

# FWS Retirees Association

## NEWSLETTER



February 2019

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discretion, to participate in Board meeting and to give us the benefit of his many years of experience. Jerry was one of the founding members of the Association and served many years on the Board. He was also the member most involved in locating and negotiating the venues for our many reunions. We don't want to lose that knowledge. Jerry will be only the second person to be awarded Emeritus status, the other being the late Denny Holland, also a founding member.

**Cindy Barry** retired on March 31, 2018, after 41 years of federal service. She earned a BS degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign/Urbana before beginning her career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That career included positions in the Pacific Region 1, Northeast Region 5, and Headquarters, in the programs of Refuges, Ecological Services, External Affairs, and Budget/Administration. Among other positions, Cindy headed up the Endangered Species program in the Pacific Region, and was the ARD for the region's Ecological Service's Program. She is a second-generation Service employee; having lived on several national wildlife refuges in the Northeast and Midwest Regions as the daughter of FWS retiree (now deceased) Darrell "Dick" Uptegraft. Cindy resides on the shores of the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington.



**Doug Fruge**, a southwestern Louisiana native, has a BS degree in Zoology from McNeese State University and an MS in Fish Biology from Louisiana State University. His professional career began as a fishery biologist with the State of



## Chesapeake Bay Area Reunion.

The Board, with the invaluable help of several local retirees, has been busy exploring potential venues for our planned **2019 FWS Retirees Reunion at Annapolis, Maryland.** We have settled on **Sunday November 10th through the 14<sup>th</sup>** as the dates for the reunion in order to dovetail with the renowned *Easton Waterfowl Festival* which will run from the Thursday the 7<sup>th</sup> through Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> of November. Easton is about a 50 drive from Annapolis and is a known for this spectacular event.

Annapolis was our initial choice since it has so many attractions of its own and is also within easy driving distance from several resource attractions on both the eastern and western shores and where we could schedule our traditional day-long tour. We are negotiating tentative arrangements on a full-service hotel with a lodging rate of \$123 that includes a continental breakfast. Hold that date - details will follow.

## New Board Members.

Our voting-eligible members have spoken and elected Cindy Uptegraft Barry, Doug Fruge, and former board member Steve Rideout to fill the vacancies left by the departure of Gail Carmody, Jerry Grover, and Larry Shanks from our Board of Directors. Please welcome our new Board members (their brief bios are given below) and extend your thanks to Gail, Jerry, and Larry for their years of service. Jerry, however, has been awarded special status as a **Board Member Emeritus**, which will allow him, at his

Louisiana in their Department of Wildlife and Fisheries but joined the Service in 1978. Doug has had a very diverse Service career, starting with the Ecological Services Field Office in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He's been an Assistant Refuge Manager at the Upper Ouachita and D'Arbonne NWRs in northeastern Louisiana, the Oil, Gas and Minerals Coordinator for refuges in the Alaska Regional Office, Deputy Refuge Manager of Arctic NWR, and worked in the Fairbanks Fisheries Assistance Office. He later served as Deputy Field Supervisor in the ES Field Office in Ft Worth, Texas, the Gulf Coast Fisheries Coordinator in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and as Program Supervisor for the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program in the Mountain-Prairie Regional Office in Lakewood, Colorado.

Doug retired from the Service in 2017 and is currently living in southern Vermont with his wife, Joyce, and his two dogs (Annie and Bernie).

**Steve Rideout.** Steve began his conservation career with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife after earning his BS in Wildlife Mgmt. from the University of Maine and Masters in Fisheries Biology from the University of Massachusetts in 1974. Steve joined the Service in 1977 in the Federal Aid Division in the Northeast Regional Office and later moved on to be the Connecticut River Anadromous Fish Program Coordinator. Steve went through the Service's Upper Level Management Development program after which it was back to Region 5 where he served as Fisheries Manager for the southern 12 Fisheries Stations in the region. After a tour in Region 7 as ARD for Fisheries and Federal Assistance, he returned to DC in 1995 to become the first National Ecosystem Coordinator. Steve ended his career in Region 5 as the Director of the Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turners Falls, Massachusetts from which position he retired in 2005.



Steve has been a Retirees Association member since 2009 and a former Association Board Member during which he served as Secretary/Scribe and Treasurer. He and his wife Carol reside in Hampden, Maine and also maintains a vacation cabin on Lake Ambajejus in northern Maine.

**Election of Officers for 2019.** As per our by-laws, the Board elected new officers for the 2019 calendar year during our January conference call. Robin West was elected Chair, Rowan Gould will continue as Vice-chair, Jim McKeivitt will continue as Secretary/Scribe, and Steve Rideout volunteered to assume the duties of Treasurer. Many thanks to Bob Streeter who for several years ably filled the position of Chair of the Association and to Gail Carmody who held the very difficult job as Association Treasurer. We expect very little difficulty in the transition of duties.

## **Acting FWS Director Sheehan**

**Resigns.** In case you hadn't heard, in mid-August, Deputy FWS Director (and interim Director) Greg Sheehan stepped down from that position after only 14 months into the job. He left, he said, to return to his family and home state of Utah. During his tenure at FWS, he proposed several rules changes to the Endangered Species Act that would weaken protections for threatened species and habitats critical for their recovery. He also pushed to open more federal lands, including National Wildlife Refuges, to hunting and fishing. A member of Safari Club International, Sheehan also lifted existing bans on the importation of elephant and lion trophies from certain African countries, a move that was almost immediately countermanded by President Trump.

Deputy Operations Director Jim Kurth will lead the Service until a new Director is appointed by the Trump administration. However, the Trump administration wasted little time in nominating **Aurelia Skipwirth to be the new FWS Director.** Ms. Skipwirth currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in the Department of the Interior. Previously, she served as Assistant Corporate Counsel at Alltech, Inc. Ms. Skipwirth earned a Bachelor's degree in biology from Howard University, a Masters in molecular genetics from Purdue University, and Doctorate from the University of Kentucky College of Law.

## **Zinke Out – Bernhardt In: Pruitt**

**Also Out.** But don't expect any real change. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt both resigned their cabinet positions before the new year amidst internal investigations into potential abuse of government regulations and travel excesses. Zinke was also being investigated for using his authority as Interior Secretary for personal financial gain. Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt initially assigned the role as acting Secretary has now been tapped by president Trump to be the new Secretary of Interior.

Bernhardt is a former Interior Solicitor from the George W. Bush administration *and* a former lobbyist for the oil, gas, and water industries. He was a lobbyist for the powerful Westland's Water District in California and, as such, has sued the Department and helped write legislation more irrigation water at the expense of endangered fishes. He is a staunch advocate for weakening the Endangered Species Act. While serving as Deputy Secretary, he recused himself from matters involving his former clients but that recusal has now expired.

It is unknown what effect Zinke's departure will have on his plans to reorganize the Interior Department or to move key functions out of the DC area to the western U.S. He had previously identified a plan to establish ten unified regions and move leadership functions for the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management and possibly other agencies whose missions are largely in the Western U.S. to the west. He wanted that move to be accomplished by July 2019.

**Costa Rica 2019.** Those interested in international travel have chosen to go birding in Costa Rica in April 2019 and are using Road Scholar to organize and lead the trip. The trip was FULL 2 days after the announcement went out! Big thank you to Sandy Tucker for finding this option for us and coordinating. All on trip will be FWS retirees or spouses.

