



# IDAHO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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November 1994

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *Some Thoughts on the Changing Nature of Wildlife Management.*

Sometimes change occurs at such a rapid pace that one is left mentally reeling. Our profession seems to be going through such a phase at the present. This was brought home to me vividly at the First Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society in Albuquerque this past September. Sessions at this meeting bore titles quite different from what we have grown accustomed to at traditional wildlife conferences. Many of the themes and topics came from the field of conservation biology. There were sessions on biodiversity, metapopulations, ecological sinks, and landscape management. It seemed to me that a research project that did not use GIS was hopelessly passe and out of date. Highly interesting was the attendance at sessions such as metapopulations where people guarded their seats while others stood in the aisles. Even more startling were conversations overhead in hallways. People were asking "What is a metapopulation"? "What is a sink habitat"? These questions were being posed not by beginning wildlife students but by seasoned biologists and university professors. It became obvious that a generation gap was in evidence.

Having spent the major portion of my career in wildlife education, I have reflected at length on new directions in the wildlife profession and how educational programs should respond. There is a fair amount of resistance in some quarters among traditional wildlifers to accepting new paradigms from the field of conservation biology even though the presumed schism between the two fields is rapidly fading. This became apparent when I recently served on TWS Biodiversity Committee. Turning a blind eye toward the winds of change always has been self defeating. We must educate and inform ourselves to meet new challenges. For the practicing professional this translates into continual updating through reading, attending conferences and participating in appropriate short courses. For educational institutions it means a reorientation of course and curricular content and of hiring new faculty educated and skilled in integrating new concepts and ideas into traditional approaches to wildlife management. However, educational institutions can develop inertia that dictates slow responses to rapidly occurring events. Part of this is due to the inability to hire new people until existing personnel retire. Certainly at the University of Idaho this has been a limiting factor in our quick response capability.

Regardless of limitations, we need to move forward quickly and position ourselves near the front of the parade rather than carrying a shovel and following the last horses. In the wildlife program at the University of Idaho we are teaching a graduate level class in conservation of biological diversity and at the undergraduate level we have a seminar on biodiversity. This seminar is a stop-gap measure until a faculty member can be hired who has the necessary expertise. Within wildlife agencies I am less clear on what is happening except for the high level of interest exhibited at the Albuquerque meeting. Perhaps workshops on approaches to inventory and monitoring of biodiversity or on population viability analysis might be useful. Let me hear from you on what we should be doing, especially on the need for short courses and training sessions.

### ***Annual Meeting***

The Annual Meeting of the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society will be held in Idaho Falls, Idaho at the Shilo Inn (Reservations: 1-800-222-2244) on March 9-11, 1995. Sessions will be held at the Shilo and also the ISU/UI Center for Higher Education. Occurring jointly will be the 68th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Scientific Association (NSA). Wildlife Society members are invited to attend any of the NSA functions. The NSA will hold a banquet on Thursday evening. The guest speaker will be G. Wayne Minshall, internationally recognized expert on stream ecosystem structure and function. The Wildlife Society will hold it's auction and buffet on Friday evening.

The Wildlife Society will hold 2 special sessions:

- Wolf Reintroduction - Ted Koch, Program Chairman.
- Riparian Management - Kirk Lohman, Program Chairman.

General sessions will also be held and members are encouraged to give papers on other topics concerning wildlife and habitat. Details on abstract format and a preliminary program will be mailed directly to members.

For more information contact:

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### *Upcoming Meetings*

**May 24-25, 1995.** Western States and Provinces Joint Deer and Elk Workshop, Sun Valley Inn and Lodge, Sun Valley, ID, Lon Kuck, Western States and Provinces Deer and Elk Workshop, ID Dept. of Fish and Game, 600 S. Walnut St. Boise, ID 83707. 208/334-2920.

**June 7-11, 1995.** Society for Conservation Biology 1995 Annual Meeting, Colorado State Univ., Ft. Collins, CO., Richard L. Knight, Dept. of Fishery and Wildlife Biology, Colorado State Univ., Ft. Collins, CO. 80523. 303/491-6714.

### *Recognizing Support*

While I was treasurer I was pleased to see the enthusiastic support for our fund-raising auction each year. I was particularly impressed with Kerry Reese and Jeri Williams during the last two years.

Because of their support I have been moved to sponsor a traveling plaque to be called the "Least Inhibited Bidder Award". The winner will be the person who pays the most at our annual auction. This dedicated TWS supporter will have the plaque to hang in her or his office until next year.

Jeri Williams is the 1994 winner and the plaque is on her wall.

