



The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Spring Issue - May 2016



Message from President Scott Brainerd

Greetings Alaskan Wildlifers! Whew! We were able to pull off the annual meeting in Anchorage this year, but it almost didn't happen. Why? Because the Governor banned state employees from traveling to attend conferences due to the current fiscal crisis. Biologists with the Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) comprise a significant portion of our membership, and in recent years have represented over a third of participants and presenters at our annual meetings. As a result, most Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) employees were unable to attend the conference this year. Some exceptions were allowed, as President-Elect, I was able to get special approval from the Commissioner's office to attend the meeting, thanks to Director Bruce Dale's efforts. Something for which I am very thankful!

After the abstract deadline passed at the end of February, it became apparent that we were in trouble since it was clear that we could not count on attendance by ADF&G biologists. The number of oral presentations submitted was disappointingly low and registration was sub-par as well. We quickly realized that reduced participation by state biologists would severely impact the meeting, as

their absence would have negative consequences for the program and our budget.

In addition, our contract with the Embassy Suites hotel had committed us to a 20-room block, which meant that we were obligated to pay for any unused rooms. As a consequence, we were looking at a financial disaster for the Chapter whether we cancelled or not. Luckily, Secretary-Treasurer Matt Sexson was able to persuade the hotel to waive this requirement, thus saving the Chapter from a severe financial blow. Many thanks to Matt for his hard work here, and the Embassy Suites hotel for understanding our situation and accommodating us!

We focused on a path forward to make this meeting a reality, despite the lack of state biologist participation. We extended the registration deadline, and encouraged several students that had submitted poster abstracts to give talks instead, as we were having trouble filling our program for a full two day meeting. To facilitate student participation, we waived the registration fee for students on the suggestion of board member Todd Brinkman. Todd, a faculty member at University of Alaska-

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President's Message - Continued

Fairbanks (UAF), also worked with the student chapter to encourage as many students to attend as possible, and organized two university vans to bring them to the conference. Thanks in large part to the willingness of many students to give talks rather than posters, we were able to put together a nice program and fill two full days.

We had to cancel the planned workshops on Human Dimensions (HD) and Moose Population Assessment since key players would not be able to attend because of the budget shortfall and travel ban. The fact that we could not finance Alastair Bath's participation in the HD workshop and as plenary speaker was a real blow. Todd came up with an alternative approach, and gave a great introduction to the HD session, with a nice question and answer session with presenters at the end of the session.

In the end, the meeting was a success, thanks in large measure to student participation! This has to be the biggest student turnout that we've had at a Chapter meeting, at least in the 8 years that I have been involved. It was nice to see some students and professionals coming up from Outside to attend our meeting, as well. I was quite impressed with the quality of all the talks and posters. However, the student participants really shined in my opinion. I was amazed at the quality of the student talks in particular, especially of those that were in the initial stages of their research. Kudos to all the students from Alaska Pacific University, University of Alaska-Anchorage, and UAF that came and presented their work at the meeting!

Another positive note was the fact that the venue for our conference, the BP Energy Center, was free! Thanks to board member Jerry Hupp for taking the initiative to book this excellent venue a year in advance, and to the folks at BP for hosting us!

The banquet at the Embassy Suites was great, with excellent food and a great presentation by retired

biologist and Alaska Dispatch News journalist Rick Sinnott. He reflected on his 28-year career as an ADF&G biologist, working in three different divisions. His humorous presentation of the trials and tribulations, rewards and adventures of working for a hands-on management agency, was perfect for an audience of aspiring professionals and old-timers alike! It was great seeing so many students at the banquet, and the great interaction between both undergraduates and graduates throughout the meeting with professionals was quite heartening.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the organizing committee members for their hard work in making this meeting not only possible, but (wildly?) successful: Todd Brinkman (outgoing Northern Rep and UAF chapter advisor), Jerry Hupp (outgoing past-president), Howard Golden (past past-president), Matt Sexson (Secretary – Treasurer), Grant Hilderbrand (outgoing President), Kevin White (Southeast Rep), Kalin Seaton (Moose workshop organizer), Nate Svoboda (outgoing Southcentral Rep), Kaiti Ott (Newsletter editor), and last but not least, Dan Thompson (webmaster). Thanks also to outgoing board members who have worked so hard the past two years on organizing meetings and their service to the Chapter. I would like to especially thank Grant Hilderbrand for his leadership and mentoring during his tenure as President. I would also like to congratulate and welcome our new Executive Board members: John Trent (Southcentral Rep), Kerry Nicholson (Northern Rep), Nate Svoboda (President-elect), and Jessica Herzog (Student Chapter Rep). These new members will join Kevin, Dan, Grant, Matt and I to continue important chapter work and in planning the next meeting. I look forward to working with them, and hope to see many of you at our meeting in Fairbanks next spring! Fingers crossed that it will be at least as successful, and that our colleagues in ADF&G will be able to attend!



Regional News

Northern

Kerry Nicholson, Northern Representative

Personnel Changes

In Nome, **Peter Bente**, ADF&G Management Coordinator for the DWC retired in January and **Tony Gorn** was named the new Management Coordinator. Area Biologist in Kotzebue, **Jim Dau**, retired in April (see article pg. 18), and Regional Supervisor of Region V, **Steve Machida** will be retiring in late summer or early fall 2016.

David James, Regional Supervisor of Region III in Fairbanks retired in July 2015. Fairbanks Program Management Coordinator **Cathie Harms** retired in December of 2015, and Assistant Management Coordinator **Jackie Kephart** retires in June. **Cal Skaugstad**, Fish Biologist in Fairbanks and **Roger Seavoy**, Area Biologist in McGrath will also retire in June.



TWS-Alaska Chapter Regions: Northern, Southcentral, and Southeast.

In December 2015, USFWS Wildlife Biologist **Shannon Torrence** transitioned to a new position as Terrestrial Wildlife Biologist Program Manager for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest in Arizona.

Philip Martin, USFWS Fairbanks Science Coordinator for the Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Retired in December as did Planning and Conservation Branch Chief **Jewel Bennett**.

Education Coordinator, **Laurel Devaney**, also retired in February. Laurel and her Fairbanks Youth for Habitat Students were recently named 1st runner up in the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 10 2015 President's Environmental Youth Awards. Environmental Contaminants Specialist, **Angela Matz**, will soon relocate to Anchorage where she will continue her work with USFWS.

In Memory

Pioneering biologist and educator, **Brina Kessel** passed away in March 2016 (See obituary pg. 14).

Graduate Student Transitions

In the fall of 2015, graduate student **Ian Johnson** completed his Wildlife MS degree at UAF with his thesis: Space Use and Movements of Moose Hunters and Wolves in the Yukon Flats. One chapter,



Cathie Harms and ADF&G DWC Director Bruce Dale at Cathie's retirement party in May.

Eric Wald just joined the National Park Service (NPS) as the Arctic Network Inventory and Monitoring Program Manager. Prior to joining the NPS, Eric worked for USFWS, most recently as a biologist with Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Before that, Eric was with the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge based in Bethel. He can be reached at: eric_wald@nps.gov



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Quantifying Rural Hunter Access in Alaska, has been published in *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* and a second chapter, Winter Hunting Behavior and Habitat Selection of Wolves in a Low-density Prey System, has been submitted to *Wildlife Biology*. Ian recently accepted a position as the Coordinator of the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership with the Sustainable Southeast Partnership.

