

**FEDERAL AID  
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
PO Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
State Wildlife Grant**

**Grant Number:** T-21 **Segment Number: 1**  
**Project Number:** 19.0  
**Project Title:** Implementation of Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan: Conserving Alaska's Biological Diversity through Program Development, Coordination, Collaboration, Planning, Research, Outreach, and Action.  
**Project Duration:** 16 April 2011 – 30 June 2015  
**Report Period:** 16 April 2013 – 28 September 2014  
**Report Due Date:** 28 September 2014  
**Principle Investigator:** David Tessler taking over from Mary Rabe (retired), Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game  
**Project Location:** Statewide

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**I. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS FOR LAST SEGMENT PERIOD ONLY**

**Objectives:**

**Objective 1:** Oversee, administer, and coordinate the operations of the Wildlife Diversity Program and associated education, outreach and in-reach efforts, technical guidance projects, and the updating of Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan and its conservation actions, including participating in national and regional conservation strategy coordination efforts and discussions and activities related to wildlife adaptation and climate change.

**Job/Activity 1a:** Supervise, hire, and coordinate staff of the Wildlife Diversity Program, and education and outreach staff activities related to State Wildlife Grant projects.

**Job/Activity 1b:** Submit annual and multi-year contract documents and project implementation reports with supporting documentation for State Wildlife Grants when they are due to Federal Assistance.

**Job/Activity 1c:** As needed, develop the framework for subsequent grant(s) needed to coordinate wildlife action plans.

**Job/Activity 1d:** Participate in state, national and regional conservation strategy coordination efforts when appropriate.

**Job/Activity 1e:** Serve on recovery teams for nongame species, and assist in developing science based recovery actions for listed species.

**Accomplishments:**

- Acting Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator, David Tessler, replaced Mary Rabe who retired September 2013.
- Coordinator Tessler developed a new, long-term non-permanent senior level biologist position (Wildlife\_Biologist III), to coordinate the revision of Alaska's State Wildlife

Action Plan (SWAP), due to USFWS September 30, 2015. The Statewide SWAP Coordinator reports directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator. Recruited for and filled this position in November 2013. The incumbent, Matt Kirchhoff, brings his extensive background and wide-ranging expertise in wildlife conservation and research to this challenging position and we are extremely fortunate to have him. Matt served as an ADF&G Research Biologist in Southeast Alaska from 1981-2003 where his work focused on the competitive interactions between native Sitka black-tailed deer and introduced elk, predator prey relationships of deer and wolves, effects of forest fragmentation and clear cut logging on deer, and the effects of selection logging on forest habitat. He went on to serve as the ADF&G Wildlife Diversity Program Regional Biologist (then Nongame Program) for Southeast Alaska from 2003-2007, where he focused his research efforts on the distribution and movements of Marbled Murrelets and investigated a variety of approaches to effectively survey and monitor murrelet species. Matt also coordinated regional conservation priorities for the Nongame Program, and was instrumental in the early development and implementation of that program and participated in the development of the original CWCS. More recently, Matt served as the Director of Bird Conservation at Audubon Alaska from 2007-2012, where he continued research on species of conservation concern in Alaska, including Kittlitz's Murrelet. While at Audubon, Matt also expanded the Important Bird Area program, developed the Audubon Watchlist that highlights declining and vulnerable bird populations in Alaska, and was involved in policy work on the Arctic, the Tongass National Forest and other statewide conservation issues, especially as they relate to birds and bird habitat. Among his many accomplishments, Matt served on the board of trustees and as Chairman of the board at the Alaska Conservation Foundation where he remains Trustee Emeritus. He earned an M.S. in Zoology from the University of Maine in 1978 where he graduated cum laude, and a B.S. in Forest Biology from Syracuse in 1975, also cum laude.

