



The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

October 2001

Message from the President

By: Gino Del Frate

Anchorage 2004??

I have just returned from Reno Nevada where TWS hosted the 2001 annual conference. At that meeting I was hoping to find out if TWS council was going to approve the Alaska Chapter's bid to host this conference in 2004. Well, we made the final cut and the decision will be between Alberta, Canada and us. Alberta would like to add a bit of international flavor to the national conference and has put together an excellent bid. The decision will be made after site visits are completed later this month. Stay tuned. In other business at this meeting the Council approved a motion to adopt the Alaska Chapter's position statement on oil exploration and development in ANWR. See the related story in this issue. A big thank-you goes out to all on the committee who worked on this position.

Thanks to all who returned their ballots. We were ahead of the national average with approximately 25% of the members voting. In addition to the ANWR position being approved, we approved the Strategic Plan and voted in new regional representatives. Congratulations to Tom Paragi, Tom Schumacher and Herman Griese for being elected as regional representatives. In other business the executive board has been hard at work revising the bylaws for the chapter with President Elect Doug Larsen in charge on this effort. I am happy to announce that the revised bylaws are now available for members to review and comment. You can access a copy at our website (<http://mercury.bio.uaf.edu/ak-tws/>). The draft version has also been sent to Headquarters for their approval. Please send comments to Doug or myself or ask your regional representative to forward them on.

Our next annual meeting will be held in Fairbanks and will be in conjunction with the Society of American Foresters and Alaska Chapter of American Fisheries Society. I would encourage Fairbanks wildlifers to extend a helping hand to Tom Paragi to make this event a successful one.

News from the North

Submitted by Tom Paragi

Only a couple replies from the North:

Doreen Parker-McNeil was hired as the regional management assistant after two years of running the public services program in the Fairbanks office of ADF&G. **Jackie Kephart** was hired in Doreen's old position after 2 years of scientific and educational permitting in the Juneau headquarters office. **Laurie Stack** was hired in July as a college intern at ADF&G, and **Shelly Szepanski** was hired in April as a Fish and Wildlife Technician. Shelly was most recently employed on marine mammal research by USGS-BRD in Anchorage.

Also, **Lori Quakenbush** was recently hired by the Marine Mammals program at ADF&G in Fairbanks. For the last five years she was a research associate working on ringed seals, walruses, and eiders for the School of Fisheries and

Ocean Sciences at UAF, and prior to that she worked for USFWS Ecological Services on environmental permitting and eiders. She was also appointed to the Alaska Board of Game for four years during the Knowles administration, serving as chair for three years.

News from Southcentral

Submitted by Herman Griese

No news this time (...hunting is apparently good in south-central).

News from Southeast

Submitted by Tom Schumacher

TWS Meeting in Reno:

Several people from the region attended this meeting including ADF&G Regional Director, Kim Titus, biometrician, Grey Pendleton, and research biologist, Dave Person. Grey gave a poster on estimating sea lion numbers using a mark-resight technique with brands, and Dave Person gave a poster on wolf mortality related to density of roads. Ellen Campbell, Winni Kessler, Don Youkey and others from the USFS were also there.

Evaluation of the Tongass Forest Plan for Conservation of Wildlife:

Tom Schumacher of ADF&G continued work to develop a conceptual framework for evaluating the conservation measures for terrestrial wildlife in the **Tongass Forest Plan (TLMP)**. This work is funded by the USFWS and the framework should be completed by the end of October. It is intended to serve as a tool to develop, prioritize, and coordinate activities to evaluate TLMP.

