

# The Wildlife Society

## SOUTHEASTERN SECTION



SEPTEMBER 2025 VOLUME 67, NUMBER 3  
KATHERINE EDWARDS, EDITOR

### PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Members,

As the days grow shorter, fall is finally upon us. Here in east-central Mississippi, fall arrived right on time, with temperatures dropping from the mid-to high 90s to the low to mid-80s within a couple of days of the official date. I find fall to be the best season, and with its arrival, I'm rejuvenated to get outside and observe the shifting patterns in wildlife. Fall bird migration is in full swing, although some have already finished their southern journey (e.g., the purple martin, one of my favorite birds). Monarch butterflies are on the move. A few weeks ago, I was fortunate to watch multiple individuals cross Lake Ontario, and after a much-needed vacation, made it back to Mississippi where their numbers were starting to peak. Like many people, I get stuck in a groove of work, travel, and life behind a computer rather than enjoying the great outdoors. These big transitions remind me of our intricate connections within our ecosystems and the importance of our shared commitment to conservation. Simply put, getting out and being in nature motivates me to do more. I encourage you to take a moment to enjoy these seasonal wonders.

### Past Events

This past June, we hosted our third Wildlife and Forestry Field Techniques Course at the Jones Center at Ichauway. This immersive experience helps students build essential field skills, and this year, we had 11 outstanding students from Western Kentucky University, Flagler College, Hendrix College, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, University of South Alabama, Auburn University, Eastern Kentucky

University, Cleveland State Community College, North Carolina State University, Florida State University, and Catawba College.

For 15 days, students endured long days with at least three labs/modules each day focusing on wildlife techniques (e.g., capture and identification), wildlife habitat management, and tools and technology. Below is a photo of this year's students after they completed a prescribed burn. In our next newsletter, I will include a more detailed summary of our topics and student and instructor perspectives of this event.



### In This Issue

<b>President's Address</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SE Section Rep Report</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Committee Reports</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>State Reports</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Nominations</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Meetings of Interest</b>	<b>26</b>

# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Personally and professionally, this field course is among my favorite things that I get to do each year. I also get to work alongside **Dr. Mike Conner**, who was recently elected to be the next Vice President of The Wildlife Society (Congratulations!). This course would be nearly impossible to run without the coordination and instruction by Dr. Conner. In total, it takes at least 50 people, including past and current SETWS leadership, invited guests, and (mostly) Jones Center staff to host this course.

Beyond instruction and logistics, there is the financial component. Like any TWS event, our guest instructors volunteer their time – some for a day, others for a full week. Over the past several years, SETWS has secured ~\$10,000 in grants to cover equipment costs and other miscellaneous expenses. Yet, one of the bigger challenges is that many students are unable to use university scholarships for summer credits. This is where our wildlife community has really stepped up. To date, Georgia DNR, and the Kentucky, Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama State Chapters of TWS have supported students with scholarships. Your commitment to our future wildlife professionals is what keeps this program thriving, and it speaks volumes to your investment in our next generation.

## Upcoming Events

We are looking forward to two important events this season. The Wildlife Society will hold its annual meeting on October 5-8 in Edmonton, Alberta. This annual conference is a tradition that brings members together to share science, foster collaboration, and celebrate our achievements.

Shortly after, the 79th Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) will be held October 26-29 in Biloxi, Mississippi, hosted by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. This meeting provides a valuable opportunity for professionals to share insights, discuss current challenges, and explore new strategies for wildlife management. The SETWS Members' Meeting will take place Tuesday, October 28th from 8:00-10:00 AM CT. For those who plan to attend in person, keep an eye on the Whova app for our room assignment. For SETWS members planning to participate remotely, we will email a Microsoft Teams invite a few days before our meeting.

I encourage all members to participate, whether in person or virtually. These meetings are not only a chance to learn and network but also to strengthen the bonds that unite our wildlife community.

## Board Elections and Honoring Service

As we approach the end of the year, it's time to recognize the dedication of those who volunteer their time to serve SETWS. First, **Kelly Douglass** concludes her term as Past President, and **Dr. Vanessa Lane** as Secretary/Treasurer. Kelly has been a role model to me and with incredible help and support from past and current SETWS leadership, we've grown the Section through benefits to our membership and with increased financial security. Vanessa's efforts have been incredible over the past 2 years. She has modernized the management of SETWS's finances and brought us to the point that a split Secretary-Treasurer role might not be possible for our foreseeable future, likely to result in our need to create

# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

a new officer position. Behind the scenes, there's a constant theme – **Dr. Katie Edwards'** commitment to SETWS is incredible. Katie manages the newsletter and website, neither of which is easy. It's nearly impossible to get people to submit content, let alone on time (sorry Katie!). Words cannot express our gratitude to Katie for her efforts. She's been a standing member of SETWS's leadership team for longer than anyone in a board or committee role, and we all owe her a big thank you for her efforts.

There's a long list of things I wanted to accomplish or wrap up during my term, which I will carry over into 2026 and 2027 as I transition into the Past President position. With that change, congratulations to **Dr. Rachael Urbanek** for her upcoming transition into the role of SETWS President! Our new Secretary/Treasurer and President-Elect are yet to be determined, but I trust we'll have a smooth transition. Overall, the hard work and commitment of the SETWS Officers, Committee Chairs, and Committee members have been instrumental in advancing our mission. Please join me at our Member's Meeting in expressing our sincere gratitude for their service and hear about the accomplishments they have made during the past year.

Elections are happening right now, and I encourage you to cast a vote and support our new officers! Whether by voting or considering a leadership role, your participation ensures the ongoing vitality and success of SETWS.

## Looking Ahead

Thank you for your ongoing support, dedication, and commitment to conservation in the Southeast. This past year has been challenging, and your work is more important now than ever. I look forward to seeing many of you soon, and as always, please reach out with your ideas on how we can strengthen this Section and better serve our membership.

