



Texas Chapter Tails

of Wildlife and Stewardship

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President's Note

As I begin this note, I have just met the noon deadline for final grade submission for the fall semester and am preparing to travel west across Texas for a short break with my family. By the time this newsletter reaches you, that trip will be behind me, and the spring semester will likely be well underway. This season has been a busy one, marked by full calendars, growing to-do lists, and the steady pace that often accompanies our professional commitments.

My drive west from Nacogdoches to Sonora passes through five of Texas' ecoregions: the Pineywoods, Post Oak Savannah, Blackland Prairies, Cross Timbers and Prairies, and on through to the western edge of the Edwards Plateau. As the dense forests of East Texas give way to the open landscapes of West Texas, I am reminded of the diversity of our state and the sense of perspective that comes with wide-open spaces.

I think the long solo drives across Texas, beginning years ago when I first left the South Texas brush country for the Big Bend region to attend college, helped inspire this year's plenary theme: *Margins Matter: Wildlife on the Edge in a Changing Texas*. This theme reflects an interest in highlighting regions across our state where wildlife populations are shaped by changing landscapes, shifting human populations, and evolving management challenges. Through thoughtful conversations with colleagues and friends, this vision has taken shape, and I am

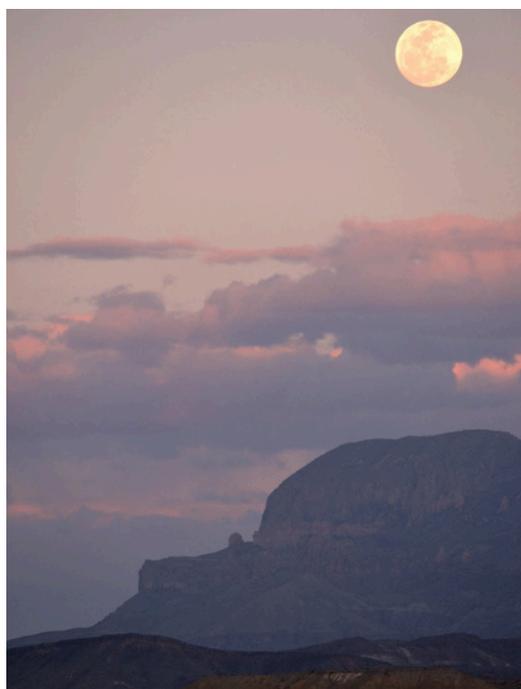


Photo by Jessica Glasscock

President's Note

pleased to share the speaker lineup for the 2026 Plenary: Dr. Louis Harveson (Borderlands Research Institute), Dr. Warren Conway (Texas Tech University), Kirk Feurbacher (The Nature Conservancy), Sam Kieschnick (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department), and Dr. Fidel Hernández (Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute).

Collectively, these speakers represent the diversity of perspectives, landscapes, and challenges that define wildlife conservation in Texas today. Their work underscores that while our ecoregions differ, the issues we face, and the opportunities ahead, are deeply interconnected. As we look toward the 2026 Annual Meeting, I am excited not only about the discussions that will take place, but also about the continued strengthening of our professional community.

Planning for the 2026 Annual Meeting is well underway, and the program is shaping up to reflect both the depth of expertise within our Chapter and the evolving challenges of wildlife management across the state. I encourage you to begin finalizing your plans to attend. Early-bird registration closes on January 31, and the hotel room block ends January 27.

Please also remember to participate in the TCTWS leadership elections. Candidate summaries are provided on pages 12–18. Remember, your vote plays an important role in guiding the future of our Chapter!

The 2026 Annual Meeting will also mark the conclusion of my term as president. It has been a privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated group of professionals and volunteers. I am grateful for the collaboration, conversations, and shared commitment to wildlife conservation that define this organization, and I will continue to support its work in the years ahead.



Jessica L. Glasscock, PhD
President, Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society



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Photos by S. Artrip, J.Perez, E. Weber, & C. T. Stamps

TCTWS 2026 Annual Meeting

Save the Date

A note from the Local Arrangements Committee:

Save the Date!

The **Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society's 2026 Annual Meeting** is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 18th – Friday, February 20th** at the **Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa & Convention Center on Galveston Island.**



Please note that Moody Gardens is a property-wide cashless venue and accepts credit and debit card payments only

The reservation link for booking your rooms is available and linked below under the group rate tab. Please go ahead and book your room early!

Moody Gardens Hotel Group Rate

[Click Here for Moody Gardens Group Rate](#)

Rate is \$111/night plus taxes and fees.

Self-Parking at the hotel is included.

Cut off date is January 27, 2026. No exceptions.

The TCTWS Annual Meeting each year offers opportunities to hear from leading experts in the natural resource community, get updates on breaking research from wildlife and conservation students, and meet professionals from across the state.



