

Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education



A. Wiley

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THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
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EDITORS, ANDREA WILEY AND
MAUREEN FRANK

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

by *John M. Tomeček*

A Message from the President

My Fellow Wildlifers:

It is hard to believe that fall is on the horizon in Texas already. A very welcome cool front graced most of our fair state, and dove season is in full swing. Although 2020 has been anything but "typical," I hope that the coming of fall, the return of hunting traditions, and the relief from the heat of summer brings a measure of peace to us all. It is sorely needed this year in many ways.

Since my last message to you, our profession suffered tragedy in the loss of Dr. Bob Dittmar, Dewey Stockbridge, and Brandon White in a helicopter accident while actively engaged in the conservation mission they loved. Words fail to express the depth of emotion associated with losing these fine men. It seems everyone had a personal connection to them, with words of sympathy coming in from all over the world. Conversations since the accident with wildlifers across Texas and beyond serve to remind us how many lives they touched, and how much good conservation was done because of the dedication of these three. They serve as an

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

example to us all, and one we will not forget. It is difficult to mourn our friends during the time of COVID-19, but I am truly impressed by the outpouring of support for their families, charity, and kindness. We all know that the wildlife profession is more than simply our work: our coworkers are a second family. In this time, we have proven once again that the ties that bind us are strong, and they run deep.

As fall approaches, we also turn our thoughts to preparations for TCTWS Annual Conference 2021. While the status of the conference in an electronic or in-person format is still somewhat uncertain, plans are continuing apace for the annual meeting. Whether in person or electronic, we will have a TCTWS 2021 conference. Plan for this as we would in any year, and look forward to it! Decisions will be made soon regarding holding the meeting in-person, so as to provide ample time for an electronic transition, if needs be. Much of this decision is based on financial practicalities related to holding a meeting in-person with limited attendance versus incurring venue penalties for cancellation. As in many things, we must “hold fast” to continue as normal a cycle of life as possible. TCTWS will endure and thrive, no matter what. Should we move to an electronic format, I implore you all to step up and serve TCTWS in any way you can during this time. We will need all hands to help steer our ship safely through this time. You can expect open, transparent conversations from me regarding the decisions made on this topic.

Despite the uncertain nature of the 2021 meeting, what is clear is the theme for our annual meeting. In the world in which we presently live, increasing human population, demand for natural resources, and a changing disease landscape present conservation challenges on many fronts, but likely none moreso than the management of human-wildlife interactions resulting in damages or disease, often called Human-Wildlife Conflict or Wildlife Damage. As I mentioned in my last message, TCTWS has never dedicated an annual meeting theme to this topic. Thus, the TCTWS 2021 theme will be “Managing Wildlife Conflict in a Changing World.” For many of our young members, this field will be a growth area that will not only provide employment opportunity, but will also require the engagement of new solutions and novel ideas from generations beginning to take up the mantle of conservation. I am very excited, and look forward to the excellent interactions surrounding this topic!

Recently, I sent an e-blast to the society regarding the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee by the Executive Board of TCTWS at their most recent meeting. Creating a committee within TCTWS is not something done lightly, nor is it easy to do. The will of TCTWS membership drove this action, as it does all things in our society. In the spirit of service, I hope that all who are interested in shaping and leading this group will step up and nominate themselves or another colleague for committee chair. The vision of the Executive Board was quite clear: that this group would systematically work to decrease barriers to those passionate about wildlife conservation entering our field, while also fostering a sense of inclusion among all members, new and old. We are the family of wildlifers in Texas, and at times, we must ensure that all of our family are at the table, together. I am looking forward to seeing the work of this committee in the future, as their task will be one that takes some years to come to fruition.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

It seems that this year, in many ways, has presented an incredible diversity of challenges for everyone in our human world, and yet, I am constantly amazed by the resilience of our wildlife family. I have seen and heard stories of good conservation, mentoring of young wildlifers, and incredible fieldwork accomplished. We have faced adversity, and continued on with our good work in spite of it. I suspect we have more hurdles ahead, but I take great comfort in knowing that ours is a strong family, made of a group of people that bravely charge forward, no matter the odds before them.



Kindest personal regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John M. Tomeček".

John M. Tomeček, Ph.D.

President, Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society

IN MEMORIAM



Dr. Robert Otto Dittmar, II, DVM

Many wildlifers think of Dr. Dittmar as the first state wildlife veterinarian for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, but before this position he served his community for over 30 years as a small and large animal veterinarian in the Hill Country. In all aspects of his life, Dr. Dittmar was known for his dedication to service, whether volunteering with local junior livestock shows, at Texas Brigades, or during youth hunts on his family ranch. Dr. Dittmar passed along his passion for conservation not just to youth, but to all who were blessed to work alongside him.



