

Shamindri D. Tennakoon

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Education

- University of Florida** – Gainesville, FL [08/2022]
PhD in Zoology, Department of Biology
Dissertation – Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches in morphological analyses of recent and fossil benthic invertebrates
Advisor – Dr. Michal Kowalewski – Curator, Invertebrate Paleontology, Florida Museum of Natural History
- University of Peradeniya** – Sri Lanka [01/2014]
Bachelor of Science – Special Degree in Zoology (first class Honors)

Appointments and Professional Experience

- Lecturer, Odum School of Ecology, University of Georgia [08/2025 –]
Visiting Assistant Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies, Hendrix College [08/2022 – 07/2025]
Graduate Teaching and Research Assistant, University of Florida [08/2015 – 08/2022]
Lecturer, Department of Zoology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka [05/2017 – 12/2021]
Research Assistant, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka [01/2015 – 06/2015]
Teaching Assistant, Department of Zoology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka [02/2014 – 10/2014]

Publications

Petsios, E., Farrar, L., **Tennakoon, S.**, Jamal, F., Portell, R., Kowalewski, M., and Tyler, C. (2023) “The Ecology of Biotic Interactions in Echinoids: Modern Insights into Ancient Interactions” *Elements of Paleontology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tennakoon, S., Portell, R.W., Petsios, E., Tyler C.L., and Kowalewski, M. (2022) “*Semicassis globosum* (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Cassidae) from the upper Eocene Ocala Limestone of Florida with redescription and discussion of its extreme morphological variability” *Historical Biology*: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08912963.2022.2063055>

Monarrez, P. M., Zimmt, J. B., Clement, A. M., Gearty, W., Jacisin, J. J., Jenkins, K. M., Kusnerik, K. M., Poust, A. W., Robson, S. V., Sclafani, J. A., Stilson, K. T., **Tennakoon, S. D.** and Thompson, C. M. (2021) “Our past creates our present: a brief overview of racism and colonialism in Western paleontology” *Paleobiology*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–13: <https://doi.org/10.1017/pab.2021.28>

Petsios, E., Portell, R. W., Farrar, L., **Tennakoon, S.D.**, Grun, T. B., Kowalewski, M. and Tyler Carrie L. (2021) “An asynchronous Mesozoic marine revolution: the Cenozoic intensification of predation on echinoids” *Proc. R. Soc. B*.2882021040020210400: <http://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2021.0400>

Teaching Experience

- Lecturer**, Odum School of Ecology, University of Georgia [08/2025 –]
ECOL 3220 Marine Mammals
ECOL 4050 Ichthyology
- Visiting Assistant Professor**, Hendrix College [08/2022 – 07/2025]
BIOL 460 Evolution
BIOL 260 Ecology and Evolution (with lab)
BIOL 104 Environmental Biology (with lab)
BIOL 100 Fossils
BIOL 100 Global Climate Change
LBST 150 The Climate Conscious Citizen

BSC 2010L Integrated Principles of Biology 1

Invertebrate Biodiversity on Coral Reefs (Immersion course in San Salvador, Bahamas)

Invertebrate Biodiversity (ZOO4205C/ZOO6927)

BSC 4936 Critical Analysis for Biological Research (online)

BSC 2010 Integrated Principles of Biology 1 (online)

BSC 2010L Integrated Principles of Biology 1 (online)

BSC 2011 Integrated Principles of Biology 2 (online)

In-person courses: classroom, lab, and field instruction, designing syllabi, developing course content and engaged learning activities, leading discussions, designing assignments, hosting office hours, grading, and proctoring.

Online courses: hosting office hours – discussion on course content and lab protocols, and grading.

Platforms and tools used: eLC, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, Zoom, Google workspace, and Microsoft apps.

