The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Fall Issue - September 2018

Message from President Nate Svoboda

Greetings fellow wildlifers! I hope this message finds you enjoying the end of your Alaskan summer (or perhaps the start of your Alaskan winter?) and hopefully each of you had an enjoyable and successful field season. As you may have guessed, despite the resemblance, that is not me in the accompanying photo, rather that is my recently born son, Lincoln James Svoboda. I figured this would be as good a time as any to introduce one of our future AK Chapter TWS members (and what else would a proud dad with an audience do?).

The recent birth of my son has compelled me to reflect on several important things in my life, including my profession and the professionals I have had the privilege to work with since my arrival in Alaska a few short (~6) years ago. Despite my relatively recent arrival I have had the opportunity to work with a number of fantastic individuals from various government, non-profit, Native, and university organizations, many of which belong to The Wildlife Society. I have been fortunate enough to have daily interactions with many members of the public and have had the opportunity to collaborate with numerous students, faculty, and professionals. I continue to be fascinated by the incredible accomplishments these agencies and individuals achieve and the commitment they make to safeguarding our natural resources. Thank you.

The birth of my son has also prompted me to think about what's important in my life and, more importantly, what's important in his life and the lives of future Alaskans. Many of these things are quite fundamental, such as fresh air, clean water, a balanced ecosystem, and a healthy and sustainable environment, yet these are the same environmental qualities that seem to be regularly and relentlessly threatened. Though as I consider these important qualities and contemplate the future of our state, I take comfort in knowing there are hundreds (if not thousands) of dedicated professionals working every day to ensure these important attributes are preserved for future generations. I am proud to be associated with a group of individuals that dedicates themselves and their professional careers to ensuring our resources will be here for future generations. I appreciate the work each of you do everyday and, as I step into the role of TWS Alaska Chapter President, I look forward to working with each of you to preserve the long-term health of Alaska's wildlife. I am honored and humbled to serve as TWS Alaska Chapter President and look forward to representing the chapter throughout my term. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully,

Nate Svoboda

Issue Highlights

Regional News

Northern

Kerry Nicholson, Northern Representative

Personnel Changes

Sam Harbo, retired UAF professor and former ADF&G biologist, passed away on May 30th in Fairbanks (see Memorium pg. 16-17).

Herb Melchior, retired ADF&G wildlife biologist, passed away on June 5th (see Memoruium pg. 29).

In July, the National Park Service in Fairbanks hired **Dylan Schertz** as their Biological Science Technician.

Projects and Publications

New Birdsong Tool

A new open-source Python tool for ornithology research has been released: Avian Acoustic Discovery: Alaska. It's purpose is to automatically detect the songs of select avian species in long sections of recorded audio. So far there are 10 species that can be detected, with another 10 currently in development. For questions, please contact Davyd_Betchkal@nps.gov, 907-683-5754.

Caribou Citizen Science

A National Science Foundation research project explores strategies to engage Central Arctic Caribou Herd (CACH) users through survey research and citizen science methods. Wildlife biology researchers from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) are interested in how hunter knowledge may inform

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

management of wildlife in Alaska. The overall goal of our current work is to gather users' knowledge and insights about causes and consequences of changes in the CACH and its management, and to engage them in a citizen science effort to document characteristics of caribou during the peak hunting season. We surveyed resident hunters who have hunted the CACH multiple times over the last decade which captures the 2010 peak and subsequent decline of the CACH reported by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). Our survey sample included roughly 800 people and we've received responses from about 250 (roughly 30% response rate). The survey will remain open until August 31st and results will be distributed during winter 2019. Our on-going 2018 Caribou Citizen Science Project is designed to offer people the opportunity to share their personal observations of caribou to help inform monitoring strategies for the CACH. The citizen science component of our research involves voluntary participation from people who are on the North Slope of Alaska, particularly along the Dalton Highway corridor between August and September 2018 to participate as citizen scientists. Participants will be asked to document characteristics of caribou they observe while conducting their normal activities. We've developed a smartphone app that can be used to record characteristics of caribou from any Android or Apple device that automatically geotags each submitted record. This approach provides us with a unique opportunity to gather information at the human-wildlife interface to better understand

this interaction. More detailed information about our Caribou Citizen Science Research Project can be found at the following link, along with instructions about how to get involved (www.uafcaribouproject.com). The goal of this effort is to assess the utility of app-based citizen science for generating data on caribou distribution and to determine if, and to what extent, people's observations of caribou align or differ from other monitoring methods. We currently have about 100 people registered to use the app from diverse stakeholder groups which include commercial hunting guides, transporters, air taxis, hunters, wildlife viewing companies, state and federal management agencies, researchers involved with other work in the area, and members of the general public. In conjunction with this citizen science effort, we are conducting structured road-based distance sampling transects for caribou from Galbraith Lake to Deadhorse throughout the month of August. This distance sampling data set will provide a reference to assess the validity of citizen science reports of caribou along the Dalton Highway. We are working hard to get as many people engaged and involved with our work as possible. If you have any questions that are not answered on our website, please contact Scott Leorna at sleorna@alaska.edu or at (907) 987-5382.

Southcentral

Kim King Jones, Southcentral Representative

Personnel Changes

Patrick Fitzmorris is the new wildlife biologist for Izembek. Pat comes to us from Northern California where he managed the California Deer Association for the last 11 years and oversaw everything from grant writing and fundraising to wildlife habitat projects on public land. Before that, he was the Regional Biologist for Ducks Unlimited at the Western Regional Office in Sacramento where he worked on wetland habitat projects. He was also a Wetland Habitat Biologist for the CA Waterfowl Association. Early in his career, he worked seasonally for the Hart Mountain/Sheldon NWR Complex and spent a summer with the USGS working on Dusky Canada Geese in the Copper River Delta. He attended school at Humbolt State University where his emphasis was waterfowl and wetlands. Pat has always wanted to get back to Alaska and work with waterfowl, as that is his true passion, so the position is a "dream come true" (in his own words).

Ellen Grover became the new Wildlife Education & Outreach Specialist for ADF&G in Anchorage. She previously worked for Denali National Park as a Park Ranger, and then as the Visual Information Specialist and Science Communicator. She is a talented graphic designer/media whiz and enjoys communicating scientific information in clever ways.

The Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC) announces the departure of its founder, **Mike Miller** and his wife, **Kelly Miller**, and the promotion of **Dianna Whitney** to Executive Director. Mike started Big Game Alaska in 1993, as a for-profit. The operation became the non-profit, Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, in 2004. Mike's determination, dedication and passion for wildlife turned the wildlife center into one of the top-rated tourist destinations in the state of Alaska. For the past 25 years, Mike Miller has been the face of the Center while serving as the Executive Director. Mike was a familiar sight on his 4-wheeler, sharing his experience, wisdom and knowledge of the resident animals with millions of visitors. One of Mike's most important contributions to conservation was his decade-long role with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in rearing, and then releasing, 130 wood bison back into western Alaska. Wood bison were once abundant in much of Alaska until they disappeared more than 100 years ago and were thought to be extinct. Kelly served as the Director of Education, creating the Bison in a Box program, animal-themed field trips and her famous porcupine presentations and scavenger hunts. Dianna Whitney joined the AWCC team in September of 2016 and brings over a decade of management and operations experience to her new assignment. Prior to working at the wildlife center, she was the Vice President and General Manager of the ski area at Alyeska Resort. Whitney has an Associate of Arts degree from the University of Alaska and is a Kenai Resource Advisory Commissioner and Visit

Anchorage Board Member. She holds certifications in outdoor emergency care, swift water rescue, Alaska Certified Erosion and Sediment Control Lead, OSHA general construction, and OSHA construction safety and health. An avid outdoor adventure seeker, she competed in the Arctic Winter Games, Senior Nordic Nationals and has climbed Denali twice. As Executive Director, she is responsible for overseeing the administration, programs and strategic plan of the center.

Dr. Jack Mortenson has been a wildlife veterinarian for over 20 years. He has worked for state and federal wildlife and livestock agencies, taught at Oregon State University's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and most recently acted as a pandemic disease advisor for USAID in Ethiopia. He will serve as the primary authority for chemical immobilization and captures of wildlife by ADF&G DWC personnel and support the Division's Wildlife Health and Disease Surveillance Program.

Karl Schneider, retired ADF&G wildlife biologist, passed away recently in Anchorage.

Kyle Smith became the new Regional Wildlife Biologist for ADF&G in Anchorage. This position works throughout Region 2 on various wildlife management projects and assisting with urban wildlife conflicts. Kyle has worked as a technician in various capacities for the Division of Wildlife Conservation since 2010 and is currently in the process of finishing his M.S. in Environmental Science at Alaska Pacific University.

The Alaska Refuge Inventory and Monitoring Branch is pleased to welcome **Kristine Sowl** as our new I&M Biologist. Many may know Kristine from her career here in Alaska where she started as a volunteer for Arctic NWR and got hooked on field biology. From there she worked as a Bio Tech with Alaska Peninsula, and subsequently worked for the Institute of Marine Science, National Park Service, and the Forest Service. However, most of her career has been in Refuge Biology including work at Yukon Flats, where she worked on her Master's degree in Wildlife Biology studying Yellow Warbler timing of breeding and reproductive success. From there she became the lead Biologist at Izembek, and most recently was the Nongame Biologist at Yukon Delta. Her work includes studies on a wide variety of migratory birds including waterfowl, landbirds, and shorebirds. She has worked more than 25 years on refuges in Alaska which makes her an invaluable addition to the I&M team. Please welcome Kristine as she continues to work for refuge biology through the I&M program. She will be stationed in Homer, initiating a gradual change in the location of Refuge I&M staff to the Islands and Oceans Center.

