

July 2, 2015

The 2015 Society for Wildlife Forensic Science Conference

William C. Woody, Chief of the Office of Law Enforcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, spoke to the Society for Wildlife Forensic Scientists at their 2015 conference in Missoula, Montana. He talked about the importance of wildlife forensics, how wildlife crime is a worldwide crisis and will require a worldwide solution, and showed a presentation highlighting the 2015 U.S. Ivory Crush in Times Square. He also presented each attendee with a copy of President Barack Obama's Executive Order on Combating Wildlife Trafficking that was sent by the White House, to the Chief, for this conference.

Twelve forensic scientists from the Service's Forensic Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon each created a poster visually explaining their area of their expertise. Chief Woody spoke individually with the Service scientists and each explained their poster and the important work they perform. The Chief repeated how "good science" is the foundation for the strong cases of law enforcement and how valuable forensics is to secure strong court sentences.

The purpose of the conference was to "promote the exchange of scientific and technical information related to wildlife forensics; share research in wildlife forensics; promote professional competence, uniform qualifications, certification, and ethical behavior among wildlife forensic scientists; and to represent the interests of wildlife forensic scientists around the world."

One of the many highlights of the conference was "Wildlife Forensics in the Courtroom," presented by Robert S. Anderson, Senior Counsel, Environmental Crimes Section, U.S. Department of Justice. The workshop focused on the admissibility requirements for expert opinion testimony in criminal trials of wildlife crimes and part of the workshop was a visit to the Missoula courthouse where scientists were placed on the witness stand and examined by a prosecutor and a defense attorney using a sample wildlife crime fact pattern. The workshop's intent was to assist the forensic scientist to prepare for and deliver effective and admissible testimony in an adversarial litigation environment.

The conference took place the week of June 21, 2015, in Missoula, Montana, and was hosted by the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science. The finest wildlife forensic scientists from 19 countries attended and presented at the conference. Countries represented included Australia, Botswana, Canada, China, Gabon, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Scotland, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam. The conference takes place every other year. The next meeting will be in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2017.