

The Wildlife Society

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION



MAY 2021 VOLUME 63, NUMBER 2
KATHERINE EDWARDS, EDITOR

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Spring is in the air and field work and summer activities are ramping up across the Southeast. It's a beautiful time of year. Here in Mississippi, season changes are rapid. I recall moving here in summer 2003 and eventually it was winter. Albeit, summer lasts until about October but then, you're suddenly in winter. Where'd fall go? Oh yeah, leaves seem to change color and drop within a week. Then, we're into winter. But spring to summer. . . that's a much better transition. Now, we get to experience the annual tree pollen dump that turns everything yellow concomitant to flowers blooming and birds chirping. Soon, field supplies will be packed and data sheets printed for the summer data collection season.

Students and early career professionals, if you have not learned already, field work has a lot more to it than standardized data collection. As mentioned in the January newsletter, science craves creativity. If you recall the scientific method, the first step involves observations. Key observations forming the foundation of phenomenal research can come from the comments section of your data sheet, from the conversations among field crews breaking for lunch, and even from quiet walks through nature when you simply want to decompress. Keep your eyes and ears open, your mind working, and those ideas flowing.

Speaking of ideas, we, the Executive Board of SE TWS, want to hear from you!! There's a lot to be said about collaborations and teamwork, more than I want to try to fit in here. However, an example of how teamwork can be helpful is in our

attempt to learn from you. The Executive Board has been discussing membership benefits since last year. Anyone who has served a TWS subunit from student chapter through TWS Council knows that membership benefits is a common topic. What do people gain from being a member? Why should a wildlife professional join this subunit? What do we have to offer our members?

We could sit in our Executive Board bubble and list a few membership benefits, but we wanted to do more. We really wanted to hear from you, our members. To do this, we started with state chapter representatives during two video conference calls at the end of April. Ten representatives from nine states joined these calls. The underlying question, how can we (SE TWS) help you? Here are a few topics discussed between calls.

Communication via our newsletter is great, but improvements could be made to the fall annual business meeting. The fall annual business meeting has occurred at SEAFWA, but this may be the best venue. While many of us have had virtual conferences to the point of ad nauseum,

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

targeted and short sessions do have value. For example, business updates could be packaged in a simple video update, available to membership prior to the annual business meeting allowing more face-to-face discussion time for new business during SEAFWA. Because of lingering COVID travel restrictions and SEAFWA maintaining more of a state agency focus, other venues, specifically a virtual platform, could help more members attend. But alas, who wants to be on another video conference call?

A virtual meeting during the fall would need to be a targeted discussion, opportunity to learn from neighboring states, special event involving a guest speaker, or even a coordinated team effort regarding a multi-state conservation affairs concern. Besides a day or two of virtual sessions, the general consensus was for less than a half days' worth of content consisting of all member and small group sessions (e.g., plenary speaker or panel discussion, presidents circle, new officer training). Building on a fall meeting would be at least twice annual virtual opportunities for roundtable discussions from our recent call between state chapter and Section executive board members to some of the small group sessions mentioned above. Meanwhile, we continue to look forward to our field course, now set for 2022, and serving you, our members, as best we can.

Please take a moment to think about what benefits you see from being a SE TWS member. What role(s) do you see the Section playing in your professional development and for your profession? Then, reach out to us. The more we hear from you, the better we can serve you.

Last, we rock as a Section and need to take a moment to pat ourselves on the back. Year in and year out, we continue to demonstrate to TWS and others that the Section is comprised of fantastic people. This year, our awesomeness was on display when three members of SE TWS became TWS Fellows. Typically, a maximum of two members per Section are recipients and if you remember, we as a Section still nominated four well-qualified candidates. Congratulations to **Drs. Rachel Urbanek, Christopher Moorman, and Christopher DePerno!!** Thank you for your service and dedication to TWS and the many students and early career professionals you have supported over the years.

Sincerely,
Ray Iglay
President, Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society



SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Dear Wildlifers,

I hope you are all doing well, and you are enjoying your spring before the heat of summer is upon us. The spring meeting of TWS Council took place in March. One of the highlights of this meeting is reviewing TWS Fellows nominations. This year was particularly competitive, and we have three new TWS Fellows from the Southeastern Section. Please congratulate, **Drs. Chris DePerno, Chris Moorman, and Rachel Urbanek**. I suppose North Carolina showed up in a big way!

We have already rescheduled the first SETWS field course for spring of 2022. We are tentatively scheduled to offer the course June 1 – June 14 at the Jones Center at Ichauway (www.jonesctr.org) in southwestern Georgia. You will hear more about all of this as more information becomes available. If you are keeping up with this effort, you know that our planned initial offering was delayed during 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. Let's hope that the third time's the charm!

I am sure you are aware that the fall TWS meeting will be virtual again this year. The meeting will take place November 1 – 5, and preliminary indications suggest that it will be an information filled event. It is my understanding that the 75th Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies will be held in person October 17 – 20 in Roanoke, Virginia. I know many of you try to attend this meeting and I am hopeful that I will be able to see you there.

Finally, I want to thank you all for continuing to do what you do to maintain our wildlife resources for ourselves and for future generations. As always, please let me know if I can help out with any TWS issues. I can be reached at mike.conner@jonesctr.org. Take care and keep in touch.

Mike Conner
Southeastern Section TWS, Representative to Council



COMMITTEE REPORTS

DEER COMMITTEE

2021 Southeast Deer Study Group Update

The 44rd Annual Meeting of the Southeast Deer Study Group (SEDSG) was hosted virtually by the National Deer Association (NDA) on February 22-24, 2021. The NDA host team was led by **Matt Ross**, Director of Conservation. With the help of Delaney Event Management's **Cindy Delaney** and especially **Leslie Pelch**, NDA did a great job selecting a virtual platform that personalized the virtual experience. Approximately 400 registrants enjoyed a great conference and excellent meeting theme; *Pandemic or Prospect: Managing Deer and Recruiting Hunters in 2021*, that included 3 plenary session presentations and 31 other presentations in 8 technical sessions. The technical portion of the meeting included 15 student presentations and 10 posters. The SE Section TWS Deer Committee also met 2 weeks prior to the conference and its minutes are posted on the SEDSG website www.SEDSG.com.

The event was capped off by a recognition awards program that included student awards for the top three student presentations and posters. Texas A & M University at Kingsville's **Seth Rankins** and Mississippi State University's **Miranda Huang** and **Luke Rosop** took 1st, 2nd and 3rd place finishes, respectively, in the Student Presentation Award competition. Clemson University's **Michael Muthersbaugh** and University of Georgia's **Cody Scarborough** took 1st, 2nd place finishes in the Student Poster Award competition with **Seth Rankins** and University of Georgia's **Zachary Wesner** tying for 3rd.

Since it is not an annual award and due to this year's virtual meeting, to honor the tradition, importance and respect of the Deer Management Career Achievement Award and its recipient, the Deer Committee voted not to solicit nominations



*2021 SEDSG 1st place student award recipients from top to bottom include **Seth Rankins**, Texas A & M University at Kingsville, Student Presentation Award and **Michael Muthersbaugh**, Clemson University, Student Poster Award.*

COMMITTEE REPORTS

for the award in 2021 in order to preserve the dignity and accolades of an in-person presentation. Hopefully, the Committee can solicit nominations again in 2022 as there are some great candidates for the award out there. However, the SEDSG recognized four retirees with impressive contributions to deer research and management.

David Sawyer recently retired after 32 years of service with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. One of his many accomplishments include playing an integral role in the development of agency deer hunting and management goals based on measurable biological objectives, which the agency continues to use today to evaluate herd status and guide proposed rule changes. David also served on the SE Section of TWS Deer Committee for 19 years until his retirement.

