

The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society

November 2006

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Message from the President:

Our hosting of the 13th Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society last month in Anchorage will be remembered as a watershed event for the Chapter. We haven't heard the official tally, but indications are that over 1,600 registrants attended the 5-day event! We will pass along pertinent statistics, including finances, in the next newsletter. Especially noteworthy was the unprecedented turnout of volunteer effort over the last year to serve on the many arrangements subcommittees or the program committee. I thank everyone for their hard work in making this conference a success. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Chapter members in alphabetical order:

Our hosting of the 13th Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society last month in Anchorage will be remembered as a watershed event for the Chapter. . . . I would like to thank everyone for their hard work in making this conference a success.

Mark Bertram
Ellen Campbell
Aaron Christ
Gino Del Frate
Wayne Eberhardt
Jimmy Fox
Howard Golden

Grant Hilderbrand
Kris Hundertmark
Jerry Hupp
Judy Jacobs
Cindy Jacobson
Becky Kelleyhouse
Elizabeth Manning

Joe Meehan
Deb Rudis
Tim Peltier
Mike Rehberg
Todd Rinaldi
Lisa Saperstein
Glenn Stout

Liz Solomon
Nancy Tankersley
David Tessler
Kim Titus
Dave Yokel

We also had 19 students from UAF (most of them Student Chapter members) commit to two volunteer shifts:

Jennifer Addison
Melanie Bakker
Daniel DeBord
Kimberly Dullen
Jonathan Linus Fiely

Paige Gingrich
Darce Holcomb
Caroline Jezierski
Kandace Krejci
KristiAnne Mathews

Jason Mercer
Micah Miller
Cortney Pylant
Jennifer Schmidt
Sumy Sekine

Brian Teachworth
Jan Tomsen
Simon Wigren

In other news, the Chapter sent a letter on 13 June to Senators Murkowski and Stevens in support of providing \$75 million for State Wildlife Grants in federal Fiscal Year 2007. The U.S. Senate Bill proposed funding at \$50 million (a decrease from \$65 million funded in FY06), whereas the President's budget recommended \$75 million, and a coalition of 226 members of Congress advocated \$85 million. On 27 June the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee voted to provide level funding at \$67.5 million. In September, as the budget process continued, the Chapter signed on as supporting the Teaming With Wildlife coalition's request for \$67.5 million. The final figure will be decided in a House/Senate conference, likely to take place after the November elections.

Following the November elections, the Chapter will send our introductory letter to new and returning members of the Executive and Legislative branches of state government. The letter will include our colorful rack card and an invitation to an "open house" that the Chapter will sponsor in Juneau in the next session. The open house will be modeled after a similar event that has been hosted by the Society of American Foresters for the last several years to meet informally with interested legislators. My plan is to have one or two past presidents or long-term active members of the Chapter join me in communicating the goals of our organization one-on-one over light refreshments. We hope to make legislators more aware of our potential role as an information resource when they evaluate proposed legislation or policies that relate to wildlife conservation.

The Minerals Management Service is seeking public comment on their 2007-12 leasing program. This program includes Bristol Bay, despite current protections provided by the presidential moratorium. This is the last opportunity for public comment before the plan is finalized, and **comments are due 22 November**. For information, visit www.mms.gov/5-year or call the Anchorage office for the Outer Continental Shelf program at 1-800-764-2627. You can find another perspective of leasing in the North Aleutian Basin on the website of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council (www.akmarine.org). I encourage members wishing to comment on the proposed leasing program to visit both information sources to examine the issues in detail.