Mark Udevitz retired from USGS end of August after an extremely productive and important career (see pg. 18).

Awards

The manager of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge has been recognized with a national award. **Andy Loranger** was recently named the 2018 Paul Kroegel National Wildlife Refuge System Refuge Manager of the Year.

Loranger's career has spanned three decades, with stops in Texas as a project leader and Washington DC where he served as Division Chief for Natural Resources. His first full time job in the system was at the Anchorage regional office, where he worked as a clerk in the Division of Migratory Birds.

Loranger's work on invasive species management has been used as a model across the Refuge System. Other notable achievements include three different youth hiring programs intended to get more young people involved with conservation work. Habitat management and research has also been a highlight, including a program on the Kenai to develop new land cover classification in the Refuge.

The Paul Kroegel Award is named after the first manager of the first refuge. The award recognizes outstanding accomplishments by a refuge manager in the protection and management of our 562 national wildlife refuges (article by Shaylon Cochran, photo by National Wildlife Refuge Association).

Upcoming Seminars

Alaska Science Center Seminar Series

The USGS Alaska Science Center monthly seminar series runs from October through May. This series highlights the multiple research programs that are taking place across all disciplines at the center. For additional details or to be added to the electronic notification list, please visit this website, and contact Yvette Gillies at ygillies@usgs.gov.

Projects and Publications

Vaginal Implant Study

Measuring body temperature in free-ranging ungulates is challenging. ADF&G evaluated a vaginal implant transmitter (TVIT) modified to collect continuous body temperature of captive and wild female moose (*Alces alces*) in Alaska, USA. We deployed TVITs in 18 moose between 2014 and 2016. We manually removed the TVIT after 51–338 days of deployment and sampled vaginal bacterial flora to assess negative effects of TVIT retention. For comparison, we also sampled vaginal flora from moose that did not have a TVIT. Mean bacterial growth scores were greater for moose with a TVIT than representative vaginal swabs from moose without a TVIT. The TVIT adequately collected body temperature measurements; however, the TVIT design could be improved to fit young, nulliparous moose. TVITs can be easily deployed and removed, but are limited by battery life, can only be deployed in adult female moose, and may increase vaginal bacterial concentrations. Citation: Thompson, D.P., Crouse J. A., McDonough, T. J., Badajos, O. H., Adsem, J., and Barboza, P. S. 2018. Vaginal implant transmitters for continuous body temperature measurement in moose.

Pika Project Update

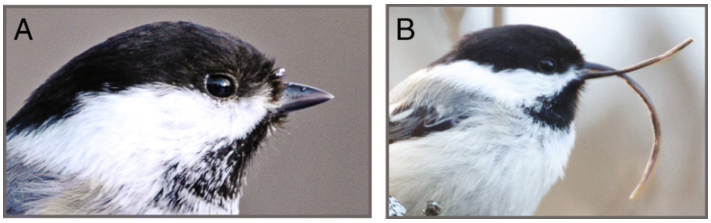
In July, ADF&G and the University of Alaska - Anchorage (UAA) began a study on the population ecology of collared pika in southcentral and interior Alaska. This collaborative study aims to understand patterns of occurrence, survival, and food preferences of this small alpine mammal. UAA surveyed 30 sites in southcentral Alaska, Denali National Park, and along the Steese and Denali Highways at historically occupied locations and at randomized sites. They noted all pika observations, collected feces and "haypile" samples (cached plant material), and quantified vegetation around talus patches. ADF&G captured, sampled, and attached color ear tags to 50 pikas at Hatcher Pass and the McLaren Summit area. They conducted a cafeteria experiment to assess the food selectivity of haying pikas, and deployed temperature loggers in the haypiles of pikas to monitor over-winter temperatures.

Collared pika (*Ochotona collaris*) in Denali National Park

We are gathering information on known pika locations for our 2019 field season. Have you seen any pika during your summer hikes? Send your observations to Amanda Droghini at adroghini@alaska.edu. For other inquiries, contact Katie Christie at katie.christie@alaska.gov or Paul Schuette at paschuette@alaska.edu.

Research Provides Further Evidence for a Link Between Virus and Beak Deformities in Southcentral Alaska

USGS Alaska Science Center research biologists Caroline Van Hemert and Colleen Handel are co-authors on a recently published study that investigated



Avian keratin disorder. Panel **A** BCCH with a normal beak; photo by John Schoen. Panel **B** BCCH exhibiting beak overgrowth characteristc of AKD; photo by Martin Renner.

a relationship between a novel virus (Poecivirus) and avian keratin disorder (AKD), a disease that causes debilitating beak deformities in Black-capped Chickadees and other resident avian species. Using swabs collected from wild-caught chickadees, Poecivirus was detected in 100% of birds with beak deformities characteristic of AKD, but only 9.5% of birds with apparently normal beaks. Other samples provided evidence of active viral replication in beak tissue of affected birds, providing further support for Poecivirus as a probable cause of AKD. Taken together, these data corroborate and extend the evidence for a potential causal association between Poecivirus and AKD in Black-capped Chickadees and provide guidance for collection for future field sampling. The paper is available online here. Contact: Caroline Van Hemert Anchorage, AK, (907) 786-7167. Citation:
Zylberberg, M., C. R. Van Hemert, C. M. Handel, and J. L. DeRisi. 2018. Avian keratin disorder of Alaska black-capped chickadees is associated with Poecivirus infection. Virology Journal,15:100.

Genetic Differences among Greater White-fronted Goose Populations

The Greater white-fronted Goose is a wide-spread, circumpolar species that is important to sport and subsistence harvest throughout its range. Scientists from the USGS Alaska Science Center recently completed a study that summarizes the distribution of genetic diversity across the global range of the species to inform management decisions related to harvest and population status. Results from the study suggest significant differences among sampling locales, but do not provide strong support for the various taxonomic divisions proposed for this species except for two isolated breeding populations in Cook Inlet, Alaska, and Greenland. The paper is available as an "early view" publication from the journal Ecology and Evolution here Contact: Robert Wilson Anchorage, AK, (907) 786-7066. Citation:
Wilson, R. E., C. R. Ely, and S. L. Talbot. 2018. Flyway structure in the circumpolar greater white-fronted goose. Ecology and Evolution In press. doi:10.1002/ece3.4345.

Diverse Partners Involved in Study of Increasing Number of Alaskan Arctic-breeding Geese

Populations of Greater White-fronted Geese, Pacific Black Brant, and Snow Geese have increased on the North Slope over the past decade, but the rate of increase for Snow Geese is very rapid and of concern due to their ability to degrade habitats at high population densities. USGS Alaska Science Center biologist Vijay Patil coordinated a diverse team of seven USGS biologists and two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists in efforts that will allow resource managers to better understand the causes and consequences of continued population increases. The team included the Coordinator of the Arctic Goose Joint Venture, a biologist deploying tracking devices to monitor the movement and distribution of Snow Geese in California's Central Valley, and a recent high school graduate and USGS intern who was participating in the Summer Bridge Program at the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program or ANSEP. Contact: Vijay Patil Anchorage, AK, (907) 786-7178

Whimbrels on the Wing

USGS Alaska Science Center biologists Lee Tibbitts, Dan Ruthrauff, and Bob Gill contributed information and data for the story map "Whimbrels on the Wing" produced by Manomet Bird Observatory. The story map features three individual whimbrels and the people working across the western hemisphere to understand and protect habitats used by whimbrels and other migratory species. Whimbrels are large shorebirds that nest in the Arctic across North America and Eurasia and winter on the coasts of six continents. T6, a whimbrel tracked by USGS, is

featured in the story map highlighting its 9,160-mile migration from the breeding grounds on the Colville River Delta in northern Alaska to an urban beach just outside of Santiago, Chile. In one year, T6 flew nearly 18,640 miles round trip! To start the tour visit this website. Contact: Theresa Lee Tibbitts Anchorage, AK, (907) 786-7038.

Defenders of Wildlife Alaska - New Tool

Bering Strait Response Teaching Tool (BSRTT) is a state of the art interactive data mapping portal that promotes understanding of oil spill response and conservation. The BSRTT was developed by Defenders of Wildlife in collaboration with Axiom Data Science and Alaska Ocean Observing System with funding from the Prince William Sound Oil Spill Recovery Institute, to promote the conservation of marine mammals and subsistence resources of the Bering Strait Region by increasing community engagement to better responding to the threats posed by oil spills. The BSRTT contains 42 map layers that can be layered and customized depending on the scenario being examined. Data includes real time weather and sea ice data, historical ship tracks, infrastructure and development footprints, species monitoring studies, and spill response resources. To explore the BSRTT visit http://bsrtt.defenders.org/ or for more information on its use and training opportunities, please contact Courtney Breest at cbreest@defenders.org.

ADF&G Publications

Herberg, A. M., V. St-Louis, M. Carstensen, J. Fieberg, D. P. Thompson, J. A. Crouse, and J. D. Forester. 2018. Calibration of a rumen bolus to measure continuous internal body temperature in moose. Wildlife Society Bulletin 42:328–337. doi: 10.1002/wsb.894

Minicucci, L., M. Carstensen, J. Crouse, J. M. Arnemo, and A. Evans. 2018. A Technique for Deployment of Rumen Bolus Transmitters in Free-Ranging Moose (*Alces alces*). Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine 49:227–230. doi: 10.1638/2017-0027R.1

Southeast

Susannah Woodruff, Southeast Representative

Personnel Changes

In mid-July, **Roy Churchwell** moved from biologist at Kanuti NWR with USFWS, to Douglas/Juneau Area Biologist.

In May, **Ross Dorendorf** moved from Fairbanks to Ketchikan to become the Assistant Area Biologist with ADF&G.

In April, **Dan Eacker** moved from Montana to Douglas and is the new ADF&G Sitka black-tailed deer researcher.

