

Midwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (MWPARC) Student Travel Grant Report 2024

Awardee: Kevin Green

Professional association: Eastern New Mexico University

In one or two paragraphs, describe the work you participated in that was facilitated by this award.

In May 2024, I was awarded funding to help cover travel costs for a project tracking the spread of the Common Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) along the Ohio River. This invasive species was initially introduced to Cincinnati, Ohio, in the early 1950s, and made its way into Indiana, likely via rafting on flotsam downstream along the Ohio River (Walker and Deichsel 2005). Concern over its impact on native lizards (e.g., *Plestiodon fasciatus*) prompted efforts to eradicate this species (Deichsel and Walker 2010). However, in 2023, observations of *P. muralis* across three sites within two counties in southeastern Indiana suggested that *P. muralis* had once again become established in Indiana. As a result, I was able to travel with my research advisor, Dr. Drew Davis, to conduct surveys at additional sites along the Ohio River to locate other new populations of this introduced species. Over the course of six days, 21 sites along the Ohio River in Indiana and Kentucky were surveyed. These surveys involved recording abiotic conditions, survey effort (time), and the number of *P. muralis* observed, and I collected voucher specimens of these lizards when possible. I was able to document *P. muralis* at two previously known sites in northern Kentucky, and four sites in southeastern Indiana, including two new sites. I was able to share the results from our surveys with the Indiana state herpetologist, Nate Engbrecht, who is also interested in tracking the spread of this invasive species. These surveys have helped to confirm the persistence of *P. muralis* in southeastern Indiana and highlight challenges with invasive species management.



How has this work aided you in achieving your career goals?

This project has provided me with valuable field and data management experiences. Given time constraints, we had to maximize our time in the field, quickly visiting as many sites as possible under favorable conditions. I also learned that to do fieldwork, one must be adaptable due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., weather). Though we did not detect *P. muralis* at as many sites as expected (which is a good thing), our lack of detections remains important to serve as baseline data to monitor future spread of this species. I am planning to continue as a M.S. student with Dr. Davis after I graduate in May 2025 and will be working on a turtle survey project in southern Indiana. This MWPARC-funded work has helped to familiarize me with the area and learn valuable skills that will benefit me in graduate school. I am extremely grateful to MWPARC for funding this project through this award and helping to make this fieldwork possible.

Image description: Kevin holding a lizard lasso that has caught a wall lizard.