



ALBERTA WILDLIFER

October 1995, Vol. 6, No. 3 Editors: Jan Edmonds, Dave Hobson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Margo Pybus

Time continues to fly past at break-neck speed. However, geese, warblers, and bats fill the air, the leaves are turning colour, and the water temperatures in a certain prairie slough are finally starting to drop. Autumn must be here!

The executive has been very busy during the summer and we are well on our way to having a great meeting next March. The Executive agreed to host the Annual Meeting of the Northwest Section TWS so the logistics of putting on the meeting expanded considerably. Our own Annual Meeting will be rolled into the Section meeting. Natural Resources Services (Fish and Wildlife), of Alberta Environmental Protection will co-host the meeting and it will be in Banff. However, there will be lots of opportunity elsewhere in this newsletter to fill in some of the details. Suffice to say, anyone wishing to help with any aspect of the meeting is encouraged to contact Ron Bjorge (340-7698 w) or any Executive member of the Chapter.

The Executive has been busy on other fronts. Various committees are up and running. Ernie Ewaschuck is heading up a committee to develop protocols and terms of reference for a Student Technical Scholarship. Brad Stelfox is hard at work (Membership), as is Bob McFetridge (Student Awards) and, of course, our hard-working dynamic duo of Jan Edmonds and Dave Hobson (they seem to like sharing things) at the helm of the Newsletter. Kirby Smith could probably use some help with Nominations. Eldon Bruns is looking after Awards. Anne-Marie Buchwald has been very active in trying to establish a Student Chapter of ACTWS. I get to sit back and 'coordinate'!

On a more serious note, there is little doubt that this is indeed a time of flux and consternation within our profession. Government, industry, education, and private business are all taking on new roles and new relationships relative to one another. As individuals, we must be ready to adapt and perhaps make sacrifices in the pursuit of long-term goals and objectives; as a profession we must be flexible but at the same time remain committed to the basic tenets of sound wildlife management and ensure that wildlife and wildlife habitats are not used either as pawns or as mere commodities in establishing these new relationships. If we apply to our profession the same kind of inherent resilience seen in natural ecosystems, then we should see success in the long run. Lessons from the past teach us that small sacrifices and even catastrophic change can be accommodated.

The sun still rises and the earth still turns. Geese fly south in the autumn and the leaves will forever turn colour and fall. We will get through this period of flux.

Margo Pybus



*In muskrat land, the conies leap
the waxies linger in their flight,
the jewelled snake-like rivers creep
the sun, sad rogue, is out all night.
The great wood bison paws the sand
in muskrat land, in muskrat land.*

*In muskrat land, dim streams divide
the tundras belted by the skies,
how sweet in slim canoe to glide
and dream, and let the world go by,
build gay campfires on greening strand
in muskrat land, in muskrat land.*

Robert Service

CHAPTER NEWS

*** CWS NEWS ***

Don Thomas

We highlight research on one critter that soon will grace your change purses and ever-shallower pockets. The Polar Bear Project, under the direction of Ian Stirling, continues to monitor bears in Western Hudson Bay. The objective is to gain insight into fluctuations in the environment and long-term climatic change. Hudson Bay is ice-free between late July and early November and the entire bear population is forced to fast on shore and is available for sampling. And sampled it is! Between the late 1970s and early 1990s there was a slow decline in the physical condition of bears, reproductive rates, and cub survival. A brief reversal in these trends was attributed to climatic change resulting from, of all things, the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. This fall the SWAT Team of Nick Lunn, Dennis Andriashek and Ian Stirling captured 177 bears, deployed two satellite radios and retrieved one satellite radio. Polar bears in this population are unique in that pregnant females occupy earth dens. In 1994, a new study was initiated by post-doc. Peter Scott and the ursine group. During the fall 10 dens were instrumented to study their insulative value compared with ambient temperature and tree disks were taken from collapsed dens to evaluate their ages. A former member of the "coin-bear" team, Andy Derocher, recently was hired as a polar bear biologist in Norway.

