some cooler weather! The 2024 Hurricane Season was a rough one for Florida. Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton wreaked havoc and resulted in heart-wrenching damages to communities, homes and livelihoods across the state. I hope that wherever you are, things are OK.

I am based on the west coast of Florida and a large portion of my work involves fishing communities. Hurricanes Helene and Milton brought record surge and flooding to some of our oldest working waterfronts – including Cedar Key and Cortez – filling buildings with water, wiping out infrastructure, and leaving behind a whole bunch of damage (not to mention some pretty incredible piles of sand and mud.) I just wanted to pause and make a formal shout-out to the folks who make up the fabric of these fishing communities. Even while their own homes were flooded (or worse), they were among the first to respond – using their skills and resources to rescue neighbors, deliver supplies, transport generators, fix docks, clear debris – and generally MacGyvering a way to keep things going. When things get rough, it sure is good to have water people around.

As we help each other rebuild, I have been thinking a lot about resilience, and how to apply the work we do across the fisheries spectrum in a way that bolsters our ability to respond and recover from disturbances like these. Integrating feedback from those who are most intimately connected with the resources has always been really valuable to me, and post-storm conversations within these working waterfront communities have highlighted the opportunity and the need to build – not just back, but better.

Florida's fisheries and working waterfronts are an important piece of Florida's economy and history – let's do the best we can to make sure they are also part of Florida's future.

On that note, we are in the throes of planning the 2025 annual meeting. It's sure to be awesome, so save the dates **May 13 – 15** and I will see you in St. Augustine!

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season,

Angela Collins

President, Florida Chapter AFS





# Getting in Touch

## American Fisheries Society Florida Chapter Officers

### *President*

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### *Secretary/Treasurer*

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Florida Southern College

### *University Liaison*

Jordan Zulli  
Nova Southeastern University  
Email: [jz476@mynsu.nova.edu](mailto:jz476@mynsu.nova.edu)



## Upcoming Events

**February 18-21, 2025:** AFS Southern Division  
annual meeting Asheville, NC

**May 13 –15, 2025:** AFS Florida Chapter annual  
meeting St. Augustine, FL

**Interested in contributing something to the Shellcracker?** Email: Bridgette Froeschke at [bfroeschke@ut.edu](mailto:bfroeschke@ut.edu) with any articles or information that you would like to be included in the next issue. Prize will be awarded for the best, and worst fish jokes submitted.

# Getting Involved!

## Committees Seeking members:

### **Award Committee**

Rich Caiteux/Outstanding Achievement Awards  
Eric Nagid  
Eric.Nagid@myfwc.com

### **Continuing Education Committee**

Planning future continuing education workshops  
Allison Durland Donahou  
adurland@flsouthern.edu  
Jason O'Connor  
Jason.Oconnor@myfwc.com

### **Membership Committee**

New membership ideas in recruitment, retainment, and reactivation of members  
Sara Menendez  
FWC  
Freshwater Fisheries Management  
Lakeland, FL 7386 NW 71st St  
Email: sara.menendez@myfwc.com

### **Policy Committee**

Keep members informed on local to national policy issues on aquatic resources  
Ed Camp  
edvcamp@ufl.edu

### **Community and Engagement Committee**

Providing members with information on DEI  
Chelsey Crandall  
Chelsey.Crandall@myfwc.com

## Feature your research:

### **Shellcracker Newsletter**

Feature articles or other AFS content  
Bridgette Froeschke  
bfroeschke@ut.edu

### **Website**

Updates, articles, content  
Jason O'Connor  
Jason.Oconnor@myfwc.com

## Student Scholarships and Travel Grants

Assistance with student scholarships and future scholarship opportunities:  
Rottman Scholarship and  
Dennis Panches Memorial Scholarship  
Chuck Cichra  
cecichra@ufl.edu

## Student Sub-unit

Swag sales, blog updates, student chapter involvement  
Cody Eggenberger  
coeggenb@fiu.edu

