The Wildlife Society SOUTHEASTERN SECTION



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Hello SETWS Members!

I have to admit, this issue is a little bittersweet for me.

Bitter, in that my term as your President is ending - on January 1st, I will rotate into my past presidency and Dr. Dan Greene will assume his role as President of SETWS - and that I will no longer be captaining the Section ship. I feel so fortunate to have been elected to this position, and have truly enjoyed serving the Section. I consider my time as President to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career and so I'm a bit sad to see my term come to an end.

And sweet, in that this is my last newsletter address - I don't know about you, but I will be happy to pass on the duty of writing these addresses to someone else! Just kidding... well, sort of. It's also sweet because I know how much we have accomplished together in the two short years of my presidency it's guite a list and something of which we should all be proud!

Here's an abbreviated list of those achievements, just to highlight a few of our outstanding moments over the last two years:

- Hosting our first two cohorts at the SETWS Wildlife and Forestry Field Techniques Course, providing hands-on/experiential field technique training for 34 students from 12 different states
- Sponsoring the OiTF Initiative to support two travel grants for our LGTBQ+ community to attend the TWS Conference 2022



- Holding nine Executive Board meetings to conduct Section business, opening three of those meetings up to state chapter officer attendance to increase communication and transparency among member states and the Section
- Providing virtual/remote access to our Annual Members meetings, so all Section members could participate regardless of their attendance at the SEAFWA Conference
- Endorsing the Eastern Spotted Skunk Conservation Plan. Recommendations for State Oversight of Wildlife Damage Control Agents, and Recommended Best Management Practices to Address Possession, Transportation, and Disposition of Rabies Vector Species
- Strengthening our relationship with the SEAFWA MINRC Committee by appointing an official Section representative on their committee, and serving on their workshop panel entitled "Relevancy – Advancing the Conservation Profession Through Inclusion" at the SEAFWA Conference 2023

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

- Sponsoring the TWS Southeastern Wildlife Conclave at Haywood Community College and Western Carolina University in March 2022, and representing the Section at the TWS Southeastern Wildlife Conclave at Cleveland State Community College in March 2023
- Maintaining Section representation within The Wildlife Society at the international level with appointees serving on various committees and boards
- Increasing the Section's financial security (budget) by 19% from January 2022 to October 2023

We can't wait to see everyone at our **Annual Members Meeting on Tuesday, October 17 from 8-10am CST (9-11am EST)** at the SEAFWA Conference in Corpus Christi, TX. Conference attendees – be sure to check the conference app to find out our meeting room number/location. Virtual attendees – check your inboxes for an email invitation with the virtual meeting link.

Our 2024-2025 SETWS officer elections are almost underway! We will be filling two positions this fall: Secretary/Treasurer and President-elect. Be on the lookout for another email from us, with the candidate biographies and voting instructions.

And last but not least, we are super excited to host our TWS friends and family at The Wildlife Society Conference in Louisville, KY! We hope to see a bunch of you there – please come say hi if you see us in the hallway, at technical sessions or meetings, or out on the town. I look forward to toasting our new Executive Board and seeing all the great things our Section will achieve in the coming years!

Kelly Douglass President, Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society



SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Currently there are over 1,100 people registered for this year's TWS conference in Louisville. Very exciting to have the meeting in our Section! Looking forward to seeing many of you soon. Please look me up at the meeting (and any time in between) and let me know if you have any questions/ concerns or information you would like me to bring to TWS Council. As you can imagine there is a lot of activity going on to make sure the meeting is a success. TWS is hosting a new networking event called, "Birds of a Feather" this year before the Welcome Reception to connect first attendees and those from diverse backgrounds before the conference. I am always impressed with the dedication of TWS staff and their ability to plan meetings, work on policy, expand membership services including training, promote diversity in the profession, and prepare quality journals.

Some tweaks have been made to the Wildlife Biologist Certification Program to help denied applicants the opportunity to complete needed coursework and reapply with 18 months without paying additional fees. TWS is discussing more ways to make the program more beneficial to employers and employees together. So, please talk with me about suggestions/comments to make the program as useful as possible.

Hopefully you had a chance to respond to the TWS member survey or focus group. Thanks again to **Mike Mengak** for serving as our Southeastern Representative on the Strategic Planning Committee. Looking forward to hearing more of what was discussed and proposed by the committee to guide TWS into the future. The hope is to finalize the Strategic Plan at the Spring Council meeting in March 2024.

A few quick items to share, **Dr. Fidel Hernandez** from Texas A&M Kingsville was elected as the incoming Vice President for TWS. Applications are being accepted for the next Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Wildlife Management. Looking for someone who has great communication and leadership skills with a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology, management, or related field. Hope we can connect soon and enjoy the fall season!

Lisa Muller Southeastern Section Representative to TWS Council



MINORITIES IN NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The 2023 SEAFWA Annual Conference in Corpus Christi is almost here! This year, the MINRC Committee is sponsoring 24 students who will become the 2024 MINRC Fellow Cohort. Fellows will participate in the MINRC Fellow Workshop, where they will get tips and tricks for resumes and applying to jobs in various sectors, participate in mock interviews, and gain insight on employment opportunities from SEAFWA's fifteen member states, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and attending federal agencies.

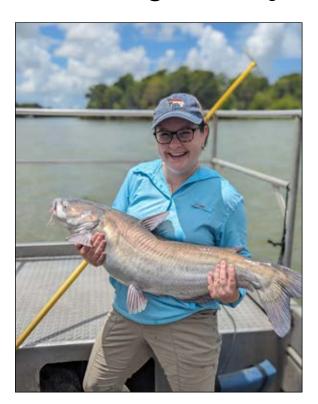
MINRC is also hosting a professional workshop at SEAFWA titled "Relevancy: Advancing the Conservation Profession through R3 & Inclusion Initiatives." The workshop will include a presentation from keynote speaker Lauren Pharr, The CEO and Co-founder of Field Inclusive, Inc., presentations from the 2022 SEAFWA Diversity and Inclusion Awardees, and an open panel discussion on the various inclusion initiatives agencies and organizations are implementing in the conservation field. This workshop is open to ALL PROFESSIONALS attending SEAFWA. Visit the SEAFWA website to see a full agenda.

