



The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of
The Wildlife Society
August 2010



Highlights in This Issue

- *Message from President Kris Hundertmark*
- *Goodbye to Erich Follmann*
- *News from Southcentral & Southeast*
- *Southeast BioBlitz*
- *Report from the Gulf of Mexico*
- *Announcements*

Message from President Kris Hundertmark

I'm going to stray from convention for this message and not focus on chapter business or wildlife management issues. Instead, I want to write about cardiovascular disease. We recently lost Erich Follmann, Professor of Zoology at UAF and a long-time TWS member, to cardiac arrest. Erich was one of my faculty mentors when I arrived at UAF and was a friend as well as a colleague. The wildlife education and research community in Alaska has certainly lost a valued member.

The real tragedy of Erich's death is that it likely was preventable. Heart disease produces predictable warning signs that are precursors to heart attacks, particularly in men. Unfortunately, the warning signs are easy to shrug off and attribute to some other ailment such as the flu, a pulled muscle, a pinched nerve, or indigestion. As a heart attack survivor, I know firsthand what those warning signs feel like and the ease with which you can ignore them. Luckily for me, I sought medical help when the warning signs were impossible to ignore. The intervention I received may have saved my life and undoubtedly has reduced my risk of suffering a serious event in the future.

My message here is not to preach about eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly, although those are certainly advisable. My message is to do yourself a huge favor and become familiar with the warning signs of heart disease and if you experience some of them, listen to your body and get yourself to a doctor. Even if it ends up being nothing more than indigestion, why gamble with your life? There are also risk factors that are good predictors of your likelihood of suffering from heart disease. Know your risk. A good place to start educating yourself about heart disease is the website of the American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org.

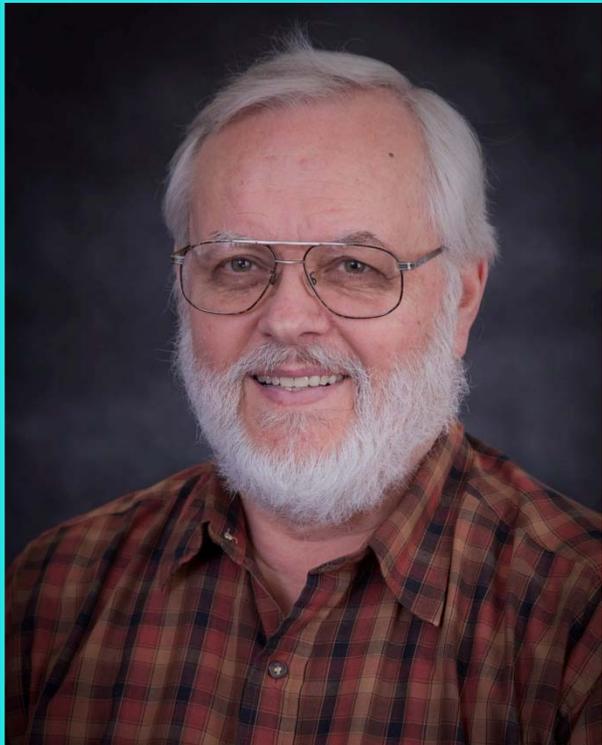
As for chapter business, it has been a relatively quiet three months. We donated \$300 to the national office for organizing the upcoming annual meeting in Snowbird, Utah. Also, the chapter's position statement on intensive management is nearing completion. The committee of Wade Willis, Kyle Joly, Mark Burch, and Mark Bertram has been quite active in the past few months and we hope to have a finished document very soon. We also are hoping to have position statements on disease risk of pack goats and ballot initiatives finished soon. The Executive Board voted to sponsor an event entitled "An evening with Sam Harbo." Randy Zarnke is organizing the event, which will be held in Fairbanks sometime in the fall, in which Sam, a retired UAF wildlife faculty member and Board of Game member, will talk about his career and experiences in Alaska. For more information, contact Randy at itrap2@gci.net. Karen Mager, a grad student at UAF, interviewed retired ADF&G biologist Jim Davis for the COWCH program (Celebrating Our Wildlife Conservation Heritage). Video from the interview will be archived at TWS headquarters and in the Rasmussen library at UAF. Finally, I want to thank Howard Golden and Jerry Hupp for taking on much of the load of running the chapter while I was on a six-month fellowship in Poland. I truly appreciate their efforts.

TWS membership is now required for AWB® and CWB®, certifications to remain valid, so be sure to join or renew at wildlife.org



Goodbye to a colleague and friend: Erich Follmann

By Tom Paragi and Harry Reynolds



Former students, colleagues, and friends were saddened by the passing of Erich H. Follmann on 26 July 2010. Erich is survived by his wife Ardella and stepson Aaryn.

