

The Wildlife Society

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION



SEPTEMBER 2021 VOLUME 63, NUMBER 3
KATHERINE EDWARDS, EDITOR

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Something's happening! It may be the hope of a break in the Mississippi summer signaling fall is coming or perhaps, the potential of face-to-face classes emerging after the COVID gloom. Whatever it is, I like it. It's exciting to feel some sense of normal. January 2020 was my first President's address. "We made it!" captured the excitement of reaching 2020, the start of a new decade. Well, it hasn't been the most enjoyable start, but we've persevered. We have 8 more years ahead before 2030 is upon us so it can only get better from here. Right? Right. We can make it happen. Let's make the best of it!

For starters, who's going to Roanoke? The schedule is posted with numerous fun activities listed from the Sunday night opener through the Plenary, banquet, and myriad technical sessions, student development opportunities, and the "in-between" moments. Those "in-between" moments to sit and talk with collaborators, friends, and fellow wildlife professionals about our passion, events over the past year, and what we're looking ahead are likely what most readers of this address have missed most. I know I have. The virtual meeting environments simply do not capture the energy of an in person gathering. While it means that we need to dress accordingly and ditch the Zoom pants and other comforts of the home office, the mental health benefits alone are bound to be extraordinary. We will be meeting face-to-face, perhaps mask-to-mask, on Tuesday morning, October 19 from 10:30 AM-noon (EDT), for our Members Meeting. A virtual option will be available as well for those unable to make it. As I write, the SEAFWA schedule is being updated, and we will confirm additional meeting details with members once finalized.

As mentioned in my first address, we the Executive Board of the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society are here to serve you. We are looking forward

to continuing to put these words into action working alongside state chapter representatives and listening to you, our members. For example, new officer training was mentioned as something helpful to state chapters. We hope to have some new officer resources available by our Members Meeting to share with you for feedback. Furthermore, we have a list of outstanding candidates to consider for joining the Executive Board, bylaw revisions to review, and beginning 2022, a new President when **Kelly Douglass** takes the reigns. The future just keeps looking brighter and brighter.

During these closing months of my term, I look forward to meeting with you at Roanoke but also receiving emails regarding concerns or comments about the direction of the Section. Your creativeness is what has encouraged us to look ahead at how best to serve our members just as your dedication to the conservation and management of our wildlife resources can be inspiring to those around you. Keep up the great work and please stay in touch!!

See you in Roanoke!

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

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SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Greetings Friends and Colleagues,

As I write this, I am reminded that time really does fly. This will be my last newsletter article as your Southeastern Section Representative, and I want to take this time to thank you for allowing me to serve you over the last six years.

As I look back upon my time on Council, I can't help but remember something that previous Section Representative, **Darren Miller**, told me. He said that being on Council was one of the most professionally rewarding things he had experienced. Soon after I stepped onto Council, I saw what he was talking about. During my time on Council, we discussed a lot of topics. In most cases, motions were made and carried with unanimous support. In other cases, debate was intense. In all cases, each member of Council voted in a way that – in their opinion – best served our membership. We left every meeting as friends. I suggest that this is how Council has always functioned, and I think this is as it should be. I share these things with you so that, if you are ever asked to run for Council, you will say yes. It is a lot of work, but it is rewarding work.

Some of you took the time to contact me and others on Council to voice your opinion regarding Council decisions or to offer suggestions for the betterment of TWS. The importance of this is immense. Your emails and phone calls are discussed on Council, and it helps us to better understand what our membership thinks on a given topic. Your opinions really do affect Council action. It would be better if we had more feedback from our membership. Remember, The Wildlife Society is your society, so feel free to your offer suggestions and opinions.

Lisa Muller will be replacing me on Council. I am sure that most of you know her. Lisa has a great deal of experience in The Wildlife Society, she has served as a working group officer, she is active in SETWS, and she is a TWS Fellow. She also is firmly committed to ensuring that TWS remains strong and able to address the needs of members into the future. I encourage everyone to welcome her and to introduce yourself to her when you are able.

I am hopeful that I will be able to visit with many of you at SEAFWA in Roanoke in October. I think many are really looking forward to a return to face-to-face meetings. I know I am. If you all feel like I do, this may be the most well attended SEAFWA meeting ever.

Finally, I will get around to my real message of this letter. Thank you. Thank you for electing me. Thank you for your support. Thank you for trusting me to speak for you. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for what you do for natural resources. As always, I am happy to hear from you. I can be reached at mike.conner@jonesctr.org

Sincerely,

Mike Conner
Southeastern Section TWS,
Representative to Council



COMMITTEE REPORTS

DEER COMMITTEE

Southeast Deer Partnership

Alongside partners, the National Deer Association (NDA) is pleased to announce the official start of phase 1 of the Southeast Deer Partnership's (SDP) "Conservation of At-Risk Species by Deer Hunters in the Southeastern United States: An Innovative Model for Cooperative Conservation" Project. The SDP set a goal of securing \$900,000 in total funding and to-date have garnered enough support to contract with Responsive Management through an open bid process to initiate the project. Phase 1 includes gathering, mining, and analyzing all available data on the economic, social and conservation benefits of deer hunting in the southeastern U.S.

Phases 2 and 3 include developing and implementing a fact-based communications plan based on the findings in phase 1, and will include professional marketing and public relations experts.

The SDP is comprised of state and federal governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and private sector entities that have vested interests in the future of deer hunting, wildlife management, and conservation. The SDP's mission is to increase awareness of the role and benefits of deer hunting and hunters throughout the Southeast through collaboration with partners.

