

Southwest Section Newsletter

Spring 2021 - Vol. 12 Issue #1



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President's Message

James Cain - 2021 President SW Section of The Wildlife Society

It is my pleasure to serve as the current president of the Southwest Section of The Wildlife Society. I hope my first message as president finds you and your family healthy and safe. The past year has brought challenges for all of us, both personal and professional. We all had to make a lot of adjustments to our routines at work and with family. I for one, am cautiously optimistic that this year we will get back to something that at least more closely resembles our normal routine. I am personally really looking forward to getting out in the field (a lot) with my graduate students this season, attending in-person meetings, and gathering with friends and family. Although I admit that I will miss being able to attend meetings in gym shorts and flip flops!



I would like to welcome **Whitney Gann** (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) and **Masahiro "Masa" Ohnishi** (Texas A&M University-Kingsville) to the board this year, Whitney is now president-elect, and Masa was elected as Secretary in February. **Erika Nowak** (Northern Arizona University) will continue on the board as Treasurer and **Fidel Hernández** (Texas A&M University-Kingsville) will transition to past president. I would also like to thank **Casey Cardinal** (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish) for her service as secretary

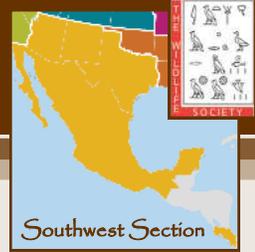
Our scholarship program continued this year and there were 17 applicants for the Southwest Section Graduate Student Scholarship. We had a lot of really good applicants and the board had a difficult decision. We awarded the 2021 scholarship to **Amanda Veals**, a Ph.D. student at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. You can read more about Amanda and her dissertation work below in the newsletter. The board also voted to help Jacob Locke offset some of the application costs for certification as an Associate Wildlife Biologist. If you are a graduate student in need of free money, keep an eye out later this year for an announcement on the Southwest Section Graduate Student Scholarship. Also, if you are a



Current Members

AZ	NM	TX	Int	Oth
62	57	103	1	53

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James Cain - 2021 President SW Section of The Wildlife Society

recently graduated student and need assistance with the fees associated with your Associate Wildlife Biologist application, send me an email and we can discuss the application process for fee assistance through the Southwest Section.

The process of creating a Mexico Chapter of TWS moved forward over the past year. The Mexico Chapter was tentatively approved by council pending completion of the appropriate legal paperwork in both Mexico and in the U.S. Luis Tarango and **Raul Valdez** are taking the lead on these efforts in Mexico, with Cameron Kovack assisting with the appropriate paperwork at TWS. Once all the paperwork is completed and the ink is dry, the Mexico Chapter will officially become part of TWS and the Southwest Section.

As most of you know, all chapter meetings in the Southwest Section and the TWS Annual Conference went virtual this year. All the meetings were relatively well-attended and generally successful, all things considered. I know the organizers of the Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas chapter meetings are hoping conditions will allow for in-person meetings next February. Given the logistics and funding involved in TWS Annual Conference, the TWS board has already decided to hold the 2021 meeting online as well, with the 2022 conference scheduled to be held in Spokane, Washington.

One final thing to mention is that **Misty Sumner** is looking to stepdown from her role as newsletter editor after this year. If you have any interest in helping out with the newsletter, or running for a position on the board of the Southwest Section, please send me an email: jwcain@nmsu.edu.

I hope you all have a less chaotic and productive year in 2021, one with far fewer Zoom meetings!



Sunset on La Plata Mountains.
Photo courtesy
Jim Ramakka.

From the Board

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National News

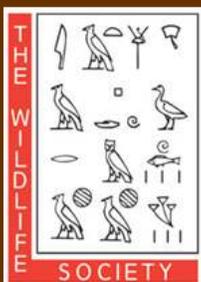
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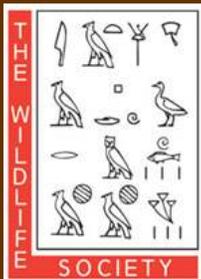


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Thank you to those that contributed to this newsletter: **James Cain, Jim Ramakka, Amanda Veal, and Joseph Richards.**

We need photos and/or articles from you!