William (Bill) Gray retired in 2020 from the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries after 30 years of service. For many of those years Bill worked as a Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) biologist and worked with hundreds of landowners and hunting clubs to improve deer populations, habitat, and hunting opportunities in east central and southeastern Alabama. He also led efforts to implement quality deer management practices on many of Alabama's public lands.

Dr. Karl V. Miller recently retired from the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia at which he enjoyed a 30-year tenure. Karl is no stranger to the SEDSG meeting as he has participated in 38 meetings and served on the Deer Committee for 25 years. His impact on the whitetail research world has been tremendous as he has either authored or co-authored 4 books and 22 book chapters, edited or co-edited 2 books and authored or co-authored 231 peer reviewed journal articles. He is considered the most published white-tailed deer researcher of all time. Karl also has been the recipient of numerous awards including appointment as Wheatley Distinguished Professor of Deer Management at UGA, the SE Section TWS Deer Management Career Achievement and SEAFWA's C.W. Watson awards. During his tenure at Georgia, Karl has served as thesis or dissertation advisor for 67 Master of Science and 19 Ph.D. students, many who now serve in high-ranking wildlife positions for government, academia, NGOs and private sector all across the nation.

Joe Hamilton retired from the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), now NDA, in 2020. Joe's professional career has spanned more than four decades and he is known for his



*2020 Retirees who had tremendous impacts on deer management in the Southeast over the past 30-40 years include from left to right; **David Sawyer**, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, **Bill Gray**, Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, **Dr. Karl Miller**, University of Georgia and **Joe Hamilton**, Quality Deer Management Association.*

COMMITTEE REPORTS

practical and ethical approach to deer management and maintenance of our deer hunting heritage. Joe is a Certified Wildlife Biologist® and worked as a deer research and district wildlife biologist for 19 years with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Joe also worked with DU and TNC from 1997 to 2006 and then with QDMA, first as the Director of Education and Outreach for the Southern Region, later as the Director of Development, and finally as the organization's Senior Advisor before retiring. He has received countless conservation awards including the SE Section TWS Deer Management Career Achievement Award, Budweiser's Conservationist of the Year, Outdoor Life's Conservation Award, and he is one of only two American's to ever become a member of Australia's "The Keepers of the Hunting Spirit". He is the founder of the QDMA and is currently a member of the board of directors for the NDA.

Pending restrictions related to COVID-19, the 2022 SEDSG Meeting will be hosted by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources on February 20-22 at the USFWS National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown. Please monitor the SEDSG website for updates.

Steve Shea
sheawildlife@gmail.com

C.W. WATSON AWARD COMMITTEE

C.W. Watson Award

The C. W. Watson Award Committee is responsible for the annual selection of the recipient of this award. The Committee is composed of a representation of the SEAFWA, the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society, and the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society. Members are appointed by the organizations represented

for a three-year term, each member scheduled to serve as Chairman in their third year. Procedures and qualifications for nomination of recipients shall be as prescribed by the previously approved C. W. Watson Award criteria. This award shall be presented at the annual conference banquet by the Chairman of the Watson committee. See seafwa.org, Awards and Committees, or p.29 of this newsletter for more information on the 2021 nominating process.

SETWS Committee Chair: Lisa Muller
lmuller@utk.edu

STUDENT AWARDS COMMITTEE

Student Presentation and Poster Awards

The Southeastern Section of TWS annually recognizes the best student presentation and poster given at the SEAFWA Conference. To be eligible to receive this award, a student must have graduated within one year prior to the meeting and be presenting research at the conference conducted as a student. If you have or know of students presenting in the wildlife technical session or presenting a poster at the upcoming 75th Annual SEAFWA Conference, please encourage them to participate. If you are a student who will be giving a presentation or poster at SEAFWA, be sure to indicate that when you submit your abstract. The deadline for submitting abstracts for general contributed oral presentations and posters is Friday, July 16, 2021. The winning students will be recognized at SEAFWA and will be presented an award (a plaque and \$100 for best poster and \$200 for best presentation).

SETWS Student Awards Committee Chair:
Andy Madison, *amadison@uu.edu*

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MINORITIES IN NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Minorities in Natural Resources Conservation Committee

The MINRC Committee is diligently planning for the 2021 SEAFWA Annual Conference in Roanoke, VA where we look forward to hosting a Student Workshop and a Professional Development Workshop. Applications for the MINRC Student Scholarship to attend the conference are now open. The application will consist of a cover letter, a copy of transcripts, one letter of recommendation, a resume, and the Teddy Roosevelt Award Essay. This is a great opportunity for current students and recent graduates to attend the SEAFWA Conference free of charge, and to participate in the student workshop, networking events, and professional presentations. Visit minrc.org to view the application – the deadline is September 6.

We are also accepting nominations for the 2021 SEAFWA Diversity and Inclusion awards to recognize the achievements of outstanding diversity and inclusion employment and outreach practices among SEAFWA member agencies. Details on how to submit a nomination can be found on the SEAFWA website.

Lastly, we want to highlight the work of one of our former MINRC students! **Zurijanne “Zuri” Carter** participated in MINRC in 2006 as a student at Clemson University. She graduated from Clemson with a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, and then went on to get her Master’s in Human Dimensions of Wildlife Management from Michigan State University. After graduating, she jumped into the professional field doing various field work with South Carolina DNR and the US Forest Service. She is currently working with Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department in North

Carolina as the Natural Resources Coordinator where she develops and implements strategies related to GIS and natural resource management for department staff. She also coordinates volunteer development and activities that complement department efforts in the field. When asked about her experience with MINRC she said, “My journey has definitely been one filled with moving to pursue opportunities and making connections wherever I went. MINRC helped because it was the first opportunity to see multiple black people who were interested in wildlife and make those connections. I continue to feel empowered when I reflect on what MINRC helped me to experience as part of the community.”



*Natural Resource Coordinator and former MINRC Student, **Zuri Carter**.*

To keep up to date on MINRC news, jobs, and events throughout the Southeast, please follow us on social media or email us at seafwa.minrc@gmail.com. You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Mercedes Maddox
mercedes.maddox@dcnr.alabama.gov

STATE REPORTS

ALABAMA



Alabama Power Company

Among the several tornadoes that came through Alabama on Thursday, March 25th, one of the tornados tore through old growth longleaf pines and several Red Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) clusters near Lake Mitchell on Alabama Power Company (APC) property. On Monday, March 29th, APC Biologists assessed the damage to RCW clusters and discovered the storm toppled several longleaf pines, including nine suitable RCW cavity trees at three RCW clusters. With the RCW nesting season just a few weeks away, it was imperative that the company's stewardship team take action. On March 30th and April 1st, the team, with the help of **Mark Bailey** (Conservation Southeast), replaced the destroyed cavities with new, artificial ones that were inserted in standing pines. "The repair and replacement work taking place in the longleaf forest at Lake Mitchell as well as the prescribed burning regime and mid-story clearing will hopefully ensure the RCW population there continues to grow," said **Chad Fitch** (APC Biologist).

Will Gulsby, wdg0010@auburn.edu



*Toppled trees from the tornado.
Photo credit: Chad Fitch.*



*Mark Bailey installing artificial RCW cavities.
Photo credit: Chad Fitch.*

ARKANSAS



Arkansas Chapter TWS

The Chapter held our 2021 annual meeting virtually on March 11th. **Clint Johnson** was elected to the office of President-elect and **Levi Horrell** was elected to the office of Secretary-Treasurer and both will begin service on July 1st. Twelve speakers presented on a wide variety of topics related to wildlife ecology and management.