As of July 2021, financial partners include:

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, Missouri Department of Conservation, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

Because 70% of at-risk species in the U.S. occur on private lands, landscape-level conservation projects cannot be achieved by focusing solely on public



lands. This is especially true in the southeast U.S. where 87% of the forested land is privately owned and where many at-risk species occur. White-tailed deer hunting is one of the most popular activities on private lands in the southern U.S. and deer management plays a major role in land use and habitat conservation. The utilization of deer hunters to achieve landscape-level conservation objectives is possible because private lands managed primarily for white-tailed deer provide multiple habitat components that benefit other wildlife species.

Conservation of at-risk species by deer hunters in the Southeastern United States can be achieved by support and implementation of the SDP's goals: 1) to ensure the future of deer hunting and benefits hunters provide to conservation efforts; 2) promote effective, science-based management of deer population and its relevance to habitat quality, at-risk species, and socioeconomics; 3) educate hunters, non-hunters, and governmental decision-makers throughout the Southeast on the value of deer hunting and hunters; 4) Support R3 (hunter recruitment, retention, reactivation) initiatives in partner states; 5) increase deer hunter participation in partner states; and, 6) increase deer hunter engagement in land management activities that benefit deer and at-risk species.

This project is organized to collect and present data from the 15 states in the SEAFWA region which includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

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To learn more about the SDP or this project, visit www.deerassociation.com/conserves/southeast-deer-partnership; or contact SDP Chairman **Kip Adams** at kip@deerassociation.com or SDP Vice Chairman **Steve Shea** at sheawildlife@gmail.com.

Steve Shea, sheawildlife@gmail.com
Matt Ross, matt@deerassociation.com

MINORITIES IN NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The MINRC Committee is diligently planning for the 2021 SEAFWA Annual Conference in Roanoke, VA where we will host both a Student and a Professional Development Workshop. The Student Workshop is open to all students attending SEAFWA. Students will get tips and tricks for resume and cover letter writing, practice elevator speeches, and will learn from the experiences of a former MINRC student, now professional. Students will also participate in a Careers in Conservation panel where they will gain insight on employment opportunities and network with professionals from SEAFWA's sixteen member states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and attending federal agencies. Visit the SEAFWA website to see a full agenda of the workshop.

MINRC is also hosting a professional development workshop that will focus on diversity and inclusion in conservation. The workshop will have two keynote speakers, a presentation from the 2020 SEAFWA Diversity and Inclusion Awardee, and a panel of all the current DEI Directors of the SEAFWA state agencies. The workshop will close with breakout groups focused on topics such as recruiting, community engagement, R3, and more. This workshop is open to all professionals attending SEAFWA, and we hope that you'll join us for this exciting workshop to further the SEAFWA theme, "The Outdoors are Better Together".

Lastly, we want to highlight the work of one of our former MINRC students! **Darren Beachem** participated in MINRC in 2018 & 2019 as a student at the Alabama A&M University (AAMU). He graduated from AAMU in May 2019 with a B.S. in Forestry with a concentration in Forest Management. After graduating, Darren

continued at AAMU and jumped right into graduate school where he is currently working on his M.S. degree and researching the effects of goat browsing on forest health, including soil nutrients, invasive species control, and overall tree performance. When asked about his experience with MINRC, he said, "Along with the understanding of how to become a productive professional, MINRC taught me several networking and team building skills, and as a forestry outreach specialist, I spend much time using these skills with the landowners I serve today."



*Former MINRC student, **Darren Beachem**, is accessing tree height at The Federation of Southern Cooperatives Rural Training and Research Center.*

To keep up to date on MINRC news, jobs, and events throughout the southeast, please follow us on social media. You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Mercedes Maddox
mercedes.maddox@dcnr.alabama.gov

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ALABAMA

NO NEWS REPORTED



ARKANSAS

Arkansas Chapter TWS

The Chapter's annual meeting will take place March 3 – 4, 2022, tentatively set for DeGray Lake State Park.

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Jason Mitchell was honored with the Arkansas NWTW Wildlife Manager of the Year Award. **Maia Larson**, who leads the 5 member Arkansas Habitat Specialist Team (which is a partnership between the Commission and Quail Forever), recently received the Firebird Award from the NBTC State Quail Coordinators and the team also received the Group Achievement Award. **Carl Hunter**, who joined the Commission staff as a deer biologist in 1945 and eventually retired as Assistant Director in 1986 was recently inducted into the Arkansas Waterfowler Hall of Fame.

Arkansas State University Student Chapter

Alix Matthews won the graduate student poster competition at the recent Students United in Preserving, Exploring, and Researching Biodiversity summer institute.

Arkansas Tech University Student Chapter

New officers were recently elected. **Alyssa Mostrom** will serve as President, **Autumn Henry** as Secretary, and **Lark Sybrant** as Social Coordinator.



University of Arkansas Fayetteville Student Chapter

The Chapter has elected **Thomas Fortner** as President, **James Boyko** as Vice President, and **Kenneth Taylor** as Treasurer. **Dr. Caleb Roberts** came to the University in January 2021 and joined the USGS Coop Unit as the new assistant unit leader with a focus on Invasive Species and Landscape Ecology.

University of Arkansas Monticello Student Chapter

Dr. Philip Tappe, who served as Arkansas Chapter President in 1997, retired as Dean of the College of Forestry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources in December and **Dr. Michael Blazier** was hired to fill that role in July. **Dr. Elena Rubino** has been hired to teach Conservation Social Science.

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

FLORIDA

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is seeking public feedback on draft Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines for four state-listed beach-nesting bird species including the American oystercatcher, snowy plover, least tern and black skimmer. Once approved the guidelines will be part of Florida's Imperiled Species Management Plan.

Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines are intended to provide information on rule requirements as they relate to permitting. They also provide information on the species' range, survey methodology and voluntary practices that can benefit the species.



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All four species of state-listed beach-nesting birds are included in one set of draft guidelines, which is now available for review and comment.

Key information included in the guidelines will be presented at four public webinars. The webinars also offer an opportunity for public questions and feedback. Each webinar will offer the same information. The first webinar date has already passed by the time of this publication.

