



Early Career Professional Newsletter

Letter from the Chair

Welcome to the maiden voyage of the first newsletter from the Early Career Professional Working Group of The Wildlife Society!

For those of you who are new to the working group, or who are interested in learning more about what we do, we hope this newsletter will serve as a means for you to learn more about what the working group can offer you. The ECPWG aims to provide training opportunities, a communication network, and overall support to every wildlife professional who is beginning their career journey.

This year, we are working hard to improve communications among ECPs and to increase opportunities for training and certification. So far, this year we have dramatically increased our social media activity through frequent Facebook

posts providing tips and tricks on career success, member highlights, job opportunities, and much more. We also have launched a Twitter account in hopes of reaching out to the greater wildlife community. Through this newsletter we hope to further provide you with beneficial information, as well as provide you a means of submitting your own articles on experiences, knowledge, or other information that you feel would be helpful to other ECPs.

We also strive to create new professional development opportunities for ECP members. With the financial support of The Wildlife Society and the 1000 initiative, the ECPWG can now provide scholarships and grants, as well as events and workshops during the annual TWS conference.

In the future, we hope to



work alongside other units of TWS to create and inform ECPs about new professional development opportunities.

We hope you enjoy our first newsletter! If you are interested in writing an article, getting more involved in our working group, or have an issue you would like us to address, please contact any of our officers; we would love to hear from you!

All the Best,
Emily Williams, Chair
Associate Wildlife Biologist ®

Scholarships & Grants

Did you know that the ECPWG provides two monetary awards for early career members of TWS?

Professional Development Grant: Provided on a rolling basis, this grant helps defray costs associated with attending a professional event such as TWS annual conference, local or regional meetings, or relevant workshops. See page 3 for the most recent awardee's experience in Cleveland.

Certification Scholarship:

Meant for early career professionals who are no longer enrolled in school but are lacking courses for an AWB or CWB certification, this scholarship helps cover coursework costs to fill requirements for the certifications.

Find out more about our grants and scholarships [here](#).

Upcoming Events:

- See upcoming TWS section and chapter meetings as well as conclaves in March [here](#).
- Mark your calendar for TWS/AFS Joint Conference in Reno, Nevada—September 29 to October 3, 2019.

What is the ECPWG?

CONTACT US

ecpworkinggroup@gmail.com

CONNECT WITH US

[website](#)
[facebook](#)
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ECPWG officers with TWS staff and TWS president Darren Miller. L-R: Mariah Simmons, Kristi Confortin, Darren Miller, Krysten Strong, Caroline Murphy.

The Early Career Professional Working Group is a working group of The Wildlife Society dedicated to addressing the challenges and opportunities that early career wildlife professionals encounter. “New Professional” members of TWS automatically receive free membership to the ECPWG. We hope to guide the TWS council in making decisions that benefit early career professionals, as well as providing financial support, opportunities to network, and overall increasing accessibility to the wildlife field.

Want to get involved?

If you're interested in helping out with social media posts and engagement, attending ECPWG remote meetings, participating in workshop planning for the TWS 2019 conference, or otherwise getting involved with the ECPWG, please reach out to us at the email above!

ECP Tips & Tricks: Taxes

Tax season is upon us, and the filing deadline is fast approaching! Taxes can be confusing and stressful, especially when doing them for the first time, so we've compiled a few resources and pointers for you.

- Taxes are due April 15th. Make sure you have received W2s from all of your employers—these should have been received by January 31st.
- Did you know that if you made less than \$66,000 this year, you qualify for free tax filing? H&R Block, Turbo Tax, and other companies offer free software. Click [here](#) for the IRS free file software lookup tool.
- If you file your taxes electronically and select direct deposit for your refund, you should be getting it back within 3 weeks of filing.
- Double check your withholding information on your W4s when starting a new job and after major financial events (marriage, new home, etc). You can go back and adjust a current W4 as well. While getting a large refund come tax season is nice, there's no reason you shouldn't be getting that money as you earned it!
- Speaking of refunds, you may want to expect a different refund even if your financial situation has not changed. Due to legislation enacted in 2018, the [Treasury Department projects](#) that compared to last year, about 4 million Americans will receive a smaller refund than last year, and about 4 million more will owe money. Key changes include an increased child tax credit and changes in tax deductions.
- If you owe taxes after filing and can't pay right away, no worries! The IRS provides tax payment plans. Check it out [here](#).
- The IRS will ONLY contact you via the USPS. If you receive any other correspondence (phone call, email, social media) from someone claiming to be the IRS, shoot an email to phishing@irs.gov.

