2026 ISSUE 4 FALL EDITION

# THE ARIZONA WILDLIFER

THE VOICE OF THE ARIZONA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

## The President's Message

Tom Correll

Well friends, we made it to October, and despite a record El Niño bringing heatwaves across the globe, Arizona has had a remarkably mild summer. An abundant monsoon ushered us through the fire season with relative ease, and cooler days are fast approaching. This time of year is always very exciting as I prepare for my upcoming deer and squirrel hunts and I start hungrily looking at my Crock Pot, daydreaming of warm roast venison after a chilly morning in the field.

This is also a season of preparation. It seems hard to believe that the next JAM is already so near on the horizon, and NMTWS has been diligently planning for a great event in Las Cruces this coming February. We highly encourage anybody who wants to be involved to reach out to Jack Marchetti (jack.marchetti@dgf.nm.gov) to volunteer for a committee. We, at AZTWS, have also been preparing for the 2028 JAM, which will be held in Arizona. I don't want to spill the beans too soon, but we have committed to a location and can assure you, that it will be an awesome weekend at the foot of a mountain with the possibility of seeing bighorn sheep!

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To the right:
Tom with Apache Trout on East Fork Black River

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Gentle reminder that we are always accepting nominations for chapter awards, if you feel there's somebody in our community who deserves recognition or honors for their work, please contact President-Elect Katie Beard (Kathryn.beard@tonation-nsn.gov) to nominate them for any of our 7 award categories! Selected award recipients will be recognized at the JAM banquet so please make sure to submit early!

This has also been a season for Conservation Action. Our Conservation Affairs Committee, led by Matt Lau, has drafted and submitted several public comments and position letters to senate and congressional offices; opposing the premature de-listing of the Mexican Grey Wolf, and support for the Tohono O'odham Nation's opposition to the Secondary Border Wall which imperils Quitobaquito Springs and the endemic Sonoyta Mud Turtle. Additional comments are being drafted regarding the Roadless Rule Recission, and Updated Definition of "Waters of the United States". Efforts such as these are critical to ensuring that the voices of Biologists, Ecologists, Naturalists, and Scientists remain at the forefront of the conservation discussion and acting as the bulwark against unscientific politics. Let your voice be heard, and please reach out if you want to be involved!

Finally, I want to quickly highlight our upcoming collaboration with Wren House Brewing Company in Phoenix. They are working with our chapter to roll out a custom limited edition TWS wrap for their flagship Valley Beer, and we will be hosting a Pint Night on October 17th from 5-9pm at their new taproom location in Paradise Valley. This is a free event and we will be selling merch, bringing speakers, and doing our best to collect donations. So please come out, bring your friends, and spend an evening with us having a cold AZTWS brew – and take a few collectors cans with you before you leave!

I wish you all a fantastic autumn, it's the best time of year to be out in the field. Whether you're checking traps, conducting migration surveys, or simply spending a morning glassing hillsides for Coues deer, make sure to slow things down and enjoy the season and get out there as often as you can!

Best wishes,
Tom Correll

# Southwest Section Tracks

Kathy Granillo
TWS Southwest Representative



**Section Representative Kathy Granillo with a wolf pup.**

It has been a long, hot summer, hasn't it? Arizona and New Mexico experienced their hottest summers on record. It was the 4th hottest on record for Texas. It is finally cooling down some in New Mexico, where I live, and we finally got some rain. But we did not get rain in July and August, our typical monsoon season, and our rivers and reservoirs are at all time lows. Hundreds of miles of the Rio Grande went dry, and the cottonwoods along the Rio Grande started going dormant in August. Experts suspect many trees will not survive the winter.

These conditions have me musing about resiliency, redundancy and connectivity. And mostly my musings leave me with more questions.

Our ecosystems are changing and the wildlife that are part and parcel of these ecosystems are constantly adapting to conditions such as weather, food, shelter, predation, and the actions of humans. We now live in the Anthropocene - the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. How can we humans, particularly us wildlife professionals, best help wildlife to adapt and thrive in these novel environments that we are now creating?

I would argue at least partly through researching what helps a species be resilient and then managing to provide resilient places for them to be. And to provide lots of these places, across the landscape and provide for some connectivity between them. Especially for migratory species. I've been thinking about the migratory songbirds, which are in the peak of fall migration, and the sandhill cranes and the waterfowl that will soon be migrating south and the ones that will be wintering in our states. What places do we have available for them as stopover sites and wintering sites?

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Habitat conditions for wintering cranes and waterfowl are horrible in New Mexico, which could have dire implications for these birds. Will these birds seek areas with better conditions? That remains to be seen. Cranes and waterfowl are known to move around if conditions are bad. Maybe they will head to Mexico as many of them already do each year. Over the last several decades, researchers have documented Sandhill Cranes regularly wintering in the Mexico States of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Durango, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas and Guanajuato. Surveys from the late 1950s through the 1990s estimated that over 50,000 cranes winter in Mexico. Are the wetlands they need available in Mexico?

