

Shifting Gears

RETIREES HELP TWS ENGAGE WITH LONGTIME MEMBERS

By Reed Sanderson

In October I attended The Wildlife Society's 20th Annual Conference in Milwaukee. I've been to many others, and I am always amazed at the changes I see. The most encouraging is the increasing number of students and women. But one thing remains unchanged: There are always dedicated retirees remembering the past, discussing the present, and looking to the future of TWS.

I'm one of those who can take the long view. I joined TWS in 1955 when I was a wildlife student at Humboldt State University. One of my professors, Ray Dasmann, said: "If you are going to be a wildlife biologist, you need to join The Wildlife Society." I'm glad I did.

During my 30-year career as a research wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), I served on a few TWS Chapter and Section committees and organized the San Joaquin Chapter in California. I moved to Arizona and retired in 1989, then volunteered for the USFS and The University of Arizona (UA) at the Santa Rita Experimental Range. The university offered me a paid job on the Mt. Graham Biological Programs (aka Mt. Graham red squirrels and telescopes) in 1992. I left the Experimental Range position in 1996 and retired from UA in 2007. With the publication of *The Last Refuge of the Mt. Graham Red Squirrel: Ecology of Endangerment* (Sanderson and Koprowski 2009), I really retired! Well, not really: I just don't get paid any more. But let me back up.

Tapping Retirees' Expertise

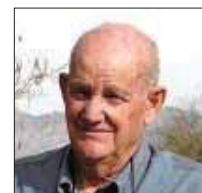
In 2004, TWS membership was declining and Council thought it might be due to wildlifera retiring and leaving the Society. To investigate, Council formed the Retired Wildlife Professionals Committee and charged it to provide recommendations as to how TWS might retain retirees, become more relevant

to them, and capture their experience and energy. Our committee determined that the decline was *not* due to a wholesale loss of retired members. It was also clear, however, that TWS *was* losing contact with retired wildlifera and therefore losing their expertise. We needed a way to serve and reengage these valuable members. After all, who better to speak for wildlife than those who have spent careers working on its behalf?

The Society already had a membership category for retirees with reduced annual dues. In 2005, Council took another step in the right direction by reducing annual meeting registration fees for retirees. TWS then provided a breakfast gathering for retired and life members who attend the conference. Most important in this day and age, TWS has created a retiree [listserv](#) and [webpage](#), tools that help retired members stay connected with the Society and each other.

Both these tools are "open forum" for retirees to post inquiries, express opinions on wildlife issues, ask for support to lobby for or against wildlife policies, tout achievements—just about anything they'd like to share. Retirees may submit postings to the webmaster, who may place listserv postings on the retiree webpage. (To sign up for the retiree listserv or visit the retiree webpage, go to the TWS home page and hit the "GO" button next to Retirees Center.)

Those of us who are on the backside of a career know that wildlifera never retire—we just shift gears. The articles in this package show a small slice of what retirees are doing to apply their skills to ongoing wildlife and habitat conservation. Help TWS's Retired Wildlife Professionals Committee tell your story by posting your activities on the retiree webpage, which could inspire others to follow in your footsteps. Contact us at RetiredWildlifer@gmail.com, and we'll make it happen. ■



Credit: Georgie Sanderson

Reed Sanderson is Chairperson of The Wildlife Society's Retired Wildlife Professionals Committee.