The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

May 2001

Message from the President

By: Gino Del Frate

WE NEED YOUR VOTES! In this newsletter you will find a ballot. Please take a moment to fill out the ballot and return it to us ASAP. I feel that it is important that each member have the opportunity to weigh in on the issues. On this ballot you will be asked to approve a new position statement on oil and gas development in the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**; to approve a new **Strategic Plan for the Alaska Chapter**; and to approve **new regional representatives**. You will see that we only have one candidate for each regional position. We had a tough time finding interested folks that wanted to be involved. If you know of someone that would like to run for this position you can write them in. There will also be plenty of opportunity next year for anyone interested in these positions or even officer positions. For the ANWR position statement and the Strategic Plan you will be asked to approve these documents. If for whatever reason you do not want to approve them, then following your no vote please take a moment to state your reasons. We need to know if the committees were off base on their recommendations.

A small but enthusiastic group attended this year's annual meeting. Many important decisions were made that will affect the Alaska Chapter for many years to come. In addition to the highlights above we made the decision to put in a bid to host the national annual meeting. This is an excellent opportunity to bring professionals to Alaska and for those of us in Alaska to showcase our wildlife management accomplishments. Success in hosting this event depends on the efforts of volunteers from our chapter. Members will be called on to assist with the planning and preparation for many of the local functions. If you are interested in helping please feel free to contact me. The decision to hold the meeting in Anchorage will be made at the national conference in Reno, Nevada this September.

Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Minutes from the annual meeting in Anchorage, Alaska
March 30, 2001

Submitted by Kevin White.

The Alaska Chapter held its annual meeting on March 30, 2001 in Anchorage with 10-15 members present. This years meeting coincided with the 3rd Annual Alaska Bear Festival which featured evening talks by Montana bear researcher Chris Servheen and Sitka writer Richard Nelson as well as a weekend program in Soldotna.

Chapter president, Gino Del Frate provided an update on the chapter's position statements regarding Tongass N.F. road management and spruce bark beetle issues in south-central Alaska. Regarding the Tongass N.F. position statement, biologists K. Titus, T. Schumacher and L. Suring were consulted on the issue and the chapter recommended management option T2. The spruce bark beetle position statement was sent to U.S. senators Stevens and Murkowski. In further news, the AK chapter sent a full set of JWM and a partial set of WSB to a wildlife organization in Kenya. The chapter also gave a donation to the Dave Klein Symposium, which was held in Fairbanks last year.

New regional representatives for the chapter were nominated previously. However Bylaws state that new members must be elected via a mail in ballot. That ballot will be sent in the May newsletter and H. Griese (southcentral), T.

Schumacher (southeast), and T. Paragi (northern) will be up for election. Former chapter Secretary-Treasurer, Ted Schenck was replaced by Jackie Kephart (ADFG, Juneau) following nomination by president-elect Doug Larsen and subsequent approval by the Executive Board. By unanimous support, a motion was passed to create a non-voting "Newsletter Editor" position; K. White was appointed to this position on an interim basis.

The financial upshot: the chapter account balance was $8,390 (with $850 outstanding) in December 2000. The members decided to follow through on intended 2000 cash support to the National Heritage Program at UAA ($200), to Partners in Flight ($100) and in support of CARA legislation ($300). For 2001, the chapter voted to support expansion of the UAF Natural History Museum ($500), and both cash ($250) and in kind support for the Alaska Bear Festival. Annual chapter income for 2000 was ~$1000 and currently 231 individuals are regular members.

In committee news, a "Nominating and elections committee" was formed by Gino Del Frate, Howard Golden and Herman Griese. The concept of an "Audit committee" was discussed and will likely involve the President-elect Larsen, Ellen Campbell, and Jackie Kephart in SE who will maintain responsibility for chapter accounting. An Ad-hoc committee responsible for updating the 1991 position statement regarding oil development and wildlife impacts in the Arctic Refuge was formalized and includes, D. Yokel (Chair), J. Hupp, J. Schoen, D. Klein, K. White, B. Marston, T. Bowyer, K. Whitten, and M. Cronin. A "Bylaws committee" was established to address inconsistencies between the AK chapter and TWS-national bylaws and includes D. Larsen, E. Campbell, and H. Griese.

