

FWS Retirees Association NEWSLETTER



Spring (May) 2024

2024 Board of Directors

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Jessy Jacobs, Secretary	Meeting notes, emails	907-350-3670	jjacobs@fwsretirees.org
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Deborah Holle	History, Membership	512-266-2949	promote@fwsretirees.org

Message from the Chair



As this newsletter is being posted, I am heading back to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, for my annual week of relaxation at the resort where my brother and his friends have vacationed for the past 30+ years. This time, my son Kyle is joining me (for the first time) to see where his Uncle Darrell called his "Happy Place." My brother passed away seven years ago from ALS, so this annual trip brings back a flood of wonderful memories.

Here's a shocking statistic...only about 25% of the members of the FWS Retirees Association open the emails that we send out! Hmm, can it be that the messages go to their spam box, or that we have outdated email addresses for them? If you hear any complaints from FWS retirees that they are not getting email messages from us, please ask them to go to our website and click on "Join Us". That is also the place to update your information. FWSRetirees.org

We have an election coming up this Fall for three members who would like to serve on our Board of Directors. The terms for Conrad Fjetland, Doug Frugé, and me will be expiring. I suspect that Conrad and I will seek re-election, but Doug Frugé has indicated that he will be stepping down to devote more time to his other pursuits. Therefore, I hope that we will have some candidates who will want to join the Board! If you want more information, or want to nominate someone, please reach

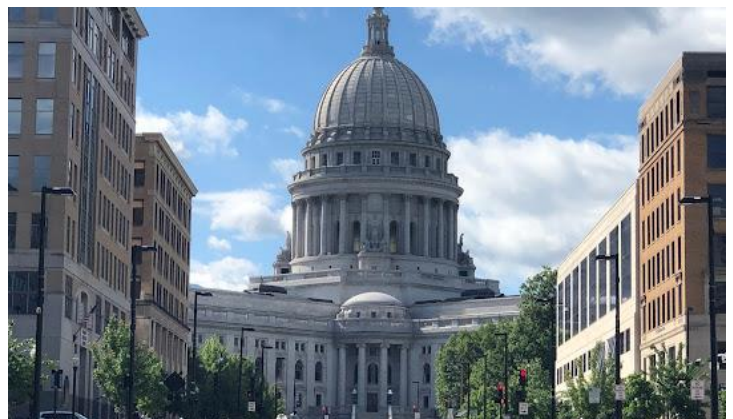
out to any of the current Board members who will provide all the details. Join us!!

Please have a safe and happy summer! We are always seeking articles for this newsletter, so please contribute! *Cindy Uptegraft Barry, Chair*

Board Business

Check out our new FWS Retirees Association video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHTy93XDprE>

Below this headline in the last several issues of this newsletter was information about the reunion at NCTC so it only seems appropriate to use this space to remind members of the next two reunions. We will be in Madison, Wisconsin in May of 2025. Board vice Chair, Paul Tritaik is working on securing a venue and look for specific dates in our fall issue.



Wisconsin State Capitol, Photo Credit: City of Madison, WI

And in September 2026, we will be in Anchorage Alaska with field trips planned to exciting destinations including the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Knowing you will want to plan far in advance for an Alaskan adventure, we hope to have firm dates and more details available early in 2025.



Black Bear on Kenai Refuge. Photo credit: Colin Canterbury, USFWS.

Treasurer's Report

Operating Accounts. In February the Board of Directors approved an operating budget of \$6,930.00 for 2024. Through the first quarter of 2024 (end of March), our total operating income was \$912.00, including \$900.00 in regular dues payments for 19 membership renewals and \$12.00 in donations. Expenses were \$594.54, including PayPal transaction fees for renewals and donations, fees for processing Forms 1099 for contract employees, website-related expenses, software licenses/subscriptions, and rental of a post office box for more secure receipt of checks. Operating income less expenses was \$317.46, and our operations checking account balance at the end of March totaled \$22,244.93 with \$170.06 in PayPal.

Grants Accounts. We had \$7,689.39 in the Grants checking account at the end of March.

History Grant. During the first quarter of the year, we spent \$1,370.74 of the FY 2024 History Grant. Expenses included advance payment for meals at a History Committee meeting to be held in May this year (this payment will be reimbursed), database management expenses, oral history transcription software license renewal and oral history-related travel. Of the \$44,590.00 grant total, a \$35,090.21 balance remains to be spent before September 30 this year when the grant expires.

Conservation Career Awareness and Youth Programs (CCA/Youth) grant. There were no expenses paid from the CCA/Youth grant funds during the first quarter of 2024. Of the \$41,500.00 grant total, a \$38,805.61 balance remains to be spent before September 30 this year when the grant expires, the difference having been spent in CY 2023.

Other major Treasurer activities during the first quarter of the year included issuing IRS Forms 1099 to three individuals in January for services rendered during 2023 and completing a registration update/renewal for the System for Award Management (SAM) in February. The SAM is the overarching system used by the federal government for managing and distributing federal grants funding to recipients. Also, in March, a new post office box was established by the Treasurer as a more secure way to receive membership renewals and other checks. That address is PO Box 73, Whitingham, VT 05361. Checks were previously being sent to the Treasurer's personal rural mailbox. *Submitted by Doug Frugé.*

Membership

We would like to thank all our sustaining members who pay their dues each year and welcome our 7 new members. Spring quarter, members could pay their dues using our normal membership and dues renewal form either on-line with a credit card or pay by mail with a check to Doug Frugé, Treasurer. If you want to ensure that the data base information has your correct and updated information, please contact Deborah Holle at Promote@FWSRetirees.org.

ANSCHUTZ, Steven (Jurita); Russell, KA; Retired 2007; R6, RO Ecological Services

BELL, Thomas (Donna); Columbia, MO; Retired 2018; R3, Refuges and Wildlife, Big Muddy Fish and Wildlife Refuge
NEW

BIDWELL, John (Bonnie); Easton, MD; Retired 2010; R9, Sunkhaze Meadows WMA, Old Town, Maine

Boggs, James (Laura); Vero Beach, FL; Retired 2014; R4, Ecological Services, Conway AR ES Office

BOWDON, Sally (Bennie); Wallops Island, VA; Retired 2017; R5, Refuges and Wildlife, Chincoteague NWR

BULAVINETZ, Richard (Lydia); Ellicott City, MD; Retired 2023; R9, NCTC
NEW

COCKRELL, Joe; Charleston, SC; Retired 2019; R4, Ecological Services, Charleston SC Field Office
NEW

DENT, Charles (Janette); Millsboro, DE; Retired 2008; R2, RO, Diversity and Civil Rights

EATON, Robert (Wanda); Johnson City, TN; Retired 2018; R9, Washington, Refuges and Wildlife, Branch of Fire Management

FITZPATRICK, Lesley (Cary Riall); Glendale, AZ; Retired 2016; R2, Arizona Ecological Services

GLADWIN, Terry (Mary); Pocatello, ID; Retired 2001; R1, Refuges and Wildlife; SE Idaho Refuge Complex

GLOMAN, Nancy; Rio Rancho, NM; Retired 2010; R2, RO, Ecological Services

HAYES, Karen (Mark); Norfolk, VA; Retired 2008; R5, Ecological Services, Virginia Field Office

LAMBERT, Dale (Marcia Hamley); Portland, OR; Retired 2018; R9, Refuges and Wildlife, NWR System Facilities, Equipment and Facilities

LaMOTTE, Ed (Kathy); Underwood, WA; Retired 2002, R1, Fisheries, Spring Creek NFH

