

Alaska Hunting Bulletin

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Alaska Moose Hunting Outlook for 1998

Perspectives of 10 State Wildlife Biologists

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While the 1997/98 El Niño-powered winter was a shot in the arm for deer and deer hunters in coastal Alaska, reports from ADF&G staff suggest it won't be a big plus for moose hunters.

As can be expected in a state the size of ours, the news is mixed. Biologist reports ranged from pessimistic to somewhat optimistic. While hard winters are a big mortality factor in moose populations, predation, declining habitat, and heavy hunting pressure can also dramatically affect the big ungulates.

The Alaska Hunting Bulletin talked recently with ten state wildlife biologists about populations around Alaska for perspectives on what moose hunters can likely expect this fall. Here is what they said.

Kenai Peninsula

Other than in Homer, where about 50 moose, mainly calves, died of winter

stress and starvation, last winter's calf survival was "normal," said area biologist Ted Spraker, in Soldotna.

"Normal" means that, of the approximately 110 to 130 calves born to each 100 cows in the spring, about 10 to 15 survived to one year of age, Spraker said.

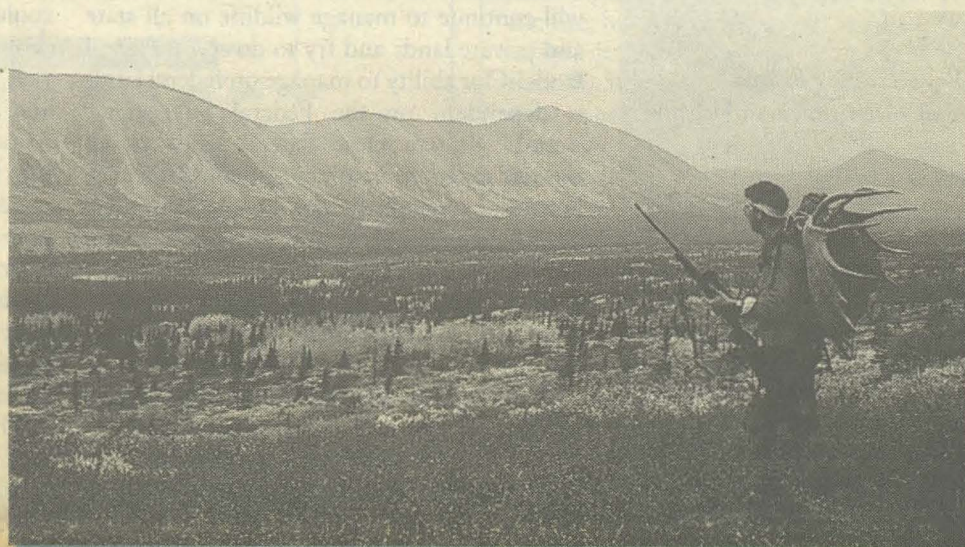
Last fall, hunters harvested 408 "spike-fork" bulls and 238 "50-inch/three brow tines" bulls. A total of 3,431 hunters reported hunting moose on the Kenai Peninsula. Their success rate was 20 percent - about average for highway accessible areas with fairly heavy hunting pressure, Spraker said.

"My best estimate for 1998 would be a harvest similar to 1997," Spraker said.

The Kenai's estimated moose population is 8000 animals.

Matanuska-Susitna

A mild winter helped ensure good calf recruitment, making for good moose



The winter of '97/98 did not help Alaska moose as much as it did deer. Moose hunters can expect poor to fairly good hunting this fall, depending on the area they hunt. Photo by Chris Batin, Alaska Hunter Publications.

hunting prospects for the Mat-Su area this fall, said area biologist Herman Griese, in Palmer.

"In our survey of GMU 16A (west of the Susitna River and east of the Kahiltna River), we observed pre-1989-90 moose densities, with 33 bulls (12.1 yearlings) per 100 cows and 35 calves per 100

cows," Griese said. Moose numbers had declined as much as 30% as the result of the deep-snow winter of 1989/90.

Similar yearling recruitment is expected to have occurred throughout much of the Mat-Su area, Griese said. An exception is GMU 16B on the west side of

Continued on page 11

REGULATIONS BOOK ERROR

Alaska military personnel should note that the price of a non-resident license continues to be \$85. An error in the wording of the 1998/99 regulations says military personnel can purchase their license for half price. While non-resident military can purchase big game TAGS for half price, the LICENSE cost remains \$85. The mistake is on page 8 of the new regulations booklet. The booklets are available now at license vendors and ADF&G offices around Alaska.

El Niño Spells Relief for Alaska Deer: Fall 1998 Deer Hunting Prospects Good

©1998 by Diane Wirth

El Niño has been maligned around the world, but it turned out to be a blessing for Alaska deer. Alaska's deer populations are mainly controlled by winter weather. Cold, deep snow winters hammer them; easy winters mean good survival rates. 1997/98 was an easy winter to remember.

The National Weather Service (NWS) in Juneau told me that November through April temperatures averaged almost five degrees warmer than normal. This caused the first half of 1998 to be the fifth

warmest on record. During the winter the only outbreak of Arctic air from Canada dipped the temperature to 1 degree above zero. Usually several outbreaks would push temperatures below zero. Juneau recorded only about one third the normal 94.7 inches of snow. Other areas of Southeast Alaska experienced similar conditions.

Valdez, Cordova and Whittier NWS stations recorded average temperatures three to almost five degrees above the historical average temperatures. Whittier received 124% of the average precipitation while Cordova had 79% and Valdez

saw close to the average amount of precipitation. Much of what fell on sea level recording stations landed as snow mixed with rain. Valdez had only 87% of the average snowfall. Kodiak had 1.2 degrees above average temperatures, 183% of the average precipitation and only 73% of the average snowfall.

In Southeast, ADF&G and Forest Service biologists surveyed deer pellet densities on 38 transects in spring, 1998. At first glance, the survey suggested lower deer densities in Units 1A and 2, about the same in

Continued on back page

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From the Director...The Way I See It

by *Wayne Regelin, Director of Wildlife Conservation*

Recent actions by the legislature in the special session mean the dual system of wildlife management in Alaska will be with us for the foreseeable future.

The federal government will continue to manage the subsistence harvest of game on federal lands. That means the Federal Subsistence Board will determine who gets to hunt on federal lands, the season timing and length and the bag limit. The Federal Subsistence Board does not consider the impact of its actions on other user groups when making its decisions.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will continue to manage wildlife on all state and private lands and try to do so on federal lands. Our ability to manage on federal lands is dependent on the Federal Subsistence Board. It can close federal lands to all hunters except federally qualified subsistence hunters; i.e. people living near the hunt area. The federal board should take such action only when subsistence needs cannot be met without excluding all other hunters, but as recent events demonstrate, that is not always the case.

Action by the Federal Subsistence Board on July 31 provides a forewarning of our future. It is bleak! The federal board took action that had a dramatic negative effect on all sheep hunters in the Baird and Delong Mountains in GMU 23. The feds completely changed the rules only 10 days before state season on Dall sheep opened and after state drawing permits had been issued.

The sheep season in the Delong and Baird Mountains has been closed for several seasons after severe winters caused a sharp population loss and subsequent reproduction and lamb survival was very low. The herds in both mountain ranges began to increase in 1995 and have grown to a level where a limited harvest of 20 full curl rams in each mountain range could occur this season.

In October the Alaska Board of Game met in Nome and spent two days discussing the sheep population and deciding how to allocate the limited harvest. The Board considered information presented by the Subsistence division on past use of these sheep populations and listened carefully to the fish and game advisory committees and other local subsistence users.

They determined the number of sheep necessary to meet the subsistence need in the Baird Mountains was 18 to 43 and 0 to 9 in the Delong Mountains. The Board authorized a registration hunt in the Baird Mountains. Permits would be issued in Kotzebue to Alaska residents and hunters could NOT use aircraft for access. In the more remote Delong Mountains, 9 registration permits would be issued in Kotzebue and aircraft could not be used. In addition, 11 permits would be issued by random drawing for the Delong Mountains. Hunters issued drawing permits were allowed to access the area by aircraft. The Board of Game examined all of the data, listened to the biologists and the local users and made an allocation decision that met the needs of the subsistence users and allowed a limited recreational hunt.

The recent federal action disregarded the data on the number of sheep needed for subsistence in each population. It ignored biological reality and decided the two distinct sheep populations should be treated as one for subsistence purposes.

These two sheep populations have been managed as separate populations since before statehood. Access to the two areas is very different. The Baird Mountains population is easily accessible by snow machine. That is why the subsistence use is high in that area. In contrast, access to the Delong Mountains population is very difficult except via aircraft. We have no scientific data that demonstrates these populations intermingle on any regular basis. They would have to cross the Noatak

River to do so.

The federal board allocated the entire harvestable surplus from both populations to federally qualified subsistence users. They closed all of the federal lands used by either sheep population to all hunters except federally qualified hunters AND they allowed all of their hunters to use aircraft to access both populations. These irresponsible federal actions forced the state to cancel the state sheep hunt in the Delong and Baird Mountains.

The federal biologists attended and participated in the Board of Game meeting last October. If they had a problem with the state allocation plan, WHY did they wait until 10 days before the hunt began to object?

The Division of Wildlife Conservation will continue to do everything within its power to provide hunting opportunities for all Alaskans in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with state laws. Unfortunately, the feds have the power to change the rules on federal lands, even if they do not make biological sense and consider the needs of only one user group.

The Alaska Board of Game made good decisions in October. Their allocation plan met the subsistence need for sheep and provided an opportunity for others to share in the harvest. We will support their decision by going forward with the state hunts on state lands in the Delong Mountains. Unfortunately, there is no state or private land in the Baird Mountains where sheep exist, so we will not be able to issue any permits to hunt in that area.

It is bad enough that we have dual management of our wildlife resources in Alaska. It is intolerable when the federal government violates the process and its own policies to pass unnecessary regulations days before our seasons are to open.

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What Do People in Anchorage Think About Wildlife?

by David Fulton

If you are a hunter concerned about the image and support of hunting among the general public, you will be refreshed by some of the results of ADF&G's 1997 Anchorage wildlife and wildlife user survey.

It turns out that most Anchorage residents think hunting is a safe and positive activity. Furthermore, they believe it helps people enjoy wildlife and nature.

This is just one finding of a survey conducted for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game last year. We used this survey to collect information about wildlife issues in Anchorage and we will be using it to help develop a wildlife management plan for the Anchorage area.

