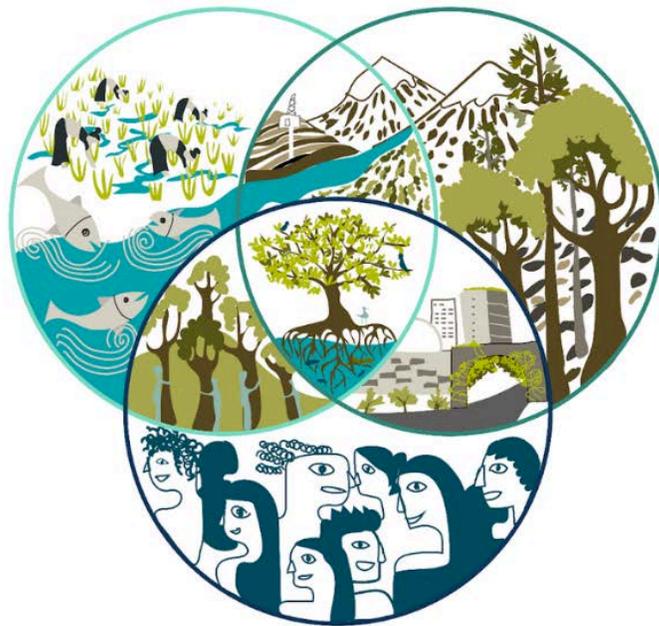


2026 Integrative Conservation Conference

CENTERING COMMUNITY



Hosted by the Center for Integrative Conservation Research (CICR) at the
University of Georgia, February 27 and 28, 2026.



Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research
Center for Integrative Conservation Research
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Center for Integrative
Conservation Research
Integrative Conservation Ph.D. Program
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Center for Integrative
Conservation Research
Owens Institute for Behavioral Research
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Welcome to the 2026 Integrative Conservation Conference

2026 marks the 5th biannual Integrative Conservation Conference (ICC) at the University of Georgia!

Since 2018, the Center for Integrative Research (CICR) has hosted the ICC as a space for collective learning and collaboration, bringing students, researchers, and practitioners together to share their work with each other. CICR's mission is to advance new visions for conservation and environmental governance that are more just and more effective in creating the conditions in which all life can thrive, through innovations in graduate education, research and societal engagement that embrace multiple ways of knowing and relating to the world around us.

Over the past three decades, community-centered environmental research and practice have made significant strides across disciplines, particularly under Indigenous and feminist ecologies; complexity and complex adaptive systems; assemblages, emergence, and self organization; collaborative and participatory research; more-than-human research; relational, spatial, or temporal approaches, and beyond. This work encompasses a vast array of communities, and we would like to engage with dialogues that represent this diversity –

From peoples' relationships with communities of microbes

*That can be spread by communities of ticks
To communities of livestock or megafauna or insects,
Whose lives are intricately entangled with communities of farmers
On communities of people who have communities of plants in their
gardens
To communities of bees and wasps found in communities of crops
About communities of birds observed by communities of birders
To communities of bacteria in the gut microbiomes of humans
From communities of scholars co-building community-led coalitions
To the communities we form at work, at home, through art, or in the
academy*

This year's theme of "**Centering Community**," challenges us to engage with the varied human, more-than-human, and beyond-human communities - communities of people, plants, wildlife, fungi, microbes, and beyond. We hope to foster dialogue across natural and social sciences, humanities, and the arts, highlighting interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and antidisciplinary approaches to conservation and environmental research and practice. Let us approach ICC by celebrating, learning, and sharing our communities, as we build one with each other.

We are excited to welcome you to the 2026 ICC, whether you are joining us in person or online. This program not only showcases a glimpse of the great diversity of communities that we engage with, but also the varied ways that community is meaningful.

Thank you for joining us.

Sincerely,

Eileen Joseph and Akanksha Sharma

2026 ICC Co-Chairs

Bhavya Iyer and Aharna Sarkar

ICC Organizing Committee

Table of Contents

Use the outline tab (left) or the interactive Table of Contents below to navigate.

Welcome to the 2026 Integrative Conservation Conference

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

Table of Contents

Conference Schedule

Zoom Links

Friday Sessions

Saturday Sessions

Information for Attendees

Hybrid Format

Wi-Fi Access for Off-Campus Guests

Locations for Friday and Saturday

Parking on Campus

Quiet Room

Keynote Address

Session Schedule

Friday, Feb 27, 2026 at the Paul D. Coverdell Center

9:00 - 12:30 PM

1:20 - 2:40 PM

2:40 - 3:40 PM

3:40 - 5:00 PM

Saturday, Feb 28, 2026 at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, Building 4

9:00 - 10:20 AM

10:30 - 11:50 AM

1:00 - 2:20 PM

2:30 - 3:50 PM

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Field Trip Information

Workshop Information

Conference Directions, Parking, and Maps

Land and Labor Acknowledgement

Acknowledgements

[Abstracts are available here.](#)

Conference Schedule

All times are in EST (UTC -5:00)

All events are hybrid unless noted otherwise (*)

Return to the [Table of Contents](#)

Zoom links are [included below](#).

