

FWS Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER



January 2020

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Annapolis Reunion.

One hundred and twenty-one retirees and guests met at the Hilton Doubletree Inn in Annapolis, Maryland November 10 to 14, 2019 for the 19th reunion of the Association. The gathering was highlighted by a 2-mile "Greenwalt Walk for Wildlife" at Broad Creek Country Park, the Association business meeting, field trips to Patuxent Research Refuge and the National Aquarium (Baltimore) and to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. We also had FWS Northeast Regional project presentations and updates, our traditional Reunion Banquet, and a meeting of the Service Heritage Committee. The venue also provided ample opportunity for visitors to explore local sites such as the United States Naval Academy. The weather was very good except for one particularly stormy day that reminded visitors that winter was coming soon to the Eastern Shore!



Our host region did an excellent job showcasing important lands, wildlife projects, and partnerships in the Chesapeake Bay area in the field trips and over 10 formal presentations. Shared successes in species recovery and habitat restoration were especially pleasing at a time when it seems conservation challenges are overwhelming. We greatly



appreciate Regional Director Wendi Webber and Regional staff dedication, and their hospitality to Service retirees. Service Director Lynn Greenwalt (1974-1981) was our guest speaker at the reunion banquet and spoke eloquently about his life and career with the Service that was both enlightening and empowering. Dr. Matt Perry (retired from Patuxent) was also recognized at the banquet with the annual Heritage Committee Award.

Planning for the next reunion was also discussed. It will be held in concert with a 150th anniversary celebration of the Service next year. Mark your calendars now for the third week in June 2021 in Spearfish, South Dakota. We hope to see you there!

2020 Board of Directors.

As reported in October, the terms of three Association Directors expired at the end of 2019. Rowan Gould opted not to run for another term but Robin West and Jim McKeivitt both sought another three-year term on the Board of Directors. And seeking to join the Board as a new member was Nancy Gloman. Since we had only the three candidates for the three expired terms, the Board decided to forego an election and simply appoint Robin, Jim, and Nancy to new three-year terms.

Also, on our first Conference Call in 2020, the Board selected officers for the year. Cindy Barry was approved as Board Chair, Robin West as Vice-Chair, Steve Rideout as Treasurer, and Jim McKeivitt as Secretary/Scribe.

Meet Your New Board Member.



New Board Member Nancy Gloman was appointed to a three-year term starting in 2020 and running through the year 2022.

Nancy retired in 2010 after 32 years of service with FWS. She was fortunate to be able to work at all

levels of the organization, in three regions, and in almost all programs. Her last position was Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services in Albuquerque, New Mexico. After retirement from the Service, she joined former director Jamie Clark at Defenders of Wildlife where she was Vice President of Field Conservation. She finally retired in 2017.

Nancy started her career in the Bloomington, Indiana, Ecological Services Field Office and moved on to become the national hydropower coordinator in Washington, DC. Her work primarily with the western regions led her to become the Assistant/Deputy Field Supervisor in the Olympia/Lacey, Washington Field Office. She helped grow the office from twenty-some people to over a hundred people, and with the merging of Ecological Services and Fisheries functions, the office became one of the first multi-function Fish and Wildlife Offices. Her second stint in Washington, DC included several division chief positions in the endangered species program and Chief of the Division of Planning and Policy in the National Wildlife Refuge System program. She also worked as Assistant Regional Director from Migratory Birds and State Programs in the Albuquerque Regional Office.

Nancy now resides in Rio Rancho, New Mexico with her daughter and two grand dogs. She spends her time hiking with the grand dogs, reading, visiting friends and taking international trips. She is a founding member of the Women in Wildlife Conservation Network which was established in 2011 to provide an opportunity for women (and men) to share information and challenges and become better leaders in the fish and wildlife conservation field.

As a Fish and Wildlife Service Retiree's Association Board member she would like to grow our membership, help identify additional opportunities for hands-on volunteering, and assist with international travel planning.

Association Business.

New Life Members. The FWS Retirees Association welcomes and thanks our two newest life members. Retirees Walt Quist of Rowe, Massachusetts and Nancy Morrissey of Bowie, Maryland are the latest to sign up as life members. Their contribution helps to support our Association activities.

We invite others to seriously consider being life members as well.

Oral Histories. John Cornely, chair of the Oral History Committee, reported that there were 37 Oral Histories taken in 2019. They did 14 interviews in Annapolis at the reunion. Mark Madison is scheduled to interview Sally Jewel in January and John will interview Bruce Babbitt and Dirk Kempthorne in D.C. in February.

He also reported a backlog of histories waiting to be transcribed at NCTC. The goal is to eliminate this backlog before the FWS 150th Anniversary celebration in 2021.

Mini-Grants Awarded. The Association receives funds via a grant to support important FWS station anniversaries and youth outdoor activities, usually associated with Service facilities and career awareness, particularly careers in the conservation field. These "mini-grants" are received and evaluated by an Association committee headed by Bob Streeter.

Recent mini-grant awards included:

Anniversary Grants - **Ding Darling NWR**, Heritage 75th anniversary celebration, assistance with memorial challenge coins.

Youth and Outdoor Activities: **Alaska NWRs**, support for binoculars to involve youth in wildlife viewing and identification and career training.

Garrison Dam NFH, support for backpacks for day campers to view wildlife and to learn outdoor skills.

Puget Sound NFH, support for fishing gear to expose youth to outdoor adventures.

Nevada, support for hiking field trips.

Hopper Mt NWR Complex, support for camping interns to promote career awareness and conservation.

Oxbow NWR, support for Urban Outreach: canoes, careers and conservation. The Oxbow NWR mini-grant exemplifies the type of things the Association is supporting. The following is a report provided back to us by the recipient:

The Friends of Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge (Friends) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) in eastern Massachusetts. The Friends received a mini grant from the Retirees Association in 2019 to host an event for underserved and underrepresented youth to

further develop their outdoor skills and build their conservation career awareness. The Friends and the Service partnered with four youth service organizations (Groundwork Lawrence, Groundwork Somerville, Groundwork Southcoast, and Lowell Spindle City Corps), Service Retiree Janet Kennedy, and a local business (Nashoba Paddlers) to host the event at the Refuge on July 17th, 2019. Sixty-three youth from the four organizations took part in the event. The youth took part in a variety of activities, including the removal of invasive flora from Blanding's turtle nesting habitat, a guided interpretive walk, a guided canoe trip on the



newly-designated National Wildlife & Scenic Nashua River, a pizza lunch, and a workshop on conservation careers with the Service. The youth participated in a variety of outdoor activities for the first time as part of this event, with many of them having no previous experience with canoeing, wildlife observation, or hand-removal of invasive flora. The youth were able to build their confidence by successfully participating in the new activities in a new environment, as many of them had never been to a National Wildlife Refuge before. The youth also built a greater awareness of the opportunities that are available to them with regards to careers in conservation. Refuge Project Leader Linh Phu and Service Retiree Janet Kennedy led a workshop on conservation careers with the Service, providing the students with an opportunity to learn from current and former Service personnel.

