

COMPILED EVALUATIONS



NOVEMBER 11–12, 2003
SACRAMENTO RADISSON HOTEL

The following represents a compilation of the ratings and comments from attendees of the recent symposium. Out of 248 attendees, 39 evaluation forms were submitted (15.7%) in addition to several e-mails with comments from attendees who didn't have a chance to submit the form at the end of the symposium. We sincerely thank those of you who took the time to write evaluations and comments. Responses to specific comments are included in this compilation.

To what extent were your personal/professional objectives satisfied? N=39. (5=highest; 1=lowest)
5=18 (46.2%), 4=18 (46.2%), 3=3 (7.7%), 2=0, 1=0

Comments:

"I wanted to learn more about the challenges for burrowing owls; I learned quite a bit at this symposium. Not enough time was allowed for presenters and questions."

"Wanted to (have) more "real/current" data available, specifically on Mojave Desert locations—(owls are increasing in these areas with increased food)."

"All were met except having more of a discussion on what can be done—perhaps an open session could have been dedicated to this topic."

"Great lineup with good variety."

"Very well administrated!"

"Would have been interested to hear the potential impact to all parties if the burrowing owl is listed."

"As a biological consultant, the symposium provided answer to questions, reinforced my current strategies with burrowing owls, and showed me what additionally I can be doing."

"Very interesting conference."

"Active relocation is a new concept for me and may be extremely applicable to my work project. I am excited to read and research further on this concept."

"Excellent compilation of recent research and integration of research with policy."

"As a new graduate student studying burrowing owls, this symposium greatly increased my knowledge and breadth of information about burrowing owls. I made contacts that will be very beneficial to my research."

"Very helpful for implementation of mitigation, monitoring, and management plans in south S.F. Bay Area and elsewhere. Also, good source of current scientific literature available."

"Good blend of research, management, and policy. Got better handle on various perspectives and viewpoints."

"Great conference."

"Great speakers, private, professional, agencies=many perspectives."

"Would have liked to hear more about long-term viability of small populations in habitat fragments."

"I'm a beginning field biologist, thus, I learned a significant amount of new information relating to regulation and mitigation issues, as well as status."

"The burrowing owl symposium was terrific. There was a good group of speakers and a nice crowd."

"Although I did not submit an evaluation form for the subject conference, I want to let you know that, in my opinion, the symposium was a success. I did not have an opportunity to speak with you at this busy

meeting. Other than a couple of speakers, all those giving papers or talks were well prepared. The scheduling of sessions was very tight, but there were important topics to cover. I congratulate you on obtaining appropriate speakers on a variety of topics concerning the burrowing owl and for holding the meeting at the appropriate venue of the Radisson. For me, the symposium confirmed what I had feared, that the burrowing owl is being mismanaged in California. Somehow, translocating owls has become more important than protecting habitat. Through your efforts, those of us in the Department of Fish and Game who attended this conference are in a better position, from the point of view of knowledge and resolve, to address the problem.”

“Cite speakers’ affiliations in the program. Name session chairs and cite their affiliations in the program. Assign someone to handle the slide projectors. Need signages at registration area to direct those registering and those pre-registered.”

“Would have liked more of the general type of information and less of specific issues/research.”

“Hands-on workshops would be a valuable addition to future symposia.”

Responses:

We apologize for not having signs at the registration desk. We normally provide them; this was just an oversight. Speakers’ affiliations were listed in the abstracts and the session chairs names and affiliations were listed on page 1 of the printed program.

**To what extent did the environment contribute to the learning experience? (5=highest; 1=lowest)
N=37. 5=7 (18.9%), 4=18 (48.6%), 3=10 (27%), 2=0, 1=2 (5.4%)**

Comments:

“The Radisson is generally a good quiet facility. Some problems with room temperature control.”

“Provide a room adequate for the number of attendees—those on the sides were unable to see the screen/slides (use 2 screens). Learn how to operate the lights before the conference starts.”

