

WILDLIFE WATCHERS' NEWSLETTER



published twice a year by:

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

State Endangered Species Review

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game recently completed its 1993 Biennial Review of Alaska's Endangered Species list. This review determined that Alaska populations of three species, the American peregrine falcon, the Arctic peregrine falcon, and the Aleutian Canada goose, had recovered to the point where removal from Alaska's Endangered Species List was warranted. The appropriate regulatory changes were signed by the Lieutenant Governor on October 12, 1993.

The remaining species on the state endangered species list will continue to receive protection afforded under state statutes. That list includes the following species: Short-tailed albatross, Eskimo curlew, right whale, blue whale, and humpback whale.



Wildlife Viewing Brochure

ADF&G and the state Division of Tourism recently coordinated the production of a brochure called "Wildlife Viewing in Alaska." This attractive full-color brochure was designed to answer visitors' inquiries about where, when and how to watch wildlife in Alaska.

The brochure was supported by eight other agencies and organizations, and is available free-of-charge through the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Tok, or through the ADF&G Public Communications Section and the Division of Tourism in Juneau, as well as other outlets. Bulk orders (more than 10 copies) can be purchased from the Alaska Natural History Association, 605 W. Fourth Avenue, Suite 85, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Alaska Species of Special Concern

On May 25, 1993, the Commissioner of Fish and Game established an administrative list of Species of Special Concern to complement the Alaska Endangered Species List. A Species of Special Concern is any species or subspecies of fish or wildlife native to the State of Alaska that has entered a long-term decline in abundance or is vulnerable to a significant decline due to low numbers, restricted distribution, dependence on limited habitat resources, or sensitivity to environmental disturbance.

During the 1993 Biennial Review process, 10 species were recommended for listing as Species of Special Concern. These were: Aleutian Canada goose, Arctic peregrine falcon, American peregrine falcon, spectacled eider, Steller's eider, Steller sea lion, harbor seal, bowhead whale, beluga whale (Cook Inlet population), and fall run of Snake River chinook salmon. The marbled murrelet, Queen Charlotte goshawk, and several species of neotropical migrant songbirds are also being considered for listing.

For additional information on Alaska's Endangered Species List or Alaska Species of Special Concern contact John Schoen, at ADF&G in Anchorage: 267-2180.



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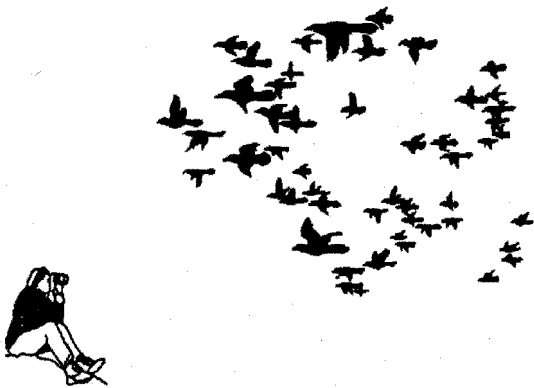
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Note to our readers: the 1993 Spring/Summer edition was not published.

Expansion of Programs at Anchorage Refuge

ADF&G will be developing an interpretive master plan to guide development of future facilities and programs at Potter Marsh and the rest of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. Visitation at Potter Marsh has grown tremendously in the past few years with the increasing interest in watching wildlife, and we want to provide additional facilities and programs to serve these visitors.

Specifically, the master plan will be addressing development of a visitor center in cooperation with Bird Treatment and Learning Center on the bluff above Potter Marsh. Opportunities along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail overlooking the refuge and other sites will also be addressed. We welcome public participation in this planning process, scheduled for February through September, 1994. For more information, contact Nancy Tankersley at the Anchorage ADF&G office: 267-2180.



Naturalists at Potter Marsh

During the summer of 1993, volunteers from ADF&G, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Anchorage Audubon Society helped visitors enjoy wildlife at the Potter Marsh boardwalk.

Equipped with binoculars, spotting scopes and field guides, the naturalists pointed out nesting bald eagles, spawning salmon, nesting ducks and geese, Arctic terns, and a variety of other wildlife to school children and visitors from around the world.