The grant received from the Retirees Association was essential to the success of the event, as the funds received ensured that the students were able to take part in several new activities. The grant also served as the incentive to reaching out to local Service retiree Janet Kennedy, who the Friends had never worked with before. Janet was an excellent addition to the event and the youth really enjoyed working with her during the

careers workshop. The Friends hope to replicate the success of this year's event with another one in 2020.

Happenings.

New FWS Director Confirmed. Aurelia Skipwith was confirmed in December as the new Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. She has degrees in biology, molecular genetics, and law. She began her working career with the Monsanto Chemical Company and has held several positions in crop science and corporate affairs. She



joined the Trump administration as deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks less than two years ago

Her confirmation as Director was opposed by many in the conservation community who contended that she was not legally qualified for the position. They cited US law which says a Director must be, "by reason of scientific education and experience, knowledgeable in the principles of fisheries and wildlife management". However, her background showed no fish, wildlife, habitat, or conservation experience, which they considered a prerequisite for the Directors position.

Current BLM Leadership Challenged. A coalition of 91 groups with ties to public lands, including the clothing giant Patagonia, sent a letter to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt in Late December 2019 asking that acting Bureau of Land Management (BLM) head William Pendley immediately resign or be removed from his post. They also criticized Interior for using temporary assignments to fill high-ranking posts with controversial figures who would be unlikely to earn Senate confirmation.

Pendley is well known for his opposition to federal land ownership and as a lawyer for groups fighting the protection of lands in the west. Among other work, Pendley represented several Utah counties fighting to reduce the size of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. He has authored several books that clearly display his feeling on the mission of BLM, including "War on the West: Government Tyranny on America's Frontier" and "Warriors for the West: Fighting Bureaucrats, Radical Groups, and Liberal Judges on America's Frontier."

Nevertheless, their complaints fell on deaf ears. The Department of Interior pegged the groups involved in

sending of the letter as environmental extremists and called their request as “laughable”.

President Scraps His Plans for Eliminating OPM. We reported in earlier newsletters that the Trump administration was proposing to eliminate the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), with the General Services Administration (GSA) taking over many of OPM’s programmatic policy functions and OPM’s personnel policy functions going to the Executive Office of the President.

The Washington Post reported in December that President Trump has abandoned his administration’s faltering effort to dissolve this key federal agency. OPM will remain the human resources manager of the civilian workforce of 2.1 million employees, and its functions will not — for the foreseeable future at least — be parceled out to the White House and GSA. If the plan had succeeded, it would have been the first federal department of its size to be eliminated in decades.

While many in Congress from both sides of the aisle recognized that OPM had its problems, they considered the administration’s plan as ill-conceived and unlikely to save money or shrink the federal workforce. In addition, Trump himself seemed to have soured on the current effort after seeing a local TV program, “Government Matters”, which aired several segments about the OPM proposal. He told top advisors that, with a win unlikely, the unpopular plan would bring him bad reviews. A key conservative ally of the President acknowledged that “there’s a lot of distrust related to any effort to rearrange, reform and redirect a federal asset.”

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.

Another Assault on the National Bison Range. SB 3019, legislation introduced in December by Montana Senators Steve Daines and Jon Tester, would remove the National Bison Range from the National Wildlife Refuge system as part of a water rights settlement agreement with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of the Flathead Indian Reservation. The refuge would be held in trust by Interior for management and use by the tribes and the FWS would be required to vacate the land and all its holdings and the bison contained therein. A copy of this proposed legislation is posted on our website for your information as are copies of letters in opposition from your FWS Retirees Association and the Blue Goose Alliance. Go to www.fwsretirees.org to view.

While this bill is new, the efforts by the tribes is not: they have been trying for years to gain control of this unique

piece of the National Wildlife Refuge System; the only difference is now they propose to accomplish their goal as part of a non-related water rights settlement agreement. The United States paid for this refuge **twice** and twice the tribes agreed to such payment as fair and equitable. There is absolutely no need or public benefit for the transfer of the refuge to be part of the water rights settlement agreement. Indeed, it is contrary to the public trust.

In the past, FWS Retirees Association has been steadfast in advocating for retention of the NBR as a vital piece of the National Wildlife Refuge System. We remain so and have also prepared and sent a letter in opposition to this proposed legislation: this is posted on our website as well. We strongly encourage each and every one of our members to carefully review the legislation and the letters from the Retirees Association and the Blue Goose Alliance and to voice your own opinion on this crucial topic.

NEPA Also Under Attack. On January 9, 2020, President Trump announced his proposal for significant and detrimental changes to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, the landmark legislation that requires all federal, federally funded and federally permitted projects to be reviewed for their environmental impacts and to identify alternatives to avoid such impacts. The proposed regulations were published by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in the Federal Register on January 10 with a 60-day window for comments. **Due date for comments is March 10, 2020.**

Current regulations require that all direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative impacts be analyzed. Ostensibly, the proposed changes are intended to shorten the time required to complete the studies of such projects. While that, in itself, is a worthwhile goal, it would come at the expense of longstanding requirements for thorough and informative analyses. The proposed changes include language that would exempt certain projects from environmental review altogether. Projects with “minimum federal funding or involvement” would not be required to undergo environmental analyses. These could include projects requiring federal permits or licenses or federally assisted projects. The proposed changes would also eliminate the requirement for consideration of cumulative impacts such as those related to climate change and greenhouse gas emission. The courts have long held that the requirement to evaluate cumulative consequences constituted a mandate to study the effects of allowing more planet-warming greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.

The new regulations would also require that Environmental Impact Statements on major projects be completed in two years regardless of the complexities of their impact analyses. A one-year timeframe would be required for the

more cursory Environmental Assessments which would apply to federal permits and licenses and federally funded projects. These could include offshore oil drilling and pipeline construction projects implemented by third parties. These changes have long been sought by the oil and gas industry and the building and trade industries. They are expected to be opposed by nearly all environmental groups and, because they are so sweeping in scope, will undoubtedly be challenged in court. Of particular concern is the elimination for requiring consideration of cumulative impacts and the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. The Act itself requires all impacts be assessed and no executive mandate can change that core requirement.