Friday, February 27th

Coverdell Center

9:00 – 12:30 PM	Field Trip and Workshops	
	Oconee Rivers and Basin Tour	South Parking Deck
	SciCoM (Science Integration through Concept Mapping)*	Room N339
	Popular Science Writing for Beginners	Room S341
12:30 – 1:20 PM	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00 – 3:40 PM	Registration	Rotunda
1:20 – 2:40 PM	Presentation Sessions:	
	Coast to Coast	Room S175
	Lightning Talks - Coexisting on the Edge	Room N104
	Knowledge and Practice - Challenging the Narrative	Room 340
2:40 – 3:40 PM	Posters, Photovoice, and Refreshments*	Rotunda
3:40 – 5:00 PM	Opening Remarks and Keynote Address	Room S175
5:30 – 7:30 PM	Social @ Creature Comforts Brewing Co.*	270 W. Hancock Ave.

Saturday, February 28th

Warnell Building 4

8:00 – 11:50 AM	Registration	Lobby
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Networking Coffee Hour*	Lobby
9:00 – 10:20 AM	Presentation Sessions:	
	Socio-Ecological Resilience	Room 132
	Practicing Pluralism Session 1: Presentations and Panel	Room 516
	Conflict and Conservation	Room 517

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

10:20 – 10:30 AM	Coffee Break	Lobby
10:30 – 11:50 AM	Presentation Sessions:	
	Heritage as Adaptation	Room 132
	Practicing Pluralism Session 2: Presentations and Reflexive Exercise	Room 516
	Lightning Talks - Vulnerability, Access, and Change	Room 517
11:50 – 1:00 PM	Lunch (on your own unless paid with registration)	Lobby
1:00 – 2:20 PM	Presentation Sessions:	
	Urban Ecologies	Room 132
	Multispecies Communities	Room 418
	Governing for More-Than-Human Worlds	Room 516
	Integrative Approach to Storm Recovery 1: Six Stories from Hurricane Helene	Room 517
2:20 – 2:30 PM	Coffee Break	Lobby
2:30 – 3:50 PM	Presentation Sessions:	
	Of Maps and Models	Room 132
	Participatory Methodologies	Room 418
	Communities and Economies	Room 516
	Integrative Approach to Storm Recovery 2: Shared Understanding Interactive Session	Room 517
4:00 – 6:00 PM	Closing Remarks, Awards, and Concert	Building 2-100

Zoom Links

Please ensure you have Zoom downloaded and installed on your computer ahead of the conference. We ask that you keep your microphone muted unless you are presenting, asking a question, or participating in a discussion.

Friday Sessions

[Room S175](#)

- 1:20 – 2:40 PM: Coast to Coast
- 3:40 – 5:00 PM: **Opening Remarks and Keynote Address**

[Room N104](#)

- 1:20 – 2:40 PM: Lightning Talks - Coexisting on the Edge

[Room 340](#)

- 1:20 – 2:40 PM: Knowledge and Practice - Challenging the Narrative

Saturday Sessions

[Room 132](#)

- 9:00 – 10:20 AM: Socio-Ecological Resilience
- 10:30 – 11:50 AM: Heritage as Adaptation
- 1:00 – 2:20 PM: Urban Ecologies
- 2:30 – 3:50 PM: Of Maps and Models

[Room 418](#)

- 1:00 – 2:20 PM: Multispecies Communities
- 2:30 – 3:50 PM: Participatory Methodologies

[Room 516](#)

- 9:00 – 10:20 AM: Practicing Pluralism Session 1
- 10:30 – 11:50 AM: Practicing Pluralism Session 2
- 1:00 – 2:20 PM: Governing for More-Than-Human Worlds
- 2:30 – 3:50 PM: Communities and Economies

[Room 517](#)

- 9:00 – 10:20 AM: Conflict and Conservation
- 10:30 – 11:50 AM: Lightning Talks - Vulnerability, Access, and Change
- 1:00 – 2:20 PM: Integrative Approach to Storm Recovery 1: Six Stories from Hurricane Helene

- 2:30 – 3:50 PM: Integrative Approach to Storm Recovery 1: Shared Understanding Interactive Session

Building 2-100

- 4:00 – 6:00 PM: **Closing Remarks, Awards, and Concert**
-

Information for Attendees

Hybrid Format

Unless otherwise specified, all sessions will be hybrid. Each session will have an in-person room and a Zoom room. Zoom links are [available here](#). If you plan to attend online, please ensure that you have downloaded and installed the latest free Zoom software prior to the start of the conference.

