The Impact of Philanthropy

Endowed chairs and professorships are distinctions awarded to faculty or Cooperative Extension specialists in recognition of past and potential contributions to the individual’s academic and research discipline. These endowments provide funding to support teaching, research and outreach responsibilities. They also give UC Davis greater impact as a world-class university.

With these positions, we are able to attract and retain the brightest teachers and researchers, who contribute to the scholarly activity and effective functioning of their academic units through teaching, seminars, or other intellectual pursuits that benefit students and external stakeholders.

These important faculty positions, like the Dennis G. Raveling Endowed Professorship in Waterfowl Biology, are made possible only by the generosity of donors who believe strongly in the need to support an area of study that will benefit society.

I hope you will save the date and join us at our Donor Recognition Event and 25th Annual College Celebration on Friday, October 11, 2013 so we may thank you in person.

Sincerely,
Mary Delany
Interim Dean

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Dennis G. Raveling Endowed Professorship in Waterfowl Biology
Dr. John Eadie
Professor and Chair
Wildlife, Fish and Conservation Biology

RESEARCH

The primary research focus of the Raveling Program is to address key information needs to guide waterfowl conservation and wetland restoration efforts while promoting sustainable agriculture in California. We have been actively engaged in a large number of research projects (some of which are outlined in the attached 2012 update). During the past year, we completed work on several projects:

- We have just completed a 5-year study to examine cost-effective moist-soil seed production in relation to mosquito production and abatement in irrigated seasonal wetlands.
- We conducted a statewide survey (using the Dillman method) to assess the range of management practices being used on private and public managed wetlands in the Central Valley of California.
- We are continuing a study on the role of predators on nest success of waterfowl in managed nesting habitats.
- We have completed an examination of the capacity of the Central Valley landscape to support and retain abundant wintering populations of white-fronted geese and several species of dabbling ducks by examining changes in body condition relative to the changing habitat base since the mid 1980’s.

STUDENT TRAINING

We have used the funds from the Raveling Endowment primarily to support research and training of graduate and undergraduate students. I am delighted that as of today, we have now supported 35 Ph.D. and M.S. students with funds from the Endowment. Given the average cost per year for graduate studies at the University of California, this represents $3.07 million in graduate student support alone, in addition to the research funding that these students have helped to raise. More significant, perhaps, is the impact these graduates are having. Of the 35 students in the lab (12 Ph.D. and 23 M.S.), 26 have graduated and now occupy influential and prominent positions in state and federal agencies, NGO’s and universities. The other 9 students are currently working in the lab now (7 of whom will finish next year).

We also use the Raveling Endowment to support undergraduate internships, a critical component of undergraduate preparation for careers in field biology. Since 1995, we have trained 20-30 students per year working on wetland restoration, waterfowl breeding ecology, and waterfowl management and conservation research. The total now exceeds more than 400 students who have completed formal internships. This has certainly met and exceeded our original aspirations to establish the Raveling position at UC Davis in order to provide essential training for the next generation of waterfowl and wetland biologists.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AND/OR DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

I was recently appointed as Chair of the Department of Wildlife, Fish & Conservation Biology for a 5-year term and I look forward to helping our department grow and flourish. However, the greatest outreach and extension contributions I have made in the past year – and some of the greatest rewards – have been as an invited member of the
writing team for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in 2011-12. This is the guiding document for all waterfowl and wetland conservation in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, sweeping in scope and vision, and involving a precedent-setting tri-national agreement to conserve wetlands and waterfowl through the continent. It was an honor and a privilege (and somewhat of a Herculean task) to be invited to be a member of the 7 person writing team charged with updating and revising the Plan in 2012.

Preparatory to this revision, I was extensively involved with two large-scale assessments that set the stage for this new vision for North American waterfowl and wetland management: the Joint Task Group for Clarifying North American Waterfowl Management Plan Population Objectives and Their Use in Harvest Management and North American Waterfowl Management Plan Continental Progress Assessment. Both of these efforts involved extensive meetings and travel throughout Canada and the U.S. The continental assessment involved in-person interviews with all 24 habitat and species Joint Ventures in all 3 countries and took over a year to complete. These efforts then led to the Future of North American Waterfowl Management Summit in Minneapolis, MN, at which I was one of 4 invited plenary speakers and a facilitator for the 2-day workshop. That workshop developed the template for what is hoped to be a new vision for waterfowl management and wetland conservation in North America. It has been exciting to participate and it will be personally fulfilling to help realize at least some of this vision. Indeed, it has been a busy and rewarding period!

THANKS

The Dennis G. Raveling Endowed Professorship in Waterfowl Biology was established in 1995 and has had a significant impact on the field for almost two decades! I believe we are fulfilling the vision of the initial donors to the fund, as well as of those giving even today, as we continue to honor Dennis Raveling’s accomplishments and contributions to waterfowl enhancement. It has been a wonderful journey, and we have much more to do. As always, I thank you for your support.