The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Winter Issue - December 2016

Message from President Scott Brainerd

Stand up for science!

Dear Alaska Wildlifers,

With the new administration, we may experience significant changes in federal government policies with respect to leadership, philosophy, funding and priorities that may affect many of our members and their agencies. This is to be expected, and occurs whenever there is a change of leadership in our democracy. There may be implications regarding how science is interpreted and used in decision making. Although the U.S. and Canada have led the way in advancing the wildlife profession, wildlife management itself appears to be increasingly politicized. A rapid turnover rate of state agency directors, the makeup of boards and commissions, the organizational structure of some agencies, and examples of politics meddling in science have challenged the foundation of science. Some have even referred to a new age of "post-factualism." Ignoring the facts is something we do at our own peril, no matter what the objective may be. Science itself is not a body of facts, but it is a method for deciding whether what we choose to believe has a basis in the laws of nature or not. Sometimes the scientific method leads to truths that are not self-evident, or easy to understand. But science helps us understand what is true, what is not, and where we need to investigate further.

In this regard, we all need to be mindful of the basic tenets of our profession, and what we stand for collectively as members of The Wildlife Society. Aldo Leopold, in his 1933 classic, Game Management, highlighted the Roosevelt Doctrine of Conservation, which recognized that: 1) all 'outdoor' resources were an integral whole, 2) 'conservation through wise use' is a public responsibility and their private ownership is a public trust, and 3) science is a tool for discharging that responsibility. This idea, that science is the foundation of what we do, is also laid down as one of the principles of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (see TWS 2014). This model has been widely promoted and is now touted by organizations that advocate for consumptive use of our wildlife resources.

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, science is a systematic enterprise

Issue Highlights

that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe. Reliable and objective scientific information is the foundation of wildlife management and is essential for meeting our responsibility to increase public knowledge and confidence that wild populations of fish and wildlife are responsibly managed. Creative and innovative research by many of our members has established Alaska as a national and international leader in the realm of applied wildlife research. This research tradition has greatly benefited management and conservation programs in our state, both directly by informing and evaluating management measures and policy, and indirectly through the level of scientific credibility and trust it has given our profession.

I invite you all to read the Parent society's letter to the President-elect (pgs. 7-9), and to review the standing positions of TWS on the parent society website. First among these is that we recognize science is a cornerstone for establishing wildlife policies and making management decisions. Those of us that work for government agencies are ever mindful that science must be carefully used to inform the decision process, rather than to prescribe a particular outcome. To quote from the TWS standing position on the use of science in making policy and management decisions: "*We adhere to the highest standards in providing science input to policy and management decisions and acknowledge the uncertainty inherent in science while noting that such uncertainty is not a reason to ignore or censure scientific findings. The Wildlife Society opposes misuse of science by policy and decision makers, including attempts to censor researchers or managers, distort or misuse results and conclusions, or ignore science that contradicts a desired outcome. We encourage, recognize, and advocate appropriate use of wildlife, ecological, and conservation science in policy determination and decision-making processes and we are committed to identifying and supporting actions to correct inappropriate uses or abuses of science.*"

As we move forward, we should all be mindful of the importance of science in what we do. We must strive for its objective application and guard against its misuse, whenever and wherever possible. Administrations come and go, but science remains our constant guiding star. Government agencies, and the wildlife professionals that work for them, are trust managers of the wildlife resource. We are therefore accountable to the public beneficiaries of that trust. Science is therefore our most important tool, upon which our professional credibility is founded. Therefore, let us stand up, one and all, for the continued objective use of science as the proper tool for discharging our responsibilities as wildlife professionals in the years to come

Look for us on Facebook!

You can "like" us on Facebook! On our Facebook page, we are posting information on scientific publications relevant to Alaska's wildlife, announcements of upcoming meetings, and job openings. If you have ideas on how we can most effectively use our Facebook page, contact the Executive Board through the Chapter email: twsalaska@gmail.com

Regional News

Northern

Kerry Nicholson, Northern Representative

Personnel Changes

Mike Hinkes, pilot/biologist with Yukon Flats Refuge, retired at the end of September after 39.5 years of federal employment.

Dave Yokel, wildlife biologist with the Bureau of Land Management plans to retire at the end of 2016.

Tok River Fire Rollerchopping Update

Jeff Wells with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in Tok reports rollerchopping within the 1990 Tok River fire is underway (it began the first week of November) for the third winter in a row. The primary purpose of this project is improving grouse and moose habitat. Aspen-dominated areas are targeted during rollerchopping efforts, with the end goal of creating moose browse and forest stand age diversity. 130 and 287 acres were treated during spring 2015 and winter 2015–2016, respectively. The goal for this winter is to treat up to an additional 110 acres.

