

TWS NPWMWG

Newsletter



Our Mission

The Native Peoples Wildlife Management Working Group promotes improved relationships between state / provincial / federal wildlife managers and tribal wildlife managers through improved communications. The Working Group provides a forum for tribal and agency wildlife professionals to discuss wildlife management on reservations and aboriginal lands and to share viewpoints on proposed policies affecting wildlife management in Indian Country. The Working Group works to enhance wildlife management on and off reservations through joint activities.

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Updates from the Board

We love when our members get involved!

See below for NPWMWG pursuits, and please reach out if you'd like to contribute!

Native Student Professional Development Program

Each year, our Native Student Professional Development (NSPD) Program facilitates the advancement of Indigenous students via mentorship and financial support at the annual Wildlife Society conference. This year, we were able to secure external funding to support students attending the conference in Edmonton, including support from the USDA's Native American Research Assistantship Program. We are also looking for opportunities to expand this program to include other activities and conferences that occur during the remainder of the year. If you have ideas you'd like to share or if you would like to become more involved in the NSPD program, please contact NSPD Co-Directors [Remington Bracher](#) and [Dominick Harris](#).

Indigenous Wildlife Management Course Content

One of our current initiatives is the development of course content for adaptation in collegiate classrooms. Our goal is to develop a series of 15-minute mini-lessons that can be incorporated into existing courses, such as Wildlife Ecology & Management and Conservation Biology, to bring attention to Indigenous stewardship and wildlife management. In support of this initiative, we met with the National Association of University Fisheries and Wildlife Programs (NAUFWP) to gain feedback on our proposed lessons. Current lessons include "Models of Coexistence" and "Engaging with Tribal Nations". We are currently seeking more lessons and would love to include those being taught by our members. If you have course content you would like to share or are interested in developing a 15-minute mini-lesson for inclusion in this forthcoming portfolio, please contact NPWMWG Chair [Celina Gray](#) and Chair-elect [Avery Tilley](#), leaders on this project.

The Wildlife Society Monthly Webinar

The Wildlife Society hosts an online webinar each month exploring the hottest topics in wildlife management and research. The NPWMWG will be hosting the November webinar, and our plan is to provide the broader Wildlife Society community with an introduction to "Best Practices for Wildlife Professionals Engaging with Tribal Nations". This seminar will likely include an introduction to topics such as respectful communication with Indigenous peoples, gift giving, and more as well as case study examples. Please visit [this link](#) for more information on the webinar series and contact NPWMWG Chair-elect [Avery Tilley](#) or Board Member [Nadira Mitchell](#) if you're interested in contributing to the webinar.



Updates from the Board

The Wildlife Society Annual Conference

This year's annual conference will be held October 5-9th in Edmonton, Alberta, also known as amiskwaciwâskahikan (meaning beaver hills house in the Cree / Nehiyaw language). The Wildlife Society will be emphasizing Indigenous wildlife management and research at the conference, and our board has been encouraging these efforts. Signifying The Wildlife Society's considerations, this year's conference logo was designed by Nehiyaw artist and clothing designer [Dusty LeGrande](#). Registration for the conference is now open at twsconference.org. Our board intends to support student attendance via the Native Student Professional Development Program and host our annual members meeting at the conference; we hope to see you all there!



The Wildlife Society Position Statements

The Wildlife Society maintains Position Statements on a variety of topics ranging from lead ammunition to climate change to workforce diversity. All 25 current position statements can be found [online](#). These position statements are regularly reviewed and updated to maintain accuracy and integrity. Statements influencing Native Peoples are soon coming up for review, and our board intends to review and provide feedback during this process. If you're interested in reading and providing feedback on these statements, please contact NPWMWG Chair [Celina Gray](#). The Wildlife Society also maintains [Issue Statements](#) focused on more specific challenges such as Wolf Population Restoration and Feral Horse Management. If you're passionate about an issue and need guidance on how to develop an Issue Statement, you can contact policy@wildlife.org.

The Wildlife Professional

The Wildlife Professional is The Wildlife Society's bimonthly members' magazine, which can be read online through your [TWS member portal](#). The Wildlife Professional is starting a new initiative to highlight more research and management efforts completed by and in coalition with Indigenous peoples. If you feel your work is worthy of a broader audience, details on publishing in The Wildlife Professional can be found [here](#). You can also contact NPWMWG Newsletter Editor [Nate Wehr](#) for writing advice.