Lastly, we want to highlight a new program that SEAFWA, MINRC, and USFWS introduced this past summer: the SEAFWA Internship Program. This program was funded by the USFWS and in partnership with the Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative (IIC) to support four internships: two with the TX Parks and Wildlife Dept., one with the GA Dept. of Natural Resources, and one with the LA Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. Interns were exposed to various new skills, including dove banding, freshwater mussel surveys, environmental education, fish population monitoring, and much

more. We are proud of these former MINRC Fellows and look forward to continuing to support their career growth. Also, a BIG thank you to the SEAFWA admin, SEAFWA state directors, the MINRC Internship Committee, the USFWS, site supervisors, MINRC mentors, and the IIC for making this internship possible. It could not have been accomplished without your support.

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



Kaitlyn Tiffany, M.S. student at NC State
University and 2021 MINRC Fellow, interned
with the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
where she worked in multiple areas of
conservation, including wildlife, fisheries,
outreach, and enforcement.



Gabriella Ruiz, an undergraduate student at Texas A&M University – Kingsville, worked with the TX Parks and Wildlife Dept. in the Inland Fisheries Division where she worked on various projects on Guadalupe Bass conservation.



Tanya Duran (center), M.S. student at Sam Houston State University and 2022 MINRC Fellow, worked with the TX Parks and Wildlife Dept., Coastal Fisheries Division, at their Marine Fish Hatchery Visitor's Center where she worked on R3 objectives and outreach.



Zoë Jordan, a recent graduate of Hollins University and 2022 MINRC Fellow, interned with the GA Dept. of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, where she worked directly with field biologists on plant, mammal, freshwater fish, and mussel conservation.

STUDENT AWARDS COMMITTEE

Seeking Judges for SEAFWA Conference

Annually, during the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conference, the Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society recognizes the Best Student Oral Presentation and Best Student Poster in the Wildlife Technical Sessions. In order to make that happen, we rely upon professionals to judge the presentations and posters. If you know that you are attending this year's conference in Corpus Christi, TX, please consider serving as a judge for either the student presentations or posters (or both). If you are willing, please contact **Andy Madison** (amadison@uu.edu), **Kelly Douglass** (kelly.douglass@usda.gov), or **Lisa Muller** (Imuller@utk.edu).

Andy Madison, amadison@uu.edu



DEER COMMITTEE

Southeast Deer Partnership

Conservation of At-risk Species by Deer Hunters in the Southeastern United States

More than 70% of at-risk species in the U.S. occur on private lands. As a result, landscape-level conservation objectives 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. Given that much of this land is predicted to be negatively influenced by fragmentation and development in the coming decades speaks to the need for timely conservation action on private lands. While there have been numerous conservation success stories on private lands, few have been effective at mitigating impacts to at-risk species on broad spatial scales. Consequently, new strategies are necessary to capitalize on private land conservation opportunities.

One of the most popular activities on private lands in the southern U.S. is hunting whitetailed deer (Odocoileus virginanus). Annually, 9.2 million deer hunters utilize approximately 356 million acres in the U.S. for lease or ownership. Private land ownership and leasing generates a \$16.28 billion annual investment in recreation. Deer management also plays a major role in land use and habitat conservation. However, utilizing deer hunters to achieve landscape-level conservation objectives has received little attention despite the fact that whitetailed deer are the most pursued game animal in North America, annually generating nearly 50% of Pittman-Robertson funding. Private lands managed primarily for white-tailed deer provide multiple habitat components that benefit other wildlife species. Given that managing

land for white-tailed deer is the dominant wildlife management regime in the Southeast, capitalizing on these efforts presents a unique opportunity for a voluntary conservation solution to managing atrisk species on private lands.

The Southeast Deer Partnership was formed in 2020 and 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, wild-life management and conservation. The Partnership initiated a project to increase awareness of the role and benefits of deer hunting and hunters throughout the Southeast. Project goals at a minimum include ensuring the future of deer hunting and the benefits hunters provide to conservation efforts; educating hunters, non-hunters and governmental decision makers on the value of deer hunting; and increasing deer hunter participation rates in partner states.

The project included three phases. Phase 1 was to gather, mine and analyze all available data on the economic, social and conservation benefits of deer hunting in the southeastern U.S. Responsive Management, a Virginia based, internationally recognized survey research firm specializing in attitudes toward natural resource and outdoor recreation issues conducted that research and submitted a final report in spring 2022.

Phase 2 included a fact-based communications plan on the benefits of deer hunting. Strategic

Digital Services, a full-service digital marketing agency in Florida took the Phase 1 report and developed that plan. They also produced a full-length documentary on the incredible journey of white-tailed deer from near extinction back to an ecological and economic hero of America's native landscapes.

Phase 3 is the messaging phase where all the key information and messaging will be dispersed. Strategic Digital Services and the steering committee met and developed state-specific messaging campaigns, and these campaigns will be unveiled during fall and winter 2023. In addition, the documentary, Wild-Tail: America's Wildest Conservation Success Story opened its film premiere in Nashville, TN on August 2, and included stops in Little Rock, AR on September 7, Frankfort, KY on September 21, and Richmond, VA on October 4. Additional film premieres are pending in other states. The film will be available for streaming later this fall.

For additional information about the Southeast Deer Partnership visit <u>Southeast Deer Partnership</u> | <u>National Deer Association</u> or contact **Kip Adams** at Kip@DeerAssociation. com, and for more information on WildTail visit <u>WildTail Film (wildtailmovie.com)</u>.

