05 | Marine Conservation Efforts in Georgia TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] **Erin Riney:** From the New Media Institute at the University of Georgia, hello and welcome to the Georgia On Your Mind Podcast, a series that explores the relationship between the state of Georgia and the university that lives within the heart of it. Each week, a new episode will dive into an area that the state excels in and how the University of Georgia acts as a major contributor to that success.

[00:00:37] **Erin Riney:** Hey guys! Welcome back. I'm Erin Riney and this is the Georgia On Your Mind podcast. It's been a few weeks, but please welcome back Bailey. He interviewed both of our guests for this episode, so I will turn it over to him to tell you more about that.

[00:00:47] **Bailey Pelletier:** Hey everyone, it's been a minute. Like Erin mentioned, I got to interview both of our guests for this episode today, and I learned so much about the Georgia coastline and the efforts that are being made to preserve it. I'm actually from the coast [00:01:00] myself near Savannah, so it was very cool to talk with these guests and hear more about their unique perspectives.

[00:01:06] **Erin Riney:** So, if you've ever been on vacation to Savannah, Tybee Island, or any of the other coastal towns in Georgia, you know that Georgia has one of the most pristine and well-kept coastlines in the nation. According to the Georgia Conservancy, Georgia's coast stretches for 110 miles and features some of the most pristine beaches and salt marches in the entire country.

[00:01:24] **Bailey Pelletier:** For this topic, our Georgia perspective came from Dr. Kady Lyons from the Georgia Aquarium, and our UGA perspective came from Dr. Mark Risse from the Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant. Dr. Kady Lyons graduated from UC Santa Cruz in 2009 with a bachelors degree in Marine Biology, and again in 2013 with a masters in Marine Biology. She went on to earn her PhD in Zoology & Animal Biology from the University of Calgary, and currently, she's a research scientist at the Georgia Aquarium specializing in elasmobranchs.

[00:01:53] **Bailey Pelletier:** Dr. Mark Risse graduated from UGA in 1989 as a Double Dawg with degrees in both Agricultural and [00:02:00] Biological Engineering. Currently, he's the director of the UGA Marine Extension and

Georgia Sea Grant. First up, we have Dr. Kady Lyons, whose work at the Georgia Aquarium focuses on shark and ray research. Let's hear more about her role as a research scientist and the responsibilities she takes on as a result.

[00:02:18] **Bailey Pelletier:** First thing, I want you to introduce yourself, who you are, and your role at the Georgia Aquarium.

[00:02:23] **Kady Lyons:** My name's Dr. Kady Lyons. I'm a research scientist at the Georgia Aquarium, and in my role, I focus on shark and ray research.

[00:02:31] **Bailey Pelletier:** Can you kind of summarize your responsibilities for the aquarium? And just, kind of, what are your main priorities or goals?

[00:02:37] **Kady Lyons:** Yeah, I have a lot of different responsibilities at the aquarium. The first and foremost, though, is to produce scientific research. So, one of my deliverables that I have to do every year is publish at least two papers. So, very similar in a way to an academic institution for a prof. Um, so the aquarium wants me really involved in research, which is great cause that's what I do. That's what I love doing. Um, and [00:03:00] so, kind of within that, though, my responsibilities can be very varied, right? We're a very small department. There's only about like five of us there, um, in the whole research and conservation department. Um, and so, I was brought on as a shark expert for the new gallery that we had opening a few years ago. Uh, hopefully, maybe you've been, and so, what I've been tasked with is to help increase our scientific presence, um, in that particular field.

[00:03:27] **Erin Riney:** When Dr. Lyons was growing up, her favorite place was by the water. She loved going to the beach, visiting the aquarium, and attending after-school sessions to learn as much about the ocean as she could. After getting her bachelors and masters degree from UC Santa Cruz, she pursued a doctorate at the University of Calgary in Alberta, but didn't land the job at Georgia Aquarium until later. But let's hear it from her personally.