## Raffle/Silent Auction

Assistance with raffle collections, auction items  
Amanda Croteau  
acroteau@uwf.edu

## Positions

### **Code of Conduct Officer**

Searching for officers to represent FL AFS code of conduct  
Daniel Nelson  
Daniel.Nelson@myfwc.com

### **Apprentice webmaster**

Training opportunity for web management.  
Angela Collins  
abcollins@ufl.edu



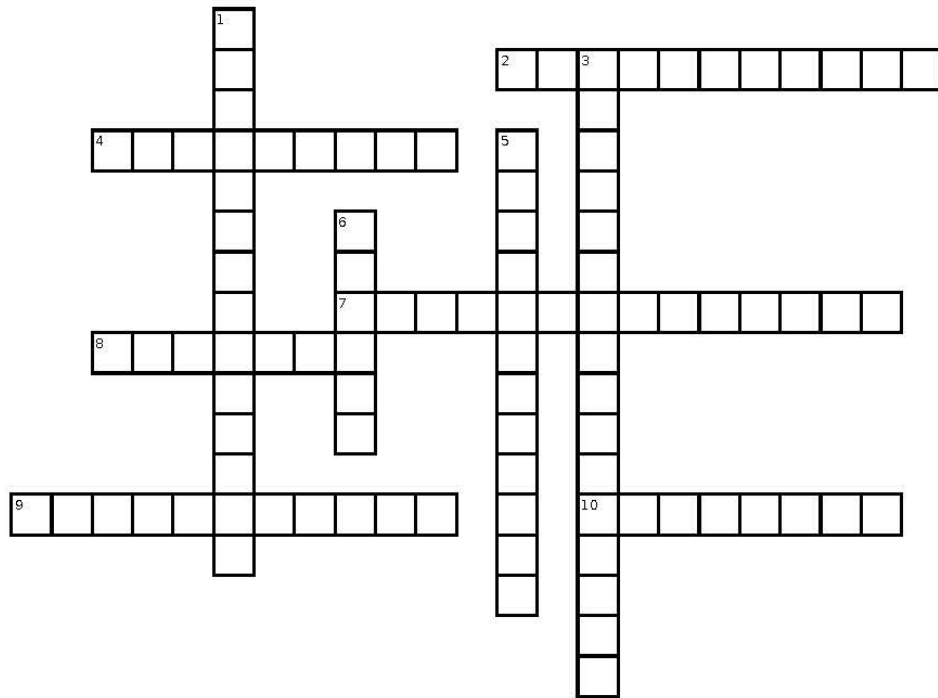
## OR!

We are excited to invite you to share your favorite fishing stories and/or pictures for the next edition of the Shellcracker. Whether it's a tale of your biggest catch, an unforgettable fishing trip, or a moment that made you laugh, we want to hear about it! Please submit your stories and photos by February 1, 2025 to [bfroeschke@ut.edu](mailto:bfroeschke@ut.edu). Your contributions will help make this edition truly special.



# Crossword Puzzle

## Invasive Species



### Down:

1. Fish that can move on land
3. Colorful, aggressive cichlid
5. Central American fish with a tail eye-spot
6. Bold-patterned aquarium fish in canals

### Across:

2. Sport fish introduced to Florida
4. Aggressive "Frankenfish" predator
7. Nocturnal fish with a curved body
8. Farmed fish disrupting Florida waterways
9. Sucker-mouth catfish from aquariums
10. Venomous reef predator with long spines

# 45th Annual Meeting of the Florida Chapter American Fisheries Society



We invite you to submit abstracts for the 44th annual meeting of the Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. The meeting will take place May 13-15 at the Guy Harvey Resort in St. Augustine Beach. We hope you can join us! **Registration Opens: Jan 1, 2025.** The meeting format will be similar to previous years, notable changes include: single occupancy lodging available, tiki-bar socials (sorry no bonfire, but there are multiple gas firepits), and a beach!