LEVIN CRUS, Paula (Carmelo Crus Diaz); Kittery, ME; Retired 2014; R1, Ecological Services Pacific Islands FWO

MARTIN, Patrick (Alice); Louisburg, KA; Retired 2020; R6, Refuges and Wildlife, Marais des Cygnes NWR

McCAULEY, Joe; Mechanicsville, VA; Retired 2015; R5, RO, Refuges and Wildlife

MIEZYKOWSKI, Steve (Barbara Smith); Orono, ME; Retired 2014; R5, Ecological Services, Maine Field Office
NEW

MINKKINEN, Steve (Renee); Denton, MD; Retired 2023; R5, Fisheries, DFWCO, **NEW**

MORGAN, Phillip (Karen); Lawrenceville, GA; Retired 1984; R4, RO, Refuges and Wildlife

NELSON, Peggy; Burnsville, MN; Retired 2007; R3, RO, Diversity

POPOWSKI, Ron; Galloway, NJ; Retired 2022; R5, Ecological Services, New Jersey Field Office **NEW**

PRIOR, Tim (Ann Marie Pots); Plymouth, MA; Retired 2005, R5, Refuges and Wildlife, Eastern Massachusetts Refuge Complex

RAUCH, Ray; Pueblo, CO; Retired 1999; R6, Refuges and Wildlife, Rocky Mountain NWR

RILEY, Larry (Colleen); Carmichael, CA; R8, Federal Aid & State Programs **NEW**

SALZ, Ron; Kailua, HI; Retired 2021; R9, RO, Refuges and Wildlife, Realty

SHARP, Dave (Tammy); Littleton, CO; Retired 2010; R9, WO, Office Migratory Bird Management

SMITH, LaVerne; Anchorage AK

SPENCER, Douglas (Janine); Neenah, WI; Retired 2011; R1, Refuges and Wildlife, Willamette Valley NWR Complex

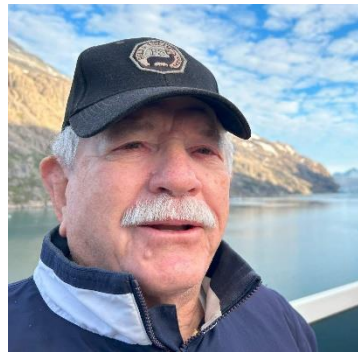
WIKOFF, Peter; Spokane, WA; Retired 2019; R7, RO, Refuges and Wildlife, Natural Resource Planning and Policy

WYNN, Anthony (Adrian); Rancho Cordova, CA; Retired 2018; R1, Diversity & Inclusion

YOSHIOKA, Beverly; Langley, WA; Retired 2012; R4, Ecological Services, Caribbean Field Office

Submitted by Deborah Holle

Jerry Smith, Life Member # 63



Jerome (Jerry) Smith was born and raised in North Dakota. He attended the University of North Dakota where he graduated in 1961 with a PHB in Biology. He then moved to Oregon where he attended Oregon State University, receiving a Master's of Science Degree in Wildlife Management. Jerry worked for

the Utah Fish and Game Department as a Conservation Officer for 4 years. Then in 1967 he began his Federal career in the State of Texas. Jerry was selected as a United States Game Management and was stationed in McAllen, Texas. In 1972 the Division of Management and Enforcement became the Division of Law Enforcement and all Officers became Special Agents. Jerry was stationed in McAllen, Texas, Washington DC, New Orleans, Louisiana, New York City, New York and Washington DC during his career.

He served 27 years as a Special Agent for the Fish and Wildlife Service before Mandatory Retirement in 1994. He worked in all 50 States and in 22 foreign countries during his career. Since retirement, Jerry has worked steadily at keeping the Retired Law Enforcement personnel together. He has held Annual LE Get Togethers every year since the first one that was held in Biloxi, Mississippi in 1997. Jerry currently lives in Tyler, Texas.

Fun Facts & Family Ties

Some of you may know that Fun Facts was the idea of Mark Madison, FWS Historian and his staff. They wanted to collect fun facts to engage employees in an anniversary. Employees sent them to Mark by the dozens. Most were about the FWS.

The Retirees Fun Facts deal more with the experiences of the people—YOU. Many employees who worked in Fisheries at Hatcheries and Refuges lived in government quarters. Government Quarters were not always the greatest, but you got an intimate and unique experience living on your field station. Conrad Fjetland submitted this very funny story about Quarters Nine. Deborah Holle

Quarters Nine

By Conrad A. Fjetland

In the fall of 1970, I transferred from Seney NWR in Michigan to LaCreek NWR in South Dakota. My wife, Judy, three small children and I arrived at LaCreek in November and got our first look at the refuge house that we were to live in for the next three years. It was an old farm house known as Quarters Nine and was located about four miles from the refuge headquarters.

Quarters Nine had two bedrooms, a living room and dining room, and a kitchen about the size of a small closet. In addition, there was a basement and an un-insulated screen porch. Our children were three, two and six months old in the fall of 1970, and Laura, the baby was still in a small porta-crib. So, Kristin and Randy got one of the bedrooms, Laura got the living room, and Judy and I took the other bedroom. By the next winter, Laura was out of the crib, so she moved in with her older sister and Randy got the other bedroom. Judy and I moved to the porch.

Did I mention the porch was un-insulated? It was completely surrounded by single pane windows and it was COLD. We used an electric space heater (probably a big safety risk in retrospect) but it wasn't enough. One day when it was about zero outside, I mentioned we had been cold at night before at the morning staff meeting. Jack Ritts, one of the maintenance men, said he would do something to improve the situation. When I got home that afternoon, the entire front porch was covered with black plastic! But Jack was right, the nighttime temperature rose about 10 degrees, from the low forties into the fifties. One problem solved through the ingenuity of Jack and his fellow maintenance man, Leland Key.

There was a story that Quarters Nine was the first house built in Bennett County with indoor plumbing. I don't know if that was true or not, but the system was certainly not "state of the art." There was no drain field. The sewer pipe exited the house, went through a small holding tank, and then directly into a small pothole by the road. Shovelers loved that little pond in the spring.

Well, one winter we had an unusually long cold snap. As a result, the pond froze solid. As there was no outlet for the pipe; the system didn't work. The sewer started backing up through

the basement drain. To stop the backup, I shoved a tennis ball into the basement drain and presented my problem to Jack and Leland.

"No problem," they said. Jack and Leland proceeded to chop a hole in the ice near the end of the pipe and inserted a ten-pound bag of ammonium nitrate. We backed the refuge truck up a few yards and prepared to hook up the blasting wires to the truck's battery. "Everybody ready," said Jack. Then he touched the charge off.

Now what do you supposed covered the bottom of that pond? Well, there was lots of it, and perhaps five pounds of ammonium nitrate would have been enough. We stood there fascinated as we watched the contents of the pond bottom rise majestically into the sky. It was about then it occurred to us that what goes up must come down. And down it came, like cows were flying. None of us took a direct hit, but a rather large chunk landed squarely on the roof of the truck. As the air cleared, Jack's only comment was, "That should hold it for a while." That's what we call "Roto Rooter, Refuge style."

Of course, none of us thought to tell my wife we were in the process of "fixing" the problem. Her first clue was the explosion. Then, it was the sound of breaking glass. The blast sent so much pressure up the pipe that it blew out all the basement windows. The tennis ball was launched like a rocket and was still ricocheting around the basement when she went down for a look.

One thing was for certain, though. Jack was right. It did fix the problem. We never had another sewer problem as long as we lived in Quarters Nine. The pond was a little deeper and we even had a brood of shovelers on it that next spring. All was peaceful in Quarters Nine.

