



# The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of  
The Wildlife Society

November 2009



## Highlights in This Issue

- *Message from President Howard Golden*
- *News from around the state*
- *Marine mammal conservation actions*
- *New federal subsistence policy to be developed*
- *Announcement and Call for Papers: 2010 Annual AK Chapter Meeting*
- *Arctic/Alpine Ungulate Session at AK chapter meeting*

## Message from President Howard Golden

### BALLOT RESULTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

The period most preferred by the 47 members (approximately 21% of membership) who voted on the schedule for the Chapter's Annual Meeting was the week of February 7<sup>th</sup>. The next two most preferred periods were the weeks of February 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. Other preferred periods were the last two weeks of October and, our traditional meeting time, the middle two weeks of April.

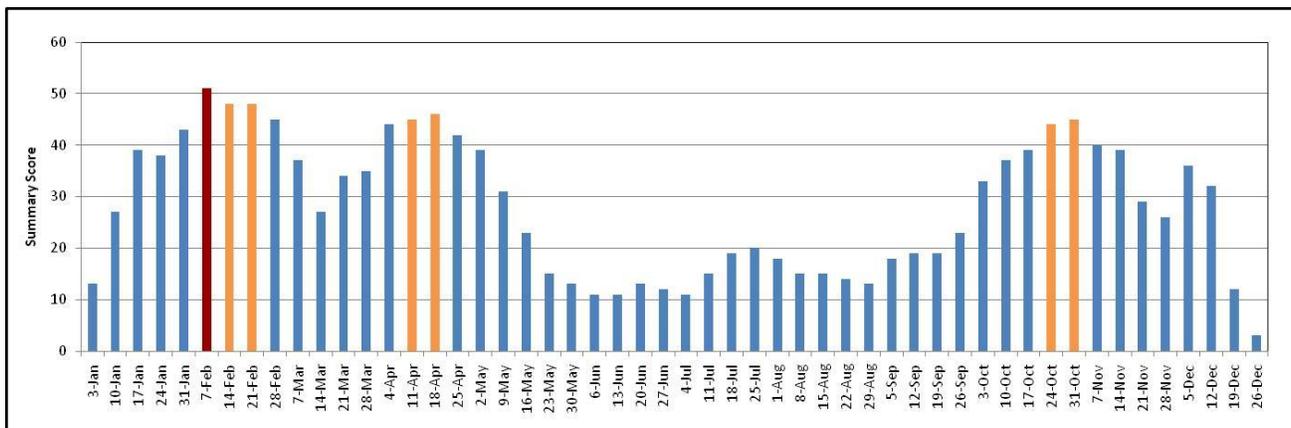
### ANNUAL MEETING PLANS

The 2010 meeting is scheduled to be in Anchorage. Given the response by members, the Executive Board approved moving the Annual Meeting to one of the 3 preferred weeks in February to allow as many members as possible an opportunity to participate. The organizing committee has planned the meeting for February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. See the announcement later in this newsletter. Planning will be accelerated because of the advanced time frame so stay tuned for more details to come through e-mail and on the Chapter's website.

Please begin planning now to attend and to participate by giving a paper or poster. There will be a special session/working group on alpine/arctic ungulate research and management. Contact Kevin White at [kevin.white@alaska.gov](mailto:kevin.white@alaska.gov) for more information.

### NOMINATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

With the Annual Meeting rapidly approaching, we will need to have a new slate of Executive Board candidates ready for a ballot by January 1<sup>st</sup>. Please consider nominating yourself or someone else to run for one of the following positions: President-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer, or Regional Representative for North-West, Southcentral, and Southeast. Serving the Chapter on the Executive Board is a rewarding experience and is vital to its success. See Article V, Section 3 in the Chapter bylaws for details on office duties: [http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/images/documents/AK\\_bylaws\\_rev\\_1Aug06.pdf](http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/images/documents/AK_bylaws_rev_1Aug06.pdf). Contact Howard Golden at [howard.golden@alaska.gov](mailto:howard.golden@alaska.gov) for more information and to submit your nominations.





