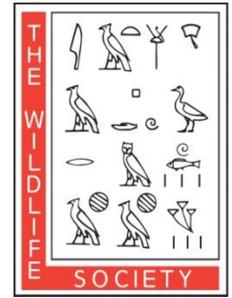


NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



Fall/Winter 2015 Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT CHRIS NICOLAI

I sure have been enjoying seeing moisture, in the form of both rain and snow, arriving to Nevada. I am hoping this is a change which will continue through the winter. It's been a tough year for plants and wildlife with the lack of water. Many of us have been out seeing this first hand. However, many members of the general public don't have firsthand knowledge of the severity of the drought or its effect on the Nevada landscape, and lastly, why it would even matter.

This is where it may be really important for us as wildlife biologists to ensure we communicate often and effectively with the general public. As I've mentioned in past messages, we need to show how our jobs are relevant for the health of the resources in our state. I've been out enjoying the fall season and have ran into several people with jobs in the wildlife profession. I also enjoyed talking with them learning about what they are seeing out there in their day to day work duties.

We have many wildlife success stories in Nevada, and given the drought conditions, we also have some dire stories. I encourage many of us wildlife professionals to make an extra effort to communicate more often with both our primary constituents, but with also the components of the general public who may gain an appreciation about our state's natural resources when given an opportunity to learn.

The next Nevada Chapter of the Wildlife Society Annual Symposium will be some time in early 2016 (dates and location to be announced very soon). Please consider giving a presentation on your work to share with other professionals and nonprofessionals to be more informed about wildlife in Nevada. Let's all work together to provide the public more information about what we do for our careers and why it is relevant to everyone's daily lives.

Bring on the snow!

Chris

Chris and his family of successful brant hunters!



RECAP: 2015 UNR Student Chapter and Nevada Chapter BBQ in Reno

By: Kelley Stewart, President-Elect

The TWS Welcome Back BBQ was very successful. John Jimenez, the UNR Student Chapter President and the students in the chapter did an excellent job of bringing all of the supplies together and helping to host the event. We had many undergraduate and graduate students from UNR and professionals from NDOW, USFWS, and other agencies attend and all of them spent time chatting with UNR students. Numerous professional biologists from NDOW attended the BBQ, and many people jumped in to help cook, setup and clean up. Russel Woolstenhulme, Cody Schroeder, Ben Sedinger and other biologists were instrumental in the success of the BBQ. Both Chris Nicolai and I attended the event as well and we had a great time talking with new students and junior and senior level students as well. We purchased food for about 100 people and ALL of it was gone by the end of the 2 hours. Chris also barbecued sandhill crane from his personal freezer, which made everyone exceptionally happy.



TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer: Derek Hall
Chapter Membership: 64
Bank Account: \$6,850.32

RESEARCH, MONITORING, & MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

Western Red-tailed Skinks in Nevada

By Derek Hall

The western red-tailed skink (WRTS; *Plestiodon gilberti rubricaudatus*) is considered “At-risk” by the Nevada Natural Heritage Program, and little is known about this species, particularly in Nevada. A field study on the distribution and abundance of WRTS on the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) was conducted. Part of this study entailed documenting all WRTS records for Nevada. Five records found using a VertNet Search, two from Scofield Canyon (Grant Range), two from Charleston Peak (Spring Mountains), and one from Reese River Valley, were anomalous and would have extended the range of WRTS 100-150 miles to the north and to over 11,000 feet in elevation which would have greatly expanded the potential habitat for this species in Nevada. The



Figure 1. WRTS juvenile with red tail (upper left), WRTS adult (lower left), and GBS adult (right). Note the extension of the dorsolateral stripe well onto the tail in GBS versus WRTS.

two specimens from the Grant Range were obtained from the University of California, Berkeley Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (special thanks to curator Carol Spencer) and these specimens were identified by myself, Phil Medica, and Paul Greger as Great Basin Skinks (GBS) (*Plestiodon skiltonianus utahensis*) based on the dorsolateral stripe extending well onto the tail and presence of 7 supralabials. WRTS generally have 8 supralabials and the stripe stops shortly behind the vent and doesn't extend much onto the tail (Figure 1). Photos of the two specimens from Charleston Peak were obtained from the San Diego Natural History Museum (special thanks to Bradford Hollingsworth and Laura Kabes) and identified as GBS by myself based on 1) the dorsolateral stripe extended well onto the tail, 2) the original collector noted the location as Charlestown Park which is in Kyle Canyon not on Charleston Peak and GBS are known from the Charlestown Park area, and 3) no annotation is available as to who or why the specimens were identified as WRTS.

