

TWS COUNCIL REPORT

Bob Lanka, Central Mountains and Plains Section Representative

TWS Council met March 8-9 in association with the 85th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Omaha, NE. Even as we met in Omaha a lot was changing and certainly a lot has changed since then. After the conclusion of the North American, one of our council members, NE Section Representative Paul Johansen, tested positive for Covid 19. Very glad to report that Paul is OK and has since recovered. No other member of Council or TWS Staff has tested positive. We had a productive meeting, passed the FY21 budget and many other things that were really important at the time. Amazing how quickly perspectives on what is and isn't important change.

Time self-isolating after the Council meeting and isolating/social distancing in general since then has provided me an opportunity to reflect and think. I have thought about what is the proper perspective given our current situation? My mom turned 97 the end of January. Decided it was finally time to give up driving. I wish all of you the longevity and health she has enjoyed. Hope some of those longevity genes passed on to her baby, me. But at 97, there can be no doubt she has perspective. She was born just after the end of WWI and the 1918 worldwide flu pandemic. She didn't live through either but her folks and brothers did. Amazing they all lived since best estimates put the death toll in the U.S. from the 1918 flu at 675,000 and worldwide at 50 million <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/1918-pandemic-history.htm>. She lived through the Great Depression (September 1929 – 1939) when U.S. unemployment hit 24.9% <https://www.ushistory.org/us/48.asp>. She and her six brothers (5 of whom served) lived through WWII and the rationing associated with it here on the home front. During that war she became "Rosy the Riveter" building portable radio equipment used by the GIs at the Western Electric plant in Cicero, IL just outside Chicago https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawthorne_Works, the place where she and dad first met. If you have never seen this video on military and civilian deaths in WWII, it is worth your time and may leave you speechless as it did me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwKPFT-RioU>. She lived through the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War and every war since, Sputnik and the rise and fall of McCarthyism, the Polio epidemic of the 1950s https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_polio, the assassination of one president, the impeachment and resignation of another, landing a man on the moon and bringing him safely home again, the unrest of the 1960s and the passage of landmark civil rights and environmental legislation. And now she is living through the current pandemic. Perspective is a hard thing to have when the person who gets sick or dies from Covid 19 is a loved one. It is also hard while this event is ongoing to even discuss perspective gained from past experience without coming across as crass. But I believe it is important for each of us to remember that over the past 100 years there have been many instances of uncertainty in our country and around the world. Will all of us doing our part, our species will find a way through this most recent example and I hope come through stronger and more united.

I have also thought a lot about the meaning of the word independent in all its forms. Can't tell you how many conversations I have had over the years where independence was equated to an individual's financial ability to buy things. If nothing else, this pandemic should make absolutely clear that

individuals of our species are not at all independent but are likely the most interdependent species on the planet. Run low on TP lately? Money isn't much good if there are no goods on the shelf. Others produce most if not all of the food we eat, still others harvest and process that food so it can be delivered to our local grocer, they produce the clothes we wear, the materials needed for the homes we live in, the fuel needed to keep those homes warm and to power transportation, they mine the materials necessary for microprocessor technology and others still are our first responders, our doctors and nurses, our teachers, our religious and political leaders and those who lift the human spirit through art, music and literature. Indeed, even in this time of worldwide uncertainty, we all have a lot to be thankful for. A big part of our thanks must go out to the millions and possibly billions of people all around our planet who make our lives possible.

The fate of our Annual Conference (9/27-10/1 in Louisville, KY) will depend upon how this pandemic plays out. I have no idea what may happen other than to say that any decision to hold, delay or not hold our Conference will be based on what TWS needs to do for our members. That decision will be based on the best medical advice available. Keep your eye on the eWildlifer and the TWS Website for further details. In the meantime, take a moment to let those closest to you know that you love them and to thank all those out there who work hard every day so that each of us can pursue our passion for wildlife and wild places Thanks for all you do.