

# The Student Chronicles

Newsletter from the SDWG

September 2017

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Hello Students,

I would like to welcome you to The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We designed our newsletter to help you prepare for conferences in general. I hope your conference experience will be one that you will always remember!

My conference experiences are always enjoyable! I always get excited about learning from the presentations and meeting professionals. I try to always look over the schedule before arriving at the conference to have a plan of what I would like to do. Once you're at the conference you can make some small goals, on who you would like to meet or which talks you would like to attend. These are just some helpful tips that I have used to keep me focused and organized at conferences!

I am ecstatic for our Student Development Working Group Meeting, where I will be able to meet many of you. I look forward to hearing your suggestions for our working group. We want to ensure we are meeting the needs to keep a successful and fun working group for future students. Please feel free to flag me down during the conference if you need anything. I look forward to seeing many of your faces out in the wild west in just a few short weeks!

Travel safely,

Kristi Confortin, *Chair*

Kristi Confortin is a master student at Ball State University, in Muncie Indiana. She is currently researching the roosting habits of the Eastern small-footed bat in the Shawnee National Forest, in Southern Illinois. She is using radio telemetry to learn more about their unique roost selection!





This year will be my 9th time attending The Wildlife Society's Annual Conference, and each year I have seen more and more growth on the part of TWS in their efforts to include and provide for our student members.

When I first became involved with TWS, the annual conference had one students-only mixer and the quiz bowl. Over the years, they have added a mixer dedicated to student-professional interactions, workshops and symposia for student training, have rearranged the schedule to meet student needs, and so much more. This year they have a new symposium just for students and are designing their conference name tags in a way that turns the whole conference into a student-professional mixer. As a student, I know it can be very intimidating to approach professionals you do not know, especially if they are conversing with other professionals, but my advice to you would be this:

- 1) You are the only one who knows what you are looking to learn, therefore it is easier for a student to search out a professional with specific interests than vice versa. Every professional at this conference is vested in the growth of the next generation, so take advantage of that.
- 2) Come prepared. Have an idea of what you'd like to say, so when your nerves kick up, your prep will kick in.
- 3) Bring a [Networking Card](#). They will help professionals remember you much better than a business card.
- 4) Have fun!!!

I look forward to seeing you all there!

Krysten Zummo-Strong, *Past-Chair*



I hope everyone is getting excited about the upcoming conference in Albuquerque, NM. This will be my second TWS annual conference, but it will be slightly different than my first conference. My first TWS conference was in Portland, OR and I

was a senior in my undergraduate program. I was fresh to the conference scene and was wanting to make waves to land a graduate assistantship in waterfowl research at one of the many great programs across the country. Little did I know that my journey would lead me to study bee communities, but that is another story. I created friendships at that conference with folks just like me that are now moving into the ranks of associate professors and wildlife professionals across the country and the world. These people will be your allies as you work together for the greater good of conservation and wildlife management. I would strongly recommend that you to take advantage of these new friendships as they will serve you well in the future. I will also admit to you that it can be scary to talk to professors about your future goals and research interest, but they are willing to listen and those interactions can lead to a future job or assistantship. So, consider grabbing a meal if you can and definitely attend the mixers to see who you might run into. Just remember that the New Mexico state nickname is "the land of enchantment," so let your dreams come true!

Phillip Stephenson, *Chair-Elect*

## Top 10 Tips for Getting the Most out of Your Conference Experience

Contributed by Jason Matthews

1. Design professional-looking business cards to hand out to potential employers or graduate professors. You can buy printable business card sheets at office supply stores to make your own.
2. Bring copies of your résumé or CV to hand out to potential graduate advisors or employers. Use a clear protective cover or sturdier paper to make your résumé stand out.
3. Participate in the résumé review workshop. A second opinion is always beneficial.
4. Always have a pen and paper, so you are prepared to take notes or record contact information for speakers, graduate advisors, etc.
5. Dress professionally yet comfortably. Business casual is typical, unless you plan to attend a formal event at the conference.
6. Bring a spare outfit to the conference. Accidents happen. There's a lot of coffee to spill.
7. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to someone. Be prepared with a thoughtful question about his/her presentation or research to break the ice.
8. A strong handshake and a little confidence can go a long way when meeting someone for the first time.
9. Review the schedule beforehand to prioritize the talks you wish to attend. The conference app is a great way to get reminders about what's coming up.
10. Enjoy yourself. Everyone is there to learn and meet new people.

As a Biological Science Technician with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, author Jason Matthews assisted in banding passerines for the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship Program.



