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TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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EDITOR, JOHN M. TOMECEK

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society Newsletter is electronically published in January, April, July, and October. Contributions on any topic pertaining to wildlife, announcements of interest to members, or Chapter business are welcome and should be submitted to the Editor (John M. Tomecek; tomecek@tamu.edu) by the 15th of the preceding month. Change of e-mail address should be submitted online through the Address Change Form or directly to the Treasurer. Membership in the Chapter is \$15/yr for students and \$25/yr for regular members, payable to the Treasurer (Terry Blankenship).

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



A message from the President

It's spring, which means wildflowers, nesting birds, strutting turkeys, and the first newsletter of the year from the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society. The annual conference in San Antonio concluded on February 20 with yet another milestone for our Chapter in both registration and presentations. We tallied 748 attendees, half of whom were professionals, the other half composed of undergraduate and graduate students. Dr.

Roel Lopez, committee chairs, and volunteers presided over a

terrific program that included 113 oral presentations and a record 92 posters; four to six concurrent sessions were needed to accommodate everyone. The plenary session provided an excellent and timely overview of the impacts of chronic wasting disease, followed by a full session of students vying for the Clarence Cottam Award. Students competed in the Quiz Bowl, plant ID contest, and poster presentations. We recognized the outstanding achievements of our members and introduced a new cohort of fellows into the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Institute.

The collective vision of the Chapter is to assure the sustained diversity of wildlife and their habitats in Texas. Decisions about wildlife resources should be based on science, with the support of an informed citizenry. Therefore, we strive to serve as the acknowledged source of scientific information and expertise concerning wildlife biology and management in Texas. In pursuit of this vision, we promote communication and information exchange and invest in professional growth and education. We also recognize the need to be responsive to changes that are occurring in our society to best serve the changing needs of our fellow wildlife professionals. One recent change involves a surge of attendance at our annual conference, a fortunate circumstance which has had some unfortunate side effects.

The cost of the conference has increased because fewer hotels can accommodate a conference of our size. Larger hotels charge more for audio-visual, food, and other items; some hotels are will not honor the state hotel rate. The executive board implemented several changes this year. We signed a 2-year deal at the Wyndham San Antonio Riverwalk Hotel to negotiate a better rate. San Antonio is a relatively central location and we'll be able to adjust our program and events a bit based on our

experience this past year. We also obtained assistance with registration to free up our volunteers for other tasks; we also opted not to print the long program. Many of you also noticed that we had an awards ceremony and reception in lieu of a sit-down banquet this year. Collectively, these changes are meant to ensure that we can continue to maintain the quality and affordability of the annual conference. You will see a membership survey shortly as we consider additional changes. Please take a moment to send us your thoughts.

Our amazing Chapter is by far the largest and most active in all of The Wildlife Society. It is an honor to serve the Chapter alongside the members that make our society function. Your leadership team will strive to maintain and support our mission efforts, including Wildlife Conservation Camp, the Teer Institute, Conservation Affairs Committee, and providing the scientific underpinning for natural resource decisions. In closing, remember that the success of the Chapter is only possible through the efforts of dedicated members who volunteer their time. These folks toil behind the scenes to ensure the success not only of our annual conference, but the multitude of education, outreach, and networking programs, as well as recognition of member achievements. All of our committees rely on volunteers. Please take the opportunity to thank these committee chairs and members; better yet, contact a committee chair or an officer and ask how you can serve. I look forward to a fantastic year, and let me know how the Chapter can help you.

Randy DeYoung, President

TEXAS FLORA AND FAUNA

What do prairie dogs, military training missions, and environmental stewardship have in common?

By:
Sarah Turner
M.S. Student
Institute of Renewable Natural Resources
Texas A&M University

What do prairie dogs, military training missions, and environmental stewardship have in common? To the unknowing civilian or soldier, absolutely nothing; however, all three rely on one another to be success-



ful. This unconventional association is made possible through an intricate collaboration between the Department of Defense and the scientific community. Through the sharing of knowledge and the pursuit of compatible goals, both parties are able to successfully cooperate and further the missions of both military readiness and environmental stewardship.

To begin, why does the Department of Defense need to worry about protecting the environment and how do they do it? As a whole, the Department of Defense (DoD) owns the rights to and subsequently manages over 30 million acres of land. To put this in perspective, all the DoD lands combined are about the size of the state of Louisiana, a pretty substantial sum to say the least. Additionally, as a federal agency, the DoD is obligated by law to comply with all environmental regulations such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. Unfortunately, environmental stewardship more often than not conflicts with the DoD's mission of ensuring military readiness, which requires the complete authority to use lands and

resources in any manner necessary for training purposes. However, the DoD recognizes that in order to maintain military readiness, their training lands and the resources it supports must be preserved in a sustainable manner. This understanding is the platform that harbors the collaboration between the military and the scientific community. Who knows more about the environment and ecological interactions than we fellow scientists? It is our expertise that the military seeks in order to attain their goals, while also supporting the goal of environmental conservation embraced by biologists and ecologists nationwide.