Please contribute to our next newsletter. Consider submitting articles or photos on work related adventures, conservation happenings, or any topics of interest to Southwest Section members.

Deadline for the Fall newsletter articles is **August 1.**

Southwest Section News



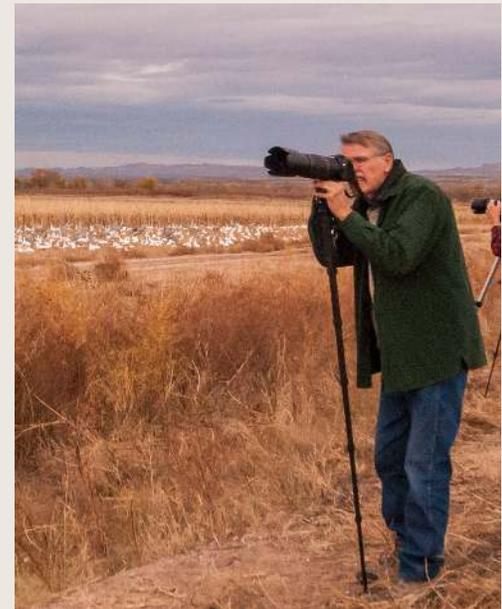
Southwest Section Tracks

Jim Ramakka - Southwest Section Representative To Council

I am constantly amazed by the effort and dedication that the officers committee members of the state chapters put into their annual chapter meetings. That was certainly apparent during this year's virtual business meetings.

During those meetings I presented a summary of TWS Council activities over the past 12 months. The theme of my presentation was that, while The Wildlife Society started 2020 in great shape, the following months generated some stressful times. Higher-than-expected attendance and lower than budgeted expenses for our joint meeting with AFS in Reno in 2019, along with unexpected bequests from non-members enabled us to start the year with a budget surplus of \$600,000. Council had begun discussing the best use of those funds to benefit the membership when we were confronted with the onset of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Within just a few months, membership renewals were declining, returns on investment accounts were dropping, and several partners who contributed funds to our Annual Meetings were considering withdrawing or reducing support.

In response to these developments, during our March 2020 Meeting, Council decided to take a cautious approach to any new discretionary spending for FY21 and 22 while waiting for a return to greater stability in the economy. During a Special Meeting in May, it was apparent that we would have to cancel our in-person Annual Meeting scheduled for Louisville. Fortunately, our CEO, Ed Thompson, was able to negotiate what would have been up to \$400,000 in contract cancellation penalties down to zero, provided we agreed to hold our 2023 Annual Meeting in Louisville. Council agreed to that strategy and asked TWS Staff to begin planning for a virtual meeting in 2020. Due to the hard work of TWS staff, contractors, and volunteers, our first ever Virtual Annual Meeting was a great success with over 2,500 attendees. We began to breathe a little easier.



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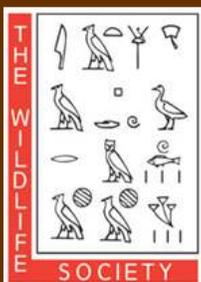
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Jim Ramakka - Southwest Section Representative To Council

Council held out hope that we could return to a normal meeting mode for our 2021 Annual Meeting. However, with continued uncertainty as to when more normal travel would return and social distancing restrictions might be lifted, Council decided during a Special Meeting in November, to continue with the virtual meeting mode for this year's meeting originally scheduled for November in Baltimore. We are still planning to have an in-person gathering in Spokane in 2022. At some point we may move to a hybrid model involving both virtual and in-person components, but we will wait to see what options might evolve in the future.

