

FWS Retirees Association NEWSLETTER



Winter (January) 2025

2025 Board of Directors

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Deborah Holle	History, Membership	512-266-2949	promote@fwsretirees.org

Message from the Chair



Greetings! By the time that this newsletter arrives in your inbox, we will have finished a transition to a new and improved website. It's still the same website address: FWSRetirees.org. All of the same information is there, just readable in a more user-friendly manner. Please check it out!

The Board of Directors is fully engaged with planning/hosting another fantastic Reunion for our membership. Madison, Wisconsin, here we come, May 12 – 16, 2025! Look for an email from the **FWS Retirees Association**, we sent on Dec. 27, that provides the link to make your lodging reservation at the Hyatt Hotel Madison (using that link will provide a special room rate for our group). The draft agenda is also included. [Check your spam if you don't see that email in your inbox.] If you didn't receive that email, you can see the information posted on our website. The details for registration for all the events will be sent in an email to all members shortly. We hope to see you there!

Please, please, forward this information to your FWS friends who may not be members of this Association, and probably don't know that we exist! We are trying to spread the information that our Association is alive and active. Please help us spread the word!

Remember when we had our last Reunion at NCTC (November, 2023) and we took videos of several attendees? You can see our new "recruitment video" on our website (click on "Who We Are") You may be in it!

Chris Cline joined the board as a new member on January 1 when Doug Frugé's term ended. Patrick Martin is the new treasurer as of January 1.

Please beware of phishing scams. I would never send an email asking for money so don't fall for it. Seems like these bandits are now sending out email to members allegedly from me.

We are always seeking articles for future newsletters, so please keep in touch! *Cindy Uptegraft Barry*

Business

22nd Reunion of the FWS Retirees Association

Welcome to Madison, Wisconsin, May 12 – 16, 2025

We are excited to announce more details for the next FWS Retirees Reunion! We have a draft agenda coming together and it is now time to make your lodging reservations! So, what events are causing the excitement about our reunion in Madison? Here are a few highlights:

- Douglas Brinkley, acclaimed Presidential historian and conservation author, returns as our keynote speaker! When he was our speaker at our last Reunion at NCTC, he mentioned that he would like to attend if we were in Madison, to explore Aldo Leopold's legacy. And so, we are!
- We will take a field trip to Baraboo, Wisconsin, and meet with the folks at the Aldo Leopold Foundation, Shack and Farm, of the famed Sand County Almanac.
- Also, near Baraboo, we will visit the International Crane Foundation. Did you know that they have all 15 of the world's crane species?
- Have you been to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge? Bring your binoculars!
- We will hear from the CEO of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, as they celebrate their 50th anniversary.
- It's the first time that we will be meeting at the same place, same time, as the national group of FWS Law Enforcement retirees.
- Be on the lookout for a very special online auction that will run from April 15th to May 5th – open to all, whether or not you attend the reunion! Our Association has been given three very special pieces of Kent Olson artwork, from the estate of John Cornely, for a fundraising opportunity. Stay tuned for more details to come April, 2025.
- Our traditional Thursday evening banquet will be held in the Grand Terrace of the Monona Terrace Convention Center. Let's fill up that room!



So, are you ready to make your lodging reservations? Our host for the week is the Hyatt Place Madison/Downtown. They have set aside a block of 85 rooms for our Reunion attendees. The Hyatt is where it all begins on Monday, May 12th: Reunion registration table (3:00 PM); start of the traditional Greenwalt Walk for Wildlife; and then our Welcome Happy Hour during that evening (5:00 till 8:00 PM). and departures for our field trips for the week.

The Hyatt has asked that we use the link below to make our room reservations, as this link has an embedded code that guarantees a special room rate for our attendees, including breakfast! (\$159 for King bed or \$169 for 2 Queens, plus applicable taxes). When you use this link, please make sure to insert your arrival and departure dates. Cancellations can be made up to 48 hours prior to arrival. There is a \$20 per day charge for parking. The link also provides information on the amenities at this Hyatt. We would appreciate your reservations as soon as possible, for our planning purposes.

<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/MSNZD/G-FISH>

Should you have any trouble with this link, or have any questions for the Hyatt, please contact Katie Schelitzche (Mondays – Fridays) at (608) 316-7278, and refer to our block of rooms using the code G-FISH. Go ahead and make your lodging reservations if you know that you are coming. The Hyatt established a deadline of April 11, 2025, before rooms from this block will be released.

The closest airport is Dane County Regional Airport (5 miles/15 minutes). The closest major airport is Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport (84 miles/1.5 hours). O'Hare Airport is about 2 hours away!

This year's Retirees Association Walk for Wildlife in Madison, WI is scheduled to start at 3PM on Monday, May 12, 2025, at the Hyatt where the Reunion/Conference is being held. From there we will carpool to the trailhead. The University of Wisconsin at Madison owns the land and the trailhead parking lot, dubbed Lot #130. From there we'll walk trails in the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve. The donation for participants is \$15. There is no meal cost included, and none to be provided. Parking at Lot #130 is about \$8 for 2 hours, the planned length of the Walk for Wildlife. If you have questions, please contact Lew.gorman@yahoo.com

The next email that you receive from the FWS Retirees Association will be the actual registration form to fill out to attend the Reunion. There will be a registration fee to attend the Reunion to cover the meeting room costs, plus the field trips (bus transportation, e.g.), and banquet, of course. We are doing our best to keep these costs as low as possible. We will gladly accept donations from sponsors!

Are you excited yet? We are! Hope to see you in Madison!

Draft Agenda – FWS Retirees Association Reunion

Monday, May 12 - Arrival Day. Check in to the **Hyatt Place Madison/Downtown**

3:00 PM Reunion registration table opens

3:00 – 5:00 PM Greenwalt Walk for Wildlife

5:00 – 8:00 PM Welcome Social

Tuesday, May 13 Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center meeting room

8:00 AM Reunion registration table opens
9:00 – Noon Welcome from the FWS Regional Director, Region 3, and regional program highlights, Retirees Association Board member updates
 Lunch on your own
[1:00 – 5:00 PM Law enforcement retirees’ group, led by Jerry Smith, return to the Hyatt meeting room for their afternoon meeting]
1:30 – 4:30 PM Invited speakers:
 Regional Director, Midwest Region U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 CEO of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, to celebrate 50th anniversary
 Bill Wilen, Celebrating 50 Years of the National Wetlands Inventory Wetland Mapping and Monitoring Program
5:00 – 6:30 PM Dinner on your own
7:00 PM Evening program at the Monona Terrace meeting room
 Presentation of the FWS’s Annual History Award
 Final live auction of Kent Olsen artwork.
 Keynote Speaker, **Douglas Brinkley**, historian and Author.

Wednesday, May 14 - Field Trip Day

8:00 AM Depart Hyatt for the **International Crane Foundation (ICF)**, north of Madison, WI, near Baraboo, WI. After a welcome and video, we will break into guided groups to view the live cranes. This is the only place to see all of the world’s 15 crane species. We will have take-out lunches at their library and hear a briefing on ICF’s work.
1:30 PM Continue on with our field trip to the **Aldo Leopold Foundation**. the tour will include the visitor center, then to the Shack and Farm of Sand County Almanac fame.
5:00 PM Return to the Hyatt Place, Madison. Dinner on your own.

Thursday, May 15 - Field Trip Day

8:00 AM Depart Hyatt for **Necedah National Wildlife Refuge**. We will tour the refuge, so bring your binoculars to possibly see cranes and other waterfowl.
5:00 PM Return to the Hyatt
6:00 PM Banquet at the Grand Terrace, Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center

Friday, May 16 - Departure Day

Did you receive our most recent email blast containing similar information about the Reunion? If not, please contact Jessy Jacobs at jjacobs@fws.retirees.org to let her know you are not receiving our emails.

Treasurer’s Report

Submitted by Doug Frugé, former Treasurer.

