

TWS-IDEA WORKING GROUP Listening Session: Oct 21, 2020. 1-2:30 Pacific Time

Meeting Notes:

Overview of Inclusion Diversity Equity and Awareness Working Group (IDEA WG): Within TWS, support awareness, support, education, around IDEA, home of WOW and Out in the Field.

Open up convo within wildlife profession, not just TWS. Our WG is subset of TWS. Annual dues are 5-10\$ depending on career stage. More about TWS EDI initiatives and info at wildlife.org/dei

BIPOC= Black, Indigenous and People of Color
DEI= diversity, equity and inclusion (sometimes abbreviated EDI)
HBCU= historically black colleges and universities
URM= underrepresented minority
WOW= women of wildlife

24 participants as of 1:05.

Listening sessions to engage with membership, get finger on pulse of what people involved in TWS are feeling about these issues. First session on Oct 7 to advance EDI when planning conferences and meetings; and this one more on racial inequities. Forum to start/continue some of these conversations. Curious where people are at now, how the WG can best provide assistance and forum for conversations. Feedback to leadership like conference location and dates, and in wake of brutality and larger events within society, where we go from here, especially since TWS is overwhelmingly White.

TWS executive committee will be on call at beginning, but then to leave. Not recording to allay concerns about potential miscommunications. But we are taking minutes without individual or organizational identities. Notes will be publicly accessible online in the coming weeks.

Ice breaker: what brings you here today?

- Great that TWS is continuing to think about these things, including momentum from TWS annual national meeting (the panel on dismantling systemic racism).
- Faculty member at uni and other professional society: opportunity to collab and not duplicate to make more progress forward.
- In chat, someone says they are hoping to hear more about how TWS and OiTF can do more to represent, include, and each out to BIPIC, including BIPOC LGBTQ+ wildlifers.
- In chat, someone says here to know what TWS needs to do and how they can help
- Grad student in chat says they wants to help with fish and wildlife fields, including OiTF

Anybody want to share their background and identity, and how that relates to their professional capacity?

- Somebody said they're trying to get AFS on our level; appreciate that this listening session is open to people who are not current TWS members

For those attended annual meeting and panel on systemic racism, what stuck out to you?

- One thing that motivated somebody was their field work experience, and concern about their safety, and then hearing similar stories come out after the central park incident and black birders week. How do I need to prepare in ways that other people don't?
- Quotes: "Do I need a white man chaperone with me as I do my job? Can I even work here?" "How are we still not feeling safe in 2020"
- The issue of safety in the field has come up a lot this fall, and interest in developing resources for this. As a standalone book, or part of the wildlife techniques manual. If you are interested in supporting/providing/expertise, please reach out to Jenn/Carol Chambers. Update: Kathy Granillo may be editing this book; you can also reach out to her
- Someone said that, as a white guy who spent his whole life in the outdoors, considering their personal life. An unfortunate situation, including the rural west with confederate flags. Eye opening for this person.
- In chat: Somebody who has benefitted from white privilege due to colonial and ethnic associations. This has influenced my learning about the importance of diversity. Putting aside my personal identity struggles to raise up other groups whose struggles are more pressing has become a personal and now professional calling. Thank you for providing this space and inspiration to improve the wildlife profession.
- In chat: Re: field safety, there is a new publication out by two Black ornithologists addressing strategies for minimizing risk of adverse field experiences
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-01328-5>
- In chat: as a faculty advisor, this person could support their students by providing a satellite phone, go with students, not do field work in unsafe places because science should not be more important than safety. Also, that nobody should feel more or less safe than someone else because we all have equal worth and ensure everyone can do their best work.

Others looking at DEI within wildlife profession as a research topic or a "side"-project? Barriers at recruiting and retaining diversity?

- Scholarships that award privilege are problematic.
 - o Why is it that we get the same people applying the same year and get awarded each year?
 - o How does the rewarding/granting process advance or provide barriers to DEI?
- What about scholarships so that students from underrepresented backgrounds can "volunteer" for field positions? That is a HUGE barrier to entry
- A main barrier is lack of scholarships or paid internships.
- Efforts in Canada to develop metrics for early-career granting programs to better self assess as well as for better transparency in the eyes of the larger scientific community when it comes to increasing diversity and equity in those who get grants and are funded
- Self nomination approach can be a barrier. Certain people/groups of people may feel more uncomfortable self-promoting. Is there another way to go about it? Could faculty nominate people who would be unlikely to self-promote?
- Reaching out to historically black and tribal campuses. Land grant and R1 unis. Wonder if fruitful in very specific programs at those other campuses. This person is going to try to

pay attention to that. Lots of HBCUs in the south are land grant, so that may facilitate gov't relationships. This is an opportunity we really need to look into.

