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**Testimony of The Wildlife Society for the Resources Committee, U.S. House of Representatives,  
oversight hearing on *Canada Lynx Interagency National Survey and Endangered Species Data  
Collection*, 6 March 2002**

**Presented by Thomas M. Franklin, Wildlife Policy Director**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Thomas M. Franklin and I am Wildlife Policy Director of The Wildlife Society. Thank you for the invitation to appear before the Committee. The primary point that I wish to make today is that The Wildlife Society, the professional society responsible for establishing the code of ethics and credentials for practicing wildlife biologists, has developed rigorous standards for persons engaged in wildlife surveys, management and science. Practicing wildlife biologists are highly educated professionals, most with graduate degrees, who are dedicated to excellence in natural resource management. They follow the scientific method. They understand that their career accomplishments depend on their credibility as biologists and scientists. Do they occasionally make mistakes? Yes, of course. Every professional is subject to errors whether they are physicians, engineers, teachers, or lawyers. However, professionals learn from their mistakes and avoid repeating them. We do not know the identity of the individuals who were involved in the Canadalynx survey that is the subject of today's hearing. Nor do we know whether their behavior was appropriate. However, I am pleased to describe The Wildlife Society, its code of ethics, and its standards for professional conduct that are embraced by members of The Wildlife Society and Certified Wildlife Biologists.

The Wildlife Society is the association of professional wildlife biologists and managers. Our Society, founded in 1937, is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. The Wildlife Society's mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. The Wildlife Society encourages professional growth through peer-reviewed publications, technical meetings, certification, continuing education, professional development, and working groups.

We have nearly 9,000 members who are employed by federal, state and local agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and students. Society members are dedicated to sustainable management of wildlife resources and their habitats. Ecology is the primary scientific discipline of the wildlife profession. The Society recognizes that humans, as well as other organisms, are dependent upon the environment. The Wildlife Society has a strategic document with goals that guide and direct our strategic emphasis. Those goals include:

1. Develop and maintain professional standards for wildlife research and management.
2. Enhance knowledge and technical capabilities of wildlife managers.
3. Advance professional stewardship of wildlife resources and their habitats.

4. Advocate the use of sound biological information for wildlife policy decisions.
5. Increase public awareness and appreciation of the wildlife profession.

## **The Wildlife Society Code of Ethics**

The Wildlife Society's members first adopted a Code of Ethics and incorporated it into the Society's Bylaws in 1963. The following is The Wildlife Society's current Code of Ethics for members:

Each member, in striving to meet objectives of the Society, pledges to:

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct;
2. Recognize research and scientific management of wildlife and their environments as primary goals;
3. Disseminate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, values of wildlife and their habitats;
4. Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance the practice of wildlife management;
5. Promote competence in the field of wildlife management by supporting high standards of education, employment, and performance;
6. Encourage the use of sound biological information in management decisions; and
7. Support fair and uniform standards of employment and treatment of those professionally engaged in the practice of wildlife management.

Violations of this Code by a member may result in censure, or censure and suspension, from membership in the Society. All reported violations are reviewed by a presidentially appointed Board of Inquiry or by the Council of the Society.

## **Certification**

Since 1977 The Wildlife Society has had a program for Certification of Professional Wildlife Biologists. The Society has long sought to promote and strengthen professional standards in all activities devoted to wildlife resources. The certification program was developed to provide a voluntary peer evaluation of the education and professional experience of wildlife biologists. Since its inception, nearly 6,000 individuals have participated in the program, which is open to members and nonmembers. In addition to describing their education and experience, applicants must sign a pledge to uphold and conduct their activities in accordance with a "Code of Ethics" and "Standards for Professional Conduct."

The Code of Ethics in the certification program adheres to the above code of ethics for Society members. The Standards for Professional Conduct express the intent of the Code of Ethics and traditional norms for

professional service.

Under the Certification program, Associate and Certified Wildlife Biologists shall conduct their activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the following Standards for Professional Conduct as prescribed by The Wildlife Society outlined below.

### **Standards for Professional Conduct**

The following tenets express the intent of the Code of Ethics as prescribed by The Wildlife Society, and traditional norms for professional service.

Wildlife biologists shall at all times:

1. Recognize and inform prospective clients or employers of their prime responsibility to the public interest, conservation of the wildlife resource, and the environment. They shall act with the authority of professional judgment, and avoid actions or omissions that may compromise these broad responsibilities. They shall respect the competence, judgment, and authority of the professional community.
2. Avoid performing professional services for any client or employer when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or Standards for Professional Conduct or detrimental to the well-being of the wildlife resource and its environment.
3. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client/employer accepted, regardless of the degree of remuneration. They shall be mindful of their responsibility to society, and seek to meet the needs of the disadvantaged for advice in wildlife-related matters. They should studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of professional authority for personal satisfaction.
4. Accept employment to perform professional services only in areas of their own competence, and consistent with the Code of Ethics and Standards for Professional Conduct described herein. They shall seek to refer clients or employers to other natural resource professionals when the expertise of such professionals shall best serve the interests of the public, wildlife, and the client/employer. They shall cooperate fully with other professionals in the best interest of the wildlife resource.
5. Maintain a confidential professional-client/employer relationship except when specifically authorized by the client/employer or required by due process of law or this Code of Ethics and Standards to disclose pertinent information. They shall not use such confidence to their personal advantage or to the advantage of other parties, nor shall they permit personal interests or other client/employer relationships to interfere with their professional judgment.
6. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner, beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients/employers of qualifications, or in a manner detrimental to fellow professionals and the wildlife resource.
7. Refuse compensation or rewards of any kind intended to influence their professional judgment or advice. They shall not permit a person who recommends or employs them, directly or indirectly, to regulate their professional judgment. They shall not accept compensation for the same professional services from

any source other than the client/employer without the prior consent of all the clients or employers involved. Similarly, they shall not offer a reward of any kind or promise of service in order to secure a recommendation, a client, or preferential treatment from public officials.

8. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the wildlife profession. They shall endeavor to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.

Violation of either the Code of Ethics or the Standards for Professional Conduct is a serious matter that reflects unfavorably on the entire wildlife profession. Accordingly, the certification program contains a formal process to investigate a charge of misconduct against anyone who has been certified through a board of inquiry, as well as disciplinary actions for those found in violation of the Code of Ethics or Standards for Professional Conduct.

## **Conclusion**

Wildlife biologists are highly educated scientists who dedicate their careers to understanding ecological relationships and to managing wildlife following the scientific method. Wildlife biologists conduct their work ethically and professionally. If mistakes are made, they correct their behavior, as do persons employed in similar professions. In the rare case where an individual may violate accepted standards, The Wildlife Society has established disciplinary procedures, through our membership and certification programs, to ensure that the credibility of the profession is maintained and that the public interest is served.

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