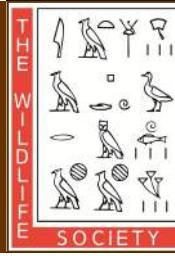




The Wildlife Society

Southwest Section Newsletter

Winter 2024



Madeleine Kaleta and Robert Corkren, Editors

President's Message

Nicole Tatman - Outgoing President, SW Section

The Southwest Section has made important progress on several initiatives this year!

We are re-engaging with The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network. The Section provided input on the Bureau of Land Management's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development. We offered comments on wildlife topics relevant to the Southwest. This is especially important as our southwestern landscapes experience abundant sunshine and many areas will see utility-scale solar development in the future. It is key that this development occurs with the input of wildlife professionals. You can see the complete [letter here](#).



Additionally, two members of the Section travelled to Washington D.C. during the Annual Meeting in Baltimore (October 2024). We met with officials from the Department of the Interior and U.S. Congressional staff to discuss issues that affect wildlife. It was enlightening to see how the work of our profession informs staff in Washington D.C. To read more about this, a complete [article is here](#).

The Section's new Conservation Affairs Committee representative is Nick Forman, the Carnivore and Small Mammal Program Manager for New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. In Nick's role, he will represent our Section by bringing valuable perspectives to the policy process and advocate for issues important to wildlife in the Southwest.

Another achievement is that the Section is sponsoring some wildlife professionals from Mexico to attend the Joint Annual Meeting of the New Mexico and Arizona Chapters of The Wildlife Society. This was the first time the Mexico Chapter of TWS participated in this regional conference!

Lastly, it is important to recognize members of our Section who have distinguished themselves through exceptional service to our profession. Leland Pierce received the Southwest Section's Distinguished Service Award and Jim Heffelfinger received The Wildlife Society's Fellows Award. You can read more about them on page 5 of the newsletter. Congratulations Jim and Leland!

Nicole Tatman
Outgoing 2024-2025 Southwest Section President

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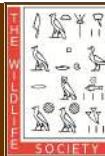
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Southwest Section Tracks

Kathy Granillo - Southwest Section Representative To Council

It's hard to believe that a year has come and gone, and it is already 2025.

The various chapter annual meetings are upon us (AZ/NM Joint Annual Meeting February 6-8, and Texas Chapter Annual Meeting February 19-21), and I hope many of you are able (or were able) to attend. These are great opportunities to interact with other wildlife professionals and students, and to stay up to date on the latest and greatest science in our field.



Speaking of annual conferences, the 2025 TWS Annual Conference will be October 5-9, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. That sounds like a long way off, but proposals for special sessions (workshops, symposia, panel discussions) are due by March 9, and the call for abstracts for the general science sessions will come along soon after. It is never too early to start thinking about presenting at the conference. Also, if you plan to attend, please note that you will need a Passport to enter Canada. Visit www.travel.state.gov to learn more about passports and other international travel suggestions/requirements.

One of the many things we do in The Wildlife Society to support our members is to offer recognition in the form of awards. Most awards are due May 1 of each year for the parent society awards. The Section and Chapters have their own due dates – please check with them for those dates. The only way someone receives an award is if they are nominated. Please familiarize yourself with the various awards and then think about who you know who would be a good candidate (if could even be yourself!). Check out the awards website at <https://wildlife.org/awards/>.

Another way that TWS supports members is by offering leadership training. The Leadership Institute is an annual course established in 2006 to provide a select group of 10 promising TWS members with leadership training. The Leadership Institute consists of intensive activities and mentoring relationships that prepare participants for leadership positions, both in their workplace and in TWS. TWS is now accepting applications for the 2025 Leadership Institute. The application deadline is March 14, 2025. <https://wildlife.org/leadership-institute/>.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about anything TWS please contact me via email at KGBirder55@gmail.com.



Southwest Section Tracks

Nick Forman— Conservation Affairs Network Committee Chair

As wildlife professionals we almost always have our toes dipped into many different pools, each piggy in a different market. We are out in the wild, making fast-paced decisions to execute field projects; we sit sagely in front of a computer screen, battling complex statistics or hammering out rigorous manuscripts; we engage with the public and our peers to share our passions for being outdoors and pursuing our wildlife resources; and we sit like an anxious parent on the sideline as we watch the mainstream and social media cosmos create all kinds of content about the natural world.