**Get Up Front Info on Travel Opportunities.** If you are interested in travel with fellow retirees, you will be among the first to know of planned ventures if you checked the Travel box on your *membership application/renewal form*. Those that do are put on mailing lists for any travel being planned for our retirees while others may hear of those opportunities after it is too late to sign up. However, if you are interested, you can always go to our website and update your preferences by filling out a new membership application/renewal form. Good idea if you don't want to be left out. These travel ventures are not planned by the Association but by individual members of the Association who reach out primarily to those retirees who have previously expressed their interest.

## **Natural Resource Issues.**

*The Association strives to keep you abreast of fish and wildlife matters of regional or national significance or of importance to the Fish and Wildlife Service. If there are issues you believe we should become more deeply involved in, let us know.*

**Alaska Seabird Die-off.** A troubling die-off of several species of seabirds is being observed in Alaska, in an area stretching from north of the Bering Strait to the Gulf of Alaska. Experts are concerned that the mortalities may be connected to climate change and a trend of warming ocean water. So far, there is no indication of disease or toxicity but carcasses examined so far have been emaciated and showed signs of starvation. One possible cause is that

Andrew Wheeler has taken the acting Administrator job at EPA. Wheeler is a former lobbyist for the coal industry.

## **Travel & Leisure.**

**Slovenia and Croatia Small Ship Adventure.** Sandy Tucker has lined up a Road Scholar small ship cruise to interesting sites in Slovenia and Croatia. Dates are September 4 through 16, 2019. This trip involves moderate activity, mostly walking at sites being visited. Be sure to check out the flyer and its links at the end of this newsletter and if you think this is the trip for you, let Sandy know ([ssluck1050@gmail.com](mailto:ssluck1050@gmail.com)).

### **Southeastern Texas Coastal Birding Trip Planned for April 2019.**

John Gallegos has let us know about a fun birding trip they have planned for April 22-26, 2019. There is still room for interested retirees to join in the outing. **There is a flyer at the back of this newsletter** with more info on what is currently on the docket. Please read and, if you have any interest or questions, get in touch with John

warming ocean conditions may have resulted in reduced populations of forage fishes on which the birds feed within their feeding range.

Dead and dying seabirds, mostly common murre, first began showing up in May 2018 near the in the north Bering Sea, north and south of the Bering Strait. These birds can fly miles in search of forage fish. But if they aren't able to find them, they can starve and/or fail to nest or successfully raise their young.

Later, more deaths were documented near Saint Lawrence Island, just south of the Bering Strait. These deaths included storm petrels, fulmars, shearwaters, kittiwakes, auklets and puffins.

While localized seabird mortalities due to scarcity of prey are not unusual, they occur most often in the southern parts of the Bering Sea and in the Gulf of Alaska. What is alarming is that these deaths are occurring much further north. "As in the past, these die-offs have been associated with unusually warm water conditions," said Katherine Kuletz, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seabird biologist. "That's only increased in the last few years". "I think what's different is that the numbers, even though they're in the dozens or hundreds, they're widely dispersed and very highly concentrated in the north Bering Sea and the southern Chukchi Sea, which is unusual," Kuletz said"

Biologists are still trying to pinpoint the exact cause of these die-offs. Climate change is suspected but disease and toxicity have yet to be ruled out.

**ANWAR Lease Sale.** In mid-December, the Trump administration released an environmental assessment that describes its plan to begin selling oil drilling rights to lands within the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, one of the goals of the administration. The plan lays out four options to leasing lands in the refuge for oil drilling, one of which is

the “no drilling” alternative. Following the publication of the assessment in the Federal Register, a 45-day public review period began. That review period extends to **February 11, 2019**. Then the Department of Interior plans to produce a Final Environmental Impact Statement. This could be as soon as mid 2019. After that, the first lease sale could be held. Actual drilling, however, is not likely to occur soon because of expected lawsuits and additional studies and approvals for the oil development.

There is a brief notice of the EA and the opportunity to review and comment on it at our website.

As we reported in earlier newsletters, when the 19-million acre was established, a 1.5-million section of it was set aside for possible energy extraction. In 2018, Congressional Republicans were able to include a provision in their tax reform legislation that allowed oil exploration to proceed. In that legislation, Interior was directed to hold its first lease sale by 2021 and a second by 2024, each to be not less than 400,000 acres. These sales were expected to raise revenue to help pay for their tax reform.

How the current government shutdown will affect the timing of these actions is uncertain.

**Natural Gas Pipelines Hit Legal Snags.** Two natural gas pipelines, in the mid-Atlantic region one already under construction, were halted in August 2018, at least temporarily, due to environmental concerns.

The 600-mile long Atlantic Coast pipeline would start in West Virginia and run through Virginia and North Carolina. A three judge panel of the 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with local plaintiffs and environmental groups and threw out two critical permits for the project. The judges found that the Fish and Wildlife Service’s “Incidental Take Permit”, issued pursuant to provisions of the Endangered Species Act, was arbitrary and capricious because it did not set clear limits on the take of listed species.

The judges also vacated a right-of-way permit issued by the National Park Service that would allow the pipeline to pass beneath the Blue Ridge Parkway because it failed to show that the pipeline crossing of the Blue Ridge Parkway was consistent with the purposes of the Parkway and the National Park System.

The judges went on to say that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s authorization of the project was conditioned on valid permits from both FWS and NPS and that construction could not commence without these permits.

The second pipeline, the 300-mile long Mountain Valley pipeline, already under construction through Virginia and West Virginia, was halted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in response to an earlier 4<sup>th</sup> circuit ruling. In that ruling the court reversed two approvals, one by the U.S. Forest Service and another by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, allowing the pipeline to pass through the

Jefferson National Forest. Although the pipeline passage in the national forest is but a small part of its total length, work on the entire pipeline must cease until concerns are resolved. Those center on erosion and stream sedimentation in public lands. The project has already been cited numerous times by regulators for its failure to control erosion and sedimentation in wetland and its more than 500 stream crossings.

While both project developers indicated that complying with the court’s decision would be a simple task, environmentalist and locals feel differently. And they say that the questions about the performance of the Mountain Valley pipeline in federal land bring into question the projects effects along its entire length.

**Chincoteague NWR Ponies in Trouble.** A deadly infection called pythiosis, also known as swamp cancer and more commonly found in more southern climes, has arrived at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on the Virginia coast. And seven of the famous Chincoteague ponies have already died or been euthanized as a result.

Pythiosis primarily affects horses and dogs and is typically caused when the animal walks through waters contaminated by a fungus-like organism, *Pythium insidiosum*. The organism can enter any small break in the skin, resulting in inflamed lesions, primarily on the legs of the infected animal. If left untreated these lesions become tumor-like growths and is invariably fatal. Caught early enough, the disease can be treated but with only very limited success. And if the condition spreads to the 150 or so other ponies for which the refuge is famous, it would be catastrophic.