2006-2008 Alaska Chapter Executive Board

President: Tom Paragi, ADF&G, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, tom_paragi@fishgame.state.ak.us; phone 907-459-7327, fax 452-6410

President-elect: Howard Golden, ADF&G, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, howard_golden@fishgame.state.ak.us, phone 267-2177, fax 267-2433

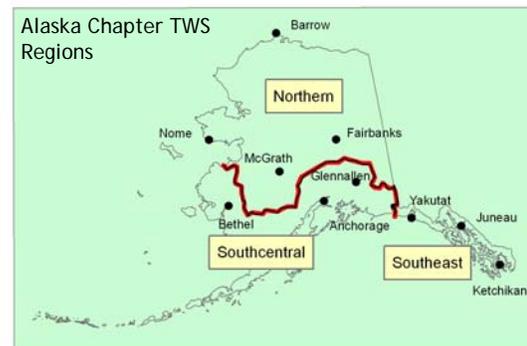
Past-president: Eric Taylor, The Wildlife Society, 5410 Grosvenor, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20814-2144, eric_taylor@fws.gov, phone 301-897-9770, fax 301-530-2471

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Northern Representative: Carol McIntyre, US National Park Service, 4175 Geist Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709, carol_mcintyre@nps.gov, phone 455-0671, fax 455-0601

Southcentral Representative: Robin West, USFWS, P.O. Box 2139, Soldotna, AK 99669-2139, robin_west@fws.gov, phone 262-7021, fax 262-3599

Southeast Representative: Stephen B. Lewis, ADF&G, P.O. Box 110024, Douglas, AK 99811, steve_lewis@fishgame.state.ak.us, phone 465-4348, fax 465-4272



Newsletter editor (non-voting): Jim Herriges, USBLM, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844, jim_herriges@blm.gov, phone 474-2373, fax 474-2282

UAF Student Chapter TWS Representative (non-voting): Jan Tomsen, PO Box 751512, Fairbanks, AK 99775, fsjet5@uaf.edu, phone 374-0578

Please make note of upcoming events, personnel changes, issues and projects, or anything of interest to other AK-TWS members, and pass them on to your regional representative by the 25th of October, January, April, or July.

News from Southeast:

By Steve Lewis, Southeast Representative

People

Ellen Campbell will retire on 3 January 2007 from her position as Regional Wildlife Program Leader for the Alaska Region of the U.S. Forest Service.

Linn Shipley will also retire 3 January 2007 from his position as Wildlife Program Manager for the Tongass National Forest.

Trish O'Connor, formerly Yakutat District Ranger, has been selected as Wildlife and Subsistence Staff Officer for the Tongass National Forest, and will be located in Juneau.

News

Pack Creek/Swan Cove: At a recent Alaska Board of Game public testimony session in Juneau, the issue that received the most attention was a proposal to open the Swan Cove and Swan Island parts of the Seymour Canal Closed Area to brown bear hunting. (The Seymour Canal Closed Area surrounds Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area.) The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) recommended retention of the closed status of Swan Cove and Island. Overall, public testimony was also against this proposal. The Board of Game will not make a decision until it's meeting in Wrangell on 10-15 November.

Tongass Land Management Plan DEIS: The Tongass National Forest continues to work on a Forest Plan amendment (www.tongass-fpadjust.net). A new EIS will focus on the three points identified by the 9th Circuit Court (timber demand, cumulative effects, and range of alternatives) and concerns resulting from the recent Five Year Review (changes to standards and guidelines). The Draft EIS is expected in January 2007 with the Final EIS planned for July of 2007.

Wildlife Research Projects

Juneau Access: With funding received from the State of Alaska's Department of Transportation, several projects have recently begun or will begin in the next year to address concerns about certain wildlife species should a road be built from Juneau

to the Katzehin River. Projects will involve brown bears, mountain goats, moose, and wolverines:

- ADFG biologists Rod Flynn, Steve Lewis, LaVern Beier, and Neil Barten began a study to investigate the abundance, spatial relationships, and movements of brown bears along the Juneau Access road corridor. During the past field season, 13 brown bears were captured and 10 were equipped with GPS radiocollars. In addition, hair snaring was successfully completed on streams throughout the Berner's Bay area to test the feasibility of estimating bear abundance throughout the area.
- Steve Lewis, Rod Flynn, and Neil Barten will begin a study on wolverines in northern Southeast Alaska during the winter of 2006 with the first full field season of work scheduled for the winter of 2007.
- ADFG biologists Kevin White, Neil Barten, Doug Larsen and colleagues have been studying mountain goats in the eastern Lynn Canal area. This study is investigating habitat use and movement patterns, reproductive success and mortality as well as procedures for estimating population abundance and sightability. To date, 64 mountain goats (28 females, 36 males) have been captured and fitted with GPS radiocollars. This study is expected to continue until fall 2009.
- An additional moose ecology study is set to begin in fall/winter 2006 in the Berners Bay and Katzehin River watersheds.