Living between worlds can be taxing and confusing, and increasingly it seems that we are bearing witness to a growing chasm between the science and the public discourse about wildlife and ecology. Whether it be misinterpretation or cherry-picking of facts, or outright denial or subversion of science, one may at times get a sense that those hard-earned observations and results we endeavor for are getting drowned out by agendas, personal animus, buzzwords, and glow-ups (with a splash of rizz, is that what the cool kids would say?).

So, how can we adhere to the core tenets of our scientific training while increasing our participation to inform public discussions and shape policy based on the work that we do?



Nick Forman releasing Louisiana river otters into the Rio Grande

Courtesy of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish



Southwest Section Tracks

Nick Forman— Conservation Affairs Network Committee Chair

The Conservation Affairs Network (CAN) is TWS's toe in the policy world. It seeks to channel the expertise of TWS members into the policy making realm. At this past annual conference in Baltimore, there was some emphasis on billing the Society's participation in policy as striving for "science-informed" decisions (instead of the arguably more overbearing phrase, "science-based"). TWS seems well positioned to do so via all the work being done within this network.

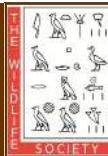
The CAN is involved in policy at every level, from advocacy at the individual level, working within the Southwest Section to create cohesive statements on a topic, or providing input at the national level. Examples of these efforts are the letter and comments made by the Southwest Section over the past year concerning [energy development](#) and [feral horses and burros](#). At a higher level, the CAN is coordinating policy priorities for the Society and engaging directly with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to lobby for better inclusion of wildlife science in policy and continued support for wildlife professionals.

To increase access to those interested in getting involved, the CAN offers [tools for engagement](#), include guidelines and templates for structuring chapter or section participation in the CAN. Chapters and sections have varying configurations of Conservation Affairs Committees (CAC) and representatives. Currently, the Southwest Section's CAC consists of just a Committee Chair (myself) who participates in CAN meetings and works with the section's board to stay abreast of current events and coordinate any policy related input or action.

Please consider this a call to action: learn more about the CAN and its resources, reach out if you'd like to be involved in the Sections' CAC, or at the very least be vigilant and share your interests or concerns about policies (local, state, federal) that the Section or CAN as a whole could take action on. Let's take advantage of our joint expertise and enthusiasm to be better heard and stand on firmer ground for advocating for science to be included in decision-making processes.



Jason Baldes speaks at the 2024 Conference in Baltimore. Credit: Katie Perkins/TWS.



Professional Awards

Distinguished Service Award

Leland Pierce

Leland Pierce, the amphibian and reptile biologist at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) was recently awarded the Distinguished Service Award. This national award recognizes his long-term commitment to TWS through his long-standing membership and dependable involvement in furthering the mission of the Society.

Pierce has continuously represented the Southwest Section through his roles as president and executive board member for both the New Mexico chapter and the Southwest Section.

Pierce's peers have praised his long-standing guidance for both established and newer members through his counsel for those taking on new leadership roles and his mentorship for students and early career professionals. Pierce has consistently emphasized diversity, equity, inclusion, and women in wildlife management throughout his involvement.



Leland Pierce (left) and Nicole Tatman (right)

Sourced: NMDGF newsletter

The Wildlife Society Fellow

Jim Heffelfinger

Jim Heffelfinger, the wildlife science coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, has recently earned the TWS Fellows Award. This lifetime award recognizes distinguished members with exceptional service by promoting and engaging wildlife professions and TWS.

Heffelfinger is known for his expertise and leadership as a wildlife conservationist, in addition to his deep involvement with TWS since 1985. However, Jim has worn many hats through his work as a biologist for the federal government, state wildlife agencies, universities, and the private sector throughout the Southwest Section.

He has been recognized for his extensive contributions to wildlife science with a host of accolades, involvement in over 300 publications - including scientific papers, book chapters, TV scripts, magazine articles, and his renowned book "Deer of the Southwest".



Jim Heffelfinger

Sourced: TWS [article](#)

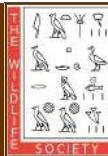
Interested in nominating someone for a TWS professional achievement, education, or service award?

Visit <https://wildlife.org/awards/> to submit your nominations. Deadlines vary: March 1st - May 1st.



