

The Wildlifer

The Voice of the Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society

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Presidents Message

July August 2006

Hello Wildlifers,

I've been reading some of the newsletters posted on our web site (www.aztws.org) and was surprised to find that I am the 4th woman to hold the office of President in the 40 years since inception of the Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society. In 1982, Tice Supplee (AGFD) was elected the first woman president. She was followed in 1989 by Shelly Barrett (USFWS) and Mary Ann Benoit (USFS) in 2001 (see Spring 2001 newsletter for a list of past presidents at <http://www.aztws.org/newsletter.htm>). Women's roles in wildlife management and research have grown over the past 40 years. How do we encourage women to take more leadership roles in The Wildlife Society? What does it take to be a leader?

Good conservation leaders have a clear and realistic vision of a big picture plan, have good interpersonal skills, and can compromise in order to make progress (see Conservation Biology 2004, 18:274-278). They are able to influence others to fulfill a conservation vision and make the "big picture" a reality. Our experiences can make us good leadership material. Some of the experiences that conservation leaders said were important in building their interest in wildlife started in childhood. They were inspired by nature. I remember a friend talking about how he loved to catch lizards in the desert (for me it was chameleons in Florida). I suspect all of us Arizona wildlifers spent time

exploring the outdoors as kids – hunting, catching, or watching animals – and that has inspired us to follow a wildlife career.

Taking opportunities for foreign travel or working abroad are also valuable in building a big picture vision. Working in the field helps build an understanding of ecological reality that may not always be clear through reading books. Integrating these types of experiences helps us understand cultural, ecological, and social realities which are important traits for a leader.

Leaders also talk about the importance of mentors in their lives. Mentors can serve as role models to those in the process of developing their careers. People like Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson were inspirational because they were passionate about the environment and influenced how we saw the world – they thought outside the box. They talked about what they learned, even when what they had to say was controversial. Mentors generously offer opportunities and encouragement (see in this newsletter the interview that Megan Friggens, a PhD candidate at Northern Arizona University, conducted with one of the people who inspired her to become a wildlife biologist). Good leaders look for opportunities to mentor others. Today, this can be a way to help promote women into leadership positions.

Leaders are respected for their ability to work with many different people. Their integrity is valued; they are respected by those who work with them. Although during the early years of the development of the wildlife profession, women did not make up a large component of wildlife professionals, they are well represented in agencies and universities today. Women should be better represented in leadership areas since they add diversity and different perspectives to wildlife conservation and management. It is up to women to work to gain leadership positions, and good leadership can help mentor women into these roles.

- Carol Chambers

Hello from Field

Hey gang, this Nate Gwinn apologizing for the lateness of this summer's issue of The Wildlifer. Ah summer in Arizona, the flowers are in bloom, the birds are singing, and a myriad of wildlife biologists are fumbling around in the field chasing their creature(s) of interest trying to keep field forms, GPS units, telemetry gear, etc from getting lost and/or destroyed. If one listens just right they can hear the cry of this merry band of scientists (however in the interest of decorum I will not describe it here). All kidding aside I like most of you was busy with field work this summer. In my case I spent the majority of the season capturing, marking, and tracking Abert's squirrels on Mount Graham. As such I haven't been as diligent as I should have been regarding our beloved newsletter. I hope you all can forgive me and I'll do my absolute best to make sure to get the next issue out on time.

Cheers,

Nate

Meeting info

40th Joint Annual TWS/AFS Meeting 2007 – Albuquerque Feb 6-8 (Tuesday – Thursday)

The Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) is held every February for the purposes of electing or installing officers, receiving reports of officers and committees, and for any other business that may arise. It is rotated every other year between Arizona and New Mexico and has traditionally been the first Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in February. The New Mexico Chapter of The Wildlife Society will host the 2007 meeting in a new location – Albuquerque, and at a new time – midweek. The 2007 meeting will be at the Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town (previously the Sheraton). The hotel is located at 800 Rio Grande Blvd, just south of I-40 on the east side of RGB. The tentative theme is "Restoring Structure and Function of Habitat in the Southwestern U.S." **The meeting will be held February 6-8, 2007. Please note this is Tuesday through Thursday.**

Call for Papers

Individuals interested in presenting a paper or poster on pertinent applied management or research involving fisheries and wildlife resources in the southwest U.S. are invited to submit abstracts to the Program Chair for the 40th Annual Conference. Abstracts must be submitted:

- **via e-mail (no paper accepted) in Microsoft Word**
- **by November 1, 2006 to the Program Chair at cp_david@msn.com**

Clearly designate your abstract:

- **in the subject line identify whether it is a paper or poster presentation and whether it is a Wildlife or Fisheries Abstract**

The abstract should be a single paragraph, 12-point type, single-spaced, ½ page or less. Capitalize presenter's name. Insert address after each author's name. Abstracts should be short and informative. Authors alone are responsible for correct spelling and grammar in their abstracts. Other than italics for scientific names, do not use any formatting such as tabs, bold, etc.