Rich Lowell, Petersburg Area Biologist, retired on June 30th.

Ryan Scott, moved from Region I Regional Supervisor to Assistant Director July 17th.

ADF&G will also soon be recruiting for the Petersburg Area Biologist. Stay tuned!

Find 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

SAVE THE DATE!

ALASKA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

2019 ANNUAL MEETING

Juneau, Alaska

Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall
February 26th-28th, 2019

Seeking submissions for special sessions on land management for wildlife: effects of, and ways to benefit wildlife in management of young-growth forests, recreation, climate-change adaptation, and other resources.

More details and updates will become available at: twsalaskameeting.com.

Please contact Kim Jochum (Kim.Jochum@colostate.edu) or Nathan Svoboda (nathan.svoboda@alaska.gov) for volunteer information and/or to submit suggestions for special sessions. Thank you, and hope to see you at the meeting!

Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society Research Assistantships!

The Wildlife Society, alongside the U.S. Forest Service, a Premier Partner of TWS, has announced new Native American Research Assistantships for 2019. This is the fifth year for the professional development program, which facilitates opportunities for Native American students to be mentored by USFS Research & Development (R&D) scientists and promotes student advancement and training for careers in natural resource and conservation-related fields. Assistantship participants aid and learn about the USFS' ecological science-based approach to decision-making and balancing multiple-use management of national forests and grasslands.

Assistantships are available for Native American students interested in wildlife and forest resource research and management. Students will learn and work with an interdisciplinary team of researchers with the USFS during 2019. Applicants must be a member of an American Indian or Alaska Native tribe, First Nations, or a Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or have some other indigenous identification, and be currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program from an accredited academic institution. Pursuit of a bachelor's or master's degree in wildlife biology, ecology, forestry or other closely related natural resource discipline is preferred. Students with related associate's degrees from tribal colleges and universities or other community colleges will be also be considered. **The application period for the 2018-2019 Native American Research Assistantship program is now open through November 5th**. Click here for more information on this program. If you have any questions about the application process or the assistantship program please contact Jamila Blake at JBlake@wildlife.org

Fish and Game expands monitoring for harmful sheep, goat bacteria

By Elizabeth Earl
Previously published by *The Peninsula Clarion*

The state is asking hunters to bring in the heads of the animals they've harvested this season so biologists can test for a dangerous bacteria.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game plans to expand its monitoring program for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, commonly nicknamed M. ovi, a bacterium that can cause respiratory illness and death in big game animals such as wild Dall sheep and mountain goats. The bacterium was detected for the first time in Alaska's wild sheep and goats earlier this year and was recently discovered in wild moose and caribou in the state as well.

M. ovi has been connected with mass die-offs among big game populations in the Lower 48. Though there has not yet been a confirmed death caused solely by M. ovi — the bacterium was associated with the death of an emaciated caribou in the Fortymile herd — the state is planning to step up monitoring efforts to better understand which animal populations may have the bacterium. In a recent press release, Fish and Game asked hunters to bring in the heads of any Dall's sheep, mountain goat, or Delta bison harvested, and the heads from certain moose, caribou, and muskoxen populations for sampling.

"Thanks to hunters willing to bring in the head of harvested animals in those wildlife populations we'd like to sample," said Director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation, Bruce Dale, in the release. "We know that hunters understand the importance of disease surveillance and we appreciate their assistance with this effort."

For best success, heads should be fresh and kept cool but not frozen and brought in no later than two weeks after the animal is harvested. Biologists and staff will take nasal swabs from the animal for testing. Fish and Game is requesting hunters in some areas to bring in the heads with intact nasal mucosa.

A herd of Dall's sheep graze on the side of one of the peaks in the Mystery Hills above the Skyline Trail in September 2017 near Cooper Landing, Alaska. Photo by Eliabeth Earl/Peninsula Clarion, file.

In Southcentral Alaska, the department asks that any roadkill moose be brought in with intact nasal mucosa. The request applies to all Dall's sheep and mountain goats, both of which live in the mountain areas of the Kenai Peninsula.

The nasal swabs are part of a larger respiratory disease tracking program, in collaboration with other states and the federal government, which includes monitoring specific Dall's sheep and mountain goat populations and investigating reports of sick or dead animals. Not all respiratory illnesses are caused by M. ovi, and M. ovi doesn't necessarily always result in respiratory illness.

"The presence of M. ovi in an animal does not necessarily mean it is sick or will become sick," the press release states. "The ability of M. ovi to cause pneumonia depends not only upon the strain of the bacteria but more importantly is impacted by multiple stressors on the animal including poor nutritional condition and/or environmental factors such as extreme weather. Both domestic and wild sheep and goats can carry the strains of bacteria they are adapted to while showing no signs of illness."

Reach Elizabeth Earl at eearl@peninsulaclarion.com.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Updates

Testing for respiratory pathogens in Alaska's game animals

Attention Hunters

In response to initial detections of the bacteria M. ovi in Alaska Dall's sheep, mountain goats and, more recently, in Alaska moose and caribou, ADF&G is expanding its efforts to screen and test various species. Please read the following information so you understand what actions are underway and how you can help collect valuable data for Alaska's wildlife.

What is M. ovi?

M. ovi is a shorthand name for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae.* It is a bacterium that can lead to respiratory disease such as pneumonia in ungulates. M. ovi does not affect humans.

Are Alaska's wildlife in danger?

The presence of M. ovi does not mean that an animal is diseased. M. ovi has now been detected in healthy Dall's sheep as well as mountain goats, caribou and moose in Alaska with one caribou mortality associated with the bacterium. More research and monitoring is needed to determine if the M. ovi strains found in Alaska are similar to those in the Lower 48 that have been associated with high mortality events. More information and analyses are needed to characterize the M. ovi strains and determine how widespread M. ovi and other mycoplasma bacteria might be in Alaska.

What is ADF&G doing about it?

The department is collecting samples to test for M. ovi and other mycoplasmas from hooved wildlife in Alaska including: (1) taking samples from hunter harvested animals, (2) investigating dead and/or sick animals, (3) sampling animals captured for radio collar deployment during management or research projects, (4) establishing multi-year intensive monitoring studies of specific sheep and goat populations to assess the impact of M. ovi, and (5) conducting research to improve future surveillance efforts.

How you can help:

Successful hunters can help provide the department with harvest samples from:

Dall's sheep — Mountain goats — Muskoxen— Moose — Caribou from Nelchina and Fortymile herds

Please see the back of this flyer for specific information about target species and locations, and how you can help by bringing in the heads of harvested animals.

For more in-depth information about M. ovi go to ADF&G's website and look under "Hot Topics and Issues." http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hottopics.movi

Hunters: below are the species and areas we are collecting samples from to test for M. ovi as well as actions we are requesting from you. Please bring fresh (never frozen) samples soon after harvest.

DALL'S SHEEP

Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an area office for sampling during sealing.

MOUNTAIN GOATS

Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an area office for sampling when bringing in horns to be measured.

CARIBOU

Fortymile Herd (YC831, RC860, RC867)- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa out of the field for sampling when ADF&G checks stations are operating.

Nelchina Herd (RC561, RC562, CC001, DC485)- ADF&G staff will meet hunters along the Denali Highway to collect samples.

MUSKOXEN

Nelson Island- A decision on sampling hunter harvested animals will be made at a later date. Please check with ADF&G before your hunt.

Seward Peninsula- TX095, TX096, TX102, TX103
Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to the Nome office for sampling.

SITKA BLACK-TAILED DEER

ADF&G staff will be sampling deer during field work. There is no request for hunter harvested heads for sampling at this time.

DELTA BISON

Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to the Delta ADF&G office for sampling.

What is intact nasal mucosa?

The mucosa is a type of tissue that lines the inside of the nasal cavity. Biologists run a long swab up the nostril into the nasal cavity up towards the eye of the animal. If the front of the head and nose of the animal is intact the nasal mucosa should provide a good sample.

MOOSE

Region 1 Southeast

- *Haines (TM059)*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa out of the field for sampling when ADF&G check stations are operating.
- *Gustavus (RM049) and Petersburg (RM038)*- Please contact the Douglas ADF&G office to arrange for a staff person to meet you to collect samples.
- *Berners (DM041) and Taku River (RM046)*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to the Douglas office.

Region 2 Southcentral

- *Roadkill salvage requirement*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an ADF&G office for sampling.
- *Unit 14C* – ADF&G will email a subset of hunters who received drawing permits to request heads for sampling.

Region 3 Interior/Northeast

- *Roadkill salvage request*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an ADF&G office for sampling.
- *Koyukuk check station*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa out of the field for sampling when ADF&G checks stations are operating.
- *Unit 20D (DM790, DM791, and DM795)*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an ADF&G office.

Region 4 Central/Southwest

- *Roadkill salvage requirement for 14A/B and 13A*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an ADF&G office for sampling.
- *Unit 13 CM300 CSH hunt*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to an ADF&G office for sampling.
- *Dillingham hunters*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to the Dillingham ADF&G office for sampling.

Region 5 Northwest/Western

- *Bethel hunters*- Please bring heads with intact nasal mucosa to the Bethel ADF&G office for sampling.

Kenai Moose Corridors

By John Morton

Previously published in the *Peninsula Clarion*

Why do moose cross the road? To get to the other side, of course — as do other wildlife like lynx, caribou, bears, and wolves. The nature of the beast is that dens and calving areas and salmon and hardwood browse and berries don't all occur in the same place. Here on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, it seems reasonable that we like wildlife to move freely around to access these sometimes patchily-distributed resources.

An aerial photo of the longest of five culverts being installed under the Sterling Highway. Photo by Shaun Combs, DOT&PF.