Wi-Fi Access for Off-Campus Guests

To access UGA Wi-Fi without a UGA myID, please select 'UGA_Visitors_WiFi.' A screen will then appear that requires you to 'Agree to Terms and Conditions'. After confirming that you agree and choosing 'Next', you will come to a screen where you will be able to receive a code via email or text. Once you receive the code, the next screen will ask for it, and then it should easily connect you to the network. If for some reason you do not receive the code, you can call the UGA EITS office, (706) 542-3106, to request a code over the phone.

Locations for Friday and Saturday

Please note that the 2026 ICC will be held at different locations for Friday and Saturday.

On Friday, workshops, sessions, and the Keynote Address will be held at the Paul D. Coverdell Center for Biomedical and Health Sciences, located at 500 D.W. Brooks Drive, Athens, GA 30602.

On Saturday, sessions and the concert will take place at the Warnell School for Forestry and Natural Resources, located at 160 E Green St, Athens, GA 30602.

Parking on Campus

On Friday, paid visitor parking is available at the Carlton Street Parking Deck at 125 Smith St, Athens, GA 30605. The maximum daily parking fee is \$10. Parking in the non-paid lots is by permit only.

On Saturday, parking is free in most lots. The closest free parking lot to Warnell is the East Green St Car Park (S07). Access the East Green St Car Park from E Campus Road.

More information about the conference locations and parking can be [found here](#).

Quiet Room

A quiet room is available on Saturday in room 301, building 4. This space is available to all attendees. We ask that you do not talk, take phone calls, or use devices that emit sound to maintain a restful environment for those who use it.

Keynote Address

Dr. Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University

3:40 PM to 5:00 PM, Coverdell Auditorium S175

Communing with Others: Ecological Imagination in a Time of Neglect



Anand Pandian is Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Anthropology at Johns Hopkins University. His books include *Something Between Us: The Everyday Walls of American Life and How to Take Them Down*, and *A Possible Anthropology: Methods for Uneasy Times*. Anand also serves as a curator of the Ecological Design Collective, a community for radical ecological

imagination and collaboration. He lives with his family in Baltimore, where he is currently working on a new book project on the global fight to build a zero waste future, anchored in stories from the United States, India, Ghana, and Spain.

Session Schedule

Friday, Feb 27, 2026 at the Paul D. Coverdell Center

Abstracts for Friday sessions can be [found here](#).

Registration will be held in the Coverdell Lobby from 1:00 to 3:40 PM.

9:00 - 12:30 PM

Tour of North Oconee River Basin, South Campus Parking Deck

In-person only, registration closed.

SciCoM (Scientific Integration through Concept Mapping), Coverdell N339, 9:30 AM-12:30 PM

In-person only, prior signup required.

Popular Science Writing for Beginners - Conceptualizing, Writing, and Pitching for Popular Media, Coverdell S341, 9:30 AM-12:30 PM

Hybrid, prior signup required.

1:20 - 2:40 PM

Coast to Coast, Coverdell Auditorium S175

Flow Alteration and Livelihood Adaptation: Social–Ecological Responses to Hydropower Dams in Coastal Karnataka, India

Shishir Rao, University of Georgia

Coastal erosion: Risk and Adaptation in the Bocas del Toro Archipelago

Camila Rojas, Smithsonian Institute

Scale, landscape change, and salt marsh conservation along the Georgia coast

Asa Julien, University of Georgia

Mangroves: Friend or Foe? Understanding divergent community responses across two coastal regions

Sameera Gujarathi-Talati, University of Georgia

Lightning Talks - Coexistence on the Edge, Coverdell N104 - starts at 1:30 PM

Aligning Flood Management and Biodiversity Conservation: Centering Human and More than Human Communities

Zeeshan Khalid, University of Georgia

When Communities Collide: A Nanoparticle-Based Approach to Reshaping Human, Immune, and Microbial Interactions in Tuberculosis

Marshah Menos, University of Georgia

No Place Like Home! Understanding landowner motivations for engaging in Northern bobwhite conservation in Kansas, USA

Bhavya Iyer, University of Georgia

Political Ecologies of Convict Leasing: Race, Labor, and the Transformation of Nature in the New South

Jay Atkins, University of Georgia

Living Within Protection: Pastoral and Gendered Lives Within Govind National Park

Tuheina Thakur, University of Georgia

Knowledge and Practice - Challenging the Narratives, Coverdell 340

Communities of Refusal: The Shompen and the Ethics of Withdrawing from Modernity

Surabhi Baijal

Conservation for whom? Revisiting Historical Narratives in Modern Conservation

Sahamatha, National Centre For Biological Sciences, Bengaluru

Knowledge as Liberation: Building Anti-Colonialist and Resilient Academic Communities Through Libraries

Claire Joseph, The Catholic University of America

“The Point is to Change It”: Research as Learning, Teaching, and Organizing for Abolition Ecology

Kayla Edgett, University of Georgia

2:40 - 3:40 PM**Poster Session**

Exploring Stakeholder's Prioritization in Social-Ecological-Technological Metrics of Green Infrastructure: A Case Study of St. Marys, Georgia