- Regional Biologist Tessler completed the performance evaluation of the Regional Wildlife Biologist I, Snively. He also hired, trained, deployed, and directed 5 seasonal staff. Biologist Booms completed the performance evaluation of regional biologist I, Barger. Biologist Blejwas recruited, hired, and completed the one-year performance evaluation of regional biologist I, Michael Kohan.
- Coordinator Tessler continued to serve as implementation coordinator for Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan, overseeing the implementation of 25 SWG funded projects: T-21-1.0-21.0; T-22-1; T-9-1; T-16-1.
- In September 2013, Coordinator and Regional Staff Biologists submitted Federal Assistance research reports for 21 projects. Coordinator oversaw the completion of associated Partner Program Federal Assistance reports.
- Regional Biologists participated in three WDP staff meetings to discuss programmatic business, budgets, planning, hiring, and to strategize for the upcoming revision of the SWAP. Coordinator Tessler and Biologist Kirchhoff developed a strategic operational plan for the revision of the SWAP, and a model for revising and identifying the states list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Tessler and Kirchhoff participated in a meeting with DWC leadership to. All staff attended local ADF&G regional meetings. Staff also attended the Alaska Wildlife Society meeting in April 2013.

- Biologist Booms finalized the Boreal Partners in Flight (BPIF) Landbird Plan for Bird Conservation Region 3 – Arctic Plains and Mountains in summer 2013. Booms attended a number of meetings national meeting to discuss and coordinate national and regional conservation strategies with partners: In October 2013 he attended The Wildlife Society national scientific meetings in Milwaukee; a joint meeting of regional wildlife societies and the Raptors of the Northwest Symposia in Pasco, WA where he presented and discussed conservation strategies for Short-eared Owls; the Tundra Conservation Network meeting in Boise, ID, where he discussed Arctic conservation issues with leading experts from across the circumpolar north (8 countries represented); and Alaska Raptor Group Steering Committee meetings in Fairbanks, AK throughout the reporting period.
- Biologist Hagelin continued to partner on the development of the Boreal Partners in Flight Landbird Plan for Bird Conservation Region 4. Hagelin also met with partners in Alaska and Canada and began developing a framework to address boreal songbirds of conservation concern by bringing together a “network” of three long-term songbird migration stations (in Alaska and western Canada), each with 10-20 years of unprocessed data. Combining data analysis efforts, identifying common research goals, and streamlining protocols would provide more powerful outcomes relevant to declining species of concern across the western boreal.
- Biologist Hagelin continued her 2-year term as co-chair of BPIF, the official Alaska state working group of the international *Partners in Flight* program, and represented BPIF at the international Partners in Flight meeting, Snowbird, UT (Aug. 2013) participating in workshops aimed at coordinating conservation efforts of boreal songbirds of concern.
- Acting Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinators attended Pacific Flyway Council (PFC) and Nongame Technical Committee (NTC) meetings in San Diego, CA, and Provo, UT and discussed conservation strategies with other state fish and game agencies, and worked on comments to the Bald and Golden Eagle rule change among other regulatory issues. Acting Coordinators also attended to Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (AMBCC) meetings in March and September 2014, and served as the AMBCC representative to the PFC NTC.
- Acting Coordinators continued to participate in state and national Teaming with Wildlife activities, and the Wildlife Diversity Program Managers group associated with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) that addressed national conservation issues and issues related to the SWAP revision.
- Coordinator Tessler and Biologist Kirchhoff reviewed State Wildlife Action Plan Best Practices to guide the future plan revision, and participated in regular AFWA webinars on SWAP revision key topics.
- Kirchhoff and other staff met twice and had multiple teleconferences on the development of new procedures to identify Alaska’s SGCN).
- Biologist Kirchhoff attended the National SWAP Coordinators meeting in St. Louis, MO July 2014 and participated in workshops and seminars on SWAP revision.
- Diversity Program staff continued to provide comments on species recovery plans as requested, and otherwise assist the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) in developing science based recovery actions for listed and candidate species.

**Objective 2:** Provide expertise on the biology, regulatory framework, and conservation issues pertaining to nongame and priority species to state and federal government agencies, other institutions and stakeholders, and the Alaskan public.