The Chincoteague ponies have inhabited these coastal area for 200 or more years and prior to the refuge’s establishment were purchased by the Chincoteague Voluntary Fire Department, which still owns and manages them. Under a FWS permit, about 150 are allowed to roam on about 4000 acres of the refuge. The ponies range seasonally from Assateague Island, on which the refuge is actually located, across a narrow channel to Chincoteague Island, which is developed with houses, motels and restaurants. They spend most of their time on the refuge but each year in July they are driven across the channel to Chincoteague where some are auctioned off by the fire company. This helps to keep the population on the refuge at optimum numbers and also raises money for the fire company that helps pay for their management.

Over the years, there have been occasional unconfirmed cases of the disease among the Chincoteague ponies. In late summer of 2016, volunteers spotted a mare with small sores above her hoofs. Blood tests would confirm pythiosis and, caught early, it was successfully treated. But in 2017, two more infected animals were found with more advanced infections and, despite aggressive treatment, both died. In 2018, one was successfully treated in the spring but several

other cases were diagnosed in the fall, prompting managers to set up an intensive treatment regimen that has included immunotherapy and, in some cases, cutting away infected tissue surgically. The group has spent more than \$25,000 on treatments. Nevertheless, seven of the ponies have died including four that were euthanized in December at a field hospital set up to treat them on the Chincoteague Fairgrounds.

An effective vaccine could protect the herd, and one is under development by a research veterinarian in Oklahoma who hopes to secure final government approval for his company's pythiosis vaccine in 2019. He and the fire company are seeking permission to vaccinate the Chincoteague herd even sooner on an experimental basis, a prospect that might be their best chance to avoid a bigger epidemic.

Still, the vaccine wouldn't clear the pathogen from the natural habitat, especially with more infected horses spreading it from pool to pool. The fire company would like the refuge to take more action, including clearing away old barbed wire that can be exposed by storms and increase the risk of cuts. The organism can't penetrate healthy skin. Refuge personnel have been coordinating with the herd managers and were exploring steps they could take. But no matter what, action is imperative to protect this iconic resource.

**Clean Water Act Under Attack.** In December 2018, EPA announced a proposed new rule that would weaken and limit the scope of the Clean Water Act by redefining "Waters of the United States" thereby rescinding a rule implemented by the Obama administration. The new rule would exempt many key bodies of water and wetlands from the permitting requirements of the Clean Water Act. According to PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility), the new rule would exempt up to 60 percent of US waters and wetlands. Many water bodies—including many wetlands, vernal ponds, and so-called "ephemeral" streams that flow only after rain fall, and waters that lack direct surface connections to major waterways—would be off-limits for permitting rules. Jurisdiction would be limited to waters that are directly "connected to a traditional navigable water." This would allow them to be dredged and/or filled without federal review, something long sought by developers.

This proposed rule is the culmination of a Trump Executive Order signed in 2017 directing the rollback. At that time, Trump called the waterway protections then in effect "a massive power grab" targeting "nearly every puddle or every ditch on a farmers land." While he was careful to couch the roll back in terms of benefits to farmers, farmers and farmlands are already exempt from most of the regulatory hurdles that protecting wetlands entail under the Clean Water Act. The real beneficiaries of this move are developers and the real issue is the mitigation that is usually

required for dredging or fill in wetlands. The EPA analysis readily acknowledges this fact and the disproportionate benefit to developers that would accrue if the proposed rules change is enacted. Of the nearly 250,000 permits issued nationwide from 2011 to 2015 for fill in wetlands and small streams, the federal government required home builders and developers to provide mitigation an average of 990 times per year. Farmers and other permittees received only 3163 permits requiring mitigation during this period and of these, farmers represented an average of only eight permits with mitigation requirements per year.

**Mexican Wolf Deaths.** We have reported several times in recent issues about the efforts to re-establish viable populations of the endangered Mexican wolf, the rarest subspecies of the grey wolf. Nearly extinct by the 1970s, the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1998 began a program to reintroduce captive wolves into some of their former habitats, primarily in New Mexico and Arizona. The effort has been fraught with difficulty, including lawsuits from landowners, reluctance by the affected states and the killing of released wolves, primarily by ranchers afraid of losing livestock.

2018 was a year of mixed results. A record number of Mexican wolves were reported dead in 2018, including five killed in November in New Mexico alone, bring the total killed for the year to 17, the most killed in any single year since reintroductions began in 1998.

**Red Wolf.** We have also reported several times on the efforts to save the red wolf from extinction in the wild. This smaller, more slender cousin of the grey wolf, is considered the world's most endangered canid with only 35 currently existing in the wild and about 200 others in captive breeding facilities. They once roamed the entire southeast U.S. from the Carolinas to Florida and west to Texas and the mid-west but loss of habitat (a 99.7 percent loss is estimated), hunting and predator control programs nearly wiped them out. The species was designated Endangered in 1967 and later declared biologically extinct in the wild in 1980. By then the last wild red wolves had been captured and placed in captive breeding facilities.

The Fish and Wildlife Service began a restoration effort in 1987 with the release of mated pairs of wolves into Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina. They were declared a non-essential experimental population, meaning somewhat lesser protections under the Endangered Species Act. Since that time, the wild population climbed to as high as 110-120 individuals but hunting and other factors reduced them to the current level of 35 wolves, primarily in a five county area around Alligator River NWR. Unable to curtail mortality of red wolves in areas not under direct federal control, FWS in 2018 proposed a rule that would limit the conservation area for the experimental

population to just two counties which include the Alligator River NWR and other federal lands in the two-county area. Wolves that stray outside of those federal lands would be subject to lawful hunting. Hunters and many landowners welcomed the proposal as did the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission which was against the introduction from the start. However, the proposal immediately got a response from the Governor of North Carolina objecting to the reduction in the size of the conservation and howls of protest from environmental groups saying the Service was walking away from its responsibilities under ESA and abandoning the restoration effort. Lawsuits were filed to prevent the reduction and a temporary injunction was issued. In response to the ruling and perhaps also to the many objections, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has extending its review of the proposed rule to adapt its management of red wolves in North Carolina stating that "additional review time will provide the Service the opportunity to fully evaluate the implications of the court decision".

**Bee Killing Pesticide Ban Reversed.** Before he left office, Principal FWS Deputy Director Greg Sheehan lifted an Obama-era ban on the cultivation of genetically modified crops on National Wildlife Refuges and on the use of a toxic class of pesticides, neonicotinoids. These pesticides are deadly to many non-target species and have been blamed for severe declines in bee populations. When the ban was implemented in 2014, Jim Kurth, then head of the Service's Division of Refuges, argued that the use of neonicotinoids led to plants whose tissues harmed many non-target species and said that "refuges throughout the country successfully meet wildlife management objectives without" genetically modified crops or the pesticides they are engineered to withstand."

The proposed lifting of the pesticide ban by FWS was immediately challenged by a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and others.

**Border Wall Construction to Begin in NWR?.** Congress last March approved more than \$600 million for 33 miles (53 kilometers) of new barriers in the Rio Grande Valley. While President Donald Trump and top Democrats remain in a standoff over Trump's demand for \$5.7 billion in border wall funding, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has pushed ahead with building what's already funded. That construction was often described as fencing, and the government funding bill that included construction was supported by some Democrats in the House and Senate. CBP refers to what it plans to build as a "border wall system."

