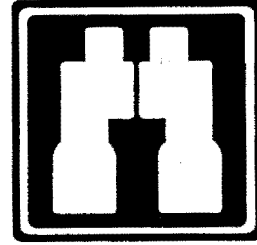


# WILDLIFE WATCHERS' NEWSLETTER



*published twice a year by:*

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

## Winter Watching Highlights

- \* Look for eiders, oldsquaws, scoters, loons and bald eagles wintering along southern coastal waters.
- \* In fresh snow, look for tracks of wolves, wolverines, foxes, marten, mink and river otter. Frozen creeks and rivers are natural wildlife highways.
- \* "Give Moose a Brake". Watch for moose and travel with care along southcentral highways at dawn, dusk and nighttime.
- \* Attract chickadees, woodpeckers, redpolls, jays and other birds to feeders stocked with sunflower, millet and thistle seeds and suet.
- \* Watch for caribou from highways near Cantwell and Glennallen from January through March.
- \* Enjoy the courtship antics of ravens during February and March as they perform aerial and vocal displays.
- \* Listen for owl calls and hoots in late February and March.
- \* Participate in your local Christmas Bird Count during December organized by your local Audubon Society chapter.



*Marten*

## Endangered Species Act Update

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 is one of the most significant conservation laws in the world. The ESA, last reauthorized in 1988, is scheduled for reauthorization hearings in 1992.

This reauthorization is expected to be the focus of considerable public attention. Some people think the act has gone too far in protecting species at the expense of economic interests, while others think it needs to be strengthened to prevent more species from going extinct. Species sure to be highlighted in the debate will include the spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and Snake River Chinook salmon.

### Definitions

The ESA was designed to protect species from extinction. An endangered species is defined as any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened species is any species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Once listed, recovery plans require conservation and management efforts to recover listed species and remove them from the list.

### Species Listed in U.S.

As of January 1992, 717 plants and animals were listed in the United States (548 endangered, 169 threatened). Worldwide, 1,245 species are listed. Recovery plans have been prepared for 389 species.

Thirteen species and subspecies are listed from Alaska. Threatened species include the Aleutian Canada goose, Arctic peregrine falcon, Steller sea lion, and green sea turtle. Endangered species include the Aleutian shield fern, American peregrine falcon, Eskimo curlew, short-tailed albatross, blue whale, bowhead whale, humpback whale, gray whale, sperm whale, fin whale, right whale, sei whale, and leatherback sea turtle. This year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the spectacled eider as threatened. Although still listed in Alaska, peregrine falcon and Aleutian Canada goose populations are increasing. (Cont. on page 2)

## ESA Update (cont.)

### **Alaska's Endangered Species Program**

The State of Alaska's Endangered Species Program was enacted in 1971. It is the responsibility of the commissioner of Fish and Game to make a determination of what species or subspecies of fish and wildlife are threatened with extinction, publish a list of those species, and conduct a thorough biennial review of that list.

Currently there are eight species on Alaska's Endangered Species List. These are: short-tailed albatross, Aleutian Canada goose, Eskimo curlew, American peregrine falcon, Arctic peregrine falcon, right whale, blue whale, and humpback whale. The state does not have a threatened category.

The last biennial review of the Alaska Endangered Species List was completed in May 1991. The department will begin another review this winter. Anyone interested should contact John Schoen, the Division of Wildlife Conservation's Endangered Species Coordinator, at 267-2280 in Anchorage.

### **Bald Eagle Viewing Planned on Alaska Marine Highway**

The first featured wildlife-viewing event for ferry travelers will be during the annual gathering of eagles in Haines. A travel planning session and school activity packets are planned to help prepare Juneau-based travellers in early November. Educational programs will be presented onboard and in Haines by eagle biologists during late November and early December when eagle numbers typically peak.

These activities are being co-sponsored by a variety of partners, including ADF&G, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Juneau Audubon Society, the Juneau Raptor Center, the Haines Visitor Bureau, and the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Council.