STATE REPORTS

Arkansas State University

Taylor Fiedor is receiving the best student award in the BS Wildlife, Fisheries and Conservation program and will be starting a MS in Biology in **Dr. Kyle Gustafson's** lab in the fall. She was part of the Neuman-Lee lab although she also assisted **Anneka Lamb** (Rolland lab) in road culvert surveys for tricolored bats this past winter. **Sara Harrod** (Rolland lab) is receiving the best student award in the PhD Environmental Sciences program and has moved to Colorado as a natural resource specialist for the US Army Corps of Engineers. **Dr. Drew Sweet** joined the Biological Sciences department in January. His expertise is in host-lice co-evolutionary interactions, with a focus on hosts that are mostly birds and mammals. **Dr. Travis Marsico**, botanist who serves our wildlife program, received the Chancellor's medal for research and creative activities in April. **Dr. Than Boves** has been elected new director of our Biology graduate (MS and MA) programs, effective July 1, 2021.

Blake Sasse, Blake.Sasse@agfc.ar.gov

FLORIDA

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

FWC Recognizes Alachua County Landowner for Wildlife Conservation Efforts

An Alachua County landowner was recently recognized by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) for his outstanding wildlife habitat management efforts, as part of the agency's Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program.

Jim Fischer owns Hatchet Creek Tree Farm in Alachua County, which includes a section of Hatchet Creek and is adjacent to conservation lands managed by Suwannee River Water Management District. His property connects and conserves upland and wetland habitat, providing a corridor for wildlife and assisting in landscape-scale wildlife habitat management.

Upon purchasing the property, Fischer reached out to natural resource professionals to assist with developing a management plan that would promote wildlife habitat. The property was initially covered with hardwoods that had gradually encroached on the naturally occurring sandhill due to the absence of fire.



Fischer got to work by removing the competing hardwoods, allowing the native longleaf pine trees and native groundcover to be exposed to sunlight. He then began implementing a prescribed burn treatment with the assistance of the North Florida Prescribed Burn Association.



STATE REPORTS

After two years of reintroducing fire, Fischer re-stored characteristic species of the sandhill ecosystem including wiregrass, toothache grass, lopsided Indiangrass and lovegrass.

In addition, Fischer has improved wildlife habitat by treating invasive species including smutgrass on his roads, maintaining snags (standing dead trees) for nesting birds including kestrels, planting native fruit-bearing trees and installing wood duck nest boxes near the creek.

When walking the firebreaks on the property, one can find burrows of gopher tortoises, hear the calls of eastern bluebirds, flush a covey of quail and watch wood ducks take flight near the creek. A resident coachwhip lives beneath the house and is often seen rising like a periscope out of a hole beneath the porch.

Private and public lands provide the habitat necessary to maintain sustainable wildlife populations. The efforts of private landowners to manage their own land to benefit wildlife and its habitat compliments the efforts of public agencies and is critical to ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to experience and enjoy wildlife in its native habitat. Without private landowner efforts, countless plant and animal species would be at risk of significant population declines, which could result in them becoming candidates for listing on state or federal threatened and endangered species lists.

To show appreciation for the work done by landowners to conserve our state's wildlife habitat, the FWC's Landowner Assistance Program created the Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program formally honoring landowners by awarding them with a sign to display on their property and a certificate recognizing their habitat conservation efforts.

Private lands play a critical role in wildlife conservation by protecting and restoring rare habitats like the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem and by managing farms, ranches, and forests that provide habitat to many species. While public land protects many species of wildlife, these properties form a fragmented landscape of habitat. Private lands connect these islands of public conservation land and provide critical habitat linkages and corridors necessary for many species to thrive.

FWC's Landowner Assistance Program offers a written management plan to guide landowners interested in working toward meeting the requirements for the Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program. Interested landowners of 20 acres or more can apply online. For more information, visit [MyFWC.com/LAP](https://myfwc.com/LAP) and click on "Landowner Recognition Programs."

<https://myfwc.com/news/all-news/landowner-421/>



STATE REPORTS

GEORGIA



Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Six Projects Receive DNR Grants to Promote Wildlife Viewing

Six projects selected for Georgia DNR Wildlife Viewing Grants promise new opportunities for Georgians to enjoy native animals and plants across the state.

Grant projects announced in March by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources will improve public opportunities to see and learn about native animals and plants statewide. The six proposals selected by the DNR Wildlife Resources Division as 2021 recipients in the Wildlife Viewing Grants Program range from Cairo to Covington and from Varnell to Tybee Island.

The grants program, funded by the Georgia Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund, helps develop and enhance wildlife viewing options, with an emphasis on State Wildlife Action Plan species and habitats. Georgia's Wildlife Action Plan (georgiawildlife.com/wildlifeactionplan) is a comprehensive strategy to conserve these animals, plants and places before they become rarer and costlier to conserve or restore.

The 2021 proposals include:

- Georgia Wildlife Federation: \$3,000 for signage and outreach for an expanded wildlife trail through prescribed fire demonstration areas, along with signage for a swamp trail at the federation's Alcovy Conservation Center in Covington.
- Prater's Mill Foundation: \$2,938 to build two wildlife viewing platforms along Coahulla Creek nature trails at Prater's Mill Historic Site in Varnell.

- Wolf Creek Trout Lily Preserve: \$2,844 for trail upgrades to improve access at the Grady County preserve near Cairo.

- Georgia Audubon: \$1,996 for signage to help visitors spot and identify birds at Constitution Lakes Park in Atlanta.

- Georgia 4-H Foundation: \$3,000 to install two wildlife viewing gardens featuring native plants at the Burton 4-H Center on Tybee.

- ABAC Foundation: \$2,097 to replace the boardwalk in a nature study area at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton.

These projects include work and spending by partners that will significantly amplify the grants provided.

Jon Ambrose, Ph.D., chief of DNR's Wildlife Conservation Section, said the end result is that Georgians and others will have more options to experience the state's native wildlife, including high-priority species and habitats identified in the Wildlife Action Plan.

"And with the pandemic imposing limitations on all of us," Ambrose added, "wildlife viewing is a healthy and engaging outdoors activity that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and requires little or no investment except for time."

The grants are small—capped at \$3,000 each—but the interest they tap is big. According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey, about 2.4 million people took part in wildlife-viewing activities in Georgia in 2011. The survey estimated related spending at \$1.8 billion. Nationwide, the number of people involved in wildlife viewing surged from about 72 million in 2011 to 86 million in 2016, the agency reported.

<https://georgiawildlife.com/WildlifeViewingGrants>

STATE REPORTS

KENTUCKY



Kentucky Chapter TWS

The theme of the virtual 2021 annual state chapter meeting was 'Conservation of Pollinator Species'. Meeting attendees (n=87) heard **Scott Black**, Executive Director of The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation [the keynote speaker] discuss 'Insect Apocalypse? What is really happening, why it matters, and how we can all be a vital part of the solution'. Additional speakers discussed 'Bee Conservation: The Rusty Patched Bumble Bee', 'Monarch Conservation in North America with Consideration of the Recent Listing Decision', 'Kentucky's Monarch Conservation Plan', and 'Ecotourism and forest protection in Mexico's Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve' (the Capstone presentation by **Dr. Ellen Sharp**, and **Joel Moreno Rojas**, co-owners JM Butterfly B&B and co-founders of Butterflies & Their People, AC). **Gordon Batchellor**, TWS President Elect, provided a national TWS update and responded to questions from chapter members. Students from the University of the Cumberlands, Eastern Kentucky University, and Murray State University gave oral poster presentations addressing a wide range of topics, e.g., assessing the influence of stress and behavior on susceptibility to, and recovery from, snake fungal disease in the timber rattlesnake, assessment of herpetofauna communities in restored wetlands, understanding relationships between stress, snake fungal disease, and parasitism in wild cottonmouth snake populations, and morph- and sex-specific differences in corticosterone of the Arizona tiger salamander.

The Chapter's most prestigious award, the Lauren E. Schaff Memorial Award, which recognizes an individual for outstanding contributions in wildlife conservation, management and research was presented to **Brent Harrel**, Wildlife Biologist and Private Lands Coordinator in the USFWS Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office.

Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves (OKNP)

The OKNP announced the availability of "The Kentucky Biological Assessment Tool (KY-BAT)", an online tool for environmental review that enables users to easily submit project boundaries and within minutes receive data on threatened and endangered species, managed areas, and critical habitat within a defined distance of the project. This tool is designed to improve the ease and speed in which individuals are able to receive information related to T&E species and critical habitat.

Chuck Elliott, charles.elliott@eku.edu



the **OUTDOORS** *are*
Better **TOGETHER**

SEAFWA
Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



STATE REPORTS

LOUISIANA



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Paul Link was promoted from NAWMP coordinator to Rockefeller Research Program Manager. He will be stationed at Rockefeller Refuge.

Jeff Duguay, jduguay@wlf.la.gov

MARYLAND/DELAWARE



Maryland/Delaware Chapter TWS

The Maryland and Delaware Chapter of TWS held their Spring meeting in April, with a theme of “Looking to the Future: Technologies in Wildlife.” Research presentations included MOTTUS towers and its findings in the Mid-Atlantic, as well as drone surveys on clapper rail. Our Chapter has also voted to create a D.E.I. committee, which will have a variety of objectives ranging from outreach and education to membership engagement. Finally, we kicked off a new volunteer incentive program. This program will reward members who go above and beyond while volunteering their time.

Eric Ness, Eric.Ness@delaware.gov

MISSISSIPPI



USDA APHIS Wildlife Services-Mississippi Program

The Mississippi Wildlife Services program flew over 70,000 acres and worked with approximately 54 cooperators to reduce negative feral swine impacts to farmers, landowners, federal refuges and state wildlife management

areas. The program also has been working with Delta Wildlife to reduce damages to catfish farmers from double-crested cormorants and American white pelicans through hazing and harassment of fish farms and bird roost sites.

Mississippi State University

The Mississippi State University student chapter of The Wildlife Society, with the help of Education Outreach Officer **Kayla Feist**, created sustainable wildlife-related crafts for virtual story times with Starkville Public Library. Paper towel and toilet paper tubes were gathered using donation boxes throughout the College of Forest Resources, and were then painted white in preparation for kids to design however they saw fit! Cut-out templates for owls and frogs were included and dropped off at Starkville Public Library to be paired with two book readings, “Little Owl’s Night,” and “Why Wolves Howl,” a children’s book written by former MSU TWS member, **Murry Burgess**.



*President of the MSU student chapter of TWS, **Abby Florez**, and Education Outreach Coordinator, **Kayla Feist**, present collected and prepared crafts to Starkville Public Library for virtual story times.*

STATE REPORTS

Mississippi Bat Working Group

The Mississippi Bat Working Group will hold the first annual bridge blitz July 15-18, 2021. Inexperienced surveyors will be paired with survey leaders to search for bats using bridges in various parts of the state. For more information, please contact **Alison McCartney** at alison_mccartney@fws.gov or call 601-455-8780.

Taylor Hackemack, th8370@gmail.com



FLICKR/Judy Gallagher

NORTH CAROLINA



NC Wildlife Resources Commission

On May 12, 2021, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources announced a positive case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Montgomery County, VA, about 33 miles from Surry and Stokes counties in North Carolina. In response, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) have met to discuss next steps in implementing the state's CWD response plans.

“North Carolina has been fortunate to not have a reported CWD case,” said **Jon Shaw**, wildlife biologist with the Wildlife Commission. “We have successfully taken preventative measures over the past couple of decades to keep the

disease out, but there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of CWD entering our state.”

The confirmed case was identified just outside of the 30-mile range that the two agencies have identified to activate the response plan, but it's close enough that heightened concerns have triggered a proactive and integrated approach.

The Wildlife Commission and NCDA&CS have authority over free-ranging and farmed cervids respectively and share a mutual need to combat CWD. Together the agencies have taken numerous proactive steps to minimize the risk of CWD entering the state over the last couple of decades, including a prohibition on the importation of live deer species that are susceptible to the disease until a USDA-approved live test is available, and prohibiting the importation of carcasses and high-risk carcass parts from residents who travel out of state to hunt any members of the deer family.

Surveillance for CWD in North Carolina began in 1999. Over 16,000 samples have been collected and tested across the state, including submissions from deer and elk farmers at 27 farmed cervid facilities overseen by the NCDA&CS. The majority of that testing ramped up after 2018 when the state adopted a robust annual statewide surveillance strategy. Officials from both agencies will continue to monitor the situation and are asking North Carolina residents for help.

“The NCDA&CS Veterinary Division has been in contact with our North Carolina cervid farms,” said State Veterinarian **Doug Meckes**. “We have encouraged increased surveillance at these facilities, which includes testing for CWD in all animals that die for any reason and to monitor all cervids for any illness and abnormal behavior. Farmers can report concerns to the Veterinary Division by calling 919-707-3250.”

STATE REPORTS

The public is encouraged to contact the NC Wildlife Helpline, 866-318-2401, if they see a deer that appears to be sick or acting abnormal. The Helpline is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. or folks can send an email anytime to HWI@ncwildlife.org.

Shaw stated that deer hunters may be asked to submit additional samples of their harvest this coming deer season, especially in Surry, Stokes, Alleghany and Rockingham counties.

“It’s imperative that we continue to closely monitor the situation in North Carolina and our border states,” Shaw said. “The Virginia case occurred 120 miles from their last confirmed case of CWD. That amount of distance is cause for concern in North Carolina. We feel confident we are ready to respond but would rather not have to pull out that playbook.”

<https://www.ncwildlife.org/News/new-chronic-wasting-disease-case-confirmed-in-virginia>

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Chapter

The Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society hosted its first ever virtual annual meeting in early March. This might not sound exciting as others were doing the same, but we added a wildlife centric plenary session that usually include our fisheries and rangeland partners. We offered this half-day meeting for free and were able to recruit members and non-members that usually do not attend our meetings to experience our chapter and unique resources we offer. We are currently working on our summer newsletter and have been increasing our executive board meetings to also stay engaged as the leadership team.

Phillip Stephenson
phillipleestephenson@gmail.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

Clemson University

Clemson Student Chapter Hosts 41st Annual Buzzard Banquet

The Clemson Chapter of The Wildlife Society held their 41st Annual Buzzard Banquet on April 12th at the Esso Club in Clemson. The event was a huge success with over 200 people in attendance and around \$5,000 raised for the chapter. At the event we served an assortment of wild game including duck jalapeno poppers, black bear, deer and elk burgers, Hawaiian Orange duck, smoked hog, gator nuggets, squirrel perlow, country fried deer steak, oven broiled fish and lemon rosemary quail. We also had an assortment of raffles and auction items that were a huge hit!

Contributed by: Abby Dwell, Clemson TWS Chapter President



*Menu for 41st annual Buzzard Banquet hosted by the Clemson Student TWS Chapter.
Photo credit: Abby Dwell.*

Clemson Study Identifies Barriers to Field Experience for Students From Diverse Backgrounds

Our study investigated strategies to attract diverse students to field experiences in the environmental and natural resource professions. Field experiences (i.e., field internships and technician positions) are work experiences for students or recent graduates that offer training in their field of study. These experiences have numerous positive impacts on students, including improved GPAs, self-efficacy, retention, and graduation rates. Field experiences also provide important links between college and career through applied learning, networking, and career advancement opportunities.

Yet it has been suggested that field experiences are not accessible to everyone because of their low pay, long or non-standard work hours that conflict with family care commitments, a lack of accommodation for students with disabilities, and in some cases, discrimination, harassment, and unwelcoming work environments. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that many field experiences fall short of attracting and retaining diverse students.

Although some barriers to access have been identified, we still know surprisingly little about what students across diverse backgrounds value or how much they need to be paid to participate in field experiences. To address this knowledge gap and provide information to employers seeking to diversify their workforce, we surveyed undergraduate students in environmental and natural resource fields across the United States to understand what students prioritize when seeking field positions. Students across all demographic groups overwhelmingly indicated that they needed better pay to participate in field experiences. On average, respondents required

at least \$8.68/hour to accept a field position, which is above current federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour. Pay was especially important for racial and ethnic minority students, who required 24% higher pay (\$10.80/hour) than white students (\$8.21 /hour).

