

The Murreletter

Society for Northwestern
Vertebrate Biology

Volume 12, No. 3

October 2004

President's Message

It's time to think of another election! Yes, yes, that pesky US election is happening, but I'm talking about the election that will really hit home for all of you. Nominations are now open for the following SNVB Executive Board positions: **President; Vice President for Washington; Vice President for Inland Region; Secretary and Trustee.** Terms run 2 years, except for Trustee which is 3 years. Duties include helping to navigate the society into new and exciting waters. If you might be interested or know of someone who fits the bill, please contact one of the current Board members. We will announce nominees towards the end of the year. Election Day will be at the annual meeting, February 24, 2005. We will have paper and web-ballots available beforehand.

Also, we are looking for a new **Murreletter Editor!** It is a great opportunity to pick up some new skills relative to publishing newsletters. Duties include compiling and editing submissions, paging and mailing the document. This is not an elected position, so we can fill it outside the election schedule. Let us know NOW of your interest!



SNVB NEEDS YOU!

Very soon we will be sending out the 2005 Annual Meeting announcement and Call for Papers. Also, check for them on the SNVB website. It is a joint meeting with the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society in Corvallis, 22-25 February 2005. Please note that the **abstract deadline is EARLY: December 3rd.**

At the '05 meeting, we will award our first student Scholarships. If you would like more information about that, contact Tara Chestnut. Also, **donations** to the Scholarship Fund are a great way to encourage developing vertebrate biologists. Contact Julie Grialou, our Treasurer, if you would like to contribute.

In 2006, we are looking to move north to Olympia for our annual meeting...likely to be at the Evergreen State College during their spring break in March. Plan ahead!

-Dede Olson

Call for Artists!

We will have an Art Display of original artwork of a natural history nature at next year's annual meeting. Get creative! Don't be shy, let's see your line drawings, paintings, cartoons, graphics, sculptures, carvings, quilts, or whatever you might be doing!

Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology

*... the oldest scientific association devoted to the study
of terrestrial vertebrates in the Pacific Northwest.*

- Established in 1920.

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Who we are...

The Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology was founded in 1920 as the Pacific Northwest Bird and Mammal Society. Long recognized as the pre-eminent union of ornithologists and mammalogists in the Pacific Northwest, the society adopted its current name in 1988 to reflect an expanded taxonomic scope that included amphibians and reptiles. The scope expanded again in 1999 to include fish. Today the society strives to promote close working relationships among ornithologists, mammalogists, herpetologists, and ichthyologists in our region; foster exchange of scientific information and interest in the study of vertebrates; and offer a forum for these activities through meetings and publications.

Membership

All persons or institutions interested in the study of birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles are eligible for membership. Individual members receive the Northwestern Naturalist and the Murreletter, our newsletter. Other SNVB publications, such as Northwest Fauna, are available at a reduced rate. Other privileges of membership include notification of all meetings of SNVB, power to vote in SNVB meetings and elections, and the privilege of holding office in SNVB.

**For more information or
to become a member:
<http://www.snwvb.org>**

The Murreletter

The Murreletter is published 3 times yearly and is distributed to the members of the Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology. Submission of stories, meeting announcements and other material of interest to members of the society is encouraged. Submissions should be sent to Murreletter Editor Richard Nauman. To receive the Murreletter electronically please provide your current email address to SNVB Treasurer Julie Grialou.

PowerPoint Presentations: Useful Stuff or Fluff

One rule of progress is that new technologies couple unique problems, often unanticipated, to their benefits. Computer and digital technology is no exception. Prominent among the technologies that arose from the computer revolution was digital presentation software, most notably in the form of PowerPoint™. The benefits of PowerPoint are significant. These advances include ease of preparation, handling, manipulating, and storing presentation media in digital form. Among these, the really novel aspect of PowerPoint is the system approach to presentation development that allows the integration of different media, opening diverse possibilities. Unfortunately, both the diverse possibilities and compatibility issues intrinsic to an ever-changing computer technology present unique problems for which the PowerPoint technology is held responsible.

First, that PowerPoint has expanded presentation possibilities is difficult to dismiss. Indeed, PowerPoint is so replete with possibilities that some talkaholics so fearlessly adorn their presentations that they become animation or multimedia circuses. If a tool ever existed that one could use to conceal oneself behind presentation gimmicks, PowerPoint clearly provides the capabilities. In fact, the artful dodgers of this medium go as far as making presentation tactics everything as the content vanishes into oblivion. But is this a fault of PowerPoint?