UPDATES FROM TWS ANNUAL CONFERENCE: CLEVELAND



Professional Development Grant: Jackie Gehrt

Last fall, I was the recipient of the Early Career Professional Working Group Professional Development Grant. This grant, worth \$500, covered a substantial amount of my travel costs to attend the annual Wildlife Society Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. This grant is available for those who are interested in attending professional development opportunities whether that be a workshop, training session, or Wildlife Society meeting at any level (State, Regional, or National).

The application process for this grant was very accessible and straight-forward; I had to compile a list of travel costs and submit a statement describing my involvement in and motivation for attending the specific professional development opportunity (in my case the national TWS meeting). Every application received was ordered based on a clearly outlined ranking system, which I found on

the ECPWG website. Because the criteria were explicitly stated, with point values assigned to each criterion, I already had an idea where I ranked among other applicants when I applied. Unlike other grants which seem to be merit-based, this grant gave me a chance to secure funding despite not yet having many professional achievements under my belt.

This grant was a great opportunity for me at that point in my wildlife career. I was in between technician jobs and applying to graduate schools, working as a research assistant, so I did not meet the application criteria for many other grants. I knew attending the national conference would be a great jump-start to my professional career because I could connect with other professionals in my area of interest while also gaining experience with presenting my own research. Although I am now a graduate student, and not

Jackie with a greater sage-grouse she captured and collared.



technically an “Early Career Professional”, I am excited to eventually join this group of hard working, motivated professionals who are trying to make a difference in their areas of expertise while supporting other Early Career Professionals to do the same.

ECWPG Accomplishments



Kelsey Pangman, Krysten Strong, Kristi Confortin, and Silas Fischer at the Student-Professional Networking Event held at TWS 2018.

We had a well-attended meeting at the conference, where we welcomed all newly elected officers (page 5), as well as presented the first professional development grant to Jackie Gehrt. Former chair Krysten Zummo-Strong was the first ECP to give a plenary session. We came up with great plans for the working group, including increased social media involvement, continuing to develop our grants and scholarships provided to ECPs, and planning events and panels geared towards ECPs for the 2019 TWS conference.

Looking Ahead

The 2019 annual conference will be held jointly with the American Fisheries Society in Reno, Nevada from September 29-October 3. Registration opens May 19th!

Leadership Institute: 2017 LI Spotlight

The TWS Leadership Institute (LI) is a unique program geared towards preparing early career professionals for leadership positions both in the workplace and within TWS.

In 2017, ten Early Career Professionals were selected to participate in the 11th year of the LI. These participants were selected from all over the U.S. and Canada due to their promise and experience in leadership and involvement in TWS Sections, Chapters, and Working Groups.

The Class of 2017 met virtually during the spring and summer with conference calls, personal assignments, and group projects. Activities included coming up with recommendations on how to build TWS' professional development programs, and addressing leadership needs within TWS or Sections/Chapters/Working Groups.

The experience culminated in the 2017 Annual Conference in Albuquerque, NM. The group sat in on Council meetings, met with the TWS President and CEO, and had discussions with LI Alumni. Participants also

shared video interviews of conservation leaders and asked advice of a panel of career professionals and leaders from the university and public sectors. The Class of 2017 really valued their experience and continues to be actively involved in TWS.

Stay tuned for info on LI class of 2018 coming in our next newsletter!

Interested in LI?

Applications for the Class of 2019 are **currently open** until March 24th, 2019. You can apply [here](#). Please contact Paul Di Salvo (LI Class of 2017) or Krysten Zummo-Strong (LI Class of 2013) for more information about the LI experience. Their information can be found on our [website](#).



LI Class of 2017 (top to bottom, left to right): Brian Kluever, Sarah Milligan, Chris Lituma, Stacy Elmore, Melissa Merrick, Kyle Daly, Paul Di Salvo, Pam Moore, Marcella Fremgen, Beth Ross.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long is the program? What would be expected of me?

The 2019 LI program will begin in May and conclude at the TWS conference in Reno, NV at the end of September. During this six-month period, participants engage in a series of (remote) activities to strengthen leadership; work collaboratively with each other, alumni, and TWS council mentors; and develop stronger written and verbal communication skills.

I can't afford to attend the conference; can I still apply?

Participants receive complimentary registration and a travel grant to attend the conference.