TCTWS 2026 Annual Meeting

Tentative Agenda (times are subject to change slightly)

Day 1 (Wednesday, Feb. 18th)

ALL DAY: Student Poster Set-up; Photo Art Submission; Plant ID Set-up

8:00am - 12:00pm: Workshops

12:00 - 1:00pm: Lunch on your own

1:00 - 3:00pm: Exec Board Meeting

2:30 - 4:00pm: Plant ID – students

4:00 - 5:15pm: Student Posters

4:00pm: Hotel Check-In

5:00 - 7:30pm: Welcome Dinner and Plenary

7:30 - 10:00pm: Opening Social (**In the Aquarium Pyramid!**)

Day 2 (Thursday, Feb. 19th)

8:00am - 5:00pm: Voting for Photo & Art Open

8:00am - 5:00pm: Naturalist Contest

8:00 - 10:00am: Membership Meeting

10:30am - 12:30pm: Cottam Awards Presentations

12:30 - 1:30pm: Past Presidents Luncheon

12:30 - 1:30pm: Lunch on your own

1:30 - 4:00pm: Technical Sessions (2.5 Hours x 2-4 rooms)

4:30 - 5:30pm: Women of Wildlife Reception

4:00 - 6:00pm: Quiz Bowl

6:00 - 8:00pm: Student Awards (Dinner Provided)

Day 3 (Friday Feb. 20th)

7:00 - 8:00am: Student Breakfast

7:00 - 8:00am: Fellowship of Christian Conservationists

8:00 - 9:00am: Student Leadership Meeting

8:00am - 10:00am: Conservation Affairs

9:00am - 12:00pm: Technical Sessions (3 Hours x 2-4 rooms)

12:00pm - 1:00pm: Lunch on your own

1:00pm: Photo & Art Voting ends

1:00 - 3:00pm: Technical Sessions (2 Hours x 2-4 rooms)

2:30 - 4:00pm: Exec Board Meeting (Incoming 2025-2026)

4:30 - 6:00pm: Noncompetitive/Professional posters

6:00 - 8:00pm: Professional Awards (Dinner provided) - Raffle winners announced afterwards

TCTWS 2026 Annual Meeting

Become an Exhibitor or Sponsor at the 2026 Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society Meeting!

Join hundreds of wildlife professionals, biologists, land managers, and conservation leaders at this year's TCTWS conference February 18-20, 2026 at Moody Gardens in Galveston, TX.

Exhibiting or sponsoring is the best way to showcase your products, services, research, or organization to the people shaping wildlife conservation across Texas. Spaces fill quickly so secure your spot today and make a meaningful impact on the future of Texas wildlife.

Contact us at exhibits@tctws.org or finance@tctws.org for more information.



Photos by K. Irvin, L. Spjut, & A. Hoxie,

TCTWS Committee News

Student Activities

Happy New Year students!

The 2026 TCTWS Annual Meeting is only a few short weeks away! Your Student Activities committee members have been diligently working to ensure you have the best conference experience possible, and we look forward to seeing each of you very soon. We would like to remind you of a few upcoming deadlines pertaining to student events at the conference:

- Conference registration is open! The registration price for students is \$250 and gives you access to conference activities, dinner at each night's events, and access to the student breakfast on Friday morning. Please make sure you register before February 1, 2026, after which point a late fee will be incurred.
- **January 31, 2026** is the deadline to register teams for the quiz bowl competition. Please send your team registrations to Dr. Sarah Lucht at sarah.lucht@tctws.org. For questions on either competition, please do not hesitate to reach out!
- **January 31, 2026** is also the deadline to submit your chapter's application for the Student Chapter of the Year award. Please talk to your chapter advisor for more information and feel free to reach out to us at student.activities@tctws.org with any questions! Submit applications to Dr. Sarah Lucht (sarah.lucht@tctws.org).
- The Plant ID competition will be accepting participants until the event, which will be held on Wednesday, February 18th at 2:30 p.m. Forward notice of if your university will participate is appreciated, but not necessary.
- The Naturalist Contest will be held on Thursday, February 19th from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is open to all attendees. Come test your wildlife and plant ID knowledge in a fun, interactive setting. Our high achievers of both the novice and professional categories will be recognized at the Thursday night awards banquet.