Second, oft-heard complaints about PowerPoint are the inability to run a presentation that represented significant hours of work on this computer or than one... or better yet, a presentation in which the text ran wonderfully, but the pictures were blank (typically displayed as red Xs on a white background). In fact, I have heard this complaint actually make others question the value of PowerPoint. Is this, then, a fault of PowerPoint?

If these are the fault of PowerPoint, all of us ice cream consumers should not hesitate to sue ice cream manufacturers for making a product that, consumed in excess, will likely shorten our lives. Too many of us have become absorbed in that notably American condition of not only expecting a tool to do the job for us, but to do it flawless as well.

PowerPoint is simply a tool that can enormously enhance our ability to make a presentation, but cannot do it for us. The ability to enhance a presentation through PowerPoint is no substitute for content. Moreover, in its use of computer technology, PowerPoint is equally subject to the ever-changing vagaries of new versions of the software or the system hardware. Why

is it that a number of us expect PowerPoint to run perfectly on any machine, when we take the trouble to find out, for example, whether the appropriate version of Microsoft Word will run on this computer or that one.

Our upcoming SNVB meeting provides an excellent opportunity to address the features of what constitutes a good scientific presentation, one which PowerPoint can enhance.

Contributed talks are usually 15 minutes long. Respect other speakers by staying within your scheduled time. A brief (usually about 3 minute) period post-presentation should be left so members of the audience can ask a few questions. Take the time to practice so your delivery fits into the scheduled interval. Focus on highlights, not details. Practicing a talk will help you balance the talk so the important highlights are addressed within the allotted time. A good rule of thumb is about one slide per minute. Too many slides will force you to rush your presentation or exceed the allocated time.

Use slides to only illustrate your points. Avoid trying to stuff the slides with everything you say. Overstuffed slides are distracting, and the audience will spend too much time trying to read or understand what the slide says rather than listening to you. A little animation can be fun, but too much is distracting. Err on the side of simple wherever possible.

Humans, like many primates, are vertical integrators. This means that a major way we judge differences is by examining the height differences in similar objects. This is key reason that simple histograms, bar graphs, or line graphs are good modes of graphically illustrating differences; these graphic modes emphasize differences in the vertical dimension. For clarity, a good rule of thumb is that the number of elements graphed in a bar graph or histogram should not exceed 7, whereas a line graph should be populated by no more than 4 different lines. Label axes on your graphs, but exclude captions or figure labels. The latter can be described when you discuss a graphic. Besides, excluding captions or name labels from graphics will allow you to make the individuals graphics larger, and therefore easier to read by the audience.

Use tables sparingly as they are generally harder to read than graphs. If you must use a table, keep it as simple as possible. Tables will be clearest if they consist of a matrix no larger than 4 rows by 4 columns.

If you use slides with bullets use the simplest phrases possible. Avoid reading the bullets verbatim. Rather, describe what each bullet means or illustrates.

Use a background color that contrasts with the color of the graphic or text. Graphic presentation studies have show that a medium to dark blue background

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with white or yellow writing is both most easily read and easiest on the eyes.

Speak clearly, facing the audience, and where appropriate, point to features on the slides that illustrate key points. For graphical slides, it is often best to point to what the respective axes as you discuss them and their units of scoring or measurement.

Check with your session chair well in advance of the start of your session to make sure that you know where the tools are that you need for your talk (e.g., slide advance monitor, laser pointer) and how to use them. This is also the time to check and see if your PowerPoint presentation runs properly on the projector and projection computer.

Lastly, remember, like PowerPoint, these guidelines are just another tool. Use the tools well, refine your delivery, and you cannot miss giving a great talk!!!

- Marc Hayes, Trustee

Associate Editor Needed

The Society is in need of an Associate Editor for *Northwestern Naturalist* to handle manuscripts on reptiles (primarily) and amphibians. The workload averages about 5-7 manuscripts per year including 2-3 notes. Associate Editors handle all the peer review and revision for articles and they serve directly as a reviewer (along with the Editor) for notes.

If you are interested, please send a letter of interest and a copy of your resume to Burr Betts (bbetts@eou.edu). If you know someone else who might be interested and qualified, please encourage him or her to apply.

Student Mentoring

There will be an opportunity at next year's annual meeting for students to meet with professional biologists. There will be a Student-Mentor Social on Wednesday February 23rd prior to the Welcoming Reception and Dance. All students are encouraged to participate. Who knows what might happen? Names and faces may be put together, new liaisons and networking linkages may develop, interesting projects might be discussed, potential academic advisors may be identified, or employment opportunities might be found. Mentors are being sought now also. If you are interested, please contact Rebecca Goggans (541-737-8166; Rebecca.Goggans@orst.edu).