The problem is that it's not that simple. Almost 1.4 million vehicles per year travel down the Milepost 58 to 79 section of the Sterling Highway that bisects the Refuge between Jim's Landing and Sterling. That traffic volume translates to a vehicle every 22 seconds, making this a formidable (albeit moving) barrier to wildlife like wolves and bears that tend to avoid traffic. For animals like moose that are sometimes attracted to the roadside hardwood browse, road salts, or plowed roadways this translates to 225 -250 collisions with vehicles annually on the Kenai Peninsula, 90 percent of which are cows and calves. This mortality approximates the number of moose (mostly bulls) legally harvested on the peninsula every year!

In addition to this waste of meat and hunting opportunity, moose-vehicle collisions average $36,000 in vehicle damage, lost wages and towing, medical and investigation costs. That's $9 million per year! And sometimes people die, for which there is no price tag.

Needless to say, the Refuge is just as interested in public safety as it is in ensuring wildlife movement. The answer clearly isn't to prevent moose from crossing the highway. Thomas McDonough and Sean Farley, two local biologists with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, coauthored a 2015 journal article in which their research showed that moose populations in Anchorage were genetically different on either side of the Glenn Highway because of the restricted gene flow (movement) caused by fencing and heavy traffic. While they didn't find any detectable effect due to the Sterling Highway, it's clear that this is a looming issue as traffic volumes increase on the Kenai Peninsula.

Instead, the Refuge worked closely with an Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) planning team to develop six underpasses for wildlife passage on this 21-mile section of the Sterling Highway. Perhaps the most noticeable underpass is the new bridge over the East Fork of the Moose River. This almost 140-foot bridge will provide a 104-foot wide by 18-foot high opening for moose and the Kenai Lowland caribou herd, eventually replacing the small culvert and very high road bed that currently exists there.

The other five underpasses are large culverts ranging in height from eight feet for bears and lynx, to twin

culverts for moose, each 16 feet high. This latter structure anchors the west end of 1.5 miles of fencing on either side of the highway section that runs between there and the new East Fork bridge. This area is known to have a high moose-vehicle collision rate, in part because moose travel there, but also because of a large bend in the highway near Lily Lake that hides crossing moose until the last second.

We've made every effort to ensure this fence is porous to other wildlife. It's eight feet high to stop moose, but it starts one foot off the ground so smaller wildlife can pass under. In addition, 22 "jump-outs" are being installed every eighth of a mile to allow moose that might accidentally walk around the fence to escape. These are dirt ramps that lead up to large gaps in the fence that allow moose to step through and away from the road corridor, but don't allow moose to return because of a seven-foot vertical drop

Will wildlife use these underpasses? We already know that overpasses are a better design for moose and caribou. Unfortunately, the cost of overpasses were more than this particular project could afford, but we have ensured that the culverts are as high and as short as they can be to minimize the "tunnel" effect. All but one of the structures pass under two lanes, and they have all been placed in areas of frequent wildlife crossings based on GPS collar data from moose and caribou, moose vehicle collision reports, and wildlife observations.

As these structures are new for Alaska, we'll be monitoring their use by wildlife for several years after construction. We fully expect moose and other wildlife to still cross over open pavement, but our interagency goal is to reduce those opportunities for vehicle collisions as much as possible. The Refuge's goal is to ensure that widening of the road to allow for passing lanes and a wider shoulder doesn't restrict wildlife movement.

This project will have other tangible benefits that those who use the Kenai Refuge will appreciate when the construction dust settles next year. A pedestrian underpass will connect the parking lot for the Skyline Trail with its trailhead on the other side of the road. The gravel pit at MP 63.5, an open wound on the landscape for several decades, will finally be remediated. The access to Mystery Creek Road will be realigned to make it safer and to provide public parking. And this is the first DOT&PF project in Alaska to use certified weed-free gravel.

Why moose cross the road is no surprise. But the "how" is perhaps the more interesting question. We should find out over the next few years!

Dr. John Morton is the supervisory biologist at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Find more Refuge Notebook articles (1999-present) here.

A new bridge over the East Fork of the Moose River will provide a more natural wildlife underpass after the existing small culvert and roadbed are removed. Photo by John Morton

New Digital Systems Sharpen Alaska Caribou Counts - Counting the herd

By Kari Rasmussen

Counting caribou in Alaska's largest herds has become more effective, thanks to a pair of newly acquired digital aerial camera systems. The systems replace World War II-era black and white film cameras previously used since the 1970s. Last summer, the new camera system enabled biologists to pinpoint numbers for the Porcupine, Fortymile, Central Arctic, Teshekpuk, and Western Arctic caribou herds.

Caribou in Northwest Alaska bunch up on a snowfield to avoid harassment by biting insects.

"At least three of those herds wouldn't have been photographed (last summer) without the new system," said Wildlife Biologist, Nate Pamperin, of Fairbanks.

During the summer when caribou are harassed by insects, a herd groups together and escapes to the ridgelines, snowfields, and coastlines. This type of grouping behavior allows biologists to monitor caribou by flying over herds with cameras mounted in small aircraft and taking photographs of the groups.

Why are surveys necessary?

Caribou are used by many people in and around Alaska, including local community residents, resident non-local hunters, and non-resident hunters. To ensure there are enough animals in the herd to sustain current harvest by these groups, herd managers need to know the population size. Without this information, they must manage the herd conservatively and cannot increase or decrease hunting opportunity according to herd population dynamics.

Photocensus counts are important caribou management tools that help biologists track and manage herd population trends. Findings are used by advisory and regulatory boards as well as state and federal wildlife managers to help determine bag limits and hunting seasons. Regular herd surveys also allow biologists to detect problems in the herd early on, before there is a serious decline. Disturbance to caribou during these surveys is minimal and the information gained is extremely valuable.

New Technology

Since the 1970s, ADF&G has used the same World War II-era black and white film camera to photocensus Alaska's caribou herds. The old systems, which featured Zeiss RMK-A large-format film cameras, functioned poorly in low light conditions, covered limited ground swaths, and cost precious time by

Individual caribou can be picked out on the snow in the image on the right, which is a small subsection of the larger image on the left, taken by the new digital camera.

requiring pilots to periodically land and reload film. In the fall of 2016, the department upgraded to a new digital system that is linked to GPS and compatible with innovative software. There are four main benefits to the new system:

1. Photos can be taken under a wide range of light conditions. ADF&G can now survey when skies are overcast.
2. Individual photos have a larger footprint, so fewer transects and less time are needed to photograph the herd. This reduces disturbance to caribou.
3. Digital imagery along with GPS information allows for automated alignment of the photos and eliminates the manual layout process that was used with film.
4. Images are in color and high resolution. This makes it easier to pick out individual caribou, so population estimates are more accurate.

The new digital systems feature three medium-format 100-megapixel cameras in gyro-stabilized mounts with GPS and inertial measurement units to record position, pitch, roll, and yaw. The technology allows biologists to conduct photocensus work under low light conditions and capture wider swaths of country.

"Our Western Arctic herd count would not have happened with film last summer because of poor light on the second day," said Pamperin. "In several other situations last year the larger ground swath of the new system allowed us to photograph large groups that were rapidly moving or widely scattered – situations that were problematic for the film systems."

The digital cameras produce superior color images that can be inspected immediately for quality. In addition, new software enables individual images to be stitched together and georeferenced so that each caribou group can be viewed as a single image mosaic. In the past, staff had to manually lay out 9-inch by 9-inch printed photographs, delineate overlap, and determine which parts of each photo were to be counted. It was a tedious process that sometimes took weeks to accomplish.

The new systems were purchased with funds generated by hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts through payment of federal taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and through state hunting license and tag fees. For more information about caribou photocensus work, contact Nate Pamperin at (907) 459-7377 or nathan.pamperin@alaska.gov.

In Memoriam – Samuel James Harbo, Jr. (1929 – 2018)

By Scott Brainerd and Randy Zarnke

Dr. Samuel J. Harbo, Jr., passed away at home in Fairbanks while working in his garden on May 30th. He was the youngest of nine children and grew up during the Great Depression on a farm in a Norwegian-American community in southern Minnesota. Hunting, fishing, and trapping were a way of life in his family. Trapping was an important source of cash income during the Great Depression, and hunting and fishing provided food for the table. After high school, he went to the University of Nebraska on a US Navy scholarship in 1947 and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Soil Conservation in 1951. He served three years (1951-1954) in the U.S. Navy as an officer and participated in the blockade of Wonsan harbor while serving on a destroyer, the USS *O'Brien*.

After Sam got out of the service, he enrolled in the Master's degree program at the University of California, Berkeley, under the supervision of A. Starker Leopold. However, he then transferred to UAF in January of '56. He arrived in Fairbanks on a crisp beautiful January afternoon. The temperature was about 130 degrees colder than when he left San Francisco, but he didn't regret it for one moment.

An avid trapper, Sam conducted his graduate research on mink in Interior and Southeast Alaska under the direction of Dr. John L. Buckley and graduated with a Master's degree in 1958. He concluded from this work that trapping was not detrimental to mink in his study area near Huslia, but that trapping in the Wrangell-Petersburg was effective along the coast and had the potential to greatly reduce mink populations locally.

After he completed his Master's Degree, Sam went to work for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Cold Bay. During that time, he participated in sea otter and caribou transplant projects in the Aleutian Islands. At statehood, he was hired by the new Alaska Department of Fish & Game as a biologist based in Juneau. He became the first game biologist in Nome and opened the first Fish & Game office there. His primary emphasis was on walrus, but he was also trying to document the status and utilization of various moose populations. He said that there were good feelings throughout Alaska at that time, and he felt very welcome in the villages as a state biologist. His most memorable experience was participating in the walrus hunt on King Island. His wife, Gayle, accompanied him in this work. Returning by umiak across 40 miles of open ocean to Nome at the end of the hunt was an experience that stayed with him throughout his life.