Warmest regards,

***Dan Greene, President***  
***Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society***



Marc Epstein/USFWS



# SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

## SOUTHEASTERN SECTION REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

I am very worried about all my friends and colleagues who work for the federal government. I worry about the gutting of regulations, and threats of selling public lands. I worry about lack of resources to manage and protect our wildlife. However, I am always encouraged to see the compassionate and caring community that we have developed in TWS at all levels. This engagement of wildlife professionals gives me hope. Thank you all for everything you do for wildlife, natural resources and the profession.

At the Spring Council Meeting the following priorities were approved, 1) support funding for wildlife professionals to continue work in conservation, 2) promote the role of science and expertise of wildlife professionals in decision making and policy, and 3) advocate for legislation important for conserving and protecting biological diversity. TWS is committed to our shared core values.

I am excited for the upcoming TWS meeting in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada October 5-8 and the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conference in Biloxi, Mississippi, October 26-29. I hope I can connect with many of you soon. On a personal note, I have been to Edmonton one other time and that was when we were part of the translocation of elk from Elk Island National Park to Tennessee. This amazing park is very close to the conference venue. I was recently told it is the 25th anniversary of the first elk release in Tennessee. Time seems to have no meaning anymore (easier than admitting I am that old). But in a couple of weeks, I will be visiting the elk range to hear the haunting bugles of elk that have been returned to our area. I hope you will be able to take some time and enjoy this upcoming fall season as well.

***Lisa Muller, Southeastern Section Representative to TWS Council***



Richard Smith/FLICKR CC BY 2.0

# COMMITTEE REPORTS

## CONSERVATION ACCESS, RELEVANCY, AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Conservation Access, Relevancy and Engagement (C.A.R.E.) Committee has a new look! The committee has updated the logo to a more polished look that still pays homage to the conservation work we all care about despite our different disciplines. Additionally, the committee is working diligently to plan for the 2025 SEAFWA Annual Conference in Biloxi, Mississippi this year. Applications closed on August 29th with over 50 applicants. This year the committee was able to sponsor 15 students from across 9 state and territories (AL, GA, KY, LA, NC, SC, OK, TX, USVI) in the Southeastern US to join our fellowship. These fellows are 5 undergrad, 8 graduates (5 master's and 3 PhD students) and 2 recent graduates that represent some of the best and smartest individuals and we are ready to show them off!

To get a head start, there will be a virtual orientation on October 17th which will focus on some of these skills including professionalism and an introduction to elevator speeches. We will be hosting a student workshop for the students selected for the C.A.R.E. fellowship and a professional workshop where everyone at the conference is welcome to attend. The student workshop helps students to gain and develop skills related to networking, C.V. and cover letter writing, applying to internships and jobs, in addition to other professional skills relevant to the conservation field. We will also visit Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge as a field trip mentoring activity to see how federal land is managed locally and the collaboration between state and federal partners.

The professional workshop will focus on "Developing Workforces for Tomorrow's Conservation Leaders". The workshop is on October 27th and is open to all. We look forward to seeing you all there! Visit the [SEAFWA website](#) to see the full agenda.



To keep up to date on C.A.R.E. news, jobs, and events throughout the Southeast, please follow us on social media. You can find us on Instagram, [LinkedIn](#), and [Linktree](#).

**Amaad Blades**  
[amaad.blades@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:amaad.blades@dnr.ga.gov)

## STUDENT AWARDS COMMITTEE

### Student Poster/Presentation Judges Needed

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. We are requesting help for judging the student presentations and posters in the Wildlife Technical Sessions at the SEAFWA Conference being held in Biloxi, Mississippi, in a few weeks. You are not required to judge every presentation and poster, only the sessions you would like to attend. In order to be a judge, you must be a wildlife professional and not a student. If you are willing to help, please contact **Andy Madison** at [amadison@uu.edu](mailto:amadison@uu.edu).

**Andy Madison**, [amadison@uu.edu](mailto:amadison@uu.edu)

# STATE REPORTS

## ALABAMA



### Alabama Chapter TWS

On Thursday, July 10th, the ACTWS Membership Committee hosted its fourth pop-up social at the Back Forty Beer Company in Huntsville, AL. We had approximately 35 attendees from various organizations, including: NASA SERVIR, Alabama Power, USFS, Alabama A&M University (AAMU), Athens State University, University of Alabama Huntsville (UAH), the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), and more! The social provided a casual networking opportunity for natural resource professionals, students, and retirees. Attendees gained insight into the chapter's activities and the process for becoming a member. They also had the opportunity to applaud the 2025 ACTWS Biologist of the Year awardee, **Jud Easterwood**.

Jud began his career with ADCNR in 2006 as a Conservation Enforcement Officer. He now serves as the District 1 supervisory biologist and is responsible for managing most of the north Alabama region. In this role, Jud ensures that eight Wildlife Management Areas and three

shooting ranges run as well as they can. Jud also serves on the state turkey committee and is involved with establishing the framework responsible for ensuring that this valuable resource is here for future generations to enjoy. He has played an important part in the state's continued monitoring of chronic wasting disease. Jud also represents the Alabama Department of Natural Resources - Wildlife Section, as the alligator point of contact for north Alabama and has served as a professional source of information for the public, providing technical assistance to many landowners. Finally, Jud's work as a dedicated conservation officer has reflected his commitment to protecting hunting opportunities and the natural resources of this state for others to enjoy. Please join us in congratulating Jud on this accomplishment!



Members of the ACTWS gather at the Back Forty Beer Company in Huntsville, AL for a pop-up social.



**Jud Easterwood**, biologist at ADCNR, was awarded a 2025 Biologist of the Year award. Jud is pictured receiving the award with **Allison Cochran**, ACTWS member and past president, and **Jeff Baker**, ACTWS Secretary and Treasurer.