Operating Budget. During 2024 our total operating income was \$9,882.12 and expenses were \$6,715.28 for a net gain of \$3,166.84. This significant gain for the year resulted from our sending out an e-mail reminder to members in October and the many responses from you, our members, in renewing your memberships! At the end of the year our main (Operations) checking account balance was \$23,434.65 with \$484.72 in our PayPal account. **The table below presents a breakdown of our income sources and expenses for the year 2024.**

Operating Income	
Base Account Support	0.00
Contributions	891.00
Dues	7,650.00
Lifetime Memberships	1,000.00
Miscellaneous Income	341.12
Special Projects Income	0.00
	9,882.12
Operating Expenses	
Board Travel	0.00
Legal and Professional	115.55
Mailing Service & Postage	312.00
Miscellaneous	743.01
Newsletter	0.00
Office Supplies	11.66
PayPal expense	193.41
Special Projects	30.50
Website	5,309.15
	6,715.28
Net Gain/Loss	3,166.84

Grants Budget

We had \$11,315.52 in our Grants checking account at the end of 2024.

FY 2024 History Grant. We had received \$44,590 from the FWS in October 2023 for this grant, which ended September 30, 2024. Major expenses included \$19,877.15 for travel to History Committee meetings, \$7,581.74 for travel to collect Oral Histories, \$3,933.91 for membership database management, \$3,644.13 indirect expenses, \$3,130.31 for oral history transcription, and \$900.15 for oral history equipment and supplies. We had a balance of \$5,522.61 remaining unspent at the close of the grant September 30 this year when the grant expires.

FY 2024 Youth Grant. We had received \$41,500 from the FWS in October 2023 for this grant, which also ended September 30. Major expenses included funding 13 Mini-Grants to Friends Groups of FWS field stations totaling \$29,398.19, \$6,651.81 in travel costs to attend the 2023 annual meeting of The Wildlife Society and also to attend the National Order of the Arrow conference in Boulder, CO to provide outreach to young participants regarding careers in wildlife conservation, particularly with the FWS, and paying \$4,450 in honoraria to 7 presenters at a Native American youth conference at NCTC. One of the honoraria checks, for \$1,000 was lost in the mail, and the FWS paid that honorarium directly to the individual. The FWS extended the grant period to March 31, 2005 to allow us to fund an additional Mini-Grant with the \$1,000, which we will do this spring.

FY 2024 NWR Youth Outreach Grant. The FWS awarded us this grant in September 2024 for \$10,000. The grant period extends to September 30, 2026 We partially funded one Mini-Grant for \$7,849.13 to the Friends of Patuxent in 2024 leaving \$2,150.87 for funding one or more additional Mini-Grants this year.

FY 2025 History Grant. We received this \$45,000 grant in November 2024 with the grant period extending to September 30 this year. In 2024 we spent \$1,258.32 on travel to conduct oral history interviews, \$733.25 on membership database management, and \$520.00 on oral history transcription services, leaving a balance of \$42,488.43 to cover FWS history-related expenses in 2025.

FY 2025 Youth Grant. This grant was also awarded to us in November 2024 with the grant period ending also September 30 of this year. In 2024 we spent \$1,876.38 to cover travel costs again to attend the 2024 Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society, again to manage the FWS's information table there and participate in other activities focused on career outreach to young participants.

The Treasurer and other Board members worked on reviewing and editing the Association's *Fiscal Policy and Procedures* document, which was last updated in 2019. The revised document will be approved early this year. We also began financial planning for the next Retirees Reunion to be held in Madison, WI in May this year, and we made a deposit for event space at the Monona Terrace Convention Center there.

Oral History Update

by Libby Herland, Chair, Oral History Subcommittee

Hi folks. I have been the chair of the FWS History Committee's Oral History Subcommittee now for just over a year, taking over for the late, great John Cornely, who many of you knew. It is my intention to start writing a short article for upcoming Retirees Association newsletters to let you know about the great work that

is being done by retirees and FWS staff on the oral history program. The Retirees Association supports this work through a grant with the FWS. We really appreciate this support.

The oral history program has three major components: conducting interviews with retirees or other folks who contributed significantly to the conservation work of the FWS, completing transcripts of each interview, and posting these final transcripts online.

In 2024, we conducted 29 oral history interviews, including with former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner. 39 interviews were transcribed in draft form for review. We finalized 25 oral history transcripts. Many of the draft transcripts were of interviews conducted by John Cornely. Members of the subcommittee are reviewing these since John is no longer with us to do so.



Dr. Rosa Meehan was interviewed for her oral history by Robin West in Anchorage, Alaska in October 2024. Pictured with Dr. Meehan are canine and equine friends Brodie and Yana, respectively.

We contracted with a part-time transcriptionist, thanks to support through the Retirees Association, to supplement the FWS transcriptionist at NCTC. This effort will continue in 2025. This will help us reduce the transcription backlog. All newly finished transcripts will be uploaded to the new Oral History Collection on the revamped FWS website. In addition, all other transcripts previously posted online will be migrated to the new Oral History Collection by the end of this year. You can see these transcripts at www.fws.gov/library/collections/oral-history-transcripts.

We will keep you posted on our work and may need to ask your help in finding interviewees that we have lost touch with (or who might have died).



Rowan Gould at his oral history interview.

If you have any questions about the oral history program or want to be involved either by becoming an interviewer or being interviewed, or if you were interviewed and are wondering about the status of your transcript, please send me an email at herland194@gmail.com or call me at 413-822-5026. Thank you

ADAMS, Jeff (Francis); Fairbanks, AK; 2007; 2017; R7, Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Fairbanks Fisheries Office

ALOISI, Doug (Debbie); Viroqua, WI; 2023; R3, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, Genoa National Fish Hatchery

BENFIELD, Dan (Connie Dodd); Winston Salem, NC; 2022; R4, Refuges & Wildlife

BENNETT, Merle O.; Bismark, ND; 1982; R6, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Bismark Office

BRYANT, J.C. (Cathrine); Popular Bluff, MO; 1996; R3, Refuges & Wildlife, Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge

BODEEN, Tim (Stephanie Stuve Bodeen); Black River Falls, WI; 2024; R3, Refuges & Wildlife, Necedah NWR

CARR, Donald (Maureen); Gresham, OR; 1996; R1, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Migratory Birds

CHRISTOFFERS, Edward (Christian); Easton, MN; 2009; R5 Science Advisor

CHU, Diane (Donald); Cortland, NY; 1994; R5, Migratory Bird Research, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

CHU, Nancy (Lance Hoboy); Silver Spring, MD; R3, RO, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, Fisheries

CLINE, Christine (Eric Borkgren); Salt Lake City, UT; R6, Ecological Services, Environmental Contaminants, Utah ES Field Office **New Member**

COLLINS, Susan; Martinsburg, WV; 2022; R9, NCTC/Facilities Operations

COON, Richard (Nancy); Palm Beach Gardens, FL; 1997; R4, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Migratory Birds

CREAMER, Dennis; Gresham, OR; 1990; R4, Project Development Biologist, Jacksonville, FL, Project

DOGGETT, John (Betty); Knoxville, TN; 1996; R9 Headquarters, Office of Law Enforcement

DOUGLAS, Barbara (Gary Berti), Montrose, WV; 2020; R5, RO, Ecological Services

EATON, Laura; South Berwick, ME; 2024; R5, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Great Bay NWR

EATON, Robert (Wanda); Johnson City, TN; R9, Headquarters, Branch of Fire Management for Refuges & Wildlife

ENLOW, Dale (Alice); Hackberry, AZ; 2011; R2, Refuges & Wildlife; Office of Law Enforcement Zone 1, Lake Havasu

Membership

Another Shout Out to our membership! We could not operate without your dues and support. As a 501(c)(3) organization, it limits how we raise money. We thank you for joining and renewing your memberships. As they say, we couldn't do it without you,

Who Can Join? Membership in the FWS Retirees Association is open to any person who has ever worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and has now retired, including their spouses or partners. If you were involuntarily transferred to another agency due to a reorganization, voluntarily transferred from the FWS and finished your career with another federal agency, or left the federal government altogether before retirement, you are eligible to join with full membership privileges. If you are a current FWS employee, you are also welcome to join us. In addition, we have a special membership category called Associate Membership that is open to anyone who has retired and demonstrates an interest in the mission of the Association. However, current employees who join cannot run for the Board of Directors nor vote in Board elections until after they retire. Associate members are not eligible to run for the Board of Directors nor to vote in Board elections.