After two years of collecting data, Sam realized that he needed more training in statistical analysis. He decided to go back to school and pursue a doctorate in statistics. His interest was still in biology, but he realized he needed those statistical tools. He left ADF&G in 1961 to pursue a Ph.D. in Statistics from North Carolina State University. After completing his doctoral degree, Sam accepted a faculty position as an instructor in the Wildlife Management Department at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in 1964 and retired in 1985. During that time, he served ten years as chair of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and was instrumental in establishing the UAF Statistics Department. Having worked with the feds, the state, and the university, he had a good appreciation of game management and the attitudes residents and non-residents had regarding the wildlife resources of Alaska.

His career spanned the transition from territory to statehood, the rapid growth in the human population

due to the oil boom, the dramatic changes in land ownership associated with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the 'subsistence battle', the impacts of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the 'wolf wars' of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, he was appointed to the newly formed Alaska Board of Game and was elected chair at its first meeting. He served on the Board for the next ten years and was chairman for the first seven. While serving on the Board, he was directly involved in the decision-making process regarding wildlife management during a tumultuous period when Native land claims, subsistence, and wolf control were hot button issues. When Governor Sheffield took office in 1982, he demanded that all Board members resign so he could appoint new ones. Sam Harbo refused, in the interest of the resource by arguing the need for continuity...and prevailed.

Jim Rearden, who served along with Sam on the Board, immortalized Sam's role as Board of Game chairman in his book "The Wolves of Alaska – a Fact-based Saga." In that book, Rearden also recounts the paper Sam gave at the Wolf Summit in 1993 entitled "Environmental Sanity: Think Globally – Act Locally." In that paper, Sam advocated that an intensively managed moose population, through manipulations of predator populations and moose habitat, was an environmentally responsible alternative to intensive agriculture, since the energy input for the former was solar energy alone, rather than environmentally detrimental fossil fuels, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, growth hormones, or soil erosion associated with intensive agriculture. At the same time, he argued that the intensively managed natural system still would provide the added benefit of an intact natural system with healthy populations of moose and their predators in a relatively natural, stable ecosystem that provided a surplus of meat for hunters and food for predators. He pointed out that game meat had the added advantage of being healthy, 'organic' and lean when compared to meat from livestock. He first conceived of this idea many years earlier and shared it with his students at UAF back when the moose population in the Tanana Flats was at a low ebb in the 1970's. Sam deserves credit for his leadership on the Board during this crucial time in the history of game management in Alaska, and recognition regarding his vision of the benefits of intensive wildlife management which has been implemented with success in Game Management Unit 20A and elsewhere. His vision from the 1970's, based on sound science, has become a reality today here in Interior Alaska, with thriving high-density, intensively managed moose and healthy predator populations to the benefit of hunters and non-hunters.

During his tenure at the University, Sam mentored and supervised many undergraduate and graduate students in the wildlife and statistics programs. He served essentially as a consulting biometrician for ADF&G and trained many of the first biometricians to work for the agency. He was an inspiring teacher and mentor who brought 'the real world' into the classroom. He was instrumental in improving survey techniques for many species, including moose and marine mammals. His happiest memories at UAF are associated with his Scientific Sampling course, which had direct and applied application to natural resource management. He also held week-long training courses for agency personnel.

Throughout his professional career, Sam remained an avid hunter. His reflective nature caused him to question his own values and motives. He eventually concluded that he was a dedicated "meat" hunter, which he attributes to his practical upbringing on the farm. He often said that he was a 'prisoner of his upbringing.' His life on the farm meant a lot to him and that is why he always had a big garden and would spend hours working in it each summer. After retirement, Sam and his family enjoyed dividing their time between Fairbanks in the summer and Maui, Hawaii, in the winter.

Sam recounted his life experiences in a recent interview filmed before an audience at the University of Alaska in January of this year. It can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcc7bg8N4Y0. Sam and Gayle recently celebrated 60 years of wedded bliss on May 1st. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his children Lisa Ann, Lora Kay, Keith William, and Sam Jens, and several grandchildren.

Mark Udevitz Retires After Distinguished Career

By Rebecca Taylor and Joel Reynolds

Mark Udevitz retired in August after 30 years as a biometrician with the Alaska Science Center (across at least four agency incarnations). His rigorous development and application of statistical theory to concrete problems improved our ability to assess and manage wildlife populations in Alaska and elsewhere.

Mark Udevitz at the Alaska Science Center, USGS photo.

Some of Mark's early work focused on using change-in-ratio methods to estimate the size of harvested populations. At the time, practical application of these methods was limited by overly restrictive assumptions and lack of a unified statistical theory. Mark developed the theory and new, more flexible estimators with fewer sampling assumptions. These methods are applicable to a wide variety of harvested species and remain state of the art for closed population change-in-ratio estimation.

He is also well known for evaluating and developing wildlife survey methods and analytical approaches for estimating population sizes. His methods for species as diverse as sea otters and Dall's sheep have become standard long-term protocols for multiple federal agencies. Perhaps the best example of Mark's all-encompassing application of statistical thinking to wildlife population estimation is his work assessing the status of the Pacific walrus population. He began with a critical comparison of existing walrus population size survey methods, then developed a new survey method integrating high altitude infrared imagery, low altitude digital photography and radio telemetry, and then demonstrated the need for alternative population assessment methods through a rigorous representation of the many sources of uncertainty affecting walrus population size survey estimates. Eventually, he developed and integrated models of walrus movement, behavior, bioenergetics and demography to directly account for mechanisms affecting population size and growth rates. These integrated models allowed him and his colleagues to assess the status of the walrus population, forecast population consequences of continuing habitat (sea ice) loss, and inform the 2017 Pacific walrus Endangered Species Act decision.

Finally, Mark developed a comprehensive statistical framework and new survival rate estimators using age-structure data for non-stable populations. This is critical for most wildlife populations, as age structures become stable only if recruitment and survival remain constant for a long enough period of time. Mark's survival rate estimators, which combine age-structure and population growth rate data, can be used with as little as 1-2 years of data. His methods are applicable to many species, and have been used to quantify important population level effects, for example the impacts of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill on sea otter survival.

We honor Mark by recounting some of his accomplishments because we will miss his statistical, scientific and biological expertise, as well as his extensive experience and his wisdom. Just as much, we will miss his modesty and his thoughtful nature—both as a scientist and as a colleague. We are fortunate to have worked with him and hope his hiking boots and skis will be much the worse for wear now that he is retired.

Is it time to renew your membership?

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

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
ALASKA CHAPTER

The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society strives to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve biological diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources in Alaska for the benefit of society.

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
510 L Street, Suite 750
Anchorage, AK 99501

May 21, 2018

Greetings Senator Sullivan,

The Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society is writing to express concern over the de-prioritization of science and scientifically sound wildlife conservation and management programs within the Trump Administration's FY 2019 budget request.

The Wildlife Society, founded in 1937, is a non-profit professional society representing over 10,000 wildlife biologists and managers dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management and conservation.

Many conservation programs within the Departments of Interior and Agriculture assist state, federal, private, and non-profit biologists and managers in maintaining wildlife populations as a public trust resource for the benefit of all Alaskans as well as other Americans. Relative to the FY2019 budget request, of notable importance to our members are the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Cooperative Research Units (CRU) Program, the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG) Program, the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services - Wildlife Damage Management Program.

Without sufficient funding for these programs, applied science and monitoring programs will be lost, and practical, proactive conservation and management measures carried out by state, federal, tribal, and local partners will be impossible to implement. This will leave federal agencies with an irreversible knowledge gap and has the potential to cause costlier, reactive conservation measures, such as Endangered Species Act listings. Such listings can be a significant burden to private sector economic activity and lead to burdensome regulations at both state and federal levels.

USGS Cooperative Research Units (CRU) Program

The CRU, within the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area, is a true partnership among federal, state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academic institutions to provide applied science tailored to the needs of on-the-ground wildlife managers and helps develop the next generation of wildlife biologists and managers. These partnerships **leverage more than three dollars in external funds for every federal dollar invested.** The CRU at the University of Alaska is a collective endeavor and product of its cooperators, which include the university and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). An example of a valuable project at the Alaska CRU is one to develop an ecosystem model for Alaska and Northwest Canada. This model represents how animal habitat structure and function is influenced by changes in climate, disturbance regimes (such as wildfire and permafrost degradation), permafrost dynamics, and hydrology. These assessments are important to numerous stakeholders that rely on fish and wildlife in Alaska for subsistence and recreation because they inform land managers of options for adaptation strategies when managing natural resources in a changing climate.

Federal partners also greatly benefit from adequate funding of the CRUs. These agencies partner with the CRUs not only because they are highly responsive to their scientific needs and are composed of highly reputable, skilled researchers, but also because they are highly cost-effective. **Elimination of CRUs, as the Trump Administration budget requests, would have devastating impacts to the scientific capacity and science-based wildlife management decisions of the State of Alaska and the federal agencies within.**

USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System

The Administration's FY 2019 budget request for the National Wildlife Refuge System outlines an **$11 million reduction and realignment of the accounts currently funded.** Today, the NWRS hosts 16 refuge units in Alaska, comprising over 76 million acres of land and water. While these units are essential to the conservation of native species for the enjoyment of Alaskans and all Americans, they are especially valuable for surrounding communities, generating both economic activity and critical subsistence resources.