### TWS ACTION ON MEMBER PRIVACY AND CONTACT LISTS

You may recall that Alaska Chapter and Northwest Section members attending the April 2009 AK Chapter Annual Meeting voted unanimously to direct the executive boards of each group to draft a joint letter to TWS expressing our concerns about the privacy and use of member contact information. Section President Terry Bowyer and I then drafted the letter, received approval by both executive boards, and sent it to TWS President Tom Franklin on September 1, 2009. We also posted it on the Alaska Chapter website:

[http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/images/documents/tws\\_akchpt\\_nwsect\\_contactinfo\\_ltr.pdf](http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/images/documents/tws_akchpt_nwsect_contactinfo_ltr.pdf).

Michael Hutchins, TWS Executive Director and CEO, quickly responded to our letter to tell us what TWS was doing to address our concerns. It turns out TWS legal counsel had already expressed concern about a privacy policy. Michael said they have made progress in three areas.

- First, full access to member databases will be restricted to chapter and section officers and will include use and privacy considerations. A new user agreement was prepared and will be distributed to chapter and section officers along with instructions. (*This was recently put into place*). Currently, members can now access only 100 names at a time from the directory, but there is already an opt-out option for the directory function in each member's profile.
- Second, like most other associations and societies, TWS does sell its membership mailing list to interested vendors. However, they retain the right to refuse any vendors that are not relevant to the wildlife profession or which are antithetical to our core mission and values. He has asked Darryl Walter, Director of Membership Marketing and Conference, to draft a written policy on this for consideration by Council. The policy will provide a list of the types of vendors (e.g., publishers, scientific equipment manufacturers, legitimate conservation organizations, scientific societies, outdoor gear, etc.) TWS would deal with, and those it would not (e.g., animal rights groups, religious groups, music vendors, etc.).
- Finally, new programming is being written to allow individuals to opt out if they do not want, under any circumstances, to have their contact information distributed to any vendors.

I had the opportunity at the Members Forum of the TWS Conference in Monterey to thank Michael Hutchins and Darryl Walter and to commend their efforts to address our concerns. I'll keep you posted as I learn more about progress in this matter.

### TWS CAREER CENTER FOR JOBS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

TWS now has a very good Career Center on their website that was designed as a one-stop shop for people looking for jobs or to post jobs:

[http://careers.wildlife.org/home/index.cfm?site\\_id=8764](http://careers.wildlife.org/home/index.cfm?site_id=8764). It is designed to allow area-specific searches. For example, an Alaska search currently lists 8 postings.

People can also search by keyword and job type. They can set up their own account to submit a profile/resume and receive job alerts that will send them notices when jobs they're interested in are posted. Potential employers can also open an account to post a job notice. Please make the hiring managers in your organization aware of this service. In addition, Liz Solomon recently established a page on the Chapter website called Jobs and Other Links:

[http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=191&Itemid=273](http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=191&Itemid=273). It lists links to job databases for a number of organizations that might be of interest to Chapter members. If you have any other links to suggest, please contact Liz at

[elizabeth.solomon@alaska.gov](mailto:elizabeth.solomon@alaska.gov)

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED

For the past 6 years, we've had the good fortune to have Jim Herriges as our newsletter editor. He's done an outstanding job and is now ready to let someone else take over. The Chapter produces 4 quarterly newsletters each year using contributions by the Executive Board and general membership, and providing news and information about wildlife and wildlifera in Alaska. If you are interested in stepping into this important position, contact Howard Golden at [howard.golden@alaska.gov](mailto:howard.golden@alaska.gov).

