

# THE TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



Photo by James Cash

Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship Through Science and Education

Number 190 • October 2016

## 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



October is here, though one might have to check the calendar to be sure, given the recent temperatures. Preparations for the 2017 Texas Chapter TWS conference are ramping up, and committee members are hard at work. The combined volunteer efforts of our large and diverse committees are in large part what make the Texas Chapter and our annual conference a success. Take a chance to thank the committee chairs and members. Even better, ask them how you can help. Program chair Tyler Campbell has lined up an excellent plenary session and abstracts will soon be rolling in for the general sessions. Awards nominations will be due soon, if the deadlines have not already passed. Everyone knows of someone who

deserves to be recognized, so please take a few moments to send in a nomination.

Our annual Wildlife Conservation Camp this summer was a success, as campers and volunteers alike enjoyed the cool mountain air near Fort Davis. Those of us who hail from coastal portions of Texas especially appreciated the low relative humidity! I had the opportunity to participate in several camp activities and interact with many of the campers. Wildlife was abundant, and I recorded sightings of Montezuma quail and a ringtail in the same day. Camp director Annaliese Scoggin and I capped off the camp by climbing Mt. Livermore. We had an absolutely fantastic view of the Tran-Pecos skyline; the moderately challenging climb up and back was made easier by sightings of band-tailed pigeons, and a few hardy aspens, remnants of the Pleistocene landscape. Many thanks to camp volunteers and to the Nature Conservancy for allowing us to use their fantastic facility.

Judging by the quality of the campers and group leaders, our natural resources should be in good hands for the foreseeable future. It is good to see that more excellent high school and baccalaureate students are now choosing a career in the natural resources; this observation continues a theme that many of us in academia have noticed when recruiting for M.S. or Ph.D. graduate students. I'm a bit glad that I didn't have to vie for scholarships or graduate school opportunities with today's students— there is some really stiff competition!

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our Chapter's long-running efforts at supporting students were recently enhanced by the establishment of the James Teer Institute for leadership training, directed at early-career professionals. The current cohort of Teer Institute fellows is progressing through a series of challenging leadership training and group projects. It was great to spend some time with them at the Kerr WMA in May and the Welder Refuge in August. One of the highlights of the August retreat was a roundtable dinner with successful wildlife professionals. One might meet Fred Bryant or Neal Wilkins at this stage of their highly successful careers and easily think that these individuals never had a doubt or made a wrong move. Their stories of navigating early career challenges and of the value of attitude, goals, and perseverance were revealing and insightful. Both the cohort members and the rest of the audience left with some valuable words of wisdom. One of the cohort's group projects is directed at understanding diversity in our profession; be on the lookout for a short membership survey as they work towards this important goal.

Hunting season is here for some, and fast approaching for others. I was unable to attend this year's national TWS conference due to a scheduling conflict with some elk in southern Colorado, but the Texas Chapter was well-represented in Raleigh. Next year's conference will be just up the road (in western parlance) in Albuquerque, so keep that one on the calendar. The Texas Chapter will be assisting the SW section and local New Mexico volunteers—additional volunteer help is always appreciated, so take the chance to help out, especially if you've never been to a national conference. FYI, the organizers have assured me that the conference is well in advance of many important elk dates!

Although many areas of the state are now drying out, the accumulated rains of the spring and summer months have been sufficient to replenish deep-soil moisture. Some areas of the Rolling Plains have reported near all-time highs on quail surveys, and bobwhites are generally forecast to be good to excellent in many areas. Deer reproduction was average to above average, and early indicators of antler development suggest a good year. It is always hard to sit at a desk behind a computer screen this time of year; hope that everyone can get out and enjoy the outside in coming months, whether hunting, hiking, or simply taking it all in.

On a more serious note, the human-wildlife conflicts surrounding chronic wasting disease and management are still with us. The upcoming legislative session promises to be interesting, to say the least. The Texas Chapter will always be available to managers and policy makers as a resource underpinning the science behind management issues. The need for sound science is even more important in our age of social media, where a steady stream of inaccurate, even outrageous, statements is a reminder of how little it takes to sow the seeds of doubt and controversy. We must remember that science-based management is the cornerstone of our "North American model" of wildlife management, and the primary reason why our model is envied throughout the world.

Until next time, thanks to everyone for their continued dedication to our great chapter and to the natural resources of Texas.

—Randy DeYoung, President

## VOICES FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

By Kent Williamson, Chair, Membership Committee

In any growing organization, it's important to know how constituents feel, and especially how they feel in regards to changes and potential changes. The Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society is certainly a growing organization. The annual meeting seems to grow bigger every year. The growth of the Chapter has been wonderful to see over the last several years, but presents a series of logistical and other constraints. Some considerations are finding an affordable venue large enough to hold the meeting, lining up presenters, topics to focus on, vendors, and providing a quality experience to all involved, just to name a few. Therefore, it seemed a good opportunity to take a moment to hear from the members of the Texas Chapter and see how they felt everything was going. The TCTWS leadership sent out a survey after the last conference; hopefully, many of you had a chance to participate. The survey indicated many people feel the Chapter is headed in the right direction, and the feedback will serve a good purpose as important decisions continue to be made.

The survey had a good response rate, with 336 members responding. Most responders (83%) had attended the meeting, making their comments about meeting specifics especially important. The other 17% offered good feedback on why they may not be attending, and even offered ways of improving attendance among the 161 open-format comments left. Most responding have attended the meeting in the past (84%), and many had attended more than 10 times (43%). One of the changes to this past event was the banquet, replaced by an awards presentation and reception. This change appears positively received, with 62% in favor of this format, while 8% favored a formal reception with no meal, and 30% desiring the former format of a sit-down meal and formal awards ceremony/reception. In regards to meals and pricing, most (48%) were in favor of a \$125 fee for students and \$225 for non-student members, along with the President's Reception on Thursday, light meal of hors d'oeuvres, the Awards Reception on Friday with a separate dinner. Fewer people, (34%) were in favor of the President's Reception (Thursday), light meal/hors d'oeuvres and Award's Reception (Friday), accompanied by dinner costing \$150 registration for students and \$250 for non-student members. Fewest (18%) selected \$100-200 registration fees for students and non-students respectively, with the President's Reception (Thursday), drinks only and the Award's Reception (Friday), with light meal/hors d'oeuvres.