Tessa Hasbrouck is a new Wildlife MS student at UAF with **Dr. Todd Brinkman**. Tessa's project is funded by the National Science Foundation and will involve the formation of a partnership with a rural Alaskan community. Through the partnership, a research agenda will be established that prioritizes and addresses the community's wildlife research needs.

Southcentral

John Trent, Southcentral Representative

Personnel Changes

USFWS Region 7 Director **Geoffrey Haskett** retired in March. Geoff served as the Service's Alaska Regional Director from 2008 to 2016. Mr. Haskett brought a wide range of experience to the job in Alaska and the Lower 48 States. He served in Washington, D.C. as the Assistant Director/Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Mr. Haskett served in 5 of the 8 FWS Regions. He served in the Southwest Region, as Deputy Regional Director, as the Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife, and served as Geographic Assistant Regional Director for the Region's Southeastern ecosystems. Before that, Haskett served in the Service's Headquarters as the Chief of Realty, and as Secretary to the Department of the Interior's Migratory Bird Commission. He started work with the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1979 in the Portland Regional Office. Mr. Haskett received the Department of the Interior's Meritorious Service Honor Award in 2003. Mr. Haskett has a Presidential Commission from both Presidents Obama and Bush as the United States Commissioner on the U.S./Russia

Polar Bear Commission. He was head of delegation to the Polar Bear Range States with Russia, Canada, Greenland, and Norway; and head of delegation for the Porcupine Caribou Working Group with Canada. During his time in Alaska, Mr. Haskett made it a



USFWS Region 7 Director Geoff Haskett at his retirement.

priority to protect and conserve species and their habitat while working closely with Alaska Native people to continue their traditions and culture.

Greg Siekaniec has been selected to take Geoff Haskett's place as the new USFWS Regional Director for the Alaska Region. Greg's career in the field of conservation spans more than 30 years, including among others, positions as Assistant Director for the National Wildlife Refuge System and Refuge Manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Greg was raised in the Red River Valley area of Minnesota at Moorhead. The early part of his career was spent working in the prairies of North Dakota, the Missouri Breaks of Montana, and the high elevation sagebrush deserts of Wyoming before heading to Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Greg earned a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. He completed the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in 2008, the same year that he completed the Senior Executive Fellows Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Greg and his



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wife Janelle are looking forward to resuming their Alaska lifestyle – one where wild places and family are always close by.

David Safine recently joined the USFWS-Waterfowl Section of Migratory Bird Management (MBM), Alaska Region. David comes to MBM with extensive waterfowl expertise gained during 20 years with the California Waterfowl Association, the Alaska Science Center (USGS), Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, The Alaska SeaLife Center, and the USFWS Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office-Endangered Species program. David will serve multiple roles in MBM including implementation of waterfowl surveys and management actions, participation in the Pacific Flyway Study Committee and the Sea Duck Joint Venture's Continental Technical Team, and representing conservation actions for Alaska's waterfowl to the USFWS Regulations Committee. David's official start date with MBM was April 4th, and he will complete his move to Anchorage in May with his wife Shiway and three sons, Leo, Max, and Noah.

David Payer joined the NPS this spring as the Regional Wildlife Biologist. Dave most recently worked for the USFWS with the Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. Prior to that, Dave had spent many years as a Supervisory Ecologist with Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

At ADF&G, **Gino DelFrate** accepted the Regional Supervisor position for Region IV and will be soon moving to the Palmer office. **Howard Golden** will serve as Acting Regional Supervisor for Region II and **Cyndi Wardlow** will serve as Acting Management Coordinator until both positions are hired. **Todd Rinaldi** will continue to serve as Acting Management Coordinator and **Michael Guttery** as Acting Research Coordinator in Region IV until these positions are

filled. Anyone interested in any of these middle management positions should watch Workplace Alaska (<http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/workplace/>) or contact ADF&G for more information.

Update on Common Murre Die-Off

The large die-off of common murre (tens of thousands of carcasses found) in south-central has diminished though not yet completely abated. Staff from many agencies have been involved. All murre tested were emaciated but the reason for their condition is still unknown (See article pg. 9).

Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Developing Moose Sightability Correction Factor

Togiak Refuge Wildlife Biologists will be using radiocollared moose in random and non-random trials to calculate a sightability correction factor for a GeoSpatial Population Estimator (GSPE). Random trials are conducted when a collared moose occurs within a sample unit randomly chosen for the GSPE survey. Nonrandom trials conducted during a survey are collected by directing teams to survey

in sample units not chosen for GSPE estimation. Nonrandom sample units are included covertly along with random units so survey teams are unaware they are being tested. A separate aircraft and crew are required to locate radiocollared moose, assign sample units to survey teams, and determine



Collared moose cow with twins



Regional News - Continued

whether the survey team saw the collared moose. Covariate data (group size, composition, activity, habitat, and snow cover) will be collected for moose used in sightability trials.

During March 11-16, 2016 we attempted 36 sightability trials on Togiak Refuge. In two cases, the radiocollared moose moved out of the sample unit and were not available for detection by the survey team. Of the remaining 34 usable trials, survey teams observed the collared moose/group 22 times suggesting a sightability correction factor of 1.55. Snow cover was incomplete or absent in all sample units surveyed. We did not attempt to get a population estimate during March 2016. We plan to conduct three GSPE population estimates with 40-50 sightability trials each over the next two years (October 2016, March and October 2017). This project is being funded by the Western Alaska LCC, USFWS-Division of Natural Resources, Togiak Refuge, ADF&G, and the BLM-Anchorage District. Principal Co-Investigators are Biometrician **Anna-Marie Benson** and ADF&G Dillingham Area Wildlife Biologist **Neil Barten**.

Efforts to Address Invasive Aleutian Cattle Halted

The fiscal year 2016 bill funding federal agencies prohibits USFWS from conducting non-native caribou control on Kagalaska Island in the Aleutians and also prohibits USFWS from proceeding with planning what to do about the unauthorized cattle on Chirikof and Wosnesenski Islands. As a result, USFWS has cancelled their planned 2016 Kagalaska caribou control project and will not be releasing draft environmental impact statements regarding the cattle, will not be clarifying the ownership of the cattle, and has rejected permit requests from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Genomics and Improvement Laboratory as well as private parties interested in harvesting cattle for genetics or meat.

Update: 2014 Funny River Fire Moose Response
Agency biologists on the Kenai Peninsula are

continuing their efforts to assess the response of individual moose to the spring 2014 Funny River burn mosaic of ~200,000 acres. An additional ~9,000 acres burned near adjacent Sterling, Alaska a year later. Data collection efforts are now well underway. ADF&G biologists **Thomas McDonough**, **John Crouse** and **Dan Thompson** have worked with Kenai National Wildlife Refuge pilot biologist **Nate Olson** and supervisory biologist **John Morton** to deploy GPS collars on cow moose in and around the Funny River Fire in GMU 15B. In November 2014, 16 GPS collars were deployed, and an additional 10 GPS collars were deployed this spring. Collars collect data for 2 years and store the information onboard the collar. Collars will be retrieved by recapturing animals or when the collar falls off with a blow-off mechanism. In addition to this work in GMU 15B, both agencies worked together to deploy an additional 25 GPS collars on cow moose in GMU 15A, largely unburned since 1969. The overall effort is a side-by-side study design intended to tease out burn effects on moose.