“A little cold (better than being stuff & hot though).”

“Needed bigger space—couldn’t see screen from all seating areas.”

“The Radisson service staff was ‘surly’, asking people to move along at the bagel table. Restaurant service staff annoyed when checks were separate.”

“The hotel and snacks were great. Thanks for providing something healthy to eat (fruit)!”

“It’s almost always too cold in this hotel. More interaction would occur with a catered lunch (with associated fee increase of course).”

“Allowing for slightly longer breaks to walk to and from the restrooms that were located far from the conference room. Restaurant service was slow, causing tardiness to attend sessions.”

“The hotel was very spread out, a little concerns with security issues. Also too far away from ‘other things’ to do in the off seminar hours (no car; traveled from so. Cal.).”

“More organized poster session would have been nice.”

“Having table, water available and adequate lighting with good viewing of AV materials contributed extensively to the experience. Overall a very relaxed environment; temp and environmental control were great.”

“Very comfortable room and setup.”

“Too cold!”

“Good facility, easy access, reasonable cost.”

“Radisson was fine; good place.”

“Great environment.”

“Good AV equipment; easy to hear and see all speakers and panelists.”

“Wretched architecture appears designed to prevent movement and foster urinary accidents. Poor food choices.”

“If you plan on conducting a workshop on a national holiday (Veteran’s Day), someone should at least make an effort to recognize it. I was very disappointed that the opening comments did not thank our vets. No political statement is necessary, just some recognition of those who protect our freedom to such an assembly. The moderation...the timekeeper needed to do it. Staying on schedule is very important and a basic courtesy. Those that don’t watch their time or respect the timekeeper are more discourteous than those who must rush because of the subsequent lack of time. Stay on time....Some of us don’t have all day to talk about this.”

Responses:

We apologize for the cramped room and recognize that some could not see the material on the projection screen. The screen was originally at floor level; however, the stage was used to allow more space for attendees. There were many, many people who registered onsite, which contributed to the cramped room. We encourage people to register ahead of time to avoid these problems. Regarding the hotel's "architecture", obviously, we can't do anything about its layout; however, there were restrooms located next to the house telephones just to the right of the conference room. The temperature in the room seemed to be fine for most attendees. We checked several times and, except for a few who were cold, most were very comfortable. We also recognize that the hotel is not near other establishments and finding lunch was not easy. The hotel had promised to provide a special lunch cart for our attendees but canceled it at the last minute. A letter is being sent to the Radisson about its lack of accommodating our attendees.

A catered lunch for approximately 250 attendees would have been cost prohibitive as well as our having to "choose" food for everyone. Raising registration fees to allow for this would have also created more complaints about high fees. The promotional materials about the symposium and schedule clearly stated that lunch is "on your own"; however, we recognize that there were not many choices without having to drive a short distance.

Regarding the national holiday, your comments have been duly noted and we apologize for not recognizing the holiday.

**To what extent did the written materials contribute to the learning experience? (5=highest; 1=lowest)
N=38. 5=4 (10.5%), 4=10 (26.3%), 3=13 (34.2%), 2=9 (23.6%), 1=2 (5.3%)**

Comments:

"Helps—would be neat to have hardcopies of entire papers."

"Abstracts are useful."

"Since the presentations were made so quickly because of time constraints, having copies of them in the material handed out would be helpful for following along. At the very least, it would be nice if they are made available on a website for downloading after the symposium."

"Need to have all PowerPoint presentations available at symposium or online and downloadable."

"Brief copies of presenter notes would have been helpful (8 slides per page or so)."

"Additional written materials would have been good but I recognize that many speakers don't provide anything."

"Always great to have the abstracts to take home. It would be excellent to have a list of attendees for future reference and to facilitate discussions during the meeting."

"It would be very helpful to be able to get speaker notes/handouts."

"Appreciated the abstracts—hopefully the full talks can be provided with more details in a printed symposium."