NSPD Application Open!

The Native Student Professional Development (NSPD) Program Now Accepting Applications

We are now welcoming student applications to join the 2025 NSPD cohort; please apply [here](#)! Students attending this year's annual conference in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada October 5–9th, 2025 are strongly encouraged.

Perks

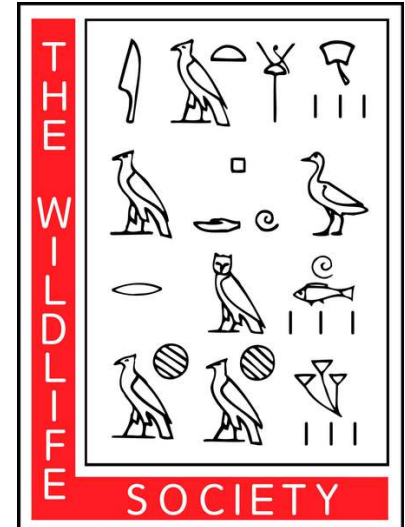
- Complimentary conference registration
- One-year memberships to The Wildlife Society and the Native Peoples Wildlife Management Working Group
- Conference mentorship
- Specialized workshops, networking events, a wildlife career panel discussion, and engagement with TWS leadership

Eligibility

- Must be a member of a Native American, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or Indigenous Tribe with political or legal recognition or be actively engaged with an Indigenous-led organization (e.g., Native Hawaiian Organizations or Alaska Native Corporations)
- Must be currently enrolled or within 6 months of graduation from an undergraduate or graduate program in a relevant academic discipline
- Must display a record of academic excellence and a strong interest in pursuing a career in wildlife management or conservation

Applications

- Interested students should submit their application (including a 500–750-word essay explaining why you would like to participate and how this program will benefit your career development and your most recent transcripts) via this [Google form](#)
- The deadline is August 1st, 2025
- Contact Remington Bracher at tw.s.npwg@gmail.com with any questions regarding your application
- Please keep in mind that the conference is in Canada, and travel to the conference location will require [relevant travel and identification documents](#)



NSPD Alumni Profiles

Marie Taylor



Marie Taylor is part of the Muscogee (Creek) Tribe and a 2024 NSPD Program alum. Marie is currently an undergraduate student at Utah Valley University studying Zoology. This summer, Marie will be completing a Biological Threats Internship with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. After earning a Bachelor's degree, Marie plans to pursue a Master's to gain further research acumen. Please look out for Marie during the poster session at this summer's Animal Behavior Society Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, July 8-12.

"The NSPD program was really beneficial to hear more about grad school; it made me think way more about grad school. Before, I was very unsure of the process, so it was super helpful to talk about it and even hear from the other students. It made the process seem like a less daunting thing." – Marie, reflecting on the NSPD program

Ryleigh John

Ryleigh John is from the Seneca Nation and a 2024 NSPD Program alum. Ryleigh recently completed her Bachelor's in Biology at the SUNY University at Albany and is currently serving as the Climate Change Program Manager for the Seneca Nation Environmental Protection Program. In this role, Ryleigh is developing a climate adaptation plan for the Seneca Nation corresponding to their Thanksgiving Address and assisting with a Northeast Climate Vulnerability Assessment in collaboration with the USDA and Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. This fall, Ryleigh will begin pursuing a Master's in Natural Resources, Wildlife Biology, and Conservation at the University of New Hampshire researching avian malaria.

"I am thrilled for my next steps, and have the Native Peoples Wildlife Management Working Group to thank for inspiring me to further my education." – Ryleigh, reflecting on the NSPD program.



NSPD Alumni Profiles

Keolohilani Lopes Jr



Keolohilani Lopes Jr is native Hawaiian / Kānaka Maoli and a 2024 NSPD program alum. Keo is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Natural Resources at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. This summer, Keo will be conducted field tests of the computer vision, eDNA sampler, and hyperspectral imaging systems employed via marine robotics at Lizard Island, Australia with the goal of identifying alien invasive macroalgae species in the coral reef ecosystem as part of "a summer at the beach with robots".