“Everyone wants to know how the moose population is going to change as a result of vegetation response to the fire” says Dan Thompson. “With repeated captures of these animals, we can track changes in nutritional condition of animals in the burn area compared to that of late seral habitat in 15A.” Variables include body condition, pregnancy status and twinning rates, calf survival, ambient temperature, activity level, and habitat selection by a GPS location every 30 minutes. Captive moose at the Kenai Moose Research Center are also part of this study, validating activity and temperature sensors on GPS collars, and are intensively being studied to evaluate their physiological and behavioral responses to environmental temperature.

Data analysis will begin once GPS collars have finished collecting with the first set of collars coming off moose this coming winter. Depending on funding, the project will continue for several more years.



Regional News - Continued

2016 SCI Governor's Conservationist of the Year

On February 27, Alaska Governor Bill Walker presented the 2016 Safari Club International Conservationist of the Year Award to **William P. Taylor** DVM of Anchorage. About 1,500 SCI members and guests were in attendance at the annual banquet at the Dena'ina Center. Bill Taylor (ADF&G Retired 2002) is well known to many of us in the Alaska Chapter. His work on big game and Steller sea lions has taken him to all corners of Alaska where he pioneered protocols for wildlife immobilization. For the past 14 years Bill has been especially active as a seasonal and volunteer worker in snowshoe hare and ptarmigan/grouse research and population tracking. For many of us who have "small game roots," Bill almost singlehandedly kept that work alive over a working span of nearly 40 years. The ADF&G small game program was re-established in 2011 due to efforts by biologists like Bill Taylor, Gino DelFrate, and **Nick Steen**. The Governor concluded, "We are grateful to Bill for all he's done, and all he continues to do, for wildlife conservation in Alaska." The SCI Governor's Conservationist of the Year Award honors people who have dedicated their lives to the conservation of fish and wildlife resources in Alaska.

Southeast

Kevin White, Southeast Representative

Personnel Changes

Phil Mooney ADF&G Sitka Area Management Biologist, retired in February 2016, after 26 years of state service. Phil worked as a wildlife biologist for 13 years based out of Sitka, following a long stint as a habitat biologist. Phil has also previously worked for the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska and the lower 48. As an area management biologist, Phil was a jack of all trades but made particularly notable accomplishments while working on specific projects focused on non-lethal aversive conditioning of brown bear using tasers, deer habitat ecology on Chichagof and mountain goat population biology and management on Baranof Island. Phil is also a

master storyteller (if only in an informal capacity) and excellent photographer. He will remain living in Sitka with his family.

Steve Bethune has accepted the position of ADF&G Area Management Biologist for Unit 4 in Sitka. Steve's career with ADF&G began in 1999 at the Anchorage Information Center and included a period as acting Assistant Area Biologist in Anchorage before moving to the waterfowl program in 2001. Steve worked outside ADF&G for a few years, but returned to DWC in 2008 as Assistant Area Biologist in Craig, where in addition to normal management duties, he spent considerable time working on research projects involving black bears, deer, and wolves. Steve is an avid hunter with a strong interest in mountain ungulates. In Sitka he'll have the opportunity to work with mountain goats (and maybe a few brown bears). Steve and his family hope to make the transition to Sitka by early May.

Sitka Black-tailed Deer Response to Second Growth Forests

Todd Brinkman and **Jon Martin** are collaborating with the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (HNFP) to understand Sitka black-tailed deer response to managed forests on northeast Chichagof Island. HNFP is a science-based community forest approach that will result in strengthening social-ecological resilience both in Hoonah, and across southeast Alaska. The specific objective is to determine the statistical relationships between young growth treatment type/time, slash characteristics, deer use, and deer density. Funding to support research has been provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

White-nose Syndrome in Bats

White-nose Syndrome (WNS) was recently documented in Washington state, an unexpected discovery with serious implications for western bats. On March 11, hikers found a sick bat on a trail in North Bend, Washington, about 30 miles east of Seattle. The bat was sent to the National Wildlife Health Center for testing and was confirmed to have



Regional News - Continued

both the fungus and the disease. Until now the disease has spread steadily in a manner largely consistent with bat-to-bat transmission. How the fungus reached Washington is not known, but it is being cultured to determine if it is the North American, European, or Asian strain. That bat itself genotyped as a coastal subspecies of the little brown myotis, ruling out the possibility it had been accidentally translocated from the east. However, bats are excellent hitchhikers and there have been several recent instances on the Pacific Coast of bats being translocated by boat, raising the threat of multiple points of introduction of the disease, particularly in coastal states and provinces.

It is going to be a challenge to detect and monitor the spread of this disease in the west, where most bats do not hibernate in caves and mines like they do the eastern United States. The best bet for early detection will be if a member of the public finds and reports a sick or dead bat with the disease to ADF&G. There is information on the ADF&G website on what to do if you find a sick or dead bat at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbats.deadbats>, as well as a flyer that can be distributed to agencies and organizations that work with the public on wildlife issues. Monitoring maternity roosts will be another important tool for detecting WNS. If you aware of a bat roost in your community, please report it using our online report form at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=citizenscience.batobservationform>.

Alaska-Finland Seal Connection

Southeast Alaska Chapter member, **Jamie Womble** traveled to the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu in November 2015 to serve as an External Reviewer for a Doctoral student, **Sari Oksanen**. Sari's doctoral dissertation focused on spatial ecology of grey and ringed seals in the Baltic Sea. A primary objective of Sari's research was to use satellite telemetry data from grey and ringed seals to seek solutions to the coexistence of seals and fisheries in the Baltic Sea. Sari's dissertation advisor was **Dr. Mervi Kunnasranta**

who conducts research on Saimaa ringed seals in Finland and previously held a post-doctoral position at the University of Alaska studying ringed seals and Steller sea lions in Alaska.



Sari Oksanen, Mervi Kunnasranta, and Jamie Womble at Sari's post-defense dinner party or "karonkka" at the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu, Finland

Look for us on Facebook!

You can "like" us on Facebook! On our Facebook page, we are posting information on scientific publications relevant to Alaska's wildlife, announcements of upcoming meetings, and job openings. If you have ideas on how we can most effectively use our Facebook page, contact the Executive Board through the Chapter email: twsalaska@gmail.com



Common Murre Update: Growing Awareness of Sea Bird Die-off Thanks to Citizen Reporting

By Sierra Doherty

Alaska is witnessing the largest murre die-off in the state's recorded history. Thousands of common murres are dying of starvation. It is normal for murre populations to sometimes experience large-scale die-offs, known as wrecks, but the series of die-offs seen in 2015/2016 is unparalleled in the historic record, both in terms of geographic extent and time frame. Over the last 12 months, striking numbers of dead and dying murres have been documented from Juneau and Kodiak to Glennallen and Fairbanks, with some counts tallying birds by the thousands, as observed along the Prince William Sound coastline near Whittier. When sightings reached a peak in Southcentral and Interior Alaska in January, wildlife agencies were inundated with phone calls from concerned citizens. The Fairbanks Alaska Department of Fish and Game office received over 70 calls on January 1st alone. The Palmer office had multiple reports nearly every day in January. Thanks to reports from the public and collaborative efforts among wildlife agencies, the magnitude of this die-off is better understood. But the work is far from over. More reports have come in from Unalaska, the Pribilof Islands, and Lake Illiamna, and more are expected through the spring. It is critical that the public remain vigilant in reporting sightings. If you observe dead or weakened murres, please do not touch them or attempt to transport them. Report the estimated number of birds, date, time, and location by calling 1-866-527-3358 or emailing AK_MBM@fws.gov.