What about our resident wildlife? Black bears have been making the news in New Mexico and Arizona, as they roam far afield seeking water and food. New Mexico Department of Wildlife has had to euthanize over 100 bears this summer as they come into conflict with people on their search for food and water. And many are killed by cars and trucks as they traverse the landscape and cross roads. What can we wildlife professionals do to help? At least one thing we can do is to help educate the public both about how to avoid conflicts with wildlife such as bears, and to provide habitat for wildlife. And to advocate for including wildlife in our planning for water resources in our states. I see lots of articles these days about data centers and their demand for water and energy. The public is taking notice, and I hope wildlife professionals are, too.

I will close with a reminder that the Annual Conference is being held this year in Des Moines, Iowa, November 1-5, 2026. The 2027 Annual Conference will be in Sacramento, and the 2028 Annual Conference will be in Dallas. If you attend the conference this year, I'll be there, too and look forward to seeing you. Otherwise, I hope to see many of you at the Joint Annual Meeting of the AZ/NM TWS Chapters and AZ/NM AFS Chapter in February.




## 2026 Annual Conference
## November 1-5
## Des Moines, IA

Event Details

# TWS 2026 and the art of conservation



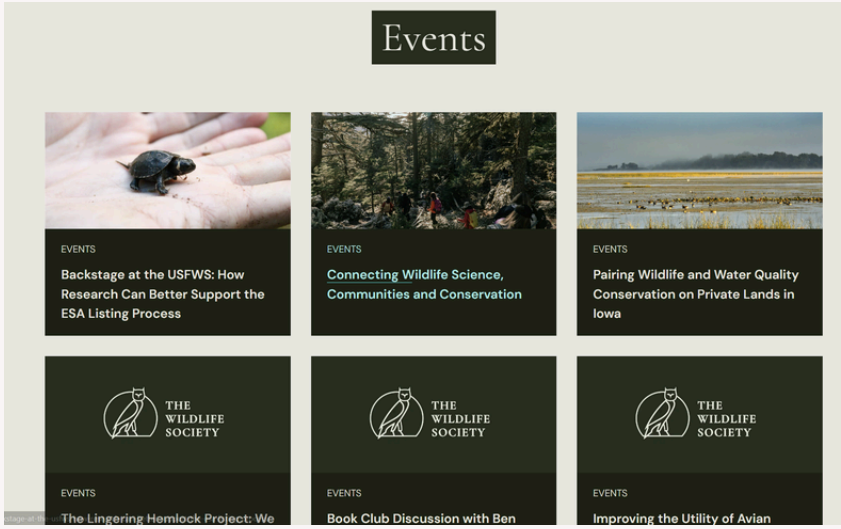
Art has emerged as a prominent theme of this year's conference, and with good reason. From 1906 to 1949, the Des Moines Register helped shape the conservation movement through publishing regular contributions from two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist Jay N. "Ding" Darling. During that time, Darling also served as a mentor to other prominent conservation artists, like the Iowa-based Maynard Reece. In planning for TWS2026, our goal is to honor the enduring legacy of local artists like Darling and Reece while also capturing the vibrancy of art and conservation in TWS today.




Plenary Speakers: Join three artists from diverse disciplines as they explore the power of art and literature to shape conservation outcomes and inspire action.

# Check It Out!

The Wildlife Society has an events calendar! This resource includes the dates of upcoming TWS annual conferences, webinars, and deadlines, as well as Section, Chapter, and Working Group meetings/events. The hope is that this new tool will provide a more comprehensive picture of upcoming TWS events/deadlines across all levels of the society.



# Member Highlight

Spotlight on Katie Beard, AZTWS President-Elect

Congratulations to AZTWS President-Elect, **Katie Beard**, on two outstanding recent achievements! As the Ecologist for the Tohono O'odham Nation Wildlife and Vegetation Management Program, Katie was recently named **Biologist of the Year** by the **Native American Fish & Wildlife Society** and was also recognized, along with her program, with the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Region 2 Tribal Excellence in Conservation Award**.

Katie has been an incredible contributor to wildlife conservation and to AZTWS, where she currently serves as President-Elect. She has dedicated her time and expertise to supporting the Chapter and Arizona's wildlife profession. We are proud to have Katie as part of the AZTWS board and congratulate her on these well-deserved honors!





## AZTWS Donates to the University of Arizona's Wild Cat Research & Conservation Center in honor of Past President Dr. Melanie Culver in recognition of her distinguished career and lasting contributions to wildlife conservation.



# In-Memoriam

## Dr. Melanie Culver



Melanie Culver passed away on August 23, 2026, after a two year battle with glioblastoma, she was 67. Melanie was a faculty member in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Arizona and USGS Assistant Unit Leader in the Arizona Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. She served as President of the Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 2015.