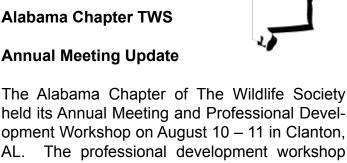
Kip Adams, kip@deerassociation.com

Steve Shea, sheawildlife.com



ALABAMA

Alabama Chapter TWS



opment Workshop on August 10 – 11 in Clanton, AL. The professional development workshop topic was "UAS Applications for Wildlife Management" which included a field day and in-person presentations on a variety of applications, including wildlife surveys, feral swine control and aerial applications for prescribed burning, in addition to regulations. Following the workshop, students and professionals participated in a mixer activity prior to the evening social. Highlights from day two of the meeting included an address from TWS President **Don Yasuda**, an update on avian influenza, and an update on Alabama's Federally Listed Species listing work plan.

The Chapter sponsored one student to attend the SETWS Field Course at Ichauway in 2023. Andrea Miranda Paez shared her experience at the Field Course with the membership. Students from around the state contributed six posters covering their graduate projects. Four students gave oral presentations about their graduate projects during the meeting. The student awardees were:

- I. **Kevin Shaw** (UA) best student poster presentation, Disentangling Species Availability from Observer Memory When Estimating Occupancy.
- II. Thomas Thompson (AAMU) best student oral presentation, Avian Community Association and Morphometric Features of Cerulean Warblers (Setophaga cerulea) in Bankhead National Forest.

Elections were held. The executive board welcomes Logan McCord as a new At-Large Board Member and thanks outgoing member Ryan Mitchell for his many years of service. Jeff Baker was elected to continue his service as Secretary/Treasurer. The chapter heard updates from newly established committees including Membership, Awards, Elections, Conservation Policy and Student Outreach. A successful membership drive resulted in an award to Kristen Mc-Cord for recruiting the most new members prior to the meeting.

Two Biologists Recognized for Their Contributions

The Alabama Chapter of TWS invites you to join us in congratulating Nick Sharp (2023 ACTWS Biologist of the Year) and Eric Soehren (Lifetime Achievement) for receiving this year's ACTWS professional awards.



Eric Soehren (left) and Nick Sharp (right) were recognized with ACTWS professional awards.

The Chapter's "Wildlife Biologist of the Year Award" is presented to a biologist who has made outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation in Alabama. **Nick Sharp**, the 2023 ACTWS Biologist of the Year, has shown dedication to the conservation and management of Alabama's natural resources. Nick has worked as a Wildlife Biologist for 17 years and is currently the Nongame Wildlife Biologist for north Alabama (ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division). He has been directly involved in the conservation efforts of many state protected species including the eastern spotted skunk, long-tailed weasel, and many bat species in the state.



Nick Sharp received the 2023 ACTWS Biologist of the Year Award.

These efforts have contributed to a better understanding of the status and range of many of these species. In addition, Nick has worked diligently to protect important gray bat caves making significant contributions to conservation of the species and has developed or lead several important collaborative working groups that will continue to make important contributions to

imperiled species in the state. Some of the species benefiting from these collaborative working groups include narrowly distributed Alabama endemics such as the federally protected Black Warrior waterdog and flattened musk turtle. In addition, Nick was recently awarded the 2023 Wildlife Conservationist of the Year Award by the Alabama Wildlife Federation for his work in a leadership position of the Alabama Bat Working Group. Furthermore, he coauthored the paper Eastern Spotted Skunks Alter Nightly Activity and Movement in Response to Environmental Conditions, published in The American Midland Naturalist, and has taught wildlife tracking workshops.

The Chapter's "Lifetime Achievement Award" is presented to wildlife professionals who have made significant impacts over their career to the field of wildlife management in Alabama. Due to the prestigious nature of the award, it is not expected that it will be awarded annually. Eric Soehren was awarded the Chapter's Lifetime Achievement Award. Eric has worked diligently and passionately in the state protecting many of Alabama's important natural resources. From 1997 to 2011 Eric was a Terrestrial Ecologist with the ADCNR State Lands Division's Natural Heritage Section and has served as the Manager/Ecologist of the Wehle Land Conservation Center since 2011. He has worked in various fields including ecology, herpetology, mammalogy, entomology, botany, and has a keen interest in natural history. He is considered by his peers as one of the states leading ornithologists and and naturalists. Among many other duties, Eric has been responsible for inventorying terrestrial nongame fauna on state lands, worked closely with many bird species including federally protected ones, established a reproducing gopher tortoise population near the northern extent of its range at Wehle, developed a gopher frog breeding pond at Wehle where they were released this year,



Eric Soehren was awarded the Chapter's Lifetime Achievement Award.

developed and coordinated various avian programs, and developed sampling methodologies for different taxa across the state. Furthermore, he has been willing to share these skills with others by hosting workshops in the state for wild-life professionals. Finally, much of this work has been published making it available for reference to other wildlife professionals and researchers in the state. Eric has served on various committees and is currently the editor of the Scientific Journal of the Alabama Ornithological Society.

Allison Cochran, ACTWS President

Newly Formed Policy Committee Meets for the First Time

The newly formed Alabama Chapter of TWS Policy Committee met virtually to allow members to introduce themselves. Six chapter members comprise the current Policy Committee and represent state and federal natural resource agencies, academia, and private industry. The committee developed comments to submit to the Federal Register in response to the Environmental Protection Agency's interest in revising particulate matter standards and the potential impacts to prescribed burning efforts.

Ray Metzler, ACTWS Policy Committee Chair



Derek Colbert, derek.s.colbert@usda.gov

Join the Women of Wildlife Listsery!

The <u>Women of Wildlife (WOW)</u> community was created to promote and support women in the wildlife profession and to provide mentoring opportunities and advice. If you are interested in being added to our email listserv, please email us at: womenofwildlifetws@gmail.com. Please note, WOW is not limited to women, and all are welcome.

Citizen Scientist Success

Successful hunters eventually become naturalists and are an invaluable source of seasonal wildlife information. Falconers even more so.

Falconry is defined as the hunting of wild animals in their natural state and habitat by means of a trained bird of prey. We follow our raptors with a keen eye on their behaviors, on quarry, and quickly learn to watch for crows who will loudly announce their presence when spotting our raptors. We meet a variety of people in the field whose expressions can only be described as childlike.

Late summer routinely brings calls from poultry owners with questions for both the state and falconers needing solutions to juvenile red-tailed hawks, cooper's hawks, and great horned owls.

