

THE WILD TIMES



IDAHO CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



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NEXT NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS DUE JULY 31

President's Message

THANK YOU AND THINK ABOUT NEXT YEAR

My first task as the new president of the Idaho Chapter of TWS must be to thank all members who participated in the election, as candidates and voters. All those who ran for office should be thanked for their willingness to serve the chapter. The next two years will be challenging but rewarding as the new officers follow in the fine tradition of the outgoing officers. I am very honored to be able to serve as president of our chapter.

Soon I will be calling on various members to serve on the committees that make the chapter function. If you are interested in a particular committee, or want to discuss other topics concerning the Idaho Chapter, please call or e-mail me.

The 35th annual meeting of the Idaho Chapter of TWS was held on March 5th and 6th in Moscow. It was a well-attended meeting with over 30 presentations on everything from grizzly bears to burrowing owls, duck distribution to deer mortality, and spotted frogs to sage grouse. Speakers were interesting and informative, and the social/auction on Thursday evening was a great success. Such a meeting results only from the efforts of many people. The following deserve a hearty thank you for their work on the annual meeting: Frances Cassirer, Robin Garwood, Pamela Bell, Chad Bishop, Patricia Heekin, Susan Loper, Hollie Miyasaki, Matthew Lucia, Gary Nohrenberg, Scott Robinson, Tom Hemker, Daryl Meints, and Alan Dohmen (and the remainder of the Trueblood Communications Award committee). In addition, a fine group served as session chairs: Wayne Melquist, Patricia Heglund, Sam Mattise, Gerry Wright, Lisa Shipley and Anna Owsiak. Sam Mattise was again our auctioneer.

If you missed the annual meeting this year, please consider attending in 1999. The meeting will be held in Boise in early March in conjunction with the American Fisheries Society. Several hundred fish and wildlife professionals will come together for 2-3 days to discuss natural resource management and ecology. It should be a great meeting on which to end the 20th century.

Kerry Reese©

Editorial

REGIONAL CORRESPONDENTS AND NEWSLETTER E-MAIL

I would like to thank Jeff Copeland and Joe Butsick for volunteering as regional correspondents. Jeff will represent eastern Idaho and Joe will cover northern Idaho. I'm still in need of a person to represent southwestern Idaho. Ideally, I would like to get somebody from private industry. If you are interested, please contact me (hey Sam M. - know anybody?). My hope is that these correspondents will help the newsletter better inform the membership of statewide conservation issues, by hi-lighting regionally important topics.

Secondly, I would like to begin distributing the newsletter via e-mail to those members requesting so. If you would like to receive your newsletter by e-mail, please contact me and provide your e-mail address and whether you prefer the file in WP6.1 or *.txt format. Each newsletter sent by e-mail will save the chapter approximately \$1.50. BBC ©

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Feature Articles

KAMINSKI'S FAREWELL REPORT

Following is the last Idaho Wolf Update from me and a hope for continued efforts to restore and manage wolves into Idaho's future.

As of 2 March 1998 I was dismissed from my employment as Idaho Wolf Project Leader for the Nez Perce Tribe. As Project Leader, I alone bear responsibility for my actions and those of others, regardless of circumstances.

For 2 decades I was privileged to be involved in restoring a native carnivore to this extraordinary state. I served as the first biologist to gather and compile information on the wolf in Idaho beginning in late 1978. Subsequently I spent 6 winters and summers in the Idaho backcountry

as a biologist and graduate student, served the Recovery Team for 9 years, trapped and followed wolves, wrote the first northern Rockies wolf control plan for the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1986, and worked for 2 years as congressional staff on the EIS before going to work for the Tribe in 1996. There were dedicated people involved in each of these efforts; like them, I tried to contribute.