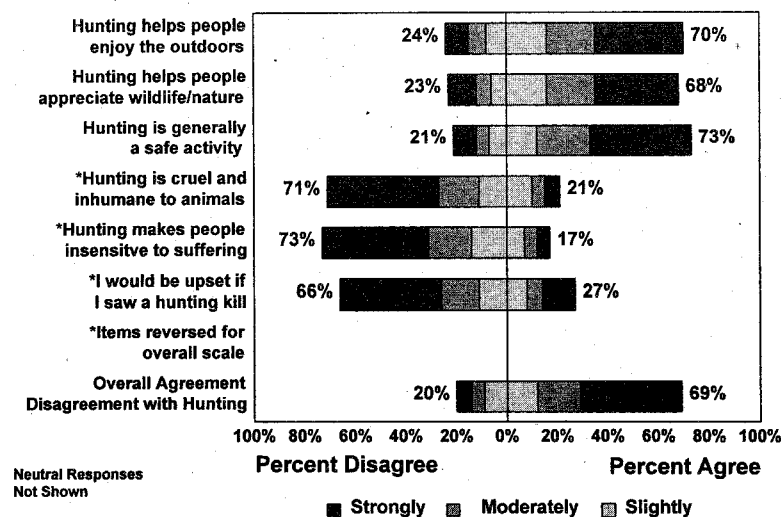
We asked a representative sample of Anchorage residents six questions to see what they think of hunting (Figure 1). Overall, 69% felt hunting is generally good, while only 20% felt hunting is generally bad. The remaining 11% did not feel strongly one way or the other.

A large majority of Anchorage residents said they support using and managing wildlife (75%). Almost all residents agreed that learning and teaching about wildlife (97%), conserving wildlife now and for future generations (96%), and seeing wildlife on outdoor recreation trips (96%) is important to them.

Nine out of ten agreed having wildlife in their local neighborhood was important to them. Most residents enjoyed watching moose (96%) and geese (92%) in the Anchorage area, but they also reported conflicts with wildlife. Common conflicts include moose eating gardens or trees (89%) and vehicles swerving or braking to avoid hitting moose (72%) or geese (53%). One out of four residents reported being charged by moose in Anchorage, either on a trail or in their neighborhood.

About one in five (22%) reported seeing a bear in their Anchorage neighborhood. On the other hand, few people reported actual problems with bears eating garbage (5%), dam-

Figure 1. Anchorage Residents' Beliefs about Hunting



aging property (2%), or injuring or killing pets (1%) (Figure 2). Despite the common occurrence of conflicts, fewer than one in four residents felt there are too many incidents of moose eating gardens or trees. In contrast, while few have had aggressive encounters with moose or bears in Anchorage, about one-third believed there are too many moose or bear encounters in neighborhoods or on trails in Anchorage.

Most residents felt there are too many moose deaths from vehicle accidents (60%) and too many incidents of bears getting into garbage (58%) (Figure 3). One out of three felt there are too many moose, black bears, and brown bears in Anchorage.

In contrast, almost six out of ten believed there are too many Canada geese. About 60 percent of residents would accept public hunts to reduce numbers of moose, black bears, brown bears, and geese near Anchorage. Slightly more than one-third felt such hunts are unacceptable.

Opinions were more divided about having wildlife authorities destroy moose and bears in Anchorage to reduce populations. Slightly more than half (53%) accepted such actions for moose while 44% found them unacceptable. Just under half (48%) would accept these actions for brown and black bears, while 46% found them unacceptable. Responses to questions about a proposed moose hunt in Chugach State Park indicated about half (51%) of Anchorage residents would support the hunt, a third (34%) would oppose it, and 15% were unsure.

People supporting the hunt believed it would:

- reduce accidents involving moose;
- reduce potentially dangerous encounters with moose;
- keep moose from being overpopulated; and
- provide more hunting opportunities for Anchorage hunters.

People opposing the hunt believed it would:

- generate a lot of conflict between people;
- cost a lot to administer;
- prevent non-hunters from using the park; and
- have the potential to injure someone.

These results highlight issues that must be addressed if urban wildlife populations are managed through public hunts.

We collected this information by way of a mailed survey that we sent to a randomly selected sample of Anchorage voters. The residents we selected returned a total of 971 surveys for an overall response rate of 59% — a good response rate for a survey of this type. There is a 4% margin of error on the survey results.

Dr. David Fulton is a wildlife planner working for the Division of Wildlife Conservation in Anchorage. Fulton says he would be pleased to provide copies of the complete report. His address is Alaska Department of Fish & Game Wildlife Conservation 333 Raspberry Rd. Anchorage, AK 99518 (907) 267-2133 (907) 267-2433 email: davidf@fishgame.state.ak.us

Newsbreaks...

ADF&G, Alaska State Forestry, F&WP, and US Fish & Wildlife Service staff on July 21 burned approximately 50,000 acres to benefit wildlife in Alaska's largest-ever prescribed fire. Tok Wildlife Technician Danny Grangard says the fire did just what managers hoped it would by producing a very diversified burn area. The fire burned from lowland black spruce bogs all the way up through the sub-alpine zone to rock in some areas. Grangard says the burn will benefit many species of wildlife in the next 30 years or more. Moose will benefit from the shrub-by growth in many areas. Marten, hares, lynx, songbirds, small mammals and other species will benefit from the rejuvenated landscape. There was one cabin in the area of the fire, but the small agency crew easily prevented it from burning. The fire cost less than \$0.50 per acre. When the cost is averaged over the benefit life of the project, the cost per acre per year is just pennies. Grangard said what really made the project possible was help from other agencies. Alaska State Forestry provided manpower, technical expertise and support. The US Fish & Wildlife Service provided a biologist qualified to run the specialized ignition device and weather stations. The Tok Fish & Wildlife Protection officer flew a Supercub spotting for the ignition helicopter.

The southcentral region has created a task force to evaluate the spike/fork-50" selective harvest strategy. The evaluation will include a biological assessment and a review of hunter satisfaction with the management strategy. Task force members include Kris Hundertmark, Gino Del Frate, Jeff Selinger, Mark Masteller, David Fulton, an F&WP representative, and public representatives from the Mat-Su, Nelchina, Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula. The task force met in late January to begin development of a hunter assessment survey. The task force will work closely with advisory committees throughout the region and with the larger hunting public to develop any necessary proposals for Board of Game review at the March 1999 meeting. (See related story on page 6-ed.)

DWC Director Wayne Regelin has decided to continue the Hunter Information and Training (HIT) Program Steering Group to help the division develop this rapidly changing and growing program. Regelin appointed Gale McKnight, Dan Kittoe, David Cline, and Ted Schenck of Anchorage, Robert Fox and Barry Whitehill of Fairbanks, Orville Lind of King Salmon and David Johnson of Delta Junction. All except Cline are volunteer Hunter Education Instructors. Regelin also established two subcommittees. The curriculum and rural issues subcommittee will consist of Michael Lord of Ketchikan, Sarah Jones of Soldotna, Ellen Hannan of Craig, Ed Russell of Anchorage, and two as-yet unnamed Native representatives. Phil Pringle of Anchorage, Victoria Gross of Palmer, Del Demeritt and Jim Low of Fairbanks will serve on the standards and incentives subcommittee. In his letter to

Continued next page

HOW WILL YOUR CHILDREN HUNT TOMORROW?

The Hunter Heritage Foundation of Alaska was established to provide private resources for the effort of training new hunters and educating the public about the benefits hunting brings to wildlife conservation.

Endorsed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the HHFA has been an active partner in the Alaska Hunting Clinic Series since its beginning in 1995. Long term plans include educational projects promoting hunting's important role in wildlife management and the cultural heritage of Alaskans.

All contributions to the HHFA are tax deductible and will be used entirely for projects that benefit hunting's future. Please send your contribution to:

Hunter Heritage Foundation of Alaska
PO Box 73902
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Wolf Snaring Ballot Measure Fate Uncertain

The State of Alaska has appealed a lower court ruling that could prevent the wolf snaring initiative from appearing on the November election ballot. If the ruling is not overturned before the state's August 26, 1998 election ballot printing deadline, the initiative will not be subject to a vote this fall.

Initiative supporters gathered 27,224 signatures this past winter and spring. The Lt. Governor approved the measure to appear on the fall general election ballot in early April.

A coalition of Alaska sportsmen's organizations then sued to prevent the initiative from appearing on the November ballot. They argued that the Alaska constitution requires that wildlife law be developed by the legislature. The superior court agreed, and in mid-May enjoined the placement of the initiative on the ballot, ruling that it was not a proper subject for an initiative.

The state appealed the ruling early this summer because of the potential effects it may have on restricting Alaskans from pursuing other initiatives totally unrelated to the snaring measure.

If ballot measure number 9 is printed on election ballots, the wording will read as follows:

This bill would prohibit a person from using a snare with the intent of trapping a wolf. It would also prohibit a person from possessing, buying, selling, or offering to sell the skin of a wolf known by the person

to have been caught with a snare. Breaking the law would be a Class A misdemeanor.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation published a position paper on this initiative in February. The Alaska Hunting Bulletin published the complete text of the position paper in the May, 1998 edition. You can obtain a copy of the position paper by calling the DWC FAX on Demand server. Call (907) 267-2892 from a FAX machine as if you were calling a person, and be prepared to press the "start" button when prompted. You can also view a copy at the DWC website at www.state.ak.us/adfg/wildlife/geninfo/hunting/hntbul5.htm#snaring

Here is some of the major points made in the position paper:

- * The Alaska Department of Fish and Game supports regulated trapping and snaring as legitimate harvest methods for use of Alaska's furbearer resource.

- * The Department supports and promotes humane and ethical trapping using the best techniques available.

- * Snaring and other methods of trapping are strictly regulated in Alaska. Department of Fish and Game biologists monitor wolf and other furbearer populations throughout the state to assure that populations remain healthy and are not overharvested.

- * Trapping is an important part of the economy in

rural Alaska. In some rural communities in the Interior, as many as 87 percent of households trap for income. Snares are particularly important in cash-poor villages of Interior Alaska because they are the most effective way to trap wolves in areas of deep or frequent snowfall. In addition to cash, trapping generates other products used by rural households, including food for human consumption (e.g., beaver, lynx, ptarmigan, and hare) and raw materials for clothing (especially cold weather gear for the head, hands and feet).

- * Many wolf trappers prefer snares because they are lighter than other traps, less expensive, more effective than leghold traps during freezing and thawing weather, and remain operable after snowfalls.

