

# Arkansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society

## Newsletter

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### **2013 Officers**

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#### **Arkansas Chapter Web Site**

[www.wildlife.org/arkansas](http://www.wildlife.org/arkansas)

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### **Fall Meeting Minutes**

September 19, 2013

Arkansas Tech University, Russellville

Attendance (Field Trip): 37

Attendance (Meeting): 53

The meeting began with a field day for students at Bona Dea Park in Dardanelle. Students participated in various wildlife technique demonstrations including mist-netting (led by Dr. Chris Kellner), feral cat radiotelemetry (led by Catherine Normand and Dr. Rachael Urbanek), and small mammal trapping (led by Dr. Tom Nupp). Approximately 37 members participated, with representatives from all 4 student chapters.

Following lunch, the group convened at Doc Bryan Lecture Hall at the Arkansas Tech University campus for the afternoon session. Tom Nupp, President, opened the session by welcoming everyone. A detailed agenda for the afternoon session is included.

Dr. John Jackson, Program Director ATU Fisheries and Wildlife Program, Arkansas Tech University, opened the meeting with a presentation describing Arkansas Tech University's Fisheries and Wildlife Program, Past and Future. The field-oriented program has 6 faculty members including 3 in wildlife and 3 in fisheries. The undergraduate curriculum is designed to meet either TWS or AFS certification requirements and students are encouraged to join the wildlife club and participate in internships.

Eliese Ronke with the Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, gave a presentation on Survival and Recovery of Temperate-nesting Canada Geese Banded in Arkansas. She utilized banding data collected by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission from years 2005-2011 to estimate survival. She determined that young have a slightly higher survival rate and early-season hunting did not have an effect on survival. In the future she hopes to model population growth rates.

Tyler Pittman, a graduate student with the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, presented on Survival of Eastern Wild Turkey Females in the Ozark Highlands, Arkansas. They fit 72 female turkeys with gps transmitters at White Rock Wildlife Management Area. They recorded 25 mortalities. Using program MARK, they estimated a survival rate for hens of 47%. Mortality was greatest during the nesting season. Nesting mortality was highest during the second week of incubation.

Christopher Redding, MS candidate with the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, presented on his research "Small Mammal Community Associations at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Benton County, Arkansas". He examined small mammal diversity and habitat relationships at Pea Ridge National Military

Park. Using Sherman and Tomohawk traps along 15 trap lines, he captured 542 individuals. The most common species were deer mice, Texas mice, and white-footed mice. Trap success was highest in the post-oak, cedar, and old field habitats.

The business meeting was led by President Tom Nupp. The first order of business was to complete the election for the positions of president-elect, secretary-treasurer, and member at large. Allison Fowler, secretary-treasurer, distributed ballots to the group. Allison Fowler then presented the spring meeting minutes and a motion was made to approve them. The minutes were approved. Updated copies of the chapter financial report and membership report were distributed to everyone in attendance. After review, both reports were approved.

Tom Nupp relayed to the group that the UAM chapter had asked for financial assistance for paying for their chapter officers' dues to the national TWS chapter. Discussion commenced. Several expressed concern that such a request, if repeated annually by each student chapter, could get costly and exceed what the chapter could financially sustain. No motion was made for or against the issue.

Student chapter updates were requested from the group. Jared Schluterman, president of the ATU chapter, provided an update for the ATU chapter. The chapter currently has 35 members. The chapter's fundraising efforts include a big buck contest, selling donated wildlife prints and a beast feast. They plan to continue helping with the Bearcat Hollow project. One of their members was selected as the youth conservationist of the year.

Eliese Ronke provided an update for the UAF chapter. The chapter has 15-20 members and had a very good attendance at their first meeting. They sent 3 members to conclave. They plan to hold a skeet shooting afternoon and show a series of documentaries in the winter. Several of their members will attend the national TWS conference in Milwaukee, WI.

