

# The Wildlife Society

## Western Section

### President's Message

*Douglas A. Bell, Ph.D.*

Of the many things that can be said about the wildlife profession (e.g. it is almost never boring), heartbreak is rarely mentioned. Last week I was at a local wildlife hospital, facing an anesthetized prairie falcon splayed out on the operating table. She was a wind farm casualty that had undergone a month of arduous treatment and then suffered a catastrophic setback. At this point, the consensus among the three attending experts – a veterinarian (a former student of mine), a vet assistant, and an experienced raptor rehabber, was to put her down. I had the option of saying no and of taking her on to attempt a rehab with worse prognosis than before. She looked so broken. My mind raced, grasping at logic – the importance of the population versus the individual versus the species, the quality of her prolonged life, the odds of any success, green energy solutions - all littered with my own love for prairies. Out of this conflict I distilled a decision and agreed with the consensus. Did I make the right decision? It is hard to know – easy to second guess. The fact that the vet mentioned she had already “died” a month ago when irrevocably struck down in the wind farm did not lessen my heartbreak. As a wildlife professional, I know we have to face decisions with relative steadiness and logic, but somehow this one got to me. The



lines blur and the profession that becomes your soul becomes your profession. Which brings me to my point (if there is one here): whether in the cubicle or in the field, you are all contributing to our future and the common good, and your experiences, as varied and diverse as they are, can enrich both our organization and future wildlife biologists. Please step up in any way you can, become involved and stay engaged with your local Chapter, the Western Section and The Wildlife Society.

Speaking of stepping up, I wanted to again thank our Conference Planning Committee for their excellent work on our 2013 annual meeting. Based on the post-conference survey poll, it appears the meeting was indeed a success. There were over 550

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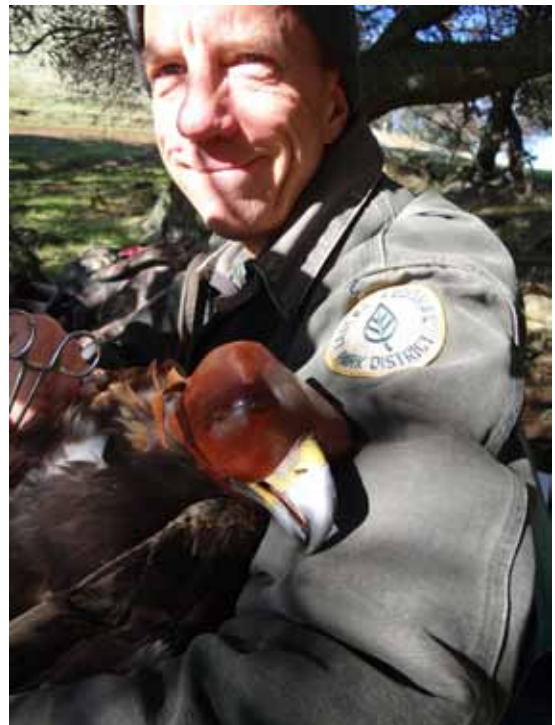
conference attendees, which is a near-record, especially considering the paucity of travel support for many government professionals. Many commented on the cramped nature of the meeting facilities. We agree, but I would like to point out that the Western Section is at an inflection point when it comes to finding venues that fit us. It is a case of "be careful what you wish for" - we are slightly too large for the more intimate venues, yet too small for the larger, and much more expensive facilities. Nevertheless, we will continue to assess our options for meeting facilities with your comments in mind.

I also wanted to thank all of you who could attend the annual meeting. Attendees were treated to a plethora of 16 concurrent sessions with over 136 scheduled oral presentations and 44 poster presentations. We were able to provide venues for the Western Snowy Plover Recovery Team Meeting and Symposium, the CA/NV Golden Eagle Working Group, the CA Bat Working Group, the CA Fisher Working Group, and the CA PIF Working Group (clearly, a lot of *work* is accomplished at our meetings!). There were opportunities for professional advancement through a Section 7 workshop headed by Jana Alfonso and Eric Shott, a Scientific and Technical Writing Workshop taught by Jack Barclay, Resume Workshop and Resume Critiques by Barbara Peters and a Presentation Workshop by Dr. Jon Hooper. Dave Wyatt, Student Affairs Chair, spearheaded the Student Professional Lunch, a workshop on the job interview process and a panel on early federal careers, the latter co-hosted with Rhys Evans, while Karen Swaim organized our Student Career Fair. Dr. John Perrine deftly moderated our plenary on the Endangered Species Act. Our Evening Banquet offered a full plate with an emotional memorial to Jim D. Yoakum by Dr. Reg Barrett, a fascinating keynote by the author Lily Raff-McCaulou on her philosophy and experiences of becoming a hunter, and our annual raffle emceed by Joe DiDonato, who will always have a fallback career should he ever give up being a wildlife biologist. Post-conference activities included a Wilderness First Aid course taught by Bobbie Foster and Foster Calm, a delightful field trip to the

Sutter Buttes lead by Dave Wyatt and courtesy of the Middle Mountain Foundation, and a Hunter Education for Conservation Professionals course organized by Mark Heath and Program Director Cynthia Perrine, and taught by Cynthia Perrine, Mark Heath, Mark Pabst, Charlie de la Rosa and CWA's George Oberstat. Our Staff consisting of Program Director Cynthia Perrine, Event Coordinator Candace Renger and Webmaster Eric Renger, served above and beyond the call of duty for this conference. I apologize for not having the space to highlight you all by name!