The majority of meeting attendees and TCTWS members appear fine with new technology, with 85% supporting the reduced paper approach and use of the free app, while 15% prefer the long printed program. Most folks are also fine with staying at a location for 2-3 years (61%) while others prefer a new annual location (21%) while 18% don't mind meeting in the same place every year. Overall, the survey provided a wonderful opportunity for the Texas Chapter membership to voice their opinions in several areas, and provide valuable feedback the Executive Board will be considering and implementing for years to come.

The membership committee and the executive board value input from the membership, increasingly important as our chapter continues to grow. Be on the lookout for additional opportunities for your voice to be heard. Until next time, thanks!

# 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](mailto:whitney.gann@sulross.edu)  
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# TWS-SW SECTION NEWS

## Southwest Section Tracks

Autumn Issue 2016

By Fidel Hernandez, Southwest Section Representative

Despite it being September, summer is still lingering in southern Texas. However, with each passing day, there are glimpses of an approaching change of season. Mornings are becoming a bit cooler, and days are becoming a bit shorter. The sun also seems to be losing a bit of its intensity. Autumn cannot be too far away...

Like most organizations, activity at TWS slows down a bit during summer. However, there are always things happening somewhere within TWS. Below is a short update on TWS operations and synopsis of some of the primary activities.



### GENERAL OPERATIONS

*Finance.* The Wildlife Society operates on a July-June fiscal year, and the beginning month (July) of the new fiscal year indicated a strong start both in terms of operations and investments. Overall financial activities for July showed positive income that was primarily driven by conference receipts, strong investment gains, publications receipts, and relatively low expenses. Thus, TWS has started the year ahead of expectations in revenues, expenses, and investments that should provide some security against fluctuations as the fiscal year unfolds.

*Membership.* In our last newsletter, I reported that TWS membership was 8,989 members in April 2016. The current membership is 9,317 members as of August 2016. Thus, TWS membership continues to grow. One new feature of member services that TWS has been working on is the development of a TWS Network Online Directory. TWS has been engaged in having members update their profiles in order to provide the most effective possible directory. To date, 2,632 members have updated their profiles, and TWS believes that a launch will be possible once this number has increased to 5,000 members. So, if you have not done so already, please remember to update your member profile if necessary. Another improvement of member services is that TWS has begun work on a new layout for the member portal that will feature a design and navigation that is similar to the TWS website in order to provide a more consistent member experience. The anticipated launch date for the redesigned member portal is November 1.

*Membership Audit of Organizational-Unit Officers.* As you may know, one requirement to hold office at the state, section, and national level is membership with the parent society. TWS recently conducted an audit of membership among organizational-unit officers. This audit found that 257 organization-unit officers (about 15% of the total) currently are not members of the parent society. Additionally, the holders of 159 current positions have not been reported to headquarters resulting in TWS being unaware as to the membership status of these individuals. TWS has reached out to organization-unit officers in an attempt to update membership status of current organization-unit officers. If you currently hold

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office and have forgotten to renew your membership to the parent society, please do so to assist TWS in updating their membership.

## TWS COUNCIL

*Elections.* In case you missed the results of the recent TWS election, here are the newly elected officers and representatives. New Council members include Darren Miller as TWS Vice-president, and John Moriarty as the North Central Section Representative. Cynthia Perrine and Harriet Allen were elected to continue their representation of the Western Section and Northwestern Section, respectively.

*TWS Conservation Engagement.* TWS CEO Ken Williams travels extensively throughout the year building relationships and collaborations with other conservation organizations to promote partnerships and advance the TWS mission. Below is a brief overview of some of the discussions occurring during summer.

- **Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA).** Dr. Williams was invited to join and co-chair an AFWA President's Task Force to work on a series of adaptive challenges to the long-term success of fish and wildlife conservation in North America. Some of the issues that will be addressed recruitment and retention of hunters, linking resource science and management, and evaluation and strengthening the relationships of state and federal agencies.
- **North American Ornithological Congress (NAOC).** Dr. Williams attended the NAOC in Washington DC. While there, he conferred with Umberto Berlanga, the Conservation Director for CONABIO in Mexico. Director Berlanga expressed interest in working with TWS to establish a TWS presence in Mexico and discussions will ensue on the next steps to make such presence a reality.
- **National Wildlife Federation (NWF).** Dr. Williams met with the Senior Scientist, Doug Inkley, and other staff at NWF to ensure a smooth transition and continuation of TWS interactions when Senior Scientist Inkley retires this autumn. Issues discussed included collaboration at the chapter and national level, the possibility of joint positioning on some conservation issues, and the prospect of partnering with them to sponsor TWS annual meetings.
- **Society of Range Management (SRM).** Dr. Williams and TWS Director Keith Norris met with the executive leadership of SRM in Washington DC. SRM is interested in pursuing a cooperative relationship with TWS, building on previous discussions at an executives meeting with TWS, SRM, American Fisheries Society, Society for Conservation Biology, and others. TWS proposed an agreement focusing on some common issues facing the 2 societies and follow up discussions will occur after the TWS Raleigh conference this October 2016.

