Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group


Photo credit: Levi Heffelfinger

Summer Newsletter July 2020

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Note from the Chair

Greetings,

Shortly after our meeting in Reno, my family and I moved from Virginia to South Texas. I started a new job as the Stuart Stedman Chair of White-tailed Deer Research at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI) at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Shortly after we arrived, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. When the shutdown really took effect in South Texas, I was on the banks of the Rio Grande working on a CKWRI project led by Randy DeYoung in collaboration with the USDA-ARS, USDA Cattle Fever Tick Eradication program, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. We were conducting a deer density reduction treatment as part of ongoing research examining roles deer and nilgai play in perpetuating tick populations in the Cattle Fever Tick Quarantine Zone in South Texas. We removed 300 deer on International Boundary Water Commission lands, where hunting is highly restricted, access is limited, and the area is essentially a sanctuary. The lack of effective hunting resulted in the need to remove deer through our project. Our team of around 30 students, volunteers, and scientists scratched deer for ticks, collected biological data, gutted, skinned and loaded carcasses on to refrigerator trucks for five days. Each time our delivery truck rolled into the border town of Zapata we were meet by a line of cars. During the week, we delivered around 15,000 lbs of venison. This all occurred as Texas began social distancing measures and the grocery stores were sold out of meat. We gave hundreds of families a deer to help make it through these tough times.

About Us

Webpage: https://wildlife.org/htcwg/

Officers – 2020-2021

Chair: Michael Cherry (Michael.Cherry@tamuk.edu)

Chair-Elect: Val Titus (val.titus@keystone.edu)

Past Chair: Tom Decker (thomas_decker@fws.gov)

Secretary/Treasurer: Pat Jackson (pjackson@ndow.org)

Board Member: John Kilgo (john.kilgo@usda.gov)

Board Member: Geriann Albers (geriann.albers@gmail.com)

Membership: 265

TWS Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group

@htcwg_tws

@HTCWG_TWS

Note from the Chair

Our Working Group has been busy!

I would like to welcome three new members of the Communications Committee, Gabriela Zaldumbide, Marcelo Jorge and Amanda Veals. Gabby is a recent master's graduate who now works as a Conservation Communication specialist with the Wildlife Management Institute. Marcelo is starting his PhD at UGA studying impacts of CWD on deer in Arkansas and Amanda is a PhD student at the CKWRI studying ocelot spatial ecology. They all are really fired up to increase the communication in our group on social media and hope you will help provide content.

Additionally, TWS President Gary White has asked our working group, along with 3 others, to provide comment on a revision of TWS's Standing Position on Furbearer Trapping. We have formed a committee to provide this review. The committee is Chaired by HTC WG Past-Chair Tom Decker and includes Geriann Albers, Chris Dwyer, Pat Jackson, Colleen Olfenbuttel, John Olson, John Organ, Samara Trusso, and I. TWS council approved an updated version of this position statement largely on 6 July 2020. This revised version integrated input from our working group, and in my opinion the Position Statement is substantially improved. You can find the new Position Statement at the end of this Newsletter and here: **https://wildlife.org/tws-standing-position-traps-trapping-and-furbearer-management/**

We have formed our Elections and Nominations Committee for 2020. We thank Garrett Clevinger, Mike Conner, and Serra Hoagland for agreeing to recruit candidates for our officer positions. They also reviewed our election process to provide recommendations for conducting future elections including platforms and timeline. Please send candidate nominations to Garrett, Serra, and Mike.

We are preparing for a virtual meeting associated with 27th Annual Meeting of TWS. We are excited about the meeting and want to highlight a couple sessions our group has supported. We are supporting symposia *on Relevance of Sustainable Use of Wildlife in a Changing Society* and *Eastern Elk Ecology and Management.* We have, unfortunately canceled our workshop lead by Pat Jackson on *Animal Capture Techniques for Researchers and Managers*. I look forward to catching up this fall at our annual meeting.

Best regards,

Michael J Cherry

Stuart W. Stedman Chair for White-tailed Deer Research
Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute

Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Social Media in Science

By: Marcelo Jorge and Amanda Veals

Social media has changed the world in many and immeasurable ways. Society's reliance on social media can be considered a hindrance by some, while others would call it a useful tool. Regardless of where one falls on this issue, social media is not going away anytime soon and as a tool scientists should use it to the best of their ability. However, science as a whole has been relatively slow to jump on the opportunity social media provides in a form of communication with the lay public.

It is common knowledge at this point that one of the greatest issues facing scientists is the lack of dissemination of findings in a consumable manner by the public. Scientific journals are often not free to public access and can be full of jargon and statistics that turn the general reader away. Social media is arguably a great tool to bridge the gap for researchers conveying the importance of their work. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are great means for dissemination of information quickly in an easily consumed and understood format.

