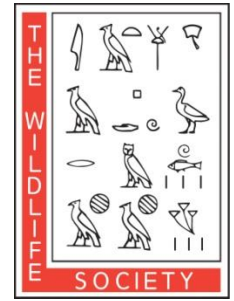


NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



Spring/Summer 2016 Newsletter

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Mackenzie Jeffress

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KELLEY STEWART

I truly appreciate the opportunity to be the President of the Nevada Chapter of The Wildlife Society. This year looks busy for the Nevada Chapter, the Western Section will hold the annual conference in Reno, just 3 years since the Section held their conference here last time. The conference was so successful, bringing in students, academics, and professionals that we are doing it again. I love that Nevada is becoming an important player in TWS, and it speaks to the dedication of our chapter members and our students, the future of the profession. I've also heard some rumblings of the national TWS meeting returning to Reno in the next few years.

Our Nevada Chapter Symposium in March was very successful with 41 people attending, including academics, professionals, and both graduate and undergraduate students. I want to extend a special thank you to Ben Sedinger and Marcus Blum for organizing agenda and the social for the symposium. Thanks also to Mackenzie Jeffress for her work organizing the symposium and the newsletters as well. We had a mix of 16 excellent presentations from our wildlife community this year, with presentations from academic, professionals, and graduate students. The symposium also included opening remarks from Dr. Chris Nicolai and keynote from Ted Koch both from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and a chapter history by Don Klebenow, emeritus faculty from UNR and a long time NV chapter member.

I feel it is important to mention the commitment of our members to wildlife resources in our state. Not only the turnout at our symposiums, but also all of the efforts of people around our state, including professionals, academics, students and people that volunteer to help wildlife or improve habitats in various ways. Our wildlife resources greatly benefit from the efforts of all of these people. I believe we should continue to include those people that may be outside the professional area, but appreciate wildlife and continue to help the resources of our state.

-Kelley



RECAP: 2016 Nevada Chapter Meeting and Symposium

By: Chris Nicolai, Past President

On March 2 and 3, 2016, the Nevada Chapter of The Wildlife Society held their annual symposium and business meeting at the NDOW Valley Road office in Reno. Ben Sedinger and Marcus Blum put together an excellent program including speakers and coordinating the evening social at the downtown Silver Peak. The student chapter helped with running the front registration table. Ted Koch from USFWS provided a Keynote talk. Forty-one people attended including 15 people who also made presentations. Talks varied from Columbia Spotted Frogs to arctic breeding geese with half of the talks from UNR students. The business meeting was held and John Tull was voted in as incoming President. A large turnout at Silver Peak facilitated further discussions. Overall, it was an excellent and diverse meeting.



ABOVE: UNR Student Chapter members help with meeting registration and check-in.

UPPER RIGHT: Ted Koch with the US Fish and Wildlife Service gives an inspiring keynote speech.

LOWER RIGHT: UNR Student Chapter presents on recent activities during the Nevada Chapter business meeting.



TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer: Derek Hall
Chapter Membership: 80
Bank Account: \$7,700

RESEARCH, MONITORING, & MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

Multi-agency-funded UNR Research Project on Pygmy Rabbit Gets Underway

By Marjorie D. Matocq

The pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) is known to be a sagebrush obligate species with a broad but patchy distribution across the Great Basin. As a sagebrush obligate, the pygmy rabbit can be considered an indicator species for the health and resilience of the sagebrush ecosystem. While the overall distribution of pygmy rabbits in Nevada is relatively well understood, we still have little understanding of fundamental aspects of the ecology and demography of this species across habitat types. Because of its local abundance and relatively rapid life history, pygmy rabbits may be particularly sensitive indicators with which to track short-term changes in sagebrush habitat quality and connectivity. Because the majority of the intact range of the pygmy rabbit occurs in Nevada, we have a unique opportunity to contribute critical insights into the ecology of this species. As such, we have launched a broad-reaching research project in close collaboration with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative and the Greater Hart-Sheldon Fund. The goals of the project are to quantify population dynamics of pygmy rabbits in habitat of varying quality, identify the habitat characteristics that facilitate connectivity across the landscape and integrate these parameters into predictive models that allow exploration of population response to land use and environmental change.