Webinars are scheduled for the following dates:

Thursday, Sept. 23, 3-4 p.m. (ET)

Wednesday, Sept. 29, 6-7 p.m. (ET)

Monday, Oct. 11, noon-1 p.m. (ET)

Participation in the webinars will require access to a computer or access to a telephone for audio-only access. To learn more about how to attend the webinars visit: MyFWC.com/Shorebirds. Once available, a copy of the webinar presentation and draft guidelines will also be available on the website.

GEORGIA

NO NEWS REPORTED



KENTUCKY

NO NEWS REPORTED



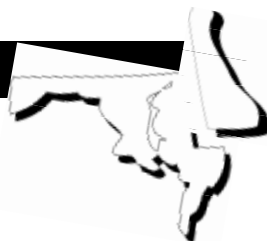
LOUISIANA

NO NEWS REPORTED



MARYLAND/DELAWARE

NO NEWS REPORTED



MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Chapter TWS

The Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society sent letters to state representatives calling for support of the 2021 version of Recovering America's Wildlife Act. As in year's past, the chapter urged congress members to consider the wide-ranging impacts this bill can achieve for not only wildlife in Mississippi but nationwide.

Mississippi's 2021 state chapter meeting was held virtually, from September 16-17, 2021.



FLICKR/Jim Bauer

Mississippi State University

Congratulations to **Madelyn McFarland** on being named the 2021 Society of Wetland Scientists Best Student Oral Presentation recipient at this year's society meeting. Her research, begun in 2018 at Mississippi State University, is a multidisciplinary effort with Ducks Unlimited and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries to evaluate the efficacy of marsh terraces for restoring and enhancing Gulf Coastal wetlands in Louisiana. She is pleased to report that data collection for this project will culminate in October 2021. The study assesses the effectiveness of marsh terracing in providing avian habitat, facilitating submerged aquatic vegetation production and sediment transport, and reducing erosive wind and wave energy. Her research was impacted by two major hurricanes which allowed the project to evaluate the efficacy of marsh terracing under extreme weather conditions. Madelyn's research will benefit coastal restoration by providing new insight into marsh terrace implementation and management.

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*Mississippi State University graduate student, **Madelyn McFarland**, conducts a secretive marsh-bird survey in a marsh terrace site in southeast Louisiana.*

Mississippi State University graduate student, **Taylor Gibson**, is proud to be part of an 8-state initiative that is researching wood duck recruitment and other aspects of cavity-nesting duck breeding ecology. His project's overall objective is to estimate annual duckling production and annual female recruitment from nest boxes at several study areas in eight states, spanning from Delaware to central Louisiana. This work also assesses micro and macro habitat characteristics, and nest box design and dimensions that may influence nest selection, nest success, number of eggs laid, nest parasitism, duckling production, and ultimately female recruitment. For the Mississippi portion of this study, he monitored 174 wood duck nest boxes at Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, east-central Mississippi, and York Woods, a privately-owned property in Tallahatchie County in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Field work

was conducted in spring-summer 2020 and 2021. From February 2020 – August 2021, his team weighed, measured, and banded 142 female wood ducks, 9 female hooded mergansers, and 31 female black-bellied whistling ducks from all nest boxes. They also obtained structural measurements and web-tagged 795 wood duck ducklings, 182 black-bellied whistling duck ducklings, and 34 hooded merganser ducklings. Taylor will initiate post-nesting season trapping and banding through September 2021.



*Mississippi State University graduate student, **Taylor Gibson**, places a webtag on a juvenile wood duck at his study site.*

A study being conducted in collaboration with Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Network, and Mississippi State University is evaluating how priority open pine species are responding to management strategies in pine systems. The research, led by graduate student **Holly Todaro**, is assessing long-term response in priority bird species to thinning and fire and includes an assessment of Bachman's sparrows resource use within individual home ranges. Preliminary results suggest Bachman's sparrows are choosing locations

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within their home ranges based on pine basal area, available perches, vegetation density, and leaf litter. I&M interns **Cara Stewart**, **Kim Lowery**, and **Sydney O'Donald** worked with Holly in the field. "The project has provided me the opportunity to share my knowledge and passion for this species and has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my masters career", Todaro said.



Technician **Kim Lowery** shows off a freshly banded Bachman's sparrow while in the field at Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, Mississippi.

With the efforts of graduate student **Tyler Evans** at Mississippi State University, wild pig research efforts are ongoing at the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge (hereafter, Refuge) in east-central Mississippi. Although present in the Southeast for centuries, wild pigs are recent invaders of the Refuge, presenting novel opportunities to investigate wild pig early detection strategies, movements, and genetics in a bottomland and upland forested landscape. A census of wild pig rooting and wallowing activity was conducted between fall 2020 and spring 2021 using 20-m x 500-m belt transects ($n = 184$) across the Refuge, yielding a baseline distribution of wild pig activity. To aid future wild pig

monitoring at the Refuge and throughout the Refuge System, landscape features influencing wild pig use will be determined from the baseline distribution and sub-sampling approaches investigated throughout fall 2021 and spring 2022 with the goal of improving future early detection efforts (i.e., rapid assessment of changes in activity distribution). In addition, information gathered from the census has aided in identifying trapping locations for deployment of GPS collars, accelerometers, and magnetometers on adult sows ($n = 10$), hair snares for genetic sampling, and soon, wild pig enclosures for evaluating ecological impacts and ecosystem recovery. Collectively, data gathered will improve understanding of not only where wild pigs are located but how they use the Refuge landscape through dead reckoning of pathways (i.e., reconstruction) between recorded locations and identifying specific behaviors (i.e., foraging, resting, locomotion) occurring along these pathways. Because wild pigs present an emerging threat to this sensitive ecosystem, an investigation of the magnitude of invasion through non-invasive genetic sampling via hair snares is in-progress for determining true abundance (i.e., density index). Because of seasonal baiting



A newly collared wild pig that will aid in data collection for **Tyler Evans'** research on Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.