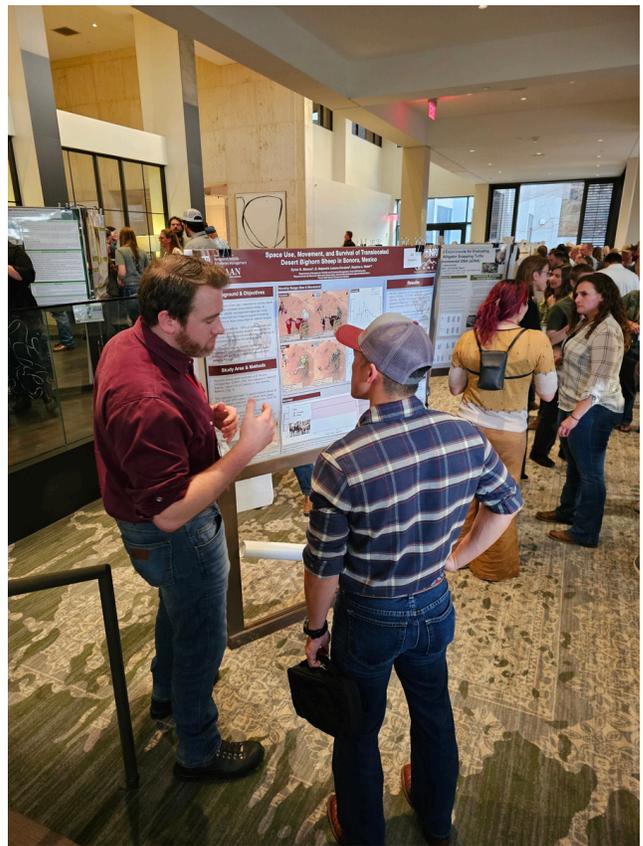
We are also requesting the help of student volunteers to ensure the conference runs as smooth as possible! The selfless service of our young professionals has been a cornerstone of what makes our conference the very best and provides a great networking opportunity. Volunteers will be needed for a variety of roles, including registration, technical sessions, raffle, pre-conference set up, and post-conference take down. We also would like to again solicit volunteers to be our conference photographers. This student-led initiative has been successful for the past several years and is a great way to share your passion for photography with your peers. We will send an email after February 1st to all registered students to request volunteers and photographers, but please reach out to us in advance if you would like to volunteer!

TCTWS Committee News

Student Activities, cont.

Lastly, remember this conference is an opportunity for you to learn and grow, both personally and professionally. Many of the folks you will meet at the conference will soon be your mentors, supervisors, colleagues, and friends. It's our hope that the conference will further ignite your passion for natural resources conservation and maybe inspire you to get involved with TCTWS even more. If you would like to know more about giving back to TCTWS, feel free to chat with any of our committee chairs or executive board members at the conference.

We hope to see you soon, and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions!
-Your Student Activities Committee



Students at the poster and plant ID competitions at the 2024 annual meeting.

Conservation Affairs

By Matt Wagner, Executive Director, and Mary Pearl Meuth, Past President

New World Screwworm

On December 9, The Texas House held a joint hearing of the Culture Recreation and Tourism and Ag and Livestock committees regarding New World Screwworm (website). Invited testimony was heard from USDA representatives, Texas Department of Ag, TAHC, TPWD, Texas A&M AgriLife, Berringer Animal Health, Tx and SW Cattle Raisers, Tx Cattle Feeders, Tx Farm Bureau, Tx Vet Medical Assoc, TWA, Tx Deer Assoc, Tx Grain Feed Assoc, Barret and Crowfoot Feeders, Livestock Market Assoc, and Texas Livestock Association. There have been four positive NWS fly detections over the last year within about 120 miles of the Texas border, but these have all been due to livestock movement and not due to migrating fly populations. The NWS fly population remains in southern Mexico and is being managed with the dispersal of 100 million sterile flies per week. It is anticipated that within 18 months, another 100-200 million sterile flies will be produced per week. For the latest developments on NWS, go to the new USDA NWS website: <http://NWS.gov> or the Screwworm Coalition of Texas website: <https://screwwormtx.org/>

Ghost Deer Case

The “Ghost Deer” investigation began in 2024 after game wardens discovered violations during a traffic stop in Montgomery County. Their work eventually revealed one of the largest deer smuggling networks in state history, resulting in 24 suspects and approximately 1,400 charges filed across 11 counties. Two positive cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD) have been confirmed at a Tom Green County deer breeding facility linked to the case and are the first detections of CWD in the county. In addition, there are other widespread, coordinated deer breeding violations including, but not limited to: smuggling captive breeder deer and free-range white-tailed deer between breeder facilities and ranches, CWD testing violations, license violations and others.



Photo by L. Heffelfinger

Conservation Affairs, cont.

Endangered Species Act rule proposals (From TWS)

The administration announced four proposed rules that would impact regulations implementing the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Broadly, the proposed rules relate to listing and critical habitat determinations, interagency cooperation, blanket protections for species listed with threatened status, and deciding factors for critical habitat exclusions. Public comments on the proposed rules were accepted until December 22. A press release is available [here](#).

Waters of The U.S. (WOTUS) Definition Proposal (From TWS)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Army Corp of Engineers are proposing rulemaking that would revise the definition of “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) within the Clean Water Act. The proposal is a response to the Supreme Court’s Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency decision in 2023, which significantly narrowed the scope of waters protected under the Clean Water Act. As of December 15, nearly 10,000 public comments had been received before the deadline of January 5, 2027.