Southcentral

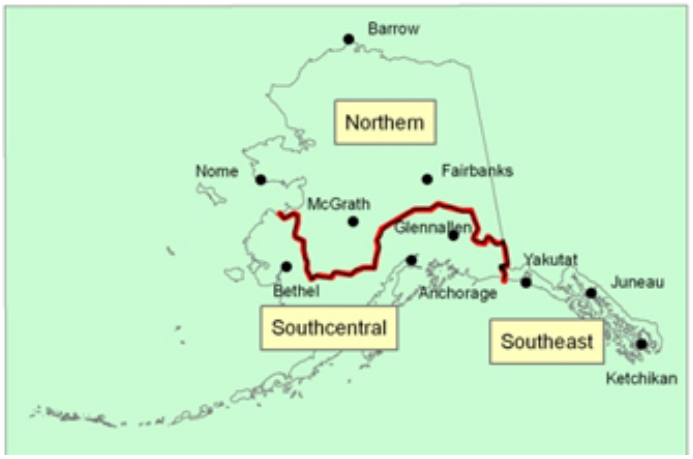
John Trent, Southcentral Representative

Personnel Changes

Dan Rosenberg, Waterfowl Coordinator with the ADF&G, retired Friday October 28, 2016 after 33 years of professional service.

September 30 was **Steve Machida**'s last day as a Division of Wildlife Conservation biologist. Steve started with ADF&G in 1980 as a Game Biologist II (GB II) with Region 2 and later worked for Region 5. Steve had a long and impressive career with ADF&G, and he will be greatly missed.

Dr. Michael Guttery is ADF&G's new Region IV Research Coordinator. Dr. Guttery received his PhD in Wildlife Biology from Utah State University.



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

From there he acquired three years of consulting experience in post-doctorate positions at both Utah State University and University of Wisconsin-Madison. Over the years he has served as a biometric consultant for dozens of fellow researchers and graduate students. Most recently he helped Region IV stay on track with their management operational plans. Michael has spent much of the last year as ADF&G's acting Research Coordinator and has already gained the respect of the research staff. Michael's blend of biological knowledge, quantitative skills, and personable consulting skills is expected to serve him well in this position.

Southeast

Kevin White, Southeast Representative

Check back in the next issue for updates from the Southeast Region.

Join or renew memberships

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

2017 License and Tag Fee Increases

The Alaska Legislature passed a bill in May 2016 that raises fees for hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses and institutes a $15 fee for personal-use fishing in part of the Copper River starting 1 January, 2017. The fee increase is the first in 10 years for sport fishing licenses and the first in 24 years for hunting licenses and tags. A resident sport fishing license will cost $29 in 2017, a $5 increase from 2016. The resident hunting license fee has increased from $25 to $45, while the price of a resident trapping license has increased from $15 to $25. Non-resident tag fees have also increased; for example, the non-resident tag price for a muskox bull has increased from $1,100 to $2,200. Resident tag fees for muskox and brown/grizzly bear are unchanged. The bill also raises the minimum age for a license from 16 to 18 and increases the threshold for low-income licenses to the federal minimum threshold of $29,820 from the historical $8,200. For a full overview of license and tag fees for 2017, see this link. The Alaska Outdoor Council, Territorial Sportsmen, and the Alaska Professional Hunters Association have been supportive of this measure.

The fee increase is expected to bring an additional $4.2 million to the Division of Wildlife Conservation and $4.9 million to the Division of Sport Fish compared to previous years. The additional funding will go to the ADF&G Fish and Game Fund. This will help offset substantial cuts to the department's funding from the state's unrestricted general fund. The legislature cut the general fund allocation to the department from $79.3 million last year to $66.4 million for the current fiscal year.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation uses Fish and Game Fund money to leverage federal money to support wildlife management and research through the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, a law passed in 1937. In order for states to get P-R money, Fish and Game can match three federal dollars for every state license dollar. P-R funds are based on an 11% excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition. Increased sales of guns and ammunition in recent years have generated a large amount of revenue to the P-R fund, which ADF&G has had difficulty in matching in recent years. This increase in state funds will help the department take better advantage of available federal funding.

Alaska Chapter TWS Awards!

The bylaws of The Wildlife Society describe recognition of professional achievement as one of the principal purposes of TWS. Prior to 2015 the Alaska Chapter TWS had periodically given awards for outstanding service to the chapter. In 2015 the Executive Board sanctioned a more formal process for nominations in several categories of professional service and achievement (http://twsalaskameeting.com/awards/).

Please take a few moments to think of your Alaska Chapter colleagues and other wildlife professionals presently or formerly in Alaska but not (yet!) chapter members who have distinguished themselves in furthering wildlife conservation in Alaska, or beyond. I urge you to nominate a worthy individual or team for an award, which will be presented at the 2017 annual meeting in Fairbanks.