Robert Floyd, president, gave the update for the UAM chapter. They have 16 members. They will be helping with the fall festival at Felsenthal

NWR and deer check stations at White River NWR.

Virginie Rolland, provided an update for the ASU chapter. They have 40 members. They plan to assist with deer check stations for the USFWS and AGFC this fall. They also have a 1-mile adopt-a-highway stretch, plan to participate in DU/Delta waterfowl banquets, to assist with a stream restoration project. At conclave, they placed 5th in quiz bowl and 9th overall.

Member Blake Sasse gave a report on the chapter newsletter and also about access issues with the chapter website. The website issues are resolved and it is now up and running. He also proposed the idea of having a facebook page for the chapter. Members were supportive of this idea and he will move forward with creating a facebook page.

President Tom Nupp announced the winners of the elections. Allison Fowler was elected as President-elect, Dr. Rachael Urbanek was elected as secretary-treasurer, and Blake Sasse was elected as the member-at-large (to fill out the remainder of the term for the 2013-2014 member-at-large position).

J. Gordon Ross, Graduate Student at Arkansas Tech University, presented a summary of 2013 Interior Least Tern Nesting Season on the Arkansas River, AR and Development of a Habitat Restoration Plan. He surveyed the Arkansas River and found 16 colonies. An additional 3 colonies were located on rooftops in central Arkansas. He recorded a 21% colony failure rate. In the future he hopes to use GIS to model sandbar characteristics, determine an 'ideal sandbar', and how to create it.

Phillip Jordan, M.S. Candidate, Arkansas State University, gave a presentation on Single Unit Turbines and Bat Mortality. He conducted acoustic surveys for bats at 3 single unit turbines in the Karst and Delta regions. Bat mortalities (20) were detected at only one turbine location and none were sensitive species.

Allysa Bangs, graduate student at Arkansas Tech University, presented on Thermal Ecology of *Sceloporus consobrinus* in Two Different Habitats. She compared rocky and forested habitats on the effect of body size, temperature,

and mortality of lizards. Lizards were caught with a noose, measured, and marked with nontoxic yellow paint. No significant morphological differences were detected between the 2 habitats, though there were some differences in activity patterns.

## **Urbanek Chosen for TWS Leadership Institute**

When Dr. Rachael Urbanek set out to begin her college teaching career in 2012, she was looking for a location that would provide her with an opportunity to develop one-on-one mentoring relationships with her students.

She found that environment at Arkansas Tech University.

“That’s what attracted me to Tech,” said Urbanek, assistant professor of wildlife science at Arkansas Tech. “I like having that close relationship with students to be able to help them. I tell all of my students that I have an open door policy. I’ve been here for a year now, and I am to the point where my students will just come by for a chat. I really like that. I try to let my students know that college professors are just normal people and they should try to get to know all of us. We all have something different to offer.”

Less than 12 months into her teaching career at Arkansas Tech, Urbanek has been honored as one of 10 members of The Wildlife Society (TWS) from across the United States and Canada selected to participate in the 2013 TWS Leadership Institute.

Urbanek will study alongside colleagues from such institutions as Texas A&M University, Virginia Tech and Gonzaga University.

After engaging in a variety of distance learning projects this summer, the TWS Leadership Institute participants will cap their experience in October with mentoring activities and leadership workshops at the 2013 TWS Conference in Milwaukee, Wis.

“The Wildlife Society is our professional society,” said Urbanek. “With the TWS

Leadership Institute, they have created a way to get younger professionals involved in the society. I’m excited to be in it. I was never the kind of person to run for student council, but I feel like I am a natural leader. I would like to be involved with the society, be it at the local level or beyond. They are also going to help us with managerial skills, which is something that is often lacking in science education. It’s a fabulous group of people and I’m excited to meet and network with them. I’m looking forward to using the skills that I will develop here at Tech and within The Wildlife Society.”

