



The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Winter Issue - January 2013



Message from President Jerry Hupp

I'll be a little different in my office at the U.S. Geological Survey in the coming months. I'm not referring to what may or may not happen with future federal funding. Rather, I have several long-time colleagues who opted to retire at the end of 2012. I don't anticipate these folks will disappear entirely. There are still data sets to evaluate and publications to wrap up. I expect to continue to see them around our office. Still, it's a period of transition. In time, new faces will take the place of some familiar ones.

Our office is not unique. Reportedly, 7-10 percent of employees in federal resource management agencies in Alaska will retire by early 2013. And, it's not simply an issue for federal agencies. Based on a 2007 survey, approximately one half of employees in state fish and wildlife agencies, three-quarters of whom are in leadership positions, plan to retire by 2015. I'm happy for those who are moving on to a new phase in life; not many of the people I know in this business are apt to sit around in retirement. Many will continue to contribute professionally and find more time to devote to interests they could never fully pursue when they were on the payroll. Sounds like a pretty good gig.

During this time of transition, I wanted to share several thoughts. First, sincere thanks for those who have or will soon retire. Many of you have dedicated more than 30 years to the wildlife profession, and also spent the bulk of your careers in Alaska. You are professionals who started work when Alaska's wildlife resources were often poorly understood. We're the richer for your efforts documenting the abundance and diversity of the state's wildlife, and laying the groundwork for conservation actions. This took hard work under tough field conditions, battles over resource exploitation, and getting the job done despite tight budgets and administrative

FUBARs. There's a lot of knowledge about Alaska's wildlife that has resulted from your cumulative efforts. Fortunately, a good bit of that knowledge has been passed down in reports, publications, seminars, and day to day interactions with coworkers. Those of us who remain on the job, and those that will come later, owe you a debt of gratitude.

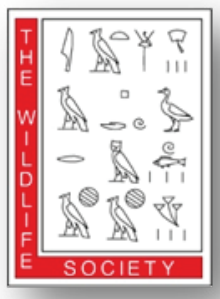
The second thought is more of a question, "What next?" A younger generation will be taking over as we Baby Boomers exit the stage. They'll inherit a suite of issues that we now barely grasp. Probably chief among those is the effect of climate change on northern ecosystems. Also on the list is the potential for resource development on a scale perhaps previously unseen in Alaska, invasive species, novel pathogens, an expanding human population, etc., etc. It's a daunting set of challenges. Fortunately, the young professionals I know are pretty sharp. They have skills that were not conceived of 20 years ago, are committed to making a difference in the world, and are socially and politically savvy. Still, students and young biologists could benefit from the assistance of the old guard as they transition into the professional ranks. During this time of transition, perhaps the best way the current generation of wildlifers can honor the work of our retired colleagues is to help the next generation carry that work forward.

Earlier this year The Wildlife Society released a report on the future of the wildlife profession (<http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/blue.ribbon.panel.final.report.pdf>). It's interesting

continued....p. 3

Issue Highlights

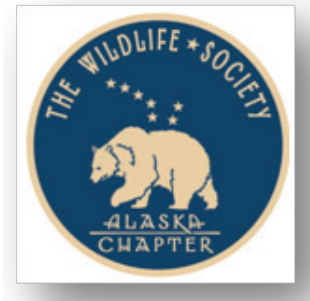
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SAVE THE DATES!

Annual Meeting of The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society

April 3-5, 2013
Wood Center – University of Alaska
Fairbanks, AK



You are invited to gather with colleagues and friends from across Alaska for the annual meeting of the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Please join us and consider submitting an abstract for poster or oral presentation. Meeting information, online registration, and abstract submission instructions are available online at <http://www.twsalaskameeting.com>.