# STATE REPORTS

Next on the pop-up social tour was Montgomery, AL. On August 20th, members of ACTWS met at Montgomery Whitewater to catch-up with familiar faces and meet new ones. At this meeting, we were happy to present **Ray Metzler** with the 2025 Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society Lifetime Achievement Award. Ray's contributions to conservation have been demonstrated on many levels including his boots on the ground "lead by example" efforts, through his mentorship and leadership, and through his ability to develop lasting partnerships. During his career, Ray has been instrumental in implementing and contributing to several programs that have benefited hunters and others in the state including substantial increases in hunter safety, shooting opportunities, and investing in youth through initiating Alabama's archery range program. Ray has an ability to convey the importance of conservation both in written and spoken word and his involvement with conservation organizations and partners in Alabama has been effective at realizing real, lasting conservation of Alabama's natural resources, contributing to protecting some of Alabama's most imperiled and unique habitats. Finally, Ray's leadership and commitment to the ACTWS has spanned his entire career serving the chapter at all levels.



**Ray Metzler** received the 2025 Alabama Chapter TWS Lifetime Achievement Award.



**Ray Metzler** receives the 2025 Alabama Chapter of the Wildlife Society Lifetime Achievement Award from ACTWS president, **Mercedes Maddox**.

## TIPS & RESOURCES FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEE TERMINATIONS

The Wildlife Society stands with our members and colleagues affected by recent federal workforce reductions. We recognize the critical role federal employees play in wildlife conservation and understand the challenges these changes bring. TWS is committed to advocating for you and providing resources to support your professional and personal well-being during this time. Below, you'll find information on membership extensions, career opportunities, policy engagement and more.

<https://wildlife.org/federal-resources/>

# STATE REPORTS

We would also like to recognize **Michelle Colbert** who received the 2025 Jay N. “Ding” Darling Memorial Award for Wildlife Stewardship through Art for the art she created to benefit and commemorate ongoing conservation efforts occurring on the Conecuh National Forest (CNF), in south-central Alabama. One artwork piece Michelle created (left) was used to educate about Eastern Indigo Snake (EIS) reintroduction efforts and to promote the 2024 EIS Festival at CNF. The other artwork that Michelle created (right) was used to commemorate the successful recovery efforts of red-cockaded woodpecker populations at the CNF and Blackwater State Forest (BSF). This piece of art was a special surprise for attendees at BSF in 2024 where this conservation feat was celebrated. We congratulate Michelle for receiving this award and her incredible contributions to conservation in Alabama.



This artwork by **Michelle Colbert**, titled “Emperor of the Forest”, was used to educate about the Eastern Indigo Snake (EIS) at the 2024 EIS Festival at the Conecuh National Forest.



This artwork by **Michelle Colbert**, titled “Recovery Goal”, was used to commemorate successful recovery efforts of red-cockaded woodpecker populations at the Conecuh National Forest and Blackwater State Forest.

We were happy to sponsor two students this year to attend the SETWS Wildlife and Forestry Field Techniques Course at the Jones Center at Ichauway that occurred from June 6-20, 2025. One of these students, **Kayla Beitzel**, a graduate student at the University of South Alabama, Department of Biology, reflects on some of her favorite experiences and learning moments:

1.) My favorite experience during the course was definitely when we went looking for owls at night. **Dr. Dan Greene** told us that he had never heard as many owls as he did that night. It was so cool being able to basically call out to these owls with a speaker and see how they interacted. What was even better was trying to catch them with the spotlight!



# STATE REPORTS

2.) One activity that I was surprised that I enjoyed was radio telemetry. The graduate assistant, **Jordan Baron**, did an amazing job showing our class how to use radio telemetry to locate quail eggs. It was really rewarding to be able to follow the signal and find the trackers he put down as practice for us. A funny situation though, I am colorblind and almost missed the flags he placed! This one definitely was more fun and captivating than I thought it would be.

3.) This course definitely did prepare me for a career in conservation and natural resources. Coming from a more coastal background, this class gave me a lot more terrestrial knowledge. It also allowed me to find what research and work I found to be the most interesting to dive into in my own career or even on a PhD track.

4.) I would tell other students thinking about taking this course that they would not regret it. It is definitely a lot of hard work as well as super long days and nights. However, this was the best class and research experience I had ever received. It allowed me to see a wide range of possibilities in this field of work, and it also opened a door for me to meet other students and professionals in my field. This class really showed me that this is a field that I love and that I want to remain in for my future career.

In other chapter news, we are excited to announce that the Alabama Chapter and the Georgia Chapter of The Wildlife Society will be hosting a joint Annual Conference. The conference will take place at the Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City, AL on February 18-20, 2026. More details about the conference will be available soon but please mark your calendars!

Photos (right): SETWS Field Course at the Jones Center at Ichauway.



# STATE REPORTS

## Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

During the 2024-2025 chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance season, which occurred from July 1st to June 30th, ADCNR confirmed 7 additional detections of CWD, with six detections being in Lauderdale County where all positive cases have previously been. However, there was one detection this past season in Colbert County, a 2.5-year-old buck, which was the first detection in this county and expanded our current CWD management zone (CMZ) to include Franklin County. Increased sampling efforts around the Colbert County positive yielded no additional detections during the season. Currently, ADCNR is gearing up for another deer season, with increased surveillance goals in Franklin County, which is now part of the CMZ. In this management zone, we will hold at least three mandatory weekends for hunters to submit their harvests for CWD testing. More information is available at [www.outdooralabama.com/CWD-Info](http://www.outdooralabama.com/CWD-Info).

## Auburn University

The National Wild Pig Task Force is hosting a Wild Pig conference at the Auburn College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment on April 20-22, 2026. The goal of the conference is to expand knowledge toward the goal of reducing and eventually eradicating free-ranging populations of wild pigs in North America. The conference will take place at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Montgomery, AL, USA. Registration will be available soon at [cfwe.auburn.edu/iwpc](http://cfwe.auburn.edu/iwpc).