Species that are dependent on a narrow range of habitat types, like the pygmy rabbit, are expected to be particularly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, the pygmy rabbit is the only species identified in NDOW's Wildlife Action Plan as "extremely vulnerable" to climate change, the highest ranking in their system of classification. This listing is in part due to the predicted dramatic decline in sagebrush ecosystem suitability over the coming decades. Because of this expected change, it is particularly critical that we quantify functional landscape connectivity across a range of sagebrush habitat quality and patterns of fragmentation, to identify key areas that may serve as refugia or critical movement corridors for many sagebrush obligates, including pygmy rabbit.



A pygmy rabbit in a burrow. Photo by Miranda Crowell

The project is being conducted by a Nevada-based team of researchers with expertise in small mammal ecology and genetics (myself, Dr. Marjorie Matocq), landscape ecology (Dr. Peter Weisberg and Tom Dilts), demography and population dynamics (Drs. Kevin Shoemaker and Jim Sedinger), and pygmy rabbit ecology (Dr. Eveline Larrucea). The first PhD student to be recruited to the project is Miranda Crowell who recently earned her Master's degree working on pygmy rabbits in Idaho. To achieve project goals, the team is quantifying landscape connectivity at distribution-wide and regional (among local populations) spatial scales by inferring genetic connectivity from the distribution of genetic variation. To quantify population dynamics, the team is conducting intensive mark-recapture in several populations throughout the range with particular emphasis on localities in the Elko region, the major valleys around Austin, and across the Hart-Sheldon refuge complex in northwestern Nevada and southern Oregon. The team is coupling local estimates of pygmy rabbit abundance with

Yippee! Spring is here!! Photo by Miranda Crowell

habitat assessments to ultimately quantify the habitat correlates of local population abundance, connectivity, and persistence. The current project is set to continue for 4 years, but future funding opportunities may allow extension of this initial timeframe. If readers are aware of sites that are currently occupied by pygmy rabbits, they are encouraged to contact the project team so these localities can be included in the project.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE PYGMY RABBIT

- World's smallest rabbit (adults as little as 375 grams)
- Evolutionarily distinct; only species in the genus *Brachylagus*
- Only native rabbit that digs its own burrow
- Sagebrush can comprise 99% of the diet in winter

Marjorie is a Professor
in the Natural
Resources and
Environmental Science
program at the
University of Nevada,
Reno.



MEMBER IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Kris Boatner, Wildlife Program Manager for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

What is your educational and professional background?

I received my BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology at the University of California Davis. I actually began working for the USDA Forest Service during college doing summer survey, habitat mapping, and assessment work for California spotted owls, great gray owls, northern goshawks, and numerous forest carnivores. I was hired by the Forest Service as a professional wildlife biologist upon graduation. In the past 25 years, I have been a District Biologist/Natural Resources Officer on three ranger districts on two national forests in the Sierra Nevada of California, most recently stationed in Truckee, California. In May 2015, I transferred to the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest's Supervisor's Office in Sparks as the Forest Wildlife Program Manager.



What made you want to become a wildlife biologist?

I always loved wildlife. I grew up all over the western US with a family that always spent a lot of time in the outdoors. I adored shows like *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* and *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* and I devoured books on wildlife. The world of a wildlife biologist fascinated me from a very young age and that fascination has never left.

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

I have so many it is hard to recall. Some days as a professional wildlife biologist in a land management agency can be frustrating, however, there are many other days when I find myself saying "I can't believe I'm getting paid to do this." Being in a mountain meadow at sunrise, holding a hummingbird in my hand, watching an eagle feeding chicks, skiing in to check a remote camera, finding a species where you didn't think it would be, getting charged by a bear, the satisfaction of implementing a project researched and designed for a species of concern – all are the moments that make the career special.

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

Since I was usually on my own as a biologist at the places I worked, my greatest influences came from other natural resource professionals. I learned about restoration ecology, forestry, fire management, and grazing management from people that wanted to partner with a wildlife biologist to do what was not only good for their areas of interest, but also for wildlife and the ecosystem as a whole. They helped me see the big picture and the many opportunities I had to make a difference by working with others rather than against them.

If you could give one piece of advice to a wildlife student or early career professional, what would it be?