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potentially attracting non-target species, non-grain attractants (e.g., fruit spreads, commercial urine scents) were tested among 5 camera grids on the Refuge to identify optimal attractant(s) that maximize wild pig visitation while minimizing non-targets. Top attractants (e.g., orange marmalade, cooking grease) are currently being used within deployed hair snares ($n = 20$ snares) from early August through the end of September 2021. Last, wild pig exclosures (i.e., simulated wild pig eradication) will be distributed across the Refuge in identified wild pig activity areas as clusters of enclosed wallows, rooting areas and undisturbed sites alongside accessible sites to track long-term ecological impacts and ecosystem recovery. Ultimately, findings will be used to better inform wild pig management on Noxubee NWR and other bottomland and upland forested landscapes experiencing wild pig invasions in the Southeast.

Taylor Hackemack, th8370@gmail.com

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Chapter TWS



North Carolina Names Lori Williams 'Biologist of the Year'

Lori Williams, a TWS member and wildlife biologist in the Wildlife Diversity Program with the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission, recently earned the title of 2020 Biologist of the Year.

"Lori is inspirational to those of us lucky enough to work with her because of her incredible no-nonsense work ethic, compassion for wildlife and people, humility and her warm and giving demeanor," the North Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society wrote in its newsletter. "Though her schedule is always packed, Lori is quick to offer help for other staff's projects as often as needed whether directly or through sharing her wildlife technician."

Williams oversees and conducts research on rare amphibians and other species, adding to months of

surveys and monitoring projects. Some example of her work include providing technical guidance to NC-WRC staff, other state and federal agencies, NGOs and members of the public on activities including dam removals, bridge replacements, timber sales, species and habitat management and more.

She coordinates and manages projects on eastern hellbenders (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*), mud-puppies (*Necturus maculosus*), green salamanders (*Aneides aeneus*), mountain chorus frogs (*Pseudacris brachyphona*), Weller's salamander (*Plethodon welleri*), four-toed salamanders (*Hemidactylium scutatum*) and more. In many of these projects, she's used cutting edge research including eDNA and other genetics techniques to improve surveys, monitoring and conservation for amphibians in western North Carolina.



Williams also has participated in public outreach events, some of which feature a hellbender that she cares for at home, offering members of the public an opportunity to see a live hellbender.

"Lori does not seek the limelight or any accolades, yet she is always quietly working as hard as possible to conserve North Carolina's amphibians," the chapter wrote. "She is a passionate, joyful advocate for amphibians and their habitats. This exuberance rubs off on her colleagues, permit holders and landowners."

Chris Kelly Awarded 2020 Kayah Gaydish Award

Chris Kelly is a wildlife biologist with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) who has earned many awards over the years through her wildlife and other skills, long hours, and perseverance

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conserving birds and Carolina northern flying squirrels. In 2020, she was awarded the Kayah Gaydish Stewardship Award from the Carolina Climbers Coalition (CCC) for her work with the organization and climbers to conserve peregrine falcons as well as benefit rock climbing. In 2020, she trained several climbers to monitor peregrine falcons and worked with them to access nest ledges to investigate the fate of uncertain nest failures and conduct research.

“Being chosen for this stewardship award is an honor. Over the years, NCWRC and CCC leadership have come to work together and even rely on each other for stewardship. A couple of years ago, CCC members found a new pair of falcons nesting on the CCC-owned cliff, immediately set up a buffer to protect the birds from disturbance and alerted fellow climbers. If I need help spreading the word about a new nest or help accessing a nest ledge, we know **Mike Rear-don** and others with the CCC are just a phone call or email away.”

Chris is always exploring ways to address wildlife conservation challenges that involve working with stakeholders and other partners. Her passion for wildlife conservation and determination to make it happen is invaluable to the wildlife diversity of western North Carolina and beyond. Congratulations to Chris on a well-deserved award.

Read the chapter’s newsletter here.



Pixabay/Ray Miller

OKLAHOMA

NO NEWS REPORTED



SOUTH CAROLINA



Clemson University

Dr. James Anderson Named New Director of Clemson’s Kennedy Center

Clemson University has announced **Dr. James Anderson** as the next director of the James Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center, a coordinated effort — with sister organization Nemours Wildlife Foundation and other public and private-sector partners — to lead in conserving the Atlantic wetland ecosystems through education, research and outreach.



Dr. Jim Anderson, newly appointed director of the James Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center.

Headquartered at the Baruch Institute of Coastal Ecology and Forest Science (BICEFS) — located on Hobcaw Barony, a 16,000-acre tract of undeveloped land along the Waccamaw Neck — the Kennedy Center is the first endowed waterfowl and wetlands conservation center along the 3,000-mile Atlantic Flyway stretching from the Canadian maritimes to the Gulf of Mexico.

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A 30-year veteran researcher of wetland and wetland-dependent wildlife including waterfowl, Anderson joins Clemson after serving as the Davis-Michael Professor of Forestry and Natural Resources and a professor of wildlife ecology and management at West Virginia University.

Clemson University is the New Home to the National Bobwhite Quail Conservation Initiative

On Thursday, July 15, 2021, the Clemson University Board of Trustees approved Clemson as the new home for the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI), which is a unified effort of 25 state fish and wildlife agencies and various conservation organizations to restore wild bobwhite quail, grassland songbird, and associated wildlife populations across their historic range. Funding to support NBCI's efforts and staff comes from participating states, primarily through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act) funds.

In January of this year, NBCI sent out an RFP to select universities across the country. Besides Clemson, interested universities included the University of Georgia, Mississippi State University, Texas A&M University, and Oklahoma State University. In March, NBCI Board of Directors and 25 participating states voted unanimously to select Clemson as the new home for NBCI.