**Olivia Sciandra**  
**SE Section Chapter Representative**  
[olivia.sciandra@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:olivia.sciandra@dcnr.alabama.gov)

## Alabama Bat Working Group

The 2025 Alabama Bat Working Group Bat Blitz was held on May 12-14. The blitz was headquartered in Scottsboro with surveys performed in Jackson and Marshall counties on public and private conservation lands. Team leaders and volunteers with government agency, academia, and private groups converged to mist net 31 sites over 3 nights. In total, 282 bats were captured, species including Eastern red bat, Big brown bat, Silver-haired bat, Evening bat, Gray bat, and Seminole bat. The most notable capture was an Eastern small-footed myotis at Cathedral Caverns State Park. This is the second individual of that species recorded in the state, with the first being captured during last year's blitz in the same general area. The event was overall a success and the ABWG is working now to plan next year's blitz.



[Virginia State Parks/FlickR](#)



# STATE REPORTS

## ARKANSAS



### Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

During the Wildlife Management Division's annual meeting these employees were recognized for their efforts: **Marcus Asher** received the Wildlife Management Division's employee of the year award. Marcus is the area biologist for Shirey Bay Rainey Brake, William E Brewer Scatter Creek and Robert L Hankins Mud Creek WMAs. **Jeffrey Cothren** was awarded the George H. Dunklin Jr Arkansas Waterfowl and Wetland Management Award. **Cameron Tatum** was awarded the National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative State Fire Bird Award. **Jason Mitchell, Mark Hooks, Jake Wisenhunt, Levi Rengstorf and Allen Cathey** were given Special Recognition Awards for their extra efforts on leading bear den visits during the 2025 bear den visit cycle. **Michey Cupples** received a special recognition award for his volunteer efforts to assist multiple divisions and Region 3 activities.

**Brendan Hood** is the new farm bill biologist working out of the Monticello Regional Office. He will be covering Drew, Lincoln and Chicot counties working with private landowners enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Easement and Working Lands for Wildlife farm bill programs alongside our Natural Resource Conservation Service partners. Brendan just graduated from the 5 Oaks Graduate Waterfowl Program in May 2025. **Bradyn Snow** is the new Biological Technician for Sheffield Nelson Dagmar WMA. Bradyn is a 2001 graduate of Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. **Colton Caples** is the

new WMD Region 3 Habitat Biologist. He is a graduate of the U of A at Monticello Forestry Program and is an Arkansas Registered Forester. Prior to joining AGFC he was a procurement forester in the private sector.

**Blake Sasse, [blake.sasse@agfc.ar.gov](mailto:blake.sasse@agfc.ar.gov)**

## FLORIDA

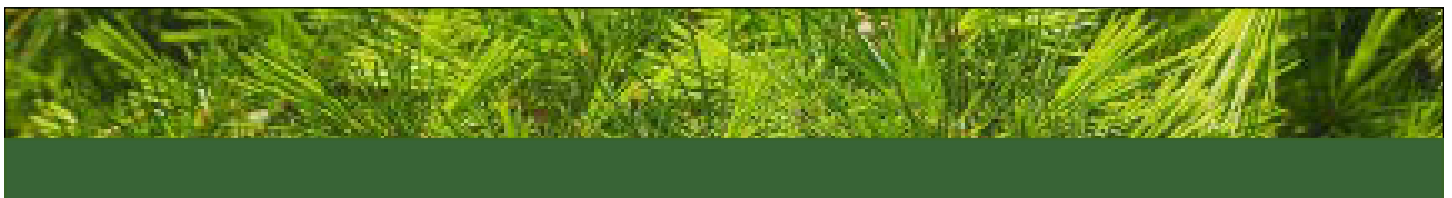


NO NEWS REPORTED

## GEORGIA



NO NEWS REPORTED





# STATE REPORTS

## KENTUCKY



### Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) Student Chapter

**Dr. David Brown** and **Dr. Luke Dodd**, plus students from the ECU Chapter of The Wildlife Society, developed and administered a high school wildlife competition as part of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Career and Leadership Development Event held at the Kentucky State Fair (August 2025). Future Farmers of America (FFA) Career and Leadership Development Events are a series of competitions designed to challenge FFA members in grades 7-12 to develop critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork, and communication skills, while also fostering ethical competition and individual achievement.



EKU faculty members **David Brown** and **Luke Dodd**, and TWS Student Chapter members **Faith LeGrand** and **Ava Hagan** preparing for the high school wildlife competition as part of the FFA Career and Leadership Development Event held at the Kentucky State Fair (August 2025).

These events help students build skills for future careers in agriculture and related fields. Approximately 70 high school students and faculty coaches representing 16 schools participated in the 2025 wildlife competition. One aspect of the wildlife competition involved presenting students with specimens to identify. This portion of the event was supported by contributions from EKU's natural history collections (fish, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects) and plant specimens from EKU's Herbarium.



The Eastern Kentucky University Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. They hosted an event at EKU's Maywoods lodge for alumni and current student members. Pictured are **David Brown** (faculty advisor), **Andy McQueen** (Vice-President), **Jaron Cooper** (President), **Raeyln Willman** (Public Relations), and **Avery Krahwinkel** (Treasurer).

# STATE REPORTS

## Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife (KDFWR)

To learn more about the northern pine snake and the least weasel, the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves and the KDFWR are collaborating on a project that uses trail cameras to search for both species. Both projects use 16-foot plywood drift fences with bucket traps placed on each end. Each bucket trap has a hole cut in the side for animals to enter and exit, and a camera mounted inside to capture the image of any animal that enters.



Visitors at the Salato Wildlife Education Center, located KDFWR's main campus, can climb atop a tree stand or hide inside a waterfowl blind as they explore the new Healthy Hunting Grounds exhibit. The new exhibit celebrates the many ways in which hunting supports Kentucky's natural resources, offers healthy food sources and boosts the economy. The exhibit tells the story of hunting in Kentucky, from the earliest traditions to

the role hunters play in managing wildlife today. The exhibit consists of immersive activities for kids, historical memorabilia, video clips and interactive displays. The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a nonprofit organization, provided the funding to make the exhibit possible.

