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TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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EDITORS, ANDREA WILEY AND MAUREEN FRANK

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 Editors (Andrea Wiley; awiley@quantaenv.com or Maureen Frank; mgfrank@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



I attended a special meeting yesterday evening on a land acquisition project that is very near and dear to my heart. At this meeting there were investors, other members of our conservation community, and a couple of other agency members. As we were sitting at a fancier than I was comfortable with dinner (which fork do I use?), everyone started trading stories about how conservation has touched their lives. One of the investors told a funny story about fishing with his daughter, and referred to it as a “magical moment”. As I sorted through the many “magical moments” in my mind that I have been blessed to experience, it dawned on me that getting to serve as President of TCTWS

this year has been one of these “magical moments” for me. This has been a fabulous personal and professional growth opportunity, and I have been truly honored to work side-by-side with so many amazing individuals this year. I know now, more than ever before, that our membership is made up of some very special folks with hearts as big as our great State. I want to take a moment to express my sheer gratitude to the members of the executive board, committees, the many volunteers, our student chapters and the general membership that have helped the Chapter this year. You guys are truly wonderful!!

As we look forward to next year, I am obviously beside myself with excitement for our upcoming annual meeting at La Torretta Lake Resort in Montgomery, Texas. Our local arrangements and program committees have been hard at work making both large and small decisions that I know are going to make this year’s meeting great! This year’s meeting theme is, “Focusing on the Future”, and will be a meeting dedicated to arming students, young professionals, and their mentors with how to better prepare our conservation workforce for the next century. We have organized several workshops targeted at helping students and young professionals gain skills needed to be competitive for positions in the wildlife profession and organized a special session of invited speakers on “How to Land Your Dream Job”. We of course have kept all

the other great activities from meetings past, including: interesting technical sessions, student:professional mixers, poster sessions, competitions, etc.

We have made some other changes to the program that I hope you will like. For example, we have moved the TCTWS Business Meeting to where it is not in conflict so that more of our members can attend both events at the meeting. I am excited to also announce that our plenary session will be delivered for the first time by our Early Career Professional Program graduates and will highlight their progress on two hot-button conservation issues they have tackled for the Chapter this year 1) Captive Bred Deer Identification and 2) Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

Early Bird registration and our room block run until January 25th, so make your plans soon to attend the meeting and get a little price break too. I look forward to seeing all of you in February!

Jena Moon, President

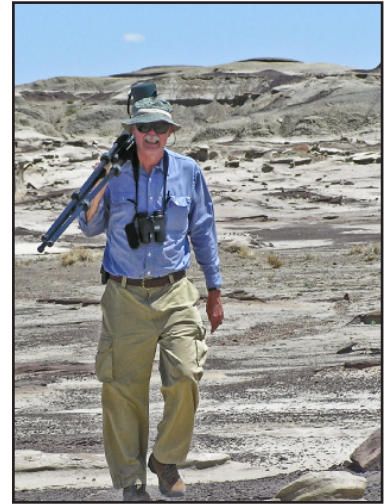
TWS - SW SECTION NEWS

Southwest Section Tracks

By Jim Ramakka
Southwest Section Representative

As the year draws to a close, I want to thank folks for electing me to serve as your representative on The Wildlife Society Council.

Over the last 4 decades I worked in various locations across the country, but almost half my career has been in the Southwest, including 2 winters banding sandhill cranes in the Texas Panhandle and 15 years, in two different tours, with the BLM in New Mexico. The one career constant, ever since graduate school, has been my participation in The Wildlife Society. I first joined to have access to the journals. Eventually, when finances allowed, I began attending Chapter and Section meetings, primarily for the professional development and local networking opportunities. Then, when I was appointed to the Certification Review Board in 1994, I gained a real appreciation for the important role The Wildlife Society plays in maintaining professional standards and providing unbiased information to agency leaders and law makers. Council plays a key role in guiding the direction of The Wildlife Society and I'm excited to be joining and working with a great group of professionals representing Sections from across North America.