During our most recent Special Meeting on January 25th, Council reviewed a report of the Policy Priorities Committee that included an analysis of input from Chapters and Sections. Based on that input, we approved the following Policy Priorities for 2021-22:

- Continue efforts toward passage of Recovering America's Wildlife Act.
- Support funding for U.S. federal cooperative science programs (Coop Fish and Wildlife Research Units, Climate Adaptation Science Centers, and other similar programs).
- Support adequate funding for U.S. federal land management agencies (USWS Refuges, BLM, FS)
- Support efforts to restore previous interpretation of "take" under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- Encourage and support Chapter, Section, working groups to continue engagement in Policy issues through the Conservation Affairs Network



Partially leucistic Dark-eyed Junco.
Photo courtesy Jim Ramakka.

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Jim Ramakka - Southwest Section Representative To Council

These priorities for approaching policy issues as well as TWS planning and programing efforts include an overarching commitment to consider Sustainability, Climate effects, and to continue efforts toward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Council will meet virtually for its Spring Meeting on March 6 and 7. We will review committee reports, FY21 Budget and Operations Plan progress, and will decide on the specifics of the FY22 Budget and Operation Plans.

Despite all of the stress and uncertainty of the past months, The Wildlife Society remains in a good financial position. A Payroll Protection Plan Loan helped cover operational costs, so it wasn't necessary to withdraw funds from our contingency backup account. Membership, which had declined early in the year, has resumed growing and presently stands at its highest level ever at 11,123 paid members plus 515 give back members. However, we remain concerned about the effects of continued educational and economic disruption on student membership. Hopefully, next year will bring more stability.

Finally, at the close of one of this year's Chapter Business Meetings, we paused to remember old friends we lost since we had last gathered. We also talked about how important TWS meetings have been for building, not just professional connections, but personal friendships that have lasted over the years. It provided a reminder that we wildlifers are a unique group of men and women dedicated to our chosen profession. I am confident, as we transition into whatever the "New Normal" may be, that we will all continue to support each other and The Wildlife Society's mission: "To inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation."

Best wishes for a safe and productive Spring and, as always, please contact me with any concerns or issues you wish to have discussed by Council.

Jim



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Misty Sumner – Co-editor SWS Newsletter

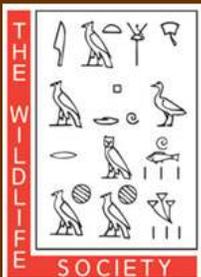
Friday, March 19, 2021 Representative Debra Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo, was sworn in as the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. She is the first Native American Cabinet secretary in U.S. history.

As secretary of the Interior, Haaland will influence the efforts we as natural resource managers make as she oversees the country's natural resources and leads the agency which manages nearly 500 million acres of land, one-fifth of the surface area of the United States.

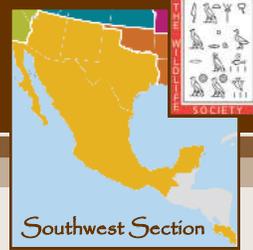


United States Department of the Interior Secretary Debra Haaland
Photo courtesy US DOI

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Student News

Amanda Veals - 2021 Recipient of SWS TWS Graduate Student

I grew up in the suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona to parents that encouraged my love of nature. I made my way to the University of Arizona (U of A) to pursue a degree I was passionate about. I received my Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology with a minor in Natural Resources in 2014. I stayed at the U of A to pursue my Master of Science in Wildlife Conservation and Management in 2018. For the last three years I have been working towards my Doctorate in Wildlife Science at Texas A&M University-Kingsville with Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. My professional training began in the Southwest and I plan to remain in the region for a majority of my career.



Amanda Veals holding a recently collared gray fox from her master's work. Photo courtesy Mercer Lawling.

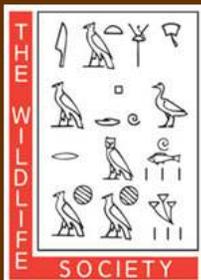
My career in the wildlife conservation and management field has been greatly influenced by The Wildlife Society, particularly the Southwestern Section. Beginning as an undergraduate and continuing as a graduate student, I have been an active member of Women of Wildlife. My involvement with TWS at the university, state, and section levels helped me gain valuable skills and connections that eventually led to my master's position.