The following account at Lake Illiamna is an excellent example of citizen science in action.



Common murre in the Palmer Hay Flats. Photographer Doug Hill

The Observation

It was a pleasant February afternoon in Illiamna when the Lake and Peninsula Borough meeting adjourned. Randy Alvarez, the vice president of Igiugig Village Council was hitching a flight home with pilot and mayor, Glen Alsworth Sr. and the borough manager, Nathan Hill. This crew was familiar with flying over Lake Illiamna in all seasons, but this winter was unusual. "It's been so warm, the lake never froze," Alvarez said. "We should be able to drive snow machines and four-wheelers out there."

As they set out over the ice-free water, they peered down at a disturbing site: a constant line of black and white bird bodies dotting the shoreline. Local and national news reports had made the men aware that common murres in Alaska were in trouble and showing up in unfamiliar territory. Alvarez stated that it was a rare occurrence to see a murre on Lake Illiamna and he had never seen anything like this. Fortunately, not all the birds were dead. With the nice weather and open water, a resident from Kokhanok



Murre Die-Off - Continued

boated across the lake to Iliamna the same day and reported seeing lots murrees swimming around.

Counting Birds

After dropping Alvarez off, Alsworth and Hill flew back north along the shore in order to count the carcasses. Igiugig is on the southwest end of the lake, and a mass was bunched up around there. “Easterly winds could have pushed them in,” Alsworth said. As they flew, he looked out his window and signaled to Hill every time he counted 10 birds pass the strut of his plane.

“Since there was no snow on the ground, we counted white spots,” Alsworth said. “If the birds were lying face down, we probably missed them.” Still, they estimated a number between 8,000 to 10,000 birds. “I bet that number would be even higher if we were on the ground,” he said

Reporting to Wildlife Authorities

As a Bristol Bay fisherman, a hunter, and the chairman of Lake Iliamna’s Advisory Committee for ADF&G, Alvarez is no stranger to wildlife issues. So when he heard the estimate from Alsworth and Hill, it was intuitive to report the observation to his local wildlife agencies. Many state, federal, and non-governmental organizations have been working together to make sense of the die-off. In no time, ADF&G, USFWS, USGS and others were made aware of the birds on Lake Iliamna.

“It is so crucial to report,” said Rob Kaler of USFWS. “Organizations like COASST (The Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team) have helped with on-the-ground surveys in Prince William Sound, but we really need people to continue to call in—it is by far the most effective way to identify where the birds are and how many have died.” Kaler said it’s not necessary to collect specimens unless wildlife officials specifically ask for them.

Collecting Specimens

One of the foremost researchers of seabirds in the Pacific Northwest is John Piatt, PhD., a research biologist with the USGS Alaska Science Center. It didn’t take long for him to learn about the happenings on Lake Iliamna. Piatt quickly got a hold of Alvarez in Igiugig and asked him to collect intact specimens. He collected and delivered 21 birds to the USFWS Becharof Wildlife Refuge in King Salmon to be prepared for shipping.

“It’s difficult to say how long ago the birds arrived at the lake or how long they’ve been dead,” said refuge biologist Melissa Cady. The condition of the carcasses on the lake varied; some looked fresh while others were reduced to bits and pieces by dint of scavenging eagles, ravens, and foxes.

The carcasses were sent to the National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) in Madison, Wisconsin where they will be tested for toxins and parasites. While the murrees appear emaciated, researchers have not eliminated the possibility of toxins from such things as harmful algae, though testing has proven difficult since researchers need stomach contents to detect it. Ultimately, the murrees found at Lake Iliamna add to the geographic range and the timeline of the largest murre die-off in Alaska’s recorded history.



Murre Die-Off - Continued

Exploring the Theories

So the question remains: why aren't murres finding food? Dr. Piatt offered several theories. His areas of specialization include alcids, the sea bird family that murres belong to, as well as breeding biology and feeding ecology of seabirds, marine ecosystems, fisheries, oil pollution, marine mammals, forage fish, oceanography, and Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska studies. He's authored and contributed to 198 professional publications.

According to Dr. Piatt, more research is needed to fully understand how atmospheric influences impact the ocean's lower trophic levels, and the forage fish that murres eat. Over the past two years, the North Pacific has been hit by unusually warm water, driven by the cyclical El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the anomalous warm water mass referred to as "The Blob." While these two phenomena are discrete, the resulting warm water could be the culprit for the murres' lack of success.

Theory 1: Distribution of Prey

Warm water events can affect distribution of the prey species that murres rely on. Warm water at the ocean's surface makes it more difficult for cold water upwelling to take place, thus strengthening stratification in the water column. Some of the forage fish that murres prefer may not like the warmer waters and so they go deeper, or they go off shore to the shelf edge. Fish, like capelin and sand lance go hide in deeper water anyway so they're not as available in the winter. Other fish like juvenile pollock usually stay in the water column all winter long. But if the water column is particularly warm, they might go a little deeper or further off shore.

Theory 2: Abundance of Prey

There is a direct line between changes in water temperature and recruitment. Warm waters may not be suitable for certain fish species' ability to recruit young. Ideally, fish that broadcast thousands of eggs during spawning will have at least one that will survive into adulthood. The timing is very critical for these larvae as they emerge. The Match-Mismatch Theory suggests that if a particular fish species puts its larvae out at a specific time of year, but things warmed up two months early, and the phytoplankton and zooplankton were two months early, by the time the larvae get out there looking for food, it would be too late because the food would have been eaten up by other fish species.

Many fish have multiple years to spawn so they aren't severely impacted by short-term warm water events, like those caused by an ENSO. However, for short-lived fish like capelin that may only have two years to spawn, two years of warm water could mean that they won't produce young to recruit and the population could tank in a hurry.

"There are all these fish out there and they all have different strategies for survival," Piatt said. "And there's a reason for that: when the climate changes and it gets warm for a while, the ones who spawn earlier are going to benefit and the ones who spawn later are not. In time, the balance changes and you get a shift."



A group of murres in Auke Bay, near Juneau, November 2015. Photo by Kristen Romanoff



Murre Die-Off - Continued

Theory 3: Competition for Prey

A one-kilogram murre has a very high metabolic rate - it requires a whopping 40 to 50 percent of its body mass every day. Without food, it can only survive for three to four days. By comparison, a small cod fish similar in size to the murre only has to eat maybe once a week. But fish are cold-blooded. Their metabolism, it turns out, is dependent on water temperature. A laboratory study performed in the 1970s looked at feeding rates of cod at different temperatures. The researcher found that cod had to eat significantly more food as the water temperature increased. A rise in water temperature by a couple of degrees can have a profound effect on predatory fish in terms of how much food they need.

“Predatory fish consume ten to one hundred times more fish than do seabirds and mammals based on sheer volume- there are so many more fish in the ocean than there are birds in the air,” Piatt said. “Fish consume an order of magnitude more under normal circumstances, but when you turn up the oven, suddenly the predatory fish have to eat a lot more.”

Sierra Doherty is a Wildlife Education Specialist based in Palmer.