*Position Announcement.* As you may have heard by now, CEO Ken Williams will be retiring in July 2017. The Executive Committee has been involved in succession planning in anticipation of Dr. Williams' retirement next year. A position announcement has been created and distributed through several mediums. The last date to apply is **28 October 2016**. If you know anyone who is interested or would be an ideal candidate, please pass along this career opportunity to him-her. A full position description can be found at: <http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/jobs/executive-directorchief-executive-officer-maryland/>

## PUBLICATIONS

In the past, membership to TWS did not include access to TWS journals. Journal access involved a fee in addition to membership costs. However, in July 2016, TWS announced a policy change whereby membership to TWS included **free web access to all TWS journals** beginning in January 2017. Members

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have been notified through email and the e-Wildlifer. This policy change also has been announced to the public at large via the TWS website.

## UPCOMING ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference is less than a month away. It will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina during October 15–19, 2016. This year's conference will feature 4 Plenary/Keynote Sessions as follows:

- **Plenary 1:** Expanding Partnerships Vital to the Future of Wildlife
- **Plenary 2:** The Past, the Present and the Future of Invasive Species Control in North America: Achieving Success through Innovation
- **Plenary 3:** Is Sustainable Use of Wildlife Sustainable?
- **Keynote 1:** Public-Private Partnerships for Conservation

Attendance to annual conference has been increasing in recent years. As of August 2016, registration was at 1,230 attendees, putting TWS on pace for about 1,600 attendees if the current trend continues. To find out more about the conference, please visit the conference website at <http://www.twsconference.org/>.

Until next time,

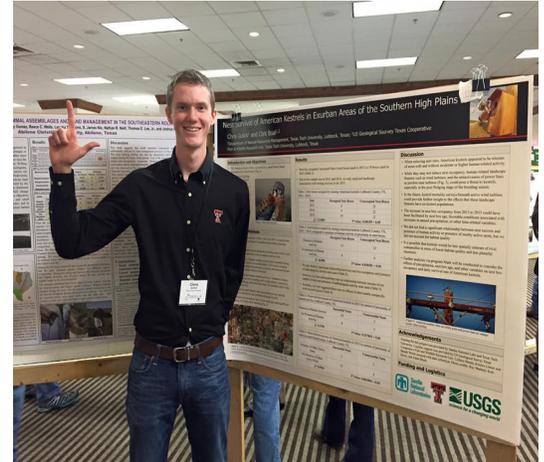


Fidel Hernández  
Southwest Section Representative to TWS

# STUDENT CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

The Range, Wildlife, & Fisheries and Society for Conservation Biology clubs at Texas Tech University have grown exponentially over the past three years. The two clubs meet and work together to accomplish our goals of conservation, management and education in the natural resources management field, and our first meeting of the 2016–2017 had 59 students in attendance.

For the past two years, the officers have worked hard to increase membership, involvement and create many opportunities within our field. With a combination of 14 officers and members, Texas Tech was represented at the 2016 Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society (TCTWS) conference for the first time in several years. We also competed in the Wildlife Quiz Bowl, with a new team planning to compete in 2017. The experience at the TCTWS conference created many friendships and it also encouraged a few members to become more involved and run for officer positions. One of our members, Chris Gulick, presented a scientific poster of his undergraduate research on birds of prey (Right) at the TCTWS meeting in 2016. This summer in San Antonio, club President Sarah Whitson, and club members Kathleen York and Manny Silva, represented the Department of Natural Resources Management the Texas Wildlife



Association

Convention, where they met and visited with Texas Tech Alumnus and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Executive Director, Carter Smith (Left).

We have hosted speakers from professions intersecting many disciplines, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, among others, including a Buckskin Brigades Alum! We also hosted Alumnus and NRM Advisory Board Member Jim Ray his involvement with Purple Martin Conservation and the Purple Martin Conservation Association. As part of this effort, we have initiated a conservation project by installing martin housing on the Texas Tech Rangeland for the aerial insectivore. Three

of our members now coordinate the project to monitor and band Purple Martins that use the gourds. We also collaborated on a mule deer capture event in October 2015 with colleagues, students, faculty, and other collaborators from the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University Kingsville, the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), as part of a multi-year research project examining mule deer movements in a mixed rangeland/agricultural landscape. We assisted with capturing, radio-tagging, and recording body measurements and condition of mule deer. Student members were grateful for the valuable hands-on experience provided by TPWD and collaborating universities (Below).

## STUDENT CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

The Range, Wildlife & Fisheries club hosts bi-annual camping trips every school year. We have visited such iconic locations as Big Bend National Park, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, and the White Mountain Wilderness in New Mexico. Our next camping trip is to the Great Sands National Park in Colorado during the fall semester in 2016, with plans to revisit Big Bend in the Spring of 2017. We hold numerous fundraisers to raise money for travel expenses. The camping trips help our members reconnect with nature and each other on our shared passion for wildlife and conservation. For several students, this is their first opportunity to camp and be outdoors, and our camping trips recruit various individuals who are not wildlife management majors, but are passionate and interested in being outdoors.

In fall 2015, our clubs hosted our first annual Alumni Wild Game Dinner during Homecoming Weekend, where students and alumni had the chance to meet and discuss all things natural resources and football. This provided an opportunity for undergraduate students to visit with alumni, professors and wildlife professionals. Our second annual Game Dinner is scheduled for this October, and as a FYI for all you Red Raiders reading this now, we anticipate holding an annual game dinner during homecoming weekend for the foreseeable future! We also hosted a spring alumni event at one of our Texas Tech baseball games (on their way to their first Big XII Championship!), which was another great opportunity for students to connect with professionals.

Our goal is to continue to grow membership, increase student involvement, create more opportunities for community and educational outreach, and emphasize the importance of protecting our environment



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Planting Gardens at the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch



You're probably sitting there reading the title thinking "What are they doing planting gardens at a quail research ranch?", but bear with me here, there's a method to my madness. Rudyard Kipling once said "Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh how beautiful' and sitting in the shade." My career as a wildlife biologist is the garden, I already had the empty plot, and maybe a few seeds, but my internship at RPQRR provided a bag of seeds and the water and sunlight to make them flourish.