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

Wednesday, April 3

Morning Workshop on Machine Learning – Falk Hautmann, UAF
Morning Workshop on Structured Decision Making – Angela Romito, Jim Peterson,
and Mike Conroy – USGS, U of Georgia, and Oregon State U
Plenary – Dr. Wayne Regelin – former director of the Moose Research Center,
Wildlife Director/Deputy Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game,
and author of “Fish Politics and Wolf Wars”
General Paper Program Sessions
Student-Professional Mixer and poster Session

Thursday, April 4

Special Session on Boreal Forest Ecology
NW Section Meeting
Evening Banquet – Boreal Ecology and Forestry
Banquet Speaker - Marvin Eng, British Columbia Forest Practices Board

Friday, April 5

General Paper Program Sessions
Alaska Chapter Business Meeting



reading and it offers recommendations to ensure the future health of our profession. At least a couple of its recommendations are relevant to Alaska Chapter members. One recommendation is to foster mentoring. If you've not taken time to sign up for the Society's mentoring program, I encourage you to do so at <http://mentor.wildlife.org/p/main/pages/programs>. For professionals of all ages, it's an opportunity to lend a hand to a student, just as someone in the past probably lent you a hand. For students, it's an opportunity to interact with those that have made it to the ranks of the employed, ask some candid questions, and receive tips on how to contribute as a professional.

Another recommendation from the report is that TWS utilize social media as a means to connect with students and young professionals. To that end, I've asked a few members to explore how the Chapter can use social media such as Facebook to convey information to members. I think we may be able to take advantage of social media to better keep in touch about job openings, new publications, meetings, and relevant news items. If anyone wishes to assist the Chapter's exploration of social media, please contact me at twسالaska@gmail.com. During our upcoming annual meeting in Fairbanks, I would like to explore other means for the Chapter to interact with and support young professionals.

It's a time of change. But isn't that always the case in some manner? Our challenge is to adapt to it.

Elsewhere in the newsletter is information on our April meeting in Fairbanks, news from the regions, and recent honors for Chapter members. I hope winter is treating everyone well.

-Jerry Hupp, President, TWS-AK Chapter

Chapter Position Statements

The TWS Alaska Chapter Executive Board recently forwarded a position statement that addresses the risk of disease transmission from livestock to Dall's sheep and mountain goats. The statement offers proactive recommendations to reduce that risk. This is timely as the Alaska Board of Game will consider a proposal next month to restrict use of domestic pack goats and sheep for Dall's sheep, mountain goat, and muskox hunting. Members may vote on the position statement at http://joomla.wildlife.org/election_alaska_statement_2013/. You will need to enter your TWS member number and last name to access the site. Voting will remain open until Jan. 31, 2013.

New memberships and renewals are available on-line at The Wildlife Society (<http://joomla.wildlife.org>). Click on membership to obtain membership forms.

You can contribute! We need your story ideas! Help keep AK-TWS members connected.

Are you working on an interesting project you'd like to share with other AK-TWS members? Do you have news to share with colleagues? Please make note of upcoming events, projects, personnel changes, issues, or anything else of interest to other AK-TWS members, and pass them on to your regional representative for the winter issue, due out in early December. If you know of something that would make an interesting newsletter article and can't write it up yourself, please contact newsletter editor Elizabeth Manning at elizabeth.manning@alaska.gov or 907-267-2168. Help us make this an interesting and informative newsletter!



Regional News

Southcentral

By Cara Staab, Southcentral Representative

Russ Oates Receives Pete Isleib Award

Russ Oates, Chief of Migratory Bird Management for the Alaska Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and member of the Alaska Chapter of TWS, received the Pete Isleib Award at the 15th Alaska Bird Conference in Anchorage.

The Isleib Award is presented to people who have made outstanding contributions to conservation of Alaska's birds. Russ came to Alaska in 1984 to lead congressionally-mandated studies as a wildlife biologist for Arctic NWR. From 1986-1988, he served as the first wildlife biologist on the Kanuti NWR. In 1989, Russ joined Migratory Bird Management (MBM) where he worked in various positions until he became Chief of MBM in 2007.