[00:03:47] **Kady Lyons:** How I got there, uh, though I don't think is as interesting, because essentially, I was a student for pretty much like nearly all of my life. Um, you know, so like, once I started Pre-K, I was in school [00:04:00] for 30 plus years or whatever. Whenever kids start preschool until I finished my PhD, and then somebody sent me this job at Georgia Aquarium and I was like, sure, that sounds great. Applied. Forgot about it. Got a call that's like, hey, we'd like to interview you. And I was like, who? Uh, and so, you know, that was like, definitely not on my radar at all. And, but in talking to the folks that now are my bosses, it was just like, hey, there's a lot of really good benefits here. Um, I

wasn't really wanting to like, stay in academia, for again, a variety of reasons, but I wanted to stay in research and this kind of allowed me to continue like, doing research without having to do like, the teaching and all those other obligations that come with that. So, I was like, yeah, sure. Uh, and then I packed up my bags and I moved cross-country to Atlanta and here we are today.

[00:04:54] **Bailey Pelletier:** After finishing school and starting at the Georgia Aquarium, Dr. Lyons pursued research on elasmobranchs [00:05:00] specifically for a variety of reasons. The main reason, though, is because the physiology of elasmobranchs is unique. For example, elasmobranchs have five to seven gill clefts that open individually, rigid dorsal fins, and teeth arranged in multiple rows.

[00:05:14] **Bailey Pelletier:** Can you tell me a little bit, specifically why you're interested in elasmobranchs and why you decided to research that family?

[00:05:22] **Kady Lyons:** Yeah. So, elasmobranchs are a fascinating group of animals. Um, and I will preface that again. I tell people when they wanna come in, they're like, I wanna do shark science. It's like, no. Don't do that. Yeah. You want to say like, I want to study sharks because here are the questions that they're really good to answer. Specific ecological, physiological, whatever it is. Having said that, right? I literally have shark scientist in my job title, so it's like, don't, do as I say, not as I do sort of a situation. So, um, again, a very, a very small field. So, I'm privileged to be able to have focused on this class of animals for [00:06:00] the majority of my academic career. Um, it makes me a very specialized person, which I have other friends of mine that, you know, you could call them shark scientists, but they study bony fishes. Ichthyologists, they have a much wider breadth of diversity of things they study. And I'm like, no, I don't know much about those. Like, I can tell you it's a fish, but I should be better at taxonomy. But I really don't like taxonomy that much actually.

[00:06:24] **Kady Lyons:** Uh, anyways, so elasmobranchs, though, are just a fascinating group because they're these really ancient fishes, right? So, if we think about evolution, right? We have our bony fish, which is where we're derived from. So, pretty much any bony thing eventually, you know, had a fish ancestor, if you trace that back long enough. Um, and elasmobranchs broke off from that, you know, millions and millions of years ago, and they, you know, we kind of have these two different paths of evolution. So, there's a lot of quirky things that elasmobranchs do in terms of their physiology that is just not, not what all other [00:07:00] vertebrates do. Um, and that makes them a fascinating group of animals to study, but also frustrating group, right? Because you can't just take like, some of the paradigms that we use in other vertebrate biology and

apply that cleanly to them. So, I think they, um, I think because of that, though, that's why they, it's like, oh, here's other ways of doing a thing. Let's study that.

[00:07:23] **Erin Riney:** The main reason why we were interested in interviewing somebody from the Georgia Aquarium is because one of their main goals is to conserve animals and the environments that they live in. Without it, we would have to drive much further than Atlanta to see a whale shark.

[00:07:34] **Bailey Pelletier:** Going back to the Georgia Aquarium, can you kind of summarize the overall mission of the aquarium?

[00:07:39] **Kady Lyons:** Yeah, so one of the main aspects of our mission is to inspire, uh, conservation. So, when people come and see these really cool animals, like, we have a fantastic collection. So again, I'd never seen a whale shark before. I had visited the Georgia Aquarium, which obviously is one of our flagship species, and, you know, people get to have that [00:08:00] experience without having to travel to Mexico or, you know, to Indonesia or like other really exotic places to be able to be inspired and hopefully, you know, want to change some of the aspects maybe of their life to help preserve or conserve these animals that we all find like, really fascinating. So, that I think is like, one of the main missions of our institution, is that hopefully you come, you learn some things, and you're inspired to maybe, you know, do further actions in your own personal life.

