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WILDLIFE WATCHERS' NEWSLETTER



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Nongame Wildlife Program

Division of Wildlife Conservation Alaska Department of Fish & Game

First Annual Spring Open House at Creamer's Refuge

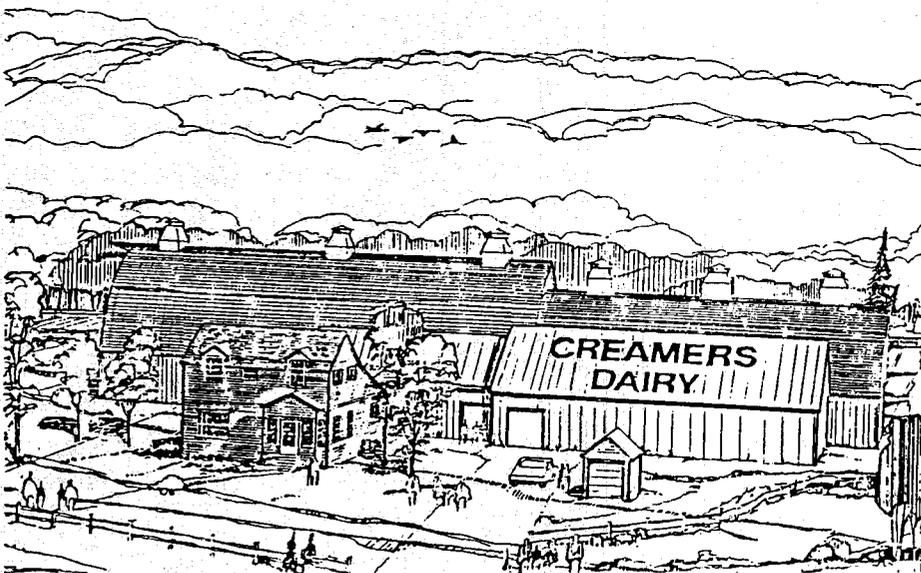
Spring has always been the busiest season for wildlife at Creamer's Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks. Ever since the 1930s birds have been attracted to the dairy's open fields as a spring staging area near the end of their northward migration. To continue that tradition, ADF&G and local civic groups maintain the fields in grass and grains and provide additional grain atop the snow each spring. Since the late 1960s, a second tradition has become established—local fifth graders visit the Refuge each spring to view the waterfowl.

This spring, ADF&G sponsored the first annual *Spring at Creamer's Field*, an open house focused on wildlife education and appreciation which complements the annual fall Hunting and

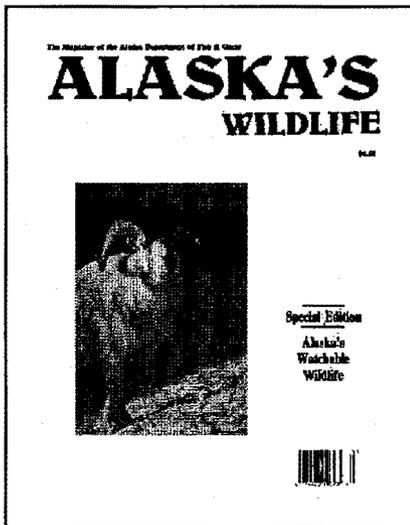
Fishing Day. Timed to coincide with the return of the waterfowl, this year's event on April 27 occurred at the peak of bird abundance. The melt-water from the winter's record snowfall provided perfect conditions to attract birds and for viewing.

In addition to bird watching aided by knowledgeable volunteers, guests had the opportunity to learn wildlife photography first hand from local professionals and to slip on earphones and listen to the close-up sounds that nature sound recorders pick up with their specialized equipment. More than twenty organizations shared information about outdoor education and other related activities. A local biological research company brought a mobile radar truck that allowed visitors to see how biologists track migrating birds in the dark or fog. The newly remodeled farmhouse, which will serve as a visitor and nature center for the Refuge, was open to the public.