- Certain universities have good relationships with diverse communities in their local area (e.g. some campuses of Texas A&M)- can we look at these as models for success? Great to work with people who are passionate about improving their local communities and want to stay/develop careers in that area
- Wildlife department at Humboldt State has funded a new speaker series, called Our Next Generation Wildlife EcoSeries, which highlights the achievements and amplifies the voices of early career wildlife biologists and next generation of scientists. Systematic racism continues to impose barriers for BIPOC seeking careers in natural resources. This speaker series will not only spotlight the professional achievements of BIPOC scientists who are role models for this next generation, it will also serve as a forum to discuss how our field can move forward to reduce barriers and become a more inclusive community. contact Frank Fogarty (faf7@humboldt.edu) with any questions. They are open to the public.
- In southern/Hispanic serving institution in TX: USDA was really interested in diversity and so they funded a lot of grad students who didn't want to leave the geographic area due to kinship ties. Very successful. ~30 students that went through it.
<https://nrct.nmsu.edu/> and <https://www.ncipmc.org/connection/?p=3992>
- Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) != HBCU. Natural resources career track with USDA in NM. Pipeline to USDA, Forest service, BLM, etc
- Agreeing with comment about scholarship but this application process assumes applicants are feeling welcome. But confidence in getting awarded can impact, e.g., perception of lack of worth. (Something?) about honor system, building trust, and to waive fee (for something?). When reaching out to people about a scholarship opportunity, maybe say you'd be happy to write a letter of rec, or a sample of what they would say in their support.
 - o In addition to feeling unqualified, a perhaps more prevalent issue is that they just don't ever see these opportunities. there's a problem with initial access/reach to diverse groups
 - o Also are we making assumption that people who aren't in our applicant pools for scholarships or other opportunities WANT to be there? Maybe they don't
 - o the ECPWG is grappling with this too, because we want to better serve all our ECP wildlifers but based on a survey we did we're only reaching largely white ECPs
 - o We had an African American female student turn down a wildlife-related internship with potential for longer-term career placement that we thought was reasonably well-paid (\$0.50 more per hours than what they accepted). Potentially concerns about being the only Black person in the field, how to communicate what the profession is to their family/social network (you do what???), committing to a longer-term career while still learning about the profession, etc. Made us rethink how inclusion needs to extend to social networks (people may feel like they aren't just the only one in the field, but the only one in the family as well doing wildlife work) and underscores the importance of representation and inclusion efforts.

- a welcoming/inclusive environment is something we need to focus on too. 2019 TWS LI cohort - presented information to try to offer at least some DEI training to TWS members.
- Paid Internships for Underrepresented groups-starting in high school gives the youth the experience they need and get their feet "wet" and therefore competitive to gain a technician position or research opportunities in colleges
- Some TWS sections do 3-week field courses for credit to help expose folks to wildlife research and get experience that they may miss in traditional biology programs- could we expand outreach for these courses to HBCUs, BIPOC, etc. and offer scholarships to reduce economic barriers to participation? We know that experiential courses are what excites many students about pursuing wildlife

Could/should TWS should follow suit of other professional societies and provide reduced or free memberships or registration to BIPOC?

- o Could be in TWS Diversity and Inclusion Strategic plan that is under development by TWS staff (Jamila and Mariah leading). That's not on/off table, but could be discussed in coming months. We want the strategic plan that is short , sweet, impactful, and roll out in 6months. So it won't be a long-drawn out practice and we can implement actions soon.
- o What about other marginalized groups, like people with disabilities? Shouldn't be selectively inclusive.
- o field courses to give students to exposure to techniques that they may not have had experience in, potentially because they switched to this profession. Scholarships to these field courses that have helped some see what this profession is about and then help them get into the careers, through subsequent grad schools. Hadn't really thought about who this targets, really only native and bipoc.
- o The organizer of the SE field course also said the money aspect is the biggest barrier to potential students; but they may also be missing out on pay throughout the summer because they may not be able to take on a summer job either
- o The NC Chapter offered a scholarship to the SE field course with a lot of promotion but didn't get any applications. Maybe people don't/didn't apply because they don't think they are qualified.
- o A recent paper on field courses:
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169534720302202?dgcid=ra-ven_sd_via_email

Not just training but also unpaid/underpaid experiences early in the career that they feel were necessary to break into the field.