To report dead seabirds

Please call 1-866-527-3358
or email AK_MBM@fws.gov.
Include date and time, location
(latitude/longitude and length
of beach surveyed), type of bird,
estimated number of birds, and
any photographs you may have
taken.

Wood Bison Update

ADF&G Biologists spotted the first wild-bred, wild-born, wood bison calf in over a hundred years this week in the Lower Yukon/Innoko area. This monumental event is a milestone that marks the beginning of a viable, wild, and growing population of wood bison in Alaska, the only place in the United States where the species is currently found. The stock used to reintroduce wood bison to Alaska had been in captivity over many generations (since 1957) in order to save this unique northern subspecies from extinction. Some people had doubts that the bison would become wild again and prosper in their old homelands after such a long time behind fences with supplemental food, water, and shelter.

Since their reintroduction in spring of 2015, the Alaska wood bison have shown that they are right at home along the lower Yukon, and as of this week, calves are being born and the population is growing with no input or assistance from humans. It was not without difficulty. In the first few months after release, some bison died as natural selection chose the strongest and culled the weakest. Now, the bison fit for life in the wild remain, and robust young calves will soon increase the population of the 130 that were released. This marks the dawn of an era: the era of *wild* wood bison conservation in the USA, with Alaska at the helm.



Photo by Scott Brainerd, ADF&G



The Wildlife Society Annual Conference and Council Updates

There's been a lot going on at The Wildlife Society! With the Annual Conference in Winnipeg, the fall and spring TWS Council Meetings, government affairs and conservation activities, website additions, publications and awards. Here are a few highlights and you can read full monthly activity reports and other news and information on the TWS website at <http://wildlife.org/>.

Chapter and Section TWS Website Migration –

Please check out the new Chapter and NW Section Websites (<http://wildlife.org/>), which have migrated to and are now being hosted on the TWS website. It looks great and is highlighting many Chapter and Section activities.

2015 Annual Conference – The TWS Annual Conference was held October 17-21, 2015 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It's been 10 years since it's been in Canada and it was a rousing success, with 1,564 attendees (+12 over Pittsburgh), and once again, 46% were students. Nine workshops had more than 270 participants and the six field trips sold out with more than 280 attendees. There were 29 sponsors and 31 contributors. Nearly 700 educational opportunities were presented through plenary, symposia, panel discussions, contributed papers and posters, and there were more than 30 networking receptions and events, and 23 working group meetings (<http://wildlife.org/manitoba-attendees-chime-in-on-2015-conference/>). There was a popular Ignite session, as well as a Women of Wildlife symposium and reception.

The conference focused on a number of issues facing the wildlife profession as public attitudes toward wildlife conservation and management shift. There were two excellent plenaries: "Why Does Wildlife Matter", and "Balancing Conservation and Development in the Final Frontier – Canada's Boreal Forest", which featured the Manitoba Premier, as well as four leading experts on conservation and management of Canada's boreal forests.

The TWS Annual Members Meeting was held during the conference. New TWS President Gary Potts' theme for the year is on strengthening and expanding partnerships to work together on common causes: "... as the human population increases and we have more problems to deal with, our partnerships will be the key to our success."

Two new member benefits for 2016 were announced: The frequency of The Wildlife Professional magazine has been increased from four to six issues a year, effective January 2016; and a 5% tuition discount is being offered to TWS members on courses taken through the Society's new Strategic Partner, American Public University, for college credit or professional development.

A new award, the Jay N. "Ding" Darling Award for Wildlife Stewardship through Art was also announced. Sam Koltinsky, representative of the "Ding" Darling estate, presented TWS with a "brush of excellence" - one of Ding Darling's art brushes - to be housed at Headquarters and used to help recognize the award recipients. "Ding" Darling achieved significant wildlife and habitat conservation through his artwork and associated conservation messages. He initiated the Federal Duck Stamp Program, was founder of the National Wildlife Federation, creator of the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program, and laid the groundwork for today's National Wildlife Refuge system. TWS awarded him honorary membership in 1938, and he was the first recipient of the TWS Aldo Leopold Memorial Award in 1950 — TWS' highest honor for distinguished service to wildlife conservation.

The 2015 TWS Fellows were awarded, including two from the Northwest Section, Barb Hill from Oregon and Steve Belinda from Montana. The TWS Distinguished Service Award recipients included Warren Aney, of the Oregon Chapter. Congratulations to all.

Continued on page 14



In Memoriam - Brina Kessel

By Quentin Kessel

A remarkable life ended on March 1, 2016. Professor and ornithologist Brina Cattell Kessel journeyed to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in 1951 and never looked back. She was born in Ithaca, NY, in 1925, the daughter of Quinta Cattell and Marcel Hartwig Kessel and was proud to be the granddaughter of James McKeen Cattell, a world-famous psychologist, publisher, and academic who promoted the idea of faculty governance of universities. Brina was raised in Storrs, CT and she attended the Storrs Grammar School and Windham High School. After graduating from Cornell University, she went to the University of Wisconsin to study under Aldo Leopold, the founder of the science of wildlife management. Unfortunately he died fighting a fire soon after she arrived and she discovered Wisconsin would not accept women into the wildlife management program. For this reason, after her Master's degree, she returned to Cornell. There she continued to work with Arthur Allen with whom she worked as an undergraduate to record some of the first bird-sound recordings. She researched, wrote an epic thesis on the European Starling, and received her Ph.D. in just two years.

At the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, she rose quickly from instructor to Full Professor, was appointed Head of the Department of Biological Sciences in 1957 and was named the Dean of the College of Biological Sciences and Renewable Resources in 1962, a position she held until 1972. After serving in other positions, in 1980 she declined further administrative responsibilities in order to concentrate her efforts on research and the development of the University of Alaska Museum. In 1999 she was awarded Emeritus

status as Professor, Dean, and Curator of Ornithology. It does not do her justice to say she served as the Curator of Terrestrial Vertebrate Collections (birds and mammals). Her research took her to nearly every corner of Alaska. U.S. Senator Ted Stevens, in honoring Brina wrote, "She has travelled to scores of Alaskan villages, towns, river deltas, interior lakes, coastal plains, mountaintops, wetlands, highway corridors, Arctic sites – locations where she set up observation

posts and studied the many species of birds that live in, or migrate to the northern regions of North America." Brina published numerous ornithological papers and books and received many honors. She was listed in the American Men and Women of Science in 1954; she was named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1960 and given fellowship in the American Ornithologists' Union in 1973 and later served as their national president. She was also a fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America. The Fairbanks Business and professional Women's Club named her Woman of the Year

in 1970 and she received the University of Alaska President's Distinguished Service Award in 1981. In 1993 a Friends of Brina Kessel Committee established the Brina Kessel Medal for Excellence in Science to be awarded annually to honor an outstanding University of Alaska undergraduate science student. Later Brina established an endowment so that a monetary award could be added to the honor.

Brina's research career was funded by a number of agencies and took several surprising turns. A project was funded by the Office of Naval Research for research along the Colville River in the PET-4 Reserve. Then she was told, "You cannot come on to the



Brina Kessel - Continued

Reserve because the navy will not allow any woman on the PET-4 Reserve unless they are married, and with their husband.” She was not happy that they would accept her freshman student, George Schaller, but not her more experienced self to collect the data. Schaller later became a preeminent conservation biologist, known worldwide. From 1959 to 1963, she was the project director for Ecological Investigations for the Atomic Energy Commission Project Chariot in Northwestern Alaska. The initial ecological investigation was carried out, but Project Chariot, a plan to use atomic bombs to create a deep water harbor off the coast of Alaska, was later cancelled. Brina was especially pleased to accompany Olaus and Margaret Murie on some of their trips to the far northern interior Alaska and to have her participation described in their books.