Erich was a Professor of Zoology jointly in the Department of Biology and Wildlife and the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. During his UAF career as a Senior Research Associate (1979-89) and subsequently as a faculty member, he supervised 20 doctoral and masters students. He also served on over 50 graduate committees in biology, fisheries, wildlife, and anthropology and mentored numerous undergraduates.

Erich was born on June 15, 1943. He received an undergraduate degree in biology from Loyola University (1965) and graduate degrees in zoology (M.A. 1968, PhD 1973) from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, with his doctoral dissertation on the ecology of gray foxes. During 1972-76, he was a senior biologist with Woodward-Clyde Consultants, conducting environmental assessments on proposed pipelines in Texas, the East Coast, and Alaska, and he supervised scientists and engineers for other environmental projects on the North Slope.

Erich was a post-doctoral fellow at the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory in Barrow during 1976-1979, where he conducted research on cold adaptation in arctic foxes, wolves, wolverines, and grizzly bears using radio telemetry. While in Barrow, Erich devised a unique application of modern technology to traditional practices by inserting a transmitter in marker buoys to allow tracking of animals struck by Inupiaq hunters, thus reducing wounding loss. He was also the first to develop adaptations of telemetry to record the temperature and heart rate using subcutaneous transmitters in free-ranging grizzly bears.

At UAF, Erich's research focused on mammalian carnivore ecology, especially arctic foxes and rabies, and included black, brown, and polar bears, wolves, and bowhead whales. Students will recall his endearing mix of wit and humor while teaching classes in mammalogy, comparative anatomy, physiology, biotelemetry, and survey of wildlife science. In recent years, Erich was also in charge of the undergraduate internship program. Erich's strong sense of integrity, scientific background, and consulting experience complimented his easygoing personality and sincerity to make an ideal mentor, particularly for those intimidated by the academic environment. He deeply cared about the well-being of students in their journey to becoming scientists and helped them maintain a good perspective on balance of career and life. Former students commonly developed a lifelong friendship with Erich, and many continued professional collaboration with him after moving into positions with natural resource agencies.

Erich was a long-time member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management, serving during 1993-2001 as Chairman of the Grant Review Committee, primarily for the most-needed research and conservation projects on bears in developing countries. As a member of The Wildlife Society since 1966 and the Alaska Chapter of TWS since 1975, he actively encouraged student participation in professional organizations. His exceptional dedication and contributions to students and their participation in annual scientific meetings was affirmed by a special recognition award from the Alaska Chapter in April 2008. We will deeply miss our esteemed colleague and friend. A webpage has been set up for people to post comments and remembrances of Erich at <http://www.iab.uaf.edu/news/follmann.php>. Erich's family suggests that, in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to the Erich Follmann Scholarship fund at www.uaf.edu/giving/gift/



News from Southcentral

By Chris Kaplan, Southcentral Representative

PERSONNEL CHANGES

After 17 years as Anchorage's Area Biologist, **Rick Sinnott** retired on 30 June, leaving some big boots to fill at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Rick's contribution to wildlife conservation went far beyond the day-to-day activities of an Area Biologist's efforts to manage wildlife - enhancing habitat, wrangling moose calves out of traffic, serving on stakeholder panels, etc. In fact, it could be argued that Rick's biggest contribution to Anchorage area wildlife was as an educator. His frank, common sense approaches to the public's interactions with wildlife were refreshingly direct, cutting through the fluff to the ecologically appropriate course of action.

Rick's field skills are unsurpassed. To those lucky enough to have had the opportunity to work with him, we know the Department has lost a great mentor, one with focus and calm confidence even in the most dangerous wildlife emergencies. A friend to wildlife, the public and wildlife professionals alike, we can only hope he decides to continue working in the wildlife field after his retirement from ADF&G. Interviews for a replacement are still pending.

Cynthia Jacobson will join the USFWS on 16 August as the new Assistant Regional Director for Science Applications. A primary focus of this new position is to oversee implementation of climate change initiatives, including the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives effort in Alaska. She worked for ADF&G for more than 11 years. For nearly three years, she has been an Assistant Director for the ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation.

NEWS

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game hosted the Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) meeting in Anchorage on July 16-21. WAFWA represents 23 states and Canadian provinces, and its mission is to deliver conservation through information exchange and working partnerships. WAFWA advocates for the western states to maintain jurisdiction over fish and wildlife resources. The theme of the event was "Conservation Challenges and Opportunities Amidst Diverse Interests." By all accounts, the conference was productive, interesting, and fun!

The Municipality of Anchorage has recently installed metal gates on the Rover's Run trail as a way to make the public more aware of bear presence in the area.