[00:08:31] **Bailey Pelletier:** According to Dr. Lyons, the main reason why Georgia excels in marine conservation is because we have not overly developed what little coastline we have, unlike other states that have a much larger coast and much larger cities on the coast.

[00:08:42] **Bailey Pelletier:** Okay. Um, can you kind of explain what makes Georgia unique from other coastlines?

[00:08:48] **Kady Lyons:** Sure, yeah. Um, I think it's safe to say you look at a map, right, of the whole Eastern Seaboard. Florida, like the whole state's basically coast, right? Georgia, teeny, little coast. Like, some people forget that we even are like, [00:09:00] a coastal state. Um, we're not landlocked. Uh, and then you have South Carolina, you know, North Carolina pretty much every other state, right? I think we would say like, by area, is much larger than we are. Um, but Georgia, though, has the distinction of having just the percent of salt marsh habitat that has been conserved in the sense that, it's not been overly developed, right? So, I think, like, think of Washington DC, right? This is

another salt marsh that is essentially paved over. Um, New York City, paved over estuary.

[00:09:29] **Kady Lyons:** Like, we could go like, essentially down the list of like, all major American ports, um, and people wanna live on the coast, right? It's a beautiful place. Um, and for a number of reasons, Georgia has not had as much development as most of the other Atlantic Seaboard. So, what that means, though, is that we have some pristine coastlines that, you know, can play the really important roles cause estuaries do have a lot of benefits that they provide. So, a number of ecosystem services, whether you're thinking about aquaculture [00:10:00] for oysters, right, that clean the water. Um, to, you know, to systems where juvenile animals, you know, go to grow up and then enter their adult populations. Like, having that juvenile habitat is critical. So, you have animals that can then go join the adult population. So, if you take away where the babies live, then how are you supposed to supply the adults? Um, so, a number of different reasons for that, um, makes it really important that, you know, we continue to conserve these habitats.

[00:10:28] **Erin Riney:** Without the Georgia Aquarium, the state of Georgia would not be able to preserve its coast the way it has. This is because of the amount of research that the aquarium does to improve husbandry, which refers to animals being bred and raised for food products, develop habitats, and apply their knowledge to conserve these animals and their habitats for years to come.

[00:10:45] **Bailey Pelletier:** So, our next question is what factors about the Georgia Aquarium allows it to excel in its conservation efforts, not just in Georgia, but across the country? Cause I know there's a ton of efforts and programs that span the country.

[00:10:58] **Kady Lyons:** Some of the things that [00:11:00] Georgia Aquarium excels at in its conservation programs is that this is part of our mission. Um, so we are very focused on making sure that that does happen, that it's not a secondary afterthought, right? So, like, other aquariums, I think the industry is shifting this way, but like, most other aquariums don't have like a science program, right? They'll have an education program, but like, they won't have dedicated like, research staff. Um, and so, like I said, I think that's where things are going. Like, people are seeing the value of, uh, of giving back, right? Uh, and so, I think that's one of the strengths of Georgia Aquarium that we do invest, um, a lot of financial resources into those programs. So, like, your coming to buy a ticket at the aquarium helps pay my salary and allow me to do my work and help provide funds so that we can go out and try to answer some

of these questions. Um, so, I think that's one of the biggest strengths is that we're, you know, putting our money where our mouth is.

[00:11:53] **Bailey Pelletier:** For Dr. Lyons specifically, the partnership that the Georgia Aquarium has of UGA has been extremely beneficial in conducting her own research, [00:12:00] from providing housing to actually driving the boats that take the researchers out to sea, UGA has been a critical part of improving these conservation efforts.

[00:12:08] **Bailey Pelletier:** Can you expand on how UGA allows the state and the aquarium to excel in its conservation efforts?

