

Historical Figures in the Texas Chapter – The Wildlife Society 1965-2005

These are the people who made a difference in the history of the organization. They provided the leadership, innovations, new concepts, and commitment to projects that made the Texas Chapter a successful nationally recognized wildlife science organization.

By
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Historian

- 1) **Dan Lay** – He was involved in the organizational discussions of the Texas Chapter before it was chartered. In a 1959 letter about forming the new organization, he recommended high standards for its members and officers. That concept has carried through all the years of the organization. In 1976, he was selected as the first permanent archivist for the Chapter, and the care that was given to the archives is the reason the Chapter's history can be told in such detail. Dan was also a charter member of the TWS when it was formed in 1937. He served the field of wildlife science for 65 years, which is longer than most of us have lived – what a legacy.
- 2) **James Teer** – He made arrangements for the charter meeting in 1965 at the campus of TAMU, and served as the first President of the Chapter. He has worked extensively with landowners on their wildlife management issues over many years. He was a guest speaker at the first Student Chapter (TAMU) meeting in 1974, and has been a mentor for students of wildlife management for 30 years. His guidance to student chapters contributed to their record of success, and one of the most important functions that the Chapter does is to mentor and involve students in wildlife issues.

3) **Doug Slack** – As Chapter President he provided the innovation and leadership that created the Executive Director position in 1990, which has been very important to the Chapter. At that time he stated that the new position would enhance the Chapter's capability to respond to wildlife resource policy concerns in a timely and effective manner, and he was very correct and insightful about that. This position was not only a first for the Texas Chapter, but also was the first among all of TWS chapters. His leadership as a Board Member at Large resulted in outreaching to other organizations on wildlife issues in ways that had not previously been done, and he was also active in the Southwest Section of TWS. In addition, he served as chair of the Chapter's Membership and Nominations/Elections Committees. He was the TAMU Student Chapter Advisor in 2002 when they won TWS Student Chapter of the Year award. This award was a great honor not only for the student chapter, but also for the Texas Chapter without whose support and mentoring such achievement would not have been possible. The Texas Student Chapter of the Year Award was developed to recognize student chapters for their tireless efforts to improve club activities, research, volunteer programs, and youth

activities. His leadership helped the student chapter become the best in the nation. This was also a year in which the Texas Chapter won TWS Chapter of the Year Award – a clean sweep for the Lone Star State.

- 4) **John Jefferson** – He was the second Executive Director of the Texas Chapter, and served brilliantly for 7 years (1995-2001) in that position. As an attorney, he was very influential in making the Chapter's views known on all wildlife related bills that were being considered by the Texas Legislature. Because of his work, many bills effecting Texas wildlife issues were improved and some bad bills were killed. The influence of the Texas Chapter on wildlife legislation became very prominent as a result of John Jefferson.
- 5) **Nova Silvy** – He was active at all levels of the wildlife profession. He provided leadership on 7 different committees in the Texas Chapter (serving as chair of the Program, Certification, Nominations/Elections, Publications, Scholarship, Membership and Audit Committees), served as the Texas Chapter President in 1981, Southwest Section President for 6 years (1987-1993), Southwest Section Representative to TWS Council for 7 years (1987-1994) and was President of the TWS in 2003. As the

Chapter's Secretary/Treasurer he was first to computerize the membership list and print out mailing labels, which made it much easier to keep track of membership and mail out newsletters. However, he is most proud of getting the student scholarship fund started with a \$5,000 deposit in a CD from which the Chapter earned interest to provide for the first student scholarship by the Texas Chapter. These scholarships have been given every year since by the Texas Chapter, and the Chapter has acquired outside support to give up to 4 other student scholarships each year. Nova got the inspiration for the student scholarship fund from 1 of his Ph.D. students who sadly died of cancer.