Awards, Scholarships, and Fellowships

- University of Georgia Teaching Academy Early Career Fellow, 2025 – 2026
- Hendrix College Odyssey grant for supervising undergraduate research in paleontology, 2023
- Travel award to attend LGBTQ-communities in paleoscience, the Paleontological Society, 2023
- Arthur J. Boucot Award, the Paleontological Society, 2022
- John W. Wells Grants-in-Aid of Research Program, Paleontological Research Institution, 2022
- Florida Museum of Natural History summer travel award, 2022
- Graduate student Service Award – Biology Department, University of Florida, 2021
- Earthrates RCN travel award to attend GSA, 2021
- SACNAS registration scholarship to attend the 2020 SACNAS National Conference
- Scholarship for presenting at the 'Future Leaders in Paleontology' session at Geological Society of America Annual Meeting, 2020
- Paleontological Society Outreach and Education grant for the project 'Afterschool at the Museum: Hands-on Learning Experiences for Elementary and Middle School Students', 2020
- North American Paleontological Convention Travel Award, 2019
- Florida Museum of Natural History travel award to attend the Geological Society of America Annual Meeting, 2018
- Lelia and William Brayfield Scholarship Award, Southwest Florida Fossil Society, 2018
- Brian Riewald Memorial Fund Research Grant, Department of Biology, University of Florida, 2017
- The Florida Paleontological Society's Gary S. Morgan Student Research Award, 2016
- R. Jerry Britt, Jr. Paleobiology Scholarship, Florida Museum of Natural History, 2016
- Astronaut Trail Shell Club Scholarship, 2016
- University of Florida International Center; Certificate of Outstanding Academic Achievement, 2016
- F.P. Amerasinghe Memorial Gold Medal for Zoology (Highest GPA in the Zoology major cohort) 2014, University of Peradeniya
- University Award for Academic Excellence 2014, University of Peradeniya

Invited Talks

"A gallery tour of learning activities and other creative endeavors in geoscience and biology" [2024] Putting the "Art" in Earth: Exploring the Intersection between Geoscience and the Creative Arts session at Geological Society annual meeting 2024. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 56.

"A journey in invertebrate paleontology" [2024] Seminar at the Biology department, University of Central Aransas.

“Morphometrics as a tool for molluscan systematics: a paleobiological perspective” [2022] How do we make decisions about data and analyses in systematic biology? It depends! Symposium at Evolution 2022.

“Paleoecological implications of non-lethal marginal traces in clypeasteroid echinoids” [2021] PaleoPERCS early career seminar (virtual seminar).

“Cassid snails: terrifying predators, fascinating fossils” [2021] Fossil Friday Chats organized by the Alf Museum of Paleontology and the Western Science Center (virtual talk)

“Morphological variability of cassids (Mollusca: Gastropoda) from the upper Eocene Ocala Limestone of Florida” [2020] Florida Museum graduate student lightening talk series, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

“Cenozoic cassid snails (Mollusca: Gastropoda)” [2018] Florida Fossil Hunters Meeting.

“Cassid gastropods from the upper Eocene Ocala Limestone, Florida and mollusk death assemblages as a tool to detect impacts of artificial reefs” [2018] Florida Paleontological Society Meeting.

Presentations

*Denotes mentored undergraduate student

*Johnston M, *Hurley B, Portell RW, **Tennakoon S** (2024) [Poster]: Morphological comparison of *Mulinia congesta* and *Mulinia lateralis* (Mollusca: Bivalvia: Mactridae) from the Neogene and Quaternary Periods of Florida. Presented at the 2024 annual meeting of the Arkansas Academy of Sciences.

Tennakoon S (2023) [Talk]: Experiences in the field: a journey from Sri Lanka to Florida to Arkansas. Presented at the SACNAS National Diversity in STEM Conference 2023.

Tennakoon S, Portell RW, Kowalewski M (2022) [Talk]: Morphological disparity and variability of the fossil gastropod *Hystrivasum* (family Turbinellidae). Presented at the Geological Society Southeastern and Northcentral section meeting 2022. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 54.

Tennakoon S, Thompson C (2022) [Talk]: Using museum specimens to teach Florida fossils and geology across multiple learning environments. Presented at the Geological Society Southeastern and Northcentral section meeting 2022. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 54.

Tennakoon S (2021) [Talk]: Non-lethal marginal traces in Recent and fossil clypeasteroid echinoids from Florida. Presented at the Postgraduate Institute of Science Research Congress, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka 2021. Proceedings the Postgraduate Institute of Science Research Congress 2021.

*Negron K, **Tennakoon S**, Portell RW, Kowalewski M (2021) [Poster]: A morphological comparison of Recent and Pleistocene *Phrontis vibex* (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Nassariidae) from southwestern Florida. Presented at the Geological Society Annual Meeting 2021. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 53.

*Negron K, **Tennakoon S**, Jamal F, Grun TB, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2020) [Poster]: Ecological and paleoecological implications of marginal traces in echinoids from the Gulf of Mexico. Presented at the Geological Society Annual Meeting 2020. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 52.

Tennakoon S, Petsios E, Portell RW, Farrar L, Grun TB, Kowalewski M, Tyler CL (2020) [Talk]: Drill Holes and Bite Marks Shed Light on the Role of Predation in the Evolution of Echinoids. Presented at the SACNAS National Conference 2020.