- * Over the last five years, snares have accounted for an average of 29 percent of the wolves harvested each year in the state. Trapping furbearers has been economically and culturally important to Alaska's people for centuries. The seasonal harvest of wildlife provides meat and warm clothing needed to sustain and enhance life in the North.

- * Historically, trapping was at the heart of trade in Alaska, and it is still a vital part of rural economies and cultures. Like hunting, viewing, and photography, trapping is a legitimate use of our wildlife resource.

Newsbreaks...

committee members, Regelin said he feels the HIT program is heading into a new era. He pointed out the legislature has provided significant additional funding and the first steps in new directions have already been taken. HIT program coordinators John Matthews and Tony Monzingo will provide technical and logistical support for the groups.

More than 100 enthusiastic women descended on Chena Hot Springs near Fairbanks in late July for Alaska's fifth "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" (BOW) program. The Alaska BOW program is sponsored by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and is almost identical to programs like it in most other states in the nation. Interior program coordinator Cathie Harms said the women could take their choice of four classes from a menu of 25 different classes covering hunting, fishing and other key outdoor skills. Interestingly, she said, field dressing big game was the first class to fill up. Students used two reindeer purchased for the class to learn the skills. The reindeer were later turned into table fare in the very popular Dutch oven cooking class. Harms said the output from the that class was incredible: halibut in sour cream dill sauce, spiced mushrooms with reindeer backstrap, strawberry-rhubarb cobbler, rosemary ptarmigan and roast potatoes and much more. National BOW program Assistant Director Diane Lueck joined the team as a guest instructor, as did Michigan BOW program leader Lynn Marla. Harms said evening sessions were great fun. The moose calling contest was divided into two sections: realistic and entertainment. Some of the moose callers could easily bring in moose, judges said. The entertainment calls brought down the house, Harms said. Other sessions showcased outdoor clothing for Alaska women and a round robin of Alaska outdoor skills. ADF&G intends to annually sponsor two programs. ADF&G will offer a summer, 1999 BOW program on the Kenai May 14-16 and a winter program in the Interior. Harms said



Kris Jenkins shows off her pineapple upside down cake prepared at the popular Becoming an Outdoors-Woman™ Dutch oven cooking class.

women interested in the program can contact her in Fairbanks at 459-7231 (charms@fishgame.state.ak.us) or Southcentral Alaska coordinator Enid Keyes in Anchorage at 267-2253 (enidk@fishgame.state.ak.us). Information about BOW is on the web at www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/geninfo/educate/bow.htm

The Fortymile Caribou Herd is growing at a faster rate thanks to reduced harvest by hunters, decreased predation and good weather. Tok Area Wildlife Biologist Craig Gardner says the concession made by hunters to voluntarily reduce harvest in the herd has

been a valuable factor in the increased rate of herd growth in the last two years. Trappers have also helped by stepping up wolf harvests in the area. Gardner says good spring and winter weather has been a real break for the caribou, as have wolf relocations to other parts of the state. (See page 7 related story on a wolf relocation to the Kenai Peninsula-ed.) The effect of the non-lethal wolf sterilization program will begin to kick in this fall and winter, as pups are not present to replace aging and dying adult wolves. With the success of the plan, Gardner says ADF&G and hunters should begin thinking about a harvest plan that will take effect in 2001, as the larger herd should be able to support additional harvest.

The Hunter Information and Training Program (formerly Hunter Education and Hunter Services) unveiled its new laser interactive shooting training system at the Anchorage and Fairbanks sportsmen's shows in April. Program co-coordinator Tony Monzingo said the new system is designed to introduce Alaskans to safer shooting and better marksmanship. At the two shows, more than 2500 individuals tried their hand with laser activated rifles and shotguns at the video targets. Approximately one-third of the "shooters" were in the 11- to 16-year-old age group and about 12 % of those were young women. This group expressed great interest in participating in the shooting sports if opportunities were readily available. Hundreds of students signed up at the two shows for future hunter education classes. The training system will be used to assist in teaching hunter safety and education by posing "shoot-don't-shoot" scenarios. Since a majority of fatal hunting accidents occur when someone is mistaken for game or suddenly appears in the line-of-fire, this system may help decrease these avoidable accidents. The HIT program now has two of the interactive systems. One is permanently installed at the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage and the other is a mobile system for public outreach opportunities. (see related story on page 5-ed.) The new hunter education building in Fairbanks will also be constructed with a dedicated room for a laser

Continued on page 6

You Can Help Protect Alaska's Hunting Heritage by Becoming A Hunter Education Instructor

by H. Gale McKnight

Many Alaskans learned a sobering statistic in the spring issue of the Alaska Hunting Bulletin: fatal firearms-related hunting accidents here are far worse than the national average. These accidents touch the lives of many people. Think of the impact that the loss of a life has on the friends and family of that person. Preventable deaths are truly tragic in their far-reaching implications.

Hunter education training elsewhere in America has reduced these tragedies by up to 75%! Today, every state except Alaska requires hunters to complete a hunter education course. In the past, many hunters seemed to believe the myth that young, inexperienced hunters are responsible for the bulk of these accidents. Statistics do not support this conclusion. The average person involved in a fatal hunting-related shooting is 31 years of age and has 17 years of hunting experience.

The Alaska Volunteer Hunter Education Instructor Association (AVHEIA) is acutely aware of the need for hunter education in Alaska. We have been actively seeking solutions to stop the needless loss of life due to the negligent handling of firearms. At the

same time, we seek to preserve our unique Alaska hunting heritage.

The goal of the AVHEIA is hunters in the field that are safe, ethical, and responsible. While 80% of non-hunters support hunting, hunters have a definite image problem. 65% of the people who approve of hunting feel that most hunters knowingly break the law. Obviously, the non-hunting public will ultimately decide the fate of hunting. We hunters must change the perception that most hunters deliberately break the law. Hunter education can help change how the non-hunting public views us.

Both the AVHEIA and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game are currently working on a plan to insure that Alaska has hunters of which we can be proud. The Division of Wildlife Conservation is currently reviewing a proposed new three-pronged approach to improving hunter education. The proposal was the product of yearlong deliberations by a steering committee appointed by Wildlife Division Director Wayne Regelin. Implementation of the proposal will require action by the state legislature, the Board of Game, and the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

Nationwide, the success of hunter educa-

tion can be directly attributed to the dedication of volunteers. These volunteers are deeply committed to eliminating needless firearm hunting injuries and preserving our hunting heritage for generations to come. Without volunteer instructors, the program simply could not exist.

Alaskans desperately need hunters who will step up to the plate and become instructors. We need hunters — men and women — who want to contribute to a radical decline in Alaska firearms accidents. We need hunters who want to be instrumental in helping increase the number of ethical hunters afield. We need hunters who want to help insure the future of hunting through recruitment of new hunters. If you share these ideals, Alaskans need you to join the ranks of volunteer instructors.

Experienced hunters who want to share their enjoyment and enthusiasm for hunting will find being a hunter education instructor extremely rewarding. I became an instructor because of a personal need to "give something back" to an activity that had provided me with so many opportunities to enjoy and challenge myself.

The next few years are going to be exciting times for hunter education in Alaska. We are

working on developing a new curriculum specific to our state. If the proposed new approach to hunter education is adopted, young hunters in certain game management units will require training starting in the year 2000. It is going to be a period of growth, transition and challenge!

Those of us who have enjoyed hunting have an obligation to help the next generation get off to a good start. If you have an interest in becoming a hunter education instructor, please step forward and lend a hand. The pay is lousy but the rewards will continue into future generations and may even help us expand hunting opportunities that will otherwise be lost forever.

H. Gale McKnight is President of the Alaska Volunteer Hunter Education Instructor Association. Gale is an active hunter and hunter education instructor. When he is not hunting, he is a dentist. If you want to join Alaska's dedicated hunter education instructor corps, call or write today. Call (907) 267-2187 in Anchorage (1-800-478-4868 elsewhere in Alaska), or write Hunter Information and Training Program, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518-1599.

Have Guns/Will Travel

by Tony Monzingo

The Hunter Information and Training Program recently received funds from the Alaska legislature to purchase and operate an innovative mobile shooting sports training program that will substantially extend the ability of ADF&G to promote firearms safety and responsible hunting through better marksmanship.

The heart of the program is a DART™ laser interactive shooting system designed for use with both bows and firearms. The DART system will be inside a 36-foot 5th

wheel trailer. This mobile shooting sports training system can be used at locations where live fire would not be practical.

Two qualified Fish and Game coaches/technicians will travel with the mobile system. Other ADF&G personnel and volunteer hunter education instructors will join the team during clinics in their hometowns.

In the months ahead, look for the new mobile system with the DART training format at the Anchorage and Fairbanks outdoors sports shows, fairs, and at schools. The Texas Parks and Wildlife department used a system like this to introduce over 100,000 junior high age students to the safe and proper use of firearms during the 1997-98 school year alone! While we have a smaller population, we expect to reach many young Alaskans and adults with the message of firearms safety and better shooting skills.

The DART is the premier laser-activated, interactive firearms and archery training system in the United States. The DART system consists of a laser disc player and projector, a computer operating system, and a sensitized screen that reflects the laser beam into a special camera attached to the projector.

While technically complex, the system is easy to use. Over 20 special training laser discs are provided with the system. Some of the video laser discs are made from video of entirely Alaskan big game animals. Others allow one to "hunt" lower 48 game such as white tail deer, mule deer, antelope, and turkey. There are also discs that are primarily for entertainment. In these, the targets are inanimate objects like the old shooting gallery games for rifle shooters or clay targets for shotgun shooters.

We believe two of the best uses of the DART system are to help hunters practice precise shot placement and learn knowledge of big game anatomy without the

noise, expense, or recoil of firing actual big bore rifles, handguns, or arrows. After the "hunter" takes a shot at a video animal the action freezes and a red or blue vital target area is illuminated. The hunter can tell immediately if the practice shot would have quickly taken the animal. In some accessible and heavily hunted areas, the combination of animals dying from wounding loss and poaching exceeds the legal take. It is imperative that Alaskan hunters minimize wounding loss of big game. Fewer animals lost to wounding could mean an increase in hunting opportunity or larger bag limits in some areas.

The trailer will also be fully equipped with clay target machines, shotguns, rifles, muzzleloaders, bows, and the support equipment necessary to conduct clinics. These clinics could include shotgun skills, waterfowl hunting, steel-shot education, muzzleloading, rifle marksmanship, archery and other advanced hunting skills.