## A Game Called “Have You Met Jon?”

### A Guide to Networking

Contributed by Jonathon Trudeau

If any of you are avid *How I Met Your Mother* fans, like I am, then you are already aware of a game called “Have you met \_\_\_\_\_,” but I’m going to explain it in a new light regarding a little something called networking. First, let me explain what the term “networking” means to me. Networking is the process in which an individual actively initiates and maintains professional relationships to stay informed, collaborative, and aware of future employment opportunities. This is simply the way I view networking, but it is by no means the only way one can interpret the term. No matter how you define it, networking is an important part of any aspiring wildlifer’s future career. We are part of a very small community and getting to know those around you only helps you to grow as a person and biologist.

Now, let’s talk about meeting people, shall we? Many of you may be shy and avoid awkward first encounters at all costs; I know I used to. This is not an abnormal feeling and believe it or not, it is the exact same feeling many around you are having as well. Meeting anybody for the first time can be intimidating, but meeting a researcher, professor, biologist, or other professional that you have admired and want to work for can make it even more intimidating. I do not say this to frighten any of you, just to assure you all that it is perfectly normal to be nervous. Now, the trick is to not let those nerves keep you from talking to people. The worst feeling you can have after leaving a conference or meeting is knowing that you didn’t talk to the one person you really

wanted to all because you were too nervous. Take it from me, this is not a good feeling and you regret it almost immediately.

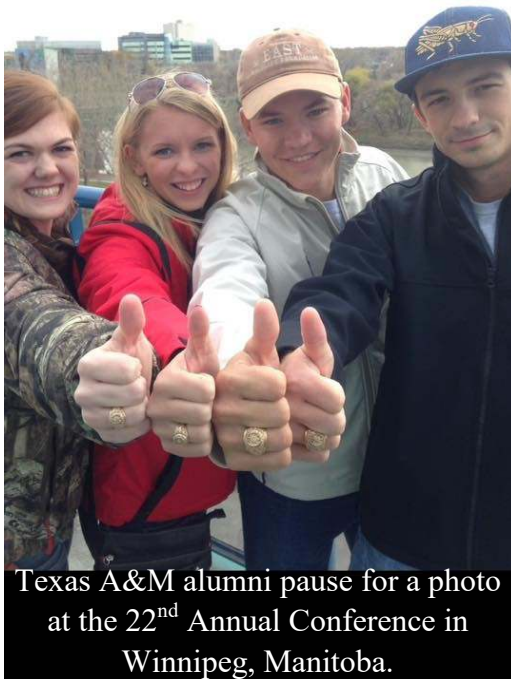
You can network just about anywhere, but conferences are by far the best and easiest place to do so because they are basically designed for networking. There are different types of conferences, but most wildlife conferences fall under two categories. The first type is a general fish/wildlife conference where a wide variety of topics are presented. The second type is a specialized conference dedicated to a specific topic such as deer. Both conferences offer you similar, but slightly different opportunities to network. If you are interested in a specific topic, let’s say bats, and want to meet bat researchers (they are a fun crowd so you should meet them), then you should find a conference dedicated to bats. By doing so, you are selecting for professionals that you already have something in common with. Now, what if you don’t have a clue what area of wildlife you want to be involved in yet? Well then, a general conference may be the best option as it brings individuals from all sorts of wildlife backgrounds.

Conferences are not the only place you can network. Some of the best networking you can do is right in your own school. Many of your professors are willing to use their vast networks of biologist and other professionals to help you in your own career. Now, this does not mean you should just walk up to a professor you have meet once and ask them to introduce you to people. You need to develop a relationship with them first. Volunteer to help on a project they are coordinating, ask if you can assist in any lower level courses they may teach, or even just swing by their office every once in a while to say hi.

*(continued on page 5)*



This may sound silly, but little actions can go a long way. If you go on any fieldtrips or have professionals come into school to speak at TWS meetings or in class, try asking them some questions and then introduce yourself at the end of their presentation. Developing connections such as these are easy to do and very important. If you are already doing this, then whether you realize it or not, you are networking. Congratulations!



Texas A&M alumni pause for a photo at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

When you meet someone new, you want to make a good first impression, and one that sticks, right? Well, I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but not everybody you meet will remember your name, what you talked about, or even what you look like, and that is perfectly fine. However, there are a few things you can do to help make yourself more memorable. If you know who you are going to meet, it is much easier to introduce yourself if you prepare a little. Start by researching them beforehand and educate yourself about their most recent studies. By doing this, you can speak to them about their own research.

