

History of a Continental Bond

CANADA'S TIES TO THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

By Merlin W. Shoesmith



Courtesy of Merlin W. Shoesmith

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There is an adage often repeated on the Bluegrass channel of Sirius XM satellite radio: “Don’t forget where you came from and watch out where you are going.” This article is about remembering Canada’s roots in The Wildlife Society, and looking ahead to where we are going together.

We have much to celebrate. The Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society—formed in 2007—is an equal partner of TWS at the highest levels, with a Canadian Section representative on the Society’s Council. In May of this year, Canada hosted its first-ever continental conservation congress, which was well-attended by TWS colleagues from the United States (see article on page 72). And in 2015, Canada will host TWS’s 22nd Annual Conference in Winnipeg, uniting wildlife professionals from around the world. Yet this integration of Canada and TWS took quite some time to weave together.

The Rocky Road to Unity

The first attempt to bring a Canadian Section into TWS occurred back in 1946, the year that TWS first divided North America into seven geographic regions, with Canada as Region VII. This arrangement lasted for several years, but began to unravel in the 1960s.

“Region VII is simply too large, distances too great, and interests too varied to act effectively as a Region,” wrote Thomas Harper, Canada’s regional representative in 1963. He suggested that Region VII be divided into four sections and added to existing U.S. regions along the U.S.-Canadian border. In March 1964, Council approved that plan, saying

that “Canadian members may attach themselves to their ‘ecological’ counterpart sections to the south.” For the next three years, Region VII continued to have a representative on Council, but by 1968, Council decided to accept Harper’s suggestion. Region VII was dissolved, and the provinces were officially attached to regions in the U.S.

In 1977, a second attempt was made to bring Canada into TWS, this time as a semi-autonomous “affiliate.” It began during a TWS Council meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, when a number of Canadian members were invited to present their views over a lack of an effective professional voice for wildlife in Canada. The following year, in 1978, then-TWS President Jack Ward Thomas invited nine Canadians—university and government field biologists—to form a new Committee on Canadian Concerns to advise Council on how TWS could become more relevant to Canadians and encourage membership of Canadian professionals.

Council created a new slot for a Canadian Member-at-Large, who served as an ex officio member of the Concerns Committee. Harry Hodgdon—then TWS’s field director (a liaison to the sections and other subunits)—became the committee’s recording secretary. This committee held a number of meetings in Winnipeg, Toronto, Regina, and Quebec City to determine the level of interest by Canadians in this endeavor and to seek their advice on how to proceed. From these deliberations came the formation of a new entity called The Wildlife Society of Canada/Societe de la Faune du Canada (WSC/SFC), which was to operate as an advisory affiliate. It was approved by TWS Council in 1981.

The new WSC/SFC held a formal organizational meeting on June 23, 1981, in Charlottetown, PEI. It issued a newsletter in English and French, and by the end of the year had recruited 250 members. TWS provided a \$1,000 grant to help establish the group, and Council agreed to accept WSC/SFC as a full affiliate in 1983. TWS’s section boundaries continued to include portions of Canada, and Canadian representation on Council would be maintained through a WSC/SFC representative, replacing the Canadian Member-at-



Credit: Alberta Fish and Wildlife

Biologist George Mitchell (right) records data at a pronghorn check station in Alberta in 1958. Mitchell helped forge a Canada-U.S. bond by serving as a Canadian representative to TWS’s Council from 1979 to 1988.



Large. George Mitchell from the University of Regina served as the member-at-large from 1979-1983 and as WSC/SFC affiliate from 1983-88.

The WSC/SFC lasted only six years. At a March 1987 TWS Council meeting, Mitchell and two of his Canadian colleagues—David Euler and Scott Jones—reported that WSC/SFC had failed due to severe communication problems and an apparent lack of commitment by Canadian biologists. They recommended that the WSC/SFC affiliate be dissolved, but that a Canadian member-at-large be reinstated on Council. TWS Council agreed to appoint an ad hoc committee to develop recommendations regarding non-U.S. country representation on Council. But in 1988 it officially dissolved the WSC/SFC and the Canadian affiliate on Council.