A few examples: (1) The NWRS manages big game guiding through competitive award of exclusive guide-use areas. This system has been positively recognized by big game guides and the Alaska Professional Hunters Association because it results in a stable business environment, high quality experiences for hunters, reduces hunter conflicts, and ensures sustainable use of a renewable resource; (2) All refuges work closely with the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game to evaluate populations and ensure hunting harvest levels remain sustainable. The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society is concerned that reductions in Refuge funding will curtail opportunities for refuges to continue implementing a quality big game guide use permit program and hinder their ability to cooperate with ADF&G in gathering annual population survey data to ensure game population sustainability.

The Alaska Congressional Delegation has publicly stated the Cold Bay to King Cove access road through Izembek NWR, and the petroleum exploration and drilling in the Arctic NWR can be completed with minimum harm to the environment, including Alaska's world-class big game and fishery resources. For this to occur the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society believes the Refuge System in Alaska must be provided sufficient financial resources to ensure those priority projects can be undertaken in a careful and environmentally sensitive manner. The proposed cuts will make it nearly impossible for the agency to conduct effective permitting oversight, monitoring, and impact analysis on these projects.
Incremental reductions in funding levels in recent fiscal years, have resulted in many positions left vacant or even eliminated. This has reduced the ability of Refuges to provide for basic visitor services and work with collaborators like ADF&G to ensure sustainable wildlife and fish harvests on Alaska refuges.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, within the USFWS budget, is the nation's only program that directly supports developing and implementing State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), which are fundamental to preventing the listing of more species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This program empowers Alaska and its partners to proactively and cost-effectively conserve fish and wildlife resources. This funding is critical for proactively conserving species deemed at-risk of decline or in need of additional monitoring efforts to determine their status, distribution, and trends in populations; critical information to avoid reactive ESA listings. **The FY 2019 budget request proposes a 50% reduction in this program**, unraveling years of work to conserve species before they become threatened or endangered.

Current funding levels, despite being well below the level required to implement the critical conservation actions identified in SWAPs, have assisted in ESA delistings, downlistings, and unwarranted decisions for many previously at-risk species. These efforts not only included habitat conservation and management, but also monitoring that provided the data necessary for population management. A recent, high profile success for the State Wildlife Grant program in Alaska has been the reintroduction of wood bison near the Innoko River in southwest Alaska. This subspecies of bison was once common in Alaska's boreal forests but was extirpated in the 1800s. Other examples of recent successes include delisting the Eastern Distinct Population Segment of the Steller sea lion, avoiding listing of the Kittlitz's murrelet; and avoiding listing of yellow-billed loons.

Examples of Tribal Grant projects include: the Native Village of Utquiagvik (formerly Barrow) was able to monitor walrus, polar bears and eiders near their community; the Native Village of Eyak helped to increase the overall population and genetic diversity of moose around Cordova; and, the Native Village of Old Harbor developed and implemented a plan to improve safety and reduce conflict with brown bears around their community.

Alaska's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)

The President's FY19 budget eliminates all funding for the five Landscape Conservation Cooperatives in Alaska, and the USFWS has indicated they will no longer provide staff or funding support to the LCCs. The Alaska Chapter has found that collaborations initiated by the Alaska LCCs have brought together federal, state, tribal, and local governments, along with industry, and other stakeholders to engage on shared wildlife and habitat issues. These cooperatives have augmented and leveraged the science capability of all participating agencies to better understand and respond to the environmental climate change effects that are rapidly becoming significant to Alaska. Further, these collaboratives have made significant progress bringing together divergent stakeholder groups to iron out strategies so that business ventures may be less impactful to long term renewable resource sustainability, while helping to meet industry goals. One noteworthy example is work completed by the Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands LCC (ABSI) and shipping companies to alter maritime traffic routes, which has reduced spill contamination risk, and therefore insurance costs. Another example is proactive resource planning work done by the Northwest Boreal LCC on transboundary watersheds with Canada. The Western Alaska LCC and ABSI LCC, together with the Aleutian & Pribilof Islands Association, sponsored and led coastal resilience and adaptation workshops along Alaska's west coast. In all three examples, when stakeholders come to the table early, allocation and business/conservation conflicts, or climate change adaptation planning can often be worked out, with less overall cost and delay. Ensuring these partnerships continue also provides established and effective opportunities for the Governor's Climate Change Task Force to develop collaborative solutions for climate adaptation.

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services - Wildlife Damage Management Program

Wildlife Services' Wildlife Damage Management program would see a **45% reduction in funding under the FY2019 budget proposal.** Aviation is essential to all Alaskan communities and depends on a few hub airports in larger cities. The Wildlife Damage Management program within USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services provides expertise and management assistance to operators of these airports to limit bird strikes and other wildlife conflicts impacting aircraft, thereby significantly contributing to human safety and reduced expense of aircraft maintenance.

The Need for Conservation Funding

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, the primary basis of our country's success in wildlife management and conservation, stresses science as the appropriate mechanism to guide wildlife policy. Historically, this has been understood by multiple administrations beginning with President Theodore Roosevelt who initially harnessed this idea. Today, the generation and application of science is still understood to be the root of all effective natural resource policies, regulations, and management. Without an investment in these programs, the policies by which we govern our natural resources will suffer due to a lack of current and unbiased information. This is not only bad policy, but as noted above it has the potential to be financially cost-intensive. The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society urges Congress to carefully consider the consequences of any proposed reductions in funding to programs supporting science-based wildlife conservation and management including the CRUs, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, the NWRS, the LCCs, and the USDA Wildlife Services-Wildlife Damage Management Program. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Nathan Svoboda
President, Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society

CAN Committee Members Jerry Hupp, Mike Spindler, John Trent, and Dave Yokel contributed a great deal to the development of this letter on behalf of the Chapter.

DAN SULLIVAN
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United States Senate

COMMITTEES

ARMED SERVICES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

August 2, 2018

Mr. Nathan Svoboda
President
Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society
389 Neva Way
Kodiak, AK 99615-7056

Dear Mr. Svoboda,

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Trump Administration's funding requests for fiscal year 2019 (FY19), specifically with respect to the contribution of our Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (CRU) program towards the science-based management of Alaska's public lands and resources. I appreciate your thoughts on this issue and welcome the opportunity to respond.

Every year, the President submits a budget request to Congress, which then considers and debates the contents of this proposal before crafting what is known as a budget resolution. This legislation sets forth the funding priorities and budgetary levels that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees then use to craft the 12 annual appropriations bills that fund the various federal agencies and their programs, including the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and its CRU program.

As you know, on February 12, 2018, President Donald Trump announced his FY19 budget. The proposal would increase spending on defense, infrastructure, and a few other items, but would substantially reduce spending overall. It is important to remember that the President's budget is just a proposal and Congress will ultimately decide on the level of funding for these agencies. For example, in H.R.1625, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, Congress appropriated $1.1 billion for the USGS, representing a 6 percent increase over FY17 levels and an increase of about $178 million over the Administration's funding request.

While discussions regarding the FY19 budget are ongoing, both the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations are actively considering or have approved many FY19 appropriations bills. While some funding amounts are less than FY18 levels, each Departments' overall levels have so far remained the same.

Training capacity within respected and established programs – such as the USGS CRU program – is critical to helping our public resource agencies in Alaska foster and maintain expertise regarding our unique management conditions and frameworks. As discussions over funding for FY19 continue, I will keep your comments and concerns in mind, and hope to share them with my colleagues in the Senate.

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Thank you again for contacting me on this issue. If you have any more questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my staff. My office can be reached at 202-224-3004, or online at www.sullivan.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Video Remake Aims to Educate, Keep Moose Hunters Legal

By ADF&G

A remake of the popular video "Is This Moose Legal?" is now available for hunters preparing for the coming season. Originally produced by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in the 1980s to familiarize moose hunters with newly imposed antler restrictions, this educational tool is now more valuable than ever, especially for those who plan to hunt moose in Kenai Peninsula Game Management Units 7 and 15 where viewing the video is part of a mandatory Moose Hunter Orientation package.

The new 25-minute-long version of "Is This Moose Legal?" is updated to address regulations that have evolved over the years and is designed to familiarize hunters with moose antler terminology, selective harvest strategies, and help hunters learn how to identify legal moose in antler-restricted hunt areas.

"This is a wonderful educational video for new and experienced moose hunters alike," said Bruce Dale, director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation. "I think hunters across the state will enjoy watching the new version and will gain valuable information for their next moose hunt"

Moose management in many parts of Alaska includes restrictions on the spread or configuration of a bull's antlers. Knowing definitions for these terms and how to identify these antler distinctions in the field is a critical part of legally harvesting a moose in Alaska.

The updated "Is This Moose Legal?" video can be streamed for free on the department's website at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=moosehunting.legal. DVDs will also be available beginning in August for $5 at your local Fish and Game office or online at the ADF&G Store. For more information, contact Education Specialist Sierra Doherty in Palmer at (907) 861-2104 or sierra.doherty@alaska.gov.

More ticks are being reported in Alaska. Researchers want to know how dangerous they are

By Tegan Hanlon - previously published in the *Anchorage Daily News*

A new research project will test ticks found in Alaska to see if the tiny, blood-sucking arachnids carry the pathogens that cause Lyme disease, tularemia or other illnesses. Wildlife biologists and the state veterinarian have for years asked the public to send in ticks to help identify what species live in Alaska, but this is the first time researchers will go out looking for ticks in parks and examine whether those ticks carry diseases.

The team, which includes biologists, veterinarians and researchers from the University of Alaska, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Office of the State Veterinarian, said it needs to know what tick-borne diseases exist in the state now so it can measure future changes.

"As the climate changes and ticks are moving north, we need a baseline," said Kimberlee Beckmen, a wildlife veterinarian with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks. "It's important to have the baseline so we can monitor things before they become a problem," said Micah Hahn, an assistant professor of environmental health at the University of Alaska Anchorage and the lead on the new research project. Here's some of what's known now about ticks in Alaska:

First of all, Alaska has ticks, said state veterinarian Bob Gerlach. "There's still the urban myth that we don't have fleas up here, we don't have ticks up here, but no, actually we do," said Sean McPeck, a veterinarian in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and president of The Alaska State Veterinary Medical Association.