These gates will not close the trail when bear danger is higher, but instead alert users to be more cautious. Research led by Sean Farley of ADF&G using hair snare stations to collect genetic information passively showed that the area is used by both resident and transient bears. Several brown bear/human conflicts have occurred on the trail, including the severe mauling of Petra Davis in the summer of 2008 and more recently of a bike rider on his way to work. The recent mauling occurred on 15 June, just five days after ADF&G urged the Municipality to close the trail for the summer.

ADF&G AREA BIOLOGIST IN GLENNALLEN RETIRES

By Becky Schwanke

May 28th marked the end of an era for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Glennallen. **Bob Tobey**, long-time Area Biologist and 32-year Department employee decided to hang up his hat. Tobey's commitment to the Copper River Basin was unparalleled, and this region is a better place because of it. The wildlife issues in this area are some of the most complex in the State. Despite constant legal challenges to intensive management and other harvest management strategies, conservation and maintenance of a hunting heritage remained Tobey's core guiding principles.

Tobey personally fostered several successful wildlife management programs that will continue to benefit Alaskans for generations to come. For example, he was instrumental in increasing the Nelchina Caribou Herd from 18,000 to the stable 35,000-40,000 Alaskans have been enjoying in recent years. While still experimental, this move has helped to eliminate the boom and bust population and harvest patterns seen in other caribou herds.

While it is difficult to pinpoint his most important contribution to wildlife management, Tobey's clear and steadfast support for well thought-out habitat improvement projects such as the Alphabet Hills prescribed burn and the two wolf control programs implemented in GMU 13 are credence to his dedication to hunters that rely on Alaska's wildlife resources.

Tobey is an amazing field biologist with an eye for detail. His passion for wildlife and dedication to leaving things better than he found them provide true testament to his professionalism as a state wildlife biologist. Bob and his wife Melinda reside in the Copper River Basin, and continue to operate Valley Veterinary Clinic.



News from Southeast

By Deborah Rudis, Southeast Representative

— *Editor's note: Deb has been very busy on detail to the Gulf of Mexico, which she describes in a special report. The following summary was provided by Steve Brockmann with the Juneau Fish and Wildlife Field Office of USF&WS.* —

2010 SOUTHEAST BIOBLITZ

At noon on Saturday, June 26, the starting gun for BioBlitz Southeast Alaska went off, opening a 24-hour effort by scientists and the public to document every species in the Fish Creek watershed near Juneau.

The event brought together over 50 scientists and about 350 friends and families from Juneau, who broke into teams that spread out in search of birds, plants, small mammals, bats, owls, freshwater fish, marine plants and animals, aquatic invertebrates, terrestrial invertebrates, even lichens. At any given time, there were small groups scattered from the alpine to the ocean in search of local biodiversity. There were also activities and presentations at the event headquarters (Eaglecrest Ski Area Lodge) throughout both days. The species tally currently stands at 634, with more expected as identification of terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates is completed.

BioBlitz was produced through a partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, City and Borough of Juneau, and the Juneau Economic Development Council, with additional support from many others. Support from the media was good, with articles in advance of the event in the local paper:

http://www.juneauempire.com/stories/061110/out_652208508.shtml and on radio:

<http://www.ktoo.org/audiofile.cfm?clip=4712>.

During the event, we hosted reporters from a local radio station and the newspaper. KTUU TV in Anchorage ran this report:

<http://www.ktuu.com/Global/story.asp?S=12725128>.

The Juneau Empire also ran a story:

http://www.juneauempire.com/stories/070910/out_673036853.shtml.

By all accounts, the first BioBlitz in Juneau was a grand success. Many requested that we make this an annual event in Juneau, perhaps moving it to different locations around town each year. We are also hoping to take the event to other communities in Southeast Alaska, both as a way to nurture local awareness and appreciation for biodiversity, and as a way to help fill

in gaps in our scientific understanding of how species are distributed across the islands of Southeast Alaska.

You can learn more about the event at the BioBlitz website:

<http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=education.blitz> or Google "southeast bioblitz" to find it.

We'll be updating the website with a list of species as soon as it's ready.

Report from the Gulf of Mexico

By Deborah Rudis, Southeast Representative

This summary cannot begin to capture what my Mississippi Canyon Incident (aka Gulf Spill) experience entailed. I went to the Gulf for the first two weeks of June as a USFWS technical specialist with expertise in avian identification and survey work. As you may know HAZWOP, Incident Command System (ICS) training and previous oil spill experience was either mandatory or very useful. My spill work experience dates back to Exxon Valdez, my first year in Alaska.

I was stationed out of Venice, LA., which is a small town near the mouth of the Miss. R. I don't think it gets any hotter or more humid than the Gulf in summer! It was 95 every day but with the heat index — that includes humidity — it was 105! The Mississippi River Delta marshes are expansive, but have been much reduced due to channel cutting for oil industry work and erosion from recent hurricanes. Our operational field station was a barge moored about 12 miles from Venice; this served as combination office/living quarters. Accommodations were pleasant for the 20–25 of us working on field operations. There are three similar additional field operations areas in LA.

