

**Student Research, Networking, and Professional Exposure of the Fish and Wildlife
Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

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Submitted to:

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B. RESTATEMENT OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY

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 Annual TWS 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. Within the Fish and Wildlife (FW) program at Arkansas Tech University (Tech), Drs. Urbanek and Kellner, 2 thesis students, and 1 undergraduate student presented their research at the 21st Annual TWS Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania during 25-30 October 2014. Aside from presenting our research, the presence and participation of Dr. Urbanek and the Tech students at the Student Reception, Leadership Institute Reception, student-professional mixer, and select symposia garnered attention from professionals, faculty, and students. We hope this promotional opportunity for the FW program leads to future scientific collaborations among faculty from other universities and higher student enrollment.

C. BRIEF REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE UTILIZED

All research presentations were accepted by June 2014. Prior to the conference, Drs. Kellner and Urbanek met with the students to practice their presentation and critique their posters before printing. Dr. Urbanek and her graduate student, Catherine Normand, presented their research on feral cat population abundance and multi-scale habitat use in an exurban landscape. Dr. Urbanek and Austin Klais, a FW undergraduate student, also presented their research on the activity patterns and interspecific interactions of free-ranging domestic cats at urban feeding stations. Dr. Kellner and his graduate student, Alyssa Bangs, presented their work on the

morphology and behavior of central fence lizards in thermally different habitats.

D. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

During the conference, Dr. Urbanek supervised the students, provided advice in presenting our work, and offered the students networking opportunities with the vast number of wildlife professionals that attend the annual conference. On Saturday, 25 October, Dr. Urbanek reported to TWS Council on the status of the international survey she is co-leading to determine the perceptions of TWS member benefits and services throughout the hierarchical subunits of the Society. During the day, the students visited the National Aviary as an educational field trip. Saturday evening, Dr. Urbanek joined the Tech students at the Student Reception and the Leadership Institute reception to begin helping them network while also promoting Tech's FW undergraduate and graduate programs. The students and Dr. Urbanek attended oral and poster presentations and the plenary titled "Making Science Relevant in Today's Society" on Sunday 26 October. Dr. Urbanek attended a symposia titled "Strategies of Successful Student Chapters: Recruiting, Engaging, Involving, and Promoting" also on Sunday. The Tech students presented our research posters on Monday 27 October from 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM. Dr. Urbanek represented Tech at the National Association of University Fisheries & Wildlife Programs Semi-Annual Meeting on Monday. Dr. Urbanek and Catherine Normand also met with different professionals during the "Resume Critique" session. Monday evening, Dr. Urbanek and the Tech students participated in the student-professional mixer.

E. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attending and presenting our research at the Annual TWS Conference allowed us to showcase the FW program and our excellent students. We work hard to train our undergraduate and graduate students in scientific research and in the art of effectively communicating research.

The plenary provided insight as to how to frame contemporary research questions and how to communicate our research with the public. While presenting, our students were exposed to a diverse and talented group of professionals that provided feedback on our research methods and results. Moreover, by supervising the students, Dr. Urbanek was able to assess how we may improve the way we teach our students to communicate via presentations and while networking in a professional setting.

All 3 titles of the posters were published in the conference booklet (see attached copies). Conference attendees had multiple opportunities to discuss our research with the students and Dr. Urbanek at the poster session and during symposium breaks. The student research posters are now hung in McEver Hall for all FW students in addition to Physical Sciences and other Biological Sciences faculty and students to view. Dr. Urbanek has discussed with Austin Klais, the student president of Tech's student chapter of TWS, new fundraising opportunities she learned from attending the symposium on improving student chapter success. Pertinent insights learned from the meeting on resume critiques will be used to improve material Dr. Urbanek teaches in Natural Resources Communication (FW 2013). Updates from the National Association of University Fisheries & Wildlife Programs meeting were discussed between Dr. Urbanek and the FW program director, Dr. John Jackson.