Julie Dodds of the Anchorage Convention Visitors Bureau gave an informative presentation and answered many questions regarding the logistics of hosting a national TWS meeting in 2004 in Anchorage. Following the presentation, H. Golden, D. Larsen, H. Griese, and J. Hupp agreed to form an informal committee focused on assessing the extent to which members of the AK chapter (and respective employers) are willing to support a bid for the national meeting in 2004. This committee made plans to reconvene in April 2001 with expectations to prepare an official bid shortly thereafter, *if* adequate support was found to exist within the chapter.

The "Conserving our Wildlife and Cultural Heritage (COWCH)" program, a national effort to record oral histories of wildlife biologists who have made significant contributions to the field, was discussed with hopes of soliciting volunteers willing to conduct 3-4 interviews with distinguished biologists in various areas of the state.

For the future: the 2002 annual meeting of the AK chapter will be in Fairbanks and will potentially be held in conjunction with the Society for American Foresters and the American Fisheries Society annual meetings next spring. T. Paragi, the AK chapter northern representative nominee, will be coordinating the 2002 meeting.

News from the North

Submitted by Tom Paragi

Jim Sedinger is leaving UAF to take a position with University of Nevada Reno. He plans to continue his research on black brant on the Y-K Delta. **Mark Lindberg**, presently on the faculty at the University of Montana, will be joining the UAF faculty in August. Congratulations to **Terry Bowyer** of UAF, who recently became an Elected Fellow (Biological Sciences) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was honored for distinguished research into the relation of habitat to the social behavior, sexual segregation, and population biology of large mammals, and for related ecological teaching.

Patty Rost, Chief of Resource Management at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve for 10 years, resigned in December 2000. She is now enjoying her new home in Silver City, New Mexico.In the Fairbanks ADF&G office, **David James** was hired as regional supervisor after the retirement of **Dan Reed** last November. **Roy Nowlin** was hired into David's former position as management coordinator. **Mark Keech** left the assistant area biologist slot in Anchorage to become an ungulate research biologist in Fairbanks, and **Jason Caikoski** was hired as the Creamer's Refuge biologist to take over for **Sam Patten**, who retired in March.

Info from the National Park Service…Several biological studies are underway in northern administrative units. The 4th year of track counts in **Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve** were done for snowshoe hares near Wiseman, with data also collected on browse and soil minerals. A project to assess density of grizzly bear populations in foothill and mountainous habitat of the eastern Brooks Range is being done to determine levels of sustainable mortality. Preliminary investigations of a recolonizing muskoxen population and its habitat use are being done, and a study of demography and home range of Dall sheep near Anaktuvuk Pass is nearing completion.

At **Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve**, wolves are being monitored for population size and home range relative to the Fortymile caribou plan for sterilizing and translocating wolves that live outside the preserve. Biologists

plan to follow wolf demography after wolf sterilization stopped and as the caribou population continues to increase. Movement patterns of Dall sheep are being studied to identify critical use areas to assist with mitigation of military overflights. Biological samples are being collected from sheep in several areas to define health parameters in an inter-agency cooperative project. Long-term monitoring protocols are being developed for birds and their habitats in the preserve. Additionally, post-fire recovery of vegetation on a 120,000 acre burn in 1999 is being monitored with plots and photopoints.

Info from the Bureau of Land Management…After extensive wildfires on the Seward Peninsula during summer 1977, the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service jointly funded initiation in 1978 of **fire effects transects** in the central Seward Peninsula at Imuruk Lake. Soils and vegetation were sampled here 1973, allowing for pre-fire comparisons. The original transects will be re-read during summer 2001, providing data on lichen recovery 24 years after fire.Recovery rate of tundra lichen communities after fire is still relatively unknown. This project will update the description of the effects of fire on vegetation patterns, soils and permafrost in arctic tundra plant communities in northwest Alaska.