A Baby and a Blizzard

Before refuges stopped preparing an annual written narrative report in the 1980's, most refuges prepared an extra copy each year and put it into circulation through the refuge system. For a new employee like me it was a great way to learn what each refuge's mission was and what had been done for that year. But the narratives also related personal stories and information about life on a refuge. One story I still remember from when I read it in 1971 is a well-written tale from the 1969 narrative for Lostwood NWR in northwestern North Dakota. Following, within the quote marks, is a verbatim copy of manager Jim Frates' arrival of a new child. Only a couple spelling and punctuation additions have been made from his narrative.

"The Frates family was visited by the great white, long-legged, bird in January. Just what he was doing in North Dakota in January is still very much of a mystery, but in his hasty retreat to a warmer climate he left a wrinkled, red-faced, bald-headed beautiful baby named Barbara - born in a blizzard.

Sunday, January 26 was a memorable day. My wife was 10 days overdue, (punctuality was never one of her virtues) a blizzard was raging, a six-foot-high snow drift had permanently sealed the car inside the garage, and to make things even more interesting, we were 24 long miles from town.

Because I had no desire to receive an instant course in obstetrics, I finally convinced her it might be wise to go to town as a precautionary measure and sit out the storm there - not that I was all that concerned - after the fourth neighbor had called expressing the same concern, we finally headed for Stanley with the unauthorized use of a government, 4-wheel drive pickup. Outside of having to break through several large drifts, a wet and badly missing engine, frequent zero visibility and an extremely anxious wife, the trip was uneventful.

The trip to town took 2½ hours, and it was a real relief when we checked into the very plush Wilson Hotel - Stanley's finest. It even had a bathroom - down the hall and to the left. Another interesting feature was the fact that all hot water had to be diverted to heat the building in the 35-degree below temperatures. This meant that those wishing to enjoy the comforts of a hot bath must do it before 8 PM. Since we didn't arrive until 8:15, we were just in time to witness the last dribble of moderately lukewarm water as it descended the drain of our early American (1850) bathtub.

Another interesting feature, which we didn't discover until 2 a.m., was the fact that the water pipes apparently had frozen. This discovery was made by my wife who had just taken two aspirins. I was awakened by the muffled sounds of someone trying to swallow two aspirins without water - a rich emotional experience whether you're pregnant or not.

The labor pains began shortly thereafter, and I was groping about in the dark for the light switch underneath the huge lampshade of another antiquated piece of furniture, the entire shade suddenly came unhooked - engulfing me from the waist up and producing instant panic. It was with deep regret that we departed from the Wilson so early in the morning without having the full opportunity of discovering its other many interesting features.

If there is a moral to this story, it would probably be that having a baby in North Dakota in the wintertime represents, among other things, extremely poor planning."

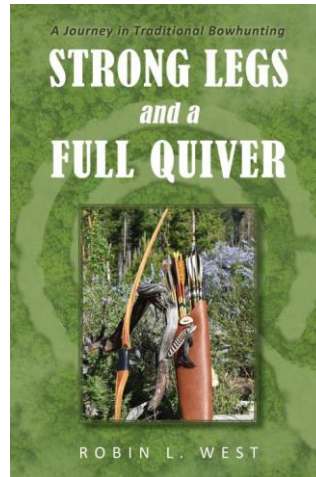
Jim Frates passed away February 14, 2024, in Kenai, Alaska. His wife of 63 years, Marlene, still lives in Alaska. His daughter, Barbara now lives in Meridian, Idaho. Jim's obituary is included in this issue of the retiree's newsletter. *Conrad Fjetland had run across this story and contacted Jim's widow for permission to publish it, which she provided.*

I hope you enjoyed these stories. I even have a few stories, but our membership would rather hear your stories. We need Fun Facts and Family Ties (relatives, children of employees who

chose to work for FWS) stories to keep this section of the newsletter fun and interesting. Please send me your stories, even if they are short. Thank you! Deborah Holle, Membership

FWS Authors

From Robin West in Alaska



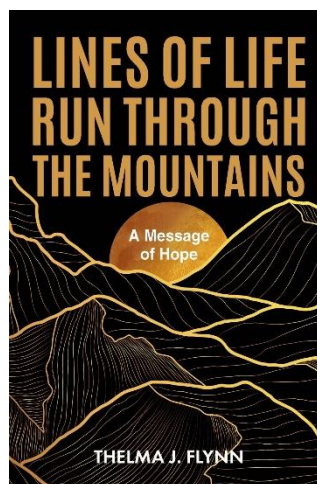
My first book (2020) shared something of my career and professional life in Alaska; the second (2022) about my faith and spiritual life in the context of politics and history; and my latest, about some of my adventures around the world while bowhunting with traditional archery equipment. The stories span over 50 years and include successes, failures, and insights that are intertwined with special people, places, and animals

and the use of an ancient, simplistic, yet effective weapon. If interested, you can check it out at:

<https://store.bookbaby.com/book/strong-legs-and-a-full-quiver>

It can also be ordered from Amazon or Barnes and Noble (and in softcover or e-book). I hope you enjoy it. *Note: Robin's other books are available from the same sources,*

NCTC's Thelma Flynn's book is out



Thelma's book shares the stories of her family including her 9 brothers and sisters – the 10 children of a poor Virginia coal miner and the paths they took in life. The importance of Thelma's faith and how it helped shape her amazing story is woven throughout the book with sage advice. Her family's struggles, successes and failures are described along with many historical events of our lifetime. The back cover, says, "by the end of this book, you'll find

what you're looking for – a better life within your grasp today." *The book can be ordered from Amazon.com.*

Retiree Travel

Ready for a Safari to South Africa!

There is a new South African Safari open to FWS Retirees, families, and friends for this coming Spring. This trip travels to two locations with a stop or two – ChaZen Game Reserve near Parys (about 2-hour drive south of Johannesburg) and Pilanesberg National Park located northwest of Johannesburg. In addition, there will be a stop in the Cradle of Humankind area where the oldest human remains have been found!



The wildlife will be abundant and varied – with the opportunity to see the Big Five! While at ChaZen we will be the only guests, so wildlife viewing can be very up close. While visiting Pilanesberg we will be staying at a Black Rhino Private Reserve adjacent to the park. Here are the particulars:

Dates:

March 25 to April 4 (depart US on March 24) to Johannesburg

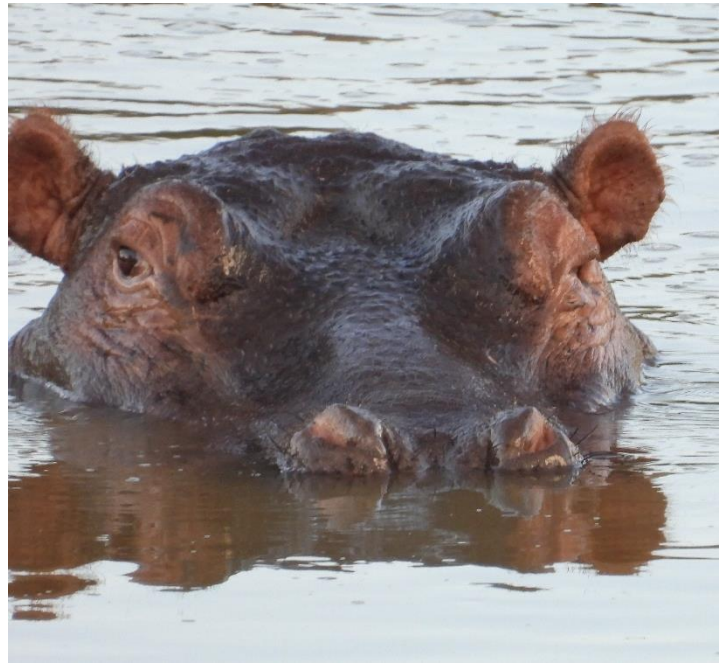


Price: \$3950 double occupancy, \$4900 single occupancy – plus airfare. This includes all lodging, meals, transportation, entry fees, and drinks (wine, beer, soft drinks). Tips are collected separately upon arrival, suggested is \$20 per day per person.

