

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS

The Boone and Crockett Club University Program is designed to provide science-based knowledge from seasoned wildlife professionals and educators to college graduates in the wildlife field to better prepare the graduates for the responsible and wise management of wildlife in the future.

The Wildlife Society and Boone and Crockett Club's University Programs PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

In late September, the Boone and Crockett Club's University Programs provided its fellows the opportunity to learn from wildlife professionals from throughout North America. Boone and Crockett Fellows and professors from Michigan State University, Texas A&M University, University of Montana, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and Mississippi State University gathered in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and joined 1,844 other wildlife professionals at the annual meeting of The Wildlife Society. The Wildlife Society is the professional organization of wildlife biologists with nearly 10,000 members.

The five-day meeting was an extravaganza of 87 sessions of oral presentations, 260 posters, and 19 workshops. The B&C's University Programs organized a symposium that presented case studies and lessons from prominent wildlife professionals on the delicate balance between stakeholder engagement and scientific decision making when formulating wildlife policy. Boone and

Crockett professional members Becky Humphries, Eric Rominger, John Organ, Laura Van Riper, and Robert Brown shared their experiences along with eight other prominent wildlife biologists. The room was filled to capacity with dozens of participants standing along the walls.

Boone and Crockett Fellows and faculty were given a more intimate networking and learning opportunity during a special luncheon hosted by the Boone and Crockett Club and University Programs. Boone and Crockett Professor Bill Porter opened the luncheon with the story of wildlife conservation in North America summarized through the contributions of five generations of conservationists. The story started with Theodore Roosevelt's and Gifford Pinchot's generation, which realized many wildlife species were headed toward extinction and took action by establishing the idea of wildlife conservation. Next was the development of the wildlife professional by Aldo Leopold's generation followed by the scientific underpinnings developed by the third generation of wildlife biologists represented by the likes of Paul Errington and Herbert

Stoddard. The fourth generation, composed of today's leaders in the wildlife profession, came of age as society codified wildlife conservation through policy and legislation developed and passed in the 1970s and 1980s. The fifth generation is represented by today's Boone Crockett Fellows who use advances in technology to generate new dimensions in our understanding of the natural world and thereby provide the knowledge necessary for effective management and policies.

After getting to know each other during conversations over lunch, Boone and Crockett Professional Member Wini Kessler addressed the group. The insights Wini shared took on additional meaning because two days earlier Wini had been presented the Aldo Leopold Award, the highest honor bestowed by The Wildlife Society. Wini used experiences from her long and storied career to help the B&C Fellows understand the importance of developing, nurturing, and employing professional networks. She explained why having a broad network of people not directly associated with the wildlife profession can make for a more effective

wildlife professional. She emphasized the importance of working to maintain a professional network and made it clear that a long list of friends in social media is not the same as a network of friends and colleagues cultivated by frequent, personal interactions. She encouraged fellows to pick up the phone instead of engaging members using impersonal emails, texts, and postings. Finally, Wini encouraged B&C Fellows to include established biologists in their professional network because those more seasoned members of the wildlife profession stand to benefit tremendously from the enthusiasm of the fellows and from the innovative techniques and approaches this newest generation of biologist are developing.

Boone and Crockett Fellows closed the networking loop when they shared results of their research in poster and oral presentations. In doing so, the fellows made their findings available for use in research, management, and policy development and demonstrated that the B&C Club is making a difference in wildlife conservation. ■

BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB SPONSORED SYMPOSIUM

CHALLENGES OF BALANCING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SCIENTIFIC DECISION-MAKING TO INFORM WILDLIFE POLICY

During the past several decades, The Wildlife Society has become recognized as the organization of wildlife professionals in North America and throughout the world. The wildlife profession is solidly founded in the disciplines of biological, quantitative, and social sciences, yet wildlife professionals also must function within the reality of political and public arenas. Thus, in their efforts to manage and conserve wildlife populations and habitats, wildlife biologists often encounter politically and publicly challenging situations. Sometimes, political motivations or public special interests may interfere with the objective and scientific programs or projects being conducted by wildlife professionals. In these situations, political and public interests may not only question the scientific validity of the wildlife programs or projects, but they may even cast aspersions as to the integrity and motivations of the wildlife professionals who are in charge of the programs or projects. This symposium includes presentations from speakers who have had experiences in the real world working with state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations that will enable them to address situations where wildlife policy programs have succeeded or failed. These experiences should help symposium attendees to be better prepared to deal with the challenge of having science guide the decision-making process associated with wildlife management.