See the big picture and develop great people skills. The world of wildlife biology can be controversial, complicated, political, and very emotionally charged. You can learn all the science, but if you don't develop superb communication skills, you will have a hard time applying that science effectively. Whether it is writing grant proposals, networking with land management agencies, writing reports for environmental analyses, or advocating for a species or your area of expertise, you will need to understand how your interests fit in the big picture of land and species conservation/management and how to work effectively with other people.

What is your current position and job duties?

As the Forest Wildlife Program Manager for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, I oversee the management of wildlife resources on 6.3 million acres; the largest national forest in the lower 48 states. The Forest Service focuses on habitat management, but also works in close coordination with federal and state wildlife agencies for the management of populations as well. In a nutshell, I provide technical assessment, advice, training, and assistance in the implementation and evaluation of wildlife resource management programs and projects. The Forest is home to approximately 75 rare or special status species. As the program manager I need to have a working knowledge of these species and the habitats upon which they depend.

Can you tell us more about the Humboldt-Toiyabe's Wildlife Program?

While I oversee the program at the Forest level, I work closely with the six District Wildlife Biologists stationed across the forest. They are on the front lines, building relationships with partners, participating in working groups, obtaining grants, designing projects, and doing great habitat management and enhancement work. These biologists are the backbone of the wildlife program.

What are you most excited about in your new job?

I am most excited about the incredible diversity of the Forest. From the Great Basin, to the eastern Sierra Nevada, to sky islands in the Mojave Desert, I get to work with a wonderful variety of species and habitats.

What sort of projects are in store for the Forest?

Both the greater sage-grouse and the Bi-State sage-grouse are currently the spotlight of many of our projects, with a focus on meadow and riparian habitat improvement projects and a very active program of pinyon-juniper removal from sagebrush habitat. In addition, in partnership with NDOW, we install numerous bat protection gates on abandoned mine workings. We also have projects that focus on the Federally listed Mt Charleston blue butterfly and we partner with agencies and researchers on projects and studies for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, Sierra Nevada red fox, flammulated owls, elk, deer, bats, and bighorn sheep.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WESTERN SECTION

The Western Section had another successful annual meeting this last February in Pomona, CA. One of the big activities for the Section in 2016 is exploring options for hiring a Workshop Coordinator to help put on more workshops and training opportunities for members. To help support all of the Section events and activities, the section is considering a dues increase, so expect to see more information and opportunities for input on that via emails from the Section in the coming months. Also, don't forget to "like" the Section on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/tws.western/>.

Please keep in mind that the 2017 Western Section meeting will be returning to Reno and we encourage you to represent Nevada with presentations, posters, workshop ideas, attendance, etc! Mark your calendars – Feb. 7-10, 2017, at the Peppermill.



By Mackenzie Jeffress, Nevada Chapter Representative to the Western Section



Meet our new President - Elect – John Tull

John Tull has been a member of The Wildlife Society since 1994, the year he finished his undergraduate degree in Forest Wildlife Management at Stephen F. Austin State University. He migrated west to pursue graduate school and earned his M.S. In Wildlife Ecology and Management at the University of Arizona in 1997 studying desert mule deer movements and ecology in the Sonoran Desert. John worked with the U.S. Forest Service monitoring spotted frog populations and ecology in the Toiyabes prior to beginning his Ph.D. pursuit at the University of Nevada, Reno. He completed his doctoral degree in 2006 looking at the interface of humans and wildlife by using the western fence lizard and other lizard species as a model system to examine the influences of stress and environmental factors on wildlife populations. From 2007 until 2012, John sought conservation solutions for wildlife populations through the nexus of science and policy at

the Nevada Wilderness Project and as a consulting conservation biologist. In January 2012, he joined the Nevada Department of Wildlife team as a Wildlife Staff Biologist in the Habitat Division. John has a passion for the outdoors, Nevada landscapes, and spending numerous hours walking his French Brittany and his shotgun, ostensibly in pursuit of upland birds.

Professional Development Committee Update

The Professional Development Chair (PDC) position is new for our chapter. It provides us with an opportunity to help facilitate learning and training experiences geared towards wildlife conservation. The knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) required to perform job duties associated with flora and fauna are often difficult to garner, and The Wildlife Society provides a rich pool of resources focused on the prospects of professional growth.

Our 2016 Nevada Chapter Symposium showcased a diverse network of wildlife professionals actively participating at different scales within our community. The exemplary organizing efforts put forth by Mackenzie Jeffress, Marcus Blum, Ben Sedinger, Kelley Stewart, and Kenneth Mayer creates an ethos of comradery for the upcoming Western Section Conference in Reno.