Now CBP appears to be ready to begin construction in early February and their plans call for the construction of concrete walls to the height of the existing flood-control levee. On top of the concrete walls, CBP will install 18-foot (5.5-

meter) steel posts and maintain a 150-foot vegetation-free enforcement zone in front. Because local landowners have vowed to sue to prevent taking of their lands under eminent domain (which could take months or even years), CBP plans to start with lands already in public ownership and have targeted the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the National Butterfly Center and Bentsen State Park. Heavy construction equipment has been moved into the lands of the National Butterfly Center. While Congress last year prohibited CBP from construction in the Santa Ana NWR (because of public outcry) but did not include the Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR in the prohibition. Construction has already been exempted from any environmental review.

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, has introduced a proposal that would instruct CBP not to build border walls in several places that have environmental and cultural significance. There is no indication that CBP intends to comply and lawsuits are likely to ensue.

**Proposed Grizzly Bear Hunt Derailed.** On September 28, 2019, a Montana District Court judge, siding with environmentalists and native Americans, overruled the Trump administration's decision to remove the grizzly bear from the "threatened species" list, thereby reinstating its protections under the Endangered Species Act. That, in turn,

## **Miscellaneous.**

**Government Shutdown.** The shutdown is temporarily over after federal missed over 30 days of work and paychecks. However, the same deadlock between President and the House Democrats over funding for a wall along the Mexican border still remains as does the Presidents threat for another shutdown. During the shutdown, the Association joined with others in a letter to President Trump urging and end to the shutdown.

**Retiree Pension Raise.** In case you didn't notice, Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees received a 2.8% raise in their annuity to be reflected in the January 2019 payment. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) retirees, however, received only a 2.0% raise, the maximum allowed under the existing cap in the FERS system.

**Federal Pay Raise.** The House passed a bill on February 1st providing a 2.6% pay raise for federal workers, exceeding the 1.9% raise proposed in the last session but which did not pass before the session ended. A bi-partisan group of senators have also introduced a companion bill providing the same 2.6% raise. Many in both houses feel that federal workers deserve this raise because of what they have been through with the government shutdown.

**Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).** As many of us know, this provision enacted in the Reagan administration, severely reduces the Social Security benefits of federal retirees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System

(CSRS) who also earned and would also be entitled to Social Security benefits by virtue of employment outside of the federal sector. This past session of Congress, a bi-partisan pair of congressmen introduced a bill to modify the WEP. Under this bill, starting in 2020, individuals whose Social Security benefits are reduced by the WEP would receive an additional monthly payment of \$100. Individuals whose benefit is based on a spouse's employment would receive an additional \$50 per month. These changes would apply to individuals who turn age 62 prior to 2025. Those turning 65 after this date would be subject to a new formula designed to more accurately reflect their earnings under Social Security compared to their earnings while in the public sector.

While the bill did not make it through the legislative process before the end of the session, it appeared to have a lot of bi-partisan support in both houses and will most likely be reintroduced in the current session with a fair chance of success.

**Retirees Offer Aid For Hurricane Victims.** The Retirees Association offered aid to victims of hurricanes Florence and Michael, largely due to creative thinking and action by Board member, Gail Carmody. Gail worked with other Board members to send an email message out to all Retirees asking them if they would be willing to offer a place to stay for other retiree or active FWS staff who may have lost their home to the storm, and to ask who might have such a need. A website called "SignUpGenius" was employed to handle the logistics of connecting offers to help with anyone who had such a need. Retirees were also asked to sign up if they were willing to help with post-hurricane work. Fortunately no retirees or Service staff reported having a need for housing, but a heartwarming number of retirees stepped forward with offers for housing. Hurricane Florence did not deliver the predicted punch but Michael exceeded predictions. The Service is still assessing the needs for assistance at any of the affected field stations. Association members stand ready to provide assistance if requested.

**FWS Retirees Encouraged to Participate in Endangered Species Day 2019.** Fish and Wildlife Service retirees have a special opportunity to share their expertise and give back to the community by participating in the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Endangered Species Day on May 17, 2019.

First approved by the U.S. Senate in 2006, the purpose of Endangered Species Day (ESD) is to expand awareness of the importance of endangered species/habitat conservation and to share success stories of species recovery. Every year, Endangered Species Day events are held at museums, schools, zoos, aquariums, botanic gardens, conservation groups, parks, wildlife refuges and other locations throughout the country.

"This is a good opportunity for us to help celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and give the day the attention that our FWS colleagues still working may not be able to", said Lew Gorman, a former Ecological Services biologist and FWS Retiree.

Suggested Endangered Species Day activities include:

- Offer to speak about endangered species conservation to a local school group.
- Organize or support a habitat restoration project.
- Create a pollinator garden at a community site or school grounds.
- Help prepare an endangered species display for a library or other public building.

The ESD website ([www.endangeredspeciesday.org](http://www.endangeredspeciesday.org)) features a variety of resources, including:

- event planning information;
- a series of infographics about endangered species conservation,;
- ake;
- the Endangered Species Act;
- color/activity sheets, masks, bookmarks;
- a passport (ideal for use in scavenger hunt);
- stickers and other material.

Many of these can be downloaded and printed for use at your activity.

Events can be held on Endangered Species Day or at another appropriate time.

Of course, it's important to include your activity on the ESD Event Directory. You can either register the information on the Endangered Species Day website or send the details to David Robinson, Endangered Species Director ([drobinson@endangered.org](mailto:drobinson@endangered.org))

## Passing of Colleagues.

*If you are aware of the passing of any retired FWS employee, including those who left the Service because of organizational or late career changes, please let us know so that we can pass that information on to our readers.*

**C. Phillip Agee (1928 – 2018).** C. Phillip (Phil) Agee of Northfield, Minnesota, died at the age of 89 on July 11, 2018 from the effects of Alzheimer's disease with his family by his side. Phil was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, to Walter and Loma Agee. Phil graduated from Lincoln Northeast High School in 1946. In 1951 he married his high school sweetheart, Jeanne Wood, and they are the parents of two sons, Alan and Michael.



In 1952 he graduated from the University of Nebraska with a Bachelor of Science degree and went on to receive a master's degree in wildlife management from the University of Missouri in 1954. He worked as a wildlife biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission from 1954 until 1973. At that time, the family moved to the city of Fairfax, Virginia, and he took a position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Division of Federal Aid in Washington D.C., where he worked until his retirement in 1991. Phil and his wife moved to Northfield in 2009.

Phil loved carpentry and was an avid bird watcher and accomplished wood carver. For the past 2½ years, Phil lived at the Cottage on Forest of the Three Links Care Facility in Northfield. The family would like to express their sincere gratitude for all the wonderful care given to Phil by the staff. Survivors are his wife of 67 years, Jeanne; his two sons, Allan (wife: Karen), of Webster, Minnesota, and Michael (wife: Merry), of North Adams, Massachusetts; his half-sister, Carol Mickiewicz and husband Jack; his grandsons Andy Peterson and Bryan Wolfe; and several nieces and nephews. Phil was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Donna Lytle. Memorial services were held on September 15, 2018 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northfield. Memorials can be made to the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, Planned Parenthood or the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northfield.

**Jane Bently.** Jane Bently passed away on Saturday, October 13, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband of 25 years, best friend, and racquetball partner, Jerry Bentley, who died in December of 2014. Both worked in the Albuquerque Regional Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Jane had over 30 years of Service with FWS.