Niketa Nandan Roy Choudhury, University of Georgia

Heat Index Analysis for Humans and Small Ruminants (Sheep) in Soule, France During the Summer of 2025

Sonrisa Reed and Emm Trippe, University of Georgia

Strengthening Water Resource Management for smallholders farmers within the revision of the ECOWAS' NDCs and related climate policies

Ummuqualthum Usman, University of Georgia

Resident–Destination Image Congruity and Support for Tourism: Resident Perceptions of Themselves and Their Home Destination

Dominic Gialdini, University of Georgia

3:40 - 5:00 PM**Opening Remarks and Keynote Address, Coverdell Auditorium S175**

Communing with Others: Ecological Imagination in a Time of Neglect

Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University

Saturday, Feb 28, 2026 at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, Building 4

Abstracts for Saturday sessions can be [found here](#).

Registration will be held in the Warnell Building 4 Lobby from 8:00 to 11:50 AM.

9:00 - 10:20 AM**Conflict and Conservation, Warnell 4-517**

Hit and Run : Wildlife Victims of Road

Udita Roy, Bharati Vidyapeeth University

Of 'Devils' and 'Tree Ferns': Intricacies of Loneliness and Community Building in a Tasmanian Ecovillage

Edwin Zargar, KU Leuven

Habitat Suitability and Selection of Pallid Harrier in Rajasthan: Insights from Multi-Scale Random Forest Modeling

Sneha Singh, Aligarh Muslim University

Socio-Ecological Resilience, Warnell 4-132

Art and Memory Activism in Indonesia: The Significance of Place

Alyx Bontrager, University of Georgia

"Pearled Bodies: Becoming (with) Plastic" - A speculative short story about evolving with plastic

Adah Bennion, University of Georgia

"Living with the River" Post-Helene: Conceptualizing Community Recovery from a More-Than-Human Lens

Hannah Boone, University of Georgia

You Are a Sign: Living Indicators of Community Resilience in Isolated Wetlands

Scott Binger, Clemson University

Practicing Pluralism Session 1: Presentations and Panel, Warnell 4-516

Pluralism in environmental research and practice: Charting pathways from aspirations to outcomes

*Elizabeth King, Janaki Mohanachandran, Jesse Abrams, Laura German, Jeff Hepinstall-Cymerman, James Owen, David Porinchu, Jon Schelhas, Jennifer J. Thompson, Charles Van Rees; University of Georgia

Conservation in Common: Managing Wildlife and Sustaining Community on the Maasai Steppe

Justin Raycraft, University of Lethbridge

Creating an Accessible Conservation Field: Caring for Nature Should Not Be the Exclusive Domain of the "Able-Bodied"

Aireona Bonnie Raschke, Colorado State University

Panel Discussion

Mark Callahan¹, Aireona Raschke², Justin Raycraft³, Anand Pandian⁴, Cass Johnson⁵, Elizabeth King¹; ¹University of Georgia, ²Colorado State University, ³University of Lethbridge, ⁴Johns Hopkins University, ⁵USDA Forest Service

10:30 - 11:50 AM

Practicing Pluralism Session 2: Presentations and Reflexive Exercise, Warnell 4-516

Coproduction in dendrohydrology: Questioning expertise in water resource management

Aharna Sarkar, University of Georgia

With Moths, Humans, and Mausam - Unraveling Tasar Livelihoods and Ecologies in Singhbhum, Eastern India

Akanksha Sharma, University of Georgia

Reflexive Exercise

Mark Callahan, University of Georgia

Vulnerability, Access, and Change, Warnell 4-517

Coastal vulnerability through the lens of sentinel species: a case study on polychaete-pollutant interaction from the Gulf of Khambhat, India

*Moumita Bhowmik, Soumya Haldar, CSIR-Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute

Between Livelihood and Invasion: Van Gujjar Lopping Practices Reshape Fruit Resources in Himalayan Foothill Forests

Sipu Kumar, Wildlife Institute of India

Changing Landscapes: A Review of Land Use and Land Cover Change in Ganga Basin Wetlands

Ashika Talreja, Graphic Era University

Variation in Vocalizations of Streaked Laughingthrush Individuals in the Central Himalayas

*Ayesha Mohammad Maslehuddin, Anil Kumar, Satish Kumar; Aligarh Muslim University

Learning on the Job: Efficiency of tandem leaders navigating a labyrinth during relocation in *Diacamma indicum*

Paromita Khan, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research
Kolkata

Exploring Fishers' Perspectives on Marine Resource Management in one of India's Most Remote Island Systems- Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Jessica Barman, ICAR-Central Inland Agricultural Research Institute,
Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

Heritage as Adaptation, Warnell 4-132

Heritage as Adaptation: Co-Producing Climate Futures with Basque Transhumant Communities