New Study Documents Continental-Scale Decline in Weasels

Few animals have fallen from grace more rapidly than the weasel.

The miniscule mammals have gone from being so revered they were featured in the paintings of Renaissance artist Leonardo DaVinci to being something you might call someone when you want to start a fistfight.

Now, three once-common species of weasels are rapidly fading from the continent, according to a study led by Clemson University wildlife ecologist **David Jachowski**.

The findings, published July 21 in the scientific journal PLOS ONE and co-authored by Jachowski, an associate professor in Clemson's Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation, along with researchers from N.C. State and New Mexico State universities, echo recent calls for further investigations into the conservation needs of small carnivores globally.

"We often focus on big animals — we go to Yellowstone to study wolves and we talk about coyotes invading South Carolina — but we don't really focus on the smaller carnivores and smaller mammals that exist in our states, our country or even the entire continent of North America, which is the scale of this research," Jachowski said.

Jachowski said his co-authors on the paper have done similar analyses for other small carnivores and seen such declining trends, which led to the idea of looking at some of the common continental carnivores that are oft overlooked by many due to their small stature.

Clemson University wildlife ecologist David Jachowski is an associate professor in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation.

"Unless you maybe have chickens and you're worried about a weasel eating your chickens, you probably don't think about these species very often," he said. "Even the state agency biologists who are charged with tracking these animals really don't have a good grasp on what is going on. So, as scientists, we said, 'Well, let's pull together the best data possible to see if what's happening to some other small carnivores around the globe is happening to weasels.'"

Turns out, the study showed a significant decline in the weasel population over the past century — with weasel reporting statistics, harvesting numbers and, for all intents and purposes, every type of monitoring data available indicating the animals are increasingly rare in North America, particularly the American Southeast.

The research team observed 87–94% declines in weasel harvest across the continent over the past 60 years. And while declining trapper numbers and shifts in trapping practices are likely partially to blame for the

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reduction, even after accounting for trapper effort and pelt price, a significant decline in weasel harvest for 15 of 22 evaluated states and provinces was detected.

“There used to be a lot more fur trapping of weasels in the United States than there is now, although there still is a market for them,” said study co-author **Roland Kays**, research professor of forestry and environmental resources at N.C. State and head of the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences’ Biodiversity Lab. “Trappers were getting a lot of weasels — whether by accident or on purpose. Historically, they’ve been trapped more frequently in northern areas. In North Carolina, we’ve seen less trapping than we have in the past. There are very few weasels caught.”

The research team analyzed a century of historical datasets to track weasel population trends in the U.S. and Canada, including historical harvests for pelts, data from museum collections, observations reported on the popular iNaturalist crowdsourcing platform and results of a recent nationwide trail camera survey conducted by more than 700 researchers in 2019.

The study showed that while relatively common before 2000, there has been a dramatic decline in records of long-tailed weasels recently in some parts of its range — specifically the Southern, Central and Great Lakes regions — and the extent of these declines approaches 75-95% for all three species.

Likewise, the camera trap survey across all 50 U.S. states detected weasels at 14 sites, but only above 40 degrees latitude — a circle of latitude that passes through West Virginia and New Jersey among Atlantic coastal states.

“The decline is striking in some regions. There are areas where weasels were once common but seem to have become rare or even absent,” said **Matthew Gompper**, professor and head of the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology at New Mexico State.



Recently published findings from a research team led by Clemson Associate Professor **David Jachowski** observed 87–94% declines in weasel harvest across the North American continent over the past 60 years. The study examined three once-common weasel species in North America, such as the ermine pictured here.

(Photo by **Brent Jones**)

The study centered on the status of three weasel species — least weasels, long-tailed weasels and ermine — including one holding the distinction of being the smallest carnivoran species.

“While the polar bear is the largest carnivore in the world, a type of weasel known as the least weasel is the smallest,” Kays said. “They’re important predators of mice and rodents. But now it seems like no one is seeing weasels anymore. We see them very rarely on our camera traps in North Carolina. We were concerned they were declining.”

Weasels are ferocious carnivores with a fast metabolism and, unlike bears or coyotes, only eat meat — typically rodents.

“We don’t really know what impact their loss could be having on the release of rodents from their predation, but it could be substantial in some areas,”



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Jachowski said. “Perhaps more importantly, because they are such specialized carnivores, their decline could be a valuable indicator of declining populations of native rodents. We just don’t know yet, which is part of why this finding is so interesting and important to follow up on.”

In the English language, of course, the weasel has a substantially negative connotation, with the term also used as a noun to describe a sneaky, untrustworthy or insincere person and as a verb meaning to escape from or evade a situation or obligation. But Jachowski said weasels have not always gotten such a bad rap.

“Back in the Renaissance era, DaVinci and other painters were famous for putting weasels into paintings because they represented fertility and particularly pregnancy,” he said. “It’s represented different things at different times in history. Native American societies, particularly in the Great Plains, tied weasels onto their shields because they were known as very fierce fighters. But for some reason in our modern culture, the intimation of weasel is kind of this sneaky ne’er-do-well. And that probably has to do with agriculture and raising livestock. Most people only encountered them when they came in and killed some of the chickens in their chicken coop.”

Globally, weasels are a species of “least concern” in terms of conservation status and can be harvested legally across most of their North American range. Regional recognition of harvest declines, however, has resulted in some recent attention to their management status.

“At the very least, this paper is hopefully a call to arms for biologists and the general public to reassess what we think we knew about this formerly highly abundant resident of our forests, backyards and even cities,” Jachowski said. “The next step for us to devise new and better ways to monitor for weasels. In addition, we have found that some of the best hope for information comes from the general public reporting whenever and wherever they see these tiniest of carnivores. Knowing where they persist is a key first step to understanding why they are declining.”