I studied the spatial ecology of gray foxes in Southeastern Arizona to inform rabies management for my master's thesis under **Dr. John Koprowski**.

During my degree, I also worked for the Mt. Graham red squirrel monitoring project. I spent much of my time working in the mountains of Arizona, growing to care for the unique environment and species even more.



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Student News

Amanda Veals - 2021 Recipient of SWS TWS Graduate Student

I moved to Texas just over three years ago to pursue my PhD and continue a career dedicated to research, conservation, and management of wildlife. I had always heard great things about the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. When I learned of a PhD project under Dr. Michael Tewes studying the impacts roads have on the spatial ecology of an endangered carnivore, I just couldn't pass up the opportunity.

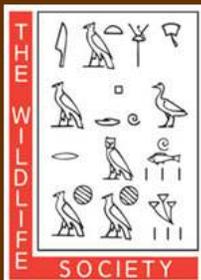
I am a part of a larger research grant funded by Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) to answer questions related to ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*) ecology and road mortality. Vehicle collisions have been cited as the leading source of mortality for the critically endangered ocelot in south Texas. It is estimated that less than 80 individuals remain in the United States, all concentrated in two isolated breeding populations in southern Texas. TXDOT is interested in learning more about where they could place wildlife crossing structures to mitigate vehicle collisions with the ocelot.

My dissertation focuses on the resource selection and landscape connectivity of the ocelot in south Texas. We used a 35-year telemetry dataset collected from 78 radio-collared adult ocelots across the two populations. We wanted to understand what aspects of woody vegetation cover ocelots select for and how roads may influence that selection. We examined use of resources across multiple spatial and temporal scales to see how that use may change as habitat availability decreases and barriers to movement (roads) increase on the landscape across 35 years.

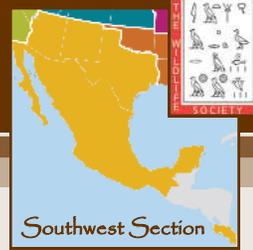
Our results support previous work showing that ocelots use areas with large, dense patches of woody cover. We also found that roads play a significant role in how ocelot use of the landscape. Ocelots will avoid areas near large roads with much traffic. We found that as time progressed over our 35-year dataset, available habitat decreased and roads increased on the landscape. As we progressed through time, we found that roads played an increasingly important role in ocelot use and movement across the landscape.



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Amanda Veals - 2021 Recipient of SWS TWS Graduate Student

From our top resource selection model, we were able to map this change in predicted ocelot occurrence on the landscape across time. Areas with high probability of use were further from roads and in areas where there is a lot of intact woody habitat. We will use the models to identify areas ocelots will likely move across the landscape and, specifically, where they are likely to cross roads. By understanding how ocelot behavior changes over time, particularly in relation to woody cover and roads, we can develop insights into how ocelots will respond to future road networks and potential road crossing structures. We will continue to examine the role roads play in ocelot habitat use to mitigate future road mortality

Additionally, we are examining resource use at the 3rd order (within home range spatial scale) and examining functional responses. Functional responses take into account individual heterogeneity in the behavioral response an animal exhibits as a resource changes in availability. Preliminary findings indicate that we cannot definitively conclude behavioral patterns as functional responses to habitat cover or road types. Despite not showing functional responses, ocelot demonstrated behavioral patterns to vegetation cover as expected for a habitat specialists and roads still played a large role in habitat use. Our assessment of functional responses within home ranges likely demonstrates that higher order selection processes likely truncate resource gradients within home ranges such that ocelots generally exhibit proportional habitat use.

The goal of my dissertation is to help inform future road crossing structures to help mitigate ocelot-vehicle collisions and increase landscape permeability for this critically endangered species. Ocelots are declining rapidly in south Texas, and I hope we can provide meaningful solutions to the problems this species faces for TXDOT.