*Jennifer Jo Thompson¹, Meredith Welch-Devine¹, Thomas Mote¹, Brian Burke²; ¹University of Georgia, ²Appalachian State University

Linking Local Knowledge and Soil Health in Basque Summer Grazinglands

Simone Falvey Gibson, University of Georgia Department of Crop and
Soil Science

High-Resolution Climate Scenarios for Transhumant Pastoralism: Co-creation of climate narratives bridges gaps between climate science and communities

Thomas Mote¹, Brian Burke², *Julia Tootle¹, Pablo Manzano³, *Sonrisa Reed¹, Meredith Welch-Devine¹, Ferran Paune³, Xin Yan¹, Savannah Milburn¹, Gabriel Gower Claussnitzer¹, and Chaitra Nulu¹; ¹The University of Georgia, ²Appalachian State University, ³Basque Centre for Climate Change

Plural Epistemologies in Practice: Collaborating with Transhumant Pastoralists to Strengthen Climate Science

*Bryn Watkins¹, Jennifer Jo Thompson¹, Sam Olvey¹, Sechindra Vallury¹, Edwige Marty²; ¹University of Georgia, ²Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique

1:00 - 2:20 PM

Urban Ecologies, Warnell 4-132

Centering Community in the Adoption of Nature-Based Solutions for Flood Risk Management: A Tale of Three Cities

Katie Foster, University of Georgia

Beyond Neutrality: Centering African American Communities in Urban Parks

Dominique Valentine, University of Georgia

From wetlands to lawns: white ibis urbanization through the lens of community science

Doreen Chaussadas, University of Georgia

Urban Wildlife Governance in Shanghai: Raccoon Dogs, Residents, Organizations and the State

Yidi Feng, The University of Texas at Austin

Multispecies Communities, Warnell 4-418**Connecting Tapir Health and Human Action for Human-Tapir Coexistence in Costa Rica**

Sonia Hernandez, University of Georgia

Linking Sociodemographic Vulnerability with Urban Human–Bird Relationships in Orange County, Florida

Matthew Tatz, University of Georgia

Communities at the Edge: Rethinking Research in No-Human Habitat, High-Altitude Ecosystems

Sabmeet Singh

Carne de la tierra: Lessons and opportunities from ethnomycological research in Northern Mexico

*Jesus Alejandro Najera Medellin, Miroslava Quiñonez Martinez;
University of Georgia

Governing For More-Than-Human Worlds, Warnell 4-516**Communities (of) Matter: Cultivating Material Kinships and Decentering the Human in Narratives of Community as a Feminist Practice of Resistance, Resilience, and Care**

Adah Bennion, University of Georgia

Think global, act local: Insights from place-based subsistence hunting to co-produce sustainable pathways.

Bhavendu Joshi, Deakin University

The tolls of targets: How global conservation targets can undo park-people relations and Indigenous land rights in Thailand's national parks

Lilly Zeitler, Pennsylvania State University

Integrative Approach to Storm Recovery 1, Warnell 4-517

Six Stories from Hurricane Helene

Signe Ballew, RADA Foundation; Chris Watson, Community Housing Coalition of Madison County; Caleb Hickman, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; James Williams, Atlanta Firewood Bank; Luke Etchison, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Michelle Mitchell, US Forest Service

2:30 - 3:50 PM

Integrative Approach to Storm Recovery 2, Warnell 4-517

Shared Understanding Interactive Session: Building on the Six Stories from Hurricane Helene

Sara Gottlieb, The Nature Conservancy; Elizabeth King and Hannah Boone, University of Georgia

Participatory Methodologies, Warnell 4-418

Centering local voices in reimagining Maine's forest governance

*Ravneet Kaur, Dr. Jesse Abrams, University of Georgia

Expanding Access to Environmental Funding: A Community-Centered Grantmaking Model

Sadie Friesen, Chesapeake Bay Trust

Communities and Economies, Warnell 4-516

From Crisis to Circularity: Tackling Abandoned Fishing Gears Through a Community-Centered Circular Economy Model in India

Dr. Suman Mallick, Wildlife Institute of India

Integrated post-harvest practices for winter wildlife biodiversity in the Korean DMZ-adjacent agroecosystems

*Shinyeong Park, Jae Hyun Kim, Jesse Abrams, James Beasley; University of Georgia

Abundant community economies: Pandemic-era community initiatives in an ecotourism destination from 2020 to 2025

Eileen Joseph, University of Georgia

Theoretical Framework to define Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing as a Wicked Problem

Jesus Alejandro Najera Medellin, University of Georgia

Of Maps and Models, Warnell 4-132

Spatiotemporal modelling of burrow ecology and its ecosystem services of the Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) in Saurashtra Region, Gujarat, India

Sandeep Kumar Kaushal, Aligarh Muslim University

Signals and Sticks: Communication in the Transition from Nomadic Foraging to Settlement in Borneo

Evan DesRosiers, University of Georgia

Participatory mapping and individual-based modeling to predict changes in trout populations in a coldwater river facing climate change

*Kaili Gregory, Justin Miller, Jared Ross, Dana Infante, Kelly Robinson;
University of Georgia

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Field Trip Information

Registration for the field trips closed on January 30, 2026.

