

MS Assistantship in Spotted Turtle Conservation at the University of Vermont

Project: The [Wildlife Ecology Research Lab](#) at The University of Vermont's Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources is seeking a master's-level graduate student to participate in research related to the conservation of Spotted Turtles (*Clemmys guttata*) in Vermont. The student will join a team of researchers from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, The Orianna Society, and the USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit as well as partners from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. The position is available beginning in January 2023 and includes two years of funding (stipend, tuition waiver, and health insurance). We will also consider applicants who cannot start the position until May 2022. The position will be supervised by Dr. Brittany Mosher (UVM), Dr. Luke Groff (Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department), and Kiley Briggs (The Orianna Society).

Project description: The Spotted Turtle is Vermont's rarest turtle and is both endangered and a high priority Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the state. Vermont's Spotted Turtle populations are located along the northern fringe of the species' range. Only three Spotted Turtle populations are known in Vermont, but additional unknown populations likely exist. These populations appear to be geographically isolated, being separated by 38–101 miles, but apparently suitable habitat across the state may also support Spotted Turtles. Our incomplete knowledge of the species' distribution in the state is likely owing to its low detectability, the complex habitats it uses, and a lack of concerted survey effort.

This project will complement ongoing regional Spotted Turtle population assessments by providing Vermont-specific information, which is currently lacking. The goals of this project are to 1) develop a Vermont-specific habitat suitability model for Spotted Turtles, 2) develop optimal field methods for detecting Spotted Turtles using eDNA sampling, 3) use a variety of survey methods to search for Spotted Turtles in previously unsurveyed Vermont habitats, and 4) contribute to habitat restoration or enhancement activities at identified Spotted Turtle sites.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree in ecology, biology, natural resources, environmental sciences or a closely related field. Applicants should have a strong work ethic, experience leading a field crew and working in relatively remote areas, demonstrated writing capabilities, an interest in developing analytical skills, and a record of leadership and integrity. Excellent oral communication skills will be critical for this highly collaborative project involving other researchers, resource managers, and agency collaborators. In addition, the student must be comfortable working independently. Training will be provided, but experience working with GIS and/or with ecological datasets (e.g., in R), as well as familiarity with survey methods for Spotted Turtles or similar species are desirable.

Application: We strongly encourage applicants from underrepresented groups in science to apply for this position. GRE scores are not required. Interested applicants should submit their applications using the Google Form listed here: <https://forms.gle/yuwfonQCp1sesE1o9>. On the form, you will be asked to answer two short questions (each 150 words or less) and to submit 1) a cover letter expressing their interest, experience, and qualifications and 2) a CV with contact information for three references.

Applications will be reviewed as they are received, until September 9, 2022.

Contact: Dr. Brittany Mosher (brittany.mosher@uvm.edu).