*Negron K, **Tennakoon S**, Grun TB, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2020) [Poster]: Comparison of Non-Lethal Predatory Traces in Recent and Fossil Sand Dollars. Southeastern GSA Abstracts with Program 52. Conference canceled due to COVID-19.

Tennakoon S, Thompson C (2020) Holey rocks! the application of Florida fossil invertebrates to middle school learning standards in Alachua County, Fl. Southeastern GSA Abstracts with Program 52. Conference canceled due to COVID-19.

Tennakoon S, Jamal F, Grun TB, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2019) [Poster]: Non-lethal traces of predation in tests of recent and fossil echinoids. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 51.

Petsios E, Tyler CL, Portell RW, Farrar L, **Tennakoon S**, Kowalewski M (2019) [Talk]: Escalation of echinoid-associated predatory and parasitic drilling in the Mesozoic marine revolution. 11th North American Paleontological Convention at Riverside, CA.

Tennakoon S, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2019) [Poster]: Morphological disparity of Cenozoic cassids (Mollusca: Gastropoda). 11th North American Paleontological Convention, Riverside, CA.

Tennakoon S, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2019) [Talk]: Fossil cassids (Mollusca: Gastropoda) from the upper Eocene Ocala Limestone of Florida. Annual Meeting of Florida United Malacologists 2019, Gainesville, Florida.

Tennakoon S, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2018) [Talk]: Morphometric analysis of Cenozoic cassids (Mollusca: Gastropoda). Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 50.

Tennakoon S, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler CL (2018) [Talk]: Morphometric analysis of Cenozoic cassids (Mollusca: Gastropoda) from Florida. 5th International Palaeontological Congress, Paris, France.

Tennakoon S, Lindberg W, Kowalewski M (2018) [Talk]: Live-dead fidelity of mollusk assemblages in the Suwannee Regional Reef System, an artificial reef in Florida, USA. 5th International Palaeontological Congress, Paris, France.

Tennakoon S, Portell RW, Kowalewski M, Petsios E, Tyler, CL (2018) [Poster]: Carnivorous cassids (Mollusca: Gastropoda) from the upper Eocene Ocala Limestone of Florida. Southeastern GSA Abstracts with Program 50.

Tennakoon S, Lindberg W, Kowalewski M (2017) [Talk]: Mollusk death assemblages as a baseline for assessing community shifts in artificial reefs: a comparison of dead and living mollusk assemblages in the Suwannee regional reef system, Florida. Geological Society of America Abstracts with Program 49.

Tennakoon S, Lindberg W, Kowalewski M (2017) [Talk]: Mollusks as a proxy for assessing ecological impacts of artificial reefs: a comparison of dead and living mollusk assemblages in the Suwannee regional reef system, Florida. Southeastern GSA Abstracts with Program 49.

Tennakoon S, Lindberg W, Kowalewski M (2017) [Poster]: Decadal-scale impact of artificial reefs on mollusk communities: a comparison of dead and living mollusks in the Suwannee Regional Reef System, Florida. Big Bend Science Symposium, Cedar Key, Fl

Tennakoon S, Meegaskumbura M, (2014) [Talk]: Systematics of cerithiform gastropods (Superfamily Cerithioidea) in Miocene of Sri Lanka. Peradeniya University International Research Sessions 2014 (iPURSE 2014).