The winter of 2000-2001 was the second year of exploratory drilling in the northeastern corner of the **National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska** (NPR-A). The NPR-A is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, which completed an EIS for northeastern NPR-A in 1998 and held an oil/gas lease sale for that area in 1999. The Bush administration hopes to accelerate leasing in the NPR-A, with the intent to develop an EIS for the remainder of NPR-A's coastal plain in the near future, followed by a third EIS for the southern portion of the NPR-A.

News from Southcentral

Submitted by Herman Griese

The USFWS reports the **King Cove Access EIS** scoping document for the King Cove to Cold Bay road is completed and available on the website: http://www.kingcoveaccesseis.com Comments on the EIS will be accepted until June 4th. The scoping document was produced by Michael Baker, Jr.Inc. and coordinated by U.S. Corps of Engineers. Details for comments are described on the website. Contact Lenny Corin, USFWS liaison, at 786-3545 for additional information.

Jeff Hughes Region II Supervisor for Wildlife Conservation Division, ADF&G, reports that the **Kodiak Archipelago brown bear conservation and management plan** has made it to the draft stage and is now available for public comment. The 219 page draft is not only available at Kodiak NWR office and the Kodiak and Anchorage ADF&G offices but it is also available at APLIC and DNR information centers in Anchorage and several locations in Kodiak as well as on the Wildlife Conservation web site: http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/geninfo/planning/kodiakbb.htm. The comment period is generous, going through October 31. For more information contact: Cindi Loker at 267-2301 or cindi_loker@fishgame.state.ak.us or Larry Van Daele at 486-1880 or larry_vandaele@fishgame.state.ak.us. Hughes also reports that the Anchorage Municipality administration appears to be working toward a cooperative management strategy to reduce garbage bear problems through improved garbage management. For more information contact Rick Sinnott at 267-2185 or rick_sinnott@fishgame.state.ak.us

Retirements: John Westlund, the Regional Lands Coordinator for DWC-ADF&G in Anchorage, has decided to hang up his Fish and Game hat after well over 20 years of service with the department from Ketchikan to Glennallen. Most years were spent in the Anchorage office overseeing the McNeil River Wildlife Sanctuary and other lands issues in the region. John made great strides in bringing several divisions and agencies with different philosophies together for the benefit of wildlife habitat and the benefit of all Alaskans.

Enid Keyes, who has worked as the Lab Coordinator and, more recently, Information Center Coordinator for DWC-ADF&G, has also decided to move on to greener pastures. She began her career with ADF&G in the 1970's! (Must have been hired fresh out of high school) Enid played an important role in developing laboratory techniques and data quality early in her career and in her later years successfully met the demand to develop the Information Center in the Anchorage office. Her efforts have facilitated a more helpful and much friendlier environment for the public wishing information from the regional DWC office. Our hats are off to you, Enid.

New Hires: **Steve Lanctot** was hired as a sea duck biologist with USGS-BRD

News from Southeast

Submitted by Tom Schumacher

Tongass Conservation Strategy Evaluation: **Tom Schumacher** is coordinating an ADF&G lead effort to develop a framework to evaluate the conservation strategy in the Tongass Forest Plan. ADF&G has contracted with Sheinberg Associates of Juneau to help develop and run this process. A meeting of agency administrators from ADF&G, USFWS, and USFS was held on April 11th. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss direction and scope of this effort. It was agreed that long term research and monitoring with short term reporting, landscape and regional perspectives, and consideration of the effects of greatly increased tourism and recreation on wildlife in addition to logging would be most helpful for agency decision makers. The next step in this process will be to hold a 3-4 day workshop of scientists from Southeast and outside Alaska to develop a draft evaluation framework.

Passive Radiocollaring of Elk for Mark-Resight Population Estimate: Matt Kirchhoff, research biologist with ADF&G, reports that at least one elk on Etolin Island was successfully collared using passive neck snares. However, this low success rate along with numerous logistical difficulties will result in this pilot project being reconsidered.