Dewey Douglas Stockbridge

Conservation of desert bighorn sheep was Dewey's passion throughout his wildlife career, starting with his first position as a technician at Black Gap Wildlife Management Area and eventually leading to his role as Wildlife Biologist for Elephant Mountain WMA. Through his dedication to habitat restoration for desert bighorn, Dewey has helped preserve this iconic Texas species. Dewey also contributed to wildlife conservation through membership and service in many organizations, and, perhaps most importantly, through sharing his knowledge and passion with friends, family, and his young children.



Brandon Keith White

Toughness with love and work ethic with laughter were qualities that characterized Brandon's life and cherished by those who knew him. Brandon could teach himself nearly any skill yet was fortunate that his vocation and avocation met in his role as fish and wildlife technician for TPWD, where he contributed to conservation of desert bighorn sheep and many other species of his beloved Trans-Pecos. The outdoors were truly Brandon's home, whether he was on horseback or on foot, working diligently alone in the vast west Texas landscape or hunting side by side with friends.

SOUTHWEST SECTION TRACKS

Jim Ramakka, Southwest Section Representative

As I write this in mid-September the dove season has opened, the elk are bugling in the high country, hummingbirds and warblers have started migrating south, and The Wildlife Society is preparing for our first ever virtual annual meeting. TWS staff and contractors have been working hard to arrange what Council hopes will be productive and enjoyable sharing of the latest developments in wildlife research and management and a venue for various networking opportunities for the membership. As of September 14, registration had reached 2,000!

After a summer of webinars and Zoom calls the concept of a virtual conference seems a little less intimidating than when it was first proposed this Spring. In August, I participated in the virtual North American Ornithological Congress (NAOC) along with 2,400 other attendees. There were a few technical glitches and it was not the same experience as an in-person gathering, but it was a still an excellent conference. While I missed not being able to chat face-to-face with old friends, I also realized that, since most of the sessions were recorded, I could attend more sessions than would have been able to in-person. Hopefully, our TWS virtual experience will be as interesting, successful, and thought-provoking.

Aside from missing the opportunity to spend breaks and evenings catching up with former colleagues and interacting with students and early career professionals, I'm disappointed I will not be able to shake hands with year's TWS award winners and including a number from the Southwest Section:

- Fidel Hernandez and Randy DeYoung: TWS Fellows Award
- The Organizing Committee for the First and Second National Conferences on Wildlife Management and Conservation in Mexico: Group Achievement Award
- Clint Boal: W.L. McAtee and G.V. Burger Award for Outstanding Service as an Associate Editor
- Stephen F. Austin State University Student Chapter: Student Chapter of the Year Award

These folks and all the other award recipients are certainly worthy of recognition for their contributions to TWS and to the wildlife profession.

SOUTHWEST SECTION TRACKS

TWS business has continued despite the pandemic. We ended fiscal year 2020 with net operating surplus driven by greater-than-expected income due to positive investment returns, unexpected non-member bequests, and the success of last year's Annual Meeting in Reno. Expenses were also less than projected. However, uncertainty as to the long-term financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has made Council cautious in planning for FY21. Registration for the 2020 conference has exceeded the number planned for in the budget, so that will give use an additional financial buffer.

During a Special Meeting on July 2, Council approved a revised budget which took into account the transition to a virtual 2020 Annual Meeting, passed a motion to accept proposed revisions to the TWS Standing Position on Trapping Furbearers and a motion to allocate \$15,000 in the 2020-2021 FY budget to promote diversity and inclusion of underrepresented communities. Also discussed was a proposal to establish a TWS Ombudsman position to serve as resource for members and staff of The Wildlife Society (TWS) to seek assistance, discuss concerns, and identify available options to help prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts in the context of the Mission and Policies of TWS. Council will continue to address these and other topics during a 2-day virtual Zoom meeting immediately prior to the Annual Meeting. Other agenda items include:

- Discussion on a Diversity Framework for TWS
- Review of the FY20 Budget and Operations plans
- FY 2021 Budget and Operations Plan progress
- Working Groups Fiscal Sponsorship progress
- Mexico Chapter petition
- Canadian Organization Units update
- Policy updates
- Wiley Publishing updates and recommendations
- Reports from the Diversity Committee, Bylaws Subcommittee, and Certification Review Board Liaison Ad hoc Committee
- Discussion of the gender field in the member database
- Review and discussion of the diversity, equity, and inclusion funding proposal
- Discussion of the North American Non-Lead Partnership

SOUTHWEST SECTION TRACKS

We are also scheduled to receive an update on Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency programs and activities by AFWA Executive Director Ron Regan. Hopefully, Ron will allot time to discuss the plenary session at their recent annual meeting titled: “Conservation in the Time of Coronavirus: Social Pandemics. Cultural Pandemics.”

