



# Meet the Speakers for the 2026 AHH / BHS Conference!

Additional speaker details will be added to this presentation as we  
confirm them

# Carl Franklin



**Carl has held a lifelong fascination and passion for herpetology with a keen focus on turtles. Over the past 27 years, he has worked at the herpetology departments of the Fort Worth Zoo, Dallas Zoo and the Amphibian and Reptile Diversity Research Center at the University of Texas at Arlington. He has assisted in and conducted numerous herpetological expeditions across North, Central and South America, Java and Sumatra, contributing to new breakthroughs in science as well as the discovery of hundreds of new species of amphibians and reptiles. Carl has also bred and maintained several species of reptiles and received the Joseph Laszlo award for outstanding contributions in herpetoculture. He is a member of the IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and Founder of Texas Turtles, a non-profit organization devoted to the conservation and study of Texas turtles.**

[Texas Turtles | TEXAS TURTLES](#)

*Having previously spoken at the 2023 conference, Carl will be returning in 2026 to do the after-dinner talk on Saturday evening – sure to be informative and entertaining!*



# Rachel Pikstein



[PiksteinLab](#)

Rachel is an environmental biologist, ecologist, & herpetologist who moved to the Sonoran Desert of Phoenix, Arizona USA in 2016 with her husband Joey, from their native freshwater backyard-wetlands of southeast Michigan. She worked as a Biology Professor for Grand Canyon University and the University of Dubuque for 7 years, while teaching grade school science for an overlapping 6; a teaching career spanning 13 years, joyfully retiring in 2023. Simultaneously, she would launch non-profit *Pikstein Laboratory for Conservation Research & Education*, while beginning a PhD in Biology at *Loma Linda University* to continue her study of invasive lizard biology. Now studying in California she is grateful to be continuing the 11 year study of her specialty species, *Salvator merianae* (black and white tegu lizard), under the guidance of renowned rattlesnake and venom specialist, Dr. Bill Hayes.



Rachel will be giving two talks at the conference:

***‘Black and White and Red All Over: Phenotypic Plasticity and Hybridization Delineation among Invasive Tegu Lizards (Salvator merianae; Teiidae)’***

***‘Lizards & Legacy: How Herpetology Heroes Learn to Balance Science, Husbandry, and Stewardship’***



CONSERVATION RESEARCH & EDUCATION



# Thomas Marriott



**Thomas Marriott is the Manager of Exotics Keeper Magazine and Executive Editor of the Responsible Herpetoculture Journal. He has travelled to dozens of countries finding and photographing reptiles and amphibians and sharing the stories of conservationists working with them in the field. Thomas has authored over 200 magazine articles and worked on several other projects including a documentary on New Caledonian Geckos and the EK Survey Report, aimed at capturing data on the UK reptile-keeping hobby.**



**<https://responsibleherpetoculture.foundation/about-us/thomas-marriott>**



# Viviana Ricardez

*‘Texas sized turtle conservation from tiny tortoises to beastly behemoths’*

[Texas Turtles | TEXAS TURTLES](#)



**Viviana Ricardez is Vice President of the conservation nonprofit Texas Turtles. Viviana generates a contagious passion that drives her research and leadership roles in Texas Turtles. When not tackling day to day business affairs of Texas Turtles, she is active in fieldwork, and outreach events that safeguard turtle populations while engaging communities in conservation science. She has studied turtles from virtually every part of Texas, authored numerous publications, appeared several times on television and worked as a turtle consultant for blue chip documentary films as well as local, state and federal policy makers. Additionally, she manages one of the largest herpetological research libraries in Texas (1000+ book titles alone!), co-manages a scientific research collection of turtle specimens primarily from Texas and a growing genomic tissue collection and advocates for an increase in the standard of humane treatment of turtles used in field studies.**



# James Dale

James serves as the owner and director of Aquatect, a company specializing in services for zoos and aquariums. With more than 20 years of experience in the field, he has held positions at institutions such as Blue Planet Aquarium, Chester Zoo, and ZSL London Zoo. Aquatect has designed and installed aquariums, vivariums, and zoo enclosures for zoos, land-based colleges, and universities nationwide.



## Aquatect: Custom Aquarium & Fish Tank Builders & Installation

James will be doing a talk at the conference

### ***‘Building and Theming Naturalistic Exhibits for Reptiles and Amphibians’***

*Exploring a range of materials and techniques to create naturalistic exhibits for reptiles and amphibians in zoos, public aquariums and educational settings.*

And is also doing one of the practical workshops on both Saturday and Sunday

*‘You will learn how to create realistic rock themed backgrounds for your vivariums and enclosures using concrete and a range of techniques to texture and colour it.’*





# Dr Marie Kubiak



Marie graduated from Bristol University vet school, following placements within zoos and exotic animal practice. She spent two years working as a small animal and exotics vet in Kent, before undertaking a 3 year European College of Zoological Medicine residency. She has completed the RCVS certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice with distinction in the Avian, Reptile, Wildlife and Zoo examinations and a credit in small pet mammals, and then the RCVS Diploma in Zoological Medicine. She gained RCVS Specialist status in 2015 and worked as a consultant for zoo collections across the UK until 2017, then took on a full time position as veterinary surgeon for West Midland Safari Park before returning to zoo and exotic animal private practice in 2020. Marie has worked with a number of large aquaria and holds the WAVMA certificate in Aquatic Species. In 2024 she opened Evolution Exotics Referrals, one of very few clinics across the UK providing 24/7 on site veterinary care by a multidisciplinary exotics Specialist, accepting complex case referrals in any exotic or zoo species from primary care vets.