"The program has broadened my knowledge of Native American projects and regional differences between tribes. It gave me motivation to keep going in the field and advocate more for our voices to be heard at the table. I aim to do this by trying my best to end up working at a government agency to assist in the management of my native lands and waters." – Keo, reflecting on the NSPD program

Nadira Mitchell

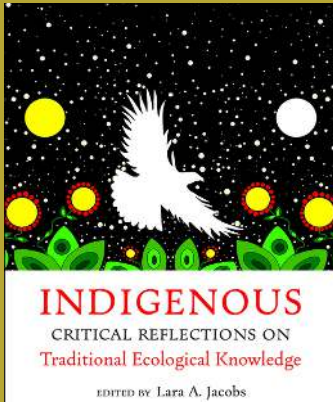
Nadira Mitchell is from the Navajo Nation and a 2024 NSPD program alum. Nadira is currently a Restoration Ecology Apprentice with Watershed Management Group, a water stewardship non-profit in Tucson, Arizona. Nadira assists with River Run Network restoration projects, Annual Bi-national Beaver Monitoring, and coordination with the Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative. Nadira is also helping initiate and coordinate a statewide beaver working group in Arizona and serves as a board member for the NPWMWG.

"My favorite part of the program was being able to navigate the conference as an Indigenous cohort. I loved the field trip and different networking opportunities. I was able to connect with mentors who were willing to give their time and energy to talk and give advice. This program has opened my eyes to different opportunities that TWS promotes. I definitely feel like I have a place in this field as a Native American professional." – Nadira, reflecting on the NSPD program



Native Peoples News

Indigenous Critical Reflections on Traditional Ecological Knowledge



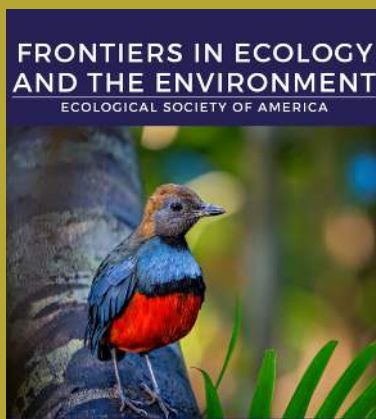
Published in March, this new book edited by Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizen Lara A. Jacobs was written to inspire and inform conscientious efforts to decolonize the consideration and application of Indigenous Knowledges outside of Native Communities. This book includes perspectives from more than 50 Indigenous storytellers, poets, and scholars from around the world, including NPWMWG Chair Celina Gray. This book is a powerful resource for tribal, state, and federal agencies as well as Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous allies. It can be purchased via [Oregon State University Press](#).

Dr. Patrick Zollner Receives Dreamer Award

[Dr. Patrick Zollner](#), Professor of Quantitative Ecology in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Purdue University, was recently honored with Purdue University's Martin Luther King Jr. Dreamer Award. This award is presented to individuals representing MLK's ideals of service and diversity within the community. Dr. Zollner was well-deserving of the award as he helped found the [Sloan Indigenous Graduate Partnership](#) and has often collaborated with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission ([GLIFWC](#)).



Centering Indigenous Knowledges in Ecology and Beyond



The Ecological Society of America ([ESA](#)) conference was hosted in Mohawk and Haudenosaunee territories in Montreal, Québec in 2022. During that conference, Indigenous ecologists convened to address the challenges facing consideration and application of Indigenous Knowledge and options for overcoming barriers established by settler-colonial institutions. In this [recently published manuscript](#), those Indigenous scholars led by Arizona State University Senior Global Futures Scientist Joseph Grazing Wolf (Lakota / Amazigh / Nubian) outline their consensus on four key themes underlying transformative pathways in this space.



Riparian Assessment Training

Creeks and Communities:

A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Stewardship



[Nevada Creeks and Communities](#) is an interagency program designed to improve riparian management education. The Creeks and Communities team teaches workshops, writes articles, and works directly with landowners, land users, interest groups, and agencies. For more than 20 years, the Creeks and Communities Team has hosted formal classes on riparian stewardship.

This summer, the Creeks and Communities team is hosting workshops on Riparian Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) Assessments. These workshops cover common terms, definitions, and methods to identify opportunities for making positive changes for reasonable investments, enhancing local management, and solving problems by people most affected. Integrated Riparian Management uses PFC assessment to prioritize needs for adaptive management with monitoring for riparian objectives and strategies.