Mitkof Island Western Screech-owl Study - Michelle Kissling and Steve Lewis continued their study of western screech-owl ecology on Mitkof Island. They have also begun to work with Dave Tallmon from the Alaska Population Genomics Lab at the University of Alaska-Southeast to develop the appropriate genetic markers required to assess the sex of owls from tissues that were collected during capture. As time and funds allow, they will assess the genetic distinctiveness of western screech-owls in Southeast Alaska.

News from Southcentral:

By Robin West, Southcentral Representative

People

Gary Wheeler, Deputy Refuge Manager at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, has been selected as Refuge Manager at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge effective 26 November 2006. Gary holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology from South Dakota State University. Gary also served more than a decade as Assistant Field Supervisor of the Ecological Services Anchorage Field Office.

Will Meeks has been selected as the Deputy Refuge Manager for Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in Homer, effective this December. Will is currently the Refuge Manager for Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge/Wetland Management District in northwest North Dakota. Will holds an M.S. degree from South Dakota State University and was recognized in 2003 as "Communicator of the Year" by the North Dakota Chapter of TWS and most recently served as Chapter President.

Jeni Evans, who had been serving in an acting capacity, has accepted the District Ranger Position in Seward for the Chugach National Forest.

Long-time Wildlife Biologist, **Brian McCaffery**, has decided to switch career focus for awhile and has accepted the Education Specialist position at Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

News

The Annual Interagency Alaska Wildland Fire Review was held 23 - 26 October 2006 in Anchorage and was attended by approximately 70 foresters, biologists, and managers from State, Federal, and municipal agencies and Native organizations. Although 2006 was a relatively light year in terms of acres burned, the overall trend is a steadily increasing length and intensity of fire seasons. For example, in the 13 years 1991 to 2003 approximately 10.3 million acres burned in the State vs. 11.9 million acres in just 2004 and 2005 alone. In 2006 there were 307 reported fires (249 human-caused) burning 270,540 acres. Information was also presented on various studies in observed and predicted landscape level changes due to warming and drying trends. This included significant decline in the number of lakes in boreal forest areas over the past 5 decades, and the predicted decline of white spruce forests in future decades. Such climate-related studies have significant implications to wildlife managers as well as fire managers.

Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area: The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge is taking public comment on the Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. The Draft Plan identifies three alternatives for enhancing wildlife viewing, environmental education, interpretation, photography, and other non-conflicting wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities throughout the 44,000-acre Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area. See the draft document and get directions for submitting comments at

http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/pdf/skilak_pr_draft.pdf or by calling (907) 786-3982. **Comments are due 17 November.**

News from the North:

By Tom Paragi for Carol McIntyre, Northern Representative

Tanana Lakes-- urban wildlife habitat in Fairbanks: The Fairbanks North Star Borough is developing a plan for revitalizing and enhancing a premier birding site on the Interior road system. The flood of 1967 led to construction of a dike upstream of Fairbanks (to divert Chena River flood waters into the Tanana River) and levees along the Tanana to keep water out of Fairbanks. The Chena Lakes Recreation Area (<http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/ParksandRecreation/Chenalakes/default.htm>) was constructed in association with the Chena dike. In addition, ponds were inadvertently created behind the Tanana River flood control levees next to Fairbanks when they restricted flow in a slough of the river. The site of these ponds near south Cushman Street is a wonderful place to spot a variety of birds during migration and it provides nesting habitat, but it has also become a dumping site with associated unsavory activities.

The Borough has begun a planning process for the site to examine options for conserving wildlife habitat, providing a wide range of primitive and developed recreation opportunities, and continuing extraction of gravel for local infrastructure needs. A map of the site and description of associated projects and funding partners can be found at <http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/ParksandRecreation/OngoingProjects/>.

