

2015 WI-MN Joint Winter Meeting Summary

Submitted by Scott Craven, Past President

Wisconsin and Minnesota TWS members came together February 17-19, 2015 in Duluth, Minnesota for a joint chapter annual conference. While some questioned the wisdom of traveling to Duluth in mid-winter, the weather was excellent for travel and total attendance was close to 400! About 100 Wisconsin chapter members made the trip. From the Wisconsin side, budget issues reduced travel opportunities and distance may have been a factor for some, but overall it was a large and outstanding conference.

Chapter members should thank their Board and a few other volunteers for the considerable time and effort it took to coordinate this meeting. In particular, now President Mark Pfof was the key contact for papers and program issues along with his counterpart in Minnesota, Rich Olsen. Mark also made a site visit last summer and was in on all the planning discussions with Rick and then President, Scott Craven. Lesa Kardash kept communications flowing, handled the Wisconsin chapter scholarships, and served as our institutional memory along with Travis Anderson. Travis also worked on registration and handled all the financial details. Amanda Kamps helped with planning and student activities. Brian Heeringa helped with planning and did a great job on fund raising. Tami Ryan helped with planning and student awards. Krista McGinley, once again did a fantastic job coordinating the program. Other members pitched in when asked. A big THANK YOU to all involved.

The conference began with an afternoon plenary session in the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. Titled “Global Warming: Carbon Solutions for a Warming World”. Professor Ben Zuckerberg from UW-Madison did a terrific job leading off the plenary by describing observed and predicted trends in climate. He then related trends in climate change to ecological and evolutionary impacts on selected wildlife species and conservation. The next 3 (2) speakers (one was stuck in Texas due to ice) emphasized the role of carbon and soil in climate change.

After the plenary adjourned, a spirited student – professional mixer was held, followed by an evening fundraiser and social. Beer and food contributed to a very enjoyable evening. Wisconsin did not participate in the fundraiser, BUT we should certainly learn from what the Minnesota chapter did (and does every year). They modeled their fundraiser on the kinds of things normally seen at a DU, RGS, PF, NWTF, or other NGO banquets. There were raffles, silent auction items (about 20), bucket raffles (about 20 items) and several games of chance on major prizes and extra raffle tickets. It was fun and unofficially, I was told that Minnesota cleared nearly \$5,000!!! With some help from chapter members, such an event could become a regular part of our in-state annual meetings.

Paper and poster sessions dominated day 2 of the conference. There were as many as 4 concurrent sessions. Feedback suggested that, in general, the presentations were excellent with a good mix of species, conservation issues, ecological considerations, and geography represented.

In the afternoon, Minnesota and Wisconsin went separate ways to 2.5 hour chapter business meetings. The Wisconsin meeting was well attended (50+) and a wide range of topics were

discussed, most of which will be addressed elsewhere in the issue of IT. There was considerable concern over the impact of proposed budget cuts to the DNR, the University, and conservation in general. The North Central Section tried to intervene on our behalf, but substantive ideas were elusive. The discussion and the meeting ended with directives from the membership to re-evaluate our need for an Executive Director and our opportunities with the League of Conservation Voters.

After the business meetings, there was an enthusiastic quiz bowl competition won by UW-Stevens Point. Congratulations students from UWSP!

The last full day of the conference ended with an excellent banquet and awards program at the Entertainment and Convention Center overlooking Lake Superior. On the Wisconsin side, the Wisconsin Award was presented, posthumously, to Dr. James Harden from UW-Stevens Point. The award was accepted by Jim's wife, Helen, who presented a piece of Jim's favorite artwork to be displayed at UWSP. The Don Rusch Memorial Award was presented to Ken Jonas. Thanks to Kris Johansen for a fine job on the awards committee.

On Thursday morning, about 40 students and chapter officers attended a breakfast meeting. The Wisconsin students were advised of bylaws changes that allow for a student representative on the state chapter board. That new student board member will have been chosen by the time you read this newsletter. Paper sessions, student papers and poster awards, and a workshop entitled "Telemetry 101" rounded out the program and attendees headed home during the afternoon.