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## News from the North:

By Kyle Joly, North Representative

### People

Tara Wertz has accepted a position for the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Florida as a refuge biologist. The Refuge is world famous for its spectacular migratory bird populations, but also provides habitat for alligators, sea turtles, manatees, gopher tortoises and is part of the largest undeveloped mangrove ecosystem in the United States. Tara began her career in Alaska in 2001 with the FWS Fairbanks Ecological Services Office then in 2002 became the large ungulate biologist at Arctic NWR. She'll be leaving in mid-November.



The ADFG lost a talented Nome-based employee with the retirement of **Sue Steinacher**. Her work on such projects as the *Caribou Trails* newsletter will be missed, best of luck on her future endeavors. Luckily, ADFG was able to hire **Meghan Nedwick**, of Kotzebue, into the Education and Outreach Program Coordinator position. Meghan comes to the department with extensive education experience.

**Erica Craig** was hired by the BLM's Central Yukon Field Office as a wildlife biologist covering 20 million acres of western Alaska.

Former AK Chapter Northern Rep and Lead Biologist at Kanuti NWR, **Lisa Saperstein**, is heading south to become a habitat biologist with US Army on the 300,000+ acre Yakima Training Ground in Washington state.

## News

### Whimbrel flights

Biologists from the USGS-Alaska Science Center and Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge collaborated to investigate the southward migration of whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*) nesting on the refuge. Fifteen whimbrels were surgically implanted with satellite transmitters and fitted with colored leg flags (black with two white characters); another 6 whimbrels received leg flags only. After initially staging in western and southwestern Alaska, the transmitted birds have reported from California, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile.

### Alaska Board of Game

(<http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/gameinfo/index.php>) is accepting comments on public proposals for statewide wildlife management issues until January 15th and new proposals for Interior issues until December 4th (comments due February 12th).

*Wildlife response to environmental arctic change: predicting future habitats of arctic Alaska* has been published by USFWS. It is based on a November 2008 workshop and is available at [http://www.arcus.org/alaskafws/downloads/pdf/WildREACH\\_Workshop\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.arcus.org/alaskafws/downloads/pdf/WildREACH_Workshop_Report_Final.pdf)

No news submitted by Southeast or Southcentral Representatives

## Announcements

**Game Transplants in Alaska**, ADFG Technical Bulletin #4, Second Edition, by Tom Paul. The first edition of the report on the history of wildlife introductions and transplants in AK was produced by Burris and McKnight in 1973. The new report updates the last 35 years and includes the new ADFG policy regarding transplants. The second edition is at the printer and will be available for distribution soon; it will eventually be posted on the ADFG website. For a copy, contact [patricia.harper@alaska.gov](mailto:patricia.harper@alaska.gov).

The **Northwest Section of TWS** will be holding its **annual meeting** in conjunction with the Oregon Chapter. The meeting dates are 11-12 February in Bend, OR and there will be two workshops on 10 February. See <http://joomla.wildlife.org/oregon/>.

**2010 Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council Symposium** will be held 7-11 June in Hood River, Oregon. All-day sessions will be held on 8 and 10 June, a morning session 11 June, and a field trip 9 June. The symposium will be held at the Hood River Inn ([www.Hoodriverinn.com](http://www.Hoodriverinn.com)). Shuttle service is available to the site, approximately 1.25 hours east of the Portland Airport ([Shuttlefare.com](http://Shuttlefare.com)). Meeting information will soon be posted on the NWSGC website at [www.nwsgc.org](http://www.nwsgc.org). For more information, contact [keith.l.kohl@state.or.us](mailto:keith.l.kohl@state.or.us) or [Kevin.Hurley@wgf.state.wy.us](mailto:Kevin.Hurley@wgf.state.wy.us).

**45th North American Moose Conference and Workshop** will be held 23-26 June 2010 at Voyageurs National Park, International Falls, MN. Conference Theme: Moose in a Warming World. Contact Steve Windels, Conference Co-Chair, at [steve\\_windels@nps.gov](mailto:steve_windels@nps.gov).

