



The Wildlife Society Strategic Plan

Approved by TWS Council on March 25, 2024; Effective July 1, 2024

“We shall never achieve harmony with land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations, the important thing is not to achieve but to strive.”

Aldo Leopold

The Wildlife Society (TWS), founded in 1937, is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization representing an international network of over 10,000 students and professionals dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. TWS values are integrity, service, excellence, knowledge, and inclusiveness.

TWS contracted and worked closely with the TCC Group, a New York based social impact consulting firm, to support a collective effort for ideation and creation of a new strategic plan. Although TWS staff and Council members led and championed much of the process, working with a third party added expertise, helped ensure confidentiality when collecting data and sharing insights from members and partners, and aided in data interpretation and guiding future directions of the plan. Including diverse voices and embedding a wide array of TWS stakeholder perspectives into the process and resulting strategic plan was a central aim of TWS’ strategic planning approach.

Data collection included an online survey distributed to all TWS members (n = 1,159 responses received), interviews and focus groups with external partners and clients (~45 participants), and input from TWS Staff and Council Members. Throughout this process, TCC Group collaborated closely with TWS liaisons, staff, and the Strategic Planning Committee (see Appendix 1) to analyze and interpret data to inform future decision-making.

Based on this input, TWS developed a new Vision and Mission Statement and will focus its efforts on three unifying themes present in the data: **building community**, **supporting wildlife professionals**, and **exercising external influence**. These themes represent TWS’ new mission-driven priorities for the future.

Over the next 5 years and beyond, TWS will maintain, enhance, or expand its performance and leadership in each mission priority area:

1. **Building Community** - engage and evolve an inclusive community of diverse wildlife professionals to conserve wildlife and their habitats
2. **Supporting Professionals** - enhance support and provide resources to ensure professionals effectively influence the future of wildlife conservation
3. **Exercising External Influence** - TWS is an effective voice and a trusted resource for wildlife science, conservation, and management

Each year, TWS will take action on and track progress of each of the goals, objectives, and strategies identified for each mission-driven priority in the strategic plan. Priority tactics aligned with each set of strategies will be developed into annual operations plans, along with performance metrics, staff resources, and budgets needed to achieve results. Many of the objectives and strategies in the plan are aspirational for TWS and implementation will depend on securing additional budget resources or significant volunteer service from TWS members.

The new strategic plan will be implemented through the lens of its [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Vision](#) developed as part of the 2019-2023 strategic planning process and codified in TWS Bylaws. TWS will emphasize operational flexibility so that the plan remains relevant in a rapidly changing environment. Each year, TWS will assess and adjust the level of effort and resources needed in each of the mission-driven priorities to best serve the Society's strategic goals and member needs.



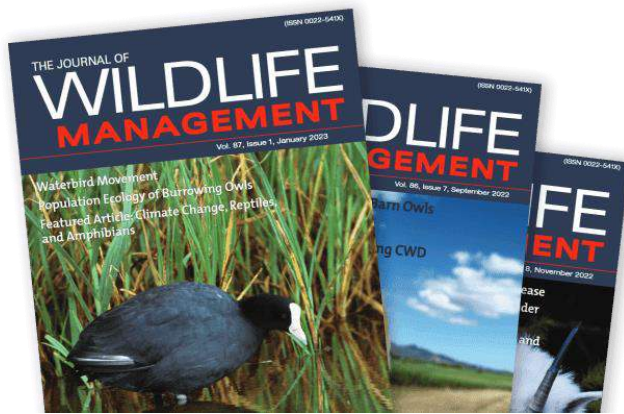


Vision

A world where wildlife and people thrive in resilient ecosystems

Mission

Empower wildlife professionals to advance conservation through science, community, and professional excellence





MISSION-DRIVEN PRIORITY: BUILDING COMMUNITY

Engage and evolve an inclusive community of diverse wildlife professionals to conserve wildlife and their habitats

Goal 1: Strengthen alignment across all levels of TWS

Objective 1: Strengthen relationships between TWS and its Sections, Chapters, Working Groups and Communities

Strategies

- **Address administrative and operational barriers** across units affecting greater coordination and engagement
- **Assess pros and cons of unified membership** opportunity and other approaches to strengthen unity across all levels of TWS
- **Increase awareness of TWS benefits**, services and activities to members
- **Ensure sections, chapters, working groups and communities have the necessary resources** for successful, year-round operation and continuity
- **Evaluate and strengthen communications** across all levels of TWS

