

WILDLIFE WATCHERS' NEWSLETTER



published twice a year by
NONGAME WILDLIFE PROGRAM

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

New Conservation Biologist

In June of this year, John Schoen accepted a new job as Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation senior staff biologist for conservation and education. His responsibilities include:



- * development of a new wildlife appreciation initiative emphasizing wildlife viewing and photography opportunities;
- * oversight of wildlife education and major conservation issues;
- * liaison to conservation organizations; and
- * development of new, alternative funding for nongame, wildlife appreciation, and education programs.

Before accepting this assignment, John was the regional research coordinator based in Fairbanks. Prior to that, John spent 12 years in Juneau doing research on the habitat relationships of mountain goats, black-tailed deer, and brown bears in southeast Alaska.

We welcome John's enthusiasm and energy towards expanding ADF&G's wildlife appreciation and conservation efforts.

Wildlife Viewing Programs A Conservation Strategy

As the human population continues to increase and utilize more of the earth's resources, scientists and natural resource managers are increasingly concerned about habitat destruction and fragmentation of habitats that are causing species extinctions throughout the world.

Promoting wildlife watching and appreciation through recreation and education programs is a strategy for broadening the public constituency for the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats. This concept is the central focus of the new national "Watchable Wildlife" initiative endorsed by several major conservation groups, federal land management agencies, and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Traditionally, hunters and anglers have provided the major source of funding for fish and wildlife conservation programs in the United States through purchase of licenses and payment of excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. Current trends throughout most of the United States, however, indicate a leveling off or decline in these revenues (approximately 9% of the U.S. population - about 17 million people - currently buy hunting licenses).

At the same time, increasing numbers of people are seeking additional wildlife-related recreational activities. From 1980 to 1985, the number of adults participating in wildlife viewing, feeding or photography had grown from 93 to 135 million. This resulted in \$14 billion in wildlife-related expenditures. This new and growing constituency has great potential for contributing significantly to wildlife conservation efforts.

In many states where viewing programs have been added, hunters (most of whom are also viewers) have welcomed the additional contributions to conservation that viewers can make.

Alaska has the opportunity to develop a program of wildlife conservation and recreation, with economic benefits, that could be an example to the world. Long-term conservation for Alaska's unique wildlife heritage and biological diversity will require effective partnerships and cooperation among all users (including hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, environmentalists, the tourism industry, and natural resource managers). Their fundamental common ground is a commitment for protecting productive wildlife habitat.

ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation is committed to broadening wildlife recreation opportunities and increasing public support for long-term conservation programs.

Roadside Wildlife Viewing



Many travelers on Alaska's highways wonder why they don't see wildlife as they pass through vast stretches of undeveloped country. In many cases, the wildlife is there and available for viewing, if only drivers knew where to stop, the best times to look, and in what habitats to concentrate their search.

Late in December 1989, John Wright, an Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologist in Fairbanks, approached the Alaska Department of Transportation with a suggestion for developing more roadside turnouts for wildlife viewing. DOT responded enthusiastically and took the lead in organizing an advisory group of geology, botany and wildlife experts to assist in selecting turnout locations.

Initial efforts have focused on sites along stretches of Interior highways, as DOT plans to repair or upgrade. Sections of the Alaska, Denali, Elliott, Glenn, Parks, Richardson, and Tok Cutoff highways have been reviewed. Limited only by safety and engineering constraints, DOT has been very receptive and is incorporating most suggestions into their work plans. Highway planners and natural history experts are aiming to have the first of a new series of turnouts in place for the 1992 Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the AlCan Highway.

The goal is to expand the program state-wide, developing an integrated system of roadside interpretive sites throughout the state highway system, including the marine highway. The program would include participation by Alaska Department of Fish and Game, DOT, other state agencies, local communities and their service organizations, and private groups. Facilities could range from simple turnouts keyed to information available in viewing guidebooks, along wilderness highways, to more elaborate trails, viewing platforms and signs where appropriate on more heavily traveled paved roads.

Group Formed to Discuss Wildlife Viewing in Southeast Alaska

Improved communication and a commitment to maintaining healthy wildlife populations in quality habitats are the goals of a new group of resource managers and tourism operators in Southeast Alaska.