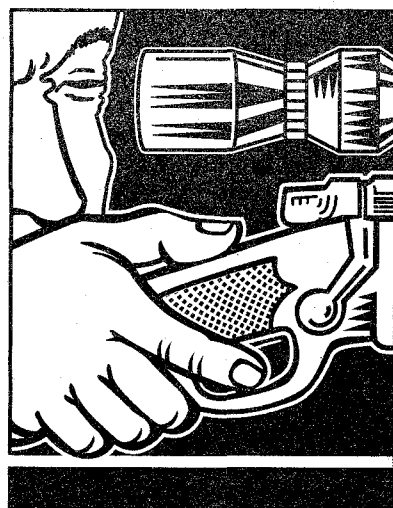
Our present plans call for the mobile system to be available for use by March, 1999 and on-the-road beginning in May. The first summer tour of the mobile system will be in southeast Alaska. The mobile unit is tentatively scheduled to visit the marine highway connected communities of Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau, Sitka, and Haines as well as Tok, Valdez, and Glennallen enroute. We will select clinic topics in each area based on the interests expressed by local hunters and recreational shooters.

According to program coordinator John Matthews, the summer season will culminate with an appearance of the mobile system at the Palmer State Fair. If pilot program results from the 1998 Great Alaska Sports Show in Anchorage and the Fairbanks Outdoor Show are any indication, the system will be used by thousands of Alaskans, shooters and not-yet-shooters alike.

In the years ahead the mobile system will tour the remainder of the state road system including the Kenai Peninsula, southcentral and interior Alaska. Watch future editions of the Alaska Hunter Bulletin for a schedule of the mobile system's activities in your area!

Tony Monzingo is a coordinator of the Division of Wildlife Conservation's Hunter Information and Training Program. Tony is an expert shooter and avid hunter. He works in Anchorage.

Hunter education: it's not just for kids. Adults can learn valuable skills too!!



For more information,
call your local ADF&G
Wildlife Conservation
office or:

(907) 459-7305

Fairbanks

(907) 267-2373

Anchorage

(907) 465-4265

Juneau

Most classes are taught winter and spring. Training includes firearms and outdoor safety, wildlife conservation, and hunting ethics and responsibility. Graduates receive an Alaska Hunter Education card which is accepted in other states and provinces that require hunter education training.

Biologists, Hunters Review Spike-Fork/50 Strategy in Southcentral

by Bruce Bartley

As the selective moose harvest strategy known as spike-fork/50 heads into its sixth season, an in-depth review is under way to evaluate its effects and to make recommendations to the Alaska Board of Game on its future.

The spike-fork/50 regulation was adopted in the spring of 1993 in most of the road-accessible Game Management Units in southcentral Alaska. It was modeled after the strategy that had been successfully used on the Kenai Peninsula for nearly a decade. At the time SF/50 was adopted, the Division of Wildlife Conservation told the Board it would come back at the end of five years with an analysis.

A change in the way Board handles regional regulations postponed that review one year, but the group evaluating the regulation already has been at work for nearly a year, studying the biological aspects as well as hunters' satisfaction with the SF/50 regulation.

The study group includes biologists, managers and researchers from throughout the region as well as representatives of Fish & Game advisory committees in Kenai, Anchorage, the Mat-Su Valley and the Copper River Basin.

Among other things, the biological assessment is focusing on whether:

- bull-to-cow ratios have improved
- targeting the smallest and largest bulls alters the genetics which dictate antler spread
- more large bulls are surviving the hunting season for

viewing and breeding purposes

- overall harvest has changed and the distribution of various sized bulls in the harvest.

While the biologists and other task force members can pore over lots of dry statistics, the numbers don't tell them much about what hunters think of the SF/50 regulation. So in June, surveys were sent to about 4,400 people who hunted moose in southcentral Alaska over the past five seasons.

The surveys contain 34 questions about what makes for a good (or bad) moose hunting trip, satisfaction with the SF/50 regulation and what changes, if any, hunters would like to see.

David Fulton, DWC's regional planner, says he expects a return rate of 40-50 percent on the surveys, which should be enough to produce a statistically valid representation of southcentral moose hunters.

The SF/50 regulation is well entrenched on the Kenai Peninsula, where it has greatly increased the bull:cow ratio, lengthened the general season to more than a month as well as added a week-long archery season, and generated harvests as large as back in the days when any bull was legal during a very short season.

But even a cursory glance elsewhere shows less uniform success throughout the rest of the region. In GMUs 14A, 14B and 16A, SF/50 more than doubled the bull:cow ratio in just a couple of years. Hunters have enjoyed longer seasons, any-bull permits and late hunts as a result. The effects in more remote 16B are less clear,

although the situation there is clouded by low hunting pressure, increasing predation and subsistence issues.

While the harvest in GMU 13 has held up well, different antler structures have complicated things because in many areas bulls have three brow tines well before they reach 50 inches. In some of those areas, bull:cow ratios have gone down.

Among the options to be looked at are shortening the seasons, increasing the minimum number of brow tines to four, or some combination of a general season for certain bulls and a drawing or registration hunt for any bulls. Of course, the consensus may be to leave the regulation alone. All of those options are presented in the hunter survey.

The evaluation must be completed by December so any proposed regulation changes can be submitted in time for the spring 1999 Board of Game meeting when southcentral regulations are on the agenda.

Meanwhile, this fall's hunting season will be the same as in recent years. With some exceptions, the season will be Aug. 20-Sept. 20. A legal bull is one with a spike or forked antler on at least one side, a bull with at least three (or four, in some parts of Alaska) brow tines on at least one side or a bull with an antler spread 50 inches or greater.

Bruce Bartley works in the Anchorage regional DWC office as an information officer.

Newsbreaks...

Continued from page 4

interactive system.

In other Hunter Information and Training news, program managers began a new direction with the hunting clinic series in April. Since 1995 the hunting clinics have been lecture-based and presented to relatively large audiences. In surveys conducted by the HIT program, hunters have indicated that they would like to see a number of "hands-on" skills clinics. The topics hunters selected indicate that many Alaskans have a strong desire to become more proficient and ethical hunters. Some of the most-requested clinics include field dressing and meat care, wilderness first aid, navigation, survival, rifle shooting skills, and calling big game. The first "hands-on" clinic was held April 24-25 at the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range. The class was a sell-out with 25 hunters participating in the first "Becoming a Muzzleloader Hunter" clinic. Everyone attending the clinic had the opportunity to try out a variety of muzzleloaders, projectiles, and propellants. Hunters also were "tested" on their range estimation abilities and marksmanship. Everyone attending the clinic expressed a high level of support for future "hands-on" clinics. Each hunter attending the clinic was rewarded with certification from the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association and several new hunting skills.

Wolves eating dogs is a familiar story to many rural Alaskans, but last winter a number of Ketchikan dogs met the same fate. Area Wildlife Biologist Doug Larsen says as many as ten dogs, mostly small, old, and feeble, disappeared from residents' yards last winter.

Larsen found the partly consumed carcasses of two dogs in the woods near their owners' homes. He believes the mild, snow-free winter experienced throughout southern Southeast Alaska made it difficult for wolves to take



Muzzle loaders trained at Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage at the Alaska Hunting Clinic Series program 'Becoming a Muzzleloader Hunter'.

prey. Wolves in poor physical condition are especially in need of easy-to-catch prey, and in some cases dogs fill the bill. Larsen says there was a similar incident involving a single wolf five years ago.

A citizen's advisory group and planning team is working with ADF&G staff to recommend changes to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge management plan. Regional Refuge Manager Colleen Matt says the fate of the established ORV trail is probably the most difficult issue for the planning team. Nearly all of

the members are hunters and understand the needs for access on the refuge. The problem, however, is that the trails are becoming wider and wider, and could change water drainage and waterfowl habitat. Other key issues are possible land purchases to extend the refuge, target shooting and vandalism at key access points, and dumping. Matt expects to have a draft for public comment by next summer. She says the planning team welcomes written comments. Matt can be reached at 746-6335 or cmatt@fishgame.state.ak.us

Tok wildlife staff worked with contractors this past spring to crush vegetation on more than 200 acres along the Big Tok River near the Glenn Highway. The area is prime winter moose habitat, but willows had grown 20-30 feet high and out of the reach of the animals. This project is a continuation of similar work done in the Tok River drainage throughout the 1980's. The earlier work was very successful, but new sites are needed to augment the 10-15 year old willows in the older units, which will soon be past their prime as moose forage. The contractor walked a D-8 Caterpillar through the area with the blade about one foot above the ground. Some vegetation, including

aspen and cottonwood trees and large willows were sheared off. Smaller plants bounced back up. The crushing operation took 2-1/2 weeks and was completed April 7. Tok wildlife technician Danny Grangaard says available moose browse in the area has now about tripled.

Should the Delta bison herd be managed differently in the next five years? That is the question Wildlife

Continued on next page

Kenai Ruffed Grouse Population Slowly Growing

by Nick Steen

The "Kenai." The mere mention of this name brings visions of giant halibut, huge salmon and moose. If all goes well, Alaskans will soon be able to hear a sound similar to a chain saw that refuses to start echoing through the spring hardwood forests. No, it is not the sound of the removal of beetle-killed spruce, but the mating sounds of male ruffed grouse.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff completed a three-year project to move ruffed grouse from the Interior to the Kenai in September 1997. We moved 242 birds in total, with 103 birds in 1997 alone. Ruffed grouse are native to Alaska but apparently their short flight capabilities have not allowed them to penetrate south of the Alaska Range. This release completes a 10-year project by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to introduce these birds to Southcentral Alaska.

We initially moved birds to the Matanuska Valley in the late 1980's. This was very successful and hunters are now enjoying the opportunity to pursue this fine upland game bird. Early indications are the introduction to the Kenai will be at least as successful, but a bit more time will be needed before we can tell for certain.

During the three-year Kenai transplant, staff moved 100 more birds than were released in the Matanuska Valley. Even so, the new Kenai population does not appear to be expanding as rapidly as it did in the Mat Valley. ADF&G biologists do not yet understand all the reasons for this. However, predation, hunters and weather all appear to play a role. Birds were radio col-

lared to provide information on dispersal and reproduction. These birds fell to predators at a rapid rate. Of 17 birds collared in 1996, only 2, a male and a female, survived to breed in the spring of 1997.

Weather is a third factor that could be slowing the growth of this population. Although adult birds can handle almost anything Mother Nature can throw at them in the winter, young birds are a different story. Chicks hatch about the first week of June. They need warm, dry weather for the first couple weeks of life for the best chance of survival. Cool, wet weather chills the young chicks, causing hypothermia and death. The spring of 1998 brought a series of low-pressure systems, producing cool, misty, windy or rainy days. This is bad weather news for young birds.

