



# Urban Wildlife News

The Newsletter of the Urban Wildlife Working Group  
of The Wildlife Society

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Editors: Lowell Adams and Jennifer Cotting

## A Word from the Chair

*Chris Moorman*

### **Communication is Key to Conservation Success**

Few of us entered careers in wildlife conservation as natural communicators, yet our success revolves around the skill. I, for one, was an introverted teenager who enjoyed the outdoors as an escape from human conversation. Since, I have come to realize two related points: 1) most positions in the field of wildlife conservation are more about people management than wildlife management; and 2) communication with colleagues, community leaders, students, partner organizations, and the public is critical to the success of conservation efforts, especially in urban environments.

Recognizing the importance of communication, The Wildlife Society requires 12 hours of communication classes for the Certified Wildlife Biologist program, the most of any category of coursework. While these courses provide a solid academic foundation in public speaking and writing, they cannot substitute for actual practice. Even after 4 courses in communication, many graduating college seniors struggle with writing and public speaking. The 8 years that I spent as an Extension Wildlife Specialist making hundreds of presentations and writing dozens of popular articles helped me hone communication skills that I found difficult to acquire while in college. This hands-on practice, however, should not be limited to

Extension Specialists. Successful urban wildlife management requires us to freely engage stakeholders in conversation about the tasks required to conserve urban wildlife and its habitat. I challenge working group members to engage the television and newspaper media, write popular articles or letters to the editor, and make presentations to the public or other practitioners.

The Urban Wildlife Working Group is acting to facilitate your efforts by improving communication among the membership. Having served in the working group for several years, I realize that communication among the members is limited. Yet, a primary benefit of membership should be the opportunity to communicate with like-minded professionals that have relevant experiences or ideas. Accordingly, attendees at the working group meeting in Snowbird, Utah this past October discussed several means to improve communication among members and between members and outside constituent groups. We decided to create a Facebook page that includes a blog, develop a new website that will serve as a clearinghouse for all information related to urban wildlife conservation, and move the current working group website to The Wildlife Society website. I also would like to see more members contribute information to the working group newsletter.

While improved communication is a great idea, successful implementation of the plan will require voluntary efforts by members

with relevant skills (e.g., website design and maintenance, newsletter editing, ability to write well). Also, the working group is seeking a volunteer to take over as the Newsletter Editor; Lowell Adams and Jennifer Cotting have served diligently for years, but it is time for someone else to take on the responsibility. Please contact me ([chris\\_moorman@ncsu.edu](mailto:chris_moorman@ncsu.edu)) if you would like to volunteer to aid the working group in its efforts to improve communication. Otherwise, keep an eye out for updates on our progress. --Chris

**Urban Wildlife Conference**  
**May 22-25, 2011**



**Urban Wildlife**  
Management and Planning  
Conference

Austin, Texas 2011

We hope you have marked your calendar and are planning to attend the urban wildlife conference in Austin, May 22-25 (please see details at the conference website <http://urbanwildlife2011.tpwd.state.tx.us>). Keynote speakers include Drs. Timothy Beatley and Marina Alberti. Dr. Beatley is Teresa Heinz Professor of Sustainable Communities in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning at the University of Virginia. His most recent book is *Bio-philic Cities: Integrating Nature into Urban Design*, available from Island Press. Dr. Beatley writes a regular column for *Planning* magazine, the flagship publication of the American Planning Association, called

Ever Green, about environmental and sustainability matters. Dr. Alberti is Professor of Urban and Environmental Planning in the Department of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington. She is especially interested in advanced interdisciplinary approaches to urban ecological problems. Dr. Alberti's recent book, *Advances in Urban Ecology* (Springer 2008), synthesizes the state of knowledge on the complex interactions of urbanization and ecological function and articulates the challenges for scholars of urban ecosystems.

Other highlights of the conference include several field trips that will run on Sunday, May 22. Following the welcome reception on Sunday evening, participants can view the evening Mexican free-tailed bat flight from nearby Congress Avenue Bridge. Also, there will be opportunity to visit the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and Bracken Cave (world's largest urban bat cave). Please check the conference website for registration and program details. This will be an excellent conference that you will not want to miss.

**Urban Wildlife Workshop**



Dr. Michael Wolfe and David Stoner of Utah State University discuss cougar ecology and research in the Salt Lake City area with workshop participants.

Again in 2010, the working group sponsored an all-day field workshop at the annual conference of The Wildlife Society in Snowbird, Utah. Titled "Salt Lake City: Wildlife Conservation in an Urbanizing Environment," the workshop comprised three spe-

cific stops. The first stop was at the base of the Oquirrh Mountains. There we met Professor Michael Wolfe and graduate student David Stoner of Utah State University.

Michael and David discussed their cougar research along the wildland-suburban interface of the surrounding area. The Oquirrh Mountains lie just to the west of Salt Lake City, with the Wasatch Mountains to the east of the city. Both mountain ranges are receiving increased pressure of development with the expanding city. The researchers have been studying cougars in the area since 1997 and have captured and marked more than 80 individuals to monitor population dynamics, dispersal, predation, and seasonal movement patterns. Cougars use suitable habitat up to the edge of suburbia but there is no evidence of animals habitually travelling through, or hunting in, suburban settings. A single young male cougar dispersed some 6 km from the Oquirrh Mountains east across the Provo Valley and Interstate 15 to take up residence in wilderness habitat on the east side of the Wasatch Mountains. The animal was never implicated in any conflicts with humans. Wolfe and Stoner reported that cougars use human water developments, vacant buildings, and road-killed animals. They also use culverts as den, rest, and cache sites. Cougars rely on native prey for food. Domestic animals (free-ranging livestock) made up only 2% of more than 400 recovered kills. No attacks on humans have occurred. Wolfe and Stoner are hopeful that their research will be useful in regional planning efforts as Salt Lake City continues to grow.