Kuiu Island Black Bear Population Estimate: In April Ph.D. student at the University of Nevada, Reno, **Lily Peacock**, delivered a progress report on her work estimating numbers of black bears on Kuiu Island using 2 techniques. This population is of interest because an apparent high number of trophy-sized bears is drawing increased hunting pressure. Lily is estimating bear numbers using tetracycline mark-recapture and a DNA technique. She reported high success in marking bears on northern Kuiu with tetracycline last summer, which allowed a preliminary population estimate based on bone samples turned in by hunters last fall. Because most hunting takes place in the spring, she will be able to compute a better estimate using this technique later this summer, and will work on a comparative estimate using DNA.

Prince of Wales Island Wolf – Deer Study: To estimate the rate of predation on deer by wolves ADF&G research Biologist**, Dave Person**, collared 25 deer on his study area last fall. Since then only one was killed by wolves, 2 were killed by hunters, and the remainder survived the winter. Dave attributes this low predation rate to current high numbers of deer. He will continue to monitor predation for several years. Dave may have also documented the longest swim by a wolf. A collared adult female swam from Prince of Wales Island across Clarence Straight to the Cleveland Peninsula in March 2000. Minimum distance across the straight is 5 miles, and often it is a rough body of water. While this may not be common, it does demonstrate wolves ability to move among islands and between islands and the mainland in Southeast.

Forest Service Science Conference: During the week of April 23rd the US Forest Service held a science conference in Sitka, which was primarily organized by **Dr. Wini Kessler**, Region 10 Director of WFEW. This conference was attended by Forest Service, FWS, and ADF&G personnel of many disciplines from throughout the region. There were breakout sessions featuring papers on wildlife, fisheries, watershed, and silviculture, a poster session, field trips, and a district showcase pizza party. It was a great opportunity to keep abreast of what is happening on the Tongass and to touch base with colleagues.

Other Tongass Issues: In April the 1999 Record of Decision, which guided management of the Tongass National Forest, was vacated by the 9th Circuit Court in Ketchikan. This decision, along with new national forest planning regulations and the 2000 Roadless Policy as implemented by the Bush administration likely will have significant implications for management of the Tongass.

New Biologists in Southeast:
Jim Zelanak – Wildlife Biologist USFS Misty Fiords District
Todd Tisler – Fish and Wildlife Biologist USFS Ketchikan District
Ellen Lance – Wildlife Biologist USFS Thorne Bay District
Susan Howell – Fish and Wildlife Staff USFS Craig and Thorne Bay Districts
J. T. Stangle –Planning Biologist USFS Sitka

2001 Membership Renewal

Current memberhip status is noted on the address label for this newsletter. Members interested in renewing their membership to the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society should send their membership dues to Gino DelFrate. Our

membership list will be updated after this newsletter, so hurry to renew your membership and you will continue to receive the Alaskan Wildlifer in the future.

Strategic Plan of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Working Document (May 3, 2001)

This strategic plan is a working document that provides direction to the Chapter and its members. It shall be the framework for future activities and monetary expenditures. Goals and Objectives have been developed by the executive board and the general membership in 2001 and shall be reviewed (and modified if necessary) by a Strategic Planning Workgroup at 5-year intervals, or sooner if deemed necessary by the Executive Board.

The Alaska Chapter's Strategic plan was crafted after a model established by the Parent Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Readers are encouraged to review the Alaska Chapter's plan together with the supporting Parent Society's plan.

ALASKA CHAPTER'S VISION

Excellence in Conservation and Stewardship of Alaska's Wildlife Resources through Science, Education, and Information Sharing.

ALASKA CHAPTER'S MISSION

The mission of the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of Alaska's wildlife and habitats.

ALASKA CHAPTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1. Enhance knowledge, awareness, and technical capabilities of Alaska's existing and aspiring wildlife professionals.

- Announce, promote, and support technical and scientific meetings, conferences, symposia, and workshops in Alaska.
- Publish quarterly newsletters.
- Maintain a Chapter website.
- Involve Chapter members in leadership positions and special committees.
- Organize and host annual meetings, preferably in conjunction with other resource-related conferences and symposia.
- Develop a listserv so Chapter members can easily notify other members of important issues.
- Support professional education of wildlife students through mentoring, scholarships, and facilitating attendance at professional wildlife gatherings.
- Encourage wildlife certification among TWS members and provide opportunities for members to receive and maintain certification.