Urbanek’s interest in wildlife science was sparked during her childhood, much of which was spent in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. She grew up fishing and knew that she wanted to spend her career working with wildlife.

“Before I went to Penn State University for my undergraduate degree, I was working at a wildlife rehabilitation center and also as a veterinary technician, so I thought I wanted to be a wildlife veterinarian,” said Urbanek. “Then I took my first fisheries and wildlife class. After that, I knew I needed to change my major. I fell in love with it.”

Urbanek went on to work for the Pennsylvania Game Commission and earn her Ph.D. in zoology and wildlife ecology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Next came an opportunity to join the Arkansas Tech faculty, and even though it was a new region of the country for Urbanek, she immediately felt at home.

“It’s beautiful here,” said Urbanek. “When I came for my interview, I thought it was just like the Poconos, only a lot hotter and more humid. The surroundings reminded me a lot of my early childhood. For classroom activities, this area is perfect. There are so many places we can go and so many nice people who will allow us to use their land for research. It’s a perfect location for having a program in fisheries and wildlife science. If I had grown up in this area, I probably would have been a student here.”

Urbanek said that one of the biggest misconceptions about the field of wildlife

science is that it is always conducted in a remote location far beyond the day-to-day influence of humans.

“When you get into wildlife and fisheries science, not only are you managing wildlife and fisheries, you are managing people too,” said Urbanek. “That’s a surprise for many students because they signed up for critters, not people. We do a lot of management and conservation in our field, but it’s also working with people to understand why it is important to conserve our natural resources.”

The focus of Urbanek’s research is on urban wildlife ecology. Since arriving in the Arkansas River Valley, she has undertaken a research project that seeks to learn more about the feral cat population in and around Russellville.

“In order for me, in my mind, to help conserve our natural resources for future generations, it was important to be at the forefront of research,” said Urbanek. “We are a very urbanized country, and that’s not going to stop. I want to understand how animals are reacting and adapting to urbanization and why some are failing to do so. I am interested in studying how we can work with our landscapes and animals themselves to make everything co-exist.”

## PERSONNEL CHANGES

### Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Brad Carner was selected to serve as the new Wildlife Management Division in July. Former Chief David Goad is now serving as a field biologist out of the Mayflower office.

AJ Riggs replaced Brad Carner as the Region 8 Supervisor.

Dr. Brad Miller, Assistant Chief of the Wildlife Management Division, left the Commission in October for a position with the National Wild Turkey Foundation in Tennessee.

John Gallagher and Barry McArdle, Field Biologists with Region 8, retired.

## Arkansas Publications

Connior, R Tumilson, and HW Robison. 2012. New vertebrate records and natural history notes from Arkansas. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 66: 180-184.

Fiedler, JM, R Kannan, and DA James. 2012. Status, dispersal, and breeding biology of the exotic Eurasian collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) in Arkansas. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 66: 55-61.

James, DA. 2012. Nocturnal communal winter bird roosts in northwestern Arkansas. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 66: 185-187.

Long, AK and A Locher. 2013. American Woodcocks' (*Scolopax minor*) use of pine plantation habitat during spring in central Arkansas. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 125(2): 322-328

Noel, BL, JC Bednarz, MG Ruder, and MK Keel. 2013. Effects of radio-transmitter methods on pileated woodpeckers: an improved technique for large woodpeckers. *Southeastern Naturalist*: 12(2): 399-412.

Reiley, BM, TJ Benson, and JC Bednarz. 2013. Mechanisms of flood-induced territory abandonment in an obligate ground-foraging bird. *Condor* 115(3): 650-658.

Smith, KG and DA James. 2012. History and current status of Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*) in northwestern Arkansas. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 66: 200-204.

Techentin, DM, ES Boyd, WE Sparks, and RE Kissell Jr. 2012. Using infrared imagery to estimate white-tailed deer populations on Pine Bluff Arsenal. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 66: 158-163.