I got to RPQRR in May with a handful of wildlife biology skills and had expected to learn some new ones and strengthen the existing ones. I got way more than I had bargained for. As far as wildlife related skills go, I already had some seeds planted for radio telemetry and small mammal trapping, but those seeds flourished into towering and beautiful flowers. I spent most of my days tracking radio collared quail, it's hard not to improve when it's a daily activity. Small mammal trapping was quite the experience, over the course of four weeks I had handled over 1,700 individuals, 1,160 of those being first time captures and the rest recaptures. It was overwhelming and the hours checking traps were long, but you don't build a garden without work out in the hot sun. I learned how to dissect a quail and name all its

anatomy, dissect a quail head for parasitic eyeworms, do whistle counts, check dummy nests, do some quail CSI work when I found a mortality, and collect arthropods in pitfall traps. I also had the chance to pit tag and measure Western Diamondback Rattlesnakes, an experience I will never forget. What I didn't expect was how many other skills I'd pick up along the way. I got here with no knowledge of ranch work, I had never driven anything other than a car and an ATV maybe once in my life, nor had I ever used any sort of tools, not even a hammer. I can proudly say that I now know how to use a hammer, and I only smashed my thumb once! I also had the opportunity to learn to drive not only all the off-road vehicles at the ranch but the tractor and the bulldozer too. You also can't come to Texas and not learn to shoot firearms! During my time here I had the chance to, for the first time in my life, safely shoot a variety of firearms and it was a blast, I'm even thinking a new purchase is in order once I get home to Montana.

Skills play a big part of the seeds in my garden but people can be seeds too. Being out here I had the opportunity to meet so many wildlife professionals and ask about their careers and the path they took to get there. I admired the gardens they had built and wanted to follow in their footsteps. Some of the individuals I met even gave me contacts in Montana to follow-up with when I got home, something unexpected but that I am very grateful for. Other individuals let me tag along as they worked, from there I learned new skills and found some new interests, particularly in reptiles, though I did have a chance to attempt banding doves, but the doves were not cooperative enough to go into the traps. I saw the dedication of many of these individuals to their fields, their passion, and how that pushed them to participate in programs, like the Texas Brigades Camps, that encourage responsible management of wildlife species, and may even one day influence the next generation of wildlife biologists. As I plant my garden, I lay it out as I have seen them lay out theirs, and I plant similar seeds and spend a similar amount of time out in my garden hoping that one day it will grow as large and beautiful as theirs.

Dr. Rollins tells the parents at the Bobwhite Brigades that they should measure their child before they leave,

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because by the end of camp they will have grown. I wish I had asked my loved ones to measure me before I left, though they would've laughed and told me I wasn't going to get any taller than 5 feet. But they would be wrong, physically maybe I'm only 5 feet tall, but after this whole experience I'd say I've grown several feet. In an internship you expect to learn work related skills, you don't necessarily expect to find yourself or improve as a person. It took moving 1600 miles from home and everything and everyone I knew to face my fears and overcome some of the obstacles life had presented me. I leave here knowing that despite my arachnophobia, I still slept in a room where I had found spiders, including some in my bed, and I survived. I leave here having fully conquered any remaining fear of public speaking or social situations, having to be a good role model for others at Brigades and giving a good war cry will do that to you. I leave having so much more confidence in myself and my abilities than I ever have, I leave knowing I can achieve anything I set my mind to and that when work gets tough, I get tougher. You can't turn a lump of coal into a diamond without heat, pressure, and time. I spent three months here out in the hot Texas sun, something that us Northern folk don't comprehend, and there were days when the workload was rough and the days were long, but I'm feeling like a diamond now, I just need a little more polishing, but that is all up to me and my future decisions.



I can't stress the importance of internships enough. Everyone should take the opportunity to do an internship out of state or study abroad, being immersed in a new culture with new people teaches you so much and leaves you with fond memories. It's good to get out of your comfort zone, that's the only way you grow as a worker and a person. Challenge yourself to try something new and fully commit to experiencing it, I tried so many new things out here in Texas and it was an amazing experience. I came here thinking Texas was one big hot desert, I realized during the first week that it does indeed rain in Texas and I probably should have brought a jacket, but I came home that day soaked to the bone with a huge smile across my face because this was an unforgettable experience and I loved my job. I leave Texas feeling a little more Texan, and feeling thankful for all the hospitable and kind Texans that I have met that enthusiastically shared their cultures and good food with me. I also leave knowing that I was fortunate enough to work with a fantastic group of individuals, it's not often your coworkers are also your roommates. It was three months spent laughing and encouraging one another and I am so grateful for that, I get to bring home such fond memories and know that somewhere out there my newfound friends will be benefiting the wildlife community.

As I part ways with the Rolling Plains of West Texas, I leave knowing I have grown and that I carry with me a garden that is not as bare as it was when I arrived, one that is beautifully planned out and even has some vibrant and vivacious flowers already in bloom. I will arrive home ready to continue to plant and cultivate a beautiful garden like those I admire. Happy gardening my friends and Carpe Diem.

Much Love,  
Ruger

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## The Impacts of Social Media on Wildlife

by Imogene Davis

If you're plugged in to social media, you've probably seen recent articles citing numerous human-wildlife interactions involving selfies. For those who are unaware, I'm referring to events that include an endangered baby dolphin dying from being passed around like a yearbook for photos, an adult blue shark that died after being pulled from the surf for trophy photos, and a harbor seal pup being euthanized after being found in a tote bag on a beach. These sad events are the result of negligence and a misunderstanding of wildlife and how we as humans can impact their health and safety. As biologists, many of us feel compelled to address this, as we know all too well the detrimental impact the selfie craze can have on wildlife. There seems to be a lack of consensus among wildlife professionals regarding our role in social media and science communication, yet social media and public perception is responsible for current issues in wildlife management and conservation. The unnecessary deaths of wildlife at the hands of eager photographers sparks interest in what motivates these actions, whether they are at a tourist location, national park, or someone's backyard, and begs to be addressed with regards to mitigating these actions. These preventable events prompt me to examine my own role in the wildlife selfie craze, and to ask whether or not we as a group should reconsider our role. As biologists, how can we positively impact public perception of wildlife in social media?