When does my membership expire? “The FWS Retirees Association membership is by calendar year. If a dues payment is received in the last quarter of the year, the Association will count the payment as membership of the next calendar year.” Approved by the Board on December 1, 2016

Membership List and Dues Status. We are currently updating our web page, www.fwsretirees.org, so you can see when you need to renew your membership. You will be able to click on Membership List and Dues Status for a current list of all members and dues payment status. Membership applications and instructions on how to pay your dues, check or credit card, is also included.

ESSIG, Ronald (Susan); Shutesbury, MA; 2018; R5, RO, Conservation Investment (formerly Federal Aid)

FETHERMAN, Sheri (Ray); Lakewood, CO; 2013; R6, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Lakewood & RO Division of Education & Visitor Services

FJETLAND, Conrad (Judy); Buckeye, AZ; 1997; R2, RO, Fisheries

GARD, Stephen (Alice); Grenada, MS; 2018; R4, Refuges & Wildlife, N. Mississippi Refuge Complex

GUTZKE, Tedd (Ella); Driscoll, ND; 2008; R6, Refuges & Wildlife; Souris River NWR

HAGEDORN, Gary (Susan); Yacolt, WA; 2007; R1, Refuges & Wildlife, Mid-Columbia NWR

HAGENBUCK, Warren (Sharon); Rio Rancho, NM; 1997; R2, RO, Ecological Services, Wetlands Coordinator

HARTMAN, Paul (Janelle); 1995; R6, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Realty

HEFFERNAN, David (Catherine); Littleton, CO; 2003; R6, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, ARD NWR System, Iowa Private Lands Coordinator for Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program

HENNY, Charles (Susan); Albany, OR; 2009; R1

HILL, Wayne (Ann Muir); Battle Ground, WA; 2014; R1, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Realty

HOBBS, Peggy (John); Billerica, MA; R5, Refuges & Wildlife, Parker River NWR **LIFE Member**

HOGAN, Mimi; Anchorage, AK; 2005; R7, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Migratory Birds

HOUSEWORTH, David (Elaine); Georgetown, TX; 1987; R1, Fisheries, Makah NFH

HOWEY, Ronald; Sunderland, MA; R5, RO, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, Fisheries

HULTMAN, Don (Laurie Munroe-Hultman); Williamsburg, MD; R3, RO, Refuges & Wildlife

HYLTON, Roberta (Edwin Clark); Arlington, VA; 2017; R5, RO, Ecological Services; **LIFE Member**

JESSEE, Peggy; Boone, NC; 2024; Associate Member, R4, Volunteer with FWS

JESUP, Benjamin; Alexandria, VA; 2024; Associate Member; Asst. Solicitor

JEWELL, Susan; Springfield, MO; 2024; R9, Headquarters, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, Invasive Species;

KITCHEN, Art (Diane); Beaver Dam, WI; R3, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Private Lands

KJOS, Charles (Mary Ann); Bloomington, MN; 1999; R3 RO, Ecological Services, Twin Cities Field Office

KNUDSEN, Bradley; Crofton, MD; 2019; R5, Refuges & Wildlife; Patuxent Research Refuge

KOCH, Ted (Lauri); Garden Valley, ID; 2018; R5, RO, Ecological Services

KOON, Ellie; Baldwin, MI; 2012; R3, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, Livingston Biological Station

LAUGHLAND, Andrew (Barbara Gage); Belfast, ME; 2016; R9/Headquarters, Management & Administration, Division of Economics

LEACHMAN, Robert (Peg); Grand Junction, CO; 2005; R6 Ecological Services, Grand Junction CO, ES Office

MAESTRELLI, Mary; Lehigh Acres, FL

MARTIN, David; Vero Beach, FL; 2008; R4, RO, Ecological Services, Vero Beach Office

McKEVITT, James (Lucille); Auburn, CA; 2000; R1, RO, Ecological Services, Fish & Wildlife Restoration Program, Sacramento Central Valley

MOTIVANS, Karene (Stuart Wallace); Shepherdstown, WV; R9, NCTC

MULLEN, Douglas; Lansing, IA; 1998; R3, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge/McGregor District

MUELLER, Allan (Kathleen); Conwy, AZ; 2008; R4, RO, Ecological Services

OLAND, James (Verne); Shady Side, MD; R4, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Field Supervisor Caribbean FO

OLSON, Edward; Sebastian, FL; 1998; R2, Navajo Fish & Wildlife Program

PALISOUL, Alan (Jane Lyder); Bethesda, MD; 2008; R9, Headquarters, Refuges & Wildlife

PALMISANO, Bill (Linda); Shepherdstown, WV; 2015; R8 (CA&NV), Center Director

RILEY, Lawrence (Colleen); Carmichael, CA; 2023; R8, Conservation Investment, formerly Federal Aid, WSFR, SW Pacific Region

SAMPSON, Tom; Sacramento, CA; 2020; R8 (CA & NV), R0, Refuges & Wildlife, Realty

SALZ, Ron (Janie); Kailua, HI; 2021; R9, Headquarters, Refuges & Wildlife, Realty

SCHWINDT, Kenneth (Janice); Fort Collins, CO; 1999; R2, Refuges & Wildlife, Washita/Optima NWRs

SHULL, Alisa (Patrick Conner); Broken Arrow, OK; 2022; R3, RO, Endangered Species

SMITH, Brenda (David); Flagstaff, AZ; 2018; R2, Ecological Services, Flagstaff ES Office

SMITH, Franklin (Robin); Kenton, DE; 2003; R5, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Bombay Hook NWR

SOUHEAVER, Elizabeth (Chuck); St. Augustine, FL; 2016; R4, RO, Refuges & Wildlife, Refuge Supervisor

STARNS, Lynn; Sparks, NV; 2006; R2, RO, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, ARD Fisheries

STINE, Pete (Marlene); Albuquerque, NM; 2004; R2, RO, Fish & Aquatic Conservation, Division Fisheries

TODD, Cecile (James); 2024; R9, Headquarters, International Affairs

TRUDEAU, David (JESSE Chipley-Trudeau); Nekoosa, WI; 2014; R3, Refuges & Wildlife, Necedah NWR

VENDEL, Cornelius "Case" (Becky); Bella Vista, AZ; 1997; R5, Office of Law Enforcement, Kansas City

VITS, Jerry (Sherri); Eatonton, GA; 2007; R4, RO, Federal Assistance

WATHEN, Wayne (Laura); Centennial, CO; 1996; R6, RO, Ecological Services/Endangered Species

WILLISS, Cheryl, (Frank); 2006; R6, RO, Water Resources

YAICH, Scott (Dianne); Mountain AR; 2019; R4, Refuges & Wildlife, Migratory Birds, White River NWR

New Life Members:

Peggy Hobbs

Peggy is currently an Administrative Officer at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Newburyport, Massachusetts, but began her career 37 years ago at the Region 5 Regional Office in Newton Corner in the Realty Division of

Refuges. She later transferred to Ecological Services, but when the Regional Office moved to Hadley, Peggy transferred to the Great Bay NWR in Newington, New Hampshire. When she got married and had two children (Rachel and Jake), she transferred closer to home to the Great Meadows NWR in Sudbury, Massachusetts (now known as the Eastern MA NWR Complex). In 2013, she transferred to Parker River NWR and took on the role as Administrative Zone Lead.



Peggy in her office.