The symposium topic will be:

## ***“Workflow in Fisheries Projects: Best Practices for Project Development, Management, Evaluation and Making Improvements for the Next Round.”***

Many of you have likely been involved in some or all aspects of planning and implementing fisheries projects and encountered hurdles along the way. How do you define project goals and success criteria? How do you manage: field/lab equipment, logistics, data processing, and team responsibilities? How do you monitor a project to make immediate adjustments? How do you evaluate a project to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the next project? The goal of the 2025 FAFS symposium is to invite presentations on diverse fisheries topics in a format that could benefit all Chapter members in their work. In addition to sharing your excellent work in your particular field, please focus on general workflow practices and what is most effective in getting your fisheries projects completed.

Deadline for abstract submission and early registration:

**Sunday, March 2nd, 2025**



# AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

*FLORIDA CHAPTER*

## ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

*MAY 13-15, 2025*

# Meeting Information

### Meeting Details

The 2025 meeting will be held at the Guy Harvey Resort St. Augustine Beach. The address for the Resort is 860 A1A Beach Boulevard, St. Augustine Beach, FL, 32080. Maps and directions will be available in the next issue of the Shellcracker or can be found on the Guy Harvey Resort Website at <https://guyharveyresortstaugustinebeach.com/>

The meeting's schedule of events will be similar to past meetings. We will begin in the afternoon on Tuesday, May 13th at 1:00 pm with the “**Workflow in Fisheries Projects**” symposium. The poster session will take place following dinner on Tuesday evening. The symposium will continue on Wednesday morning. The business meeting and raffle will follow dinner on Wednesday night. We will hear more contributed papers on Thursday morning, followed by lunch and the presentation of awards immediately following lunch.

### Registration

Registration period opens Jan 1, 2025. The link for online registration will be provided via email and will also be in the January Shellcracker. Registration includes all meals. State employees can discuss payment with their supervisor. Registrations will still be accepted at the meeting (late fees applied). We can accept VISA, MASTERCARD, AMEX, DISCOVER, cash, or check at the meeting.

Registration Options:

**Full Meeting:** \$315

**Day 1:** \$115

**Day 2:** \$175

**Day 3:** \$85

This link to the registration website will also be made available on our chapter's website at <https://units.fisheries.org/fl/>. There will be no mail-in registration forms this year, however, you can still mail a check for your meeting costs.

### Lodging

A block of rooms has been reserved for this event and **[you must make your own lodging arrangements with the Resort](#)**. There are single or double bed options available for \$140 per night, and you must mention you are attending the American Fisheries Society meeting to get this rate.



# AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

## FLORIDA CHAPTER

### ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

*MAY 13-15, 2025*

# Meeting Information

## Presentation Details

### **Abstract Submission Process**

Abstracts will be submitted online via the [Abstract Submission Form](#) on the Florida Chapter website. [Florida Chapter Meeting Abstract Submission | Florida Chapter \(fisheries.org\)](#)

Abstract Submission Form Opens: January 1, 2025

Abstract Submission **Deadline** (Oral and Poster Sessions) : March 2, 2025

### **Oral Session:**

*Speakers will be given 20 minutes* for talks (15 minutes for presentations and 5 minutes for questions and/or discussion). We will have PowerPoint on a laptop capable of accepting your presentation on a flash drive or other device.

*Important note:* Please use **widescreen PowerPoint slide format** for all presentations.

### **Poster Session:**

**All posters will be presented on Tuesday evening, May 13th** and can be left up for the entire meeting. Posters should be no larger than 150 X 100 cm (60" X 40"), but they can be set up either as portrait or landscape format on an easel.

### **Opportunities for student support**

As in previous years, student travel awards will be available for the annual meeting. The recipients will be notified by early February to allow for early registration. Master's and doctoral students are also eligible for the Roger Rottmann Memorial Scholarship. More information and the application materials are available on page 8 of the Newsletter.