We also collected data to assess the current pay for field experiences posted to environmental job boards (e.g., Texas A&M, ECOLOG, Conservation Job Board) between 18 March and 18 April 2019. Despite pay being a priority for students, only 65% of positions posted to job boards paid the average wage required by our student respondents, and only 3% of positions paid the wage needed to attract at least 90% of our respondents. Less than 25% of our overall respondents and far fewer non-White or low-income respondents would even consider jobs that pay below minimum wage. Even at minimum wage, only 35% of non-White students were retained in the applicant pool.

Students identified other important opportunities to increase the accessibility of field experiences, including flexible timing to address conflicts with family care, cultural, religious, work, or course-work responsibilities, providing transportation to the field, housing and transportation while on the job, providing supportive work environments (especially for students with mental or physical health disabilities), and providing inclusive and safe workspaces. Some examples include:

“I’m concerned about time away from my daughter/daycare cost.”

“Accessibility (as a person with a physical disability my ability to do many, many jobs is limited by my physical limitations as well as my medical needs).”

“Transportation (it is difficult to get to an internship if you don’t have a car).”

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“I worry about my safety when working with men sometimes.”

“I participate in cultural activities during the summer including gathering all the customary and traditional foods I need for the year... and most internships do not allow time off or I cannot afford travel expenses to and from the internship location and home.”

“I drill once a month with the Army National Guard and 2 weeks out of the year I am gone for Army training, which limits my ability to participate.”

Our study suggests that attracting most students, especially students of color, will require pay above minimum wage, flexibility in timing

and study locations, and intentional actions to cultivate inclusive and supportive work environments. We recognize that employers will not be able to meet all student needs, but we suggest that our findings can be used to identify targets to better support the needs of diverse students. If creating a diverse and inclusive work force is a priority, the environmental and natural resource profession will need to cultivate field experiences that meet the needs of a diversity of students.

The open access journal article in BioScience can be found here: <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/biab039/6213241>

Contributed by: Alex Jensen and Sara Bombaci



Infographic highlighting findings from Clemson University study on the barriers to students undertaking field internships.

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Regional Recruitment Study of Box-Nesting Wood Ducks

Collaborative research efforts continue across the southeastern and mid-Atlantic United States examining the contribution of nest boxes to wood duck (*Aix sponsa*) recruitment. Four graduate students from either Clemson University (**Emily Miller** and **Jacob Shurba**), Louisiana State University (**Dylan Bakner**), or Mississippi State University (**Taylor Gibson**) began their second field seasons in January 2021. The students are assisted by over a dozen technicians and monitor approximately 1,300 nest boxes in study sites in Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Nest boxes are checked weekly and incubating hens are banded. Boxes are re-visited during estimated hatch dates, and ducklings are marked with web tags. Recaptures of web-tagged adult hens in subsequent years provide recruitment estimates from these populations. During the 2020 field season, field crews web-tagged 4,445 ducklings. As of April 16, 2021, 516 adult hens have been captured, including 322 recaptures from 2019 or 2020, and 21 web-tag returns. In addition, 791 ducklings have been tagged this spring. This study will continue for 1-2 years and provide guidance for management of box-nesting wood ducks and the cost-benefits of this management in the Southeast. Our study would not be possible if not for the dedicated and coordinated partnerships among the aforementioned universities; wildlife agencies representing Delaware, Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana; US Fish & Wildlife Service Refuge System; University of Delaware; Clemson University's James C. Kennedy Water & Wetlands Conservation Center; and Nemours Wildlife Foundation.

Contributed by Beau Bauer, Wildlife Biologist and CWB®, Nemours Wildlife Foundation



Jake Shurba showing off a hen who returned with a web-tag from last year.
Photo credit: **Abby Weber**.



Rebeca Bravo web-tagging a wood duck duckling that had just hatched that day.
Photo credit: **Jake Shurba**.

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Lighting Fire to Fight Fire: US National Governors Association and Wildland Fire Leadership Council Promote Prescribed Burning to Enhance Air Quality

In an effort to increase the use of prescribed fire as a land management tool to lessen the impacts of smoke from wildfires, the National Governors Association (NGA) issued a letter this past November providing guidance and resources to each of the US Governors' offices. The NGA represents the US's fifty states and five territories, identifying and prioritizing issues and dealing with governance and policy at the state, local and global levels.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) comprises all levels of government in the US, from the federal firefighting agency heads down to the local level, and is dedicated to promoting and coordinating consistent wildland fire policies, goals and management activities across the nation. **Mike Zupko**, Executive Director of the WFLC, said "This letter, which recognizes and encourages the use of prescribed fire through the highest levels of federal and state government, in close partnership with local wildland fire professionals, aims at dealing with the increasingly challenging wildfires and the associated air quality and other issues we are facing, through the judicious use of a time-tested land management tool."

Prescribed fire (aka "controlled burning") is by far human's oldest ecosystem management tool, but about a century ago in the US, this "good-fire culture"—both the practice as well as the people whom it defined—was attacked as part of a nationwide, categorically anti-fire program that is now seen to have been a hegemonic failure. But the wise, multicultural heritage of carefully using fires lit under prescription for ecological, economic and public safety benefits was never quite

destroyed. In certain areas, most notably the Southeastern US, firefighting traditions persisted. Over the last two decades, the remnant flames of these traditional rural lifeways (TRL) have been fanned and are spreading, being increasingly used, shared and valued. By lighting controlled burns, land managers actively facilitate a natural and inevitable ecological process, becoming a part of, rather than apart from, ecosystem integrity.

It may seem a paradox to some, but in certain areas where it is not a matter of if, but rather of when, wildland fire burns, objective-driven prescribed fires—those safely lit under specific socioecological conditions, when fire intensity and the type, direction and dispersal of smoke can be chosen—are uniquely able to remove fuels that could drive wildfires that would severely impact air quality while also destroying property, harming natural resources and imperiling public safety. Prescribed fire allows controlled burners to "choose the when" of wildland fires.

The burgeoning recognition of prescribed burning in the US is evident in the spate of state prescribed fire councils (37 and growing), and the overarching national Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils (prescribedfire.net), chaired by prescribed fire master **Mark Melvin** of the Jones Center at Ichauway, in Georgia.

In September 2020, Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) **Sonny Perdue** (former Governor of Georgia, who grew up in a prescribed fire culture) emphasized the importance of prescribed fire in his keynote address to the annual meeting of the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council ([youtube.com/watch?v=AdKOoYA5bLg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdKOoYA5bLg)).

The US Forest Service, one of the nation's leading fire management agencies, is a branch of the USDA. Georgia Governor **Brian Kemp** also

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spoke at this meeting ([youtube.com/watch?v=foSQLS5Jnv0&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foSQLS5Jnv0&feature=youtu.be)). Georgia, which has a population of 10.6 million, prescribed burns 1.4 million acres per year.

Full article: <https://www.iawfonline.org/article/lighting-fire-to-fight-fire/>

Contributed by **Johnny Stowe**, Board of Directors
International Association of Wildland Fire



Savanah Hebler, SCDNR firefighter, setting the woods a-fire to restore a wet longleaf-pond pine savanna.