**Geoff Hogander**

## *Follow-Up*

In the December 1993 newsletter, Hadley Roberts wrote a Viewpoint column about the role of the Wildlife Society in providing input to NEPA process. Hadley called for the Chapter President and Conservation Affairs committee to form regional oversight sub-committees of Idaho Wildlife Society members. He proposed these members provide input and peer review on the biological recommendations and information within NEPA documents. Hadley requested that interested members contact him to begin putting these regional sub-committees together. Please contact Hadley Roberts at 708 Lombard St., Salmon, ID 83467 or call 208-756-2163 for more information on forming and joining a regional subcommittee.



**Viewpoint**

**Keith A. Lawrence**

During the last half of the 1800's many forces combined to suppress game populations in the state of Idaho so drastically that recovery has taken decades to achieve. There is a popular belief that elk arrived in Idaho for the first time on trains or wagons from Yellowstone in the early part of this century. While archeological records and a broader reading of history easily dispute this, we all agree we now enjoy a resource that did not exist at the turn of the century. People are now seeing elk where they have not been seen for an entire human generation.

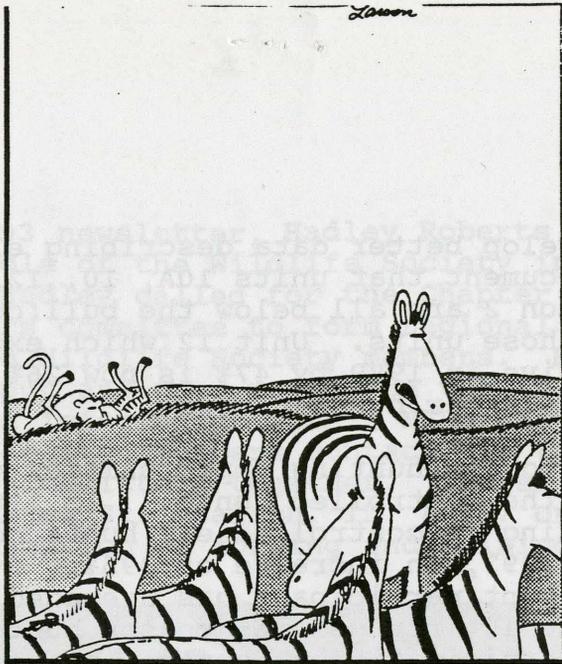
We often quantify the extent of the elk resource in terms of numbers of animals harvested in a given year. During the eleven years between 1982 and 1993 elk hunter-days in Idaho increased by 68% and total elk harvest increased by 73% from 11,800 to 20,400 animals. The number of elk harvested yearly has increased slowly since 1976 to a peak of 26,000 animals in 1992. While a one year decline of 22% from 1992 - 1993 is reason to be concerned numbers of elk harvested over the last few years are greater than any recorded since 1935. Were these the "good old days". Or were they? The development and use of more accurate elk survey techniques by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has allowed

biologists to develop better data describing elk populations. Recent surveys document that units 10A, 10, 12, 15, 16, 16A, 17, 19 and 20 in Region 2 are all below the bull:cow objectives established for those units. Unit 12 which exceeded the population objective in 1989 by 47% is now 26% below it's standard of 25 bulls per hundred cows.

The fastest growing elk hunting opportunities over the last eleven years are the controlled hunts. In 1982 there were 5,700 people participating in controlled elk hunts compared to the 22,500 people in 1993, an increase of 395%. Over the last eleven years controlled hunt participant has averaged a 49% success rate as compared to the 19% for general season hunters over the same time period. Participation in general season hunts has steadily declined from 74% percent in 1982 to 55% in 1993. Participation in 1993 controlled hunts accounted for 18% of the elk hunters and 36% of the total harvest in the state. If current trends continue for the next eleven years there will be 88,816 hunters participating in controlled hunts harvesting 43,520 elk by the year 2004. I believe this harvest trend is not sustainable.

The existing trend is more hunters, more hunter effort and higher harvest levels. Elk populations are no longer meeting established management criteria. The 22% decline in elk harvest last year was unprecedented in the previous 17 years. The problem is so widespread and has developed so abruptly it appears to be linked to the recent increases in hunting pressure rather than habitat based concerns. While it may be possible to continue to expand hunting opportunities by initiating hunting of cows, I do not believe additional controlled hunt opportunities will be able to sustain the growth in total number of hunters and harvest at the rates documented over the past eleven years. We need to consider how to change the management of sport hunters to mold the population to desired biological parameters. How are we as a professional community of biologists going to come together to address the future of elk management in this state? In the past we have argued over what was a Forest Service, State, Tribal or Industry responsibility regarding elk habitat or population management. Rather than arguing, we need to create interagency partnerships supporting the development of biological objectives establishing the links between habitat and population management and a framework for evaluating and making management decisions that will shape the future of the elk resource in Idaho.

Follow-Up



"Let's move it, folks. . . . Nothing to see here. . . .  
It's all over. . . . Move it along, folks. . . . Let's go,  
let's go. . . ."

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IDAHO CHAPTER  
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