

**TWS Council Candidate Biographic Sketch  
Vice President Position – 2023**

**Fidel Hernández**

**I. Education**

Ph.D. Wildlife Science, Texas A&M University  
M.S. Biology, Angelo State University  
B.S. Biology, Angelo State University

**II. Professional Background**

**Current position**

Regents Professor and Alfred C. Glassell, Jr. Endowed Chair in Quail Research, Department of Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences and Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Primary duties involve 1) teaching of undergraduate and graduate courses in rangeland and wildlife sciences; 2) mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students in rangeland-wildlife research and nurturing their professional development; and 3) conducting applied research on important conservation issues to provide landowners the necessary information and assistance to better conserve rangelands, wildlife, and their habitats.

Major accomplishments include:

- To date, acquired more than \$5.7 million in research monies; authored 3 books and 13 book chapters; published 111 peer-reviewed scientific publications; written 103 popular articles; presented or co-presented 361 presentations at state, national, and international conferences; and mentored 33 undergraduate students, 26 M.S. graduate students, 8 Ph.D. students, and 2 post-doctoral scientists
- Assisted the Executive Director of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute in a 5-year capital campaign that resulted in private endowments of \$43 million to the Institute for scholarships, fellowships, professorships, chairs, operation, centers, and programs
- Findings from this research have impacted rangeland and wildlife conservation on more than 22 million acres in southern Texas and 10 million acres in northern Mexico. This research has contributed towards the

- management of a suite of non-native, invasive grasses that have established across millions of acres in the American Southwest and northern Mexico; management guidelines have resulted in improved rangeland health and sustainability, increased biodiversity, and improved wildlife habitat;
  - guidance and revision of state-wide harvest policy and regulations of northern bobwhite by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department;
  - creation and cultivation of a constituency of private landowners who support and provide access to their ranches for rangeland and wildlife research; existence of such constituency has resulted in thousands of acres of rangeland and wildlife habitat being impacted through their requests for ranch visits for management recommendations; and
  - collectively, this research has resulted in southern Texas being named in 2021 a Legacy Landscape, one of only 2 in the nation, by the National Grassland Quail Initiative for the provision of large, contiguous landscapes for grassland birds, particularly quail.
- Awarded a Fulbright Teaching and Research Fellowship to South America to teach rangeland and wildlife courses at the University of Magallanes in Punta Arenas, Chile and to conduct research with the Institute of Patagonia on a human-wildlife conflict involving guanacos and sheep ranchers. This Fulbright Fellowship also permitted the opportune collaboration with the Parque Nacional de Patagonia (Patagonia National Park) regarding native-grass restoration on rangelands vulnerable to wildfires and subject to a long history of grazing. Results from this Fulbright Fellowship resulted in:
    - guidance of conservation policy for the Chilean government regarding the guanaco-sheep ranching conflict; and
    - improved rangeland restoration techniques for government and non-government organizations (e.g., Tompkins Foundation) interested in the establishment of native grasses following historic wildfires in areas of high conservation interest and priority for Chile.

Major awards include:

- Hispanic Heritage Hero, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2022
- Teaching Excellence Award, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2022
- Regent's Professor, Texas A&M University System, 2021
- Professional Conservationist of the Year, Harvey Weil Sportsman Conservation Trust, 2016

- Fulbright Scholar, Universidad de Magallanes and Instituto de Patagonia, 2014
- Community Leader Award, League of United Latin America Citizens, 2013
- Rising Star Award, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2010
- Chancellor's Teaching Award, Texas A&M University System, 2010
- Junior Research and Scholar Award, President's Excellence Award, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2004

***Additional Positions Pertinent to TWS Vice President Position***

**Deputy Director**, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M University- Kingsville. Primary duties include assisting with the supervision and evaluation of 17 research scientists and 12 support staff, development and oversight of a \$2.3 million annual budget, participation in and coordination of development functions and donor relations, development of strategic vision and operational business plan, and review of outreach publications and media outlets.

**Professional Advisory Group**, East Foundation. Primary duties include the offering of scientific critique and guidance on rangeland and wildlife research, assisting with the development of a strategic vision for the Foundation regarding research, conservation, and education, and assisting with the professional development of research scientists and professional staff.

