



# ROME-FLOYD ECO CENTER

## ANNUAL REPORT

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# A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

There are no words to describe 2025 for the Rome-Floyd E.C.O. Center other than incredible. What a year! After being closed for renovations for all of 2024, our community humbled us by pouring through our doors beginning March 3, 2025. If we ever had a doubt that a natural resource education facility was not important, you erased that. We do not take this growth for granted but rather use it to keep us motivated and inspired to provide programs and events that matter to our patrons. As we are still processing all that happened in 2025, know that we never take any success for granted, but instead, we attribute it to the support of our visitors, school systems, program attendees, social media shares, and everyone in between. Thank you Rome, Floyd County, and the surrounding areas!

*Ben Winkelman*

**BEN WINKELMAN**

Director



# TOTAL REACH

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25,544  
students & adults

engaged in natural resource and native wildlife education through

150  
programs & events



## PARTICIPANT TOTALS

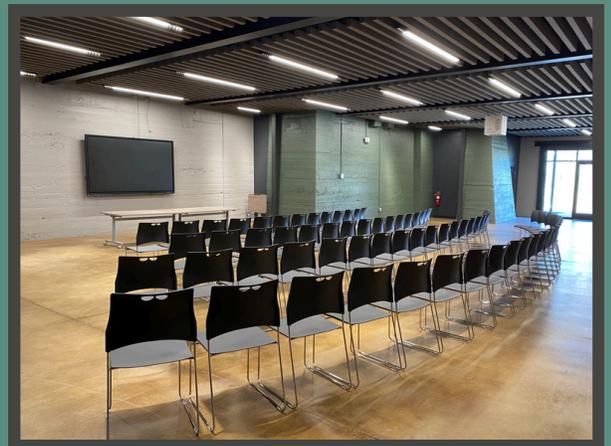
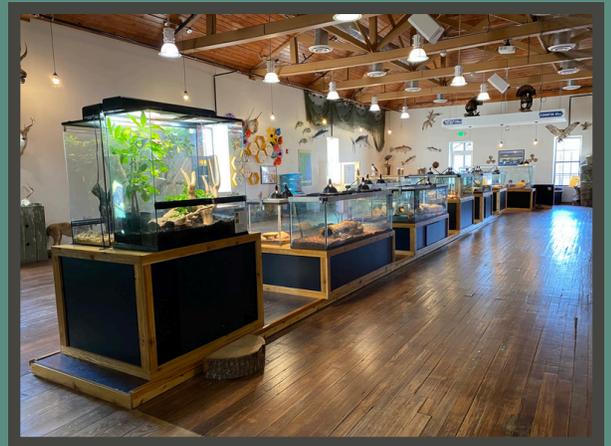
7,772	SCHOOL PROGRAMS
1,619	EDU PROGRAMS & EVENTS
737	OUTREACH EVENTS
15,416	WALK-IN VISITORS

# RENOVATIONS

## March 2025 grand (re)opening



On March 3, 2025, the E.C.O. Center officially reopened its doors to the public after a 15-month renovation process! Thanks to funds collected during the 2017 SPLOST campaign, our facility received a major upgrade. With the transformation of the basement into a functioning classroom space, the exhibit area expanded to include a more interactive layout with additional animals and displays. Additionally, the facility gained new office space, an elevator, and an easier to access entrance. We cannot thank the Rome-Floyd citizens enough for saying, "Yes" to SPLOST!





# SCHOOL PROGRAMS

7,772  
students

There is nothing more fulfilling for the staff of the E.C.O. Center than to have our building filled with school students! After a whole year of no field trips in 2024, the sites and sounds of laughter and excitement over wildlife were refreshing and energizing. From preschoolers describing the texture of an alligator, to high schoolers discussing the importance of vegetative buffers, we covered everything in between with all ages. Working with teachers to bridge classroom learning with hands-on experiences is priceless!



# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & EVENTS

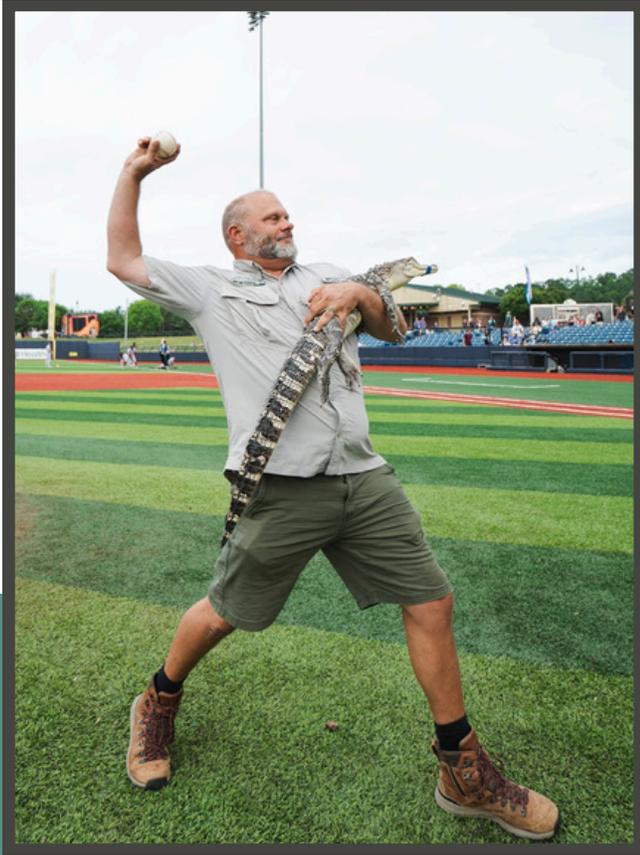
1,619  
students & adults



The E.C.O. Center's Little Critters preschool program continues to be a huge hit among the kids *and* the adults! Preschoolers are bright and can't help but make you smile with their questions and stories. Other educational programs in 2025 included garden clubs, Leadership Georgia, 4-H clubs, summer camps, libraries, and so many more. We truly enjoy the diversity of groups that we get to see!



# OUTREACH EVENTS



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737  
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 we participated in Ducks Unlimited Greenwings, multiple STEM nights, Bee Fest, Safari Night at Truett's Chick-fil-A, and Ben and the alligator even got to throw out the first pitch at Ag Night with the Rome Emperors!



# BIRDNIRDS



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291  
students & adults

BirdNirds is the newest program that takes place at the E.C.O. Center on the last Thursday of the month. Master Birders Marcus & Whitney Edwards have an incredible knowledge and passion that they are passing on to fellow bird-lovers in our community! All ages attended BirdNirds throughout last year as the club learned about specific bird species, habits, habitats, etc. The coolest part, though, is that the group participates in bird walks in the park as part of each session. We love that this program fulfills a niche that we had not yet explored, and it is getting more people interested in birding!