- ECWG has been talking about this for years. Initially trying to get TWS to put out some formal statement that does not condone those positions. And then maybe work with Texas A&M job board (and others), which doesn't really have a vetting process for the things being posted to the jobs board. And some posts are also blatantly sexist. So ECWG is working on this.
- Example of removal of job posting from national boards that was inconsistent with national orgs' diversity and inclusion statements:
<https://www.geosociety.org/gsatoday/groundwork/G429GW/GSATG429GW.pdf>

- Can TWS to point undergraduates from diverse groups toward wildlife-oriented Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) programs through NSF which are paid (usually even better than tech positions)?
- Needs a clear statement from TWS that "reducing barriers" is not "lowering the bar"
- Could the mentoring program be a method of getting info out to early career professionals and students? If all mentors were sent the info to share?
- Providing housing for interns or technicians would help. That is a major barrier because most students apply for these positions in different states
- A recent survey at Clemson, with goal to identify barriers to field experiences and internships, but also values. IDEAWG helped sponsor incentives to encourage participation in the survey. Sarah Bombaci was lead author in talk at annual meeting. Found that we need to pay people more, but to retain 90% nonwhite applicants, you have to pay them \$20/hr. There's limited money in our field so we need to think about how to build that into grants. A paper is coming out- Maybe a popular press article for TWS would be a good complement?

1:02 Hours in – tws exec committee left room

Other comments or feedback?

- Ableism and selective inclusion. Change from EGWDG to IDEAWG is a start.
 - o Someone said they I may no longer be an excluded demographic of this group. The WG can do better and include disabilities as a URM and not selective inclusion of URMs
 - o I have always felt an exclusion or resistance for including the support of those with disabilities.
 - o Someone else also thought the name change was good and a fantastic step forward.
 - o There seem to be many in TWS with disabilities who keep it an unknown "identity in the closet"
 - o Transparent identity could really desensitize TWS members to Ableism
 - o when a description of URMs includes a list of URMs passive desensitization can be achieved just by placing less discussed URMs first on the list in descriptions
- the exclusion experience though unintended is also a preview to what other POC see/perceive/feel when they are hesitant to even join TWS
- If you're truly inclusive you shouldn't need to create new working groups etc to accommodate them. It should be about reducing barriers of ALL people, independent of what marginalized identities they may have.
- If you have an idea for a TWS annual symposium let us know.
- ASL for every webinar/meeting/call/conference talks is a great idea. Like during Black Mammalogists Week.
 - o Or at a very minimum transcription for recordings
 - o place text within the image as transcribing it is not possible
 - o Alt text works great but doesn't work on text from within an image
 - o section 508 compliance; IDEAWG could help with a workshop on making presentations accessible. Make a fact sheet available online?
- socioeconomic background is another area where inclusion can improve

- Someone asked what does the IDEAWG see moving forward as change for improving inclusion?
 - o Have more engagement with members throughout the year through different forums. Not just the annual meeting. WG has ~170 members; what topics are most important to them, and provide opportunities to support people in those areas, i.e, OiTF in the last 18 months
- Telling stories helps a lot. Like Winnie Kessler's presentation.
 - o <https://storieshappeninforests.com/>
 - o <https://www.pictureascientist.com/>
 - o USGS Step Up Program.
 - o New TWS program: Wildlife vocalizations (see wildlife.org/dei)
- How much interconnectivity is there between TWS WGs?
 - o There is active ongoing work to improve collaborations across WGs

Last Impressions

- social media is important. TWS and OiTF are doing well. Being visible helps people feel like it is approachable.
- ableism; those who are comfortable could be highlighted to increase visible representation.
- Plug for new TWS initiative: wildlife vocalizations. Self nominate or nominate someone else.
- General feedback: don't know what this WG does, maybe just ignorance. Way to get regular comms
 - o Frequency and medium of communication is forefront of topic in the upcoming IDEAWG board meeting- stay tuned!
- Would/could it be possible to anonymously record and/or collate some of the stories of discrimination, inequity, or exclusion to show some of these issues that TWS members have faced. personal stories really effective, especially for people who might not have experienced such a situation.
 - o Anonymity would open that door of oppression way more easily
 - o Yes, and follow that up with 'here's what we're doing about it'.
 - o then the stories can act also as feedback for goals for change
 - o Also careful about risk of retraumatizing.
- Representation matters and speak volumes. TWS being open and outspoken about where it stands in these issues is important!
- Thank you for providing this session. I look forward to getting more involved with TWS WGs.
- wildlife.org/ideawg/news for meeting minutes
- IDEAWG chair: jmalpass@usgs.gov or jennmizen@gmail.com; please feel free to reach out. Or contact any board member.
- For future calls, look into easier zoom access, some had difficulty with Canadian phone number from US
- Thank you! 5:33 EDT. End.