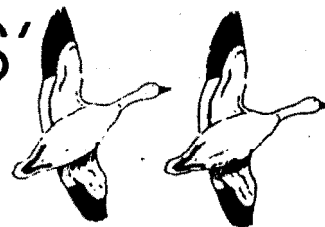


WILDLIFE WATCHERS' NEWSLETTER



published twice a year by
Nongame Wildlife Program

Division of Wildlife Conservation Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Owling Around Fairbanks

More than 60 people crowded into the backroom at Creamer's Farmhouse to prepare for an owling adventure on the evening of March 20. Biologists John Wright and Ted Swem presented an introduction to owls of the interior and then led a caravan to two locations where boreal owls were singing. Participants learned that not all owls hoot—the boreal's song is a series of bursts of throaty whistles, often likened to the winnowing of snipe. This event was sponsored by the Friends of Creamer's Field in cooperation with ADF&G.



Interpretive Programs at Creamer's Refuge Funded

Two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) challenge grants have been awarded to Creamer's Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks, one for displays and exhibits in the remodeled farmhouse visitor center and the second for development of a nature trail around a wetland on the Refuge. These grants are to be matched by money and in-kind contributions from ADF&G's Waterfowl Program, Ducks Unlimited, Friends of Creamer's Field, Arctic Audubon Society, and other organizations. Refuge Manager Kris Hartnett worked closely with USFWS refuge personnel in Fairbanks to develop the grant proposals and is looking forward to drawing upon the assistance of many groups and agencies to complete these long-awaited projects.

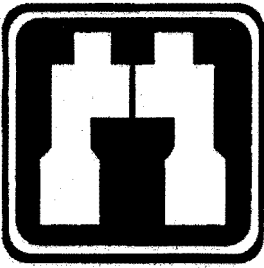
Anchorage Hosts Annual Loon Festival May 8, 9

Anchorage, the largest city in North America to still have nesting loons, will host the Alaska Loon Festival 1992 the second weekend in May. The Friday evening picnic at Goose Lake May 8 and the day-long session on Saturday, May 9 at Wendler Junior High School are designed to be educational, informative, and entertaining on the subject of loons.

"Dr. Loonacy," in the person of Denny Olson, former director of the Minnesota Loon Preservation Project, will present an entertaining and educational slide show for older children and adults. Also appearing at the festival will be Tom Klein, author of two books on the subject, *Loon Magic* and *Loon Magic for Kids*.

The festival will also feature a loon calling contest, guest speakers on loon biology and conservation, guided walks to see loons, children's activities, movies, wildlife craft sales, and exhibits. The event is being presented by the Anchorage Audubon Society, the Anchorage Waterways Council, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Supporters of the festival include BP Exploration, ARCO Alaska, Inc., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage Committee for Resource Education, and the Wildlife Federation of Alaska. All proceeds benefit loon conservation in Alaska. For more information, call 344-1634.



Regional Watchable Wildlife Committees Organize to Promote Wildlife Viewing

The Southeast Alaska Watchable Wildlife Committee was revitalized this winter following formation of a statewide Steering Committee on Watchable Wildlife. The regional committee includes representatives of state and federal agencies who manage wildlife recreation, tourism industry groups such as the Alaska Visitors Association and the Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau, and tour operators who provide wildlife-viewing opportunities. Representatives from both the highways section and ferry system section of the Alaska Department of Transportation also attend meetings.

The group has compiled a list of potential cooperative projects to develop wildlife-viewing opportunities or enhance and publicize existing ones. They have also reviewed Board of Game proposals affecting wildlife-viewing, were briefed on funding initiatives for nonconsumptive use fees of Pack Creek, been involved in the early stages of a regional brown bear management plan, and discussed ways to publicize ethical wildlife viewing and to educate pilots of flightseeing tours as to when wildlife are being disturbed by a close approach. They are working to develop an inventory and computerized database of viewing sites and tour operators who feature wildlife-viewing. This spring and summer, they will also participate in a statewide inventory of roadside wildlife-viewing sites, including some very unique opportunities along the marine highway.