This was also the first opportunity for people to join *Friends of Creamer's Field*, the fledgling nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and promoting the Refuge and its activities. *Friends* is developing programs to provide "Education in Action," to integrate environmental education, history, community pride, and research interests for everyone. For membership information, contact ADF&G, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701.



Magazine Features Wildlife Viewing



The March/April 1991 issue of ADF&G's magazine *Alaska Wildlife* features wildlife viewing in an attractive format full of color photos and pertinent information. Articles include special viewing sites, species of high interest, monthly viewing highlights, guidelines for viewing, and tips for collecting or purchasing wildlife souvenirs. Background articles on the growing interest in wildlife viewing and the economic, tourism, and management impacts are also included in this 45-page magazine.

This issue will be of interest to residents and visitors who are interested in seeing wildlife. Individual copies are available for purchase for \$5 (including shipping and handling) from ADF&G's Public Communications Section, P.O. Box 3-2000, Juneau, AK 99802-2000. Orders of 25 copies or more receive a 25% discount.

People who order a new two-year subscription to the magazine (\$18) will receive a free copy of ADF&G's 170-page book, *A Guide to Wildlife Viewing in Alaska* (sold at \$12.95).

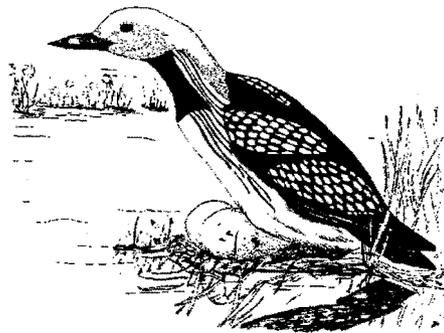
Loon Watch Continues in Southcentral Alaska

Up to 200 volunteers have participated in ADF&G's Loon Watch surveys each year since 1986 contributing information about loons on 200 lakes in southcentral Alaska. Loon populations have declined in many states due to habitat loss, pollution, and uncontrolled shooting earlier in the century. Alaska and Minnesota are the only two states with substantial numbers of breeding loons.

Fortunately, studies in other states have shown that loons and people can coexist if certain conservation practices are implemented. Because loons are valuable aesthetically and ecologically, ADF&G hopes to maintain healthy loon populations in populated areas of southcentral Alaska.

Loon Watch survey volunteers have helped identify loon nesting lakes, traditional nesting areas, and loon conservation problems. We hope to learn more about how loons and people can coexist so that even Alaskans in developed parts of the state can enjoy this "wilderness species."

If you would like to participate in this fun and rewarding effort during 1991, please contact Nancy Tankersley at the Anchorage ADF&G office. An informational packet, including observation forms, instructions, and background information, will be sent to all volunteers. All participants receive an attractive loon pin as a small thank you for their efforts.



Annual Loon Festival Postponed

The Loon Festival for 1991 was canceled due to lack of a coordinator. The Bird Treatment and Learning Center had agreed to coordinate the festival this year, but were unable to fulfill that agreement due to a loss of personnel. We hope to find another coordinator for the festival in 1992 to work with a group of outstanding and dedicated volunteers. Money raised during the 1990 festival has been supporting various research, education, and conservation projects.

Watershed Launched

The Alaska Wildlife Curriculum Program publicized its 1991 theme "Wetlands and Wildlife" in a new publication *Watersheds*. The first issue of this new department newsletter about aquatic and riparian education programs of the department was a joint project of the Division of Wildlife Conservation, the Division of Sport Fish, the Alaska Natural Resources and Outdoor Education Association (ANROE), and the Northwest Association of Marine Educators (NAME).

Department staff provided newsletter articles to ANROE newsletter editor Cathy Rezabeck who then designed and produced the newsletter as one of ANROE's four quarterly publications sent to its members, some 400 educators throughout the state. Copies of the newsletter were also sent with the annual Alaska Wildlife Curriculum packet mailing to all Alaska schools and will be included in packets distributed in the future.

The first issue provides information about the Sport Fish Division aquatic education program, funding sources for aquatic education, an innovative and successful aquatic education trail project in Juneau, considerations about in-class incubators, and the "Wetlands and Wildlife" curriculum.