Social media can be used to first engage people with comedic or interesting posts which can then be supplemented by more informative posts as well as calls for action regarding relevant policy. In this new age of disinformation, scientists now more than ever should be openly talking about the science and research they do on politicized/controversial topics (e.g. climate change, coronavirus). Take for example, the controversial hunting of Cecil the lion which sparked a major conversation on the topic of trophy hunting. Regardless of what one may think about trophy hunting, it was clear that only one side of narrative was being shown: trophy hunting was bad and shouldn't be done. It is not the job of researchers to advocate for one political stance over another, but to highlight the pros and cons of relevant topics so that the public might be better informed. In the case of hunting, there are numerous scientific publications that show the impacts hunting can have on wildlife populations, however that is not where the public looks for their information on such topics. Social media in these instances can be a great way to provide the public with scientifically based information in an easily understood manner.

Editorial | Published: 27 November 2018

Social media for scientists

Nature Cell Biology **20**, 1329(2018) | Cite this article

15k Accesses | **4** Citations | **53** Altmetric | Metrics

Scientists are increasingly embracing social media in their professional lives. Here, we look at the different platforms available to researchers and how social media engagement can positively influence their day-to-day work and scientific communication.

Without scientists coming out and talking about the science behind a phenomenon, while others wildly speculate with little concrete evidence, we do a disservice to the general public when scientists stay quite (e.g. flat earth, moon landing controversy, 5G coronavirus, climate change hoax, anti-vaccine campaigns). These reasons are why the Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group are working to increasing our social media presence. We want to further engage the general public on topics that our members are passionate about. We aim to share scientifically based content that engages both our members and the general public. The working group will be increasing our presence on multiple social media platforms to help disseminate information and engage more people in discussions regarding hunting, trapping, and conservation.

Hunting Mentorship Program Update

By: Gabby Zaldumbide

In the winter of 2018, the Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group of TWS collaborated with the National Shooting Sports Foundation and launched its first hunting and target shooting mentor program. TWS members that are interested in becoming a mentor can sign up online through the working group's website and are encouraged to return to the website again after mentoring a hunter or target shooter in the field to tell us about their experience. Each mentor has the opportunity to provide a photo and a short story describing their mentoring experience, and a few lucky mentors will have their stories featured in The Wildlife Professional!

A few of our favorite mentorship stories have been from TWS members Mateen Hessami and Samantha Pedder. Mateen lives in Missoula, Montana, where he attended school at University of Montana. He developed a student-led hunting mentorship program at his university through a partnership with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and the University of Montana's TWS chapter. Through his own program, Mateen mentored a non-hunting mentee, Ada Smith. Ada was eager to learn how to hunt, but she wanted to shadow an experienced hunter before she ventured out on her own. Luckily for her, while Mateen and her were glassing up a hillside, a young mule deer buck came crashing out of the brush at 70 yards. Mateen took a shot, but the bullet flew right past the deer. Ada was not disappointed at all; instead, she was curious as to what went wrong and thankful that it was a clean miss.


Mateen Hessami mentoring Ada Smith.

For Samantha, her 2018 hunting season became a time for personal growth. Her idea of a mentor relationship evolved from a one-on-one perspective to one of a hunting mentor-mentee network. She spent a week during Pennsylvania's rifle season hunting with hunters of all levels of experience. At first, she was worried that her "mentoring" capability couldn't be adjusted to meet the needs of many people instead of just one. However, as the week progressed, she came to realize that the responsibility of teaching and learning fell on each of our shoulders. The thought of a tribe/network/cohort/or group of people all pursuing different hunting opportunities together was a newfound concept to her and became something that she believes will continue to evolve as the next generation of hunters steps into the field. Last year's Pennsylvania whitetail season left a humbling and exciting impression on her time in the field. Sam looks forward to recruiting not one, but a group of new hunters in the coming years so that her tribe may grow and continue to learn from one another.

The HTCWG would like to thank all those who have for passed on our important heritage and cultural values through mentored hunts and target shooting excursions. By enrolling as a HTCWG hunting and target shooting mentor, you are exposing more people to hunting and target shooting heritage as well as supporting future land and habitat conservation. All mentors help preserve hunting and target shooting and support environmental conservation for years to come.

Samantha Pedder with fellow hunter Sara.

2020 HTC WG Election Update

The HTC WG Elections and Nominations Committee is chaired by Garret Clevinger and includes Serra Hoagland and Mike Conner. Please send you nomination to the committee.

Garrett Clevinger: garrbc1@vt.edu
Serra Hoagland: serrahoagland@gmail.com
Mike Conner: mike.conner@jonesctr.org

Open Positons:

Chair-elect

This is a 6-year position and the elected person will serve 2 years in each position (Chair-elect, Chair, and Past Chair). The responsibilities for this position include:

CHAIR-ELECT - The Chair-elect shall assume the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair or upon the inability of the Chair to serve, and shall perform any duties assigned by the Chair. The chair-elect shall serve as a member of the Membership Committee. In the event the Chair-elect cannot serve in the Chair's absence, the Executive Board shall appoint a Chair, pro tempore. Upon completion of a full term as Chair-elect, the Chair-elect succeeds to the position of Chair.