Brina was predeceased by her husband, Raymond Roof, a sister, Jo Kessel Buyske, and a brother, McKeen Cattell Kessel. She leaves her sister Edgra Kessel Ringler and her husband, Ira, of Easton, MD, and her brother, Quentin Cattell Kessel, and his wife, Margaret, of Storrs. Contributions may be made to the University of Alaska Foundation (fund 40815), PO Box 755080, Fairbanks, AK 99775 to support Brina’s ” Birds of Alaska” project.

Personal Perspective from John Trent (USFWS Retired)

“I took ornithology and comparative vertebrate anatomy from Brina in the mid 1960’s. She was one of those rare people who made the learning process exciting and positive while maintaining very high standards. There was always an energy bubble around Brina and it was contagious! I especially enjoyed the field trips with her ornithology class. I have always admired her significant career contributions, have some of her books in my library, and think of her as a true gender pioneer in the Alaska biological sciences. She helped open the door to professionalism for me and many others; I am grateful for that. Rest in peace, Brina, you left a very high bar for the rest of us to follow.”



TWS Updates - Continued

2016 Annual Conference - The 2016 Conference will be in Raleigh, North Carolina, October 15-19. Please consider submitting papers and posters, workshop, symposia, and panel discussion ideas, and attending!

TWS Council Meetings – Council meetings were held October 16-17, prior to the Annual Conference and March 13-14 at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Each of the TWS Sections is represented on the Council. Bruce Thompson, from the Northwest Section, is serving as President-Elect of TWS. Next October he will become President. Detailed budget reports were given by Executive Director Ken Williams. The TWS fiscal year runs July to June. The Society remained in good financial health during the 2014-15 budget year, with revenues exceeding expenses; and we are on track at the beginning of the 2015-16 budget, with revenues exceeding expenditures and a “rainy day reserve” fund building.

Chief Operating Officer Ed Thompson reported on many new initiatives and benefits that were implemented for TWS members in the last year, including: the new TWS website that features at least three new TWS and/or wildlife news features daily; weekly eWildlifer newsletter and TWS Talks, featuring two presentations from our most recent Annual Conference; the new Wildlife Partners program (<http://wildlife.org/wildlifepartners/>), a free affiliation that provides professionals, students and supporters with a small slice of member benefits as part of the new member acquisition strategy; increased engagement with members of Sections and Chapters through headquarters staff attendance at annual chapter and section meetings and more frequent e-communications; support to the Sections and Chapters by hosting websites at wildlife.org; increased social media presence through Facebook (34,400 followers), Twitter (32,400 followers), and LinkedIn (9,400 followers).

Government Affairs and Partnerships – Keith Norris, the new TWS Director of Government Affairs and Partnerships gave reports on TWS conservation

TWS Updates - Continued

efforts, the Conservation Affairs Network, Certification, and the Student Leadership Institute. He noted TWS Policy Communications available on the website, including: wildlife policy issue articles each month at www.wildlife.org; and TWS fact sheets (www.wildlife.org/fact-sheets).

The Conservation Affairs Network – <http://wildlife.org/policy-2/conservation-affairs-network/> communicates, in part, through a bimonthly newsletter distributed to all Section and Chapter Conservation Affairs Committees. A policy toolkit is also available online (<http://wildlife.org/policy-2/policy-toolkit>) to assist Chapters and Sections engage in the policy arena.

Other Parent Society Updates - TWS CEO Ken Williams has asked about involvement of TWS chapters/sections with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). He will be meeting with NWF in the near future to discuss opportunities for collaboration at the national level and felt that it would be useful to know about any other collaboration occurring with NWF at other levels of TWS. Please contact your chapter leadership if 1) your Section or Chapter has worked with a local unit of NWF in the past or plan to do so in the future, and 2) what kind of event/work you collaborated on.

The TWS Parent society has written a letter regarding the upcoming annual conference in North Carolina given House Bill 2, and the potential impact on its members (see letter next page). From preliminary scoping and discussion among the board, there are those who would like the Parent Society to adopt a policy at this meeting that they will not hold any future Annual Conferences in states or locations that have discriminatory laws that impact the diversity of the wildlife profession's membership and participation including laws that discriminate regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

Wood Bison - Continued

Two calves have been spotted to date, and ADF&G is expecting about 30 new calves this year.

For more information on the wood bison reintroduction, read Tom Seaton's recent article, Bringing Alaska's Wood Bison Back – The American Conservation Story that Almost Wasn't in *The Wildlife Professional* (<http://wildlife.org/>) or visit <http://www.adn.com/article/20160422/after-more-century-wild-wood-bison-calves-spotted-alaska>

Have you ever wished there were a single source to stay up-to-date on the latest wildlife research publications pertaining to and coming out of Alaska?

That is why the Alaska Wildlife Research Listserv (AWRL) was started. The AWRL is a monthly e-newsletter that delivers direct access to the most recent peer-reviewed publications and professional reports related to wildlife research in Alaska. It is an effort to maintain strong communication and connectivity amongst wildlife scientists of all disciplines in the state, from agency, university, and industry. It is intended as a single source for the latest wildlife research products to come out of Alaska. However, to be successful, AWRL will require two-way communication, so if you or your colleagues are publishing articles or reports, please send them to nathan.jones@hdrinc.com to be included in the next issue of AWRL. Thank you! We can all benefit from the exchange of information and ideas.





THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

April 28, 2016

Dear Julie,

Over the past few months you've likely seen or heard the unifying phrase, "We are The Wildlife Society" stated proudly. We're writing to you today with important information that reinforces that message.

Since this year's Annual Conference will be held in Raleigh, we have been closely monitoring the developments in North Carolina in regards to House Bill 2 and its potential impact on our members. TWS Leadership has been engaged in discussions with members of the North Carolina Chapter and our contacts within the Raleigh tourism bureau, the convention center and our hotel facilities on behalf of all of our members to ensure that everyone will experience a welcoming, safe and respectful environment that aligns with our organization's commitment to diversity in the wildlife profession.

The diversity of our membership is one of our greatest strengths. As stated in our long-standing [Position Statement on Workforce Diversity in the Wildlife Profession](#), "The Wildlife Society recognizes the value of including the richness of human diversity in our efforts to discover, educate, inform policy, and involve the public in wildlife science and management."

Similarly, the City of Raleigh, the Raleigh Convention Center and our two contracted hotels all have strong nondiscrimination policies. The mayor of Raleigh, Nancy McFarland, reinforced that position in a recent press release saying that the city, "...will always be open to everyone. Everyone. We will continue to support all of our businesses, citizens and visitors with the utmost respect, regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability."

The Raleigh Convention Center, where the bulk of the conference's activities will be held, issued the following public statement: "The Raleigh Convention Center will continue to support all customers and visitors with respect and care regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability...It is of the utmost importance that all attendees feel comfortable in our facility; and our staff will make every reasonable accommodation to ensure our guests feel welcome..."