Five years ago I received an invitation from several men who managed an exclusive hunting lodge in Alabama. My red-tail and I were successful and the men were ecstatic.

Several weeks later I was on the phone with manager **Neil Phifer** who mentioned he had a handful of free range poultry and a hawk problem. We agreed a crow feeding station placed an appropriate distance from structures was in order. Neil sent a video clip two days later of several screaming crows pushing a juvenile red-tail.

Neil has successfully fed crows for over four years, adding a second successful station in his warehouse district. I phoned him for an update last week. That morning his wife mentioned the crows were screaming and they witnessed them push a juvenile red-tail out of the area.

Neil suggests framing a rectangular board with a short edge of wood on 3 sides for drainage. Expect a water dish to be used to wash certain foods.

The crows like canned or frozen corn and will eat any food scraps including meat. Unshelled peanuts are favorites. No avocado or chocolate. Watch for gifts.

Joan Wymer, ACTWS Member and Chair of the AL Falconry and Raptor Council





ARKANSAS

Arkansas State University

Alix Matthews (PhD student in Dr. Than Boves' lab, co-advised by **Dr. Asela Wijeratne**) won first place for her talk at the American Ornithologists Union. She is now a visiting Assistant Professor at Rhodes College. Joe Schroeder won the 2023-24 Best Student award for the BS Wildlife. Fisheries and Conservation degree. He was a red wolf curator in Dr. Kyle Gustafson's lab and conducted two bluebird research projects in Dr. Virginie Rolland's lab. He is now a wildlife technician for the US Forest Service in Montana. Dr. Than Boves was promoted to Full Professor. Dr. Lori Neuman-Lee (herp eco-physiologist) received the Emerging Scholar award and was granted tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. After a successful second field season that included a culvert blitz with 27 participants from various agencies and states, **Anneka Lamb** (Dr. Rolland's lab) is writing up her thesis on the use of road culverts by tricolored bats in the winter in southern Arkansas, while working as a natural resource scientist for Environmental Research Group.

Southern Arkansas University Student Chapter

Paperwork has been filed with the parent society to organize a student chapter at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia which will be advised by **Dr. Jesse Filbrun**.

U.S. Forest Service

Mary Mentz has been promoted to the position of forest wildlife biologist for the Ouachita National Forest.

Blake Sasse blake.sasse@agfc.ar.gov



Joe Schroeder won the 2023-24 Best Student award for the BS Wildlife, Fisheries and Conservation degree, pictured with **Dr. Jennifer Bouldin**, Dean of the College of Science and Math (right).

FLORIDA

Florida Chapter TWS

Our first in-person Spring conference since the pandemic was a great event! Over 100 wildlifers gathered for three days in Jacksonville to interact and learn about climate effects (and solutions) on Florida wildlife. The first day included a symposium of case studies on natural disasters that are impacting our wildlife. This was followed by our annual member business meeting, during which some big decisions were made. Committee reports, meeting minutes, Treasurer's statement and other announcements from the meeting are found throughout our summer Newsletter. The evening included a Student Recruitment Fair, Big Raffle and Networking Social. The Keynote presentations on the second day were outstanding! We learned about the landscape-scale planning efforts that led to creation of the Florida Wildlife Corridor project from Dr. Tom Hoctor, Director of the Center for Landscape Conservation Planning. Kelly O'Connor, of TWS's Conservation Affairs Network, shared the approach of our national chapter for policy engagement with issues of Climate Change. Logan Benedict, FWC's Adaptation and Landscape Specialist, discussed resiliency and FWC's approach to proposing reasonable future targets for coastal ecosystems that might not include maintaining existing conditions following sea level rise. A series of breakout sessions discussed the future of the Conservation Committee, how to improve member recruitment and retention, and how to get more involved with the Chapter. The afternoon included a plethora of good technical talks on many different topics. Following a Poster Session and Silent Auction, the annual Banquet included presentation of many awards, including Best Student Paper and Poster, Scholarships and Chapter Awards.

The final day's events were three field trip options, including a birding trip, habitat management tour and Jacksonville Zoo program.

In addition, the Chapter is excited about the upcoming Fall meeting on "Practical Wildlife and Habitat Monitoring Techniques" and hopes it will be as successful and well attended as last fall's meeting and workshop on unmanned aerial vehicles (aka drones).

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society had their first virtual, Zoom social: Wildlife Connections - Conversations with Wildlife Professionals. This platform is designed to foster connections among our professional members in a friendly, casual environment. During these virtual socials, an invited speaker will give a short presentation and then we openly discuss wildlife-related topics, ask questions of others, and engage in insightful conversations. It's a chance to forge new friendships and connections, collaborate on potential projects, and gain valuable insights from fellow wildlife professionals. Whether discussing project success stories, amusing field mishaps, or incredible wildlife-oriented travel experiences to inspire others, these socials are the ideal platform to connect and learn from one another.

The Chapter plans to hold these sessions bi-monthly. The first social was well attended, and there was a presentation from **Paul Moler** on "Florida's Charismatic Microfauna." The next social will be on the struggles in aquatic habitat restoration by **Jodi Slater** of the St. Johns River Water Management District. We hope, through these socials, we can share our knowledge, experiences, and love for wildlife as we create a vibrant and supportive community within our chapter.

Larame Ferry, larame.ferry@gmail.com

GEORGIA



Georgia Chapter TWS

The Georgia Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Annual Meeting will be held on February 22nd-23rd in Dahlonega, GA.



ABAC Student Chapter TWS

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's (ABAC) Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society held their first meeting of the semester on August 24, and they are already off to a running start for this

academic year. After a strong showing at the Southeastern Student Conclave last spring at Cleveland State, TN (2nd place overall), and a high-energy year led by past president, **Dawn Greer** - Senior Wildlife Mgt, the students were eager with anticipation for this year to get started.