In 2017, Peggy became the Region 5 representative on the FWS History Committee and has already worked closely with the Retirees Association and has attended several reunions. She has also conducted several oral history interviews. Because of her love for FWS and the impression the Association has made on her, she has already decided to become a life-long member. She plans to retire in December 2025 and will officially join the rank of a Retiree.

Roberta Hylton

With a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science and a Master of Science degree in biology, Roberta dedicated more than 35 years of service to local, state, national, and international conservation efforts, focusing primarily on the conservation of rare freshwater species. After serving in the Endangered Species Division of the US Fish and Wildlife Service for two years, Roberta moved to Southwest Virginia in 1994, returning to her roots to pursue her passion for fish and wildlife conservation in the Southern Appalachians. She opened and supervised the Service's Southwestern Virginia Field Office, mentoring employees and negotiating deals with industry and local, state, and federal government to conserve fish and wildlife habitat on public and private lands.

Roberta has a long history of public service. She served two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala, where she learned Spanish and met her late husband, Edwin Clark, with whom she has two children. For over 15 years she served as a volunteer teacher of English to speakers of other languages, helping those far away from their native cultures adjust and feel at home in the US. Whenever she can, Roberta enjoys finding time for long day hikes, exploring rivers, cooking ethnic foods, reading, and being with family and friends



Roberta on a hike

National Monuments and refuges in every state and U.S. territory.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association has played a key role in this incredible growth. Over the past five decades, we've worked tirelessly to advocate for strong conservation policies, protect threatened species and habitats, and strategically grow the Refuge System. This advocacy has included helping to safeguard some of the nation's most treasured landscapes, from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. These hard-fought battles have ensured that these wild places remain protected to this day.

One of our proudest achievements has been our work to grow and strengthen the grassroots network of over 200 Refuge Friends groups across the country. These passionate volunteers are the backbone of so many refuges, raising fundings, running wildlife festivals, and connecting communities to nature. Volunteers collectively provide over a million hours of work each year—the equivalent of 20% of the Refuge System's workforce.

Through our Urban Wildlife Refuge Program, we've also expanded opportunities for people in cities to experience the magic of nature, ensuring that the next generation of conservationists feels connected and invited into the natural world.

Despite these successes, the challenges facing the Refuge System today are more significant than ever. Years of underfunding have left refuges struggling to meet basic operational needs. Habitat restoration, invasive species control, and environmental education programs have all suffered. The Refuge System is at a tipping point and it needs all of us— those who know it best — to step up and advocate for its future.

Natural Resource Issues

Refuge Association Celebrates 50 years



This year the National Wildlife Refuge Association celebrates its 50th anniversary, and I'm thrilled to introduce (or reintroduce!) our organization to the FWS Retirees Association. Many of you already know us as our roots run deep within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and our shared history is the foundation of everything we do.

In 1975, a group of visionary retired refuge managers came together to create the National Wildlife Refuge Association, determined to ensure the National Wildlife Refuge System had a strong, independent voice. Fifty years later, we are still fulfilling that mission, and our connection to FWS retirees remains as vital as ever. Many of you have played a direct role in shaping our organization, from serving on our board of directors and staff to offering invaluable advice.

A lot has changed since those early days. Back in 1975, a postage stamp cost just 10 cents, gas was 57 cents per gallon, and the Refuge System consisted of 378 refuges covering 34 million acres. Today, the Refuge System has grown to more than 850 million acres of lands and waters, including iconic Marine



NATIONAL
Wildlife Refuge
ASSOCIATION

I came back to the Refuge Association with a clear vision to build an even stronger, more effective advocate for the Refuge System. With your help, we can raise awareness, secure increased funding, and ensure that refuges remain lands of wild abundance for wildlife and people alike.

As retired FWS employees, you understand the value of these special places better than anyone. You've seen the impact refuges have on wildlife and communities, and your voices are uniquely powerful. Here are a few ways you can join us in supporting the Refuge System:

- **Stay Informed:** Follow the Refuge Association on social media or sign up for our newsletter, Refuge Watch <https://www.refugeassociation.org/sign-up> to keep up with the latest news and advocacy opportunities.
- **Reach Out to Congress:** Your experience and stories can make a difference in urging lawmakers to prioritize funding for refuges. You can even come to Washington D.C. yourself and we'll help you set up meetings with your Congressional delegation!
- **Donate:** Your contributions directly fuel our advocacy efforts. You can make a donation at [refugeassociation.org/donate](https://www.refugeassociation.org/donate) or federal retirees can support us through the Combined Federal Campaign using CFC #10076.

Fifty years ago, retired refuge managers laid the foundation for what the Refuge Association has become today. We literally wouldn't be here today without people like you. As we celebrate this milestone, I am inspired by their vision and grateful for the role many of you have played in shaping our shared legacy for wildlife. With your help, we can ensure that the Refuge System continues to grow and thrive for the next 50 years—and beyond.

Thank you for everything you've done and continue to do for wildlife and the places we all cherish.

In solidarity, peace, and perseverance,
Desiree Sorenson-Groves
National Wildlife Refuge Association

Five-year status review of Golden-cheeked warbler recommends delisting to threatened

After careful analysis of the best available scientific and commercial information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced completion of a five-year status review for the golden-cheeked warbler. The Service's review recommended downlisting of the species from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

During the comprehensive status review, the Service evaluated the golden-cheeked warbler's current needs, conditions, and threats, in addition to modeling future scenarios. This comprehensive assessment of the species indicated that the golden-cheeked warbler is not currently in danger of extinction

throughout all or a significant portion of its range (the definition of an endangered species in the ESA) but is instead in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future throughout its range (the definition of a threatened species in the ESA).

The five-year review concluded that the golden-cheeked warbler's condition merits a potential change in listing status, due in part to decades of ongoing research that better clarifies our understanding of the species and its habitat conditions, and habitat conservation. While these efforts are encouraging, the review confirmed that the species and its habitat currently face ongoing threats from urbanization, drought, and wildfire, among other stressors, and will continue to do so into the future. Although the five-year status review recommends downlisting the golden-cheeked warbler to threatened status, at present, the species is still listed as endangered.

The descriptively named golden-cheeked warbler, a small, yellow-cheeked bird with black and white plumage, eats insects and typically feeds in the top portion of the tree canopy. It has varying habitat requirements throughout its range. In the breeding range, the neotropical migratory bird nests exclusively in the mature juniper-oak woodlands of central Texas. It then migrates south for the winter to the pine-oak forests in the highlands of southern Mexico and Central America.



In 1990, the Service listed the golden-cheeked warbler as endangered under the ESA, while Texas granted the bird state protection. The Service issued a recovery plan for the golden-cheeked warbler in 1992, and that same year, the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge was established to protect the habitats of the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo (now delisted due to recovery). After a September 9, 2024, court opinion, the Service is currently reevaluating information found within a petition to delist the species and will publish a new 90-day finding in a separate action expected in early 2025.

Collaborative long-term efforts to protect the species, its breeding habitat and migratory range have improved the golden-cheeked warbler's path to recovery, and these efforts will continue regardless of federal listing status. The link to the five-year status review for the golden-cheeked warbler can be found online at ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/33. For more information, please visit the [frequently asked questions about the five-year](#)

[status review of the golden-cheeked warbler](#) and the [golden-cheeked warbler's webpage](#).

Two New Reports on Chronic Wasting Disease are Available

As Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) continues to increase in geographic distribution and prevalence in infected populations, so too does its potential to cause negative impacts on healthy ecosystems and generate large economic costs for agencies and Tribes charged with wildlife management responsibilities as well as industries that depend on revenue from cervids or cervid products. All this in addition to the damage CWD continues to cause on the culture and food security of communities with meaningful and long-standing traditions tied to cervid hunting and cervid population health. Two recently released reports provide insights into CWD research and management.