Once widely distributed throughout the Commonwealth, current records of the Eastern hellbender are known primarily from streams in eastern and central Kentucky. It is unknown if these populations are reproducing. Conservation efforts for the species within the state include instream surveys, monitoring artificial nesting structures and rearing young hellbender from eggs collected in Kentucky. Since 2022, 100 juvenile hellbenders have been released back into streams where eggs were collected, with an additional 250-300 set for release over the next two years [information from KDFWR's magazine *Kentucky Afield*].



## LOUISIANA

NO NEWS REPORTED

## MARYLAND/DELAWARE

NO NEWS REPORTED





# STATE REPORTS

## MISSISSIPPI

### Mississippi Chapter TWS

The Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society hosted its annual meeting on August 28-29 at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, located near Hattiesburg. More than 60 participants from federal, state, university, and non-governmental organizations, as well as private conservation-related entities, were in attendance for the meeting which included research presentations and posters, a business meeting, networking time, and a field trip to see collaborative restoration work for gopher tortoises being conducted by The Nature Conservancy and Camp Shelby. Mississippi State University graduate student **Haley Hughes** (**Brian Davis**, advisor) won best presentation, *Native Bee Response to Mechanical and Hydrologic Manipulations and Red Imported Fire Ants in Seasonal Wetlands*. MSU graduate student **Madalyn Reeks** (**Dana Morin**, advisor) won best poster for her work entitled, *Wildlife and the Environment Using the Eastern Wild Turkey*.

Photos: MS TWS Secretary/Treasurer **Mel Boudreau** (right), presented awards to **Haley Hughes** (top photo) and **Madalyn Reeks** (middle photo) for best presentation and poster, respectively, at the Mississippi Chapter Annual Meeting.





# STATE REPORTS

**Leslie Burger**, Associate Teaching Professor and Southeastern Section Representative for the Mississippi Chapter, was recognized for her receipt of the 2025 TWS Excellence in Wildlife Education award. The award will be presented at the upcoming TWS national meeting in Edmonton. The TWS news release is here: [Leslie Burger wins 2025 TWS education award - The Wildlife Society](#)

## Mississippi State University

Mississippi State University celebrated the opening of a new bat house on August 19, a conservation effort led by the MSU chapter of The Wildlife Society aimed at changing public perception of

one of nature's most misunderstood animals. The new construction provides a sustainable habitat for bats already living on campus. Students applied for and won \$26,000 from the university's Green Fund, which supports student-led sustainability initiatives on campus. Along with support from the MSU Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, MSU College of Forest Resources, Mississippi Bat Working Group, MSU Student Association and others, they raised more than \$37,000 over a two-year period to bring their idea to life.

**Leslie Burger**, [leslie.burger@msstate.edu](mailto:leslie.burger@msstate.edu)



The Mississippi State University Student Chapter celebrated the opening of a new bat house on campus.

# STATE REPORTS

## NORTH CAROLINA



### North Carolina Chapter TWS

In Memoriam: **Danny Ray** (Written by **James Tomberlin**; Edited by **Colleen Olfenbittel**)

Longtime TWS member **Daniel “Danny” Ray**, CWB®, died on July 27, 2025, at age 63 following a period of declining health due to cancer. Danny was a dedicated professional wearing a variety of hats with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission across the state over his 30+ year career, starting out as a small mammal surveys biologist and most recently as the District 8 wildlife biologist until his retirement in December of 2023. If you had the good fortune of knowing Danny or the opportunity to work with him, it was very evident he

was passionate about the conservation of our wildlife resources, considered it a privilege to serve, loved his job, and cared for his colleagues. He approached his job... and life, with enthusiasm, a positive attitude, a high level of motivation and a sense of humor. Those that had the fortune to work with Danny always looked forward to spending a day in the field with him, as it would be filled with fun and laughter, philosophical discussions, and learning something new about wildlife, habitats, and the mountains of western NC where he grew up.

Danny was an avid outdoorsman, sportsman, gardener, and beekeeper, and enjoyed life to the fullest. He was committed to furthering wildlife conservation, serving the people of North Carolina, and mentoring college students and young professionals. One of his biggest interests was studying the status and distribution of small mammals in



Danny with an Allegheny Woodrat captured in the Linville Gorge area of North Carolina in August 2020.

Credit: **Colleen Olfenbittel**



# STATE REPORTS

NC, particularly woodrats. Danny earned master's degree from UNC Wilmington studying the two species of woodrats in the southern Appalachian Mountains of NC in the late 1990s. He would play a pivotal role at the end of his career revisiting woodrat colonies he researched to examine their population status, genetic hybridization, and potential disease concerns. Importantly, it provided the opportunity for Danny to pass on his knowledge of woodrat life history, capture, and monitoring techniques to the next generation of agency biologists. His career had come full circle, which he said, "was a nice way to end my career". He was a wellspring of knowledge and a true small mammal expert.

Danny had a long track record of service to TWS and its organization units. He was a member of TWS, SETWS & NCTWS since 1992. He twice served as NCTWS President (2011-2012, 2022-23), as well as NCTWS At-Large Board member (2004) and NCTWS Secretary (2006-2010). Danny also served on various NCTWS committees, including NCTWS Program Committee (2007-2008, 2018-2019) and the NCTWS Mentoring Committee (2015-2023). The success of the 2016 TWS Conference in Raleigh, NC was partly due to Danny's leadership as Chair on the TWS Conference Field Trips Subcommittee (2016) and his involvement on the TWS Conference Arrangements Committee (2016).

He received numerous recognitions and awards throughout his career, most notably receiving the NCWRC - Wildlife Management Division Biologist of the Year Award in 2016 and again in 2021. Danny represented the wildlife profession with dignity and pride. He was a great colleague and a friend to many; he will be missed.