*** PARKS CANADA NEWS ***



*** ALBERTA FISH AND WILDLIFE NEWS ***

Margo Pybus

Massive Waterfowl Dieoff in Southeastern Alberta

Last year at about this same time, I reported on the largest documented dieoff of waterfowl and shorebirds in Alberta. Unfortunately, this year was even bigger. Between mid-July and late September 1995, staff from Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Canadian Wildlife Service collected nearly 100,000 dead birds from Pakowki Lake. Projected actual losses are in the range of 150-200,000 birds in total. The majority of birds were ducks, primarily Green-winged Teal with Northern Pintails, Shovellers, Gadwall, and Mallard well represented in the burial pits. Intoxication due to botulism and, perhaps, blue-green algae was the primary cause of mortality.

The lake appears to provide near-perfect conditions for large-scale mortality: it has a large surface area, largely shallow water depths, high evaporation rate, significant wind tides, and soft clay sediments. Fluctuating water levels, high ambient air and water temperatures, heavy contamination of botulism spores, and large numbers of resident and migratory birds set the scene. Vertebrate carcasses provide the spark, and later the fuel, for the wildfire to take off.

Both botulism and blue-green algae are a natural part of prairie ecosystems in late summer. However, the effects are particularly poignant at a time when prairie waterfowl populations are beginning to show some rebound from the all-time lows recorded in past years. Management efforts are directed towards removing carcasses before they contribute to further mortality. This is done despite the lack of empirical evidence that carcass collection is effective. Planned future activities include an inter-agency research proposal to be implemented across the 3 prairie provinces with the goal of gathering sufficient data to evaluate whether carcass collection affects subsequent losses. In addition, a Working Group of staff from the 3 agencies will evaluate all options at Pakowki Lake, including modification of water levels and water quality.

*** CONSULTANTS NEWS ***

Editor's Note: Many of our members are wildlife biologists who work as independent contractors or for large and small environmental consulting companies. Often the work they do is of great interest and the perspective they bring to their work may be different than government-funded organizations. We, the Editors, would like to hear from these members. Because there is no one agency through which to contact this diverse and widespread membership, we have not been successful in gleaning Consultants News for this gossip column. Thus we are asking (trying not to bully) for ideas on how to more effectively reach this group. Unsolicited articles, short or long are welcome. They need not be of "Journal" quality; we just want to hear what is going on out there and share it with the rest of the membership. Give us a call: Jan Edmonds and Dave Hobson - 723-8244.

*** ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE NEWS ***



DUCKS UNLIMITED NEWS
Brett Calverly

The 1995/96 Ducks Unlimited habitat program in Alberta is progressing according to plan. The provincial acreage projections are on target at 39,600 secured and 47,500 enhance acres. A total budget of \$10.5 Million is projected for the current fiscal year. In addition to the habitat program, DU successfully co-hosted the Kinsella Ranch (U of A) Producer's Day on August 3 and entertained 200 guests at the Big Hay/Bittern Lakes Dedication on September 8. Big Hay and Bittern Lakes are on the Wetlands For Tomorrow list and represent two of the 20 most important wetlands in Alberta for waterfowl breeding, molting and staging.

News from the three major districts of Alberta is encouraging. The Peace Parkland District will see an increased fall flight of ducks due to the improved habitat conditions experienced there over last year. The Aspen Parkland District is the focus of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan delivery and progress is right on schedule. Both the upland and wetland components of the habitat program will benefit waterfowl and a wide array of other species for several decades to come. Wetlands in this district could use a good runoff next spring to help them recover from several years of below normal runoff. Waterfowl populations remain similar to last year's.