Despite these problems, there is reason to be optimistic that the introduction will be successful and we will soon be enjoying the sights and sounds and hunting opportunities that ruffed grouse provide.

Future plans call for monitoring the status of the introduction. No additional releases are planned for the foreseeable future. If the population needs a boost to insure its success or to expedite its spread, additional birds could be brought in, but this unlikely.

For those of you that enjoy chasing birds in the cool, colorful days of fall, we urge you to learn to identify the various grouse species. Please suppress the urge to collect any ruffed grouse you find on the Kenai Peninsula.

If the urge to exercise your dogs in pursuit of these fine birds becomes too great, I suggest you travel north of the Alaska Range. Try the aspen ridges and back trails from Healy to Fairbanks or Fairbanks to Tok. The Taylor highway also is a likely destination, as is the Elliot highway heading toward Manley. Check your hunting regulation booklet (pg. 108-109) for season dates and bag limits throughout the State. The regulations booklet also has some information on how to identify ruffed and spruce grouse. **GOOD HUNTING!**

Nick is an ADF&G biologist stationed in Anchorage.



Newsbreaks...

Continued from page 6

Conservation staff will be asking as a new five-year plan is developed this winter, according to Delta area biologist Steve DuBois. Staff will work with citizens on the Delta Bison Working Group to review the existing situation and develop a proposed plan for future herd management. DuBois says the plan should be ready for public review next spring. Hunters or others with comments can contact DuBois at 895-4484 or sdubois@fishgame.state.ak.us

Palmer area wildlife staff counted grouse drumming in April and May and found similar numbers to 1997. Grouse counters ran four existing survey routes at dawn on several mornings, stopping at intervals to listen for drumming grouse. Male grouse drum loudly to attract females and the sound can be heard at distances up to 600-1000 feet on still mornings. Staff counted the same number of drummers this year as in 1997, which could mean population growth has leveled off, at least along some survey routes. On the other hand, grouse were heard on routes where they had not been heard before, suggesting a stronger, wider distribution (*See related Kenai Peninsula ruffed grouse story above-ed.*)

Alaska Wildlife Conservation and Forestry staff in Interior Alaska ignited one large prescribed fire in July and at press time were awaiting weather for one more large and three smaller prescribed fires. DWC biologist Dale Haggstrom said the fires are all designed to improve habitat for moose and other wildlife. He points out that past fire suppression has produced unnaturally aged habitat that is less capable of supporting wildlife. Staff ignited the largest burn unit on July 21 northeast of Tok. (*See related item on page 3-ed.*) A second 25,000+

acre fire is planned for southwest of Fairbanks on the northwestern Tanana flats. Unlike the Tok area fire, which is on state lands, about half the land of the Tanana Flats fire is owned by Toghothlele Native Corporation in Nenana. Toghothlele is very interested in the fire as a means of improving resource values on this land. Three small fires are also in the works. These fires, ranging from 16-87 acres, would be ignited on recently logged areas as a means of improving habitat for wildlife, and improving the seedbed for white spruce. Haggstrom says these fires will make it easier to plant the commercially valuable spruce and set back the grass which sometimes overwhelms the small spruce seedlings. They will also promote the growth of brushy plants like willow. The willow will provide moose browse, but may actually also improve the growth of spruce seedlings in clearcut areas by providing a little shade. Managers are waiting weather conditions within a window of wind speed, direction, moisture levels and other factors. Haggstrom says the fires are not lit when conditions are "out of prescription" because at one weather extreme they fizzle and at the other extreme they become unmanageable.

A donation by the Kenai Peninsula Chapter of Safari Club International has extended the ability of biologists to plot movements of Kenai brown bears. SCI board member and ADF&G Wildlife Technician Larry Lewis says the group raised and donated \$8,000 to purchase two Telonics Global Positioning Satellite Store-On-Board radio collars. The devices periodically capture precise position location data and then store it in on-board memory. Biologist capture

Continued on page 8

Central Arctic, Fortymile, Mulchatna and Nelchina Caribou Hunting Information At A Glance

Mulchatna Herd

This is one of Alaska's fastest growing caribou herds. The herd ranges west of Cook Inlet and north of Bristol Bay. The season is liberal because of the herd's large size. Hunters should be aware of the requirement for keeping edible meat on the front and hindquarters on the bone until the meat is removed from the field or processed for consumption.

The Dillingham DWC office records up-to-date information about the herd and hunting opportunities on an Anchorage voice mailbox: (907) 267-2308

Nelchina Herd

Alaska's most accessible caribou herd is available this year only to Alaska residents holding a Tier II permit or hunters qualified by the federal government to hunt on federal public lands in the area. Tier II hunters may take only bulls. The season runs August 1 - September 20 and October 21 - March 31.

Call (907) 267-2304 in Anchorage for information about the Nelchina herd.

Fortymile Herd

The rate of growth of the Fortymile herd is beginning to increase, but biologists remind hunters that fastest herd growth will occur if hunters will voluntarily take caribou elsewhere. A return to more normal hunting seasons should be possible in a few years. The Fortymile hunt is on a registration permit basis.

Call (907) 267-2310 in Anchorage for Fortymile herd information.

Central Arctic Herd

This herd is stable at about 19,000 animals. Most hunters access the herd from the Dalton Highway (Haul Road). Hunters with IBEP (bowhunter) certification may take caribou within five miles of the road. Neither firearms nor motorized vehicles may be used for hunting within this ten mile-wide corridor.

Fairbanks staff record up-to-date hunting information about caribou and other game at (907) 459-7386

Newsbreaks...

Continued from page 7

and collar bears emerging from dens in the spring and then recapture the animals and replace the GPS units with conventional VHF collars as they begin to be inactive in winter dens. When biologists recapture the bear, the location data is downloaded and biologists have a precise picture of summer bear movements. This information adds substantially to the understanding of bear habitat use and movement patterns.

ADF&G and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge have built a cabin at Paimiut on the Yukon River in memory of Randy Kacyon. Kacyon, the former Bethel Area Wildlife Biologist was killed in an aircraft crash during an aerial moose survey on November 30, 1996. The cabin was constructed in mid July by ADF&G and Refuge staff working alongside volunteers, including some of Kacyon's family. The builders placed a plaque identifying the cabin as a memorial to Randy.

Comings and Goings in the Division of Wildlife Conservation

Alaska's loss of Assistant Director Chris Smith is Montana's gain. In his 22 years with ADF&G Chris worked in many different capacities, including regional biologist, research biologist, area biologist, management coordinator, regional supervisor and assistant director. Smith's enthusiasm, dedication and optimism will be greatly missed here, but the good news is that he has moved right into a similar position with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

Doug Larsen has been hired to fill the assistant director position vacated by the retirement of Chris Smith. Larsen was the area wildlife biologist in Ketchikan for nearly 10 years, and was previously stationed in Kotzebue. Larsen started his new job in Juneau on July 1.

Meanwhile, the retirement of Kodiak Area Wildlife Biologist Roger Smith and Sitka Area Wildlife Biologist Jim Faro has led to quite a bit of biologist movement around the state. Larry Van Daele from Dillingham is replacing Smith. Jim Woolington, previously in Galena, has in turn taken Van Dale's place. Area biologist Jack Whitman has moved to Sitka from McGrath, where Toby Boudreau who was an assistant area biologist in Fairbanks will replace him. Jeff Selinger, now assistant area biologist in Glennallen will take Boudreau's place in Fairbanks. Kate Persons has been appointed Nome area assistant area biologist.

DWC staff, friends and family mourned the passing of pioneer moose researcher Dr. Bill Gasaway who died in California July 15 after a brief illness. As a wildlife biologist with the Division of Wildlife Conservation, he led the development of the "Gasaway census" now widely used in Alaska and elsewhere in North America. The census technique allowed, for the first time, the ability to estimate moose numbers with measurable precision. While the census technique was perhaps his most widely known accomplishment, Gasaway enjoyed an international reputation as a biologist with an unusually deep understanding of large ungulate and predator-prey biology. Gasaway was not just an outstanding biologist, he was a dedicated hunter, and a fine friend to many in Fairbanks where he worked until he retired in 1990. Gasaway leaves his wife, Kathy.

HIT Program Trains Youth and Women's Shooting Coaches

On June 19-24, the National Sporting Clays Association certified 11 new coaches to teach beginning and novice Alaska shooters. The Department of Fish and Game's Hunter Information and Training (HIT) Program sponsored the coaching clinic.

The newly-certified coaches will be called on to teach HIT program shotgun clinics, coach youth league activities, and support the Department of Fish and Game's new mobile shooting sports program (see accompanying article on page 5-ed.)

After an initial overview of the course and a warm-up shooting exercise, every coaching trainee was assigned a beginning shooter to coach. The beginning students were given a briefing and demonstration on safety with firearms and range etiquette then allowed to "jump in with both feet."

The teaching philosophy of the NSCA is centered on gaining practical experience. In this system, students shoot at clay targets until they make a clearly identified mistake. At that point, coaches make suggestions and faults are corrected one at a time.

As in any sport, there are a range of styles and forms which are successful. The coaches do not attempt to make everyone conform to a standard style. Changes are made only when an individual style is fundamentally unsound. Mike McAlpine, one of only 23 Level 3 instructors in the U.S. says experience and extensive research has shown this approach to beginner instruction helps prevent an overload of information that leads to confusion and frustration.

McAlpine also emphasized that coaches should avoid overwhelming

beginners and novices with too much technical information and shooting jargon. The emphasis, according to McAlpine, is on letting students achieve early success and have fun when they begin to shoot. Beginners who have a pleasant experience generally return.

The proof was in the pudding. Every single beginning shooter managed to break targets on the skeet range early and often. On the more challenging five-stand clay target course, every shooter was able to break a target at each station before the end of the two-day clinic.

Benelli USA™ (and Browning Arms™) provided shotguns for the clinic. John Matthews, one of the coordinators of the HIT program, told me that Benelli was especially helpful in providing a variety of shotguns which had stocks modified for use by youth and women.

A shotgun which correctly fits the shooter minimizes recoil and helps the beginner develop solid fundamentals of swing and stance. Shotguns of proper length and weight for young shooters and women also enhance safety. It is much easier for novice shooters to maintain constant muzzle control and operate the mechanical parts of the action.