Indicate student presentations, by placing the words STUDENT PAPER above the title of the paper or poster. The name of the student's presenting the paper should be capitalized, followed by the words "Graduate Student" or "Undergraduate Student" in parenthesis. Abstracts will be reviewed by designated Wildlife and Fisheries Program Co-Chairs. Please contact Pete David, NM-TWS Chapter President at cp_david@msn.com or (505) 449-7918 with questions.

Awards

Nominate a deserving Wildlifer to receive an AZTWS Award!

The Arizona Chapter has traditionally recognized outstanding accomplishments in wildlife management, both by professionals and laypersons, by giving awards at the joint annual meeting. Please take the time to nominate a deserving person or organization for an award. To do so, write a letter of support for the nominee. Include 1) the name and affiliation of the nominee, 2) the award nominated for, 3) the nominator's contact information, and 4) letter(s) of support or endorsement of two other individuals. Endorsers may sign the nominating letter or send separate supporting letters. Send the letter(s) by mail to Stu Tuttle, 3391 S. Gillenwater Drive, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (Voice 928-214-0459 ext. 223) or by E-mail to Stu.Tuttle@az.usda.gov. Nominating letters must be received by 30 November to be considered.

There are 6 awards:

The Doug Morrison Award: Given in memory of Doug Morrison to an Arizona Biologist in a non-supervisory position who has made significant contributions to the management and conservation of wildlife in Arizona.

Professional Service Award: Given to an Arizona Biologist for outstanding contributions to management and conservation of wildlife.

Conservation Award: Given to a person, or persons, not employed directly as a wildlife biologist, or an organization not directly involved in wildlife management (including researchers at universities), who contribute significantly to the conservation of wildlife and/or their habitat in Arizona.

Wildlife Habitat Relationships Award (WILDHARE Award): Given to a professional wildlife biologist in Arizona for their contribution to understanding or applying habitat principles to management of an animal species or group of species.

Scrapping Bear Award: The recipient has gone beyond the normal call of duty in support of wildlife issues and has made exceptional contributions toward the management and protection of wildlife and habitat resources AND the recipient has stood up for what they thought was right, even if it was controversial or perceived as contrary to their agency's official position, supervisor's positions, or had the potential to put the recipients job on the line.

Roger Hungerford Student Award: Given to a student who while attending an Arizona college or university made significant contributions to the management and conservation of Arizona's wildlife and/or habitat.

More detail about the awards can be found on the web site at <http://www.aztws.org/awards.htm>.

14th Annual TWS Conference in Tucson Arizona

The 14th Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society is coming to Tucson in 2007 and planning is already underway. The plenary session will deal with the theme of International Borders. If you would like to help, you can contact Bill Mannan (mannan@ag.arizona.edu) or Paul Krausman (krausman@ag.arizona.edu) or the following Chairs:

Stu Tuttle (Stu.Tuttle@az.usda.gov) - Program Committee Chair

Steve Rosenstock - Contributed Papers Sub Chair

Henry Messing - Poster Sub Chair

Bob Steidl (steidl@ag.arizona.edu) - Workshops

John Morgart - Symposia

John Organ - Plenary Subcommittee Chair

Condor Update

The California Condor Recovery Program celebrates a milestone in 2006. December will mark the ten-year anniversary of the first California condor release in Northern Arizona. Additional releases have occurred each year since then, with condor reintroduction projects underway in California, Arizona, and Baja California, Mexico. Thanks to these recovery efforts, the condor population has climbed from a low of 22 birds in 1982, to a current population of almost 300 birds. The Arizona program boasts 58 free-flying condors, including four wild-fledged chicks. The progress of the Arizona program is in no small part due to the dedicated work of project cooperators: The Peregrine Fund, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Bureau of Land Management, Grand Canyon National Park, Kaibab National Forest, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and the Phoenix Zoo.

Peregrine Fund biologists monitor the condors daily with the aid of conventional and satellite transmitters. Approximately 10-12 captive-reared sub-adults are released each winter at

the Vermilion Cliffs. Supplemental food is provided as a clean food source as well as a management tool for capturing the birds. The condors regularly forage for carrion however, traveling from the south rim of the Grand Canyon to the Kolob Canyon area of Utah. Reproduction in the wild has proved successful in Arizona, with five wild-hatched chicks produced since 2003. This accomplishment is significant when you consider that condors first breed at five to seven years of age, and pairs only produce one chick every other year in the wild. Although the program has experienced some setbacks, the condor population in Arizona is steadily increasing and biologists are adapting their management techniques to address ongoing and new threats to the condor program.