During my tenure as Idaho Wolf Project Leader, many with whom I came in contact asked why I would want such a job. I replied that I knew from years of prior work what had been promised; it was now time to follow through. My belief is that wolves and people can share Idaho's space and resources if they are open to the possibility. . . and respectful of each other's interests. Most with whom I have worked during the past 2 years, mindful of our disagreements, share that view. I have watched the process of restoring wolves go forward, knowing well that wolves' indifference to our comfort will cause us to think in more ways than we're accustomed. I experienced firsthand Idaho's coming to terms with our past views about large predators. It has been a slow process. Many remain concerned about how many wolves will be where, and imposing of further regulations. But ranchers, outfitters, sportsmen and others share my reverence for life. Not one I have met begrudges the wolf a rightful place, and most quietly marvel at its size and strength. The struggle has been difficult, but I believe it's been good for us.

Upon accepting the Project Leader job, I was asked to bring credibility to the Tribe by establishing a scientifically credible and comprehensive approach to restoring wolves and monitoring Recovery. By most accounts, efforts by my predecessor and myself yielded progress to that end. My departure now seems abrupt, even to me. Regardless, recovery of Idaho's wolf population will forward through work of many individuals, insuring that wolves again become part of the Idaho landscape, and that legitimate concerns are met. No one individual's departure can be allowed to make a difference; we owe more than that to the wolves we brought here and residents of Idaho they will live among. There - have been and continue to be many good people willing to help. My message to those who follow me is simple . . . work diligently, work together, and above all else, work forward.

Ranchers, sportsmen, and elected state and county officials in Idaho have been willing to give this endangered species recovery effort a good chance. As evidence of the social acceptance and credit deserved by Idahoans of rural and urban communities across the State, more wolves have remained alive and been viewed with tolerance, if not admiration, than in Yellowstone or northwest Montana for more than 3 years. Considerable numbers of people were pleased with the return of a reproducing wolf population to Idaho; a considerable were not. Regardless of differences, people of Idaho its many visitors have acted with dignity by following the intent of the rulemaking, working together, and

speaking up when they felt there were problems. In response, our collective attempt was to blend biological knowledge with common sense solutions. Rather than wait, Nez Perce Tribe, Wildlife Services, and Fish and Wildlife Service professionals tried to anticipate conflicts and communicate with people where problems seemed likely. When difficulties arose, we tried to resolve them quickly. While unfamiliar to many in our own agencies, the approach has worked for people and wolves.

Efforts to make wolf restoration a success in Idaho have enjoyed good fortune. Wolves have reproduced, survived, and remained near to where they were released. There have been few livestock depredations thus far, and as promised, no land-use restrictions in more than 3 years. But success has not come without costs, many hidden from the unknowing. All 3 Project pilots without hesitation have regularly dropped whatever they were doing to assist the Project when needed, in all kinds of conditions. Field biologists repeatedly donated their evenings, weekends and holidays to gather information in the Idaho backcountry. Odd and long hours were driven responding to complaints, or to share information with livestock producers, hunters, county commissioners, and others. Ranchers shared ideas at late night meetings and allowed access to their land, a single woolgrower experienced significant losses, and houndsmen provided information we didn't have. Though not without bumps along the way, mutual respect, shared interest, and kept commitments have brought progress toward delisting. Moreover, people are coming to value the wolf in some areas of the State. Earning and keeping the trust of Idaho residents now requires in turn, positive response by management agencies. By doing their part, people of Idaho rightly expect us to do ours.

Keeping trust will require that our promise of progress toward delisting is effectively and efficiently met. In the midst of our differences, Tribal staff and I had come to an impasse over how to approach the coming year's work: I for more biologists on the ground amid an expanding wolf population; the Tribe for a more centralized effort in Lapwai. At the time of my departure we had not reconciled.

To date, the Tribe has done a commendable job. But rapid growth in wolf numbers and distribution means more wolves in more places and more impacts real or perceived, where people are not accustomed to wolves presence. Year 'round monitoring requirements, and quick response to conflicts where wolves live among people and livestock is outstripping the ability of a single, distance, and centralized agency to keep pace. Managing Idaho's 8 wolf packs and 5 established pairs, impending dispersers from 6 1997 litters, and as many as 45-60 pups - in 1998 represents a significant and complex challenge. Operating "in front of the curve" will require appropriately matching a capable work force over 11 million acres of backcountry and inserting organization and policies designed to support field

1998 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

efforts for implementing a statewide program of this complexity and breadth. Based on my experience, a constructive interagency dialogue for how agencies and interests can best meet recovery objectives, sustain progress toward delisting, and involve Idaho Department of Fish and Game during the remainder of 1998 and beyond is necessary now.