**2010 Alaska Marine Science Symposium**, 18-22 January 2010, Anchorage, Alaska. Scientists will gather to discuss their research in the large marine ecosystems of the Arctic, the Bering Sea, and the Gulf of Alaska. Plenary and poster sessions will feature the latest research on climate, oceanography, lower trophic levels, the benthos, fishes, invertebrates, seabirds, marine mammals, and local and traditional knowledge. Registration is free, and will be open online through 5 January 2010. Registration will also be available onsite. Abstract submission deadline is 20 November. See: <http://www.alaskamarinescience.org>.



The Department of Defense's (DoD) Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP), is seeking to fund environmental research and development in the Sustainable Infrastructure focus area. SERDP intends to fund multiple projects that respond to the following four focused Statements of Need (SON):

- Impacts of Climate Change on Alaskan Ecological Systems
- Behavioral Ecology of Cetaceans
- Ecological Forestry and Carbon Management
- Ecology and Management of Source-Sink Populations

The objective of the "Climate Change" SON is to improve our understanding of the potential impacts of climate change to ecological systems that occur on DoD testing and training lands in Alaska. Of particular concern are climate change impacts that could lead to state changes or regime shifts in ecological systems. [www.serdp.org/funding](http://www.serdp.org/funding).

The latest issue of **Wildlife Policy News**, at the **TWS website**, contains several items pertinent to Alaska:

- [Climate Debate Moves to Senate](#)
- [Alaska Land Swap Rejected](#)
- [Vilsack Outlines Vision for Forests](#)
- [Salazar Approves New Wetlands Mapping Standard](#)
- [Renewables Encouraged on Tribal Lands](#)
- [Bill Introduced to Revamp Oil and Gas Leasing](#)
- [Department of the Interior Plans to Combat Climate Change](#)
- [Energy Development Threatens Hunting & Fishing](#)
- [Updates](#) (Federal nominations and confirmations, budgets).

***You can contribute!***

*Please make note of upcoming events, projects, personnel changes, issues, 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.*

And don't forget, our Newsletter and Chapter Website now have an [opinion page](#) specifically dedicated for the discussion of topics pertinent to AK-TWS.

## ***Department of Interior begins comprehensive review of subsistence policy and programs***

Source: DOI News Release, [http://www.doi.gov/news/09\\_News\\_Releases/102309.htm](http://www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/102309.htm)

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced October 23 at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention in Anchorage that he is launching a comprehensive review of the Department's subsistence management policies and programs on federal lands to make them work more effectively to meet the needs of Native Alaskan communities. Kim Elton, Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs at Interior, explained, "A fundamental premise will be that we can no longer expect the state to regain subsistence management on federal lands. We are here to stay, so we have the obligation to provide the best management system that we possibly can." Secretary Salazar has charged the team with developing a clear subsistence road map by early next year. "This administration's subsistence road map will not be developed from the top down," Elton explained. "His management policies will be informed by the people who have to live with his policies—by you and others." The revamped subsistence management plan will operate based on several principals, including:

- decision-making based on science and traditional knowledge;
- an understanding of the practice and importance of subsistence; and, most importantly
- a commitment to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) subsistence mandate—the promise made in law will not be compromised or relegated to a low priority status in this administration.

"In a few months, the Secretary will match his subsistence policy, crafted with your help, with the appointment of a chairman to the Subsistence Board who can best help us fulfill our subsistence obligations," Elton said. "There is no pre-determined chair waiting in the wings. The Secretary will select a chair he feels will not let this administration's subsistence policy, based on law and science and the input of stakeholders, later be trumped by personality or politics."

Concerning budget issues, Elton said that over time inflation and cuts have eroded the subsistence management budget, providing less money while the challenges grew. "For example, do the regional advisory councils have the capacity to fulfill their mandates, do we have the capacity to get the science



we need to make management decisions to increase benefits for subsistence users, or do we have the management resources to work with all parties to effectively provide the subsistence preferences called for in Title VIII of ANILCA?"

