

Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology *and* Graduate Assistantship with Shaver's Creek Environmental Center

Anticipated Start Date: Fall 2022 Semester (August 2022)

Application Deadline: We will begin reviewing initial application materials Dec 15, 2021.

Context: We are seeking a PhD graduate student that will link wildlife research in the [Department of Ecosystem Science and Management](#) and outreach and education with [Penn State's Shaver's Creek Environmental Center](#). The student will conduct research on the ecology and management of reptiles and amphibians and also be an active participant in the outreach, education, and interpretive mission of our university's outdoor environmental center. Ideal candidates will combine a passion for wildlife research with outreach and education. The Department of Ecosystem Science and Management (ESM) prepares students for careers in the conservation and management of natural and human-dominated ecosystems. ESM faculty are driven to solve conservation problems by conducting innovative research and training tomorrow's environmental leaders. Shaver's Creek Environmental Center (SCEC) is a field lab for Penn State students seeking experience in wildlife conservation education, natural history interpretation, environmental education, leadership, and human-nature connections. Shaver's Creek collaborates across all colleges in the University as well as serving the wider community through engagement with schools, government agencies, for profit and non-profit organizations, and the general public.

Research (Ph.D. level): The candidate will complete their PhD dissertation research under the direction of [Dr. Julian Avery](#) and [Dr. David Miller](#). Research will focus on how habitat management and thermal landscapes influence conservation outcomes for reptile and amphibian species. The student will work within established research systems of the two lab groups, including ongoing work on forest habitat management and turtles, pathogen dynamics in wetland amphibian communities, and/or effects of climate and land-use change on terrestrial salamanders. The candidate will have access to long-term data collected in these systems and will work with us to develop new research questions and angles. Potential areas of research emphasis include behavioral ecology, population and community dynamics, population genetics, and quantitative ecology. The student will have the option to apply either to the [Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences](#) program within the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management or the [Interdepartmental Graduate Degree Program in Ecology](#).

Graduate Assistantship at Shaver's Creek: Funding for this research is available for a 4-year period dependent on successful progress (years 2-4 will be funded as an assistantship with the Shaver's Creek environmental center with first year funding coming from other sources). The student will pursue a degree in ESM where they will work for approximately 5 hours per week as a research assistant. Additionally, they will work for approximately 15 hours per week as a Shaver's Creek teaching assistant and/or science communicator with the public. The student will be provided with extensive opportunities to develop outreach and communication skills within these experiences while contributing the teaching and engagement mission of Shaver's Creek.

Candidate information and application

- We strongly encourage candidates from under-represented backgrounds in wildlife ecology to apply and will give a strong preference to candidates with a demonstrated dedication to inclusive science and outreach to diverse audiences.
- The successful candidate will be highly motivated and have a demonstrable interest and background in wildlife conservation. The desired candidate will have strong writing skills and will show a commitment to honing science communication skills with a wide range of audiences. They will be capable of critical analysis and carrying out trans-disciplinary research that is both academically rigorous and applied in nature.
- The assistantship covers all tuition fees and provides a generous monthly stipend for the fall and spring semesters as well as wages during the summer.
- For initial application, please send to Drs. David Miller/Julian Avery (dxm84@psu.edu; jda121@psu.edu) and Lucy McClain (lbr118@psu.edu) a 1) letter of interest, and 2) a current resume with contact information for three references using an email subject line of “ESM-SCEC Graduate Application.” We will begin reviewing applications Dec. 15th.
- After initial screening of applications and interviewing candidates, we will ask the selected candidate to officially apply to the Ecology or Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences graduate program.