Social media glorifies photos with wild and exotic animals more than the animals themselves. Likes and accolades are more important than animal wellbeing, conservation, or being informed. As wildlife professionals, we understand that wildlife management is about populations, not individuals, and that while one dead animal does not an extinction make, a sense of entitlement to and disregard for wildlife just might. At the core of this selfie craze are variable values regarding wildlife. Many of these events demonstrate how the public misunderstands the repercussions of their actions, but more importantly, that they may not think of wildlife at all. Understandably, if something is not present in our lives, how do we assign meaning to it? How can we understand something we have not been taught? These are important considerations in wildlife education, and certainly (partially) explains issues between wildlife and social media. For those who value media moments and snapshots more than the wellbeing, or conservation, of a wild animal, what can we do?

One way we as biologists can assist in mitigating this wildlife selfie craze is to be more communicative regarding our efforts. To address the epidemic means to define the conversation regarding what an acceptable wildlife interaction is. There is debate on whether biologist research selfies (you know the ones) contribute to public desire to handle wildlife. To me, the occasional grin-like-a-fool photo I have with my study animals is a great way to encourage interest in and affinity for wildlife. That being said, no biologist should post a photograph with a wild animal without a detailed description of why the handling is

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

necessary, how the research helps management or conservation, and what training, certifications, or education are necessary to safely complete the research in question. When I consider posting a photograph, I perceive it as a teachable moment and I treat it with the same attention to detail as I would IACUC paperwork or a permit application. This is because, oftentimes, social media lacks factually correct content, especially pertaining to wildlife, and this is an area in which we can all lead by example. We should be actively participating in the wildlife selfie conversation by explaining the repercussions of selfies with wildlife on individuals as well as populations. In some respects, it does seem contradictory, elitist even, that we can interact with wildlife, but others should not. However, it is important to note that wildlife professionals focus their education and careers on wildlife management and conservation. While we certainly don't hold a moratorium on wildlife (and we shouldn't), we absolutely must be willing to dive into social media to redirect how the public perceive wildlife. Scientists are phenomenal disseminators of research, yet many of us fall short in our ability to communicate with the non-scientific community. Whether we like it or not, social media plays a prominent role in the discussion of wildlife, and, as wildlife experts, we need to play a leading role in that conversation. This involves persecuting self-gratifying photos with wild animals just as much as it requires us to discuss the values of wildlife. Pointing out the ecological, economic, cultural, and intrinsic values of wild animals makes wildlife relevant to the public, and creates more opportunities for others to stop and consider the impact their actions may cause on a wild animal.

Of course, not everyone who wants a selfie with a wild animal means to cause harm, but good intentions do not compensate the safety of wild animals. If wildlife are only relevant to (some of) the public for online likes and accolades, wildlife management and conservation is further threatened by a lack of public interest. In a social climate that accepts passing around a baby dolphin until it dies, we need to use our expertise to ignite conversations on why this is not okay. As biologists, we need to be more active in science communication, provide tangible evidence for the value of wildlife in common conservation, and be willing to speak more loudly than those who advocate for questionable interactions with wildlife for photos or experiences. Perhaps wildlife selfies don't threaten our wildlife in the same way that habitat loss or climate change does, but the public perception responsible for these actions do. If we want to generate interest in and momentum for paradigm shifts in wildlife conservation and management, addressing the way wildlife are treated on social media is an important consideration for, as well as responsibility of, wildlife biologists.

# RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

## The Influence of Agriculture on Mule Deer in the Texas Panhandle

Jacob Lampman: M.S. Graduate Research Assistant,  
Borderlands Research Institute, Sul Ross State University

Laura Warner: M.S. Graduate Research Assistant,  
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Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) are an economically important game species throughout the western United States. Unlike many populations in the United States, populations in the Texas Panhandle have distributions and numbers that are continually increasing. However, little is known about their movements and survival in this region, especially in relation to the large amounts of agricultural production that exist there. Since crops are utilized by mule deer to supplement natural forage, deer may travel longer distances or shift their home ranges seasonally to make use of crops in this region. In addition, crops may increase mule deer survival by providing supplemental nutrition during stressful periods of the year. On the other hand, movement to access agricultural fields may decrease survival by making the deer more susceptible to hunter harvest, vehicle collision, or predation. Understanding how mule deer use agriculture seasonally and how this affects their movement, productivity, and survival is crucial to their management. More accurate surveys can also be conducted by determining when and how far deer travel to crop fields from rangeland. Improved survey accuracy means that harvest limits will be better-suited to maintain viable deer populations. Furthermore, if deer use an excessive amount of cropland, it may indicate a need for habitat management to increase or improve natural forage on rangeland. Mule deer productivity is significantly influenced by nutrition. Therefore, any changes in amount, distribution, or type of crops could impact mule deer trends. This crop-driven nutritional effect is relatively invisible to many land managers, yet the effects on mule deer productivity could be far-reaching.



*A 1.5-year-old collared mule deer doe.  
Photo by Jacob Lampman.*

The objectives of this project are to study the influence of agriculture production on mule deer by:

1. Evaluating sex- and age-specific differences in mule deer movements relative to agriculture crops yearly and seasonally, paying particular attention to periods of breeding, gestation, fawning, and lactation in females,
2. Investigating the effect of agriculture on survival of adult and fawn mule deer, and
3. Documenting mule deer seasonal diets and nutritional content of native forage and crops.