Texas Mountain Lion Research and Monitoring Plan

The final draft of TPWD’s Mountain Lion Research and Monitoring Plan was presented to the TPWD commission at the November commission meeting. At the direction of the commission, staff will be proposing new rules for mandatory harvest reporting of mountain lions, anticipated to be presented for public comment at the March commission meeting with possible adoption in May. The Texas Chapter is encouraging TPWD staff to use members of the Mountain Lion Stakeholder Group when preparing a mandatory harvest reporting proposal. The Texas Mountain Lion Research and Monitoring Plan will be available at: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/mlion/>

TPWD Commission Meeting

The [January TPWD Commission](#) meeting will be held on January 21-22 in Austin. Agenda items up for adoption will include hunting aoudad from helicopters, new CWD rules, and cultivation of dotted duckweed. Also proposed are upcoming hunting regulations for the 2026-27 season.

TCTWS Committee News

Conservation Affairs, cont.

TWS Annual Meeting in Edmonton Alberta

This meeting occurred on October 5-9 and was attended by over 1,400 participants, a surprising number considering the federal government shut down. Matt Wagner and other TCTWS members attended the meeting where Dr. Fidel Hernandez was installed as the next President of TWS. Wagner gave a presentation on Texas's Wildlife Tax Valuation during the Private Lands Working Group Session. He also attended the Conservation Affairs Network meeting, Policy Roundtable (The Path Forward), a CWD and Landowner Session, and was able to meet with CEO Ed Arnett.

Webinar on 89th Legislative Session

On November 20th, Matt Wagner and Mary Pearl Meuth presented a webinar summarizing the results of bills filed during the Texas 89th Legislative Session. Of the 61 bills tracked by the chapter, 12 or 18% passed into law. Past webinars are available at tctws.org/webinar/.

Upcoming Meetings:

January 21-22 2026, Austin – TPWD Commission Meeting

February 7-11, 2026, Monterey, California – Society for Range Management Annual Meeting

February 11-15, Alpine - Water in The Desert

February 18-20 2026, Galveston – TCTWS Annual Meeting

February 25-27 2026, Austin – Texas Land Conservation Conference

March 25-26 2026, Austin – TPWD Commission Meeting

May 27-28, Austin - TPWD Commission Meeting



Photo by A. Taulli

If you are interested in participating in TCTWS policy discussion activities or attending Commission Meeting(s), legislative hearings or more alongside TCTWS, please reach out to the Conservation Affairs Committee (conservation.affairs@tctws.org). TCTWS members are always encouraged to participate in these activities.

TCTWS Committee News

Nominations

We are pleased to introduce the nominees for our 2026 Vice President, Secretary, and Board Member at Large positions. These individuals have stepped forward in service to the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society, committing their time and talents to help guide and strengthen our membership society. Service is the foundation of our Chapter—our leaders and volunteers alike make it possible for us to carry out our mission.

Candidate bios will be featured in the October and January editions of The Tails and highlighted across our social platforms. **Voting is open now at this link:** <https://www.xcdsystem.com/tctws/forms/index.cfm?ID=QPYPD8fK>, and we encourage every member to learn more about the nominees and cast a ballot. **Voting closes February 17.**

Your vote is your voice, and together, through service, we shape the future of our Chapter.

Vice President

- Grant Lawrence
- Matt Reidy

Secretary

- Andrew Earl
- Benjamin Olsen

Board Member at Large

- Bobby Allcorn
- Adam Terry

*in alphabetical order

Nominations

2026 Vice President Candidate - Grant Lawrence

I am Grant Lawrence and I serve as the Land Steward and Operations Manager at Shield Ranch Barton Creek and Shield Ranch Camp Wood. Over the past 8 years my role has transitioned, but the focus remains on careful conservation planning, executing wildlife and habitat management objectives, overseeing property and infrastructure management, and supervising the day-to-day operations of full-time staff, seasonal employees, and volunteer groups.

I obtained a B.S. in Range and Wildlife Management from Abilene Christian University (ACU) and a M.S. in Natural Resource Management from Sul Ross State University. I was first introduced to the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TCTWS) at the 2012 meeting in Ft. Worth. Recognizing the value of the organization, I helped charter a new student chapter at ACU and served as Vice President. Throughout undergrad and graduate school, I was fully immersed in TCTWS activities including oral and poster presentations, leading teams in student competitions, and forming invaluable networking connections. My collegiate career concluded with a 2nd place finish for the Cottam Award in 2017.



I am blessed to have attended annual meetings for 14 consecutive years. The intricate, interconnected professional networking web of TCTWS has played a pivotal role in my career. Continued involvement led to graduation from the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Institute (JGTCLI). As a member of the two-year COVID cohort (2020-2022), I learned leadership and communication skills that have translated well into my career endeavors and service roles.

I have served two terms as a Scholarship Committee member (2020 and 2021) and two terms with the Finance Committee (2021 member and 2023 co-chair). I currently serve as fundraising chair of the Early Career Professional Program committee and will aid as a Peer Mentor for the 2026-27 JGTCLI cohort.

