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## **The Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society**

### **Summer Newsletter: BIG conference news, National TWS goes virtual (and cheap!), and a bunch of other stuff you should read**

We've got a jam-packed newsletter for you! Some conference updates, some COVID updates, some sad updates, some happy updates, updates that will hopefully make for good reading as you sit down to a cup of coffee and/or zone out during your next Zoom meeting (haha, just joking, that NEVER happens).

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## Greetings from your MTTWS President

Well, can you believe it has only been a little over six months since our conference in Butte?! I know I cannot! Hard to believe with all the changes that have occurred across the world in the past half a year that it really has not been that long since we were exchanging ideas and research findings, enjoying the social atmosphere, having an adult beverage with friends, and hanging out at the banquet while getting random shirts and mugs with misspelled words thrown out into the audience! Ah, the good ole days.

Since we last saw each other in Butte, there is one thing though that seems to have stayed its course for most of the past six months and that would be wildlife and our wild places. During my spring work, which I am certainly thankful I was still able to do and hope you were as well, I enjoyed watching male sage grouse perform their dances on their leks while the females watched and judged. I enjoyed watching the fawns and calves start popping up in the world. I enjoyed listening to the grassland birds sing their

hearts out as the winds brought in those prairie rainstorms. It was these very storms that provided some great spring and early summer moisture levels that helped promote the growth of the cool season grasses, which helped with the early nesters as well as provide that welcomed green wave of nourishment to the land's inhabitants seeking forage after the winter months.

Of course, I am sure many of us also saw another wave make its way out on the landscape, a wave of recreational users like many have not seen before. Trail heads, boat ramps, hidden reservoirs or lakes, campgrounds, and any halfway scenic place seemed to be packed. While this may have put a bur in some of our saddles, we need to remember that in this fast paced, technological world these people, some newcomers to the wild world and some long-time recreationists, sought out the comforts of the wide open, wild places that we are privileged to work in. I hope that this recreational boost has brought a new wave of people excited to help manage and conserve these systems the very way we all do. I hope that they leave these places cleaner than they found them. I hope that it instills excitement to explore responsibly. And I also hope that it helped navigate some people toward the path for a career in the outdoors.

As many of you have had to do with your jobs, all of us on the Executive Board have had teleconferences discussing the past conference and looking forward to the upcoming conference. We recently chose to have a socially distanced meeting in the mountains to discuss how we plan to move forward for the 2021 conference. With the uncertainty of the world, travel restrictions, and the health of our members we are choosing to give the virtual conference a try. We will miss the person-to-person interactions, but we are going to do everything we can to provide an educational platform, where everyone can engage from the comforts of their home, and we also hope to throw a few surprises in there just to keep things from getting too stale.

Thanks again for coming to our conference this past winter, and I hope you all stay safe, be smart, and get outside to enjoy the fresh air and beauty that is all around us!

*-Brett Dorak, President*



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## Get to know yer new president-elect

**What has Andrew been up to this summer?** The weather has been exceptional for most of Montana, with lower fires and drought conditions from years past.

Unfortunately, with the presence of COVID-19, this has not correlated to more field work! As such, I've been keeping busy in front of the computer finishing up reports, writing manuscripts and continuing collaborative efforts to start new projects. One exception has been the implementation component of a larger project in Beaverhead and Madison Counties, to help improve on-the-ground wildlife movement opportunities. With collaborators such as TNC, USFWS – Partners, MTFWP, NPCA and BLM, National Wildlife Federation hired two Montana Conservation Corp crews to modify, remove or rebuild existing fences to become more wildlife friendly on private lands. Through this effort, these enhancements allow for a greater number of wildlife species to move across the landscape while keeping cattle in desired pastures. Landowners have been appreciative of the support and we see this work as a 'win-win' for ranchers and wildlife.

*-Andrew Jakes, President-Elect*





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# **TWS** **VIRTUAL**

**THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY  
2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE:**

**A Five-Day Virtual Conference Experience**

SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 2, 2020

**Register now!**

If you do it by August 15 (that's THIS SATURDAY!) it's only  
100 bucks!