Nobody likes to admit it, but as researchers, we all like to talk about our own research and toot our own horns a little now and again. Some researchers like to do this more than others, and you can take advantage of it. When you are talking to them about their research, don't just have them describe everything about their research. Make sure you ask questions that pertain to a certain aspect of the research like why they used a certain technique instead of another. Asking them questions deeper than "what did you find?" will make an impression because it shows a greater interest in not only the topic, but the individual.

Even when meeting a person you have never heard of and know nothing about, you can still have deeper conversations. Ask them questions such as why they were interested in a specific topic, or what issues they encountered and how they remedied them. A simple, yet surprisingly in-depth, question you can always ask is "what made you decide to go into the wildlife field?" Our field is filled with very passionate individuals who love to talk about why they got into it, and some of the stories you will hear are absolutely amazing. You can compare your experiences with theirs and build a relationship based on similar experiences. Developing some sort of personal connection is key to building a solid professional network. Always ask for business cards or some sort of contact information. Most of the time, if you give a big biologist your business card, it will probably sit in a drawer somewhere and not be seen for years, but you should always take theirs and try to remember some things you talked about. Email them a few days later thanking them for taking the time to speak with you and express how much you enjoyed your conversation.

*(continued on page 6)*

This will help set you aside from the countless others they spoke to that didn't take the extra five minutes to reach out again. You should also continue to reach out to those contacts you have already made good connections with. Maintaining the relationship is the only solid method to maintain a functioning professional network.

Now, we have discussed how to choose a location to network, how to build a relationship with professionals, but we still haven't discussed a key element, the introduction. It may sound silly for me to even address the introduction, but it is a crucial aspect. When you introduce yourself, make sure you are confident and well composed. If you are extremely nervous, that is all right. The easiest way to overcome this is to introduce yourself with a friend. This is where a game called "Have you met \_\_\_\_\_?" comes into play. At any event or conference, it is always easiest to meet new people when you are with somebody you know. This does not mean you walk around a conference social with six of your closest friends. Try walking around with one other friend and talking to folks. Start by talking to other students and get an idea of what they are interested in, bounce ideas off them for TWS events. A lot of the time, you will meet students who have great connections at the event and then they will take you around to the folks they already know and introduce you. This is where the game begins. When you introduce yourself give them a solid handshake. While you are speaking, maintain eye contact during your conversation. This shows you are interested in what they are saying and not looking around for the next person to talk to or appear bored. There are few things that frustrate professionals more than speaking to someone who approached them that does not show much interest in what they are saying. Networking is not only for students, professionals are constantly networking as well

and they do not want to waste time on somebody who seems disinterested. If you speak to every professional respectfully, they will reciprocate and you will enjoy your time meeting new people.

After all this, I'm sure some of you are a little on edge about meeting new people in our field, but I ensure you it is a blast. By putting yourself out there, you will meet people with extremely diverse backgrounds. You will make lifelong friends, and look forward to attending the same meeting every year just so you can see what your new-found contacts are up to. Just remember that any time you meet someone, try to talk about their interests as well as your own. Make a personal connection, and thank them for speaking with you. Politeness will expand your network wider than almost anything else. As I have stated before, we work in a very small field and introducing yourself to the right person can open avenues you never thought possible. I hope my advice will help each of you as you step out of your comfort zone and introduce yourself to someone new. Who knows, maybe that someone will be me!



Author Jonathon Trudeau is a graduate student at Ball State University.

## What to Wear to The Wildlife Society's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Contributed by Amanda Vescovi

### How much clothing do I pack?

For starters, consider how long the conference will be. In your case, the TWS conference is 5 days. You want to make sure you have enough items of clothing to get you through the entire conference. Of course, you may mix and match outfits to eliminate over-packing, which comes in handy if you are flying to the conference. Students have managed to pack an entire conference worth of clothes into their “carry-on” bag to eliminate the need to check in a bag at the airport and to save a few dollars.

Pack light and avoid luggage fees by fitting everything into a carry-on. Watch this [video](#) to find out how!

### What should I wear?

What you wear depends on each particular conference setting. There are 3 main settings for the TWS conference.

1) Convention Center ( i.e. plenary, symposia, poster sessions, working group meetings etc.)

The majority of your time will be spent indoors at the convention center. The convention center setting advocates “professionalism”. You will be surrounded by fellow students, professors, potential employers, graduate advisors, and researchers alike. So, be sure to look presentable.