## Catawba College Student Chapter

In February, several Catawba College students attended the NCTWS annual meeting, which was jointly hosted by the North Carolina Partners in Reptile and Amphibian Conservation (NCPARC). Not only were some students inspired to join TWS and NCTWS, but they also decided to forge a new NCTWS student chapter. Catawba's 2025 student chapter presidents are **Elias Barber** and **Austin Wise**. Welcome, Catawba! NCTWS is so happy to have you as our newest student chapter, and we can't wait to see what great things you accomplish.

## North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC)

Commissioner: On [July 22, 2025](#), **Justin Boyd** was sworn in as the new NCWRC Commissioner of Agriculture At Large. Boyd was appointed by current Commissioner of Agriculture, **Steve Troxler**, and will serve a four-year term through June 2029.

**Kelli Applegate**  
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## OKLAHOMA

NO NEWS REPORTED





# STATE REPORTS

## SOUTH CAROLINA



### South Carolina Chapter TWS

#### SC TWS State Chapter President Anna Smith named SCDNR Employee of the Year

The SCDNR honored exceptional staff from across the agency during its annual employee recognition ceremony. The event brought together agency leadership and staff to celebrate outstanding dedication, professionalism, and public service. The highlight of the ceremony was the announcement of **Anna Huckabee Smith** of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division as SCDNR's 2024 Employee of the Year. Huckabee Smith serves as the State Wildlife Grants & Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, where her leadership and collaboration have had a meaningful impact on statewide conservation initiatives. She is also the current SC TWS State Chapter President. "I really appreciate the recognition—especially because it comes from my peers—but I couldn't have received it without their support behind the scenes," said Huckabee Smith. "There's really something to be said for our DNR family and how we work well together to make good things happen here in South Carolina." "This annual recognition reminds us of the incredible people who make up the heart of SCDNR," said **Director Thomas Mullikin**. "Our employees go above and beyond to protect South Carolina's natural resources and serve the public with excellence."

SCDNR News Release, [News@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:News@dnr.sc.gov)

### South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

#### Emily Cope retires as Deputy Director of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division

**Emily Cope** retired in May as Deputy Director of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division of the SCDNR. She has served as Deputy Director since 2011, the first female to hold that position. She previously served as the Assistant to the Director, Habitat Protection Coordinator, and Assistant Regional Wildlife Biologist. Emily received her BS and MS in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Clemson University. She is active in the SC State Chapter, serving in various capacities including President. During her tenure as Deputy Director, Emily spearheaded numerous positive changes that resulted in increased budgets for wildlife and fisheries management, the permanent protection of over 100,000 acres on land, and a pay plan that brought the salaries of natural resources professionals closer to the national average. Emily will continue working in the natural resources arena, accepting a position with DU as the Managing Director of Development for the South Atlantic Region.

SCDNR News Release, [News@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:News@dnr.sc.gov)

#### SCDNR announces several changes in senior leadership within the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division

**Will Dillman** has been named the Deputy Director for Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries following the retirement of **Emily Cope**. Will holds both BS and MS degrees in Biology from the University of South Carolina. Before joining SCDNR, he worked as an Aquatic Biologist



# STATE REPORTS

with SC Department of Health and Environmental Control. In 2013, he joined SCDNR's Wildlife Section as the Herpetology Program Coordinator. In 2018, Will advanced to Assistant Chief of Wildlife, where he oversaw statewide projects, research, and survey. His responsibilities have included supervision of the Bird Conservation, Big Game, Bat, Small Game, Herpetology, Alligator, Furbearer, Lottery Hunts and Permitting programs.

**Jay Cantrell** has been promoted to fill the Assistant Chief of Wildlife for Statewide Programs. Jay received his BS and MS degrees in Wildlife Biology from Clemson University and has 25 years of state agency wildlife experience. He started his career as a wildlife biologist for the Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division prior to coming to SCDNR in 2005. He spent 11 years managing the Webb Wildlife Center in SC and has been the Assistant Big Game Program Coordinator since 2016. This path has given him experience in private lands technical assistance, public lands management, statewide project administration, research, survey, outreach and education. He was recently selected to participate in the next cohort at the National Conservation Leadership Institute.

SCDNR News Release, [News@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:News@dnr.sc.gov)

## **Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes inducted into the National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative Technical Committee Hall of Fame**

**Billy Dukes** was recently inducted into the National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative Technical Committee Hall of Fame at their annual meeting. Dukes has a long involvement with grassland birds, dating back to 1995 when he attended the first meeting of the Southeast Quail Study Group and has continued to be a leader in grassland bird conservation every year since. Over the past thirty years, Dukes has served as the Forestry Subcommittee Chair, served on several ad hoc committees, as the Chair of the Technical Committee and recently accepted a seat on the NBGI Foundation Board of Directors. In South Carolina, he has been a major supporter and facilitator of the South Carolina Bobwhite Initiative and has proven instrumental in getting bobwhite quail habitat on the ground in the Palmetto State.

SCDNR News Release, [News@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:News@dnr.sc.gov)

**Jamie Dozier**, [DozierJ@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:DozierJ@dnr.sc.gov)



# STATE REPORTS

## South Carolina DNR Biologist Sarah Pesl selected to participate in the TWS Leadership Institute

SCDNR Small Game Program Biologist **Sarah Pesl** has been selected to participate in the TWS Leadership Institute. Sarah is originally from Maryland and attended Frostburg State University for her undergrad, where she was introduced to wildlife research through volunteering to help graduate students with their field work. After graduating, she spent several years traveling around the United States to work on different wildlife research projects before completing an MS degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Resources from West Virginia University. In her current role, Sarah helps coordinate research and monitoring efforts for mourning doves, bobwhite quail, and other small game species in South Carolina.