The proposed new regulations can be found here:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/10/2019-28106/update-to-the-regulations-implementing-the-procedural-provisions-of-the-national-environmental>

Nevada Bighorns. In mid-January, the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe teamed up to release 21 desert bighorn sheep into the hills around Pyramid Lake near the Nevada-California border. Bighorns haven't lived in that part of Nevada in 100 years. Although only a small number, these 21 sheep could be instrumental in securing the species' future. There were 17 ewes and four rams released and all the adult females are pregnant. It's expected that at least 12 of these will give birth in the spring and that the new habitat could see more than 100 sheep in the next five years.

The desert bighorn sheep is Nevada's state animal and once populated the state in the tens of thousands. But with settlement, their populations shrunk, primarily to excessive hunting and human encroachment. They were virtually eradicated from the Pyramid Lake area by the early 1900s.

Last year, the Department of Wildlife signed a resolution designating the desert bighorn as a protected species. With this re-introduction in the Pyramid Lake area, the sheep and their progeny can occupy the land without being hunted for the next five years at least.

"We've recovered a species lost in time," said Emily Hagler, biologist for the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. "It's been a main focus of the tribe for many years, recovering our fisheries and now to be able to recover a large game species is incredibly tremendous."

Alaska Oil Drilling Expansion. We've reported in past newsletters about the governments plans to open sensitive areas in Alaska to oil and gas exploration and development. In particular, we were concerned about plans, now authorized, to open portions of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on the eastern side of Alaska's north slope to leasing. In September 2019, the Bureau of Land Management released its final Environmental Impact Statement, with a preferred option to offer lease sales across

1.56 million acres of Alaska's coastal plains. Several of those leases sales are in process.

But the refuge is not the only Alaskan territory being planned for additional oil and gas drilling. Environmentally sensitive but potentially oil-rich areas of Arctic Alaska will be opened to oil development under a new Trump administration proposal to undo Obama-era protections. In late November 2019, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a draft environmental impact statement for managing the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, a 23 million-acre unit of federal land on the western side of Alaska's North Slope. That draft contains a set of options. The most aggressive would allow oil development in 81 percent of the reserve. Under the Obama-era management plan enacted in 2013 and currently in effect, about half the reserve is open to oil development and half is protected for its wildlife and cultural values. Comments were originally due to BLM within 60 days. Now, however, due to the heavy volume of comments, the due date has been extended another 15 days, until February 6, 2020. A final statement and an action decision are expected to follow.

Anti-coagulant Lawsuit. Citing very high levels of anti-coagulant rodenticides in California wildlife, Reuters News reported in mid-December that the Center for Biological Diversity notified state pesticide regulators of its intent to file suit for what the group calls a failure to adequately safeguard the San Joaquin kit fox and 11 other animals protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. They seek a total ban on the commercial use of such pesticides.

Harm to wildlife from these highly toxic compounds is most pronounced in upper trophic level predator and scavenger species, including mountain lions, bobcats, owls and condors, which feed on poisoned rodents.

More than 70% of wild animals tested in California in recent years showed exposure to the rat poisons in question - so-called second-generation anticoagulants widely used by licensed pest control operators, the group's notice said.

The products are typically used in bait boxes and work by causing the animal ingesting it to hemorrhage internally over a matter of days. The slow-acting nature of the substances then poses a secondary threat to other animals that prey on those that were poisoned.

Populations of endangered kit foxes near Bakersfield have been especially hard hit, with 87% of those examined testing positive for the super toxins. The California Fish and Wildlife Department has attributed at least five kit fox deaths to the chemicals.

The group also cited a 2018 state analysis documenting those rat poisons in over 85% of tested mountain lions, bobcats and Pacific fishers. Other protected species at stake include the northern spotted owl, the California condor, the Alameda whipsnake and four types of kangaroo rats.

California's Department of Pesticide Regulation outlawed consumer sales of the chemicals in 2014 but continued to permit their use by professional exterminators and for agricultural purposes. However, the Center for Biological Diversity maintains that the exposure in the wild remains too high and that there are over a hundred less toxic rat poisons available that are far safer to wildlife.

M-44s Regain Approval. On December 5, 2019, EPA announced that it will reauthorize the use of sodium cyanide in wildlife-killing devices known as M-44s, or "cyanide bombs". The devices are intended to target depredating wild animals that are killing livestock. A bait is used to lure in offending predators where the spring-loaded traps release deadly sodium cyanide into the mouth of any animal that tugs at the bait.

Unfortunately, M-44 traps indiscriminately kill any animal that is attracted to and attempts to eat the bait, posing a danger to non-target species including endangered species and even domestic pets. There are also several recorded instances of people being harmed. According to the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), in 2017 an Idaho teenager hiking with his dog near his home was temporarily blinded and watched his dog die after the pet grabbed an unmarked device."

EPA attempted in their "revised interim decision on sodium cyanide to mitigate the unintended consequences of the use of M-44 cyanide bombs. For example, the new interim decision requires that traps cannot be placed within 600 feet of a residence—unless the property owner has given written permission—or 300 feet from designated public paths and roads. In addition, traps must be accompanied by two elevated warning signs within 15 feet, which face in the two most likely directions of approach.

But these restrictions are certain to be ineffective in protecting non-target wildlife and threatened or endangered species. And they cannot address traps placed illegally or in violation of the planned restrictions. To truly protect humans and wildlife from these poisonous contraptions, we need a nationwide ban, says the CBD. Such a ban would have the overwhelming support of the public. An analysis conducted by the CBD and Western Environmental Law Center found that more than 99.9 percent of the roughly 22,400 people who submitted comments regarding the previous proposal to reauthorize cyanide bombs asked the EPA to ban them. They firmly believe there are safer alternatives that will also be more effective in achieving the goal.

Red Wolf Update. The Associated Press reported that the fight over the critically endangered red wolf has returned to the courts as North Carolina's governor sought immediate help for the dozen or so remaining in the wild and federal biologists planned to transfer wolves into the recovery area for the first time in years.

In late November, Gov. Roy Cooper sent Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt a sharply worded letter warning that, with no more than 14 known wolves in the wild, "the American red wolf is on the brink of extinction." He noted that in 2019, no litters of red wolf pups were born in the wild for the first time in the history of the reintroduction program.

Red wolves once occupied much of the Eastern U.S. but were driven to near extinction by trapping, hunting and habitat loss before they were reintroduced to North Carolina in 1987. Their range is now limited to five North Carolina counties. Another 200 live in captive breeding programs.

Cooper wrote in his November letter that "changes in management strategies over the last several years have diminished the wild population to a dangerous level. This population decline has occurred despite the availability of proven conservation strategies, such as coyote sterilization and captive wolf reintroductions."

The letter follows a lawsuit filed earlier in 2019 by the Center for Biological Diversity seeking to force the Fish and Wildlife Service to commit to a deadline for a new recovery plan. Another lawsuit by the Southern Environmental Law Center sought FWS documents pertaining to red wolf decision-making.