Melanie was a pioneer in conservation genetics. Her early research on pumas and Florida panthers helped show how genetics could guide wildlife management and support the recovery of vulnerable populations. After joining the University of Arizona and the Arizona Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit in 2002, she helped make conservation genetics a practical and essential part of wildlife management. Her research covered an extraordinary range of species and questions, from Mexican wolves, Sonoran pronghorn, and masked bobwhite to butterflies, fish, reptiles, and jaguars. Whether she was working in genetics, environmental DNA, disease research, or wildlife monitoring, her goal was to produce science that could make a difference. She was a generous collaborator and built lasting partnerships with agencies, universities, nonprofit organizations, Tribal Nations, and members of the community.

In 2009, Melanie founded the University of Arizona Wild Cat Research and Conservation Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization conducting science-driven research and wildlife monitoring in southern Arizona. She helped build a long-term jaguar and ocelot monitoring program that brought scientists and community members together. That work has produced more than a decade of important data while giving people a direct role in the conservation of Arizona's wild cats.

She was also an amazing athlete, kayaker, SCUBA diver, skier, and mountaineer. She was adventurous, tough, and determined, qualities that were part of her long before she became ill. When she was diagnosed with terminal cancer, that determination remained. She focused on completing her final publications and making sure her students had what they needed to finish their work. Even then, she was thinking about the people who depended on her.

One of Melanie's most important legacies is the many students she trained and inspired. She genuinely cared about them as people and went far beyond what was expected to help them succeed. She believed in them, gave them opportunities, and helped them become confident, independent scientists. She was an exceptional scientist whose work made lasting contributions to conservation, but she was also a deeply caring person. Melanie was devoted to her students and colleagues, and she formed relationships that extended well beyond the workplace. Her family and friends were central to her life, and she was unwavering in her commitment to them.

That support did not end when a student graduated. Melanie continued to follow their careers, celebrate their professional and personal accomplishments, offer advice, make connections, and remain part of their lives. Many of her former students now lead conservation work in Arizona, across the country, and around the world. For many, Melanie became much more than a mentor, she was an advocate, an inspiration, and a friend.

# In-Memoriam

## Josh Avey

Josh Thomson Avey passed away on August 7, 2026, at the age of 55. Born on January 29, 1971, Josh received his B.S. at the University of Arizona and his M.S. at Texas Tech University studying habitat relationships between mule deer and white-tailed deer. Josh lived with his wife, Noelle, in New River Arizona, was a father of two daughters, and had one grandson. He spent part of his career working with the UofA's Santa Rita Experimental Range and The Nature Conservancy and worked for the Arizona Game and Fish Department for 20 years in a variety of positions including; the Landowner Relations Program, Habitat Branch Chief, Ombudsman in the Director's Office and most recently as the Terrestrial Wildlife Branch Chief. Josh was beloved by so many as he was a great friend, peer and mentor.



Josh was a kind and gentle soul with an infectious smile who treasured his family and friends. He was a professional cyclist in his early days, an avid runner, loved hunting upland game birds with his dogs, and had a passion for conserving Arizona's diverse wildlife resources. He was diagnosed with glioblastoma on July, 3, 2025 and Josh passed on August 7, 2026 with his family and bird dawgs by his side, at home. He will be missed tremendously!

# AZTWS to host 2028 Joint Annual Meeting of the Arizona and New Mexico state chapters of The Wildlife Society and the Arizona-New Mexico chapter of the American Fisheries Society




JAM Planning Committee of AZTWS at a potential venue location in Tucson, AZ

## Share Your AZ Wildlife Stories

Want to share your Arizona wildlife stories and perspectives? Please consider submitting articles, stories, project updates, events, and pictures for upcoming newsletters! AZTWS welcomes all contributors. Email submissions at any time to: **aztwseditor@gmail.com.**

*The Arizona Wildlifer* Content Deadlines:

| Issue | Deadline |
|---|---|
| Winter 2026 | Dec 18, 2026 |
| Spring 2027 | Mar 19, 2027 |

## Looking for Local Opportunities?

Check out the AZTWS website for events, volunteer opportunities, and jobs based in Arizona! Do you have an opportunity to share? Send it to Blue Martin at bbmarti5@asu.edu.

# AZTWS News & Resources

The Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society is dedicated to promoting sound management and conservation of Arizona's wildlife resources and strives to be the preeminent resource for Arizona's community of scientists, managers, educators, students, technicians, planners, and others working to manage and conserve wildlife and habitats in the state. To help you keep up with AZTWS's resources, opportunities, and happenings, we hope that you find the following hotlinks useful:

- Members gain access to numerous opportunities; if you are not yet a member, sign up here. Annual dues are only $6!
- The new AZTWS Web store is officially open! Shop our chapter merchanise and support AZTWS here!
- Support others in Arizona's natural resource fields! Consider donating to AZTWS (discretely or in monthly recurrences) or sharing our membership link with someone who could benefit.
- Looking for that older issue of The Arizona Wildlifer? All issues are freely accessible here!
- TWS emphasizes important resources for diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the wildlife profession. AZTWS also strives to uphold these values.
- Want to get more involved with your Chapter? Check out the information available on our Facebook, X (Twitter), and website for opportunities.
- Have questions for us? Contact us here.

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