

Notes from the Editor

May 21, 2025

For the spring issue of the Journal, I am happy to introduce you to a number of new editors. My current Associate Editor (AE) staff was having difficulty keeping up with our submission workload, so I put out a call for new editors—and boy did my fellow CDFW scientists step up! Below you will find the bios for my new AEs and Junior Editors. A reminder that a Junior Editor program is for scientists without a lot of experience with the scientific publication world to gain experience through mentorship from current AEs.

New Associate Editors

Dr. Helen Killeen is a marine ecologist and science communicator whose professional background bridges research, policy, and education. With a PhD in Ecology from the University of California (UC), Davis, her research has explored how oceanographic variability and human activity shape marine ecosystems from plankton to top predators. Dr. Killeen is a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) at CDFW in the Marine Region (Region 7) and is based in the Santa Rosa office. In this role, she leads fisheries research and management planning under the Marine Life Management Act for state-managed species. Previously, Dr. Killeen was a postdoctoral researcher at the Farallon Institute, a Science Policy Fellow at the Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, and a high school science teacher. Her expertise includes science communication and public engagement.

Carly White has a B.S. in Environmental Science from UC Santa Barbara and an M.S. in Ecology from UC Davis. She has worked for CDFW in a variety of wildlife management roles since 2016. Carly first worked as a Scientific Aid for Region 2, and used her position to partner with the Mammalian Ecology and Conservation Unit at UC Davis and investigated wildfire impacts on black-tailed deer diets for her master's research. After receiving her M.S., Carly worked in Region 3 as the regional lead for the Drought Terrestrial Species Monitoring program, and then as the Unit Wildlife Biologist for Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Currently, Carly is the Unit Wildlife Biologist for Nevada and Placer counties where she conducts game species research and monitoring, manages habitat on department owned lands, educates the public on wildlife topics, and collaborates with other agencies and biologists on wildlife issues.

Alya Wakeman-Hill currently works as a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) liaison in the Central Region (Region 4)'s Renewable Energy/Climate Permitting with the Habitat Conservation Program drafting permits and assisting permittees with the habitat mitigation land acquisition process. She attended Fresno State, received her B.S. in Ecology, Evolutionary, and Organismal Biology in 2011, and completed an M.S. thesis on *Ixodid* tick distribution in Fresno County in 2018. She previously worked at the Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner's Office from 2013 until coming to CDFW as an Environmental Scientist liaison in R4's California High-Speed Rail team in December 2021.

Dr. Katie McElroy is a fisheries ecologist originally from San Diego. She received her B.S. in marine biology from UC Santa Cruz and continued her education there to get a M.S. in ecology and evolutionary biology, focusing on salmonid restoration in the San Joaquin River. She then received a PhD in aquatic and fisheries sciences from the University of Washington and conducted research as part of the Alaska Salmon Program in Bristol Bay, Alaska. She studied predator prey dynamics and spatial foraging decisions in the commercial drift gillnet fishery and grizzly bear populations as they searched for their

sockeye salmon prey. At CDFW, Katie is an Environmental Scientist in the Bay Delta Region 3's Fisheries Management Team and focuses on instream flows to support the recovery of coho salmon and steelhead.

Dr. Dylan Stompe is a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) with the Ocean Salmon project in CDFW's Marine Region (Region 7), where he is responsible for coordinating the California Endangered Species Act listing petitions, five-year reviews, and recovery plans. He is also involved in salmon fishery planning and analysis through the Pacific Fisheries Management Council process. Prior to his current position, Dylan led white sturgeon and striped bass monitoring for CDFW's Region 3 and Chinook salmon redd monitoring for CDFW's Northern Region (Region 1). Dr. Stompe has a master's degree from California State University (CSU) Chico where he studied the diets of striped bass and Sacramento pikeminnow, as well as a PhD from UC Davis where he studied the abundance and distribution of striped bass and other estuarine fishes in the San Francisco and Umpqua River estuaries.

Dr. Ben Carter is a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) and is the Wildlife Connectivity Specialist for the Inland Deserts Region (Region 6). He did his undergraduate at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and went on to a PhD at UC Berkeley and a postdoctoral position at Duke University, where his work focused on biogeography, phylogenetics, and taxonomy of non-vascular plants. Prior to CDFW, he spent nearly a decade as a faculty member at San Jose State University, where he led a wide-ranging research program that focused on plant biogeography, conservation, floristics, and taxonomy but ranged into using iNaturalist data for spatial analyses, studies of flower color polymorphism, spatial phylogenetics, and some other topics. A relative newcomer to CDFW, he is part of the new statewide connectivity team and spends his time analyzing data to identify priority areas for wildlife connectivity and working with partner agencies and NGOs to develop strategies for improving wildlife connectivity across Region 6.