Lastly from the conference, I would like to congratulate the student presentation winners. For oral presentations: 1<sup>st</sup> place Kelly Weintraub, 2<sup>nd</sup> place Laurel Serieys, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place Jennifer Rowe. For student posters: 1<sup>st</sup> place Julie Shaw, 2<sup>nd</sup> place Maryjo Olegario and 3<sup>rd</sup> place Rebecca Green. Thanks to all of the students who participated. It is not easy to prepare and present during the semester when so much else is going on, so I really appreciate all of your efforts.

(Bell, cont'd on page 7)



*Douglas A. Bell, Eagle Tagging  
Photo by Joe DiDonato*

## President-Elect Message

### Natasha Dvorak

I am honored to write you as incoming President-Elect of the Western Section. I agreed to run as a candidate for two main reasons. First, I enjoy being of service to the Society. Second, the experience of serving a three-year term as president-elect, president, and past-president will oblige me to raise my eyes from the minutia of consulting to see the forest that I cannot now discern because I am in the trees. More colorfully stated, I endeavor to unsmash my nose from this glass so that I may see out of the window.

For life is not without risks, as Reginald Barrett, Section member and Goertz Professor of Wildlife Management at U.C. Berkeley reminded us in his 2004 article, *The Future of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society*: "Risk is an inevitable part of existence- for organizations, as well as individuals," he quotes the president of the Boone and Crockett Club, "...if we stand aside or 'play it safe' there are risks to our very reason for existence." *The world of wildlife management is not black and white.*"

To the first end, my primary service this year is to bring you the 2014 Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada scheduled for January 29-31. I have read your ample feedback comments from past conferences and will incorporate them where possible into next year's event. I endeavor to provide a conference that is congruous with Nevada and California, and integrates concepts useful to Hawaii and Guam; our sub regions share the challenge of preserving species amidst shrinking habitats, and concepts around island biogeography are now applicable to many inland areas. Let's work together to effect a conference that will give what you what you came for. I am listening to your ideas for plenary themes and conference sessions that will encourage collaboration and broadly appeal to our membership.



To the second end, which relates back to the first, I strive to better understand the biological, spatiotemporal, and socio-political landscape of California, Nevada, Hawaii, and Guam. It's certainly a busy landscape out there. A patchwork of urban, managed, and wild places, parceled and sectioned. Atmosphere and climate. Biota. Economy. Society. Structures. Boundaries. So many parts to the whole. Each an orchestra...how many composers? It seems harder than ever to see the forest, and it sounds more like musical chaos than harmonious complexity.

Wondering how the Section has thought about this over the years, I turned to the electronically available *Transactions* from 1966 to the present. These are available on the Section's website, thanks to the hard work and dedication of past Board members. In the late 1960s, the Section wrote about a sea change from consumptive to recreational use of nature, the steadily increasing task of wildlife agencies to perform plan review, and the social imperatives of a country to exploit some amount of natural resources for the benefit of its citizens. In the 1970s, we wrote about *Populations and Water in California*, *Politics and the Wildlife Profession*, *The Role of Enforcement in Modern Fish and Wildlife Management*. We pondered the role of the public in resource development and the private in resource management. We asked ourselves, *What Lies Ahead in Wildlife Conservation?* In the 1980s, we wrote a lot about enhancing our profession, the applications of newly-accessible technologies like GIS and computer databases, the tools of CEQA, and asked ourselves *Are We Ready for the Next Ten Years?* In the 1990s, we talked about partnerships in resource policy and legislation, landscape-level approaches to wildlife management, advocacy in the profession, and assessed *Changing Roles for Wildlife Professionals- Where We've Been and Where We're Headed*. In the 2000s, we tried adaptive management, discussed the impacts of transportation systems on wildlife populations, lamented the fragmentation of terrestrial habitat, responded by going large-scale with habitat connectivity planning, and committed to *Meeting the Challenges: The Western Section's role in developing tomorrow's resource management professionals*.



## Past-President

*Linda Leeman*

# What makes an organization effective?

**E**ffectiveness is a key part of success. Some define effectiveness as “doing the right thing.” For an organization, effectiveness might be how well the organization achieves the outcomes it intends to produce, or in other words, organizational effectiveness is characterized by the ability to do what you set out to do.