David Jachowski, djachow@clemsun.edu

TENNESSEE



Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

TWRA Partners with the University of Tennessee on Bobwhite Research

TWRA is partnering with the University of Tennessee-Knoxville on a quail research project. The research led by **Dr. Dave Buehler** is studying quail on three focal areas: Kyker Bottoms, Bridgestone Firestone, and Wolf River wildlife management areas in TN. The project includes documenting existing quail populations in the areas annually and the collection of data related to quail reproduction, survival, and habitat use. Habitat conditions are documented on each of the focal areas and TWRA is developing a habitat plan for each focal area. An evaluation of specific management practices over time will also be conducted.

The project has met goals for quail capture and radio-tagging and documenting bobwhite activity such as movements, habitat use, survival, and reproduction. The project is a part of TWRA’s efforts to restore bobwhites to areas of Tennessee.

Notable Increase of Reports of Dead Birds in Tennessee

Reports of dead birds have been increasing in Tennessee due to the recent news coverage of a disease affecting birds in several eastern and midwestern states. The disease is reportedly causing eye swelling and crusty discharge from the eyes of birds and it may also cause neurological symptoms. Most birds reported are young and have included common grackles, European starlings, blue jays, and American robins along with other species of songbirds.

Disease experts are diligently working to determine the cause of the disease and have not found signs of infection from known illnesses (e.g., Salmonella, avian influenza, West Nile virus, Newcastle disease, herpesviruses, poxviruses, and Trichomonas parasites).

STATE REPORTS

Chris Hunter Receives Firebird Award

Chris Hunter, TWRA Wildlife Habitat Biologist for west Tennessee, was Tennessee's recipient for the National Bobwhite Technical Committee's Firebird award. Over 90% of the state's Conservation Reserve Program acres are in west Tennessee, and a sizeable chunk of Conservation Stewardship Program acres along with other NRCS programs contracts. Mr. Hunter's technical assistance experience combined with working relationships with landowners, producers and NRCS personnel, along with Quail Forever partner biologists, are resulting in helpful increases in wildlife habitat.

Tennessee Tech University

Summer 2021 was an exciting one at Tennessee Tech University (TTU), as relaxed COVID guidelines allowed us to resume our field-based Wildlife Techniques course in a somewhat traditional format. In addition to learning the basics of radiotelemetry, orienteering, fish electroshocking, wildlife capture and handling, forestry, and more, students had the opportunity to meet with and learn from wildlife professionals representing a variety of state and federal agencies. The class was a huge success, and we look forward to a successful 2021-22 academic year, as well! Our TTU Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society also is looking forward to a great 2021-22 academic year. We welcome our new slate of officers – President **Abrial Norwick**, Vice-President **Bailey Hawkins**, Secretary **Allie Torres**, Treasurer **Jakob Craig**, and Communications Officer **Brittany Keaton**.

Cleveland State

The last quarter has been relatively quiet for the Cleveland State Student chapter. However, we have been able to accomplish a few things. First, we assisted the East Tennessee Retriever club with a retriever field trial at Hiwassee refuge in June and assisted the TWRA with Abomasal Parasite Counts at Yuchi Refuge and Enterprise South Nature Park in August.

The Student Wildlands Adventure Program made up for missing last year by taking students from 8 different colleges and universities from 3 different states to the

greater Yellowstone area from July 23- July 31. Students flew into Salt Lake City, Utah and spent a day there before driving to Island Park Idaho. From Island Park, they visited and learned from biologists from several different agencies. We visited the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, The Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Tetons National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. The students got to learn about everything from rare and endangered species to management of migrating ungulates and grizzlies.

Chuck Yoest, Chuck.A.Yoest@tn.gov

VIRGINIA



Virginia Chapter TWS

The Virginia Chapter of The Wildlife Society is planning for their 2022 Annual Meeting to be held in-person in Waynesboro, Virginia. The meeting will begin on February 1 and continue through February 3 featuring invited speakers, networking events, field trips, and workshops. We are finalizing a special session on wildlife disease that will provide attendees with the latest information on emerging issues in Virginia and how these affect policy and people. A lot more details to follow!

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

75th Annual SEAFWA Hosts

Virginia DWR is hosting this year's annual conference of the Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). This year's conference will represent the 75th anniversary of SEAFWA, and we're honored to be able to showcase Virginia by hosting this conference in Roanoke from October 17th through the 20th. We are designing this meeting to be a hybrid event to allow those unable to travel to have access to content, live-streamed sessions, as well as a variety of other ways to engage and connect with your colleagues in the natural resources community. You can read more about the conference here: <http://www.seafwa.org/conference/overview/>.

STATE REPORTS

New Initiatives

Over the last year, VA DWR has received over \$5 million in grant funding through USDS (VPA-HIP) and Department of Energy (AML Pilot Grant) funding programs to increase public access for wildlife related recreation and to improve wildlife habitat. These projects are focused in Southwest Virginia with a goal of opening almost 30,000 acres of public access, by partnering with private landowners, for hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife viewing, and a variety of other wildlife-related recreation. Properties enrolled through these grants will become part of DWR's Public Opportunities for Wildlife Related Recreation (POWRR). Beyond providing opportunities to provide public access, these projects will include management that will control invasive vegetation, promote native plant diversity, and encourage early successional habitat that will benefit elk, white-tailed deer, songbirds, turkey, pollinators, black bear, and a variety of other wildlife species.

In May of 2021, the Board of Wildlife Resources endorsed the agency's first-ever Wildlife Viewing Plan. The Plan is the culmination of a 3.5-year collaborative effort between the DWR and Virginia Tech's Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. It was developed through a participatory planning process, which included a 14-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee and a 15-member Technical Advisory Committee composed of DWR staff. Together, these committees developed a series of goals, objectives, and strategies, based on the results of a statewide Wildlife Recreation Study completed by Virginia Tech under contract to the DWR. The Study utilized focus groups, a random-sample survey of Virginia residents, a survey of wildlife recreationists already affiliated with the DWR, and a web-based stakeholder analysis of other organizations and agencies that support wildlife viewing in Virginia. Broad promotion of the draft plan resulted in over 350 comments received during the public comment period and final revisions made in response.

