

Rautsaw wins BioOne Award

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The Early Bird

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LAURA – Rhett Rautsaw, originally of Laura, has been selected as a winner of the 2019 BioOne Ambassador Award.

This award was created to spotlight rising scholars in their field. BioOne invited qualified nominees to submit a 250-word, plain-language summary explaining the impact of their specialized work on the public at large. This year’s winners hail from around the world, including Spain and Germany.

Rhett, who is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at Clemson University’s Department of Biological Sciences, wrote his summary on his previous research on Gopher Tortoises.

His explanation of his work was compelling and succinct, and made clear the dire impact that railways have on Gopher Tortoises in Florida. Railways, while crucial for a variety of industries, are insurmountable obstacles for the tiny turtles. As they physically cannot get over or around the railroads, Gopher Tortoise populations have become fragmented.

“I want the public to remember that we – as humans – have an enormous impact on our natural world. We go about our day-to-day lives and don’t think about how simple actions can have large consequences on the environment,” he wrote when asked what he wanted the public to take away from his research.

A potential solution? Small trenches that would allow the turtles to pass through the railways. Rhett and his co-authors’ work suggested that these trenches increased Gopher Tortoise movement, mitigating some of the challenges the railways posed.

For more information about his work, visit <https://www.rhettrautsaw.com>.