Current President, Jacob Owens - Senior Wildlife Mat, is pictured below introducing the guest speaker, Dean Barber - GaDNR Paradise Public Fishing Area manager, to the 83 students who attended the first meeting. The chapter agreed to send 25-30 volunteers to help with the PFA's Jakes Day event scheduled for September 23. Owens also announced their guest speaker for the 2nd meeting would be Braxton Bearden from GaDNR's State Parks and began the planning process for an "Ecological Excursion" to observe a southeastern bat (Myotis austroriparius) emergence from a local sinkhole cave. In addition to these activities the club also agreed to send a guiz bowl team to compete for the Wildlife Quiz Bowl National Championship in Louisville, KY, at the National TWS meeting in November.



First meeting for the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's (ABAC)
Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

The Wildlife Conservation Section of GA DNR hosted the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network (SBDN) Bat Blitz on federal and state lands surrounding Fort Mountain State Park. This blitz was a repeat of the first SBDN Bat Blitz held in 2010, before white-nose syndrome (WNS) was detected in Georgia. Nearly 100 volunteers from around the southeast assisted with the surveys, and US Forest Service staff guided team leaders and volunteers to 11 sites each night for three consecutive nights of sampling. Capture numbers (see table below) were roughly onethird of the bats captured pre-WNS. Declines in WNS affected species were expected, and the capture of one federally endangered Northern long-eared bat was the first in the state since 2017. WCS staff plans to conduct followup surveys in this area to determine if there are other remaining bats on the landscape.



SBDN Georgia Bat Blitz Bat Captures		
Species (WNS affected species in red)	2010	2023
northern long-eared bats (Myotis septentrionalis)	89	1
red bat (Lasiurus borealis)	73	39
tricolored bat (Perimyotis subflavus)	65	1
big brown bat (Eptesicus fuscus)	41	53
little brown bat (Myotis lucifugus)	9	0
evening bat (Nycticeius humeralis)	7	3
small-footed bat (Myotis leibii)	5	1
gray bat (Myotis grisescens)	2	0
hoary bat (Lasiurus cinereus)	1	0
Total Bats	292	98

Results table from the 2010 and 2023 Georgia SBDN Bat Blitzes.



The only Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) captured at the 2023 Georgia SBDN Bat Blitz.

2024 SBDN ANNUAL MEETING

The 29th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network and 34th Annual Colloquium on the Conservation of Mammals in the Southeastern U.S. will be held on Wednesday, February 14th – Friday, February 16th at the Sonesta Resort on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

There is meeting space for any working groups that want to meet on Wednesday. Contact Lydia Moore to reserve a room: Imoore@pbconservancy.org.



KENTUCKY



Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

The KDFWR recently partnered with the Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business at Murry State University to develop the commercial and retail use of invasive carp. This partnership will work with commercial anglers to industrialize the harvest of invasive carp to reduce the population of these fish. The partnership will also help develop infrastructure for the processing of invasive carp and support efforts to get these fish to market. Hunters in Kentucky harvested over 35,000 turkeys, the second highest total on record for the state. As part of KDFWRs wild turkey population research in partnership with Tennessee Tech University, the department leg-banded 420 male turkeys this year and 236 in 2022. Hunters harvested 152 of the leg-banded birds this spring season.

Chuck Elliott, charles.elliott@eku.edu

LOUISIANA



The Louisiana Associate Riologists (LAPR) / TWS

The Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists (LAPB) / TWS Louisiana Chapter held their annual meeting and research symposium on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette October 5-6. This year's theme was "Recruiting Tomorrow's Managers." Twelve graduate and undergraduate student presenters gave oral presentations on Thursday and a Poster Session and Panel Discussion was held that Friday. **Dr. Ryan Askern**, University of Arkansas – Monticello, gave the Keynote Address "Background, Goals, and Vision

of the Five Oaks Ag Research and Education Center" during the Thursday evening social. Thanks to the Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana, the Natural Resources Management Association, Ducks Unlimited, the LSU Ag Center, and the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Foundation for supporting this meeting and symposium.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has added six new Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) drop-off locations, in addition to the seven established last season, for deer hunters to submit CWD samples for testing. Hunters wishing to submit deer heads for CWD testing may visit a location within 7 parishes, submit samples and view results using the sample number obtained at the drop-off location. The locations are self-service and hunters will be able to place deer heads in chest type refrigerators provided. Instructions as well as sampling bags and hunter information cards are provided at the locations.

Cecilia Richmond, crichmond@wlf.la.gov

MARYLAND/DELAWARE



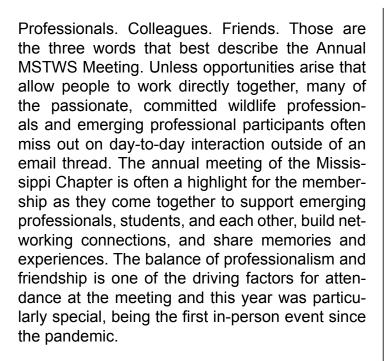
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MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Chapter TWS

Getting Back on Track



The 2023 Annual Mississippi Chapter Meeting was held at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science on September 7-8, 2023. The agenda was packed with a mix of agency updates, professional/student presentations, social events, and chapter business. During the business meeting, discussions to expand on the annual meeting structure to best meet membership opportunities were heard. Chapter elections and awards were given before adjournment. Chris McDonald was announced in the President-elect position and Rainer Nichols as Board Member At-Large. Riley Porter was awarded the Student Presentation Award with his presentation entitled "Nest box selection by breeding Common Goldeneye (Bucephela clangula) and other cavity-nesting birds in the Chena River System, Interior Alaska."

Curtis Coleman was awarded the Student Poster Award with his poster entitled "Correcting time drift, magnetometry, and global rotations in accelerometer data for better behavior pairing in feral swine (Sus scrofa)." Three specialty awards were awarded as well. The Publication Award for Outstanding Publication in Wildlife Biology/Management for "Work on Mallard Hybridization in the Mississippi Flyway" was awarded to Brian Davis et al. The Sam K. Riffel Award for Conservation Excellence was awarded to Kristine Evans for her past conservation efforts and amazing contribution to classroom training. The Dale H. Arner Honorary Membership Award to recognize and acknowledge the continuous exemplary service to the Chapter and Wildlife Profession was awarded to Randy Spencer for his long, passionate, distinguished and committed career.

