

**Travel Funds to the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual National Wildlife Society Conference**

**by**

**Rachael E. Urbanek  
Assistant Professor of Wildlife Science  
Department of Biological Sciences**

**Submitted to  
Charlie Gagen, Department Head of Biological Sciences  
Jeff Robertson, Dean of the School of Science  
John Watson, Vice President for Academic Affairs**

**11 October 2013**

## **B. Restatement of Professional Enhancement Opportunity**

The Wildlife Society (TWS) is the premier professional organization for wildlife biologists in North America. The organization is grounded in scientific research in wildlife conservation and management, networking and collaboration among wildlife professionals (both industrial and academic), and advocating for effective wildlife policy and laws. The TWS Annual Conference is an immense congregation of wildlife biologists from around the world that enables attendees to disseminate new ideas, research findings, policies, and educational needs in the field of wildlife science. This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual TWS Conference which was held 4-10 October 2013 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

## **C. Brief Review of the Professional Enhancement**

The Leadership Institute (LI) is a competitive program within TWS to develop early-career professionals to become leaders in the field of wildlife science. I was fortunate to be 1 of 10 participants across the nation for the class of 2013. The LI program consists of 5 essays from May-October that are geared to creating leadership skills. Additionally, LI participants are required to go to daily meetings that discuss leadership skills and TWS Council meetings during the national conference.

In addition to LI, I represented the Fish and Wildlife Program at Arkansas Tech at the National Association of University Fish and Wildlife Program meeting held at the TWS conference. I also co-presented a research-in-progress poster with my graduate student, Catherine Normand.

## **D. Summary of Experiences**

The 5 LI assignments developed my leadership skills by forcing me to take action on problems at Arkansas Tech and in TWS subunits. For example, 1 assignment resulted in my

development of an Advanced Topics class that leads graduate students in the understanding of how committees work and to establish a better appreciation of wildlife research. The end goal of this class is to have the students help write a future Professional Development Grant that will be used to fund a wildlife research seminar series that they will create under my advisement over the semester. Another example includes having to write a vision and specific goals for a TWS subunit or working group. My particular vision and goals dealt with increasing undergraduate attendance at the Arkansas chapter of TWS and I have received support from the president and president-elect of the chapter on these matters.

At the conference, I attended daily LI meetings geared to discussion on leadership in the workplace that will be applicable at Arkansas Tech and TWS. I gave a presentation with 2 other LI colleagues to TWS Council on 5 October on the potential collaboration between TWS and the Ecological Society of America. I was also a mentor for students at the conference during the student-professional mixer. Throughout the conference, I was mentored by TWS Council members, specifically by Jon Haufler, the current President of TWS, which was invaluable experience.

Aside from LI activities, I co-presented a research-in-progress poster with my graduate student on 7 October. I attended several symposia and presentations on current wildlife research and management activities. Additionally, I represented the Fish and Wildlife Program at Arkansas Tech at the National Association of University Fish and Wildlife Program meeting.

## **E. Conclusions**

The national TWS meeting is an extremely important conference for me to attend because it offers a chance for nation-wide networking and bringing me up to date on contemporary research and obstacles in wildlife science. At this year's conference, I presented

both to Council and to the TWS membership at large. I was able to provide networking experiences to my graduate student and to continue networking myself. The LI program was an amazing opportunity for me to experience a national conference in a different way (i.e., not focused on seeing a lot of presentations). Several of the assignments required me to step up and take action on things that I see that need improvement and it has helped me to take on leadership roles not only at Arkansas Tech but also at the state chapter of TWS. The time spent at the conference was invaluable; most of my time was spent in a "think tank" atmosphere with other LI participants and/or with TWS Council members. Jon Haufler, my LI Council mentor, provided me with amazing opportunities to get involved at the national level of TWS and I believe will continue to be mentor as my career progresses.

#### **F. Attachments**

Please find attached a PDF copy of my poster listing that my graduate student and I presented at the conference (poster can viewed in McEver's Hall) and a copy of my certificate of completion of TWS' Leadership Institute.