Goal 2. Increase public awareness and appreciation of wildlife conservation and the wildlife profession.

- Seek opportunities to present information on wildlife science, management, and policy to the public.
- Promote Chapter outreach efforts to enhance working relationships with landowners, interest groups, and local government and to advocate wildlife conservation.
- Document and communicate the history and development of the wildlife management profession in Alaska.

Goal 3. Advocate use of sound biological, social, and economic information for wildlife policy decisions.

- Cooperate with other professional societies, conservation groups, and natural resource agencies in Alaska to achieve mutual goals.
- Provide technical information, advice, and professional opinions on major Alaskan wildlife resource issues.

Goal 4. Encourage and recognize professional and lay stewardship of wildlife and promotion of Alaska

Chapter goals.

- Sponsor, encourage, and support special award and recognition programs to acknowledge excellence in wildlife stewardship among Alaska's public and wildlife professionals.
- Sponsor, encourage, and support special award and recognition programs to acknowledge exemplary service to the Alaska Chapter and the wildlife profession.

Goal 5. Promote the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society as the professional organization of wildlife biologists.

- Encourage agencies to acknowledge the Society's Wildlife Biologist certification program and to promote certification of employees.

Goal 6. Ensure the financial stability of the Chapter and promote participation by all wildlife professionals.

- Maintain or increase Chapter membership.
- Maintain effective financial and organizational management.
- Conduct fundraising, as needed, to accomplish Chapter goals.

Draft Position of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, May, 2001

The Arctic National Wildlife Range was established in 1960 to protect wildlife and wilderness values for human use. In the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA), Congress enlarged the Range to 19.6 million acres, renamed it the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and designated 8 million acres of mountain terrain as Wilderness. ANILCA established the following purposes for the Arctic Refuge:

> 1. To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, the Porcupine caribou herd, polar bears, grizzly bears, muskoxen, Dall sheep, wolves, wolverines, snow geese, peregrine falcons and other migratory birds, Dolly Varden, grayling, whitefish and burbot;
>
> 2. To fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
>
> 3. To provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in subparagraphs i and ii, the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and
>
> 4. To ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph i, water quality and necessary water quantity within the Refuge.

ANILCA also required the Secretary of the Interior to assess the petroleum and wildlife values of the Refuge's 1.5-million-acre Arctic Coastal Plain (or "1002 Area") and reserved to Congress the decision whether to allow oil and gas leasing and extraction within that area. The assessments are complete and indicate that the Coastal Plain may contain substantial amounts of oil and gas, but they also indicate that the Coastal Plain is of vital importance to many wildlife species. Development of the Coastal Plain's petroleum resources could have serious, long-term impacts to caribou and other wildlife resources of the Arctic Refuge.

Bills have been filed in Congress to open the Coastal Plain to oil/gas leasing, but other bills have been filed to designate the entire area as Wilderness closed to leasing. Proponents of leasing cite economic potential and enhancement of domestic energy production that new oil and gas development may provide. Opposition to exploration and development stems from concerns about the impacts of development on wildlife, integrity of the Arctic Refuge as Wilderness, and long-term, national energy policy, i.e. a focus on developing domestic fossil fuel resources versus reducing demand for fossil fuel products through conservation and development of alternative energy sources. This paper deals only with the issue of impacts to wildlife.