Failure to safeguard the interests of individuals who live or work near wolves risks training the social acceptance expressed thus far for Idaho wolf recovery, and future conservation efforts. To insure Recovery criteria are met, wolves are conserved, and progress toward delisting continues, I recommend the following:

- * The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Governor's Office and Fish and Game Commission should request legislation for Idaho Department of Fish and Game's full involvement in managing an experimental population of gray wolves in Idaho.
- * The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should establish a multiskilled workgroup composed of scientists, affected livestock permittees, outfitters and recreationists to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Fish and Game, Nez Perce Tribe, Wildlife Services, Wolf Education & Research Center and Wolf Recovery Foundation on clarifying respective agency and interest group roles to sustain progress toward delisting. I suggest the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and Idaho Department of Lands be invited to cooperate.
- * If less than full involvement, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game should select an employee to lead an interagency Idaho wolf management effort. That person should be detailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on an Interagency Personnel Exchange through the time of delisting.
- * The Wolf Oversight Committee in cooperation with the Governor's Office, Nez Perce Tribe, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should immediately seek Idaho Congressional delegation assistance for Idaho Department of Fish and Game operating funds for the remainder of FY 1998, and FY 1999.

For all the enjoyment that experiencing wolves' return to Idaho brought me, my work with many good people across Idaho and Montana, unexpectedly, brought me more. Through wolves' return I benefitted personally and professionally; I learned a great deal. To those who shared time, floorspace, the coffee pot, and otherwise gave much, my thanks.

I'll continue to devote my efforts to resource conservation in the Northern Rocky Mountains. I wish those involved in managing Idaho's wolves from this time forward all the best.

Timothy Kaminski, ©

Approximately 50 people attended the annual business meeting convened by President Jim Unsworth March 5, 1998 at the University Inn, Moscow, ID. Minutes from the 1997 meeting were read by secretary Frances Cassirer and accepted by the membership. Treasurer's report was read by treasurer Robin Garwood and accepted by the membership.

Frances Cassirer reported that the 1996-97 membership directory was completed, and all members should have received a copy. There were 272 members in 1996-97 up from about 200 in the 1989 membership directory.

Jon Haufler reported that the Conservation Affairs Committee sent comments to Senator Kempthorne on his bill to reauthorize the Endangered Species Act, and most comments were put into the revised bill that went to committee. The bill is still in committee. Efforts were made to submit joint comments with the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, but the process was fairly slow and coordination was difficult, so the Idaho Chapter TWS submitted comments separately.

Comments were also submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the EIS for restoring grizzly bears to the Bitterroot ecosystem. Comments were submitted in conjunction with the Montana Chapter TWS.

No comments were submitted on Senator Craig's Forest Management bill, it is not moving fast, but Jon Haufler recommended that the Chapter continue to keep track of it.

Tim Reynolds reported on issues related to the Egin-Hamer road. The road bisects elk winter range. A petition from potato producers and county commissioners to open the road has been approved by BLM with off-road activity closures in effect that will benefit the elk.

Paul Moroz reported that Teaming with Wildlife legislation has not been introduced yet. Idaho legislators are neutral or opposed. Paul Moroz met with Helen Chenoweth's office, and they are noncommittal. Craig was supportive, but now is leaning against the bill at least partly because of anti-hunting concerns expressed by sportsmen. Sporting goods companies are also still concerned about consumer's willingness to pay. Letters to legislators and sporting goods companies are still needed. Wayne Melquist reported that language endorsed by hunting groups that all land acquired with TWW dollars be opened to hunting would mean the loss of support of the bill by Idaho State Parks. Watersports groups in Idaho are against the bill. However, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission has endorsed it.