Similar sessions linked to diversity and inclusion were on the agenda at other recent professional conferences including NAOC, and the annual meetings of the Ecological Society of America and the Society for Conservation Biology North America. This is a topic that needs to be addressed as we all try to find the best way to navigate a path to the future. The recent announcement of the Texas Chapter’s establishment of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee is a good first step down that path.

Whatever the rest of the year brings, I know that wildlife professionals will continue to do their jobs in managing and conserving our wildlife resources. Hopefully, in the coming year we will be able to gather again in-person at Chapter meetings and the annual TWS conference to share our experiences.

As always, feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns,

Jim



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TCTWS EVENTS

Virtual Seminar on Natural Resource Policy

Please join us on **Friday, October 23** for a free virtual seminar on natural resource policy in Texas. Katy Johnson, Associate Lobbyist and General Counsel with Garcia Group Government and Public Affairs Consulting, will be joining us to provide an overview of legislative processes and helping our membership identify interjection points throughout the process through which our individual members or the Chapter as a whole can influence proposed policy. Following Katy's talk, we will be joined by several experts who will provide advice on how to properly prepare for and approach those interjection points, while discussing specific experiences they have had doing so. There will also be a Q&A session following the presentations. The seminar will be held via WebEx. Keep an eye out for more information and the meeting link, which will be sent via email and posted on all of our social media platforms.



TCTWS 57th Annual Meeting

Managing Wildlife Conflict in a Changing World

February 24-26, 2021

BIOBLITZ COMPETITION

Joseph Richards, Texas A&M University, Class of '22

This past month, the Student Development Working Group of The Wildlife Society concluded the Student Chapter BioBlitz Competition – the first ever to be held in the organization’s history. The nationwide contest used a citizen science application called iNaturalist to collect photograph observations of wildlife species from individual members. Competing with all TWS student chapters from across the country, the Texas A&M University Student Chapter was recognized for documenting the most research-grade observations in June, July, and the second-most for August.

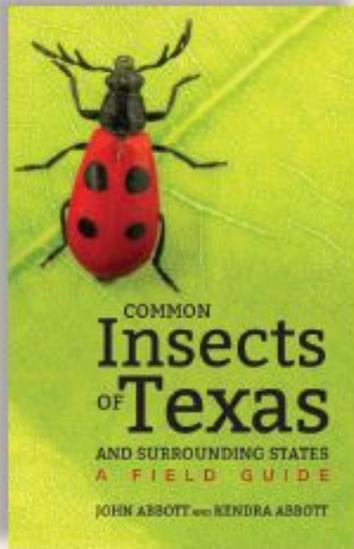
The contest featured members' observations for the months of June, July, August, and September. Student members uploaded their photographs of any species taxa including plants, animals, and fungi using the iNaturalist app. In iNaturalist, the uploader identifies the species and that observation is confirmed by another user - often researchers, professionals, and experts. An observation must be confirmed by another iNaturalist user to be considered research-grade. As of this month, the official TAMU student chapter page documented over 13,600 observations and 2,600 species from 11 states (Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Arkansas, Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alaska).

As President of the TAMU Student Chapter of TWS, I am proud of our student chapter and their participation in the national BioBlitz. With the challenges presented to our members and all wildlifers this year, I was glad to promote this opportunity for our members to collaborate and compete with our peers. As students of wildlife, the BioBlitz competition has afforded us the opportunity to pause, observe, and appreciate the grand diversity of species all around us. In the TAMU chapter, I have been humbled to watch as a rising group of professional wildlifers - dedicated to observing proper health protocols - cultivated their educations in the field.

The BioBlitz competition has enhanced networking amongst our members. During a time where many of us are physically separated, we have been able to stay connected by sharing our daily encounters, which has built camaraderie within the chapter. A few members from the TAMU Chapter have traveled to all 10 Texas ecoregions and multiple state parks. Everyone was able to participate in the competition regardless of how distant they were from the College Station campus.