[00:12:14] **Kady Lyons:** Yeah, so UGA has been, again, a critical partner in a lot of the work that we're doing. Again, particularly with our juvenile sharks project here in Georgia. We stay at the dorms, so that's been great. Um, I've tried staying at a few other lakes, seedier places and was like, nope, let's just go to camp. It's basically like being at summer camp again as a kid. Uh, so being able to be right on the water and just have that access, has been crucial. Again, the staff have been phenomenal that we've been able to work with, um, at Merricks. We also work at Sapelo Island, so with UGA staff there. We don't venture too much farther down south, even though I know you guys have offices kind of all along the coast. Um, just cause it's a little far for us to get down there. Um, but yeah, the staff have been like, really crucial.

[00:12:59] **Kady Lyons:** [00:13:00] Like, I don't like boats that much. I don't drive boats. I mean, I can, but I prefer, you know, having the safety, uh, in boat captains that are part of UGA staff, who know what they're doing and can kind of keep eyes on what, as we're focused, you know, on the animals, they're focused on, okay, is a storm coming? Like, are, are there boats coming? Like, what's the wind doing? Um, that has, allows us to do everything safely, both for us and for the animals. So, I mean, we really couldn't do what we do without partnering with UGA. I mean, we probably could, but it would be a lot more expensive and probably not as much fun. Let's be honest. Yeah.

[00:13:34] **Erin Riney:** We're gonna take a short break now, but when we come back, we'll meet Dr. Mark Risse, the Director of the Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant here at UGA to learn more about the organization and its conservation efforts.

[00:13:56] **Erin Riney:** Next up, we have Dr. Mark Risse, who's currently serving as [00:14:00] the director of the UGA Marine Extension in Georgia Sea

Grant, which provides research, education, and extension programs to the state of Georgia in order to make responsible use of our coastal resources.

[00:14:11] **Mark Risse:** Uh, hi, I'm Mark Risse. I'm, uh, Director of Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant at the University of Georgia.

[00:14:18] **Bailey Pelletier:** Okay, great. Um, can you kind of summarize your role and position and your main priorities as the director?

[00:14:25] **Mark Risse:** So, my role with Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant is really to direct the entire program as leader of the program. Some of the priorities I place are on, you know, enabling our faculty and staff to do the job that they need to do, providing vision and direction for the program. So, that involves figuring out, you know, what I think our coastal communities need and assembling resources to address those needs. And [00:15:00] then, you know, managing our facilities and faculty and staff to, uh, keep them up-to-date, current and functional.

[00:15:09] **Bailey Pelletier:** Talking about the UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant, uh, can you give us a broad overview of what that is exactly?

[00:15:16] **Mark Risse:** So, Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant is very similar to, uh, cooperative extension. Uh, our mission is to, um, improve the environmental and economic health of Georgia's coastal communities through research, education, and extension or outreach. And we do that with our staff, as well as funding other researchers from throughout the University System of Georgia. Um, so much like land grant universities help the ag communities in those states and is funded by the Department of Agriculture, [00:16:00] Sea Grant was created to bring that expertise from the university to address problems in coastal communities. So, we work on a variety of issues with Georgia's coastal communities. Those can range from, uh, developing seafood and aquaculture and helping our fishermen, to helping communities protect their ecosystems through sustainable, low-impact development and even helping businesses and industries, uh, thrive along our coast. And then we also have, uh, an environmental literacy workforce development mandate that is just about helping Georgia citizens recognize the value of their coastal communities. And so, you know, we run educational programs for the general public, as well as youth audiences.

[00:16:59] **Erin Riney:** We discovered some [00:17:00] overlap between our episodes when Dr. Risse told us that he actually used to work for the College of

Agriculture and Environmental Sciences before accepting the position he has now. In this role, he interacted with local communities to discover problems that were occurring and how UGA could aggregate its resources to help. This experience helped him transition into this new position because he essentially is doing the same thing, just for the coastline and the people affected by it.

[00:17:21] **Bailey Pelletier:** Can you tell us a little bit about your journey to becoming Director of Marine Extension and, kind of, your path to where you are now? Have you always been interested in like, marine research or the marine field?