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## Polar Bear, Walrus and the Endangered Species Act

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By Charlie Hamilton, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage

In May of 2008, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) listed the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to loss of sea-ice habitat and in December of 2008, FWS finalized a special rule under section 4(d) of the ESA for the polar bear. This special rule: (a) in most instances, adopts the conservation regulatory requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for the polar bear as the appropriate regulatory provisions for the polar bear; (b) provides that incidental take of polar bears resulting from activities outside the bear's current range is not prohibited under the ESA; (c) clarifies that the Special Rule does not alter the Section 7 consultation requirements to ensure that any Federal action authorized, funded, or carried out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the polar bear; and (d) maintains the standard ESA protections for threatened species when an activity is not covered by an MMPA or CITES authorization or exemption.

For a variety of reasons, the listing of the polar bear as well as the promulgation of the special rule have both been challenged in court by a number of parties, including the State of Alaska, the Center for Biological Diversity, Conservation Force, Defenders of Wildlife, California Cattlemen's Association, Safari Club International, and others. The FWS is vigorously defending both the listing of the polar bear and the special rule.

On October 29, 2009, the FWS announced a proposal to declare critical habitat for the polar bear. The proposal would designate habitat in three areas or units: barrier islands, sea ice and terrestrial denning habitat. The total area designated would cover 200,541 square miles. About 93 percent of the proposed critical habitat area is sea ice. The barrier island habitat now proposed includes coastal barrier islands and spits along Alaska's northern coast. Terrestrial denning habitat is proposed to include lands within 32 km of the northern coast of Alaska

between the Canadian border and the Kavik River, and within 8 km between the Kavik River and Barrow. In each case, these boundaries are informed by polar bear distribution data and encompass areas where 95 percent of bears were found to occur. Sea ice habitat is proposed as ice located over the continental shelf, where water depths are less than 300 meters. If finalized, these proposed designations would only apply to the lands and waters of the United States. Information on proposed polar bear critical habitat as well as a copy of the Federal Register notice may be obtained from the FWS Marine Mammal Management's web page at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/polarbear/criticalhabitat.htm>.

In a separate action the FWS also announced, in September, its finding that the listing of the Pacific walrus under the ESA may be warranted. This 90-day finding under the ESA is based, in part, upon projected changes in sea ice habitats associated with climate change. As a result of this finding, the FWS initiated a 12-month status review of the Pacific walrus to determine if the species should be proposed for listing. In announcing this finding the FWS is seeking information from the public on the status of the species as well as information on potential threat factors facing the Pacific walrus including: the effects of climate and environmental changes, sea ice changes, and ocean acidification on the distribution, abundance, and life history of Pacific walruses and their principal prey over the short and long term; oil and gas exploration and development; commercial fishing and shipping; contaminants; hunting; and ongoing conservation measures for the species and its habitat. Information on the petition finding as well as a copy of the Federal Register notice may be obtained from the FWS Marine Mammal Management web page. <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/walrus/esa.htm>

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## NOAA Will Not List Two Spotted Seals Populations as Endangered or Threatened

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Source: NOAA news release

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mediacenter/docs/akrspottedseallisting\\_102009.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mediacenter/docs/akrspottedseallisting_102009.pdf)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service announced that two of three populations totaling more than 200,000 spotted seals in and near Alaska are not currently in danger of extinction or likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. The announcement follows an 18-month status review. However, NOAA is proposing to list a third smaller population of 3,300 seals off China



and Russia as threatened. The importation of these animals or their parts into the U.S. would be regulated under the Endangered Species Act.

“The northern two spotted seal populations exceed 200,000 individuals. We do not predict the expected fluctuations in sea ice will affect them enough to warrant listing at this time,” said Doug Mecum, acting administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service Alaska region.