Citizen science opens the door for anyone to contribute to data collection and scientific studies. Due to technological advances, most people have mobile smartphones capable of taking detailed images to document and record sightings and unique behaviors. The BioBlitz competition afforded students the ability to network with experts in different fields of wildlife when having their species

New Field Guides for Fall



Common Insects of Texas and Surrounding States

A Field Guide

BY JOHN ABBOTT AND KENDRA ABBOTT

In this vividly illustrated field guide, two leading entomologists use their combined fifty-six years of fieldwork to present the most comprehensive and authoritative guide to Texas's insects.

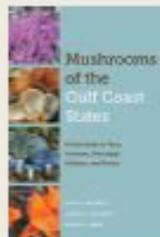
\$24.95 paperback | October 2020

Expertly written and beautifully illustrated, this exceptional book will be of interest to both professional and beginning naturalists.

—EDWARD O. WILSON, UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROFESSOR
EMERITUS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Of related
interest



Mushrooms of the Gulf Coast States

A Field Guide to Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida

BY BESSETTE, ALAN E., ARLEEN R. BESSETTE,
AND DAVID P. LEWIS

\$39.95 paperback



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS

Check out our new recurring column, 'Botany Briefs.' Here we will share information about plants that are important to wildlife, whether beneficial or harmful. If you would like to contribute an article, please contact us at newsletter@tctws.org.

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)

By Andrea Wiley

Taking a hike through the national forest in east Texas, a rich purple berry cluster catches my eye. Among the greens and the browns, the vibrancy of the



Photo 1: The cluster of berries, or drupes.
Gerald C. Williamson, 2010.

purple stands out. The American beautyberry is aptly named for the berry clusters that adorn the base of the leaf pairs (Photo 1). As the leaves begin to fall in the autumn season, the showy clusters remain as a beacon for wildlife that browse on the berries.

American beautyberry is a native perennial shrub with long, arching branches. The shrub grows about as wide as it does tall and can reach 3m in the right

conditions. However, it most often reaches 1-2m in height. The leaves are opposite and ovate-shaped with wooly-like hairs and saw-toothed margins. The inflorescence are arranged in clusters of inconspicuous wildflowers of blue, violet, pink, or white in the nook of the leaf and stem (Photo 2),

blooming in the late spring or early summer. The fruits, which are round, showy, magenta-colored drupes each 4-5mm, begin to ripen in August and September.

The berries are attractive to many songbirds, such as American robins, purple finches, and Texas' state bird, the northern mockingbird. White-tailed deer will also



Photo 2: Inconspicuous flower of American beautyberry. Gerald C. Williamson, 2010.

consume the fruit during the fall and, occasionally, the leaves in the summer if preferred foods are not as available. Fun fact: the plant is a natural mosquito repellent. Farmers used to crush the leaves and rub them on themselves and place them under the harness of their horses and mules to repel mosquitos.



Photo 3: The vibrant purple berries stand out from the green of the shrub. Gerald C. Williamson, 2010.

Literature Cited:

- 1.) Brakie, M. 2010. Plant fact sheet for American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*). USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, East Texas Plant Materials Center. Nacogdoches, TX, 75964.
- 2.) <https://uswildflowers.com/detail.php?SName=Callicarpa%20americana>

Purpletop *Tridens flavus*(L.) Hitchc.)

By Sarah Turner

Purpletop tridens, a native perennial warm season grass, can be found predominantly in sandier soils across central and east Texas. A drought-tolerant species that thrives in infertile soils, purpletop tridens can reach heights of 1.6 m. The defining characteristic of this grass is the large pyramidal, open panicle inflorescence between 10-30 cm in length containing purple/red spikelets on drooping branches (Photo 1; hence the name purpletop or redtop tridens). Other noticeable traits are:



Photo 1: The inflorescence of *Tridens flavus*. Ted Bodner, 2005



Photo 2: A keeled leaf sheath at the base of *T. flavus* (laterally compressed). Sarah Turner, 2020

a keeled lower leaf sheath (Photo 2), a ciliate membrane ligule (Photo 3; a ring of short hairs on the adaxial side of the grass leaf at the junction of the sheath and blade), a pubescent collar (Photo 4; the hairy band at the junction of the blade and the sheath on the abaxial side of the leaf), and inflorescence branches that can (but not always) occur in whorls of 2 or 3 around the central portion of the rachis. The red/purple spikelets range between 5 and 9 mm in length, have 2 glumes that are 2-4.5 mm long and unequal in length, and contain 4-8 florets (the grass "flower", delimited by the two bracts called the lemma and palea that enclose reproductive organs). Individual florets have a 3-veined lemma ranging between 3-5mm long and a palea of almost equal length.