Tour of North Oconee River Basin, 9:00 AM-12:30 PM

This tour will be a start and stop tour within the Athens area, traversing locations along the North Oconee River, Middle Oconee River, and within their basins. We will visit locations of social, ecological, and/or geographic significance, and consider how change has been manifesting in our 'home' basins. We will also get to visit the confluence of these two rivers, where they come together to flow onwards as the Oconee River.

We will engage with community and land-water ecologies, socio-ecological relationships, and spatio-temporal transformations in the basin, alongside reflections on how we can better advocate for and serve our river basins and our communities of people and beyond. We will get to learn from Athens locals who have been taking action and affecting change on the ground. We will also get to witness select photovoice exhibits shared by Athens locals and ICON community at places where the images were taken.

Duration - 3 hours 30 mins

Accessibility Information - We will be using a van to move between the sites, but we also welcome those who may need to use their personal vehicle for accessibility reasons. We will walk along sidewalks, greenways, and trails at the various locations to further explore the spots, these will be short walks (< 500m).

Workshop Information

Prior signup required to participate in the workshops.

SciCoM (Scientific Integration through Concept Mapping), Coverdell N339, 9:30 AM-12:30 PM

Ravneet Kaur and Doreen Chaussadas, University of Georgia

Integrative research is inherently cross- and inter-disciplinary, yet bridging disciplines in a coherent way is often challenging. Scientific training tends to emphasize technical skills and productivity, leaving few opportunities to step back and consider the bigger picture: what are the key components of the complex systems we study? How are they connected? How do they fit into the story we are trying to tell? This workshop will introduce concept mapping as a practical, accessible tool while helping scientists think more intentionally about the conceptual structure of their work.

We will begin by introducing systems thinking and the core principles of concept mapping using concrete examples that draw links between ecological and social components of real-world systems. Participants will then identify the elements that compose their own research systems, map their relationships, and receive peer feedback. This discussion will emphasize how concept mapping is a flexible tool that each participant can tailor to their own way of thinking.

In the second half, we introduce meta-mapping, where participants will apply concept mapping to their research design process. During this time, participants will examine their own thought processes and workflows to understand how their knowledge connects to the formation of hypotheses and the selection of methods and data types. Through this exercise, attendees will practice intentional research design and strengthen their ability to craft clear and coherent narratives.

Popular Science Writing for Beginners - Conceptualizing, Writing, and Pitching for Popular Media, Coverdell S341, 9:30 AM-12:30 PM

Bhavya Iyer, University of Georgia

Ecological knowledge is being rapidly produced, and yet it is written in ways that are catered towards an academic audience. This makes scientific knowledge inaccessible to the broader public as well as important stakeholders who have the capacity to influence policy and conservation. In today's era, where information is consumed quickly, it is often necessary for the scientific community to communicate their work through clear, easy language and form with mass appeal, such as magazine articles, storybooks, podcasts, vlogs, and more. In this workshop led by an ecologist/writer, participants will be guided

on how to write for a popular audience through a presentation and activities on writing about nature, developing a pitch, a short writing session, and group feedback.

This workshop is aimed towards students and scientists interested in science communication, as well as beginner writers interested in popular writing about science and nature, wishing to foray into publishing their work. Participants should leave the workshop confident enough to begin writing, pitching and publishing articles or other forms of media based on their research, to share with a wide audience.