Professional Service

Undergraduate Committee, Odum School of Ecology, University of Georgia	[2025 –]
Co-conveying the session ‘Broadening Access and Use of Natural History Collections Through Innovative Approaches and Engagement’ at the Society for preservation of Natural Collections Conference	[09/2024]
Judge at Paleontological Society poster competition at Geological Society Annual Meeting	[09/2024]
Faculty advisor for new student orientation trips, Hendrix College	[08/2023 and 08/2024]
Guest speaker for the ‘Women and Minorities in STEM’ course at University of Central Arkansas	[05/2024]
Participating on a panel on climate anxiety, Hendrix College	[04/2024]
Panelist at ‘WE Contain Multitudes: Identity, Empathy, and Belonging’ discussion, Hendrix College	[03/2024]
Faculty co-advisor for the Asian Cultures Club, Hendrix College	[2023- 2025]
Panelist at project Pericles forum on Climate Change, Hendrix College	[11/2023]
Mentor judge at SACNAS National Diversity in STEM conference, Portland, Oregon	[10/2023]
Representing Hendrix College at Central Arkansas PRIDE	[10/2023]
Conducting a ‘Learn how to learn workshop’ for students, Hendrix College	[08/2023]
Panelist at NSF earth science grant review panel	[Spring 2023]
Organized a virtual workshop on multicultural mentorship for the Paleontological Society	[Spring 2023]
Represented the Biology and Health Sciences Department at the Hendrix College majors fair	[03/2023]
Co-conveying and co-chairing morphology session at Geological Society Annual Meeting	[10/2022]
Judge at Paleontological Society poster competition at Geological Society Annual Meeting	[10/2022]
Panelist at the graduate school information session, Biology and Health Sciences Department, Hendrix College	[10/2022]
Diversity and Inclusion Committee – Paleontological Society	[01/2020 – 12/2023]
Member of the committee organizing professional/personal development webinars	
Representing the Society at SACNAS National Diversity in STEM Conference in 2020, 2021 and 2023, and the National Association for Black Geoscientists Annual Meeting 2021.	
Panelist at the ‘Work-life balance panel’ at the 2021 National Association for Black Geoscientists Annual Meeting	
Contribution to compiling antiracism resources for the Society	
Diversity Engagement and Enhancement in Paleontology Award Committee – Paleontological Society	[12/2022 –]
UF SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science)	
Vice-President	[04/2020 – 08/2022]
Secretary and member of the 2020 Southeast SACNAS Regional Meeting organizing Committee – UF SACNAS	[04/2019 – 04/2020]
Organizing workshops, events, and Inclusion in STEM themed reading group for UF SACNAS from 2019 – 2021	
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee – Department of Biology, University of Florida	[08/2020 – 08/2021]
Executive Board – Florida Museum Student Association	[Spring 2020]
Conveying and co-chairing the session ‘T86. Shape, Size, and Function: New Approaches to Morphometric Analyses at the Geological Society of America annual meeting	[2020]
Officer – Biology Graduate Student Association	
Member of the awards committee	[05/2021 – 08/2022]
International student representative	[05/2019 – 05/2020]
Organizing and hosting an ‘International potluck and gathering’ for the Department of Biology, November 2019 and contributing to compile resources for the ‘International student resource packet’ for the Biology Department, 2019	
Graduate student representative; Greenhouse Committee	[05/2019 – 05/2020]
Seminar support	[05/2018 – 04/2019]

Panelist at the Florida Museum graduate seminar on natural history museums	[09/2022]
Student representative – Florida Museum University Teaching Committee	[08/2017 – 08/2022]
Representing Invertebrate Paleontology at the Florida Museum Research Day	[02/2019]
Judge for undergraduate research presentations, Florida Museum	[04/2019]
Judge for Alachua County, Florida school science fairs	[11/2018 and 11/2019]
Co-chairing the session ‘D23. Paleontology, Evolution and Development’ at the Geological Society of America annual meeting 2018	[11/2018]

Mentoring and Research Supervision

Mentor for one-on-one mentoring program and ‘conversations with scientists’ at the SACNAS National Diversity in STEM conference	[11/2024]
Supervising and training two undergraduate students on independent research in paleobiology using fossil mollusk specimens, statistical methods, fieldwork, and research presentations, Hendrix College	[Summer 2023]
Academic advising for biology and Environmental studies, Hendrix College	[Fall 2023 – 2025]
Thesis advising for Environmental studies, Hendrix College	[Fall 2023 – 2025]
Internship advising for Environmental studies and health sciences, Hendrix College	[05/2023 – 2025]
Mentoring a student in the Hendrix College first gen mentoring program	[Fall 2022 – 2025]
Mentoring an undergraduate student on independent research using biological and fossil specimens, analytical techniques, and research presentations, University of Florida	[01/2020 – 01/2022]
Mentoring an undergraduate student for the “On To the Future” Program at the 2021 GSA Annual Meeting	[October 2021]
Mentoring an undergraduate student for the NSF funded GEOFutures Program at the 2020 SACNAS National Conference	[October 2020]
Mentoring students (Drop-in mentoring and CV review) at the Geological Society of America Annual Meetings	[2019, 2021, 2022]
Training an undergraduate student on analyzing echinoid specimens for paleoecological research	[Spring 2020]
Training an undergraduate research assistant in techniques used in Conservation paleobiology	[Spring 2017]