Shooting vests were provided by Lewis Creek™. The waxed cotton shooting vests were a big help in teaching proper shotgun mounting technique and keeping track of eye and ear protection between shooting sessions. The waxed cotton material also did a nice job of shedding the inevitable Alaskan summer showers. Lewis Creek has also developed prototype field hunting wear made of special lightweight Kevlar™ (cloth which will provide a significant mar-

gin of safety from penetration by pellets from upland shotgun loads.

The coaching clinic was held at the Grouse Ridge Shooting Grounds, a state-of-the-art, national-class shooting facility. Grouse Ridge is located seven miles north of Wasilla. The well-lighted, groomed, and clean Grouse Ridge facility provides basic trap and skeet fields, an attractive and challenging five stand sporting clays course, a combination skeet and wobble trap field, and a national competition caliber walk-through sporting clays course.

Between shooting sessions and classroom "skull" sessions the new coaches used the comfortably appointed clubhouse and on-site restaurant. Harry Brunnhoelzl, owner and operator of Grouse Ridge and host of the coaching clinic, is a staunch supporter of youth and women's shooting programs and offers ladies instruction shooting nights every Tuesday.

The Hunter Information and Training program will soon begin to offer both individual instruction and group shotgun skills clinics around the state. If you are interested in participating in the advanced skills clinic program please complete a hunter/shooter interest survey to have your name on file with us.

When a clinic is scheduled in your area, we will scan the data for those who have marked the survey as highly interested in that particular clinic topic. We will then send RSVP letters to everyone on the interest list. Complete and clip out the coupon below for your copy of the survey or drop by your local Fish and Game office for a copy of the survey.

PLEASE SEND ME A COPY OF THE ALASKA HUNTER INTEREST SURVEY

Print Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Send request to: ADF&G

Hunter Information and Training Program
333 Raspberry Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599



Where to Find Information on Alaska Hunting

PRIVATE SOURCES

The following businesses provide information about hunting in Alaska, either in their publications or on a consulting basis.

Alaska Hunter Publications:

Publishes Alaska hunting books and bi-monthly journal, *The Alaska Hunter*. Provides consultation on Alaska hunting on a fee basis. Free catalog. PO Box 83550, Fairbanks, AK 99708-3550. Tel (907) 455-8000. e-mail: chrisbatin@alaskahunter.com
www.alaskahunter.com

Alaska Outdoors:

Publishes *Alaska Outdoors* magazine and books on Alaska outdoor activities. Free catalog. 7617 Highlander, Anchorage, AK 99518. Phone (907) 349-2424. e-mail: alaskaod@alaska.net
www.alaskaconnect.com

Fishing and Hunting News-Alaska:

Publishes twice-monthly magazine with information about Alaska hunting and fishing opportunities and results. PO Box 19000, Seattle, WA 98109. Phone (800) 488-2827. www.fhnews.com

DeLorme Mapping:

Sells the *Alaska Atlas & Gazetteer*, a large-format book of topographic maps and other information covering the entire state. PO Box 298, Freeport, ME 04032. Phone (800) 227-1656 X7000 www.delorme.com

Outdoors America Communications:

Publishes the 144-page *Outdoors Alaska Directory of Hunting and Fishing* and a world wide website with Alaska fishing and hunting information. PO Box 609-HB, Delta Junction, AK 99737-0609. Phone (800) 561-5880. e-mail: akhb@outdoorsdirectory.com www.outdoorsdirectory.com

Alaska Guide Report: Publishes a quarterly newsletter about guided and unguided Alaska hunting and fishing and provides consultation on Alaska hunting on a fee basis. For a subscription contact AGR, Box 202520, Anchorage, AK 99520, phone/fax (907) 279-3002, e-mail: agrl@ptialaska.net

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

(ADF&G/Division of Wildlife Conservation)

Southeast Alaska

PO Box 240020
Douglas, AK 99824-0020
Tel. (907) 465-4265
FAX (907) 465-4272

Southcentral Alaska

333 Raspberry Rd
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599
FAX (907) 267-2433
e-mail: wcinfctr@fishgame.state.ak.us

Telephone numbers:

(907) 267-2347 General hunting informa-

tion (recordings and staff)

(907) 267-2373 Hunter education
(907) 267-2531 Hunting clinics information (recording only; most clinics held spring and summer)
(907) 267-2885 FAX on Demand catalog (call from FAX machine only)
(907) 267-2182 Wildlife Conservation regional office staff
(907) 566-0130 Rabbit Creek Rifle Range (recording only)
(907) 267-2304 Nelchina caribou herd information (recording only)
(907) 267-2308 Mulchatna caribou herd information (recording only)
(907) 267-2310 Fortymile caribou herd information (recording only)

Interior Alaska region

1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701-1599
FAX (907) 452-6410
Telephone numbers:
(907) 459-7206 and 459-7306
General hunting information
(907) 459-7313 Wildlife conservation staff
(907) 459-7211 Hunter education
(907) 459-7333 Hunting clinics information (recording only; most clinics held spring and summer)
(907) 459-7380 Recorded hunting information
(907) 267-2310 Fortymile caribou herd information (recording only-Anchorage number)
(907) 267-2304 Nelchina caribou herd information (recording only-Anchorage number)

Western and Arctic Alaska region

Pouch 1148
Nome, AK 99762
Tel. (907) 443-2271
FAX (907) 443-5893

APLICS

The Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLICS) in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan and Tok are a joint project of the Alaska Departments of Commerce & Economic Development (Division of Tourism), Fish and Game, and Natural Resources, and the US Departments of Agriculture (Forest Service) and Interior (Bureau of Land Management, Fish & Wildlife Service, Geological Survey, and National Park Service). The APLICS have a wide variety of information about recreational uses of public lands in Alaska.

Anchorage office

605 W 4th Ave Ste 105
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2737

Fairbanks office

250 Cushman Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 456-0527

Ketchikan office

50 Main St
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 228-6220

Tok office

PO Box 359
Tok, AK 99780
(907) 883-5667

FEDERAL AGENCIES

National Park Service

Hunting is permitted in some units of the national park system in Alaska. National preserves generally are open to hunting. Hunting is prohibited in Denali, Katmai and Glacier Bay national parks. Only persons living in certain areas of Alaska may hunt in other park units.

For additional information on hunting in lands managed by the National Park Service, contact one of the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan or Tok.

US Fish & Wildlife Service

Hunting is permitted in most areas of the national wildlife refuge system. Hunting regulations are shown in the Alaska hunting regulations. For additional information about hunting on lands administered by the USFWS, contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service

1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503
Tel. (907) 786-3357
FAX (907) 786-3635

US Forest Service

Virtually the entire national forest system in Alaska is open to hunting. For details of hunting seasons, bag limits, and areas on the national forests, consult the Alaska hunting regulations. For other information about hunting in national forests, contact one of the following offices:

USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region (for general, region-wide information)

PO Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99802-1628
Tel. (907) 586-7892
FAX (907) 586-7840

Chugach National Forest (Prince William Sound, eastern Kenai)

3301 C. Street Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99503
Tel. (907) 271-2500
FAX (907) 271-3992

Tongass National Forest (SE AK):

Chatham Area (northern panhandle)
204 Siganaka Way
Sitka, AK 99835
Tel. (907) 747-6671
FAX (907) 747-4331

Stikine Area

(central panhandle)
PO Box 309
Petersburg, AK 99833
Tel. (907) 772-3841
FAX (907) 772-5895

Ketchikan Area

(southern panhandle)
Federal Building
Ketchikan, AK 99901
Tel. (907) 228-6202
FAX (907) 228-6215

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM manages most federal lands not administered by NPS, USFWS, and USFS — some 87 million acres. Virtually all of this land is open to hunting. There are some federal restrictions to use of motorized vehicles in certain areas. Additional information on hunting uses of BLM-administered lands may be obtained from:

BLM Alaska (912)

222 W 7th #13
Anchorage, AK 99513
Tel. (907) 271-5555
FAX (907) 272-3430

Where to obtain USGS maps

US Geological Survey topographic and other maps can be obtained by mail order or over the counter in several Alaska locations. Some Alaska sporting goods or outdoor stores stock high demand maps. There are retail stores in larger Alaska communities that specialize in maps. The USGS maintains a map distribution office at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage that can provide fast service over the counter or by mail or telephone for people out of state. Maps are also available at the Geophysical Institute at UAF in Fairbanks. Here are the addresses:

US Geological Survey Earth Science

Information Center
4230 University Drive,
Room 101
Anchorage, AK 99508-4664
Tel. (907) 786-7011
FAX (907) 786-7050

Map Office, GeoData Center Geophysical Institute-UAF

903 Koyukok Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99775
Tel (907) 474-6960

NOTE: We intend to publish this information in future editions. Please forward your suggestions for additional Alaska hunting information resources to Editor, *Alaska Hunting Bulletin*, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, PO Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526 or e-mail: marthak@fishgame.state.ak.us

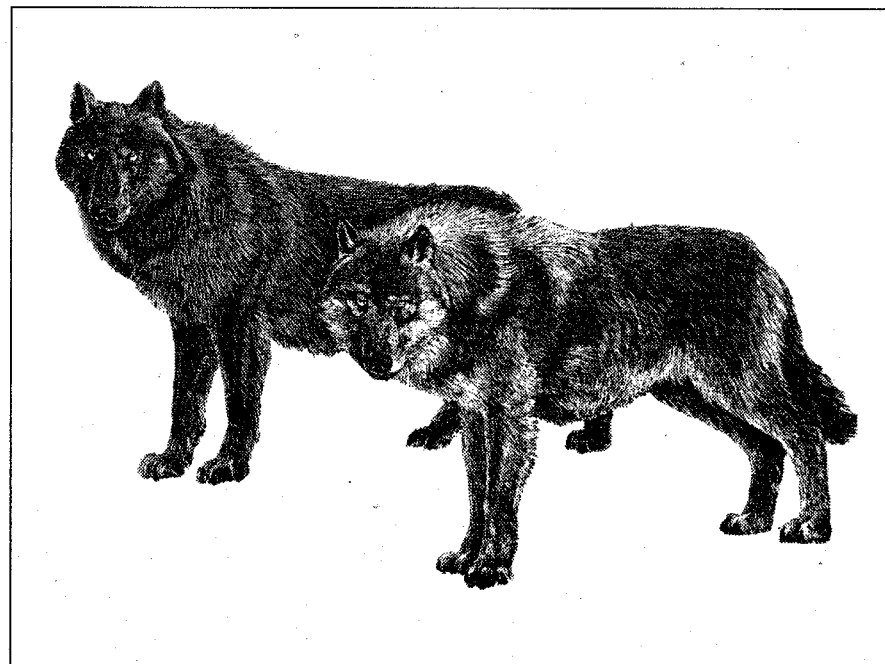
Wolves Relocated to Kenai Are Faring Well

by Ted Spraker

Editor's note: non-lethal wolf control is an important part of the compromise plan designed to restore the Fortymile Caribou Herd to abundance. Relocating wolves to other areas of Alaska is one non-lethal method. In this report, Kenai Area Wildlife Biologist Ted Spraker, a department wolf expert, describes how the program is working in his area.