The specimen from Reese River was collected by Charles Hubbs in 1938 and he just called it *Eumeces*, without any species designation. He had detailed field notes so I was able to locate the area where it was caught (6.1 miles north of O'Toole Ranch). Greg Schneider, curator for University of Michigan Museum took photos and measurements of the Hubbs' specimen. It had 8 supralabials but the stripe extended well onto the tail, so the species was still unknown although it was suspected to be a GBS. It had been called both *skiltonianus* and *gilberti*. During July 2015, I was able to set funnel traps in the area where Hubbs collected his specimen. I captured a GBS the next day (Figure 2) which led me to conclude that the species Hubbs caught was indeed a GBS rather than a WRTS. I also set traps at 5 other sites from Indian Valley to Austin Summit for a total of 180 trap days with no additional GBS or WRTS captures. It was pretty neat to document GBS at the same site 77 years after Hubbs made his collection.



Figure 2. Great Basin Skink captured in Reese River Valley (July 2015).

To date, I have identified 98 records of WRTS in Nevada. Of those records, 54 have been documented from the NNSS and the remaining 44 from various mountain ranges in southern Nevada including 34 from the Spring Mountains, 2 from the

Newberry Mountains, 2 from the McCullough Range, 2 from the Sheep Range, 2 from the Grapevine Mountains, and 2 from the Montezuma Range.

Results from the NNSS field study identified some important WRTS habitat features that include mesic or wet conditions (e.g., springs, ephemeral washes), volcanic rock formations with deep cracks, mid-elevations (average 1727 m ± 197 m, range 1310-2095 m), presence of thick vegetative litter, and aspect dominated by southern exposures. WRTS occurred in 10 different vegetation associations from blackbrush to pinyon-juniper and 12 different geological formations. Genetic analysis of 33 skinks from the NNSS indicated all belong to the Inyo Clade (Jonathan Richmond, personal communication), a mitochondrial clade that is restricted to central eastern California and southwestern Nevada. This is interesting because WRTS collected by J. Richmond in the Spring Mountains (Willow Creek) belong to the Southwestern Clade even though these sites are only 66 km apart.

I don't think the NNSS is unique or a haven for WRTS but rather a lot more effort has gone in to finding this species on the NNSS than elsewhere. I believe there are a lot of data gaps for this species and that with a concerted effort many more locations could be identified. If anyone has additional confirmed records of WRTS in Nevada please contact me at halldb@nv.doe.gov.

BIOLOGIST IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Sarah Bullock, Wildlife Biologist at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge

What is your educational and professional background?

I received my Bachelor of Science in 2006 from Murray State University in western Kentucky in Wildlife & Conservation Biology. I received my Masters of Science (M.S.) in 2009 from the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI) within Texas A&M University – Kingsville in Range & Wildlife Management. I studied nutrition and physiology of white-tailed deer while at CKWRI. My professional background is quite varied. While in my technician years, I worked with several federal and state entities working across the US. Some examples include, working as a white-tailed deer capture technician with Southern Illinois University-Carbondale graduate students, surveyed southwest willow flycatchers/bats/fish on the Tonto National Forest in Arizona, darted and collared white-tailed deer at the Savanna River Site in Georgia with the U.S. Forest Service, conducted vegetation transects for sage-grouse with the Bureau of Land Management in Elko, Nevada, and served as a wildlife observer/ranger/interpreter at the Anan Wildlife Observatory in Southeast Alaska. After receiving my M.S. in 2009, I was fortunate enough to land my first full-time permanent position working with the US Forest Service on the Tongass National Forest. This time I served as the supervisor of the Anan Wildlife Observatory and issued Outfitter/Guide Special Use Permits for the Wrangell Ranger District. I served in this position for a couple years before accepting a position as a wildlife biologist in the Interior of Alaska working with the Bureau of Land Management. In this position I served as both the wildlife biologist and as the federal subsistence hunting coordinator. I collaboratively developed positive relationships with the State of Alaska Fish & Game and the Ahtna Native Corporations on various wildlife projects and was able to work with big game species, namely moose and caribou. I most recently accepted a position as the Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge near Las Vegas. I have been serving in this position since mid-May 2015.