Objective 2. Coordinate TWS Strategic Plan priorities across all levels of TWS

Strategies

- **Share TWS strategic plan priorities** and assist Chapters and Sections with integrating them into their current or future strategic and operations plans
- **Identify desire and need** for regional conference planning assistance

Goal 2: Build a strong, connected community of wildlife professionals

Objective 1: Improve and increase engagement of all levels of TWS members

Strategies

- **Provide opportunities for stage of career-based cohorts** to exchange information, experiences, and key learnings from their career paths
- **Provide career-long mentorship** opportunities across all levels of TWS

- **Improve communications and information sharing** across all levels of TWS
- **Integrate DEI awareness and opportunities** into all mission-driven priorities and operations
- **Improve effectiveness of Council service** to enhance governance, delivery of strategic plan priorities, and member engagement

Objective 2: Evaluate opportunities for membership growth

Strategies

- **Define potential member population** of wildlife professionals
- **Increase equitable access and recruitment** to the profession across all levels of TWS
- **Expand member recruitment** across all levels of TWS
- **Increase member retention** across all levels of TWS
- **Assess current member benefits** and program areas to identify needed changes and create new opportunities for growing and sustaining TWS

Objective 3: Establish accessible pathways to cultivate successful TWS leaders

Strategies

- **Evaluate current pathways into TWS leadership** roles and identify gaps and needed strategies for improvement
- **Implement effective programs** to develop diverse, qualified leadership candidates at all levels of TWS

Objective 4: Provide year-round networking and engagement opportunities

Strategies

- **Enhance Annual Conference community building** and networking across diverse professionals
- **Improve networking experiences at the TWS Annual Conference** and accessibility to conference materials post-conference
- **Increase networking and engagement** opportunities outside of the Annual Conference across all levels of TWS

Goal 3: Engage and sustain a diverse network of wildlife organizations

Objective 1. Build strong ties with partner organizations

Strategies

- **Maintain and enhance** existing partner relationships

- **Assess organizations and potential opportunities** to develop relationships, partnerships, and coordination on conservation and policy issues

Objective 2. Provide opportunities for wildlifers to engage in dialogue on emerging and controversial topics impacting wildlife

Strategies

- **Develop science-based position statements and other informational resources** for emerging and controversial topics in wildlife management and conservation
- **Provide forums** for challenging and controversial topics and problem solving
- **Ensure members are prepared to address controversy**, while maintaining professionalism and adherence to the TWS Code of Ethics

Goal 4: TWS is recognized on the international conservation stage as an organization with influence beyond North America.

Objective 1. Strategically strengthen engagement and partnerships between TWS and other international organizations

Strategies

- **Assess how TWS can enhance engagement and activities** in the international wildlife conservation arena
- **Establish and maintain connections and membership** with key international coalitions (e.g., IUCN)
- **Work collaboratively with internationally engaged professional societies and NGOs** to expand TWS engagement and influence
- **Establish partnerships with international businesses and other organizations** to support wildlifers and international programs

Objective 2. Increase relevancy of TWS internationally through strategic representation, access, and opportunity

Strategies

- **Support international networking** among wildlife professionals
- **Provide professional development and training opportunities** needed by international wildlife students and professionals
- **Provide competitive travel and professional development grants** for international students and professionals
- **Increase the international scope and representation of international authors** and topics within TWS' peer-reviewed journals

MISSION-DRIVEN PRIORITY: SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS

Enhance support and provide resources to ensure professionals effectively influence the future of wildlife conservation

Goal 1: Disseminate scientific and technical information

Objective 1. Ensure TWS' peer-reviewed publications remain a competitive, desired outlet and source for wildlife science and conservation information

Strategies:

- **Optimize marketing strategies** to increase member and non-member publication in TWS journals
- **Assess target audiences and relevance of TWS' publications** to expand readership and ensure alignment with evolving needs of wildlife professionals
- **Deliver timely and relevant content in TWS' Journals** that enable professionals to effectively influence policy, management, and scientific advancement
- **Adapt to growing competition and trends** in the publishing arena

Objective 2. Ensure dissemination of science-based information is accessible and adapted for a rapidly expanding digital and social media landscape

Strategies:

- **Expand peer-reviewed science accessibility** for all readers utilizing science to benefit wildlife
- **Explore and develop new communication channels** to convey scientific information
- **Distribute popular and technical content** and become a hub of multi-faceted resources for wildlife professionals

Goal 2: Empower wildlife professionals with essential skills and resources needed to advance their careers

Objective 1. Enhance delivery of training opportunities and educational materials

Strategies:

- **Identify and assess** opportunities, resource needs, and priorities for training wildlife professionals and students

- **Provide training programs and continuing education resources** for wildlife professionals, students, and employers

Objective 2. Facilitate opportunities for wildlife professionals to network and develop mentoring relationships and leadership skills

Strategies:

- **Expand existing and develop new mentorship** opportunities and programs
- **Encourage the development of networking initiatives** across Chapters and Sections

Goal 3: Maintain relevant standards that sustain the profession's credibility

Objective 1. Promote ethical conduct in the wildlife profession

Strategies

- **Strengthen visibility and application** of TWS' Code (Code of Ethics and Code of Business Conduct)
- **Provide welcoming, inclusive, and safer environments for all participants** and promote and enforce ethical, professional behavior

Objective 2. Maintain a credible and relevant certification program for wildlife professionals

Strategies

- **Elevate the value and effectiveness of TWS' Certifications** to ensure they are accessible and relevant amid a shifting landscape
- **Audit AWB/CWB requirements** to identify opportunities to better align requirements with employers' needs (including those in Canada)
- **Partner with universities** to assess certification relative to university course offerings and emphasize importance to the profession
- **Identify and reduce barriers to obtaining Certification** to ensure more prospective applicants
- **Collaborate with partners** to align the AWB/CWB program with employer needs

MISSION-DRIVEN PRIORITY: EXERCISING EXTERNAL INFLUENCE

TWS is an effective voice and a trusted resource for wildlife science, conservation, and management

Goal 1: Identify TWS' policy priorities affecting wildlife and wildlife professionals

Objective 1. Identify policy priorities affecting wildlife and wildlife professionals and coordinate across all levels of TWS

Strategies:

- **Establish principles for identifying TWS policy priorities** to allow consistent, transparent, and flexible outcomes over time
- **Assess conservation and policy issues** as potential priorities for action as they arise
- **Identify, prioritize, and develop policy priorities** for each upcoming Congress/Parliament term based on established criteria, political landscape, staff capabilities, and commitment to ongoing priorities

Objective 2. Support and facilitate Chapters and Sections with identifying policy priorities at local levels

Strategies:

- **Encourage and support Conservation Affairs Network** activities to identify local policy priorities
- **Encourage and support the Canadian Section** in developing a capacity for identifying and prioritizing federal policies within Canada as part of their Canadian Federal Policy initiative
- **Encourage and support the Mexico Chapter** in assessing policy needs

Goal 2: Advance TWS' policy priorities affecting wildlife and wildlife professionals

Objective 1. Establish key internal organizational structures and align staff, Council, Chapters, Sections, and Working Groups to adequately support and advance TWS priorities

Strategies:

- **Assess internal TWS structure, capacity, and approaches** for improving the efficacy of policy engagement in the U.S.
- **Support Canadian Section's effort to develop capacity** and resources to address federal wildlife policies in Canada
- **Assess the interest and long-term goals of the Mexico Chapter** in engaging in Federal wildlife policy in Mexico

- **Communicate TWS policy priorities, activities, and progress** internally across all levels of TWS

Objective 2. Support and help facilitate engagement of Chapters and Sections on policy at local levels

Strategies:

- **Use existing Conservation Affairs Network infrastructure** to increase Chapter and Section engagement and capacity
- **Explore new avenues to enhance collaboration** and efficacy of policy engagement by Chapters and Sections
- **Increase engagement of Chapters and Sections** in the Conservation Affairs Network

Objective 3. Assess and implement strategies to assist international policy engagement

Strategies:

- **Maintain IUCN membership** and engagement
- **Strengthen engagement on policy associated with international programs** that significantly overlap with North America
- **Regularly communicate key international policy priorities** across all levels of TWS

Objective 4. Provide training to increase the ability of TWS members to effectively engage in policy and advocacy efforts

Strategies:

- **Coordinate and implement policy workshops, webinars,** resources, and other training tools across all levels of TWS
- **Maintain, distribute, and promote** the TWS Policy Tool Kit

Objective 5. Engage and support external organizations in advancing TWS policy priorities in North America and other shared policy objectives worldwide