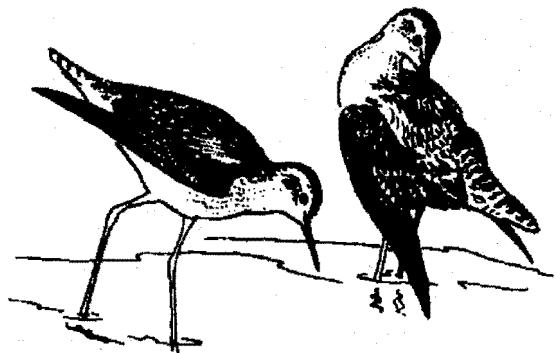
ADF&G hopes to expand the naturalist program during the summer of 1994 to include more days and times. Anchorage residents interested in volunteering for this program next summer should contact Nancy Tankersley at the Anchorage ADF&G office: 267-2180.

The Mendenhall Wetlands Refuge and the Greater Mendenhall Ecosystem

Deputy Commissioner McKie Campbell and Director Dave Kelleyhouse cut the ribbon on an interpretive trail for the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge in September and kicked off the beginnings of an interpretive network that will encompass one of the world's most accessible glacial watersheds.

The trail consists of a series of interpretive signs installed on the airport dike adjacent to the refuge, one of Juneau's most popular areas to walk, jog, birdwatch, or enter the refuge for waterfowl hunting. The signs provide local residents and visitors information about the estuary, impacts of people on wetlands, and the some 200 species of migratory and resident birds which depend on refuge habitat. Funding for the signs was provided by a combination of Pittman-Robertson funds and state Duck Stamp revenues.

Even as the trail was completed, a cooperative planning effort was underway to tie the refuge into an interpretive system emphasizing ecosystem linkages and glacial and wetland processes. A number of local, state, and federal cooperators received a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Grant to contract with D&M Bucy and Associates to develop a master interpretive plan which will focus on the well-populated Mendenhall Valley as the "Greater Mendenhall Ecosystem." The plan will address coordinating interpretive efforts for the refuge, a dedicated municipal greenbelt along the Mendenhall River, and the early post-glacial environments near the Mendenhall Glacier. A site will be chosen for an interpretive center to serve people using these areas.



Bird Studies Continue at Creamer's Refuge

Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, adjacent to ADF&G's Fairbanks office, is an excellent place to study and enjoy migratory waterfowl. However, it is also an excellent place to study and enjoy migratory land birds. In fact, in addition to being the summer home for many migratory land and water birds, Creamer's Refuge is also the home of the Alaska Bird Observatory's Field Migration Station; the northernmost migration banding station for land birds in North America.

Due to international concern about declines in North American migratory land birds that spend the winter in Central and South America, many researchers have begun studies to better understand the reasons and extent of the population declines of these "Neotropical migrants." One of these studies is taking place on Creamer's Refuge and is being led by the Alaska Bird Observatory, supported by ADF&G and other organizations.

From April 25 - October 1, 1993 the Alaska Bird Observatory conducted a study of the movement of land birds in Central Alaska. The study involved the use of mist nets set up in Creamer's Refuge in which birds were captured, identified and banded. Three staff members from the Alaska Bird Observatory conducted the study with the assistance of ADF&G staff and 35 volunteers. The volunteers, nine of whom included biologists and technicians from the Institute for Bird Populations, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, received training in land bird monitoring techniques. During the 1993 study period, 820 visitors, mostly elementary school students, were able to view the study in progress during 60 banding sessions.

The purpose of this netting program is to learn about the movement of land birds in central Alaska, to understand the connections between the timing of migration, reproduction, and molt, to understand land bird population biology and ecology and to improve conservation efforts for declining species.

During this period, 2,236 birds of 34 different species were banded. The comparison of this year's work with last year's indicate there were striking differences in the capture patterns of birds during the spring and fall migrations of 1992 and 1993.

