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**[EXTERNAL] MTTWS 2024 Fall Newsletter**

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From MT TWS <secretary@mttws.org>

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To Skone, Brandi <BSkone@mt.gov>

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## The Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society

# Fall Newsletter: Deets on the next annual conference and a new logo contest!

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## Greetings from your MTTWS President

Greetings Montana Chapter!

Hopefully you have been able to enjoy this autumn in the outdoors. The dwindling length of daylight can be difficult but hope for snow in the mountains makes the seasonal transition a little easier, despite not wanting to let summer go. And time outside provides clarity during this inevitable change to colder temperatures and longer nights.

The Wildlife Society conference was in Baltimore, MD in October and fortunately Past-President, Chad Bishop, and I were able to attend. There were interesting and thought-provoking presentations and posters (including from MT Chapter members and students!) and valuable networking opportunities. We attended the chapters and sections meeting which provided insight into how other chapters/sections function, discussions addressing issues we're facing, as well as updates from TWS council

members.

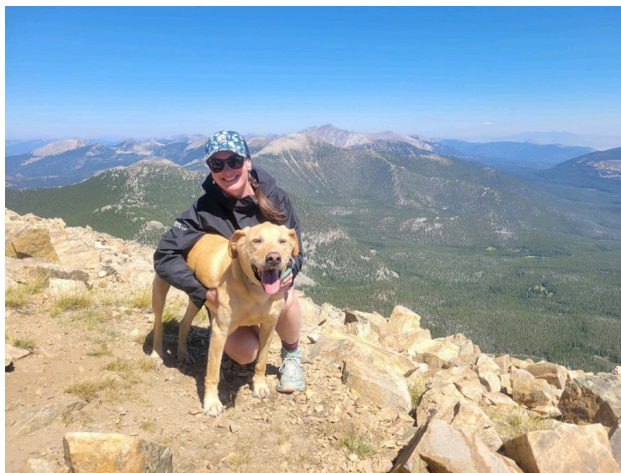
One topic that was brought up and that the MT TWS Executive Board has discussed is that TWS Council Policy Priorities Committee is seeking input from chapters and sections about policy priorities for 2025-2026. An important aspect of TWS is its engagement in policy issues to support and benefit the wildlife profession and advance science-based wildlife conservation and management decisions. This component of TWS as well as policy's impact on our wildlife professions are just a couple of reasons why the theme of the Montana Chapter's annual conference is so pertinent. Read more from Rebecca on the next page!

With that mention, the Board has been busy preparing next year's conference. We look forward to seeing you in Billings from March 4th - 7th, 2025. Huge kudos to President-Elect, Rebecca Mowry, for all her diligent work putting the conference together! The Board has also been working with the Lewis Young Memorial Fund. We encourage you to [contribute to honor Lewis's legacy. \[mttws.org\]](https://mttws.org) And, after hearing from membership that our logo could use freshening up, the Board has decided to create a logo contest that members will vote on at the annual conference. Our current logo will also be in the running. Check out all the details below.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or another Board member with any thoughts, ideas, or concerns. As I said in the summer newsletter, this Chapter and the annual conference are so successful because of your involvement.

Thank you for all your support of the Chapter and Montana's wildlife!

*~Katie Benzel, President*



# The 2025 MTTWS Annual Conference!

March 4-7, 2025

Billings Hotel and Convention Center

Billings, MT

## "Conservation Policy: Getting Involved, Staying Engaged, and How TWS Can Help"

Change is coming fast and furious to the wildlife of Montana, be it from increasing human populations and associated development, to novel diseases and invasive species, to climate change. At the same time funding and support for nongame wildlife is growing, conservation easements continue to pop up on important habitats across the state, and agencies are partnering to help connect fragmented wildlife populations and reduce the impacts of roads and fences. And the Recovering America's Wildlife Act continues to languish in legislative limbo in Washington, D.C....it may have failed in 2022, but it's not dead yet.

As I write this, America is choosing its next national leaders. When I think about our wildlife and other natural resources, there's a lot to worry about AND a lot to hope for. Most of us wildlife professionals and students probably go about our daily lives wondering what will happen, and feeling like the fate of our natural world is in somebody else's hands. But it doesn't have to be that way.

