

2016 WCTWS Winter Meeting Summary

Submitted by Mark Pfof, Past President

One hundred seventy two members attended this year's Winter Meeting which began with a bang. The meeting's theme, Sustainability of Sustainable Use, was addressed by Dr. Paul Robbins (Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies), Jon Greendeer (Ho-Chunk nation), and Keith Warnke (WI DNR). Robbins made the point that sustainable use is not sustainable without hunters, but hunters alone are not enough. The manner in which other segments of society pursue outdoor interests must also be recognized and expanded for sustainability to occur. Greendeer intertwined humor and his own experiences as a hunter as he related how wildlife fits into the Ho-Chunk's world view. Most in the audience probably identified with his description of opening-morning eve anticipation. Warnke works to recruit and retain new hunters. He has found that Millennials tend to be attracted more to quality self-harvested food for their families than to trophies. Bringing more of this demographic into the "fold" is doable, but it will take mentors and instructors to help these want-to-be-hunters learn. The message of each talk seemed to complement and strengthen the other two. Several members remarked to me that it was the best plenary that they had attended in some time. Thanks to our speakers.

During the banquet, two old codgers, "Ollie Anderson" and "Fred Felix" told tales about two other old codgers—DNR wildlife biologist John Olson and University of Wisconsin Stevens Point professor, Eric Anderson. Ollie and Fred swilled coffee served by waitress Mandy Kamps as they discussed "baked goods" and gossiped about Olson and Anderson. Funny thing that—I had never seen coffee with a foam head before.

After the old codgers left, Olson returned to present Anderson with this year's Wisconsin Award, the highest award given by our organization, for Anderson's contributions to our profession. Gary Zimmer, who retired last year from his position as the Ruffed Grouse Society's regional biologist was presented the Don Rusch Memorial Award for his career devoted to wildlife management and support of hunting. Lucas Olson and Phillip Manlick were, respectively, the undergraduate and graduate recipients of the Aldo Leopold Memorial Scholarship. Both are UW-Madison students with the Forest and Wildlife Ecology Department.

Thought provoking plenary speakers, professional and student presentations, hoot-and-holler entertainment, and deserving award recipients—I thought the 2016 Winter Meeting a rousing success.