**Upland Gamebird Advisory Council**, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Primary duties include providing guidance on critical conservation issues facing upland gamebirds in Texas, offering scientific critique to proposed revisions to policy and regulations pertaining to the conservation and management of upland gamebirds, providing input and oversight of the Upland Gamebird Stamp and its monies, and advisement on new initiatives for upland gamebird conservation that address current and future challenges.

**III. Memberships and involvement with TWS at chapter, section and headquarters level.**

**National/International**

Membership: 1996 – present

**Officer/Chair Positions**

- Southwest Section Representative to Council, 2015 – 2018
- Co-Chair, Leadership Institute Committee, 2017 – 2021
- Chair, Organization Integration Committee, 2015–2018

### Committee Involvement

- Strategic Planning Committee, 2023
- Executive Director Search Committee, 2022
- Nominations Committee, 2018–2021
- Decision Process for Spending Council Action Fund Ad Hoc Committee, 2020
- Fellows Award Subcommittee, 2015-2018
- Group Achievement Award Subcommittee, 2015-2018
- Publications Subcommittee, 2015-2018
- Diversity Subcommittee, 2015-2018
- Annual Conference Subcommittee, 2016–17
- TWS Certification Liaison Committee, 2015-2018
- AFWA Ad Hoc Committee, 2015-2018
- Future of TWS International Involvement Ad Hoc Committee, 2015-2018
- TWS Working Group Communication Ad Hoc Committee, 2016–2017
- TWS Strategic Plan Review Ad Hoc Committee, 2017–2018
- Donald H. Rusch Scholarship Committee, 2012–2013
- TWS Ethnic and Gender Diversity Committee, 2004–2006
- Program Committee, 2002–2003
- Support for Symposium Committee, 2000-2001

### Working Groups

- Rangeland Working Group
- International Wildlife Management Working Group

### Awards

- TWS Fellows Award, 2021

### **Southwest Section**

Membership: 2008–present

### Officer/Chair Positions

- Past President, 2021–2022
- President, 2020–2021
- President-Elect, 2019–2020
- Chair, Scholarship Committee, 2021–2022
- Chair, Nominations Committee, 2021–2022
- Liaison, TWS Mexico Chapter Formation, 2019–present

### Section Committee Involvement

- SWSTWS Finance Committee, 2019 – 2022
- SWSTWS Newsletter Committee, 2019–2022
- SWSTWS Nominations Committee, 2019–2020

## Chapter Memberships

- Texas
- New Mexico
- Arizona
- Organizing Group, Mexico Chapter of TWS

## Texas Chapter

Membership: 1996–present

## Officer/Chair Positions

- Past President, 2008–2009
- President, 2007–2008
- President-elect, 2006–2007
- Secretary, 2002–2003
- Chair, Student Affairs Committee, 2011–2012
- Chair, Nominations Committee, 2007–2008
- Chair, Site Selection Committee, 2006–2007
- Chair, Student Affairs Committee, 2004–2005
- Chair, Program Committee, 2001–2002
- Chair, Poster Committee, 2000–2001

## Chapter Committees

- Student Affairs Committee, 2011–2016
- Evaluation Council, James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Institute, 2013
- Membership Committee, 2007–2008
- Rangeland Plant ID Competition Committee, 2006–2007
- Student Chapter of the Year Committee, 2006–2007
- Undergraduate Poster Competition Committee, 2006–2007
- Program Committee, 2001–2002
- Poster Committee, 1999–2000
- Clarence Cottam Awards Committee, 1999–2000

## Awards

- Outstanding Technical Publication, 2020
- Outstanding Book, 2020
- Best Undergraduate Student Poster, 2013\*
- Outstanding Scientific Publication, 2012\*
- Best Undergraduate Student Poster, 2011\*
- Clarence Cottam Best Graduate Student Presentation, 2010\*
- Clarence Cottam Best Graduate Student Presentation, 2007\*
- Outstanding Publication, 2004
- Best Undergraduate Student Poster, 2000\*