Jane and Jerry's family was a blended one, his two kids Laurie and Ricky were in their early 20s, Jane's kids, Jeremy and Jessica were in their early teens when Jane and Jerry got married in 1989.

Jane is survived by her children, Jeremy, his wife Petra and their children, Amy, Brian, and David and by Jessica, her husband Brian, their children, Gavin, Julia, Corbin, and Hayden. She is also survived by Jerry's children, Laurie and Ricky and by their children and grandchildren, Christian, Malach, Moriah, Arianna (Mom to Hendrix), Michelle (Mom to Jaimie), Judith (Mom to Jon, and Beth) and Anthony. Family is messy, we all know that, but the Bentlys wanted theirs to be remembered as big, loud, and loving. Jane will be deeply missed by all of her family and community. A Memorial Service was held on October 23, 2018, at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Albuquerque. Jane was later ennniched with her Jerry at Santa Fe National

Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts can be made to St. Luke's Lutheran Church, or St. Baldrick'S.

**Judith Bladen (1943 – 2018).** Judith Bladen of Queenstown, Maryland, died Friday, November 23, 2018, at her home. She was 75. Born on May 14, 1943, in Greenbelt, Maryland, she was the daughter of the late Arthur Raymond and Nellie Jane Wells Bladen. In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by a brother Gerald Compton Bladen. Judy had no living close relatives, but many friends and colleagues, including her so-called “sister,” Rennie Harper, her caregiver and angel in her last year, and her friend, Tresa Brown. Judy attended the University of Maryland and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education.

She began working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 1970. For most of her career, she was stationed at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. She was promoted to a Program Analyst and worked with numerous wildlife biologists and statisticians. Among her duties were retrieval, proofing, editing, and summarizing large data sets. She was adept at working with the continental waterfowl breeding population data set, along with waterfowl banding data. She trained many biologists



about setting up data sets for proper analysis. Judy was a respected, trusted, and valued colleague throughout her career. She retired in 2005, but continued contact with FWS friends. Judy enjoyed water sports, especially fishing. With her friends and often with her

mother, while her mom was alive, Judy would enjoy a day of fishing or crabbing on the Chesapeake Bay. She took many trips to Wisconsin and Florida to visit friends and “spend time on the water.”

She loved traveling to exotic places with groups of similar-minded folks. In Churchill, Manitoba, in November 2006, she was thrilled to watch polar bears playing on the ice despite the frigid weather she endured. Someone always went with her when she went outside the warm accommodations for a smoke, even at night. Fellow travelers were concerned they would lose her to a marauding polar bear! In Tobago 2008, she signed up for early wake-up calls if turtles were spotted laying eggs on the beach. At 3 AM she got down the steep slope to the beach okay, but the climb back up was too much for her. Two friends got on either side of her and literally carried her up the slope. Her excitement about seeing a seven-foot long leatherback turtle laying eggs in the sand at night, illuminated by only infrared light, was very memorable.

Above all, Judy was passionate about animals. She supported the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, local

spay and neuter clinics, and local animal shelters. She personally rescued many dogs and cats, and a special mention should be made of Midnight, Amos, Fluffy, Sugar Bits, Charlie, Neo, and Spike. A generous soul, Judy gave of her time, attention and resources to several civic and social non-profit organizations, local and worldwide. She made people understand that they were valued. A memorial service was held on December 1, 2018, at a funeral home in Chester, Maryland, and attended by many of her FWS colleagues and friends. She will be missed.

**Thomas W. Custer (1945 – 2018).** Thomas W. (Tom) Custer passed away peacefully at his home in Brownsville, Minnesota on October 12, 2018. Tom was born in Minnesota in 1945 to James and Luella Custer and lived there with his family for the first few years of his life. The family then moved to southern California where he spent his youth. Educated in the California school system, Tom ultimately received his PhD in Zoology from the University of California at Berkley in 1974.



His first professional job was with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. He was next stationed in Victoria, Texas along the Gulf Coast and then moved to take a position at what is now the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences at La Crosse, Wisconsin, where he remained a research scientist for the rest of his career, producing more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific publications. He worked until his death because that is what he loved to do.

His passion was to collect and analyze data and then publish those findings. His research focused primarily on the effects of contaminants on bird populations. He worked mostly on aquatic birds, such as the black-crowned night heron and various egret species, as well as terns and waterfowl. More recently, he studied tree swallows to understand contaminant effects. He worked with a eclectic mix of contaminants including PCBs, dioxins and furans, and trace metals such as mercury and lead. More recently, he was delving into the effects of newer contaminants such as the brominated flame retardants, perfluorinated chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

In his career, Tom also studied the energetics of Lapland longspurs near Barrow, Alaska, declining moose populations in northwestern Minnesota, and even worked on lizard species in New Mexico

Tom is survived by his wife, Christine, his brother and sister-in-law Leroy and Suzanne Curtis, and several nieces and nephews.

A celebration of Tom's life was held on November 4, 2018 in French Island, Wisconsin.

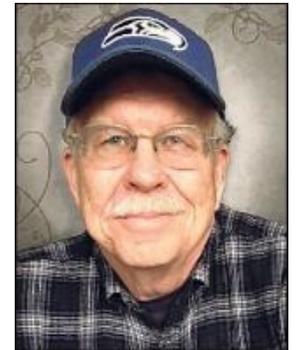
In lieu of flowers or gifts, the family would prefer a concrete action that is helpful to the environment. An online guestbook may be signed at [www.schumacher-kish.com](http://www.schumacher-kish.com)

**Charles Alan (Chuck) Dunn (1944 - 2018).** Charles Alan "Chuck" Dunn, passed away peacefully at his Brush Prairie, Washington, home on October 10, 2018. Chuck was born June 14, 1944, in Moscow, Idaho, to Carl G. and Lois I. (Dey) Dunn. He was raised in Twin Falls, Idaho, attending schools there and moving on to Idaho State College. He later transferred to the University of Idaho where he graduated in 1967.

Chuck met Linda Welker when they were both nine years old, and they married twelve years later in December 1965 in Spokane, Washington. They had two sons, Carl and Michael.

Chuck was in the ROTC program in college. Upon graduation, he reported to the US Army, Fort Lewis, Washington, for ROTC basic training and was commissioned as a First Lieutenant in June 1969. After serving a one-year tour of duty in Vietnam, he returned to Fort Lewis where he was discharged in June 1972, with the rank of Captain.

Chuck worked at the Washington Department of Fisheries in Olympia, Washington, from 1972 until 1980. He then transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Ecological Services, working eight years in Olympia as Field Supervisor of the ES field office there. Next came four years in Washington D.C., and thirteen years out of the Portland, Oregon, regional office. Chuck retired in 2005.



Chuck and Linda attended Memorial Lutheran Church in Vancouver, Washington, where they served in a number of positions. They were also on the local Marriage Team. In 2009, Linda was diagnosed with stomach cancer and died on October 2, 2011, just short of their 46th wedding anniversary.

