

FUTURE FOCUS

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Sustaining Wildlife for the Next Generation



Donor Spotlight: Daniel Decker

Love of Wildlife Becomes a Calling and a Career

“As early as I can remember, I went hunting and fishing with my father and uncle,” says Daniel Decker, speaking about the beginnings of his lifelong commitment to wildlife species and the humans who interact with them.

Decker grew up in “the country” on the southern edge of the Catskill Region of New York where wildlife was ever present—with the Shawangunk Mountains on one side, a farm on the other, and the Neversink and Delaware Rivers within walking distance of his childhood home.

At the age of 17, Decker was elected to represent a local rod and gun club at the Sullivan County Federation of Sportsmen (a county affiliate of the NY State Conservation Council) where he had to be driven to meetings because he was still too young to drive at night.

That youthful love of wildlife was further strengthened when, as a teenager, Decker’s high school physics teacher, who moonlighted as a writer of the environmental column for the regional newspaper, invited Decker to accompany him as he covered stories.

Decker was struck then by the ineffectiveness of the public communication process on wildlife and other conservation issues. That realization made an impression—one that would shape his life’s work as one of the foremost scholars in the field of “human dimensions” of wildlife management and policy.

Decker’s path to a career of accomplishment in and on behalf of the wildlife profession was helped each step of the way by The Wildlife Society. His first connection to TWS came in the early 1970s when he sought certification as a wildlife biologist.

“I started publishing in TWS journals over 30 years ago, and have continued to do so as an applied academic ever since. About 10 years ago TWS gave my colleagues and I a grant to publish the first textbook on human dimensions of wildlife management,” says Decker. A revision of that text is currently underway.

“The Wildlife Society will face challenges in the years ahead as the impacts of land use and energy development continue to impact wildlife and habitat. Leadership will be the necessary constant. That’s why I’ve made a bequest to TWS—because it’s important to build the leadership capacity for our profession to respond to the challenges of tomorrow and I think TWS is the best organization to do this.”

—Daniel Decker

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Bequest Q & A: Test Your Knowledge

Common misconceptions about wills and bequests abound. Test your knowledge by reviewing some of the most commonly asked questions. We hope you find the following information helpful as you think about making sure your wishes are carried out.

Q. I'm committed to seeing The Wildlife Society and wildlife profession continue for generations to come but I want to make sure my children and grandchildren are taken care of, too. Is there a way to do both?

A. We agree that family comes first. But some charitable gifts can actually mean that more is left to children and grandchildren. For example, naming The Wildlife Society as the beneficiary of an IRA or other retirement account and leaving less heavily taxed assets to heirs can actually benefit all.

You might also consider a bequest to TWS of a percentage of your estate, leaving the largest percentage for your children and grandchildren. Here is language you can use:

To give where the need is greatest: "I give, devise and bequeath ___ percent of my adjusted gross estate for federal estate tax purposes to The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, MD, Tax ID 52-0788976, for its unrestricted use and purpose."

To give to a specific program, such as our Policy or Professional Development Endowment, or Long-range Plan Implementation Fund: "I give, devise and bequeath ___ percent of my estate to The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, MD, Tax ID 52-0788976, to be used for [state purpose]."



We agree that family comes first. But some charitable gifts can actually mean that more is left to children and grandchildren.

Q. I've thought about including The Wildlife Society in my will but I'm not rich. I'm not sure my small gift will make a difference.

A. Every gift makes a difference and is essential to our ability to keep our profession strong for generations to come! Whatever you can give is greatly appreciated and will help ensure that future generations enjoy the wildlife and habitats you love.

Q. I'm reluctant to tell you that I'm including you in my will because what if I change my mind?

A. We understand that circumstances change. One of the best things about a charitable bequest is that you remain in control during your lifetime and can change your mind at any time.

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Forgotten Treasures: Easy Ways to Create a Legacy for Wildlife

One of the easiest and most overlooked ways to leave a lasting legacy to The Wildlife Society is to take advantage of any one of a number of choices you have to name TWS the beneficiary of a variety of different accounts you may own. Without the intervention or cost of an attorney you can designate all or a small percentage of that account to The Wildlife Society.

Bank CDs. Compared to other savings vehicles such as mutual funds and stocks, certificates of deposit (CDs) are one of the most secure investments on the market. Perhaps that's why they are so popular. But what happens if you pass away before your CD matures? Like any other asset you'll want to make sure that the CD is payable on death (POD) to a loved one or to a favorite cause, like The Wildlife Society.

Ideally, you should add a POD beneficiary when you open the account but if you haven't done so, you may still have the option to do so now. If your bank cannot add a POD to the CD in the middle of your certificate of deposit term, be sure to schedule an appointment for when the CD comes due. At that time you may wish to make a percentage or all of your CD payable on death to The Wildlife Society.

IRAs. Since you first started working, you've been regularly reminded of the importance of saving for retirement. Now you may find that your retirement savings are more than adequate. Because retirement plans are taxed differently than most assets, they may actually become a tax liability. Donating all or part of a retirement plan to The Wildlife Society may be an attractive option that can help reduce estate taxes and result in a larger overall inheritance for your loved ones. To make TWS a beneficiary of your retirement plan, simply request a 'Change of Beneficiary' form from your advisor or the custodian of your account. Your plan administrator can send you a beneficiary

designation form and forms are often available online. Check your statement for the phone number and website of your plan administrator.

Life Insurance. Most people use their life insurance policies to provide financial security for a spouse, child, or other loved one. But over time, the needs of your family may change. A life insurance policy that has outlived its purpose or needs updating may be the perfect vehicle for a charitable donation to TWS. Just ask your insurance company for the appropriate forms to make TWS the owner and beneficiary of the policy. You may also name us as a 'contingent' beneficiary so the policy passes to us only if your family members no longer need it.

These are all wonderful ways to help ensure a strong future for the wildlife profession and for the wildlife and habitats we treasure. Legacy gifts made to The Wildlife Society using any of these techniques will cost you nothing during your lifetime and retain the flexibility to be changed as needed. For more information about any of these types of gifts, simply call, write or e-mail us using the contact information on the back page of this newsletter.



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Over the years, Decker deepened his involvement with TWS, first as an officer in the Northeast Section, then as NE Section representative to TWS Council, and later as President of TWS.

“It’s important for me to give back to the profession that has given me so much,” says Decker, speaking of the decision he and his wife have made to make a bequest through their will to The Wildlife Society.

“I want to create opportunities for the next generation of professionals to develop effective leadership skills. The Wildlife Society will face challenges in the years ahead as the impacts of land use and energy development continue to impact wildlife and habitat. Leadership will be the necessary constant. That’s why I’ve made a bequest to TWS—because it’s important to build the leadership capacity for our profession to respond to the challenges of tomorrow and I think TWS is the best organization to do this.”

Bequest Q & A

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Q. I want to make a bequest to The Wildlife Society but my will is already written and I don’t want the expense of having it rewritten.

A. A codicil is a simple amendment to a will, which avoids the cost and complication of re-writing an entire will. The codicil must be signed and witnessed or notarized as is the original will. Call us at (301) 897-9770 to receive a sample form.

Q. What should I do next?

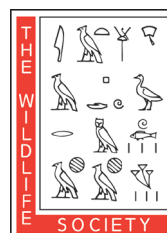
A. Review your personal wishes and options with your legal advisor. And if you include The Wildlife Society in your estate plans, please let us know. We would like to thank you and to make sure we understand your wishes.



Credit: Louise Venne

Contact Us

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