- 6) **Dale Rollins** – He started the Chapter website with the assistance of a federal grant in 1997. As Chapter President he provided leadership in directing the Chapter's future by implementing a "Futuring Session" of past Presidents and committee chairs. This session keyed on critical issues of the Chapter, and was crucial to dealing with the direction taken on numerous topics. He was the "drill sergeant" in the Bobwhite Brigade in 1996 that won a national award.
- 7) **Donnie Harmel** – He was the "hero" to many in the Chapter, and in the end he was the "heart" of the organization. His leadership to the Chapter lasted for over 30

years, and even when he became very sick he stuck in there as long as he could. He will endure in the memory of many for the person he was, as well as a gifted professional wildlife biologist.

- 8) **Gary Valentine** – He out-reached to other organizations more than any other individual in the chapter's history, was a mentor to youth programs all over the state, and served with vigor on numerous committees throughout the history of the Chapter. His outreach is exemplified by being the first and only Texas Chapter member to serve as President of the Southeast Section, which is unusual since Texas is not an official member of that section; Past President of the Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society; as well as Past President of Texas Organization for Endangered Species (TOES).
- 9) **Bruce Thompson** – As Chapter President he had to handle criticism for the Chapter allying itself with conservation organizations seen as being environmental extremist. However, Bruce would not stereotype conservation groups and continued to develop dialog with them on common viewpoints. The Chapter went on to co-sponsor the Texas Wilderness Pow-Wow at his urging, which established a working alliance with such diverse groups as

the League of Women's Voters, Texas Committee on Natural Resources, and Earth First, while avoiding adverse effects on the reputation of the Chapter. Bruce saw this as an opportunity to better inform people on wildlife issues who did not have full knowledge of all the facts. Reaching out to other organizations that do not have the same views on wildlife management issues has greatly enhanced the Texas Chapter's reputation, rather than hurt it and Bruce should be commended for his leadership on setting the direction that the Chapter took. He was also instrumental in getting the Operations Manual completed, which is an important reference manual about the duties and timelines of officers and committee chairs.

- 10) **Linda Campbell** – She was the first female President of the Texas Chapter. Linda gave the Chapter 1 of the most successful national meetings The Wildlife Society had ever seen – Texas style. It really put the Texas Chapter in the spotlight, and created a lot of good will for the Chapter on the national scene. Linda set a goal of completing an administrative handbook for the Texas Chapter that described the goals and duties of each committee as well as general guidelines for operation. Each committee chair submitted ideas to her concerning the

operation of their committee. The effort culminated in the Operations Manual that captures the collective experience of committee chairs and officers in a form that serves as a valuable tool for future officers and committees.

- 11) **Bill Armstrong** – He was chair of the Resolutions Committee when that committee became very active, and his leadership on that committee set the standard for how the Chapter responded to important wildlife issues, including those on hunting of exotic animals and the endangered species act. The Chapter’s resolutions have been introduced into Legislative hearings on important bills, and the Chapter’s position expressed through resolutions has significantly influenced legislation affecting wildlife issues. Bill has also provided numerous workshops for landowners and resource managers on ranching for wildlife diversity and integrated ecosystem management, and is very well respected and appreciated for his work to help improve wildlife management on private lands.
- 12) **John Herron** – He was the chair of the Conservation Review Committee in 1996 when that committee started becoming very active in reviewing conservation issues, which proved to be integral for the

Chapter's understanding and response to important aspects of wildlife management and science. He set the trend which made that committee 1 of the most active and important in the Chapter. Since then they have kept up with all the new issues, legislation, and federal programs affecting the wildlife field.

- 13) **Frank Sprague** – He was appointed the first chairman of the Wildlife Conservation Award Committee, charged with recognizing outstanding achievements by Texas citizens who are not professional wildlifers with emphasis on private landowners practicing exemplary wildlife conservation. The effect of this award and Frank's leadership in this recognition has been to improve both the quantity and quality of wildlife conservation practices in the state on private land, which is very important in a state that is over 90% private property.
- 14) **Janice Greene & Selma Glasscock** – Janice Greene was the guiding force in spearheading the achievement of the Wildlife Conservation Camps when they began in 1993, and set the standard for many years thereafter. Selma Glasscock provided leadership and continuing innovation to these camps as Wildlife Conservation Chair for 6 year between 1995 and 2002, which

kept the camps functioning in a very meaningful way. These camps have been a wonderful inspiration for youth interested in wildlife science and management.