Dr. Abimael León has an academic background in science education and research in the areas of herpetofauna and freshwater fish ecology. He earned a B.S. in biology, a M.S. in biology focused on ecology and a PhD in Ecology focused on ecotoxicology. He completed laboratory management training while at UC Davis before starting a career in public service. He worked as an educator and graduate student researcher before serving as a state scientist. He has been studying, working, and contributing to the field of Environmental Sciences and aquatic and riparian resources for over 30 years. Most of this work has been in the service of the State of California for more than 20 years. As an Environmental Scientist, he has been consistently writing, reviewing, and revising environmental documents. Before joining CDFW, he worked on California environmental review and consultation pertaining to aquatic resources including river restoration for anadromous fish, bioassessment studies using freshwater invertebrates, flood and drought management, groundwater recharge, water infrastructure, and the intricacies of water rights and allocation in the State. As a CDFW scientist, he has engaged in technical negotiations with diverse stakeholders at different levels including tribal, local, state, and federal agencies to address pressing issues including flood/drought preparedness and protection, adequate instream flows, and the protection of aquatic ecosystems in California. He currently applies his scientific expertise in aquatic resources in the environmental regulation of hydroelectric projects.

Dr. Laura Rogers-Bennett is a marine ecologist at the UC Davis, Bodega Marine Lab where she is a Senior Environmental Scientist with CDFW. Dr. Rogers-Bennett completed her PhD at UC Davis and two postdocs, one at the UC Santa Cruz's, Long Marine Lab and the other at the University of Washington's, Friday Harbor Labs. Her research focuses on sustainable fisheries and restoration science during a period of rapid marine environmental change. She is interested in the ecosystem processes that shape the productivity of fished and endangered marine organisms incorporating this understanding into

management and conservation. Her current research focuses on the productivity of abalone and sea urchins in northern California's kelp forests and the impacts of a changing ocean climate on the formation of sea urchin barrens and kelp deforestation. She is a principal investigator on the endangered white abalone restoration project which is a collaborative program using captive breeding to recover abalone in southern California kelp forest communities. The work in her lab combines Scuba assessments, laboratory experiments, and population modeling approaches to address population dynamics, Marine Protected Areas, and the impacts of marine heat waves on kelp forest communities. She was inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame, awarded a Lifetime Membership Award in the International Abalone Society and the Francis Clark Award for Excellence in Marine Science by CDFW.

Jenell de la Pena is an Environmental Scientist with CDFW, currently specializing in black bears and other big game species. Although new to this position, she brings an extensive background in wildlife management, having spent the majority of her professional career researching large mammals for various state agencies. Jenell holds both a B.S. and M.S. in biology and has worked with a wide range of species in diverse environments across the United States—from upland game birds to Kodiak brown bears. She looks forward to contributing her broad field experience and applying insights gained throughout her career to support the journal's mission and to help guide effective conservation and management efforts of California's wildlife populations.

Christian Romberger has been working fisheries management and research for over 10 years. He completed his M.Sc. degree at the University of Glasgow, Scotland in 2015 where he studied Risk Taking Behavior of Humbug damselfish (*Dascyllus aruanus*) in the Red Sea in Egypt. He worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the Klamath and Trinity Rivers, conducting population trend monitoring for Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), coho salmon (*O. kisutch*), and steelhead (*O. mykiss*). During his tenure at the USFWS, he led the Klamath Basin Temperature Monitoring efforts, analyzing temperature trends and their impacts on salmonids. In 2019 he joined CDFW as a member of the southern California steelhead team, working on Fisheries Restoration Grant Program projects, Propositions 1 and 68, and analyzing fish passage solutions across southern California. In 2021, he joined CDFW's Cutting the Green Tape team as the South Coast Regional coordinator working to promote restoration success across Southern California. He is also a current American Fisheries Society Volunteer Editor.

Dr. Arjun Dheer is CDFW's Statewide Black Bear Coordinator based out of Wildlife Branch. He has led CDFW's Black Bear Program since January 2024 and is a member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management and is a National Geographic Explorer. His work with CDFW focuses on population monitoring, resource assessment, hunting regulations, human-wildlife conflict, stakeholder engagement, among other topics, all focused on California's black bears. Arjun completed his PhD at Freie Universität Berlin (Berlin, Germany) focused on human-carnivore interactions in Tanzania in 2023, his M.S. from the University of Southampton (Southampton, UK) focused on resource partitioning between large carnivores in Kenya in 2016, and his B.S. from the University of Maryland, College Park (College Park, Maryland) in wildlife ecology and management in 2013.