*Business casual:*

- Tops - dress shirts, button downs, and blouses
- Bottoms - casual dress pants, slacks, leggings, or skirts (appropriate in length)
- Dresses - casual (appropriate in length)
- Shoes - casual dress shoes, boots, sandals, or flats

*Note: Wear comfortable footwear. Again. WEAR COMFORTABLE FOOTWEAR.*

2) Field Trips (i.e. Tramway, wildlife refuge, and/or sky city tour)

If you have signed up for any of the incredible field trips offered during this year’s conference, you should plan on dressing comfortably.

*Day-hike wear:*

- Tops - t-shirt (preferably breathable)
- Bottoms - Cargo pants/shorts
- Shoes - Lightweight hiking boots or sturdy sneakers

3) Quiz Bowl

If you will be participating in this year’s Quiz Bowl competition, you should plan on dressing comfortably in your team attire.

*Team attire:*

- Tops - team shirt
- Bottoms - slacks or jeans
- Shoes - casual shoes (boots, sandals, flats, etc.), lightweight hiking boots, or clean pair of sneakers



Author Amanda Vescovi (right) enjoys the 2014 Annual Conference with fellow SUNY Cobleskill graduates.

## Practice Makes Perfect: How to Ace Your Presentation

Contributed by Summer Higdon

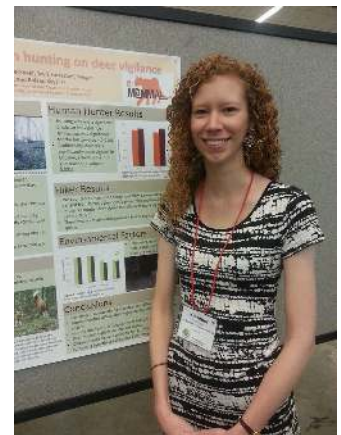
I attended my first TWS Annual Conference in 2014 in Pittsburgh, PA, where I presented a poster on research I had been involved with the previous summer at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. Recently I had finished my undergraduate degree from North Carolina State and was realizing I wanted to pursue wildlife research as a career. Needless to say, I was nervous.

About half way through my presentation day, I glanced at my poster and spotted a typo, just under one of the picture captions. A typo! My picture caption had a typo! I was horrified, but without an option to reprint, I stood by that typo the rest of the day.

Since that meeting, I have presented at both the 2015 and 2016 TWS Annual Conferences and several state and regional conferences in between. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that mistakes happen, but they really aren't a big deal. Out of everyone at the conference, you are the most critical person of your own work. Use these tips to give your best presentation:

1. If you are presenting a poster, prepare a 30-second summary of your research. Many poster viewers will ask you directly to explain the poster, rather than spending the time to read each detail.
2. Brainstorm some questions you might receive about your research. Why did you choose the analysis you did? What other research questions would be a good follow-up to your results? Coming prepared with answers will prevent the inevitable "uhhs" and "umms" when someone inquires about your work.
3. If you are giving an oral presentation, use the "notes" section in PowerPoint to add reminders on each slide. The laptops at the conference will be set up on presentation mode and you will be able to refer to your notes throughout the presentation.
4. Before you head to the meeting, reserve a conference room at your university and invite your advisor, lab members, and other friends to listen to your 30-second poster presentation or your 15-minute oral presentation. Your advisor will be able to provide constructive criticism while friends not as close to your research can point out where the presentation was confusing or needs work.
5. At the conference, be sure you arrive on time to your poster session or oral presentation. It is standard practice to arrive to your oral presentation at the beginning of the session so the moderator can meet you and ensure she pronounces your name and presentation title correctly. Always update your oral presentation slides in the control room before your session and bring a back-up copy on a flash drive to the session.
6. Practice, practice, practice! Practice before the conference, in front of others, at home by yourself, and at the conference before you present. Practice makes perfect; if you repeat it enough times, the presentation will come naturally.
7. Remember: you know your research better than anyone else at the conference. The audience is excited to learn about your research and you should be excited to share it!

Author Summer Higdon gave her first ever conference presentation at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.





## Student Activities

### **Saturday September 23, 2017**

11 workshops open to students – A wide range of topics are represented. Most workshops are all day and require prior registration and fee.

### **Sunday September 24, 2017**

Student Development Working Group meeting – All students are welcome. Students are welcome at all working group meetings through the conference, so in addition to the SDWG meeting, find a working group that you associate with and join their meeting.

Navigating the Path to Professional Success Symposium – Each presentation focuses on a different aspect of professional development for students and recent graduates. Symposium concludes with a panel discussion of distinguished professionals facilitated by the SDWG.

