

FLOWPATHS



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Fall-Winter 2020 News : COVID-19 Updates



As it has disrupted so many aspects of our lives, COVID-19 has severely disrupted our education programs like our Aquatic Science Field Days and Aquatic Adventure Science Camp, which was for the first time in over 30 years, cancelled during the summer of 2020. While we are pleased to see that infection rates in our area have remained low for the last month, despite the re-opening of campus and area schools, we are still watching COVID-19 trends across the

state and country. Our heart goes out to the many families that have been hurt by the pandemic, and as much as we miss sharing aquatic science and adventure with young scientists and explorers, we are committed to keeping safety first. Consequently, our fall and spring Aquatic Science Field Days will remain suspended, keeping in line with university guidelines. We have not made any decisions about Aquatic Science Adventure Camp for the summer of 2021. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 trends before making that decision about summer camps.



Aquatic Science Adventures on YouTube

Although COVID-19 kept us from working directly with campers, it couldn't stop our 2020 Camp Administrator, Katrina Shmidl from creating a great series of educational videos for our new [Edwards Aquifer Research and Data Center YouTube channel](#).

Check out some fun videos that introduce young scientists to amazing aquifer animals and simple, hands-on science experiments that you can do at home.

New Staff and Staff Good-byes

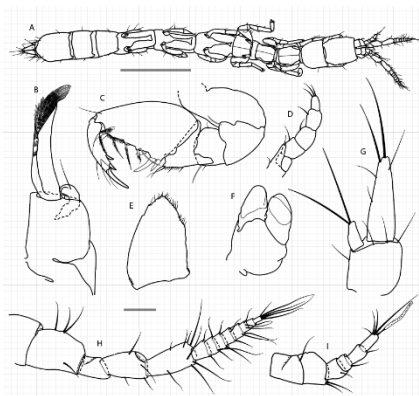


We at the Edwards Aquifer Research and Data Center are very excited to welcome Kellie Donajkowski as our new, permanent, full-time Education Program Manager. Kellie Donajkowski was born and raised in Michigan, she attended the University of Michigan and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and a Master's of Science at the School of Natural Resources and Environment with an emphasis on Behavior, Education, and Communication. She has spent the last seven years working in the field of environmental education doing programming of all types to groups of all ages. When she is not working, she spends time reading and knitting, as well as hiking and exploring with friends.

Our current Assistant Director of Education, Dr. Benjamin Hutchins isn't going anywhere. He will stay around to work closely with Kellie, and will continue to work with our campers too. However, he will also be working on a series of research projects across the state, gathering new and exciting

information to help enrich our camps and field days.

Also, we say good-bye to our 2020 Camp Administrator, Katrina Shmidl. Katrina worked with us as a camp counselor in 2019 before joining in 2020 as our Camp Administrator. Our 2019 campers will remember Katrina's awesome drone skills and propensity to break out in song. Although 2020 camps were cancelled, we at EARDC were grateful for Katrina's hard work creating our great, education YouTube videos in addition to our COVID-19 safety protocols. Katrina is now working with a Los Angeles film company on several projects in support of veteran entrepreneurs and film makers.



Spotlight on Research

COVID-19 didn't slow down research at the Edwards Aquifer Research and Data Center. 2020 saw the publication of a statewide study of groundwater organisms that live in shallow groundwater habitats beneath surface rivers. Additionally, EARDC staff collaborated with researchers from the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley to publish additional records to better understand the ranges of rare groundwater-obligate Texas snails. And finally, we continue to collaborate with taxonomists from around the world to describe Texas groundwater species. 2021 promises to be a big year for Texas groundwater taxonomy, with at least a dozen next species described. The image above shows a draft figure, depicting a new Texas groundwater species. These figures are a core component of scientific species descriptions.

Holiday & COVID Hours

The EARDC analytical lab is currently open Monday – Thursday, 8 AM – 5 PM. We will be closed Wednesday November 25- Friday 27 for the Thanksgiving holiday, and we will not accept BOD or TSS samples that week. We will be closed Monday, December 21 – Friday, January 1 for the winter break. The last day to submit microbial samples will be December 17.

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