SCDNR News Release, [News@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:News@dnr.sc.gov)



## Felicia Sanders awarded the American Ornithological Society Conservation Practitioner Award

The American Ornithological Society (AOS) has announced that SCDNR Seabird and Shorebird Coordinator **Felicia Sanders** has been awarded the 2025 AOS Conservation Practitioner Award. Sanders was instrumental in the designation of five seabird sanctuaries and collaborated with many partners, especially the USACE, to rebuild Crab Bank, a now-thriving seabird sanctuary. Sanders discovered the world's largest known roost of Whimbrel on Deveaux Bank. Media coverage of this flock reached more than 10 million viewers and resulted in increased support for shorebird protection across the state. Sanders has mentored numerous graduate students and coauthored 40 scientific publications. She is one of the principal investigators in the Southeast researching Red Knot migration strategies. Research revealed that most of the knots stopping in the Southeast fly directly to the Arctic, which led to significant conservation successes for knots. Sanders led the nomination process for two Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network sites. Most importantly Sanders worked with community members and partners to build resources and advocates to continue working on coastal bird conservation for many decades to come. She received her BS in zoology from Duke University and MS in zoology from Clemson University.

**AOS News Release, Chris Anne Handel**





# STATE REPORTS

## Clemson University

### Clemson University Launches Statewide Extension Wildlife Damage Management Program

Clemson University's Cooperative Extension Service has recently launched a new, statewide Wildlife Damage Management Program to provide resources and science-based solutions for addressing human-wildlife conflicts in South Carolina. The new program, led by Clemson University's Extension Wildlife Damage Program Director, **Dr. Elizabeth A. Bradley**, and two Wildlife Damage Extension Associates, **Andrew Jamison** and **Jacob Murray**, aims to implement an evidence-based and interdisciplinary approach to reduce wildlife damage caused by common conflict species, including but not limited to feral swine, white-tailed deer, beaver, and coyotes. Through collaboration with state agriculture and natural resource agencies such as the SC Department of Agriculture, SCDNR, SC Farm Bureau, and others, the new Wildlife Damage Management Program is part of Clemson Extension's commitment to integrating research, education, and outreach to address issues affecting agricultural producers, non-industrial private landowners, and community stakeholders throughout South Carolina.

### Clemson University's Dr. David Jachowski recognized with promotion

The Clemson University College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences (CAFLS) recognized **Dr. David Jachowski** with promotion to Professor this semester. Dr. Jachowski is a Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Clemson University in

the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation. Growing up in Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay, his passion for wildlife started in a canoe, exploring the tidal marshes out his back door. "Earning tenure and promotion is a distinguished milestone that reflects sustained excellence in scholarship, teaching, and engagement," said **Matt Holt**, dean of the CAFLS. "These faculty exemplify the ideals of a land-grant institution and play a vital role in shaping the future of our college and the communities we serve." Dr. Jachowski served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines, spent 10 years as a wildlife biologist for the USFWS. In 2014 he moved to Clemson University where his lab group addresses familiar research themes of large and small mammal ecology, but with a particular focus on conducting research that helps inform the management of wildlife in the Southeastern US. He has served in various roles in the South Carolina Chapter of TWS and is currently the advisor to the Clemson University Student Chapter.

**Jonathan Veit, Clemson University**  
**[Veit@Clemson.edu](mailto:Veit@Clemson.edu)**

TENNESSEE



NO NEWS REPORTED

VIRGINIA



NO NEWS REPORTED



# BUSINESS

## SOUTHEASTERN SECTION TWS ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

Please join us for the 2025 SETWS Annual Members Meeting on **Tuesday, October 28, 2025, from 8:00-10:00am CT (9:00-11:00am EST)** at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conference in Biloxi, MS (room posted on the conference schedule). 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.

### 2025 Southeastern Section Officers

**President****Dr. Daniel Greene, CWB®**

Wildlife Scientist, Environmental  
Research South  
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3477 S. Frontage Road  
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**President-Elect****Dr. Rachael E. Urbanek, CWB®**

Professor of Wildlife Ecology  
Department Chair  
Department of Environmental Sciences  
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**Southeastern Section Representative****Dr. Lisa Muller, CWB®**

Professor and Assistant Director  
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University of Tennessee  
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**Secretary-Treasurer****Dr. Vanessa R. Lane, CWB®**

Associate Professor of Wildlife Ecology  
and Management  
School of Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College  
2802 Moore Highway, ABAC 8  
Tifton, GA, USA 31793  
(229) 391-4811  
vlane@abac.edu

**Immediate Past-President****Kelly Douglass, CWB®**

Wildlife Disease Biologist  
Raleigh, NC 27617



Jon Pauling/Pixabay



Deb Watson/FlickR



# NOMINATIONS

## 2025 SOUTHEASTERN SECTION TWS OFFICER ELECTION

The Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society (SETWS) is proud to present the following slate of nominees for the 2025 election of President-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer. Voting instructions have been sent to current eligible members through the email address you used to register your TWS account.

### Nominees for President-Elect

**Dr. Vanessa Lane, CWB®**

**Voting for the SETWS officer election  
will close on October, 27, 2025.**



For the past two years I have worked as Secretary/Treasurer of SETWS, familiarizing myself with how the organization operates. As Secretary/Treasurer I assisted with several important events, including SETWS incorporation, opening a high yield saving account to keep up with rising inflation, creating a Square account to handle online transactions, developing a standard operating procedures document for future secretary/treasurers, and others. More change is expected over the next few years, the most pressing of which is the upcoming need to create our own regional website due to changes in national TWS hosting. Aside from knowing upcoming tasks, I have also maintained a strong commitment to TWS in its various forms through the years. I currently work at an undergraduate-only institution as co-advisor of an active TWS student chapter (ABAC) and I am familiar with the unique needs and wants of current and upcoming academics. Additionally, I maintain strong relationships with agency personnel (notably Georgia DNR) and have been representing

SETWS at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference for the past three years on the CW Watson Award Committee, which is SEAFWA's highest award. My combination of experiences with academia, agencies, and private businesses (i.e. Weyerhaeuser was my primary sponsor for my Ph.D.) I feel have provided me a solid foundation to represent my various colleagues in SETWS, and I am eager and honored to be presented with this opportunity. Thank you for considering me as your next President-Elect.