Resume Workshop – 90 minute interactive session

Certification Application Assistance – 90 minute interactive session

Outdoor Dinner and Networking Event at Civic Plaza – All members will have color coded nametags identifying their type of employer and ribbons identifying their working group

### **Monday September 25, 2017**

Resume Workshops - 90 minute interactive sessions

Resume review – Bring your resume (hard copy or electronic) and receive feedback from an established wildlife professional

Student Chapter Leaders Lunch – Socialize and share ideas with other student chapter leaders and hear updates from the SDWG officers.

Quiz bowl preliminary rounds – Cheer on your favorite teams!

### **Tuesday September 26, 2017**

Resume review- Bring your resume (hard copy or electronic) and receive feedback from an established wildlife professional

Federal Employment Workshop – Sponsored by USDA Forest Service, Human Resources and field staff personnel will provide assistance and advice on USAjobs, Pathways positions, and summer internships.

Quiz Bowl prelims and finals - Cheer on your favorite teams!

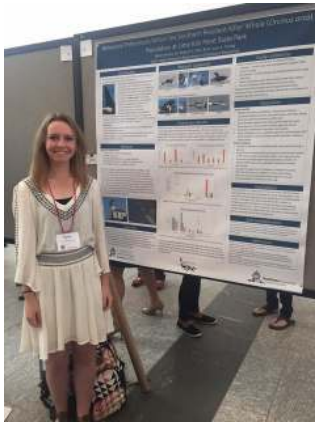
### **Wednesday September 27, 2017**

Resume Review - Bring your resume (hard copy or electronic) and receive feedback from an established wildlife professional

Southwest Sendoff Networking Event – Seek out the presenters and professionals who left an impression on you during the conference and ask for their advice as you embark on a bright future as a wildlife professional.

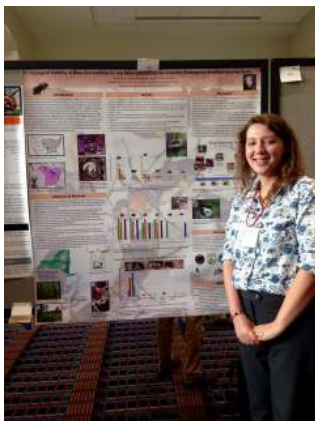
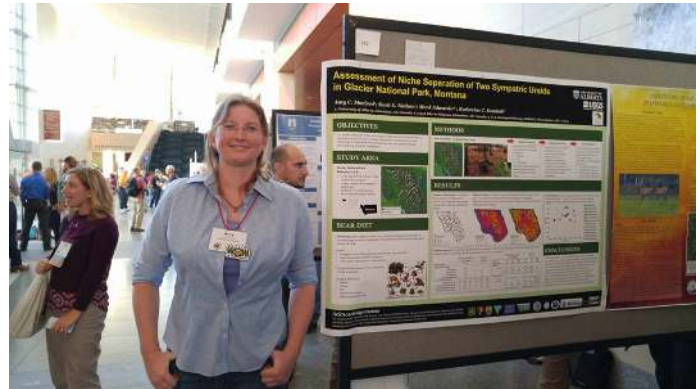
Check out the [detailed schedule](#) online. Event times are still subject to change!

## SDWG members present fascinating work at Annual Conferences!



Rylee Jensen (left) studies behavioral preferences within the Southern Resident killer whale population of Washington state, looking at the frequency and type of behaviors across sex and age classes.

Amy Macleod (right), a masters student at University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada researches the diet of grizzly and black bears in Glacier National Park, Montana using stable isotope analysis on bear hair.



Through SUNY Cobleskill, Briana All (left) investigated potential reintroduction sites in two habitat types for the federally endangered American burying beetle.

Join the Conference conversation on Twitter!

Follow @wildlifesociety!



**Lauren Toivonen** @LaurenToivonen · Jul 10

Replying to @sumdawg @wildlifesociety

Classic move: review each day's sessions and circle the ones you are interested in going to so they stand out. Also be sure to carry water.



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**Summer Higdon** @sumdawg · 2h

Replying to @sumdawg @wildlifesociety

My best tip for eating on a dime (if you don't get per diem) at meetings is to make a grocery store run for cheap breakfasts and lunches.



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**Anna Schneider** @anna\_skunk\_girl · 37m

Replying to @sumdawg @wildlifesociety

Bring business cards...and make them memorable! Be creative! Mine are black and white and have a skunk on them 😊



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