Our field team was a bird reconnaissance and recovery group. Our area of operations, Plaquemines Parish, was subdivided into 12 divisions. Each crew could cover one to three divisions per day depending on oil and bird presence. There were also operational divisions to the west and east of our area. Workdays were typically 7am to 11pm or sometimes later. The latter part of each day involved data summarization and other 'paperwork'. I spent the first 5 days as an asst. unit supervisor, which was not what I expected to be doing. I then evolved into a field crewmember for bird reconnaissance and recovery. I still did other work on preparing protocols, overall data summaries, etc.



Fieldwork involved bird reconnaissance (surveys of all bird species, recording number seen that were oiled, and degree of oiling). We also captured oiled birds and recovered carcasses during beach/marsh edge walks. Our operations were linked with daily helicopter survey reports to plan our focus areas. We went out in teams each morning via small boats or skiffs with local boat operators (local men who are normally fishermen, both commercial and charter). While I was there, most oiled birds we saw were brown pelicans. Capture of oiled pelicans was difficult as most are very flight capable even if oiled. (Those we did not try to catch.) The ones we could catch were usually fairly weak and were oiled for at least 5-7 days. Some looked just horrible, as you may have seen on the news, while others appeared only lightly oiled. Captured oiled birds were put into pet kennels and transported to the bird rehabilitation centers. We also checked island colonies of pelicans, terns, black skimmers, and other colonial water birds to count birds and to determine if any were oiled without creating disturbance to the colony. Most small islands with bird colonies are boomed, but as weather changes and waves displace booms these areas can be hit by oil. Boom maintenance is an on-going task for crews doing that work. Some of the worst hit areas were to the west of us (for example the Grand Isle area) where they recovered over 50 oiled brown pelicans on some days. As a comparison, our teams captured 15-20 oiled brown pelicans per day.

We had an interesting and varied multi-agency crew and everyone made an effort to do the best job we could out there. It is a horrible spill and we can only hope that the environment will not be damaged to the extent we all fear. One day I was offshore approximately 60 miles to see oil still headed towards shore. Surface oil patterns change each day with weather and sea conditions, and it will be worse later this summer as the Mississippi River flow drops and the salt water carrying the oil moves inland.

I should add, don't believe everything you hear on the news. (Even though I did meet Anderson Cooper!) There are lots of good efforts out there to reduce oil impacts as much as possible.

Announcements

2011 ALASKA CHAPTER OF TWS ANNUAL MEETING

The Chapter's next annual meeting will be held in Juneau in April 2011. Planning for the meeting will soon begin in earnest. We continue to solicit ideas for workshops or special sessions to be held during the meeting. Ideas submitted thus far include a session on Alaskan herpetofauna and one on how wildlife may be affected as the Tongass National Forest transitions from old to young growth forest harvest. If you have thoughts on these or other special sessions please contact Jerry Hupp (jhupp@usgs.gov). We continue to need people to serve on the organizing committee, especially those that can help with local arrangements in Juneau. If you can help with the organizing committee, please contact Jerry.

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS 2010 CONFERENCE: INCREASING HUMAN CAPACITY FOR GLOBAL HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE
27 September - 1 October 2010 in Estes Park, Colorado. <http://warnercnr.colostate.edu/nrrt/hdfw/>

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY'S 17TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, to be held in Snowbird, Utah, 2-6 October 2010. The deadline for submitting contributed papers and posters was 19 March 2010.
<http://www.wildlifesociety.org/>



THE WILDLIFE PROFESSIONAL: LOOKING FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ITS FIELD NOTES SECTION. Please send to editor@wildlife.org.
http://joomla.wildlife.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=47



Alaska Chapter Leadership

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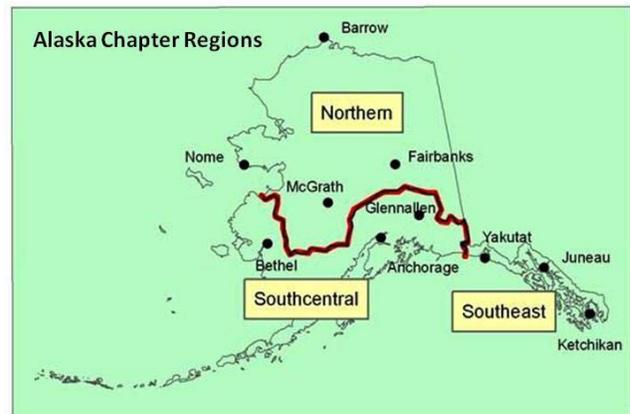
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New memberships and renewals are available on-line at The Wildlife Society's store (<https://store.wildlife.org/>).