The department intends to publish the newsletter two to four times annually. To be placed on the mailing list, write to: *Watershed* Mailing List, Jon Lyman, Sport



Fish Division, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, P.O. Box 3-2000, Juneau, Alaska 99802. If you would like more information about ANROE, write to ANROE, P.O. Box 110536, Anchorage, AK 99511-0536.

1991—A Wet and Wild Year

Help was sent this year to teachers who regularly squish their way across wetlands with their class each spring, squinting as flocks of fast-moving birds wing their way overhead. Alaska educators were mailed "Wetlands and Wildlife" curriculum packets in early April to help them celebrate Alaska Wildlife Week April 21-28. Some 1500 packets were sent to individual teachers by request and as school "library copies" for use throughout the year.

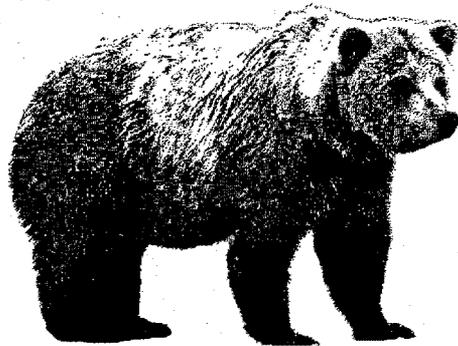
The curriculum packet was a joint project of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Revenues from the sale of Alaska Duck Stamps and prints supplemented Alaska Wildlife Week program funding. The combined funding allowed the production of hefty, grade-level-specific materials, including a special unit on migratory birds and their management. Educators received teacher's guides, classroom activity guides, a field trip manual, wetland cards of over 100 wetland plants and animals, color posters, games, a copy of the department's special magazine issue on wetlands, and *Watersheds*, the department's new newsletter about aquatic education.

Curriculum packets will be distributed in the future through teacher workshops conducted by department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge staff. Teachers interested in obtaining the materials or a workshop should contact a local refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99516 (786-3351), or Colleen Matt of the ADF&G Anchorage office, Division of Wildlife Conservation (267-2241).

Bear Finds New Habitat

A large brown bear will be residing soon in prime habitat—inside Juneau's Gastineau Salmon Hatchery. The captive salmon and visitors to the hatchery will be safe—the bear and habitat will be an interpretive display. Marilyn Sigman, Southeast Region's Nongame Biologist, has been working with the Executive Director, Ladd Macauley, and the Tourism Director, Reccia Wilson, of the hatchery to develop a display featuring a bear donated by a local taxidermist. The hatchery is a project of the Douglas Island Pink and Chum nonprofit organization and has education as one of its prime functions. Their desire to develop an educational display around the bear meshed perfectly with the new initiative by the department to provide more information to Alaska's visitors. The department and the hatchery are sharing the costs of the exhibit.

The key ingredient in the successful development of the display will be Bob Banghart, a museum exhibit designer of considerable experience with the creation of Southeast Alaska scenes. He's the



person who spent part of last visitor season perched in the eagle nest tree in the State Museum in downtown Juneau, "touching up" the display he created which still has museum visitors asking whether the museum was built around the tree. After many years work with the state museum, Bob now works independently with many of Alaska's small museums.

Plans for the exhibit include a photo-mural backdrop behind the bear and a late summer gravel bar scene, complete with spawned-out salmon (also stuffed, fortunately). An interpretive panel will provide the hatchery's 100,000 visitors with more information about the importance of Alaska's many salmon streams and riparian forest habitat to brown bears.

Sigman and Banghart are also working with the University of Alaska Southeast to design a second exhibit in the hatchery featuring bald eagles and salmon. In the future, the department and hatchery staff want to add a stream and interpretive information about stream habitats to the bear display. The display will also serve in the future as an area to dispense information about wildlife-viewing opportunities to visitors.

State of Alaska
Department of Fish & Game
Nongame Wildlife Program
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518

Marilyn Sigman
Douglas
465-4265

Nancy Tankersley
Anchorage
344-0541

John Wright
Fairbanks
456-5156

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