The expected impacts of proposed oil and gas development on fish and wildlife and the ecosystem integrity of the Arctic Refuge would be dependent on the timing, extent, location, intensity, and carefulness of petroleum exploration, development, and extraction activities. Information on these factors is lacking. With present knowledge of the fish and wildlife resources of the Arctic Refuge and of the functioning of arctic ecosystems, and considering available information on the impacts of current and ongoing petroleum development in Alaska's North Slope oil fields, the primary biological concerns of the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society regarding oil and gas development in the Arctic Refuge include:

1. Potential impacts on the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which numbered about 128,000 in 1998. In most years, the herd calves and seeks relief from insect harassment on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge, including the entire 1002 Area, migrates throughout the Refuge, and winters in Yukon Territory and northeastern Alaska, including South Slope portions of the Refuge. In 1987, the United States signed an International Agreement with Canada to preserve and protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat. The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge has been designated by the International Porcupine Caribou Board as the herd's most sensitive habitat;

2. Potential impacts on muskoxen, which were extirpated from Alaska and subsequently reintroduced to the Arctic Refuge in 1969. The muskox population expanded rapidly following reintroduction. Approximately 250 muskoxen inhabit the Coastal Plain of the Refuge year round, the majority of which depend on riparian and adjacent upland habitats within the Coastal Plain;

3. Potential impacts on polar bear that use the Coastal Plain in the fall and for land denning during winter; the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge accounts for 50 percent of the land denning of polar bears in the American Arctic;

4. Potential impacts on brown bear, wolves, wolverine, and other species of mammals and birds that use the Coastal Plain and may be affected by development activities in this area;

5. The effects of disturbance on up to 500,000 adult snow geese. These geese breed in Canada but obtain energy for fall migrations while feeding in late summer in the Foothills and on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge and adjacent Yukon Territory;

6. The potential for displacement of wildlife from the Coastal Plain, due to increased human activities associated with resource development on the Coastal Plain, and subsequent population effects;

7. Dewatering of streams and lakes, and subsequent loss of scarce, over-wintering areas for fish, due to demand for large quantities of water during exploration and production activities that include the building of ice roads and ice pads. Water is much more limited in the Refuge than in the central or western Arctic;

8. Loss and alteration of riparian shrub communities that are productive and often critical habitats for several bird and mammal species;

9. Alterations of near-shore marine and brackish water ecosystems through freshwater withdrawal and construction of causeways, drill pads, and other petroleum-related facilities;

10. Releases of toxic materials into wetlands, waterways, and the atmosphere from drill-mud spills, camps, oil spills, and other sources;

11. The potential for increased human access leading to localized over-harvest of fish and wildlife; and

12. The unknown, long-term, and cumulative effects of development on ecosystem processes critical to long term viability and integrity of the arctic environment. These include mechanisms such as predation, scavenging and nutrient cycling that are sensitive to single or multi-species perturbations and may have wide-ranging effects on many components of ecosystem productivity and stability.

Based on studies in existing areas of oil development on the North Slope, The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society believes that petroleum development on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would inevitably result in loss of wildlife habitat and probable declines in some wildlife populations. Current oil development on the North Slope has disrupted movements of Central Arctic Caribou and displaced pregnant caribou cows from traditional, high-quality calving areas to areas of poorer quality forage. Even newer oil fields that encompass smaller areas and incorporate design features that allow caribou to move more freely have been shown to displace caribou or restrict their movements. Although the Central Arctic Caribou Herd has increased since oil development began, population growth can be attributed to the availability of alternative habitat in undeveloped areas, and favorable weather. The Central Arctic Herd declined in the early 1990's during a period of adverse weather. During that period, cows that spent more time in or near oil fields gained less weight and had fewer calves than cows that did not use developed areas. Evaluation of resource development patterns in existing oil fields demonstrates the cumulative increase and interconnectedness of infrastructure and resulting fragmentation of tundra habitats. Habitat fragmentation is of special concern for species requiring large areas such as caribou, brown bears, muskoxen, and staging snow geese.