Ticks that infest red squirrels, snowshoe hares and some birds have long been found in parts of Alaska, according to an article published in the Anchorage Daily News in 2016.

Then, during a study of ticks collected in Alaska between 2010 and 2016, a team of biologists and veterinarians, including Gerlach and Beckmen, identified five non-native species in Alaska, including the Lone Star tick and the American dog tick. Some of the ticks hitchhiked to Alaska on animals and humans who had recently traveled out of state. But others had not.

This tick was found on a dog in Anchorage this year. Photo by Bill Roth, ADN.

Since the study, at least two additional non-native tick species have been found in Alaska, Gerlach said. Now that researchers know non-native ticks are here, he said, the next step is determining the health risks they pose to people, pets and wildlife. "Right now we don't know if we've got a problem up here," he said.

Non-native ticks arrive in Alaska regularly on animals and people who have traveled from the Lower 48, Beckmen said. One of those non-native species, the American dog tick, has become established in Alaska, she said. "It's already been introduced into the wild, and able to reproduce in the wild and is living here happily," she said.

The American dog tick can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a bacterial disease that can be deadly if not treated early and with the right medicine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There have been no reports of people contracting Rocky Mountain spotted fever in Alaska, said Louisa Castrodale, an epidemiologist with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The same goes for Lyme disease, she said. While the state health department reported that 10 Alaskans were diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2017, they had contracted the disease out of state, Castrodale said.

Tick Research - Continued

Last year, the state recorded three cases of tularemia, a bacterial infection that humans can pick up in several ways, including from a tick bite or through direct contact with an infected animal. Symptoms can vary depending on how the bacteria entered the body, but the infection always comes with a fever, according to the CDC. Most infections can be treated with antibiotics, though without treatment tularemia can lead to hospitalization and even death.

People most often get tularemia in Alaska by touching infected hares, including when they remove dead animals from their pet's mouth, Castrodale said. This summer, Beckmen said, she identified multiple hares and two dogs with tularemia in the Fairbanks area. Last year, two pet cats died from the infection in Fairbanks, according to an article in Alaska Fish and Wildlife News, Fish and Game's online magazine.

In October 2016, a dog got Lyme disease from a tick bite on the Kenai, Beckmen said. People have found ticks across Alaska, most often in Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, North Pole, Bethel, and Valdez, according to the Alaska Fish and Wildlife News article.

It's unknown how many ticks live in Alaska. There hasn't been a proactive surveillance program before, Beckmen said. However, both Beckmen and Gerlach said they have gotten more calls in recent years from Alaskans about ticks, as well as more ticks sent to their offices. Gerlach received 50 ticks last year that were plucked from pets and humans in Alaska, compared to 17 in 2016 and 15 the year before. On Wednesday morning, he said, he sent 10 ticks in for testing. By the afternoon, he already had two more ticks delivered to his office. "I can't keep up with the processing of them," he said. Just over the last week or so, Beckmen said, three people contacted her with tick reports.

"It's not statistically proven, but in my experience, I shouldn't be getting three tick reports in one week," Beckmen said. Beckmen and Gerlach said they don't know for sure whether the increase in reports of ticks is because more people know about ticks, and know the state wants their ticks, or whether there are actually more ticks in Alaska.

Gerlach said his office is concerned about reports that dogs have gone into the woods in Alaska and come back with ticks. "We've had dogs that have never left the state that have just gone hiking through the woods with their owners and come back with ticks on them," Gerlach said. "So that's our big concern."

In May, UAA acquired a $125,000, one-year grant to study ticks in Alaska. The research will be done in collaboration with Fish and Game and the Office of the State Veterinarian, Hahn said.

Next summer, the team will search for ticks at parks in Anchorage and on the Kenai Peninsula, she said. Hahn said a Fairbanks professor will examine the ticks collected by researchers, as well as those sent in by veterinarians, biologists, and the public. She will look at the ticks' DNA to determine what diseases they might carry. Meanwhile, an Anchorage professor will work on establishing a habitat model for ticks in Alaska to answer the question: If ticks come to the state, where could they establish?

"Because there's so little information, it's just like: Let's just see what's out there and see if we're finding anything at all," Hahn said. She hopes to continue the research after the one-year grant expires.

The research team will also launch a website in the spring with information about what Alaskans should do if they find a tick. In the meantime, she said, people can submit ticks found in Alaska using a more general form on Fish and Game's web page for Parasites and Diseases, noting where and on what, the tick was found.

People can send ticks found on pets or humans to the Office of the State Veterinarian in Anchorage or, if found on wildlife, to Fish and Game. Gerlach said he wants Alaska pet and livestock owners to be aware that there are ticks in the state and to check their animals. He recommends Alaskans work with their local veterinarian to determine whether they should use tick preventative treatments on their pets.

Earthworms and Alaska: Yep, we've got them here, too

By Ned Rozell

Previously published in the *Fairbanks NewsMiner*

Under its own power, an earthworm gains about 30 feet of new territory each year. But that does not help explain how worms got to Alaska. "It's almost geologically slow," Matt Bowser said of the earthworm's locomotion. Bowser, Alaska's closest thing to an expert on earthworms, is an entomologist with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. He has taken an interest in worms that exist in surprising numbers in southern parts of the state, probably carried here by people.

Earthworms take to the ground in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge during a study by Deanna Saltmarsh. Photo by Deanna Saltmarsh.

The earthworm is an overlooked creature here. It is the subject of just two studies, one on the Kenai Peninsula refuge at which Bowser works. He and others have found worms tunnel through Alaska's soils at least as far north as Trapper Creek and also exist in the Pribilof and Shumagin islands. As far as he knows, most of the 17 species of worms in Alaska seem to be exotic types that recently have settled the last frontier with the help of humans.

"They are continually being bought in bait shops, in potted plants, and in transplants of soil," Bowser said. "A lot can be transported by vehicles - four wheelers and cars can pick up cocoons in the mud of their tire treads." Some worms like the red wigglers used to compost can't survive outside the bin in Alaska. Others can. On the Kenai refuge, researchers have found large worms known as nightcrawlers making a go of it.

"The only place we find them are at boat launches," Bowser said. "After fishing, people toss them over their shoulder and the worms do quite well."

Worms probably were eliminated from most of Alaska during the last glacial maximum 20,000 years ago when most of the state was under glacial ice. But some worms might have survived Interior Alaska, which was not glaciated. Local farmers and gardeners have reported earthworms to Derek Sikes, University of Alaska Museum curator of insects, but he said the museum has no specimens from central Alaska.

A native earthworm exists in the Yukon, Bowser said, and cold-hardy earthworms live in Siberia all the way north of the Arctic Ocean.

"It would not be a surprise to find relic Beringian worms in the Interior," Bowser said. "We just haven't found them yet."

Are worms a benefit? A curse? Neither? As engineers of the soil, burrowing earthworms improve the earth for many plants. But in other areas of the U. S., scientists have documented earthworms removing the duff layer of the soil upon which some plants depend. Bowser said farmers in Alaska are curious about worms but have not yet reported problems.

One animal seems to be quite happy earthworms are in Alaska. In a 2014 study, Dan Rinella of UAA found coho salmon wintering near the Anchor River gorged on exotic earthworms in springtime. Worms were their primary food source.

"When you have an introduced species, you'll have winners and losers," Bowser said. "It appears salmon fry can benefit."

Since the late 1970s, the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Geophysical Institute has provided this column in cooperation with the UAF research community. Ned Rozell is a science writer for the Geophysical Institute.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation's Education staff needs your help! We want to continue to improve our current moose education materials with fresh moose video footage (and still images). Here's what we're looking for:

VIDEO:

- Wildlife Trooper talking on the phone or out in the field with a hunter (preferably in the field, checking a moose with hunter).
- Hunters in the field - doing just about anything, scanning landscape, calling moose, taking the shot, field dressing the animal, packing meat.
- Spike antler moose in Alaska.

STILLS or VIDEO:

- Small bulls
- Unusual antlers from Southeast Alaska
- Mid-bay tine
- Antlers with tines emerging from the first branch
- Bulls with antler spread close to 50 inches
- Large bulls with less than 50 inch-spread

DON'T FORGET !

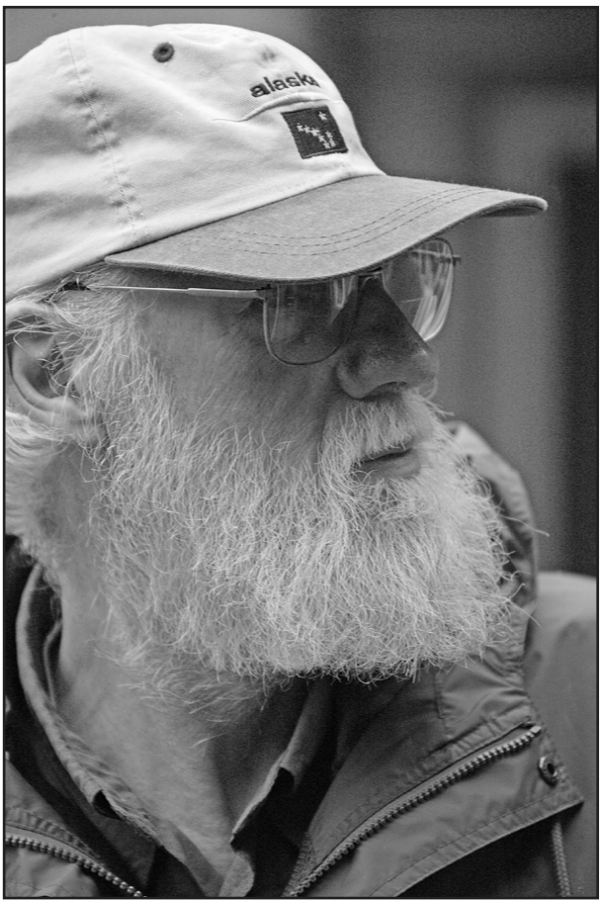
If you capture video/ images of a hunter, we need their permission! Make sure to have them sign a model release form (just ask a member of the education team for one!). If that hunter is a minor, their parent/ guardian needs to sign for them.

