2013 TWS Conference in Milwaukee, WI  
Submitted by Chuck Pils

I attended The 2013 TWS 20th Annual Conference in Milwaukee, which resulted in an attendance of 1336 participants from around and outside the U.S. I applied for and received a $500 grant from the Wisconsin Chapter-The Wildlife Society (WCTWS), which was much appreciated and helped me pay for the conference. About 300 (?) federal employees were not able to come because of the shutdown of the U.S. government due to the inability of our government to function properly. The conference was held in the Milwaukee Center, downtown and featured excellent spacious meeting rooms and top-flight audio-visual systems. This was the best conference facility that I have ever attended!

I volunteered for a morning’s work helping to register attendees and spent an afternoon volunteering to work in the TWS store at the conference. The conference highlight for me was attending the TWS 76th Annual awards on October 6th, because I was the recipient of one of 10 TWS members receiving the TWS Fellows award, which recognizes members who have distinguished themselves through exceptional service to the wildlife profession. I was touched for receiving this honor. I was also fortunate to sit next to A.R.E. (Tony) Sinclair, who received the Leopold Award, which is given for distinguished service to wildlife conservation and is the highest award bestowed by TWS. Tony was a low-key person with a great sense of humor. Fellow WCTWS members were also honored: Keith McCaffrey received the North Central Section’s Distinguished Service award and Adrian Wydeven received the Jim McDonough award, which recognizes a certified wildlife biologist who makes significant contributions to the wildlife profession as an active participant at the local level of TWS and through program implementation and development of new techniques or approaches. It was a good night for Wisconsin.

Because of the many concurrent sessions, it was impossible to attend all the sessions. Some of the outstanding ones that I attended were included:

- Brave New World: Conservation Landscapes of Recovered Wolves, which featured excellent talks by Curt Meine (International Crane Foundation and Leopold biographer), John Vucetich (Michigan Tech Wolf researcher), and Luigi Boitani (Italian wolf researcher).
- Dick Thiel’s wolf talk, which expertly summarized his career with wolves.
- “America’s Darling: The Story of Jay N. “Ding” Darling” at a brown-bag lunch. This movie was an excellent summary of Darling’s career.

Other Conference highlights included attending an evening mentor-student session, where I, along with other experienced wildlifers acted as mentors for students who moved around the room every 15 minutes to get advice and counsel……it was fun. I also attended the Quiz Bowl, which pitted various student chapters against each other. Good thing I wasn’t competing because I could only answer about 20% of the questions.

I acted as a chaperone for 9 attendees who attended the “Discover Lake Michigan” field trip on Thursday, October 10th, after the Conference ended. We had a beautiful sunny day to cruise aboard the UW-Milwaukee vessel “Neeskay”, which was piloted by Greg Stamatalakys. We also
had UW-Milwaukee professor Don Szmania give us a running narration of various points of interest as we cruised along the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan. Wisconsin DNR fisheries biologist Will Wawrzyn gave us an overview of the Lakeshore development and fisheries management. It was an outstanding field trip.

Finally, the conference was like a wildlife family reunion for me. Shortly, I will be a 50 year TWS member and have accumulated many friends and colleagues over the years. Several of them showed up at the meeting and it was very enjoyable to reminisce about old times at the meeting. I have never had any regrets about being a wildlifer; this Conference was ample proof of a correct career decision.