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The Great Lakes Fishery Commission Names Dr. Thomas Binder as New Director of GLATOS

Dr. Binder will head the Great Lakes Acoustic Telemetry Observation System (GLATOS)

Ann Arbor, MI—Dr. Thomas Binder, currently a senior research associate at Michigan State University and a Great Lakes Acoustic Telemetry Observation System (GLATOS) research scientist, has been appointed as the director of GLATOS. GLATOS is a multi-national network of Indigenous, federal, state, provincial, and university researchers using cutting-edge acoustic telemetry to track fish movement in support of Great Lakes fishery management. By collaborating across Canada and the United States, GLATOS connects scientists, shares data, and expands research capabilities, providing invaluable insights to support sustainable Great Lakes fisheries. Dr. Thomas Binder will join the Great Lakes Fishery Commission as GLATOS director to succeed Dr. Christopher Vandergoot, who tragically passed away in late 2024.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, in partnership with Michigan State University and the U.S. Geological Survey, and with support from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, established GLATOS in 2010 with the goal of helping scientists, managers, and the public gain a better understanding of fish movement, behavior, and population dynamics in the Great Lakes. GLATOS utilizes a network of acoustic receivers that are placed strategically throughout the Great Lakes basin to detect and record surgically implanted acoustic tags in individual fish. These tags emit a series of “pings” that the receivers hear, decode, and record, allowing researchers to track the fish’s movement throughout the basin. Movement of fish is just one piece of the puzzle—when collected and combined with other environmental or biological data, the information from GLATOS can provide a more robust account of a fish’s behaviors and activities (e.g., habitat occupancy) which helps scientists better understand the ecology of the animals, information which, prior to GLATOS, was unattainable. The GLATOS network of receivers works in partnership with the Ocean Tracking Network and the Champlain Acoustic Telemetry Observation System, which are global and local telemetry networks, respectively.

In addition to supporting a basin-wide detection database for data sharing, GLATOS supports individual research projects and facilitates collaboration and knowledge transfer among researchers around the basin. GLATOS members contribute detection data and receiver locations from receivers they operate to the GLATOS database. In return, each project lead can access detection data from their tagged fish, as well as receiver locations and dates of operation from across the entire network of receivers. For more information about GLATOS, including an interactive map of receivers and a project list, visit glatos.glos.us.

“Having the ability to track the migration of fish in the Great Lakes is an incredible opportunity to gain insight into their behavior,” said Ethan Baker, chair of the Commission. “GLATOS has ballooned from a few receivers and locations to an entire network that is key to better understanding the behavior of fishes as it relates to the ecology and health of our fishery resources. We congratulate Dr. Binder on beginning his tenure as director of this vital program and look forward to working closely with him. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience and will undoubtedly lead GLATOS with zeal. We also graciously thank the late Dr. Vandergoot for his unwavering, enthusiastic leadership and for the paths he forged for the GLATOS program,” Baker concluded.

Dr. Binder earned an M.Sc. and Ph.D. from the University of Guelph, ON. He has a keen interest in understanding the behavior, biology, and physiology of fishes, especially lake trout and sea lampreys, to aid managers in making fisheries management decisions. Dr. Binder has 70 peer-reviewed scientific publications, which have been cited over 2,500 times, and was awarded, with his co-authors, the 2023 Chandler-Misener Award for the most notable paper in the Journal of Great Lakes Research. Dr. Binder has been a core member of the GLATOS team since inception and brings more than fifteen years of fish telemetry experience to the role of GLATOS Director.



Pictured: Dr. Thomas Binder, the new GLATOS director, surgically inserting a tag into a cisco.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The Commission has the responsibility to support fisheries research, control the invasive sea lamprey, and facilitate cross-border management. Visit www.glfc.org

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