Strategies:

- **Establish criteria and a process for developing partnerships** with other professional societies, government bodies, indigenous entities, and other organizations and coalitions to advance TWS priorities
- **Engage with partners and coalitions on key issues** affecting wildlife conservation and wildlife professionals

Objective 6. Build a reputation for TWS as being a trusted organization for wildlife science and policy expertise

Strategies:

- **Establish relationships with officials** within federal, state, indigenous, and provincial governments, legislative members, and their staff and communicate TWS policy priorities, expertise available for consultation and testimony, and opportunities for collaboration
- **Establish relationships with other professional societies, NGOs,** coalitions and trade associations and communicate TWS policy priorities, expertise, and opportunities to collaborate and help disseminate TWS influence more broadly
- **Communicate TWS policy priorities,** expertise, and capacity to assist partners and decision-makers

Goal 3: Further TWS' reputation as a trusted organization for information, expertise, and collaboration on wildlife conservation for diverse audiences

Objective 1: Increase awareness that TWS and its members are credible sources of information on wildlife conservation

Strategies:

- **Utilize TWS' communications channels** to reach members and target audiences
- **Develop new media tools technologies** that could extend TWS' reach and influence
- **Increase earned media** (i.e., when an organization is spoken of by a third party, with no payment changing hands) to expand TWS' reach and influence

Goal 4: Increase public engagement and interest in wildlife by expanding TWS' communications and member exposure

Objective 1. Ensure scientific information dissemination is accessible and adapted for a rapidly expanding digital and social media landscape

Strategies:

- **Maintain an active web presence** providing news on wildlife science, conservation and management directed to the general public
- **Assess and expand existing use of TWS' social media** channels to disseminate scientific information
- **Expand the use of TWS' YouTube Channel** to expand TWS' reach and impact to target audiences

- **Develop new communication channels** to expand reach and deliver information to target audiences
- **Assess the need and value of creating a toolkit** specialized for schools and general public information sharing on wildlife issues

Goal 5: Support and coordinate with organizations focused on increasing public engagement and interest in wildlife through communications and education

Objective 1. Identify key partners that align with TWS' priorities and have established communications departments

Strategies:

- **Assess a diverse group of potential partner organizations** that are well-positioned to advance communications on wildlife conservation
- **Align TWS organizational priorities, capacity, strategies** and roles for communications with partners and coalitions
- **Encourage TWS members and Sections and Chapters to collaborate** with other organizations locally to broaden impact of communications and outreach

Goal 6: TWS members are well equipped to communicate wildlife science and management with diverse audiences and through a variety of media platforms

Objective 1. Improve communication skills of TWS members

Strategies:

- **Provide communications training** for TWS members, Chapters and Sections

Objective 2. Establish and/or improve alignment, coordination, and progress across all levels of TWS to strategically improve public knowledge of and interest in wildlife conservation

Strategies:

- **Support and/or assist with the development and maintenance of communication platforms** for Chapters, Sections, and Working Groups.
- **Improve networking** across Chapters, Sections, and Working Groups websites and other media platforms
- **Coordinate communications priorities and strategies** across Chapters, Sections, and Working Groups
- **Increase engagement with working groups** (e.g., conservation education and outreach, human dimensions) on delivering strategic communications priorities

APPENDIX 1. The Wildlife Society's Strategic Planning Committee, 2022-2023.

Ed Arnett*, PhD CWB®, Chief Executive Officer, The Wildlife Society

Bob Lanka*, CWB®, President-elect (2022-23), The Wildlife Society

Keith Norris*, AWB®, Director of Policy and Communications, The Wildlife Society

Don Yasuda*, CWB®, President (2022-23), The Wildlife Society

Janet Bucknell, CWB®, Deputy Administrator, USDA Wildlife Services

Kathy Granillo, TWS SW Section Council Representative, retired federal agency biologist

Fidel Hernandez, PhD, Vice-president Elect (2022-23), Professor, Texas A&M-Kingsville

Serra Hoagland, PhD, Liaison Officer/Biologist, US Forest Service

Wini Kessler, PhD CWB®, retired, US Forest Service and TWS Past-President

Darwin Mayhew, Student Development Working Group

Mike Mengak, PhD CWB®, retired, Professor, University of Georgia

Ken Wilson, PhD CWB®, retired, Professor/Department Head, Colorado State University

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