Russ' accomplishments include principal investigator on the Arctic NWR tundra bird study, development of a state-wide duck brood survey, and a decade and a half of service on the spectacled and Steller's eider recovery teams. He played a key role in promoting protections for the Teshekpuk Lake area and the Beaufort Sea lagoons, and he supervised the development of innovative methods to estimate the statewide population size of yellow-billed loons. Under Russ' leadership, staff of MBM have conducted inventory, monitoring, and research on migratory birds from arctic Russia and Alaska to southern Chile. Russ also served on numerous Pacific Flyway technical teams, several Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council committees, the Avian Influenza Task Force, the Waterfowl Conservation Committee, and the Sea Duck Continental Technical Team. Russ retired from federal service at the end of 2012.

Southeast

By Karen Blejwas, Southeast Representative

People

Kris Larson has been hired by ADF&G-DWC as a wildlife biologist to assist with black bear and wolf research on Prince of Wales Island. Kris was born and raised in Ketchikan. During his high school years he would regularly stop by the local ADF&G office to offer insights and observations from his many and varied outdoor sojourns. Kris later obtained his BS in wildlife biology from UAF and is now putting his education and outdoor experience and enthusiasm to good use. Kris is a great addition to the Region I ADF&G team!

ADF&G Southeast Projects

Juneau Access: Under the leadership of Rod Flynn and Kevin White, final reports have been published for brown bear (Flynn, Lewis, Beier, Pendleton, Crupi, and Gregovich), mountain goat (White, Gregovich, Pendleton, Barten, Scott, Crupi, and Larsen), and moose (White, Gregovich, Barten, and Scott) research conducted as part of the Juneau Access project (proposed road from Echo Cove to the Katzeihin River). Work was done in the Berners Bay area (bears and moose) and along east Lynn Canal from Berners Bay to the Katzeihin for mountain goats.



TWS-Alaska Chapter Regions
(Northern, Southcentral, Southeast)



A copy of the bear report can be found on the F&G web site at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildliferesearch#bear>. Copies of the mountain goat and moose reports will soon be available at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildliferesearch>. For more information on these studies, please contact Rod Flynn (rod.flynn@alaska.gov) or Kevin White (kevin.white@alaska.gov).

Wolf research: Under Dave Person's leadership, a wolf population study is underway on Prince of Wales Island in southern Southeast Alaska. Dave will be using radio collars, hair snares, and user surveys to develop a population estimate for wolves on POW. To date, 7 wolves have been radio collared (GPS) and numerous hair snares deployed. Staff from F&G's Subsistence Division will be assisting with user surveys. For more information on this research, please contact Dave Person (dave.person@alaska.gov).

Black bear research: Under the leadership of Boyd Porter and Steve Bethune, more than 50 black bears have been radio collared (GPS) to date on POW Island. Assisted by other regional staff, Porter and Bethune are obtaining a substantial amount of data about bear movements, habitat use, den locations and use, and mortality. For information about this study please contact Boyd Porter (boyd.porter@alaska.gov) or Steve Bethune (steve.bethune@alaska.gov).

Wolf harvest and status papers: DWC recently drafted papers on the status of wolves in Southeast Alaska and on wolf harvest and risk on POW and associated islands. Copies of the papers can be found on the F&G web site at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildliferesearch#wolves>.

Northern

By Kaiti Ott, Northern Representative

ADF&G News: Region III ADF&G DWC research is currently experiencing turnover, with experienced biologists retiring and new positions being created. ADF&G is in the process of hiring a research biologist to replace **Mark Keech**, who left last summer to pursue other interests. In addition, **Rod Boertje** retired in September, after 31 years of service. ADF&G plans to recruit a caribou research biologist to replace Boertje early next year. **Martha Ellis** was selected to become the new Biometrician II with the Division of Wildlife Conservation in Fairbanks. She is currently finishing her Ph.D. in Wildlife Biology at the University of Montana, and holds an M.A. in Statistics from the same institution. She brings a wealth of talent and new perspectives to ADF&G, and the agency looks forward to her starting work with our agency next spring.