Spring Migration

The most abundant species captured in both '92 and '93 spring seasons included: Hammond's Flycatcher, Swainson's and Gray-cheeked thrushes, American Robin, Orange-crowned, Yellow, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle), Blackpoll and Wilson's warblers, Northern Waterthrush, Savannah Sparrow, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco, and Common Redpoll. However, in 1993, the capture rate of birds that were not previously banded was 51% less than 1992.

Fall Migration

In the fall of '93, the average capture rate of birds that were not previously banded was 69% lower than in the fall of '92. Capture rates of Yellow-rumped Warblers, the most abundant species in '92 were 97% lower in '93. Capture rates of seven other species of warblers was 76% lower than '92.

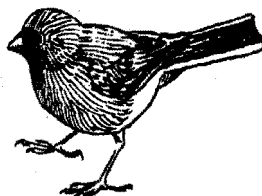
Lower capture rates of hatching-year and after-hatching-year birds in '93 suggest that there could have been smaller breeding populations and reduced productivity for many species of land birds in Alaska in '93 than in '92.

The capture rate of one species, however, was actually higher in '93 than in '92. American Tree Sparrows, the most abundant species in fall '93 showed capture rates 59% higher than in fall '92. The most abundant species captured in both falls included: Swainson's and Gray-cheeked thrushes, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned, Yellow, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle), and Wilson's warblers, Northern Waterthrush, American Tree, Lincoln's and White-crowned sparrows, and Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Juncos.

In results similar to '92, 65% of the species and 78% of the individual birds banded in '93 were Neotropical migrants. Continuation of these and similar studies may increase understanding of how to protect these populations from dangerous declines.

Other supporters and cooperators on this project include: the Arctic chapter of the National Audubon Society, the Anchorage chapter of the National Audubon Society, the ARCO Foundation, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the members and volunteers of the Alaska Bird Observatory.

The data for this article was provided by Tom Pogson of the Alaska Bird Observatory.



Department of Fish and Game Revises Wildlife Curriculum

Grants totaling more than \$56,000 will be used to revise and improve the "Alaska Wildlife Curriculum."

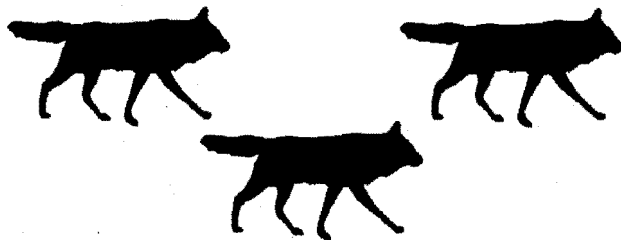
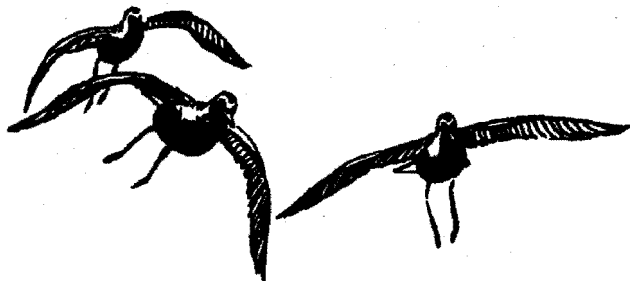
The latest grants of \$12,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and \$26,000 from the ARCO Foundation will be combined with \$18,400 already contributed by the National Park Foundation, said Colleen Matt, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Education Coordinator. The Alaska Conservation Foundation assisted the department in raising funds for the curriculum project.

The money will enable the department, the Alaska Public Lands Information Center and the Alaska Natural History Association to update sections of the curriculum on ecology, forests and tundra. Matt said sections on wetlands and wildlife populations already have been revised.

The "Alaska Wildlife Curriculum" began as a packet of teaching material developed in conjunction with Alaska Wildlife Week in 1983. The materials, sent to every classroom teacher in Alaska, were developed in response to requests from many teachers for Alaska-specific wildlife information, Matt said.

Since then, the materials have been developed into year-round lesson plans and in-depth information for teachers from kindergarten through 12th grade. Matt said many teachers in rural areas use the wildlife curriculum as a supplement to traditional textbooks which are often irrelevant to rural lifestyles and environments.