Conference Directions, Parking, and Maps

Coverdell: Friday, February 27

Coverdell Information

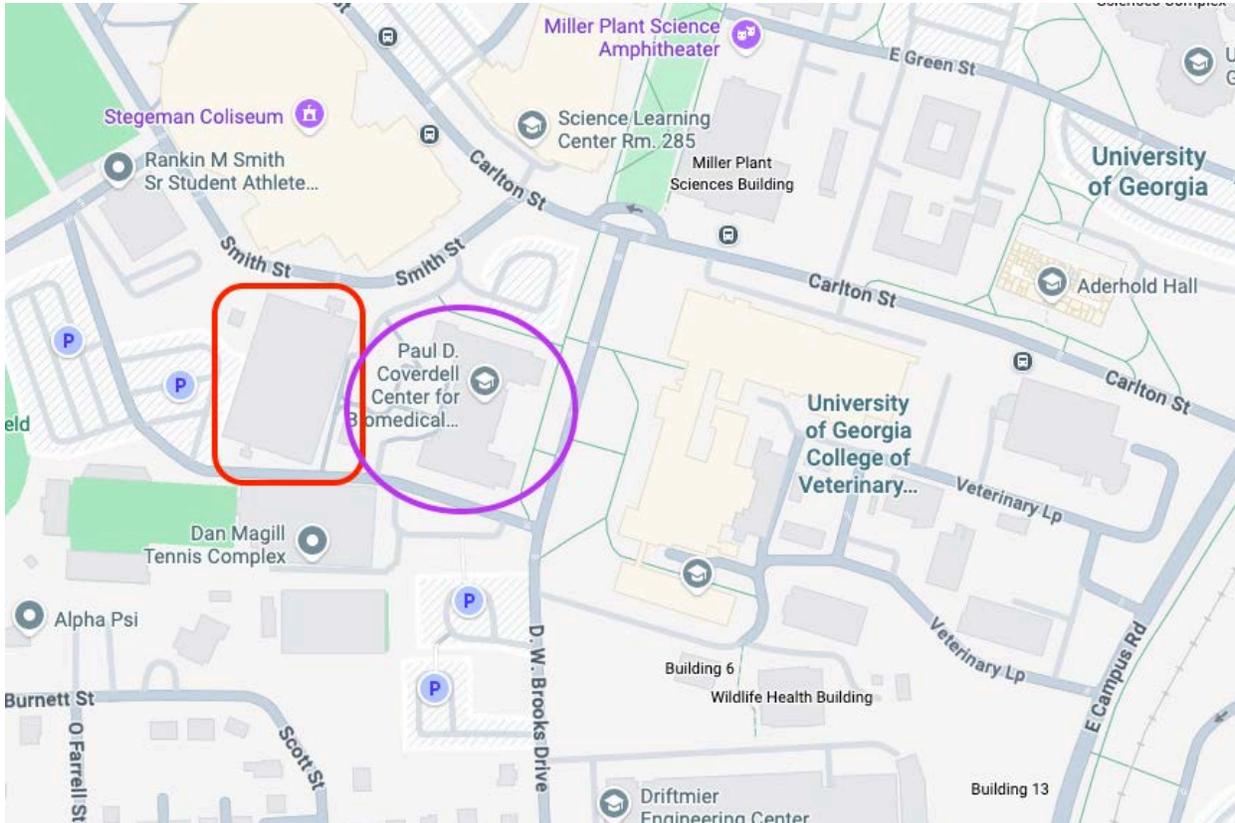
Paul D. Coverdell Center for Biomedical and Health Sciences is located at **500 D.W. Brooks Drive**, Athens, GA 30602.

Sessions are located on the first (ground) and third floors. Registration is in the lobby of the ground floor. The keynote address will be given from the auditorium on the ground floor.



Coverdell Parking Information

Paid visitor parking is available at the **Carlton Street Parking Deck** at **125 Smith St**, Athens, GA 30605. The maximum daily parking fee is \$10. Parking in the non-paid lots is by permit only.



Carlton Street Parking Deck (red rectangle) and Coverdell Center (purple circle).

Warnell: Saturday, February 28

Warnell Information

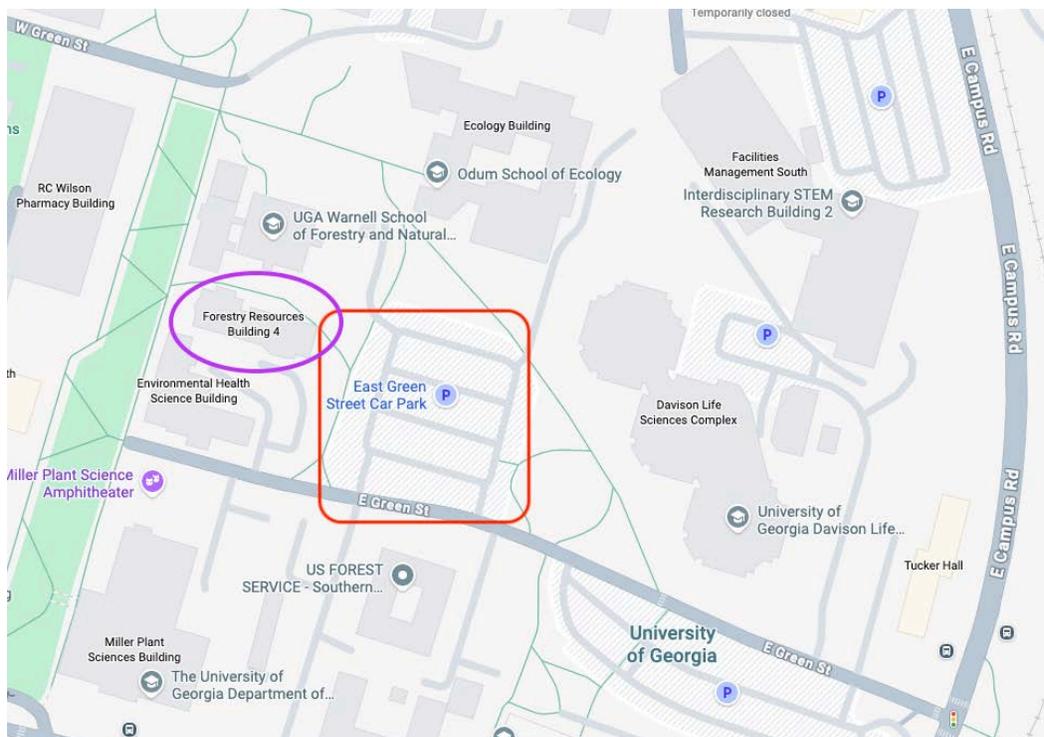
Warnell Building 4 (known as Forestry Resources Building 4 on Google Maps) is located at **160 E Green St**, Athens, GA 30602.