As part of numerous efforts to address the current and future challenges to wildlife management caused by CWD, Congress passed America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act (P.L. 116-188) in 2020. The bill directed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to lead a task force charged with developing an action plan to guide national efforts aimed at controlling CWD in the United States. The ACE Act proposed that the task force be guided by a report commissioned from the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) that would “identify the predominant pathways and mechanisms of the transmission of chronic wasting disease in free-ranging and captive populations of cervids in the United States.” This report, entitled *State of Knowledge Regarding Transmission, Spread, and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease in U.S. Captive and Free-ranging Cervid Populations* was recently published by NAS. It describes what is currently known about how CWD is transmitted among cervids, the current distribution of disease outbreaks, and the effectiveness of current diagnostic, prevention, and control methods available to limit the spread of the disease. This report will assist the task force in prioritizing research and developing future CWD management strategies.

In addition to the NAS report formally documenting the state of science on many aspects of CWD and its management, it also presents a comprehensive set of future needs and considerations that “are intended to inform the design of a strong action-

oriented and integrated strategy to reduce the transmission and further geographic spread of the disease.” These conclusions, generated by more than 20 of the leading experts on CWD research and management who drafted and reviewed this report, address factors such as the potential transmission of CWD to humans and other species, the future spread of the disease, CWD management and control challenges, social and economic considerations, as well as others. This report represents one of the most authoritative and defensible syntheses of CWD knowledge and experience gained through research and management experience in North America over the past half-century.

An unrelated recent effort was focused on the issue of preparedness of the U.S. community to respond to a potential spillover of CWD from cervids into production animal agriculture or in humans. The Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) took a multidisciplinary approach to assess the current state of CWD and prion disease science, surveillance, and management to identify gaps in spillover preparedness and developing recommendations to improve public and animal health agencies’ ability to respond. Using the results of numerous listening sessions conducted with a broad collective of North American CWD managers and researchers, CIDRAP identified thematic areas of concern related to CWD prevention and control: human health, cervid and production animal health, prion biology and disease diagnostics, carcass and contaminated item disposal and the environment, and wildlife health and management. This report, entitled *Chronic Wasting Disease Spillover Preparedness and Response: Charting an Uncertain Future*, was published January 8, 2025 by CIDRAP. *Article from information from the Wildlife Management Institute provided by Deborah Holle.*

No Bids received on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Oil Lease Sale

The Department of the Interior announced on January 8, 2025 that the Bureau of Land Management received no bids for the congressionally mandated oil and gas lease sale for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Arctic Refuge). The deadline to submit bids was Monday, January 6.

The expired deadline to submit bids concluded the second congressionally mandated sale required by the 2017 Tax Act, which directed the BLM to hold two lease sales in the Coastal Plain within seven years of enactment. The first sale, held by the previous administration, similarly demonstrated low interest, yielding a total of \$14.4 million in high bids on 11 tracts. Congress included the two lease sales in the Tax Act on the grounds that they would generate approximately \$2 billion in revenue over 10 years.

Of the nine leases sold during the previous Administration’s sale, the two held by oil companies were canceled and refunded at the request of the lessees, and the remaining seven, held by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, were canceled by Secretary of the Interior Haaland due to the multiple

legal deficiencies in the underlying record. There are currently no existing leases in the Coastal Plain.



Polar bear at Arctic Refuge, FWS Photo

“The lack of interest from oil companies in development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge reflects what we and they have known all along – there are some places too special and sacred to put at risk with oil and gas drilling. This proposal was misguided in 2017, and it’s misguided now,” said Acting Deputy Secretary Laura Daniel-Davis. The BLM has followed the law and held two lease sales that have exposed the false promises made in the Tax Act. The oil and gas industry is sitting on millions of acres of undeveloped leases elsewhere; we’d suggest that’s a prudent place to start, rather than engage further in speculative leasing in one of the most spectacular places in the world.”

The Arctic Refuge sustains people, wildlife and fish in the northeastern corner of Alaska, a vast landscape of rich cultural traditions and thriving ecological diversity. The lands and waters are a critical home to migratory and resident wildlife, have unique recreational values, and contain the largest designated Wilderness within the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Refuge is located on the traditional homelands of the Iñupiat people of the north and the Gwich’in people of interior Alaska and Canada. *From as USDI News Release dated January 8, 2025.*

State of Alaska Sues over Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Oil Lease Sale

The State of Alaska has sued the Biden administration for what it calls violations of a Congressional directive to allow oil and gas development in a portion of the federal Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The lawsuit filed January 6, 2025 in the U.S. District Court in Alaska challenges the federal government's December 2024 decision to offer oil and gas drilling leases in an area known as the coastal plain with restrictions. The lawsuit said curbs on surface use and occupancy make it "impossible or impracticable to develop" 400,000 acres of land the U.S. Interior Department plans to auction this month to oil and gas drillers.

The limits would severely limit future oil exploration and drilling in the refuge, it added. "Interior's continued and irrational opposition under the Biden administration to responsible energy development in the Arctic continues America on a path of energy dependence instead of utilizing the vast resources we have available," Republican Governor Mike Dunleavy said in a statement. Alaska wants the court to set aside the December decision and prohibit the department from issuing leases at the auction which was held on the same day.

When combined with the department's cancellation of leases granted during the waning days of Donald Trump's presidency, Alaska says it will receive just a fraction of the \$1.1 billion the Congressional Budget Office estimated it would get in direct lease-related revenues from energy development in the area. The lawsuit is Alaska's latest legal response to the Biden administration's efforts to protect the 19.6-million-acre (8-million-hectare) ANWR for species such as polar bears and caribou.



Coastal Plain of Arctic Refuge, FWS Photo

An October 2023 lawsuit by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority contested the administration's decision to cancel the seven leases it held. Another state lawsuit in July 2024 sought to recover revenue lost as a result. Drilling in the Arctic Refuge, was off-limits for decades and the subject of fierce political fights between environmentalists and Alaska's political leaders, who have long supported development in the coastal plain. In 2017, Alaska lawmakers secured that opportunity through a provision in a Trump-backed tax cut bill passed by Congress. In the final days of Trump's administration, it issued nine 10-year leases for drilling in ANWR. Under Biden, two lease winners withdrew from their holdings in 2022. In September, the interior department canceled the seven issued to the state industrial development body. *From Reuters news service January 8, 2025.*

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.

30th Anniversary of International Technical Assistance Program

This year the Department of the Interior will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of [the Department of the Interior’s International Technical Assistance Program \(DOI-ITAP\)](#). DOI-ITAP was established in 1995 to enable Interior to collaborate with counterpart agencies worldwide to advance its mission. In the last three decades, DOI-ITAP has helped countries and organizations combat wildlife trafficking, improve energy and mineral production and regulation, manage water resources, and generate economic growth through wise management of natural and cultural resources. DOI-ITAP is proud to have worked with approximately 100 countries in a cost-effective, efficient, and mutually beneficial manner. Notably, ITAP is fully funded entirely with external funding.



DOI-ITAP works closely with Interior’s bureaus and offices to build staff skills and capabilities through DOI-ITAP assignments. Interior staff have brought back best practices and lessons learned to their home offices and field sites, thereby strengthening the Interior workforce and advancing the work here at home.

To learn more, you can [watch this video](#), [sign up for DOI-ITAP’s distribution list](#), visit DOI-ITAP’s website [DOI International Technical Assistance Program | U.S. Department of the Interior](#), and follow DOI-ITA [on Facebook](#). The celebration will continue throughout 2025, so please follow along as DOI-ITAP shares periodic highlights from its 30-year history. *From a*

message from Carmen G. Cantor, Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs, USDI.

National Wetlands Inventory Program 50th Anniversary

This year marks the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services’ National Wetlands Inventory Program’s 50th Anniversary! Over the last 50 years the National Wetlands Inventory Program has been the leader in Wetland Mapping and Monitoring, providing essential data used to support conservation and to inform policy and decision making. To honor NWI’s achievements, NWI retiree Bill Wilen will present the highlights, history and successes of the NWI Program at the reunion in Madison. Please join your friends and colleagues at this year’s retiree meeting to help celebrate this important milestone.