University of Alaska Museum Mammal Collection now holds the state's only complete humpback whale skeleton available for research.

By Aren Gunderson, UAM Mammal Collection Manager

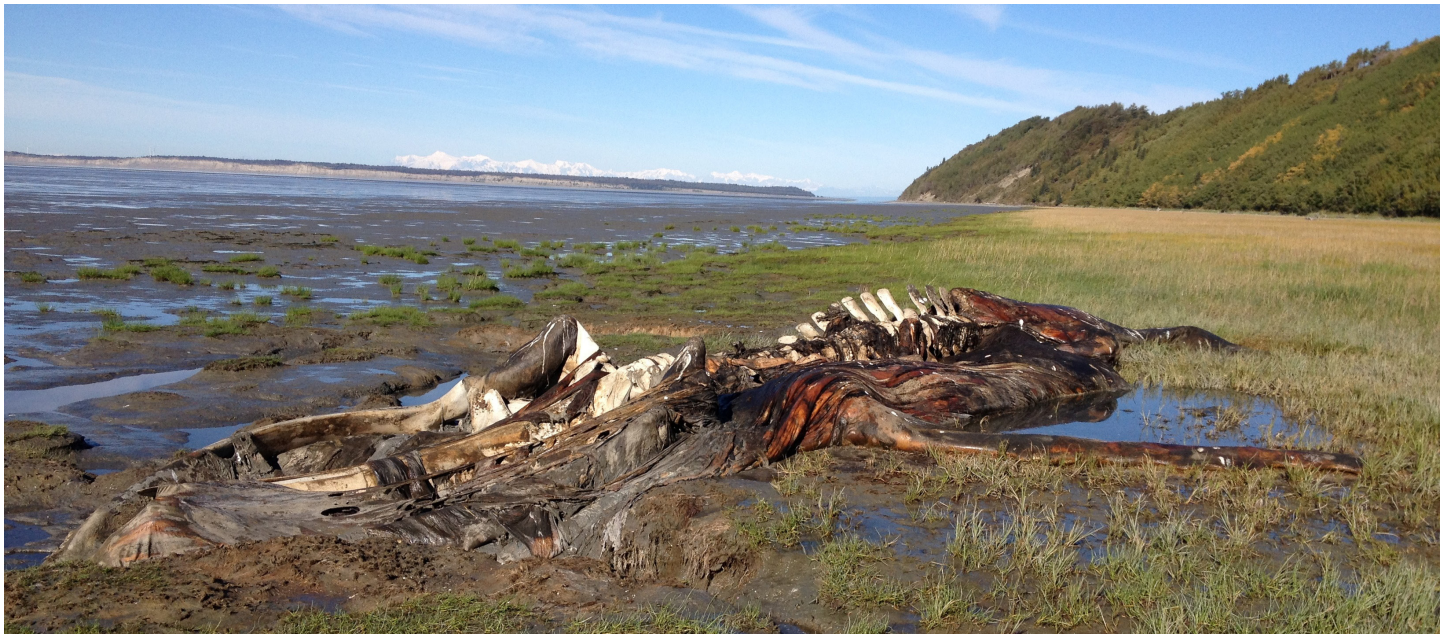
The University of Alaska Museum (UAM) Mammal Collection houses the largest collection of marine mammal specimens in North America. Its holdings include specimens from more than 12,000 walrus, 15,000 seals, 1,100 sea lions, 3,200 sea otters, and 1,100 cetaceans (whales, porpoises, and dolphins). The collection contains specimens from every species found in Alaskan waters, however, most cetacean specimens consist of tissue samples only with very few skeletons available for research. The large size of most whales and porpoises coupled with the remote sites where they are typically found beachcast, make salvaging a whole carcass arduous at best.

However, on June 28, 2016, an adult male humpback whale washed up freshly dead, near Hope, Alaska. A necropsy was performed, and tissue samples were collected by Dr. Pam Tuomi and biologists from the Alaska Sea Life Center and the National Marine Fisheries Service the following day. No cause of death has been determined. The carcass was set loose and the tide took it further up Cook Inlet just below the motocross area of Kincaid Park in Anchorage.

We knew that there would likely never be a better opportunity to collect such a valuable specimen and since there was not yet a full humpback whale skeleton in our collection, we were determined to salvage this one.

