Wildlife Veterinary Section Candidates 2018

Chairperson - Sonia Hernandez, DVM, DACZM, PhD

I was raised in Madrid, Spain but spent formative years in New Orleans, graduated from vet school (LSU '96) and went the “clinical track” (internship; residency Cornell 2001), private practice clinician, academic clinician and independent researcher before pivoting away from individual and more towards population animal health (PhD Ecology, 2008). I have been in my current academic position (associate professor) in a split position between the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources and SCWDS, at the University of Georgia for nearly a decade. My professional time is divided between research and teaching and the focus of my lab is investigating how anthropogenic activities influence wildlife health and disease with a big focus on urban wildlife. My energy is now mostly devoted to getting other people (under-, grad- and vet students) to become passionate about wildlife health!

I have done a little bit of everything in my professional career (from clinical wildlife medicine, zoo work, exotic pet work, research on endangered species, collaborative work with agencies etc) while being very active in various professional organizations (ACZM Education Chair, AAZV Chair of International and Wildlife Conservation Committees, but most recently, AAWV Vice-President for 4 years; WDA Student Awards Committee; TWS Wildlife Disease Working Group and Chair of NAVC’s One Health Section). These experiences have taught me to be inclusive, as I believe a diversity of perspectives enrich the outcome.

I have been a proud and active member of WDA for 2 decades. Within WDA, veterinarians and other professional members enjoy a very collegial relationship, but outside of the organization, the Wildlife Veterinary Section (WVS) can help to promote cooperation with other wildlife professionals, especially when collaborating with similar groups of allied organizations (e.g. TWS Wildlife Disease Working Group). The WVS can lend a louder voice to wildlife health. Within the organization, this means keeping the Section members connected to each other and updated on the most important wildlife issues (newsletters and meetings): but towards the outside, we must find new ways to ally with others to speak loudly for wildlife health. Our future are our students. I am currently the faculty advisor for a very active student chapter of the WDA and thus in touch with their struggles as they develop their careers. I would like to capture more students for our section early in their careers. WDA has also always been very international. I have watched the
growth and expansion of wildlife veterinary medicine in Latin-American and hope we can encourage more of their members to join the Section. Finally, many wildlife practitioners choose other professional organizations simply because of their exposure during vet school-we can help to make them feel welcomed at WDA!

I hope my diversity of experiences, my culture of inclusivity, and my energy and passion towards wildlife health can be used to serve the WVS as its Chair

Secretary - Sandie Black

I have been a member of the WDA since my veterinary school days, now over three short decades ago! Following a residency in Zoo and Wildlife medicine and pathology at the Toronto Zoo and Ontario Veterinary College (mentored by such luminaries as Ian Barker and Kay Mehren) I landed at the Calgary Zoo, and have stayed here ever since as Associate Veterinarian/Pathologist, then Associate Veterinarian and lastly Head of Veterinary Services. My work at the zoo has encompassed clinical medicine as well as the development and implementation of several conservation breeding programs. My research interests have varied from diseases of wild sheep and goats to carnivore anesthesia to capture effects, health and chronic stress of Narwhal (the August field season for narwhal work has often coincided with the timing of the WDA conference, one small but significant drawback of Arctic research). I have been involved with wildlife health issues throughout my career, working on a subcommittee for national wildlife handling guidelines (CCAC), serving on the executive of the CAZWV, serving as a board member for WDA in the 1990’s, and acting as a member of the International Whooping Crane Recovery Team (current) as well as the Canadian swift fox and Vancouver Island Marmot recovery teams (past). If elected, I look forward to working with the executive and members of the WDA Wildlife Veterinary Section to increase our reach through mentorship, partnership and communication activities.
Treasurer - Julia Burco

I have been a member of WDA for the past 15 years and the Wildlife Veterinary Section since it's inception. Playing a more active role as treasurer would be a perfect opportunity to share many of the experiences I have learned early in my career and coordinate with other wildlife health professionals. I have diverse background in wildlife health; ranging from oil spill response and avian infectious diseases from my PhD work with the Wildlife Health Center at UC Davis to working with a diverse array of free-ranging wildlife and health issues in my current position as a state wildlife veterinarian for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, where I have worked for the past eight and a half years. I am very passionate about training students, biologists, and the public in techniques for monitoring and evaluating wildlife health and currently organize our busy externship program for 4th-year veterinary students interested in wildlife medicine.

Social Media Editor - Anne Justice-Allen

I have been the Chairperson of the Wildlife Veterinary Section for the past 4 years. During that time the section membership has increase in numbers and diversity. The section now provides support for professionals to travel to the Wildlife Disease Association annual meeting. I have been the Department Veterinarian at the Arizona Game and Fish Department for the past 9 years. In that capacity I oversee disease surveillance and response in the state, and participate in policy and protocol development at a regional and national level. I mentor undergraduate and graduate students through internships at the Department and I am an adjunct instructor at Midwestern University in Glendale, Arizona. As the Social Media Editor for the WVS, I hope to increase member engagement on environmental issues, and collaboration to address disease and health management of wildlife.

Student Representative – Adam Hering

I am a Ph.D. student studying veterinary epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I was a member of the University of Calgary's inaugural vet class, graduating in 2012, after which time I spent a year in mixed practice before returning to grad school to pursue a career in wildlife veterinary medicine. I spend as much time as possible getting outdoors through backcountry skiing, backpacking,
climbing, and paddle sports. My professional interests are primarily focused on wildlife management and the impact of disease at the population level as well as the intersection of disease and the human dimensions of wildlife management. I first attended a WDA conference after completing his first year of vet school in Blaine, Washington in 2009, and has since been a member of the organization. So far, my experience in the field has shown me that there is so much more to know than anyone could possibly manage. Clearly, wildlife disease rarely pays much attention to human-drawn borders, and so the network of wildlife vets that we become a part of serves as an invaluable resource in improving the efficiency and effectiveness that we can play in the field. I hope that becoming more involved can help me be both help the broader community and benefit from this network immense body of knowledge.