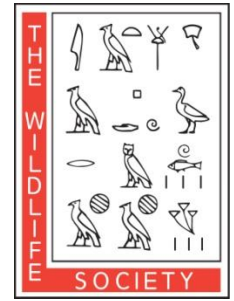


# NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



Fall 2017/Winter 2018

2017

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jctull@gmail.com

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## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JOHN TULL

Here we are, already well into another wonderful Nevada autumn! Many of us are winding down from busy field seasons. Others are getting out to enjoy viewing or hunting some of the wildlife that we help manage and conserve. And some of you are back into the academic routine, teaching or taking courses to help deliver our future wildlife professionals.

I reflect on my message from the last newsletter when I spoke of change on the horizon. We are still very much in a mode of change as ideas that reflect a new administration at the federal level are trickling down into policies and direction on how we will manage our public lands, creating management shifts that can have great bearing on the habitats our wildlife depend upon to persist. We also saw transformative change from catastrophic, large-scale wildfires that burned more than 1.2 million acres of land in Nevada this summer. State, federal, and private partners are struggling to prioritize habitat restoration needs, and they will be relying on another good winter of precipitation to help establish plants that will hold soils in place and provide food for wildlife in future years. All of this occurred simultaneous with tremendous catastrophes from multiple large hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, challenging our ability to provide fiscal resources to both humanitarian and wildlife resource needs.

Despite all of this change, all of you, our wildlife resource specialists and professionals, continue to stay the course to conserve and manage Nevada's wildlife heritage. For that, I want to say thank you and encourage you to keep up the great work, no matter what the outlook may seem. With perseverance and some perspiration, I am certain that all of us, as wildlife professionals, will find solutions to overcome the resource

challenges we face and keep our wildlife populations intact for the benefit of current and future generations.

- John

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**TREASURER'S REPORT**

*As of 9/19/2017*

**Chapter Membership: 80**

**Available Funds: \$6,219.12**

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**UNR STUDENT CHAPTER UPDATE**

By Kristen McCarty, President, UNR Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society

The UNR student chapter is on track to having another great semester! One focus thus far has been trying to expand our membership. Members of the board gave presentations at the beginning of the semester to Wildlife Ecology and Environmental Science classes, emphasizing what a beneficial experience being a part of the Wildlife Society can be, in terms of learning and networking, but also having fun! We also participated in the UNR Club Fair, and between these activities had nearly 100 students sign up to receive information about the club's events and meetings. Our first general meeting at Laughing Planet was packed!



*UNR Student Chapter on a hike at the Hunter Creek Trail.*

The Welcome Back BBQ with the Nevada Chapter was held on September 20th at the NDOW boat titling office and was a blast! We had high attendance this year and our student members had the chance to meet professionals from various agencies and learn about their work. Big thanks to Nevada Chapter President John Tull and Past President Kelley Stewart for their help with this event!

We participated in UNR's Field Day at the Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station on September 30th, offering wildlife related crafts and education for children. We got feedback from many parents that their kids were excited to visit us year after year at this event, and our booth was one of the busiest! Our members who weren't getting covered in paint, glue, and googly eyes that day were still getting dirty, volunteering for a cleanup day at the Oxbow Nature Study Area.

Other activities this fall have included a group hike of the Hunter Creek Trail, with a little birding, herping and plant ID along the way; Quiz Bowl Social gatherings, where we test our wildlife knowledge to keep us competitive for conclave competitions, and a Halloween pizza party with wildlife-themed pumpkin carving.

Our upcoming events include quite a few volunteer opportunities, but the biggest upcoming event is our Grad Life Night! This is an event we host yearly, and we are changing it up a bit this year! In the past, we have invited graduate students to give brief talks on their research and experience applying to grad school, to help give our undergrads an idea of what to expect. This year we would like to invite professors who work with wildlife to talk to us about the qualities that they look for in graduate students. Our event last year had a great turnout, and we hope to do it again this year!

The UNR Student Chapter is always looking for volunteer opportunities, and speakers who would like to reach out to the next generation of wildlife professionals! If you are interested in giving a talk at one of our meetings, or if you need volunteers for your projects, please don't hesitate to contact us! Please feel free to reach out to me at [kristenmccarty@nevada.unr.edu](mailto:kristenmccarty@nevada.unr.edu), on our Facebook (@unr.wildlifesociety) or Instagram (@unrtws).

## **MESSAGE FROM THE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

Have you ever heard of the Student Development Working Group? We are a Working Group that promotes increased student awareness of TWS membership benefits, works to expand knowledge and technical capabilities of student members, and helps prepare student members for professional wildlife careers. The working group facilitates networking between students and experienced TWS members by hosting meetings, workshops, poster sessions, a mentoring program, and a student chapter leaders' breakfast. The working group also selects the recipient of The Wildlife Society's Student Chapter Advisor of the Year Award.