The Western Section certainly has demonstrated some successes recently based on a few metrics: growing membership, financial stability, high quality technical material and programs, good attendance and participation at events. These successes are truly due to the tireless dedication of many individuals and they are accomplishments for which we should feel proud. But I have a deep sense that we could be doing more and that we are not as *effective* as we could be as an organization.

I think that the Western Section is on the verge of a transformation as a result of our successes. We are no longer a small organization of a few people who went to college together or worked together for a season on a field crew. We had almost 600 people attend our Annual Meeting earlier this year, and yet we are still run by an executive board of volunteers with the support a few part-time contractors and many other volunteers (who all do an amazing job).

Comments received about the Annual Meeting were mostly very positive, but I wonder... are we meeting the needs of our diverse membership?... are we fulfilling our mission (and does our membership even know what it is)?... what is our vision for the future of our organization, and what steps do we need to take to achieve it? In summary: *What can the Western Section do to increase our effectiveness as an organization in the future?*

I can not, nor would it be appropriate for me to, answer these questions on my own. The member survey sent out last month by our Program Director, Cynthia Perrine, will provide some answers. We also are considering a strategic planning process to help us define a vision for our future and identify the steps and organizational structure that will help us get there. My key task this coming year as Past President will be to help the Western Section start a strategic planning process that will enable us to articulate our goals and to develop an effective organizational structure. If you want to get involved or have thoughts you would like to share, please contact me. More information will be coming later this year about the Western Section’s strategic planning process.

(Dvorak, cont'd from page 3)

It’s a good start toward understanding the landscape we all work in. The complexity is no reason to stop moving forward, rather it is further reason to embrace *understanding by doing*. For life is not without risks, as Reginald Barrett, Section member and Goertz Professor of Wildlife Management at U.C. Berkeley reminded us in his 2004 article, *The Future of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society*: “Risk is an inevitable part of existence- for organizations, as well as individuals’, he quotes the president of the Boone and Crockett Club, ‘...if we stand aside or ‘play it safe’ there are risks to our very reason for existence.’ The world of wildlife management is not black and white.”

In closing, thank you for electing me and I promise to *move forward*. I’m always open to philosophical and practical discussions regarding nature, conservation, and the role of The Western Section of The Wildlife Society so please call or email and let’s get to know each other better. Author Margaret Atwood said “In the spring at the end of the day you should smell like dirt.” So then, until summer when we discourse again in this newsletter, may you all be well and smell like dirt.

## Treasurer's Report

*John McNerney*



**G**reetings from your newly appointed Treasurer!

We are pleased to report that 2012 was another fiscally strong year for the Western Section. Our beginning asset balance for the year was \$281,640.40 and our final balance was \$355,241.02 for a net increase of \$73,600.40. We are still holding about \$75,000 for a Packard Foundation grant we are managing. So, on first glance, it appears we had a "break-even" year. However, if we look at the income from membership dues and events we held in 2012 and compare that to our expenses for the year (as shown below), we can see that the Section had a very productive year. The net income for these events was \$100,862.87 and our expenses were \$68,708.59, leaving a net income of \$32,154.28. We believe this is a much more useful way to

assess the year because our starting and ending balances vary widely each year due to variable patterns of income for the annual meeting and related symposia/ workshops. Income from these events is typically received in December and January.

As you can see, a little more than one-half of the Section's annual income comes from the annual conference. We strive to keep registration rates low at this meeting, which means conference attendance is critical to generate revenue for Section operations and supplemental programs. We are pleased to put the additional profit to use in professional development, our research and student support. Many thanks to all our members for your continued support of the Western Section!

### Income from Section Events and Other Main Sources

2012 Annual Conference Profit	\$	53,601.37
2012 Section Workshops	\$	19,092.82
Western Section Dues	\$	15,360.00
Professional Products	\$	4,081.00
Dividends	\$	7,966.38
Other Income	\$	761.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>100,862.87</b>

### Section Expenses

General Administration	\$	6,792.79
Program Director	\$	16,001.76
Web Management	\$	2,141.40
Newsletter	\$	3,554.25
Transactions	\$	350.00
Bookkeeping	\$	5,462.22
Accounting	\$	915.00
Exec. Board Expenses	\$	6,917.09
Donations, Awards, Grants	\$	9,214.88
Bank Fees	\$	6,072.16
2013 Annual Meeting	\$	4,625.00
2014 Annual Meeting	\$	1,871.03
2015 Annual Meeting	\$	507.50
Other Expenses	\$	4,283.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>68,708.59</b>

### Donate to the Western Section Endowment Fund!

The Western Section established an Endowment Fund through a member-approved change to our Bylaws in 2007. The goal of the fund is accumulate a core of principal that will not be depleted. Interest generated from the fund will be used to support the Section's education, outreach, and scholarship programs. The Endowment Fund principal receives input from all bequests, life membership dues, and donations specifically made for the fund. The fund is administered by three Trustees, including the Treasurer and two other Section members appointed by the President. Currently, former President Scott Osborn, former Treasurer Gary Falxa, and Past-President Marshall White are the Trustees.