My inaugural meeting was The Wildlife Society Western Section Conference in 2014 with keynote speaker Allen Fish from the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. Exposure to people working on similar projects and the introductions to other like-minded folks highlighted the networking and team building capacity of The Wildlife Society. TWS Western Section Conference Planner and Registrar Candace Ranger helped Allen organize a successful 2015 Raptor Research Foundation Conference in Sacramento. 2017 is on the horizon, along with the Western Section Conference return to Nevada. Our region will once again be in the spotlight. Let's come together as a community and deliver another memorable conference!

As our Chapter continues to progress and expand, I'd like to create a dialogue on the local and regional needs for professional development. How can "WE" develop a sustainable model for advancing future generations of wildlife professionals? Rhys Evans, immediate past Section PDC Chair, has done an excellent job utilizing a "team" approach, which could provide us a good template to launch from. I look forward to working with Jessica Martini-Lamb as she takes the lead on the Section's PDC. "Teamwork makes dreams work" is a saying I use often.

Field-season is upon most of us, creating an opportunity to ponder, "What's needed for the next generation in my profession, and what can I do to assist their efforts?" No data forms or complete sentences required!!! Just send me an email at zacormsby@gmail.com, when you get cell service.

In conclusion, one-person committees limit growth potential. If you have any interest in making our PDC Committee as effective and productive as possible, please contact me.



By Zachary Ormsby, PDC Chair

The Nevada Natural Heritage Program



"We flew over the remains of the Great Salt Lake, the saltiest of the salty seas, which is gradually drying up. Then we came to the great gambling and marriage destruction hell, known as Nevada. To look at it from the air it is just that—hell on earth. There are tiny green specks on the landscape where dice, roulette, light-o-loves, crooked poker and gambling thugs thrive. Such places should be abolished and so should Nevada. It never should have been made a State. A county in the great State of California would be too much of a civil existence for that dead and sinful territory."

—from the diary of Harry S. Truman, June 24, 1955

President Truman obviously did not have an appreciation for our great state; however, Nevada's vast and diverse landscape has always been part of the state's history, people, and wealth. This land has provided assets such as minerals, forage, and fertile soil, as well as the invaluable resources of clean water and air, abundant wildlife, and open space. Thousands of diverse species call Nevada home, and hundreds of these live nowhere else in the world. Nevada's health and economic well-being depend directly upon wise stewardship of its land and all the life it supports. This challenge increases as population and land-use pressures grow. Nevada is among the top 10 states in the nation for both the diversity and the vulnerability of its living heritage. With early planning and responsible development, economic growth and our biological resources can coexist. The Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NNHP) is a central source for information critical to achieving this balance.

NNHP is a member of the NatureServe network, an International network of heritage programs and conservation data centers in the U.S., Canada, and Latin America/Caribbean that focus on science-based biodiversity conservation. NNHP evaluates species' conservation needs and systematically collects and compiles information on the state's most at-risk biological features (taxa). Staff biologists compile natural resource information from diverse sources such as field surveys, museum collections, resource management agencies, published and unpublished reports, and knowledgeable individuals. We research and record facts: the existence, locations, numbers, condition, biology, and habitats of species and biological communities. This comprehensive inventory is maintained in an Oracle-based system of databases, GIS, online reports, and paper files, and is continually updated, refined, and subjected to quality controls. Program information becomes more complete each year, and is continually changing to reflect current conditions on the landscape. This information is then available for use by agency personnel, researching scientists, and the general public. Our information is used in a variety of projects—anything from road maintenance to planning new developments to conducting scientific research. We are a small state agency in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and are eight staff members strong. We are a non-regulatory information resource, although we do have responsibilities under the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC 527.200) to advise the State Forester in matters related to native flora.



Spring monitoring. NNHP

Within the last few years, we revamped our website and our resident technology expert (who is first and foremost a botanist), Janel Johnson, created a nifty tool to explore the species information in our database. This tool can be accessed by clicking on the big green "Explore Species Information" button from most pages on our website, entering your parameters, and clicking the search button. This tool returns taxonomy, status, and biological information. If you search for your favorite species and notice that we are missing information, please let us know. We gladly welcome new

information, and because we are such a small staff, rely on people like you to provide it. We also have a photo database to accompany this website tool. Please contact us if you would like to submit any species photos. We will give you full credit of course! To request spatial data for a particular project, please visit the Request Data section of our website (http://heritage.nv.gov/get_data).