Tom Paragi Receives AFWA Award

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) recently recognized Tom Paragi with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for his dedication to advancing fish and wildlife conservation at the Association's Annual Awards Ceremony held on September 11, 2012 on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Paragi and ADF&G received the AFWA Ernest Thompson Seton Award for leadership in scientific wildlife management. In 2009, Paragi was asked to take on a two-year challenge to restructure the agency's Intensive Management (IM) programs for maintaining wild ungulate harvests at elevated, but sustainable levels through wildlife management practices such as predation control, habitat enhancement and increased hunter access and harvest. Paragi produced the IM policy, guidelines and protocols as a framework for the Department. Paragi also advised area biologists on developing and implementing IM plans, and served in an advisory capacity to insure the collection of quality survey and inventory information. Paragi is a National Conservation Leadership Institute Fellow.



Rabid Wolverine Found in Alaska

Wildlife Veterinarian Dr. Kimberlee Beckmen with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Wildlife Conservation (ADF&G- DWC) diagnosed the first recorded case of rabies in a wolverine in North America this summer. The diagnosis was possible through an expanded rabies surveillance initiative in Alaska that allows screening of large numbers of wildlife specimens via the dRIT (direct rapid immunohistochemical test) method. The Centers for Disease Control recently confirmed the wolverine from a strain of arctic fox rabies.

The wolverine was initially found dead in June when state wildlife biologists Lincoln Parrett and Patrick Jones were flying in a helicopter about 25 miles northwest of Umiat on the North Slope of Alaska. It was completely intact and had not been scavenged. There was no obvious cause of death, no sign of trauma and the frozen carcass was flown to Fairbanks for necropsy. The wolverine had only a recent, non-fatal wolf bite to the masseter muscle of the jaw. Since the wolverine was in estrus when it died, and in that area, that usually occurs in May, implying the animal had died a month earlier and frozen shortly afterward. Another clue reinforced this: the wolverine had a goose egg in her stomach, and by June geese eggs have hatched.

The ADF&G DWC has a disease surveillance program that is certified to test wildlife for rabies using the dRIT method which does not require a fluorescent microscope. In the past two years ADF&G has tested more than 600 animals, including hundreds of foxes and more than 100 wolves, 19 bats and four wolverines –counting this one. Of the samples tested, 2.8 percent positive for rabies, but these were all foxes except the one wolverine.

Rabies in Alaska is endemic (meaning always present) in arctic fox only along Alaska's coast but spills over frequently to red fox, sometimes in

epidemic numbers of cases. The highest numbers of cases in foxes occurs the winter, especially in the year after a high lemming/vole population explosion, which leads to increased fox numbers. Rabid foxes will enter villages and attack dogs left out on chains or running free, and it is mainly from the dogs that people are at risk.

In addition to the disease surveillance program, ADFG embarked on a project with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Institute of Arctic Biology and examined more than 330 trapper-killed "normal" foxes from the Bethel area and determined that six were positive (1.8%).

After foxes, the most common wild animal in Alaska to attack dogs or people when it has rabies are wolves. In two separate incidents in 1942 and 1943, a Native hunter in Noorvik and a 10-year-old boy in Wainwright survived attacks by rabid wolves and later died from rabies. Since 1971, over 100 wolves have been tested and of those, 20 have been positive for rabies. One of the most recent, was the sole wolf killed and tested when a wolf pack that attacked killed 6 dogs in a dog yard in the village of Marshall in 2007.

The Alaska Section of Laboratories' State Virology Laboratory (ASVL) in Fairbanks is the only Alaska facility that performs confirmation of rabies virus presence via DFA (direct fluorescent antibody) techniques and this test is required for all specimens with public health significance such as a bite exposure to a person and tests approximately 30 specimens per year. The ADF&G DWC dRIT rabies surveillance is for research and disease surveillance purposes and is not associated with an Oral Rabies Vaccine Project, making it unique in the US.

- Contributed by Kimberlee Beckmen, ADF&G

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Retirements-USFWS

Hank Timm-USFWS

Hank Timm, General Biologist at Tetlin NWR in Tok, AK has retired after almost 30 seasons with the federal government. Hank received a BS in Forestry at the University of Montana, Missoula in 1975 and then embarked on his “resource” career as a Forestry Tech on the Kootenai National Forest in Montana and the Clearwater NF in Idaho. After several seasons with USFS, he and his wife moved to Alaska where, in 1981, they homesteaded near Tok, built their cabin and raised a family. In 1989, he started working at the Tetlin NWR as a summer camp coordinator, but quickly morphed into a bio-tech. His uncanny navigational skills, love of wildlands and wildlife, physical stamina and sense of adventure combined with his intelligence and education made him an exceptional field biologist. In 1994, Hank was offered a permanent biologist position at Tetlin.