Like other professional organizations, The Wildlife Society continues to evolve. Outgoing Section Representative, Fidel Hernández, and I sat together during the Council meeting held at the TWS Annual Meeting in Cleveland. Over the 2 days of presentations and discussions, Fidel shared with me his insights and observations on the functioning of Council. Dr. Hernández did a great job during his time on Council and his valedictory column in the SW Section Newsletter provides an excellent summary of the issues covered. There is plenty of work yet to do and I will do my best to continue in his footsteps.

The next Council meeting will be in March at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Conference in Denver. Prior to that meeting I plan to attend the Joint Annual Meeting of the Arizona and New Mexico Chapters and Texas Chapter Annual Meeting and look forward to reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. I especially want to hear what thoughts folks might have regarding the current direction of The Wildlife Society and any suggestions for ways to ensure the Parent Society is responsive to the needs of the membership.

Until then, Best Wishes For The New Year!

Jim Ramakka, CWB®
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ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

TCTWS Annual Meeting

February 20-23, 2019

Preparing Biologists for the 21st Century and Beyond

Activities ranging from paper and poster sessions, workshops and field trips will make the event informative and interesting.

Meeting Location:

LaTorretta Lake Resort and Spa
Montgomery, Texas

Registration now open. Earlybird registration ends January 25, 2019.

Workshops for the 2019 Meeting:

- Grazing Planning for the Wildlife Manager
- TCTWS Hunting Mentor Training
- Cowbird Trapping
- Fisheries Techniques
- R and R Studio for Beginners
- Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration on the Sam Houston National Forest WMA

Call for Meeting Space

If you plan to have additional meeting space needs please contact Penny Wilkerson by January 15, 2018 with your needs and our local arrangements committee will do our very best to accommodate you and your organization. Please contact Penny via email: penny.wilkerson@tpwd.texas.gov



NOMINATION/APPLICATION NOTIFICATIONS

Exhibitor Applications

The 2019 Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TCTWS) meeting will be hosted at the La Torretta Lake Resort and Spa in Montgomery, TX on Wednesday – Saturday (Feb 20th – 23rd, 2019). We are expecting more than 700 attendees (wildlife professionals, researchers, students, landowners, managers, enthusiasts, etc.) to be at the meeting.

Our exhibitor area will be right smack in the middle of everything (oral presentations, poster presentations, award ceremony, and raffle items), so exhibitors are guaranteed good exposure.

For more information please check out our website (<http://tctws.org/.../vendor-applicati.../exhibitor-registration/>). If you are interested in having an exhibitor booth at the 2019 TCTWS meeting, please fill out the registration form online (same link) or fill out the form and return to Thomas Janke at tjanke@sulross.edu.

For those of you who have already found our registration link and registered, thank you very much.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Thomas with the Exhibits Committee.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS

Conservation Affairs Committee News

The TCTWS Conservation Affairs Committee (CAC) is built as a working committee to help the Chapter address regional, state, and local wildlife management issues and promote science-based decision making. Additionally, the CAC works to communicate positions and support member engagement. The CAC is composed of 20+ wildlife professionals that represent the breadth of our profession, a depth of expertise, and a wide range of Texas ecoregions.

Among many issues addressed by the CAC, the TCTWS Executive Committee has identified two priorities:

1. Affirming the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation
2. Supporting Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)

We invite TCTWS members to engage the CAC on any matters of wildlife management policy by e-mailing committee chair, Romey Swanson at romeyswanson@gmail.com

Conservation Affairs News and Notes – A brief update of CAC business over the past 3 months:

Breeder Deer ID Position Statement – The TCTWS membership recently voted to pass a Position Statement concerning captive-bred deer identification. The position statement will be available on the Resolutions page at the TCTWS website (found under the “About Us” tab). The CAC offers a special thanks to the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Cohort for leading this effort.

Predator Hunting Contest – The committee was previously asked to consider a position on predator hunting contests within Texas. Since this request, the committee has worked to review the current regulatory framework, collected available science, and sought expert opinions while, at the same time, worked with the larger TWS Conservation Affairs Network to consider addressing the issue at the regional or national scale.