15) **Wendell Swank** – He is a pioneer wildlife biologist in Texas, the nation and internationally. As a member of the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society and as an expert in international conservation affairs, he was and remains an outstanding biologist in conservation and management of wildlife. He has been active in Chapter affairs since its inception in 1965, and as a member of the parent society from the 1930s to the present. He and several of his colleagues were major forces behind the formation of TWS Texas Chapter. Now retired, during his active years which covered almost 65 years, he served conservation and those that use it with skill and valor. He served as TWS President in 1962-64, and on its Executive Council in 1955, 1959-61, and 1966-67. A research scientist, teacher, and administrator, Wendell's employment history is an outstanding record of 1 man's dedication to the natural world and enormous impacts on conservation in the nation and abroad.

16) **Samuel L. Beasom** – Sam Beasom was an icon of predator research in Texas, especially coyote research. His 1974 article

on the effects of short-term predator removal and its subsequent effects on white-tailed deer productivity was (and continues to be) a benchmark study relative to coyote interactions with deer. He passed away in 1995, leaving a legacy behind. In a symposium dedicated to the life, achievements, and memory of Sam Beasom, Dale Rollins said that he “coupled a critical eye with an on-the-ground ability to communicate with his colleagues at the time, be they ranchers, Ph.D.s or front-line trappers.” His research extended beyond coyotes, and Chapter members’ collective knowledge about white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorns, wild turkeys, and scaled quail was enhanced by his work. He was well-published and served a tour of duty as Editor of the Journal of Wildlife Management from 1985-87. Sam may be gone, but he leaves a legacy among Texas wildlifers. He was recognized as the Outstanding Wildlife Professional by his peers in the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 1987. Sam held positions with Texas A&M University, New Mexico Game & Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service, and finally as Director of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Kingsville. As a professor and mentor, he leaves behind many of his traits in his former graduate

students, some of whom have developed into distinguished wildlife biologists, and his heritage continues through their achievements.

- 17) **Jack Inglis** – He served as chair of 4 committees for Chapter, including the Honorary Life Membership (1994-96), Resolutions (1980-81), Outstanding Service Award (1973-74), and Publication Award (1968-69) Committees. After joining the Chapter, Jack never missed a meeting and always paid his own way to the meetings; considering it unacceptable to have his travel paid for by his employer. Jack, because of his long association with the Chapter and his great ability to remember details, also served as an unofficial Archivist for the Chapter long before there was an official Archivist. He was made an Honorary Life Member in 1992 for his many years of service to the Chapter, and for his distinguished career in wildlife research and education. Jack was considered an expert on white-tailed deer behavior, but also was one of the few true naturalists and philosophers in the wildlife field. His career included service as an Assistant Project Leader with the Texas Game & Fish Commission, Research Scientist with TAES, Professor with the TAMU Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences, Staff Scientist for the

Serengeti Research Institute in Tanzania, and Visiting Professor to the University of Dar es Salaam. He authored and coauthored numerous scientific articles, and was the recipient of the TWS Monograph Publication Award in 1987.

- 18) **Ray Telfair** – Ray Telfair not only served in many positions and edited a book for the Chapter, but chaired the Certification Committee which helped many Texas Chapter members become certified by The Wildlife Society. He served as Chair of the Resolutions Committee when it passed a resolution that was sent to the TP&W Commission supporting control of lead shot. His goal as the 1989 Chapter President was to get every member to serve on a committee, recruit at least 1 new member and former member to pay dues and be reinstated, and “become more involved with the most crucial problem confronting our wildlife resources—habitat loss”. He initiated the Honorary Life Membership Committee, charged with the responsibility of selecting individuals to be considered for this honor. The first Texas Wildlife Student Conclave was a very successful event due in part to his efforts. He edited a book entitled “Texas Wildlife Resources and Land Uses”. This book was modeled on a 1982 wildlife symposium published by the Texas Chapter,

and updates and expands the issues involved in wildlife and land use (University of Texas Press). It is a landmark work, and a project in which the entire Chapter should take pride.