The Endowment Fund was established with a \$38,000 bequest from the estate of Section member Douglas Donaldson. Please consider adding to the Section's fund by making a donation or becoming a Lifetime Member of the Section. Donations to the Fund are tax-deductible. Lifetime memberships cost \$450, which may be paid in up to three installments. Helping to increase the core principal in the Endowment Fund is a great way to support the Section's programs for students and education/outreach!

## Section Representative Report

*Don Yasuda*



TWS Council met for our mid-year meeting March 24-25 in Arlington, Virginia. I flew out early and went to TWS headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland and was able to meet and talk with our new Executive Director, Ken Williams. He began in early March but is very quickly becoming familiar in depth with our operations and issues. Additional changes at headquarters include hiring Katie Edwards as the Coordinator of Professional Development, which includes the subunits and certification programs. Katie replaces Shannon Pederson, who is pursuing her PhD at the Univ. of Maryland. Ken Williams also announced that he was going to continue to have Darryl Walter serve as Chief of Staff since that arrangement was working well for staff and headquarters operations.

In terms of business, TWS remains in very guarded financial condition. While we are working hard to achieve a balanced budget and staff have undertaken significant cost-cutting measures, we need to find ways to increase revenues to re-build reserves. This will be a significant driver when Council updates the TWS Strategic Plan this fall. With an Executive Director again, we will increase our efforts at fundraising and seeking grants. TWS will be switching to a new membership management system which should allow members to better manage their contact and membership information. The next, and my final Council meeting will be at the TWS Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin October 5-10, 2013.



*Board Member and Southern California Chapter Representative Jeff Lincer at work.*

## TWS-WS Policies

The Wildlife Society Western Section strives to be an inclusive organization and does not tolerate harassment or discrimination of any kind. We also seek to protect our members' personal data by not sharing database information with other organizations and other prohibited activities.

For more information about these policies please visit our [webpage](#).

(Bell, cont'd from page 2)

Our Board continues to be infused with new and/or familiar faces. Please join me in welcoming the following:

Natasha Dvorak, President-Elect; and John McNerney, Past-President, now Treasurer. Our new Chapter Representatives are: Wendy Knight (CA Central Coast), Lisa Ollivier (CA North Coast), Adam Yaney-Keller (Cal Poly Student Chapter), and Rachel Fichman (UC Davis Student Chapter). Congratulations on your elections, and thanks to the outgoing reps for your service. I especially thank Linda Leeman, for her outstanding service as President in 2012. We continue to be very fortunate to have such experienced and extremely helpful Executive Board Members!

As we move into what for many is the very busy field season, please keep local Chapter and Western Section functions and workshops on your radar screens, and reach out to neighboring chapters whenever you have the chance. The more we can work across our own borders, the better our Western Section will be. Please feel free to contact me anytime, should you have concerns, ideas, or just want to touch base. I look forward to continuing our dialog on the ESA into the future, and I look forward to seeing you all in Reno in 2014, at the latest!

## Conservation Affairs Committee

*Armand Gonzales*



The Conservation Affairs Committee is continuing to work on plans to reach-out to decision makers in the form of an introductory letter, where the Western Section is described, and information about our mission and goals, our policies, and our inherent expertise about wildlife and in wildlife science is shared. The CAC has crafted a letter that will be signed by President Bell and sent to a few decision makers initially, and then more broadly later after the committee has had the chance to evaluate the number and types of responses received. In the letter, we offer expert knowledge to decision-makers, pertinent to decisions they may be deliberating on, related to wildlife and habitats. Discussion of our plan during past Executive Board meetings focused on the uncertainty of what kind of response would be received, which could be a problem if the letter is sent far and wide, and we become inundated with requests for scientific information. The Executive Board didn't want to create a situation where we offer help, but can't deliver due to too large of a response and not enough Western Section members stepping up to help. Questions also came up about who would be the "expert" and what would they say. While it is unlikely that we will be overwhelmed with requests for information, The CAC agreed to start slowly with a pilot letter and reevaluate the situation in a few months.

The answer to the question of who will be the expert is Western Section members and the CAC. The expertise that would be shared would be TWS policies and position statements. If the CAC receives a request for information on a specific species or ecosystem, they could connect them to a member/expert provided the member/expert agrees to help. Chances are good that if a decision maker requests information about a species or habitat, providing them with credible scientific information to help them with their decisions would be a good incentive for members to help, *i.e.* knowing that the focus of their expertise will be affected by some upcoming decision.