The Fish and Wildlife Service responded by issuing a statement in November saying it plans to begin updating the recovery plan in 2020 by appointing a panel of scientists to advise them on the process. "Although an updated recovery plan is not yet in place, the Service has engaged in recovery efforts and continues to do so," the statement said. At a December meeting attended by the litigants, FWS indicated it planned to move two wolves into the recovery area from a Florida refuge to promote breeding and a third wolf, a male, will be moved within the North Carolina recovery area to pair with a female.

Moving wolves from Florida could help diversify the wild gene pool in North Carolina.

Records show the red wolf population has declined sharply since the government abandoned proven recovery methods. After red wolves were reintroduced to North Carolina, the wild population grew beyond 100 and remained stable through 2012. Wolf numbers were bolstered by releases of captive-born pups and sterilization of coyotes that competed for space. But those tactics were halted by FWS in 2015 amid pressure from conservative politicians and landowners who deemed wolves a nuisance.

The most recent round of litigation over the wolves comes more than a year after environmental groups won a November 2018 court victory when a federal judge ruled the Fish and Wildlife Service had violated the Endangered Species Act by failing to effectively conserve the species. The agency backed off of a plan to shrink the territory from

its five-county area and said shortly after the ruling that it would review its red wolf management strategy. But in the year since, the agency has said little about its long-term plans. This lack of action is what spurred the most recent round of lawsuits.

"It's just so frustrating that they've done so very little at the same time that the population numbers are plummeting. It's a really scary situation out there. We could see the extinction of the red wolf," said Collette Adkins, an attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity who's suing over the lack of a new red wolf plan. "They've had a court order telling them to do more, and in fact, it seems like they're doing less. It's really frustrating."

Washington Wolf Conflicts. The presence of endangered gray wolves in northeastern Washington state has sparked the same conflicts that have arisen in several other places where wolves and livestock meet. And as has happened in other places, passions run high between wolf advocates and some local ranchers who graze their cattle on public lands where wolves make their home. Washington's population of gray wolves had increased to about 126 by the end of 2018 and with their arrival, livestock depredations have occurred. No surprise there.

Most ranchers seem willing to learn to co-exist with the wolves, which have emigrated over the past decade from packs in Idaho to the east. To prevent or minimize losses to livestock, many ranches routinely avail themselves of the use of state-contracted range riders to ward off wolves. Other methods include not turning cattle loose on public land allotments for grazing until fawns and elk calves are born in the area, providing wolves with a wild food source. They also are likely to avoid heavily forested areas where wolves are more likely to be found instead keeping their cattle in more open areas where they can be monitored. Cattle bells have also been shown to be effective as have the use of herding dogs. It is also important to remove dead or ailing cows that attract predators.

When Washington ranchers do find that gray wolves have attacked their cattle, they can call the state wildlife agency, which has killed 31 wolves identified as livestock predators since 2012 under a program intended to save vulnerable livestock.

But not all ranchers are inclined to coexist with their wild wolf neighbors. One ranch, in particular, exemplifies the problem and the conflict. That ranch, located in northeast Washington near the border with Idaho and just south of the Canadian border, has grazed its cattle on federal land since World War II and they do not take preventative measures to reduce or eliminate wolf depredations. Wildlife Department documents show that qualified range riders have never patrolled this ranches allotment where attacks occurred and have declined offers of state-funded range riders who could help protect their cattle.

Environmentalists say the ranch not only fails to take preventive steps to safeguard its herds, but in some cases also brings on the bloodshed by leaving cattle near known wolf dens. They also accuse them of keeping salt blocks near a wolf den, causing cattle to swarm around it.

It's not coincidental that 26 of the 31 wolves eliminated by the Wildlife Department were taken from this one ranch's public lands allotment.

Operators of this ranch deny goading wolves to attack but are vociferous about their rights. They believe the problem is clearly the wolves, not the ranch. "I don't feel that we have room for wolves in Washington state," said a fourth-generation rancher in the family that owns this particular ranch. He says his family will continue to oppose what they see as a broader agenda of wolf advocates to use the reintroduction of wolves in the West as a plot to end grazing on public land, much as environmentalists used protection of the threatened spotted owl in the 1990s to preserve Northwest forests.

Wolf advocates see them as an extreme example of ranchers abusing public land privileges, and the wildlife agency as pandering to cattle producers and hunters by slaughtering animals it's supposed to protect. "Year after year, they reportedly lose cattle to wolves while neighboring producers are able to effectively protect their herds," said Claire Loeb Davis, an attorney for wolf advocates suing the state wildlife department. She views the wildlife department as having been "captured" by ranching and hunting interests. The agency counts on revenue from hunting and fishing license fees, which depend significantly on continued access to private ranch land, she noted.

It seems that both sides are firmly entrenched in their positions and that, unless each is willing to seek some mutual accommodation, the conflict will continue to the detriment of both and will result in more wolves being exterminated unnecessarily.

Miscellaneous.

Tell Congress to Pass WEP Reform Legislation in 2020.

Once again, as in the past several years, Congress has in front of it bi-partisan legislation to get rid of the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, two provisions that reduce the benefits otherwise entitled to federal retirees that have earned a government pension and are eligible also eligible to receive Social Security benefits. The GPO reduces the amount one is eligible to receive for unearned social security benefits (e.g. spousal benefits) by two thirds the amount of their federal pension, very often resulting in no benefit at all. The WEP reduces the amount one receives in social security benefits for earned credits, usually by more than half. These reductions were imposed during the Reagan presidency. To date, there has been no real movement on these.

Bills introduced this year include:

H.R. 141/S.521 would repeal both the GPO and the WEP.

H.R. 3934 would reform the WEP for affected individuals by providing a \$100 monthly rebate on their social security benefit and \$50 for an affected spouse.

H.R.4540 would reform the WEP for affected individuals by providing a \$150 monthly rebate on their social security benefit.

Both H.R. 3934 and H.R. 4540 would bring relief to more than 1.8 million Social Security beneficiaries. And both change the WEP calculation moving forward.

These efforts to correct a financial injustice to those affected by the GPO and WEP have stalled long enough. It's time to **Tell Congress to Pass WEP Reform Legislation This Year.** Action on these are one of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association's (NARFE)'s top priorities in 2020. So visit NARFE's Legislative Action Center today to [send a message](#) to your representative urging him or her to support a bipartisan solution to WEP reform.

Retiree Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). CSRS retirees and Social Security beneficiaries will receive a 1.6% COLA this year. As you probably well know, this will do little to help the millions of federal retirees to cope with increased costs in their retirement, particularly their health care costs. The COLA is calculated using the Consumer Price Index for Wage Earners (CPI-W) which measures the living costs for goods and services used by working people. However, retirees and seniors in general spend much more on health-care related items. These costs are measured much more accurately by the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E). On average the CPI-E is 0.3% more than the CPI-W.