We try to keep the groups small – 8 to 12.

Want to learn more? Check out the ChaZen website Africa Through Your Lens, Black Rhino Reserve and Pilanesberg National Park.

Interested? Contact Donna Stanek at dstanek0418@hotmail.com



Natural Resource Issues

Service evaluating Kings River pyrg for ESA listing in Nevada

On October 31, 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received a petition from the Western Watersheds Project, requesting that the Kings River pyrg, an endemic springsnail found in Humboldt County, Nevada, be listed as an endangered species or a threatened species and critical habitat be designated for this species under the Act. Located near the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine, there is concern about how a listing could affect mining of this mineral critical in production of batteries used to combat the effects of climate change.

The *Federal Register* notice stated, “Based on our review of the petition and readily available information regarding spring modification (Factor A), we find that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that

listing the Kings River pyrg may be warranted. The petition presents credible information that all 13 known springs occupied by the Kings River pyrg exhibited signs of habitat disturbance during 2018 surveys and that the flows of 4 occupied springs have already been modified.”



Kings River pyrg on human fingertip. Photo credit Corey Long, BLM.

“The petition discusses several additional threats, which could ultimately result in spring modification and impacts to Kings River pyrg habitat. These threats include livestock grazing, roads, drought, climate change, and the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine. The current State of Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) Water Pollution Control permit for the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine does not authorize mining below the groundwater table (NDEP 2022), which as written, may significantly reduce the potential for spring modification from this project. The petitioners also presented information suggesting that nonnative aquatic species, small population size and limited distribution, and the species' lack of mobility may be threats to the Kings River pyrg.”

An article with additional information can be found in the *Seattle Times* at <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/us-wildlife-service-considering-endangered-status-for-tiny-snail-near-nevada-lithium-mine/> and the Federal Register notice is at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/02/08/2024-02620/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-90-day-finding-for-the-kings-river-pyrg>. Thanks to Jessy Jacobs for information on this potential listing.

Notes From the Field and Other Things

This is the section formerly called “Miscellaneous.” We welcome your contributions on just about anything that may be of interest to FWS Retirees. Just send them to Helen Clough at communications2023@fwsretirees.org.

Will Meeks Midwest Regional Director



Will Meeks recently became the Regional Director for the Midwest Region, overseeing the day-to-day operations and strategic direction of the region which covers Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Meeks spent his childhood in northern Ohio, the son of a natural resource manager. “Growing up on the shores of Lake Erie crafted my conservation legacy,” he said. “I used to take a small boat out to the backwaters and learn about wildlife. I was blessed with that opportunity, and I’m proud to lead the Midwest Region in sharing opportunities for everyone to connect with nature.”

Will has been with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for several decades, filling many different roles across the country. His first permanent position was as a Partners for Fish and Wildlife biologist in the Sandhills of Nebraska before becoming the supervisory wildlife biologist at the Devils Lake Wetland Management District Complex in northeastern North Dakota. He worked as refuge manager at Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern North Dakota and as the deputy refuge manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. He then accepted the position of branch chief and deputy division chief for the National Wildlife Refuge System’s Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning in the headquarters office. Following his time in headquarters, Will became the project leader of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team located in Bismarck, North Dakota. He served for more than seven years as the assistant regional director for Refuges in the Mountain-Prairie Region before becoming the project leader of the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex in South Carolina and Georgia and later the assistant regional director for Refuges in the Southeast Region.

Will attended the University of North Dakota where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology, and South Dakota State University where he earned his Master of Science degree in Wildlife Management

Bishop Paiute Tribe, USFWS and partners celebrate establishment of Owens pupfish sanctuary

On April 21, the Bishop Paiute Tribal Council along with Tribal staff, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power came together to release endangered Owens pupfish into the newly established Owens Pupfish Refuge within the Tribe's Conservation Open Space Area in eastern California.



Owens River pupfish Photo credit: Joe Ferreria, California Dept. of Fish and Game.

“Establishing the Owens pupfish on tribal lands is a real reason to celebrate. The fish have played such an important part of our cultural history. We are so happy that we have finally arrived at this point where we have worked through the logistical and legal hurdles involved and found the means to contribute to the protection and recovery of the fish both on and potentially off-reservation,” said Meryl Picard, Tribal Chairwoman.

Once widespread up and down the Owens Valley in the network of ponds and sloughs that make up the Owens River watershed, the Owens pupfish was once a staple food item for the local Paiute, who caught fish by the hundreds and dried them for storage and later eating. Owens pupfish are small, rarely larger than two and a half inches long. The females are a dusky, olive-green color and the males are bright blue, particularly during their spring and summer spawning season. The pupfish gather in small schools and eat mostly aquatic insects. They were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1967 and are threatened by habitat loss, predation by introduced, non-native fish and amphibians, and climate change.

Implementation of this project is an important milestone in a 15-year journey for the Bishop Paiute Tribe, taking a proactive approach to the conservation of a local protected species. The Service worked with the Bishop Paiute Tribe to finalize a Safe Harbor Agreement, which means the Tribe can establish and manage this new, seventh, population of Owens pupfish without additional regulatory burden for the duration of the

SHA. “Safe Harbor Agreements are an important tool for endangered species recovery, and we are so honored to be a partner to this historic moment for the Tribe and for Owens pupfish,” said Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Southwest regional director Paul Souza “The Tribe’s efforts to see this project through speak to their inherent dedication to the stewardship of the land, and the fish, wildlife and plants within.” *From FWS.gov*

Bringing Birds Back – Hawadax Island's Journey Post Rat Eradication

by Stacey Buckelew, Island Strike Team Biologist, Alaska Region Invasive Species Program

In the vast expanse of the Aleutian archipelago, a remote island of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge was once infested with invasive Norway rats that came from a 1780 Japanese shipwreck. The rats decimated birdlife and the island was gripped in eerie silence. Hawadax (once known as Rat Island) has undergone a remarkable transformation since rat eradication. Not only have the birds come back but surprising changes were found even in the intertidal habitat.



Hawadax Island – rats were eliminated in 2008. USFWS

Invasive species, which primarily spread around the globe via human transportation, are a leading cause of extinctions on islands and of biodiversity loss globally. Invasive rats are among the most damaging due to predation on ground-nesting birds and seabirds that lack natural predatory defenses. Fortunately, proven eradication techniques have been used on over 500 islands worldwide to restore threatened habitats and allow native species to recover.

Hawadax Island stands as a testament to the power of restoration by invasive species eradication. Rats, notorious for their destructive foraging habits, wreaked havoc on the native wildlife of Hawadax and disrupted the delicate balance of the island's ecosystem. Bird populations, including seabirds and songbirds, faced severe declines and some species were eliminated from the island due to predation.

The Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge has been a national leader in eradicating invasive species and restoring

habitat on islands for over 70 years. Until recently, efforts have focused mostly on removing fox that were imported for the fur trade from 48 islands which restored native biological diversity on over a million acres. Building on this long history of ecosystem recovery, the emphasis has shifted to rats. In October of 2008, the refuge in partnership with Island Conservation and The Nature Conservancy launched an eradication campaign to rid Hawadax Island of rats using an aerial broadcast of grain pellets containing rodenticide.