Once completed, single copies of each of the revised units will be donated to school libraries statewide. Teachers may purchase their own copies through the Alaska Natural History Association. For more information, contact Colleen Matt at 267-2241.



Wildlife Education Program Wolf Resource Kits

The Wildlife Education Program of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has created an educational resource kit featuring Alaska wolves. The wolf resource kit will be available as of January 1, 1994. The kit includes a resource notebook with activities and background information about wolves appropriate for all grade levels. Additionally, the kit contains reference books and literature on wolves, a wolf skull and hide, a wolf puppet, wolf videos and audio cassettes, posters of the Canid family, and much more!

For further information on the kits or to schedule the use of a kit, contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Anchorage office (267-2180), the Anchorage School District (263-7161), Alaska Science Center (564-8267) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Library (786-3358).



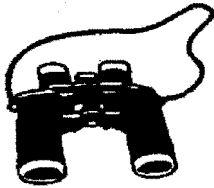
Watchable Wildlife Display

The Division of Wildlife Conservation recently designed a large panel display (approximately 8 x 10 ft) on the "Sport of Wildlife Watching" for the Anchorage Sportsman's Show. This professional exhibit has received many compliments and is now on display at the Anchorage School District's King Career Education Center in Anchorage. The exhibit can be disassembled/assembled in about 30-40 minutes. If anyone would like to use this display please schedule through Liz Williams at ADF&G in Anchorage: 267-2180.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Develops Strategic Plan for Wildlife Viewing

ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH, a strategic plan for ADF&G's wildlife viewing program has been finalized.

The mission of **ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH** is to promote the conservation Alaska's wildlife and improve people's quality of life by: enhancing public opportunities to watch and enjoy wildlife; increasing public knowledge and understanding of wildlife, their habitats, and ecological processes; and building a broader constituency for supporting wildlife conservation.



The guiding principles for **ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH** are:

- * Emphasize common ground among wildlife enthusiasts. Recognize that all wildlife users (including watchers, photographers, hunters, anglers, and guides) seek knowledge in their "hunt" for wildlife, many have overlapping interests, and all benefit from the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- * Develop and manage all department viewing and interpretive programs to ensure the long-term conservation of wildlife and their habitat.
- * Design viewing and interpretive programs to avoid changes in animal behavior associated with people.
- * Design viewing and interpretive programs that demonstrate positive roles for people in ecological processes and provide benefits to local economies.
- * Promote conservation and sustainable use by highlighting conservation messages in public information and education efforts.
- * Develop and manage department programs to expand (i.e., not replace) existing public use opportunities.
- * Support a diversity of wildlife-viewing and educational opportunities to meet the variety of public interests, skills, and accessibility requirements.

- * Seek to maximize cooperation, understanding and work toward a win:win resolution of real and potential conflicts among programs or uses/users.