The Alaska Chapter submitted a comment letter to the Borough last April in support of the facility master plan and site assessment for the proposed Tanana Lakes Recreation Area and offered our assistance in addressing wildlife needs. This long-term project will provide a great opportunity for

involvement by the Alaska Chapter and especially Student Chapter TWS at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. (Some of the information in this report came from an article by Ken Whitten in the October 2005 issue of *The Redpoll*, a monthly publication of *Arctic Audubon*.)

Tanana Valley Demonstration Forest: When House Bill 130 (introduced by Governor Murkowski) became law in May 2006, it created a 52,000 acre Tanana Valley Demonstration Forest adjacent to the Bonanza Creek Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) site. The demonstration forest was conveyed in trust to the University of Alaska as part of the land grant program to be managed under multiple use and sustained yield and for advancing research into forest management practices. The site will be managed by the Alaska Division of Forestry (DOF) for the next 50 years. A management plan will be prepared by DOF in consultation with the University of Alaska and local residents. The Alaska Departments of Fish and Game and Natural Resources and the University of Alaska recognize the great potential for examining the interrelated roles of wildlife habitat management, hazardous fuel reduction (to reduce risk of wildland fire), and production of wood biomass for heat and electricity production. This demonstration forest will provide applied research opportunities for both undergraduates and graduate students on forest management practices with respect to wildlife habitat conservation. It will also be an opportunity for the UAF Student Chapter of TWS to be involved in planning to address wildlife needs.

News from the UAF Student Chapter:

By Jan Tomsen, Student Chapter Representative

The UAF chapter of TWS is under the new leadership of President Simon Wigren (senior in Wildlife Biology, BS), with the direction and guidance of faculty advisor Dr. Falk Huettmann (Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology). After many of our students volunteered, presented, or engaged in the conference in Anchorage, the chapter is energized with many new activities and resources. Several students from UAF SCTWS also helped out at the ADFG annual Fall Festival in October, and others will volunteer at the Far North Conservation Film Festival on the 10-11th of November in the theatre at the Pioneer Park Centennial Center for the Arts.

Dr. Perry Barboza (Associate Professor of Biology) has proposed a new student-directed project

addressing the issue of how to resolve a problem with red foxes getting into the feed and creating fence holes at the Large Animal Research Station. The research, project, and implementation will be student driven. Also ahead for this year are several other field trips, projects, and other events for the UAF chapter.

All Alaska TWS members are invited to attend the Life Sciences Seminars, held every Friday at 3:30 in the Elvey Auditorium, with receptions afterward (www.iab.uaf.edu/events/events.php).

Be sure to check out <http://www.uaf.edu/wildlife/> for chapter announcements and events, or contact UAF SCTWS by emailing fbscwlf@uaf.edu with ideas or potential activities. Wildlife and Biology students are often searching for volunteer or internship opportunities with wildlife professionals!

National TWS News

By Tom Paragi

In the near future, TWS Council will be soliciting member feedback on prioritizing new initiatives (while assessing funding requirements) in the Strategic Plan, which went out for member review and comments this past summer. Feedback may take place with online voting, so watch the TWS website (www.wildlife.org) for details. Please take a few minutes to provide guidance on issues you think are important for TWS to focus on during the next five years. Council hopes to finalize the plan during their March meeting at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Portland, Oregon.

The Wildlife Professional, a new TWS publication starting in 2007 which will be a part of regular membership, will include parts of both *The Wildlifer* newsletter and the *Wildlife Society Bulletin*. Four issues of *The Wildlife Professional* and four issues of *The Wildlifer* will be published in 2007, after which time *The Wildlifer* may become electronic or transferred to the website. TWS Council will be seeking member feedback on the new publication, and there will be opportunities for individuals to contribute articles or opinion pieces. I encourage you to review the introductory issue closely and provide feedback to Dr. Philippa Benson, Editor-in-Chief, *The Wildlife Professional* (philippa@wildlife.org; 301-897-9770 ext. 302). All the peer reviewed sections of the *Wildlife Society Bulletin* will be retained in the new *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

TWS is recruiting for 6-month policy internships in the Bethesda office that begin in January or July and pay \$1,500/month, with college credit available for those still in school. The Wildlife Policy Intern will research conservation issues, prepare background information for use in testimony or comments, assist with developing content for

Society publications, and attend legislative hearings. Interns will also assist in the routine activities of The Wildlife Society, with specific duties tailored according to the interests of the individual intern. Visit the TWS website for details (<http://www.wildlife.org/policy/Policy%20Internship.pdf>).

