



## Spring Newsletter

April 2024

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TWS Hunting, Trapping, and Conservation Working Group



@htcwg\_tws



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### Note from the Chair:

Happy March Mammal Madness HTCWG members,

Hope things are going well for everyone. It’s been a busy start to the year. It was great seeing some of you in Louisville at our annual meeting and TWS conference. This spring, our Working Group provided feedback to TWS’s policy team about the draft policy from the Fish & Wildlife Service: “National Wildlife Refuge System: Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health”. This included a section about “native predator control”. TWS incorporated many of our suggestions into their final comments on the proposed policy update and the policy team expressed gratitude for our Working Group’s input as they were working to provide those comments.

We also submitted comments on TWS’s position statement about the North American Model. I sent around a survey to gather feedback on the North American Model position statement for the board to synthesize and submit. That survey also gathered information for anyone who was interested in providing feedback or assisting the board for the upcoming position statements. There are three other position statements coming up for review this year: Animal Rights, Responsible Use of Wildlife, and Hunting. We appreciate the people who submitted their names to provide feedback.

If you’re interested in providing feedback on those three position statements for the board to consider but didn’t complete the survey, it’s not too late. The board wants to work on compiling our feedback now to be prepared for those reviews, so we’re working over the next few weeks to draft comments that reflect our Working Group and our Charter goals. It’s not too late to contribute: you can send comments on any of these three (Animal Rights, Responsible Use of Wildlife, and Hunting) to our WG email at [htcworkinggroup@gmail.com](mailto:htcworkinggroup@gmail.com). They can all be found at [wildlife.org/position-statements](http://wildlife.org/position-statements). There are always 3 key questions to address with any position statement, which is helpful to include in any feedback: 1) Should TWS continue to have a position statement on this topic? 2) Does this position statement need to be changed? 3) If this position statement needs edits, what are the changes that will improve the position statement?

For these position statement reviews, we try to strike a balance to represent our Working Group and the goals of our Charter. To do so, we need to hear feedback from our members. But we also must synthesize those into final comments representing the HTCWG. That’s a role the Executive Board takes on. So exact comments and edits you provide may not be included, but we do our best to represent the themes, topics, and concerns we hear from members. Keep in mind, as a TWS member you can always provide feedback directly on any position statement by sending input to TWS Council directly by contacting your section representatives: <https://wildlife.org/council-and-staff/>

We’re also in review of an Issue Statement about recovery of big game with the aid of dogs we hope to share with all of you soon for review in the coming months. Scott Hygnstrom, Kurt Vercauteren, and Bryant White are the sub-committee working on that draft, and we really appreciate their efforts! Hopefully see some of you at the virtual spring meeting in April. Thanks.

*Geriann Albers*

## New Officer Bios

In November 2023, our working group elected a new board member at-large and re-elected our secretary/treasurer.



### Secretary/Treasurer: Val Titus

Val has been re-elected for a second term as Secretary/Treasurer for the HTCWG and has been a member since the working group was chartered. Val is the Program Coordinator for Natural Resources Conservation and Management at Paul Smith's College in Paul Smiths, NY. She has been hunting and fishing her entire life. She's a certified hunter safety instructor, as well as a Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow instructor. Her research has focused mainly on the conservation and management of reptiles and amphibians and wildlife health, but she has recently started to dabble in game species and

human dimensions work. She is an active member of TWS, having held a number of positions at the state, section, and working group level. She is an alum of the Leadership Institute and is a TWS Fellow. Val completed her PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at Binghamton University in 2013.

### Board Member At-Large: Amanda Veals Dutt

Amanda is a postdoctoral research scientist with Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University in Texas. For the last two years she has lead research focused on carnivores, mentored graduate students, and teaches. Amanda received her B.S. from University of Arizona and M.S. from the same institution studying gray fox ecology and rabies management. She completed her Ph.D. in 2021 with a dissertation focused on spatial ecology of the endangered ocelot to inform road mitigation efforts. Amanda has been involved with The Wildlife Society since her undergraduate (~10 years). She has served as the newsletter chair for HTCWG for the last 3 years and is excited to start as an official board member.



# Bang for the Buck: The Many Values of Hunting

## One Vegetarian's Hunting Journey



### Kaitlyn Landfield

I have always been the outdoorsy type. Whether it be hiking, mountain biking, kayaking or surfing, if it gets me closer to nature, I have probably tried it or plan to. I just can't get enough of the outdoors. Despite that, there is one outdoor activity I could never have imagined pursuing—hunting.



Participants, Kaitlyn Landfield and Kris Pancheco, and course leaders, Albert Flores and Bruce Thomas, pose for a post-hunt photo. Photo credit: USFWS

I had little exposure to hunting growing up. My friends didn't hunt, their parents didn't hunt, and neither did mine. My mother did grow up in a small town in Minnesota and she would sometimes tell us stories about her dad and brothers hunting when she was a kid, but most of her stories focused on being afraid of the hanging deer carcasses in her garage. As an animal lover and vegetarian for much of my life, I was pretty sure I did not want to have deer carcasses hanging in my garage. Aside from her stories, my only exposure to hunting was what I saw on the television—men in camouflage holding big guns and dead animals. I couldn't relate.

Little did I know, I'd eventually embrace hunters as my fellow conservationists.

After I joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I was lucky to get nominated for the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow workshop. Conservation

Leaders for Tomorrow is a program designed to introduce natural resource professionals to hunting, angling and trapping so they can better interact with stakeholders and navigate management issues involving such uses. The week-long workshop is made up of classroom sessions, discussions, and hands-on activities, all culminating in an optional hunt. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to immerse myself in a world that was so critical to my work and yet I had no experience in.

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**Membership Corner:** Check out member stories in our previous newsletters!

