



Thinking of Thanking



A bull moose resting in Chugach State Park from our 40th anniversary photo contest. Photo by Donna Dewhurst

The holiday season is upon us, and with Thanksgiving practically at our door, it is an appropriate time to thank all of you for all that you do in our parks. You put your heart and soul into Alaska State Parks, working odd hours, sacrificing summer holidays to work on those days when nearly every Alaskan is playing in our parks, working extra hours in the summer instead of playing in order to finish boat launches, parking pads, campgrounds, and more before the snow flies, and using limited resources to the best of your abilities to meet the needs of our parks and park visitors.

Whether you are protecting a park's historical or cultural resources, teaching school kids about boating safety, inspiring a new generation of park stewards and advocates, rescuing stranded hikers, designing and building better and safer park infrastructure, administering grants, or mapping

trails, your time and efforts are appreciated more than you know.

Most of us hear complaints more often than encouragement or recognition and it can be easy to become discouraged, but don't be, despite any difficulties and setbacks, you are doing an incredible job. As part of the Alaska State Parks team and as a park user, I see, use, and appreciate the results of your efforts.

You go above and beyond the call of duty—thank you. The new year is only a month away, let's all resolve to do even better next year!



Festival Time in Haines

After an unseasonably warm fall in Southeast Alaska, weather patterns have shifted and produced a week of sunshine and cold temperatures for the Alaska Bald Eagle Festival in Haines. The week-long festival includes keynote speakers, educational programs, fundraising events, and the release of two eagles back into the wild. The festival is sponsored by the American Bald Eagle Foundation, a non-profit group based in Haines, which focuses on the study and protection of the American Bald Eagle. One keynote speaker, University of California Santa Cruz PhD student Rachel Wheat, shared her research on Chilkat Valley bald eagle movement.

Rachel's current research examines how Pacific salmon impact the behavioral and spatial ecology of terrestrial predators, such as bald eagles. Below is a summary of her research project.

"My eagle research focuses on the links between salmon availability and regional movement patterns of bald eagles. Although it is well known that salmon are an important food resource for eagles, variability in eagle movements has restricted our understanding of the broader geospatial influence of salmon runs on eagle populations. Details on fine-scale movement patterns of eagles in many regions are lacking, and it is unknown how closely eagles track salmon availability across the landscape."

"Eagles can capitalize on salmon resource variability within multiple river systems by moving among different spawning habitats, but it is unknown how individual eagles allocate their foraging effort. The objectives of my research are twofold: 1) determine the underlying drivers influencing bald eagle movement among salmon spawning areas across regional scales and 2) explore how movement decisions vary between sex and age classes, and how this variation might influence energetic demands on individuals."

Rachel has a website with weekly blog posts about eagles, the other research in the Haines area, and occasionally, other wildlife news. Additionally, she has an "Eagle Tracker" where visitors can view Google Earth maps of 12 of the eagles' pathways, updated every other month, or so, throughout the year: www.ecologyalaska.com.



The Haines District has been fortunate to have Rachel Wheat as our volunteer caretaker for the past two seasons. Rachel has been nesting in the 19-mile cabin, located in the Alaska Bald Eagle Preserve, allowing her to immerse herself in bald eagle research.



To gather information on eagle movements, Rachel uses solar-powered GPS transmitters attached to bald eagles using harnesses made of Teflon™ ribbon. These tracking devices record a GPS location for each eagle every hour during daylight. She follows the movement pathways of 16 adult and four immature bald eagles that were captured in Juneau and Sitka during March 2011 and on the Chilkat River near Haines in November 2012 and 2013.



Northern News

- The Northern Area is transitioning from summer to winter operations. Signs are being switched at trailheads from ATV to snowmachine. Trail counters are getting loaded with lithium batteries, chimneys at public-use cabins are being cleaned, and ice houses are being prepped to go out on area lakes.
- The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation is soliciting proposals from qualified bidders to operate a restaurant at Big Delta State Historical Park. Proposals must be received no later than 4 p.m., Alaska Time on December 16, 2014. The Request for Proposals is posted on the state's online public notice system at: <http://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=174624>



Northern Area staff Marty Schatz, Mike Hitte, Doug Avara, and Brian Charlton work on a new roof covering connexes and providing dry storage space at the DNR maintenance yard in Fairbanks.

Facial Hair and Men's Cancers Awareness

This November 18 marked four years since former Mat-Su ranger Ira Edwards broke his back while working in one of our state parks. We are thankful that four years later he is happily participating in fundraisers such as "Movember" to benefit others and he definitely has not lost his sense of humor.

Ira has been growing and mowing his facial hair into new styles for "Movember" for years as a fundraiser for men's cancer.

His donation site is <http://mobro.co/iraedwards>. On this website he explains his motivation for participating in this sometimes humorous fundraiser, "I've had a couple of life events with injuries and illness (non-Cancer) that have made me think I wouldn't make it until the next day. Life is precious, and life can be short. [Let's rally] to help prevent and CURE men's cancer and make sure to tell those close to you how important they are to you!"



The "Wyat Earp," 2013



The "redneck-hippy-professional," 2014



"Untamed," date unknown.



The "Hulk Hogan," 2012