I am still in school; do I still qualify?

The LI is geared towards ECPs two to three years out of undergraduate or graduate school, working full-time in a wildlife profession.

Do I need to be involved with TWS to qualify?

Preference is given to those with an Associate Wildlife Biologist or Certified Wildlife Biologist certification, and members must be a member in good standing with TWS and state/regional chapters. While heavy involvement in TWS is not required, a history of involvement with TWS, as well as previous leadership and a commitment to wildlife conservation and management are all factors that will be reviewed in applications.

Mentorship for Life Program

Since the 2017 Annual Conference in Albuquerque, NM, members of ECPWG, along with other TWS members, TWS staff, and the TWS council, have been working on a building a mentorship program within the society. This program, deemed Mentorship for Life, now has a draft strategic plan which outlines the goals and visions for the program. This strategic plan was presented to Council at the 2018 Annual Conference, and was the impetus for TWS President Darren Miller and Council in creating the Mentorship for Life Subcommittee of Council, at the request of the ECPWG.

In Albuquerque, the original proposals approved by the TWS Council for the program included allowing

mentorship hours (mentor or mentee) to count towards renewal for Certified Wildlife Biologist certifications (CWB) and Professional Development Certificates.

Based on the great strides the ECPWG made at the Council meeting in 2017, there were several informal meetings during the conference to discuss mentorship. The ECPWG met with several working groups, TWS Staff, Council members, and other interested TWS members to discuss forming a Mentorship Committee.

This new committee is chaired by Paul Di Salvo, Board Member for the ECPWG, and has participation by ECPWG Past Chair Krysten Zummo-Strong, current Co-Chair Kristi Confortin, Council Members Jim Rammaka and John Moriarty, Student

Liaison to Council Colleen Hartel, TWS Staff's Professional Development Coordinator Jamila Blake, TWS Retirees Chair Carl Wolfe, and long-time TWS member Susan Rupp. The group's first task is to revise and finalize the draft strategic plan to lay out a more defined vision of how to implement a formal mentorship program for TWS.

If you are interested in the Mentorship For Life Subcommittee of Council, please reach out to Paul Di Salvo. Additionally, don't forget that you can find a mentor or mentee anytime on the TWS Members Portal (where you sign-in to renew your membership). You can use the Member's Directory to search people based on location, whether they are willing to be a mentor, and career focus. You can even message them directly through the website.

"The strategic plan presented to Council at the 2018 Annual Conference was the impetus for creating the Mentorship For Life Subcommittee."



TWS approves creation of a Mentorship ad-hoc committee at TWS annual conference in Cleveland.



Contact Paul Di Salvo, chair of the TWS Mentorship Committee, for any questions about the Mentorship for Life Program at pdisalvo25@gmail.com.

Meet the Officers

[Click here for more information about our officers.](#)

Emily Williams

Chair



Kristi Confortin

Co-Chair



Krysten Zummo-Strong

Past Chair



Jonathan Trudeau

Secretary



Sarah Clark

Treasurer



Yasmine Hentati

Communications Coordinator



At-Large Board Members

John Vanek



Julia Nawrocki



Paul Di Salvo



Rob Lewis



Jason Matthews



Anna Butler



Ben Olsen



Reflections from a Past Chair

By Maggi Sliwinski

I first joined The Wildlife Society back in 2011, the year that the annual conference was being held in Hawaii. I bet TWS saw a big jump in membership that year. My graduate lab was in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and we all decided that we could not miss a chance to head south to tropical Hawaii. It also didn't hurt that a few of us got grants to help cover our travel costs (we were still students, after all!). When the meeting finally came around in October that year, I was freshly out of graduate school with a Master's degree in hand. Given that this was my first big conference, I took every opportunity I could to network in low-stress situations. For example, I quickly found that working group meetings were a better place for me to network than the big, official "networking events."

We keep our [website](#) up-to-date with useful information and stories from fellow early career professionals, including stories on parental leave and tips for winter field work. Our website also has information that can be used to create local benefits for early career professionals; sometimes it's hard for early career professionals to join in at the national level so we encourage them to stay involved locally. Because local chapters and sections sometimes don't have activities geared towards new professionals, we offer resources to make it easier to get such activities on the agenda. We have details on workshops hosted by us and other groups, as well as programs on offer by some sections (like new professional scholarships and grants). Be sure to visit our website and keep up with new posts through the weekly eWildlifer newsletter!