Bill Wall reported that the awards committee did not

receive many nominations. Sam Mattise suggested using the board of directors to submit and discuss additional nominations. Kerry Reese suggested e-mailing a form to members to solicit more nominations.

Alan Dohmen reported that the speaker awards program was going smoothly, but requested help from Tom Hemker in getting plaques made.

Brad Compton reported that he is willing to continue to edit the newsletter, but would like 3 regional correspondents, one each from the northern, southern, and eastern parts of the state. He would like to have representation from federal, state, and private biologists. Each correspondent would have to submit 4 articles per year.

Jim Unsworth reported that our commitments to Idaho Chapter TWS scholarship funds at the three Idaho universities have been fulfilled (\$5,000 each). We also contributed \$1,000 to the National for Teaming with Wildlife, for a total of \$2,000 given to this issue, the most of any chapter. In 1997 we also contributed \$1,000 to the 4-H National Meeting in Sun Valley and \$100 to the Inland Empire Natural Resources Youth Camp.

We received 3 funding requests this year: \$500 for the state 4-H contest, \$300-500 for the Inland Empire Natural Resources Youth Camp, and \$1,000 from Idaho Mythweaver to help underwrite production and distribution of a bison documentary. Sam Mattise also requested funding to support a Duck Valley tribal member interested in wildlife to visit ISU or U of I. After discussion, Sam Mattise moved that we contribute \$500 to 4-H and \$500 to the Inland Empire Youth Camp. The motion passed unanimously. Sam will write a formal proposal to the board with specifics on the Duck Valley (or other tribal member) grant. Although the proposal looked good, funding the bison documentary might be more appropriate for the Montana Chapter. There were also some concerns about whether the chapter would have a voice in the "message" and whether the documentary was redundant with stories already done on bison. This funding request died for lack of a motion.

President Unsworth suggested the chapter look for another big project, as the scholarship commitments have all been fulfilled. Suggestions included funding continuing education for members, and hiring someone to work on Teaming with Wildlife.

Paul Moroz suggested we donate one of the auction items to former chapter president Ernie Ables who is moving to Oklahoma. Motion was approved.

The 1999 meeting will be at the Grove in Boise in conjunction with the Idaho Chapter of AFS. The meeting will be the first week in March.

The 2000 meeting will be in Coeur d'Alene or Post Falls

in conjunction with the Northwest Section.

1997 AWARD WINNERS:

Professional Wildlifer Award - Chuck Peterson

Frances Cassirer, Past-secretary ☺

IDAHO CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY COMMITTEE UPDATES

Teaming With Wildlife:

Editor's Note: Paul provided Kaminski's final wolf report.
Paul Moroz, Chairperson ☺

Conservation Affairs Committee:

No Report.
Jon Haufler, Chairperson ☺

Nominations-Election Committee:

The new officers for 1998-99 are: Kerry Reese, President; Toni Holthuijzen, Vice President; Tony Apa, Treasurer; and Chuck Peterson, Secretary. Congratulations!

Thank you to Tom Hemker, Alan Dohmen, Johnna Roy, and Michelle Beucler for running for office. Also, thank you to Kim Ragotzkie for tallying the final ballot count and to Frances Cassirer for reporting the results at the annual meeting (while I was in Africa).

Only 21% of the chapter members voted during the officer elections.

Don Kemner, Chairperson ☺

Awards Committee:

Editor's Note: Alan Dohmen, chairman of the Ted Trueblood Communications Awards, provided the following results.

There were no losers in this years group of presenters at the annual meeting in Moscow. Attendees heard twenty-one professional and ten student presentations address a variety of wildlife issues, research, and management topics from around the state. Each oral presentation was critiqued by a five person review panel based on content, organization, style, and graphics, and not the subject matter. The panel was impressed by the high quality of each of each presentation. However, in the long run two presentations did stand out as recipients of the 1998 Ted Trueblood Communications Awards. Jack W. Connelly received the award in the Professional Category for his presentation "SAGE GROUSE MANAGEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA: A