For more information on the condor recovery program visit peregrinefund.org and azgfd.com/w_c/california_condor.shtml. To see condors in the wild, visit the south rim of the Grand Canyon from May through September, or the Vermilion Cliff release site viewing area year-round.

-Kathy Sullivan
Condor Coordinator
AZ. Game and Fish Department
Flagstaff

An Interview with a Mentor

The following interview was conducted on July 10th of this year by **Megan Friggens** a PhD candidate at NAU. Megan interviewed **Dr. Sharon K. Collinge** an Associate Professor of Biology & Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, a mentor of hers that inspired her to go into wildlife biology.

MF: Please tell us a little bit about your academic and professional background.

SC: I first seriously considered the field of ecology as a freshman in college. I was one of the legions of freshman pre-med majors, basing my decision on the knowledge that I liked biology and thinking that a medical career would satisfy my scientific curiosity. But as I sat in Introductory Biology class that first year, I found myself fascinated by the classic ecological story of the snowshoe-hare lynx population cycles. I learned that ecologists had discovered remarkably regular, ten-year cycles of increases in snowshoe hare populations, followed by rises in lynx populations, later followed by a decline in both as the lynx consumed all of their prey and left themselves with nothing else to eat. I marveled at a system that was so complex, yet so elegant in its simplicity. The fact that ecologists had uncovered these cycles using long-term data from fur trappers and their own field measurements further stoked my interest in this field of study. I realized soon after that classroom experience that I would much rather spend time studying the intricate relationships of nature than diagnose the illnesses of people. My captivation with ecology resonated well with my childhood experiences exploring the woods and grasslands near my home in the tallgrass prairies of eastern Kansas.

At the end of my undergraduate education, I knew that I wanted to study ecology but wasn't sure which area of ecological research to pursue. I met my future master's thesis advisor at a regional professional meeting and was intrigued by her field studies of how insect herbivores make choices regarding which particular host plants to eat. Her research was centered at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Gothic, Colorado and I found myself lucky to spend three summers there, which is still one of my favorite places on earth. RMBL was a very stimulating and exciting place to complete my first graduate degree and I formed professional friendships there that persist to this day. After finishing my master's degree, I worked for three

years as a research technician and then as a program officer for a non-governmental organization. This time gave me a chance to reflect on my goals and direction for a PhD. My growing passion to combine ecological science with landscape planning led me to complete a degree in landscape ecology at Harvard University. My research focused on the ecological consequences of habitat loss and fragmentation and I conducted field experiments in grasslands near Boulder, Colorado. During my PhD I was a student on a two-month OTS (Organization for Tropical Studies) field course in Costa Rica, which was a highlight of my career. I became convinced that every biologist should spend time in the tropics to witness its amazing biological diversity! In 1996 I joined the faculty at the University of California-Davis as an assistant professor in the landscape architecture program. My position focused on teaching ecological principles to students of landscape architecture and planning. Because my training and research are interdisciplinary, I relished this opportunity to integrate ecological science and land-use decisions. I returned to Colorado in 1998 with a joint appointment in the Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Colorado-Boulder. In 2004 I was selected as an Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellow, which is a program for mid-career environmental scientists involving training in scientific leadership and effective outreach and communication with policy makers, the media, industry, government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

MF: Describe your current research program and position.

SC: My career as a field ecologist and professor is ideal because it stimulates my intellectual curiosity, rejuvenates my spirit, provides a great physical workout, and indulges my sense of social responsibility. For the past 15 years, my research has focused on the ecological consequences of habitat loss and fragmentation. I was drawn to this research specifically because I am committed to research that is intellectually rigorous and based in ecological theory, but that provides solutions to the problem of declining biological diversity. In my current faculty position at the University of Colorado-Boulder, I teach interdisciplinary courses in conservation biology and ecology to both undergraduate and graduate students. I strive to provide a solid grounding for my students in ecological science, but also to expose them to the social and political arenas in which biodiversity conservation occurs.

My current research program expands my previous work on habitat loss and fragmentation to include the effects of landscape change on disease dynamics in western grasslands. My colleagues and I are currently in the fourth year of a study of how grassland loss and fragmentation caused by urbanization affect the transmission and spread of plague. The dynamics of plague involve a complex set of interactions among hosts, vectors, and the pathogen, which may all be affected by the spatial configuration of the landscape. Our study centers on black-tailed prairie dogs, since they are highly susceptible to plague and are a species of conservation concern. We also study other grassland rodent species that serve as hosts for this bacterial pathogen. Perhaps my early interest in human health has now successfully merged with my interest in field ecology, since my research program now integrates anthropogenic landscape change with the occurrence of a disease that is shared by humans and wildlife.