The group was formed by David Johnson, regional management coordinator for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation in Juneau, and Ken Leghorn, who conducts tours in remote parts of Southeast. They invited resource managers and commercial tour operators to

explore mutual interests. The meeting provided a forum to identify potential problems where "people management" soon might be necessary to avoid crowding or materials and training the resource agencies could provide tour operators.

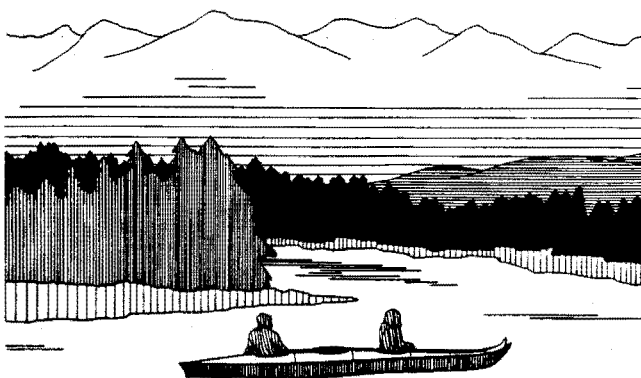
Marilyn Sigman, nongame biologist in Juneau, followed up by producing a brochure, *Guidelines for Wildlife Viewing in Southeast Alaska*. The brochure, developed in conjunction with U.S. Forest Service biologists, was mailed to tour operators throughout the region at the start of the visitor season. The brochure included general viewing "etiquette" and tips for observing birds, mammals, fish and intertidal creatures commonly encountered. Also included were regulations about which parts of wild animals could be salvaged or bought and sold legally. A brochure about bear safety completed the information packet.

The group is working on an inventory of wildlife viewing sites in the region, refinement of recreation data being used in the Tongass Land Management Plan and criteria for promoting use of specific sites to ensure the quality of the wildlife encounters can be maintained.

Developing local or regional wildlife viewing guides and organization of an informational spring session for tour operators are possible future projects.

The need for interaction between resource managers and commercial users is becoming increasingly obvious. Lana Shea of the ADF&G's Habitat Division surveyed 204 businesses in Southeast and found that 120 of them were at least partially dependent on "non-consumptive" wildlife users — people who come to the region to view, photograph, film or study wildlife. The survey found that 146,000 clients totaled 337,000 "user days" in 1989 and spent \$43 million. Based on her data, Shea estimated the industry's annual growth rate of clients at 33 percent.

Andy Spear, operator of a sailing tour company and a member of the group, said last spring's meeting marked the first time anyone ever asked him his views as part of a specialized segment of the tourist industry. Hearing those views will help management agencies maintain this rapidly growing and economically important use of wildlife.



New Education Coordinator Takes Charge

Colleen Matt says trying to deliver material that is both interesting and pertinent to very different audiences will be one of her biggest challenges as ADF&G's new Wildlife Education Coordinator. "Contrast, if you will, the values and attitudes of children in a remote



village like Quinhagak with those of kids at any junior high school in Anchorage," says Colleen. "The rural view of wildlife is likely derived from subsistence needs and traditions, whereas urban dwellers tend to have fewer experiences with wildlife and more exposure to diverse viewpoints."

Fortunately, Colleen says, the two curricula that we offer, Project WILD and Alaska Wildlife Week, help teachers develop lessons that are compatible in both urban and rural schools.

Besides succeeding Dolores Scott as state-wide Project WILD coordinator, her other duties include training and maintaining a network of Project WILD and Alaska Wildlife Week workshop leaders, generating finances to help create, revise, and reprint Alaska Wildlife Week guides, and coordinating the Interagency Bear Safety Education Committee. The interagency committee is dedicated to improving human understanding of bears by publishing brochures and other projects.

Colleen says the new job unites her devotion to Alaska and her interest in education. She came to Alaska in 1979 and worked for eight summers in Denali, Katmai, and Gates of the Arctic national parks.

During the winters she was an environmental education specialist in California and worked in classrooms and outdoor schools. Colleen started working for ADF&G in 1988 at McNeil River State Game Sanctuary where she says she enjoyed working with bears and people as much as she enjoyed working with children. She recently completed a master's degree in education.