The next question needing resolution is who the letter should be sent to. Should the letter be sent to state level decision makers *i.e.* Legislators, or County Supervisors or Planning Directors, or City Council members? If you have an opinion or suggestions, please send them to CAC Chair, Armand Gonzales, [agonzales7200@yahoo.com](mailto:agonzales7200@yahoo.com)

## Program Director News

### *Cynthia Perrine*

**M**embership Committee Chair Don Yasuda and I have created a survey to collect feedback on Western Section membership services and initiatives. Despite some syntax issues on SurveyMonkey's end of things, the survey is actively collecting important feedback for our Executive Board. All current and prior members are invited to participate by following the direct link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MemberWSTWS>.

Speaking of feedback, our post-conference survey has been analyzed; thanks for all the great comments and suggestions!! Some common themes for improvement include expanding the lunch break to allow for more daytime networking, lengthening the poster session/welcome reception, and to provide more space outside concurrent session rooms for congregating and conversation between sessions. It's clear from the responses that a 2-3 day conference is the best fit, and we're working on all these ideas as we plan the 2014 and 2015 conferences.

Field Camp is coming in Summer 2013! We've partnered with Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's Swanton Pacific Ranch near Davenport, California to offer a 12-day intensive course where participants will learn common field techniques for identifying and monitoring vertebrates. Professional wildlife biologists from private firms and public agencies will team-teach the course along with Assistant Professor John Perrine, through a combination of lectures and discussions, laboratory and field exercises, and a field-based project. The camp is open to anyone junior-status or above who has completed the pre-requisite coursework or equivalent, regardless of current university affiliation. Fees are still being finalized, but the 12-day, lodging and meals-included, 4-unit course will cost about \$1600/student.

A post-conference workshop, "Hunter Education for Conservation Professionals" was well received by 11 participants. After learning the basics of hunter safety, including laws and safe firearms-handling practices, each participant fired a shotgun at moving clays, a rifle

at stationary targets, and archery at decoy targets. Discussions centered around the ethics of hunting and especially the role of hunting in conservation and management of wildlife. All participants passed a hunter safety written test and received certificates that make them eligible to purchase a hunting license. Most of the participants do not plan to hunt, but took the workshop to better understand hunters and hunting's role in conservation.

Join the conversation! Our facebook page continues to grow and we've had some intriguing posts recently to remind us that some people interested in wildlife are not interested in or receptive to science-based approaches to management. I continue to explore which posts and photos get good comments or "likes" and welcome feedback or suggestions about anything you might think a fun addition to the page.

I recently attended a "Land Ethic Leaders," workshop offered by the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Anchored by a screening of the "Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time," we spent time tuning into and deepening our personal land ethic. We also explored methods of cultivating a land ethic within our respective communities. Let me know if you're interested in hosting a screening of "Green Fire," and discussion of the movie and land ethic within any group in your community.

Finally, I'm running for Western Section Representative to TWS Council, as Don Yasuda's term is ending this year. You can find more information on that through the TWS monthly publication, *The Wildlifer* and all TWS members will receive a ballot in May. I appreciate being considered, and the Section Executive Board is discussing what that might mean for continuing my work as Program Director. If you have ideas on this, please contact President Doug Bell.





## Professional Development Committee

***Rhys Evans***

We will have two amazing workshops returning this spring. More info and registration for Noninvasive Acoustic Monitoring of Bats on our website:

[http://www.tws-west.org/upcoming\\_events.php](http://www.tws-west.org/upcoming_events.php)



### **Bat Ecology and Field Techniques Workshop**

**Happened April 5 – 8, 2013**

**Location: Dye Creek Preserve, Tehama County, near Red Bluff, CA**

This workshop combined lecture, discussion and demonstrations to introduce participants to the ecology and conservation of California bats, covering species accounts, physiology, anatomy, behavioral ecology, conservation issues, and mitigation strategies. Field techniques of mist-netting, assessing species presence or absence, and acoustic monitoring were demonstrated with participants gaining hands-on experience in mist net set-up and acoustic monitoring and analysis. 20 Participants netted bats at 2 locations despite windy, inclement weather. More details to follow in our Summer newsletter.

### **Noninvasive Acoustic Monitoring of Bats, Field Techniques Workshop**

**Thursday, May 2 to Sunday, May 5, 2013**

**Location: Dye Creek Preserve, Tehama County, near Red Bluff, CA**

This workshop will introduce participants to noninvasive acoustic monitoring and species identification of bats. Beginning with the fundamentals of acoustics to interpret the biology and ecology of echolocation; we'll work to understand how bats use sound and how we can interlope into this realm to survey and monitor bats. From this foundation, participants will then learn the theory and practice of recording and analyzing ultrasonic bat vocalizations to interpret bat activity and species presence. Field outings will provide hands-on experience in deploying equipment and acquiring data to process. Tools and techniques for both short-term and long-term passive monitoring of bats and automated data processing will be demonstrated. Participants will recognize the acoustic characteristics of western North American bats, essential for species discrimination. Full spectrum acoustic techniques will be emphasized, as recommended by the new USFWS guidelines for Wind and Wildlife when species ID is important. Meals are included.