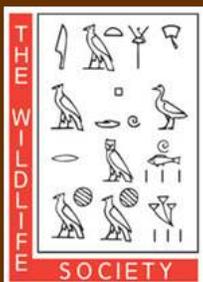


Male ocelot on the East Foundation El Sauz Ranch in South Texas.

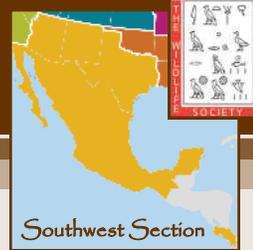
Photo credit East Foundation and Cesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute.



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Student News

Joseph Richards - Texas A&M University WFSC '22

This past month, The Wildlife Society's Student Development Working Group concluded the Student Chapter BioBlitz Competition— the first ever to be held in the organization's history. The nationwide contest used a citizen science application called iNaturalist to collect photograph observations of wildlife species from individual members. Competing with all TWS student chapters from across the country, the Texas A&M University Student Chapter was recognized for documenting the most research-grade observations in June, July, and the second-most for August.

The contest featured member's observations for the months of June, July, August, and September. Student members uploaded their photographs of any species taxa including plants, animals, and fungi using the iNaturalist app. The uploader identified their species, and that observation is confirmed by researchers, professionals, and experts. An observation must be confirmed by another iNaturalist user in order to be considered research-grade. As of this month, the official Texas A&M University (TAMU) student chapter page documented over 13,600 observations and 2,600 species from 11 states (Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Arkansas, Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alaska).

As President of the TAMU Student Chapter of TWS, I am proud of our student chapter and their participation in the national BioBlitz. With challenges presented our members and all wildlifers this year, I was glad to promote this opportunity for our members to collaborate and compete with our peers. As students of wildlife, the BioBlitz competition has afforded us the opportunity to pause, observe, and appreciate the grand diversity of species all around us.

TAMU TWS student documents a golden silk spider for the National BioBlitz competition at Brazos Bend State Park, Needville, Texas.

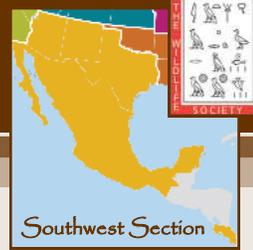
Photo courtesy Joseph Richards.



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Student News

Joseph Richards - Texas A&M University WFSC '22

In the TAMU chapter, I have been humbled to watch as a rising group of professional wildlifers - dedicated to observing proper health protocols - cultivated their educations in the field.

The BioBlitz competition has enhanced networking amongst our members. During a time where many of us are physically separated, we have been able to stay connected by sharing our daily encounters which has built camaraderie within the chapter. A few members from the TAMU chapter have traveled to all 10 Texas ecoregions and multiple state parks. Everyone was able to participate in the competition regardless of how distant they were from the College Station campus.

Citizen Science opens the door for anyone to contribute to data collection and scientific studies. Due to technological advances, most people have mobile smartphones capable of taking detailed images to document and record sightings and unique behaviors. The BioBlitz competition afforded students the ability to network with experts in different fields of wildlife when having their species identified. They also contributed sightings to the iNaturalist data collection which is used for research and scientific projects by professionals and academia. The online platform has emerged as a powerful tool for wildlife researchers to document the presence of certain species in areas where surveys might have overlooked.

There is an enduring relationship between conservation and



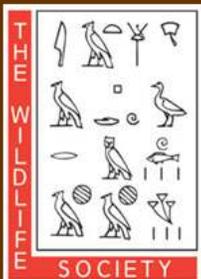
photography. Images of wildlife and their habitats can be used to inspire and educate the public on the current state of ecosystems. As wildlifers, we must participate in the conservation-photography movement by sharing our meaningful experiences with others if we are to inform the public on the state of wildlife and their habitat.

Cody Stricker, TAMU TWS member, led the chapter with most research grade observations.

Photo courtesy Cody Stricker.