There is bi-partisan legislation now in Congress - H.R. 1553: The Fair COLA for Seniors Act of 2019 - to address this situation by requiring the federal government to use the CPI-E in calculating the cost of living adjustments for retirement benefits instead of the CPI-W. Let your representative hear from you on this if you want it to be heard and to pass.

Trump Considering Entitlement Cuts? While at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in January, President Trump indicated that he will consider cuts to social safety-net programs like Medicare to reduce the federal deficit if he wins a second term, an apparent shift from his 2016 campaign promise to protect funding for such entitlements. This is due to the ballooning federal budget deficit watch that resulted from the sweeping tax cuts and additional government spending under his watch. He suggested that curbing spending on Medicare, the government health care program for the elderly, was a possibility.

“We’re going to look,” he said.

The president has already proposed cuts for some safety-net programs. His last budget proposal called for a total of \$1.9 trillion in cost savings from mandatory safety-net programs, like Medicaid and Medicare. It also called for spending \$26 billion less on Social Security programs, including a \$10 billion cut to the Social Security Disability Insurance program.

Spending on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid is expected to cost the federal government more than \$30 trillion through 2029, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

FEHB Premiums Increase Significantly in 2020.

Premiums for the federal Employees Health Benefits program rose by an average 5.6 percent for participants in 2020. This is a relatively large increase compared to the 1.3 percent increase in 2019. The governments share of the contribution for 2020 increased by an average of 3.2 percent.

Fun Facts.

Mark Madison, the Service Historian, has a goal to collect at least 150 Fun Facts or Interesting Facts about Service Programs and/or its employees to celebrate the FWS 150th Anniversary. If you have any, please send them to Deborah Holle, at miamibig99@aol.com. If you aren't sure your Fun Fact or Interesting Fact will work, please submit them anyway. And they are very interested in finding out about family ties in the Service as well. If you have a relative you followed into the Service or vice versa, please send Deborah that information. She looks forward to hearing from you!

A Mobile Ecological Services Office. Some folks may think of Clint Eastwood or *Starksy & Hutch* where the iconic Ford Gran Torino is mentioned, but the Fish and Wildlife Service has its own Gran Torino story. When Ecological Services (then River Basin Studies) went to open its first office on Chesapeake Bay in Annapolis, Maryland in 1972, it didn't have office space. The first biologist assigned to Annapolis, Marvin Moriarty, also didn't have a government vehicle available to him. So he ran the office out of the trunk of his green 1972 Grand Torino and stayed in hotels. This went on for about six months before GSA finally located and rented space for a real, honest-to-goodness office. Marvin eventually became the Regional Director of the Northeast Region (2003 to 2011). The Chesapeake Bay Field Office is now located in a modern office building in Annapolis, Maryland. — **Submitted by Karen Mayne.**

Follow up to the above: When all this happened, Marvin was a very new GS-7 biologist who was soon joined in this adventure by Jim McKevitt, then a GS-9 and trying like hell to get out of ES and go west. Marv and Jim flipped a coin to see who would work what area: Marv got Chesapeake

Bay and Jim got all the rest of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia.

Within 6 months, the first Field Supervisor for Annapolis, Larry Shanks, moved up from Raleigh, North Carolina and got things underway. Within a week of Larry's arrival, we had the key to an office, dog-robbed some furniture from a GSA warehouse in Virginia and set up shop.

One of the first things Jim said to Larry when he arrived was that he (Jim) was out of there the first chance he got; Larry's reply – Give me six months and I'll change your mind. Jim spent the remainder of his career in ES and loved it.

Did You Know? In the 150 years of what is now the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, there has been only one Chief of Anadromous Fish and that was Jerry C. Grover. That came about at the completion of the Fishery Resources Program *Statement of Responsibilities and Role*, January 31, 1985 and a general 1985-86 reorganization within the Washington Office. While then current Director, Robert A. Jantzen, was attempting to show support for Fisheries and highlight its Statement's emphasis on interjurisdictional anadromous fish, the position was in reality a paper only position without any supportive operational authority or fiscal resources. It was abandoned when the incumbent transferred to a supervisory Regional Office position.

Submitted by Deborah Holle.

The FWS Moon Mission. Did you know there was only one Service person ever permanently assigned to support the biological aspects of NASA's space program? He is Jim Warren who had truly a one of a kind job and fabulous experience with the Service.



A fisheries program graduate from Oregon State University, Jim began his Service career in the Fisheries program at the Little White Salmon NFH. His 38-year career was focused within the very limited specialty of integrated fish health and he was one of a very small cadre of individuals in the U.S. with a grasp of the total biology and management of fish health issues as a true scientific fish health professional.

It was the Spring of 1969 when he completed his assignment in D.C. as part of Interior's DMDP, when he learned that he had been selected to be project leader for the Aquatic Animal Testing Section at NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center south of Houston. This involved the study of moon rock samples brought back by the Apollo XI and XII missions.

His work with NASA was to be carried out at the Lunar Receiving Laboratory (LRL), a remarkable, state-of-the-art facility. This involved the tightly controlled exposure to

lunar material of 11 aquatic animal species ranging from paramecium up to planarian worms, oysters, shrimp, and two species of fish. Critical to this work was the maintenance of healthy stock cultures of those animals. Then, during exposure tests he had to also maintain them successfully behind the biological barrier inside of Class-3 cabinetry, an extreme level of isolation and containment. This is a glove-box cabinetry system that makes it quite difficult to work because you are hindered by the isolation equipment and by having to pass everything from one gloved hand to another inside a sealed cabinet system.

The LRL was specifically designed to contain the spacecraft and its contents that came back from the moon. And there was a special facility to house the astronauts and debrief them for 21 days while they were in quarantine. The astronauts also served as human guinea pigs, exposed to lunar material and endlessly examined by doctors.

The third part of the LRL was a huge containment facility for the examination of lunar samples. Geologists had a big lab, the agriculture people exposed all different kinds of plants, public health folks exposed mice and Japanese quail, and Jim's aquatic animal test section had his 11 aquatic animal species. The whole idea was that researchers of all disciplines had a totally safe place to examine the characteristics of the samples that were brought back from the moon to assure the samples were safe to release out to scientists for more detailed studies. And the protocol was that you had to have your animals in isolation showing that they could live without incident for 21 days and then you had them exposed for 28 days – each test was a seven-week process.

The plan was to do the first three missions and hopefully by that time there would be overwhelming evidence to prove whether there would be anything harmful to earth and mankind.

Submitted by Jerry C. Grover.

Travel & Leisure.

Interested in a Volunteer Vacation in the Bahamas?