Generally, concerns are lumped into three categories:

1. whether these contests are conducted in accordance to the North American Mode
2. the potential for localized impacts to some targeted species and their prey
3. how these contest reflect on hunters and our hunting legacy as a whole

Because the issue and concerns extend well beyond the boundaries of Texas, the CAC is working with leadership in two additional states to explore the issue further at the regional level. This group of states is collaborating with TWS (national) which is also reviewing the issue through an ad hoc Position Statements Committee. The ad hoc Committee is expected to report to the TWS Council in March 2019.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) – Significant progress was made over the last few months of the 115th Congress. RAWA now stands at 112 co-sponsors including 12 co-sponsors in Texas. Five of these Texas co-sponsors were added since October 2018 due, in part, to the direct efforts of TCTWS and Student Chapter outreach (Doggett – District 35, Conaway – 11, Gonzalez – 15, Castro – 20, and Smith – 21). For more information on the effort and the benefits to Texas wildlife and wildlife management, see this story map prepared by TCTWS members (<https://arcg.is/HOaOK>) or the Texas Alliance for Fish and Wildlife website (<http://www.txwildlifealliance.org/>)

The CAC would like to commend the efforts of the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Cohort and student chapters across Texas.

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CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS CONT.

Supporting State Park Funding – The TCTWS has signed on as a member of the newly organized Texas Coalition for State Parks. The Coalition seeks a constitutional amendment to fully dedicate funds generated from the Texas Sporting Goods Sales Tax. This revenue is statutorily obligated to TPWD to fund State Parks but has rarely been fully appropriated by the legislature. Originally set up as a sustainable funding mechanism, appropriation short falls have left around \$1.5 Billion “unspent” over the past 25 years. Texas State Parks are wildly popular and have seen visitation double in just a short number of years with increases expected as the state population doubles over the next 30 years. Unfortunately, the State Park System currently suffers from a backlog of deferred maintenance and natural disaster recovery in excess of \$800 Million. Full dedication of Sporting Goods Sale Tax revenue would go a long way to improving visitor experience and maintaining/improving park facilities and services. In a state with limited public land access, TCTWS sees the State Park System as an important way to promote an informed and caring citizenry while providing experiences which promote the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Eastern Black Rail Listing Proposal – After consulting with TCTWS members and Texas experts, the CAC summarized concerns surrounding the proposed listing of Eastern Black Rail as an ESA threatened species. These concerns primarily stemmed from the 4(d) rules associated with prescribed fire and grazing management practices commonly utilized on public and private lands along the Texas Gulf Coast and the science cited as justification. In consultation with the TCTWS, Audubon Texas incorporated several of these concerns in a letter submitted to US Fish and Wildlife Service.

CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE NEWS

Professional Wildlife Biologist Certification

In any field, professional standards and development are a critical component to ensuring you meet your client's and colleagues' expectations of knowledge and skill. This is certainly true in an adaptive field such as wildlife biology, especially when faced with scrutiny from the public. It is important for us to ensure we properly represent the company or agency of our employ, and advertise ourselves as skilled and capable to future employers. Through Certification, The Wildlife Society has developed an evaluative program to provide both recent graduates and professionals with minimum standards necessary to demonstrate expertise.

After meeting both the educational and experience requirements, a successful applicant to this program is designated as a Certified Wildlife Biologist (CWB) and is now considered to be a qualified practitioner in the art and science of applied ecology and natural resources management. Certification as an Associate Wildlife Biologist (AWB) establishes that an applicant has met educational requirements but lacks suitable experience requirements of at least five years of professional employment as a wildlife biologist.

There are numerous advantages of obtaining AWB or CWB for those working on moving up the ladder in their careers or are fresh out of school and job-searching. Though somewhat anecdotal, I continue to observe an ever-increasing trend of CWB requirements in position openings, much like a variety of other license and permit prerequisites, particularly in the private sector. Certification is not always a stipulated requirement from local, state, and federal employers, but it is certainly encouraged to pursue, or obtain within a given timeframe after being hired. Undoubtedly, any advantageous designation like certification on your resume over fellow applicants in a highly competitive field are worth pursuing when in the job market.