We also had not three, not four, but FIVE successful PDC workshops/symposia offered in association with our 2013 annual meeting. We'd like to thank our participants and especially the coordinators: Technical Writing (Jack Barclay); Western Snowy Plover (Mark Colwell, Jim Watkins), Wilderness First Aid (Bobbi Foster); ESA Section 7 (Jana Affonso and Eric Shott as leads; Amy Fesnock, Julie Vance, Mari Quillman and Sharon Lockhart as guest speakers); and a crew of great instructors at the Hunter Education for Conservation Professionals workshop. (see page 2)

Let your Western Section Professional Development Committee know what you'd like us to do next; there's a representative of almost every chapter on our committee, so please speak up!

## Did you know?

# TWS-WS Grant Money is Available to Members

In pursuit of the objective to encourage high standards of professional achievement, the Western Section has established an honoraria fund to assist participation in professional meetings, conferences, symposia and other continuing education activities.

Additionally, each year The Wildlife Society-Western Section makes funds available to students to encourage their participation. These funds can be used for partial reimbursement of transportation, lodging, registration and meal expenses. Travel grants of up to \$300 will be awarded to a limited number of students.

For more information visit our website at:

<http://www.tws-west.org/grants.php>

## Upcoming Events

### **Noninvasive Acoustic Monitoring of Bats**

May 2-5, 2013  
Los Molinas, CA

### **Field Camp**

August 4-16, 2013  
Swanton Pacific Ranch  
Santa Cruz County

### **TWS National Meeting**

October 5-9, 2013  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### **Western Section Annual Meeting**

January 29-31, 2014  
Reno, Nevada

### **Western Section Annual Meeting**

January 28-30, 2015  
Santa Rosa, CA

**26<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference** will be held 3-6 March 2014, at the Hilton Waikoloa Village, Big Island, Hawaii

[www.vpconference.org](http://www.vpconference.org)

***Note to California employees -***  
**Start planning early to attend the**  
**2014 Western Section**  
**Annual Meeting in Reno!**

*Research out of-state travel request guidelines for your organization, consider travel grants from your chapter and Western Section, and consider submitting an abstract for poster or oral presentation. Western Section will post justification letters of support on our website for you to reference in your requests. Hope to see you there as we celebrate 60 years of Western Section and our 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting!*

## San Joaquin Valley Chapter Report

*Linda Connolly*



It is an exciting and busy time for the San Joaquin Valley Chapter. Of course we are honored to have been awarded Chapter of the Year at the recent Western Section annual conference. We hope to continue providing great opportunities to our members and nonmembers alike, and to continue to have strong competition from the efforts and successes of the other Chapters.

We're getting our events calendar in order for the next couple months: Our annual Natural Communities Conference was March 28, 2013, and we actually had a waiting list for interested presenters! We also are planning a blunt-nosed leopard lizard workshop, to be held May 2-3, 2013, in Bakersfield. The event will include a day of classroom instruction followed by a day in the field identifying lizards and learning about their habitat. Successful completion of the workshop contributes toward an individual's qualification as a Level II species surveyor.

Our Chapter Board recently approved a donation to fund award prize money for a California Department of Fish and Wildlife contest geared toward Bakersfield-area students who will create educational posters about San Joaquin kit fox issues in the urban environment. We are excited to see the results! And just a reminder, we are always accepting applications for research grants; the application is on our website. We also welcome ideas for ways the Chapter can help foster research, education, and conservation. For more information about the Chapter, our research grants, and recent events, visit our website at <http://joomla.wildlife.org/SanJoaquin/>



*Sandhill Cranes, Photo by Eveline Larrucea*

## Davis Student Chapter Report

***Rachel Fichman***

The UC Davis Student Chapter had a very productive and exciting quarter this winter! To start with the end of Fall quarter, our much anticipated trip out to Tolay Ranch to trap small mammals in November had to be cancelled due to bad weather. Sadly we were unable to rescheduled our survey, but we will have another chance to go out in spring. Thankfully we can now say all our Winter events went splendidly. First, we had our regular Davis Student Chapter meeting on January 24th. Members competed in a fun, yet challenging trivia game of identifying local wildlife! Then on February 9th we went out to Stebbins Cold Canyon Reserve for birding, hiking along the trails and finding California newts (pictured below). In the evening we also held a club social where members joined together to watch a comedic movie about birding called *The Big Year*. To round out our quarter, we had our annual trip to Año Nuevo. This yearly trip down the coast lets us see the elephant seals when they come ashore to breed which is always an exhilarating experience. For those members who did not want to make the drive out to Año Nuevo, we also assisted with manning the Putah Creek Council's table at Yolo Basin Foundation's Annual Duck Days event. Overall our chapter has had a great time, and we look forward to participating in Davis' Annual Picnic Day event. And once again, don't forget to check out our new website!