• For more info, contact Abby Lowell — abby.lowell@alaska.gov | 907-465-4292

In Memoriam – Herb Melchior

By Randy Zarnke
written for the *Alaska Trapper* magazine

Herb Melchior worked for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks for 21 years. Among other positions, Herb served as the statewide furbearer coordinator for several years. In this capacity, he served the Alaska Trapper's Association (ATA) by writing a monthly column for our magazine for several years. In addition, he played a major role in completion of our Trappers Manual. Herb also served on the ATA Board of Directors from 1983 – 1986, including one year as Secretary.



Herb was born and raised in Ridgewood, New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree in biology from Middlebury College in Vermont and a master's degree in plant ecology from the University of New Hampshire. Herb met his future wife Hilda while working as a camp counselor in Maine.

Herb first came to Alaska in the late 1950s to work on a botany project affiliated with Project Chariot, which was a proposal to detonate an atomic bomb in northwest Alaska. He also worked as a naturalist at (then named) Mount McKinley National Park.

Herb then pursued a doctoral degree in animal ecology and behavior from the University of Wisconsin. In 1967, he took a faculty position at San Diego State University. Herb returned to Alaska in 1972, as a research ecologist with the Tundra Biome Center in Barrow (Utqiagvik), Alaska. He subsequently worked in several positions at UAF, until 1977 when he took a job with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, where he remained until retiring in 1998.

ATA member Dick Bishop was the Regional Supervisor at ADF&G during most of Herb's tenure, "Herb was a man of boundless curiosity about Alaska's wildlife and Alaska's people. He promoted public appreciation of Alaska's trapping legacy and its compatibility with sound scientific wildlife management."

Past ATA President Pete Buist shares his recollections, "Herb was a GREAT furbearer biologist! His belief in science and the scientific method, coupled with his dedication to wildlife and wildlife users made him the perfect person for that job. Herb was very good at balancing the job with his personal interests. He realized that biologists, with their college degrees and their "book learning" were but one piece of the Big Picture. He knew that trappers, with their amateur, but more intimate knowledge of their traplines, knew details that the scientists were not aware of. Herb always strived to blend those sources of information and was able to determine what was best for the resources and the resource users. He served both ADFG and ATA very well in this regard."

In his free time, Herb enjoyed skiing, hiking, hunting, canoeing, dog mushing, gill net fishing, and photography. Herb passed away on June 5, at age 88. He leaves his wife Hilda and sons Thor and Soren.

What Wildlifers are reading in TWS Journals - The Top 20 Most Downloaded Papers in 2017

By Nancy Sasavage - TWS Director of Publications and Communications

TWS' three premier wildlife journals — The Journal of Wildlife Management, Wildlife Monographs, and the Wildlife Society Bulletin — support our mission to achieve a positive impact on the sustainability of wildlife populations through the dissemination of science-based wildlife conservation and management.

With online access now included as a membership benefit, TWS members are increasingly engaging with the latest research findings in wildlife science. In case you missed any of these, here's a list of the most downloaded papers in 2017.

1. Free-roaming cat interactions with wildlife admitted to a wildlife hospital
2. Polar bear attacks on humans: Implications of a changing climate
3. Determining kill rates of ungulate calves by brown bears using neck-mounted cameras
4. Effects of control on the dynamics of an adjacent protected wolf population in Interior Alaska
5. Predicting eagle fatalities at wind facilities
6. How publishing in open access journals threatens science and what we can do about it
7. Clarifying historical range to aid recovery of the Mexican wolf
8. Bat mortality due to wind turbines in Canada
9. Online hunting forums identify achievement as prominent among multiple satisfactions
10. Inefficiency of evolutionarily relevant selection in ungulate trophy hunting
11. Investigating impacts of oil and gas development on greater sage-grouse
12. The role of domestic cats in the admission of injured wildlife at rehabilitation and rescue centers
13. Consumption of intentional food subsidies by a hunted carnivore
14. How open access is crucial to the future of science
15. Predators, predator removal, and sage-grouse: A review
16. Annual elk calf survival in a multiple carnivore system
17. Demography of an increasing caribou herd with restricted wolf control
18. Manipulations of black bear and coyote affect caribou calf survival
19. Winter diet and hunting success of Canada lynx in Colorado
20. Overpasses and underpasses: Effectiveness of crossing structures for migratory ungulates

Log into Your Membership to read these papers by going to the "Publications" tab. We want to thank these authors for choosing to publish with TWS. Next time you are ready to submit a paper, we hope you will choose a TWS journal as your publication outlet!

Here are just a few reasons why you should:

- Universal author guidelines
- Rapid, rigorous peer review
- Discounted page charges for members
- Open access option available

COWCH Update

by Scott Brainerd

The Celebrating Our Wildlife Conservation History (COWCH) program aims to document the history of wildlife management and biology through interviews with influential retired professionals. Here in Alaska, the fact that older tier professionals have witnessed profound changes associated with the transition from territory to state, during the pioneering days of science-based management, emphasizes the historic value of these interviews. We are fortunate that we have been able to interview some of these personalities and preserve these conversations in high quality digital format. There are challenges associated with this. There are a number of older professionals, some who are in failing health, that are available to be interviewed. However, it has been difficult to find Chapter members that are willing to take the time and effort to accomplish this, particularly outside of Fairbanks, where I and a few others have been engaged.

To compound things, the parent society of TWS has decided to de-emphasize COWCH at the national level. I was surprised to see that all of the COWCH interviews the Alaska Chapter has conducted through the years were taken down by TWS Headquarters with no prior notification. TWS Headquarters stated they no longer have the resources to invest in this program, which is a shame. They have used Vimeo, which is a product that requires a paid subscription. Oddly, an argument made for discontinuing COWCH has been that there isn't much interest as evidenced by the few 'hits' on these Vimeo videos. At one point they stated they were only interest in 'highlight' reels of maximum ten minutes, because people don't have the patience to sit through a 1- or 2-hour video. Now they are no longer accepting videos from chapters or sections, so the program has been effectively discontinued nationally. TWS has shipped all of the hard copies of videos they have to a member in Minnesota, who is supposed to work on a longer-term archival solution. It remains to be seen if these will ever be made available to the public in any form going forward.

Fortunately, I have been able to locate the older videos the Alaska Chapter has done, some of which were thought to have been lost. We now have the complete inventory of these, going back nearly fifteen years. These include:

Cal Lensink	Sig Olson	Jim King
John Morrison	Jim Rearden	Bob Weeden
Will Troyer	John Burns	Chuck Gray

Some are in old VHS or DV format. I am working with the University of Alaska Oral History archive to preserve these. They already have the more recent videos of interviews and other related material that we have collected and preserved. Other material, including special events such as the Bob Stephenson memorial evening, Mike Spindler's retirement talk, and older audio recordings are also being archived. Check out our Alaska Chapter YouTube channel (see facing page) to see what we have posted so far. We have also posted an interesting lecture on Karelian bear dogs as a tool for bear conservation by the founder of the Wind River Institute, Carrie Hunt, and her assistant, Nils Pedersen, to the Student Chapter of TWS at UAF last fall. Check it out!

We are still looking for volunteers to help interview retired professionals, particularly in places outside the Fairbanks area. We have a list of willing participants but need someone to take the time and interest to sit down with them. UAF has been interested in involving students in a classroom setting for these interviews, and Dr. Todd Brinkman and I are pursuing this option now. Recent interviews with Sam Harbo (see memorial piece in this issue), David James, Kathy Frost and Lloyd Lowry were all done at UAF, with student and faculty audiences or involvement. All that is needed is a high-quality video recorder (preferably 4K) and minimal operating expertise. Sound recording is an essential part of doing a good interview, and I have found that it can be a challenge. The best solution is to use a backup camera and/or digital sound recorder. These can be checked out from the AV departments of universities or public libraries, or in some cases through agencies. Please contact me directly at scott.brainerd@alaska.gov or 907-459-7261 if you are interested in volunteering. I can promise you that it will be an interesting and rewarding learning experience, as well as an enduring contribution in documenting the history of our profession in the state!

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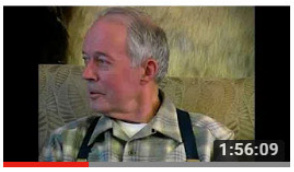

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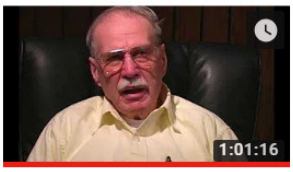

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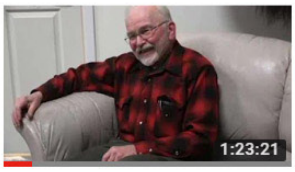

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Are you working on an interesting project you'd like to share with other Alaska TWS members? Do you have news to share with colleagues? Please make note of upcoming events, projects, personnel changes, issues, or anything else of interest to other Alaska TWS members, and pass them on to your regional representative for inclusion in our next quarterly newsletter. If you know of something that would make an interesting newsletter article and can't write it up yourself, please contact newsletter editor Kaiti Ott at kaithryn_ott@fws.gov or 907-456-0277.

Help us keep this newsletter interesting and informative!