The wildlife resources and environment of the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain differ from currently developed areas on the North Slope in a way making it difficult to mitigate the adverse effects of oil development. The Coastal Plain in the Refuge is much narrower than it is at the existing North Slope oil fields, and there is little snow-free habitat that is unoccupied by the Porcupine Caribou Herd during calving. In the event of petroleum development on the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain, caribou would have limited alternative calving areas. Caribou that calve in the vicinity of oil fields could find their post-calving movements impaired. Impaired movement of caribou through oil fields on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge could be more likely because the herd often occurs in large groups greater than 10,000 animals, substantially larger than groups that occur in the Central Arctic Herd. Research in the central Arctic has shown that larger groups (a few tens to a few hundreds) paralleled roads and pipes and often approached several times before some or all caribou crossed. Small groups (usually a dozen or fewer) tended to cross more directly. In addition to impaired movement within current calving areas, displacement of caribou outside of traditional calving areas may place cows into areas of poorer forage and more predators. Any decrease in productivity of the Porcupine Caribou Herd would be of particular concern because the herd has historically grown more slowly than other herds, even during favorable weather. Special efforts to maintain productivity of Porcupine Caribou are warranted because in the past ten years the population has declined to about 130,000 animals from a high of 180,000. All these factors indicate that the Porcupine Herd may be particularly vulnerable to disturbance and displacement.

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge, unlike existing areas of oil development on the North Slope, supports a relatively large number of maternal polar bear dens in winter, a substantial population of migratory snow geese in autumn, and higher numbers of muskoxen. The effects of oil development on these populations are largely unknown, and techniques to mitigate adverse impacts are undeveloped. The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge also differs from existing areas of oil development on the North Slope in that fresh water resources are much more limited. The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge lacks extensive thaw-lake plains found in other parts of the North Slope, and most rivers have little free water in winter. Use of limited water resources for oil exploration and development could be detrimental to wetland and riparian habitats and associated wildlife species.

Based on current knowledge and understanding of the cumulative effects of oil and gas exploration and development on Alaska's North Slope, there is inadequate baseline data to predict the long-term, cumulative effects on the wildlife and ecosystem processes of the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain. Thus it is unlikely that a mitigation plan could be developed with any degree of certainty. We believe it is prudent to more fully understand these effects before risking development of other, more sensitive, areas. In this regard we are encouraged to learn that, at the request of Congress, the National Research Council has established a committee of experts to evaluate "Cumulative Environmental Effects of Alaskan North Slope Oil and Gas Activities."

Studies of wildlife and vegetation on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge during past decades have provided considerable information on structure and function of an arctic tundra ecosystem that has been relatively undisturbed by human activities. Few arctic areas have baseline data as extensive as the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain. There is considerable scientific value in maintaining undisturbed arctic regions where effects of long-term global changes can be sorted out from localized human influence. Continued research on the Coastal Plain in the absence of petroleum development may be especially important given that rates of warming in the Alaskan arctic are generally higher than in other regions.

The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society believes that petroleum exploration and development are not warranted on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, an area critical to the abundance and diversity of wildlife and fish in the entire refuge, because (1) adverse effects of petroleum development on some wildlife species at existing oil fields on the North Slope have not been avoided, (2) the unique aspects of wildlife resources and the environment on the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain are such that mitigation of the impacts of oil development is questionable, (3) the long-term, cumulative effects on the fish and wildlife resources are unknown and (4) there is substantial scientific merit in maintaining part of Alaska's Arctic Coastal Plain in an undeveloped state for long-term studies of the effects of climate change in the Arctic on fish and wildlife resources. The Chapter urges Congress to provide adequate, long-term protection for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge to meet these concerns.

BALLOT
Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society, 2001 Elections

Southcentral Regional Representative:

___ Herman Griese
___ write-in candidate:_____

Southeast Regional Representative:

___ Tom Schmacher
___ write-in candidate:_____

Northern Representative:

___ Tom Paragi
___ write-in candidate:_____

Should the Alaska Chapter of the Wildife Society adopt the draft Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Position Statement?

___ Yes
___ No
if No, please indicate why_____
_____
_____

Do you support the draft Strategic Plan of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society as it is written?

___ Yes
___ No
if No, please indicate why_____
_____
_____

_____

Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society
2001 Membership Form

If you are not a member of National chapter and want to maintain your membership please fill out the form below and return it to Gino Del Frate at the address on the front of this newsletter. If you are a member of National please continue to pay your state dues when you renew.

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Numbers-Work: _____**Home:** _____**Fax:** _____

E-mail: _____