Dr. Elyse Freitas is a Senior Environmental Scientist at CDFW in the Fisheries Branch where she works on Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans. She has been at CDFW since February 2023. Prior to working at CDFW, Dr. Freitas received a B.S. in Aquatic Biology from UC Santa Barbara, M.S. in Biology at Villanova University, and PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Oklahoma. For her M.S. and PhD, she studied the phylogenetics of scincid lizards in Africa and Southeast Asia, and she also

did projects on the biodiversity of Oklahoma reptiles and amphibians, including work with environmental DNA.

Dr. Marcus Griswold has an M.S. in Entomology and PhD in Environmental Engineering, with a focus on watershed restoration and management and climate resilience in the southern U.S. and Latin America. He has experience working for NGOs, local, state, and federal agencies to develop climate resilience policies and plans; conducting pre- and post-stream and wetland restoration surveys for invertebrates, herpetofauna, fish, and hydraulics and hydrology; and supporting community understanding of the impacts of Superfund sites and cleanup on water quality, environmental justice, and threatened and endangered species. At CDFW, he works in Region 3 on landscape level conservation through the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan, Regional Conservation Investment Strategies, and advanced mitigation through Mitigation Credit Agreements and Connectivity Advance Mitigation.

New Junior Editors

Denise Wesley joined CDFW Region 1 in July 2024 as a Research Data Analyst II, supporting technical projects with mapping, ArcGIS Online web application development, geospatial analysis, data management, and GIS. She holds a B.S. in Rangeland Resource Science and A.A./A.S. degrees in Geographic Information Systems from Shasta College, with additional GIS study at the University of Arizona and Ocean Science coursework at Oregon State University. Before joining CDFW, she served as GIS Manager at the Trinity County Resource Conservation District, GIS Developer at a forestry consulting firm, and GIS Technician for Shasta County GIS. Her experience also includes roles as a Rangeland SCEP Technician and Soil Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, a GIS Student Intern for the USFS, a Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator, and a Wildland Firefighter.

Jake Jacobsen is a scientific aid with CDFW's Native Plant Program. He graduated in June 2024 from UCLA with a B.S. in Ecology, Behavior and Evolution and a minor in Geographic Information Systems. At UCLA, he conducted collaborative research on topics such as leaf-mining flies, chewing lice on birds, and insect population fluctuations, and participated in field work with orb-weaving spiders and bats. Before his current position, Jake was a scientific aid on the Lower American River Salmon Carcass Survey. In the Native Plant Program, he helps issue permits and conduct field work monitoring state-listed endangered plants.

Dacota Huzzen received a Wildlife Biology degree from Humboldt State University, taking elective courses in genetics, chemistry, wildlife diseases, and bacteriology. She began working as an environmental consultant and assisted in many rehabilitation projects particularly related to illegal cannabis cultivation. Her work remediating properties often going into foreclosure coupled with her love for helping others led to her obtaining a real estate license, which she practiced full-time until she began riding and training horses professionally a few years later. Her most recent position in CDFW as a Wildlife Biologist Tech has supported participation in projects such as small mammal trapping, using acoustic monitoring devices to bank and record nocturnal sounds, and management of the pond and plug wetland system at Ash Creek Wildlife Area.

Lauren Sique is a scientific aid for the Fish Restoration Program Monitoring team at CDFW. She spends her days in the field sampling fish and in the lab identifying invertebrates. Before beginning work for the state, Lauren earned her B.S. in Animal Biology from UC Davis.

Idris Tang holds a B.S. in biology and secondary degrees in anthropology and religious studies from Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). Tang is a recent graduate but has previously studied frogs and salamanders in Dr. Mike Benard's amphibian ecology lab at CWRU and spent a summer surveying cougars on the Olympic Peninsula for the Quinault Department of Natural Resources. Currently, Tang works for the CDFW as a F&W Scientific Aide and part-time with the National Park Service, collecting and processing macrozooplankton for the former's Environmental Monitoring Program and supporting Tribal co-stewardship programs with the latter.

As always, a reminder that the Journal has a subscriber listserv. Anyone interested in receiving updates from the Journal and being notified when new issues are available can [subscribe here](#).

Happy Spring!

Ange Darnell Baker, PhD
Editor-in-Chief
California Fish and Wildlife Journal