David Jachowski, djachow@clemson.edu

TENNESSEE



Tennessee Chapter TWS

The Tennessee Chapter of The Wildlife Society held its spring 2021 meeting in a virtual (Zoom) format during March 30-31, 2021. The meeting featured nine presentations in our Professional Presentation Session, held Tuesday morning and early afternoon on the 30th. Presentations

included a welcome address by **Bobby Wilson**, Executive Director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; a national update and question-and-answer session with **Gordon Batcheller**, President-Elect of The Wildlife Society; and a special presentation addressing inclusion and diversity in state agencies by **Christopher Kennedy** of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Other professional presentations included a national policy update from the Tennessee Wildlife Federation, updates from several state agency program leaders, and a research presentation addressing white-tailed deer population estimation based on harvest data. Additionally, nine students from Tennessee universities gave presentations of their undergraduate or graduate research in our late afternoon Student Presentation Session. Congratulations to **Brittany Panos** and **Mark Turner** from the University of Tennessee – Knoxville, our co-winners of our Outstanding Student Presentation Award! Additionally, **Keith Blanton** of USDA Wildlife Services was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award and both **Clint Borum** and **Jamie Feddersen** of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency received Professional of the Year awards. The chapter then held its annual spring business meeting on Wednesday morning, March 31st.

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

Changes Made to Public Land Duck Hunting, Blind Draw Procedures at TFWC Meeting

The Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission (TFWC) approved several proposals by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) for changes to public land duck hunting and blind draw procedures. TWRA's proposal for public land duck hunting is a significant effort to increase access for hunters statewide and retain traditional season-long, 60-day blind locations as offered previously.

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TWRA Begins 4-Year Turkey Banding Project

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) has launched a 4-year, large-scale turkey banding project across the state to look at factors affecting gobbler harvest rates. In conjunction with researchers at Tennessee Tech University, the TWRA has initiated the project to obtain data on spring wild turkey harvest rates and the factors contributing to these rates. The goal is to capture and band many adult and juvenile male turkeys, broadly distributed across the state on both public and private lands. Hunters who harvest a banded bird are asked to report the band number to TWRA. The Tennessee Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation are partners in the project.

Feddersen and Borum recognized by TN Chapter of TWS

At the recent annual meeting of the Tennessee Chapter of TWS, **Jamie Feddersen** and **Clint Borum** received Wildlife Professional of the Year awards. Feddersen serves as the Migratory Bird Program Coordinator for TWRA and Borum serves as a Habitat Wildlife Biologist. Both professionals are great employees of the Agency and greatly deserve the recognition.

USDA/APHIS Tennessee Wildlife Services

Sam Dowlen Named 2020 Rabies Specialist of the Year

USDA APHIS National Rabies Management Program named **Mr. Sam Dowlen** from TN/KY Wildlife Services the 2020 Rabies Specialist of the Year. This national award is given annually to one Wildlife Service Specialist that has met the criteria of proficiency in the field, exemplary

internal and external communication skills, knowledge of rabies and rabies vector species, and initiative, enthusiasm, dedication, and an outstanding ability to work on a team and with cooperators.

Keith Blanton Receives TN Chapter of TWS Life Achievement Award

Keith Blanton was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Tennessee Chapter of TWS at its recent annual meeting. Mr. Blanton recently retired after serving over 33 years as a civil servant within the agency. During his long career, Keith positively impacted numerous large-scale wildlife damage management programs, hundreds of wildlife professionals, and literally thousands of private citizens. Keith did all of this in a quiet and modest manner, which is his nature. Keith's character and integrity are legendary. His perspective and insight were and are valued highly.

Cleveland State Community College

The Wildlife Society at Cleveland State has accomplished many things over the past year. The Society has worked at multiple checking stations, field trials for hunting dogs, and a huge litter clean-up initiative where over 2.4 tons of garbage was disposed of properly! The club also held a fundraiser for the Student Wildlands Adventure Program and gained around \$400.00 dollars of revenue. Additionally, the Society was awarded the Instructional Program Award by Community Colleges of Appalachia, and the club's advisor, **Robert Brewer**, got the award of Conservation Educator of the Year from the Tennessee Wildlife Federation.

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University of Tennessee- Knoxville

The University of Tennessee's student chapter of The Wildlife Society has continued to be successful despite the ongoing pandemic conditions. In January, they conducted a waterfowl count at Kyker Bottoms Wildlife Refuge. Afterwards, in February, they sponsored two students for the Southeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (SEPARC)'s virtual annual meeting. In March, the Society hosted a wood duck box building workshop, and in a big opportunity for the Society, Quail Forever (QF) partnered with Society members for QF's youth hunt. Members taught children and teenagers about furbearers and humane trapping techniques; afterwards, the members joined in on the hunt! Their most recent activity has been to assist the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) with grouse surveys. Officer elections were held earlier in April and the new officers are **Tullie White** (President), **Gabriel Siples** (Vice President), **Ash Cable** (Graduate Representative), **Hillary Poole** (Secretary), and **Holly Whited** (Treasurer).

University of Tennessee- Martin

The UT Martin Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society has faced challenges that are not unique to our university the past year. Restrictions placed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have required the student chapter to re-invent and renovate programs for student engagement. Workshops and classes have been smaller and more frequent, reducing the likelihood of spreading the disease, while still allowing students to learn new skills and engage with their profession. In addition to these small meetings, the Chapter held monthly meetings for the entire chapter via Zoom, where we were joined by wildlife professionals from various agencies and organizations, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and Appalachian Bear Rescue.

The Student Chapter recently teamed with the Riverlands Outdoor Heritage Conservation Alliance, an organization focused on sustainability and conservation in western Kentucky and Tennessee. This collaboration will focus on combating invasive plant species in the Weakley County area for years to come. Finally, we supported and promoted the proposed changes to the Tennessee Duck Blind Drawing System voted on by our Tennessee Wildlife & Fish Commission in March of this year. As the UT Martin Student Chapter closes out another academic year, we are both excited and motivated to return for our fall semester.



Tennessee Tech University

Tennessee Tech University's student chapter of The Wildlife Society has been making the most of the 2020 - 2021 school year, while taking the proper precautions put in place by the University. At the beginning of the fall semester, specialty masks, chapter t-shirts, and pullovers were sold to raise money for the Chapter. In October, there was a pumpkin carving mixer for new members to meet existing members of the Chapter. For opening day of both the muzzle-loader and rifle deer hunting seasons, members

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had the opportunity to volunteer at deer check stations with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and gain experience aging deer and taking samples to test for Chronic Wasting Disease. A couple of members had the opportunity, in early December, to volunteer at a Wounded Warrior Hunt at Fall Creek Falls State Park. During the spring semester, members were able to volunteer to plant 3,000 saplings for a retired TWRA agent. In-person chapter meetings have been held with proper social distancing, including a special meeting where a TWRA officer came to talk to members about the interview process with the agency. To end the semester, there will be a mixer after the last meeting, where officer elections will be held for the 2021-2022 Officer Team.

Chuck Yoest
Chuck.Yoest@tn.gov

VIRGINIA



Virginia Chapter

The Virginia Chapter of The Wildlife Society held their Annual Meeting February 2–4, 2021. The meeting was 100% virtual and free to members, offering them a chance to participate without travel expenditures. This format also provided the chapter with an ideal opportunity to reach out to other non-member professionals in the field by offering attendance at the low cost of an annual membership to the VATWS chapter. In total, we had 132 registrations made up of 32 non-member professionals, 34 non-member students, 46 professional members, and 20 student members.

The meeting's plenary speakers included **Dr. Jim Nichols** (2015 Aldo Leopold Memorial Reward Recipient and USGS Senior Scientist

Emeritus), whose presentation was titled 'Adaptive Management and a Vision for the Future of the Wildlife Profession,' and **Mr. George Braxton** (Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources), whose presentation was titled '360 Degrees in 360 days: One Diversity and Inclusion Professional's Perspective.' In addition to the outstanding plenary lectures presented, we were also fortunate to have two presentations from invited speakers **Ed Thompson** (Chief Executive Officer with The Wildlife Society), who provided us with updates from The Wildlife Society parent organization, and **Dr. Carol Chambers** (President and Fellow with The Wildlife Society and Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Northern Arizona University), who spoke about the importance of diversity in the world of wildlife professionals. Over the course of the meeting, a suite of research was presented which comprised 15 posters presentations (12 student and three professional) and 17 oral presentations (13 student and 4 professional).