"Copies of the PowerPoint presentations could be provided—hardcopy, on a CD, or on the website after the symposium."

"The abstracts were helpful in providing direction but additional written materials would be helpful."

"A lot of the talks raised more questions than they answers. This indicates a lot of info still needs to be gathered on this species."

"It would have been helpful to have more complete abstracts and/or ideally full papers when available. Also, it would have been nice to have complete bios on the speakers with links to websites or other pertinent info sources."

"Written materials were nice to have, but did not really contribute to the learning experience. But the talks fulfilled that role."

"Abstracts helpful but proceedings would be better (although yes, more expensive)."

"Would have been helpful to have a copy of each presentation to take notes on in order to pay more attention rather than writing."

"It would be great if any papers written could be posted on the TWS website for download."

"Abstracts were great; however, would like to see notes pages for the speakers. Or all the ppt. pictures put on a CD for spread of knowledge."

“Inadequate. It would be helpful to get a list and contact info of attendees. It could be helpful for abstracts to include a recent publication reference/website where applicable.”

“There was some good info, but there could be more.”

“Would be nice to get mentioned bibliography via email.”

Responses:

Your comment regarding having speaker presentations in the handouts will be taking into consideration for future events. The Steering Committee is discussing how to best publish a Proceedings and the updated bibliography will either be included in the Proceedings or will be sent by e-mail to attendees. We normally do not provide attendee information to registrants to protect the privacy of the individuals.

To what extent were the objectives stated in the promotional literature or those stated at the beginning of the symposium satisfied? (5=highest; 1=lowest) N=38. 5=19 (50%), 4=16 (42.1%), 3=3 (7.9%), 2=0, 1=0

Comments:

“I wish we could have directly addressed the listing petition with/CDFG. I still don’t know why they recommended against listing.”

“All of the objectives were met.”

“A lot of the talks raised more questions than they answered. This indicates a lot of info still needs to be gathered on this species.”

“The symposium is well advertised and the syllabus was very explanatory. A very well done effort....”

“Great!”

“Far exceeded the goals with respect to cohesiveness and fluid motion.”

“I was absolutely amazed that this many people showed up to this wonderful symposium. Thank you all for the tremendous effort to bring the outstanding speakers to all of us.”

Responses:

Thanks for your comments.

To what extent did the symposium contain significant and current intellectual or practical information? (5=highest; 1=lowest) N=36. 5=20 (55.6%), 4=12 (33.3%), 3=4 (11.1%), 2=0, 1=0

Comments:

“The few presentations which were a higher intellectual level were diluted by ones at trivial levels.”

“Very up-to-date and new data.”

“Easily the best organized TWS conference I have attended. Thank you!”

“Some very wonderful speakers!”

“Great.”

“Excellent diversity and level of speakers in the community; presenting was excellent overall; great information and especially new information presented was excellent.”

“Very excellent up-to-date info., which will help me a lot with my current habitat conservation plan in our area.”

“Much was based on data collected in the 1990s. The current data presented was valuable but additional is needed.”

“Would have liked to see more discussions/strategies to change current policy to protect winter and foraging b. owl habitat.”

“Great lineup! Very informative and diverse.”

“The information regarding status and trends was helpful. I would have liked more discussion on what we can do as individuals and as a group to help stop the decline of burrowing owls.”

“Among so many opinions, passions, and studies, the message Fish and Game and USFWS gave was much more conservative and less drastic.”

“Need to have current data and not extrapolations. Where do owls really go in winter?”

“It seemed that a lot of statistical data is dated and may no longer be appropriate for use in attempting to determine today’s population. In addition, very little information was presented on data from the Mojave Desert that is being significantly impacted by development but no one is addressing impacts to owls. They are there, and are being moved by development (passive).”

“A few of the presentations were a little “lite”. Central Valley biologist working more in the valley could have been contacted.”