In April 1998, 18 wolves from the Fortymile caribou calving grounds were relocated to Kenai Peninsula. During the previous year, the Department of Fish and Game completed an Environmental Assessment to determine public support. In general, public support was positive. The Kenai Peninsula was chosen as a favorable destination for two reasons. First, the peninsula satisfies the Board of Game's requirement that wolves be relocated to areas where prey densities are greater than or equal to prey densities in the Fortymile range. High numbers of moose, several small herds of caribou, a healthy population of Dall sheep and mountain goats and plenty of smaller prey animals such as beaver are all present on the Kenai.

A second consideration was the potential benefit to the Kenai wolf population. Because the geography of the area makes immigration difficult, the Kenai wolves are somewhat isolated physically and genetically. Relocation of wolves from outside the



peninsula will increase the potential for outbreeding, which may increase genetic diversity for future generations of Kenai wolves and hopefully help eliminate the parasite problems which are plaguing Kenai wolves. Nearly all 200 Kenai wolves are infested by a biting louse (*Trichodectes canis*) which causes them to lose their guard hairs, fur becomes greasy and matted and sores develop due to scratching. The severe response of Kenai wolves to lice infestations is not seen in other wolf populations even though

wolves across North America are in contact with this type of lice. Hopefully, Fortymile wolves will not be susceptible to the louse but will pass on their defenses to future wolf generations.

We will recapture relocated wolves in about 10 months to examine whether they are infested with lice. If we find that Fortymile wolves are susceptible to the louse infestation, we will stop the program on the Kenai.

Wolves relocated to Kenai Peninsula

were released by pack at three different release sites. All wolves were radio-collared, and monitored weekly in April and May. Since the release, one wolf died, shot by a hunter about 50 miles north of the release site. As of May 11, a two year old female had moved north over 200 miles and was located on Knik River southeast of Palmer. The remaining 16 wolves are still on the Kenai Peninsula.

One pack numbered nine wolves at release, and eight of them are still together and are residing within 40 miles of the release site. This pack cohesiveness has never been observed when wolves have been released together without containing them in an onsite enclosure prior to release. Pack members released in other areas of Alaska and in Minnesota and Michigan have split within 10 days following release. The ages of these wolves vary from one to four years old. Possibly the older wolf is maintaining pack integrity. It will be interesting to see if this pack remains together and carves out a range for itself.

So far the wolves relocated to the Kenai are healthy. Hopefully the Kenai will continue to be a good home for the Fortymile wolves, and perhaps over time they will start breeding and raising litters of wolf pups that are not susceptible to louse infestation.

Ted Spraker is the Alaska Department of Fish & Game Area Wildlife Biologist in Soldotna.

Sighting-In Days at Rabbit Creek Range

by Tony Monzingo

Just how fast is a speeding bullet? How fast does your bullet leave your gun? What is the maximum point blank range of your favorite hunting load? Where should you sight your firearm in to maximize your point blank range and reduce the need to guess at distance? Can you correctly estimate the range and place your hunting load in the vital area of a moose off-hand at typical field distances?

Anchorage area hunters had an opportunity to get answers to these and other questions related to sighting-in and hunting with their personal firearms at the Department of Fish and Game's first annual Sighting-In Days at Rabbit Creek Rifle Range (RCRR).

On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 31 -August 2 the Hunter Information and Training Program sponsored a special two-day opportunity for Anchorage area rifle, handgun, and muzzleloader hunters. The Hunter Information and Training Program was recently formed from the Hunter Education and Hunter Services programs in the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

At Sighting-In Days, hunters had their hunting loads chronographed to determine velocity. The chronograph results were loaded into a special computer ballistics program that provided shooters with a custom trajectory chart for their own load and firearm.

After chronographing their hunting load, hunters used the custom trajectory chart to sight in their firearms from a benchrest. We recommend a sighting system that insures the bullet will never rise or drop more than three inches from the line of sight. The longest distance

at which this is possible is called the maximum point blank range.

The beauty of this system in the field is that the hunter can concentrate on estimating only the maximum point blank range distance. At any distance within that maximum point blank range the hunter need only select the vital area of the animal and squeeze off a good shot into the vital area. The bullet will strike within three inches of the point of aim. Since the vital heart-lung-liver area on even a blacktail deer is approximately ten inches in diameter such a hold will result in an animal taken quickly with a minimal loss of edible meat.

The average point blank range of a high velocity big game rifle is quite a distance. In fact, it is typically further than most casual shooters can consistently hold for a vital shot. For example, a .30-'06 pushing 180-grain pointed bullets will have a maximum point blank range of around 260 yards — depending on barrel length, brand of ammunition and other variables. The popular .338 Winchester Magnum loaded with 250-grain bullets will have a maximum point blank range almost identical to that of the 30-06. Hyper-velocity cartridges such as the .300 Weatherby Magnum will extend it by 20 to 40 yards, which is not of great significance under most hunting conditions in Alaska. After experimenting with the large magnums many hunters find that they can place their shots more accurately and enjoy the shooting experience more with cartridges such as the .280 Remington, .30-'06, and 7mm Remington Magnum.

Keeping all of our shots within an eight to ten-inch circle at 250 plus yards under field conditions is a chal-

lenge for many of us. After chronographing the loads and sighting-in, RCRR sight-in day participants had the opportunity of stepping over to an adjacent range and taking part in a field shooting simulation. The simulation used life-sized moose silhouettes at various distances. The hunters were able to verify the accuracy of this method of sighting in and check field marksmanship. Many of the hunters were ready to hunt this season and a few others saw the need to spend a little more time practicing from hunting positions.

Our objectives with these Sighting-In Days is to help Alaska hunters become more knowledgeable about their personal hunting firearm, develop a good system for sighting in and taking game under field conditions, and minimizing wounding loss of big game. We believe this first one was a great success and we're looking forward to doing it again next year.

Regular daily admission fees at the Rabbit Creek Range are \$5.00. There was no additional charge for the special sighting-in day services. However, everyone participating in the sighting-in exercises had opportunity to make a contribution to the Alaska Hunter Heritage Foundation's youth shooting programs such as the youth leagues and the youth hunter education challenge competition. Hunters under age 16 are always admitted free at RCRR.

Tony Monzingo is a coordinator in the Hunter Information and Training Program. Hunters wishing to contribute to Alaska Hunter Heritage Foundation programs may send a check to HHFA c/o ADF&G DWC-HIT Program, 333 Raspberry Rd, Anchorage, AK 99518-1599.

Alaska Moose Hunting Outlook for 1998

Continued from page 1

Cook Inlet, south of the Beluga River. There, for the second year in a row, calves apparently succumbed to heavy predation in the Tyonek-Redoubt Bay-Trading Bay area, he said.

Prospects for large bulls also look promising. "In (GMU) 14A (the lower Mat/Su), about 90 of the 450 bulls harvested were in the 50-inch/three-brow-tines category," Griese said. "In 14B (Talkeetna mountains), a high percentage of the harvest—which is getting better—is also in this category. "The same harvest composition was observed in 16A, where hunters reported taking 200 bulls. Due to the remoteness of GMU 16B, from 80 to 90 percent of its harvest continues to be in the 50-inch/three-brow-tines category, he said.

"The late season spike-fork hunt should again produce 250-300 bulls for hunters not wanting to fight the bugs," Griese said.

Glennallen

Prospects for this fall in GMU 13 don't look good, said area biologist Bob Tobey, in Glennallen.

"Last year, almost 5,500 moose hunters took about 900 bulls," Tobey said. "This was the smallest harvest in the five years since going to the spike-fork/50-inch regulation."

A low, unit-wide bull-to-cow ratio, coupled with poor calf survival, suggest that the harvest will be even lower this fall, Tobey said.

"Prospects for an increase in the number of bulls in the near future are not good because of poor calf survival," Tobey said. "Calf survival has been low in 3 of the last 4 years."

The most popular hunting method in unit 13 is the 4-wheeler or ORV, and the established trails remain crowded, Tobey said.

Tok

The moose population in Unit 12 (mainly southeast of Tok) has been growing slowly since 1993, said area biologist Craig Gardner, in Tok.

"Overall, the unit's moose population exists at low density," Gardner said. "Bull numbers have declined in the more accessible areas due to hunting."

Last year's harvest was about 120 bulls with a 25 percent success rate. About 500

people hunt moose in Unit 12. Hunter participation has increased since 1992, he said.

The unit 20E (north and east of Tok) moose population estimate is about 5,500-6,000 moose. Approximately 450 hunters hunt moose in 20E, with a 28 percent success rate. Both hunting pressure and harvest have increased in recent years, Gardner said.

In both units, crowded hunting conditions sometimes exist along the major river and trail systems. Hunters who can reach "difficult" areas will have a better chance of success, Gardner said.

Delta Junction

In 20D, south of the Tanana river, the moose population is slowly increasing, said area wildlife biologist Steve DuBois. Calf survival is generally good and harvest is increasing.

North of the Tanana, calf survival is generally poor, he said. The population seems to be stable at a low level, and harvest is stable.

"What I'm anticipating for this fall is good hunting south of Tanana River and fair hunting north of the river," DuBois said.

In recent years, two major wildfires swept through the area south of the river. Both burns now are producing good habitat.

Fairbanks

Moose hunting should be very good in most of Unit 20A (Tanana flats and Alaska Range foothills) again this year, said area biologist Bruce Dale, in Fairbanks.

"Good productivity and survival were apparent in the fall surveys and from radio-telemetry data," Dale said. "The central flats and foothills continue to be the best areas, having some of the highest moose densities in the interior."

Opportunities should be about the same as the last 2 years for units 20B, 20C, 20F and 25C (Fairbanks area and environs), Dale said. Unit 20B west of Minto Flats and 20F are the "worst bets," while portions of the remainder of 20B and 25C may be a little better than in recent years, he said.

Nome

In the late 1980s, hunting along the road system in the Nome area was excellent, but no longer. In the more easily accessible areas, the population is still recovering from the hard winters of the early 1990s, according to biologist Kate Persons, in Nome.