Beyond the personal career objectives and resume-building attributes, the Certification program provides public and private clients and employers more positive access to professional advice in matters concerning wildlife resources. Not only other biologists, but also government agencies, courts, and the public at times require defined standards for evaluation and peer review of practicing wildlife biologists. Professionals that regularly speak to the public or even testify in the public arena should be able to exhibit proper credentials to attest to their expertise, and the AWB and CWB status properly conveys they have met the high standards set forth by The Wildlife Society. The Code of Ethics and the Standards for Professional Conduct of The Wildlife Society ensures that the advice and opinions of a CWB are proficient and ethical, and in the best interest of natural resources and the public.

Although the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society does not have a direct role in the parent Wildlife Society 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. The TWS Certification Review Board frequently is asked to substitute experience or other professional development for course credits especially in courses that are frequently lacking on transcripts. Common examples of coursework requirements that tend to not be the focus on many university wildlife biology degree paths include the categories of Botany, Communications, and Policy, Administration and Law. This was certainly no exception on my application when I first attempted certification, and likely many other current CWBs had to make up for educational deficiencies through professional experience or even online courses. 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.

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CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE NEWS CONT.

There is no requirement that you go through the Texas 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. Regardless of the question, our Certification Committee can help advise you on how to develop such substitute documentation, review your application, or discuss other issues, to ensure the ranks of the Texas Chapter continues to fill with skilled professionals.

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:

James A. Hall, Chair
TCTWS Certification Committee
jhall@plateauwildlife.com

Transforming Science Communication and Literacy

A new report from Wiley sheds light on one of our profession's biggest challenges

By Cameron Kovach
TWS General Manager

We live in interesting times... I could stop there, link the report, and call it quits, but I'm not going to because I'm fascinated by the topic of science communication. In fact, nearly a decade ago I altered my career from studying wildlife to studying new frontiers in wildlife conservation. I say new frontiers because our profession is increasingly operating in uncharted territories. The world is changing, public attitudes are shifting, and skepticism towards science is increasing.

Gone are the days when we could produce a standalone scientific report, retreat to the field, and expect society to exhibit a heightened level of deference towards our research. Some may point to partisan politics or blame millennials because that seems to be a thing, but perhaps, we as a profession have failed to keep pace with the changing times. Our science may reach other scientists but is seemingly lost in the gluttony of information available to policy-makers and the public.

So, what's the solution? Unfortunately, there's no simple answer to that question, but Wiley's report—*To Know the World: Transforming Science Literacy and Communications to Improve Research Impact*—touches on several timely and thought-provoking concepts including:

- Recognizing the need for “translated” scientific information;
- Fostering curiosity and improving scientific literacy by inspiring others to ask questions and seek science-based answers;
- Making science relatable and the profession welcoming to all through providing diverse portrayals of scientists and by highlighting the personal stories of scientists;
- Contextualizing science and the scientific process; and
- Developing innovative ways to expand the audience and understanding of research.

This is not about becoming activists or about attacking the messaging of others. It's about improving our own messaging, becoming better storytellers, and figuring out ways to enhance our communication while still preserving the depth and integrity of our work. How can we as individual wildlife professionals shape our own personal networks, touch the lives of those around us, and inspire the next generation? Not every aspect of Wiley's report is relevant to wildlife professionals, but I hope the report sparks dialogue within your Section, Chapter, or Working Group while demonstrating that, while these are interesting times, we face boundless opportunity to forge new paths through the unknown.

What do you think? Is the increased skepticism towards science a good thing? What role should wildlife professionals play in communicating science? How do you share your science? Share your thoughts with us on social media: @wildlifesociety or #wildlifesociety.

Wiley is the publisher of TWS' three premier wildlife journals—*The Journal of Wildlife Management*, *Wildlife Monographs* and the *Wildlife Society Bulletin*.