Additionally, we were able to offer four workshops to both members and non-members. These workshops included topics related to increasing diversity, equity, and awareness in the wildlife professions, an introduction to R, basic geospatial analysis using R, and occupancy modeling in Windows and R. We were also able to host a variety of fun networking opportunities including socials, pub trivia, and raffle drawings. Despite the meeting being 100% virtual, it was an overwhelming success and provided us with a unique opportunity to recruit additional members into the chapter!

The VATWS chapter also presented its awards during the Annual Meeting on February 3, 2021. The chapter presents awards to both undergraduate and graduate students in three presentation categories; Best Poster, Best Speed Talk, and Best Presentation.

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The winners from this year's meeting were:

Best Poster (Undergraduate Student)
McKenzie Clore and **Georgia Davidson**
Radford University

Best Poster (Graduate Student)
Darby McPhail, Virginia Tech

Best Speed Talk (Undergraduate Student)
Natalie Webster, Randolph-Macon College

Best Speed Talk (Graduate Student)
Adele Balmer
Virginia Commonwealth University

Best Presentation (Undergraduate Student)
Kelly Burdette, Virginia Tech

Best Presentation (Graduate Student)
Garrett Clevinger, Virginia Tech

The Chapter also presented the A. Willis Robertson Award, which is given to individuals or an organization that demonstrates outstanding conservation practices on their own land or who has made significant contributions to conservation activities in the Commonwealth. The 2021 Robertson Award was presented to the Arlington Regional Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists represented by **Ms. Marion Jordan** and **Mr. Bill Browning**.

Since 2014, several members of the Arlington Regional Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists have spearheaded annual public education efforts to alert the public to the effects of deer browsing and begin the process of breaking down the barriers to developing an effective and humane control program for deer in Arlington County. The group has worked on deer browse surveys, major outreach events with the Virginia Native Plant Society, the Deer Advisory Council for Northern

Virginia, Arlington's Urban Forestry and Environmental Services departments, and in 2019, a small team of ARMN members met with regional experts from VA, MD, and DC to create a volunteer training and public presentation that has been delivered to over 50 groups and nearly 1,000 participants over the past two years.

The Chapter also presented the Henry S. Mosby Award, presented to the professional biologist who has had a significant impact on wildlife management in the Commonwealth of Virginia through a body of work, or for an especially poignant action. The 2021 award went to **Dr. Megan Kirchgessner** of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR). Dr. Kirchgessner played a vital role in the (VDWR) response to coronavirus and COVID from both wildlife health and human health perspectives. Megan initiated and directed VDWR efforts to address concerns related to potential impacts of the virus on wildlife populations, as well as the potential for wildlife populations to serve as a potential reservoir for the virus. Despite the challenges posed by rapidly changing knowledge regarding the coronavirus and the significant knowledge gaps associated with this novel pathogen, Megan was vigilant regarding the latest information and disseminated that information to colleagues in order to guide decision-making related to human interactions with wildlife species. She led VDWR efforts to implement emergency permit conditions involving the capture and handling of wildlife by researchers, wildlife rehabilitators, and commercial wildlife control operators to prevent transmission of the coronavirus from humans to Virginia's wildlife populations. Her knowledge and work enabled DWR to implement these measures within one month of the beginning of the pandemic. In addition, Dr. Kirchgessner was instrumental in developing protocols that would allow VDWR employees to continue with their important

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work requiring safe handling of animals in research, management, and public conflict scenarios. In addition to these exceptionally poignant actions in the face of the coronavirus, Megan also met the challenges from significant wildlife health issues such as Chronic Wasting Disease, mange in black bear, and outbreaks in Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 each requiring tremendous amounts of coordination, knowledge, communication, and collaboration.

Grant Sizemore
GSizemore@abcbirds.org

DUCKS UNLIMITED

Jeremy Ballard has joined Ducks Unlimited as a biologist located at Delta National Forest in Mississippi. A graduate of the University of Arkansas at Monticello with a B.S. in Wildlife Management,

Jeremy has a passion for waterfowl management and research. Always one to take advantage of every opportunity to learn the habits of a duck and what is needed to provide the optimal resources for waterfowl on the wintering grounds, the chance to work with Ducks Unlimited was one that he couldn't pass up. "Being given the opportunity to make management decisions on a landscape level on a historic bottomland hardwood system like Delta National Forest seems surreal," Jeremy said. "Green tree reservoir management has always intrigued me, it's an art. There's a fine balance between forestry and wildlife factors that make bottomland hardwood management effective. I am blessed to be able to work for such a passionate, mission driven organization like DU."

Emily Austin
eaustin@ducks.org

75th Annual SEAFWA Conference
Sunday, October 17 - Wednesday, October 20, 2021
Roanoke, Virginia
Host: Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources



The Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is a forum for the exchange of ideas and critical information regarding the management and protection of fish and wildlife resources primarily in the Southeast. At this time, we are planning to hold the 75th Annual Conference in person in 2021. For more information, please visit the SEAFWA Conference website at: <http://www.seafwa.org/conference/overview/>.

- Attendee registration for the 75th Annual Conference will open in the Summer of 2021.
- Call for Abstracts now open! **Submit an abstract** by the July 16 deadline.
- Special Symposia announced. **Read the symposium overviews.**
- **Exhibitor and sponsor registration is open!** Learn how you can support fish and wildlife conservation in the Southeast.
- To stay up to date on developments with the 75th Annual Conference, join our email list.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Support wildlife professionals, make connections, and discover something new. The Wildlife Society's monthly webinar series brings you the latest in wildlife science, conservation, and management. Each webinar is supported by TWS Working Groups to ensure that you stay current on new science-based research, techniques, and tools from experts in the field.

Webinars will be pre-approved for continuing education credits. Each webinar is hosted through Zoom. Registration is open to both TWS members and nonmembers.

Molecular Ecology Working Group: Choose Your Own Adventure in Molecular Ecology Webinar: June 10, 2021 (2-3pm EST)

Join us for an interactive webinar that will introduce TWS's Molecular Ecology Working Group. The webinar will briefly showcase the working group members' research and activities, as well as introduce molecular ecology topics such as new biomonitoring techniques, the use of -omics in wildlife management, disease tracking based on population identification (e.g., chronic wasting disease), and an overview of the most frequently asked wildlife genetics questions. After introductions, we'll start the fun! The audience will 'choose their own adventure' by selecting which topics and questions our panel of experts will discuss in more detail. Join us for an in-depth introduction and wide-ranging conversation about the role genetics plays in wildlife management.

Upcoming: Invasive Species Working Group (July), Student Development Working Group (August)

2021 Southeastern Section Officers

President:

Dr. Raymond B. Iglay
Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology,
Department of Wildlife, Fisheries &
Aquaculture
Mississippi State University
Box 9690
Mississippi State, MS 39762
Training Coordinator, 486 Series
Review, USDA APHIS Wildlife
Services National Training Academy
Phone (662) 325-5933
ray.iglay@msstate.edu



President-Elect:

Kelly Douglass
Wildlife Disease Biologist
USDA Wildlife Services
6213-E Angus Drive
Raleigh, NC 27617
Phone (919) 326-6918
Kelly.Douglass@usda.gov

Immediate Past President:

Dr. Michael Mengak
Professor – Wildlife Specialist
Warnell School of Forestry
& Natural Resources
University of Georgia
180 E. Green St.
Athens, GA 30602
Phone (706) 583-8096
mmengak@uga.edu

Southeastern Section Representative:

Dr. L. Mike Conner
Scientist, Wildlife Ecology
Joseph W. Jones Ecological
Research Center
3988 Jones Center Drive
Newton, GA 39870
Phone (229) 734-4706 ext. 278
mike.conner@jonesctr.org

Secretary/Treasurer:

Daniel Greene
Wildlife Scientist, Environmental
Research South
Weyerhaeuser Company
3477 S. Frontage Road
Columbus, MS 39701
Phone (850) 890-9360
dgreene907@gmail.com

NOMINATIONS

2021 TWS Elections: Southeastern Section Representative Candidates

The ballot for The Wildlife Society's 2021 elections includes candidates for the position of Southeastern Section Representative to Council. Electronic ballots were sent on June 1 to all TWS members with an email address. Members without an email address will receive a paper ballot in the mail. Voting will close June 30. Mailed paper ballots must be postmarked on or before June 30. Newly elected council members are scheduled to be installed at the virtual 28th Annual Conference, Nov.1-5. The candidates' statements expressing their vision for The Wildlife Society and their interest in running for this council position are below.