Invasive species, which primarily spread around the globe via human transportation, are a leading cause of extinctions on islands and of biodiversity loss globally. Invasive rats are among the most damaging due to predation on ground-nesting birds and seabirds that lack natural predatory defenses. Fortunately, proven eradication techniques have been used on over 500 islands worldwide to restore threatened habitats and allow native species to recover.

Two years after aerial baiting was completed biologists returned to look for any signs of rats. Even a single pregnant rat remaining could cause the island to be overrun again. No rats were detected in 2010, and eradication was declared victorious in removing every single rat. Yet, it was a victory with lessons. Despite precautions, Glaucous-winged Gulls and Bald Eagles had unexpectedly succumbed to poisoning during the eradication. Fortunately, later visits to the island found that both eagles and gulls had recovered to numbers greater than the population before eradication, showing that negative impacts were transient with long-term benefits outweighing the short-term losses.

In the years since rat eradication, the island is quiet no more. Five years post-eradication most terrestrial birds (Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Lapland Longspur, and Snow Bunting) rebounded and bird song returned to the island. Several other bird species with no prior record of nesting, including the Rock Sandpiper, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Eider, and Red-faced Cormorant, were successfully nesting on the island. Black Oystercatchers increased fivefold and the Song Sparrow appeared for the first time two years after eradication, potentially indicating a return of this species to the island. Two seabird species (Tufted Puffins and Leach’s Storm-petrel) were documented nesting for the first time ever recorded. Delighted ecologists were surprised to find a flourishing kelp forest as the returning shorebirds feeding in the intertidal reduced the unnatural level of kelp-grazing invertebrates.

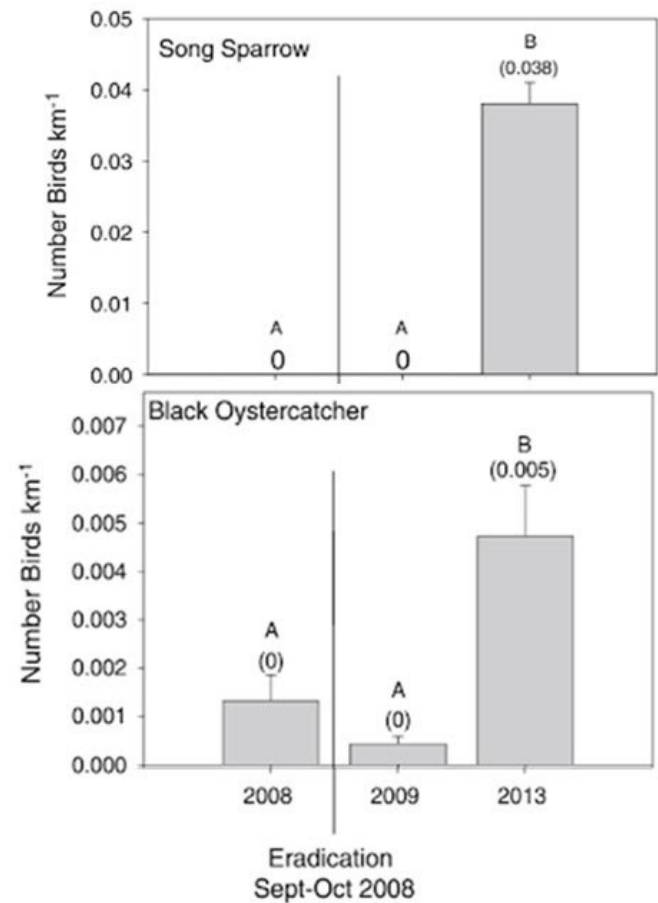
With the removal of rats and the return of birds, the island name was restored to its Unangan name Hawadax (pronounced “how AH thaa”), reflecting both the true history of the island and celebrating the success of removing invasive species to restore the island to its previous ecological state.

Annual changes in Song Sparrow and Black Oystercatcher abundance(mean±SE) on Hawadax Island pre-versus post-Norway rat eradication (2008 vs.2009 and 2013) from beach surveys; median values are shown in parentheses. Croll et al.

2015 Passive recovery of an island bird community after rodent eradication.



Black Oystercatchers increased fivefold after eradication. Black Oystercatcher chick. Island Conservation/Rory Stansbury



Rats occur on at least 10 other islands in the Aleutians. The Alaska Maritime Refuge is in the early stages of planning for rat eradication on four other islands, Great Sitkin, Attu, Kiska, and Amchitka. They have asked for Friends’ help in the fall to assist with hosting public meetings and other tasks. You can read more about this project and the Environmental Impact

Statement process [here](#). Learn more about hopes for a rat-free Aleutians [here](#). *From the Alaska Refuge Friends Newsletter.*

Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Turns 100

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is celebrating 100 years of conservation and recreation in 2024! The creation of the Refuge was largely the result of the Izaak Walton League of America, and in particular, the efforts of its founder and leader, Will Dilg. In the summer of 1923, Dilg learned of a plan to drain large areas of the river's backwaters so he came up with an ambitious solution to the drainage scheme: turn the entire stretch of river into a federal wildlife refuge. Remarkably, one year later, due to Dilg's determination, Congress passed the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge Act on June 7, 1924.



Upper Mississippi River. USFWS Photo.

Nestled in the Driftless Area and bordered by steep wooded bluffs, the Mississippi River corridor and refuge offer scenic beauty unmatched in the heart of America. The refuge hosts over 3.7 million visits annually. The 261-mile-long refuge is the longest river refuge outside of Alaska, beginning near Wabasha, Minnesota and passing through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois before ending near Rock Island, IL. Visitors come to see tundra swans, canvasbacks and other waterfowl and bald eagles, in numbers rarely seen in other locations other than in Alaska. Each season offers new perspectives and exceptional recreational opportunities for paddlers, anglers, wildlife watchers, photographers, hunters, and many outdoor enthusiasts.

Nearly 250,000 acres of floodplain forests, braided river channels, marshes, and prairie offer premium habitat for resident and migratory wildlife. Located in the middle of the Mississippi Flyway, the refuge is critically important for migrating waterfowl, particularly tundra swans and canvasbacks. The refuge is also an Audubon Important Bird Area, providing habitat to over 300 bird species.

Mini Grant Report

Get Outdoors Nevada and Desert National Wildlife Refuge Collaborate

Get Outdoors Nevada (GON) successfully used a grant to expand the Schoolyard Habitat (SYH) Program in collaboration with Eldorado High School. The program, designed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, engaged students in rehabilitating urban spaces to their historical ecologic conditions. GON conducted three classroom programs and two field trips to Desert National Wildlife Refuge, aiming to inspire positive attitudes about nature, foster an understanding of the Mojave Desert, and build appreciation for unique community resources.

The Schoolyard Habitat program was designed to teach important outdoor skills to horticulture students, with a primary focus on creating habitats for pollinators. Students went through an extensive learning experience that covered public lands, native plant species in Southern Nevada, and the fundamental elements that were necessary for habitat survival.



Students learn how to use binoculars. GON photo.

Field trips to the refuge provided invaluable insights into careers such as Interpretive Park Ranger, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, and Law Enforcement Park Ranger. During classroom programming, students learned about Southern Nevada's public lands, their resources, and careers in restoration ecology. They created a draft of their designs for the SYH garden for local pollinator species. This habitat included the three basic needs for survival - food, water, and shelter. Students refined their draft and took steps to implement their pollinator habitat.