Southwest Section News

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State News

New Mexico

Taxidermy Ducks for wildlife monitoring

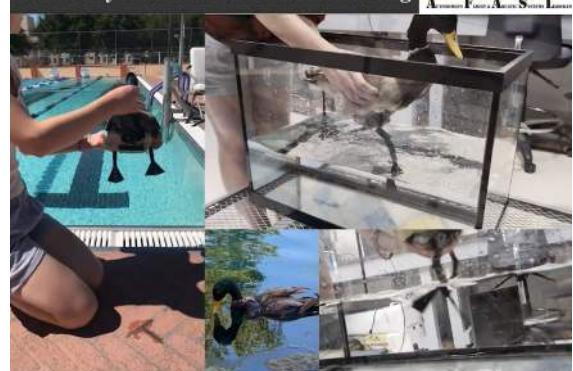


Photo: AFASI—New Mexico Tech

Taxidermy Duck Drones

Researchers at New Mexico Tech (NMT) are giving deceased birds new life using technology to study wildlife.

"I had this idea for about more than a decade [ago] to basically convert the taxidermy birds into the flapping wing drones," said Associate Professor Mustafa Hassanalian.

Almost a year ago, the drones first took flight. Now, these taxidermy birds are taking their adventures to the water to study ducks and geese behavior without disturbing nature.

by: Gabe Chavez

[READ MORE](#)

Texas

Bring Back the Bighorn

Once a success story, the species has faced a 50% decline since 2021 due to pneumonia caused by *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*M. ovi*), primarily spread by exotic aoudad sheep. Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) is working with partners to develop a science-based response, including translocating healthy bighorns to safer habitats.

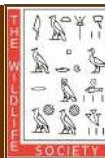
A collaborative approach is essential for future conservation.

[READ MORE](#)



Photo: Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation





State News

New Mexico & Arizona



Photo: Bob Haarmans

Mexican Wolf Recovery

The future of Mexican wolf recovery depends on sound science, not wishful thinking. While some advocate for expanding their range beyond historical habitats, research shows that recovery is thriving within their native territory in the U.S. and Mexico. Protecting the genetic integrity of this unique southwestern subspecies requires a commitment to evidence-based conservation, ensuring El Lobo remains distinct from its northern relatives.

Keep a look out in the next issue for the full article on *Science Guides Geography of Mexican Wolf Recovery* by Jim Heffelfinger and Jim deVos, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Arizona

Endangered Black-footed Ferret Conservation

Black-footed ferrets once numbered in the tens of thousands, but the weasel-like animals almost disappeared because of a combination of human-induced threats. Twice in the 20th century, they were thought to be extinct. Today, they are the focus of a broad recovery effort.

An important role in the black-footed ferret species reintroduction process is to reestablish them in the prairie and sagebrush ecosystems. Through trial and error, researchers found that ferrets that were “pre-conditioned,” meaning habituated to living around prairie dog towns in captivity, fared three times better when released into the wild than ferrets released without exposure to live prairie dogs.



Photo: [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)

[READ MORE](#)



Tribal News

Six students received the 2024 Native Student Professional Development grants.

This funding was provided for Native students' professional development at the TWS Annual Conference in Baltimore, Maryland this past year. This program has been in effect since 2014 thanks to support from federal, corporate, and nonprofit entities.

One of the six recipients was Nadira Mitchell is Diné (Navajo) and studying natural resources at the University of Arizona. Nadira also was awarded the 2024 Native American Research Assistantship (NARA). According to a news article by The Wildlife Society, this past summer Mitchell was able to work alongside Serra Hoagland from the USFS on a three-month summer research project to develop sections of a comprehensive Tribal Wildlife Management Plan that was requested by the Mescalero Apache Tribe.



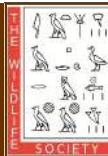
Our working group facilitates communication, develops opportunities, educates others, and encourages future native wildlife professionals to promote a more inclusive, informed, and indigenous future for wildlife management.

You may contact us by emailing Celina Gray at celina.gray19@gmail.com (Chair) and Avery Tilley at Avetill2000@gmail.com (Chair-Elect).



Southwest Section News

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Student Awards

2025 TWS Chapter Meeting Registration Award

This financial grant is awarded to students who have demonstrated a strong commitment to the conservation of biodiversity in the Southwestern United States, through both their past contributions and future plans. These recipients have boasted relevant leadership and educational experience, as well as involvement in their state chapter or the Southwest Section.