I'm honored for the opportunity to serve the chapter in this capacity. If elected as Vice President, I plan to engage and support the efforts of our membership while representing the organization with pride. I am committed to furthering the mission and vision of TCTWS by leveraging the unique skillsets and experience of our diverse membership.

In my personal life, you can find me pursuing outdoor adventures with my wife, two boys, and trusty labrador retriever.

Nominations

2026 Vice President Candidate - Matt Reidy

I am happy to be nominated for Vice President of Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society (TCTWS). I have been a member since 2006. I received my B.S. in Wildlife Ecology and Management from Texas A&M University in 2004 and completed my M.S. in Range and Wildlife Sciences from Texas A&M University-Kingsville in 2007. My research focused on population estimates and electric fencing for feral hogs.

In my professional career, I am the Assistant District Leader for The Brush Country District in South Texas for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. I provide technical guidance to private landowners in South Texas as well as assist with district operations. My additional duties with Texas Parks and Wildlife include serving on Migratory Gamebird Technical Committee, Upland Gamebird Advisory Committee, and Falconry and Raptor Council.



I have attended the TCTWS Annual Meeting every year since 2006 first as a graduate student and then as a young professional and now I guess as a mid-career professional. I was elected and served as Board Member at Large in 2022. I have also been volunteering for committees with TCTWS since 2011. I have served on the Finance, Cottam Awards, Activities, Scholarships, Publications, and Program Committees. I also have enjoyed poster judging and helping the chapter where I can.

In my personal time I am very active in the sport of falconry and serve as the Director at Large for the Texas Hawking Association. I also enjoy rock climbing, playing and hunting with my German shorthair pointer, and native grass restoration on my little piece of property in South Texas.

I agreed to be nominated for Vice President of TCTWS because it has been very important to me in my professional and personal growth. The contacts I have made and the development I have earned from volunteering and being involved mean a lot to me both personally and professionally. I hope to continue to provide my energy, passion, and time to TCTWS so that the next generation of wildlife professionals can gain same kind of knowledge, benefits, and support I have.

Nominations

2026 Secretary Candidate - Andrew Earl

Andrew Earl serves as the Director of Conservation for the Texas Wildlife Association.

At TWA, Andrew bridges the organization's issues & advocacy and landowner education programs. He serves as liaison to the organization's Wildlife Conservation and Land & Water committees, responsible for developing and advancing priorities before the Texas Parks & Wildlife Commission and state legislature. He works closely with the TWA education team to ensure that workshop curriculum reflects the emerging issues facing Texas landowners—and vice versa—that the needs and concerns of landowners are accounted for in the organization's advocacy work.



Andrew joined TWA in 2023, bringing a decade of experience in coalition building and collaborative policymaking. Most recently, he served as the Director of Private Lands Conservation and then Director of Government Relations at the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. There, his work focused primarily on building a shared platform for sportsmen on topics like working lands conservation, wildlife disease, and hunting & fishing access on federal lands.

Prior to that, Andrew worked in the U.S. Senate overseeing Senator Mike Crapo's agriculture and natural resource legislative portfolios. He began his career in the Ducks Unlimited Washington, DC office.

An adult-onset hunter, Andrew's connection to the outdoors was nurtured by clam digging and striper fishing off the south shore of Long Island. Fortunately for him, he met a girl from North Texas and eagerly followed her back to the Lone Star State.

Andrew serves on the TCTWS Conservation Affairs Subcommittee on renewable energy. He is a TYHP Huntmaster and on the Steering Committee of the American Wildlife Conservation Partnership, a coalition of 53 national hunt & fish organizations organized to amplify the collective voices of sportsmen and women in federal wildlife and natural resource policymaking.

Andrew lives in Buda with his wife and son.

Nominations

2026 Secretary Candidate - Benjamin Olsen

Ben Olsen is a Wildlife Health Specialist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). He received his B.S. in Wildlife Conservation and Management from Missouri Western State University and went on to earn his M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, where he conducted research with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. After graduate school, Ben worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources before joining TPWD, first serving as a District Wildlife Biologist in New Braunfels and later promoting to his current position as Wildlife Health Specialist. In this role, he provides advanced technical assistance on wildlife health issues, with a primary focus on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). He leads a team of wildlife technicians that help ensure TPWD's CWD surveillance and management efforts are successful.



Ben has been an active member of The Wildlife Society (TWS) since 2011, when he joined as a freshman in college. He became involved with the Texas Chapter in 2015 during his graduate studies. Over the years, Ben has held several leadership roles within TWS, including Student Chapter President, Secretary of the Student Development Working Group, and Board Member of the Early Career Professionals Working Group. He has served on multiple award committees, volunteered as a poster judge at conferences, and most recently contributed to the Texas Chapter as a Program Committee member in 2024 and currently serves as Chair of the Program Committee.