Climate change may alter these three populations’ habitats. Experts expect that large year-to-year fluctuations in sea ice will continue within the Bering and Okhotsk seas, and spotted seals in these two populations may move north in search of suitable habitat in years when the ice is reduced. Also, spotted seals are known to breed and whelp on land when ice conditions are poor. However, such breeding sites are limited and may expose seals to increased hunting and predation. The two northern populations are large, have many offspring, and have a broad distribution,

diminishing their need for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

In all, NOAA was petitioned to list four types of seals under the Endangered Species Act—ribbon, spotted, bearded and ringed. NOAA determined that ribbon seals should not be listed in 2008. Decisions on the bearded and ringed seals are expected next year.

Alaska ice seals:

<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seals/ice.htm>

Proposed rule:

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/species/spottedseal\\_proposedrule.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/species/spottedseal_proposedrule.pdf)

New memberships and renewals are available on-line at The Wildlife Society's store (<https://store.wildlife.org/>).

## Alaska Chapter Leadership

### Executive Board

**President:** Howard Golden, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518-1599, [howard.golden@alaska.gov](mailto:howard.golden@alaska.gov), phone (907) 267-2177, fax (907) 267-2433

**President-Elect:** Kris Hundertmark, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, PO Box 757000, Fairbanks, AK 99775, [kris.hundertmark@alaska.edu](mailto:kris.hundertmark@alaska.edu), phone (907) 474-7159, fax (907) 474-6967

**Past-President:** Tom Paragi, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, [tom.paragi@alaska.gov](mailto:tom.paragi@alaska.gov); phone (907) 459-7327, fax (907) 459-7332

**Secretary-Treasurer:** Karyn Rode, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503, [karyn\\_rode@fws.gov](mailto:karyn_rode@fws.gov), phone (907) 786-3801, fax (907) 786-3816

**Northern Representative:** Kyle Joly, National Park Service, 4175 Geist Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709, [kyle\\_joly@nps.gov](mailto:kyle_joly@nps.gov), phone (907) 455-0626, fax (907) 455-0602

**Southcentral Representative:** Todd Rinaldi, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518-1599, [todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov](mailto:todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov), phone (907) 267-2267, fax (907) 267-2433

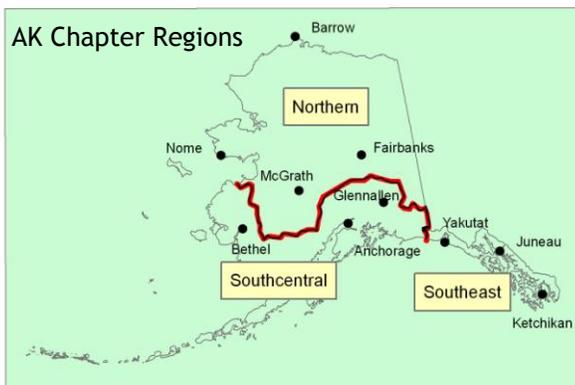
**Southeast Representative:** Dave Person, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2030 Sea Level Drive, Suite 205, Ketchikan, AK 99901, [dave.person@alaska.gov](mailto:dave.person@alaska.gov), phone (907) 225-2475, fax (907) 225-2771

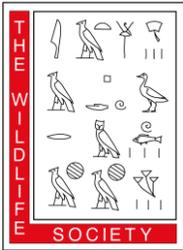
**Newsletter Editor (non-voting):** Jim Herriges, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844, [jim\\_herriges@blm.gov](mailto:jim_herriges@blm.gov), phone (907) 474-2373, fax (907) 474-2282

**UAF Student Chapter TWS Representative (non-voting):** Cortney Pylant, 5 Dead End Alley, Fairbanks, AK 99709, [fsclp17@uaf.edu](mailto:fsclp17@uaf.edu)

### Webmaster

Elizabeth Solomon, ADFG, 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Rd, Ste. B Soldotna, AK 99669-8367, [elizabeth.solomon@alaska.gov](mailto:elizabeth.solomon@alaska.gov), phone (907)260-2927





## **FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS**

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE**



## **ALASKA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY**

**CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**

**FEBRUARY 9 & 10, 2010**

You are invited to join fellow wildlife researchers, managers, educators, students, and administrators from across the state for the annual meeting of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society. The meeting will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, which is near the airport, is close to other hotels and restaurants, and offers free shuttle service to the airport.