*Do you have a hunting, trapping, or general field work story you want to share with fellow HTC members? Did you host or participate in a hunting/trapping focused event? Send your stories to Amanda Veals Dutt at [amveals@gmail.com](mailto:amveals@gmail.com) with subject line "HTC Membership Corner" to have your story featured in our next newsletter.*

Kaitlyn Landfield and Kris Pacheco practice marksmanship out in the field during the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow workshop. Photo credit: USFWS



I soon found myself flying across the country to the Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center in Mansfield, Georgia to learn about hunting.

I had the opportunity to connect with many of the instructors over dinner, coffee, and in between field activities over the course of the workshop. I enthusiastically shared stories about scuba diving and hiking. They enthusiastically shared stories about hunting. During those conversations I was surprised by a lot of what I heard. I had always assumed hunters were strictly motivated by the harvest. I thought they did what they did to put a deer head on the wall or fill their freezer with meat. What I didn't realize was there was so much more to it.

One of the instructors told me he hadn't harvested a deer in 5 years and had no intention to ever again. Yet, he went out every year with the same group of friends as he had for the past 30 years to hunt. For him, hunting was about friendship.

"A lot of times you'll go out there with your buddies and just end up having a good time in the woods" he said.

Another instructor told stories about elk hunting with his son. He reminisced on a time when they had hunted an elk together and what it was like to process the elk over the course of a night and backpack the meat over seven miles back to their car. You could see the pride in his eyes. He had raised his kids to be hunters and it was something they could always connect over. For him, hunting was about family.

For many of the instructors it seemed hunting was simply about connecting with nature and clearing their minds. They just loved being in the forest, in the quiet, and a part of the wildness. One instructor told me: "Sometimes it's more about the walk. We call it mountain therapy."

While each instructor had their own unique set of motivations for hunting, they all seemed to share one that I had never expected—dogs.

"People don't realize that a lot of hunting is just about getting outside with your dogs and enjoying watching them work" one said.

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Over the course of the week, I laughed as I listened to the instructors playfully argue over what type of dog was the best hunting dog. They each had their favorite breed and were prepared to tell you why their dog was the best. During our last activity of the workshop, the quail hunt, I got to experience watching a hunting dog work. Rhett, a German short-haired pointer, excitedly found quail after quail as he led us through the fields. It's safe to say his smile was almost as big as all of ours were while watching him. As a dog mom of two lovely mutts, I could completely relate to this motivation. So much of my life is spent with my dogs, training them, connecting with them, and experiencing the joy of watching them interact with the outdoors.

The more stories we shared, the more I realized how much our lifestyles and values aligned. I was speaking with people who valued friendship, family, connecting to nature, and who seemed to love dogs as much as I did. The gap between how I viewed myself and how I viewed hunters had started to shrink. Then, I learned about the Pittman-Robertson Act.

In 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Act was passed. It put an excise tax on all firearms and ammunition sold in the United States and distributed the revenue to wildlife agencies to fund conservation. The funding from the act is critical to natural resource agencies ability to improve habitat and manage species across the U.S. I had never heard of this act before and could not believe I had hunters to thank for keeping so many of the places I love to hike, mountain bike and kayak in healthy.

Not only did hunters share so many of the motivations I had for getting outdoors, but they have been funding conservation, something I've devoted my career to, for the past 86 years. It made me want to go out and thank a hunter. It also made me want to find more ways to contribute to conservation in my own way, such as purchasing a Federal Duck Stamp, to help protect the places I recreated in.

Participating in Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow was an amazing experience. I left the workshop with new perspectives, new skillsets, new friends and a bag full of quail I was proud to go home and cook for my loved ones.

I don't know if I'll ever add hunting to the already long list of ways I choose to get outdoors, but I have a new respect and understanding for the hunting community. And, as I continue to work in conservation, I'm excited to work hand-in-hand with hunters to continue to protect the places that matter to us all.



Course leaders, Albert Flores and Robert Abernathy, cook game-meat on a barbeque for the course participants . Photo credit: USFWS.

## About Us

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

Officers 2024–2025

Chair: Geriann Albers  
(galbers@dnr.in.gov)

Chair-Elect: John McDonald  
(twsmcdonald@gmail.com)

Past Chair: Tom Decker  
(thomas\_decker@fws.gov)

Secretary/Treasurer: Valorie Titus  
(vtitus@paulsmiths.edu)

Board Member: Bryant White  
(BWhite@fishwildlife.org)

Board Member: Amanda Veals Dutt  
(amveals@gmail.com)

Membership: 271



TWS Hunting,  
Trapping, and  
Conservation  
Working Group



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## Member Involvement

**Join us for our spring member meeting!**

**Tuesday April 30, 2024 via Zoom**

**1pm PST / 4pm EST**

Socialize with fellow working group members, discuss topics of interest with officers, hear updates on TWS and working group actions.

More details to come in our email listserve.

Join us via Zoom at this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84963014743?pwd=Vll2WWRsazVnd1Z1dU04eVJ5ditFZz09>

**Meeting ID:** 849 6301 4743

**Passcode:** 214314



## Comments on TWS Position Statements

Geriann's chair letter at the beginning of this newsletter details the three position statements our working group will be providing comments on to TWS Council. Below are links to read each statement. If you would like to provide comments, send them directly to our board at [htcworkinggroup@gmail.com](mailto:htcworkinggroup@gmail.com)

1. Animal Rights: <https://wildlife.org/tws-standing-position-animal-rights-philosophy-and-wildlife-conservation/>
2. Responsible Use of Wildlife: <https://wildlife.org/tws-standing-position-responsible-human-use-of-wildlife/>
3. Hunting: <https://wildlife.org/tws-standing-position-hunting/>