### **2025 Student Raffle**

We need your help to make this meeting's raffle a great one. If you are interested in helping or donating items, please email Amanda Croteau ([acroteau@uwf.edu](mailto:acroteau@uwf.edu)) or Chelsea Crandall ([Chelsey.Crandall@myfwc.com](mailto:Chelsey.Crandall@myfwc.com)). Remember all proceeds fund our



### Student Travel Grants

We encourage students to attend and participate in our annual meeting, and we offer a number of travel grants each year to offset meeting attendance costs for students. We endeavor to support all students who apply, but in the event of funding limitations, priority will be given to students who have not previously received a Florida Chapter Student Travel Grant.

If you plan to apply for the student travel grant you must:

1. Be member of the FL Chapter in good standing ([how to join](#))
2. Register for the FL Chapter annual meeting
3. Submit a [Student Travel Grant Application](#)

We recommend preparing the required “Rivers to Reefs” Essay prior to starting application because it is not possible to save incomplete applications and return to them at a later time. [More information on the essay requirement here.](#)

**Application Deadline: January 10th**

Question regarding the student travel grants should be directed to:

Allison Durland Donahou, Ph.D.  
Florida Southern College  
[adurland@flsouthern.edu](mailto:adurland@flsouthern.edu)

and

David Kerstetter, Ph.D.  
Nova Southeastern University  
[kerstett@nova.edu](mailto:kerstett@nova.edu)

# Announcements

## Aquatic Cleanup Events:

Back in 2019, Florida Chapter AFS decided to try to put some events together outside of the annual meeting to bring chapter members together and do something beneficial for our aquatic resources. It was decided that doing aquatic cleanup events would be the best way to do this. These events are typically held on International Coastal Cleanup day which this year falls on Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>. However, these events can be done at any time during the year. We would like to get as many members as possible to host a local event or go participate in an event someone else has already planned. It could even just be taking your family out for a few hours to pick up trash somewhere. Since 2019, chapter members and their events have removed nearly 13,000 lbs of trash from waterways around the state. Last year we only had two events and would like more participation this year. If you would like to host an event, the chapter will reimburse you for up to \$200 for trash bags, gloves, water, whatever else you may need to put an event on. Just keep your receipts. Thus far for this year we have one event planned for the Harris Chain of Lakes on September 21<sup>st</sup>. If you would like to host an event, have any questions, or want more info on the Harris Chain of Lakes event, please contact Nick Trippel at 352-800-5015 or [Nicholas.Trippel@myfwc.com](mailto:Nicholas.Trippel@myfwc.com).



## Southern Division in Florida:

Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society,

We are on the hook to host the Southern Division meeting in 2029. At this point we are gathering interest from individuals that may be interested in helping plan the meeting. The roles will range from being heavily involved to just as important, but less time intensive roles. Tasks will range from monetary budgeting to raffle items to symposium development. If you are interested in playing a role please contact Daniel Nelson ([Daniel.Nelson@MyFWC.com](mailto:Daniel.Nelson@MyFWC.com)).