CHAIR - The Chair shall have general supervisory responsibility for the Executive Board; shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Board and membership; shall appoint, with the advice of the Executive Board, chairs of all standing and special committees; and shall be an ex officio member of all committees, except the Nominating and Elections Committee. The Chair may represent the Working Group or appoint alternate representatives to other Working Group, Chapter, Section, or Society boards, committees, or meetings, including The Wildlife Society Council. The Chair shall be responsible for submitting an annual report of the Working Group's activity to the Society. Upon completion of a full term as Chair, the Chair succeeds to the position of immediate Past Chair.

PAST CHAIR - The immediate Past Chair shall perform any duties assigned by the Chair and shall serve as the chair of the Nominating and Elections Committee.

Board Member

This is a 2-year position and the elected person will serve on the Executive Board of the HTC WG. Responsibilities for this position include any duties related to Working Group activities or functions assigned by the Chair.

Photo credit: Jacob Dykes

Standing Position

Trapping Furbearers[1]

Regulated[2] trapping can be an effective and ecologically sound practice of selectively taking furbearers. Regulated trapping in North America is consistent with internationally accepted principles of natural resource conservation stipulating the maintenance of essential ecological processes, preservation of genetic diversity, and the continued existence of species and ecosystems. When consistent with the Best Management Practices (BMPs)[3] developed under the auspices of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTSs)[4] in Canada, the practice meets strict performance and animal welfare criteria.

Lethal and non-lethal trapping is a key technique used in wildlife research and management. Regulated trapping enables wildlife professionals to collect biological information about furbearer population status and re-establish or augment populations of furbearers. Regulated trapping is a primary tool of furbearer damage programs and may be used when the safety of the public is at risk or when threatened and endangered species benefit from furbearer removal.

Regulated trapping by licensed members of the public provide an important connection to nature, development of personal skills, increased appreciation and knowledge of wildlife, and an outdoor lifestyle for those citizens through sustainable use of natural resources. Regulated trapping is a vital component to the subsistence and self-sufficiency of some people in North America.

Wildlife professionals need to inform the public and address the diversity of values among the public by being educated on the advancements in trapping furbearers and incorporating the latest research findings on AIHTSs and BMPs for trapping in regulations, practice, and enforcement.

The Wildlife Society has adopted this standing position statement to underscore contemporary needs associated with the continuation of regulated trapping as a wildlife management and research tool and component of responsible public use of wildlife.

The policy of The Wildlife Society, with respect to regulated furbearer trapping, is to:

1. Recognize that furbearer trapping, when properly regulated following biological principles for sustainable harvest of wildlife species, is an appropriate public use of wildlife resources and an effective method of sustainably managing and studying wildlife populations.

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[1] Herein, "furbearers" refers to animals trapped primarily for the value of their fur.
[2] "Regulated" trapping refers to a legal regime that controls trapping methods, seasons, level of removal, and enforcement under federal, state, provincial, or indigenous law/regulations or both.
[3] See: https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/5015/2104/8473/Introduction_comp.pdf
[4] See: https://fur.ca/fur-trapping/humane-trapping-standards-and-animal-welfare/

2. Recognize that regulated trapping of furbearers provides benefits including reduced human-wildlife conflicts, management of wildlife disease outbreaks, control of invasive species, protection and restoration of species, ecological knowledge, and a connection to nature.

3. Support the appropriate regulation of regulated trapping and enforcement of trapping laws by public and indigenous agencies. Such enforcement is necessary to help maintain viable furbearer populations and management programs that are compatible with or enhance the management of other wildlife species, including threatened and endangered wildlife.

4. Oppose unregulated trapping.

5. Promote BMPs for regulated trapping developed under the auspices of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and AIHTS in Canada. Encourage wildlife agencies to continue to refine and use AIHTS standards and BMPs for regulated trapping in furbearer management, trapper education, and public outreach programs.

6. Encourage trapper education programs that emphasize trapper ethics and responsible behavior, appropriate trapping techniques and BMPs, proper fur handling, and principles of furbearer management.

7. Encourage research on furbearer biology, trapping methods, harvest and furbearer demographics, behavior and attitudes of trappers, wildlife professionals, and the public toward regulated trapping that will inform wildlife managers, policy makers, and the public in making decisions for managing furbearers.

8. Encourage global efforts to improve furbearer conservation and management, including the use and adoption of the trapping BMPs for capturing furbearers, and the training of trappers, trapper education instructors, professional biologists and conservation officers on science-based developments in furbearer management.

9. Promote programs that inform the public, including trappers, about trapping BMPs, regulated trapping, and the values and benefits of properly regulated, sustained use of wildlife resources.

Approved by The Wildlife Society Council on July 6, 2020.