**Job/Activity 2a:** Provide information to and advise the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Commissioner's staff on federal regulations pertaining to nongame species, and ESA listed populations of nongame species including state listed species and species of special concern.

**Job/Activity 2b:** Provide the best available scientific information to and advise ADF&G and other state agency staff with respect to the biology, ecology, range, distribution, abundance, status, trend, and threats for nongame and high priority species to assist in project planning, permitting, review, State Lands management, environmental assessments, environmental impact statements, etc.

**Job/Activity 2c:** Provide the public with information on species with conservation concerns, Alaskan ecosystems, and issues pertaining to conserving Alaska's biodiversity to help them participate meaningfully in implementation and updates of Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan and its associated conservation actions. Develop publications, news articles, presentations, web pages, radio pieces, education programs and materials, and other tools to raise awareness about the status of wildlife species and their habitats in Alaska. Disseminate information to a broad section of Alaskans on species of concern and featured species in Alaska Wildlife Action Plan, ecosystems and their importance, and other conservation challenges.

**Job/Activity 2d:** Respond to information requests and concerns from Alaska citizens on issues related to nongame and SGCN.

**Job/Activity 2e:** Provide professional service by serving as expert and peer reviewers for white papers, journal articles, grant proposals, etc., and by serving on appropriate professional conference committees.

Accomplishments:

- Wildlife Diversity Program staff responded to >100 public inquiries asking for information about nongame species.
- Staff regularly provided expertise and information to the ADF&G Permits Section on wildlife and listed species concerns and recommend/review/alter scientific and resource development permits.
- Staff continued to participate in relevant federal permitting and policy review for a diversity of species including yellow-billed loon, kittlitz's murrelet, bald eagle, and golden eagle.
- Through the Nongame Technical Committee of the Pacific Flyway Council, and the AMBCC, ADF&G was involved with a number of activities and provided comments for various federal regulatory issues.
- Regional Biologist Blejwas continued to represent Alaska on the White Nose Syndrome working Group and attended the national White-Nose Syndrome meeting in 2014.
- Travis Booms, Regions III & V Diversity Biologist, and Marian Snively, Regions II & IV Diversity Biologist, provided information and expertise to falconers throughout the state as their regions' Falconry Representatives, respectively.

- Regional Biologist Tessler participated in multiple meetings with Alaska DEC staff, ADF&G Region II and IV staff, industry representatives, and biological services contractors to provide expertise and commentary on the wildlife research plans for the proposed Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric project.
- Regions II/IV. Regional Biologist Tessler reviewed one proposal for the North Pacific Research Board and one for Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.
- Tessler served on the conference planning committee for the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) meeting held Estes Park, CO, Sep. 2014.
- Regional Biologist Hagelin organized and led the annual BPIF meeting (Nov. 14-15, 2013) in Anchorage, AK with over 60 attendees (in person and online). We hosted two internationally recognized guest speakers who addressed decline of aerial insectivores and the importance of migratory connectivity. Topics of scientific sessions included: Regional and state-wide conservation plans for Alaska; Species of conservation concern; Survey and monitoring efforts; Boreal songbird migration; Climate change.

**Objective 3:** Participate in partnerships

**Job/Activity 3a:** Actively participate in established partnerships and create new ones for research on and conservation of Alaska's nongame and high priority species, and coordinate participation by ADF&G staff in those partnerships.

**Job/Activity 3b:** Administer partnership agreements.

Accomplishments:

- Mary Rabe, Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator (retired): Chair and Alaska Representative of the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee, University of Alaska Foundation Angus Gavin Migratory Bird Research Committee member, The Wildlife Society, Boreal Partners in Flight, Alaska Amphibian Working Group, Alaska Raptor Group, Alaska Shorebird Group, and Western Bat Working Group.
- Karen Blejwas, Region I Diversity Biologist: participated in a continued multi-state grant effort for White Nose Syndrome planning and coordination; served as Southeast representative to The Wildlife Society, Alaska Chapter; Alaska representative to Western Bat Working Group; co-chair of the Northern Bat Working Group; and member of Pacific Seabird Group, American Society of Mammalogists, The Wildlife Society, Boreal Partners in Flight, Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Alaska Amphibian Working Group, and Alaska Entomological Society. Karen along with Link Olson, Curator of Mammals at the University of Alaska Museum, and others co-founded the Northern Bat Working Group to identify information, research and management needs for northern bats and facilitate coordination efforts and information exchange.
- Travis Booms, Regions III & V Diversity Biologist Served as founding member and current chair of Alaska Raptor Group, Chair of Alaska Raptor Group Short-eared Owl Conservation Committee, Chair Early Career Raptor Researcher Committee for Raptor Research Foundation, member of the Raptor Research Foundation Conservation Committee. Booms attended the annual meetings of Boreal Partners in Flight, the Alaska Shorebird Group, and the Alaska Raptor Group to discuss conservation efforts and findings for high priority species; and various Alaska Raptor Group Steering Committee meetings in Fairbanks, AK throughout the reporting period.

- David Tessler, Regions II & IV Diversity Biologist and Acting Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator during this reporting period, served as the Alaska Representative of the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee (NTC), served as the NTC representative to the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council, chaired the International Black Oystercatcher Working Group (IBOWG); served as co-founder and executive committee member of the Alaska Amphibian Working Group, and executive committee member of the Rusty Blackbird International Technical Working Group; and member of the Northern Bat Working Group, Boreal Partners in Flight, and the Alaska Shorebird Group.
- Marian Snively, Regions II & IV Diversity Biologist, is a member of the Northern Bat Working Group, Boreal Partners in Flight, the Alaska Shorebird Group and the Alaska Amphibian Working Group.
- Julie Hagelin, served as co-Chair for Boreal Partners in Flight, spearheaded a Memorandum of Understanding between the Alaska Songbird Institute (ASI - an important, emerging NGO in central Alaska that focuses on songbird migration, public education, and scientific research.) and ADFG.
- Chris Barger, Regions III and V Diversity Biologist: attended the Alaska Bird Conference in fall 2012, ADF&G Region 3 Annual meeting in Fairbanks in Dec. 2012, ADF&G Region 5 Annual meeting in Fairbanks in January 2013, and The Alaska Wildlife Society Meeting in Fairbanks in April 2013.

**Objective 4:** Coordinate and participate in conservation planning efforts and in the development of monitoring, survey and inventory programs and directed studies to conserve nongame and high priority species.

**Job/Activity 4a:** Coordinate the division's participation in monitoring, survey and inventory programs and directed studies on high priority nongame species including short-term efforts by division staff focusing on regional priorities.

**Job/Activity 4b:** Prioritize, design, conduct, and participate in monitoring, survey and inventory programs and directed studies on high priority species.

**Job/Activity 4c:** Incorporate information and data gathered in monitoring, survey and inventory programs and directed studies into the wildlife databases integral to Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan and its conservation actions.

**Job/Activity 4d:** Establish and/or participate in conservation planning efforts for Alaska's nongame species and SGCN, when such plans will be useful in informing future revisions of the Wildlife Action Plan or when such plans provide a detailed step-down from priorities and actions already listed in the Action Plan. Work to insure that various species specific, local, regional, statewide, national, and international conservation planning efforts are well coordinated, that they facilitate the development of economies of scale, and are mutually reinforcing.

Accomplishments:

- Please refer to Accomplishments for Objective 1, 2, and 3, as many of the accomplishments for Objective 4 are also reported for those objectives.

- 20 SWG projects (beyond this overarching coordinating project T-21-19) implemented during the reporting period addressing the monitoring, survey and inventory needs of SGCN. Accomplishments are included in individual project reports.
- Several Diversity Program staff were involved in the review and revisions of the Boreal Partners in Flight Landbird Conservation Plan for Alaska, which includes a number of SGCN. The plan will be useful in informing future revisions of Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan. It also ensures that species specific, local, regional, statewide, national, and international conservation planning efforts are coordinated.