The lemma veins are pubescent and its lateral vein is mucronate (has a very short mucro, or a short sharp point).

Since purpletop tridens is at peak maturation in the late summer and early fall, it can serve as valuable forage for livestock and as a food source for a plethora of birds and mammals. Likewise, its tall stature and clumped distribution can provide cover for wildlife. Purpletop tridens serves as the larval host for many species of butterflies and moths.



Photo 3: The ligule of *T. flavus* defined by the white arrow. Sarah Turner, 2020

Fun fact: this species is also commonly referred to as "greasewood" due to the viscosity of the pedicels and branchlets at maturity.



Photo 4: The pubescent collar of *T. flavus*. Sarah Turner, 2020

Literature Cited:

- 1.) Hatch, S.L., Umphres, K.C., and Ardoin, A.J.. 2016. Field guide to common Texas grasses. Texas A&M University Press, 2016.
- 2.) <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/tridens-flavus>
- 3.) <https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=trfl2>

TCTWS OFFICER ELECTIONS

Officer Elections

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society greatly appreciates those individuals who dedicate their time and expertise to the service of the chapter. Nominations for open positions in 2021 have been made, and the candidates are listed below:

Vice President

Blake Grisham

T. Wayne Schwertner

Secretary

Johanna Delgado-Acevedo

Jessica Glasscock

Board Member at Large

Whitney Gann

Maria F. "Masi" Mejia

Background information for each of these candidates will be emailed to TCTWS members in January, along with a link to the election ballot. Please take time to learn about each candidate and then participate in the election!

TCTWS COMMITTEE NEWS

EXCELLENCE IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Committee is asking you to help us recognize exceptional wildlife conservation efforts in Texas by submitting nominations for one or more of the following award categories:

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 bulleted statement explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with a curriculum vitae of the nominee.

Land Stewardship Award

The Land Stewardship Award recognizes landowners who have been instrumental in the development, application, and promotion of sound wildlife management principles on their land. Please submit a ½ to 1 page letter of nomination explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award.

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 bulleted statement explaining why the nominee is deserving of the award, along with a curriculum vitae of the nominee (if possible).

All nominations should be submitted to: Corey Mason at corey@biggame.org with the subject "Nomination for TCTWS Excellence in Wildlife Conservation Award." The deadline for nominations is November 15, 2020.

PUBLICATION AWARDS - CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

This is the first call for nominations of publications that include a TCTWS member as one of the first three authors and were published within the last 3 years (2018-2020). At least 3 publications within a category must be submitted to offer the award. The deadline for submission is 15 November 2020. Categories include:

- Books
- Electronic Media (i.e. websites, CDs, DVDs, listservs, or similar)
- Peer-reviewed Scientific Articles (journal or peer-reviewed proceedings)
- Popular Articles (published in magazines, newspapers, newsletters, or similar)
- Technical Publications (reports, factsheets, or similar)

To nominate a publication, please submit:

- 1) A cover letter stating why the publication is being nominated.
- 2) A digital pdf to the Publication Awards Committee Email, publication.awards@tctws.org, or mail 6 hard copies to:

Stephen Webb: Committee Co-Chair | Noble Research Institute
2510 Sam Noble Pkwy. | Ardmore, OK 73401

TCTWS COMMITTEE NEWS

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 of applications is December 16, 2019.

To apply for a scholarship, ALL students must submit a **single pdf** with their completed and signed application and transcript (please black out or remove any personal information, i.e. social security number and birth date). Graduate students also need a signed letter of recommendation from their major professor/advisor and a short synopsis of their graduate research project (<300 words).

Please email scholarship applications to: Kyle Brunson, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area at email: scholarship@tctws.org.

There is a total of three undergraduate and two graduate scholarships up for grabs this year. Full undergraduate and graduate scholarship guidelines are located on the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society website. <https://tctws.org/student-menu/scholarship-opportunities/>

This is *your* newsletter.

To submit an article, contact us: newsletter@tctws.org.

Pay dues, read previous newsletters, and find more information online:

tctws.org



Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society Newsletter is published electronically 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 and Maureen Frank, newsletter@tctws.org) by the 15th of the preceding month. Change of email address should be submitted online through the Address Change Form. Membership in the Chapter is \$15/year for students and \$25/year for regular members.