After Linda's death, Chuck joined the YWCA program, which allowed him to volunteer as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), working with children and their families from 2012 to 2013. In 2013, Chuck met Jane Clark. Her husband of 46 years had also died of cancer two years earlier. Chuck and Jane were married later that year at the Battle Ground Baptist Church, and continued as active members. In September 2017, Chuck and others from the church joined the Franklin Graham Samaritan's Purse Organization and went to Houston, Texas, to help those whose homes were devastated by Hurricane Harvey. While

married just short of five years, Chuck and Jane embraced their fun and love-filled time together, enjoying every day on the Family Farm and taking on activities like camping, traveling, fishing, paragliding, and zip-lining, as well as entertaining family and friends.

Chuck's lifelong hobbies included woodworking, fly fishing (catch and release), handball, racquetball, tennis, cooking, camping, and working on computer jigsaw puzzles, while his love of the outdoors had him exploring mountains, rivers, meadows, lakes, and oceans (especially the ones with rocky shores and big waves.) He was also a handy-man who loved fixing things.

Survivors include his wife, Jane; brother, Donald (Linda) Dunn; half-sisters, Debra (Ted) Kolleyer and Tawna (Tom) Noftzger; sons, Carl (Tammy) and Mike Dunn; step-children, Brad (Susan) Clark and Donnelle (Bryan) Rodriguez; step-brothers, David (Evelyn) and Bill (Karen) Ghan; step-sisters, Jeanne (Paul) Morrow and Donna Fuller; grandchildren, Caleb (Jordan) Dunn, Cierra (Dennis) McCord, Hunter, Taryn, and Hayden Dunn; step-grandchildren, Jarred, Connor and Amanda Rodriguez and many other beloved cousins, nieces, nephews, extended family and friends who will miss him dearly. A memorial service was held at Battle Ground Baptist Church in October 2018. He was interred at Evergreen Memorial Gardens in Vancouver, Washington. Please sign his guestbook @ [www.columbian.com/obits](http://www.columbian.com/obits)

**Edward William Edelbrock (1926 – 2018).** The son of Felix and Edwina Edelbrock, Edward was born April 4, 1926 at St. Cloud, Minnesota. He attended Cathedral High School in St. Cloud and graduated from in 1944. He attended St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota for two years, then finished his college career in 1956 at St. Cloud Teacher's College (now known as St. Cloud State University) with a Bachelor of Arts degree in teaching.



Edward was drafted into the army in 1950 and served for 2 years. He spent several months in Japan during the Korean War.

Edward held several jobs during his working years, but the bulk of his career was spent working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (1957 to 1979) and then the U.S. Forest Service (1980 to 1983). From 1966 until 1979, Ed worked as an Appraiser-Negotiator involved in the small wetland acquisition program in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and northeastern Montana. Spanning the years of

1957 to 1983, he served at Devils Lake, North Dakota; Huron, South Dakota; Pierre, South Dakota; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Portland, Oregon.

Edward enjoyed fishing and hunting, as well as reading and family history. He loved the covered bridges of Oregon and made a point to visit 50 of them. He retired in 1983 and spent his last retirement years in Lake Oswego, Oregon. Ed had Pioneer status at Mary's Woods Continuing Care Retirement Community in Lake Oswego. He donated a bench in honor of his parents, Felix and Edwina Edelbrock, which stands on the Mary's Woods property.

Edward passed away December 24, 2018, at Lake Oswego. He was 92 years of age. He is survived by a beloved friend, Carmen Rowe, his brother Paul (Kathy) Edelbrock, and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers Wallace and Thomas, and a sister Phyllis (Edelbrock) Prem.

A funeral Mass for Edward was celebrated at Holy Names Chapel at Mary's Woods in Lake Oswego on December 28, 2018. He was buried at St. Anthony Cemetery in Tigard, Oregon. Memorials may be made to Holy Names Chapel at Mary's Woods, 17400 Holy Names Drive, Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

**Robert A Hietikko (1938 – 2018).** Robert A. Hietikko, age 80 of Pelkie, Michigan passed away on Tuesday, October 23, 2018 at the Omega House in Houghton, Michigan. Bob worked his entire career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, many years in the Atlanta Region, and many years in the Region 3 Regional Office. A fellow appraiser who worked for Bob summed it up well . . . "Bob was a good person to work for and a good friend to hang out with."



A Celebration of Life was held on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Baraga, Michigan. Condolences may be provided at [www.jacobsonfuneralhome.com](http://www.jacobsonfuneralhome.com)

**Rodney Jacob King (1945 – 2018).** Rodney Jacob King passed away on Monday, 24 December 2018, just before midnight at his home in Goldendale, Washington. Rod died at the age of 73 from an aggressive and terminal lung disease that was first diagnosed in 2017.



Born in Rexburg, Idaho, Rod was the son of the late Jacob and Sylvia King. He grew up in adjacent Sugar City, Idaho. He graduated from

high school in 1963 and earned his Bachelors of Science Degree in Wildlife Management from Utah State University in 1967.

Rod's professional career of 40 plus years was mainly dedicated to waterfowl management and biology, including his special commitment to the protection and restoration of trumpeter swans.

Rod first moved to Alaska in 1976 where he worked as a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Forest Service in Cordova, Alaska. In 1978, he joined the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Waterfowl Management program in Anchorage as a wildlife biologist/pilot. He moved to Fairbanks in January 1981 and opened the first Migratory Bird /Waterfowl Management Field Station there. He lived in Fairbanks until 2000, when he moved to the San Francisco Bay area to fly waterfowl surveys that took him into Canada, along the West Coast and into northern Mexico, still following the migratory waterfowl. He retired from the US Fish & Wildlife Service in January 2007 after almost 40 years of federal service.

Upon retirement, Rod and his wife of 37 years, Charlotte, moved from California to Goldendale, Washington.

Rod is survived by his wife, Charlotte, (Goldendale, Washington); daughter Jacqueline Goicoa (Boise, Idaho) and son James King (Boise, Idaho) both of a previous marriage; daughter Rebecca King, (Bend, Oregon); sister Carol Drake (Boise, Idaho); sister Mary King Roberts (Gainesville, Florida); and brother David King (Idaho Falls, Idaho); along with numerous grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

Honoring Rod's wishes, no memorial or service is planned at this time; one might possibly be held next June. Rod chose to be cremated and requested that his ashes eventually be spread in the Columbia River thirty miles downstream from Goldendale at the mouth of the Klickitat River. Donations in of Rod's memory can be made to The Trumpeter Swan Society (TrumpeterSwanSociety.org), the American Lung Association (Lung.org) or the Pulmonary Fibrosis Association (PulmonaryFibrosisNow.org).

**Richard J. Myshak (1928 - 2018).** Former FWS Regional Director (Region 1) Dick Myshak of Tigard, Oregon, passed away October 27, 2018 at the age of 90. He will be buried in the Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, Oregon. A private family service was conducted at the cemetery on Friday, December 7, 2018. A memorial service to celebrate his life was held the following day at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Beaverton, Oregon.



Dick's career spanned several endeavors: 16 years of military service (active and reserves) in the US Navy and US Army; biology teacher in Minnesota; Field Secretary and President, Minnesota Academy of Science; Science Director of the Minnesota School of Mathematics and Science Teaching - Institute of Technology, University of Minnesota; Executive Director of the Golden Valley, Minnesota Environmental Science Center; Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior; Assistant Director for Wildlife Resources, Regional Director (R1), US Fish and Wildlife Service; He led two U.S. delegations to United Nations International Symposia – “Man and the Biosphere” (Vienna, Austria) and “The Polar Bear Symposia” (Oslo, Norway); and as an, Environmental Resources Consultant. Dick is survived by his wife Elaine, five children, eleven grandchildren, one great granddaughter, two great grandsons, three step-children, 10 step grandchildren and three step great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife of 34 years, Beatrice.