Look for upcoming programs on the ferries by ADF&G during winter and spring focusing on wildlife habitats, bears, marine mammals, and bird overwintering and migration.

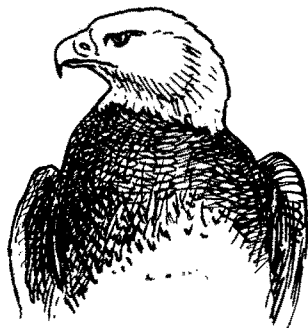


Illustration by R.T. Wallen

### **Visitors Increasing at Brown Bear Sanctuary**

More than 1,000 people visited the Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary at Pack Creek this summer. Pack Creek is unique in that it offers an opportunity to watch habituated bears in a wilderness setting only a short plane ride away from Juneau. Field representatives of ADF&G and the U.S. Forest Service provide information to visitors.

Almost all visitors were rewarded by the sight of bears going about the sometimes inelegant business of turning salmon into bear protein and fat. Pack Creek is typical of the many salmon streams which help support Admiralty Island's dense brown bear population.

Last year, visitation to Pack Creek was limited for the first time. Of the twenty-four permits issued for each day, twelve were allocated to commercial guides and eight were allocated to individuals in advance of the season. The last four permits for each day were distributed by a lottery held in Juneau 48 hours prior to the day of the visit.

If you are interested in visiting Pack Creek next season, plan your trip early. Peak viewing occurs during the last two weeks of July and first two weeks of August. Advance reservations can be made by telephone or by mail in the spring. Contact ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation office in Sitka (747-5449) or the USFS Admiralty National Monument (586-8790) for more information.

## Round Island Walrus Numbers Below Average

The peak count of walrus hauled out on Round Island beaches in 1992 was 4,210, the lowest since 1983. The number of walrus using Round Island peaked in 1978 at 15,000 and declined to a low of 3,000 in 1983. Numbers rose again to 12,378 in 1986 and have varied between 4,210 and 7,792 since then. Peak numbers are observed during July.

Reasons for the reduced numbers are unknown, but biologists think that male walrus are choosing other haul-out areas in Bristol Bay because of increasing disturbances near Round Island. In 1992, more than 5,000 walrus were seen on the remote, exposed beaches of Cape Newenham. This is the first major haul-out activity in that area for many years.

One of the disturbances may be the underwater noise associated with the large vessels used in the yellow-finned sole fishery. Because of concern about the walrus, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council elected to continue a prohibition of yellow-finned sole fishing activity within 12 miles of Round Island.

## Villagers Request Walrus Hunt on Round Island

Natives from the village of Togiak have petitioned the Board of Game to allow a harvest of up to 10 walrus each year from Round Island in the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary. The proposed hunt would take place in October and be jointly monitored by the Togiak Traditional Council, ADF&G, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Although Federal laws allow the non-wasteful take of walrus by Alaska Natives, state laws prohibit access to Round Island without a permit. Sanctuary regulations also prohibit the discharge of firearms and harassment of wildlife on Round Island. Walrus hunting is permitted within the Sanctuary only on the Twin Islands.

The Togiak Traditional Council says that Round Island is a traditional walrus hunting area and that there is no biological reason to prohibit a limited fall hunt. It contends that alternative hunting locations on Cape Peirce and the Twins do not meet hunters' needs.

The Board of Game listened to the proposal and directed ADF&G to organize and chair a task force to explore the issue. The task force consists of representatives of: ADF&G Divisions of Boards, Subsistence, and Wildlife Conservation; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Togiak Traditional Council;

the Nushagak Advisory Committee; the Eskimo Walrus Commission; and the National Wildlife Federation. So far the task force has met twice (in Dillingham and Togiak), and plans to meet at least two more times prior to submitting its report to the Board of Game in March 1993.