For any member who is concerned about restroom access at our conference as a result of HB2, the convention center has four gender-neutral family restrooms and there are two at the facility where our opening night reception will be held. Additionally, the facilities have told us that there is no requirement in the law for them to police the restrooms and they have no interest in policing or plans to do so.

A few members have asked if we are considering moving the conference, but that's not a viable option for TWS. We sign contracts with convention centers and hotels at least three years in advance to reserve the space required for an event that features more than 600 educational opportunities and more than 40 networking events. Since the facilities must hold that space for us that far in advance, the financial penalties for canceling are substantial—and in this case would cost TWS in excess of \$300,000. Additionally, we would be hard-pressed to find another convention facility and hotels available with the extensive space we require just six months out as most facilities that meet our needs are usually booked up two to three years in advance.

If you want to protest against HB2 in some manner, we ask that you consider doing it in a way that won't impact your attendance at your Society's conference. Missing the conference not only deprives you of participation in what we believe will be our most engaging and rewarding conference to date, but also has a significant detrimental financial impact on your Society, given that we must cover substantial fixed costs regardless of the number of attendees.

"We are The Wildlife Society," and together we will make this year's conference safe, enjoyable and memorable for all of our members. We'll post any additional information that may be helpful on our conference website at twsconference.org beginning May 15.

Best Regards,

Gary Potts
President
The Wildlife Society

Ed Thompson
Chief Operating Officer
The Wildlife Society



UAF Student Chapter News *By Jessica Herzog*



The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society is making a number of changes for the 2016-2017 school year. First, we would like to congratulate our new officers:

- President: Jessica Herzog
- Vice President: Karen Biondich
- Treasurer: Elise Stacy
- Secretary: Jocelyn Brady

Second, we are becoming more focused on research and helping our members advance in the wildlife field. Finding one or more research projects that we can conduct during the winter months while most members are still in Alaska, and learning important skills throughout the year will help our members gain experience they are unable to get in the classroom, making them better qualified for internships and research jobs. We would like to continue forming connections with people from different agencies so members can expand their networks and find more research opportunities, and we are interested in having some meetings led by a guest speaker. We will be approaching members from a variety of organizations and agencies to come and share their experiences and stories or teach us various topics. Suggestions and volunteers are always appreciated!

Two important goals for our chapter are to attend the Regional Student Conclave for the first time and eventually host a student conclave. Conclave is a 3-4 day event hosted yearly by student chapters at their home university. This is a great opportunity for students to network in their field through discussion and activities such as field trips, workshops, lectures, and quiz bowls.

We have developed a plan to help us reach our goals. The first part of this plan is to send two to three club members to the Regional Student Conclave in 2017 so that we can learn about conclave and what to expect and how to organize one for ourselves. However, we will need assistance from our parent chapter, the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society, as funding is our biggest hurdle. Registration costs \$60 per individual, travel costs \$700 per individual,

and lodging costs \$175 per room each night. Reducing these costs as much as possible through donations, fundraising, or grants would help us immensely in attending Conclave.

The next part of the plan is to send as many members as possible, along with two advisors, to our region's conclave, present a poster, and participate in the student quiz bowl. We hope to present meaningful findings concerning our research that we conducted throughout the fall and winter months. We will also prepare for the quiz bowl throughout the year, giving the UAF Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society their first chance to succeed in such an event.

After gaining experience by attending our regional conclave, we hope to host the regional conclave at UAF. This would require us to fill out an application that must be approved by the National Wildlife Programs Coordinator. Upon approval, we will submit appropriate paperwork and financial reports in order to qualify for \$500, awarded once we successfully complete each of the pre- and post-conclave reports. To host this event will be a tremendous accomplishment for our chapter, and keeping cost low for students travelling to Alaska will be very difficult. We will be exploring options to this end, so stay tuned for updates and please feel free to think outside of the box and brainstorm with us.



Members of the UAF Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society at the 2015 TWS Annual Meeting in Anchorage.



Upcoming Meetings - Mark Your Calendar!

24th International Conference on Bear Research and Management – Anchorage, Alaska

June 12-16, 2016

www.IBA2016.com

2016 ESRI User Conference – Sand Diego, California

June 1-July 1, 2016

www.esri.com/events/user-conference

Fish Passage 2016 Conference – Amherst, MA

June 20-22, 2016

<https://fishpassage.umass.edu/?q=content/fish-passage-2016>

Joint Meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists– New Orleans, Louisiana

July 6-10, 2016

<http://www.asih.org/>

2016 North American Congress for Conservation Biology – Madison, Wisconsin

July 17-20, 2016

<http://www.scbnacongress.org/>

2016 International Statistical Ecology Conference – Seattle, Washington

June 28-July 1, 2016

<http://depts.washington.edu/uwconf/wordpress/isec2016/>

Ecological Society of America Conference – Fort Lauderdale, Florida

August 7-12, 2016

<http://esa.org/ftlauderdale/>

Aleutian Life Forum – Dutch Harbor, Alaska

August 16-20, 2016

<http://www.aleutianlifeforum.com/>

6th North American Ornithological Conference – Washington, D. C.

August 16-20, 2016

www.naoc2016.event.com

American Fisheries Society 146th Annual Meeting – Kansas City, MO

August 21-25, 2016

<http://2016.fisheries.org/>

**IUCN World Conservation Congress – Honolulu, HI
September 1-10, 2016**

<http://www.iucnworldconservationcongress.org/>

6th International Albatross and Petrel Conference – Barcelona, Spain

September 19-23, 2016

www.iapc6.info

The Waterbird Society 40th Anniversary Meeting – New Bern, North Carolina

September 20-23, 2016

<http://waterbirds.org/annual-meeting/>

The Wildlife Society Annual Conference – Raleigh, North Carolina

October 15-19, 2016

<http://wildlife.org/tws-23rd-annual-conference/>

Annual Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation – Cape May, New Jersey

October 16-20, 2016

<http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/current-conference>

Join or renew memberships

New memberships and renewals are available on-line at The Wildlife Society (www.wildlife.org/alaska/). Click on membership to obtain membership forms.



Caribou biologist Jim Dau retires after nearly three decades of service with ADF&G

By Carmen Daggett

Jim Dau, a widely known and respected caribou biologist in Northwest Alaska, has decided to retire after 28 years of service with the Kotzebue Fish and Game office. His initial involvement with Game Management Unit (GMU) 23 began in the late 1970's, working with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Reindeer Program, Larry Davis of Nome, and Bob Dieterich (then State veterinarian), and the reindeer and reindeer herders of the Seward Peninsula. He learned to ride a snow machine by accompanying Larry Davis as they tended to Larry's large reindeer herd. Jim also spent several summers herding Davis' reindeer, on foot, with only a small transistor radio tuned to KNOM for company.

In 1988, Jim began work with ADF&G in Kotzebue as the Assistant Area Biologist in GMU 23, and then quickly became acting Area Biologist, during this time, he learned how to fly and became one of the most respected pilot/biologists in the state of Alaska. In 2007, he switched from Area Biologist to become the lead caribou biologist for Region V, continuing his work with the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, Alaska's largest caribou herd. He has conducted research on caribou migration, calving, seasonal range use, and techniques for aging caribou through the use of caribou jaws. "His steadfast determination to acquire information about caribou has led to one of the most coveted datasets on caribou in existence," says previous Area Biologist Charlotte Westing.