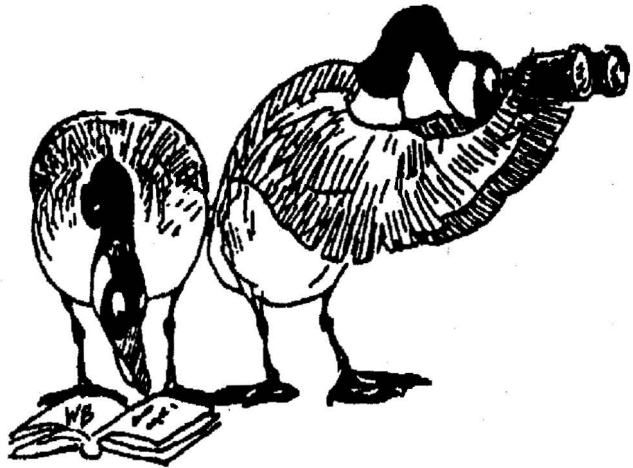


- * Design wildlife viewing and interpretation programs to benefit both residents and visitors.
 - * Give initial priority to projects that will benefit the greatest number of people, such as projects associated with transportation corridors; state refuges, sanctuaries, critical habitats, and parks; and major cities and towns.
 - * Promote program efficiency and consistency by cooperating with other state and federal agencies, conservation and outdoor-recreation groups, and the tourism industry.
 - * Design wildlife viewing and interpretive programs to create realistic expectations of opportunities and benefits.
- Nine major goals were identified in **ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH**. These are:
- * Identify public use patterns and demand for wildlife viewing.
 - * Inventory wildlife viewing opportunities.
 - * Determine the economic value of wildlife viewing.
 - * Enhance wildlife viewing and interpretive opportunities.
 - * Manage for sustainable human uses at wildlife viewing sites.
 - * Increase public knowledge and understanding of wildlife, habitats, and ecological processes.
 - * Provide leadership for watchable wildlife in Alaska and cooperate with other agencies and organizations.
 - * Expand public awareness and support for **ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH**.
 - * Develop stable funding for **ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH**.

Copies of **ALASKA WILDLIFE WATCH** are available from John Schoen at ADF&G in Anchorage: 267-2180.

Interagency Strategic Plan Finalized for Wildlife Viewing Developments

An interagency strategic plan for watchable wildlife and ecotourism in Alaska was completed in May 1994. Watchable Wildlife refers to all wildlife including birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish, invertebrates, and plants that provide opportunities for viewing and learning about the natural world. This plan was the result of an interagency workshop involving ADF&G, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Marine Highways, the Alaska Public Lands Information Center, State Parks, and Division of Tourism, which convened last January. Alaska is the first state to develop an interagency plan to guide future development related to wildlife viewing. Contact John Schoen at ADF&G in Anchorage (267-2180) for a copy of the plan which describes goals, guiding principles, actions, and evaluation.

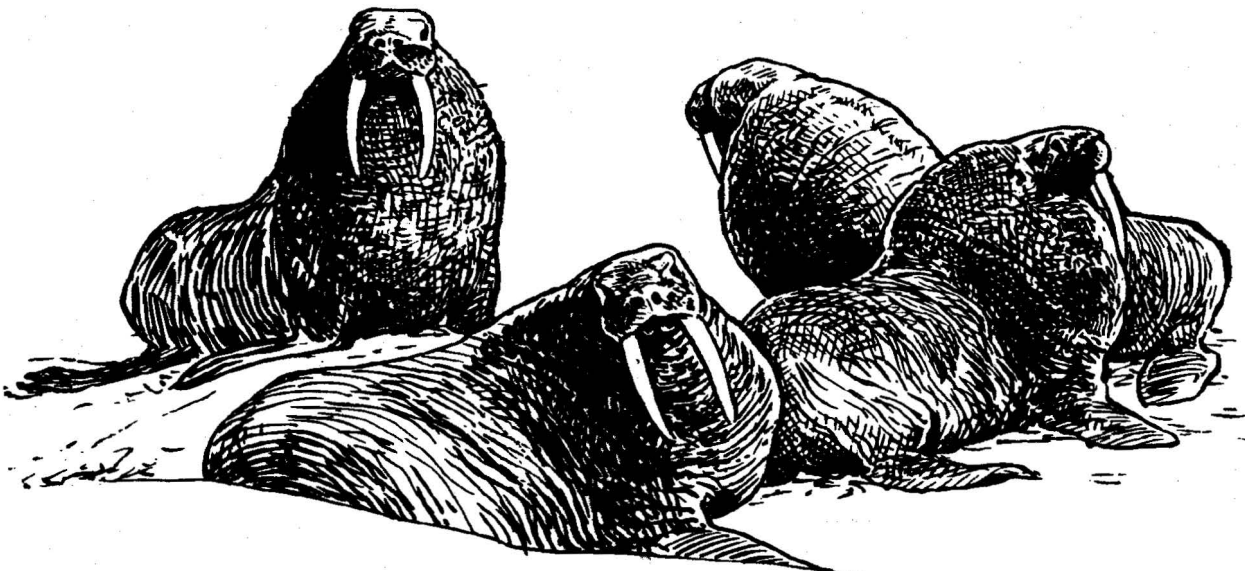


Walrus Islands Sanctuary Volunteers Needed

The Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary in Bristol Bay is managed by the Department of Fish and Game to protect thousands of male walrus that annually haulout on the islands. Hundreds of visitors come to the island to view the walrus and seabird colonies during the summer season.