Mitzi Reed, MReed@nafws.org



NORTH CAROLINA



North Carolina Chapter TWS

Please join your fellow wildlife professionals at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, April 2-4, 2024! Next year's theme is 'Partnerships in Habitat Conservation for At-risk Species'. Mark your calendars and plan for an engaging conference at a beautiful location with fun social activities and auctions!

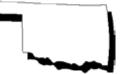
The 16th Annual Brook and Beast Feast is Friday, October 27th at 6pm at Smoky Mountain Event Center (aka Haywood County Fairgrounds).

If you are interested in supporting NCTWS while getting some awesome swag, please visit our online store here! https://my-store-bdff14-2.creator-spring.com/

For additional news and upcoming events, check out the summer newsletter (NC Wildlifer) on the Chapter website (www.nctws.org/wordpress/).

Kelsey Pistner kelseynicolepistner@gmail.com

OKLAHOMA



NO NEWS REPORTED



SOUTH CAROLINA



South Carolina Chapter TWS

Save the Date for Fall Meeting

Join us for the Fall Meeting of the South Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society. We will meet at the Sandhills Research and Education Center in Columbia on Wednesday, October 25, 2023. Registration begins at 9:30am and meeting starts at 10:00am.

Clemson University

Advancing Wetlands and Wildlife Conservation: Insights from Clemson University's James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center - 2023 Advisory Council Meeting

Clemson University established the James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center in 2014 with two central goals: 1) conduct original applied and basic research that improves our ability to manage wetlands, waterfowl, and other wetland-dependent wildlife, and 2) train students in modern research and management techniques to ensure our future wetland and wildlife stewards have the appropriate skills to be successful while navigating the complexities of the natural world and socioeconomic constraints.

The 2023 Advisory Council meeting of the James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center was held on July 11th at the Belle W. Baruch Institute of Coastal Ecology and Forest Science, which is on the beautiful 16,000-acre Hobcaw Barony in Georgetown, South Carolina. The meeting showcased a series of talks and research updates by the center's graduate

students, focusing on wetlands and the wildlife species that rely on these vital ecosystems. Presentations encompassed a wide range of topics, including habitat restoration, migratory patterns of waterfowl, alligator diet and the relation to microplastics, and the impact of climate change on wetlands of the Atlantic coast in general and South Carolina in particular.

The dedication and commitment exhibited by these young researchers were evident in their research findings and proposed conservation strategies. Their work emphasizes the significance of wetlands as critical habitats for waterfowl and other wildlife species. By addressing persistent issues such as habitat loss, degradation, and the effects of a changing climate, these graduate students actively contribute to advancing wetland conservation efforts on the Atlantic coast.

Cindy Von Haugg, an M.S. student, talked on "Caught on Camera: Tree Cavities, Wood Ducks, and More." Miriam Boucher, Ph.D. student, presented on "Aligator Diet and Utility as an Indicator of Contaminants of Emerging Concern." Stephen Clements, a Ph.D. student at Mississippi State University and a 2022 inductee into the Clemson University Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center Graduate Student Partners

Program, presented his work on "Waterfowl Diets and Forage Biomass in South Atlantic Coast Wetlands." A Post-Doctoral Scholar, **Dr. Angela Hsiung**, discussed "Using Integrated Population Models to Assess Drivers of Population Dynamics of Mallards in North America." **Nick Masto**, former Kennedy Center M.S. student and current Ph.D. student at Tennessee Technological University and Kennedy Center Graduate Student Partner, presented his work on "Waterbird-habitat Relationships in South Carolina: Implications for Protection, Restoration, and Management of Coastal and Inland Wetlands." **Jordan McCall**, an M.S. student, presented her research





Above: **Nick Masto**, former Kennedy Center M.S. student and current Ph.D. student at Tennessee Technological University and Kennedy Center Graduate Student Partner, presented a portion of his M.S. work recently published in <u>Restoration Ecology</u>.

Left: **Dr. Angela Hsiung** discussed integrated population modeling of mallards at the James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center's 2023 Advisory Council Meeting.

on "Waterbird Use and Selection of Wetlands in Georgetown, South Carolina." Lucas Clay, Ph.D. student, talked on "Landscape-scale Carbon Cycling in Coastal Ecosystems and Implications for Blue Carbon Restoration Projects," and Akshit Suthar, Ph.D. student, presented his research on "Understanding Waterbird-habitat Relations with Antebellum Rice Fields Using Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) and Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) in Coastal South Carolina."

Dr. Jim Anderson, Director of the Kennedy Center and the James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair of Waterfowl and Wetland Ecology, concluded the meeting with a discussion among Advisory Council members and staff on future research needs and direction. His address was a testament to the past year's achievements and an invitation for suggestions and feedback from the esteemed Advisory Council. Dr. Anderson expressed gratitude for their continuous support and dedication to the Kennedy Center's causes.

The 2023 Advisory Council meeting served as an opportunity to express gratitude to the Advisory Council members for their strong support and guidance. Their mentorship and commitment play an integral role in shaping the direction of research and conservation initiatives at the Kennedy Center. The close collaboration between graduate students and the Advisory Council demonstrates the synergy that drives progress in wetland and wildlife conservation.

For more information, news, and updates about ongoing research projects and future opportunities at the Kennedy Center, follow the center's social media page on <u>Facebook</u> and visit the official website.

Akshit Suthar, asuthar@clemson.edu

Waterfowl Ecology and Management Online Course

An online course in Waterfowl Ecology and Management is being taught this fall semester through the University of Texas-El Paso. The course is being offered in English and Spanish. Course instructors are **Dr. Phil Lavretsky**, his Spanish speaking Ph.D student, **Sara Gonzalez**, and **Dr. Rick Kaminski** (Emeritus, Mississippi State and Clemson Universities).