<https://sites.google.com/a/ucdavis.edu/wildlifesocietyucd/>



*Members of the Davis Chapter displaying a few California newts found at the Stebbins Cold Canyon Reserve*



## Book Review

by Matthew Bettelheim, TWS-WS Member

### ***Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet***

by Maria Mudd Ruth

Rodale Inc. ([www.rodalestore.com](http://www.rodalestore.com)), 2005, 298 pages, \$23.95.

Up until the latter half of the 20th century, ornithologists were plagued by an oological mystery: Of the 700-plus birds known to nest in North America/Canada, the nest (and nesting behavior) of only one species – the marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – had eluded discovery. The marbled murrelet was first collected in 1776 in Alaska’s Prince William Sound by Dr. William Anderson, chief surgeon and naturalist to Captain James Cook’s HMS Resolution during their voyage in search of the Northwest Passage. At journey’s end, it took more than a decade before one of Anderson’s murrelets was formally designated in 1789 as the type specimen to describe this new species of auk. At the time, so little-to-nothing was known about this elusive bird that even famed naturalist John James Audubon fudged it by illustrating the marbled murrelet (known to him as a “slender-billed guillemot”) clinging to (and by association, nesting on) a seaside cliff like other typical murrelets based on the hearsay of fellow naturalists. But what naturalists didn’t know was that

not only did the webbed feet of this species rarely touch terra firma, but finding the nest of this singular species would tantalize searchers for the next 185 years.

In 1923, while visiting Humboldt County, ornithologist Joseph Grinnell made the following observations in his journal (July 23):

“Each morning since I’ve been here, I’ve heard cries of some sort of birds high overhead in the fog. They could only be heard very early. At first I thought they might be hawks. Then I began to remember some of the same notes years ago, on Pescadero Creek in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and, I think, Sitka, Alaska – marbled murrelets! This morning, the fog was higher than usual and also the producers of the cries were out later than usual, up to 5:35 A.M. And I saw them! Birds with small chunky bodies, and rapidly, continuously beating small wings, like a small duck, very high, sometimes entering the fog... Mostly when I heard them, they were hidden in the fog... It would be easy to imagine them passing between the ocean to

the west of us and the forested slopes of the mountain within half a mile of us. Truly a mystery!”

How could the nest of this seabird – a bird known affectionately today as a fog lark, dip chick, buzz bomb, little hell diver, and described at times as a flying potato or dark meteor – go undiscovered for so long? Given their cryptic nesting behaviors – crepuscular flights, inland sites, and proclivity for heights – simply put, no one knew where to look. Along the shore? In the woods? In trees or on the ground? Today, any good field guide will tell you that marbled murrelets nest along the Pacific Northwest up to 40 miles inland in old-growth forests on the thick, mossy limbs of mature redwoods, fir, spruce, cedars, and hemlocks at heights of 150 feet or more. Few guides, however, will explain how hard to come by these few facts proved to be.

Maria Mudd Ruth unravels this mystery in *Rare Bird*, an examination and exaltation of the evasive auk that taunted naturalists across one continent, two countries (United States

(Bettelheim, cont’d on page 14)

(Bettelheim, cont'd from page 13)

and Canada), three centuries, and four states (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California). Rare Bird plays out through Ruth's viewpoint as a professed "accidental naturalist" naive to the world of ornithology or field biology. Through the marbled lenses of one enraptured by this enigmatic bird, Ruth brings to life the stories of the naturalists who toiled at great lengths, early hours, and towering heights to gather the raw data necessary to solve this mystery. Ruth moves effortlessly through time and space, crossing centuries and state lines to walk in the footsteps of intrepid explorers or in the shoes of exhausted researchers. From Anderson and Cook's type collection in 1776 to tree trimmer Hoyt Foster's fortuitous find at 148 feet atop a Douglas fir in 1974 to the wood mills, gill nets, oil spills, and raven kills in between, Ruth recounts the marbled murrelets' rocky past with patience, compassion, and humor.

In short, Rare Bird is well done, a fitting tribute to the secretive marbled murrelet and the rare breed of biologists that have dedicated their lives to protecting it.

## Field Camp Announcement

Vertebrate Field Zoology (ZOO S329) is an intensive, resident field camp emphasizing wildlife identification and field techniques for vertebrates. Administered by California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and Western Section of The Wildlife Society, the 4-unit course, held at Cal Poly's scenic Swanton-Pacific Ranch near Santa Cruz, will include hands-on opportunities, data collection and a team research project. Instructors include wildlife professionals from agency, academic, private and non-profit sectors. Informal time provides additional mentoring opportunities.