Male eight-spotted skimmer in Ruby Valley.
Photo by Kristin Szabo

We welcome submissions from knowledgeable individuals of sighting and survey data for at-risk and watch-list plants and animals. Contributions from numerous individuals and agencies over the years have created and maintained the foundation of Nevada's at-risk species database, resulting in more appropriate conservation priorities and more effective and timely conservation actions. Please visit our website to learn how to submit data (<http://heritage.nv.gov/submit>) or contact us for more information.

In addition to rare species database management and conservation status ranking, NNHP also works on special projects as funding and staffing resources allow. Through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and with generous and valuable input from stakeholders throughout the state, we are currently working on the state's first Wetland Program Plan (WPP). The WPP

will outline the activities needed to identify, assess, monitor, restore, and/or preserve Nevada's wetlands, and this document provides an avenue for entities to apply for EPA funding to complete these activities. We hope to have the plan completed by the end of 2016. We are also working on a multi-year project surveying, assessing, and documenting Carson Valley monkeyflower (*Erythranthe carsonensis*), a species of conservation concern recently recognized to be endemic to the Carson Valley area of western Nevada and adjacent California, and whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), a federal candidate species experiencing pathogen-mediated population declines in portions of its North American range.

Past special projects include climate change vulnerability assessments of plant and animal species using NatureServe's Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI); the Nevada Springs Conservation Plan [a NNHP, Desert Research Institute (DRI), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) partnership]; a scorecard of the highest priority sites for conservation throughout the state; and rare plant seed collection and banking. Please visit our online library for more information (<http://heritage.nv.gov/library>).

If you have any questions about NNHP, would like more information, or would like to contribute spatial data, biological information, or photos to our database, please do not hesitate to contact us (<http://heritage.nv.gov/?q=staff>).

Kristin Szabo joined the Nevada Natural Heritage Program as a Biologist in 2009 and was appointed Administrator of the agency in 2015. She is a native San Franciscan, but moved to southern California at age 20 where she received a BS in Biology from California State University, Long Beach. Kristin worked for 10 years as a Biologist for a private environmental consulting firm in Orange County before moving to Reno in 2007.



Opening quote from: Ferrell, R. H. (ed). 1980. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*. University of Missouri Press.

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.

The BioBlitz schedule can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/grba/learn/nature/great-basin-bioblitz.htm> and for more information, call 775-234-7541.



Our own Nevada Chapter Past President, Ken Mayer, received the 2016 Yoakum Award for Outstanding Service from the Western Section of The Wildlife Society. From the Western Section's website: "Ken's contributions to Western Section are well known -- Ken became a member of the Sacramento Chapter of the Wildlife Society and the Western Section shortly after graduation from Humboldt State University. His service to both units was extensive -- as the Sacramento Chapter Representative in 1986, 1987, and 1994, as Western Section Secretary-Treasurer in 1984, and Transactions Associate Editor from 1987-89.

Ken was a session chair at three TWS-WS Annual Conferences, Fresno (1987); Hilo, HI (1988); and San Diego (1997), and annual meeting keynote speaker in 2014. Ken coordinated/ran the TWS-WS raffle at the awards banquet for many years and also coordinated the TWS Reno raffle in 2001.

In 2014, Ken stepped up to resurrect the Nevada Chapter, serving as Chapter President. As the Nevada Department of Wildlife Director, he strongly urged NDOW biologists and colleagues from other agencies to join TWS. Under his leadership, they resumed annual meetings and conferences to become a thriving, active Chapter. He remains active in the Nevada Chapter and continues to play a pivotal role in its success."

CONGRATS, KEN!

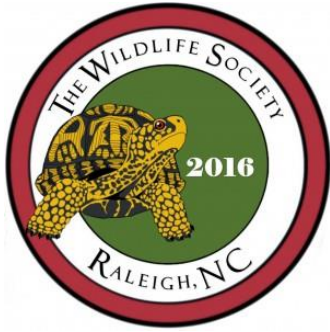
WE WANT TO KNOW!

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!

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

UPCOMING MEETINGS



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, 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>