The committee is a partnership of public agencies and members of private industry who share a common interest in sustaining this type of wildlife use into the future. As this segment of the tourism industry continues to grow, economic returns to the many locally based small businesses and local economies will also grow. However, careful monitoring is needed to ensure that high-quality

wildlife-viewing opportunities are maintained without crowding of visitors or negative impacts on wildlife.

Similar committees are being organized in Southcentral and Interior/Northern Alaska. In Anchorage contact Nancy Tankersley (344-0541) and in Fairbanks call John Wright (456-5156) if you would like to participate in a regional committee or if you have comments.

Wildlife Conservation Tag Passes House

House Bill 446, introduced by Representative Fran Ulmer of Juneau, passed the house by a vote of 40 to 0 on April 14. This bill establishes a wildlife conservation tag program through the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The wildlife conservation tag will be made available for sale to the public to provide support for wildlife conservation programs that benefit nongame and threatened and endangered species of wildlife, wildlife education, and wildlife viewing. The program would be voluntary at this time except for those people using McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary, and Walrus Island State Game Sanctuary. A person using one of the three sanctuaries would need to purchase a conservation tag.

The Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game will establish the cost of the wildlife conservation tag by regulation. This program is designed to supplement funding for the department's wildlife conservation program. As this program grows, watchable wildlife, nongame, and education programs will benefit significantly from this new funding source.

Species of Concern

Peregrine Falcons

From 1986 through 1991, ADF&G nongame biologists John Wright and Jeff Hughes conducted surveys of endangered peregrine falcons in western and northwestern Alaska. These and other surveys in infrequently visited parts of the state complemented regular surveys on index rivers in interior and northern regions conducted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Endangered Species biologists. Combined results show a strong recovery by both Arctic and American populations of peregrines in Alaska. USFWS has initiated a status review of these endangered populations which may lead to their removal from threatened and endangered lists. In light of this, state biologists are coordinating with USFWS and other federal agencies to cooperatively monitor peregrines on the Tanana and Sagavanirtok Rivers, two of the four index survey rivers.



forests are also being cut at a rapid rate). In 1989 the Alaska Bird Conference proposed that songbird studies be initiated in Alaska, but it took a national initiative, the *Partners in Flight* program, to get things started. In 1991, Alaskan representatives attended meetings of this new program and the Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) began studies of migrating and breeding songbirds at several sites in Interior Alaska.

This spring and summer, more songbird studies will be initiated. ABO is setting up a long-term study site at Creamer's Refuge in Fairbanks in cooperation with Arctic Audubon Society, ADF&G, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Volunteers interested in working on this project should contact Tom Pogson at 456-5156 (w) or 455-9130 (h). Potter's Marsh in Anchorage will have a breeding season study of songbirds. Volunteers are needed for mist netting and to conduct bird censuses. Contact Nancy Tankersley at 344-0541 if you are interested in helping with this project.

Neotropical Migrant Songbirds

For several years concern has been building for declining populations of thrushes, warblers, and other songbirds that breed in North America and winter in tropical Central and South America. The sharpest declines have been noted in the northeastern United States, but biologists are uncertain of their cause—the loss of nesting habitat in the U.S. and cutting of tropical forests in wintering areas are the two most likely culprits.

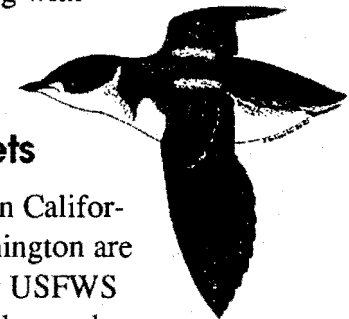
In Alaska, we know little about our songbird populations. We share many common neotropical migrant species with the rest of North America and also have several uniquely Alaskan breeders that winter in the forests of Southeast Asia (these



Marbled Murrelets

Marbled murrelets in California, Oregon, and Washington are under consideration by USFWS for listing as threatened or endangered. This small seabird of near-coastal waters of western North America is vulnerable because it nests in coastal forests and it may be caught incidentally in nets of commercial fishermen. The Alaska population of murrelets, though also exposed to these impacts, is considered to be relatively abundant and is not included in the current deliberations.