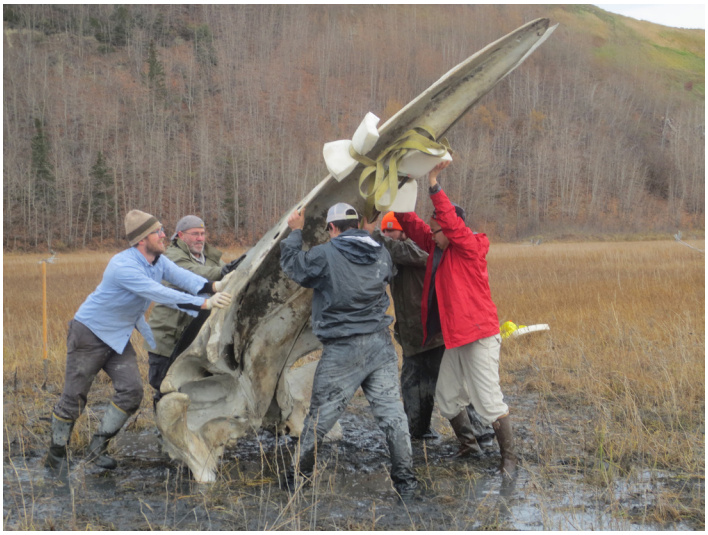
After two months of bird, maggot, and bacterial action, the skeleton began to emerge from the flesh. On September 8, four UAM staff (Aren Gunderson, Kelly May, Kevin May, Larry Pallozzi) drove from Fairbanks to recover the bones that could be salvaged by hand and hauled up the steep bluff in frame packs. The carcass was steaming, and the stench was incredible though not unfamiliar to those of us experienced in marine mammal specimen preparation. Maggots were 6 inches deep in places and sounded similar to the fizz of a freshly opened soda can. The slight breeze was welcome and kept fresh air available on one side of the carcass.

With volunteer help from the Friends of the Anchorage Refuge (FAR; Barbara Carlson, Barbara Wild, and Saige Thomas) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Josh Brekken), we made 40 round



The carcass at the start of the salvage effort, 9 September. Photo by Kevin May

UAM Whale Skeleton - Continued



UAM staff and volunteers flip the cranium upright in preparation for the helicopter lift. From left to right, Aren Gunderson, Kevin May, Kelly May, Larry Pallozzi, Tim Williams. Photo by Kyndall Hildebrandt

trips up and down the bluff, salvaging 39 vertebrae, three ribs, and part of one flipper. After one long day, what remained of the carcass was either too heavy to be hand carried or too inaccessible within the remaining soft tissue. We departed Kincaid Park that evening and began making plans to salvage the rest, which would require a helicopter to sling the remaining parts up the bluff.

On October 10th we returned to the site, this time with the same crew from UAM plus one more seasoned veteran of marine mammal salvage (Kyndall Hildebrandt). Alpine Air was contracted to do the slinging via helicopter. With help again from FAR as well as Alaska Veterinary and Pathology Services (Kathy Burek, Serena Jordan), we spent one more day on the carcass, gathering all the remaining postcranial bones (ribs, tail vertebrae, flippers) into a cargo net. The two dentaries (lower jaw bones) would be another load, and the cranium would be the last part lifted off the marsh. The sling loads went smoothly. In less than 20 minutes all three loads were lifted up the bluff, and the cranium was set directly onto our trailer. Video from the salvage effort can be seen on our Facebook page (search for Mammal Collection, University of Alaska Museum) and Eric Keto from Alaska's Energy Desk made an excellent short video summary of our effort, which can be seen here.

We managed to salvage 157 of the 168 bones. We are missing the two vestigial pelvis bones, one hyoid (throat) bone, and eight ribs we believe were taken (illegally) by people visiting the carcass before we got there. The skeleton is now safe at the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus where it will be further cleaned via burial in sand for a year. This allows bacteria to continue breaking down the remaining tissue and oil. Once clean, it will be the only (mostly) intact humpback whale skeleton available for research in Alaska. The long-term goal is to have it assembled and on display for everyone to appreciate.

The cranium is lifted up the bluff to be set directly onto a waiting flatbed trailer. Photo by Aren Gunderson

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

December 6, 2016

President-elect Donald J. Trump
Office of President-Elect
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Pesident-elect Trump:

Congratulations on being elected the 45th President of the United States of America. As you prepare to begin your service as the nation's leader, The Wildlife Society offers you our collective expertise as leaders in wildlife science, management, and conservation.

The Wildlife Society (TWS; wildlife.org), founded in 1937, represents nearly 10,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. We inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation.

As a representative of wildlife professionals and their collective knowledge, TWS is a valuable resource in formulating wildlife management and conservation policies, laws, and regulations. We recognize that natural resource decisions must consider many social, economic, and ecological factors. We also recognize that science should serve as the bedrock principle for making those decisions. This approach is critical to conserve the wildlife resources that not only provide $145 billion in direct economic benefit to the U.S., but also are important to more than 90 million wildlife-associated recreationists in the United States.

TWS is committed to provide your administration timely, practical, and science-based input for managing and sustaining the nation's diverse fish and wildlife resources to benefit the American people. As your new administration takes shape, we look forward to working with the White House and Congress on issues impacting the status of wildlife resources in North America.