Sarah on her way to check wildlife cameras on the Refuge.

What made you want to become a wildlife biologist?

I consider myself one of the lucky ones that discovered their career niche early in life. My “epiphany” moment occurred when I was a junior in high school in western Kentucky. It was career day and I was going around and listening to several

professionals as they discussed their careers and why they were a fun and worthwhile. Out of all the professionals, the wildlife biologist from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) really struck a chord with me as something I could see myself doing when I “grew-up”. I have always been an out of doors enthusiast and came to the conclusion that I couldn’t see myself in any other position than a biologist. This started my obsession/passion of accomplishing my goal of becoming a well-rounded wildlife biologist.



Sarah removing a coachwhip from a resident volunteer’s RV.

Do you have a special memory, moment, or funny story from your work as a wildlife biologist?

It seems like every position I work in, I am remembered for some silly thing I do. For example, I was conducting moose browse work in March 2014 with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) in remote portions of the Talkeetna Mountains near the Susitna River. We were using an R-44 helicopter to get to each plot and I was to check in and out with dispatch for aviation safety. The snow was several feet deep and we were using snowshoes to get around each plot. The snow was dry and ‘sugary’, which caused you to sink a couple feet, even with large snowshoes. The ADFG biologist and I were about ten minutes in on this one plot when I realized I had not checked in with dispatch. I panicked a little and in my rush to get over to my pack with the satellite phone, tripped over my snowshoes and face-planted into the snow. After I rolled over and stopped laughing, I realized I was stuck and couldn’t get in a good position to right myself. After again I regained control after laughing, I politely asked for some assistance from the ADFG

biologist. Good times at 10 degrees above 0.

Do you have any mentors or anyone that significantly influenced your career?

A few mentors come to mind when reflecting on folks who significantly influenced my career. The KDFWR biologist at the career fair probably had the biggest influence since he unknowingly created that “epiphany” moment for me. The refuge manager (Michael Johnson) at Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge has also significant influence. Michael has served as a mentor since undergraduate education, serving to chat about different opportunities, bouncing ideas, and keeping me on track to achieving full-time employment in the federal government. Finally, my graduate professor, Dr. David Hewitt, also had a huge influence. He was always there to provide constructive advice during my graduate experience and was instructive on me building a network of professionals, so when I graduated I was able to find employment in a timely manner (even as the U.S. was crawling out of the great recession of 2008).

What is your current position and job duties?

My current position is serving wildlife biologist for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. My job duties are quite variable. They include coordinating and conducting helicopter surveys and camera trap surveys of the desert bighorn sheep; and, collaborating with USFWS Environmental Services and Nevada Department of Wildlife on restoration efforts for the Pahrump Poolfish and Relict Leopard Frog. I also have been collaborating with the California Academy of Sciences (CAS) on inventory/monitoring small mammal surveys that are currently taking place on the refuge. Other duties include wildlife guzzler maintenance, spring flow measurements, southwestern willow flycatcher habitat restoration efforts, and collaborating with the Nevada Test and Training Range through their Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan.

Can you tell us more about the Desert National Wildlife Refuge?

The DNWR is managed as part of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex. A National Wildlife Refuge Complex is an administrative grouping of two or more refuges, wildlife management areas or other refuge conservation areas that are primarily managed from a central office location. Refuges are grouped into a complex structure because they occur in a similar ecological region, such as a watershed or specific habitat type, and have a related purpose and management needs.