## Round Island Camping Permits Available January 1, 1993

Camping permits for the 1993 Round Island summer season will be available from the ADF&G office in Dillingham beginning January 1, 1993. Camping permits cost \$50/person and are issued by mail on a first-come-first-served basis.

In 1992, 196 people visited Round Island. Visitors are permitted on the island from May through August. Up to 15 day visitors are allowed at a time. They may obtain a permit (\$10/person) from staff on the island. Most day visitors are commercial fishermen who come ashore with their own boats.

Up to 12 campers can be on the island during each specified 5-day period. Permits for the popular July periods are often filled by April. Few campers come during May due to cold, snowy conditions and low walrus numbers. During the past two seasons the sanctuary closed in mid-August because of budget shortfalls.

A trip to Round Island is expensive (about \$900/person from Anchorage) and access, camping and hiking conditions can be very challenging, but few visitors are disappointed with their trip. The island presents a unique chance to experience a subarctic marine ecosystem while enjoying unprecedented walrus viewing opportunities.

More information on Round Island camping permits can be obtained by contacting:

Alaska Department of Fish & Game  
Round Island Applications  
P.O. Box 1030  
Dillingham, Alaska 99576  
(907) 842-1013.

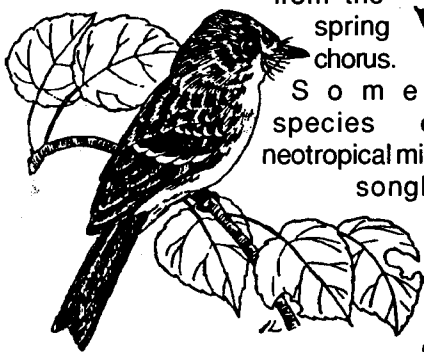
## Partners in Flight

Spring is a celebrated event, especially in Alaska. From frozen white winter, spring bursts forth in color, scent, and sound. Migrant songbirds are a key element in this dramatic explosion of life.

Thrushes, warblers, flycatchers, sparrows, longspurs and others bring song and activity to forest, shrub and tundra. What would spring be without the upward spiraling of reedy notes from a Swainson's Thrush, the ear-testing high-pitched tseets of Blackpoll Warblers, or the unbelievably loud and strident rolling end notes of the song of the diminutive Ruby-crowned Kinglet? Or without those quick flashes of yellow in the willows that are often the only indication of Wilson's or Yellow warblers, and the swooping and darting iridescent greens and blues of Tree and Violet-green swallows?

Most of these birds of spring are long distance migrants—birds that come to Alaska to breed during our short season of abundance from "neotropical" wintering areas in Mexico, and Central and South America. The Alder Flycatcher is a good example. This 12 gram bird flies at least 7,250 miles from Interior Alaska to the eastern slope of the Andes in Bolivia.

In many parts of North America, important voices are disappearing from the spring chorus.

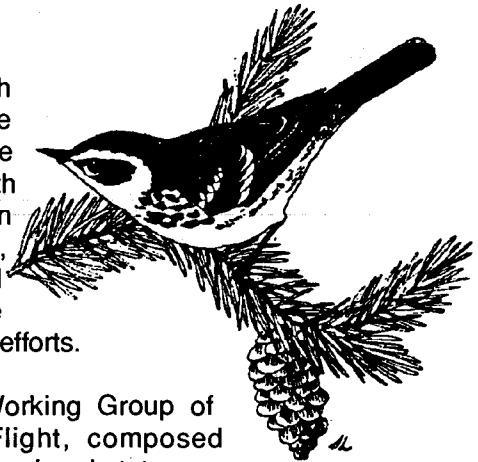


Some species of neotropical migrant songbirds are becoming scarce. This decline has so alarmed ornithologists and

conservationists that a major national and growing international initiative, Partners in Flight-Aves de las Americas, has been developed to determine the extent of the decline, its causes, and ways to reverse the downward trend.