During a classroom program, Park Ranger Joshua Contois visited to provide his expertise on natural habitats and to aid students on their draft designs. During the first field trip, students learned what an interpretive park ranger did. Students hiked with Park Ranger Joshua Contois to see what rangers did

in real-life. In addition, the focus for students was on the flora and fauna of the refuge, which aided them in their design drafts of the pollinator garden. Students also met with a Law Enforcement Ranger.



“Ranger Bob” conducting mock car pull over. GON photo.

This was particularly fun for students as they participated in a mock car pull-over with Ranger Rob Peloquin. The mock pull-over served as an interactive experience for students and taught them about leaving no trace and the consequences of stealing public resources at the refuge and beyond.

During the second field trip, students felt more acquainted with the refuge and were very eager and excited to learn more. Students met a FWS wildlife biologist and learned what biologists did, and learned more about the local flora of the refuge and the introduced species that had caused harm. Students participated in a service project to assist Biologist Cristiana Manville with picking up litter, removing invasive non-native plant and aquatic species. One notable moment was when students removed crawfish from a stream, which brought a lot of excitement for the students. Finally, students met the refuge manager at the time, Amy Sprunger, and learned about the position's role and its importance.

The project involved staff from the USFWS and Clark County School District. USFWS served to provide interactive nature programs to help youth explore different career opportunities. The program had rotations scheduled so that students could gain knowledge from interpretive ranger, biologist, patrol ranger, and the refuge manager. The program was open to Eldorado High School students enrolled in the horticulture program. The majority of program recipients were considered at-risk or underserved. GON said they have built a deeper relationship with the USFWS staff and have received the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act grant to continue bringing youth from the Las Vegas valley to outdoor spaces like Desert National Wildlife Refuge.



After the program, students used the knowledge they learned to create their own pollinator garden at their school. GON Photo.

Passing of Colleagues

If you are aware of the passing of any retired or active FWS employees, including those who left the Service before retirement, please let us know so we can pass that information on to our readers. If you can provide us with links to online obituaries, that would be most helpful, and should be sent to Helen Clough at communications2023@fwsretirees.org.

Frank Cockrell



Frank Cockrell passed away April 1, 2024. He retired from Washington Office headquarters in September 2004 after 31 years as a Facilities Management Specialist in the Refuge Division and Division of Engineering. Over the years he had increasing responsibilities in maintenance,

construction, hazardous waste compliance, ADA, and related administrative support programs. Throughout, he worked closed with field station and regional office staffs in program planning, budgeting and oversight areas including the Refuge Manual, Bicentennial Land Heritage Program. Accelerated Refuge Maintenance Management, Field Station “Threats and his Conflicts,” and the Service-wide Maintenance Management System as Team Leader. He participated in field maintenance inspections and compliance team reviews at a variety of field stations and in Regional Officers. He was the Service representative on several related Department Tasks Forces. He and his wife Elaine lived in Beltsville, MD, a short distance from Patuxent Research Refuge where he was an active volunteer. Frank was a lifetime member of the retirees association and served on the board from 2010 to 2013.

Gary Edwards

We received word that former Assistant Director for Fisheries and Alaska Region Deputy Regional Director, Gary Edwards passed away in January. We hope to provide additional information on Gary and his career in a future newsletter.

James “Jim” Frates (January 2, 1939 – February 14, 2024)



James Edward Frates, 85, of Kenai, Alaska died, on Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024. Jim was born on January 2, 1939 in Julesburg, CO to Mason and LaVon Frates. He graduated from high school in Brule, NE in 1957 and then attended Colorado State University where he graduated in 1963 with a biology degree. Jim

began his career in wildlife conservation as a wildlife biologist for Nebraska Game Fish and Parks. In 1964 he transferred to a position with South Dakota Game Department where he served as a research biologist and later as district game manager for multiple counties in east central South Dakota.

In 1966 Jim accepted a position as Assistant Refuge Manager on the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota—thus beginning a 30-year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which took him to wildlife refuges in North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Alaska.

Jim moved his family to Kenai, Alaska in 1977 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Manager of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (then known as the Moose Range)—a position he held until being reassigned to the Services Regional Office in Anchorage in 1981. He returned to the Kenai Refuge in 1986 as Director of Maintenance Operations until his retirement in 2000. Jim's career in Alaska took him to many locations throughout the State—from the Aleutian Islands, Arctic Slope, Kodiak Island and Bristol Bay.

Of the many memorable experiences he had in Alaska, one that stood out was witnessing the fall migration of the Porcupine caribou herd near Peters Lake on Alaska's North Slope. Another was observing brown bears fishing for salmon along Brooks Falls at Katmai National Park.

Following his retirement from the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2000, Jim accepted the position as Warehouse Manager at the Kenai Peninsula Food Bank – a job he truly loved due to the positive impact on the community. He retired from the food bank in 2019. Jim was active in the community, serving multiple times as Elder at Star of the North Lutheran Church and as President of both the Kenai Little League and the Peninsula Youth Football Association. Jim loved being with family, barbequing, fishing and birding.

Jim was preceded in death by his parents Mason & LaVon Frates, his sister and brother-in-law Jean & Bill Lambert and his sister-in-law Debbie Frates. Jim is survived by his wife, Marlene, of 63 years; sons Brad (Melisa) and Bob (Phyllis) of Kenai; daughter Barbara (Mike) Nelson of Meridian, ID; his brother, John Frates of Brule, NE; seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

John Kilburg (August 31, 1949 – March 6, 2024)

John L. Kilburg, 74, and his wife passed away together on March 6, 2024. John experienced a medical emergency, while Donelle's passing followed due to injuries sustained in an automobile accident near Marion, Iowa.

John Larry Kilburg was born on August 31, 1949 in Clinton, Iowa, to Raymond John and Rita Mary (Tebbe) Kilburg. His early life was marked by dedication and service. A proud 1967 graduate of Preston High School, he soon answered the call of duty by enlisting in the U.S. Army. His time in the military was distinguished by an honorable discharge. After his service, John found love and started a family with Kathy Yaddof in 1975, welcoming two children, Megan, and Brant, into the world. Although their marriage ended in divorce, John's journey led him to Donelle Streets Heneke, whom he met through her employment at the ASCS office. They were married on December 27, 1991, in Maquoketa, Iowa, building a loving blended family that stood the test of time for 32 years.

John's professional life was as grounded as he was, with his roots deeply entrenched in the soil of his farm. A lifelong farmer, he also served the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a maintenance worker from 1994 until his well-deserved retirement in 2015. His work ethic was unmatched, as evidenced by his over 30-year tenure with the B & G Auction House, where he worked part-time. Even in retirement, John's passion for agriculture never waned, as he continued to work for Cornelius Seed Corn and lent his expertise to various local farmers.

The simple pleasures in life brought John the greatest joy. He relished the time spent outdoors, tending to his farm, and taking his grandchildren for joyful Kubota rides. His love for antiquing and attending auctions was only matched by the joy he found in socializing and cherishing moments with friends and family. John's presence was a comforting constant at the farm, where he and the “two cats” were familiar fixtures.

John's legacy is carried on by his loving children: Megan (Jeff) Rettray of Bloomfield Hills, MI, Brant Kilburg of San Diego, CA, Erich Heneke of Rochester, MN, and Alycia (Steve) Benischek of Tiffin, IA. His memory will be treasured by his seven grandchildren: Liam, Emerson, Hadley, Brinley, Kennady, Kingston, and Ryan, who will miss their grandfather's warmth and wisdom. He is also survived by his sisters, Jane Bormann of Preston, IA, and Ruth (Robert) Steines of Spragueville, IA; his brothers, Richard (Rhonda)

Kilburg of FL, Dennis (Kathy) Kilburg of Altoona, IA, and Mike (Debbie) Kilburg of DeWitt, IA; along with numerous nieces and nephews. Preceding him in death were his parents and his brother-in-law, Verlyn Bormann.