Encompassing six major mountain ranges and seven distinct life zones, DNWR showcases the abundance and variety of nature that can be found in Southern Nevada, all just a short drive from Las Vegas.

Created in 1936 to provide habitat and protection for desert bighorn sheep, DNWR is the largest wildlife refuge outside of Alaska. At 1.6 million acres (643,000 hectares), the refuge can cover Rhode Island twice - and still have enough room left over for a quarter of a million football fields. Teeming with diversity over a vast landscape, DNWR boasts over 500 plant species as it transitions from the Mojave to the Great Basin Desert.

While DNWR has been home to people for thousands of years, from Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute) to ranch homesteaders, the refuge still remains largely unchanged by human hands. Over 1.3 million acres (536,000 hectares) of the refuge is proposed wilderness, and has been managed as de facto wilderness since 1974.

What are you most excited about in your new job?

I am an ungulate gal, so I am most excited about working with and collaborating with state, federal, and non-government agencies on the conservation and management of desert bighorn sheep and mule deer. However, I love diversity, so being able to work with various types of fauna (fish, birds, bats, predators) and with different agencies (NDOW, CAS, Nawuvi, etc...) add spice to an already awesome job.

What sort of projects are in store for the Refuge?

I'm still getting settled in from my introduction in May; however, there are several projects that will be in the works for the future. The DNWR will continue restoration efforts for the Pahrump poolfish and the establishment of a Relict Leopard frog population at Corn Creek. The DNWR, in the future, is hoping to collaborate with state and non-governmental entities to conduct spring surveys and possibly detect spring snails located on refuge lands. Also, DNWR, in collaboration with USGS, NDOW, amongst others, will continue to monitor bighorn sheep populations' numbers and monitor for disease outbreaks. Small mammal and herpetological inventory will continue into next spring to document the better understand the species distribution and habitats. Also, DNWR is considering having a Bird BioBlitz in spring of 2016, so stay posted if you have interest in helping out.

WE WANT TO KNOW!

About members' upcoming news, publications, activities, honors, and awards

We would like to keep our membership aware of colleagues in the news so if you have an in-press article or have received a professional honor or award, tell us about it!

Are you putting together a workshop for colleagues or the public? Share it here!

Have an article idea for the newsletter? We are seeking contributions! Send information for newsletter publication to Mackenzie Jeffress (mrjeffress@ndow.org).

WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED WITH THE NEVADA CHAPTER?

We are in search of members to serve:

- To help manage the Nevada Chapter website
- As a NV Chapter Facebook page administrator
- As artists for a NV Chapter logo to be used on t-shirts, outreach materials, etc.

If you're interested in these or other opportunities to serve, contact Chris Nicolai at chris_nicolai@fws.gov.

Meet our new Professional Development Committee Chair – Zachary Ormsby

Zachary has over 10 years' experience surveying wildlife in California and the Great Basin. He started his career researching Golden Eagles and obtained his B.A. in interdisciplinary studies at the University of San Diego with Dr. Amadeo Rea. Zachary's work experiences have centered around the impacts of urbanization and human development on Golden Eagle populations. Mentor, Dr. Jeff Lincer, enlisted Zachary's expertise to create the non-profit, RICA (Researcher's implementing Conservation Action), to assist conservation projects and further public awareness. Zachary met Dr. Pete Bloom at a TWS meeting in 2013, where they formed a mentorship to get Zachary certified with the Bird Banding Laboratory. These collaborative, reciprocal relationships create dynamic opportunities for those participating in the "mentorship experience".



Zachary is currently working on his master's degree at the University of Nevada, Reno, developing resource selection functions for a regional eagle population along an urban-rural gradient. He volunteers regularly within his community promoting wildlife education intent on engaging the younger generations. His wife Tracy is a Video Production Specialist educated in Environmental Sciences. With Tracy's help, Zachary has become a Mac Power User, and his research is well integrated with the latest technologies.

