

ALBERTA CHAPTER OF
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Strategic Plan

2021-2026

Photo: Nicholas Parayko

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Photo: Mark Bradley



Looking to our future

A message from our presidents

Written by: Alex

Edited by: Nicole and John



Nicole Heim - President 2021



John Paczkowski -
President-elect 2021



Alex Beatty -
Past-President 2021

On behalf of the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society's (ACTWS) leadership team – which includes nine volunteer members of the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and over 30 volunteers on standing committees – we are excited to announce our new Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 is ready to be shared with our membership!

This Strategic Plan is the second for the chapter, the first being for 2014-2019, and expands upon the fantastic contributions of volunteers and members over the past 30+ years.

The pursuit of the goals outlined in this plan will enable the ACTWS to connect members with opportunities in wildlife professions and contribute meaningfully to ensuring sustainable wildlife populations in Alberta.

Our chapter is growing and this strategic plan refines our member services and programs to more accurately meet the needs and interests of our members, as well as responding to emerging wildlife conservation issues in Alberta. We will continue to advocate for science-based decision making within Alberta, and we will continue to expand our capacity while striving for financial sustainability.

This is your chapter and we look forward to your feedback regarding the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. Thank you for your sustained support as we continue to evolve.

Nikki, John, and Alex

Looking to our future

A message from our executive director

For over thirty years, the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS) has been a central hub for wildlife scientists, students, managers and enthusiasts to collaborate and research new solutions addressing various complex issues facing Alberta's wildlife.

Alberta's wildlife and their habitats continue to adapt to an ever changing landscape. As they do, the ACTWS is committed to ensuring that wildlife science is a critical component in land use decision making, planning, and policy.



The ACTWS takes a holistic approach to this work through fostering and mentoring students, working with members to represent the ACTWS in wildlife and land use planning processes, proactively providing scientific information to decision makers, and rewarding professional excellence.

Through our work with other provincial chapters, the Canadian Section, and The Wildlife Society, we are part of a much larger transboundary effort to influence the future of wildlife and wild places for the benefit of generations to come.

The next five years are certain to present Alberta's wildlife with an array of natural and anthropogenic challenges. This strategic plan will guide ACTWS efforts and the Executive Director's annual work plan to ensure that our limited resources are directed to have the greatest positive impact for Alberta's wildlife and their habitats.

Sarah Elmeliqi,
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Elmeliqi".

About us



Photo: Mark Bradley

Our mission

The ACTWS is one of many chapters of The Wildlife Society (TWS) across North America working to include wildlife science in decision making and to inspire wildlife scientists, managers, students, and enthusiasts to define and implement scientifically defendable management recommendations.

Our mission is to:

Inspire and empower wildlife scientists, managers, and enthusiasts to engage in science-based management and conservation of wild animals and their habitats.

Our members are biology professionals, scientists, academics, students, communicators and citizen advocates throughout Alberta and western Canada.

As a group, we recognize the inherent potential of humans to induce and influence changes to wildlife and their habitats. We influence wildlife and habitat management in Alberta, as well as provincial policy discussions by supporting science-based wildlife management.

We bring a diverse community of researchers, educators, government biologists, consultants, and students together. Supporting students, the next generation of wildlife scientists, is also foundational to our work.

Our purpose

The ACTWS is a non-profit organization governed by a volunteer board and coordinated by an executive director. We exist to serve our membership, fostering collaboration, innovation, and professional excellence in the field of wildlife science and management.

As part of TWS, we are committed to addressing provincial issues that affect and current and future status of Alberta's wildlife and their habitats. Our role is to represent wildlife and our profession to ensure that the policy and development decisions consider wildlife and habitat by incorporating robust science that is presented in an objective, competent, and transparent manner. We also help define the value and benefit of wildlife for society.