Alexander Hoxie

Masters Student

Tarleton State University



Mauricio Rued

Ph.D. Student

Texas A&M University, Kingsville



Deandra Jones

Ph.D. Student

University of Arizona



2025 Graduate Student Scholarship

This monetary award is given annually to a graduate student enrolled in a natural resource-oriented wildlife program at a college or university in the Southwest. Recipients have contributed to the conservation of biodiversity in the Southwest Section, and have demonstrated leadership through professional, academic, or extracurricular experiences. Dylan G. Stewart, a PhD student at Texas A&M University, has been awarded the 2025 Southwestern Wildlife Student Scholarship. Originally from Yuma, Arizona, he developed a pas-

sion for wildlife conservation through hands-on experience with the Arizona Game and Fish De-



Dylan Stewart

Ph.D. Student

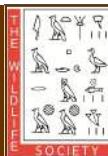
Texas A&M University

partment and later pursued research-focused graduate studies at Auburn University. His current research examines desert bighorn sheep translocation success in Mexico, utilizing GPS collars and video technology to analyze movement, habitat selection, and integration into native herds. Stewart aims to continue his work as a post-doctoral researcher and ultimately contribute to wildlife conservation efforts in the Southwest as a faculty member or research biologist.



Southwest Section News

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Student Chapter News

The latest news from classroom to the field.

Student sections are actively participating in research, community support, competitions, and campus events across the section. Here we'll provide the student sections of The Wildlife Society to showcase their great work and support in the wildlife community. If you have interesting research, community news, or campus activities please send them to the editors.

Mexico

On behalf of the Mexico Chapter, we sincerely appreciate your support in making our participation in the 58th Joint Annual Meeting possible, especially for the students attending their first wildlife conference.

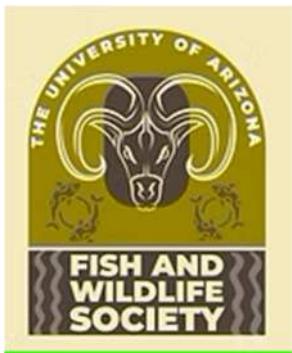
The experience was both educational and rewarding, allowing them to engage with diverse research, build friendships, and explore future collaborations. We look forward to strengthening cross-border conservation efforts and participating in future meetings.



Arizona



[Arizona State University](#)



[University of Arizona](#)

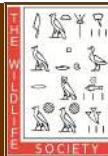


[Northern Arizona University](#)



Southwest Section News

Southwest Section Newsletter — Winter 2024



Student Chapter News

New Mexico



Eastern New Mexico University



New Mexico State University

Texas

Stephen F. Austin State University

Vincent Jolley - President

Paige Sumner - Vice President

Katelyn Anderson - Secretary

Luke Mosqueda - Treasurer

Simone Lee - Public Relations

Email: sfasuthewildlifesociety@gmail.com

Advisors are: Jessica

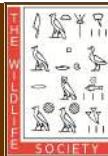
Glasscock, Rueber Antoniazzi, and Cord Eversole





Southwest Section News

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Student Chapter News

Texas

Texas A&M University

Megan Schnacke - President
Alannah Roberts - Vice President
Jase Sandefur - Secretary
Amara Freedson - Treasurer
Presley Griffin - Education Chair
Hayden Webb - Publicity Chair
Justin Hill - Fund Raising Chair
Brayden Musgrove - Conclave Chair



In October some of our student members had an amazing opportunity to participate in a deer capture with the East Foundation.

They got to take part in the whole process, from helping capture deer to various data collection to safely releasing them. This yearly opportunity is highly valuable in giving our student members hands-on research experience that will stay with them throughout their professional careers!



Student members got to participate in a prescribed burn workshop put on by Texas Parks and Wildlife with some help from the Texas A&M Forest Service. They started with a class portion where they learned why we burn, the benefits of prescribed fire, considerations for before and during burns, important policy and laws.

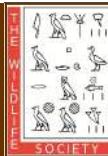
After that, the students headed out to the Ecology and Natural Resource Teaching Area for some interactive field stations, which covered: weather monitoring and protective equipment, planning and executing a burn, and a run-down in necessary equipment for a burn.





Southwest Section News

Southwest Section Newsletter — Winter 2024



Student Chapter News

Texas



Tarleton State University

President Chloe Delahoussaye
Vice President Hannah Atkinson
Student Liason Gaven Sanders
Treasurer Caden Crane
Secretary Kaylee Halfmann
Historian Gracie Gold
Risk Management Lilliana Navar
Web Manager Gracie Triplett
Email: mathewson@tarleton.edu
Advisor: Dr. Heather Mathewson

Just recently, a few of our members had the opportunity to attend a mentored duck hunt. All members had a great learning experience, and gained knowledge on hunter and firearm safety, and proper hunting tactics learning its help to conservation. A huge thank you to [Deltawaterfowl](#).