The second stop of the workshop was the Salt Lake City International Airport where we met with Mike Linnell, Utah State Director of USDA's Wildlife Services, and other Wildlife Services and airport officials. Linnell

and his team have considerable experience working with urban residents and predators such as skunks, raccoons, coyotes, and red foxes. They also work with Canada geese and cormorants in urban environments. Cormorants are particularly troublesome at fish stock ponds of Salt Lake City's urban fisheries programs. Linnell and his team train city managers how to use pyrotechnics to scare birds away rather than killing them. Utah Wildlife Services also helps airport officials with managing risks associated with wildlife-aircraft strikes. Raptors, particularly ferruginous hawks, receive considerable attention.



Reducing risks of wildlife-aircraft collisions is an important goal of USDA Wildlife Services biologists and airport officials at Salt Lake City International Airport. Raptors, particularly ferruginous hawks, are a real challenge. Workshop participants learned about several trap designs that are effective in capture of birds for relocation elsewhere.

The last stop of the workshop was Silver Lake Nature Center located within the Brighton Bowl in Big Cottonwood Canyon of the Wasatch Range east of Salt Lake City. The center is supported by the U. S. Forest Service, Salt Lake City's Public Utilities Department, and the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation. Jessie Walthers, Executive Director of Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, discussed land use history around Salt Lake City, approaches to achieving a bal-

ance between wildlife and human needs, and the challenges of managing wildlife on summer and winter ranges. The center receives more than 30,000 visitors each summer. Foundation naturalists teach folks about the ecology of the canyons and their importance as watershed areas for Salt Lake City. Sixty percent of the city's water supply comes from the canyons. The canyons also provide important wildland habitat for wildlife. And, the canyons provide considerable outdoor recreation opportunity for people and are an economic engine for the Salt Lake City area. Conservation of these natural resources is important for people and wildlife.



Jessie Walthers, Executive Director of the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, discusses the ecology of the canyons and their importance to Salt Lake City residents and area wildlife.

The workshop was well received by all. Thanks to David Drake for taking the lead in organizing and conducting the event.

### **Annual Meeting in Snowbird**

The annual meeting of the working group was held Tuesday, October 5, 2010, in conjunction with the annual conference of The Wildlife Society. Twenty-eight people were in attendance.

Minutes of the 2009 meeting were approved and it was reported that the group had a checking account balance of \$5,558. Working group membership is holding steady at about 130 members. Need was expressed to retain current members and to attract new ones. Some discussion focused on ways to improve communication within the working group and to increase active participation of members. Suggestions included sponsoring regional events and creating urban wildlife-related projects. We might also be successful in getting issues of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, or *Urban Ecosystems* dedicated to urban wildlife articles. Chris Moorman encouraged attendees to become active in working group projects and to contact him with new ideas of how the working group might be more effective.

Some discussion focused on better use of electronic media. A listserv was mentioned but it was pointed out that one existed earlier and was little used. Creation of a blog site and a Facebook page was thought to be worth trying and a Facebook committee was formed consisting of Chad Anderson, Nils Peterson, and Charlie Nilon.

The group also supported moving the working group website to the headquarters computer and upgrading the site to serve as a clearinghouse for all urban wildlife-related issues. The website might be modeled after the animal damage website. David Drake will take the lead on this project.

Reports were presented on two working group activities at the Snowbird Conference. David Drake reviewed working group sponsorship of workshops at recent TWS conferences. He reported that 12 people went on Saturday's all-day excursion. Those who attended felt it very much worthwhile. Nils Peterson reported high-

lights of the half-day symposium. That session was well attended with more than 100 individuals present for much of the time.

The group discussed proposed activities for the 2011 TWS conference in Kona, Hawaii. Ideas regarding a pre-conference field trip included something focused on feral cats and donkeys. Luanne Johnson will check with Steve Hess regarding this possibility. We should strive to include planners in the workshop.

The 2012 TWS Annual Conference will be held in Portland, Oregon. The group agreed to propose a field trip in Portland that includes planners.

The working group will propose a symposium at the 2011 conference focused on roads. It will be organized by Stan Gehrt and Seth Riley. Other ideas considered were bio-security, invasive species, transmission lines, green energy, and synurbanization. The group also will sponsor an informal social gathering at the Hawaii conference. Charlie Nilon and Chris Moorman will plan this effort.

Some discussion focused on how the working group should use its funds. Thoughts included small seed grants, scholarships, and website maintenance. The group decided that we should wait until after the

Austin conference to pursue this matter.

Mark Wallace and John Davis updated the working group on the forthcoming Urban Wildlife Management and Planning Conference to be held in Austin, Texas, May 22-25, 2011. The conference will convene in the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Ladybird Lake. The hotel is close to the Congress Avenue Bridge, made famous for the Mexican free-tailed bats that come for the summer to bear and raise their young. John has several of his employees directly dedicated to organizing and facilitating the meeting. He stressed the need to raise money for the conference. Current sponsors include Bat Conservation International, the Urban Wildlife Working Group, and the Humane Society of the United States. Target attendance is 400 and we need to advertize the conference as widely as possible, including to planners and landscape architects. We should include the Ecological Society of America's urban working group. Working group members are encouraged to submit papers and posters for presentation and to organize symposia on various topics.

The Nominations and Elections Committee includes Christine Stracey and Nils Peterson. A slate of candidates for chair-elect, secretary-treasurer, and board will be presented to the working group membership during summer 2011. New officers and board members will begin their terms following the annual meeting in Hawaii.





Art Credit: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Bob Hines

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