James Gore “Jim” King VI (October 23, 1927 - March 31, 2024)



great-grandchildren.

Jim King passed away peacefully on March 31, 2024, with his family by his side. He had struggled with dementia for the last several years but, through it all, was polite, cheerful and comfortable. He is survived by his wife, Mary Lou, daughters Sara and Laura, son James, their spouses, ten grandchildren and seven

Jim was born October 23, 1927, in Portland, Maine, to James Gore King V and Julie Hurley King. He grew up in New England and graduated from South Kent Boarding School in Connecticut in 1946. After high school, he joined the Marines and was on the base fire crew for two years in North Carolina. As was expected by his family, he attended Harvard University for one year. He drove to Alaska with a friend in 1949 and lived there the rest of his life.

Jim's first job in Alaska was working on the railroad outside Denali National Park. In the fall of 1949, he enrolled at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, under the GI Bill and attended for two years. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management from Washington State University in 1958. The break in his college experience was filled with employment as a game warden for the US Fish & Wildlife Service based out of Fairbanks. In 1961, he married Mary Lou Neville from Southern Oregon, whom he met in Juneau. They enjoyed 63 years together.

Jim came to Alaska to begin a career in waterfowl management, but over the succeeding decades his career spanned across many taxa and paved a legacy of habitat conservation. After learning to fly aircraft on wheels, skis and floats, Jim was selected as the first Refuge Manager of the Clarence Rhodes National Wildlife Refuge, precursor to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. After his time living in Bethel, he was recruited to Juneau as Supervisor of Waterfowl Investigations, a program that ultimately morphed into the Alaska Region of Migratory Bird Management.

Starting in the early 1960s Jim flew the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey in Alaska and the Canadian Yukon, then trained his successor, Bruce Conant, to take over the role. Jim worked statewide, always with an eye for

identifying important habitats in Alaska and beyond. His legendary duck roundups in Yukon Flats (over 22,000 ducks banded in three years) revealed to the public the breadth of migratory pathways previously unknown. This banding work along with his waterfowl surveys of Yukon Flats was instrumental in Secretary of Interior Udall's decision to oppose the proposal to build a dam on the Yukon River that would have flooded an area the size of Lake Erie.

Jim recognized the power of data and used his survey results to drive the selection of refuge boundaries during the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act days resulting in permanent protection of these national treasures including the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge that would have been permanently altered had the Rampart dam been approved. Jim's surveys on the North Slope identified and promoted the Teshekpuk Lake region as a critical molting ground for geese from Canada, Russia, the Yukon Delta, and the Arctic Coastal Plain - a discovery that helped create special conservation status of this region within the National Petroleum Reserve-A.

Jim designed and conducted the first range-wide census of Trumpeter swans in Alaska in 1968 when the species was in peril across North America. Jim's initial statewide trumpeter swan survey planted the benchmark that proceeded the species' recovery and his resulting spatial data has been used countless times in protection of nesting habitats in Alaska. Beyond waterfowl, Jim developed an aerial plot-based survey method for measuring bald eagle densities through much of coastal Alaska. In the 1970s Jim recognized the tremendous but vulnerable seabird resource in Alaska and co-founded the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) to increase the flow of knowledge of seabird ecology and inform decision makers. This thriving organization had its 51st annual meeting this winter in Seattle. Jim authored and coauthored dozens of published papers and book chapters and went on to publish his own book, "Attending Alaska's Birds". During his career he received two Superior Performance Awards and the Meritorious Service Award for his many contributions to wildlife conservation.

Retirement in 1983 was just an administrative action for Jim and he remained highly engaged in conservation activities for decades. In "retirement" Jim wrote the successful petition to list the Steller's eider and spectacled eider for protection under the Endangered Species Act, served on the Citizens Oil Spill Advisory Committee that was formed after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, served as President of the Trumpeter Swan Society, helped establish the Bald Eagle Research Institute in Juneau, and remained an active aerial survey observer and pilot mentor. Jim and his wife Mary Lou received the Chevron Conservation Award in 1989 for their long-standing conservation work in Alaska. Jim was awarded the Distinguished Service Award in 2002 by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the highest Departmental honor award that can be granted to a career employee.

As noted above, Jim continued working with birds until well into his 80's. He flew 6,500 hours for Fish and Wildlife and then logged another 2,100 hours as an observer for ABR Inc. and others after retiring. Besides spending time with his family, his favorite activity was to fly around at low altitudes, looking for birds and other interesting things anywhere in Alaska.

In addition to the organizations noted above, Jim sat on many boards and chaired several of them. Some of the additional organizations he was passionate about were City of Juneau Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Alaska Conservation Society, Juneau area State Parks (responsible for helping to get several popular parks created), Territorial Sportsmen, Alaska Democratic Party, and the American Bald Eagle Research Institute. He was also involved with the Juneau Audubon Society, Taku Conservation, and Trail Mix Inc.

As a result of his professional and volunteer efforts, he was the recipient of many prestigious awards: 1972 - National Wildlife Federation Alaska Conservationist of the Year, 1973 - US Fish & Wildlife Service Superior Service Award, 1988 - US Fish & Wildlife Safe Pilot Award, 1989 - University of Alaska Southeast Honorary PhD Doctor of Science, 1997 - Pacific Seabird Group Life Time Achievement Award, 1997 - The Trumpeter Swan Society Award for 50 years conservation work with Trumpeters, 2002 - US Department of Interior Distinguished Service Award, 2005 - Alaska Legislature Honor with Mary Lou for receiving Lifetime Achievements awards from the Alaska Conservation Council, 2010 - Alaska State Parks Recognition of 25 years of Service, 2011 - US Fish & Wildlife Service Recognition of 40 years of Service, and 2012 - Alaska Recreation & Park Association Distinguished Service Award. The plaques, photos, and items received were displayed all over the house, along with art depicting his favorite places, items he collected on all his travels, thousands of books, and photos of his family.

Jim was a loving, caring husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He always had a plan for an outing, and everyone in the family has wonderful memories of hiking, skiing, skating, boating, driving "out the road," picnics at beautiful view spots, and lunch on the lawn during sunny days. He loved to read aloud and did most evenings after dinner when his kids were young, a tradition the family has carried on. The Kings remain close because of Jim's love for his family and enthusiasm for adventures together.

Jim King made the world a better place, and he will be missed by his associates, friends, and family. Thankfully, we can all enjoy his legacy by reading his book, respecting the natural world, and experiencing the out of doors at the parks and on the trails he helped establish. *From information provided by the King family ad Bruce Conant.*

Wesley "Wes" Orr (1940 – 2023)

Mountain-Prairie Region longtime employee Wes Orr, who retired in 2000 and is a member of both the Northwest Fish Culture Hall of Fame and National Fish Culture Hall of Fame, died in October 2023. Born in 1940 in South Dakota, Mr. Orr first worked for the Service in high school at the former McNenny National Fish Hatchery in South Dakota. He then went on to work at national fish hatcheries across the country, but it was his success at Ennis National Fish Hatchery in Montana that established and ensured his conservation legacy. "In 1973, the Ennis Hatchery produced 13 million eyed rainbow trout eggs," Mr. Orr writes in his own obituary, "and thanks to good employees (who I never thanked enough), the hatchery was producing 40 million eggs when I retired in 2000."