“Overall, a section on what/how to reach/teach landowners may have been good. A session on how to develop regional statewide innovative management would have necessitated more interaction”

“Overall, the symposium was very well organized and had good information. However, some speakers tried to cover too much in 20 minutes and had to rush through the information or skip portions of the presentation. This was unfortunate.”

“Please allow time for questions after each talk (even if this means less talks). It’s too hard to hold on to the questions by the panel discussion. I really appreciated having a microphone for questions.”

“Make some information on natural history, taxonomy, and systematic (one talk)—overall, the diversity of talks was excellent and very applicable.”

Responses:

Thanks for your comments.

**How would you rate the registration fees for the symposium? (5 = Too High, 1 = Too Low) N=35.
5=5 (14.3%), 4=7 (20%), 3=22 (62.9%), 2=1 (2.9%), 1=0**

Comments:

“Skip the food, coffee mugs, etc. It’s tough to pony up \$195 if you are retired. Provide a lowered registration for seniors/retired.”

“It was already expensive to travel to Sacramento. The high cost of the symposium almost cancelled my attendance. The cost was similar to Invasive Species Symposium that I was unable to attend due to cost.”

“Provide the presentations at the symposium.”

“About right; food could have been more substantial.”

“A bit high but I did appreciate how well organized the symposium was. The attractiveness of the program and the mug (although giving a “gift” isn’t necessary).”

“It would be helpful to have 1-day costs available. The mug was an excellent addition; thanks!”

“Just right! >\$170 would have been too high. The printed mug was an exceptional parting token!”

“OK with me.”

“A little high—more people might come if the cost was lower.”

“Considering costs and efforts for a 2-day symposium, breaks, social, and additional information, this price is in the ballpark.”

“Fair.”

“Lunch could have been provided for that price.”

“Just right.”

“Not too bad; worth the expense; appropriate.”

Responses:

Most felt the registration fees were about right. As mentioned above, it would be cost prohibitive to provide lunches to 250 people without raising the registration fees. As for “more substantial” food, we did not suggest that we would provide breakfast or meals at the morning and afternoon breaks. The snacks alone for both days cost about \$8,000; however, we provide them as a courtesy to our attendees.

We agree that a senior or retired registration fee is a good idea and will consider it for our next event. Skipping the food altogether would no doubt result in complaints from those who feel that we did not provide enough food.

I would like to suggest the following topics for workshops/conferences:

“General species of special concern.”

“Mojave ground squirrel, all raptors, all SSC, threatened CA/Fed, etc.”

“Conservation Action Plan. Some organization to move forward to work together to protect species. Someone made reference to developers, conservationists working together. Some developers are “responsible” and would appreciate working toward a common goal of conservation area. They don’t always know who to contact. The Chino Basin in an area prime to create some habitat. California prison

area, Chino Airport, So. Calif Land Federation, Inland Empire Utilities, City of Chino, Lewis Companies, City of Ontario.”

“Am anxious to hear more about specific management practices that can be implemented on protected area like the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Riverside County, CA.”

“At least one presentation updating knowledge on burrowing owl ___ composition or foraging frequency. More species biology information.”

“Raptors of CA (general)—life history and management. Exotic species—plants and animals, management, ‘threats’ to CA species. Ecosystem management in CA—techniques/balancing especially grasslands: burning, mowing, grazing??? etc.”

“Discussion of recent comments and future responses to listing of CTS.”

“Yes—habitat restoration!! Non-native control, seeding, restoring hydrology, ecological functions, etc. Something similar to what the Society for Ecological Restoration offers but specific to western issues.”

“Ways that you can help, volunteer opportunities, and contacts for people that want to help research.”

Responses:

Thank you for providing suggestions for future events. Your suggestions will be passed on to our Professional Development Committee for consideration.

We appreciate your taking the time to complete this evaluation form. Please make sure to return this form to the registration desk before you leave.

DON'T MISS THE WESTERN SECTION'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY 2004! INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.TWS-WEST.ORG.