

# Tennessee program becomes first accredited wildlife and fisheries management concentration

February 12 2018, by Kristy Keel-Blackmon

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Students in the University of Tennessee Wildlife and Fisheries Program get hands-on experience. At the 2017 Fall Camp students gather around Chris Ogle, a wildlife survey manager with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), to inspect a deer mouse caught at the Buffalo Springs Wildlife Management Area?. Credit: UTIA

The Society of American Foresters has granted accreditation to the wildlife and fisheries management concentration of study within the wildlife and fisheries science major in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. This historic achievement represents the first and only time, nationwide, that a concentration of a wildlife and fisheries major has been accredited by a professional organization.

Faculty overseeing the program are part of the Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries. The accreditation was granted by SAF under their Natural Resources and Ecosystem Management Standards.

Normally, wildlife and fisheries programs may provide an opportunity for their graduates to become a "Certified Wildlife Biologist" by completing a specified number of credit hours within a range of academic subject areas, combined with a minimum amount of professional experience. However, degree programs themselves are not certified, only the graduates of those programs.

Accreditation, on the other hand, involves rigorous evaluation of the entire program based on standards that examine a program's mission, goals and objectives; organization and administration; students; parent institution support; curriculum; and faculty. A peer review process is conducted on site by a selected visiting team, followed by review and deliberations of the SAF Committee on Accreditation. The end result, if successful, is assurance that professional quality standards are attained by the degree program that is reviewed and approved.



University of Tennessee wildlife and fisheries alumna Brett Spaulding (2017) weighs a slimy salamander at the Buffalo Springs Wildlife Management Area as part of her hands-on research and study experience. Credit: UTIA

The FWF curricula, including the Wildlife and Fisheries Management concentration, focus on a mastery learning approach that emphasizes practical, hands-on experiences. FWF's faculty, staff, and students conduct research and educational outreach that advances the science and sustainable [management](#) of our natural resources.

FWF Department head and professor Keith Belli noted, "Reaching our goal of accreditation for our Wildlife and Fisheries Management concentration sets us apart from all of the other wildlife programs in the country. Although other universities may follow our lead in the future,

we will always be recognized as the first to reach this milestone. I couldn't be more proud of the faculty, students and staff in our department."

Tim Cross, UTIA Chancellor, echoes Belli's sentiments. "The Wildlife and Fisheries Management Program is among the many outstanding programs in our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. The Institute is always striving to provide real life solutions to our clientele, and I am delighted that this program has received this recognition for its excellent service to our students and to the communities and industries that our students will serve upon graduation."

In their report, the SAF site visit team noted, "We heard nothing but strong praise from students about the passion, dedication, and consistent willingness of FWF faculty to help students succeed during our visit. We commend the [faculty](#) for their dedication to the success of the students in these programs."

Graduates of FWF's Wildlife and Fisheries Management concentration are the only students in the world that can claim they have completed a wildlife and fisheries major that is both accredited and that allows them to become a certified [wildlife](#) biologist.

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

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