

Claire L. Thomas  
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## ***Education***

- B.Sc. in Psychology, December 2009, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC); Minor in Sociology, GPA: 3.39/4.0
- B.Sc. in Earth Systems, Environment and Society, UIUC, December 2009; Concentration in Society and the Environment, GPA: 3.39/4.0; *Graduated with Distinction*
- M.Sc. in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, UIUC, December 2011  
Concentration in Fish and Wildlife Conservation & Aquatic Ecology; GPA: 3.9/4.0  
Master's thesis: Examining a potential predator-prey interaction between crayfish and benthic fish in Central Illinois streams
- *Ph.D. in Sociology, Louisiana State University, August 2024, in progress*

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## ***Honors, Grants, and Fellowships***

- Dean's List at UIUC: Spring 2007, Spring 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2009
- R. Weldon Larimore Grant recipient, 2010
- International Association of Astacology Travel Grant recipient, 2010
- NRES Educational Opportunity Travel Grant recipient, 2011
- Future Scholars Fellowship, LSU 2025-2029

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## ***Relevant Work Experience***

### **Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA), LSU, Spring 2025-current**

- Graduate Assistant for the CRISP-Rice Project and the iPacers project under the supervision of Dr. Mark Schafer
- Conducted interviews with rice growers in Southern US
- Managed project data and revised survey questions and protocol
- Managed a team of 8 graduate students in Summer 2025
- Created interview guide for iPacers qualitative data collection
- Conducted interviews for the Quantum Information Sciences (QIS) project
- Transcribed interviews and coded them for qualitative analysis

- Presented quantitative project on Dr. Schafer's Scientist Survey data at national meeting.

#### **Graduate Teaching Assistantship, LSU, Fall 2024**

- Teaching Assistant for online *Introductory Statistics* course led by Dr. Heather Rackin. Graded weekly reflections and maintained course gradebook.
- Held weekly office hours
- Teaching Assistant for *Sociology of Law* and *Sociological Theory*, led by Dr. Skylar Gremillion
- Graded short essays, multiple choice and short answer exams, and final papers, including detailed feedback

#### **Adjunct Professor, College of DuPage, June 2016- Dec 2017**

- Taught biology courses at the college level, including lectures (both pre-made and ones that I organized)
- Created and graded assignments and exams, including classroom debates, poster and oral presentations
- Led classroom discussions and laboratory experiments
- Encouraged critical thinking in discussions and on group/personal assignments
- Provided detailed feedback, created and utilized descriptive rubrics
- Mentored students who were interested in biology with after-class informal Q&As
- Courses taught: *Environmental Biology* (both regular and Adult Fast Track), *Introduction to Biological Principles I*

#### **Adjunct Professor, Art Institute of Chicago, July 2016- Oct 2017**

- Taught biology courses at the college level, including lectures (both pre-made and ones that I organized)
- Created and graded assignments and exams
- Led classroom discussions and laboratory experiments
- Encouraged critical thinking in discussions and on group/personal assignments
- Fostered an environment where students ask questions and utilize empirical evidence to validate arguments
- Courses taught: *Environmental Science*, *Anatomy and Physiology*, *Biological Design*, *Ethical issues in Science*

#### **Program Manager, Cape Eleuthera Institute, June 2014-April 2016**

- Created and managed the Sustainable Fisheries Program at the Cape Eleuthera Institute (CEI), Eleuthera, The Bahamas
- Coordinated and conducted deepwater SCUBA surveys and shallow water nursery surveys of local queen conch populations
- Supervised a team of 2-4 interns per semester who performed data collection and entry
- Supervised undergraduate students (Jun-Jul) collecting dissertation data for their Marine Biology degree from Newcastle University (UK)

- Collaborated with the Bahamas National Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Bahamas Reef Environmental Education Foundation, Community Conch, and other NGO's, in partnerships for a nationwide Conch Conservation Campaign
- Gave presentations (poster and oral) at national and international conferences
- Duties and responsibilities from Research Associate position

#### **Applied Scientific Research Teacher, The Island School, July 2012-April 2016**

- Led teacher for the semester-long science class at The Island School, centering on the scientific method, data collection and analysis, lectures (e.g., threats to the ocean and marine management), discussions, and full field days with the students
- Edited existing curriculum, created supplemental assignments that fit into curriculum, graded and provided feedback on several individual and group assignments, created and administered oral assessments

#### **Research Associate, Cape Eleuthera Institute, July 2012-May 2014**

- Led the Queen Conch Ecology and Education Program at CEI
- Conducted population surveys of queen conch in shallow and deep water in South Eleuthera, leading to publication
- Led educational and outreach events centered on queen conch conservation, to international and local visiting school groups
- Hosted outreach days aimed at community engagement and open dialogue
- Operated small watercraft