Matt Perry advises us of an exciting opportunity for those interested in shorebird habitat conservation and restoration and who would enjoy a live-aboard schooner experience in the Bahamas.

Conservian Bahaman is looking for volunteers to help to protect beach-nesting birds, nests & young. They are seeking weekly crews of 10 enthusiastic volunteers for their Bahamas shorebird habitat conservation program in May 2020 aboard their 75ft research schooner. Volunteers should choose one week or more. They are:

Week 1: May 3-10 - Ambergris Cay, Joulter Cays & S. Andros (Nassau Int Apt)

Week 2: May 10-17 - Exumas & Great Exuma (Nassau Int Apt/Exuma Int. Apt)

Week 3: May 17-24 - Cat Island, Little San Salvador, Eleuthera (Exuma Int. Apt/Nassau Int. Apt)

Each week includes 7 nights aboard the schooner.



Crews will fly to the Bahamas each week to designated airports for shuttle transport to the schooner. All trips include bunks, onboard meals, water, & ground transportation associated with project. A valid passport is required. **Trip cost is \$1750 per person/week** but Matt says mention his name for a \$100 discount. Airfare & insurance are not included.

Check their website Coastalbird.org for more info and a short video. To join one of their conservation pirate crews contact Margo Zdravkovic at MargoZ@Coastalbird.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.

Ray Charles Erickson (1918 - 2019) Ray Erickson, an Elective Member of the American Ornithologists' Union (now American Ornithological Society), died August 16, 2019, in Mt. Angel, Oregon. He was a long-time employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service whose early work on the Whooping Cranes and other endangered species contributed significantly to the publication in 1968 of *Rare and Endangered Fish and Wildlife of the United States* (the "Red Book") by a USFWS committee on which he also served. Publication of the Red Book spurred public opinion, which in turn led to the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973.

Ray was born to Isaac and Martha Erickson January 30, 1918, in St. Peter, Minnesota. His parents fostered his early interest in nature, and a professor at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Jacob Uhler, introduced him to his son, Francis (Fran), who was working for the Bureau of Biological Survey in Washington, D.C. Fran Uhler became an important mentor for young Ray as well as a life-long friend.

Ray remained in St. Peter for undergraduate study at Gustavus Adolphus earning an A.B. in biology in 1941. He interrupted his undergraduate studies to spend a year at the Bureau of Biological Survey working with the Alabama Polytechnic Unit on analyses of food habits. During this time, Fran



and Ray made frequent trips throughout the Chesapeake Bay area with other biologists who had similar interests in plants and wildlife. After graduation from Gustavus Adolphus, he enrolled in a graduate program in wildlife management at Iowa State University, where he was employed as a technician identifying stomach contents of red foxes for the Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. He earned an M.S. in 1942 with his thesis research on the breeding habits of the Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon.

Pursuit of further graduate work was interrupted by World War II, where Ray served in the U.S. Naval Reserve from April 1943 until January 1946, primarily in the South Pacific as a boat division deck officer for amphibious landing craft. After the war, he returned to Iowa State to earn his Ph.D. in 1948.

Following completion of his doctorate, Ray began his long career with the USFWS by returning to the Malheur Refuge as a wildlife management biologist, conducting wildlife inventories and studying stock grazing/waterfowl nesting relationships and other management issues. In 1955, he moved to Falls Church, Virginia, to head habitat management on 9-11 federal refuges. Two years later he transferred to the Division of Wildlife Research as research staff specialist for wetland ecology. It was at that time he became concerned with the serious plight of the Whooping Crane and other declining species. He devised a program of research on avian propagation designed to identify the species' needs and determine measures necessary for their recovery and management. That program was described in his most frequently cited paper, "A Federal Research Program for Endangered Wildlife" He was a charter member of FWS's Endangered Species Committee and served as Assistant Director of Endangered Wildlife Research at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center for 15 years until his retirement in 1980.

Following retirement Ray moved back to Oregon and remained involved in conservation efforts, serving as a member of the Governor's Oregon Natural Heritage Advisory Committee.

During his career Ray published over 35 scientific and semi-popular articles. These included papers describing his work on the ecology of the Canvasback and others on his conservation work with the Whooping Crane and other species. At the age of 90 he wrote a memoir entitled *From Ladybugs to Whooping Cranes* documenting his interesting life and career. Although unpublished it is available to the public through the archives maintained at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

In addition to the recognition he received from the AOU, Ray was honored for his work with endangered species when he was awarded the National Wildlife Federation's Special Conservation Award in 1975, the Zoological Society of San Diego's Wildlife Conservation Award in 1979, and the Whooping Crane Conservation Association's Award in 1980. Gustavus Adolphus presented him with its Distinguished Alumni Award in 1976. Ray was elected to membership in the Washington Biologists' Field Club in 1956 and served as its Secretary for several years in the 1960s and as President from 1967 to 1970.

Ray was pre-deceased by his first wife married Helen (Jo) Haworth in 1953 and second wife Grace M. Cranor, who died in 2015. Ray is survived by three children.

Arnold Dale Kruse (1935 - 2017). *We reported on this death in our October 2019 newsletter but did not have information for an obituary. A link to the following was provided by Dave Trauger.*

Arnold Kruse passed away on February 6, 2017, in Jamestown, North Dakota. Arnold was born at home in Abbott, Iowa, on December 10, 1935, to Thomas and Kate Kruse. He graduated from Steamboat Rock High School in 1954 and went on to earn a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Management from Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Arnold served two years in the US Army, deployed one year in Korea. From an early age he enjoyed nature and hunting, passing on this enjoyment to his descendants.

Arnold's career with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife took him to National Wildlife Refuges in Michigan, Nebraska, and then to North Dakota, where he met and married his wife Beulah in 1965. Arnold was the Refuge Manager at Arrowood National Wildlife Refuge for several years before becoming a Wildlife Research Biologist at the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center. Jamestown, North Dakota. He was involved with a wide variety of research projects related to captive propagation for waterfowl and prairie grouse and habitat management for nesting ducks, including evaluations of controlled burning and grazing. He retired from the Northern Prairie in 1995. After his retirement he worked part time for the North Dakota Natural Resource Trust.

Arnold was a member of the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church of rural Gackle, North Dakota. With his wife of 51

years, they raised two daughters, Kelly (Steven) Redmann and Cameo (James) Homola, and three sons, Casey (Christine), Carter (Lora) and Kenyon (Yvonne). Also surviving are twenty-one grandchildren, three great grandchildren, three sisters, and two sisters-in-law. Preceding Arnold in death were his parents, four brothers, and two brothers-in-law.