She has authored over 50 peer-reviewed research and review papers and is the editor and primary author of “Handbook of Exotic Pet Medicine” published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2020 and is currently writing a new textbook on Zoological collection veterinary care.

## Evolution Exotics

*Marie will be doing a talk on Saturday and also be doing the vet Q&A workshop on the same day. The Sunday workshop will be run by a different vet, also with exotics experience*



# Mike Conabeer

Mike runs Rattlesnake Canyon, one of the few reptile and amphibian retail outlets in the UK that is licensed to keep and trade DWA (Dangerous Wild Animals) species.

“Having been in the aquatic and reptile trade since 1989 and owning my own shop, Rattlesnake Canyon in Birmingham since 2011, I have kept and bred many species of reptiles and invertebrates. I developed an interest in venomous in the late 90s when I imported a few species from Africa. I am self taught with regard to handling and husbandry on venomous (not something I'd recommend but there we go!). Over the years I have worked with many different species and my talk will provide an insight into venomous snake husbandry and the process of licence application, including things such as room design, record keeping and bite protocols.”



[Rattlesnake Canyon | Home](#)





# Adam Radovanovic



As Head of Reptiles at Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park, Adam is well known to many regular conference delegates. He has published work on husbandry, reproduction and enrichment in peer-reviewed journals. Adam has travelled extensively observing reptiles and amphibians in the wild and now leads herpetological trips to Madagascar and Costa Rica (@greigsmithtravels). His work has included aid in herpetological survey work, mainly in Guatemala, and he caught the first banded snail-eater (*Tropidodipas fasciata*) which was a new record for the country. He is currently on the committee of the International Herpetological Society and has been involved with the hobby of herpetoculture for over two decades.

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/conservationpark>





# Chaz Thompson

**Charles (Chaz) Thompson** Chaz is owner of Snakes 'N' Adders reptile centre a nationally recognised store that has been under Chaz's ownership for the last 22 years. In a career with reptiles spanning 34 years Chaz has kept thousands of animals and helped to develop many keeper's skillsets over the decades. Chaz is passionate about children having an access route into this hobby and advocates for their right to own companion reptiles. Chaz is now a lobbyist for the reptile industry working closely with figure heads within the sector and developing connections with government organisations such as DEFRA, CITES, JNCC and APHA. Chaz is trade delegate for REPTA ( Reptile and Amphibian Trade Association) and its representative in stakeholder groups such as the Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC) and CITES Sustainable User Group (CSUG)

*Chaz will be discussing REPTA's new policy on Deleterious Genes in captive herptiles*

<https://repta.org>

<https://snakesnaddersonline.co.uk>



# Erin Rickman- Hills



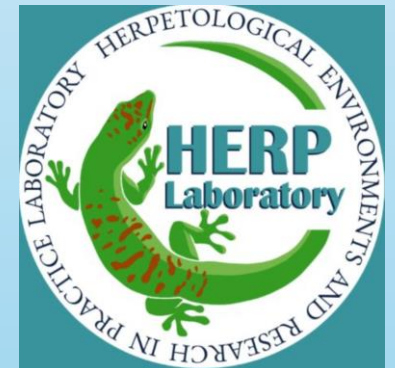
**As Tenure-Track Assistant Professor at Eckerd College, Erin founded and leads one of the first labs of its kind in the field of captive reptile research in the United States, the Herpetological Environments and Research in Practice (HERP) Lab, standing alongside the UK's Cold-Blooded Cognition and Care Laboratory at the University of Lincoln.**

**The field combines principles of biology, psychology and animal care to provide a complete picture of reptile well-being, thereby deriving evidence-based principles, standards and recommendations that keepers - both private and professional - can use to ensure the highest welfare standards for animals in their care. Erin has published a number of papers on these topics and more are in preparation.**

**Erin's team at Eckerd currently have no less than 12 active projects in progress (November 2025) . Erin was a speaker at the Herpeton conference in Florida in Oct / Nov 2025 and we're hoping that she will be able to attend the Drayton Manor conference in person to update us on key research results to date.**

**Erin's journey began in the UK, where she achieved an FdSc in Animal Science through the University of Brighton, a top-up BSc (Hons) in Applied Animal Behaviour and Welfare from the Royal Agricultural University, and is currently completing her Ph.D in Animal Behaviour and Welfare at the University of Lincoln, focusing on Leopard Geckos.**

<https://herp.eckerd.edu>





# Daryl Lott

## *‘Amphibian Breeding Differentiations’*

Daryl has a professional background in herpetological zookeeping, fieldwork project co-ordination and in-situ conservation work – including rhino anti-poaching in South Africa. He currently works on the harlequin toad project with citizen conservation.

He has been passionate about amphibians for many years and currently maintains a diverse personal collection, specialising in the genres *Theloderma*, *Megophryidae*, *Cruziohyla* and *Atelopus*.