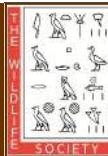
A few members had the opportunity to go to [Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch](#) and learn from technicians about banding, trapping, and releasing quail. Some groups even had a chance to see a rare species of quail! Thank you again to RPQRF for having us out!





Southwest Section News

Southwest Section Newsletter — Winter 2024



Student Chapter News

Texas



Texas Tech University

Our members attended talks, competed in the competitions, and met so many cool wildlife students and professionals at the Texas Section Wildlife Conference.

We had members compete in the Plant ID contest and undergraduate poster presentation. Jesse Haudrich represented us well in Plant ID. We also spotted member Madison McGinnis presenting her poster on "Assessing the Presence of Microplastics in Mississippi Kites." Two members, Sarah Smith and Camylle Fung, submitted their photography to the Photo and Art Contest.

Our team of Bryce Mann, Jake Gowdy, Sarah Smith, Camylle Fung, and Emmalee Balch fought hard in the Quiz Bowl. Although we didn't bring home the trophy we competed well and had a lot of fun.

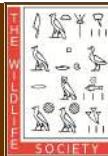
Our members showed out at the awards ceremony! Emmalee Balch won the Texas Tech Outstanding Student of the Year award. And this year, our very own Jesse Haudrich won the Charly McTee Memorial Scholarship!





Southwest Section News

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Student Chapter News

Texas



Texas State University

President: Eros Baua

Vice President: Dayna Ovalle

Treasurer: Alexandra Fleming-Patrick

Secretary: Julian Moreno

Historian: Jaime Acero

Advisors: Dr. Sarah Fritts

(fritts.sarah@txstate.edu) and Dr. James Emerson (xwz@txstate.edu)



Sul Ross State University

Extremely proud of The Sul Ross Range & Wildlife Club for all of the awards received at this year's Texas Chapter.

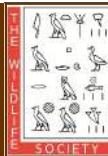
These students worked countless hours to practice and ensure they were prepared for the competitions. The Sul Ross plant ID team placed 3rd out of 13 different universities! As well as, Syndilyn Maguglin, who placed first.





Southwest Section News

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Student Chapter News

Texas



[University of Texas San Antonio](#)



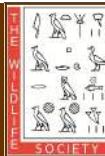
[Abilene Christian University](#)





Southwest Section Board and Committee

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Current Board

President:	Ryan Luna	rluna@sulross.edu
Past-President:	Nicole Tatman	Nicole.tatman@dgf.nm.gov
President-elect:	Tiffany Sprague	tasprague@gmail.com
Secretary:	Levi Heffelfinger	levi.heffelfinger@tamu.edu
Treasurer:	Megan Clayton	megan.clayton@ag.tamu.edu

Southwest Representative

Kathy Granillo kbirder55@gmail.com (505) 350-1007

Active Committees

Conservation Affairs:

Nick Forman Nicholas.forman@dgf.nm.gov

Newsletter Co-Editors:

Robert Corkren robert.corkren@ag.tamu.edu 713-805-8660

Madeleine Kaleta Madeleine.Kaleta@dgf.nm.gov 505-394-3805

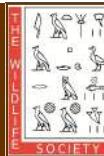
Thank you to those that contributed to this newsletter!

Do you or someone you know have a great project, recent reward, or information relevant to the Southwest that you would like to share? Please reach out to Robert and/or Madeleine to contribute to our next newsletter!



Interested in Joining the Southwest Section?

Southwest Section Newsletter — Winter 2024



Membership Application

Membership Fee \$5.00

First Name Middle Name Last Name Suffix

Mailing Address

City State Zip Code Country

E-mail address Phone

Member Type (Please circle one): Student Regular Retired

Please include this form with your payment and mail to:

Dr. Megan Clayton, Treasurer TWS-SWS, Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 1619 Garner Field Road, Uvalde, TX 78801

Membership benefits for the Southwest Section TWS

- SWS TWS Newsletter
- Scholarship opportunities
- Section-level meetings and conferences
- Strengthen your connections to national TWS
- Peer connections through Listserv and [Facebook](#)
- Website information at <http://wildlife.org/sw-section/about/>