Mini Grant Report

Friends of Patoka River Refuge

This was our second year participating in the Pike County Bird Hunters Club Youth Outdoor Day. We played two different games with the children one around identifying pelts/skins and one on identifying ducks using our ducks on a stick display. We also discussed how to know “what is an endangered species” at the state and federal level. We had QR codes for them to follow to learn this information.



Skin and pelt identification table and Friends volunteers

All participating organizations represented fish and wildlife conservation. All youth were provided the opportunity to move through numerous stations ranging from wildlife identification and ecology, to firearm and archery safety, bb gun handling and shooting, muzzleloader safety and shooting, archery safety and shooting, a round of trap with shotguns, and an upland bird hunt with dogs. All of these events were staffed by trained volunteers that emphasize safety above all else.

The Friends organization plans to hold another event in the spring using remaining materials purchased with the Retirees Association mini grant.

Outreach by Retirees Association

Retirees Association at the Wildlife Society Conference in Baltimore, October 19-23, 2024

Partnering together, the USFWS (FWS) and USFWS Retirees Association (RA) participated in The Wildlife Society's annual conference in Baltimore, MD. With funding from the USFWS's National Wildlife Refuge's Infrastructure Management Division, the Service qualified as a sponsor, established an FWS/RA exhibit booth, and attended important meetings.

The sponsorship provided three registrations for Peggy Jesse, a FWS Volunteer and university professor, RA board member Lew Gorman and Emily Thompson, an intern at Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation. Two other Migratory Bird employees volunteered to help, giving a nice complement of 5 team members. All brought different skills and backgrounds, a terrific balance for the hundreds of college students attending the conference. There were also a few high school students in attendance from Albuquerque, NM.



Retirees Poster in the foreground with booth in the background

Approximately 45% of all attendees were students, a huge number of them hungry for career related information from the FWS/RA booth. The Wildlife Society was glad that our exhibit was part of the conference. Lauren Rufolo, manager of TWS

outreach programs, stated, "Thank you for being a fantastic sponsor and exhibitor in Baltimore. You brought so much value to attendees and helped TWS' 31st annual conference thrive in Maryland."

At least 250 of the conference attendees participated in booth activities. Activities that drew visitors to the booth included a Refuge Location game. Booth visitors poked a tack onto the foam-cored backed National Wildlife Refuge map nearest their home or school, then were asked to find the nearest refuge. Many participants found refuges they now want to visit. The second activity was an Endangered Species Quiz.

The third activity was the career station. Emily, the FWS intern, spent all her booth time relating knowledge on best ways to get into the Service. Located behind this part of the booth was an NCTC-provided popup banner focusing on youth in the Service. Others shared their experience and knowledge working, or in my case, past work experiences with eager students. Students also asked questions about course selection, and FWS program activities. Brochures were provided covering law enforcement career areas, FWS careers, FWS programs, and the Retirees Association.

Many wildlife biologist retirees are members of TWS and participated in the conference in significant numbers. The FWS sponsorship of the Conference also allowed the Retirees Association to host and guide the TWS Heritage Committee and Retired Wildlife Professionals Working Group to reach a consensus on sharing contact information with TWS chapters to help foster student chapter mentoring by TWS and USFWS retirees. Lew hosted this session along with the committee chair. The Heritage Committee wants to do similar actions to that of the FWS History committee in collecting oral histories from



Lew Gorman in front of the combined USFWS and Retirees Association Booth

retired wildlife professionals. It was concluded that there may be opportunities for collaboration with the FWS History Committee. Another area where consensus was reached was in linking wildlife retirees with TWS Student chapters. Retirees could mentor the chapter by providing career information, wildlife management tales, and offer one on one guidance, as determined by the chapter. *Submitted by Lewis Gorman III.*

Smithsonian Botany Symposium

Lew Gorman, Retirees Association (RA) Board Member represented the Retirees Association, along with RA volunteer, Peggy Jessee, staffed an outreach table at the Smithsonian Department of Botany's annual Botany Symposium at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC on 17 May 2024.

As an element of the Association's functions, Outreach activities promote the connection of people with nature. At the Botany Symposium, pollinator information was provided, including Pollinator Partnership posters. The outreach information focused on the linkage between plants and pollinators. Many of the colorful and engaging posters were planned to end up in school classrooms, as attendees noted they would get the four different posters to their family members for their schools.

The Smithsonian Botany Symposium is normally scheduled for National Endangered Species Day, the third Friday of May. The Outreach table noted that the 50th Anniversary of the Endangered Species Act was being celebrated. Pollinator conservation was promoted, especially as the USFWS was considering putting the Monarch butterfly on the Endangered Species List.

Many symposium attendees visited the booth to take the outreach materials and leave the experience with a greater appreciation of the Endangered Species Act and pollinator conservation.

Submitted by Lewis Gorman III.

Fun Facts & Family Ties

Some of you may know that Fun Facts was the idea of Mark Madison, FWS Historian and his staff. Employees sent them to Mark by the dozens. Most were about the FWS. The Retirees Newsletter Fun Facts deal with the experiences of the people—YOU. Deborah Holle. Send your submissions to me at promote@fwsretirees.org

Former Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Staff member Trimble Gilbert awarded fellowship

Trimble Gilbert of Arctic Village Alaska was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship. Trimble was hired for a while by Arctic Refuge as a Village Liaison when former Retirees Association Board Member Doug Frugé was at the refuge. As a young boy, Trimble Gilbert was captivated by the sounds of fiddle and exuberance of dance during gatherings in the remote and isolated Alaskan villages of the Gwich'in people. Through watching, listening and diligent practice, Trimble developed his own repertoire of songs and unique style, and has dedicated much of his life to teaching other the Gwich'in fiddle. This is a link to a video on YouTube about him <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtkIf9eJ4Q>.

From Doug Frugé.

National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), October 2022 Reno, NV



Eight retired National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) employees plus one spouse attended a two-day reunion in October 2022 in Reno, NV (see photo from left to right) Warren Hagenbuck (Region 2), Bill Wilen (Washington Office), Jon Hall (AK), Ben Harrison (Region 1), Charlie Storrs (Reg. 4), John Swords (Reg. 5), Dennis Peters (Region 1), Linda Shaffer (NWI national team), Aaron Bills (Paiute Tribe), and Sharon Hagenbuck. The 2-day reunion included much catching up, exchanging tall tales, and remembering great times with the FWSNWI. Bill Wilen presented an overview of the NWI over the last several years and current status.

The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's Tribal Council granted approval for site visits on tribal land led by the Tribe's wetland biologist, Aaron Bills. The field day included: the Tribe's fish hatchery and museum, wetland sites along the Truckee River and a wetland restoration project on a Truckee River tributary, and an overview of Pyramid Lake. Following the reunion links to FWS/NWI wetland mapper data were provided to Aaron Bills. The FWS wetland has been incorporated in the Tribe's wetland database.

Alaska Trappers Association Establishes Scholarship in Honor of FWS Retiree Keith Bayha

The Southcentral Chapter of the Alaska Trappers Association has established the Keith Bayha scholarship that will award a \$1500 scholarship to an undergraduate student and a \$5,000 scholarship to a graduate student. They are currently accepting applications. Applicants for the undergraduate scholarship must meet a few requirements and submit an essay addressing, "If you can be an animal you trap, what animal would you or wouldn't you be?" Graduate scholarship applicants must submit an essay addressing, "Describe your short- and long-term goals and how does your future job fit into consumptive use? Any high school student with a 2.5 grade point average and a college acceptance letter may apply and graduate students must have a major relating to wildlife or the environment. Unlike many scholarships

named for an individual, Keith is alive and well remaining in Alaska in retirement. He has been an active member in the Trappers Association for many years and the association is recognizing Keith with this special honor. *Thanks to Bev Grafel for sharing this exciting news.*

Government Buildings Repurposed – the Rest of the Story *by David Klinger*

Before it became today's home of the USDA Forest Service in Washington, D.C. the Auditor's Building, a Romanesque Revival pile of red bricks constructed in 1880, was where the U.S. currency was printed, tracked and accounted for.