To accomplish these objectives, 73 mule deer were captured in the Western Rolling Plains region near Turkey, Texas during October 2015. This is the first of 3 study sites that will be investigated during the 5-year study. Mule deer were



*The 3 study sites where mule deer are being captured and monitored*

captured using a helicopter and net-gun. Of the 73 deer, 43 were adults (18 bucks & 25 does) and 30 were fawns (18 bucks & 20 does). Both adults and fawns were fitted with radio-collars, aged, and measurements were taken to determine antler size on bucks, body growth, weight, and body condition. Adults were fitted with GPS collars that take GPS fixes every 2 hours, allowing deer movement during the study to be intensively monitored. Fawns were

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fitted with expandable radio collars that are not equipped to store GPS location data; however, both types of collars emit a radio signal that can be located using radio telemetry. By using weekly telemetry, we will track deer movement and monitor survival at each study site for 2 years at a staggered approach. In other words, deer will be monitored at the Western Rolling Plains site for years 1 and 2, Canadian River Breaks for years 2 and 3, and the Southwest Panhandle for years 3 and 4. Fawn movements and home range size will also be estimated by using telemetry. If any collar is not moved for 4-6 hours, it will transmit a mortality signal. We then locate the collars using telemetry and determine cause of death for each deer by field necropsy and observation. To monitor crop use of deer, crop fields in the study area are identified and growth stages are assigned to each crop field throughout the growing season. This crop timeline is then used with the location data from the collars to determine when deer are using certain crops.

Plant and fecal samples are being collected monthly to document mule deer seasonal diet and nutritional contents of their native forage and crops. Fresh fecal samples from deer are being collected and taken back to a lab to be pulverized and analyzed. This allows for the samples to be placed on a microscopic slide and analyzed underneath a microscope in order to identify parts of plant cell structures. This technique is called fecal microhistology and will give estimates of what the deer have been eating at that point in time, which allows for the assemblage of an annual seasonal diet of these deer. These data indicate what native forage and crops they are eating throughout the year and at which growth stage crops are particularly attractive.

Samples of leaves, stems, and fruits from plants that deer eat will also be collected across the study sites. Samples are dried and pulverized to determine the nutritional value of each plant and crop species during each month of the year. Data from these vegetation samples will specify which plants and crops are most nutritious and at which growth stage their nutritional values peak in the Texas Panhandle. Comparing the nutritional data to the diet data will determine if deer are eating plants with the highest nutritional quality rather than the quantity of crops or native forage. It will also determine if deer using agricultural crops are on a higher nutritional plane compared to those using primarily native forage. In turn, this will reveal if there is a correlation between crop use and higher body weights, body condition, antler size, and survival rates.



*Jacob Lampman and Laura Warner using telemetry to find collared mule deer. Photo by Thomas Janke.*

Deer movements and crops will continue to be monitored for another year at the current study site in Turkey. In October 2016, the collared adult deer will be recaptured to download collar location data and update measurement data before refitting the collars for another year. Once this collar data is retrieved, this will allow us to see how and where the deer have moved in the past year and how they have changed with their diet. In addition, 30 new fawns that were born in 2016 will be captured and collared to monitor a new cohort of fawn survival. During that same October, another 73 deer will be captured and collared in the second study site near Stinnett, Texas as we enter the second year of this large study.



*A 7.5-year-old buck captured in October 2015. Photo by Silverio Avila Sanchez.*

Mule deer are an iconic big game species of the western United States. With mule deer numbers on the decline in many areas it is critical that we study the few

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populations that are on the incline in order to preserve this species and the hunting opportunities that are associated. Agriculture is a huge part of the Texas Panhandle and that cannot be ignored when studying wildlife in this region. Yet, very little research is available on how agriculture plays a role in mule deer ecology. Getting a good understanding on how agriculture plays a role in these deer's lives is important to make sound management decisions that will benefit deer populations, as well as, the farmers and hunters in the areas. This study will provide insight on what these Panhandle populations are doing in relation to agriculture, which will assist in formulating proper long-term management decisions that will sustain mule deer in Texas for many years to come.

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### The Plenary Session speakers for the upcoming meeting have been selected!

This group should provide an insightful set of talks. We invite you to learn a little more about them from their short biographies, below!

#### Terry Anderson

Terry Anderson is the William A. Dunn Distinguished Senior Fellow and former President and Executive Director of PERC as well as the John and Jean De Nault Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. He believes that market approaches can be both economically sound and environmentally sensitive. His research helped launch the idea of free market environmentalism and has prompted public debate over the proper role of government in managing natural resources. He is the co-chair of Hoover's Property Rights, Freedom, and Prosperity Task Force.



Anderson is the author or editor of thirty-seven books. Among these, *Free Market Environmentalism*, co-authored with Donald Leal, received the 1992 Sir Antony Fisher International Memorial Award. A revised edition was published in 2001.

Anderson's research, much of which has focused on Native American economies, recently resulted in a co-edited volume, *Self-Determination: The Other Path for Native Americans* (Stanford University Press, 2006). He has published widely in the popular press and professional journals, including the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Fly Fisherman*, *Journal of Law and Economics*, and *Economic Inquiry*. During his career at Montana State University, Anderson received several outstanding teaching awards and is now professor emeritus of economics. He received his B.S. from the University of Montana and earned a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Washington.

Anderson is an avid outdoorsman accomplished at big game hunting, bird shooting, fishing, skiing, and hiking.



#### Reed F. Noss

Reed Noss is President of the Florida Institute for Conservation Science and Provost's Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Central Florida, where he teaches conservation biology, ecosystems of Florida, field ornithology, and history of ecology. He has a B.S. in Education from the University of Dayton, an M.S. in Ecology from the University of Tennessee, and a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida. For most of his professional life he has worked in the southeastern United States, the Pacific Northwest, California, the Rocky Mountains, and several regions of Canada, with additional research projects in Latin America and other regions.