Meetings and Announcements

Joint session on marine-derived nutrients co-sponsored by the Society of American Foresters and AK Chapter TWS

This session will be held at the Alaska Chapter of American Fisheries Society meeting from 8:20 AM to noon on Wednesday 15 November at Wedgewood Resort in Fairbanks. Details of speaker topics were listed in September 2006 newsletter (http://www.wildlife.org/chapters/ak/news_Sep2006.pdf). Registration for this session is \$35 at the door.

2007 Joint Meeting of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society and the Northern Furbearer Conference

The annual meeting of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society will be held in conjunction with the biennial Northern Furbearer Conference on 17-19 April, 2007 at Centennial Hall in Juneau. The joint meeting will be preceded on 16 April by a workshop focused on an applied topic of broad general interest yet to be determined (contact Dave Person, dave_person@fishgame.state.ak.us or Sanjay Pyare, sanjay.pyare@uas.alaska.edu for more information). The conference will also host two special working group meetings focused on moose habitat ecology and small mammal conservation. The joint meeting promises to attract biologists from throughout Alaska and the Yukon and will feature presentations on topics ranging from large mammals to amphibians and population genetics to landscape ecology. More detailed information about the meeting and "A Call for Papers" will be provided in the January 2007 Alaska Chapter Newsletter. For more information contact Kevin White, AK-TWS, kevin_white@fishgame.state.ak.us or Rod Flynn, Northern Furbearers, rod-flynn@fishgame.state.ak.us

7th International Conference on Global Change: Connection to the Arctic (GCCA-7), 19-20 February 2007, Fairbanks, Alaska

The prospect of global climatic change has fueled the need to improve our understanding of many atmospheric, oceanic, and terrestrial processes. It has forced us to recognize the fact that most of these processes are interactive and that we must understand the linkages between them. Especially in the Arctic, many of these linkages have feedback effects, which can greatly magnify their total impact upon the climatic system or suppress the original input. The International Polar Year (IPY) presents a special opportunity to combine and compare research activities throughout the Arctic to build a better understanding of the system processes, their interactions, and feedback mechanisms. The GCCA-7 will highlight such IPY synthesis efforts. The abstract submission deadline is Friday, 1 December 2006. Visit <http://www.iarc.uaf.edu/workshops/GCCA-7/index.php> for more information.

The 72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference: The Changing Face of Conservation

March 20-24, 2007, Portland, Oregon, <http://www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org>

Special sessions Include:

Conservation and the Fuels Game
Casting a Broader Net for Fisheries Management

Future Change in U.S. Forests and Implications for Wildlife
Targets of Opportunity: State Wildlife Action Plans

North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants Deadline: December 1, 2006.

The NAWCA small grants program is intended to fund smaller projects (\$50,000 to \$75,000) and encourage participation by new partners. The grant must be matched 1:1 or greater by non-Federal matching funds. <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/Small/index.shtm>

Deadlines for the NAWCA standard grants program which provides funds of up to \$1 million per project will be March 2 and July 27, 2007. <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/Standard/US/index.shtm>

Apply now to participate as a 2007/2008 PolarTREC Researcher

Researchers are invited to submit an application to host a PolarTREC teacher in the Arctic or Antarctic during the 2007 and/or 2007/2008 field seasons. During PolarTREC, thirty-six U.S. teachers will spend two to six weeks in the Arctic or Antarctic, working closely with the researchers in the field as an integral part of the science team. <http://www.polartrec.com>

13th Annual TWS Conference T-Shirts!