A New Canadian Section

Another 14 years passed without an official Canadian Section or Council representation, yet Canadian participation in The Wildlife Society did not wane. In fact, it grew stronger. By 2002, there were more than 500 Canadian members of TWS, two provincial chapters—Manitoba (formed in 1973) and Alberta (1989)—and two student chapters (Lethbridge College in Alberta and the University of Alberta). Strong participation by individual Canadian wildlifers continued and was enhanced by the north-south orientation of the Sections, particularly in the Central Mountains and Plains (CMP) Section, where members of the Manitoba Chapter actively participated in section leadership roles and on committees, working collaboratively on issues such as membership and awards.

In 2002, when I became Chair of the International Wildlife Management Working Group, I proposed that TWS form a special subgroup called the Global Involvement Task Force (GITF). One of the objectives of the GITF was to review the North American organization of TWS and recommend change as needed. Rick Baydack of the University of Manitoba became the GITF member from Canada. After four years of research, the group presented a [final report](#) to Council in March 2006, offering several options to encourage Canada's inclusion. Among them: (1) form a Wildlife Society of Canada similar to the affiliation model initiated with the Australasian Wildlife Management Society, (2) continue with the border-section structure, but require that a Canadian be elected to Council every few years so that at least two Council members would always be Canadian, (3) elect two section representatives for each of the three border sections—one from Canada and one from the U.S., (4) consider forming two TWS Councils, one U.S.

and one international, (5) adopt a revised version of the old Council model that allowed for a Canadian representative on Council, and (6) form an ad hoc committee or task force of Canadian members to identify how Canadians could contribute to TWS and how TWS could support the future of wildlife management in Canada.

Council's response was totally unexpected—and most welcome. It determined that TWS would form a new, distinct Canadian Section, and that the north-south integration of parts of Canada into existing U.S. border sections would be abandoned.

Wini Kessler, the current president-elect of TWS, was on Council at that time and recalls the discussions leading to this milestone decision. As a citizen of both Canada and the U.S., Wini understood that treating pieces of Canada as “appendages” on the U.S. sections was not only ineffective because of cultural and political differences, it was downright offensive to many Canadians. Council took this perspective to heart and recognized that a Canadian Section would be the best solution. However, a bylaw clause (requiring that all TWS sections must include a minimum of 8 percent of the total voting membership) stood in the way. This was remedied in July 2006 when membership approved an amendment making the 8 percent rule applicable to the U.S. only, paving the way for Council to consider a petition for the formation of a Canadian or other non-U.S. section.

Rick Baydack, Canadian conservationist Shane Mahoney, and I were asked to draft new bylaws for the section and begin soliciting candidates to run as section president. A new Canadian Section representative would be elected to Council. In 2007, Arlen Todd from Alberta was elected as the first Canadian Section president. In 2008, the first annual general meeting of the section was held in Gimli, Manitoba, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the CMP Section—a joint venture to celebrate and to officially end the north-south integration of parts of Canada into U.S. regions, a remnant of our old organizational structure.

In essence, the “third time was the charm” for Canadians to achieve a full-fledged Canadian Section of TWS. Currently we are into our fifth year as a section and



Credit: Erin McCance

At the Manitoba Chapter's annual meeting in Winnipeg, biologist Dale Wrubleski (right) receives the 2011 Manitoba Chapter Conservation Award from colleague Don Sexton as Canada's TWS Council Representative Rick Baydack applauds from the podium.



Notable Canadian Leaders

Several Canadian wildlife pioneers have had a strong influence on the evolution of The Wildlife Society. Among them:



Courtesy of TWS

Charles H. D. Clarke was a charter member of TWS and a pioneer in biological research in Canada. In 1944 he joined the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, where he was in charge of wildlife research and management. He then served as chief of the Fish and Wildlife Branch until his retirement in 1972. He was president of TWS in 1953-54, became an honorary member in 1966, and received the Leopold Award in 1977.