All workshops are free! Indigenous agency and community members, landowners, federal, state, and local agency personnel, and commercial industry groups are encouraged to attend. For workshop reservations or questions: contact Sherman Swanson (775-233-6221; swanson@unr.edu) with your name, affiliation, address, phone, e-mail, and interest, discipline, role, or area of expertise. You are welcome to attend only the parts of the class you need or want (1-5 days). After requesting a reservation, a location-specific agenda and timeline will be provided.

Workshops covering PFC Assessment for Integrated Riparian and Grazing Management will be held:

- June 23-27 at the Pioche, Nevada Fire Hall (the first building off Hwy 93 west on Airport Rd.)
- July 21-25 at the Feather River Land Trust Sierra Valley Preserve Nature Center, 495 Beckwourth Calpine Road, California
- August 18-22 at the Eureka, Nevada Opera House

Coaching field sessions are also available for small groups such as interdisciplinary or collaborative teams. Sherman Swanson (775-233-6221; swanson@unr.edu).



University of Nevada, Reno

Standing Rock Black-footed Ferrets

Standing Rock Tribal Biologists Photograph Black-footed Ferret Far from Reintroduction Area

Michael Gutzmer, Kurt Tooley, Gary Goodrich

New Century Environmental Biologists employed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe



On May 12, 2025, Michael Gutzmer, Kurt Tooley and Gary Goodrich, New Century Environmental biologists employed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, documented the most endangered mammal in North America, the black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

The black-footed ferret photographed was observed by Tooley ducking into a prairie dog burrow, and photographed after a painstaking and nerve-wracking wait by Gutzmer only after it reemerged. Only one photograph was permitted by the elusive animal, which taken at 0645 MDT, in broad daylight—which is very rare, as black-footed ferrets are highly nocturnal and spend much of their lives underground. The photograph is crucial evidence, as the sighting would only be hearsay without it.

Black-footed ferrets are small to medium-sized carnivores related to weasels. Female black-footed ferrets can weigh up to almost two pounds (~850 grams). The fur of black-footed ferrets is yellowish buff with lighter underparts. The forehead, muzzle and throat are white, and the feet are black (of course). A black mask frames the eyes and is well defined in young black-footed ferrets. The black-footed ferret is the only ferret species native to the Americas, and there are no recognized subspecies.

The black-footed ferret was listed as endangered in 1967 and considered extinct in the wild by 1987. However, a wild population of black-footed ferrets was discovered in Meeteetse, Wyoming in 1988. This last known population was captured and bred in captivity in an effort to save the species.

Standing Rock Black-footed Ferrets

Currently, known ferret populations exist only at reintroduction sites, where introduced populations remain small, fragmented, and intensively managed. Only a few introduced populations produce wild-born adults. In collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Standing Rock Indian Tribe Game & Fish Department released 75 captive-bred black-footed ferrets in the western part of the reservation during 2021-2023. Subsequent monitoring efforts have not revealed any black-footed ferrets in the reintroduction area.

The black-footed ferret documented by Gutzmer, Tooley, and Goodrich was photographed 43 miles from the tribal reintroduction area in an area where black-footed ferret presence has been continuously reported by tribal members since the early 1980s (prior to any reintroduction efforts like those on the Standing Rock or nearby Cheyenne River reservations). This suggests relict populations of black-footed ferrets on Standing Rock that are not products of the reintroduction effort. The identification of a relict population of black-footed ferrets would be a crucial discovery that could save the reintroduction effort. Because the black-footed ferret breeding program was founded on very few individuals, black-footed ferrets produced in the breeding program have lost approximately 90% of the genetic diversity of the wild population prior to becoming endangered. Any infusion of additional genetic diversity into the captive breeding population would broaden the black-footed ferret genome, and may save the species.

Based on behavioral differences observed in black-footed ferrets born in captivity and in the wild, the black-footed ferret documented by the NCE / Standing Rock team is very likely wild-born, and may be part of a relict population. Black-footed ferrets born in captivity and released into the wild are not hard to photograph and are not generally shy and elusive when observed. Gutzmer, along with the late Tom Murphy, were credited with the initial identification of black-footed ferrets on Standing Rock in 2012, near the Grand River, South Dakota. The black-footed ferrets observed and photographed by Gutzmer in 2012—after nearby black-footed ferret releases on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation—behaved completely differently than the black-footed ferret observed in 2025. In 2012, the black-footed ferrets observed were not shy and posed for many photographs, some just a few feet from the truck occupied by Gutzmer and Murphy. Wild-born black-footed ferrets, on the other hand, are very shy, elusive, and hard to photograph. During 2012-2025, the NCE / Standing Rock team has made many efforts to detect black-footed ferrets on the Standing Rock Reservation, with results suggesting a widespread, but very elusive presence of black-footed ferrets on the Reservation in both South and North Dakota. However, conclusive proof of black-footed ferret presence was not previously secured.

