

Although these are strange times, the University of Wyoming's Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society has not let the pandemic stop us from learning about wildlife biology and future careers. Using a variety of resources, we have been able to involve students in multiple activities. These include biweekly virtual meetings centered around guest speakers in the wildlife field as well as social media engagement with a wildlife photo contest. Due to a lack of face to face meetings, officers in The Wildlife Society were able to plan Zoom meetings with unique speakers we would not have had the opportunity to hear from at a normal meeting. As of now we have had three meetings with an array of guest presenters.

Our first speaker was Carmen Daggett, a regional biologist in the northernmost region of Alaska. She discussed some of her job duties which included annual wildlife surveys, working with caribou, moose, and wolves. Other responsibilities included report writing and permit reviews. She also talked about the importance of community outreach and educating the general public. Daggett discussed how she adapted to working in rural Alaska and how it's different from what most people are used to. Flexibility and respect were key traits that helped her make the most of where she was.

The next speaker was Rob Ogden, a Professor at the University of Edinburgh and the director of TRACE Wildlife Forensics Network. He explained how wildlife forensics is used in wildlife law enforcement and some of the challenges associated with it. Ogden spoke about the processes involved in wildlife forensics and techniques to collect data, especially DNA. He explained that DNA collection and testing is very important in determining species ID and creating tools for law enforcement to identify illegal products. DNA is also used to look at different geographic locations of wildlife populations to discover trade routes and see where animals were harvested.

Finally, our last meeting focused on career development and discussed how to find a job, write a resume, and cover letter. Our speaker Jake Marden shared a variety of resources for where to find job postings. He also discussed important tips on writing a cover letter, such as proof reading and making it specific for your desired job. Marden also showed examples of resumes and showed us the aspects that made them stand out. Lastly, he gave advice for general interview skills to help in the soon approaching job-hunting season.

Covid-19 has had a dramatic effect on our organization and when I asked our president, Jake Marden about his experiences this past year he told me, “As far as Covid struggles go, trying to keep up on engagement with members has been the hardest obstacle we have had to overcome. With the university’s limits, we haven't been able to do most of the annual events and in-person events have become a lot harder to host.” Even though this year is one for the history books, I believe the pandemic has allowed our Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society to become more connected with people we would not have been able to meet and learn from.