Meals, lodging, and 4-units of academic credit are included in the \$1,599 course fee. Register through Cal Poly Extended Education or call (805) 756-2053 for registration details. Course is limited to 16 participants, with students working in groups of 4-5 to maximize hands-on experiential learning and mentoring.

**Filled out the Western Section Member Survey yet?**

**Please do so we may consider  
your point of view!**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MemberWSTWS>

This electronic survey will take just minutes to fill out and is your opportunity to contribute to the future direction of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society.

Thank you!

## Awards and Grants Committee Report

### *Richard Burg*

The following awards were presented at the TWS-WS Banquet on Thursday January 31, 2013.

The Raymond F. Dasmann Award for the Professional of the Year went to **Dr. Brian Cypher**, Associate Director, Endangered Species Recovery Program, California State University, Stanislaus. Over the past 30 some odd years of his professional career, Dr. Cypher's contributions represent important and significant additions to our body of knowledge dealing with kit fox and other small/mid-sized mammals. Dr. Cypher's research emphasis is canids and other predators, but other research experience includes work with small mammals, reptiles, ungulates, and plants.

Dr. Cypher is considered one of the foremost experts if not *the* foremost expert in kit fox ecology. He has worked extensively on endangered San Joaquin kit fox, but also worked on endangered island fox, red fox, gray fox, coyote, and gray wolves, and indirectly with swift fox and corsac fox. Dr. Cypher is internationally known for his research on canids, especially San Joaquin kit fox. He has been involved with research and conservation efforts on animals and plants in the San Joaquin Valley since 1990.



The Conservationist of the Year Award - This year we are very pleased to honor the **Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)** for their dedication to the

conservation of desert habitat throughout southern California. The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) was created by legislation in 1947 to administer a capital outlay program for wildlife conservation and related public recreation. Originally created within the California Department of Natural Resources, and later placed with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, WCB is a separate and independent Board with authority and funding to carry out an acquisition and development program for wildlife conservation. Since 1947 the WCB has allocated over \$2,500,000,000 (that's billions) to various projects (acquisitions, restorations, conservation easements, public access).



(Awards, cont'd from page 15)

The *Barrett A. Garrison Outstanding Mentor Award*.

This award was bestowed upon **Dr. Mark Colwell**.

Dr. Colwell started at Humboldt State in 1989 as an Assistant Professor and earned tenure in 1998. Mark was a Fulbright Fellow in Russia in 1995-96 and voted as Scholar of the Year at Humboldt State in 2007.

Mark has been mentoring students for nearly 25 years and he is dedicated to assisting wildlife students, at all levels, to develop their skills as scientists and pursue careers in wildlife biology. He inspires students to think critically for themselves and to seek answers to important ecological questions. Often people

attribute their success to the assistance and guidance received from a few key mentors during the course of their development. Mark has been one of those mentors to many students and colleagues over the years.



The *Chapter of the Year Award* went to the **San Joaquin Valley Chapter**.

2012 has been a very busy year for the San Joaquin Valley Chapter. They have continued to offer a diversity of activities that facilitate social networking, professional development, and involvement in the broader Wildlife Society organization. In addition, they put on two workshops, the annual San Joaquin Valley Natural Communities Conference, and supported research grants and conservation groups with over \$5,000. The San Joaquin Valley Chapter membership increased by over 40% in 2012.

The following students received an award at the annual banquet:

**Oral Presentations:**

1st - \$200, **Kelly Weintraub**, Nest Survival of Tri-Colored Blackbirds in California's San Joaquin Valley

2nd - \$150, **Laurel Serieys**, The Genetic Structure of a Disease Outbreak Associated with Poison Exposure

3rd - \$100, **Jennifer Rowe**, Cascading Impacts on Amphibian Assemblages in Restored Wetlands

**Posters:**

1st - \$200, **Julie Shaw**, Characterizing Migration Patterns, Winter habitat, and Diet of Northern Saw-Whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) in the Sierra Nevada Foothills of California

2nd - \$150, **Mary Jo Olegario**, A STR Multiplex for Columbian Black-tailed Deer

3rd - \$100, **Rebecca Green**, Maternal Rest Sites: Unique Shelter Used by Female Fishers Rearing Kits

(Awards, cont'd on page 17)



(Awards, cont'd from page 16)

**Executive Board Recognition:**

**John McNerney**, Past-President 2011 received a past-presidents pin for his service to the Western Section.

**Plaques for service to the Western Section were awarded to:**

- **Linda Leeman**, President 2012
- **Douglas Bell**, President-Elect 2012
- **Mike Lohr**, Hawaii Chapter Representative 2011-2012
- **Sandra Hunt-Von Arb**, California North Coast Chapter Representative 2009-2012



*Our fearless leader out in the field. Doulgas A. Bell, TWS-WS Presdient. Photos by Joe DiDonato*



## The Wildlife Society Western Section

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<http://twswest.org> (new!)

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