"For someone from out of state who has to get a 50-inch rack, success would be unlikely along the road system," Persons said. "If you have access to a boat, a four-wheeler or a snow machine later in the season, prospects improve."

Bethel

There are better places to hunt moose than in Unit 18, said area biologist Roger Seavoy, in Bethel.

"On the Kuskokwim, moose hunting is a very marginal proposition," Seavoy said. "I suspect we have about 200 moose where we could probably support 2000. On the Yukon, we are well below our objective, as well."

Bristol Bay

Snow conditions in the winter of 1997/98 forced moose into lowland and riparian areas, where they were more vulnerable to wolf predation, said biologist Larry VanDaele, in Dillingham. Nevertheless, hunter success should be comparable to 1997, he said.

"Fortunately, vegetation along those concentration areas was abundant, and there was little mortality associated with starvation," VanDaele said. "Wolves did kill more moose than usual, but they did not reduce the population noticeably."

The location of the Mulchatna caribou

herd during the fall season dictates moose-hunting trends, VanDaele said. The number of hunters coming into GMU 17 (Bristol Bay area) has increased as the herd's population increased from 60,000 to more than 200,000 during the 1990s, he said.

Southeast

Fall, 1997 moose harvests in Southeast were "normal," and nothing suggests that 1998 will be different, according to management coordinator Bruce Dinneford, in Juneau.

"In the Taku River valley, the harvest was very low again last year, and definitely not a place to suggest to hunters," Dinneford said.

Chilkat, Thomas Bay, and Yakutat harvests are running "standard," he said. The Stikine area is showing some rebound in harvest level, after a few years of spike-fork/50 inch regulation.

One of the two surveys conducted in Southeast showed good recruitment and a fair bull-to-cow ratio in the Chilkat herd. The other showed fewer moose than last surveyed in Berners Bay, but the number was within the expected range, Dinneford said.

Les Palmer is a long time Alaska outdoorsman and outdoor writer. He lives in Sterling and is a frequent contributor to the Alaska Hunting Bulletin.

CARING FOR YOUR GAME MEAT

Memorize these simple field care rules for best table quality from your harvest:

1. Keep it CLEAN

Clean meat is free of abdominal or scent gland contamination - no "guts," urine or feces; has minimal dirt, vegetation or animal hair; and is free of insect eggs

2. Keep it COOL

Game meat should be cooled rapidly as soon after the kill as possible and kept cool. Keep meat out of the sun. Avoid plastic bags.

3. Keep it DRY

Once dried initially, meat must be kept dry. Moisture promotes growth of microorganisms that reduce meat quality.

Hunters with more good quality meat than they want for themselves can donate to Hunters for the Hungry programs in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Call Food Bank of Alaska in Anchorage at 272-3663 or Fairbanks Community Food Bank in Fairbanks at 457-4273 for additional information.

Regulation Changes to Watch For

Alaska's new hunting regulations booklets are normally available on July first, the beginning of the regulatory year. Each year the regulations incorporate changes made by the Alaska Board of Game to accommodate changing wildlife population status and human use. Here is a list of some important hunting regulations changes to be aware of for the 1998/99 season. This is not a complete list. Please be sure to carefully review the regulations for the area you intend to hunt this season.

Brown Bear

- The resident season in Unit 26B was shortened from Aug. 20 to Sept. 1. The Board eliminated the nonresident general season in Unit 26B and established

a drawing permit hunt from Sept. 1-May 20. The drawing hunt will not be held this year.

Caribou

- Caribou drawing hunts in Unit 20B, 20F and 25C (White Mts.) have been changed to registration hunts.

Moose

- The Board closed to nonresident hunters the antlerless moose drawing hunts in Unit 14A, and most non-military lands of 14C and 15A.

Sheep

- Sheep hunt areas were redefined In Units 23 and 26A, fall drawing permit hunts were established in portions of the units, and winter registration hunts were extended to begin Aug. 10 instead of Oct. 1.

Miscellaneous

- The Game Board amended the meat-on-the bone restriction in Units 9B, 17, portions of 19A within the Holitna/Hoholtna Controlled Use Area, and 19B. These restrictions now apply only prior to Oct. 1, and rib meat may be boned out. Meat must also now be kept on the bone in Unit 21A.

- Waterfowl hunters must register in the migratory bird harvest information program

- The Board redefined the Wood River Controlled Use Area to remove the northwest portion and added that portion to the Ferry Trail Management area.

Fall 1998 Deer Hunting Prospects Good

Continued from page 1

Unit 3, and higher in Unit 4.

However, closer analysis of the transect data and a survey of some areas at altitudes above 1000 feet showed that the deer appear to have spent most of the winter at higher-than-usual altitudes. Below-average snowfall did not concentrate the deer and allowed them more land to browse. Biologists believe this explains the lower survey densities in southern Southeast. Also, the Sitka area biologist surveyed several areas and found fewer than usual winter-killed deer.

At Kodiak, ADF&G and US Fish & Wildlife Service Staff have worked together for years to monitor deer population trends. National Wildlife Refuge Biologist Robert Stovall has been conducting the Deer Population Index on the refuge for the last seven years. Biologists survey the plants browsed by deer during the winter and sites of deer mortalities in several coastal areas that include those most used by hunters. Deer carcasses are found, examined and locations mapped with the help of a GPS.

The survey crew examines the marrow in leg bones. This can reveal symptoms of starvation. Normal marrow is white. In a starvation situation the animal uses the fat in the marrow which turns yellowish to reddish.

The crew found fewer mortality sites this year and observed white and yellowish bone marrow. Early December snow pushed the deer to the lower altitudes, but when rain came, the deer followed the snow line up as it melted. The browse showed the deer had been less concentrated during the winter.

In Southeast, the weather pattern of more rain and less snow may have also influenced hunters and success. Biologists point out that as snows deepens in the higher elevations, deer come downhill where they are more accessible to hunters. ADF&G records show that the average number of deer per hunter (1.4) and average deer per successful hunter (2.5) was close to the average. The days per hunter (5.5) and average days per deer (3.9) were down slightly.

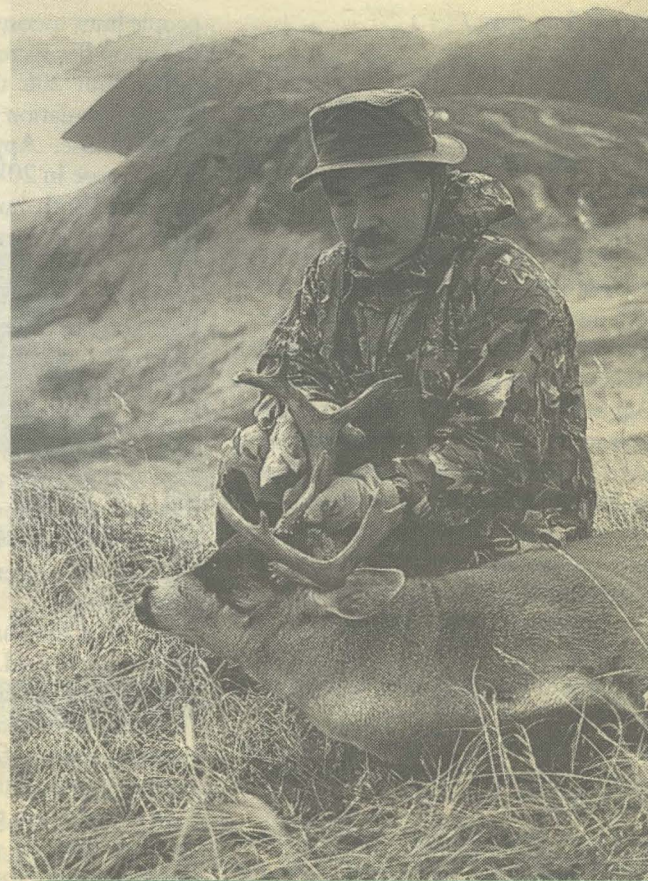
Because the Cordova office of Fish & Game is short-handed, the Hunter Survey Report for Prince William Sound was not complete at the time this was written. However, biologists told me that they expect 97/98 deer hunting results will probably turn out to be similar to the previous year.

At Kodiak, biologists report 8,709 deer were harvested with a hunter success rate of 83%. Hunters used boats (49%), aircraft (33%) and highway vehicles (13%) on hunting trips averaging 5.5 days per hunter. Thirty-nine percent of the hunters were from Kodiak Island, 26% from Anchorage and 27% from other parts of Alaska. Only 8% of the hunters were non-residents. These figures are comparable to 1996-97 data.

With what appears to have been good spring weather for fawning, Alaska's deer population appears to be abundant. In Southeast, biologists expect hunting to be the same or better than last year's with hunters in Unit 4 probably experiencing the best success. Kodiak biologists said the same. After a series of relatively mild winters capped by the very mild winter of 1997-'98, the deer population in Prince William Sound also appears healthy and growing. The deer densities are highest and look good on Hinchinbrook and Montague Islands.

If the long-range forecast of a cold phase La Niña develops in the tropical Pacific as expected, next winter may not be as kind to the deer as the winter of 97/98. However, this fall when you climb to the high alpine, or tread the woods or meadows of your favorite hunting area and see more bucks, you can thank El Niño.

Diane Wirth was a 1997 participant in the Becoming An Outdoors-Woman program in Juneau. She has a strong interest in hunting and other outdoor activities. This is her second Alaska Hunting Bulletin article. The first appeared in the May 1997 issue of the Bulletin and appeared in the form of a letter to her daughter describing her BOW experience.



El Niño made winter easy for Alaska's deer populations. Hunters should find good a number of deer in most areas. Photo by Chris Batin, Alaska Hunter Publications.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA DEER HUNTING STATISTICS

	1997/98 Season	16-year Average	Change from Average
Number of Hunters	7805	8255	Down 5%
Successful Hunters	4473	5210	Down 14%
Days Hunted	42967	51413	Down 16%
Bucks	8142	11072	Down 26%
Antlerless	2484	3406	Down 27%

Inside This Issue of the Alaska Hunting Bulletin

Moose Hunting Prospects for 1998	Page 1
El Niño Spells Relief for Alaska Deer	Page 1
Anchorage Views About Wildlife & Hunting Newsbreaks	Page 3
Wolf Snaring Initiative Fate Uncertain	Page 4
Becoming a Hunter Education Instructor	Page 5
Have Guns/Will Travel	Page 5
Spike-Fork/50 Reveiw in Southcentral	Page 6
Kenai Grouse Population Growing	Page 7



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