Visitors to the islands are required to obtain an access permit, and the Division of wildlife Conservation is responsible for managing the visitor access program. The access permit allows visitors a 5 day stay to enjoy the beautiful scenery and unique and plentiful wildlife viewing opportunities.

The Division is looking for individuals that would be interested in providing volunteer assistance to Department staff on a remote island for a minimum of four weeks in June and July, 1994. The volunteers will greet visitors, maintain trails and other facilities and assist in research data collection while living in a heated tent without running water or electricity. Persons interested in applying for these volunteer positions should contact John Westlund at the Anchorage Fish and Game office: 267-2199.



Creamer's Refuge Outstanding Volunteer Award

(The following article is by John Wright of ADF&G and is from the Winter 1993 issue of Friends of Creamer's Field Newsletter.)

Friends of Creamer's Field and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have created an award to honor individuals who have been extraordinary volunteers at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. This award is entitled the "Gail Mayo Outstanding Volunteer Award". The award was named after Gail Mayo, President of Friends of Creamer's Field, who is a model of volunteer dedication, commitment and effort. At the potluck dinner for volunteer naturalists last fall, the award was announced and the first recipient was Gail Mayo.

From 1966, when the Creamer family was forced to sell their dairy, Gail Mayo has dreamed of and worked toward the creation of a community nature-education center at Creamer's Field. In the late 1960s, Gail and Mary Shields started the annual spring field trips for school children to view returning waterfowl. Gail still coordinates those visits.

The first nature trail on the Refuge was constructed under Gail's direction in the mid-1970s. When Friends of Creamer's Field was organized as a nonprofit group to promote nature, education, and appreciation on the Refuge, Gail was elected as their first president. The growth of programs and facilities at Creamer's Refuge is due in large part to the efforts of Gail Mayo and other dedicated volunteers. This award recognizes volunteers for their vision and generous commitment to Creamer's Field. A permanent plaque is being made for display in the back room at Creamer's farmhouse. Future recipients will be honored by adding their names to the plaque.



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

- ☐ Please add my name to your mailing list.
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☐ 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, Alaska Wildlife Curriculum 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.

"Does Winter Bird Feeding Promote Dependency?"

Brittingham, M.C. and S.A. Temple, 1992. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 63(2): 190-194. [This synopsis is from the "In the Literature..." column of *The Raven*, the newsletter of the Juneau Audubon Society. October 1993 19(2): 2]

With colder temperatures just around the corner, most of us are probably joining the other 82 million Americans who stock up on wild bird seed in preparation for another winter of helping our feathered friends survive until spring. But have you ever wondered whether feeding birds might make them dependent on feeders, perhaps leading to greater mortality over the long term? That's what Brittingham and Temple wondered, and so performed this elegant little study to find the answer.



The authors studied natural populations of Black-capped Chickadees in a state park in Wisconsin during the winter of '84-'85 when temperatures went as low as -29C. They had two separate populations of chickadees; the experimental population had had access to a bird feeder every winter for the previous 25 years while the control population had never had access to a feeder. The authors then removed the feeder from the experimental site and, through banding and frequent

observation, calculated the survival rates of birds in the two populations.

They found that there was no significant difference between the survival rates of the two populations of chickadees, which indicated that the experimental population had in fact not become overly dependent on the feeder. This is good news for 82 million Americans.

The authors urge caution, however. They point out that chickadees have a broad diet, so learning is probably important to them, which would encourage us to think that they might be vulnerable to dependency. However, in a previous study the authors found that their chickadees obtained only 21% of their daily energy supplies from the feeder with fully 79% from natural food sources, so it was not surprising that they had not lost their ability to utilize natural food efficiently.

In a more urban area, where these natural food sources might be more scarce, the birds could well become more dependent on feeders. Also, migratory species could become more dependent than these non-migratory chickadees because they might be less familiar with food sources in their wintering area.

The authors think that chickadees normally track a variety of food patches all the time no matter how abundant the food is in any one patch (like a feeder), because such a strategy is necessary for survival in an unpredictable and fluctuating environment.



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