**Patrick O'Halloran (1931 – 2018).** Pat O'Halloran passed

away at the age of 86 on June 11, 2018 in Reno, Nevada. Pat was born in San Francisco in 1931, moved to Dunsmuir, California, and then to Reno. His early career in the Fish and Wildlife Service included work through Patuxent on blackbird control in Arkansas. He went on to work at Cabeza Prieta and Kofa Game Ranges in Arizona, the River Basin Studies office in Billings, Montana, and the Region One RO in Portland working in the Wilderness Study program. He then moved to Sacramento, California to be part of the Sacramento Area Office where he was primarily engaged in biological aspects of refuge management. After the Area Offices closed he went to Sacramento NWR Complex as refuge biologist and was instrumental in setting up a comprehensive habitat monitoring program. He later served as Acting Refuge Manager at Sacramento Complex. After retirement he moved with wife Janet to Greenville, CA.



Pat was a well-respected biologist with interest in many aspects of the natural world. He enjoyed reading about science, history, geology and more. His family and friends have many happy memories of learning about plants, animals, geology, and local history while camping, backpacking, fishing, hunting, or just spending time with him.

Professionally Pat was known as a thoughtful scientist. He

was well respected amongst his peers and his advice and counsel was always well received.

Pat is survived by his children Nancy, Jim, and Dan, brother Mike and sister Alana. Janet passed away in 2009.

**Howard Ross Pywell III (1944 – 2019).** Ross Pywell passed away at the age of 74 at Poudre Valley University of Colorado hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado, on January 18, 2019, in the company of his best friend, companion, and love for life, his wife Jan, and dedicated staff of the hospital after an uncomplaining 3½-year battle with cancer. He is now at home with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ross was born on July 28, 1944, in Boston, Massachusetts, to Howard Ross Pywell Jr. and Louise Olga (Galley) Pywell. He graduated from Canton High School and earned a B.S. in Forestry at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1967. He was inducted into Xi Sigma Pi, the Forestry Honorary Society. During the Vietnam War, Ross served as gunner's mate on the USS Mullinnix in the Gulf of Tonkin and the Mediterranean Sea. His proudest moment in the Navy was the night his crew hand-carried star shells all through the night from the depths of the ship's magazine to the on-deck guns in order to light the beach for medics operating on the beach.

Returning to Amherst after military service, Ross completed his M.S. and Ph.D. in Forestry, focusing on Forest Hydrology and Land Use Planning. His dissertation, "Current Study of Historical Land Use Change of Quabbin Area 1952-1972," provided a foundation for decision makers in watershed management for decades.



After seasonal work with the U.S. Forest Service, in 1975 Ross began work as a permanent Federal government employee with the Forest Service, serving on the Nez Perce National Forest Planning Team in Grangeville, Idaho. He moved to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Senior Mapping Specialist for the newly created National Wetlands Mapping Inventory in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1976. He transferred to the Washington, D.C., headquarters of the Inventory in 1978 serving as a biologist.

Returning to his roots, Ross was appointed State Extension Forester at the University of Massachusetts in 1980. In 1981, he moved to Fort Collins, Colorado, to continue his work as a Wetlands Biologist/Cartographer. Former colleagues remember Ross as a central figure in the creation of a national geo-referenced wetlands database which has become foundational to managing wetlands in the U.S. His graduate work at the University of Massachusetts on "Massachusetts Map Down," a state-wide land use mapping project using remote sensing and geographic information

overlays, was seminal to the creation of the National Wetlands Mapping Inventory.

Using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) expertise he acquired at University of Massachusetts and further developed through his years with the Wetlands Mapping Inventory, Ross returned to the USDA Forest Service in 1991 to work on the Forest Health Technology Enterprise Team in Fort Collins. There he helped to develop systems, techniques, and tools for aerial surveying of forest health including insect and disease damage. His contribution to the development of a digital sketch mapping system led to work and assistance to various states in the US. He also traveled to Russia, Taiwan, and New Zealand to promote the system. He authored or co-authored over 40 papers and presented his findings at regional and national meetings throughout the U.S. In 1993 as program manager he received the Forest Service Chief's Award for Excellence in Technology Transfer presented at a special ceremony in Alexandria, Virginia. He retired in 2004 with over 30 years of Federal Service.

Ross married Janice Elaine (Rienstra) Schoo in 1999 and is survived by Jan. From previous marriages, he is survived by sons Jeffrey Mark Pywell (wife Juliann) and Jonathan Robert Pywell (wife Jen) and grandson John Michael Paris. He also leaves behind his sister Karin (Pywell) Alexander (husband Mark); brother Mark Robert Pywell (wife Shari); and three nieces and nephews. In addition, he is survived by two step-sons, Nolan Bruce Schoo and Jordan Cameron Schoo, a step-daughter-in law and four step-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

**Steve Thompson (1953 – 2018).** Steve Thompson passed away from renal cell carcinoma at his home in Granite Bay, California on November 4, 2018 with his wife Renee, children Jena and Maya, and former Director Dale Hall at his side. He was only 65 years of age.

Born in Hawthorn, Nevada, to Leal and Paul Thompson, Steve was raised in Lake Tahoe, San Jose, and Sacramento, California where he attended high school. Steve married his high school sweetheart, Renee Moffett, in 1973 and together they moved to Arcata, California, where Steve attended Humboldt State University. Steve graduated in 1978 from Humboldt with a degree in Wildlife Management and Range Conservation and was hired by the Bureau of Land Management in Burns, Oregon. After one year with BLM, Steve transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and worked for the next 11 years as a Refuge Biologist at National Wildlife Refuges in Oregon, Washington, and Nevada. He then served for six years as Refuge Manager at Laguna Atascosa NWR in Texas.

In the mid-90s, Steve held leadership positions in the Central Office and in the Southeast Regional Office. In 2002, Steve

was appointed Manager of the California/Nevada Operations Office, overseeing all FWS stations in those two states. He retired from the Service in that position in 2008. Following retirement, Steve consulted on land, water, and wildlife issues with his Daughter, Maya Kepner and served on the Board of Directors of The Peregrine Fund.

During his career, Steve received several honors, including being named by the National Wildlife Refuge Association as the Refuge Manager of the year in 1994 and the Distinguished Executive Award, the highest award given to Senior Executive Service employees, in 2007.

Steve was an outstanding swimmer, having swum competitively in high school and college and continuing in open and rough-water swims at Donner Lake, Dana Point, Waikiki, and elsewhere. He also enjoyed birdwatching, duck hunting, photography, camping, and spending time with his family.

Steve is survived by his wife of 45 years, his daughters Jena Meredith (Jeremy) and Maya Kepner (Erich) and three grandsons, Kai, Dillon, and Kody. He is also survived by his parents, sister Pam and brother Bruce. A celebration of Steve's life was held at the Flower Farm in Loomis, California. Donations in Steve's name can be made to The Peregrine Fund, c/o Joell Brown, 5668 W. Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, Idaho, 83709.