In Alaska, songbirds have not received much attention over the years. The only effort to monitor populations on a state-wide basis was in the early to mid-80's when ADF&G's Nongame Wildlife Program promoted participation in the national Breeding Bird Survey program, a road-based trend count system managed

by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). In the past 3 years, with the growth in national interest, concerned Alaskans have increased their efforts.



The Alaska Working Group of Partners in Flight, composed primarily of federal and state agency biologists, has met twice since a workshop was held in November 1991. The Creamer's Field Songbird Project, a cooperative effort of the Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO), ADF&G and Arctic Audubon Society, began migration mist netting and banding on the Fairbanks refuge this spring. ABO, with Alaska Biological Research, is also running breeding bird productivity studies ("MAPS" stations) in

the Fairbanks area, as are USFWS in Anchorage, National Park Service in Denali, and U.S. Forest Service in Ketchikan. Several additional breeding bird monitoring studies, including new Breeding Bird Surveys and point counts, have been established in other parts of the state.

The 3rd annual Partners in Flight national conference was held in Estes Park, Colorado in late September. More than 15 Alaskans were present among the 650+ participants.

The meeting was a great opportunity for Alaskans to gain from the experience of states and regions that are further along in developing their programs, and to seek advice from experts in a variety of specialties. We look forward to our next Alaska Working Group meeting in Fairbanks in early December with anticipation of formalizing a cohesive strategy to monitor and conserve these remarkable long distance migrants.

Partners in Flight is truly a cooperative effort between governmental and non-governmental organizations. On the national front, several private organizations are playing prominent roles. In Alaska, there is still plenty of room in this partnership. For more information contact, in Anchorage: Collen Handel (USFWS, 786-3418) or Nancy Tankersley (ADF&G, 267-2149); in Fairbanks: Tom Pogson (ABO, 451-7059) or John Wright (ADF&G, 456-5156).



## Events and Enhancements at Creamer's Field



Friends of Creamer's Field is offering excellent interpretive and educational programs at the refuge. The Saturday morning guided walks last summer were a huge success and will continue through the winter with guided tours by skis and snowshoes.

Another major event last summer was *Camp Habitat*—an environmental education camp for 6-13 year olds sponsored by the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. More than 100 energetic children participated in "hands-on" activities at the refuge during four one-week sessions.

Researchers and volunteers with the Alaska Bird Observatory used mist netting to capture and band migrating songbirds as part of a continuing study on the refuge. Although the main purpose of this research is to learn more about Alaska's songbirds that come each year from Mexico, and Central and South America, the activities of the banders were of great interest to the more than 940 visitors that took part in banding demonstrations this year.

The Creamer's Field Interpretive Master Plan, which includes a conceptual site plan, recommended themes, and priorities, was completed last summer. While the interpretive plan offers a clear vision for development of programs and projects, our partnerships with individuals, agencies and organizations will make it a reality.

Future projects include completion of exhibits and displays in a remodeled historic farmhouse visitor center, and a new wheelchair/stroller-accessible nature trail with interpretive signs. Partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Grant/Cost Share Program, ADF&G's Waterfowl Program, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Friend's of Creamer's Field, Arctic Audubon Society, North Star Flying Lions, Boy Scouts of America, North Star Center, and Golden Valley Electric Association.

For those of you interested in joining in the fun this winter or who would like more information about Creamer's Refuge contact Kris Hartnett, refuge manager at 456-5156.



## Potter Marsh Volunteer Hosts Needed

ADF&G is looking for adult volunteers to park and live in an RV at the Potter Marsh parking lot next spring and summer. We are looking for people who are experienced birdwatchers and would enjoy talking to adults and school children visiting the boardwalk.

These volunteers would commit to one or more six-week sessions between April 26 and August 28 to help us provide visitor information about the refuge's wildlife and do light maintenance, in exchange for a small stipend and a free camping spot. Electricity and a telephone hook-up may also be provided.

If you would like more information, call Nancy Tankersley or Dave Harkness at 267-2180.



## Partnership Enhances Wildlife Viewing

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Watchable Wildlife and Ecotourism, initiated by ADF&G, was signed recently by 20 other state and federal agencies, conservation groups and tourism organizations.