[00:17:33] **Mark Risse:** So, I sort of had an odd path to the position I'm in now with Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant. I actually, I'm a Double Dawg. I got two degrees from the University of Georgia and they're both in, uh, Agricultural and Biological Engineering. And for the first 18 years of my career, I worked for the College of Ag and Environmental Sciences, helping farmers and communities deal with water [00:18:00] resource management issues. Uh, I always thought I wanted to be a research and teaching professor at UGA, but the first job I got was with Cooperative Extension doing, you know, public service outreach and I fell in love with doing that. Actually, I was offered a research and teaching job after I had done that four or five years and decided no, I wanted to stay on the public service side.

[00:18:29] **Mark Risse:** I just enjoyed helping people. So, I did that for about 18 years and then, uh, was offered an interim position as Director of Marine Extension and Sea Grant. And at first, I thought, I don't know anything about marine sciences. I know water flows downhill, but the water I work with doesn't have salt in it and doesn't go two directions. Well, I took the position and the, I mean, the reason I was offered it is they wanted a leader [00:19:00] that knew about public service, could talk to communities, interface with the, our stakeholders around the state, and really lead a group of marine scientists. And I've enjoyed the opportunity I've had to try and improve the programs and make them, uh, more focused on helping the state meet its challenges in order to identify these challenges.

[00:19:25] **Bailey Pelletier:** An advisory board made up of fishermen, crabbers, shrimpers, educators, and more submit proposals that are then reviewed by people who actually live in these communities, and they see firsthand how these problems are affecting their everyday lives. This process removes all the bias and ensures that the most threatening issues are addressed.

[00:19:42] **Bailey Pelletier:** First, going into the research, why do you think that it's important to do these kinds of research into our marine ecosystems on the coast of Georgia?

[00:19:52] **Mark Risse:** What's unique about the research we do is that it's very applied, so we [00:20:00] fund researchers, and not just researchers at UGA, but researchers around the state to address problems we're having in coastal communities. Those problems are identified by our advisory board, which includes fishermen, crabbers, shrimpers, educators, teachers in the K-12 system in coastal Georgia, uh, businesses and industries, natural resource agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources, and they inform us of the problems they're facing. We put those problems into a request for proposals that we then circulate with scientists throughout the university system in Georgia and they submit proposals. I think what's most unique about the research we do, is our stakeholder advisory committee actually reviews those proposals, at least in the first round, so it's not a bunch of scientists trying to figure out [00:21:00] which of these things are most important. It's the people that live in those communities. So, they select projects that they really think have a lot of potential to help their communities or their concerns. Uh, and then those projects that are selected go through a scientific review process as well to ensure the science is sound.

[00:21:21] **Mark Risse:** But what this results in is a lot of very applied research projects that are likely to have immediate impact. I also couple our faculty and staff with those researchers, so even if you're, you know, an engineering professor at UGA, you'll get teamed up with one of our coastal extension specialists that know the people in the community, and that'll help you inform the research throughout the process. So, our research tends to have more impact. It's on contemporary problems we're facing [00:22:00] in Georgia, you know, like, right? Examples, you know, a new disease is emerging and impacting shrimp yields. In Georgia, we fund a project that investigates, you know, what's causing this disease and what are the options to manage it and start implementing things to address that issue. Or sea level rise and coastal flooding is a problem all of our communities are facing. And so, we're funding a lot of research into, you know, what sort of practices can communities implement to lessen the impacts that sea level rise is having on those communities? So, very applied research that tends to have more immediate impacts.

[00:22:44] **Erin Riney:** As Dr. Lyons mentioned in her interview, Georgia has one of the most pristine coastlines for a few different reasons. Dr. Risse had some reasons of his own, which include barrier islands that are not easily

accessible, water that has been left untouched, and the commitment to maintaining the infrastructure that we already have here.

