



# ROME-FLOYD ECO CENTER

## ANNUAL REPORT



2  
0  
2  
4

# A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

---

The 2024 year was marked by major changes around the E.C.O. Center. Sights and sounds of kids filling our building were replaced with the noise and chaos of construction. I am still grateful to our community for approving the SPLOST funds that afforded us this renovation. Although our doors were closed to the public for the year, my staff and I worked hard to rearrange exhibits, add new displays, and create a more dynamic experience for visitors and students. Thank you to everyone who still supported us during this phase of our growth - you are the heartbeat of what we do and why we do it. We cannot wait for you to re-experience the updated E.C.O. Center with us!

*Ben Winkelman*

**BEN WINKELMAN**

Director



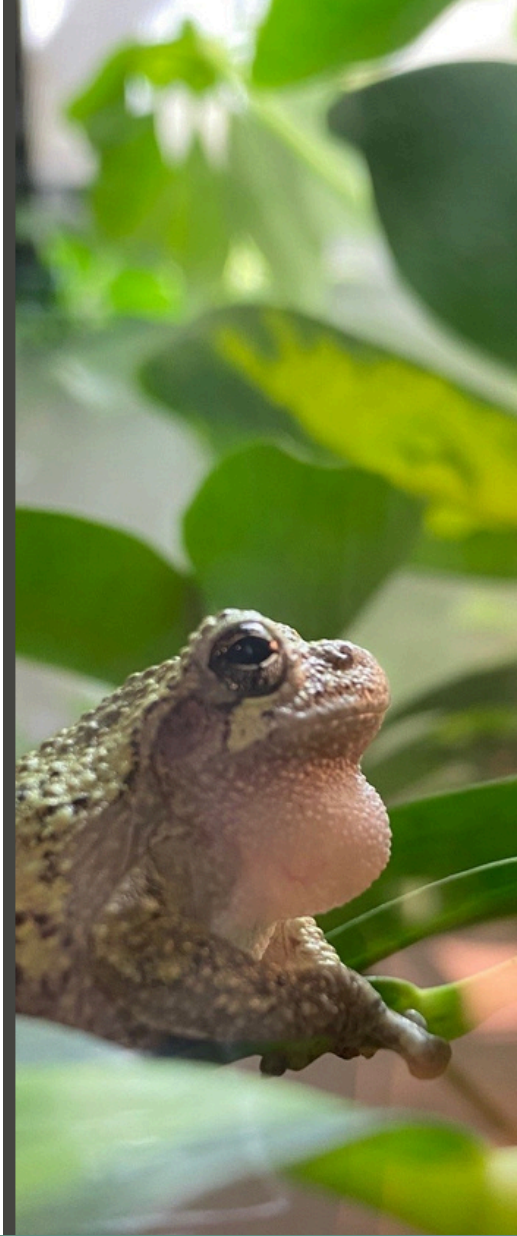
# TOTAL REACH

---

5,382  
students & adults

engaged in natural resource and native wildlife education through

54  
programs & events



## PARTICIPANT TOTALS

2418	SCHOOL PROGRAMS
1115	EDU PROGRAMS & EVENTS
1849	OUTREACH EVENTS
0	WALK-IN VISITORS



# SCHOOL PROGRAMS

2418  
students

For the first time in E.C.O. Center history, we did not have a single school group come to the Center for a field trip all year. Since renovations were pretty intrusive, we packed up our critters and headed *into* our local schools. While this is not the most ideal way to conduct programs, we were blown away at the number of schools who still wanted us to connect with them! Natural resource and wildlife education is still important so that we help young minds understand the importance of stewardship and conservation.



# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & EVENTS



1115

students & adults

While some of our educational programs and events were put on hold in 2024, the E.C.O. Center was still able to make offsite visits to daycares, libraries, 4H, camps, and more. We discussed topics including the difference between pets and wildlife, maintaining sustainable habitat, migration, predators, and of course specific species. The American alligator is always the star of the show!



# OUTREACH EVENTS



1849  
students & adults

The E.C.O. Center enjoys being part of and supporting community events as we are able. While we may not teach specific lessons at these events, it affords us the opportunity to engage in conversations about what we do. By participating in larger outreach events, we can connect with a broader audience and share our passion for wildlife and natural resource education and conservation. This year our outreach numbers grew as we participated in Ducks Unlimited Greenwings, multiple STEM nights, the NWGA RESA Forum, Landscape University, Bee Fest, and even a Critters In the Park day!



# WETLAND SIGNS

1000s  
expected impact



The E.C.O. Center continues to be graciously awarded an annual grant from the International Paper Foundation. This year's funds were used to print and install 10 informational signs about wetland functions, plants, and animals. These signs give anyone who passes through our Wetlands Demonstration Area the opportunity to better understand their significance and roles in ecosystems. The project would not have been possible without International Paper, the City of Rome's Street and Urban Forestry Departments, Camryn Roper with Georgia's Office of Tourism, Gena Flanigen's photography, and many other contributors. Check them out!



# RENOVATIONS



March '25  
expected opening

The 2017 SPLOST-funded renovations to the E.C.O. Center have been an intense process. Several obstacles and challenges of working on an 1893 building made progress slower than desired. However, the end product is still going to be worth the dust and wait. Staff have worked hard to bring new life to exhibits and create a new visiting experience. Building updates include a new entrance at the parking lot level, an elevator, classroom space with interactive technology, additional office space, fresh paint, polished floors, and so much more. We cannot wait for the community to experience it with us!