*\* denotes undergraduate or graduate student mentees*

#### **IV. Membership with other professional organizations**

- Ecological Society of America, 2015–present
- Texas Section of the Society for Range Management, 1999–present
- Society for Range Management, 2011–present
  - Member, Finance Committee, 2020–2024
  - Member, Wildlife Habitat Committee, 2011–present

#### **V. Please provide a 500-word (Limit) answer to the following question: Why are you interested in running for the office of TWS Vice President and what is your vision for The Wildlife Society?**

For many wildlife professionals, The Wildlife Society is the social fabric through which our professional life unfolds. It represents the organization where we likely delivered our first scientific presentation, attended our first national conference, or met our first colleagues beyond our local social network. It often also represents the venue where we may have obtained an internship, recruited a graduate student, or discovered a career opportunity. For many of us, therefore, The Wildlife Society is the professional home through which our career develops, and it symbolizes that constant companion accompanying us throughout our professional trajectory. For an organization that gives so much, one cannot help but desire to contribute in our own small way toward the provisioning of similar experiences for others.

One of the most rewarding experiences that TWS has afforded me has been the opportunity to serve. I have been fortunate to have served as a committee member, committee chair, and officer at the various levels of TWS (State, Section, and International). These learning experiences have allowed me to meet members from all walks of life and better understand the Society's varied and diverse membership. These experiences also have provided me with a better understanding of the administrative and financial complexities of TWS and the process through which difficult decisions often are made for an organization that spans from local to international reaches. More importantly, they also have allowed me to meet and learn from the dedicated, skilled staff who commit long hours toward the continued excellence of the Society.

These formative experiences have shaped not only my career and professional outlook, but also my vision for TWS. I envision TWS to be the premier professional organization that provides excellence in natural-resource science, management, education, and policy for North America and beyond, while providing a professional home for a diverse and geographically broad membership where they learn, develop, network, and serve. Excelling as such an organization entails many aspects including recruitment of new members, development of existing ones, nurturing of organizational subunits, fiscal growth and responsibility, engagement with conservation affairs, and many others. The sustained success of TWS therefore

hinges on 3 main pillars: 1) continued and improved effort in the provisioning of services, benefits, and opportunities for all members, including those affiliated to the Society only through Chapters or Sections, with the goal of better serving the broader membership and unifying all members; 2) enhancing the financial security of the Society through donor relations, an engaged and functioning TWS Foundation Board, and private endowments for the purposes of promoting financial sustainability of the Society and its capacity to support existing—as well as implement new, strategic—programs, benefits, and initiatives; and 3) continued improvement of the role of TWS as an effective participant in policy and international arenas with the goal of augmenting the relevance of TWS, its science, and its impact to society at large.

## **VI. Other Information**

Of all the factors that have influenced my life, my parents are the most impactful. My parents are immigrants from Zacatecas, Mexico who ventured to the United States in the 1950s. My father worked as a foreman on a ranch, and my mother was a housewife. My siblings and I were raised in a modest ranch home where my parents stressed the values of a strong work ethic, family, and education, values that have influenced my personal and professional paths throughout my life.

One day, years later, I was preparing for an important work trip abroad. I had graduated from college and was initiating my life as a professional. As I visited with them to say farewell before my distant travel, my parents gave me a handwritten note with the following piece of advice,

*“Hijo, le recomiendo que donde quiera que ande sea amable, sencillo, gentil y servicial con la gente. Una persona así es muy útil y apreciada. Que Dios lo proteja.”*

*[“Son, I recommend to you that wherever you may find yourself, be courteous, humble, kind, and helpful with people. A person like this is very valuable and much appreciated. May God protect you.”]*

I have carried these words in my heart ever since. They have developed into core principles that serve as a compass to my life and as a guiding philosophy for work, career, and leadership. For me, a life philosophy arising from such words and principles implies engagement, consideration, initiative, openness, compassion, commitment, perseverance, thoughtfulness, and action—all vital qualities of a leader. It is this leadership philosophy that I would carry in my heart and aspire towards if I were fortunate to serve as TWS Vice President.