Research projects include: Raptors and Climate Change literature review with presentations, "Raptors and a Changing Climate" Symposium co-chair for the 2015 Raptor Research Foundation Conference, first DNA confirmed account of hybridization between Warbling and Red-Eyed Vireos, urban-rural raptor predator guild behavior and landscape ecology, natal dispersal of Great Basin raptors, and the first study of city-dwelling Golden Eagles in Nevada.

As our Professional Development Committee (PDC) Chair, Zachary will work closely with our Chapter and the Western Section of TWS to coordinate on technical workshops, training opportunities, professional meetings, and TWS Certifications. Zachary can be contacted at zormsby@nevada.unr.edu.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WESTERN SECTION

The Western Section is working hard on the final preparations for the 2016 meeting in Pomona, CA (Feb. 22-26). The meeting theme is "Digging into the Roots of Conservation Conflict". The plenary session and other events will look deeper into the roots of human-wildlife and conservation conflict. Such events include an Endangered Species Act Sections 7 and 10 Symposium, Mojave Desert Listed Small Mammals Symposium, Wildlife Biologist Construction Awareness Training, resume workshops and critiques, and working group meetings for the Southern Sierra Nevada Fisher, Sierra Nevada Fox, and Mojave Ground Squirrel Technical Advisory Group. Registration is open and can be completed online at <http://tws-west.org/pomona2016/>. Early registration rates end January 8th so please register soon!

Last April the Western Section also hosted the first TWS "taxa-derby". Although the Nevada Chapter did not participate, four chapters had several teams each who scoured their state in search of unique vertebrate species over a 24-hour challenge. Sacramento-Shasta Chapter won the challenge by documented 257 wildlife species! The Western Section hopes to continue the derby in 2016 so keep that in mind if you'd like to help lead a Nevada team.

As a final note, the 2017 Western Section meeting will be returning to **RENO** (they liked Nevada so much they're coming back after just 3 years)! Mark your calendars – Feb. 7-10, 2017, at the Peppermill.

By Mackenzie Jeffress, Nevada Chapter Representative to the Western Section

ANNOUNCEMENTS



2016 Great Basin National Park BioBlitz – It's all about the BIRDS!

In May 2016, the National Park Service will hold a National BioBlitz, and Great Basin National Park will focus its BioBlitz on BIRDS. The Bird BioBlitz will be held in conjunction with World Biodiversity Day (May 22) and over 100 national parks will be coordinating BioBlitzes on the same weekend to celebrate.

The Bird BioBlitz, May 20-22nd, will feature talks and activities about birds on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons and bird walks on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The bird walks will also encompass collecting data about the birds and entering it in e-bird, an online database, so that they'll know almost real time where birds are in the park. **It will be the biggest birding effort all at one time ever held in the park.** In addition, over 80 bird species have not been vouchered, so the park will be asking for photographs of those species to document their presence in the park with a photo voucher.

If you are an experience birder and would like to volunteer to lead a trip, talk, or activity, please contact Gretchen Baker (Gretchen_Baker@nps.gov). The Park plans to open event registration for the general public in mid-December and more information about these BioBlitzes can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/grba/learn/nature/great-basin-bioblitz.htm>.

UPCOMING MEETINGS



2016 Western Section Annual Conference

Sheraton Fairplex Hotel & Conference Center – Pomona, CA

***Note* New Dates February 22-26, 2016**

Conference theme: *Digging into the Roots of Conservation Conflict*

2016 Nevada Chapter Meeting

Reno, NV

Dates, specific location, and call for abstracts TBA soon!



2016 The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting

Raleigh Convention Center, Raleigh, NC

October 15-19, 2016

2017 Western Section Annual Meeting

Peppermill Resort, Reno, NV

February 7-10, 2017

COMMUNICATION

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



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

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

NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Nevada Chapter The Wildlife Society Membership Application

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address*: _____
**To save cost, most of the Chapter's communication is via email.*

Address: _____

City, State, and Zip Code: _____

Dues: January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 = \$10.00

Dues: January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016 = \$10.00

Please Check: New Renewal

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

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

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