#### **Communications Coordinator, Cape Eleuthera Institute, Jan 2013-April 2016**

- Maintained the CEI blog
- Organized and published the CEI eNews every quarter, which involved collaborating with scientists on different teams, to elicit articles on relevant research
- Updated and edited content for the CEI website
- Provided edited content to the island-wide newspaper, The Eleutheran, aimed at educating and building relationships with the local island community

#### **Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA), Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS), FA 2011**

- Identified and catalogued marine crustaceans from the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale collection into the INHS Crustacean Teaching Collection.
- Conducted fish and crayfish surveys for the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)
- Identified native fish and crayfish
- Catalogued threatened/endangered species at potential bridge construction sites
- Participated in weekly scholarly paper discussions
- Reviewed and edited articles for submission in peer-reviewed journals

#### **Graduate Teaching Assistantship, UIUC, SP 2011**

- TA for *Integrative Biology (IB) 362: Marine Biology*
- Graded exams, gave lectures on several topics in marine biology (e.g., mangrove ecology and invasive species), organized and graded class

discussion activities on relevant topics related to marine biology for 75+ students

- *TA for IB 496: Special Course in Coral Reef Ecology*
- Prepared students for end of semester trip to San Pedro, Belize, in May 2011, by giving lectures on pertinent background information in coral reef ecology and teaching students fish and invertebrate identification
- Supervised students while they conducted status surveys (snorkel) of reef fish and invertebrates at 20 sites at and around San Pedro, including Hole Chan Marine Park
- Verified student identifications and led discussions on commonly misidentified species
  
- *TA for IB 202: Anatomy and Physiology Lab*
- Taught vertebrate anatomy and physiology labs, graded lab reports, created and graded quizzes and graded exams,
- Familiarized students with the operation of common laboratory equipment (e.g., light photospectrometer)

#### **GRA, INHS, UIUC, FA 2010-SP 2011**

- Identified and catalogued 50+ IDNR fish collections into INHS fish collection
- Gained proficiency in identifying native Illinois fish fauna, and taught fish identification techniques to fellow graduate students
- Conducted fish and crayfish surveys for IDOT

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#### ***Presentations***

- Thomas, Claire, C.A. Taylor. 2010. "Effects of crayfish predation on benthic fish communities in Central Illinois streams." Poster presentation at 18th International Association of Astacology meeting, Colombia, MO.
- Thomas, Claire. 2010. "Aquatic sampling techniques in Central Illinois streams." Oral presentation for TWS mentor series.
- Thomas, Claire, C.A. Taylor. 2011. "Effects of crayfish predation on benthic fish." Oral presentation at the 13th Graduate Students in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (GEEB) Symposium, Urbana, IL. Oral presentation.
- Thomas, Claire, C. A. Taylor. 2011. "Crayfish: Scavenger or deadly predator? Examining a potential predator-prey relationship between crayfish and benthic fish in aquatic food webs." at the 2011 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, Des Moines, IA. Oral presentation
- Thomas, Claire. 2012. "Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*) ecology and conservation in the Caribbean." Oral presentation for Academic Outreach with Deep Creek Middle School, Eleuthera, the Bahamas.
- Thomas, Claire. 12 December 2012. "Past and current queen conch research at CEI." Oral presentation at the 1st Cape Eleuthera Institute Research Symposium.

- Thomas, Claire, E. Cash, S. Auscavitch, A. Brooks. 8 March 2013. "The current status of queen conch populations in South Eleuthera, The Bahamas." Oral presentation at the 1st Bahamas National Trust Natural History Conference, Nassau, The Bahamas.
- Thomas, Claire, S. Auscavitch, A. Brooks, and A. Stoner. 2014. 7 November 2014. "Assessing essential queen conch habitat in South Eleuthera, The Bahamas: Recent research suggests urgent need for protection." Oral presentation at the 67th Gulf and Fisheries Caribbean Institute meeting in Bridgetown, Barbados.
- Thomas, Claire & C. Elvidge. 2016. 16 March 2016. "Would you sleep in a graveyard? Assessing queen conch's behavioral response to knocked shells." Oral presentation at the 3rd Bahamas National Trust Natural History Conference, Nassau, The Bahamas.
- Thomas, Claire, X. Yang, P. Miller, W. Shrum, and M. Schafer. 2025. "Gender, COVID, and Science: A 5 Country Analysis." Oral presentation at the Rural Sociological Meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah.

