

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Montana Natural Heritage Zoologist Named Wildlife Biologist of the Year

(HELENA) --- Dr. Bryce Maxell, Senior Zoologist with the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP), was named “Wildlife Biologist of the Year” by the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society last week at their annual meeting.

The Wildlife Society’s awards program honors professional excellence, recognizes outstanding achievement, and highlights contributions to wildlife science and management. The Biologist of the Year Award is presented annually for significant achievements in wildlife conservation anytime during the five years immediately preceding the award presentation.

Since 1996, Maxell has conducted field inventories for a variety of animal species in Montana. Over the last three years, his work has resulted in 5,000 species detections of 84 different species. Dr. Maxell has also authored or coauthored two books, a dozen peer reviewed publications, and 30-plus professional reports on amphibians, reptiles, bats, small terrestrial mammals, birds, terrestrial mollusks, and fish.

Maxell completed his Ph.D. in fish and wildlife biology at the University of Montana in 2009 where he completed statewide status assessments and constructed predicted habitat models for Montana's amphibian and reptile species. Dr. Maxell has been a senior zoologist with MTNHP since January 2005.

“My professional goals include working with a variety of partners to provide resource managers and the general public with information on the natural history and status of Montana’s animals, plants, and habitats through books, peer reviewed publications, professional reports, web resources, educational posters, and presentations so that they can be more fully appreciated and properly addressed in management plans,” said Maxell.

To that end, Maxell was nominated for the award by an employee of Montana, Fish, Wildlife & Parks. In the nomination letter, Maxell’s research work on Montana’s taxa and habitats and his extensive list of publications was highlighted; additionally, Maxell’s collaboration with diverse state and federal agencies, private businesses and landowners, and varying interest groups (often involving divisive issues) has placed Montana at the forefront of wildlife management.

“Montana is extremely lucky to have a scientist so dedicated to our state’s various species and so invested in helping anyone interested in Montana’s natural resources,” said Jennie Stapp,

Montana State Librarian. “The award is very well-deserved. It recognizes the many years of dedication and hard work that Bryce has devoted to providing the best and most reliable information possible about Montana’s wildlife and natural history.”

The Montana Natural Heritage Program is a statutory program of the Montana State Library that is operated under contract by the University of Montana. MTNHP staff work every day to gather information on the plants, animals, and biological communities of Montana and make it available to state and federal agencies, tribes, NGOs, and private consultants so that they can make decisions quickly and inexpensively.

“One aspect of my job is to try to better understand the distribution and status of Montana species through fieldwork and I have absolutely loved getting to better know those species and the entire state in general,” said Maxell. “Our ultimate goal is to have a thorough knowledge of species’ distribution and status so that Montana’s citizens can more easily appreciate what they have and so that a variety of environmental planning processes and decisions are better informed and can be made without delays because of a lack of information. It is a task that will always be in process, but I hope to contribute by raising the overall bar on the level of information that is available.”

The ‘Wildlife Biologist of the Year’ award came as a complete surprise to Maxell.

“The wildlife biologists across Montana are such an incredibly talented, dedicated, and passionate group of people,” said Maxell. “I am really honored just to interact with them on a daily basis. The caliber of those folks makes the acknowledgement of things that I have worked on with my coworkers and others across the state that much more meaningful.”

For more information on the Montana Natural Heritage Program or on Dr. Bryce Maxell, please contact Sara Groves at (406) 444-5357 or sgroves@mt.gov.

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About the Montana Natural Heritage Program

The Montana Natural Heritage Program is a program of the Montana State Library and is operated as a special program of the Office of the Vice President for Research and Development at the University of Montana in Missoula. The Montana Natural Heritage Program is the state’s source for reliable and objective information and expertise to support stewardship of our native species and habitats, emphasizing those of conservation concern. For more information, please visit <http://mtnhp.org>.

About the Montana State Library

Through its statewide programs, the Montana State Library empowers Montanans; enhances learning in families and communities; builds 21st Century skills; and provides opportunities for civic participation. For more information about the Montana State Library, please visit <http://msl.mt.gov>.