This MOU facilitates public and private partnerships to enhance wildlife viewing and ecotourism development. Three of our first partnership projects are an interagency wildlife viewing plan, a roadside and marine highway wildlife viewing site inventory project, and a brochure on wildlife viewing which will be published next spring.

The MOU steering committee will meet in early November to discuss development of ethics and etiquette guidelines and training for tour operators, an upcoming conference, and the state's scenic byway program. Look for brown roadside signs with a binocular logo on them, designating wildlife viewing sites.

## National Conference on Watchable Wildlife

On September 9-12 the First National Watchable Wildlife Conference was held in Missoula, Montana. The conference was attended by nearly 400 people from 38 states, three Canadian provinces, Mexico, and Australia. Included were state and federal biologists, interpreters, recreation planners, rangers, land managers, educators, private consultants, tourism representatives, ranchers, and outfitters.

About 20 Alaskans attended, including representatives from ADF&G, Division of Tourism, DOT/PF, USFS, BLM, USFWS and conservation groups. High points of the conference included:

\* A lecture by University of Idaho Senior Fellow John Hunt on the next 10 years of tourism. He predicted that "travelers will want more back-to-nature and personally enriching experiences."

\* A presentation by the chair of the University of Montana's Economics Department indicating that wildlife viewing tourism can provide economic and conservation benefits to people, if developed properly. *Masstourism* is not necessarily economically beneficial.

\* An update on Texas Parks & Wildlife "Conservation Passport" program, which is similar to our proposed conservation tag (see related article).

\* New data from USFWS surveys which indicate that the increase in wildlife viewing is mostly occurring among people primarily involved in another recreational activity.

\* An update on federal funding initiatives to increase funding for nongame and wildlife viewing programs.

\* A workshop on gaining support of corporate industry for wildlife viewing projects.

\* A workshop on community amenity resource planning, emphasizing social, economic and conservation benefits of wildlife viewing recreation.

\* A conference wrap-up by Dr. Hal Salwasser, emphasizing that since most hunters are also viewers, enhancing wildlife viewing is a way to bring all wildlife enthusiasts together to expand conservation efforts.

This conference provided a valuable opportunity to gain knowledge and develop ideas in a teamwork fashion that will further enhance wildlife viewing opportunities in Alaska.



## Alaska Watchable Wildlife Conservation Trust

The Alaska Watchable Wildlife Conservation Trust was created in 1991 by the Alaska Conservation Foundation in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. The Wildlife Trust was established to improve and develop wildlife viewing and photographic opportunities, expand wildlife information and education programs, support research, and protect critical habitat.

Since its creation, the Wildlife Trust has accumulated several thousand dollars from small individual donations. To date, the Wildlife Trust has financed two projects: development of informational signs cautioning boaters to protect grebe nests in the Mat-Su Valley, and printing of Alaska Wildlife Curriculum materials.

Projects in progress include coordination of an interagency wildlife viewing planning workshop, fund raising for a 30-minute video on McNeil River bears by BBC and a McNeil River poster. Revenues from sales of these products will be directed back to the Wildlife Trust to support the viewing program at McNeil River.

To support the Wildlife Trust or receive more information, please see coupon in this newsletter.



## Thank-You!

\* To all 1992 Loon Festival volunteers for making the event such a success. Special thanks to: Mollie Bynum, Sondra Dexter, Delesta Fox, Sue Hagedorn, Annie Lawler, Paul Meyer, Bill Mills, Jean and Gary Nilson, Terry Rosso, Virginia Samson, Elise Scheffel, Jean Tam, and Denise Tindall.

\* To all 1992 Loon Watch survey participants. Your actions protecting nest sites are making a difference!

\* To Stan Price (Pack Creek) State Wildlife Sanctuary volunteers  
Carl Yanagawa, Becky Land, Elliot Swarthout, and Alice Young who provided visitor information to bear viewers in rain and shine.