In addition, Ben was selected as a Fellow of the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Institute (2023-2024 Cohort), further strengthening his leadership skills and professional network in wildlife conservation.

Ben credits TWS with helping to shape his career and providing invaluable opportunities for growth and mentorship. He is committed to giving back to the Texas Chapter, continuing advocacy to ensure it remains relevant and valuable to all members, students, early career professionals, and established professionals alike. Serving as Secretary would be an honor and an opportunity to help the Chapter continue to grow, support its members, and advance the profession of wildlife conservation.

Nominations

2026 Board Member at Large Candidate - Bobby Allcorn

Bobby Allcorn is the South Texas Ecosystem Project Leader with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He oversees 8 staff at the Chaparral and the James E. Daughtrey Wildlife Management Areas where the goal is to promote healthy native ecosystems and to encourage research, public outreach, and public hunting opportunities.

Bobby holds an M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management from Sul Ross State University and a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University. Before his current position, he worked as a Natural Resource Specialist and then as a Regional Wildlife Health Specialist during his 9-year career with TPWD. With TCTWS, he has served as the director for the 2022 Wildlife Conservation Camp and currently co-chairs the scholarships committee.



He has regularly attended the TCTWS annual meeting since 2013 and started volunteering during the 2014 Wildlife Conservation Camp. Bobby credits his involvement in TCTWS with helping to grow his career and broaden his view of what it means to be a professional in the field of wildlife management. He continues to serve the chapter and pushes for the involvement of young professionals.

Bobby lives at the Chaparral WMA with his wife, Allie. He enjoys experiencing the outdoors through hiking, fishing, photography, and hunting as often as possible.

Nominations

2026 Board Member at Large Candidate - Adam Terry

Adam Terry is the owner of Terry Forestry & Land Management LLC, a Texas based consulting firm providing turnkey forest, wildlife, and land-management services including forest and wildlife planning, prescribed fire, and habitat restoration. Adam holds many certifications including Certified Forester®, Certified Wildlife Biologist®, and Texas Certified and Insured Prescribed Burn Manager. He holds a B.S. in Forest Wildlife Management with a minor in Biology from Stephen F. Austin State University.



Prior to launching his firm full-time, Adam served as a Forest Wildlife Biologist with the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (NFGT) where he led threatened, endangered, and sensitive species programs, coordinated complex partnerships, and managed the largest WMA program in the state. His work regularly bridged agencies, NGOs, private landowners, and industry. He collaborated with partners such as Texas A&M Forest Service, NRCS, The Nature Conservancy, the Texas Longleaf Team, Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network and others to deliver science-based, on-the-ground results. Prior to working with the NFGT Adam was a wildlife biologist for over 8 years with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Adam has been an active member of TCTWS as well as an attendee of The Wildlife Society national conferences since 2013. He has also served on a variety of committees including activities, program, student chapter of the year, scholarship, and publications, as well as poster judge.

As Board Member-at-Large, Adam will focus on being a responsive liaison between the general membership and the Executive Board—listening to member needs across Texas’s diverse ecoregions, elevating professional and student voices, and serving the Executive Board where needed.

Webinar: Youth Conservation Opportunities



Looking for opportunities for your child/grandchild/community youths to become more engaged in natural resources, conservation, and the outdoors?

Five organizations will share their youth conservation opportunities:

- East Foundation - Land Stewardship Ambassadors
- Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited - Youth Trout Camp
- Texas Brigades
- Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society - Wildlife Conservation Camp
- Texas Section Society for Range Management - Youth Range Workshop

Learn from the organizations' leaders the purpose behind each program, the who/what/where details, how both youths and you can become involved, and the impact these programs are making on the lives of the young people that attend!

Visit texaschildreninnature.org/events/youth-conservation-opportunities for webinar registration information.

Photo/Art Contest

Contestants will be limited to 1 entry per photography category.



Photography categories will be:

1. Texas Wildlife (not including captive animals)
2. Non-Texas Wildlife, Plants, and Scenery
3. Wildlife Conservation (may include captive animal or species of conservation concern)
4. Texas Plants (including plant-like organisms such as fungi)
5. Humor
6. Texas Scenery
7. Work Related
8. Remote Camera (not including captive animals)

Art:

Art may include original drawings, paintings, carvings, sculpture, poetry, etc. Art submissions are limited to 5 entries per person.

Digital copies (JPEGs, etc.) must be submitted no later than 12 PM (noon) on Tuesday, February 17th, 2026 (the day before the conference). Please keep digital files under 10mb.

- To help defray the cost of awards, there will be an entry fee of \$1.00 per item, which can be paid online at the time of submission.

To submit entries go to the TCTWS membership portal (<https://www.xcdsystem.com/tctws>) *YOU WILL NOT LOGIN TO THE TCTWS.ORG WEBSITE AS IN YEARS PAST!