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### ***Publications and Proceedings***

- Elvidge, C.K., C. Britain, P. Szekeres, **C. Thomas**, and S.J. Cooke. 2023. A field test of the "graveyard hypothesis" reveals avoidance of chemical but not visual cues in Bahamian queen conch (*Aliger gigas*). *Behavioural Processes* 210: 1-7.
  - Sherman, K.D., A.D. Shultz, C.P. Dahlgren, **C. Thomas**, E. Brooks, A. Brooks, D.R. Brumbaugh, L. Gittens, and K. Murchie. 2018. Contemporary and emerging fisheries in The Bahamas- Conservation and management challenges, achievements, and future directions. *Fisheries Management and Ecology* 1: 1-13.
  - **Thomas, C.L.**, S. Auscavitch, A. Brooks, and A. Stoner. 2016. Assessing essential queen conch habitat in South Eleuthera, The Bahamas: Recent research suggests urgent need for protection. *Proceedings of the 67th Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute* 67: 344-347.
  - **Thomas, C.L.**, and C.A. Taylor. 2013. Crayfish: Scavenger or deadly predator? Examining a potential predator-prey relationship between crayfish and benthic fish in aquatic food webs. *Freshwater Science* 32(4): 1309-1317.
  - Welsh, D., M. Zhou, S. Mussman, L. Fields, **C. Thomas**, S. Pearish, S. Kilburn, J. Parker, L. Stein, J. Bartlett, C. Bertram, T. Bland, K. Laskowski, B. Mommer, X. Zhuang, and R. Fuller. 2013. Size and shape differences between stream and lake habitats in the blackstripe topminnow, *Fundulus notatus*. *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* 108: 784-789.
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## **Service**

- *Co-host of The Joyful Rebels podcast*, September 2022-current: Co-host of a weekly podcast that covers topics pertaining to positive psychology and mental wellness and wellbeing. For each week's topic I do a quick literature review, find relevant scholarly articles, and translate the findings into conversational, easy to understand language, for our target audience of women aged 30+. I host the show with my mom (who has a M.Sc. in I/O Psych) and we offer our perspective and experience as well as science-backed strategies in the field of positive psychology. We have ~4000 episode downloads YTD. I also post free yoga + meditation videos to The Joyful Rebels Youtube page on a monthly basis.
- *Slow-Flow Yoga*, offered in Women's Empowerment Facebook Group, Jan 2021-current: Providing weekly 30-45 minutes yoga classes to women aged 30-70 who are also engaged in a fitness program.
- *School Without Walls event*, February 2016: Led discussions with local students from Deep Creek Middle School on sustainable fisheries and fishing practices in The Bahamas, as well as how they can be a marine steward
- *Earth Day Event at Rock Sound*, Eleuthera, The Bahamas, April 2016: Organized and manned a booth aimed at starting discussions and having open dialogue with community members about the importance of fisheries in their lives, and the social costs of proposed management strategies e.g., a closed fishing season
- *Deep Creek Middle School Community Outreach project*, June 2014: Mentored students from Deep Creek Middle School in an effort to promote sustainable fishing practices in The Bahamas. Helped students organize a town hall meeting where discussions were held on issues pertaining to ocean conservation and sustainable fishing
- *Illinois Radio Reader*, 2011-2012: Volunteered to record readings of local newspapers that are broadcast to residents in East Central Illinois who are visually impaired.
- *Naturally Illinois Expo*, 2010, 2011: Lead exhibitor for two informational tables on aquatic macroinvertebrates and native Illinois fish. Outreach to 2000+ students from Champaign County

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## **Professional Affiliations**

- Member of Yoga Alliance, January 2019- current
- Member of National Wildlife Society chapter, 2011-2012
- Member of Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society, 2009-2012
- Vice President of UIUC subunit of TWS, 2010-2011
- Member of Academic Outreach Committee, TWS + AFS 2009-2011
- Member of UIUC subunit of American Fisheries Society (AFS), 2009-2011
- Treasurer of UIUC AFS, 2010-2011
- Member of Diver Alert Network (DAN) 2010, 2012-current
- Member of Rural Sociological Society, 2025

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## References

- Dr. Mark Walker, Committee Chair for Dissertation
  - [mwalk67@lsu.edu](mailto:mwalk67@lsu.edu)
- Dr. Mark Schafer, Graduate Assistantship Supervisor
  - [mschaf1@lsu.edu](mailto:mschaf1@lsu.edu)
- Dr. Christopher A. Taylor, Master's advisor, INHS, Senior research scientist (retired)
  - [ctaylor@inhs.illinois.edu](mailto:ctaylor@inhs.illinois.edu)
  - Phone: 217-244-2153
- Dr. Aaron Shultz, Director (*former*), Cape Eleuthera Institute
  - [Aaron.dean.shultz@gmail.com](mailto:Aaron.dean.shultz@gmail.com)
  - Phone: 269-290-7605