Colleen welcomes inquiries, suggestions and contributions to wildlife education. She can be reached at the ADF&G office in Anchorage.

Wetlands Curriculum Due Soon

The revised Alaska Wildlife Week packet, *Water, Wetlands, and Wildlife*, will be mailed to Alaska schools in early February. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have worked together to produce the materials, which include a unit about Alaska's wetlands for all grades and a unit about migratory birds and their management for the upper elementary and junior/senior high school levels. Besides teacher manuals an activity guides for grades K-3, 4-6, and junior-senior high schools, the packets will include a field trip manual, wetland cards, a copy of the March-April Alaska Fish and Game magazine on wetlands, a color poster, and a game board.

Only one packet will be mailed to each school for each grade in February. If you are a teacher and would like a personal copy, contact Beverly Farfan, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99518 at 786-3351, or Marilyn Sigman in Juneau at 465-4265. Be sure to specify the grade level desired. Beverly also will be scheduling teacher training workshops in areas where a National Wildlife Refuge headquarters is nearby.

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

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

Suggestions:

- ☐ I want to participate in winter bird feeder counts in Fairbanks. Daytime phone number _____.

- ☐ Please send me a Fish and Game magazine subscription form.

Alaska Wildlife Week Goes to the Soviet Union!

As Alaska Wildlife Week educator Marilyn Sigman sat on a rough-cut bench last August among the birches at the edge the lake, a variety of tanned and beaming camp program directors described the two-week ecology program of the camp. Despite being in a forest very much like those of Interior Alaska, she was actually very far away geographically — she was 30 miles from Minsk, Byelorussia, at the Zubrenok ("Little Bison") Young Pioneer Camp.

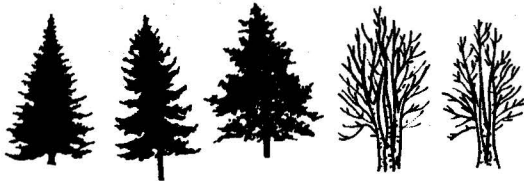
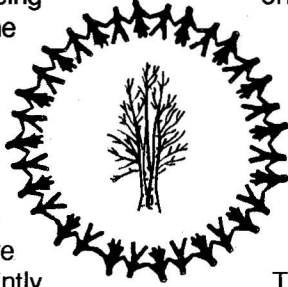
Marilyn was participating in a three-week work/study tour of the Soviet Union, focusing on geography, culture, and environment. The Alaska Department of Education selected her to participate in the first phase of an educator exchange program organized by Legacy International, a non-profit organization based in Alexandria, Va. She and the six educators from other states with experience in curriculum development were the pioneers in a three-year program to jointly develop resource materials that could be used in Soviet and American schools. Future exchanges between Soviet and American teachers are planned.

"What we found in our three weeks in the Soviet Union is difficult to summarize," says Marilyn. "Traveling to Moscow, Minsk, and Riga (Latvia), we went through the most densely settled area of the Soviet Union. Both the people and the environment

are emerging from the shadow of the years of centralized planning of the rational development of natural resources' under communist rule to a very uncertain future. Water and air pollution is widespread. Natural areas are few, wilderness virtually nonexistent."

The group met with representatives of the Academy of Sciences, Ecological Centers, local and regional environmental agencies, and educators involved with fledgling environmental programs. Everywhere, people were eager to hear about the approaches to environmental education in the United States and desperate for materials since textbooks are still published centrally by the government. The colorful posters from Alaska Wildlife Week materials were particularly welcome. Information and activities from Alaska Wildlife Week that demonstrated ecological principles in Alaska's tundra and boreal forest environments also were much coveted because they were relevant to the environments which cover large areas of the Soviet Union.

The group's kind and resourceful Soviet hosts were the staff of the Ecological Futures Center in Moscow, which is working to develop a high school-level program to develop environmental leaders in the Soviet Union. Between travel, cultural tours, official meetings, and the long meals the Soviets are famous for, the Soviets and Americans worked together to develop a curriculum framework for the Center's program which could also be used by American teachers.



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