**Member
growth
2014-2021**

59%

From 274-436 members*
*as of May 2021

Our core values



Photo: Mark Bradley

Wise management of wildlife and their habitats is critical



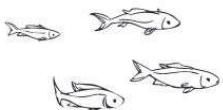
The ACTWS recognizes that Alberta and the World are facing a biodiversity crisis. Tradeoffs associated with human use of resources and wise wildlife management are critical components in addressing this crisis. As a group, we manage and conserve wildlife in ways that are compatible with the needs of wildlife and humans, and work collaboratively to apply a larger ecological-cultural-economic context to management.



Wildlife and wilderness have an intrinsic value

We recognize the intrinsic value of wildlife for healthy, functioning ecosystems, as well as the well-being of humanity. We also recognize that the livelihoods, cultures, and quality of life of many people are dependent on wildlife. These relationships demonstrate that wildlife has value beyond economics.

Our members are foundational to who we are



We value our members and are committed to serving them in ways that advance their careers and the wildlife profession in Alberta. Through innovative and collaborative research, best management practices, and an undying interest in learning, our members further the wildlife profession and our mission every day.



Science is a necessary tool to understand the natural world

We support the use of science to develop rational and effective wildlife and habitat management management practices and conservation programs, as well as to inform policy decisions. We promote thorough, evidence-based, peer-reviewed wildlife and habitat science. Through student support and professional development, we contribute to the ever-expanding body of scientific knowledge for decision-making.



Professionalism and integrity

We value professional and personal integrity, and honesty in collegial interactions and in the ethical conduct, interpretation, and reporting of science that can improve knowledge and influence decisions.

4

Priority Areas

2021-2026

Priorities and Goals

1

Our wildlife community

Goal: Advance wildlife and habitat conservation in Alberta by bringing wildlife students, professionals, and enthusiasts together.

2

Membership enhancement

Goal: Support and empower ACTWS members through diverse member services and student supports.

3

Wildlife science and management

Goal: Promote application of robust science in wildlife and habitat-related decision making.

4

Organizational efficiency

Goal: Develop, maintain, and model operational efficiency and ensure long-term financial sustainability.



1 Our wildlife community

Goal: Advance wildlife and habitat conservation in Alberta by bringing wildlife students, professionals, and enthusiasts together.

The ACTWS acts as a hub for wildlife professionals, students, and enthusiasts across Alberta. Programs that bring these people together are essential to addressing the array of complex issues facing Alberta wildlife and their habitats. The ACTWS is an inclusive organization and values the diversity of expertise that all our members have to offer.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Bring wildlife professionals together to share, discuss and collaborate on wildlife research and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host an annual conference focused on sharing recent wildlife and habitat related research.• Provide students with opportunities to network with career biologists..• Provide networking opportunities for wildlife scientists, managers, and enthusiasts.• Develop partnerships with educational institutions, non-profits, private business, and others organizations to create and implement collaborative projects.
Engage the Alberta public in wildlife and habitat conservation issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend and/or host education and outreach events focused on Alberta wildlife.• Host a public talk showcasing recent wildlife management and/or science as part of the annual conference.
Promote professionalism within the wildlife community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize outstanding contributions to wildlife research and management in Alberta through the ACTWS professional award series.• Promote The Wildlife Society wildlife profession certification.



Photo: Mark Bradley

2 Membership enhancement

Goal: Support and empower ACTWS members through diverse member services and student supports.

Serving our members based on their identified needs is at the core of our operations. Our member programs contribute to professional development and growth of our profession in Alberta. As a chapter of TWS, we maintain consistency with the strategic direction of our parent organization while focusing our work on the Alberta context. We work with other chapters across Canada and the Canadian Section to further transboundary conservation and increase organizational efficiencies.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Increase membership and improve membership retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide our members with clear and relevant benefits to attract and retain members.Engage with our membership to identify their needs.Encourage people from marginalized groups to become members through equitable initiatives and programming.
Support students and early career professionals seeking a career in wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offer travel and/or conference registration grants to students in financial need.Foster student development through scholarships and student awards.Develop a mentoring program for students and early career professionals.
Offer professional development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliver workshops that help build members' skills associated with wildlife research and management.Communicate other professional development opportunities to our membership.
Collaborate with other branches of The Wildlife Society (TWS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Attend and participate in Canadian Section and TWS working group meetings where appropriate.Foster relationships and encourage transparent dialogue among all chapter, sections, and working groups.Communicate relevant chapter, section and TWS activities and opportunities to ACTWS membership.