The National Fish Culture Hall of Fame says in its 2013 induction recognition, "During his tenure, he was responsible for shipping a staggering 438,780,605 eggs and 1,331,152 pounds of fish from six different strains of rainbow trout to over 30 different states and countries." In a 2009 issue of Eddies, the Service's former magazine on fisheries conservation, John Bryan writes, "If you've caught a rainbow trout in the last few decades, there's a good chance it was courtesy of the work of Wesley Orr."

Mr. Orr grew up, he writes, in "probably the best time in the history of our country to grow up. Our family was into fishing, camping, hunting, sports, outdoor activities, and friends." He took to fishing. Bryan's Eddies profile says, "He cast his first fly when he was 5 and began tying flies at 12." After college at Colorado State University, he worked for the Service for 38 years and served many years in the Army National Guard. Mr. Orr was "among the elite of cold water fisheries professionals,"

Bryan's article quotes a retired national fish hatchery employee. "I learned immediately from Wes that fish culture is not a nine-to-five job; it's a lifestyle. You have to work with fish according to their schedules: 4:00 A.M., all night, whenever. Wes has a strong professional ethic and treats people with respect. And he has always made certain to have time to focus on his family and keep that his priority." His association with the Service continued until his death.

He wrote the essay on rainbow trout in Service employee Craig Springer's book *America's Bountiful Waters: 150 Years of Fisheries Conservation and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*, a commemoration of our work with fish. Springer adds to the story: "I selected a photo from the NCTC archives to go with his story and by golly it was a photo of his dad! His dad was a local plumber who was working at Spearfish NFH the day a USFWS photographer was on station during the mid-1950s ... I had no idea it was Wes's father; the image was not labeled as such. We were both stunned!"

Russell Mark Sattelberg (March 21, 1959 – January 21, 2024)



Russell Mark Sattelberg, loving son, brother, husband, father and friend lost his battle with gastric cancer on January 21, 2024. Known as Mark to friends and family, Mark was the 4th and last child born to Carl and Dorothy Sattelberg.

The family lived in many of Chicago's south and west suburbs where his father was a Methodist minister. Mark was on the football, wrestling, and track teams at Riverside Brookfield High School. He made it to the state championships in the discus throw.

Mark attended North Central College and graduated with majors in biology and chemistry. While there, he met his wife, Jane. They were together for 44 years. He went on to get his master's degree in biology at the University of west Florida. Returning to the Chicago area he worked in various positions until 1990 when he started working for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. After 3 years with the EPA. He transferred to the U.S. Fish and wildlife Service in Marion, IL.

His positions with the USFWS also took him to Denver, Co; Honolulu, HI, Hadley, MA, Conway, AR, and Cheyenne, WY. Mark also worked on the cleanups for Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. After almost 31 years of government service, Mark retired to travel and spend more time in his workshop. His retirement was short, but he did make it to Alaska, achieving his goal of visiting all 50 states.

Bruce Hastings wrote this tribute to Mark. "I am so sorry that the world has lost Mark. I am not exaggerating when I say that he was one of the brightest, nicest, and most competent people I ever worked with. For a brief period, I served as Mark's supervisor. I told him that this was awkward since it would not have mattered which one of us what overseeing the other. Supervising Mark was as easy as it comes. I just got out of his way and let him do his job, which he did brilliantly. Everyone who knew Mark will miss his sense of humor and the kind way that he treated all people, including workers, supervisors, and especially his employees."

Mark is survived by his college sweetheart and wife of 38 years, Jane; his son, Ben; siblings Marcia, Nancy (Chad Kincheloe), and Wesley, 2 nephews and a niece.

Bennie Miles Williams (March 20, 1958 – March 13, 2024)



Bennie Myles Williams, the beloved and only child of Maj. Bennie Mathew Williams and Wilhelmina Toney, was born on March 20, 1958, and entered peacefully into eternal rest on Wednesday March 13, 2024. He

was loving, kind, generous, loyal, supportive, and faithful. He will be missed beyond measure.

Bennie was born in Heidelberg, Germany during one of his father's tours of duty. He was the center of their world, and they were his. From a very young age Bennie enjoyed being outdoors and learning about nature. His family's vacations to the beach and their many fishing trips ignited a passion in him that would last a lifetime.

After graduating from the Sidwell Friends School, Bennie attended both Dartmouth College and Morehouse College before earning his B.S. in Environmental Science with an A.A.S. in Marine Science from the University of the District of Columbia. Later he would venture into the wilderness with the moose, the bears, and the salmon to attend the University of Alaska at Fairbanks to pursue a graduate degree in Fisheries Management.

During his career as a Fishery Biologist Bennie worked for the D.C. Department of Environment, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He was dedicated to maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems and preserving vulnerable species. Bennie had a passion for and was extremely proud of his involvement with programs regarding aquatic resource education, public outreach, boating safety and youth angling. He loved encouraging people, and especially those of color, to get involved in the sciences and enjoy the outdoors. His work with youth fishing programs brought him great joy. Bennie's career would culminate with 20+ years of service as a Fishery Biologist with the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

However, knowledge of fish wasn't the only thing Bennie acquired throughout his life. From his beginning until his end, Bennie collected friendships. Lifelong friendships. Friends that became his Brothers and his Sisters, and cousins that became his siblings. He was always there with a shoulder to lean on, or a shoulder to cry on, a joke to make you smile and words of encouragement to help you push through. He prayed with you when he had no answers and he hugged you when he had no

words. Always willing to share the life lessons he learned from his parents and the wisdom from his own experiences. His generosity knew no limits, always going above and beyond to help those in need.

like siblings; friends who loved him like a brother; godsons whom he loved and cherished; and many, many others for whom his booming laugh and giant bear hugs, will never be forgotten.

Bennie was preceded in death by his beloved parents and a host of family and friends who have welcomed him into glory with loving arms. He is survived by two uncles: Herbert O. G. Williams and Christopher T Williams' cousins who loved him

**FWS Retirees Association Semi-Annual Luncheon
El Pinto Restaurant, Region 2, Albuquerque, NM, April 10, 2024**



(left side of the table, front to back) – Jim Hubert, Sylvia Biscamp (Jim’s friend), Sue Burton, Holt Williamson, Denise Baker, Sharon Hagenbuck, Warren Hagenbuck, Dean Watkins (not facing camera), Brent Giezentanner, Jeff Haskins, Terri Craig (Sally Spier’s daughter) and at the very end Joe Spier (Sally’s husband and Terri’s dad).(Coming around to the right side of the table, back to front) – Sally Spier, Yvonne Haskins, Sherre Giezentanner, Carlotta Ortiz (head back), Marlene Stine, Pete Stine, Vicki Fox, Jerry Burton, Phil Noron, & Wayne Gueswel. Thanks to Pete Stine for organizing and sharing the photo.

Are You up to Date on Your Dues?

The Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association depends primarily on dues and income generated at our reunions to maintain its operations. We receive no funding from the federal government or outside sources of funding for the day-to-day activities of keeping the organization functioning. Please help keep your Retirees Association going and active by paying your dues each year. If you're not sure whether you've paid your dues yet for this year or not, click on [Membership List and Dues Status](#) to find out.

This Newsletter was compiled by Newsletter Editor Helen Clough with contributions from other Board, Association members and others. If you have information or would like to contribute articles that would be of interest to Association members for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact Helen at communications2023@fwsretirees.org.

Also, be sure to visit our website for more up-to-date information at www.fwsretirees.org