Deborah Jane Long (1957 – 2019). Deborah Long of Amherst, Massachusetts died on November 29, 2019 at the age of 62. Daughter of Wesley S. and Dorothy M. Long, Deb was born on June 11, 1957; Deb grew up on Lloyd Neck, Huntington, New York, and attended Cold Spring Harbor H.S. where she developed a passion for nature and the outdoors. A graduate of Colorado State University (1979) with a BS in Biology and Zoology, and with an MBA and Teaching Certificate in Applied Science from the University of Colorado, Deb commenced her career as an environmental scientist and middle school teacher. Her 27-year career with the US Fish and Wildlife Service started at Denver's Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge in 1992, followed by assignments at Monomoy NWR in Massachusetts, a deputy project leader at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR in New Jersey, and the project leader of the Long Island NWR Complex in New York before moving to the Regional Office in Hadley, Massachusetts. She retired as Division Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System in FWS' Northeast Region where she served from 2009 through 2019, providing field support to 75 refuges in 13 New England and Mid-Atlantic states protecting over 550,000 acres of habitat. In June 2019, Deb was granted the Department of the Interior's Superior Service Award. Passionate about protecting and preserving the environment, Debbie was a mentor to many and fostered a collaborative team environment. She was a respected leader, advisor, and colleague whose impact is lasting and whose spirit has touched many who will miss her friendship, integrity, strength, kindness and her humble and unending sense of service and boundless dedication to family, friends and care for the environment.

Deb is survived by her loving and devoted daughter, Anna; sister, Barbara; nephew, Chris; niece, Kate; and loyal dog Harriett. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at the Newman Center, University of Massachusetts, on December 14, 2019.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to: Long Island Bird Conservation Program c/o Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center, Oyster Bay, NY 11771, or Hospice of the Fisher Home in Amherst.

Jane (Joanne) Dalebout Meadows (1941 – 2019). Joanne Meadows, former Administrative Officer in the Fisheries Division of the Region 3 Regional Office left this life on August 22, 2019 at the age of 78. Her career, primarily at U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, was a source of pride. She

was preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Clara Dalebout, and her brother, Larry. She is survived by her two children, a son-in-law, and a sister. A Celebration of Life was held Saturday, November 16th at the Cremation Society of Minnesota in Edina. In lieu of flowers, donations to In lieu of flowers or gifts, please consider donating to a charity that she supported such as: [Leukemia & Lymphoma Society](#), [Como Park Zoo and Conservatory](#), [Open Arms of Minnesota](#) or one of your own favorites.

Chris Ann Clayton Nehrling (1950 – 2109). Chris Nehrling, wife of retiree Rick Nehrling and herself a former FWS employee, passed away on October 16, 2019 at home surrounded by family and friends after a courageous 10-year battle with Alzheimer's at the age of 69.



Chris was born on August 19, 1950 in Lenoir City, Tennessee and raised there on a small family farm before moving to Cleveland, Tennessee. Chris graduated from high school in 1968 after which she attended Tennessee Tech University and earned a BS in Wildlife Management in 1972 and a MS in Biology in 1974.

After graduation from college, Chris accepted a job as a GS-4

Biological Aid in the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Raleigh, North Carolina, River Basin Studies Office. After a few months working in the Raleigh Office, Chris was promoted and transferred into a GS-5 Fisheries Biologist position at the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery in Suches, Georgia and soon after that promoted to GS-7. At that time, Chris was the first woman to be assigned into a Fisheries Biologist position on any of the Service's National Fish Hatcheries, trailblazing the way for more women to enter this field. And although small (she was 5'2" and barely 115 pounds soaking wet) she had the grit and heart to be able to manage the never-ending physical demands of everyday hatchery work

Within a very few years, Chris resigned from the Service so that she could follow her passion – teaching. She taught Biology, Microbiology, and Environmental Education at Cleveland State Community College, Cleveland, Tennessee and was a long-time substitute teacher in the Rockdale County School System, Georgia. She also worked as a respiratory therapist at hospitals in Tennessee and West Virginia.

Five years after she left the Service, a mutual friend and fellow FWS employee, Arnold Rakes, re-introduced Chris to Rick Nehrling who she first met at Chattahoochee when

both were married to other people. Now, both divorced, they hit it off and have been ever since.

Chris was a sweet, tender-hearted, kind, gentle, patient, loyal and fun-loving mother, grandmother, wife, sister, aunt, and friend. She had a quick wit and a fabulous, but sometimes wicked, sense of humor. She was extremely smart and had a huge vocabulary that made her virtually unbeatable at Scrabble. She enjoyed capturing moments in pictures and home movies and became the family's best photographer and videographer. She loved animals. All of their dogs and cats were animals that at one time had been abandoned that Chris picked them up and brought home.

Chris was an accomplished musician who taught her daughters and others how to play the piano. She was also an extremely gifted and creative artisan who excelled as a tole painter and stenciler. She sold her creations under "Crafts by Mountain Mama" at nationally renowned Craft Festivals such as the Mountain Heritage Arts and Crafts Festival in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia as well as in shops in Occoquan and Manassas, Virginia and Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Left to carry on her legacy is her husband of 38 years Rick; her beloved daughters, Dr. Adrienne Edwards (Brian) and Erica Nehrling; and her beautiful grandchildren Jensen, Barrett and Aveline Edwards. She is also survived by her long-time friend Donna Noe; her brother Ben Benton (Lisa) and her nephew Benjy Benton and her niece Kimberly Johnson-Welch; as well as great nephews and nieces and numerous cousins. She was preceded in death by her mother Imogene Hughett Benton, her father Manuel H. Clayton and her sister Mary Kay Johnson. Chris was cremated and buried at the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton, Georgia.

James Leigh Ruos (1934 – 2019). James Leigh Ruos, who led a life of birds and pursued the sport of kings, died



December 29 at his home in Paris, Virginia.

From his perch beneath Ashby Gap, a wind crevasse in the Blue Ridge Mountains marked by spectacular sunsets and stunningly bright star-scapes, Ruos slipped his earthly bonds at home, beneath the waxing crescent moon in the early hours of a Sunday morning, his beloved wife Mary Carlson Ruos and his faithful dog "Obi" at his side.

A dedicated field biologist with a taciturn demeanor, a wry sense of humor, and an ever-present pipe, Ruos, 85, served in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 21 years, at an eventful time when conservation was maturing into the modern environmental movement.

He joined the Federal agency in 1966, after spending his early career studying sharp-tailed grouse and their Midwestern grassland habitat for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Ruos rotated among the small Minnesota towns of Marshall, Warroad, and Mandelia, a “Lake Wobegon”-like hamlet which still bills itself as “The Pride of The Prairie.”

