

KNOWLEDGE BASE

Celebrating Those Who Showed Up



Winifred B. Kessler
PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
Boone and Crockett Club

The popular saying “the world is run by those who show up” applies well to two conservation organizations celebrating milestone anniversaries in 2012. The Boone and Crockett Club, which

turns 125 this year, began as “100 men of influence” and continues today as a select group of volunteers committed to wildlife conservation. The Wildlife Society, celebrating its 75th anniversary, consists of wildlife professionals dedicated to science-based management and the future of wildlife. Both had prominent roles in bringing wildlife populations from the brink to the abundance we enjoy today, and both continue as leaders in shaping North America’s conservation landscape.

As most readers of *Fair Chase* will know, wildlife populations in the late 1800s were in deplorable condition resulting from unregulated market hunting and widespread habitat degradation. Sportsmen organized into such groups as the B&C Club, Camp Fire Club, and New York Sportsmen’s Club took the lead in turning things around. They urged state and provincial governments to regulate the harvest of game, advocated for habitat protection and the establishment of refuges, promoted the fair chase ethic, and essentially drove the great conservation movement of the early 1900s. Wildlife management during that time was largely limited to game breeding.

By the 1930s, many conservationists recognized that further progress would require science-based management and trained practitioners. The first university program was established in 1933 with Aldo Leopold’s appointment as professor of Game Management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Some in the new discipline saw a need for professional and ethical standards, as well as mechanisms for sharing and disseminating scientific results and practical information. Ted Frison, director of the Illinois Natural History Survey, initiated discussion among his Midwest colleagues and in December 1935, a meeting was held

in Urbana to discuss the formation of a professional society. Two months later the idea was aired at the first North American Wildlife Conference in Washington, D.C., and the Society of Wildlife Specialists was born with Ralph (Terry) King as the first president. The society met in 1937 at the second North American Wildlife Conference in St. Louis, and the name was changed to The Wildlife Society (TWS).

The mission of TWS is “to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve biological diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society.” It does this in many ways, for example, by publishing high-quality research papers in *The Journal of Wildlife Management* (first published in 1937), *Wildlife Monographs*, and *Wildlife Society Bulletin*. It supports wildlife professionals and upholds the integrity of the discipline through professional and ethical standards, close involvement in university education, and certification of wildlife biologists. TWS holds an annual meeting where researchers, managers, educators, students, policy-makers, and others share information and discuss key issues affecting wildlife resources. TWS also has an active government affairs department that tracks important issues affecting wildlife and weighs in through expert testimony, technical reviews, position statements, and other means. In its 75th year, TWS faces a bright future with record

membership (nearly 11,000), strong partnerships, and new services aimed at giving students and young professionals a hand up in their chosen careers.

My term as the 67th president of TWS will commence this October at the annual meeting in Portland, Oregon. Recently I reviewed the list of past presidents, wishing to better understand the history and legacy of those who went before. In addition to being humbled by the larger-than-life names on that list, I discovered that the entire history of TWS is intertwined with that of the Boone and Crockett Club. Starting with the “father of wildlife management,” Aldo Leopold, an impressive number of TWS presidents have also been members of the B&C Club.

The following past presidents of TWS (terms shown in parentheses) served or continue to serve as B&C Professional Members:

- Aldo Leopold (1939–40)
- Olaus J. Murie (1944–45)
- Clarence Cottam (1949–50)
- A. Starker Leopold (1957–58)
- Wendell G. Swank (1962–64)
- Jack H. Berryman (1964–65)
- Jack Ward Thomas (1977–78)
- Laurence R. Jahn (1979–80)
- James G. Teer (1988–90)
- W. Alan Wentz (1992–93)
- Hal Salwasser (1993–94)
- Rollin D. Sparrowe (1995–96)
- Robert D. Brown (2005–06)
- John F. Organ (2006–07)
- Thomas M. Franklin (2008–09)
- Bruce D. Leopold (2009–2010)
- Thomas J. Ryder (2010–2011)

The current President, Paul R. Krausman (2011–2012), is a Professional Member and B&C Professor. In addition, these TWS past presidents were Regular Members of B&C:

- Victor H. Cahalane (1940–41)
- Ian McTaggart Cowan (1950–51)
- Joseph P. Linduska (1967–68)
- Edward L. Kozicky (1969–70)

The history of wildlife conservation in North America is largely a story about committed individuals who seized multiple opportunities to advance the causes they cared deeply about. In short, it’s a history of those who showed up.

W. B. Kessler