When I knew it, about a century later, it had long ceased producing money, and was used mainly as storage for surplus Federal agency office furniture, which the government has never been serious or successful at re-using or recycling. "The place where government furniture goes to die," was the old saying among agency wags.

I found it interesting as an abandoned attic, however, we occasionally made forays there for useful desks and chairs. Shortly before I left Washington in 1988, as an employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I recall clambering between stacks and piles of glass aquariums that had been stockpiled there after service on Capitol Hill.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had long been tasked with the chore of maintaining fish tanks in the reception room of various congressmen on the Hill...and a prized tank of exotic goldfish in FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's private office.

The Auditor's Building was where the aquatic detritus went to molder away, once Jack Anderson lampooned the decades-old practice of free fish for the sharks up on Capitol Hill and the Fish and Wildlife Service got out of the monthly business of aquarium cleaning.

Next door to the Auditor's Building was a curious little annex, similarly composed of red brick and complementary design, built in 1891, that had also become surplus once the money printers relocated to more modern digs down the street. It bounced around through a variety of uses until it eventually became the national publications unit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There, in the era when citizens actually wrote their government for free publications about fish farming and duck hunting and birdwatching, a small staff of public servants filled those requests, by hand, from stacks of pamphlets and posters and scientific reports, and dispatched them by return mail through what was known then as the post office.

By the late 1980's the 90-year-old warehouse had seen better days. Pipe breaks, no heat, roof leaks, and rodent infestations typified the working conditions in the agency's fulfillment center. Hardly a week went by without another calamity at the publication's unit.



Then one day a small group of strangers appeared and slowly and methodically walked through and around the forlorn structure. The story—probably apocryphal but entirely plausible—was that one or two members of the tour group burst into tears when they saw the decrepit structure and witnessed the environment in which Federal employees were working daily. For the tearful visitors were survivors of the Holocaust . . .and their group was an advance team scouting possible locations for the proposed new United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The place reminded them of Auschwitz and was what provoked their tears. Having been to that largest and most notorious Nazi concentration camps in Poland, I can readily confirm: the resemblance between the two is striking.

By 1988, the Fish and Wildlife Service had abandoned the Auditor's Annex, and the little brick building that had faithfully served the government since the presidency of Benjamin Harrison had finally been demolished. And yes, the site did become the Nation's Holocaust Memorial Museum, which has since received acclaim throughout the world for its poignant, yet unvarnished, depiction of the horrors of humanity's darkest moment.

I have visited the museum, where I met a volunteer, whose parents had hustled her, at the age of 2, out of Germany on the "Kindertransport" to the safety of England, right before the outbreak of the war. Most of her family remained behind in Germany, however, and were lost to the Holocaust.

I told her of the previous history of the site on which her museum is located, and the poor conditions under which good people long toiled in service to the public...a reality that had once shaken visiting survivors of the Holocaust. And we both agreed that the word "vermin" (whether rhetorically spoken or literally experienced in a work environment) can be harbingers of darker times to come, unless corrected.

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.

Robert Raymond Barba, Jr. (February 15, 1971 – October 16, 2024)

Robert Raymond Barba, Jr., aka. Shinzakura, adored husband of Rebecca Barba (Ashburn, Virginia), and son of Robert Barba Sr. (Deceased) and Sylvia Bratincevic (Glendora, California), passed away on 16 October, 2024.

Robert was born in Los Angeles, California, on 15 February, 1971. Upon graduation from Cantwell Catholic High School, he briefly attended USC before enlisting in the US Navy where he served for 13 years as a YN2, earning the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, the Navy 'E' Ribbon, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, the Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon, and the NATO Medal. Often referring to himself as an "old salt", Rob regarded his service with pride and continued to fondly refer to the Navy, as well as generously donating to the USO and various other veterans' charities.

Upon leaving the service and moving to Winchester, VA, Robert worked for the Department of the Interior at the Fish and Wildlife Service, though true passion was his writing. Since childhood, he was continuously writing, publishing numerous collections of short stories online and mentoring many aspiring writers of many different ages from all walks of life.

Robert was also a dedicated graphic designer and font maker, with one of his fonts catalogued in the Klingspor Museum in Offenbach, Germany. In addition, he was an amateur musician (Mitsukai Sound Systems) and streamer (Shinzakura), demonstrating his various art and writing projects on various platforms. As with veterans and aspiring writers, he likewise cultivated aspiring talent in these fields and often donated to individual talents.

Lastly, Robert was dedicated to the various veteran, artistic, and fiction communities he had both built and took part in. A believer in Jesus Christ, he shared and encouraged others in faith. His compassion, encouragement, generosity, sense of humor, and wit touched and inspired many throughout his life.

He is survived by his wife of 20 years, mother, younger sister Andria Barba Scott, stepfather Richard Bratincevic, stepbrother Jonathan Bratincevic, nieces and nephews, and many friends and men-tees across the world. *Provided by Lew Gorman who worked with Robert.*

Wilhelm "Bill" Fuchs (February 12, 1927 - September 26, 2024)



Wilhelm "Bill" Fuchs, 97, of Vinton, Iowa passed away September 26, 2024. Bill was born in Vinton, Iowa on February 12, 1927, the son of Joseph and Ursala (Simmacher) Fuchs. Bill grew up on a farm and enjoyed hunting, fishing, and trapping. He attended Benton County country school and graduated from Vinton High School in 1944. Upon graduation, Bill

enlisted in the Navy. After the war, he married Barbara Clang on September 20, 1950.

Bill worked as a conservation officer for Iowa from 1953 to 1958. He then took a job with the Fish and Wildlife Service as a game management agent at Merced, California, working waterfowl cases in the San Joaquin Valley. He was then transferred to Klamath Falls, Oregon to work waterfowl in the Klamath Basin and Tule Lake. He then was assigned to the Departmental Management Training Program in Washington, D.C. for a year before transferring to Port Clinton, Ohio to work the Erie marshes. After about two years, Bill was promoted to Agent in Charge in Lansing, Michigan where he worked for the next seven years.

Bill then transferred to San Francisco where he served as Senior Resident Agent, before moving back to Region 3, in Grand Rapids, Michigan as an agent. Bill retired in 1980. Highlights of his career were running drive banding crews in Canada to band up to 10,000 scaup and canvasbacks in six weeks; controlling botulism in California waterfowl; and reducing depredation by migratory birds.

Upon his retirement, Bill became a regional director for Ducks Unlimited. The couple returned to Vinton in 1999, after his retirement from Ducks Unlimited. Bill and Barb both enjoyed a full life of hunting, fishing and traveling. They lived and visited all over the country, spending time in almost every state. Bill's heart was with his family, and protecting our waterfowl resource.

Bill is survived by his son, Bill (Nancy); granddaughter, Jess (Matt); great-grandson, Even (Ben), step great-granddaughter, June Dora; and many nieces and nephews and their families. He was preceded in death by his; wife of 67 years, Barbara; grandson, Josh; parents; and siblings. *Prepared by Paul Tritaik with contributions from Dorothe Norton (oral history) and Jerry Smith*

Gary Lain Hickman (August 11, 1941 – May 29, 2024)



Gary Lain Hickman passed away suddenly on May 29, 2024 in Port St. Lucie, Florida. He was 82. Gary was born August 11, 1941 in Holton, Kansas to Adeline and Clifford Hickman. Gary grew up in Kansas with a passion for hunting, fishing, and conservation. He received three bachelor degrees from Oregon

State University and a master's degree from Utah State University.