We have a small number of extra t-shirts from the recent national conference in Anchorage. The first order of 250 t-shirts sold out in 1 1/2 days, and a few are left over from the second order of 125. They are Hanes Beefy-T's in an attractive "bluestone" color with the logo (in tan with shiny gold stars) on the left front chest and on the back. We are selling them for \$18.00 each plus \$4.00 shipping for 1-2 shirts, \$6.00 shipping for 3-4 shirts. We have one or two extra in most sizes. Orders will be filled first-come/first-served. Please respond to Deb Rudis at 907-780-1183 or deborah_rudis@fws.gov if you would like a shirt, payment by check can then follow.

New Publications:

The proceedings from the September 2004 symposium in Anchorage, *Sea Lions of the World*, are now available from the Alaska Sea Grant College Program (<http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/pubs/AK-SG-06-01.html>, or 888-789-0090) at a price of \$50.

The publication contributes to understanding why sea lion populations fluctuate, including Alaska's Steller sea lions. Interspecies comparisons shed light on why some populations decline while others increase, and insights are gained on whether trends in the abundance of sea lions are related to fishing activities through food dependencies or through conservation measures. Authors also discuss parasites, contaminants, nutrition, pup survival, foraging, wintering, historical fluctuations, and other topics.

2007 Membership Subscription and Renewal

New memberships and renewals for the 2007 calendar year are available on-line at The Wildlife Society's store (<https://store.wildlife.org/>). An individual may renew their TWS membership (\$64 regular, \$32 student or retired) as well as their NW Section (\$5.00) and Alaska Chapter (\$5.00) memberships. In addition, journals can be ordered (delivered on-line or on-line and print) and TWS members can join one or more of the 18 TWS working groups. A new Family membership is available this year (\$103). Also new this year--all members will receive *The Wildlife Professional* magazine in addition to *The Wildlifer* newsletter.



Membership grows to record level!

By Jimmy Fox, Membership Committee Chair

Through the hard work of many, we now have over 230 members of the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society, exceeding our goal for 2006. During the past four months the committee has distributed over 300 pieces of recruitment information and developed promotional materials in an effort to recruit chapter members. As a result, chapter membership stands at 233 members (as of October 15, 2006). To the best of our knowledge, these wildlife professionals represent the highest level of membership ever, exceeding the 226 Alaska Chapter members in 2000. We would like to thank all members that encouraged friends and colleagues to join the Alaska Chapter and TWS.

However, this is no time to rest easy; Alaska is facing significant changes that will affect fish, wildlife and habitat. It is critical The Wildlife Society take an active role in influencing natural resource policy and management in Alaska. Moreover, we believe that for every member there is a wildlife professional in Alaska that is not a member. The chapter needs the experience and energy these people could bring to meeting the mission to "enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of Alaska's wildlife and habitats."

In a long-term effort to recruit new members, the committee developed an attractive and informative, two-sided rack card that explains the mission of The Wildlife Society and the Alaska Chapter and provides reasons to join. Hot off the press, these cards were used during the recent conference to recruit new chapter members. Packets of rack cards and The Wildlife Society brochures have been distributed to executive board and membership committee members, and are available to others upon request. We encourage the use of these materials and chapter newsletters to educate prospective members of The Wildlife Society and its Alaska Chapter, and the general public. For example, these items will be used in an information booth at the upcoming Fairbanks Far North Conservation Film Festival.

Finally, we are always seeking motivated members to join the committee. We're happy Michelle Kissling from Juneau answered our call for a representative from southeast Alaska. If you would like to join the committee or receive a membership recruitment packet please contact me at jfox1990@alaska.net. Let's build upon the success of the Alaska Chapter this year, and continue to increase membership for the sake of Alaska's wildlife heritage.

Editor's note: The Executive Director of TWS highlighted our membership drive on the cover of Issue No. 338 of *The Wildlifer* (September-October 2006), with the full article by Eric Taylor and Jimmy Fox on page 14 of that publication.

The Wildlife Society in Alaska

The Wildlife Society is an international, non-profit, scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship. The Alaska Chapter is comprised of current and retired wildlife professionals and university students from Alaska and beyond. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of Alaska's wildlife and habitats.