Photo: Alyssa M

3 Wildlife science and management

Goal: Promote application of robust science in wildlife and habitat related decision making

Wildlife management decision making in Alberta is complex. Robust and current science can help reduce the inherent uncertainty associated with wildlife and habitat management. Addressing this priority requires members to work together and with decision makers to ensure relevant science is considered in decision making processes.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Establish the ACTWS as wildlife experts with reputable information pertaining to wildlife and habitat management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Utilize the experience and knowledge of our active membership to inform our advocacy actions.Utilize the experience and knowledge of members on the Conservation Affairs Committee to strategically respond to various conservation issues in Alberta.Participate on various multi-stakeholder planning committees as appropriate or as invited.
Inform policy and decision making through the use of science-based wildlife research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with policy and decision makers in applying science to management decisions.Engage our active membership to advocate for science-based wildlife management.Draft advocacy letters based on scientific recommendations to policy makers.



Photo: Mark Bradley

4 Organizational efficiency

Goal: Develop, maintain, and model operational efficiency and ensure long-term financial sustainability.

The ACTWS is a small organization that relies on the dedicated work of many volunteers, including board and committee members. As such, ensuring organizational efficiency is critical for volunteers to feel their time is valued. Internal communication and transparency is essential for our organization, as is financial accountability and sustainability.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Maintain efficient organization functionality through effective governance and internal communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue regular communications within the executive board and between the executive board and executive director.Ensure that committee and executive functions align with chapter bylaws.Model inclusiveness, transparency, and accessibility.
Maintain a series of member-led volunteer committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encourage efficiency within volunteer committees that function to further the ACTWS mission and/or other strategic plan priorities.Appreciate committee participants for their voluntary commitment and ensure their experience contributes to their own professional development.
Ensure financial stability for the ACTWS into the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase revenue for operations by increasing and diversifying funding partners and donors.Ensure accurate financial recordkeeping and reporting.Operate within a board-approved budget.



Photo: Alexa MacPherson

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Years young...
and counting.