In addition to Jim's research efforts he has provided information and education on wildlife diseases and parasites through creating a field pocket book that can be used by Alaska residents. He believes in engaging students in the science that is done. He started bringing students to Onion Portage to collar caribou and get them involved in the science that we use to understand the herd. He has also coordinated efforts to conduct monitoring and management for moose,



musk ox, Dall sheep, brown bear, wolf, and caribou.

In Jim's nearly 40 years of service between work with ADF&G and with the University he has created lasting bonds between ADF&G and the local 40 communities that are nestled in extent of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. Charlotte Westing said "Jim really values the input of the local people and sees the information they provide as being a valuable complement to the science

he produces". Fish and Wildlife Service Outreach coordinator Brittney Sweeny says, "Jim got to know local people, listened to and learned from elders, and shared his knowledge through (probably thousands of) meetings, radio announcements, and village visits."

Long-time colleague Peter Bente describes Jim as "Extremely dependable and safe." Jim was awarded the Governor's Award Coworker Recognition 2011. His kind and humble demeanor along with his extensive knowledge regarding wildlife have made him an invaluable asset to the people and the wildlife of the state. Congratulations Jim on your retirement; your contributions to and hard work for the people of the state and the wildlife will be long lasting and remembered fondly.





ALASKA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

2017 ANNUAL MEETING

Fairbanks, Alaska

Exact dates are to be determined

SPECIAL SESSION SUGGESTIONS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society is beginning to organize events for the 2017 Alaska Chapter meeting to be held in Fairbanks in the spring of 2017 and needs your input. We are seeking ideas and suggestions for special sessions that TWS members would like to see at the upcoming meeting. In addition, if you would like to volunteer during the meeting please let us know. Please contact Nathan Svoboda (nathan.svoboda@alaska.gov) or Scott Brainerd (scott.brainerd@alaska.gov) for volunteer information and/or to submit suggestions for special sessions. Thank you and hope to see you at the meeting!

Celebrating Our Wildlife Conservation Heritage

What is the Celebrating Our Wildlife Conservation Heritage (COWCH) Project?

As several key representatives of the first generation of wildlife professionals passed away in 1999, The Wildlife Society Council adopted the COWCH Project with the goal of preserving the history and evolution of the wildlife profession by interviewing influential wildlife biologists, educators, managers, and other pioneers. To date TWS has recorded more than 60 COWCH interviews with distinguished leaders in the wildlife profession including students of Aldo Leopold, charter members of TWS, Aldo Leopold Award winners, past-presidents of TWS, and other trail-blazers in wildlife management and conservation. These interviews — along with many more we hope to produce — form a priceless record of the roots of the wildlife profession, which began in the 1930s with Aldo Leopold's Game Management and the founding of a Department of Game Management at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Do you know someone who would be a good COWCH interview candidate?

Please contact Alaska Chapter President, Scott Brainerd (scott.brainerd@alaska.gov), or your Regional Representative with suggestions as soon as possible!



Recent Publications by TWS - AK Chapter Members

The following are some recent Chapter member publications.

Anderson, A, Russell, J, Booms, T, & Russell, D 2015. Siblicide and cannibalism in Alaskan boreal owls. *Journal of Raptor Research*. 49: 498-500.

Beckmen, K, Keogh, M, Burek-Huntington, K, Ylitalo, G, Fadely, B, & Pitcher, K. 2016. Organochlorine contaminant concentrations in multiple tissues of free-ranging Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) in Alaska. *Science of the Total Environment* 542:441-452.

Bodenstein, B, Beckmen, K, Sheffield, G, Kuletz, K, Van Hemert, C, Berlowski, B, & Shearn-Bochsler, V. 2015. Avian cholera causes marine bird mortality in the Bering Sea of Alaska. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 51: 934-937.

Colson, KE, White, KS, & Hundertmark, KJ. 2016. Parturition site selection in moose (*Alces alces*): evidence for social structure. *Journal of Mammalogy*. DOI:10.1093/jmammal/gyw006.

Doak, P, Carroll, C, Kielland, K. 2016. Harvest of female moose at high density: modelling the impacts of harvest on population size and biomass yield. *Wildlife Biology* DOI:10.2981/wlb.00163.

Eisaguirre, J, Booms, T, Schempf, P, & Lewis, S. 2016. Gyrfalcon home ranges and movements on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska. *Journal of Raptor Research* 50: 109-114.

Flint, PL, Pearce, JM, Franson, JC, & Derksen, DV. 2015. Wild bird surveillance for highly pathogenic avian influenza H5 in North America. *Virology Journal* 12:151.

Flint, P, Reed, J, Lacroix, D, & Lanctot, R. 2016. Habitat use and foraging patterns of molting male long-tailed ducks in lagoons of the central Beaufort Sea, Alaska. *Arctic* 69: 19-28.

Goldsmith, E, Renshaw, B, Clement, C, Himschoot, E, Hundertmark, K, & Hueffer, K. 2016. Population structure of two rabies hosts relative to the known distribution of rabies virus variants in Alaska. *Molecular Ecology* 25: 675-688.

Hays GC, Ferreira LC, Sequeira AMM, Meekan MG, Duarte CM, Bailey H, Bailleul F, Bowen WD, Caley MJ, Costa DP, Eguíluz VM, Fossette S, Friedlaender AS, Gales N, Gleiss AC, Gunn J, Harcourt R, Hazen EL, Heithaus MR, Heupel M, Holland K, Horning M, Jonsen I, Kooyman GL, Lowe CG, Madsen PT, Marsh H, Phillips RA, Righton D, Ropert-Coudert Y, Sato K, Shaffer SA, Simpfendorfer CA, Sims DW, Skomal G, Takahashi A, Trathan PN Wikelski M, Womble JN, Thums M. 2016. Key questions in marine megafauna movement ecology. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*. Doi: 10.1016/j.tree.2016.02.015

Johnson, I, Brinkman, T, Britton, K, Kelly, J, Hundertmark, K, Lake, B, & Verbyla, D. 2016. Quantifying rural hunter access in Alaska. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* 21: 240-253.

Kaltenborn, BP, & Brainerd, SM. 2016. Can poaching inadvertently contribute to increased public acceptance of wolves in Scandinavia? *European Journal of Wildlife Research* 62:179-188.

Lafferty, D, Loman, Z, White, K, Morzillo, A, & Belant, J. 2016. Moose (*Alces alces*) hunters subsidize the scavenger community in Alaska. *Polar Biology* 39: 639-647.

Lewis, S, & Kissling, M. 2015. Clarifying subspecies of peregrine falcons along the Lost Coast of Alaska, *Journal of Raptor Research* 49:367-375.

Lian, M, Beckmen, K, Bentzen, T, Demma, D, & Arnemo, J. 2016. Thiafentanil-azaperone-xylazine and carfentanil-xylazine immobilizations of free-ranging caribou (*Rangifer tarandus granti*) In Alaska, USA. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 52:327-334.



Publications - Continued

Liston, G, Perham, C, Shideler, R, & Cheuvront, A. 2016. Modeling snowdrift habitat for polar bear dens. *Ecological Modelling* 320:114-134.

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We would like to highlight the contributions of Chapter members to wildlife science. If you or your colleagues have recently published articles in peer-reviewed journals, please send the citation to Jerry Hupp (jhupp@usgs.gov).



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