The Prairie District continues to take advantage of irrigation spill water to create some of the finest wetland habitat on the continent. A major study of pintail breeding biology is providing critical information about this important prairie species and has also demonstrated some significant benefits to some of the large endemic shorebirds. A spinoff study started this year to look at the nesting habits of willets and marbled godwits. Unfortunately, 1995 was once again a disastrous year for avian botulism poisoning at Pakowki Lake. Over 90,000 duck and other water bird carcasses have been picked up. Total mortality figures could be in the range of 200,00 or more. (Editor's note: Phew! We are glad the numbers quoted by DU and F&W were in the same ball park.)

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

Anne-Marie Buchwald, a student at U of A, is the first student representative for the Society. Anne-Marie is excited about her new role and her first goal is to increase student awareness and participation in the Alberta Chapter. She feels there are lots of benefits to being a student member and through the Society students can organize job workshops, networking opportunities and various social events. If you are interested in working with Ann-Marie on any of these projects you can contact her through the Society or call one of the members of the Executive (see below for phone numbers and mailing address).

OTHER NEWS

Society for Conservation Biology

A meeting will be held on October 28, 1995 in Calgary to form an Alberta chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology. Members of the ACTWS and others interested in promoting research and communications in conservation biology are invited to attend.

when: Saturday, October 28, 1995, 1:00 PM

where: Room 2140,
Professional Faculties Building,
University of Calgary.

For further information contact: in Calgary - Mike Gibeau 220-8075
in Edmonton - Rob Powell 459-8855
Brett Purdy 492-0887
469-8847

Goals and Objectives of the Society for Conservation Biology

Our goal is to help develop the scientific and technical means for the protection, maintenance, and restoration of life on this planet -it's species, it's ecological and evolutionary processes, and it's particular and total environment.

In the service of this goal, our objectives include; (1) the promotion of research and the maintenance of the highest standards of quality and ethics in this activity; (2) the publication and dissemination of scientific, technical, and management information; (3) the encouragement of communication and collaboration between conservation biology and other disciplines (including other biological and physical sciences, the behavioural and social sciences, economics, law, and philosophy) that study and advise on conservation and natural resource issues; (4) the education, at all levels, preparatory and continuing, of the public, of biologists, and of managers, in the principles of conservation biology; (5) the promotion of all of the above through the provision of adequate funding; and (6) the recognition of outstanding contributions to the field made by individuals and organizations.

ALBERTA CHAPTER TWS EXECUTIVE PHONE NUMBERS

Margo Pybus	427-3462	Ron Bjorge	340-5142
Jack Nolan	632-8347	Richard Quinlan	625-3301
Kirby Smith	723-8244	Ernie Ewaschuk	422-1040

Mailing Address: Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Box 4990, Edmonton, Alberta. T6E 5G8

WELCOME TO:

Alberta Chapter
A joint meeting of
The ALBERTA CHAPTER of THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
and
The NORTHWEST SECTION of THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
Co-hosted by ACTWS &
ALBERTA NATURAL RESOURCES SERVICE
in
BANFF, ALBERTA

March 29-31, 1996

**CALL FOR PAPERS:
7th ANNUAL MEETING
ALBERTA CHAPTER of THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
BANFF, ALBERTA MARCH 29-31, 1996**

In order to prepare the scientific program, titles and abstracts of papers are now requested and should be received by the Program Chairman before December 15, 1995. PLEASE TRY TO EASE THE HEADACHES OF THE PROGRAM CHAIRMAN BY SUBMITTING ABSTRACTS ON TIME.

Abstracts should be typed single-spaced within a 10 X 16 cm rectangle. Hard copy and electronic copy (3 1/2" or 5 1/4" discs) preferred. Please include names and complete addresses for all authors on the abstract and underline the name of the individual presenting the paper. Do not outline the abstract. Talks will be limited to a maximum of 15 minutes (plus 5 minutes for discussion).

Send abstracts to: Ron Bjorge, Natural Resources Service, Fish and Wildlife, First Red Deer Place, #404, 4911-51 St., Red Deer, Alberta. T4N 6V4. Fax # 340-5575.