In addition to providing an independent and science-based perspective on relevant government policies, TWS also shares information through multiple scientific and popular publications; hosts an annual conference on wildlife science and management; organizes professional development opportunities; and manages a professional certification program for wildlife biologists.

We look forward to providing you with the views of wildlife professionals and wish you well as you start your administration. Attached to this letter is a document outlining major areas of interest for TWS. Please contact Keith Norris, AWB®, Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships at keith.norris@wildlife.org or (301) 897-9770 x309 for further information.

Sincerely,

Bruce C. Thompson

Bruce C. Thompson
President, The Wildlife Society

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

For the past 80 years, The Wildlife Society has served an important role in advancing the wildlife profession, while influencing and supporting the use of science in managing wildlife populations and habitats for the benefit of society.

Founded in 1937, our organization's mission is:

To inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation.

As leaders in wildlife science, management, and conservation, The Wildlife Society recognizes the following core topics as pressing issues in wildlife management and conservation.

Support for the Public Trust Doctrine and North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is a set of seven core principles that, collectively applied, has led to the form, function, and success of wildlife conservation and management in the United States and Canada. As a keystone component of the Model, the Public Trust Doctrine describes the common law concept that wildlife is owned by no one and is held in trust by government for the benefit of present and future generations. Through continued application and refinement of this Model to contemporary wildlife conservation needs we can maintain and foster landscapes that support viable wildlife populations while still providing for the sustainable public use and enjoyment of public trust resources.

Building Capacity for Sustainable Management of Wildlife Populations

The future of our fish and wildlife resources and their habitats depend upon the skilled stewardship of wildlife and land management professionals. The current system of fish and wildlife funding, however, leaves many of our state and federal fish and wildlife agencies with limited capacity to adequately address the challenges created by human population growth, land conversion, climate change, and invasive species. By providing additional fiscal and staff resources to these agencies, we can expect improved sustainability of wildlife resources and decreased regulatory uncertainty.

Promoting Science in Policy and Management Decisions

Federal land management agencies implement planning and land use rules that have a direct impact on wildlife resources and management strategies across the United States. In making these determinations, agencies should openly acknowledge and consider the best available science and likely consequences arising from a range of management options. This requires the use of professionally-trained individuals capable of navigating the complexities of modern science-based management. It also requires providing agencies with sufficient research capacity to advance the best available science when needed to make an informed decision.

Including Wildlife Management in Energy Development Planning

All forms of energy development can affect wildlife and wildlife habitats. Energy development, though, remains an integral part of modern society. In meeting America's growing energy needs, all energy sources—including but not limited to coal, oil, gas, wind, solar, and biomass—should be explored, but this exploration can and should be accompanied with measures that prevent, minimize, or mitigate negative impacts on wildlife populations and their habitats.

Enhancing Endangered Species Recovery

Conservation of threatened and endangered species presents one of the most formidable challenges to society. Rapid modification of natural ecosystems is causing wild flora and fauna to become extinct at a rate far exceeding the natural evolutionary pace. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 is a vital tool in preventing species extinction, but must be complemented by broader societal commitments and public-private partnerships to fully address larger sociocultural and socioeconomic issues that frequently drive species extinction and recovery.

Improving Federal Employee Participation in Professional Societies

Current federal policy may limit federal employees from serving on the boards of professional societies or attending professional society meetings and conferences. Curtailing this involvement is detrimental to federal agencies that employ scientists because it may distance the scientist from the full interchange of information, while restricting their professional development—thus compromising processes vital to providing the best scientific advice to the agency.

Strengthening Invasive Species Prevention and Management

An invasive species is an established plant or animal that causes direct or indirect economic or environmental harm within an ecosystem, or will likely cause such harm if introduced to a particular area. The effects of invasive species on the natural world and their economic costs to society are substantial and increasing—currently estimated at over $120 billion a year in the U.S. Direct and effective management efforts to prevent, control, and/or remove invasive species can avert consequent negative impacts and ensure the long-term sustainability of important public trust resources.

Prioritizing Habitat Conservation on Private Lands

Human population growth has resulted in dramatic reductions and alterations in the quality and availability of wildlife habitat. With over 70 percent of lands in the United States in private ownership, effective conservation of wildlife populations depends upon the management actions of private landowners in combination with state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. Voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs, like those in the Farm Bill, help build these public-private partnerships by providing technical assistance and cost-sharing options for landowners wishing to improve habitat, reduce erosion, and/or address other resource concerns on their land.

Recognizing and Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

Annual atmospheric carbon dioxide levels now exceed 400 parts per million. This has caused significant changes in the earth's climatic conditions, resulting in severe alterations to regional temperatures and precipitation patterns. These climatic changes have had, and will likely continue to have, significant and far-reaching impacts to wildlife populations; thus requiring the development and implementation of new, science-based strategies to ensure wildlife populations and their habitats have the opportunity to adapt to greater climatic uncertainty.

Addressing Threats to Wildlife Health

Growing threats to wildlife health include the spread of wildlife diseases via the human-caused or facilitated movement of animals or pathogens and the addition of broad-spectrum toxicants to the environment—like the use of lead (Pb) in ammunition and fishing tackle. Novel or introduced wildlife diseases can have severe consequences on native wildlife populations, especially when combined with other ecological stressors, like toxicants. Mitigating these threats will require rapid response to emerging diseases and a new societal focus on collaborative prevention.

Women of Wildlife: Creating a Diverse Workforce Symposium

Adapted from an article by Nancy Savage

This year at the 23rd Annual Conference of TWS in Raleigh NC, Serra Hoagland (TWS Leadership Institute graduate, AZ), Kerry Nicholson (TWS Leadership Institute graduate, AK), and Carol Chambers (AZ) organized what turned out to be a standing-room only crowd that heard why women and Native and African Americans as well as other groups remain underrepresented in the natural resources workforce and what can be done to increase diversity. In the crowded symposium, cultural, racial, sexual orientation, and ethnic diversity were clearly evident, as well as men ranging in age from seasoned to early career professionals.

Chambers (second from left) helped organize this year's symposium with Hoagland and Nicholson (not pictured here).

Eight presentations covered a wide range of workplace issues, including the influence of cultural heritage in the wildlife profession and workplace issues dividing the millennial and baby boomer generations. Two sessions allowed for audience discussion about topics covered during the presentations.

Serra Hoagland's talk provided a look at how Native Americans and Indigenous people view wildlife as an extension of their own family, a belief that is incorporated into cultural teachings and practices such as stories, songs and prayers.

"Understanding the unique perspectives of tribal communities may foster greater appreciation and broader recognition about the range of cultural and traditional values of wildlife species," said Serra Hoagland, a Native American, who was one of the symposium organizers and a biological scientist with the U.S. Forest Service.

"The presentations were extremely informative and thought provoking," said Wini Kessle, TWS Past President and one of the original group of wildlifers who created WOW. "The audience was highly engaged and on the edge of their seats during the presentations."

During the symposium's wrap up, the discussion went straight to the divide between millennials and baby boomers in the workplace, Kessler says. "The cultural clash they are experiencing is creating a cultural divide," she said, adding that this issue seems to be more controversial than gender issues in the workplace.

The WOW reception following the talks provided a gathering place for individuals to interact and discuss symposium topics. "Part of our goal was to create a network and build community to increase the representation of minorities and women within the wildlife profession," said Carol Chambers, a professor in the School of Forestry at Northern Arizona University and one of the symposium organizers.

WOW Symposium - Continued

A highlight of the gathering was the unveiling of a new WOW logo designed by Kerry Nicholson, a furbearer/carnivore biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. New this year, attendees received a patch with the logo, which they can attach to a favorite piece of clothing to show their support of diversity in the workplace.

"We hope this year's symposium and reception will serve as a stepping stone to creating more involvement in WOW by TWS' Ethnic and Gender Diversity Working Group," said Chambers.

Kerry Nicholson, one of the organizers of this year's WOW symposium

To view any of the WOW symposium talks from the 2016 TWS Annual Conference, please visit the following links:

- A Native American Perspective - Serra Hoagland
- Climate Change in Our Profession, One Wildlifer at a Time - Dana Sanchez
- Creating a Diverse Work Force of Wildlife Biologists: How Are We Doing? - Lisette Waits
- From Idle Observer to Conscientious Objector: Promoting Equality in the Workplace - Serra Hoagland
- Influencing Success of Women and Minorities in Fisheries and Wildlife Professions - Dan Edge
- Millennial Is Not a Dirty Word: New Generation Perspectives - Jennifer Malpass
- Models That Work: Taking Charge of Change - Sarah Fritts
- Portals to the Profession - Winifred Kessler
- The Take Home: Promoting Equality in the Workplace - Carol Chambers
- Underrepresented Groups and the Need to Change - Mamie Parker

www.doi.gov
News Release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
U.S. Department of the Interior

Interior and Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission Agree to Cooperative Wildlife Management Demonstration Project

On November 29, 2016, U.S. Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary Michael L. Connor signed an agreement with officials from the Ahtna Intertribal Resources Commission (AITRC) which coordinates natural resource management issues for the eight federally recognized tribes in the Ahtna region to create a cooperative wildlife management demonstration project on federal and Ahtna Corporation lands in Southcentral Alaska.

The Memorandum of Agreement with the Commission will foster a greater role for the Ahtna people in managing subsistence moose and caribou hunting for tribal members under the Federal Subsistence Management Program.

"As Alaska's population has grown, the Ahtna people have borne the brunt of increasing hunting pressure on their traditional lands because these areas are fairly accessible to much of the Railbelt region, home to 70 percent of Alaska's population," said Deputy Secretary Connor. "This agreement is an effort to help preserve their traditional way of life, put food on the table and improve wildlife habitat and populations for everyone."

Recognizing the importance of traditional ecological knowledge and cultural practices, the agreement commits Interior to begin a process under the Federal Subsistence Board to allow the Ahtna Commission to administer caribou and moose hunts for tribal members under the Federal Subsistence Management Program. The Federal Subsistence Board would establish broad parameters for the initiative, which also would sanction joint work on wildlife management and habitat issues across federal and Ahtna lands. The Ahtna Corporation's traditional region encompasses more than 1.5 million acres from Cantwell to Chitina.

"The DOI and AITRC share mutual concern for conservation of healthy wildlife populations and their habitats, as well as ensuring sustainable and sufficient harvests for customary and traditional subsistence uses. The ability of our people to pass down traditional knowledge and customary practices from generation to generation has allowed us to thrive for thousands of years. We are very thankful for the work of Secretary Jewell and Deputy Secretary Connor and their staff to make sure our traditional ecological knowledge and customary and traditional management practices are heard and represented," said AITRC Board Chair Christopher Gene.

Rural Alaskans in the Ahtna region who are not tribal members will continue to hunt on federal lands under the Federal Subsistence Management Program as before and will not be affected by the agreement. Federal lands in the Ahtna region include portions of Denali National Park and Preserve, Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, and scatted Bureau of Land Management lands around the Richardson and Denali Highways.

The Ahtna Cooperative Management Demonstration Project is the first cooperative agreement established nationwide under Department of the Interior's Secretarial Order No. 3342, which Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced last month at the annual Alaska Federation of Natives conference. The Secretarial Order encourages federal land managers to involve Native Americans in the management of fish and wildlife resources on federal lands that are part of their traditional lands.

In Memoriam - Robert O. Stephenson (1945-2016)

By Scott Brainerd, Dick Shideler, and John Trent

Wildlife biologist Bob Stephenson passed away at home in his Goldstream cabin in Fairbanks, Alaska on October 5th. Born in Wisconsin on November 7th, 1945, he obtained his undergraduate degree in wildlife studies at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. His career spanned several decades in Alaska, starting with his graduate studies at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in 1967. His Master's thesis research focused on the food habits of arctic fox on St. Lawrence Island. Shortly after graduation in 1970, Bob began his career as a Furbearer Biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks.

Bob Stephenson working with wolves in the Brooks Range in the 1970s . Photo by ADF&G

From the start, Bob had a knack for connecting with people in rural villages, and integrating their knowledge and insights into his research. This was the approach he took when he started his wolf study in Anaktuvuk Pass in 1971. Following a period of intensive wolf hunting on the North Slope during the 1950s and 1960s, there was concern that wolf populations had been severely reduced. With the permission of his supervisor, John Burns, Bob moved to Anaktuvuk to live among the Nunamiut and learn from them about wolf behavior and biology.

Bob bought one of the only two traditional sod houses remaining in the village, and field assistants recall sharing quarters with shrews, microtines, and the occasional weasel. This adoption of a traditional house as well as embracing the constant stream of visitors, from little children to village elders, endeared him to the people of Anaktuvuk Pass. While in the village, Bob worked with Bob Ahgook, Justus Mekiana, and other knowledgeable Nunamiut hunters to learn the ways of the wolf. While camping with them and watching a wolf den he realized that they formed hypotheses and tested them with observation much as western scientists do. As a result, Bob's work was one of the first to integrate traditional knowledge with modern wildlife science. This model of full collaboration between "The First Alaskans" and university-trained wildlife scientists has proven highly successful many times over in the ensuing decades since Bob's Anaktuvuk days.

While Bob learned to respect the knowledge and skills of his Nunamiut mentors, he also gave much back to the community of Anaktuvuk. With his background as a trained National Guard medic, Bob and community health aide, Bob Ahgook, nursed the entire village back to health during a severe outbreak of influenza, an act which forever endeared him to the community.

Bob Stephenson became widely known as ADF&G's wolf expert over the ensuing decades of his career and he authored or coauthored several papers and book chapters on the species from field studies conducted in southcentral, interior, and arctic Alaska. He was an early member of the IUCN wolf specialists

Robert Stephenson - Continued

group, formed in 1978. In addition to wolves, Bob also studied lynx in the 1980s, when he developed methods for evaluating population status and the effects of harvest in interior Alaska. His results were instrumental in keeping the Canadian lynx from being listed as an endangered species in Alaska. His passion and dedication for this research is exemplified by the fact that, in order to save the ADF&G money during a period of tight funding, he bought an ultra-light aircraft kit with his own money, built it and taught himself to fly so that he could radio-track lynx.

His rapport with Native communities lead to him being assigned to work on wildlife management issues with the community of Fort Yukon and surrounding villages in the 1990s. He noted wetland habitat in the Yukon Flats was ideal habitat for wood bison. He also discovered and helped document Athabascan oral histories which contained references to the "the hefty one among timber," a literal translation of one of several Athabascan names for wood bison. Through integration of Athabascan oral traditions and hard science based on carbon dating skeletal material, he was able to make a case for reintroducing wood bison to Alaska.

The road to wood bison reintroduction was hard and long, with several discouraging setbacks along the way. It is a testament to Bob's vision, dedication and perseverance that 100 wood bison were finally restored to the Alaskan landscape in the spring of 2015, after two decades of effort. The 29th Alaska Legislature honored Bob's career achievements and his role in wood bison restoration in 2015.

Although the restoration effort was the product of many dedicated individuals, the wild wood bison that roam Alaska today, and in the future, are his greatest legacy.

Bob Stephenson was a generous soul who gave much of himself to friends and to wildlife conservation. He had great impact on many lives during his career. He is sorely missed by his colleagues, fellow travelers, and by the communities he served with such dedication and passion.

Bob handling wood bison at AWCC in Portage in 2010. Photo by Scott Brainerd

Where's the List of Member Publications?

For the past several years I've compiled a list of recent scientific publications by Alaska Chapter members for inclusion in the newsletter. It's been fun and I've really enjoyed reading the diverse work by members. But, it's time to bring it to an end as there's now a better product available. Thanks to Nathan Jones at HDR, the Alaska Wildlife Research Listserv (AWRL) will send you a monthly list of recent scientific publications on Alaska's wildlife. I've subscribed to AWRL for the past several months and have found it timely and complete. It's a great way to keep up on recent publications that are of special interest to Alaskans. So, I encourage you to subscribe to AWRL by contacting nathan.jones@hdrinc.com. Also, if you or your colleagues publish a paper on Alaskan wildlife, please send a copy to Nathan for inclusion in AWRL. Thanks.

Jerry Hupp

ALASKA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

2017 ANNUAL MEETING

UAF Campus, Fairbanks, Alaska

April 4-6, 2017

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

SPECIAL SESSION SUGGESTIONS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society is organizing events for the 2017 Alaska Chapter meeting to be held in Fairbanks in the spring of 2017 and we need your input! We are seeking ideas and suggestions for special sessions that TWS members would like to see at the upcoming meeting. In addition, if you would like to volunteer during the meeting please let us know. Please contact Nathan Svoboda (nathan.svoboda@alaska.gov) or Scott Brainerd (scott.brainerd@alaska.gov) for volunteer information and/or to submit suggestions for special sessions. Thank you and hope to see you at the meeting!

TWS Alaska Chapter Leadership

Your 2016-2018 Executive Board

President: Scott Brainerd, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, scott.brainerd@alaska.gov, phone (907) 459-7261, fax (907) 687-4527

President-Elect: Nathan Svoboda, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Kodiak Archipelago, nathan.svoboda@alaska.gov phone (907) 486-1863.

Past-President: Grant Hilderbrand, U.S. Geological Survey - Alaska Science Center, 4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508, ghilderbrand@usgs.gov, phone (907) 786-7076.

Secretary-Treasurer: Matt Sexson, USGS-Alaska Science Center, 4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508, msexson@usgs.gov, phone (907) 786-7177, fax (907) 786-7021.

Northern Representative: Kerry Nicholson, Alaska Department of Fish and Game - 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701, kerry.nicholson@alaska.gov, phone (907) 328-6117.

Southcentral Representative: John Trent, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Retired, PO Box 932, Kenai, AK 99611, jgtrent@acsalaska.net, phone 907-335-1943

Southeast Representative: Kevin White, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildife Conservation, P.O. Box 110024, Juneau, AK 99811, kevin.white@alaska.gov phone (907) 465-4102.

Newsletter Editor (non-voting): Kaithryn Ott, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 101 12th Ave. Room 110, Fairbanks, AK, 99701, kaithryn_ott@fws.gov, phone (907) 456-0277.

UAF Student Chapter TWS Representative (non-voting): Jessica Herzog, UAF Student Chapter of TWS, Department of Biology and Wildlife, 412 Irving 1, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775, uafwildlife@gmail.com.

Webmaster (non-voting): Dan Thompson, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, dan.thompson2@alaska.gov, phone (907)260-2953.

You can contribute. We need your story ideas. Help keep AK-TWS members connected.

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

Help us keep this newsletter interesting and informative!