Outreach Programs

Guest lecture for the UGA Ocean Initiatives club	[10/2025]
Conversation with a paleontologist: virtual event for elementary and middle school students at SRISTEC STEAM Academy, Sri Lanka	[12/2024]
Leading a discussion on ‘Continuity’, a play on climate change: Murphy Foundation, Hendrix College	[11/2024]
Presentation on Arkansas Geology and fossils at the rock painting event for the fall 2023 wind ensemble concert	[11/2023]
Presented at the virtual career fair at Eugene Field’s Middle School, Chicago, Illinois	[05/2022]
Tabling at the opening for the ‘Fantastic Fossils’ exhibit at the Florida Museum	[04/2022]
Introduction to Echinodermata and hands-on DIY activity table at the Florida Museum at the International Women & Girls in Science Day event	[02/2022]
Invertebrate Paleontology Florida fossils table at the Gainesville Orchestra Concert at the Center for Performing Arts, UF	[11/2021]
Afterschool activities series and activity kits on Florida Geology and Paleontology (Funded by Paleontological Society)	[2020 – 2021]
The process and nature of science and introduction to paleontology: virtual event for 4 th graders at Central Park Elementary School, Broward County, Florida	[09/2020]

(Scientist in every Florida School Program)	
Interviewed for the stemCONNECT classroom connection program in Florida	[09/18/2020]
Introduction to Paleontology: virtual event for high school students in Vikhe Patil Memorial School, Pune, India	[09/13/2020]
Invertebrate Paleontology "Make your own Echinoid" activity table at the 'Girls Do Science' event at the Florida Museum – United Nations International Women & Girls in Science Day 2020	[02/15/2020]
Invertebrate Paleontology Florida fossils and activity table (Scientist in every Florida School program) at the Science Night, Littlewood Elementary School, Gainesville, FL	[01/16/2020]
Volunteering at, Backyard biodiversity camp, Florida Museum	[06/2018]
Digital outreach event to introduce different scientists to students in Bunker Hill Elementary School, Washington D.C	[05/2018]
Invertebrate Paleontology table at the "She's a scientist" event, Florida Museum	[11/2017]
National Fossil Day, Florida Museum	[11/2017]
Science exhibition for K–12 students in Central Province, Sri Lanka, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka	[05/2017]
"Can You Dig It?" outreach event by the Florida Museum of Natural History	[03/2017 and 03/2018]

Certificates, Short Courses, and Workshops

Teaching, Mentoring and Professional Development

Keys to UGA workshop series, Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)	[08/2025 –]
Assess Student Learning Just in Time, CTL	[10/2025]
Designing and Facilitating an Effective Learning Environment, CTL	[09/2025]
Teaching approaches with neurodivergent students: Strategies and solutions workshop, Hendrix College	[11/2023]
Introduction to AI workshop, Hendrix College	[10/2023]
Council of new student advisors training, Hendrix College	[08/2023]
SACNAS "Preparation & Resources for Instructors & Assistant Professors" workshop	[08/2023]
Jumpstart academic advising training, Hendrix College	[05/2023]
Arkansas women in Higher Education Professional development day	[05/2023]
Using student feedback to support your faculty evaluation workshop, Hendrix College	[04/2023]
Creating Student-Centered Assignments, University of Florida	[02/2022]
Great Teaching certificate, University of Florida	[2019 – 2020]
Great Online Teaching Certificate, University of Florida	[08/2022]
Paleontological Society short course on Pedagogy and Technology in the Modern Paleontology Classroom, Geological Society of America Annual Meeting 2018, Indianapolis, Indiana	[11/2018]

Analytical Skills

Analytical Paleobiology summer workshop hosted at the Florida Museum (Sponsored by NSF, Earth Rates, Paleontological Society, Society of Vertebrate Paleontology)	[7/2018 – 8/2018]
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Trainings

Mentor development workshop by 'Learning with Jasmin'	[04/2023]
Geological Society of America RISE liaison (trained to receive and report complaints of inappropriate conduct at GSA meetings to facilitate in making GSA meetings safe, respectful, and inclusive)	[2021]
Unlearning Racism in Geosciences; URGE training (UF SACNAS Board)	[Spring 2021]
UF Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training	[Spring 2021]

Academics for Black Survival and Wellness Antiracism Training

[08/2020]

Analytical skills and equipment training:

Nano-CT Training for Biologists (GE V|TOME|X M 240)

[Summer 2021]

Geospatial Analyses in R workshop organized by the UF Data Carpentries Club

[03/2021]

Training in preparatory lab methods, equipment, and cataloguing specimens – Invertebrate

[2016 – 2017]

Paleontology Division, Florida Museum of Natural History

Professional Affiliations

Geological Society of America

Paleontological Society

SACNAS