In his 23 years at TNWR, Hank has been involved with all aspects of the biology program. He was a significant force behind the creation of Tetlin’s migration banding station (during his career Hank has personally banded over 10,000 migratory songbirds), he became the raptor “specialist,” working with osprey, hawks, eagles and peregrine falcons and he played an integral role in numerous biological studies (lynx, moose, caribou) and monitoring projects.

Hank also jumped right in to other aspects of TNWR, assisting with educational programs, instructing water safety and motor boat operation, hydrology surveys and subsistence issues.

Hank’s love of place has kept him in the Tok area for 31 years; his “on-the-ground knowledge base” of TNWR is unsurpassed. His photography of the refuge and its animals are a legacy and his enthusiasm for living life to the fullest is an inspiration to all who follow in his footsteps.

Bud Johnson-USFWS

Bud Johnson, LMRD (Land Management Research and Demonstration) Biologist at Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge retired in December from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after 27 years. His formal education includes a BS degree in Forestry with a minor in Wildlife from Virginia Tech and a masters degree in Wildlife from University of Maine in Orno. Bud’s graduate work was on passerine bird use of buffer lakeshore strips at Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Bud Johnson began his career with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1985 at the Great Dismal Swamp at Virginia. He worked a brief stint as Assistant

Refuge Manager at Bombay Hook NWR in Delaware and then several years at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland. In 1998, he was selected for a Wildlife Biologist position at the Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge in remote Interior AK. While at the Koyukuk/Nowitna Refuge Complex, Bud lead several projects, including a 4 year study on furbearers

and prey populations using different post fire seral stages MAPS bird banding MAPS station. In 1998, Bud took the position of Supervisory Wildlife Biologist at Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge. His accomplishments at Tetlin include launching the refuge’s Land Management Research Demonstration program and campaigning for Tetlin’s designation as a globally significant Important Bird Area, which further established its importance to migratory birds. Among the hilarity of his recent retirement party, people complemented Bud on his commitment to collecting “good” data and his ability to match people’s best talents to the work needed. As Bud “passes the baton” he does so with a sense of gratification for the work accomplished and an appreciation for all the people he’s had the pleasure to work with over the years.

-Contributed by Nathan Berg, USFWS



Hank and Bud in the field



More Retirements! Five USGS Scientists Retire

The USGS Alaska Science Center had five of its scientists retire at the end of 2012.

Bob Gill started work in Alaska in 1976. Much of his research has been on shorebirds, although he also made contributions to seabird and waterfowl ecology. Bob and his team were the first to use satellite telemetry to document the non-stop migration of bar-tailed godwits from Alaska to New Zealand and other wintering sites in the South Pacific. His work on shorebird populations, habitats, and migration has contributed to shorebird conservation on an international scale.

During her 36 years of federal service in Alaska, **Margaret Petersen** has studied emperor geese, loons, seabirds, and sea ducks. She also published some of the first descriptions of bird communities for several areas of western Alaska. Margaret pioneered the use of abdominally implanted satellite transmitters to track the migration of sea ducks, an innovation that led to the discovery of the wintering area of threatened spectacled eiders in the Bering Sea. She has also made important contributions to understanding migration and population ecology of other sea duck species.

Since 1975, **Scott Hatch** has conducted research on Alaska's seabirds. In his >70 scientific publications, Scott has contributed to our knowledge of foraging ecology, migration, reproductive strategies, and life histories for a diverse suite of seabirds. This body of work has been an important component in our understanding of trophic structure in northern marine systems. Scott participated in development of the first comprehensive catalog of the location, size, and species composition of seabird nesting colonies in Alaska, an effort that led to the creation of the North Pacific Seabird Colony Database.