The Southern Division  
of the American Fisheries Society

# ICK: Invasive and Cichlid Kid's Fishing Tournament

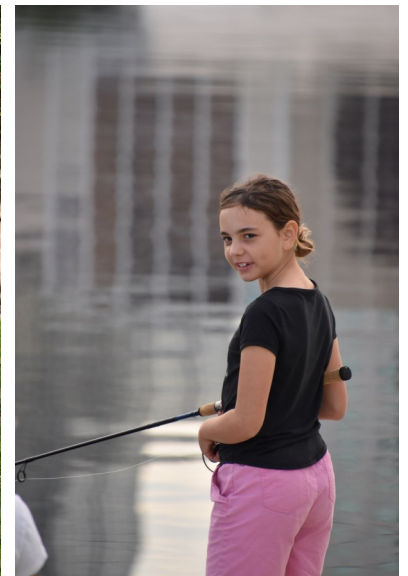
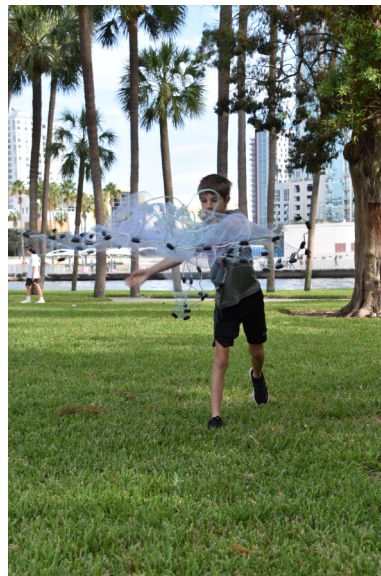
The Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) proudly sponsored the second annual **ICK: Invasive and Cichlid Kids Fishing Tournament**, hosted by Dr. Bridgette Froeschke's Spatial Ecology Lab at The University of Tampa. This unique event, held in Tampa Bay, brought together over 50 youth participants (ages 4-16) and 20 adult volunteers in a community-driven effort to combat invasive fish species while fostering environmental stewardship.

The tournament focused on raising awareness about invasive species and their ecological impacts while providing young anglers with hands-on experience in fishing and conservation. Participants targeted invasive species such as Mayan cichlids and other non-native fish, learning about the threats these species pose to Florida's ecosystems. Volunteers and lab members assisted with fish identification and removal while sharing insights into broader ecological challenges.



In addition to fishing, the event featured interactive educational stations where participants learned about native and invasive species, water quality, and habitat conservation. These activities were designed to empower youth to become environmental advocates in their own communities.

Dr. Froeschke and her team extend their gratitude to the Florida AFS for their sponsorship and continued support, ensuring this impactful event grows as a staple for environmental education and invasive species management in Florida.



# Student Subunit Update

By: Cody Eggenberger

We hope everyone is doing well and safely weathered Helene and Milton. The student subunit is excited to do more to showcase FL AFS student achievements. If you're a student with a recent publication, fellowship or scholarship, conference presentation award, etc. we'd love to help celebrate them. We understand it can feel awkward to share personal achievements, so if you're a PI with a student whose work deserves recognition, please send the details to us at [flafsstudent@gmail.com](mailto:flafsstudent@gmail.com). Additionally, we'd be happy to share any job postings or graduate opportunities on our social media channels—so please don't hesitate to reach out!

We also hope you've been enjoying the student blog posts. It's been great learning about the projects and research our fellow students are undertaking! In this edition of the Shellcracker, we're featuring a post by Sarah Sargent, a Master's student at Nova Southeastern University (Major Advisor: Dr. Kerstetter), discussing the fascinating (and creepy) parasites found in Atlantic and Bluntnose Stingrays in the Indian River Lagoon. New posts are published every other Friday on the Reefs to Rivers student blog (<https://flafsstudentsubunit.wordpress.com/>).

Lastly, the student subunit has new FL AFS hats that will be for sale at next year's meeting, with buffs also on the way! We hope you enjoy the designs and consider representing the chapter while out in the field or around town.

Have a great rest of the year and remember to reach out if you have any student achievements, job postings, or graduate opportunities you'd like us to share!

## Monsters Inside Me: Stingray Edition

AUTHOR: SARAH SARGENT, MARINE SCIENCE MASTERS STUDENT, Nova Southeastern University; Advised by Dr. David Kerstetter

It was my sophomore year in undergrad, and I had to take a class that would meet my elective requirements. General parasitology was the name, and I did not want to be a part of it. “Parasites?! No way.” I thought, remembering back to all the Monsters Inside Me episodes that scared me as a kid. Not a chance. Yet this one class changed the trajectory of my entire undergraduate and graduate career, as I developed an insatiable desire to study wildlife disease. A concept that provides insight on ecosystem diversity, health, and furthers conservation knowledge unique to different species. I mean, who wouldn’t want to be a part of that?!

