

# KNOWLEDGE BASE

## Tomorrow's Leaders



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A new emphasis on research and education takes flight in this issue of *Fair Chase*. Why now? It's certainly not because the Club's endeavors in this realm are new.

To the contrary,

Boone and Crockett Club has a long, proud, and sustained history of accomplishment in research and education. Quite simply, the committee that oversees *Fair Chase* decided it was time to share these successes, because research and education are so critical to wildlife conservation and there are so many stories worth telling.

There is a rich legacy to choose from. For starters, consider the Club's historical role in education, which began more than half a century ago. Political advocacy by prominent Boone and Crockett members was instrumental in the establishment of wildlife research units and university programs that produced the first, and subsequent, generations of wildlife scientists and practitioners. The Club's role in education today is more direct. It includes the Lee and Penny Anderson Conservation Education Program, aimed at K-12 students and designed to impart key lessons about the conservation and shared

use of natural resources. The program's mission is to increase humanity's awareness and understanding of wildlife and the ecosystems we all share and our influence on the natural and cultural resources of those ecosystems. The program's home base is the spectacular Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center, located on the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch—a working ranch managed as a laboratory for the study, teaching, and demonstration of good land stewardship.

Then, there are the Boone and Crockett Professorships. In the early 1990s, the Boone and Crockett Club and the University of Montana each contributed \$3 million to create an endowed chair at the Missoula campus. Occupants of

this prestigious chair are senior professors having a strong track record of research, management, and/or policy accomplishments in the wildlife conservation arena. The dividends from this investment have been enormous. They include hundreds of speeches and technical presentations, Congressional testimonies, scientific papers and books, popular articles, editorials, and much more. In addition to teaching natural resources policy to university students, the Boone and Crockett Professor supervises and mentors selected graduate students pursuing their Masters or Ph.D. degrees. These Boone and Crockett Fellows span the biological, social, political, and economic disciplines to study complex, real-world problems that shape the present and future of wildlife conser-

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vation. If developing tomorrow's leaders is a key purpose of the program, then it has performed admirably. Because Boone and Crockett Fellows have been successful in securing important and influential positions, they are helping to advance wildlife conservation at the national, state, and local levels. The potential for positive impact will be even greater as the Boone and Crockett Professorship concept expands to other parts of the country. Endowed chairs have been created at Texas A&M University and Oregon State University, and planning is underway at additional schools.

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Crockett has provided grants-in-aid to support graduate student research. The program is unique in its focus on big-game species and its solicitation of proposals directly from graduate students. More than 100 students and others have been assisted by these grants, which launched many on productive careers as wildlife professionals. A wealth of masters theses, Ph.D. dissertations, and scientific papers has also resulted from these investments.

In 2006 three investigators were approved for support from the program, now named the William I. Spencer Conservation Grants Program to honor the memory of a great Boone and Crockett conservation leader.

**Jim Heffelfinger**, a regional game specialist for the Arizona Department of Game & Fish, received \$8,000 to continue his work on "Defining Practical Units of Conservation and Record Keeping through Analysis of Genetic Differentiation in Mule and White-Tailed Deer."

**Ryan Walser**, a masters student at Sul Ross State University, received \$4,000 in support for his project "Public Policy vs. Biology: Evaluating Effects of Season Change on Harvest Characteristics of Mule Deer in West Texas."

**Charles Frost**, a masters student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, received \$8,000 to help with studies on "Transmission of Chronic Wasting Disease in Riparian Areas:

Influences of Mule and White-tailed Deer Movements, Population Dynamics, Social Behavior, and Landscape Patterns."

Our feature article in this initial run of the Research and Education Department is by Todd Attwood, a conservation grant recipient. As in past issues of *Fair Chase*, we will continue to share the interesting studies and findings that have been supported, in part, by the Boone and Crockett Club. However, the scope of this department will reach beyond Boone and Crockett programs to tap into the research and education endeavors of our many partners in conservation. We hope readers of *Fair Chase* will find the results both entertaining and enriching. ■