- Log-in to your TCTWS membership profile
- Click on "Photo Contest Entry" and follow on-page instructions

You must bring your art or photo prints to the conference to be viewed by everyone!

- Photographs should be a standard size (3" x 5" up to 11" x 14"), unmatted, and unframed; however, cardboard backing is permitted. **PLEASE ADHERE TO THE SIZE RESTRICTIONS.** Oversized prints will not be accepted!



Julie Myers - 2025 contest

Email photo.art@tctws.org with questions on submitting.

Contributed Articles

Family Reunion

Many seasoned attendees describe the TCTWS Conference as a family reunion, a chance to spend time with friends and colleagues who might only see each other once a year. But for some chapter members, each conference brings an opportunity to connect with actual brothers and sisters – that is, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Every year, there are students and professionals who gather early in the morning, usually on the last day of the conference, to share time at a Fellowship of Christian Conservationists (FCC) meeting. The meeting begins with introductions and then a devotion that one of the members has prepared in advance. Discussion is encouraged, with attendees frequently discussing their own experiences that connect nature and faith. The devotion usually addresses a current topic that is relevant to natural resources.

While science and faith are commonly purported to be at odds with one another, FCC attendees delight in finding God’s power and majesty throughout His creation and see themselves as blessed stewards of this incredible world. Just like family members who support and encourage one another, the FCC meeting is uplifting to those who attend, a reminder that we are not alone in our beliefs.

Anyone is welcome to attend the annual FCC meeting at TCTWS, with an intention to learn or contribute respectfully. Please check the conference schedule for the time and meeting location. We pray that our time together will be blessed and be a blessing!



Photo by A. Dwelle

FEPA and U.S. Army Corps Propose Revised Definition of “Waters of the United States”

By Jake Hill, AWB®, CCF

On November 20, 2025, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) published a proposed rule that would revise the definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) as used in the Clean Water Act (CWA) to define “navigable waters.”¹ The purpose of the proposal is to bring the current definition of WOTUS more in line with the recent U.S. Supreme Court case, *Sackett v. EPA*, which narrowed the definition and significantly reduced the “waters,” specifically wetlands, previously considered jurisdictional under the CWA.² The public comment period is open till January 5th, 2026, after which the agencies will analyze public input before publishing the final rule.³

There are two key aspects of the *Sackett* ruling which the agencies are proposing to implement in their regulations. First, the Court in *Sackett* held that a wetland is only jurisdictional under the CWA if (1) it is adjacent to a relatively permanent body of water that connects to traditional interstate navigable waters and (2) the wetland must have a continuous surface connection with that water, making it difficult to determine where the “water” ends and the “wetland” begins.⁴ Second, the Court stated that “relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing bodies of water” includes only those waters that are described ordinarily as streams, oceans, rivers, and lakes.⁵ The agencies’ stated purpose of the rule is to revise key aspects of the definition of WOTUS to clarify the scope of Federal jurisdiction under the CWA in light of the Court’s decision in *Sackett*.⁶



The most notable aspects of the agencies’ proposed rule are the new definitions for the terms “relatively permanent,” “continuous surface connection,” and “tributary.” The rule would define “relatively permanent” as “standing or continuously flowing bodies of surface water that are standing or continuously flowing year-round or at least during the wet season.”⁷ This new definition effectively removes ephemeral streams from federal jurisdiction, along with some intermittent streams. The rule would define “continuous surface connection” as “having surface water at least during the wet season and abutting (i.e., touching) a jurisdictional water.”⁸ It is important to note

Definition of “Waters of the United States”, cont.

that the Sackett decision did not actually require a continuous surface water connection, but merely a continuous surface connection. Many kinds of wetlands lack both standing water and waterlogged soils during at least part of the growing season, and even most of the year (i.e. emergent/ephemeral wetlands). The proposed rule goes beyond the holding of Sackett in this regard. Lastly, the rule would define “tributary” as “a body of water with relatively permanent flow, and a bed and banks, that connects to a downstream traditional navigable water or the territorial seas, either directly or through one or more waters or features that convey relatively permanent flow.”⁹ This definition of tributary also excludes bodies of water that “contribute surface water flow to a downstream jurisdictional water” through features such as channelized ephemeral streams, culverts, dams, tunnels, or other similar artificial features, or through debris piles, wetlands, or other similar natural features, if such features do not convey relatively permanent flow.¹⁰

The proposed rule states that only the following waters would ultimately be covered under the revised WOTUS definition:

- (1) traditional navigable waters and the territorial seas;
- (2) most impoundments of “waters of the United States;”
- (3) relatively permanent tributaries of traditional navigable waters, the territorial seas, and impoundments;
- (4) wetlands adjacent (i.e., having a continuous surface connection) to traditional navigable waters, impoundments, and tributaries; and
- (5) lakes and ponds that are relatively permanent and have a continuous surface connection to a traditional navigable water, the territorial seas, or a tributary.¹¹

The agencies’ proposed rule marks the sixth time the regulatory definition of WOTUS has changed since 2015. Many landowner, private property, and development focused groups have applauded the agencies’ proposal as a clarification and reduction of federal regulation. Other natural resource and environmental groups have expressed concerns over the rule, particularly over the elimination of ephemeral streams from CWA jurisdiction. As with all WOTUS rules, litigation is likely to ensue.