Jim Bodkin started federal service in 1977 when he went to work with the National Marine Fisheries Service in California. In 1980, he joined the Fish and Wildlife Service in California where he conducted sea otter research. Jim came to Alaska in 1989 to work as refuge biologist on the Koyukuk

National Wildlife Refuge. He joined the Alaska Science Center in 1990, where he and his team documented the immediate and long-term effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on sea otter populations in Prince William Sound. Jim also conducted research on sea otters in southeast and southwest Alaska as well as in Russia, and he initiated a research program on coastal ecosystems in the Gulf of Alaska.

Gail Irvine started work for the Minerals Management Service in Anchorage in 1984. She subsequently moved to the National Park Service and ultimately to USGS. Gail was instrumental in documenting the long-term effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on intertidal invertebrate communities of Prince William Sound. Gail also established protocols for monitoring coastal communities in Glacier Bay National Park in order to assess long-term environmental change.

-Contributed by Jerry Hupp, USGS



Recent Publications by TWS-AK Chapter Members

We would like to highlight the contributions of Chapter members to wildlife science. If you or your colleagues have published articles in peer-reviewed journals during 2012, please send the citation to Elizabeth Manning (elizabeth.manning@alaska.gov). The following are some papers that were recently published by Chapter members.

Cronin, M.A. and MacNeil, M.D. 2012. Genetic Relationships of Extant Brown Bears (*Ursos arctos*) and Polar Bears (*Ursus maritimus*). *Journal of Heredity*. DOI 10.1093/jhered/ess090.

Feng, Z., J. A. Alfaro-Murillo, D. L. DeAngelis, J. Schmidt, M. Barga, Y. Zheng, M. H. B. Ahmad Tamrin, M. Olson, T. Glaser, K. Kielland, F. S. Chapin, and J. Bryant. 2012. Plant toxins and trophic cascades alter fire regime and succession on a boreal forest landscape. *Ecological Modeling* 244:79-92.

Flint, P. L. 2012. Changes in size and trends of North American sea duck populations associated with North Pacific oceanic regime shifts. *Marine Biology* DOI 10.1007/s00227-012-2062-y.

Lance, E. W., A. C. Matz, M. K. Reeves, and L. A. Verbrugge. 2012. Petroleum hydrocarbon contamination in Nelson Lagoon, Alaska, sampling three different matrices. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 64:2129-2134.

McNew, L. B., A. J. Gregory, S. M. Wisely, and B. K. Sandercock. 2012. Demography of greater prairie chickens: Regional variation in vital rates, sensitivity values, and population dynamics. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 76:987-1000.

Prichard, A. K., K. Joly, and J. Dau. 2012. Quantifying telemetry collar bias when age is unknown: A simulation study with a long-lived ungulate. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 76:1441-1449.

Prugh, L. R., and J. S. Brashares. 2012. Partitioning the keystone effects of an ecological engineer: kangaroo rats control community structure via multiple pathways. *Journal of Animal Ecology* 81:667-678.

Ramey, A. M., C. R. Ely, J. A. Schmutz, J. M. Pearce, and D. J. Heard. 2012. Molecular detection of hematozoa infections in tundra swans relative to migration patterns and ecological conditions at breeding grounds. *PLoS One* 7(9):e45789.

Sexson, M. G. and G. H. Farley. 2012. Snowy plover nest survival in Kansas and effective management to counter negative effects of precipitation. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 76:1587-1596.

Wilson, H. M., P. L. Flint, A. N. Powell, J. B. Grand, and C. L. Moran. 2012. Population ecology of breeding Pacific common eiders on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska. *Wildlife Monographs* 182:1-28.

Wilson, R. R., A. K. Prichard, L. S. Parrett, B. T. Person, G. M. Carroll, M. A. Smith, C. L. Rea, and D. A. Yokel. 2012. Summer resource selection and identification of important habitat prior to industrial development for the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd in northern Alaska. *PLoS ONE* 7(11):e48697. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0048697.



Alaska Chapter Leadership

Your 2010-2012 Executive Board

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