That's right, folks! Our parent (national) Wildlife Society is virtual this year. Members get access to all conference content, including presentations, live video chats/panel discussions, networking events, student activities....and seriously, SO MUCH MORE, for just \$100 if you register by August 15. After that, the price goes up to \$125 for members. There are also a bunch of workshops available for an additional (low) price.

Register and check out the conference schedule by [clicking here](#). National TWS conferences are really cool and this lower price/going virtual means it's more accessible than ever. Scroll down to read about last year's Reno conference. Hope to "see" you there!

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**Wildlife Trivia (answer on bottom): What is a "head cut"?**

- A. Something you get while driving on a narrow forest road with your windows open
- B. A type of mount for an elk or deer you harvested
- C. A method for harvesting grain
- D. An important erosional feature of streams

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**The 2021 MTTWS Annual Conference is  
going virtual too!**

**(didn't see that comin', did ya)**

**February 22-26**

**Location: (y)our house, in the middle of (y)our street**

**"Pillars of success: The intersection between research,  
management and implementation"**

**i.e.**

**"Where the lab meets the field: Putting science in action!"**

After careful consideration and consultation with officials from National TWS and other chapters, we have decided that the 2021 Montana TWS Annual Conference will be virtual. As we have learned more about what this entails, we see that the benefits greatly outweigh the drawbacks. We will miss the in-person networking opportunities but be assured, there will be multiple opportunities to engage with past colleagues, meet new folks and share information with students. Also, \$0 travel costs + cheaper registration = MORE OF YOU CAN ATTEND!

There will likely be more opportunities to participate in workshops/trainings, attend concurrent & poster sessions (and join live discussions), and become inspired by panelists, speakers and award winners. No need to worry as raffles and swag will still be available! As we continue to navigate this new format, we will keep MTTWS members current of any updates. In the meantime, start thinking about those talks and posters to communicate your projects to the Montana wildlife community!

If you have ideas for workshops or trainings, please e-mail Andrew Jakes at [JakesA@nwf.org](mailto:JakesA@nwf.org).

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# Seeking Nominations

Your MTTWS board is soliciting nominations for President-Elect and Treasurer. Both are 3-year terms. You know you want to be on the board. You know you want to. Seriously, you do. Please e-mail Brett Dorak ([mttws.president@gmail.com](mailto:mttws.president@gmail.com)) by October 1 to nominate yourself or someone else.

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Sunset in Makoshika State Park, July 2020.

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## RECAP: The Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society Joint Annual Conference 2019: Reno, NV

In 2019 the Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society joined forces for the first ever joint national conference in Reno, Nevada. What an amazing event! I was lucky enough to be able to attend on behalf of the Montana Chapter and stayed at the Peppermill amongst the Greek columns and slot machines common to “the biggest little city in the world.” Buses regularly shuttled conference attendees back and forth to the Reno Convention center where close to 5,000 TWS/AFS members gathered for the week of Sept 29th – Oct 3rd.

With hundreds of talks to choose from, the biggest challenge was deciding which ones to attend. With a handy downloadable conference app you could plan your schedule and navigate to the right room. Conference planners did an excellent job of building sessions around a topic that had a mix of wildlife and fisheries talks. So instead of leaping around to catch wildlife talks I found it was much more valuable to stay in one session at a time and listen to talks I might not otherwise have caught. One session was titled “The Interface of Predation and Migration in Aquatic and Terrestrial Ecosystems.” Very cool.

This masterful blending of wildlife & fisheries was what really stuck with me after the conference was over. But luckily in this virtual age we’re living in there is still an opportunity to see presentations from Reno. Log in to the main TWS home page and click on **RESOURCES > RENO RECORDINGS**. But there’s nothing quite like attending in person and seeing all your old friends that now work in different parts of country. And making new friends of course! The networking opportunities in these big conferences is priceless. In this time of Covid and as we plan for a year of virtual conferences I think we will all be ready to see each other again. I would encourage ALL of you to attend a

National conference if you have the opportunity and we can look forward to 2022 when it will be located closer to us in Spokane. Mark your calendar!