\* To Creamer's Refuge volunteers Gail Mayo, President, and all other Friends of Creamers, Susan Grace Stolz, Director of Camp Habitat, Sarah O'Connell, organizer of the Saturday morning nature hikes, Tom Pogson, leader, and volunteers for the Alaska Bird Observatory, and to all the public who provided information for Creamer's interpretive plan. Also thanks to ADF&G employees Dave Lambert, with the Division of Administration, and Mac McLean with the Division of Habitat for implementing the wheelchair/stroller accessible trail and administering the USFWS Challenge Grant funding.

ADF&G operates all of its public programs and activities free from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap. Because the Department receives federal funding, any person who believes she or he has been discriminated against should write: O.E.O., US Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240

## Wildlife Conservation Tag Legislation

Last spring, legislation to provide a "conservation tag" for sale to the public, with proceeds to benefit wildlife viewing and wildlife education as well as nongame, threatened, and endangered species programs was introduced by Representative Fran Ulmer of Juneau. The tag purchase was designed to be voluntary except for visitors at state sanctuaries like McNeil River.

This bill (House Bill 446) passed the House unanimously and had substantial support in the Senate but failed to pass out of the Senate Rules Committee before the session ended. We expect a similar bill to be introduced during the coming session.

During the summer, ADF&G conducted a small survey of tourists to assess their interest in supporting this program and what products they would consider purchasing. On the last page of this newsletter is a similar questionnaire. We would appreciate hearing your ideas.

## Mark Your Calendar!

**November 1:** Loon Watch survey forms due to ADF&G Anchorage.

**December 2:** Proposals due to Board of Game for changes to the Waterfowl Conservation Tag, and McNeil and Round Island management plans and access permits. These will be discussed during the spring 1993 meeting.



**Please check appropriate boxes and return this coupon to the Anchorage office:**

- Please add my name to your mailing list.  
 Address correction:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Send me more information on donating to the **Alaska Watchable Wildlife Trust Fund**, to support Chilkat River Bald Eagle Preserve, McNeil River Brown Bear Sanctuary, Round Island Walrus Sanctuary, Stan Price Wildlife Sanctuary, and other conservation and education projects.

I would like to order \_\_\_\_ copies of **Alaska's Wildlife magazine** special issue on wildlife viewing. Enclosed please find a check for \$5.00 per copy made out to ADF&G. (Orders of 25 or more receive 25% discount).

FOR TEACHERS/YOUTH LEADERS:

Send me information and an order form for the award-winning K-12 grade **Alaska Wildlife Curriculum** produced by ADF&G.

Enclosed please find a \$4.75 check to "Alaska Department of Fish and Game" for an updated K-12 grade **Project WILD** activity guide.

Send me more information about the K-12 grade **Project WILD** wildlife activity guide.

# We Need Your Ideas



The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is looking for ways to support wildlife watching, conservation, and education programs in Alaska. One idea is to solicit contributions from residents and visitors through the sale of wildlife decals, patches, and other items.

1. Do you support this idea? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
2. If so, would you contribute to the program through the purchase of one of the items listed below?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please indicate below the maximum amount you would be willing to pay for each item. If you would not be interested in a particular item, put a zero in the space.

Patch \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Wildlife Calendar \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Pin \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Art Print \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Decal \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Wildlife Stamp \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Poster \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Tee Shirt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cap \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mug \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for your assistance. Your help will benefit Alaska and its wildlife.  
**Please return this form to the address below by January 1, 1993.**

State of Alaska  
Conservation and Education Program  
Department of Fish and Game  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599

Bulk rate  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 145  
Anchorage, AK  
99518

John Schoen, Senior Staff Biologist  
Colleen Matt, Education Coordinator  
Nancy Tankersley, Biologist  
Anchorage  
344-0541

John Wright, Biologist  
Fairbanks  
456-5156

Marilyn Sigman, Biologist  
Douglas  
465-4265