- **Conservation Decision-Making through Transparency, Inclusion, and Use of Best Available Science**—Rebecca Humphries, B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
- **Control of Apex Predators During the Restoration of Endangered Ungulates**—Eric M. Rominger, B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
- **Integrating Stakeholder Input and Science in Governance of the Public Trust in Wildlife**—John F. Organ, B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER; Shawn A. Riley; Daniel J. Decker
- **Effective Implementation of the Endangered Species Act By Engaging Multiple Stakeholders**—Nancy E. Mathews
- **Transforming Conflict and Fostering Collaborative Action: Critical Components in the Successful Development and Implementation of Wildlife Policy**—Laura Van Riper, B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
- **Moving Feral Cat Management Forward**—Christopher A. Lepczyk
- **The Politics of Deer Farming in North Carolina – Lessons Learned**—Robert D. Brown, B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
- **The Art of Deer Management: Finding the Sweet Spot between Biological Reality and Public Acceptance**—Jason A. Summers
- **Conservation By Conflict**—Sherry L. Barrett
- **Canary in the Marijuana Field: How Wildlife Engaged Stakeholders and Policy in Addressing Environmental Impacts from Marijuana Cultivation in the Western United States**—Mourad W. Gabriel



Rebecca Humphries



Laura Van Riper



John F. Organ



Eric M. Rominger



Professors and fellows were able to network and share stories at the University Programs luncheon coordinated by Professor Bill Porter from Michigan State University.

KESSLER CELEBRATES PINNACLE OF CAREER WITH ALDO LEOPOLD AWARD

DANA KOBILINSKY
SCIENCE WRITER AT
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Wini Kessler won the highest honor presented by The Wildlife Society, the Aldo Leopold Memorial Award. She accepted the award at this year's annual TWS conference in New Mexico.

When Winifred "Wini" Kessler learned that she achieved the highest honor bestowed by The Wildlife Society, the Aldo Leopold Memorial Award, she was shocked, she said, and "feeling like a rock star."

"It's not something I ever pictured myself getting," said Kessler, who's been a member of The Wildlife Society since 1973 and served as TWS president in 2012-2013. "It just means so much to me because it comes from the wildlife community itself. It's great. It says, 'OK, I've had a career well-lived.'"

Kessler is now the second woman to receive the

award. Lucille Stickel was the last recipient, in 1974.

Kessler began studying zoology as an undergraduate at the University of California-Berkeley. While she didn't know about the field of wildlife biology, her brother told her about a professor at the university who worked on wildlife management. His name was Starker Leopold, the son of Aldo Leopold, the man who pioneered the field of wildlife management. She met Starker Leopold, received advice on what she needed to know for the field, began attending seminars and signed up for a few classes.

At the time, the program had no women. "It was kind of uncomfortable," she said. "I was the only one in a class full of men, and all of the professors were males."

But her mentors, including Starker Leopold, were

willing to "take the risk" of working with women, she said. Leopold introduced Kessler to Harald Heady, an ecologist in the range management program who took on three women as master's students. "They called us 'Heady's harem,'" she said. Another mentor, Harald Biswell, took her on as a research assistant to study fire ecology.

She had great experiences in academia, she said, but finding a job was not so easy. "The jobs I wanted were field jobs that were not open to women," she said. "That was kind of discouraging."

It was also a big factor in Kessler pursuing her doctorate. "They were not open to me, so I'd get so darn qualified they'd have to accept me," she said.

While she was getting her PhD at Texas A&M University, the field was beginning to accept more women. At 27 years old, she landed her first job, as an assistant professor at the University of Idaho. Since then, she's held many positions in both academics and government agencies.

She taught at Utah State University, chaired the forestry program at the University of Northern British Columbia and worked with the U.S. Forest Service for 21 years in positions such as Alaska regional ecologist, national wildlife ecologist and Alaska regional director of wildlife, fisheries, ecology and watershed management.

Throughout her career, she's seen the field of wildlife biology accept more women and minorities. She was vice president at the 2011 TWS Annual Conference in Hawaii where the first Women of Wildlife reception was held and was pleasantly surprised at the large turnout. "It was really exciting. I'll never forget that," she said.

While Kessler is retired, by no means is she slowing down. She's serving on a number of boards, including the Ducks Unlimited Canada board, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council and others. She also continues to volunteer for the Boone and Crockett Club, where she became its first female professional member, in 1993.

"I've had such a great career, and I think I've amassed pertinent experience," she said. "I've learned a lot, and now I'm giving back." ■

Winifred Kessler addressed the group at the B&C University Programs Luncheon.



Wini has contributed to *Fair Chase* since 2002. Read articles and her column 'Knowledge Base' online in the B&C Associates community.