[00:22:59] **Mark Risse:** So, [00:23:00] in this position, I've learned a whole lot about our coastal ecosystems and am actually very proud of them. Uh, one of the things that makes Georgia very unique is that our coastline's very well protected. We have 14 barrier islands, and most of those islands are not accessible by car. Most of them are under some long-term protection, either, you know, Cumberlands and National Seashore. We have state parks like, at Jekyll Island, and we have a lot of long-term conservation easements on some of the islands that you may, makes them less accessible, but is also keeping them in a natural state. And we're really benefiting from foresight we had in protecting our coastline now, as sea levels rising and we're seeing stronger storms [00:24:00] hitting those natural defenses, or what we like to call natural infrastructure, are really helping protect the more inland communities. So, you know, we don't have the tourism that say, Florida has, and the pristine beaches, but we've got some of the best coastal water quality anywhere in the nation.

[00:24:23] **Mark Risse:** And if you want to see how coastal ecosystems looked before man impacted them, a lot of people like to come to Georgia because we have protected those systems and they aren't impacted. Now, on the flip side of that, our coastal communities are growing rapidly and that's one of the reasons, you know, we have a focus on healthy coastal ecosystems and trying to maintain that protection that we've put in place. Not just maintain the protection, but how do we grow? The coastal communities in Georgia are gonna double in population in the [00:25:00] next couple decades. What we want to do is make sure that growth is smart, that the, it occurs in a way that's, you know, not gonna degrade our natural resources, not set us up for more flooding and more losses down the road.

[00:25:16] **Bailey Pelletier:** Preserving the coastline of Georgia is not something that can be done alone. The UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant is doing its part in educating the public by offering food safety courses, assistance in implementing new technologies, and constant inspection of their methods to ensure that they are still effective.

[00:25:32] **Bailey Pelletier:** So, this question, you kind of touched on it with the practical nature of the research. Like, can we kind of talk about, specifically, how it impacts coastal industries?

[00:25:41] **Mark Risse:** So, I mean, coastal industry is a broad word and we do a lot to help all of them. Uh, for example, our seafood programs are the only, we

offer the only educational workshops in Georgia related to food safety. There's a program called HACCP, Hazard Analysis and [00:26:00] Critical Control Points, that is all about food safety. Every single commercial seafood processor has to go through that course, and we're the only ones teaching it. So, you know, we sort of work with every single seafood processing operation in Georgia. And because they got that certification through us, when they have other questions in their processing plant, they come back to us. You know, likewise, you know, shrimpers, crabbers, fishermen, whenever there's new technologies, we're the ones working with them to implement that. Like, right now, a current issue in Georgia is, right, whale populations. And the declining populations in Georgia's coastal areas serve as a breeding ground for those whales. While there's some pressure to stop the use of things like crab traps or fish pots, that could impact our commercial [00:27:00] fishing industry in Georgia because sometimes those whales get entangled.

[00:27:04] **Mark Risse:** So, like, one of our current research projects is looking at ropeless gear. Can we get rid of that rope, that entanglement hazard to whales by using a little remote-controlled device that inflates a float and the gear floats up? And so, we're doing a research project looking at the use of that technology in Georgia as a way to sustain that livelihood. Likewise, we can go switch gears and go to professional engineering firms or consultants working with communities in Georgia on storm water management or building resilient infrastructure. You know, we're working, offering workshops to try and teach the professionals, you know, what is the most cutting-edge technology that's being researched in Georgia and how can you implement this with the clients you're working with? So, hopefully, those [00:28:00] consulting firms, you know, they're benefiting from the knowledge that our universities are producing and then they're helping communities in Georgia when they start working with them. You know, we can't reach everybody in Georgia. So, you know, we look at training others and developing that future workforce is really the way we're gonna have more impact.

[00:28:24] **Erin Riney:** According to the coastal policy of the Georgia Conservancy, the state thrives in this area because we are able to maintain a healthy, resilient, and diverse ecosystem that can endure any disturbance, a sustainable economy, and responsible planning. After interviewing both of our guests for this episode, we gained two perspectives on this area of expertise. The way in which the Georgia Aquarium contributes to these conservation efforts by rescuing and rehabilitating animals and working closely with scientists to monitor and address problems, and the way that UGA and the Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant acts as a partner in that through research, education, and extension.