In a minor case of putting the cart before the horse, Tom Schumacher and Rod Flynn of ADF&G worked with Ellen Lance and John Haddix of the Thorne Bay Ranger District and Glen Ith of the Petersburg Ranger District to locate new study areas on Prince of Wales and Kuiu Islands for a **TLMP related marten study**. The goal of this study is to relate density of martens to availability of prey on islands with differing prey assemblages in order to evaluate the goals for marten in TLMP. To date, martens have only been studied on Chichagof Island, which has a relatively depauperate prey base. Results of an ADF&G study there found that populations of small mammal prey and of martens fluctuate widely from year to year. They hypothesize that on islands with more diverse sources of food populations of martens will be more productive and occur at consistently higher densities than on Chichagof Island. Eventually additional study areas on another island and the mainland are planned. This study is funded by the USFWS.

ADF&G also initiated a **pilot study of brown bear use of beach and riparian habitat** in relation to no logging buffers called for in TLMP. In this initial phase 2 GPS collars were deployed to evaluate their effectiveness in the rugged topography of Southeast Alaska and to gather data intensive movements data on bears using salmon streams. The collars will be retrieved this fall, and more data will be gathered next year using GPS and traditional VHF collars. This study is also funded by the USFWS.

Coming and Going:

Teresa Woods, Supervisor of the Juneau Field Office of the USFWS, will be leaving Alaska for a job with the USFWS in Minnesota.

Sandy Boyce has accepted the position of Alaska Issues Coordinator for the USFS PNW Research Station Forestry Sciences Lab in Juneau.

Kevin White has accepted a wildlife biologist position with ADF&G in Douglas where he will be working on studies of ungulates with Matt Kirchhoff.

Lauri Jemison will be transferring from her current harbor seal research position with ADF&G in Douglas to a similar position studying Stellar's sealions for ADF&G in Anchorage.

Northwest Section Awards

The Arthur S. Einarsen Award was established in 1966 to recognize outstanding service to the wildlife profession by individuals residing in the area encompassed by the Northwest Section of The Wildlife Society. The Wildlife Administrator Award was designed to recognize and reward excellence in the areas of wildlife program development and administration. The Awards Committee encourages nominations from the membership of the Section by 4 January 2002 for both awards. Nominations benefit from supporting documentation so please contact Lowell Suring, Committee Chair, for more details if you have deserving candidates in mind. Lowell Suring; Rocky Mountain Research Station; 316 East Myrtle Street; Boise, Idaho 83702; voice: 208.373.4351; FAX: 208.373.4391; e-mail: lsuring@fs.fed.us

Alaska Chapter Nominations

It's time to begin thinking about who you would like to be your representative on the board of the Alaska Chapter of TWS. We need candidates for President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Southeast, Southcentral, and Interior Representatives. Please forward your nominations to Gino Del Frate, Howard Golden, or Herman Griese.

“New” Job Announcement Section

Future issues of the Alaskan Wildlifer will include a new, “Job Announcement”, section that will feature information on wildlife-related job opportunities throughout the state. For those interested in posting a job announcement, please send a your information to Kevin White (kevin_white@fishgame.state.ak.us) by January 7th. Open recruitment should be through the month of January.

New ANWR position approved

In the last newsletter members were given the opportunity to review and approve a revised position statement on oil exploration and development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Thanks to the ad hoc committee that worked on this important issue. Approximately 25% of the members that received ballots returned them and about 83% voted in favor of the statement. As you recall the ballot asked for comments if you did not approve of the statement as written. The committee felt that if they were way off base they wanted to know what it was that members disagreed with in the event that a complete rewrite was needed. Several comments were received including the following letter that summarized most of the comments well. Like the rest of the United States, there are varied opinions on what should be done in the Northeastern part of Alaska. The letter also suggested an alternative view of what our role should be as professionals. It is important that we evaluate our role as professionals, which is why we chose to print this letter.

Dear Gino,

We would like to propose an alternative to the draft position statement of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in the May 2001 issue of *The Alaska Wildlifer*. The draft statement advocated long-term protection of the Coastal Plain of ANWR and said that petroleum exploration and development are not warranted because of concerns about impacts on wildlife. We disagree with this position because:

1. The draft statement provided an incomplete and biased view of the available science and management of wildlife in the existing Alaskan oil fields.
2. We do not think scientists or managers in TWS should advocate either development or no development of public resources.
3. We believe that professionals in TWS should offer assistance to achieve the management objectives identified by the people through their elected representatives, not influence policy to achieve personal or TWS objectives.