This document is our first comprehensive effort developed specifically for engaging with and supporting wildlife viewing across the agency, with success being achieved through implementation by all divisions. It is an exciting and significant step forward in achieving our agency's goal to connect with a broader audience.



Staff Changes

We are incredibly happy to report that **Becky Gwynn**, former Assistant Chief of our Wildlife Division, has been promoted to Deputy Director of the DWR, and now serves over our Wildlife and Aquatics Divisions, as well as our real estate efforts. Furthermore, **Mike Dye** has now transitioned from District Biologist to the position of Upland Game Bird Biologist. In addition to Mike's change in positions, the Wildlife Division has also welcomed several new staff members in recent months, including Wetlands Biologist—**Ben Sagara**, Elk Project Leader — **Jackie Rosenberger**, and Black Bear Project Leader — **Carl Tugend**.

Meagan Thomas
meagan.thomas@dwr.virginia.gov

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

SEAFWA
Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



BUSINESS

Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society Meetings

Executive Board Meeting
Sunday, October 17
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (EDT)

Annual Members Meeting
Tuesday, October 19
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (EDT)

Held during the 75th Annual SEAFWA Conference
Roanoke, VA

Virtual Options Will Be Available



Proposed Bylaws Revision - Member Review

A PDF with proposed revisions to the Bylaws of the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society is provided on the [Section website here](#). **Dr. Mike Mengak** led this effort as the Bylaws Committee Chair and shared proposed revisions with the Executive Board. Now, the Executive Board asks for our members to review these proposed changes and provide comments, even editorial suggestions, prior to our Annual Meeting to be held during the SEAFWA Conference in October. The Executive Board will assemble comments and provide another opportunity for discussion during the Annual Meeting, with an electronic vote to follow at a later date to be determined by the Board. **Comments should be sent to Dr. Mike Mengak at mmengak@uga.edu.**

2021 Southeastern Section Officers

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NOMINATIONS

2021 OFFICER NOMINATIONS

The Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society (SETWS) is proud to present the following slate of officers for the 2021 election of President-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer. Please find below the candidate bios and statements. Ballots will be sent to current SETWS members via email soon; members are encouraged to vote electronically, using the link that will be provided in that email, so stay tuned and keep an eye on your inbox. The SETWS Executive Board would like to thank **Jay Butfiloski** and **Colleen Olfenbuttel** for their assistance with developing the following slate of fantastic nominees.

Nominees for President-Elect

Dr. Daniel Greene, CWB®



My vision for the role of President-elect is to help all members understand and appreciate the value of membership and the power of being actively involved. TWS is an influential society that is led almost entirely by volunteers. Therefore, I will aim to inspire, empower, and enable our members to be involved and help the society with professional growth. As President-elect and eventually President and Past President, I would work to increase membership engagement and to help foster an environment where all members feel welcome and safe, within TWS and more broadly within the wildlife field. Moreover, I will prioritize communication and collaboration with all our chapters. SETWS serves 13 states, one district, and two territories. We are a diverse Section, but we must continue to improve how we

represent all Section members. Furthermore, I will also work to increase communication between TWS Sections and State Chapters, particularly on science, management, and policy issues that affect all of us. Additionally, I will work to better engage other environmental and biological organizations with whom we share similar missions and visions, especially the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society. If elected, it would be an honor to continue working with the Board and our committee members to promote synergy with our students and wildlife professionals and provide leadership for science-based wildlife management on public and private lands.

[See complete biographical sketch here.](#)

Dr. Marcella Kelly

I envision increasing attention on issues of climate change while also working to make our profession more accessible to a diverse range of people across the Southeast. In my new position as co-editor of the Wild Felid Monitor, the first issue will focus on the impacts of fires on felids. Many fires are catastrophic and linked to climate change, while other fires are purposely created to mimic historic fire regimes, which is important to native species. This is one example of the many complicated ecological impacts of climate change and of intentional fire management. In addition to the diverse ecological effects of a changing climate, or of fire management, I believe we must open our field to diverse opinions, backgrounds, and identities as research has shown that creative problem solving is enhanced by diversity. As a teacher of undergraduate students, I have seen students “turn off” when they do not see



NOMINATIONS

themselves reflected in, or included in, our field. Not only is this sad, but also has the potential to backfire in our quest to increase understanding of, and access to, the natural world. Wildlife is a public trust and we can enhance inclusion. As a member of diversity and inclusion committees at both my University and the State-TWS levels, I plan to bring knowledge gained therein to increase the effectiveness of SETWS in addressing the diverse ecological and human issues to address wildlife conservation.

[See complete biographical sketch here.](#)

Nominees for Secretary/Treasurer

Lynn Lewis, CWB®



Being a part of TWS has been instrumental in my growth as a natural resource professional. I see this as an opportunity to continue that growth while serving my friends and colleagues at the Section level. My role will be to provide you with consistent, transparent, and easily accessible information on the activities of your SE Section Board. This information is extremely important because it sets the stage for collaboration, accountability, trust, innovation and sound fiscal management of the Section by your leadership for you. If I'm elected, I will work with you and the other officers to improve the value and services that the SE Section provides to you, particularly as it pertains to the Secretary/Treasurer's office. Thank you for considering me for this position.