Sample Abstract:

A NEW WAY TO CONDUCT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN THE BOREAL FORESTS OF ALBERTA. E. Z. Foruew, Wildlife Science Group, Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, # 625 Ivory Towers, Edmonton, AB T6J 1E9 and U. R. Krasey, Department of Regional Perspectives, Athabasca University, Athabasca, AB T4T 7K3

Abstract: Here you get to tell us what you are going to tell us.....

Poster presentations are welcomed but please provide the program chairman with a title and display needs before January 1, 1994.

Anyone with special AV needs (e.g. VCR, movie projector, flip-chart) should notify the program chairman prior to the meeting!!

Also, please inform the program chairman if the title/abstract is to be judged for the student presentation awards.

STUDENT PRESENTATION AWARD

*The Alberta Chapter of
The Wildlife Society offers
\$100 to the best student ORAL and
\$100 to the best student POSTER
presentation
at the Chapter Annual Meeting.*

*Presentations will be judged for merit in
organization,
oration,
professionalism,
and relevance to Chapter objectives.*

*This competition is open to any person
currently registered in a program
with a primary focus on natural resources
at any recognized education facility.*

*Send your abstract to the program
chairman and
indicate that you wish to be considered
in the student competition.*

**Program Chairman: Ron Bjorge, Alberta
Fish and Wildlife, #404, 4911-51 St., Red
Deer, Alberta T4N 6V4.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF ECOLOGICAL AREAS National Conference. Calgary. 7-8 November 1995. Contact Robyn Usher c/o Gaia Consultants Inc. (403)269-9466.

FOREST - FISH CONFERENCE: Land Management Practices Affecting Aquatic Ecosystems. Calgary. 1-4 May 1996. Contact Trout Unlimited Canada, Box 6270, Station D, Calgary. T2P 2C8

5th MOUNTAIN LION WORKSHOP. San Diego, California. 27 February - 1 March 1996. Contact W. Douglas Padley, Southern California Chapter, TWS. Box 891225, Temecula, CA 92592. (909)695-2217.

7th NORTH AMERICAN CARIBOU CONFERENCE. North Bay, Ont. 19-21 August 1996. Contact Gerald Racey c/o OMNR. (807)939-3102.

32nd NORTH AMERICAN MOOSE CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP. Banff, Alberta. 21-24 April 1996. Contact Gerry Lynch, Alberta F&W. (403)422-9534

MORE NEWS:

TWS AND WDA SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Wildlife Society and the Wildlife Disease Association have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to the mutual benefit of both groups. The MOU recognizes the importance of wildlife health as a component of wildlife management and the mutual benefits to improved communications and cooperative efforts to maximize wildlife health and management. The MOU provides a framework to enhance achievement of mutually recognized goals and objectives for the conservation of and management of wildlife diseases, and the influence of natural processes and human activities on the health of wild animals and wildlife populations. Formal liaisons have been identified and the two organizations have agreed to help publicize meetings, publications, and other items of interest, to make space available in newsletters for items of mutual interest, to encourage dual membership and active participation in the two organizations, and to share services, including membership lists.

In the spirit of cooperation, the Alberta Chapter donated one of our valued and sought-after ACTWS T-shirts to the auction at the WDA Annual Meeting in August. In addition, we were able to promote the upcoming AC/NWS TWS meeting at Banff to all those present at the meeting.

The MOU provides a list of additional items of mutual interest to wildlife managers and wildlife health specialists and ways that the relations between the two disciplines can be strengthened. Full text of the MOU is available on request from Margo Pybus (427-3462).

And Lenin has lived and Jehovah died while the mother-eagle
hunts her same hills, crying the same lonely and beautiful cry
and is never tired; dreams the same dreams,
and hears at night the rock-slides rattle and thunder in the
throats of these living mountains.

It is good for man
to try all changes, progress and corruption, powers, peace
and anguish, not to go down the dinosaur's way
until all his capacities have been explored, and it is good
for him
to know that his needs and nature are no more changed in fact
in ten thousand years than the beaks of eagles.

Robinson Jeffers