Nominees for Southeastern Section Representative

Lisa Muller



I have been involved with teaching and research in wildlife for many years. I strongly believe it is important to give back to the profession and encourage current and future wildlife biologists to continue the great work of TWS. I am passionate about including diverse voices as I know wildlife conservation issues faced tomorrow will require many different ways of thinking. I know it is important to participate and for everyone to make their voices heard. I want to promote communication and collaboration in the profession. I also encourage wildlife professionals to engage the public and explain the science and thought that goes into management decisions.

Solutions to conservation issues and progress in natural resource management will come from an informed and passionate membership. I believe TWS provides many opportunities for professional growth and I will continue to advocate for education, training, and mentorship. I have been very fortunate to have had great guides, colleagues, and friends at all levels of TWS. I would like to be a part of the tradition and promote involvement. I welcome interactions, ideas, and suggestions from all members. If elected, I will do my best to serve the Southeastern Section with all my energy. **Please see complete biographical sketch here.**

Susan Rupp



Having served at the chapter, section, and parent levels and on committees and working groups within TWS over the past 23 years, I would be honored to serve as Representative of the 13 states and 3 territories comprising the Southeastern Section – a diverse and active region. As we move deeper into the 21st Century, wildlife professionals in the southeast and across the U.S. are facing diversified pressures including competing land uses, population growth, climate change, disease, anti-management sentiment within various publics, and greater demands on our time as technology rapidly expands. Our young, early career professionals are faced with expanding educational

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requirements in addition to the traditional field taxonomy and techniques courses essential to being a good biologist. With these increasing demands, we must honor our foundation as leaders in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation while adapting to changing political, public, and natural climates all while trying to stay up-to-date with the latest advances in science.

To achieve this, I believe diversification (inclusion, diversity, equity, and awareness) of our membership and development of robust mentorship opportunities at all levels is essential. True mentorship involves reciprocity; it is a synergistic relationship between two or more people that results in a mutually beneficial, collaborative structure where information, culture, and knowledge can be exchanged inter-generationally or within peer groups. These diverse synergies will help address the multiplicative demands we have on us as stewards of our wildlife resources by streamlining training, leadership development, and communication across diverse stakeholder groups. **Please see complete biographical sketch here.**

Wildlife Management Excellence Award

Each year during its annual meeting, the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society (SETWS) may present the Wildlife Management Excellence Award to recognize excellence in wildlife management activities carried out within the member states of the SETWS.

Persons making nominations must be current members of the SETWS; however, nominees need not be members. Nominations may include either an individual or group and evaluation of nominees will be based upon a single management achievement, not a “lifetime service” that has been accomplished in the field of wildlife management.

Examples of management achievements worthy of the award include (but definitely are not limited to) activities such as an exceptional break-through in bringing back an endangered species, the rapid (over a few years) development of a management area due to an individual or group effort, a major effort in stopping a particularly environmentally damaging project or an extension education effort that results in substantial and measurable change in private landowner acreage set aside for wildlife use.

Nominations should be submitted following the nomination format found on the SETWS website (<https://wildlife.org/se-section/about/awards/wildlife-management-excellence-award/>) and will be reviewed by a five-member committee. The committee is seeking nominations of individuals or groups who have performed “above and beyond” in their nominated category with good quantitative data to support the nomination.

The deadline for nominations is **August 1, 2021** and nominations should be emailed directly to the Chair of the WMEA Committee, **Travis DeVault** (travis.devault@uga.edu). The recipient will be presented with the Wildlife Management Excellence Award at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society. Your participation is vital to the awards programs of the SETWS and is greatly appreciated. We all are aware of the multitude of deserving individuals and groups within our essential profession. As such, please take the time to nominate these deserving professionals.

NOMINATIONS

C.W. Watson Award Nomination Format

The Clarence W. Watson Award is the most prestigious award given by SEAFWA and is presented to the career individual who, in the opinion of the C.W. Watson Award Committee, has made the greatest contribution to wildlife or fish conservation during the previous year or years. Nominees may be from the areas of fish and wildlife conservation including: research, administration, law enforcement, information and education, wildlife management, fish management. Nominees may be teachers, educators, professionals, and students. This award is presented jointly by the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society, the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society, and the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The C.W. Watson Award may be given for accomplishing a single item or a series of different nonrelated items. The C.W. Watson Award is given to a nominee who has contributed the most to any of the appropriate areas of fish and wildlife conservation. Emphasis is on the **contribution**, not tenure. Those making nominations are requested to ensure that they explain clearly what was accomplished and how it contributed to fish and wildlife conservation.

I. Individual making the Nomination

- A. Name
- B. Contact Email
- C. Contact Phone Number

The C.W. Watson Award will be presented during the 75th Annual SEAFWA Conference in Roanoke, VA this October. For more information on the award and a list of past recipients, please visit seafwa.org.

II. Background Information of Nominee

- A. Name
- B. Education
- C. Employment History
- D. Recent Professional Image of Nominee

III. Nominee Accomplishments

- A. Comprehensive overview of the challenges and achievements of the nominee.
- B. Actions nominee took to address the issues, solve the problems, initiate programs, or engage beneficiaries to advance conservation.
- C. Accomplishments of nominee's actions to be considered in the award review.

Please submit C.W. Watson Award nominations **by Monday, August 30, 2021** to:
2021 Chair of the C.W. Watson Committee

Eric Sutton – Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Director Representative
eric.sutton@MyFWC.com



FLICKR/Greg Schechter

MEETINGS OF INTEREST

AUGUST 2021

Ecological Society of America 106th Annual Meeting

Hybrid meeting – in person and virtual
August 1-6, 2021
Long Beach, California
<https://www.esa.org/longbeach/>

SEPTEMBER 2021

111th AFWA Annual Meeting

September 12-15, 2021
Providence, Rhode Island
<https://www.afwaannualmeeting.org/>

OCTOBER 2021

75th SEAFWA Conference

October 17-20, 2021
Roanoke, Virginia
<http://www.seafwa.org/conference/>



FLICKR/Greg Schechter

NOVEMBER 2021

The Wildlife Society 28th Annual Conference

Virtual Meeting
November 1-5, 2021
<https://twconference.org/>



FEBRUARY 2022

45th Southeast Deer Study Group Meeting

February 20-23, 2022
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
Shepherdstown, WV
<https://www.sedsg.com/>

MARCH 2022

27th Annual Southeastern Bat Diversity Network Meeting

March 10-11, 2022
Jonesboro, Arkansas
<https://sbdn.org/annual-meeting/>

87th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

March 14-18, 2022
The Davenport in Spokane, Washington
<https://wildlifemanagement.institute/>

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society Membership Application

New Renewal Change of Address
_____ Number of years (multiple year membership)

(please print)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

PHONE _____

For new memberships or renewals, please enclose a check for \$10.00 per year (students: \$6.00) payable to Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society with this application and send to:

Daniel Greene
Wildlife Scientist, Environmental Research South
Weyerhaeuser Company
3477 S. Frontage Road
Columbus, MS 39701
Phone (850) 890-9360
dgreene907@gmail.com