Our working group features the latest student's news in The Student Chronicles. We actively post on our TWS Student Development Working Group Facebook page. We delivery new topics, current student research and professional skill building.

We look forward to being the voice for students to the Parent Society of The Wildlife Society. We are always here to welcome new student members. We look forward to helping and providing for the next generation of the wildlife profession!

If you have any questions about the Student Development Working Group please contact Chair Kristi Confortin at [kaconfortin@bsu.edu](mailto:kaconfortin@bsu.edu).

Please see attached link for the Student Development Working Group Facebook Page, all you have to do is "like" the page to get daily updates! [https://www.facebook.com/TWS-Student-Development-Working-Group-252817268125541/?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/TWS-Student-Development-Working-Group-252817268125541/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel).

## RESEARCH, MONITORING, & MANAGEMENT

### NEVADA'S LOCALLY LED SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION

Thad Heater, Sage Grouse Initiative Coordinator, USDA-NRCS

Over the last few weeks while out enjoying the great Nevada outdoors I have taken some time to reflect on the sage grouse issue that we have seen in the news lately. We have come a long way since 2010 and there are some really unsung contributions that have been difference makers. In 2010 Greater Sage grouse population in eleven western states along with the Bi-State Sage grouse Distinct Population Segment (DPS) were announced as Candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act.



*North central Nevada, October 2017*

Partners across the range went to work in stepping up conservation efforts range wide to enhance, protect, and restore the sagebrush ecosystem in the west. Nevada was no exception, the back bone of these efforts are the people in the state and local communities that realized the importance of the sage grouse issue and have taken ownership in developing locally led solutions. The ranching community and mining industry joined agency, non-government organizations, wildlife researchers, and state leadership in planning and implementing conservation.

These community based efforts such as the [Bi-State Local Area Work Group](#), [Stewardship Alliance of Northeast Elko \(SANE\)](#), [Buffalo-Skedaddle Local Work Group](#), and others have worked closely with



*Bi-State field trip stop to share information local work group members and the general public.*

Nevada private landowners, State and Federal partners, and Conservation Districts to achieve key conservation objectives and long range goals. Nevada Governor Sandoval recognized the importance of this sagebrush conservation work and orchestrated the launch of the [Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Program](#) to

further step up Nevada's conservation efforts through collaboration and coordination at all levels in Nevada.

Funding for work on the ground has come from a variety of sources through coordinated planning with state and federal agencies. The local conservation efforts have utilized funds from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) [Sage grouse Initiative \(SGI\)](#) and the Department of Interior (DOI)-US Fish & Wildlife Service [Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program](#) to implement needed voluntary conservation on private land. On public land both the DOI Bureau of Land Management

(BLM) and the USDA-US Forest Service [Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest](#) have funded locally identified projects. [Nevada Department of Wildlife](#), other state, and non-government funding sources have been utilized across both public and private land ownership boundaries.

The 2015 no list decisions for both the Greater Sage grouse and the Bi-State Sage grouse DPS resulted from outstanding efforts at all levels across the 11 Western Sage grouse states. However people did not go home after 2015, but were inspired by the results and realized what they were accomplishing together through partnership. They have continued to build on those partnership based frameworks and utilize science to produce difference making results.

The leadership and continued efforts in Nevada have not gone unnoticed. The [SANE](#) group was recognized at the [2017 Public Land Council Meeting](#) with “The Sagebrush Steppe-Collaborative Team Award” for their work to conserve sagebrush ecosystems while supporting multiple use public land management. Ken Mayer ([Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies](#)) and Jeanne Chambers ([US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station](#)) were recognized with the [USFWS Regional Directors Partners Award](#) this fall for their innovative science work and leadership on addressing Fire and Invasive grasses with partners in Nevada and the Great Basin.

If you are interested in finding out more about these outstanding locally led efforts or helping, you can contact the local work group in your area to join a future local meeting or field trip.