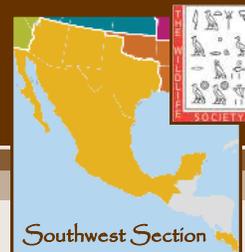


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Student News

Joseph Richards - Texas A&M University WFSC '22

CALLING ALL CHEFS! WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Texas A&M University Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society is excited because we are creating a TAMU TWS Wild Game Cookbook that will be available for purchase as a fundraiser to support our students!

The biggest part of creating this book is gathering a wide collection of recipes to share. That is why we are asking for your help! We would like to know your favorite wild game recipes. It can be anything from your favorite dove popper recipe, to venison tenderloin, grilled trout, or anything else you can think of! The link is included at the bottom of this post.

We have a simple Google Form to use for submitting your recipe. When our cookbook is printed and published you will be given credit for your recipe so those who read it know where it came from! If you would like to see an example of what we are looking for, please click on the Google Form link.

We would not be able to support our students and provide them the opportunities we do without support from you! Our members are extremely grateful for those that support our chapter and make our mission possible.

Thanks & Gig'em!



Venison backstrap with red wine reduction, cast iron grilled wild trout, and Texas jalapeno poppers with grilled vegetables.

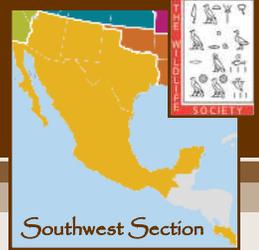
Photo courtesy Joseph Richards.

[TAMU TWS Wild Game Cookbook Google Form Link](#)





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SWS Board & Committee Chairs

Current Board

President: **James Cain** jwcain@nmsu.edu 575-646-3382

President-Elect: **Whitney Gann** whitney.gann@tpwd.texas.gov
830-676-3413

Past President: **Fidel Hernandez** fidel.hernandez@tamuk.edu 361-593-3926

Secretary: **Masa Ohnishi** masahiro.ohnishi@tamuk.edu

Treasurer: **Erika Nowak** Erika.Nowak@nau.edu 928-523-7760

Southwest Section Representative to TWS Council

James Ramakka j_ramakka@msn.com (505) 486-2746

(* note the underscore after j in email address:
j_ramakka@msn.com)

Active Committees

Conservation Affairs:

Romey Swanson romeyswanson@gmail.com 512-667-8124

Geospacial Advisory Committee:

Leland Pierce leland.pierce@state.nm.us 505-476-8094
& **Ginny Seamster** virginia.seamster@state.nm.us 505-476-8111

Newsletter:

Jamie Killian 7race13@gmail.com 830-480-9043
& **Misty Sumner** msmuledeer@gmail.com 254-702-1869

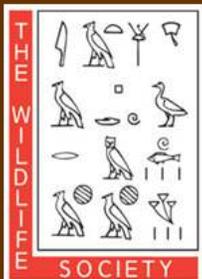
Women of Wildlife Committee:

Is now under TWS' Ethnic and Gender Diversity Working Group (EGDWG)

Don Yasuda Chair dyasudaTWS@gmail.com

Women of Wildlife Committee & EGDWG Liason

Kathy Granillo kgbirder55@gmail.com 505-864-4021



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Membership Application

Membership Fee \$5.00

First Name Middle Name Last Name
Suffix

Mailing Address

City State Zip Code Country

E-mail address Phone

Member Type (Please circle one): Student Regular Retired

Please include this form with your payment and mail to:

**Erika Nowak, Treasurer, Southwest Section of TWS, USGS
Southwest Biol Ctr Box 5614 Flagstaff AZ 86011**

Membership benefits for the Southwest Section TWS

- SWS TWS Newsletter
- Scholarship opportunities
- Section-level meetings and conferences
- Strengthen your connections to national TWS
- Peer connections through Listserv and [Facebook](#)
- Website information at <http://wildlife.org/sw-section/about/>



Current Members

AZ NM TX Int Oth
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