## **Others.**

*We are frequently informed of others who have died but are unable to find an obituary or enough information to compose one. We will simply report on their passing.*

**Hansel Hall.** Hansel Hall, a former Region 3 EEO manager, died on November 12, 2018 in Minneapolis. No other information on his time with FWS was available.

**Palmer Secora.** We have received word that Palmer Secora passed away sometime in April 2018. Palmer at one time was a Refuge Manager in Alaska and also at the William L. Finley Refuge in Oregon.

**James W. Wiley.** Matt Perry passed along the following: The Ornithological Newsletter has recently published the attached announcement of the death of Dr. Jim Wiley on September 19, 2018. Jim was a very productive and popular Patuxent researcher in the Endangered Research Program (FWS/USGS) for many years in the 1970-90s. I did not

know Jim well, but worked with him via email on his chapter in our history book. He was a real gentleman in spite of some major cuts our USGS editor did to some of his honest comments concerning the administration of his Puerto Rican program (see attached picture) If anyone has more information I would appreciate receiving it. Jim will be missed

The AOU announcement (abbreviated) is provided below: *JAMES (JIM) W. WILEY passed away on 19 September 2018. In 2010, the Journal of Caribbean Ornithology dedicated a volume to Jim. In the dedication, Herb Raffaele, Joe Wunderle, and Noel Snyder wrote, "Were his only contribution the monumental bibliography on West Indian birds that he published in 2000, Jim Wiley would rank among the most important ornithologists to have ever focused their attention on birds of this region." Among the many species for which he made significant contributions were several endangered species, among them the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xanthomus*), Hispaniolan Parrot (*Amazona ventralis*), Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*), and California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*). He was a founding member of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (now known as BirdsCaribbean) and served as the first editor of its newsletter, *El Pitirre*, for nine years (now the *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology*). He also served for many years as editor of publications for the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in California. In 2014, the Association of Field Ornithologists honored Jim with the Alexander F. Skutch Medal for his significant contributions to the scientific literature that have aided in the conservation of a wide range of imperiled species in the Latin American-Caribbean region. His published over a hundred substantial scientific publications, mostly on West Indian birds. One of his lasting legacies are the many students, particularly from the Caribbean region, that he mentored both formally and informally.*

If you wish to receive notice of the occasional *Retiree Association* newsletter and the *FWS News*, and other periodic retiree updates, please complete the form below. Dues payment is not required.



## Membership Application/Renewal/Update

Fill out and mail **OR** use online form and PayPal on our website at <http://www.fwsretirees.org/>

Please complete each section in **BLOCK LETTERS** using Black Ink

This is a: New Application\_ \_ Renewal\_\_\_\_\_ Information Update\_\_\_\_ (CHECK ONE)  
Treasurer, **Yes**, include my name on the mailing list. (please print)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*(To help defer the costs of printing and mailing)*

FWS Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

[at retirement]

Station / Region: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

*“The Retiree Association is an approved non-profit organization and your membership dues and gifts are tax deductible.”*

**Sign me up - I would like to support the Retiree Association      Dues**

**1st year Free;** Annual dues thereafter (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_; 5-year dues (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_; Lifetime (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_

**FWS Retirees Association,      64 Highland Ridge Drive,      Hampden, Maine 04444**  
For information or assistance, Steve Rideout, Treasurer      207-573-1935      [sgrideout64@gmail.com](mailto:sgrideout64@gmail.com)

Hidden Coves & Ancient Treasures by Sea  
Slovenia and Croatia Cruise  
Sep. 4-16, 2019



*You asked for more opportunities to travel, so here's another 2019 international opportunity that we learned a few FWS Retirees have already signed up for!*

How about an active cruise with Road Scholar to Slovenia and Croatia?

The trip is on a 36 passenger small ship. It is open now and the sooner you sign-up the greater the chance of FWS Retirees filling the ship! You book independently by using the links below. Since this is not an exclusive trip, we are not keeping a waiting list this time. If you sign up, let Sandy Tucker know so we can connect all the retirees who are cruising - [s4andyg4rry@bellsouth.net](mailto:s4andyg4rry@bellsouth.net)

**Overview:**

<https://www.road scholar.org/find-an-adventure/22587/slovenia-and-croatia-hidden-coves-and-ancient-treasures-by-sea>

**Daily Schedule:**

<https://www.road scholar.org/find-an-adventure/22587/slovenia-and-croatia-hidden-coves-and-ancient-treasures-by-sea/itinerary/>

**Program Reviews:**

<https://www.road scholar.org/find-an-adventure/22587/slovenia-and-croatia-hidden-coves-and-ancient-treasures-by-sea/reviews/>

There's an extended trip too that includes Plitvice National Park, a world heritage site.

<https://www.road scholar.org/find-an-adventure/23227/Extension-Croatia--s-Capital-and-Beautiful-Lakes>

## SOUTHEASTERN TEXAS COASTAL BIRDING

### NOT SO COMMON BIRDING DURING THE LOCAL SPRING BIRD MIGRATION

APRIL 22-26, 2019



**Monday, April 22:** Travel on your own to Winnie, TX – Drive, or fly and drive from Houston Airport to our meeting place, the Winnie Inn and RV Park. Negotiated rates for the group are \$55/night and ten rooms are being held for the group under the name of Deborah Rudis. Phone for reservations to 409-296-2947 and let them know you are with the FWS Alumni group. Dinner and orientation at 5:30pm at Al T's Seafood and Steak restaurant.

**Tuesday, April 23:** Birding Opportunities – Car-pool to Anahuac NWR for an orientation & guided bus/van tour in AM. Volunteer beach clean-up & shorebirds in PM.

**Wednesday, April 24:** Birding Opportunities – Car-pool to McFadden NWR for an orientation, 9-mile, self-guided auto tour route and individual birding in AM; then to Trinity NWR for an orientation and birding trails in PM.

**Thursday, April 25:** On Your Own. Optional visits to free events in Galveston, Houston & Beaumont. Visit the following web-sites for additional info:

[info@galvestoncvb.com](mailto:info@galvestoncvb.com) (1-888-GAL-ISLE)

[www.visithoustontexas.com/?utm\\_source=TourTexas&utm\\_medium=link](http://www.visithoustontexas.com/?utm_source=TourTexas&utm_medium=link)

(1-866-822-0245) [www.beaumontcvb.com](http://www.beaumontcvb.com)

**Friday, April 26:** Travel home - or stay longer. The hotel in Winnie will be contacted to determine if members arriving early or staying longer will still get the same discount.

Because there are so many fun and free places to visit in the southeastern Texas coastal region, travel to and from Houston is best done on your own. An additional charge is required to cover the bus/van rental for the Anahuac NWR guided vehicle tour. There are no other costs for the tours, but food and lodging will be personal responsibilities.

The above web-sites provide a plethora of other activities during your visit, so do your research to get the “best bang for your bucks!” The April dates were selected because they coincide with local bird migrations and minimize other conflicts. Daytime temperatures average in the 80's and the 60's at night. Please contact one of the following ASAP if you are interested in joining this fun event and learning more details: Shirley Karman (612-807-3209) in Ohio, Deb Rudis (907-723-9981) in Alaska, or John Gallegos (704-829-3084) in North Carolina. Texting or a phone call is preferred.