

THE MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

61st Annual Conference

**“Plants and Pollinators:
Conserving all of the Interdependent Parts”**

February 14 - 17, 2023

Helena, MT

Welcome back to our first in-person conference since COVID-19 upended “business as usual”! My recent conversations with folks indicate our Chapter is ready to rekindle relationships through face-to-face interactions and make up for lost time at this year’s conference in Helena. Our Executive Board has worked hard to facilitate a conference that will be meaningful and productive for you. Our conference will serve as an opportunity to learn from each other while highlighting the impressive work being done by Montana wildlife professionals across our amazing state and beyond. I was reminded recently how fortunate we are to live in a state where ecosystems are largely intact and where we have the privilege to debate how best to manage species such as grizzly bears. Whether you are an undergraduate college student, mid-career professional, or a wise retiree, I hope you walk away from the conference recharged and ready to do your part to conserve Montana’s wildlife! It has been a pleasure to serve you as president-elect over the past year and I look forward to becoming your president. Our conference theme this year focuses on what we might consider a jurisdictional “gray area” in conservation - Plants and Pollinators: Conserving all of the Interdependent Parts. As wildlifers, we place a high priority on learning botany and plant identification. After all, community assemblages of plants provide the habitat our wildlife species depend upon. Our parent organization, The Wildlife Society, requires 9 credits of botany-related courses to become a certified wildlife biologist. In a similar vein, we encourage students to take entomology and place a priority on understanding the roles of insects in our ecosystems. I would guess that most of us believe native plant and insect biodiversity is of foundational importance to vertebrate conservation in Montana. With that said, it’s fuzzy at best as to who has the jurisdictional responsibility for conserving native plants and insects. State, tribal, and federal wildlife agencies across the nation are having conversations about jurisdictional roles for conserving plants and insects. Whose responsibility is it? What is the role of a “fish and wildlife” agency? Where does the funding come from? This topic is especially timely as Montana considers a revision of its State Wildlife Action Plan. Our plenary session will include seven panelists who will describe current work being done to understand and conserve plants and insects in Montana and discuss possibilities for more formally incorporating plant and insect conservation responsibilities within our existing conservation organizations.

President-Elect: Chad Bishop (University of Montana)