The plenary topic is tentatively planned to be on: Climate Change and Potential Ecological Effects on Wildlife in Alaska. A special session on Alpine-Arctic Ungulate Biology and Conservation will be a part of the meeting (see the following announcement). More details about these events will be coming shortly in a separate announcement.

Attendees are encouraged to give oral presentations or present posters regarding wildlife-related research, management, education, recreation, and biometrics. We seek presentations on a wide range of topics, including wildlife and habitat management projects, research findings, data analysis and study design, new field techniques, conservation issues, land-use and wildlife planning, marine wildlife, human dimensions, education, wildlife recreation, wildlife economics, and non-game programs.

### **TENTATIVE PROGRAM**

**Tuesday, February 9: Plenary, technical sessions, poster reception/social, & banquet**

**Wednesday, February 10: Technical sessions, business meeting/lunch (provided)**

### **The deadline for submission of abstracts for papers or posters is January 15, 2010.**

Guidelines on formatting and submitting abstracts, oral presentations, and posters will be available soon under *Chapter Conference 2010* on the Alaska Chapter website at: <http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska>.

A second call for papers, with details about lodging and meeting registration will be distributed in early December and will also be posted on the Alaska Chapter website at: <http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska>

#### **Student Travel and Presentation Awards**

There will be travel awards for students wishing to attend the meeting, awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Students applying for awards should be presenting a poster or paper. Also, student oral presentations and posters will be judged and the top two presenters will win cash awards.

Direct inquiries to Kris Hundertmark @ 474-7159, [kris.hundertmark@alaska.edu](mailto:kris.hundertmark@alaska.edu) (through Dec. 31) or Howard Golden @ 267-2177, [howard.golden@alaska.gov](mailto:howard.golden@alaska.gov).



## Alpine/Arctic Ungulate Session of the Annual Meeting of the AK Chapter TWS – Mountain Goats, Dall's Sheep and Musk Oxen –



### Session Description

Mountain goats, Dall's sheep and musk oxen collectively represent a unique group of taxonomically similar species that inhabit extreme environments in Alaska. Unfortunately, these species, as a group, are among the least studied large mammals in North America and key aspects of individual species biology have received limited attention in past scientific investigations. Nonetheless, these species capture the imagination of scientists and public citizens alike and are highly valued among a diverse array of our citizenry. In most places throughout their range, these species are subject to human harvest yet, in most cases, basic knowledge about population biology and life-history strategies is limited.

From a conservation perspective, this challenge is compounded by the sensitivity of these species to variation in climate conditions. Despite inhabiting diverse geographic regions of Alaska, these species share a common tenacity to persist in environments near the physiological extremes of vertebrate existence. Consequently, these species may be particularly vulnerable to climate phenomena such as mid-winter "rain-on-snow" events or abnormally snowy winters or hot summers.

Overall, the intent of this meeting is to draw together species specialists in order to discuss (in a presentation/Q&A format) findings from recent studies, key management/conservation issues and synthesize our overall knowledge of this group of species. A key outcome of this meeting will be to identify common themes between species biology and conservation, as well as, to determine areas where information gaps exist and future research and/or management attention is needed. The session will be held February 9 or 10

### Contacts:

Kevin White, [kevin.white@alaska.gov](mailto:kevin.white@alaska.gov), 907-465-4102  
Tom Lohuis, [tom.lohuis@alaska.gov](mailto:tom.lohuis@alaska.gov), 907-267-2412  
Thomas McDonough, [thomas.mcdonough@alaska.gov](mailto:thomas.mcdonough@alaska.gov), 907-235-1725