Emily Kearse KearseE@dnr.sc.gov TENNESSEE NO NEWS REPORTED VIRGINIA

The Virginia State Chapter of The Wildlife Society (VATWS) is finalizing the details for its Annual Meeting. This event will be held in Front Royal, Virginia on March 19-21 at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. The call for presentations and additional information for meeting attendees will be out soon.

Virginia Chapter TWS

The VATWS Fall Seminar series enters its second year with some great speakers. These online seminars are given on a Friday around lunchtime each month. This year, we welcomed **Dr. Abigail Lynch** and **Dr. Laura Thompson**, both with the USGS Climate Science Center, to talk about the



Resist-Accept-Deflect (RAD) Framework for Managing Climate Change. Our October installation will feature a talk entitled "Building Relationships with the Sovereign Nations of Virginia: Lessons learned, things to know, and understanding the history" and is hosted by our Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Awareness (IDEA) Committee. In November, we will welcome **Dr. Marc Stern** from the Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation to discuss the importance of trust in natural resources management, and in December **Dr. Ashley Peele** of the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture to talk about citizen science and the results of the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas.

All of the Fall Seminar series talks are available online. Visit the <u>chapter website</u> for registration details, or to view past talks.

Scott Klopfer, sklopfer@vt.edu

DUCKS UNLIMITED

NFWF Announces \$250,000 in support of forested wetland restoration work in the MAV

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) recently announced \$250,000 grant award to Ducks Unlimited (DU) to improve, restore, and expand important forest and wetland habitats in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley. The grants were awarded through the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund (LMAV Fund), a partnership between NFWF and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Paper's Forestland Stewards Partnership, and the Walton Family Foundation.

The Mississippi Alluvial Valley covers 24 million acres across Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee and is the largest wetland ecosystem in the United States. The region's hardwood forests, oxbow lakes and other habitat types are home to a wide array of wildlife from the American green-winged teal to the fat pocketbook mussel. More than 60 percent of North America's bird species use the valley as a landing pad during the migration south or call it home over the winter.

"Thanks to matching funds, we are able to combine this grant with \$250,000 in match for a total of \$500,000 to invest in wetland improvements in the MAV," said **Tim Willis** Ducks Unlimited Director of Conservation Programs for Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Louisiana and Tennessee. "This project will impact a total of 1,900 acres of forest and wetland habitat, benefiting waterfowl and neotropical migratory birds."

Project work supported by the grant will include the restoration of bottomland hardwood forest through plantings, improving existing forest habitat through forest treatments on private lands and enhancing wetland hydrologic function on public and private land in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Emily Austin eaustin@ducks.org



BUSINESS

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION TWS ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

Please join us for the 2023 SETWS Annual Members meeting on **Tuesday, October 17, 2023, from 8:00-10:00am CST (9:00-11:00am EST)** at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conference in Corpus Christi, TX (room posted on the <u>conference schedule</u>). Come meet your Executive Board (if you haven't already), learn about our Section's accomplishments this past year, and participate in our discussion of what we hope to accomplish next year! For those who can't join us in person, please be on the lookout for an email invitation with a meeting link to virtually attend.



2023 Southeastern Section Officers

President Kelly Douglass, CWB® Wildlife Disease Biologist USDA Wildlife Services 6213-E Angus Drive Raleigh, NC 27617 (984) 202-4782 kelly.douglass@usda.gov

President-Elect Dr. Daniel Greene, CWB® Wildlife Scientist, Environmental Research South Weyerhaeuser Company 3477 S. Frontage Road Columbus, MS 39701 dgreene.tws@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer Lynn Lewis, CWB® Landowner Assistance Program Manager US Forest Service Southern Region - Cooperative Forestry (803) 507-5681 lynn.lewis@usda.gov

Immediate Past President Dr. Raymond Iglay, CWB®

Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology
Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Aquaculture
Mississippi State University
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Southeastern Section Representative Dr. Lisa Muller, CWB® Professor Assistant Department Head

Professor, Assistant Department Head, and Graduate Coordinator 427 Plant Biotechnology 2505 E. J. Chapman Dr. Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries University of Tennessee Knoxville, TN 37996 (865) 974-7981 Imuller@utk.edu



NOMINATIONS

2023 SOUTHEASTERN SECTION TWS OFFICER NOMINATIONS

The Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society (SETWS) is proud to present the following slate of nominees for the 2023 election of President-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer. Please find below the candidate statements. Additional information including candidate bios, voting instructions, and deadlines will be posted on the Section website and emailed to current SETWS members soon.

Nominees for President-Elect

Dr. Rachael E. Urbanek, CWB®



My goal for SETWS and its membership is to continue the momentum of the last several years' SETWS Boards that have been working hard to create regional cohesion and collaboration among TWS members. When my co-authors and I published Shifting Demographic and Attitudinal Changes of TWS Members (1991-2014) in 2018, it was quite evident that many TWS members did not perceive much, or any, value in being a Section member. SETWS has developed great networking and support opportunities outside of the annual meeting such as the bimonthly Conservation Affairs Network meetings of which I attend regularly and have had the pleasure to meet wildlife professionals across our region and the Field Techniques Course of which 2 of my students attended last summer and highly (and excitedly) talked about. Within my home Chapter of North Carolina and

at the international level, TWS has made great strides to become more inclusive and I was thrilled to see the SETWS Minorities in Natural Resources Conservation Committee sponsor 16 students to attend the annual meeting! If elected for this position, I will strive to brainstorm new ways to bring our members together to share ideas, experience, and learn from one another. The wildlife profession has always been a close-knit community to me, and I want to help our community thrive.

TWS Soliciting Applications for Journal of Wildlife Management Editor-in-Chief

TWS is currently soliciting applications for the position of Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Wildlife Management. A detailed position announcement with instructions on how to apply can be <u>found</u> <u>here</u>. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled; the review of applications will begin November 16, 2023 with an expected job start of July 1, 2024. Interested candidates may contact **Evelyn Merrill** (emerrill@ualberta.ca), Chair of TWS' Publications Committee, for more information.