REVISION OF OLD GUIDELINES". (Editor's Note: after witnessing Jack present the same information for the last 5 years, the review panel finally wore down and conceded the award.) Andrew Lindbloom received the award in the Student Category for his presentation "HABITAT USE, REPRODUCTION, MOVEMENTS, AND SURVIVAL OF CHUKAR PARTRIDGE IN WEST-CENTRAL IDAHO". Congratulations to all the presenters. ☺

Membership Committee:

No Report.
Frances Cassirer, Chairperson ☺

Regional Reports

North Idaho

No Report.
Joe Butsick ☺

Eastern Idaho

THE "WYOMING CURSE" DISCOVERED IN IDAHO

In early March, a sample of elk on a Idaho Department of Fish and Game feedground in the Rainey Creek drainage of southeastern Idaho tested positive for brucellosis. The elk were being handled and radio-instrumented by Department personnel as part of an effort to monitor elk movements between Idaho and Wyoming. Blood is routinely collected during such operations. Eleven of the 31 animals tested were seropositive for the bacteria. The disease is prevalent in Wyoming elk herds, with infection rates estimated as high as 40% in unvaccinated herds.

Brucellosis is a contagious disease of cattle caused by the European imported bacteria *Brucella abortus* which affects the reproductive organs and generally causes abortion. Transmission of the disease requires physical contact with aborted fetuses or fetal membrane and fluid. When elk are concentrated into feedground situations, opportunity is present for non-infected elk to contract the bacteria. Although transmission of brucellosis between elk and domestic livestock has never been documented in free-ranging herds, presence of the disease within the state is perceived to be a serious threat to the livestock industry. The *Brucella* bacteria may also be contracted by humans, causing a disease known as undulant fever. There are no known cases of hunters contracting the disease from elk harvested in Wyoming.

The incidence of brucellosis in eastern Idaho elk herds did not come as any great surprise to Idaho Fish and Game biologists. Idaho has maintained a "brucellosis-free" status even though biologists suspected the disease was present in eastern Idaho elk herds. Now, with confirmation, biologists, hunters, and agricultural interests will no longer have the luxury of a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. The potential of losing Idaho's "brucellosis-free" status will likely force a change in how the Fish and Game Department manages eastern Idaho elk.

As the primary vehicle for disease transmission is physical contact, winter feed grounds will be a major focus in managing the disease. Without artificially induced winter congregations of elk, it is generally accepted that the incidence of infection could be reduced. Eliminating the need-to-feed means managing elk herds to levels consistent with natural winter forage availability -- an option generally considered unacceptable to some local hunters. The only other apparent option is vaccination, which had been under study for several years on Wyoming elk feedgrounds. The vaccine is administered on feedgrounds via a bio-bullet. While vaccination may seem a viable solution, it is expensive and has only reduced infection rates. And, it may not be adaptable to Idaho feedground situations. Many of the Idaho feeding areas are not easily accessible, nor are Idaho elk as cooperative in allowing human presence as their Wyoming counterparts.

While some suggest "Pandora's box" has been opened with the discovery of brucellosis in Idaho elk herds, others contend that nothing has really changed. Eastern Idaho elk appear to have successfully survived the epidemiology of *Brucella abortus*, and have not transmitted the disease to livestock. The challenge ahead is to see if they can survive the politics of its presence.

Jeff Copeland ☺

Research Update

MULE DEER RECRUITMENT

By: Mark Hurley, Senior Wildlife Research Biologist, IDFG

Southeastern Idaho has long been one of the foremost producers of deer, and large bucks in particular, in the Western States. Although mule deer typically experience major cycles of high and low populations, numbers are not recovering from the latest low cycle brought on by the winter of 1992-93. The same trend appears to be true in most of the Western States.