Early in his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gary worked for River Basins Studies and in the Washington D.C. office in Arlington, VA. He served as the Assistant Area Director of Habitat Protection in Anchorage, Alaska in the late 1970s, supervising a variety of programs including Ecological Services, Environmental Contaminants Evaluation, Office of Biological Services, and Special Studies (a research program unique to Alaska). From there he moved to Jackson, MS to lead the Area Office responsible for supervision of all Service programs in a portion of the Southeastern United States. At the closure of area offices, Gary moved back to the central office in Arlington and worked with Richard (Dick) Smith in the Service's Science Program when it was called "Region 8" before California and Nevada became a region - and before research was transferred to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Gary retired early, at age 52, and traveled the world with his life partner, Loraine Thompson, visiting over 100 countries together. He continued as a master bird bander and remained active with a variety of conservation and political issues. He was a member of the National Rifle Association, American Society of Mammalogists, American Ornithological Society, and the American Fisheries Society.

Gary also used retirement to fully pursue his passion for deep sea fishing. A photo he shared on social media depicts him with a 630-pound blue marlin that he caught in Hawaii. Though he had sold his boat in recent years, he had not given up fishing - posting just two days before his death about a 10-foot lemon shark he had caught from his dock at his home in Ft. Pierce, FL.

Survivors include Loraine "Grandmom" Thompson of Florida; son, Arlain (Jennifer) Hickman and their 6 children, Kathryn, Samuel, Cherith, Elizabeth, Zion, and Tirzah all of Idaho, Alaska and Florida; daughter, Lori (Matthew) Roth and their daughter, Madison of Florida; brother, Kin Hickman and his daughter, Amanda (Aaron) Claypole & their son, Aiden. He was preceded in death by his parents, Adeline & Clifford Hickman, and brother, Lenney Hickman. *Prepared by Paul Tritaik*

John Carl Oberheu (April 2, 1931 - October 9, 2024)



John Carl Oberheu, 93, passed away October 9, 2024. He was born on April 2, 1931, in Trivandrum, South India. He was one of seven children born to Lutheran missionaries living in India. In World War II, the family was evacuated to the U.S. on a returning troopship. They settled in Paducah, KY until the War ended. They then moved to nearby Olmsted, IL, where his father served as Pastor for a small Lutheran Church. He went to Mound City High School, and graduated from Southern Illinois University with a Graduate degree in Wildlife Management in 1953.

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John served with the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Korean conflict from 1953-55. He returned to SIU for a Master's in Wildlife Management and married Lucille Futrell of Carbondale, IL in 1956. They were married for 61 years. John began his professional career as a Wildlife Biologist with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission in 1956 and worked there for about six years. In early 1963, he accepted a position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for River Basins, in the Raleigh, North Carolina Field Office. After only a year, John went to the Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia where he became the Regional Pesticide Staff Specialist and trained under Bill and Lucille Stickle in Bowie, Maryland to monitor the effects of DDT and other pesticides on wildlife.

After his assignment on pesticides, John became a Regional Biologist with Refuges, where he served on the Alligator Council to recover alligators. John then went to the Washington Office where he spent two disappointing years writing the Injurious Wildlife Importation Regulations that failed due to politics. One highlight during his assignment in Washington was going to Alaska to help select refuge lands for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. John returned to the Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia to become Supervisor of Refuges for Region 4 and got to visit all the refuges. John served three years as Recovery Team Leader for the then endangered West Indian Manatee, and authored the first Manatee Recovery Plan. After 40 years professional experience, he retired with wife Lucy in Jacksonville Beach, FL.

In retirement, John was the host for the annual gathering of retirees held in Steinhatchee, Florida. John was a great storyteller and jokester who loved to share stories, memories, and tall tales. He also loved to entertain his friends with his harmonica playing over appropriate libations.

Active and well known in the Jacksonville Beach community, John was a dedicated runner, logging many miles on and around the beaches. He was also a regular at Bailey's Gym and made many friends there. John volunteered at Seabreeze Elementary School for 20 years, tutoring fifth graders and coaching first grade readers. He shared his love of science with students, using items collected in nature and fossils found on the beach. He loved kids and loved to write. He published 14 books, including two well-received children's books: *The Manatee That Flew* and *Hurricane Mom*. He participated in 'Meet the Author' programs at schools and book signings all around Duval County. He kept books handy to give children at every opportunity. After his wife's passing in 2017, John moved to Cypress Village where he founded a writer's group and enjoyed the social activities, especially the music programs.

John is survived by his daughters, Teresa (David Larsen) and Suzanne (Randy Beard), three granddaughters and five great grandkids, Nicole (Kirk Stroud, Maren), Laura (Kevin Barry, Ander & Lily), and Shannon (Drew Jones, Luke & Lucy), and two brothers (Victor and Stuart).

Prepared by Paul Tritaik with contributions from George Gentry and Mark Madison (oral history) and Phil Morgan

Kenton Dean "Kent" Wohl (Oct 19, 1945 - Nov 16, 2024)



Kenton Dean Wohl, age 79, passed away peacefully on Nov. 16, 2024, due to complications from dementia. He was an adventurous, energetic and genuinely happy person his entire life. Always willing to try a new adventure or slightly bend the rules to get things done. Always whistling or humming. A loyal and dear friend to many all over the world, and a loving husband, father and grandfather.

Born on October 19, 1945 in Emmetsburg, Iowa to Hazel and Harold Wohl, Kent grew up learning small town values and making lifelong friends. He received a B.S. in wildlife biology from University of Montana, and a MPA from University of Alaska Anchorage. During his college years he served as a Smokejumper for U.S. Forest Service, and jumped out of perfectly good aircraft 52 times.

Kent served in the U.S. Army as a Wildlife Biologist at the Alaska District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This position brought Kent to Alaska, where he spent the rest of his 38-year Federal career. The bulk of his career was with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Kent was involved in management programs for marine birds and mammals. He served as Supervisory Wildlife Biologist and Regional Nongame Migratory Bird Coordinator, directing a complex, statewide program focused on marine and coastal birds. During the Exxon-Valdez oil spill event Kent directed the Services' involvement in shorebird and seabird restoration studies. He supervised, guided and mentored many young biologists, grad students and

volunteers and counted most as dear friends and learned colleagues.

In Kent's later years, he directed the FWS involvement in several international migratory bird programs and initiatives with Russia, Japan, the Arctic Council's Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna and its Circumpolar Seabird Group, FAO's Seabird Bycatch Program, and several neotropical, Japanese and Beringian bird projects. Kent's seabird duties allowed him to travel throughout the circumpolar north and numerous other international destinations. In all of his travels he developed lifelong friendships, sampled bizarre cuisines and collected stories about birds, fishing and boating.

In addition to his professional career, Kent loved boating with friends, family and colleagues, especially in Prince William Sound, Alaska. He achieved his Coast Guard Captain's license. He owned and/or operated several vessels including a 32-foot FV Woolly Bare, to harvest shrimp and halibut; a 42-foot MV Mutineer, used for sightseeing, scuba diving, fishing, and hunting charters in PWS; and lastly, his beloved MV Privateer, a 45-foot pilothouse trawler used for seabird research and exploring all the bays and inlets in PWS with family and friends.

Kent met his wife of 48 years, Priscilla Post Wohl in scuba diving lessons in Anchorage. Priscilla and Kent's family expanded to include their incredible daughter, Marissa, and two awesome grandsons – Devlin and Lucas. Together they traveled the world, primarily through their employment, but also to look for exotic birds and play in the ocean. Kent loved nothing better than to walk a beach, look at birds and pick up shells. His favorite shell beach was Playa Encanto in Rocky Point, Mexico. However, Prince William Sound was his laboratory, his playground and the place he was most at peace.

Kent is survived by his wife of 48 years, Priscilla; daughter, Marissa; grandson, Lucas; nephew, Scott Wohl; and sister-in-law, Sharon Wohl. He was preceded in death by his parents, Harold and Hazel Wohl; brothers, Steve and Scott Wohl; and grandson, Devlin.

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



Visitor Center, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge