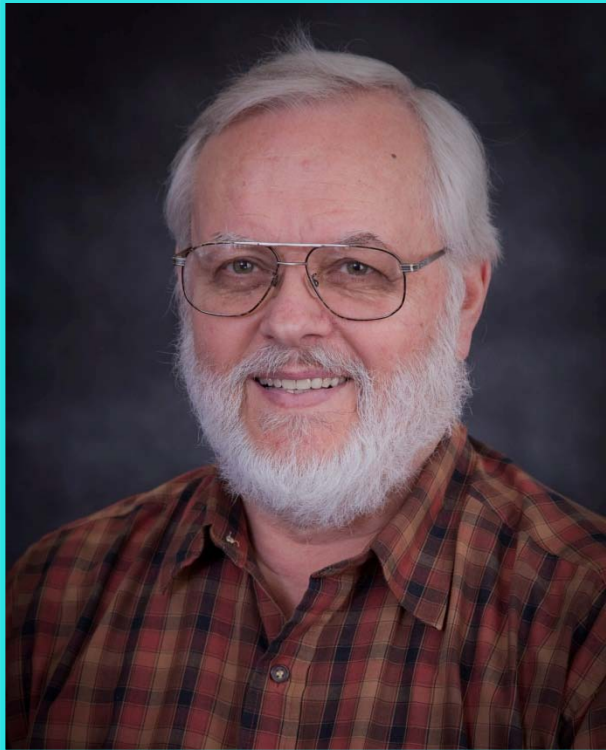

Goodbye to a colleague and friend: Erich Follmann

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/