Sessions are located on the first (ground), fourth, and fifth floors. Registration and refreshments will be located in the lobby on the first floor. Elevator access, restrooms, and water fountains are located in the middle of all floors with sessions (there are no restrooms on the second floor). Staircases to all floors are located on both ends of the building.



Warnell Parking Information

Parking is free for most lots on the weekend. The closest free parking lot to Warnell is the **East Green St Car Park** (S07). Access the East Green St Car Park from E Campus Road.



East Green St Car Park (red rectangle) and Warnell Building 4 (purple circle).

Land and Labor Acknowledgement

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which the University of Georgia is located belongs to the Muscogee Creek peoples, whose sovereignty over their homelands was forcibly and violently taken from them by settler colonizers and the governments of Georgia and the United States. We recognize that these communities' histories and relationships with the lands and waters of this region are not relics of history, but are vibrant and dynamic ways of life today. Losing sovereignty to these homelands is an intergenerational trauma that we as descendants of settler colonizers cannot understand. However, it is our responsibility to know the story of how Indigenous communities' lands were taken from them and to help redress the harm caused by land dispossession. We recognize that land acknowledgement statements such as these are often well-intended but performative acts that do not provide tangible benefits to Indigenous peoples. We make this statement to highlight the need for restorative measures in and beyond Athens to enhance Indigenous sovereignty while recognizing that actions, not statements, are ultimately needed to achieve this aim. We hope that the conversations at this conference help support ongoing efforts and spark new actions to support Indigenous sovereignty.

The 2026 ICC, CICR, and ICON also respectfully acknowledge and recognize that UGA was built by and relied upon enslaved Black Athenians. We acknowledge that it is impossible to separate UGA's history from slavery and racism, and we pledge our support to those voices who work to bring the institutional racism of the past to light so that we may better understand how to best create an equitable and safe future for all those who work at and attend UGA.

Resources

[Support the Native Student Scholarship Fund](#)

[Academic Spaces and Indigenous Places: Native American Dispossession and the University of Georgia](#), CICR Occasional Paper

[UGA and Slavery](#), website created by the UGA Department of History

Acknowledgements

Organizing and hosting ICC has been a tremendous, months-long team effort - one we could not have been able to do without our community! Beginning with our ICON community, Talley Vodicka has been an indispensable support, every step of the way. Without her, the conference would not have achieved the kind of scope it has, and planning would have been much harder.

We're grateful to our faculty advisors, Dr. Jesse Abrams and Dr. Laura German, and all the ICON students and alumni who supported us as volunteers and presenters, including the Integrative Conservation Student Organization (ICSO) and ICON Research Assistants.

Thank you to our partners, the UGA Arts Collaborative, an interdisciplinary initiative for advanced research in the arts, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), for their support.

We would like to thank the staff at the Coverdell Building, which hosted the conference on Day 1. We would like to thank the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources for hosting us on Day 2 of the conference.

We are grateful to Dr. Anand Pandian for taking the time to visit us here in Athens to deliver the Keynote Address.

The conference was made possible by grants, resources, and funding from the following: the Owens Institute for Behavioral Research (OIBR), the Department of Geography, the UGA Graduate School, the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, the Odum School of Ecology, and the Paul D. Coverdell Center for Biomedical and Health Sciences.

And finally, thank you to all the volunteers, moderators, session organizers, workshop organizers, and field trip organizers who contributed to the amazing program we were able to share with you.

ICC Planning Team

Eileen Joseph and Akanksha Sharma, ICC Co-Chairs

Bhavya Iyer and Aharna Sarkar, ICC Planning Committee

Laura German, Director, CICR

Jesse Abrams, Director of Graduate Studies, ICON PhD Program

Talley Vodicka, Program Coordinator, CICR

Volunteers

Doreen Chaussadas, Wezzdy Del Toro, Melanie Frick, Kaili Gregory, Sara Jones, Asa Julien, Ravneet Kaur, Zeeshan Khalid, Alejandro Najera, Shinyeong Park, Olivier Pilette, Rory Howes, Alyssa Quan, Asif Sandeelo, Adarsh Shahi, Tuheina Thakur, Ben Townsend