

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

President's Message, Winter 2022-2023 — Orrin Duvuvuei

Hi All! Although spring is not too far off, winter in New Mexico still has a lot to offer and explore. Whether it's various snowsports, ice fishing at Eagle Nest, or winter bird watching at one of the many Wildlife Areas and Refuges, there is something for everyone to enjoy. I hope you all have been able to get outdoors and enjoy some winter fun-tivities!

As I reflect back on the last 12 months, and what the NMTWS Chapter has accomplished, I am honored to be part of this group. In August, we held a 1-day meeting where students and wildlife professionals presented their wildlife research, and held discussions on pertinent wildlife management topics. Last week wildlifers attended the first in-person Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) since 2020. At the JAM, NMTWS awarded Best Poster, Best Paper, and 2 scholarships to deserving students. The NMTWS also recognized Wildlife Professional of the Year, Eric Rominger. See below for Eric's nomination letter and what he's been able to accomplish throughout his career.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's (Department's) Share with Wildlife program will begin accepting proposals for projects with a planned start date on or after January 16, 2024. All project proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time on Friday, June 16, 2023. The Department's Share with Wildlife program funds approximately 10-12 projects each year in New Mexico with a focus on habitat enhancement, biological and ecological research, wildlife rehabilitation, or wildlife education.

This year's NMTWS Board is comprised of Travis Zaffarano (President-Elect), Elise Goldstein (Past President), Tony Opatz (Treasurer), Danica Cooke (Secretary), Leland Pierce, Stephanie Herbert, and Jacob Lobato (Board Members). We are working on a variety of projects, including another 1-day meeting toward the end of summer where NMTWS members can present their work and we provide opportunities for students to network with professionals. If you have ideas or are looking for a way to contribute, email us at twnewmexico@gmail.com. I remain excited to see what new opportunities are presented and what positive impact we can make in the year ahead.

Until Next Time,
Orrin Duvuvuei

New Mexico Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Officers and Board Members

President: Orrin Duvuvuei; President-Elect: Travis Zaffarano; Past President: Elise Goldstein

Secretary: Danica Cooke; Treasurer: Tony Opatz

Board Members: Leland Pierce, Stephanie Herbert, Jacob Lobato

Newsletter Editor: TBD

SW Section Representative: Kathy Granillo



If you would like to contribute articles, stories, announcements, or photos, please submit to twnewmexico@gmail.com

2023 Joint Annual Meeting

2022 NMTWS Award Recipients

Best Student Poster Award (AZ and NM TWS combined award) – Emma Federman from NAU for her poster titled *Detection of listed bat species under bridges through the use of fecal DNA*.



Emma Federman
(Photo: NAU Website)

Best Student Paper Award – Leah White from NMSU for her paper titled *Large mammal distribution, habitat use, and co-occurrence in the Jemez Mountains, NM: responses to wildlife and forest management*.



Leah White
(Photo: Twitter)

Scholarship 2nd Place - Sierra Shoemaker is a Senior at ENMU with a strong academic record. As an Undergraduate Researcher she has studied population trends in juvenile Rio Grande Cooters on the Black River in New Mexico and assisted in hoop net trapping and data collection of multiple New Mexico turtle species. She has also assisted on several projects including LPC, pitfall surveys, gill net surveys, and telemetry tracking of ornate box turtles. When she isn't studying or in the field, she makes time to serve as the current ENMU TWS Chapter President. As her record demonstrates she is well-deserving of an NMTWS Scholarship.

Scholarship 1st Place - Joanna Ennis is a second year Master's Student at NMSU, studying corridors and migration patterns of elk, mule deer, and pronghorn. She has a Bachelor's degree from U of Florida in Wildlife Ecology and Evolution. She has received numerous awards and grants, including actively pursuing funding to allow her to travel to 2 international wildlife conferences. She was also the recipient of an NSF international research opportunity for students where she studied small mammal movement ecology across different land-use boundaries in an agricultural mosaic in Eswatini, Africa. She has worked on numerous studies on a variety of big game, carnivore, and raptor species. Joanna supports a strong academic record, and demonstrates ability to take the initiative to develop her career and take an active role in working with wildlife. Congratulations on receiving an NMTWS Scholarship!



Sierra Shoemaker
(Photo: ENMU Website)

Professional of the Year Award: Eric Rominger, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Nomination Letter

I would like to nominate Eric Rominger for the NMTWS 2022 Professional of the Year award. Eric is truly considered an expert in bighorn sheep management, and has fought long and hard as an advocate for this species. He stands up for what he knows to be correct, even in the face of political headwinds. When Eric arrived in the mid-1990s there were <80 desert bighorn in NM. Determined to understand why the populations were struggling, he radiocollared every bighorn transplanted from the captive facility at Red Rock to the wild. There were numerous mortalities to investigate, and Eric is a tireless field biologist – have you ever tried keeping up with Eric while climbing up, or even down, a mountain? It is the rare person who can do so!



Joanna Ennis
(Photo: LinkedIn)

Through organizing, conducting, and implementing countless bighorn captures, surveys, and other field investigations, he found that mountain lion predation was responsible for the vast majority of desert bighorn sheep mortality, and the only way to recover the imperiled populations would be to reduce the number of mountain lions within occupied desert bighorn sheep range. After many years of promoting the science he was given approval to move forward with implementing a targeted

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2023 Joint Annual Meeting (continued)

...Professional of the Year—Nomination Letter (continued)

mountain lion removal program, and this, in combination with transplants out of Red Rock, lead the population to increase from ~80 animals in the late 1990s to ~1,200 in 2022. As a result, desert bighorn were downlisted, and subsequently delisted from the NM State Endangered Species List. This increase in population size has led to an increase in hunting licenses from 1 to 28.

Along the way, Eric has authored many papers, from peer reviewed journal articles to popular stories in hunting magazines. For example, he published a paper in JWM discussing not only the story of mountain lion predation on bighorn sheep in NM, but digging much deeper to understand why the predation rates are so high. This was a combination of predator prey interaction, habitat change and its impacts on species distribution and prevalence, extirpation of two apex predators, and declining anti-predator practices. On the research side, he joined forces with biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, using the Red Rock Wildlife Management Area captive facility – and the desert bighorn sheep it contains – to field test a promising new wildlife survey methodology and publish the results. By using camera trapping and accounting for the undetected proportion of the population through distance sampling, the research team validated its results with unbiased estimates of abundance for a known bighorn sheep population.

Reaching out to a difference audience, he wrote an article for the Fall 2022 edition of Fair Chase, the Boone and Crockett Club’s magazine. This article was in honor of the 50th anniversary of constructing the Red Rock captive breeding facility, which has been home to the captive desert bighorn herd in NM. This article summarized the 50 year journey of the decline of desert bighorn sheep that lead to state-listing, the management actions taken to restore the population, and recovery that lead to delisting and the return to status of a game animal. Due recognition was given to the invaluable financial contribution and ongoing support of the hunter-conservationist in recovering this species.

Eric has always understood that bighorn sheep management and endangered species recovery cannot happen relying on science alone, and has worked hard to forge many partnerships over the years. These partners include federal wildlife and land management agencies, NGOs such as the Wild Sheep Foundation, wildlife agencies in other states, and private landowners. How he managed to gain the respect of the isolated landowners down near the Mexican border who are skeptical of everyone, much less someone who works for the government, is a testament to Eric’s dedication and genuine interest in discussing bighorn sheep with everyone who will give him a chance to do so. However, Eric is as comfortable speaking to ranchers in their living room as he is speaking to the elite members of the Boone and Crockett Club. His charismatic personality, enthusiasm for bighorn conservation, and ability to listen has earned him the respect of wildlife biologists, hunters, students, and bighorn sheep aficionados with a variety of backgrounds. This has been critical for garnering the support necessary to implement and fund bighorn sheep management.



Eric Rominger. Photo: NMDGF

For Eric’s career-long commitment to high-quality research, bighorn sheep recovery and management, understanding ecological interactions, and promoting conservation ethics across communities, I can think of no one more deserving of the NMTWS Professional of the Year award.

Around New Mexico!

Pronghorn Capture in the Bootheel a Success!

By: Dr. James Cain III (NMSU), Rachel Burke (BLM), and Nicole Tatman (NMDGF)

In December 2022 the BLM, NMDGF, and New Mexico State University partnered on a project to learn more about pronghorn in the far southwestern part of the state. A total of 48 GPS collars were deployed both north and south of I-10. The study aims to assess pronghorn movements and habitat selection, including identification of barriers or impediments to movement. The collars will collect location data for 2+ years after which analyses will begin. We are excited to learn more about pronghorn in an area they have not yet been studied.



Biologists work to collar pronghorn captured from helicopter.

Mexican Wolf Located North of Interstate 40 in Northeast New Mexico

Borrowed from NMDGF Press Release; January 9, 2023

SANTA FE – A female wolf (f2754) has been documented crossing out of the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) north of Interstate 40 in New Mexico. The wolf is affixed with a radio collar, which is transmitting its movements. The wolf dispersed from its natal pack (Rocky Prairie) at the end of 2022 and was documented crossing the I-40 boundary early this week. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish are monitoring the f2754s movements.

Mexican wolves that move outside the MWEPA, including north of I-40, are listed and protected as federally endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Therefore, livestock owners and the public cannot haze or harass wolves north of I-40 without violating the Act, unless the wolf actively poses a threat to human safety. The Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team has notified private landowners in the area.

Anyone convicted of killing, harming or harassing an endangered Mexican wolf is subject to a fine and/or criminal charges.

[New Mexico Department of Game and Fish](#)
Public contact, Information Center: 888-248-6866
Media contact, Darren Vaughan: 505-476-8027
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Borrowed from: <https://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/download/education/conservation/wildlife-notes/mammals/Mexican-gray-wolf.pdf>

Around New Mexico! (continued)

LANL, NMSU Partner Up to Study 'Disaster Ecology' After Mass Bird Die-off

Borrowed from KOB4: Griffin Rushton (KOB); January 21, 2023

<https://www.kob.com/new-mexico/lanl-nmsu-partner-up-to-study-disaster-ecology-after-mass-bird-die-off/>

Some researchers in New Mexico have a new project, and they say that birds hold the clues, and a specific event has their attention.

It's no secret birds have a close relationship with the weather. Hundreds of millions of them fly south in the winter and back north in the summer – at least that's how it's supposed to go.

Recent studies, including one from NASA, found climate change is interfering with that annual cycle, and those disruptions can ripple through entire ecosystems.

Researchers in New Mexico believe one of the most extreme examples of this phenomenon is holding secrets that could help predict the next ecological disaster.

It's September 2020, pandemic lockdowns are entering their sixth month, the burning of Zozobra goes on without crowds for the first time, and thousands of birds drop-dead over New Mexico.

"It was literally within a few days, that we saw a mass mortality of birds," said Jeanne Fair, a Los Alamos National Lab scientist.

The seemingly biblical-level event alarmed researchers across the globe. Disease was the first theory, but scientists quickly realized something more powerful was to blame.

"That would be climate change," said Fair.

Fair is one of the Los Alamos National Lab researchers who studied the incident. She says the birds experienced not one, not two, but three different extreme weather events in just a few days.

"We had had some extreme high temperatures in Colorado and New Mexico, and then we had a cold front come in that that was sort of extreme cold event. At the same time, we had large catastrophic forest fires in the region, and so it was very, very smoky as well," Fair said.

Fair says all of those stressors pushed the typically resilient birds to their limit, and researchers believe it could happen again. "Something new is happening, climate change is increasing the frequency and the severity of these weather related events," said Tim Wright, a New Mexico State University professor.

Wright is spearheading a new partnership between New Mexico State University and Los Alamos National Lab. One training students in a relatively new field of research – disaster ecology.

"It is one in which we try to understand how these disasters are occurring, what leads to these disasters, and also how we might be able to mitigate them and lessen their impact in the future," said Wright.

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Around New Mexico! (continued)

...LANL, NMSU Partner Up to Study ‘Disaster Ecology’ After Mass Bird Die-off (continued)

Wright says students will revisit 2020s mass die-off to better understand how climate change affects migratory birds, and that research could one day help predict future weather disasters.

“That’s why migratory birds are particularly important,” Fair said. “They’re a great indicator of, of stresses from whether where they’ve been to where they’re going, and so they’re the ones that are connecting us globally.

“That’s why we say they’re canaries in the coal mine, because they really are sensitive to a whole suite of human induced changes in the environment,” said Wright.

A world of knowledge hiding in the skies above.

“If it’s true that these sorts of events are going to happen more regularly, you know, we really need the next generation of environmental scientists of ornithologist, and researchers, and environmental professionals to really come together and, and to be able to address this,” said Fair.

The new partnership kicked off this past week. A USDA grant is allowing up to 24 students to participate over the next four years.

Photo Gallery



Great Blue Heron eating fish. *Photo Credit: Mark Watson.*

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Intro
New Mexico
Regional/National
Announcements

The New Mexico Chapter of the Wildlife Society Announces Electronic Membership Enrollment/Renewal!

Simply visit the Join/Renew page of our website at <https://wildlife.org/nm-chapter/membership/>, fill out the membership form, and pay for your membership with PayPal. Annual membership fees are still only \$8, and your first year is free. If you would like to send a check through the mail, simply include your name, affiliation, address, email address, and payment and mail to: NMTWS, PO Box 35936, Albuquerque, NM 87176.



Looking to join a community of wildlife professionals?

Join the New Mexico Chapter of The Wildlife Society!

How to Join:

- Add an annual membership during registration for the TWS/AFS JAM
- Add an annual membership to a National Membership renewal
- Sign up on our new website!
<https://wildlife.org/nm-chapter/>

Membership Perks:

- Expand your network of diverse wildlife professionals
- Access NM TWS newsletter to stay up to date with local Wildlife topics
- Attend events and meetings to engage with innovative wildlife management and research

Questions about membership? Email: twsnewmexico@gmail.com



Website:

<http://wildlife.org/NM-chapter/>

Email:

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