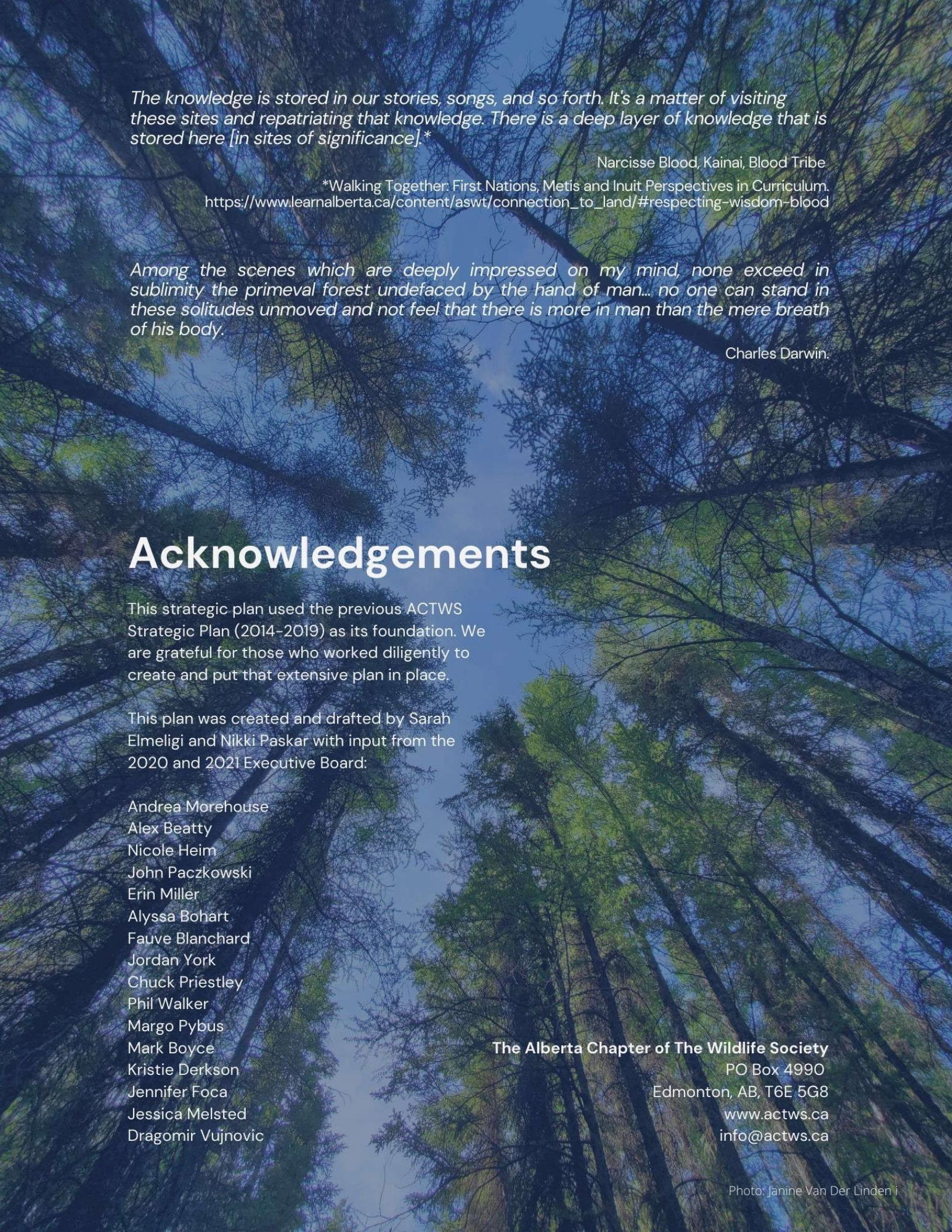
Conclusion

Advancing our mission through member support, collaboration, and innovation.



After more than 30 years of operating in Alberta, the ACTWS has grown substantially both in membership and impact. We have distributed over \$90,000 to more than 110 students. Our volunteer committees have written countless letters to Government and shared hundreds of robust research papers to influence decision making. Our members have participated on species at risk, land use planning, and other provincial committees. Our members are recognized and celebrated in Alberta, and around the world, for their meaningful contributions to wildlife and habitat science. Each year, our conference attracts more "wildlifers" to our community to learn, share, and collaborate.

Yet, we are only just beginning. We look forward to the next 30 years of working with our membership to continue advancing wildlife and habitat conservation science and its application across Alberta.



*The knowledge is stored in our stories, songs, and so forth. It's a matter of visiting these sites and repatriating that knowledge. There is a deep layer of knowledge that is stored here [in sites of significance].**

Narcisse Blood, Kainai, Blood Tribe

*Walking Together: First Nations, Metis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum.
https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/connection_to_land/#respecting-wisdom-blood

Among the scenes which are deeply impressed on my mind, none exceed in sublimity the primeval forest undefaced by the hand of man... no one can stand in these solitudes unmoved and not feel that there is more in man than the mere breath of his body.

Charles Darwin.

Acknowledgements

This strategic plan used the previous ACTWS Strategic Plan (2014-2019) as its foundation. We are grateful for those who worked diligently to create and put that extensive plan in place.

This plan was created and drafted by Sarah Elmeliqi and Nikki Paskar with input from the 2020 and 2021 Executive Board:

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