Much of Ruos’ early Federal career was spent at the Patuxent National Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. Revered as the “mother church” of professional wildlife research and scientific investigation, it was at Patuxent that Ruos in the late 1960s helped pioneer early efforts to captive-breed peregrine falcons, using birds live-trapped at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, an ultimately unsuccessful experiment that nevertheless contributed to scientists’ growing understanding of the DDT-imperiled raptor.

As a migratory game bird specialist, his professional focus was on the management of mourning doves, but also included raptors and neotropical migratory bird species that summer in the United States and winter in the Caribbean and Latin America, such as warblers. Ruos was the first to propose the novel concept of a “debt-for-nature” swap, by which forgiveness for foreign debt might be offered to other countries in the hemisphere in return for habitat protection for migratory birds.

Born in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, in 1934, the son of Clifton and Martha Ruos, he graduated from Gettysburg College with a B.S. in biology in 1956. He did additional graduate work in wildlife biology at the University of Wyoming and at Humboldt State College in California.

An avid practitioner of the “royal sport” of falconry from the age of 12 and for the next 60 years, Ruos worked with falconers worldwide to support their sport, to restore imperiled populations of birds-of-prey, and to mentor young people entering the ancient art centered on the inexplicable, largely mystical, bond between handler and bird.

And it was falconry, ironically, that prompted Ruos’ departure from the Fish and Wildlife Service, which, in 1984, had targeted what was alleged as an international black market in Federally-protected birds like Arctic gyrfalcons and endangered peregrine falcons. “Operation Falcon,” a 3-year undercover “sting” operation, marked the zenith in the agency’s increasing-assertive law enforcement program, from its traditional role as “duck cop” enforcer of domestic waterfowl hunting regulations into broader investigations into worldwide trafficking in protected animals and plants.

“Operation Falcon” — still-controversial to this day — brought Federal agents into sharp internal agency disagreement between its law enforcement division and its migratory bird conservationists. The crackdown on some

30 individuals in 14 states resulted in both convictions and acquittals, roiled the close-knit world of falconry, and triggered later Congressional oversight into actions by Federal wildlife agents.

As a Federal scientist and a falconer within the same agency that conducted the acrimonious investigation, Ruos uneasily straddled multiple, competing priorities, but earned himself the reputation as a “thorn in the ass of law enforcement” for questioning what some contended was overly-zealous law enforcement and for challenging beliefs that falconry, itself, was harming the survival of rare birds-of-prey. “The attacks on his professional reputation and integrity haunted him,” remembers one of his children.

Disillusioned by the political fallout from “Operation Falcon,” frustrated by declines in the funding of programs to benefit hemispheric migratory birds, and wearied by a daily, 2-hour commute between downtown Washington, D.C. and his Howard County, Maryland, home, Ruos later opted for early retirement. The bird scientist then imaginatively re-invented himself by pursuing another lifelong avocation ... involving jaybirds of a different stripe.

Shedding his former bureaucratic trappings, Ruos endeavored to help others to shed theirs. He founded the Caribbean Islands Travel Service, a gateway to recreation on the beaches of Guadeloupe, St. Martin, and other Caribbean islands. Of his resort booking business, aimed at affluent, middle-aged North American vacationers, the *Baltimore Sun* wrote in 1991, “Jim Ruos found his niche on a St. Martin beach where clothing is optional.” Ruos became a U.S. representative for a major naturist resort on St. Martin and handled reservations for 13 other properties. In addition to his wife, Mary, Ruos is survived by three children, Carolyn (and Bruce) Thomas of Shepherdstown, West Virginia; Jennifer (and Brian) Comeaux of Covington, Louisiana; and James (and Julie) Ruos of Miami, Florida. He is also survived by seven grandchildren, Christian and Carl Thomas, Bradley and Christopher Comeaux, and Ian, Madison, and Sydney Ruos; by one brother, John (and Lee) Okie of Jacksonville, Florida; and by several nieces and nephews.

His family regards his commitment to them and to the appreciation of nature and wild places as Ruos’ greatest legacy. Services to honor that legacy are planned for a later date. Memorial donations may be made in memory of Jim Ruos to Blue Ridge Hospice of Winchester, Virginia (brhospice.org) or to The Peregrine Fund’s Archives of Falconry at the World Center for Birds-of-Prey in Boise, Idaho (peregrinefund.org)

Tribute contributed by David Klinger

Others Who Have Passed.

Often we learn of others in the fish and wildlife and conservation communities who are not FWS retirees but whose passing may be of concern to our members.

Ray Arnett. Former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Ray Arnett, passed away peacefully at the age of 95 on June 20, 2019 following a brief stay at Creekside Care and Rehabilitation Center in Stockton, California.

Ray was born June 14, 1924 on the U.S. Marine Corps base at Quantico, VA. He was an avid sportsman, conservationist, outdoorsman, proud patriot and defender of the Second Amendment.

He served under Gov. Ronald Reagan as Director of the California Department of Fish and Game from 1968-1975. In 1980 he was appointed by then President Reagan as, Assistant Interior Secretary overseeing the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ray served two years as President of the National Wildlife Federation and was affiliated with many conservation organizations including the California Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, Game Conservation International, National Wild Turkey Foundation, Ruff Grouse Society, United Conservation Alliance, Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, and the World Wilderness Congress.

Ray served in the Marine Corps in the South Pacific during World War II where he received a field commission. After the Japanese surrender in 1945 he was sent to V-12 Officer's Candidate School at the University of Southern California where he received a 2nd Lieutenant commission and completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in petroleum engineering and geology.

He was recalled to active duty by the Marine Corps during the Korean conflict, serving from 1950-53, and was honorably discharged with the rank of Captain.

For 20 years Arnett was employed as an exploration petroleum geologist for Richfield Oil Corporation and led a team of scientists who drilled the first oil and gas well on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula.

He is survived by his former wife, Virginia Elaine Miller-Arnett and their four children, Charlene Louise Parkinson (Jim); G. Ray "Chip" Arnett, Jr. (Shirley); Sharon Elaine Taylor (Dave); and James Randall Arnett (Natalie); as well as six granddaughters, three grandsons and ten great grandchildren, who provided him an "enormous amount of pride and joy."

Funeral services were private and he was laid to rest with military honors at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, in Point Loma, San Diego.

Bonnie Jean Spear. Bonnie Spear (age 77), the wife of former Assistant Director and California/Nevada Operations Office Manager Mike Spear, passed away on Thursday, December 19, 2019 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She had been in failing health for several years.

Mike announced that Bonnie's memorial service was held at St Francis Cathedral Basilica in Santa Fe on January 3rd, 2020 followed by a reception. For those who wish to contribute in her memory, in lieu of flowers, Mike asks that you to consider contributing to her favorite charity, the United Way of Santa Fe County (www.uwsfc.org) of which she supported charities for children. If you would like to send a card, Mike's address is 3926 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87505.