There are numerous organizations out there working on conservation policy; among them is our flagship Wildlife Society, which helps bridge the gap between professionals and politicians in order to effect meaningful policy changes that will preserve the things we've dedicated our lives to managing, studying, and protecting. TWS has long been a powerful voice in Washington and has developed tools to help state chapters tackle local policy issues and add our voice to national ones.

My hope in bringing this topic to you for our 2025 conference theme is to help our membership better understand how conservation policy development works across state, tribal, and national levels. And I want to get you fired up about it. Ultimately, I want the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society to be more actively engaged with

policy—and we need YOU!

## Reserve Your Hotel Room!

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You can reserve your hotel room now with the Billings Hotel and Convention Center!

Call now (406-867-8111) and reserve your room by giving the **Group Code 64603** or mentioning the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society to receive the state rate (\$107/night plus tax).

You can also visit their [website \[mttws.org\]](http://mttws.org) and under book now, enter the **Group ID 64603**.

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## New Logo Contest for MT TWS!

We've heard some rumblings through our membership to revamp our logo and we want your help! Imagine your artwork as our Chapter's logo! We will be accepting submissions from now until January 17th. If you have a vision for what our logo should look like, we want to see it! This contest is open to any and all members.

If interested in competing, submit your designs to [mttws.president@gmail.com](mailto:mttws.president@gmail.com). You should receive a confirmation email from Katie. The board will narrow options (if necessary) and have membership vote on the final selection at this year's conference in Billings. The winner will receive \$100 and some sweet SWAG the following year with their new logo!

*\*\*Important to note, we will keep the current design as an option when voting.*

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## Small Grants Award

It's time to start submitting your applications for our small grants! This year is a little different. To hopefully entice more folks to take advantage of this grant, we are offering a little more money. Two grants will be available at \$1500 each! Visit our [website \[mttws.org\]](http://mttws.org) for details on what projects qualify for this award and consider applying!

Just do it!!

See below for how our recipient from last year used their grant. Thanks to Leah Rensel for sharing and congratulations again!



*Deer mouse with Dulog transmitter inside a protective casing.*



*Three undergraduate technicians standing by freshly baited Sherman traps.*

Thanks to the gracious support from the 2024 MT-TWS Grants, we were able to purchase Dulog transmitters to track deer mouse contacts in semi-natural enclosures. Deer mice are the reservoirs for Sin Nombre Virus, a deadly disease in humans but an ideal model for wildlife disease dynamics. Dulog technology is an innovative and novel method to track small nocturnal animals; traditionally, small rodents have been excluded from this type of research due to the size constraints of the available technology. The tiny Dulog transmitters emit beacons that are detected and recorded by nearby transmitters, recording both the animal identity and the distance between the transmitters.

Figure 1: Deer mouse with Dulog transmitter inside a protective casing.

During the summer of 2024, we tested the efficacy of Dulog transmitters on deer mice. As each transmitter is approximately \$500 USD, we tested several different types of attachment

styles to affix the transmitters to the mice using fake transmitters before deploying the real transmitters. In addition, we spent the summer calibrating equipment and customizing the settings to work best for our field site. At the end of the season, we placed the two transmitters we purchased using MT-TWS funds on two deer mice and monitored their activity in an enclosure (*left picture above*).

While we were able to detect high resolution contact information from the deer mice using Dulong technology, we ultimately concluded that the size of the transmitters (approximately 2-2.5g including the attachment materials placed on a 20 g average deer mice) was too large and may change the behavior of the deer mice. While this was disappointing, our hard work has shown that this technology is viable and may have applications in similar systems with larger rodents.

Figure 2: Our 3 undergraduate technicians, standing by freshly baited Sherman traps.

In addition to our research, we hired 14 undergraduate students to assist us with enclosure maintenance and hired 3 additional students to assist us in animal trapping and transmitter testing. We placed a large emphasis on mentoring during this summer so that any appropriately trained student had the opportunity to learn and participate in all aspects of our research (*right picture above*). Two of our students from this summer will be using some of our data collected in 2024 in their Wildlife Biology senior thesis projects.

~Leah Rensel

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## Seeking Award Nominations

It's time to start thinking about who YOU want to nominate for one of our fabulous awards. We know so much amazing work is being done in this state. This is your chance to recognize that work and those deserving individuals! It's not too early to start working on that nomination now. See below for more details on each award or visit our [website \[mttws.org\]](http://mttws.org).