Several possible causes of this problem have been

identified by biologists and the general public alike. The most plausible ideas include: predation, changing or loss of habitat, and competition with elk. Since the ban of 1080 in 1972, coyote numbers have probably increased through many of the western states. Although we do not have a reliable method to census lions, all evidence indicates lion populations have also increased. Shrubland has converted to grassland or coniferous forest, and winter ranges have been lost to urbanization. Lastly, elk numbers have reached all time highs in typical mule deer habitat. Each of these factors have some merit as a possible cause of mule deer declines.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has designed a research study to determine the influence of predators and habitat change on deer population characteristics such as population growth, recruitment, and survival. The specific questions to be answered include: What is the exact cause of mule deer deaths? Does coyote control increase the recruitment or total population size of deer? If so, what is the cost per deer saved? Do higher densities of mountain lions increase the mortality rate of deer? Do declining numbers of deer relate to areas of changing or lost habitat types? Are declining numbers of deer related to increased numbers of elk? These questions can only be answered with large-scale experimental design of the same scale as used by state wildlife managers; big game units.

The project will simultaneously monitor mule deer populations in 4 control and 4 treatment areas of similar habitat to evaluate the effect of coyotes and mountain lions on deer populations. Mountain lion populations will also be estimated using radio telemetry in conjunction with experimental indices. Wildlife Services personnel (ADC) will intensively remove coyotes from 4 big game management units and minimize coyote control in 4 others. Aerial deer surveys will determine the change in recruitment and population trend. Survival and cause of death of fawns and adults will be determined throughout the year using radio telemetry in an intensive control/treatment pair of big game units. In these two units, 200 radio collars capable of signaling mortality will be placed on both fawns and adults. The high number of collars is critical to be able to test the differences in the actual cause of death between areas. When the effects of these predators are determined, a cost/benefit analysis of predator control will be developed for managers and sportsmen.

On an even larger scale, changes in habitat will be identified in all of Southern and Central Idaho using Geographical Information Systems. Large scale habitat maps will be used to identify the differences in cover types now versus 30 years ago, an era of very high deer numbers. These maps will be combined with deer, elk and predator population trend data to identify patterns which lead to deer declines. Concurrently, on the ground analysis of nutritional value of old versus young browse stands will determine the effect of maturing habitat on deer nutrition.

This research will provide wildlife managers with information critical to future mule deer management. Progressive wildlife management supported by research is needed to ensure the future of mule deer hunting opportunity. ☺

Grants Available To Wildlife Biology Graduate Students

Christensen Designs is offering cash grants and free equipment rentals to wildlife biology graduate students. "We find that the best way our company can support wildlife research is to offer our video equipment to students to support their work," commented Ann Christensen, program administrator. Located 75 miles east of San Francisco, Christensen Designs has worked with wildlife researchers for the past four years, developing a variety of video equipment, infrared-triggered cameras, solar kits and audio mimicry technology.

Video systems that are available for the new Equipment Grant program include:

TREETOP PEEPER II - a near infrared video system mounted on a 50-ft telescoping pole and has been used to study woodpeckers and bats.

PEEPER 2000 - a 3-meter gooseneck near-infrared camera probe. Has been used to study a variety of burrows.

THESEUS - a 15-meter tethered robotic. This tractor-treaded, 2x4x5 device has been used to study tortoises, foxes and other small mammals.

To apply for Equipment Grant: please provide a brief description of your research project and a brief statement of how you intend to use the equipment to further your research. For additional information: contact Ann Christensen, 209-239-8090 or download the Christensen Designs catalog at: www.peeperpeople.com.

NEXT NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS DUE BY JULY 31

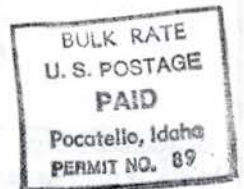
IDAHO WILDLIFE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I want to join the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society, and enclose ___\$10.00 (1 year), ___\$20.00 (2 years), or ___\$30.00 (3 years) in payment of dues. This is ___ new or ___ renewal membership. It is not necessary to be a member of the parent The Wildlife Society to be a member of the Idaho Chapter of TWS. Membership is by calender year. Make checks payable to: "Idaho Wildlife Society" and mail to Idaho Wildlife Society, c/o Tony Apa, Treasurer, 868 East Main, Jerome, ID 83338 (Telephone 208-324-4359)

Name _____
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Idaho Chapter The Wildlife Society
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