

IN THIS ISSUE

Working Group Updates

November Meeting

Minutes

Chair's Message

Policy Priorities

2024 Conference Recap

HRWG Board Meeting

TWS All Working Groups

Meeting

NRCS Working Lands for

Wildlife Symposium

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Meet the recipients of the

HRWG's travel awards

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Restoration in Action

Official Newsletter of the TWS Habitat Restoration Working Group

Working Group News

November Board Meeting Minutes

The Executive Board of the HRWG met on November 4th for their monthly meeting. During the meeting, they discussed the following:

- The recent 2024 conference, and the success of the Working Lands for Wildlife Symposium and the discussions held at the All Working Groups meeting.
- Ray Dueser and Rob Magill's progress on an article for The Wildlife Professional centered on the U.N. Decade on Ecological Restoration.
- The 2 vacant board positions: chair-elect and member-at-large, which were filled by Mason Thomas and Sarah Kolarik.
- A symposium at the 2025 Annual Conference centered on large-scale ecological restoration efforts.
- Co-sponsorship and/or collaboration with other working groups for symposia at the 2025 conference, specifically the Wetlands and Native Peoples WGs.
- TWS's policy priorities for 2025-26.

The HRWG hosts monthly board meetings on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 EST. Members will receive an email with the agenda and Zoom link the week before the meeting.

HRWG Executive Board

Chair

Amber Pippin, AWB
Wildlife Rehab Specialist

Chair Elect

Mason Thomas
Environmental Consultant
Resource Environmental
Solutions

Past Chair

Angela Burrow
Assistant Professor
Michigan State University

Secretary-Treasurer

Derrick Lindsay, AWB
Stewardship Coordinator
Kentucky Natural Lands
Trust

Communications Chair

Alexander Hoxie
Graduate Research
Assistant
Tarleton State University

Board Members At-Large

Drew White
Desert Tortoise Biologist
Center for Environmental
Management of Military
Lands

Autumn Patterson
Graduate Research
Assistant
Tarleton State University

Sarah Kolarik
Undergrad Researcher and
Student Chapter Officer
Clemson University

Not a member? Join today!

You can join the HRWG through your TWS account, under the “Membership” tab by selecting “Add Organizational Unit”. There is a \$5 annual membership fee that allows the HRWG to continue its mission of advancing the field of wildlife habitat restoration.

Messages From the Past and Incoming Chairs



Amber Pippin, AWB®, Chair

As Chair I plan to continue the “let’s get things done” attitude that we have held and to encourage our productivity to improve. With the support of our fellow members and board we anticipate expanding our relationship with the UN Decade, as well as broadening our reach

to other members via the Wildlife Professional and our Newsletter. I am enthusiastic about this year and look forward to all we will accomplish.



Angela Burrow, Past-Chair

Hopefully, like me, you also find inspiration looking back over your year at all you accomplished and penciling in ideas for next year. Our working group was particularly active this year. The biggest accomplishment of the year was formalizing support and applying for The Wildlife Society to become a supporting member of the United

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Many thanks to those who made this dream a reality, especially Ray Dueser and Rob Magill who will co-lead a sub-committee focused on UN Decade activities. Thanks to our members we also submitted substantial comments on the TWS position statement regarding the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation; our efforts led to a statement which better reflects the concerns and subtleties of conservation in the modern era. Two board members, Derrick Lindsay and Rob Magill, also submitted substantial comments representing our working group regarding the Bureau of Land Management's Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement for Greater Sage-Grouse Range-wide Planning (89 Fed. Red. 18963). I'm extremely proud of our working group leadership's engagement to ensure habitat restoration issues remain at the forefront of conservation. Contributing to these on-going efforts is an easy way for individual members to get involved! We'd love to have your input! We also love supporting our members! This year we sponsored a webinar, catch the recording on TWS' website if you missed it, and co-sponsored a symposium at the annual conference to directly benefit our members. Additionally, we provided travel awards for 4 of our members to attend the annual conference. And we're already looking forward to next year's conference! As the immediate Past-Chair, I'm excited to play a supporting role in bringing an excellent program centered on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to the annual conference. I hope to see you all in Edmonton and hear from you many times between now and then!

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

TWS's Policy Priorities

TWS is in the process of identifying its policy priorities for 2025-2026. The Conservation Affairs Committee is requesting input from members submitted to policy@wildlife.org until November 18th. After this, they will compile a list of priorities, which the sections and working groups will rank in order of importance and desired level of TWS engagement. We will be receiving the list in early December, and will submit the ranked list by January 10th. Keep an eye out for an email with the priority list to share your input in guiding TWS's priority.

2024 Annual Conference Recap

Members of the HRWG recently attended TWS's 31st annual conference in Baltimore, where they had the opportunity to attend the in-person meeting for the working group and the NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife symposium, which was co-sponsored by the HRWG. Several members of the board attended the All-Working Groups Meeting, which set a strong tone for the importance of working groups in achieving TWS's Strategic Plan.



Working Group Updates

—
2024 Conference Recap

—
Contributed Articles

—
Member Spotlights

—
Submit an Article

—
Contact Us

In-person HRWG Board Meeting

The HRWG met bright and early at 7am on October 22nd. There, we congratulated the recipients of the conference travel award: Ajay Karki, Grant Peterson, and Gabrielle Ripa, and the recipients of the Member Incentive Award: Alexander Hoxie and Derrick Lindsay for their contributions to the working group in 2024. We discussed the success of our 2024 initiatives, including TWS's partnership with the U.N. Decade on Restoration, which is currently awaiting final approval from the U.N. and the HRWG's comments on TWS's position statements on the North American Model and the BLM's range-wide sage-grouse conservation plan. We marked the passing of the torch from Angela to Amber as chair of the working group and set the tone for 2025. Next year is going to be a big one, and we are already planning for symposiums and, with luck, a plenary speaker at the 2025 Conference to discuss the U.N. Decade and landscape level restoration efforts. Thank you to those who were able to attend, and for the continued support of our members. We are excited for what 2025 has to offer and we hope we can continue to grow.

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Fall All-Working Groups Meeting

Alexander Hoxie, Communications Chair



Twice a year, TWS hosts a meeting with the leadership of its many working groups to increase collaboration and communication and receive feedback on how to better meet working group needs and goals. The fall meeting in Baltimore was well-attended and included representatives from the three newest working groups: the Latin American and Caribbean, Disabilities, Neurodivergence, and Allyship, and the Coastal and Marine Working Groups.

The beginning of the meeting discussed the transition of working groups to the fiscal sponsorship model, where TWS serves as the bank account for the working groups, which will streamline and make managing finances easier. With the adoption of the new Strategic Plan, working groups are key to two of the pillars: Building community and exercising external influence. CEO Ed Arnett discussed the importance of working groups in building community within working groups, and also

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

continuing to collaborate on symposiums, webinars, and workshops. Conservation Policy Manager Kelly O'Connor then thanked the working groups for their contributions to TWS's position and policy statements. The HRWG recently provided comments on the BLM's range-wide plan for greater sage-grouse.

In the second half of the meeting, we had breakout groups focused on discussing member communication, workshops and webinars, member recruitment, and member engagement. Many working groups are encountering difficulties in getting members engaged and involved in the working groups, and we had a lot of conversation about how to better reach and engage with our members; not only in our own working groups, but increasing multi-group collaborations. As Communications Chair, I am looking forward to the opportunity to collaborate on social media with other working groups. The meeting was very productive, and there is a lot of enthusiasm moving into the new year. Two new working groups are expected to join the existing 30 in the coming year: a long-anticipated Private Lands WG and the Transportation Ecology WG. The next all-working group meeting will be held virtually in April or May. Thank you to everyone who attended, I am greatly looking forward to working with you all!

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Symposium

Charles Rewa, U.S. Department of Agriculture



Working Lands for Wildlife with assistance from the TWS Habitat Restoration Working Group, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) organized a half-day symposium entitled ‘Scaling up voluntary conservation on private lands’ during the recent annual conference of The Wildlife Society in Baltimore, Maryland. The symposium was a joint effort between the NRCS Conservation Effects Assessment Project and Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW). The sessions featured speakers representing NRCS, academia and NGO partners and demonstrated how coproduced science and voluntary collaboration with private landowners is driving effective wildlife conservation while sustaining livelihoods and local rural communities.

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Among the speakers were Steve Jester, Executive Director of Partnerscapes, and Jess McGuire, Upland Conservationist for Quail Forever. Presentations centered around WLFW Frameworks for Conservation Action as the mechanism for implementing more effective local actions to stave off biome-limiting threats in Sagebrush, Great Plains Grasslands, and Northern Bobwhite Grasslands and Savannas. Coming online soon are new frameworks for Eastern Deciduous Forest, Southern Pines, and Big Game Migrations.

During the session, Dirac Twidwell, University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor, emphasized that restoring Great Plains grasslands is too expensive to achieve at scale unless we can get ahead of seed sources that initiate degradation from woodland expansion. Jerod Merkle, University of Wyoming big game scientist, impressed on participants the role of incorporating proactive conservation into migratory pathways to reduce impediments to elk and mule deer movements. Darin McNeil, University of Kentucky professor, quantified the multiplicative benefits of restoring canopy openings for imperiled golden-winged warblers and bee pollinators in eastern forests. As the final speaker, WLFW Communications Director Julia Debes challenged scientists to embrace their role as ‘experts’ in storytelling to reach target audiences.

During a panel discussion, McGuire responded to audience questions about scaling up conservation on private lands by emphasizing the importance of partnering with producers that share a common vision for wildlife and their operations. Jeff Larkin, Indiana University of Pennsylvania professor and 15-year WLFW science advisor, impressed on students in attendance that the most rewarding experience of his career was working one-on-one with a private forest landowner to find a restoration solution that worked for both wildlife and their operation.

Working Group Updates

—
2024 Conference Recap

—
Contributed Articles

—
Member Spotlights

—
Submit an Article

—
Contact Us

A participant asked the panel whether academia was doing a good job of training the next generation of private lands biologists. Jester responded that voluntary conservation necessitates specialized skillsets, and that state game and fish agencies and NGOs are struggling to hire a large enough workforce trained in private lands conservation. Participants universally agreed that on-the-job training is slowing down the generational opportunity to scale up private lands conservation made possible by financial resources available in the Inflation Reduction Act. The audience left hopeful that identified shortcomings could give rise to a landowner-informed academic major in private lands conservation, or some similar form of future certification. The NRCS and WLFW hope to continue these and other conversations at the 2025 TWS Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada!

Charles Rewa is a Wildlife Assessment Leader for the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) of the USDA's Natural resource Conservation Service. For further inquiries, he can be reached at Charles.rewa@usda.gov

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Member Spotlight

Meet the Recipients of the 2024 Conference Travel Scholarship!

Ajay Karki



I am Ajay Karki, a first year PhD student at the University of Wyoming. I am investigating how the large-scale human impacts like climate change and habitat fragmentation have affected big carnivores as well as how their interactions with humans differ in response to these changes.

I attended The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting for the first time. This was an inspiring and enriching experience. I am grateful to the Habitat Restoration Working Group for their generous travel grant that supported my travel and made participation possible for me.

I had an opportunity to present my research on “impact of Climate Change on Tigers,” which allowed me to engage with diverse audience from different organizations and background. I received a lot of feedback and creative comments, which were incredibly valuable to enhance the quality of my research. I had an opportunity to exchange ideas among researchers and professionals that not only validated my research but also opened new

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

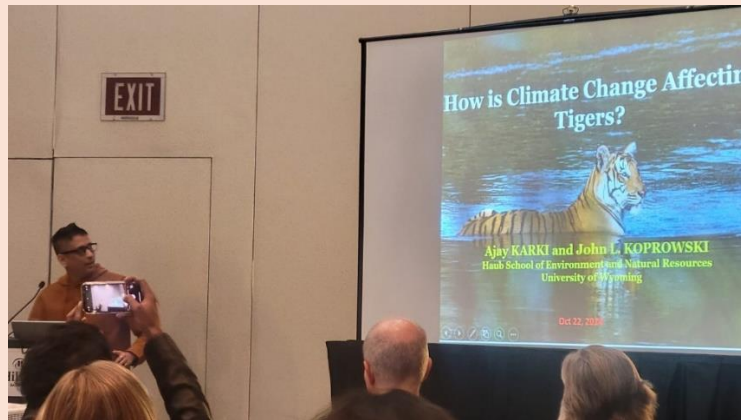
Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

avenues for exploration. I have been receiving follow up emails with keen interest in my research project.



The most important aspect of the conference was networking opportunities with fellow researchers and professionals that have similar research interests to mine. I realized that these networking interactions were important to build our relationships and establish meaningful collaboration in future. I look forward to continuing the conversations and future collaborations.

Additionally, I attended several sessions highlighting innovative methods and approaches which provided me with an opportunity to understand diversified methodologies and broaden my knowledge horizon. This inspired me to think how I might incorporate these approaches into my own research.

Finally, attending the TWS conference was a valuable opportunity for my academic and professional growth. Reflection, comments, and suggestions from different angles of academicians and professionals on the same topic helped to enhance my understanding of my research deeply. I am excited to use the things, I have learned on my ongoing research, and contribute to our common goal of biodiversity conservation around the world.

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Grant Peterson



Hey y'all! My name is Grant Peterson, and I am a new member of TWS's Habitat Restoration Working Group as well as a first year master's student at Yale University studying coastal and

wetland restoration. In May of 2024, I graduated with a BS in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture from Mississippi State University where I was involved with MSU's student chapter of TWS, floodplain fisheries research, and MSU's Coastal Research and Extension Center. In my career, I am interested in working for a nonprofit organization or government agency to plan wetland or coastal restoration projects that integrate geospatial techniques, biological monitoring, decision making tools, and community outreach to maximize the numerous and varied benefits of ecological restoration for people and the planet.

I want to thank the Habitat Restoration Working Group for generously offering me an opportunity to attend The Wildlife Society's 2024 Annual Conference in Baltimore. I feel that the conference was a great success, and I gained lots from attending it: catching up with old friends and making new ones, enhancing my understanding of barriers and boosts to scaling up conservation, and getting a clearer view of the ecological restoration career field. One set of talks I really enjoyed was sponsored by Conservation Without Conflict. Their collaborative approach to scaling up conservation on working lands by

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

building trust and incentivizing good stewardship felt very prescient in an increasingly polarized country. Building on this working lands focus, the HRWG and USDA-hosted “Scaling Up Conservation on Private Lands” session was full of great insights, wisdom, and techniques.



These lessons about working with private landowners seemed very transferable to my interest in coastal restoration since so many coastlines are privately owned. One of the most powerful testimonies I heard was that engaging landowners in conservation incentivizes good stewardship by helping landowners realize they are part of a historic legacy, protecting something important, wild, and beautiful. I find that restoration has a similar potential to engage people by helping them realize they have agency to improve ecological sustainability, mental and physical health outcomes, and safety from hazards in their own communities. Other inspirations I took away from these sessions include ideas for tracking wildlife using eDNA, GPS, and trail cameras to map areas where restoration programs will be most impactful; the idea that restoration is important, but preventative care is key to reducing restoration practitioners’ workloads; that the Endangered Species Act is flexible; and that shared values are more important than shared perspectives.

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Gabrielle Ripa

Gabrielle Ripa is a Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech studying how to mitigate the impacts of non-native plants in riparian areas along the Chesapeake Bay. By measuring the soundscape of restored and unrestored streams using passive acoustic monitoring, she has incorporated a novel technology into measuring the effectiveness of restoration and informing future adaptive management strategies. During her first sampling season, she found that restored streams are often the victims of invasion by non-native plants which may be due to soil disturbance and the thinning of encroached vegetation during restoration. As someone who is passionate about ecosystem restoration and active in the HRWG and TWS as a whole, she was excited for this opportunity to attend the conference, which included presenting a research poster titled “Conducting a Streamside Sonata: Do the Interacting Effects of Restoration and Invasion Change the Way Urban Streams Sound?” As an LGBTQ+ professional in the field, she also welcomed the opportunity to increase the visibility of her community in the wildlife field.

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

New Board Members

The HRWG has recruited two new members of the Executive Board, who were recently appointed by the Chair.

Mason Thomas, Chair-elect



Mason Thomas received his Bachelor's in Natural Resources from Oregon State University in 2021, focusing in Fish and Wildlife Conservation. He has worked for

2.5 years with RES, an environmental consulting firm, in project management and ecology. He currently lives in Virginia and volunteers with the VA Dept. of Wildlife Resources. Mason's professional goals lie in land management, research, and outreach for the improvement of habitat connectivity for terrestrial wildlife. This is the basis for his joining the Habitat Restoration Working Group!

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

Sarah Kolarik, Member-at-Large

Sarah-jean Kolarik is a student at Clemson University in South Carolina, where she works on restoration projects involving stream health monitoring and Southeast grassland bird communities, and serves as a Student Chapter Officer,



building engagement and providing professional development experiences to undergraduate students interested in the field of wildlife. As a member of the working group, Sarah-jean seeks to improve engagement with early-career restoration professionals and student chapters, to serve the goals of TWS and the Habitat Restoration Working Group.

Working Group Updates

2024 Conference Recap

Contributed Articles

Member Spotlights

Submit an Article

Contact Us

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We want to share your stories of environmental restoration! If you have a story of the struggles and successes of restoration work, please contact Alexander Hoxie at alexander.hoxie@go.tarleton.edu. Articles are recommended to be 500-700 words in length and contain 1-3 images.

Contact Us

Email: twshabitatwg@gmail.com

Instagram: @twsh_hrwg

Facebook: Habitat Restoration and Conservation Working Group