Dr. Noss has served as Editor-in-Chief of *Conservation Biology* and President of the

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Society for Conservation Biology. He is an Elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He currently conducts research on vulnerability of species and ecosystems to sea-level rise; climate adaptation strategies; disturbance ecology; road ecology; ecosystem conservation; and changes in ecological processes and species assemblages along urban-rural-wildland gradients. He has nearly 300 publications, including seven books, and is rated as one of the 500 most highly cited authors in all fields. His latest book is *Forgotten Grasslands of the South: Natural History and Conservation* (Island Press, 2013). He is currently writing a book on disturbance ecology: *Flames, Tempests, and Deluges: A Natural History of Disturbance*.

### James Oliver

James Oliver is the Chief Operating Officer with the Texas Agricultural Land Trust (TALT) and as a lifelong rancher with more than 15 years of production ag lending experience, he brings a unique understanding to discussions regarding land—and succession.

“I got my start in production agriculture as a kid on our family’s South Texas cattle operation,” Oliver, who was reared in Pleasanton and holds a B.S. in agricultural economics from Texas A&M, said. “I’ve managed production ag loans from La Pryor, Texas to Golva, North Dakota.”

“Because of my experience, I know that landowners have common issues—and the biggest one of these is passing their land intact to the next generation.”

Oliver, who has been running a diversified commercial cattle, sheep and goat operation on his wife’s family land in Crockett, Pecos, Val Verde and Kinney counties for the past decade, noted his family is facing the same challenges.

“When you ranch, it’s easy to turn off and tune out,” Oliver said. “I recognized that I wanted to be part of the conversation—in the industry and in the legislature—about keeping land intact. TALT offers several tools that helps people create their own options.”

His multi-faceted experience on the range and in the boardroom makes him a natural facilitator.

“My boss at JP Morgan Chase told me, ‘You can make a cowboy an accountant, but you can’t make an accountant a cowboy,’” Oliver said. “I speak both cowboy and financier.”

Finding succession solutions is important because productive, open space land is important.

“Productive, open space land is important because of our history,” Oliver said. “It’s important to the economy of our state whether it’s generating tax revenue at the county level or contributing to the balance of trade in the export market. And conserving land is a way to safeguard our natural resources like water. Frankly, wide open spaces are what makes Texas Texas.”



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### **Jonathan Ogren**

Jonathan founded Siglo Group in 2006 to help clients integrate natural systems into land planning and design. He specializes in environmental assessment, regional analysis, conservation planning, mapping, and land use feasibility studies. He is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with an M.A. in Geography and the Environment and a B.A. in Biology. He is now on the faculty at the University of Texas School of Architecture, where he teaches graduate students to integrate geographic analysis into their research. One of his first professional jobs was with NASA. The experience changed his direction through the realization of how valuable and irreplaceable natural systems are here on this planet. Jonathan also worked at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Sequoia National Park. He served on the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Advisory Task Force. Outside of work, Jonathan can be found running around Lady Bird Lake or hiking the Hill Country with his sons

and their dog.

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### Call for Abstracts for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society

#### Paper and Poster Presentations

Abstracts will be accepted **beginning 1 September 2016** for the technical paper and poster presentation sessions at the 2017 Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society's annual meeting to be held 16–18 February 2017 at the Wyndham Hotel on the river walk in San Antonio, Texas. Papers/posters presenting the results of wildlife investigations and analyses as well as topic reviews of interest to wildlife students and professionals in Texas are encouraged. Paper (oral) presentations should present results or outcomes and abstracts reporting preliminary or no data should be submitted as a poster. The theme for this year's plenary session is “**Wildlife Conservation and Management on Private Lands**”. This session will feature researchers, managers, and landowners with expertise in the topic.

In addition to the plenary session, the meeting will offer numerous technical paper sessions and a poster presentation session for students (undergraduate or graduate) and wildlife professionals, and the Clarence Cottam award presentations and competition for graduate students. Best poster presentation awards will be presented for undergraduate and graduate students, as in previous years. **Only one poster will be judged per student presenter, though students may present >1 poster.**

Abstracts should be submitted via the abstract submission website at: <http://tctws.tamu.edu/>. **Deadline for receipt of abstracts is 30 November 2016.**

Please indicate, where requested, your preference for presentation format (i.e., paper, poster, or no preference) and session. For those entering no preference, a decision will be made by the program committee. For poster presentations, please also check the appropriate box indicating whether you would like to be included in the judging for the best poster presentation awards. **Again, only one poster will be judged per student presenter, though students may present >1 poster.**

Any questions pertaining to abstract submission should be directed to the Program Chair: Tyler Campbell, 210-776-5059 (mobile) or at [tcampbell@eastfoundation.net](mailto:tcampbell@eastfoundation.net) (email) – preferred.

Contributed papers will be scheduled at 15-minute intervals to include time for questions and comments (2–3 minutes). The short and long program will be available at <http://tctws.org/> in advance of the meeting indicating day, time, and location of presentations.

Clarence Cottam Award presentations will be judged on topic originality, scientific procedures, quality of display, accuracy of conclusions, and response to questions from audience and judges. Abstracts should be submitted via the abstract submission website, <http://tctws.tamu.edu/>.

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### Abstract Format

Abstracts should be no longer than 250 words and follow The Journal of Wildlife Management format. Abstracts should be concise and include general problem statement, brief review of methods/experimental design, results, and management implications. For needed statistical significance statements, report P-values only (no need for exact statistical test results). Please follow formatting instructions on the abstract submission website.

Please note not to use scientific names in title; use only in body of abstract.

Short title example:

**Landscape effects on gene flow and genetic structure of northern bobwhite in Texas and the Great Plains.** Katherine S. Miller, Leonard A. Brennan, Randy DeYoung, Fidel Hernández, and X. Ben Wu.