**The Distinguished Service Award:** This award is presented for cumulative, past, current, and/or continuing achievements in wildlife conservation. This is typically acknowledgment of accomplishments over a career.

**The Biologist of the Year Award:** This award is presented annually for significant achievements in wildlife conservation anytime during the five years immediately preceding the award presentation.

**The Bob Watts Communication Award:** This award is presented for significant

communication in media such as professional publications, popular wildlife articles, books, movies, or videos that have a relatively wide audience.

**The Wildlife Conservation Award:** This award is given to an individual or non-governmental organization for past, present, or ongoing efforts that enhance wildlife conservation in Montana.

**The Rising Professional Award:** This award recognizes emerging professionals and rising leaders in the wildlife field who are drivers of professional progress in Montana. Eligible candidates will have worked in a part or full-time professional capacity (seasonal or year-round positions) for at least 3 years, and no more than 8 years. Employment need not be continuous. Current students are not eligible. Employment may include, but is not limited to: wildlife and habitat management or research, conservation policy or advocacy, environmental education or program development, consultation, etc.

To nominate, email a written recommendation for a specific award, along with compelling justification for the nomination and a discussion of the qualifications of the nominee. While there is no prescribed format, nominations often take the form of a formal letter or letters, and are often supported by several agencies, organizations, or MT TWS members. Nominations will be reviewed by the Award Committee and selections will be made in January. Nominators will be notified of selections at that time and will be asked to assist with coordinating the attendance of the awardee. Send nominations to **Megan O'Reilly** at [moreilly@mt.gov](mailto:moreilly@mt.gov).

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## Seeking Nominations for President-Elect and Secretary!

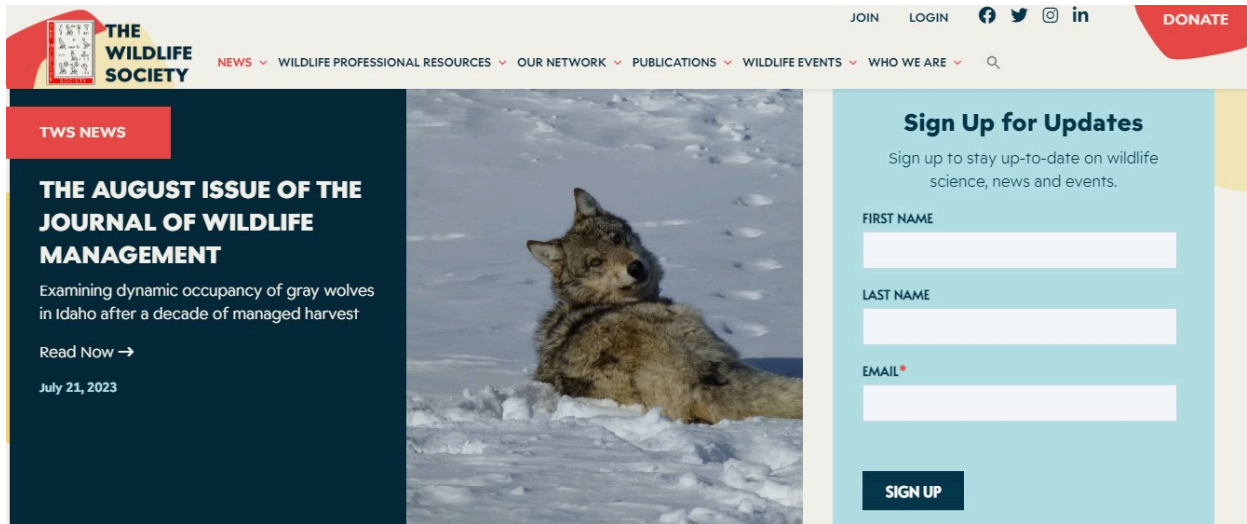
Your MTTWS board is soliciting nominations for **President-Elect AND Secretary** this year. They are both 3-year terms full of excitement, surprises, and good-humored folks that want to help you put on the conference of your dreams... or whatever we have enough money to do. Please consider! And if interested, please e-mail Chad Bishop ([chad.bishop@mso.umt.edu](mailto:chad.bishop@mso.umt.edu)) to nominate yourself or someone else.

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**Got something for our next newsletter? Send it to [mtws.secretary@gmail.com!](mailto:mtws.secretary@gmail.com)**

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