## **NOTES FROM THE APPLIED POPULATION ECOLOGY LAB AT UNR**

Kevin T Shoemaker, Assistant Professor, Natural Resources & Environmental Science, University of Nevada, Reno

I moved to Nevada in October of 2015, straight from Long Island, NY where I had been doing my postdoctoral work as a wildlife population modeler at Stony Brook University. Originally from Boston, MA, I had spent my entire life in the northeastern corner of the country – I had barely even visited the western USA before I took a job as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Science (NRES) at the University of Nevada, Reno. My job at Stony Brook had been entirely computer-based, involving mathematics, statistics, and coding, all using data collected by our collaborators (we were quite literally “armchair ecologists” -- I managed to drag my postdoctoral advisor out for what I’m pretty sure were his first fieldwork experiences!). Nonetheless, I had been a field ecologist in my previous life (as a graduate student!) working with threatened snakes and turtles, and I was determined that my lab at UNR (the Applied Population Ecology lab, or “APE lab” for short) would work directly with wildlife in addition to running statistics and population models. Stated more bluntly, the graduate students in my lab (and myself whenever possible!) were going to get dirty! The only problem was that I came here knowing next to nothing about the ecology of the Great Basin. Talk about a crash course!

As a herpetologist with a particular affection for turtles and tortoises, there was one at-risk Nevada species that I was immediately excited to work with -- the desert tortoise. Luckily, I learned about a

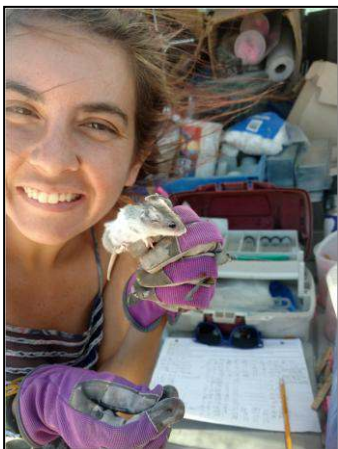


*Mojave desert tortoise (Gopherus agassizii) in its native habitat (photo courtesy APE lab PhD student Margarete Walden)*

prospective graduate student who had nearly 4 years of field experience with desert tortoises under her belt – in addition to serious data management and analysis chops. I invited this student -- Margarete Walden – to join the “APE lab” as a PhD student, crossing my fingers that we could get some funding for her to actually work with tortoises! Fortunately, Margarete and I (and Elizabeth Hunter, my postdoc and favorite co-conspirator) were recently awarded a grant from the Department of Defense to build regional habitat suitability models and investigate the resilience of desert tortoise populations to climate change. In a pilot study this past summer, Margarete used radio-telemetry (and extreme

perseverance, not to mention heat tolerance!) to successfully locate multiple desert tortoise nests at a field site in southern Nevada. She monitored all these nests until hatching to determine clutch size, hatching success, and sex ratios (using a testosterone assay – sex determination in desert tortoises is temperature-dependent). Over the next few years, we will use the techniques she refined this past summer, replicated across multiple sites across the range of the species, to determine whether nesting success and population vital rates are (or are not!) resilient to changes in climate. Ultimately, this work will help to assess the vulnerability of desert tortoise populations to climate change, and will help identify specific geographic regions that are expected to support viable desert populations now and in the future.

Although my previous field work had mostly focused on turtles and snakes, I didn’t want my lab to be defined by taxonomic boundaries—I wanted my lab to contribute broadly to the conservation and management of Nevada wildlife, whether furry or scaly, or fastened together with bones or exoskeletons. I approached several biologists with the Nevada Department of Wildlife with a simple question: what do you see as the most critical research needs for wildlife management in the state of Nevada? Among these top research needs were to better understand the ecological impacts of conifer removal (clearing of pinyon and juniper trees, which is being conducted largely to benefit Greater sage-grouse) on Great Basin wildlife communities, and to learn more about the bat communities of the Great Basin. APE lab PhD student Danielle Miles and I secured funding from the Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GBLCC) and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) to address both of these objectives. This past summer,



*APE lab PhD student Danielle Miles, in her native habitat.*

Danielle, along with two intrepid field technicians, began collecting data for this project. Specifically, they documented the bat and songbird communities (using passive acoustic detectors, or sound recordings), reptile communities (using timed visual encounters), small mammal communities (using baited box-traps- upwards of 4,000 trap nights in 2017) and insect communities (using passive light traps) on and off conifer-removal areas. Danielle and her team will continue collecting these data every spring, summer and fall through the year 2020. Ultimately this work will help to characterize the broader ecological impacts of conifer removal in the Great Basin, and will help Nevada wildlife managers to plan conifer removal activities to minimize negative impacts on non-target birds, bats, reptiles, small mammals and insects.