We review and provide our best scientific opinions on proposed state and federal actions that may affect wildlife and their habitats; provide technical reviews and position statements on complex wildlife policy issues; and continually educate our members and the public through informative newsletters, meetings and conferences. To see recent newsletters, comment letters, and position statements, visit www.wildlife.org/chapters/ak.

Why You Should Join

Alaska is facing significant changes that will affect fish, wildlife and habitat. It is critical that The Wildlife Society take an active role in influencing natural resource policy and management in Alaska. This requires your participation in our activities. As a member, you will:

- ✦ expand your peer network;
- ✦ receive professional publications;
- ✦ continue your education;
- ✦ achieve professional credentials; and
- ✦ increase your knowledge of current wildlife policy issues.

To join or renew your membership, contact The Wildlife Society at (301) 897-9770 or membership@wildlife.org or go to <https://store.wildlife.org>.

For More Information

The Wildlife Society – Alaska Chapter
1271 Lowbush Lane
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-6039
(907) 456-8682
www.wildlife.org/chapters/ak

September 2006

Aretic Tern. Photograph by Tim Bowman, USFWS



Member Contributions

(Note: This section allows Chapter members to discuss topics or ideas pertinent to our organization, following review by the Executive Board. The purpose is to stimulate member involvement and professional discussion. Opinions of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of TWS or the Alaska Chapter TWS or the contributor's employers.)

Thinking Like a Mountain-*Troll*

By Dave Person

Jack Ward Thomas once said that "ecosystems are not only more complicated than we think, they are more complicated than we *can* think". In a similar vein, Aldo Leopold described a complex web of connections between a mountain, plants, deer, and wolves in his essay "Thinking Like a Mountain". Only the mountain has been around long enough, and has the knowledge to think objectively about the howling of wolves. He urged us to elevate ourselves above our narrow self-interested goals in managing nature and bring the perspective of the mountain into our plans. Of course Leopold was sort of a wealthy gentleman farmer and scientist who didn't have to worry too much how his bread was buttered. Mountain trolls, on the other hand, don't care about any of that stuff. Trolls only want to waylay travelers, rob them, and occasionally feed on them. To them, Leopold and all the other ecodruids are just a bunch of muddleheaded party-poopers who together constitute a rather poor meal. Troll goals are simple, short-termed, and easily understood; in short, the kind of thinking that policy makers and politicians love.

I attach no particular moral value to either worldview. Trolls have been around for centuries and appear to be very busy and healthy in numbers, while the mountain thinkers are a relatively new force whose longevity and usefulness is unknown. However, it is useful to consider the art and science of wildlife management within the context of those paradigms. When we take a complex boreal forest ecosystem, manipulate populations of the top predators and expect to squeeze more moose out of the system without any unintended ecological consequences, are we thinking like a mountain or a mountain troll? The goal of more happy moose for us to eat, which may lead to more happy hunters and ultimately more happy legislators, is a very simple and sensible troll-like objective. However, do we really think we can control the ecological situation that well? Do we comprehend most of the important pieces over a long enough time span to act as if we are a bunch of moose ranchers putting more hooves on the range? Maybe we do and are really thinking like a mountain. On the other hand, when we apply the same formula to every area with low moose or caribou populations and assume one prescription fits all, maybe we are thinking like trolls. We have a great deal of good research showing that wolves and bears can limit moose populations under some circumstances. Nonetheless, that work doesn't tell us anything about what might happen when we remove those limiting factors except to say that we may have more moose. For example, can human hunters actually regulate high densities of ungulates within large geographic areas before they destroy the range? What do high densities of moose mean for plant growth and diversity? What are the effects on small mammals and birds from changes in vegetation due to heavy browsing? To mountain thinkers those kinds of complex questions are virtues, to mountain trolls they just get in the way.