### Kris Godwin



We as a profession are always facing challenges. What is encouraging is the ability of the outstanding professionals throughout the Southeastern Region tackle these challenges through resourcefulness and outside-the-box thinking. If I were to become your president-elect, I see my role as assisting all of you maneuver your way through these challenges as a support system and someone who has battled in the trenches for over 30 years. I will provide leadership, guidance and support; and be a voice to TWS, and others, on issues which are important to our region. My tenure in the wildlife profession encompasses a large diversity of roles - I served as state director for a federal program for 26 years, have served in multiple other leadership positions, as well as worked in the field as a biologist. I instructed students at Mississippi State University as an adjunct assistant professor and assisted with field research projects. My husband and I own a tree farm where we are using all the skills and management lessons we preached to others

about on our own property – which has been a humbling experience. I've learned I still have a lot to learn. I need to learn from all of you as well. Therefore, I want to hear and LISTEN to you, to hear and learn from you, what you need from the SE Section. As a leader, I need to serve you, our members.

# NOMINATIONS

## Nominees for Secretary/Treasurer

### Dr. Angela Larsen-Gray



I have been an active member of The Wildlife Society since I first became involved with the student chapter during my undergraduate studies. I began serving on working group boards during graduate school and have since become more involved with my local state chapter, including serving as chair of the Virginia TWS IDEA Committee. Recently, I became chair of the Southeastern Section Conservation Affairs Committee, which increased my engagement at the section level. I truly value the networking and leadership opportunities TWS has provided me and would love to help make those opportunities more accessible to everyone interested. I believe the Southeastern Section offers a great chance to connect people across our region who are working on similar challenges or seeking mentors or mentees with shared interests.

If elected as Secretary/Treasurer, I plan to maintain clear communication with members and ensure all financial responsibilities are handled with the utmost integrity. I also want to explore ways to provide more opportunities for members to give feedback, ensuring the section meets its members' needs and interests. I am eager to help make the Southeastern Section more connected among its members, strengthen networking opportunities, and offer resources valuable to the entire membership. Thank you for considering me for the Secretary/Treasurer role.

### Dr. Virginie Rolland



I studied birds for my PhD and postdoc. Although I later expanded my research to mammals and herps, friends and colleagues would introduce me as either an ornithologist or a statistician. Neither felt right. It's only in The Wildlife Society that I found a home. Although my French college education is not enough to become a Certified Wildlife Biologist without extra courses, I do best identify as a wildlife ecologist. The Wildlife Society was also the first society (that I know) that explicitly supported women through the WoW group. Although I did not get actively involved with the group, it was particularly comforting to know it existed after I attended a Southeast Deer Group meeting where I could count women on two hands. And in general, the Society has been ahead of the curve in supporting and including underrepresented groups. So, out of all the professional societies I've been a member of over the years, The Wildlife Society has always been the most natural one for which I volunteered my service. When I was secretary/treasurer for the Arkansas Chapter, I successfully streamlined

the budget spreadsheet and even generated benefits that allowed us to reduce registration costs to students for the chapter meeting the following year. I also drafted needed revisions of our bylaws to reflect recent practices of the chapter (e.g., annual instead of biannual meetings). So, I am now ready to take on a similar role at the section level, building on my experience and my predecessor's legacy.



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## FROM CONSULTATION TO COLLABORATION: CENTERING TRIBAL VOICES IN CONSERVATION

Hosted By: [Native Peoples' Wildlife Management Working Group](#)

Date: October 29, 4:00 pm

Learn practical strategies for fostering respectful, equitable partnerships with Tribes in wildlife research and management. Through best practices, case studies, and discussion groups, participants will gain tools for building trust, ensuring equity, and centering Tribal voices in wildlife conservation. For more information and to register, please visit [here](#).

### In Case You Missed It...

## ONE HEALTH IN ACTION: YOUTH-LED MODELS FOR CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Hosted By: [Conservation Education and Outreach Working Group](#)

This webinar is designed for conservation educators, outreach specialists, land managers, and natural resource professionals working to build healthier ecosystems and communities. Learn how a student-driven One Health program tackles real challenges—like food accessibility, conserving urban wildlife, reducing environmental health disparities, and building trust with local governments through multilingual outreach. To view the webinar that was held on September 10, please visit [here](#).



# MEETINGS OF INTEREST

## OCTOBER 2025

### The Wildlife Society 32nd Annual Conference

October 5-9, 2025  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
<https://twconference.org/>

### 79th SEAFWA Conference

October 26-29, 2025  
Biloxi, MS  
<https://seafwa.org/conference/2025>

## NOVEMBER 2025

### Native American Fish and Wildlife Society 2025 Northeast and Southeast Joint Regional Conference

November 12-13, 2025  
Clewiston, FL  
<https://www.nafws.org/product/2025-southeast-and-northeast-joint-regional-conference/>

## DECEMBER 2025

### 13th National Wild Turkey Symposium

December 8 - 11, 2025  
Kansas City, MO  
<https://www.wildturkeysymposium.org/>

## JANUARY 2026

### SEPARC 2026 Annual Meeting

January 30 - February 1, 2026  
Black Mountain, NC  
<https://www.separc.org/2026-meeting>

## FEBRUARY 2026

### 49th Annual SEDSG Meeting

February 22-24, 2026  
Roanoke, VA  
<https://www.sedsg.msstate.edu/>

## MARCH 2026

### Southeastern Bat Diversity Network

March 11 – 13, 2026  
New Orleans, LA  
<https://sbdn.org/annual-meeting/>

### 91st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference

March 29 - April 3, 2026  
Columbus, OH  
<https://wildlifemanagement.institute/conference/>

## April 2026

### 2026 International Wild Pig Conference

April 24-25, 2026  
Auburn, AL  
<https://cfwe.auburn.edu/iwpc/>