Long Title:

**LANDSCAPE EFFECTS ON GENE FLOW AND GENETIC STRUCTURE OF NORTHERN BOBWHITE IN TEXAS AND THE GREAT PLAINS**

KATHERINE S. MILLER, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX 78363, USA

LEONARD A. BRENNAN, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX 78363, USA

RANDY DEYOUNG, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX 78363, USA

FIDEL HERNÁNDEZ, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX 78363, USA

X. BEN WU, Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, USA

Abstract: Northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) populations have declined due to habitat loss and fragmentation. Northern bobwhites have been considered poor dispersers, so biologists expect a moderate population structure and low genetic diversity in fragmented areas. Our goal was to determine how landscape affects the genetic structure of northern bobwhite in Texas and the Great Plains. We collected tissues from 641 northern bobwhites in 23 populations, and amplified 13 microsatellite loci. We determined population structure (FST) and genetic distance between populations (Dest). We used a land cover map (National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative) to develop a landscape resistance matrix. We compared Dest to geographic distance and resistance with Mantel and partial Mantel tests. Populations showed low levels of structure (FST = 0.025). We found moderate correlations to geographic distance ( $r = 0.542$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and landscape resistance ( $r = 0.416$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ). There was significant correlation between Dest and geographic distance when we accounted for resistance ( $r = 0.388$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), but no significant correlation between Dest and resistance we accounted for geographic distance. A spatial principal component analysis for South Texas samples revealed a global structure. Low genetic structure and moderate genetic diversity may suggest that more northern bobwhite individuals are dispersing further than previously thought. Other possible explanations lie in the

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northern bobwhite's fall covey shuffle, their boom-and-bust population cycle, and stochastic events. Habitat is an important factor for northern bobwhites; determined how habitat affects gene flow will help biologists to manage northern bobwhite.

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Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Award Nominations Now Open!  
Deadline for all awards is November 1, 2016!

### **Educator of the Year Award:**

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nominations for the Educator of the Year Award. The Educator of the Year Award recognizes wildlife professionals for outstanding achievements in wildlife conservation education. Please submit a 5 point bullet statement explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with a curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible) to: (Daniel Kunz, PO Box 225 Alice, TX 78332, daniel.kunz@tpwd.texas.gov). *The deadline for nominations is November 1.*

### **Land Stewardship Award:**

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nominations for the Land Stewardship Award. The Land Stewardship Award recognizes individual landowners or other appropriate individuals for their wildlife conservation efforts. Please submit a ½ to 1 page letter of nomination explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award to: (Daniel Kunz, PO Box 225 Alice, TX 78332, daniel.kunz@tpwd.texas.gov). The deadline for nominations is November 1.

### **Outstanding Achievement Award:**

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is soliciting nominations for the Outstanding Achievement Award. The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes wildlife professionals for their outstanding achievements during the course of their involvement with natural resource management and conservation. Please submit a 5 point bullet statement explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with a curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible) to:

Send all nomination correspondence to:

Daniel Kunz,  
PO Box 225  
Alice, TX 78332

daniel.kunz@tpwd.texas.gov

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### Student Scholarships

### Call for Applications

This is the **FINAL** call for undergraduate and graduate student scholarship applications for the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society. The deadline for submission is 16 December 2016.

To apply for a scholarship, all students must submit a **single pdf** with their completed and signed application and transcript (please mark out or remove any personal information such as your social security number and birth date). Graduate students also need to include a letter of recommendation from their major professor/advisor and a short synopsis of their graduate research project ( $\leq 300$  words). Please email scholarship applications to: Stephen Webb, The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, 2510 Sam Noble Pkwy., Ardmore, OK 73401; e-mail: [slwebb@noble.org](mailto:slwebb@noble.org); office: 580-224-6443.

Undergraduate and graduate student scholarship guidelines are located on the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society website.

### Attention Student Chapter Advisors:

### Outstanding Wildlife Student Recognition

This is the first notice regarding the Outstanding Wildlife Student Recognition Award; an email will follow to all Student Chapter Advisors from the Scholarship Chair, Stephen Webb, providing additional information on the selection process and requirements.

The purpose of the Outstanding Wildlife Student Recognition is for each university with a wildlife program to select its most outstanding student during the past year. The student could be an undergraduate or a graduate student who has shown himself/herself to be a leader. Individual schools are free to select the criteria they deem important in the selection of their outstanding student. However, the selected student **MUST** be a member of their collegiate student chapter **AND** the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

Student Chapter Advisors should contact Stephen Webb ([slwebb@noble.org](mailto:slwebb@noble.org)) with any questions. The deadline for submission is 16 December 2016.

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### Honorary Life Membership Committee Seeking Nominees

The Honorary Life Membership Committee is seeking nominees for this honor. Certainly, the Texas Chapter is blessed with numerous members who have made outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation on a state, national and/or international scale. These individuals deserve the recognition of their peers for their outstanding long-term service to the wildlife resource.

To be eligible a nominee should have been (1) active for 20 or more years in the wildlife profession as an employee of a natural resource agency, academia, or a private organization as a wildlife biologist or consultant; or an effective non professional activist. (2) He/she should have made significant contributions to the Chapter and/or the Profession and/or wildlife conservation of Texas.

To act on a nomination the Committee needs:

1. A reasonably complete vitae for the nominee which should contain his/her full name (present position, organizational affiliation, address, phone number), and a reasonably complete history of professional accomplishments.
2. One or more letters of nomination from close friends or associates.

Nominations should be kept confidential, especially from the nominee, but you can enlist the assistance of your co-workers. Many people have vitae that they use for various purposes. Surreptitiously obtain one. If there isn't one available, patch something together, with the help of friends, associates and spouses. From those nominations that we receive the committee can select one or more recipients to be honored at the 2002 annual meeting. Dossiers of people not selected this year will be filed for future consideration. Please take a moment right now and consider who among your coworkers qualifies and deserves this honor? Set some time aside on your calendar to gather the data to support his or her nomination.

Deadline: 7 December, but act now!!!

**YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO DESERVES TO BE HONORED THIS WAY!!!**

Send material to:  
Kenneth L. Gee--Committee Chairman  
kennethlgee@gmail.com  
580.319.8440