Take-home messages from the 13th Annual TWS Conference: Science-based Wildlife Management, Global Change, International Connectivity, Integrative Research and Leadership

By Falk Huettmann

The National Meeting of TWS 2006 just went by, and it was a blast. It was one of the largest TWS meetings ever: over 1400 national and international participants turned this meeting into a very busy one, with so many details, parallel sessions and social events one could hardly breath. The opening remarks by Dave Klein set the stage very eloquently, addressing major issues for wildlife management in Alaska and elsewhere, inclusive of climate change, habitat conversion, the need for science-based management, ethical hunting as a tool for population management, and declining or endangered populations.

This meeting showed beyond any doubt that Alaska is among the hardest hit by global climate change and that the polar bear is among the hardest hit of many wildlife species. Further, it became obvious that Alaska widely lacks reliable wildlife inventory numbers and that it is not up to date with statewide monitoring schemes for assessment of status of wildlife habitats and the populations they support. However, presentations at this conference provided great examples of methodology and implementation from which to learn, including quantitative methods that enable follow-up assessment with well-designed occupancy models and are compatible with both agencies and landholders.

Many participants agreed with the headline of one session--that "*we have reached the peak of conventional oil,*" and that our hunger for "*economic growth*" will seriously affect wildlife and habitat in Alaska and elsewhere. Discussions went beyond the conference topic, delving into questions such as: how to reach "*economic steady state*" for the global village, how to distribute wealth, and how to grow in such a way that wildlife and habitat do not get harmed? One would have wished that the industry and oil companies could have directly contributed to these sessions, rather than through their contractors. The marine mammal sessions once more talked about predator effects on prey and simply transferred the Alaskan wolf and bear models more or less directly onto killer whales.

We also saw, for the first time, a comprehensive presentation of the great research projects done in the Tongass National Forest. It is very impressive that a vision formed 10 years ago was achieved, but now we need to define a new statewide vision. Studies and information systems should be collaborative and integrative; they should allow for a progressive and transparent synthesis of all the science done to date; and they should be shared with the public and should lead to decision-making that will assure sustainable resource management.

The conference had its usual share of great and international talks: from sea lions, bears and elephants to butterflies and herptiles. However, it missed opportunities to expand on how Alaska fits into the global context, for example, by describing effects of El Nino, across-border projects with Canada, or Alaska's role in the population ecology of the many wildlife species that migrate to virtually all continents of the world. Asia's marine and terrestrial resources connect us directly with each other, specifically with adjacent Russia and Canada.

A large number of details could be found throughout the entire conference, dealing with such topics as pollinators, urban wildlife, use of LIDAR (Light Detection And Ranging), co-management, and Alaska Native tribes and ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act). We have lost large numbers of tundra swans and eider ducks in Alaska, and apparently we have not been able to do much about it for lack of basic biological and ecological information on these species. Such things put our management and mandates in serious doubts. Secondly, data sharing, digital data, and data management were basically not mentioned or brought forward; nor were citizen-science projects discussed in sufficient detail. This needs a major change in Alaska - the only state in the U.S. that still has no Gap Analysis Program (GAP). Also, one has to see it as an organizational oversight that in some sessions no microphones were placed in the audience, nor was adequate time provided in scheduling to allow subsequent feedback sessions and interactions with the interested and knowledgeable audience. However, the many coffee breaks and social events provided some compensation.

The final session on *Conducting Wildlife Science in the Public Eye*, which included predator control issues, brought many fascinating national wildlife issues to the forefront. Foremost, it showed that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game still lacks reliable estimates of wildlife numbers and sufficient wildlife research, partially as a consequence of the current politically-driven management of wildlife at the state level. Problems with the predator control effort near McGrath on the upper Kuskokwim River were well exposed in this session, and hopefully they will be addressed, using science-based, best professional principles. Additionally, it became very clear to all participants that earlier policies such as the 1994 "*intensive management*" law urgently needs to be revisited and brought in line with studies such as those reported in *Wolves, Bears and their Prey in Alaska* by the National Research Council (1997). We are at least 10 years behind on such issues and need to progress. We owe it to Alaska, to the nation, and to our profession. This conference provided us with all the necessary information and tools for a new Alaskan resource management vision to be formulated and implemented, allowing Alaska to renew its status as a global leader in wildlife and resource management.