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NOMINATIONS

Dr. Travis DeVault, CWB®



I've been an active member of TWS since 2001 and have a strong professional commitment to the organization. I became a Certified Wildlife Biologist® in 2007 and have maintained certification since that time. I also have been an active member of the Wildlife Damage Management Working Group, serving as a Board Member, Chair-Elect, Chair, and Past-Chair. As Chair, I led the effort to add a student Board Member, allowing the Working Group to benefit from student voices, and encouraging more involvement from those new to the wildlife profession. Over the years I have witnessed how important TWS is to wildlife management and conservation in the USA and abroad. I would welcome the challenges and opportunities that would come with service as President-Elect, and later President. I view participation with SETWS as an excellent way to provide meaningful service to our profession. As wildlife and human populations expand and interact more often, wildlife research and management will only increase in importance. If elected, I will work with the membership to continue the Section's efforts

in highlighting the importance of science-based wildlife management and conservation, both for human and wildlife interests.

Nominees for Secretary/Treasurer

Dr. Kristine Evans



I feel strongly that the Southeastern Section of TWS has a growing presence in the region and has the potential to greatly benefit the conservation community at large through connecting state chapter partnerships and working across geopolitical boundaries for larger conservation impacts. Through the Secretary/Treasurer role I can provide support to the Board in planning and executing regional events, like the Southeast Field Course, to meet the need for field-based conservation education in the region. Maintaining a strong presence at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conference is always a priority and provides an opportunity for the regional chapter Board to meet and plan for coming events and achievements. Balanced accounts are fundamental to the activities of the board, as are

well-documented notes and action items. I will continue the good work of those before me in supporting the Section President and rest of the Board in all endeavors during my tenure.

NOMINATIONS

Dr. Vanessa Lane, CWB®



I have been actively involved in multiple facets of The Wildlife Society over the past decade. As an associate professor at an undergraduate-only institution, my primary focus for most of my career has been on providing quality educational and outreach opportunities for my students. This includes participation at professional conferences such as SEAFWA, GA TWS, and TWS. I will continue to have a strong student-centered approach, as well as a keen appreciation and support for the professionals who make this organization and recruitment of new professionals into this field possible.

If elected as Secretary/Treasurer, I will of course focus on the main aspects of the position, such as providing rapid and accurate communication to our members. However, I also believe elected officials should be well-connected and well-informed on current or emerging issues. I have lived in the Southeast for 15 years now; during that time, I have worked hard to cultivate relationships with

other professionals throughout the Southeast, and also stay abreast of conservation issues, especially within Georgia. I have actively engaged myself and students on state and federal policy issues, including the submission of formal comments. Georgia is also currently preparing for our 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan update, and I have participated on both the bird and herpetofauna advisory teams.

The Southeastern Section of TWS has made numerous positive impacts to the profession and I am excited about my selection as a nominee for Secretary/Treasurer. Thank you for considering me for this position.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FIELD BIOSAFETY LEVELS: A RISK-BASED SOLUTION ACROSS SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINES



Hosted By: Wildlife Diseases Working Group
Speaker: Marc Valitutto, VMD, Senior Field Veterinarian,
EcoHealth Alliance

Date: October 17, 3:00 pm

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the critical interface between humans and animals has garnered significant attention in both media and legislative circles. However, the absence of standardized guidelines for personal protection in field research poses a concerning safety gap. Join our presentation to learn about the novel conception of Field Biosafety Levels (FBSLs), which serves to offer the FIRST standardized guidelines for personal protection in field research with animals and in their natural habitats. These FBSLs, developed with respect to leading organizations like the CDC, OSHA, EPA, WHO, and WOAH, offer a transformative path toward enhanced safety in the field. We'll delve into key elements such as team dynamics, advanced training methods, innovative field containment strategies, meticulous decontamination procedures, responsible waste management, and precisely tailored personal protective equipment. Moreover, we'll demonstrate how these guidelines adapt to diverse local regulations, cultures, perceptions, and their significant impact on communities and the environment. Your valuable input, as a stakeholder, will play a pivotal role in refining field safety standards and practices. Join us in shaping a safer, more resilient future in field research. Register now!

TWS WORKING GROUPS

Working groups are forums for members with common professional interests to network, exchange information and promote science based decision making and management of wildlife and its habitats. Working groups publish newsletters, hold meetings, conduct policy analysis, and organize technical symposia and workshops.

Whether you're seeking information or are an expert on a subject, working groups have much to offer you, including the opportunity to: advance your skills in core or emerging areas of the wild-life profession, advance science about a particular area of concern by the profession, network with colleagues in your area of expertise, keep up with the latest information in your professional subdiscipline, participate in special projects related to your professional interests, promote science-based policy and management of wildlife and habitats.

The 27 working groups at The Wildlife Society cover a wide range of specific focuses. Find the right one for you and get involved with a working group of professionals to expand your network and make a difference in an area that matters to you.

Learn more at: https://wildlife.org/working-groups/

MEETINGS OF INTEREST

OCTOBER 2023

77th SEAFWA Conference

October 15-18, 2023 Corpus Christi, TX http://www.seafwa.org/conference/2023

NOVEMBER 2023

The Wildlife Society 30th Annual Conference

November 5-9, 2023 Louisville, KY https://twsconference.org/

45th Annual Gopher Tortoise Council Meeting

November 16-19th, 2023 Tifton, GA https://gophertortoisecouncil.org/annual-meeting



FEBRUARY 2024

47th Annual SEDSG Meeting

February 11-14, 2024 West Virginia Division of Natural Resources https://www.sedsg.msstate.edu/

29th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network and 34th Annual Colloquium on the Conservation of Mammals in the Southeastern U.S.

February 14-16, 2024 Hilton Head, SC https://sbdn.org/annual-meeting/upcomingannual-meeting/

2024 Annual SEPARC Meeting

February 29 – March 3, 2024 Camp McDowell, Nauvoo, AL www.separc.org

MARCH 2024

TWS Southeastern Student Conclave

March 14-16, 2024 Host: Murray State University Student Chapter

89th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

March 24-29, 2024 Grand Rapids, MI https://wildlifemanagement.institute/conference/