*~Liz Bradley, MTTWS Past President*



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## Other news from around the wildlife world

- Gary White, National Wildlife Society president, issued a promise for diversity, equity, and inclusion on July 23. Read his letter and learn more by [clicking here](#).
- There's a multitude of resources becoming available out there to keep up-to-date on wildlife topics in this pandemic-inspired virtual interlude. Here are just a few:

- [Conservation Conversations](#): weekly webinars about various topics
  - AFWA (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) 110th' Annual Meeting [Virtual Conference \(September 9-15, register now!\)](#)
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## In Memoriam

- **Jim Posewitz** passed away on July 3, 2020. It is extremely difficult to condense his amazing career achievements and contributions, for Montana and beyond, into a short "blurb" for this newsletter, so please [Click Here](#) to read his obituary in the Helena Independent Record. You can also listen to some of his amazing words of wisdom by viewing this recent [interview](#) via the Montana Wild Bison Restoration Coalition. Among his many accolades, Jim was the recipient of the 1983 MTTWS Distinguished Service Award.
- On August 8, three Texas Parks and Wildlife employees died in a helicopter crash while conducting aerial surveys for bighorn sheep in a remote area of West Texas. State veterinarian **Bob Dittmar**, wildlife biologist **Dewey Stockbridge**, and wildlife technician **Brandon White** were devoted, passionate professionals who gave their all for wildlife conservation. While this tragedy happened many miles from Montana, it deeply affects all of us who fly as part of our job. Bob, Dewey, and Brandon will be intensely missed.





**Answer to trivia question:** (D) A **head cut** is an erosional feature of some intermittent (like you'd see in a pasture or meadow) and perennial streams with an abrupt vertical drop, also known as a knickpoint, in the stream bed. More commonly, headcuts and headward erosion are hallmarks of unstable incising drainage features such as actively eroding gullies. They can be small in width and depth, but can also become several feet wide and deep, depending on the situation.

Why is this important to wildlife biologists? While these can and do occur naturally, these are also signs of long-term heavy impacts by grazers in the greater area...both domestic and wild. Very likely, the wildlife habitat components of a pasture or stream bed with these features are compromised. And if the headcut is still active, a change in management practices need to occur.

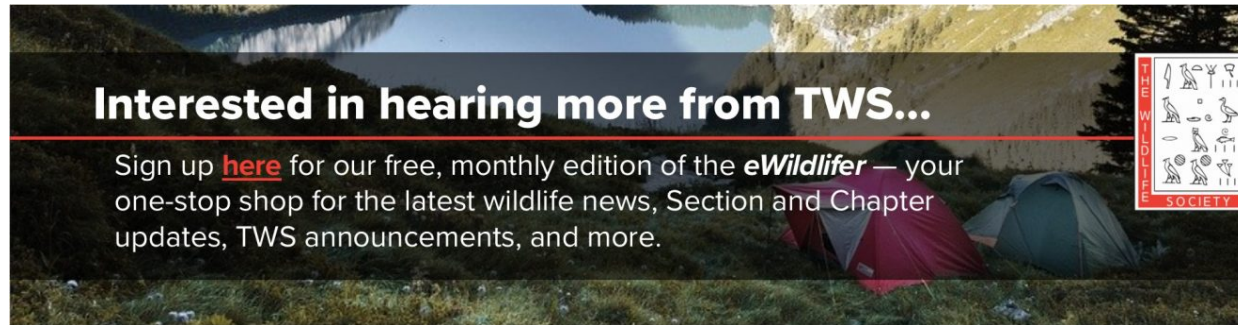


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newsletter? Send it to  
[mttws.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:mttws.secretary@gmail.com)!***


MTTWS website





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