Fast forward four years and now I am living my dream studying parasite community structure in *Hypanus sabinus* and *H. say* in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) estuary. A project that has been of interest to me for two years now. I knew I wanted to focus on parasite communities in elasmobranch species and *Hypanus sabinus* and *H. say* were the perfect candidates. They are year-long residents of the IRL



system and are important mesopredators in the lagoonal epibenthic fish communities. In collaboration with the FWC Fisheries Independent Monitoring (FIM) program I, along with several other graduate students, began taking monthly species collections. It’s been an absolute blast working with the FWC’s FIM program collecting host species and familiarizing myself with the fish populations unique to the IRL estuary. You truly never know what you will see when you go out for sample collection. Once *Hypanus* species are collected the real fun begins. Well, only if you think staring at a microscope for 4 hours and taking notebook sketches is fun.

## Monsters Inside Me: Stingray Edition, continued

AUTHOR: SARAH SARGENT, MARINE SCIENCE MASTERS STUDENT, Nova Southeastern University; Advised by Dr. David Kerstetter

It always excites me to find parasites because quite frankly, they don't want to be found. Parasites pride themselves on staying hidden. They find unique ways to hide from the immune system, living invisibly, trading the outside world and its comforts for an inside one. Usually, the only way scientists can see their activities is through species dissections. With each dissection, I get to immerse myself in a new world and get a glimpse of how elasmobranch parasites adapt to their new home in their hosts. After their collection, I get to identify them morphologically and piece together their ecological role through life cycle linkages. Each parasite in the IRL ecosystem has a unique story, and I want to uncover as much as I can, starting with one stingray at a time.



# 2024 Raffle and Silent Auction

Thanks you!

We received over \$4,400 in donations for our raffle from artists, attractions, businesses, restaurants, and chapter members. We also had 14 silent auction packages or items which included original artwork, guided fishing charters, and getaway packages valued at over \$4,000. Congrats to all of our winners!

Thank you to all of our donors and volunteers! Together we raised \$4,281 to support future student travel awards to our annual meeting!

Raffle Committee: Amanda, Geoff, and Chelsey

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www.wavecuttercharters.com

**sjn**  
PHOTO  
Alan Collins

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**2024 Raffle and Silent Auction**

**Silver:  $\geq \$100$**

**Tarpon TRUST**

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**GENUNG'S FISH CAMP**

**Thank you raffle and silent auction donors!**

**DEWEY DESTIN'S**

**Mark Erickson**  
erickson-art.com

**UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA**

**NATURE COAST**  
BIOLOGICAL STATION

**Diane Peebles**

**Blackadder**

**PIRATE TREASURE**

**Dave Kerstetter**

**SHARK ZEN**

# Congratulations to our 2024 Rottman Winner: Sarah Webb

Article written by Sarah Webb:

To be a marine biologist was the only career choice I had ever considered, and I was determined to make it happen from a young age. Growing up in New Jersey I spent many years at the shore where my cousins and I would dig in the sand looking for mole crabs. Riveted by what lies just beneath the sand, I was curious to learn about what else the ocean was keeping hidden in plain view. Once I learned to snorkel, my head stayed in the water and my take on life was the opposite of Ariel's from *The Little Mermaid*; I wanted to be where the fish were!

Collaboration and public engagement have always been at the core of my scientific endeavors. With an emphasis on age and growth and utilizing tools like acoustic telemetry, I have gained knowledge and experience in the field of marine biology. From internships during my time as an undergraduate at Chaminade University of Honolulu, I got my first introduction to public outreach and education. I was fortunate enough to even develop and present a lesson plan discussing the threats to the northwest Hawaiian Islands to college-level freshman classes. While volunteering on Hanauma Bay State Park's education team, I was able to engage the public and other stakeholders in a more informal setting and learn together about the treasured resources of the island and how to best preserve and conserve them.