H. Albert Hochbaum was one of Aldo Leopold's earliest graduate students and helped found the Delta Waterfowl Research Station in Manitoba, where he became the first scientific director and served for 32 years until his retirement in 1970. He received the Aldo Leopold Award in 1980.

Harrison Flint Lewis and **George Doveton Sprot** were the only two Canadians who were Associate Members of TWS in 1937. Lewis became the chief migratory bird officer for Ontario and Quebec and later became chief of the Canadian Wildlife Service, where he served from 1947 to 1952.

Hoyes Lloyd, recipient of the Aldo Leopold award in 1956, was a famed ornithologist and advocate for conservation policies and wildlife refuges across North America. After Canada's passing of the Migratory Birds Convention Act in 1917, Lloyd became the first appointed ornithologist of the Dominion Parks Branch, now Parks Canada. The following year he became superintendent of wildlife protection, a position he held until his retirement in 1943.

Duncan MacLulich, a TWS charter member, was a forester with an interest in parasitology, best known for his studies of fluctuations in lynx and snowshoe hare population cycles. He graduated from the University of Toronto with a forestry degree in 1929, and later headed the Waterloo Lutheran University (now Wilfrid Laurier) biology department from 1962 until 1974.



Credit: Government of British Columbia

Ian McTaggart-Cowan became TWS president in 1950-51, an honorary member in 1965, and a Leopold Award recipient in 1970. One of his greatest achievements—beyond his studies and publications on the biological basis of wildlife conservation—was the training of more than 100 graduate students, including C. S. "Buzz" Holling, Ian Stirling, Valerius Geist, and Maurice Hornocker.

James A. Munro, an environmentalist noted for his research and unyielding support of Canadian migratory bird causes, was a TWS charter member and a regular contributor to ornithological journals. His 16 papers on the life histories, populations, and movements of British Columbia waterfowl were considered by his contemporaries as "models of their kind" (Baillie 1969).

George Clive Toner was also a TWS charter member and a herpetologist for the Royal Ontario Museum who co-authored (with E.B. Logier) a *Checklist of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Canada and Alaska* in 1961.

Two Canadians have received TWS's Special Recognition Service Award: **Ian Stirling** in 1997 for leadership and outstanding contributions to polar bear research, and TWS President-Elect **Winifred B. Kessler** for outstanding service to wildlife conservation through research, management, and education.

have grown to 324 section members. There are now five provincial TWS chapters in Canada (Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan) and six student chapters (Lakehead University, Lethbridge College, Université Laval, University of Alberta, Trent University, and University of Northern British Columbia), with several more being considered. According to Canadian Section Representative Rick Baydack, "Creating a Canadian Section shows that members of The Wildlife Society are truly serious about involving Canadians in decision making for the benefit of our professional organization."

Equal Partners Face the Future

Notable Canadians helped launch The Wildlife Society in its earliest days, and over the years have continued to serve both in the trenches and in leadership roles at the highest levels (see sidebar above). Modern technology makes it possible for TWS members in the remotest regions of Canada to keep informed, sustain their chapters, and work effectively with colleagues in the states. In addition, the Cana-

dian Section's annual general meeting has gained support and is well-attended by TWS members and prospective members who have not had the opportunity to participate in a TWS Annual Conference.

Three key milestones in the coming years have Canadian TWS members looking forward with optimism. One is the ascension next year of Canadian Winifred Kessler as president of The Wildlife Society—the second woman ever to hold that post. In addition, Rick Baydack will become vice president of TWS for 2013, and will move on to become president-elect and president in subsequent years. And the upcoming 2015 Annual Conference in Winnipeg will showcase Canada's leadership in wildlife management and conservation. Clearly Canadian wildlifers have had a strong influence on the early direction of The Wildlife Society, and with a solid Canadian Section now in place, it's clear that the bond will continue to flourish. ■

This article has been reviewed by subject-matter experts.