In 2023, a grant request for the development of a noninvasive genetic survey method for black-footed ferrets written by Tooley was funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. If DNA is obtained for the black-footed ferrets observed in 2025, a relict population of black footed ferrets could be confirmed, significantly improving the prospects for preserving black-footed ferrets in North America



Lake Superior Moose and Deer

Moose and Deer Mortality under Chippewa Subsistence Harvest Management

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The Anishinaabe people of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa have practiced subsistence harvest of moose (mooz; *Alces alces*) and white-tailed deer (waawaashkeshi; *Odocoileus virginianus*) since time immemorial. However, recent moose population declines and increasing deer numbers on Anishinaabe homelands led the Grand Portage Band to apply modern tools to their seventh-generation planning approach to environmental stewardship of these species.

Located at the tip of the Arrowhead Region in northeastern Minnesota, the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa is a federally recognized sovereign nation. In 1854, the Lake Superior Chippewa signed a treaty ceding their lands to the United States. Under the 1854 Treaty, members of the Grand Portage, Fond du Lac, and Bois Forte Bands of Lake Superior Chippewa can exercise their usufructuary rights to hunt, fish, and gather throughout the 1854 Ceded Territory from Grand Portage to Moose Lake to Crane Lake. Within the Grand Portage Indian Reservation, harvest of natural resources, such as wildlife, fish, timber, and wild rice (manoomin; *Zizania palustris*), is managed by the elected Tribal Council.



Lake Superior Moose and Deer

Since 2010, the Grand Portage Band has been deploying GPS collars on the reservation's moose, with deer monitoring efforts beginning in 2016. Among the tribe's primary objectives was an assessment of mortality sources and survival rates of moose and deer on the reservation. In a [recent study](#), biologists for the Grand Portage Band collaborated with researchers from Michigan State University and SUNY ESF to analyze this data.

Similarly to other systems, moose and deer mortality rates peaked in late winter in response to annual extremes in weather—as supported by the correlation between deer mortality and winter severity—which deplete ungulate energy reserves and favor predators. A second mortality peak was observed for both species during fall, which would typically correspond to annual hunter harvest. However, this fall mortality peak was observed even when harvest mortalities were excluded from models.



In consideration of the non-harvest mortalities causing these fall mortality peaks, the researchers attributed fall mortality risk of deer to predation by gray wolves (*ma'iingan*; *Canis lupus*) during fall migrations. The reason for more frequent fall moose mortality was less clear, but the researchers suggest this peak was likely associated with a second period of moose susceptibility to parasites, seasonal malnutrition, and predation due to the increased heat stress Minnesota moose are experiencing under climate change.



The Native Peoples Wildlife Management Working Group

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Interested in joining the working group?

Check out our [TWS webpage](#) for more information including resources for advancing Native Peoples in wildlife management and archived news.

To formally join the NPWMWG, please visit the TWS login website [here](#) and select the "Add Organization Unit Membership" under the "Membership" tab. To be eligible, you must be a current member of The Wildlife Society, but it is not required to be affiliated with a Tribe to participate. The NPWMWG waives membership fees for students! If you have any questions concerning working group dues or how to join, contact the membership coordinator at (301) 897-9770 or membership@wildlife.org

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Newsletter Submissions

Are you interested in sharing your efforts supporting Native Peoples in the wildlife field? We want to know what is going on where you are! As an international working group, it is difficult to keep up on all the fantastic things members in other parts of the globe are accomplishing. Please help us keep our working group members informed on issues and announcements pertinent to Indigenous wildlife management!

Please feel free to submit any of the following for inclusion in the newsletter:

- Job and internship openings - Scholarship opportunities
- Research and management on Indigenous lands
- Policy regarding wildlife management as it pertains to tribes
- TWS Conference photos or stories - Any other conference details
- Current news pertaining to Indigenous rights / resources
- Any other announcements / information you'd like share with your tribal wildlife management colleagues

Please submit content to Newsletter Editor, [Nate Wehr](#).