Because no sound estimates of the size of Alaska populations are available, several agencies including USFWS, Forest Service, and National Park Service have begun murrelet studies in Southeast and Prince William Sound.



continued next page

First Alaska Biodiversity Conference Convenes

The Alaska Biodiversity Conference was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage March 23-26, 1992. The goal of the conference was to share information and stimulate discussion about the global biodiversity issue and place it in an Alaskan context. The conference brought together a diverse group of over 250 Alaskan scientists, resource managers, educators, conservationists, industry representatives, and the general public as well as a number of invited speakers with extensive multidisciplinary experience from around the world.

Although Alaska's resource base is enormous and our ecosystems and wildlife populations remain largely intact, the state's natural resources are increasingly in demand by people throughout

the state, nation, and world. The health of Alaska's ecosystems and the increasing knowledge of conservation biology provide us with an outstanding opportunity to conserve Alaska's biodiversity for the benefit of current and future generations.

The Alaska Biodiversity Conference provided a forum for capturing this opportunity. An important goal of the conference was to begin building cooperative strategies and designing multidisciplinary solutions to biodiversity management in order to maintain the integrity of Alaska's ecosystems. As a follow-up to the conference, a collection of summary papers will be published and will be available through The Nature Conservancy, Alaska Natural Heritage Program, 279-4549.

Species of Concern

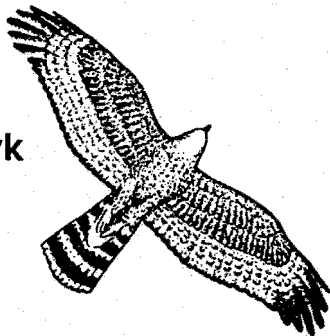
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These studies follow on the heels of early work by ADF&G biologists Sue Quinlan and Jeff Hughes. In 1984, they used radio-telemetry to locate the first murrelet nest ever found on purpose.

Northern Goshawk

This woodland hawk ranges over most of the North American continent.

Concern for local populations in the southwest states and for a possibly unique race on the coast of British Columbia and Southeast Alaska has led to consideration of this species for listing as threatened or endangered by USFWS. Loss of forested habitat is the primary cause for concern. ADF&G and the Forest Service have recently begun a study of goshawks in the Ketchikan area.



Alaska Wildlife Week Wildlife for the Future April 19-25

The 1992 Alaska Wildlife Curriculum packet was mailed in early April to over 1,000 Alaskan educators in preparation for Alaska Wildlife Week, April 19-25. This year's K-8 packet was the result of a partnership between ADF&G, Alaska Natural Resource Outdoor Educators, and ARCO Alaska, Inc. The three organizations joined forces to revise a unit of the 1983 packet with the theme "Wildlife for the Future."

The 1983 materials were updated with more current information and expanded to cover the topics of habitat and biological diversity in addition to wildlife populations, threatened and endangered species, and wildlife management. In addition, a new color poster was produced with information about the federal Endangered Species Act and Alaska's extinct, endangered, and threatened species.

Packets are still available by request. Contact Colleen Matt, ADF&G, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 267-2179.

Why One Shouldn't Chase Loons with a Motorboat

by Lisa K., age 12

Editor's Note: The following was written after the author was seen in a motorboat chasing a pair of Common Loons with a chick. She was given information about loons and why the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has a loon conservation program.

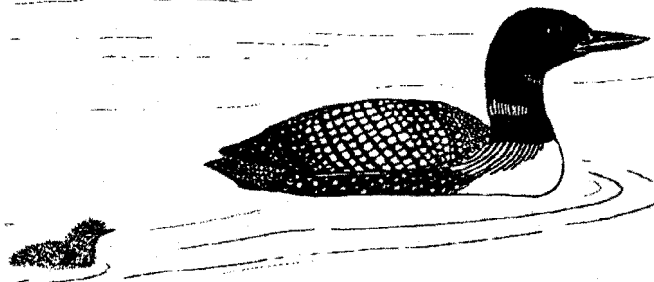
The reason why anyone shouldn't chase a loon with a motorboat is because if the loon is a baby, the wakes could drown them or the motor could scare them. Or if it were an adult and the loon dove under the water and somehow it didn't go far enough under the water and you go right over where they dove, you could kill them with your motor by cutting them up.

