

**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 2014
Report Period: 16 April 2012 – 15 April 2013
Report Due Date: 28 September 2013
Principle Investigator: Mary Rabe, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game (retired)
Project Location: Statewide

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:

- 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 and oversaw the hiring of and provided training for another Regional Biologist, Julie Hagelin.

- In September 2012, Regional Staff Biologists submitted Federal Assistance research reports for 21 projects (T-21, 1.0-21.0).
- Regional Biologists created five new projects:
 - 1-Olive-sided Flycatcher migration and breeding biology
 - 2-Assessing the impact of Biomass Harvest on Priority Species
 - 3-Golden Eagle survival and dispersal
 - 4-Golden Eagle migration
 - 5-Gyr Falcon conservation genetics
- Regional Biologists participated in three WDP staff meetings to discuss programmatic business, budgets, planning, hiring, and strategize for the upcoming revision of the AKWAP. Biologist Tessler also participated in a meeting with DWC leadership to develop a strategic operational plan for the revision of the AKWAP. All staff attended local ADF&G regional meetings. Staff also attended the Alaska Wildlife Society meeting in April 2013. Biologist Booms attended 3 Alaska Raptor Group Steering Committee meetings throughout the report period. Two staff each drafted a chapter in the Boreal Partners in Flight Landbird Plan for Conservation, Bird Conservation Regions 3 and 4.
- Mary Rabe, Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator, 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): provided input and review on State Wildlife Action Plan Best Practices to guide future plan revisions, commented on development phases of new federal project reporting system (WildTRACS), provided input and review on State Wildlife Grant program effectiveness measures.
- Mary continued to serve as implementation coordinator for Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan. Mary worked with other staff to integrate conservation concerns and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) into the Western Governors' Association (WGA) initiative to develop a Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) for Alaska. The Western Governors' Association is an independent, nonpartisan organization of Governors representing 19 Western states working collaboratively to identify and address key policy and governance issues including natural resources. To help balance energy development and wildlife conservation, the Western Governors initiated development of a process to **“identify key wildlife migration corridors and crucial wildlife habitats in the West and make recommendations on needed policy options and tools for preserving those landscapes.”**
- 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, ADF&G was involved with a number of activities and provided comments for various federal regulatory issues.
- 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 submitted five (5) papers for peer reviewed publication: two were published during the reporting period, one is in press, and two others are in review (see below, Publications). David also presented five oral papers and two posters at two professional conferences (Bird Conservation Conference, Plymouth,

MA, Alaska Bird Conference, Anchorage, AK) during the reporting period, and was invited to present a talk at the Alaska Forum on the Environment (Anchorage, AK) and to guest lecture for the Sitka Sound Science Center and the University of Alaska Southeast, Sitka, AK.

- Regions II/IV. Regional Biologist Tessler reviewed two proposals for the North Pacific Research Board and one for Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.
- Tessler served on the conference planning committee for the third International Rusty Blackbird Working Group meeting held in conjunction with the Bird Conservation Conference held in Plymouth, MA in October 2012.
- Regional Biologist Hagelin worked collaboratively with Alaska State Department of Natural Resources on planning for biomass harvest in central Alaskan forests, gave a guest presentation to the Biomass Working Group on the impact of biomass harvest on wildlife, provided guidance to the Boreal Partners in Flight on the potential for biomass industry to impact songbird habitat and gave technical assistance and guidance to the Alaska Songbird Institute, important and emerging NGO that focuses on songbirds and science education in central Alaska.

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: 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.
- Travis Booms, Regions III & V Diversity Biologist: 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. 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.

- David Tessler, Regions II & IV Diversity Biologist, 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; member of the Alaska Bat Working Group, Boreal Partners in Flight, and the Alaska Shorebird Group.
- Marian Snively, Regions II & IV Diversity Biologist, is a member of the Alaska Bat Working Group, Boreal Partners in Flight, the Alaska Shorebird Group and the Alaska Amphibian Working Group.
- Julie Hagelin, 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. Hagelin is partnering with 6 entities to accomplish conservation priorities for species of concern.
- 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:

- 5 new projects were initiated during the reporting period addressing the monitoring, survey and inventory needs of SGCN. Accomplishments are included in individual project reports.
- Karen Blejwas, Southeast Region I Diversity Biologist: continues to work with Link Olson, Curator of Mammals at the University of Alaska Museum, and others to facilitate a 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: continued collaboration with Alaska Bird Observatory and the Creamer's Field Migration Station; revised, tested, and improved upon a survey of raptor biologists intended to assess methods, intensity, locations and frequency of cliff-nesting raptor surveys in Alaska; continued Golden Eagle and Gyrfalcon fidelity, dispersal and survival research projects.
- David Tessler, Regions II & IV Diversity Biologist worked with the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group (IRBWG) to facilitate a new range-wide Conservation Strategy for the species.
- Julie Hagelin, Regions III and V Diversity Biologist continued to collaborate with the Alaska Bird Observatory, Creamer's Field Migration Station, and the Alaska Songbird Institute for songbird monitoring efforts. She also collaborated with the Biodiversity Research Institute and the American Bird Conservancy to plan and conduct a local and large-scale Olive-sided Flycatcher research and monitoring program and with the National Park Service on small mammal and songbird monitoring efforts.
- 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:

- Staff provided 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 an internal meeting to begin planning and gathering information for the State Wildlife Action Plan revision process.
- Staff held an internal meeting to finalize the Alaska Species Ranking System, which priorities species of greatest conservation need and will be a tool for conservation and research planning in Alaska.
- Travis Booms, Regions IIL & V Diversity Biologist: collaborated and planned with two professors at Miami University in Ohio on a Boreal Owl study in interior Alaska; collaborated with the Arctic NWR and National Park Service in planning for a Gray-headed Chickadee study to survey historical presence points and assess best methods for surveying other areas; and developed a citizen science poster requesting citizen participation in studies of Alaska hares.

II. PUBLICATIONS

Tessler, D.F., M.L. Snively, T.A. Gotthardt. New insights on the distribution, ecology, and overwintering behavior of the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) in central, northern, and western Alaska. *Northwestern Naturalist*, *In Review*.

Guzzetti, B. M., **D.F. Tessler**, V. A. Gill, G.K. Sage, E. C. Murphy, and S. L. Talbot. Genetic Population Structuring of the American Black Oystercatcher, *Molecular Ecology*, *In Review*.

Tessler, D. F., J.A. Johnson, B.A. Andres, S. Thomas, and R.B. Lanctot. 2013. A global assessment of the conservation status of the Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*). *Bulletin of the International Wader Study Group #20*, *In Press*.

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.

J.A. Johnson, J.A., S.M. Matsuoka, **D.F. Tessler**, and R. Greenberg. 2012. Identifying Migratory Pathways Used by Rusty Blackbirds Breeding in South-central Alaska. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 124(4):698-703.

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.

AK Wildlife Action Plan
FY13 Progress Annual Report

Prepared by: Travis Booms and other WDP Staff, ADF&G

Date: 25 November 2013