[00:28:58] **Bailey Pelletier:** I was really excited to [00:29:00] dive into this episode because I am actually from the Georgia coastline, in a small town called Richmond Hill. It's about 30 minutes outside of Savannah, and I grew up going on the water, going to St. Catherine's Island.

[00:29:12] **Erin Riney:** Mm-hmm.

[00:29:13] **Bailey Pelletier:** Ossabaw, Tybee, uh, St. Simons, all those barrier islands. So, that's where I grew up for most of my life. And it was really cool to hear from Dr. Risse and Dr. Lyons on just, their perspective of the Georgia coastline and what they're doing to help keep it like it was when I grew up. Um, cause one surprising fact I remember from our interviews is just, why other states don't have a coastline like Georgia.

[00:29:41] **Erin Riney:** Yeah.

[00:29:41] **Bailey Pelletier:** It's because they really develop their cities and take over those major coastlines and, as a result, kind of destroy the ecosystems and the estuaries that may have been natural to that area.

[00:29:54] **Erin Riney:** Yeah, definitely. I had, kind of, a different experience growing up cause I grew up like, right in the [00:30:00] middle of the state.

[00:30:01] **Bailey Pelletier:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:01] **Erin Riney:** An hour outside of Atlanta, so I really didn't get that same experience with seeing the Georgia coastline and really interacting with it on a regular basis. And I have a lot of family in Florida, so, you know, every time we would go to the beach or just on vacation in general, it would always be to Florida. And I think it was Dr. Lyons in her interview, but she had mentioned, you know, all of Georgia is, or all of Florida, for that matter, is coast.

[00:30:23] **Bailey Pelletier:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:24] **Erin Riney:** You know?

[00:30:24] **Bailey Pelletier:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:24] **Erin Riney:** And there are parts of it that are pretty well-kept, but for the most part, just things that happen over time and so many people, you know, wanting to move to the coast at some point in their lives has really, you

know, done a toll on it. So, um, but yeah, for this past Spring Break I went to Tybee, and I think that, now that I'm thinking about it, I think that was my first time in Tybee, or at least in that part of Georgia.

[00:30:48] **Bailey Pelletier:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:48] **Erin Riney:** And you can definitely tell, you know, you can see the difference between that versus other states that have a larger coast like we mentioned.

[00:30:55] **Bailey Pelletier:** Right. And like, those coastlines of Georgia aren't as accessible, but [00:31:00] that's kind of, in part, what helps keep it, um, as natural as possible.

[00:31:04] **Erin Riney:** Yeah.

[00:31:04] **Bailey Pelletier:** And it's really cool to get that perspective.

[00:31:06] **Erin Riney:** Yeah, exactly. That was something Dr. Risse had mentioned in his interview, that a lot of these barrier islands are not accessible by car, and that's really made a big difference in, you know, leaving it untouched for the most part.

[00:31:16] **Bailey Pelletier:** Yeah. And like this, it was really special for me growing up cause I was part of this field studies program and we would actually go out to these marshes and marshland and, um, categorize like, the plants and animals and these ecosystems. So, it's really a full circle moment for me to see what the scientists from the Georgia Aquarium and what, here at UGA are at, doing in the field as well. It was really cool.

[00:31:40] **Erin Riney:** Yeah, definitely. So, special thank you to Dr. Kady Lyons and Dr. Mark Risse for being willing to be interviewed for this episode. We learned a lot from the both of you and we just really want to thank you for your time. We're super excited to let you guys know that Season 1 is coming to an end next week with our sixth and final episode, film production. So, stay tuned for when that gets released. [00:32:00]

[00:32:02] **Erin Riney:** From the New Media Institute at the University of Georgia, thank you for listening to the Georgia On Your Mind podcast, a series that explores the relationship between the state of Georgia and the university that lives within the heart of it. Tune in next week as we explore another area of expertise in Georgia.