# Congratulations to our 2024 Rottman Winner: Sarah Webb

Continued article written by Sarah Webb:

After leaving Hawaii, life took me to Savannah, Georgia where I began to volunteer with NOAA's Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary as a member of the Phytoplankton Monitoring Network, collaborating with Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. In 2013 I was named "Volunteer of the Year" and was asked to join a yearly research cruise aboard the NOAA Ship Nancy Foster as their first female volunteer diver. Although there was no shortage of internship or volunteer opportunities to keep me immersed in marine biology, I was feeling unfulfilled without a job in the field I loved so much. I began attending Savannah State University in 2015 under Dr. Carla Curran. My graduate research utilized acoustic telemetry to assess the tidally influenced movements, habitat use, and temperature preferences of Atlantic stingrays (*Dasyatis sabina*) in Georgia. This led to a published K-12 activity, as well as publication with colleagues from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science about the migration habits of cownose rays (*Rhinoptera bonasus*). Upon graduation I interned for the Georgia Conservancy, again focusing on public outreach, and aiding in the restoration of marsh trails that were destroyed by Hurricanes Matthew and Irma. I then began working at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources where my supervisor encouraged us to participate and collaborate with the other teams and learn as much as we could while there. I was tasked with cutting and aging red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) otoliths, as well as managing the red drum co-op angler tagging database, along with our regular long-line field work and data entry.

I soon obtained a position with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at the Tequesta Field Lab in 2018. This job has been a combination of everything I have been doing and wanted to do in the field of marine science, and more. I had been involved in various projects monitoring several sport fish and protected species such as the recovering goliath grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*), and smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*). An opportunity arose that enabled me to go back to school to earn my Ph.D. at Florida Atlantic University – Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. Under the supervision of Dr. Matthew Ajemian, my current research focuses on movement patterns of spotted seatrout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*), sheepshead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*), juvenile goliath grouper, and hotspot analysis of small juvenile smalltooth sawfish.



# Congratulations to our 2024 Rottman Winner: Sarah Webb

Continued article written by Sarah Webb:

Identifying the distribution patterns of these fish in association with freshwater inflows via Lake Okeechobee and extreme weather events in the urbanized southern Indian River Lagoon. This study aims to identify indicator species while addressing the health of the lagoon and surrounding estuary. The health and resiliency of fish in the lagoon are important to identify how these species have adapted to vast anthropogenic change over the years, if and how declined populations will recover, and what management measures can be addressed to further protect these populations. Additionally, this study aims to reveal a reemerging nursery of this sawfish, a once-abundant species that was extirpated from the area in the 1970s.

The money awarded from the Roger Rottman Memorial Scholarship will help to cover the costs of tuition as well as support the funding of essential equipment that may be needed to continue efforts in the lagoon that are not currently being funded, such as directed efforts for the capture and analysis of small juvenile sawfish. I currently live on the St. Lucie River and frequently fish within the southern Indian River Lagoon as well, whether it be for work or leisure. I am not a native Floridian, but the health and restoration of the lagoon, or any natural resource, has been an important mission of mine on both a personal and professional level. This award would help to secure my place as a Ph.D. student in an active research position among some of the best and brightest within FAU-HBOI, fighting to save the lagoon and give back to it as much as it has given us.

I fully intend to maintain a career path in marine biology and ecological science and work with both the public and state or other government agencies to aid in policy management for the better. Obtaining this higher degree will not only enable me to move upward and onward in my career but also bridge a gap between the state and university systems in collaborative research. I have been fortunate in my career thus far, and collaboration and outreach have always been at the heart of my research and career goals. I am on the water in the name of preservation and conservation.