We propose the following is a more suitable position statement for our professional society.

Alternative position statement of the Alaska Chapter of TWS on oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

There are proposals in Congress and the Executive Branch of our federal government to explore and develop oil and gas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). There are also concerns that if oil exploration and development occurs in the ANWR, there will be negative impacts on wildlife. After 25 years of research and monitoring in the existing North Slope oil fields, we have considerable experience and expertise in mitigating impacts on wildlife. We note that in existing North Slope oil

fields wildlife populations have not experienced major impacts. Many populations, including caribou, grizzly bears, polar bears, arctic foxes, and musk ox, have all grown over the period of oil exploration and development. A particularly important example is caribou. The Central Arctic caribou herd has grown from fewer than 5,000 to 27,000 animals since the oil fields were developed. It's worth noting that between 1997-1999, caribou have had higher calf/cow ratios in oil field areas than in undeveloped areas. The Central Arctic herd continues to calve in oil field areas, and uses oil field habitats extensively during the summer. This includes frequent use of oil field roads and structures for travel and to escape from insects. However, there are still concerns that the oil fields have disrupted movements of caribou and displaced cows from their traditional, high-quality calving habitats to other areas with poorer forage. Newer oil fields incorporate design features that allow caribou to move more freely, but expanding oil fields may impact additional habitats. Planning and active management of oil field operations will be important to minimize impacts on wildlife.

The Porcupine Caribou Herd in the ANWR differs from the Central Arctic Herd in several ways. This herd migrates over a vast range in Alaska and Canada, and calves are often born on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. Porcupine herd caribou regularly occur in groups numbering tens of thousands, much larger than the groups of hundreds to thousands that currently move through and use habitats in existing oil fields. These factors indicate that the Porcupine Herd may be more vulnerable to disturbance and displacement than the Central Arctic herd. However, depending on the year, calving occurs from the Yukon Territory in the east, to the western edge of the refuge. There is potentially alternative calving habitat should parts of the ANWR be developed. In addition, avoidance of existing oil fields is not absolute. Some caribou continue to calve in traditional areas in which oil fields have been developed, and avoidance is limited to a few weeks around calving. Impacts from oil development in the Refuge could be mitigated by minimizing infrastructure and placing temporal and spatial restrictions on industrial activity during the calving period.

The Wildlife Society is concerned about potential impacts on wildlife if oil and gas exploration and development proceeds in ANWR. However, we recognize the need to consider multiple management objectives, including oil and gas production and maintenance of wildlife populations. Most importantly, we recognize the inherent right of the American people, through their elected representatives, to decide on the objectives for public resources. If the management objectives identified for ANWR by our elected representatives include oil and gas exploration and development, we suggest careful integration with wildlife population objectives and careful planning of the timing and locations of development. In either case, development or no development, we offer our support and expertise to help manage the resources in ANWR.

Sincerely,

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Sincerely,

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2001 Membership Renewal

Current membership status is noted on the address label for this newsletter. Members interested in renewing their membership to the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society should send their membership dues to Jackie Kephart in Fairbanks. If you renew through headquarters with your national and sectional dues continue to do so. This is the easiest way for us to keep our membership files straight. Our membership list is usually updated before each newsletter is sent, so hurry to renew your membership and you will continue to receive the Alaskan Wildlifer in the future.

Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society 2001 Membership Form

If you are not a member of National chapter and want to maintain your membership please fill out the form below and return it to Jackie Kephart at the address on the front of this newsletter. If you are a member of National please continue to pay your state dues when you renew.

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Numbers-Work: _____ **Home:** _____ **Fax:** _____

E-mail: _____

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