MF: What first inspired you to pursue this line of research?

SC: I became specifically interested in the prairie dog-plague study in response to a joint funding initiative by the NIH and NSF in "Ecology of infectious diseases." This program sought proposals for interdisciplinary research that would link ecology, epidemiology and anthropogenic environmental impacts. Because prairie dogs live in a highly fragmented habitat and are highly susceptible to a disease that is shared by humans and wildlife, this seemed like an ideal system to examine the ecological factors that influence disease emergence.

MF: Who was an important mentor to you during the development of your career?

SC: I've had excellent professors and advisors as well as the support and encouragement of my parents in my professional pursuits. My master's thesis advisor, Svata Louda at the University of Nebraska, taught me how to think critically, how to ask good ecological questions, and importantly, how to devise rigorous tests of those questions. My PhD advisor, Richard Forman, significantly shaped my perspective by encouraging me to consider how spatial arrangements of habitats and land uses affect ecological processes.

MF: What advice do you have for students who want to pursue similar careers?

SC: I would give at least three bits of advice for students who want to pursue careers in wildlife ecology or environmental science. First, pursue what you love. If you've chosen this field already, it is undoubtedly because you are drawn to some aspect of nature or science or ecology. I encourage you to continue to explore your passions, because that is what will give you the energy to accomplish your goals. Second, if it is financially possible for you, volunteer for a research project or for an environmental organization or agency. This will give you a chance to see what life is like in various positions and will help you determine what professional pathway you'd like to take. Third, remember that our field is relatively small and that you are becoming part of a community of scholars and professionals that you will continue to interact with throughout your career. These interactions with colleagues can provide knowledge and information and can also be a most enjoyable aspect of your career!

In Memoriam: John Prather



As many of you know John Prather passed away unexpectedly this year. I had the pleasure of working with John in the summers of 2004 and 2005 doing point counts for the Birds and Burns project in northern Arizona. I got to know John as a professional working in the field and away from the field in the bars of Flagstaff. Even in the short time that I knew him I found him to be a dedicated and gifted biologist and a "helluva" guy that was easy to talk to and hangout with. To see his prowess as a researcher refer to the latest issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management (JWM vol. 70 no.3 pp. 723-731) and read the article that he was lead author on, "Landscape Models to Predict the Influence of Forest Structure on Tassel-Eared Squirrel Populations". John will be missed not only by his friends and co-workers but by the discipline in general. The following memorial first appeared on the ForestERA website soon after John's death.

- Nate Gwinn

John William Prather, the science lead on the ForestERA Project, died February 20, 2006, in Flagstaff, Arizona, from a hypertensive aneurysm. He was 36. John was a scientist who combined research with a love of people and nature. At Northern Arizona University, his research focused on GIS-based wildlife habitat modeling, fire behavior modeling, and assessment of accuracy and uncertainty in GIS models in ponderosa pine forests of the southwestern United

States. His work on the ForestERA Project helped land managers assess how various management options might affect biodiversity on their properties. John's previous research focused on the ecology, behavior, and distribution of terrestrial vertebrates, with an emphasis on birds. He studied the ecology and behavior of congeneric warblers in Florida mangroves, effects of brood parasitism by cowbirds on avian hosts, ecophysiology of birds preparing for spring migration in Costa Rica, the use of caves by amphibians and bats in Arkansas, and the effects of recreation and forest management on avian communities.

John was born March 12, 1969, to Bill and Inez (Schmidt) Prather in Boulder, Colorado. After a childhood in Colorado and Kansas, John earned his bachelor and masters of science degrees at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and his doctorate at the University of Arkansas. From the time he was a child, John excelled at bird identification. He enjoyed leading field trips and organizing the annual Bird-a-thon for the Northern Arizona Audubon Society. He also enjoyed hiking and martial arts, and he was a thoughtful and passionate participant in grassroots democracy. By speaking eloquently on human rights, peace, and justice issues, in addition to environmental conservation, John added an intelligent and tolerant perspective to political debate in the Flagstaff community. His published letters and commentaries, and his involvement with Democracy for America, encouraged public engagement on the critical issues of our time.

Donations in John's memory may be made to the Northern Arizona Audubon Society (PO Box 1496 Sedona, AZ 86339), Democracy for America (DFA-Flagstaff, PO Box 31382 Flagstaff, AZ 86003), or to the John W. Prather graduate student scholarship (make check payable to NAU Foundation Account 4342, Box 5694, Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5694 or on line at <https://www4.nau.edu/mpcer/start.html> and select Prather Memorial Fund)