I feel incredibly lucky to have ended up in a friendly and collegial department in a strong and growing university in an endlessly fascinating state. I also feel lucky to have found some wonderful collaborators in the Nevada wildlife research community. Speaking of great collaborations, I was approached by my fantastic colleague Marjorie Matocq (mammologist and conservation geneticist in the NRES department) shortly after arriving in Nevada, about joining her in an ambitious research project investigating the regional habitat suitability, population dynamics, and genetic connectivity of pygmy rabbits in the Great Basin. In addition to being one of the most adorable species on earth, pygmy rabbits are a sagebrush obligate (they feed almost entirely on sagebrush during the winter months) that may serve as an ideal indicator of healthy sagebrush ecosystems. This fall, APE lab PhD student Miranda Crowell (co-advised by Dr. Matocq) and her team are finishing our second full field season investigating pygmy rabbit demography, ecology, and genetic connectivity at numerous sites across the Great Basin using a variety of methods from live-trapping to satellite remote sensing to genetic analysis of fecal pellets. Ultimately our research will enable land managers in the Great Basin to better understand how to maintain viable and well-connected pygmy rabbit metapopulations at a landscape scale.



*APE lab PhD student Miranda Crowell, with pygmy rabbit in hand.*

Finally, I was approached late last year by the avian ecologist (and former TWS Nevada Chapter president) Chris Nicolai, who asked if I would be willing to take on an MS student to analyze data from light-level geolocators (tiny light-level recorders that allow researchers to determine migration paths based on day length and timing) that he and his colleagues had been deploying on wood ducks, canvasbacks and mallards. This opportunity was too fascinating to pass up! Since January 2017 I have been working with APE lab graduate student Nathan Cook to use these geolocators to learn more about the timing and geography of large-scale movements in these waterfowl, and ultimately to assist wildlife managers to maintain large and stable populations through habitat protection and management efforts. Now two years into my new job at UNR, the APE lab consists of 1 postdoc, 3 PhD students, 1 MS student, and 2 undergraduates. I am proud to say that every one of my graduate students (not to mention myself) got very dirty this past summer! If you would like to learn more

about the work we are doing in Nevada and beyond (or would like to join us in the field!), please visit the APE Lab website: <http://naes.unr.edu/shoemaker/lab/index.html>.

## THANK YOU NOTES

Dear Members,

I would like to extend my gratitude for the travel grant I received to help me attend The Wildlife Society's 2017 Annual Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At the conference, I presented work from my dissertation research on sage-grouse entitled, "Factors affecting nesting propensity in Greater Sage-grouse." We had a strong showing of grouse related research, and I received some useful feedback on my analysis.

Sincerely,

Tessa Behnke  
PhD Student  
Program in Evolution, Ecology, and Conservation  
Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Science  
University of Nevada-Reno

Dear Nevada TWS board members,

I am writing express my gratitude for being selected to receive a Nevada TWS travel grant to attend the national conference. It was extremely helpful for funding my trip. My talk on the effects of grazing by non-native ungulates on sage grouse, appeared to be well received. There were two sessions dedicated to grouse this year, and it was extremely helpful to talk with other researchers from around the country about my work. I look forward to getting the manuscripts out soon.

Sincerely,

Phillip Street  
PhD Student  
Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology  
Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Science  
University of Nevada-Reno

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

### 2018 NV TWS SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

### FEBRUARY 21-22, RENO, NV

Please join us at our annual science symposium to share your work with fellow NV TWS section members. The symposium will include two days of talks as well as a get together on the final night. Abstracts are due to Amanda Van Dellen ([amandawvandellen@gmail.com](mailto:amandawvandellen@gmail.com)) by **December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017**. More information to follow.



## **UPCOMING EVENTS & MEETINGS**

### **2018 Western Section Annual Meeting**

Santa Rosa, CA

February 6-9, 2018

### **2018 NV TWS Science Symposium**

Reno, NV

February 21-22

### **25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society**

Cleveland, Ohio

October 7-11, 2018

### **2019 Western Section Annual Meeting**

Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite, Fish Camp, CA

February 4-8, 2019

### **26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society**

Reno, Nevada

September 29-October 3, 2019

## COMMUNICATION

Visit our website: <http://wildlife.org/nevada-chapter/>

And “like” our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nevada-Chapter-of-The-Wildlife-Society/795814143873233>

## WE WANT TO KNOW!

We are always seeking contributions to our biannual newsletter. The 2018 Spring/Summer newsletter will be published in June. Please send ideas for articles about local projects, events, volunteer opportunities and member accomplishments and milestones to the editor, Amanda Van Dellen: [amandawvandellen@gmail.com](mailto:amandawvandellen@gmail.com)

*If you'd like to become a member, please use the form below.*

# NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

## Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Chapter's communication is via email.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, and Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018 = \$10.00

Please Check: \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal

Make check(s) payable to: “Nevada Chapter, TWS”

Return to: Derek Hall, Treasurer  
6816 Beach Nest Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89130

You may also join online at  
<http://wildlife.org/membership/join>