**Objective 5:** Research and plan conservation actions proposed to conserve identified species and habitats.

**Job/Activity 5a:** Inform state and federal agencies, other institutions and stakeholders, and the Alaskan public about the Alaska Wildlife Action Plan, its utility and capacity to serve as a coordinating blueprint for the conservation of wildlife diversity statewide.

**Job/Activity 5b:** Gather information about and develop research/monitoring/conservation strategies for addressing direct or indirect adverse affects to nongame species and SGCN. Where deemed appropriate, establish research and surveys to identify factors that may assist in restoration and more effective conservation of such species and their habitats.

**Job/Activity 5c:** Provide technical guidance (by developing citizen science and other projects, and providing expertise) to other agencies, groups, and the general public who want to assist wildlife biologists in collecting important information that will be used to support future research and conservation planning.

**Job/Activity 5d:** Gather information, data, and other input from a variety of sources for improving and updating Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan and initiating wildlife action plans resulting from it.

**Job/Activity 5e:** Hold/attend internal and/or interagency workgroup meetings as appropriate. Coordinate and communicate management and research priorities, plans, progress, and findings with representatives from Federal, State, and local governments, NGOs, and Native corporations that manage significant areas of land and water within the state, or significantly affect the conservation of wildlife and their habitats.

Accomplishments:

- Please refer to Accomplishments for Objective 1, 2, and 3, as many of those accomplishments are directly and indirectly related to accomplishments for Objective 5.
- 20 SWG projects (beyond this overarching coordinating project T-21-19) were implemented during the reporting period which address research, conservation, inventory, survey, and monitoring priorities of SGCN – all of which involve extensive consultation, cooperation, collaboration, and communication with stakeholders, other state, federal, and Native agencies, NGO's, and various universities throughout North America - Accomplishments are included in individual project reports.
- Staff continued to provide partner agencies and organizations with copies of the Alaska Species Ranking System and gave guidance to partners for its use to priorities conservation actions on species of concern.

- Staff held internal meetings to continue the review, planning, and gathering information for the State Wildlife Action Plan revision process.
- Staff participated in multiple local, regional, statewide, national, and international meetings, taxonomic working group meetings, regulatory meetings with Federal, State, and local governments, NGOs, industry, and Native corporations that all relate back to identifying and refining management and research priorities within the state and beyond, that significantly affect the conservation of wildlife and their habitats.
- Staff held internal meetings to finalize the Alaska Species Ranking System, which prioritizes species of greatest conservation need and will be a tool for conservation and research planning in Alaska.

## **II. PUBLICATIONS**

Booms, T. L., Holroyd, G. L., Gahbauer, M. A., Trefry, H. E., Wiggins, D. A., Holt, D. W., Johnson, J. A., Lewis, S. B., Larson, M. D., Keyes, K. L. and Swengel, S. 2014. Assessing the status and conservation priorities of the short-eared owl in North America. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 78: 772–778

Tessler, D.F., M.L. Snively, T.A. Gotthardt. 2014. New insights on the distribution, ecology, and overwintering behavior of the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) in central, northern, and western Alaska. *Northwestern Naturalist* 95(3) pp TBD, accepted 10 February 2014.

Tessler, D.F., J.A. Johnson, B.A. Andres, S. Thomas, & R.B. Lanctot. 2014. A global assessment of the conservation status of the Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*. *International Wader Studies* 20: 83–96.

Tessler, D.F. and S.L. Kuzmin. 2013. Amphibians and Reptiles of the Arctic in Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, Meltofte, H. (Ed.), Special Publication of the Arctic Council, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) International Secretariat, Akureyri, Iceland, p 182-191.

## **III. ADDITIONAL FEDERAL AID-FUNDED WORK NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE THAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THIS PROJECT DURING THIS SEGMENT PERIOD**

None.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT**

Project should continue for another year.

**Prepared by:** David Tessler and other WDP Staff, ADF&G

**Date:** 25 September 2014