Leading the way in military-ecological sciences partnership is the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources (IRNR). This agency has been working with military installations for many years, and has conducted research on installations ranging from Camp Bullis in San Antonio, Texas to Naval Air Station Key West in Key West, Florida. Biologists with IRNR are



experienced in all facets of ecological management and stewardship from wildlife species and range management to environmental policy. Through the research conducted by IRNR biologists at these installations, two goals are achieved: 1) the installation complies with the environmental monitoring requirements set forth by the DoD and relevant congressional legislation (namely the Sikes Act, which requires that installations create a management plan for all their natural resources), and 2) biologists are able to protect and research unique ecological entities that are frequently hotspots for endangered species.

Currently, IRNR has partnered with Cannon Air Force Base and the United States Air Force Special Operations Command in an effort to continue the military's commitment to environmental stewardship. Under this alliance, IRNR biologists are conducting wildlife and vegetation inventories at Cannon Air Force Base

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and Melrose Air Force Range in Clovis, New Mexico in order to renovate the installation's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan, a document outlining the natural resources occurring on the installation and how to effectively safeguard them. This installation is of particular ecological importance, as it harbors habitat that is conducive for multiple endangered species and federal species of concern. Specifically, the installation supports healthy populations of black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) and Western burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*), both of which are federal species of concern. The management of black-tailed prairie dogs is important to the installation as well as biologists, as they are keystone species for the rapidly declining short and mid-grass prairie ecosystem. Furthermore, Cannon Air Force Base is on the western periphery of the range of the Lesser prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*). Though prairie chickens have not been sighted on-installation in 4 years, the Air Force still monitors for

have been onsite for one year. Baseline surveys for vegetation, migratory birds, threatened/endangered species,



and federal species of concern have been conducted and monitoring efforts will continue throughout this year. Upon the completion of this year's surveys, IRNR biologists plan to provide the installation with additional documentation on the effectiveness of their management practices and deliver recommendations on how the installation should proceed in order to proactively manage their natural resources. This is vital to the continuance of the installation's mission of military readiness, as improper management practices on these parcels can result in the imposition of training restrictions issued by the DoD and/or Congress.

This brings us back to the initial question of the article, "What do prairie dogs, military training missions, and environmental stewardship have in common?" In layman's terms the management of one supports the vitality of the other two, however as the text has proven, this relationship is extremely more complex than that. This partnership rests on not only the attainment of party-specific goals, but on the shared moral responsibility of protecting the nation's natural resources. Regardless of how or why this affiliation came to be, it has proven that military readiness and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive, but rather two analogous goals requiring the same catalyst: a respect for the land and its resources.

All Photos Courtesy of Mr. Frank Cartaya



the species and maintains suitable lekking and nesting habitat, a clear indicator of the level of commitment harbored by the installation for environmental stewardship. In addition to monitoring for federal species of concern and threatened/endangered species, IRNR biologists are conducting migratory and breeding bird surveys that will be used to construct a community assemblage matrix of bird species across habitat types. Furthermore, these surveys will also help to monitor for any potential shift in the migration patterns of many bird species. Lastly, biologists are conducting vegetation surveys following the protocol of the Army's LCTA program to: 1) determine the base-wide composition of vegetative species, 2) correlate habitat types with species occurrence, and 3) to monitor the effect of various military training operations on the landscape. As of April 2016, IRNR biologists

TWS CERTIFICATION

TWS Certification Reminder

Although our Chapter does not have a direct role in the TWS certification application process, our committee is here to assist you with completing your application, and providing advice on how to document the educational and experience requirements. Advantages of obtaining Associate Wildlife Biologist (AWB) or Certified Wildlife Biologist (CWB) status are many and are especially helpful for anyone working their way up the career ladder, as well as those established wildlife biologists who must regularly speak, develop reports, or testify in the public arena. This is because the AWB and especially the CWB status shows that you have met a high standard established by The Wildlife Society, and eliminates the need for you to justify why you have not obtained the available certification.

The Texas Chapter can help with Certification. For example, the TWS Certification Review Board frequently is asked to substitute experience or other professional development for course credits especially in Botany, Communications, and Policy, Administration, and Law categories. In many cases, candidates can prepare a written explanation of why they think that their formal and continuing education course work and work experience, taken as a whole, qualify them to be certified as a wildlife biologist. Our Chapter Committee can help advise you on how to develop such substitute documentation.