[See complete biographical sketch here.](#)

Dr. Rachael Urbanek, CWB®



As Secretary of the Southeastern Section of TWS, I want to learn as much as possible about how the Section functions, what it offers its members now, and then be a part of the conversation and decision-making to improve the networking, education, and collaboration of wildlife professionals and students in the region. My work as the NC representative on the SETWS Conservation Affairs Committee has provided me with some experience in how effective individuals from multiple states can be in sharing knowledge and helping one another in wildlife management and policy throughout the region. It has been a great collaborative experience and I would like to see wildlife professionals throughout the region be able to come together on different platforms to help learn, manage, and conserve our wildlife in the Southeast. As a new member to the Board and as Secretary/Treasurer, I will be able to learn a lot from the more experienced Board members and I hope to be able to contribute ideas that have stemmed from my various roles at other levels of TWS.

[See complete biographical sketch here.](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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



We are designing this meeting to be a hybrid event to allow those unable to travel to have access to content, live-streamed sessions, and opportunities to engage and connect with colleagues in the natural resources community. We're offering **flexible registration options** for either in person or virtual only, or both!

What will the hybrid program look like?

In Person: There will be a comprehensive program at The Hotel Roanoke featuring all of the traditional SEAFWA favorites including: Welcome Social, Plenary Session, Poster Session & Social, Awards Banquet, Guest Tours, Student Events, Committee Meetings, Concurrent Technical Sessions, and a Monday Night at the Movies. Experience these in real time in Roanoke!

Virtual: We will be using a platform called "WhoVa" to deliver online content and to serve as the conference site for the in person and virtual audiences to access. Experience these featured events online: Livestreamed sessions, On-Demand pre-recordings, Poster Gallery, Sponsor Gallery, and Community Board of discussion topics.

See more about **COVID-19 Readiness guidelines** for anyone in attendance at the conference this October.

The Wildlife Society Webinar Series



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 science-based research, techniques, and tools from experts in the field.

Upcoming Webinars

Friday, October 1, 2021 2:00 – 3:00 PM EDT
Understanding and Addressing Needs of Wildlife Professionals through Targeted
Discussions and Skills Workshops in Nutritional Ecology
Nutritional Ecology Working Group

Join panelists from the **Nutritional Ecology Working Group** of The Wildlife Society for a discussion on activities and accomplishments of the NEWG since its inception in 2019. The first panelist will speak about a recent skills workshop developed by NEWG members on measuring forage quality and quantity for herbivores that included a mix of lectures, hands-on exercises in the laboratory and in the field, and interactive group problem solving sessions. The second panelist will speak about efforts of the NEWG to better understand the needs of students, academics, and agency biologists as they pertain to nutritional ecology. We hope you will share with us questions you have regarding wildlife nutrition, so that we can determine priorities for the working group moving forward.

November – The **Renewable Energy Working Group**, November 30, 2021, 3:00 – 4:00 pm EST
December – hosted by the **Forestry and Wildlife Working Group**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Wildlife Society's 28th Annual Conference November 1–5, 2021 Learn. Network. Engage.

Experience TWS Live! From the comfort of your home or office!

The stage is set for **The Wildlife Society's 28th Annual Conference!** Our first virtual conference was an incredible success, and we're going to build on that experience this fall! The virtual format makes it easier than ever before to participate in North America's largest gathering of wildlife researchers and managers. Don't miss your chance to advance your career and the the profession as a whole.

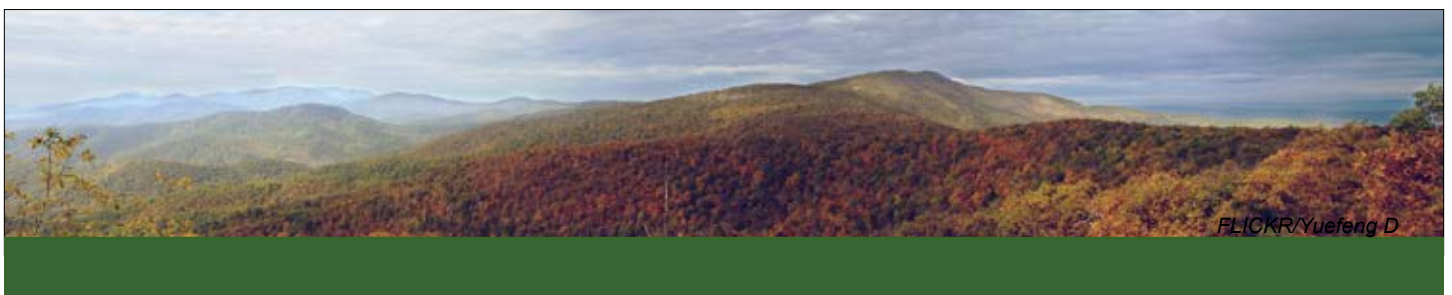
Roughly 1,000+ educational, training and networking opportunities make up our robust program that includes the latest in wildlife science, technology and other contemporary issues affecting our field. We'll also be making conference announcements on wildlife.org and in our other TWS communication channels.

The Wildlife Society's 2021 Annual Conference is just SIX weeks away! Nearly 1,500 attendees have already registered for the event, which will take place virtually November 1-5. Professional members can register now for just \$125 and student/ECP members for just \$100!

This year's conference will feature:

- Live Plenary
- Live Aldo Leopold Keynote Address
- Educational and Training Opportunities:
 - On-demand Symposia with Live Q&A
 - On-demand Contributed Oral Presentations with Live Q&A
 - On-demand Posters with Live Q&A
- Live Panel Discussions
- Live Workshops & Trainings
- Interactive Networking Opportunities:
 - Student-Professional Networking Event
 - Student Events & Activities
- Working Group and Associated Meetings
- Associated Receptions & Networking Events
- Special Sessions
- Innovation Center
- Sponsor Spotlight & Trade Show
- Wildlife Film Festival
- Wildlife Photo Contest
- Pub Trivia Night
- And more!

Register today!



MEETINGS OF INTEREST

OCTOBER 2021

75th SEAFWA Conference

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

Native American Fish & Wildlife Society 38th Annual Conference

October 1-4, 2021
Spokane, WA
<https://www.nafws.org/events-training/>

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:

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