The reason why ADF&G wants to keep these loons alive is because loons are dying and the only place they are common is Alaska and Minnesota. That's why we have the ADF&G Loon Watch!

ADF&G says that if we see some harassment with loons to talk to the people who are harassing them and tell them why people shouldn't harm loons like that person has done. And then if it continues, to contact ADF&G as soon as possible.

I'm really sorry for what I have done! I have just learned a lot of info on loons and I am going to be a lot better on driving our boat.

Sincerely,
Lisa K.



1992 Loon Watch

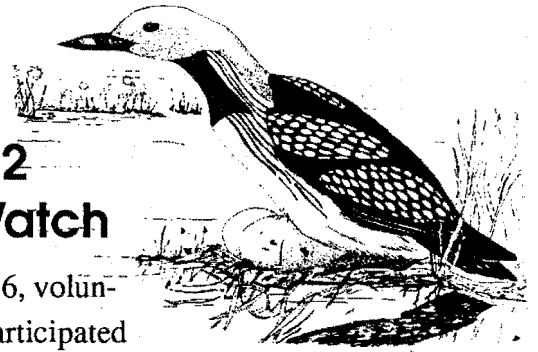
Since 1986, volunteers have participated each year in ADF&G's Loon Watch surveys gathering information about loons on 200 lakes in southcentral Alaska. Loon populations have declined in many states due to habitat loss, pollution, and uncontrolled shooting earlier in the century. Alaska and Minnesota are the only two states with substantial numbers of breeding loons. Loon Watch survey volunteers have helped identify loon nesting lakes, traditional nesting areas, and loon conservation problems.

If you would like to participate in this fun and rewarding effort during 1992, please contact Nancy Tankersley at the Anchorage ADF&G office, 344-0541. An informational packet, including observation forms, instructions, and background information will be sent to all volunteers. All participants receive an attractive loon pin in appreciation of their work.

Invest in Alaska's Most Renewable Resource

Start your spring with a tax-deductible contribution to the **Alaska Watchable Wildlife Conservation Trust**. This newly-created fund will be managed by the Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Proceeds will be used to enhance wildlife watching opportunities, support wildlife education and research, and eventually acquire critical wildlife habitat.

Tax-deductible gifts and checks should be made out to the Alaska Conservation Foundation, 430 W. 7th Ave., #215, Anchorage, AK 99501. A notation on the check or in a letter should indicate the gift is for the Wildlife Trust Fund. For more information, call ACF at 276-1917.



Wildlife Economic and Public Opinion Survey

In cooperation with several federal resource agencies, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game recently mailed out questionnaires to 1991 Alaska registered voters and 1991 resident and nonresident hunters seeking information on their use of wildlife resources and their opinions about wildlife and wildlife management in Alaska. The results of these surveys will provide resource managers with a better understanding of public desires relative to hunting and nonhunting wildlife recreation in Alaska. Resource managers will also be able to assess the economic value of wildlife and how money spent on wildlife recreation is distributed through the economy. The results of these surveys will be available next spring.

Copper River Delta Shorebird Workshop

May 8-10, 1992

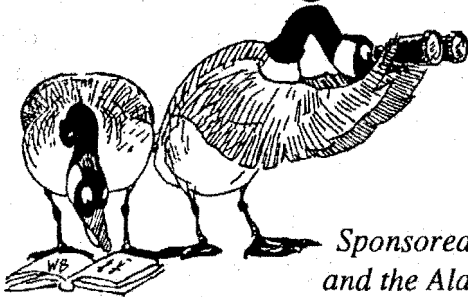
What: A three-day field trip to the Copper River Delta to observe incredible shorebird migration along the tidal mudflats and expansive wetlands of the area. The workshop will include an evening class taught by resource experts and two days of birding field trips.

Where: Cordova, Alaska, gateway to the Copper River Delta.

Who: Workshop and field trip instruction will be provided by noted Alaskan ornithologists.

Contact: Sandra Frost, Cordova Ranger District, P.O. Box 280, Cordova, AK 99754, (907) 423-7661.

Spring at Creamer's Field



Open House
12-4 p.m.
April 26, 1992

*Sponsored by Friends of Creamer's Field
and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game*

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