There is no requirement that you go through the Chapter or otherwise contact our committee when applying for certification. Rather, we are here to help answer any questions you might have on the value of certification, how to complete the application, and so forth. More details on certification including the application and required fees are on the TWS web site at:

<http://wildlife.org/learn/professional-development-certification/certification-programs/>

For any questions, contact:
Whitney Gann, Chair
TCTWS Certification Committee
whitney.gann@sulross.edu
(432) 837-8632

TWS-SW SECTION NEWS

Southwest Section Tracks

Spring-Summer Issue 2016

By Fidel Hernandez, Southwest Section Representative

Hello Fellow Chapter and SW Section Members of TWS,

February and March found me quite busy traveling throughout the US. Over these past few months, I had the opportunity to attend the Annual Conferences of the various TWS State Chapters within the Southwest Section. I must say what a positive experience.

Being from Texas, I have attended annually the annual conference in my home state, but I had never attended the Joint Annual Conference of the Arizona-New Mexico Chapters of TWS. I was quite impressed, to say the least. Attendance was excellent and the plenary, Who Will Manage the Future of Our Public Lands, was outstanding. In addition to learning of wildlife issues in other parts of the Southwest, I was able to connect with colleagues that I hadn't seen in quite some time as well as meet new people. I sincerely enjoyed these conferences and look forward to next year's annual meetings.



I also recently returned from our TWS Council meetings (13–14 March 2016) being held during the 81st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was my first full-session of Council meetings as the Southwest Section representative. I cherish this valuable experience of learning more and more of the interworking of TWS and representing Southwest Section issues to our parent society.

So, it has been a busy but an enjoyable time. Following is a concise overview of the latest happenings with our parent society as well as some of its upcoming events.

2016 TWS Council Candidates

Each year, positions on TWS Council become vacant as people complete their terms. The Nominating Committee has announced its candidates for upcoming vacancies on TWS Council. Here are the candidates:

Vice President Nominees

- Gordon R. Batcheller (Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies)

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- Darren A. Miller (Weyerhaeuser Company – Southern Timber Technologies)

Western Section Representative Nominees

- Cynthia Graves Perrine (Self-employed)
- Kent Smith (State of California and Sierra Nevada Conservancy)

Northwest Section Representative Nominees

- Harriet Allen (Retired, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife)
- Dana Sanchez (Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon State University)

North Central Section Representative Nominees

- Patrick E. Lederle (Michigan Department of Natural Resources)
- John J. Moriarty (Three Rivers Park District)

A complete view of the candidates' statements can be found at the TWS website (<http://wildlife.org/2016-tws-council-candidates-announced/>). Electronic ballots will be sent on May 6 to all members with an email address (or mailed if you happen to use a mailing address instead). Voting will close June 5 so be sure to vote!

New TWS Staff

When the TWS financial downturn occurred a few years ago, several staff positions were eliminated and left unfilled. The Society has worked diligently over the past 5 years to greatly improve its financial condition, which it has done. So, TWS recently has begun to slowly fill staff positions in key areas. One of those key areas is the Directorate of Government Affairs and Partnership (GAP). Two recent hires joining GAP are Mr. Cameron Kovach as Assistant Director of Government Affairs and Partnerships and Ms. Caroline Murphy as a Government Affairs Associate. In addition, TWS has revised their GAP internship requirements based on member input, and these intern positions now focus on hiring wildlife biologists with policy interests (rather than policy folks with wildlife interest). Toward that end, TWS GAP hired 2 wildlife biologists, Lauren McDonald and Dani Dagan, to fill this year's internships.

Another important change at TWS is that the wildlife-biologist certification program now resides within the GAP Directorate. I take the opportunity to let you know that if you are not a certified wildlife biologist but have an interest in becoming certified, one of the benefits of being a member of the Southwest Section is that the Section can help review your application prior to submission as well as help with application costs.

Upcoming Annual Conference

Just a reminder that the 23rd Annual Conference will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina during October 15–19, 2016. If you are interested in submitting an abstract for a poster or presentation, the deadline for submission is 8 April 2016 at 11:59 pm CST. Abstracts that miss this deadline will not be considered. Please note that TWS allows only one contributed paper or poster per primary author. You may find more information about the submission process at <http://www.twsconference.org/call-for-contributed-papers-posters/>.

TWS-SW SECTION NEWS

New SW Section Website

In closing, I'd like to mention that the Southwest Section has a new website! Many thanks to Mark Wallace, out-going President of the Southwest Section, for building this new website. Please visit our website (<http://swsectiontws.org>) for the latest information on the Southwest Section. We are always looking for events, news, and other happenings to include on our website so contact Mark (mwallace@ttacs.ttu.edu) if you have relevant information that you would like posted.