Footnotes:

- [1] See 90 Fed. Reg. 52498 (Nov. 20, 2025). Read the entire proposal [here](#). [7] 90 FR at 52545.
[2] See generally *Sackett v. EPA*, 598 U.S. 651 (2023). [8] *Id.*
[3] Public comments can be submitted [here](#). [9] *Id.*
[4] *Sackett*, 598 U.S. at 678-79. [10] *Id.*
[5] *Id.* at 671. [11] *Id.* at 52514.
[6] 90 FR at 52499. For more in-depth discussion of Sackett’s effects on wetland conservation, see [In the Wake of Sackett: Unpacking the Supreme Court’s Latest Definition of “Waters of the United States.”](#)

Baird's Sparrow (*Centronyx bairdii*)

By Emily Blumentritt

Interested in highlighting your favorite species? Email newsletter@tctws.org



Photo by Rick Bohn



Photo by A. Taulli

Citations:

Partners in Flight (2017). Avian Conservation Assessment Database.
Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [All About Birds](#)

This secretive sparrow is a winter resident of the wide-open spaces of the Chihuahuan Desert grasslands. Birders eager to count this species for their Texas list must travel to the Trans-Pecos to see them, and seek out high quality grassland habitat for their best chance of spotting them.

These small birds stick close to the grass, where they blend in almost perfectly. Upon approach, Baird's Sparrow will stay still until nearly stepped on, and then flush only a short distance before diving back down into the grass. After seeking shelter in a new patch of grass, they frequently run on foot to put further distance between them and their potential predator. Much to the dismay of grassland bird surveyors, Baird's Sparrows can be so good at vanishing through the grass that it's as if they disappear into their own special pocket dimension!

Because this species can be so elusive, little is known about their diet, movement, and behavior in their winter range. Baird's Sparrow is threatened by grassland loss and degradation, and has experienced population declines of more than 50% in the last 50 years. Conservation needs for Baird's Sparrow on their wintering grounds, including Texas, are still mostly unknown.

Southwest Section Tracks

By Kathy Granillo, Southwest Section Representative



I hope that those of you who attended the Annual Conference of TWS in Edmonton last October found it as satisfying as I did. I have heard nothing but praise for the plenary, the other main events, the scientific sessions, the socials and the venue. The “print-your-own-t-shirt” event was a huge hit. The artist who designed the conference logo, Dusty LeGrande, spent hours helping everyone who wanted a shirt with the logo to print their shirts.

We started the year with much uncertainty about various funding mechanisms, sponsors, donors, and the federal workforce and whether we could have a successful conference. But it exceeded our expectations in many ways including the gorgeous weather.

The Fall in-person Council meeting was held in conjunction (as usual) with the conference. Highlights included excellent presentations from the Leadership Institute cohort, Council agreeing not to raise Student membership dues for 2026, and to allow anyone who is a retired wildlife professional to qualify for the retired member dues. As usual, we heard updates from staff on the financial stability of TWS (we had a clean audit), and we heard from the Publications Committee which included the news that the new TWS website will have a searchable database on all our publications.



Above: Edmonton Conference Center
Top Left: Conference logo artist, Dusty LeGrande, helping an attendee print the logo on a shirt.

We talked at length about the intersection of politics and policy, and about the need to stand up for science, including through partnering with other professional societies, and encouraging more local interaction by the Chapters and Sections with local politics and policies. Fidel Hernandez, as incoming President, pledged to increase Council-TWS member interactions. I encourage you to approach him (and me) at the Texas Chapter annual meeting with any questions/concerns you have about TWS.

Southwest Section Tracks

Council also had a special one-day meeting right after the conference ended to further implementation of the 2024 Strategic Plan. This plan has three unifying themes: building community, supporting wildlife professionals, and exercising external influence. TWS staff and various associated committees have made great progress to date, which I hope is evident to you, the members. Again, I urge you to bring up any questions or comments you have about the Strategic Plan to Fidel and/or to me.

As part of implementation of the strategic plan TWS has a new logo and a newly revamped website. Please let us know what you think about these changes. I hope to see many of you soon in Galveston!



Kathy Granillo

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Photo by A. Mendiola

So long and happy "tails"!

Texas Chapter Tails of Wildlife and Stewardship 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 always welcome and should be submitted to the Editor (Emily Blumentritt, newsletter@tctws.org) by the 15th of the preceding month. Change of email address should be submitted online through the Address Change Form.



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