Well, that is it for now. Enjoy Spring and be sure to take some time this summer to relax.

Until next time,

Fidel Hernández
Southwest Section Representative of TWS

STUDENT CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

Texas A&M University Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society

The iconic live oaks of College Station, Texas are home to the Texas A&M University Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Throughout the last year, our society has capitalized on creating a variety of opportunities for our members to obtain field experiences related to wildlife. For example, the Texas A&M Student Chapter has partnered with surrounding agencies such as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to provide educational volunteer opportunities for our members.

TPWD provided the opportunity for our members to assist with the trapping and banding of white winged doves and mourning doves, thus contributing to the TPWD survey quota for the county. TPWD and the USACE both provided opportunities for our members to assist in local spotlight surveys, providing the opportunity for them to develop new skills and techniques. The USACE also recruited our members to assist with 10 separate vegetation surveys at nearby lakes. The other highly notable project our members participated in with TPWD was working at Chronic Wasting Disease checkpoints. Our volunteers manned checkpoints in Brazos and surrounding counties and were actually able to participate in collecting brainstem and lymph node samples, a valuable skill set as this disease continues to develop.



In addition to volunteering with organizations to develop wildlife field techniques, our members give back to the community that surrounds and supports us. We regularly send members to volunteer at a variety of nearby wildlife-based functions. In the past, we have assisted with Texas Wildlife Association's Learning Across New Dimensions deer and quail programs, sent students as far as Smithville to help with the town's Wildlife Extravaganza, and even helped put on hunts. This past year we were able to assist with a drawn hunt at Gus Engeling WMA and with a handicapped hunt at Lake Summerville (figure 1).

Our members also have the unique opportunity to work and volunteer with AgriLife Extension on campus. During the past year, eight of our members were part time employees for Agrilife. While in this position, these students have authored over a dozen internet articles, served as coauthors on two articles in Texas Landowner Magazine, served as coauthors on three in-print publications, worked as videographers and narrators for many YouTube videos, presented a presentation on feral hog trapping to landowners at the Ranch Management University, and presented a poster at the Statewide Quail Symposium.

A final area where our chapter is continuing to grow and excel in is our participation in various conferences. Over the summer members of our society presented research at the annual meeting

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of both the American Ornithologist Union and the American Society of Mammalogists. We also regularly send a group of students to the National Wildlife Society meeting where we compete in conclave at the national level. And of course, we have a growing presence at the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society meeting, where we also compete in conclave, present research, and develop networking skills.

Our society has had a very successful year, but it is only due to the time and effort that the members have been generous enough to give. As we continue to grow, we plan to continue expanding the opportunities available to students in this society.



CONFERENCE AWARDS

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Josh Helcel, Mark Tyson, and Jim Cathey

HONORARY LIFE MEMBER AWARD



Don Davis, Randy Simpson, and Fred Bryant

EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR



Patricia Moody Harveson

OUTSTANDING SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION



Jan Janecka, Michael Tewes (pictured), Linda Laack, Arturo Caso, Lon Grassman, and Rodney Honeycutt

OUTSTANDING BOOK



Raul Valdez and J. Alfonso Ortigas (pictured)

OUTSTANDING ELECTRONIC MEDIA



J. Scott McNeill (pictured), and Joshua Gaskamp

OUTSTANDING POPULAR ARTICLE



Jim Ray

1ST PLACE COTTAM



Imogene Davis

OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL PUBLICATION



Matthew Butler (pictured), Bradley Strobel, and Cinthia Eichhorn

CONFERENCE AWARDS

STUDENT CHAPTER OF THE YEAR



Texas A&M University-Kingsville

1ST PLACE PLANT ID TEAM



Texas A&M University

1ST PLACE QUIZ BOWL TEAM



Texas A&M University

NWTF SCHOLARSHIP



Grant Lawrence

COLIN CARUTHERS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Hannah Gerke

CHARLY MCTEE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Kelton Mote

DAN BOONE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Nicole Alonso

CARL D. SHOEMAKER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Mikayla House

SAM BEASOM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Sarah Weaver

CONFERENCE AWARDS

JUDGES' CHOICE WILDLIFE



Aaron Hudnall

BEST OF SHOW



Mackenzie Birkhead

1ST PLACE WILDLIFE



Bobby Allcorn

1ST PLACE REMOTE CAMERA



Nancy Heger

1ST PLACE HUMOR



Izzy Jarzombek

1ST PLACE WORK



Cassey Edwards

1ST PLACE PLANTS AND SCENERY



Ellar Vreugdenhil