Implications of Climate Change in BC's Southern Interior Forests

April 26-28, 2005

As the global climate warms, climate-associated effects such as drought, wildfire, and outbreaks of insects and diseases, already concerns in southern British Columbia, will become more frequent and severe. In turn, forest productivity, ecosystem functioning, and habitat values will be affected, in many cases adversely. It is prudent that forest and protected area managers begin to develop adaptive strategies to minimize the risks and maximize any benefits of climate change.

Topics to be addressed at this event include:

- Current information from climate models
- Geographical shifts in climatic zones
- Implications for disturbance regimes
- Implications for biodiversity
- Strategies for developing climate change adaptation or risk management approaches to policy and management planning.

This workshop is directed at forestry professionals and technicians, biologists, ecologists, protected area managers, and other managers and planners with an interest in how climate change may affect forest ecosystems.

Hosted by the Columbia Mountains Institute, the Canadian Climate Impact and Adaptation Research Network, and the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.

For more information please visit www.emiae.org

New Membership Rates

After many years with no changes to the SNVB annual dues, the Board has decided to increase membership dues. The annual rate for individuals will increase from \$20 to \$25, the student rate will increase from \$12 to \$15, and the lifetime rate will increase from \$300 to \$325.

- Julie Grialou, Treasurer

Career Path? What Career Path?

By Char Corkran

Editors Note: This is the second edition of what we hope will become a regular feature in the Murreletter. In this column we ask a member of our community to share their story with us. We hope to provide an avenue for professional exposure for people in the earlier stages of their careers and maybe provide some career ideas by featuring more established professionals. Submissions are encouraged and nominations are accepted.

At age three, when I recognized that I couldn't be a cowboy, I decided to be a Wildlife Conservationist. As a kid I played with tadpoles in the marsh, observed turtles laying eggs in the lawn, and hid in the bushes to watch the fox kits come out to romp at dusk. While living in Australia for two years, I was equally entranced by the fairy wrens in the front yard and the blue-tongued goannas in the back yard. As a teenager, I composed poetry and bird watched while on horseback, an unwise combination that once nearly dumped me onto a water moccasin.

When I arrived at Brown University I assumed I would concentrate in Biology. Instead I discovered that if I majored in American Literature I could do lots of writing and reading, avoid any chemistry, and take all the interesting whole-animal courses in zoology, paleontology, and psychology. I also discovered the Outing Club, and spent weekends hiking, canoeing, skiing and bird watching all over New England.

One of my hiking friends later became my husband whom I followed to his teaching job at a private high school in Portland, Oregon. What seemed most important then were a simple lifestyle and advocacy for wilderness preservation and environmental protection. I published my first article in a conservation magazine. When our son was born I carried him with one arm and the binoculars with the other. I had no ambitions and fewer plans for life beyond environmental activism.

I tried teaching for a few years, but I sensed that my own education was incomplete and I began volunteering, tagging along, and listening. I volunteered to spend 2 weeks with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) on a study of mule deer fawns on Steens Mountain, in the high desert country. Somehow I was allowed to bring the toddler and 2 teenage babysitters as well. I absorbed the smell of sagebrush and every word spoken by the old-time game biologists and the fresh new research biologists alike. For 10 years, almost every spring I volunteered on that

project or a later study of pronghorn antelope fawns. The rest of the year I wrote letters, testified at public hearings, and served on advisory boards, railing at the same ODFW and other agencies on the environmental topics of the day.

Then one day I got a call from the Audubon Society of Portland, asking if I wanted to tag along with a biologist on a nest box study of chickadees. Soon I was assisting for a couple mornings a week, actually being paid a few dollars for looking at birds, or turtles, or whatever survey work we could find. And as my son grew to fledging age, I spent more time working with wildlife. Six years later, the biologist took a full-time job and left me with an unfinished study of bluebirds and phone calls for more wildlife surveys. To my astonishment I realized that I had become the Wildlife Conservationist of my childhood decision.

Along the way, quite by accident, I got into amphibians as well as birds. I served on ODFW's Non-game Wildlife Advisory Committee in the 1970s and '80s, along with Bob Storm. His constant griping that no one was paying any attention to the amphibians was very impressive. I reiterated his statements in my environmental diatribes, and simultaneously began looking for amphibians while birding. All I found were weensy little larvae that didn't appear in Nussbaum, Brodie and Storm. So I brought them all home and called Bob. His response was invariably, "I haven't any idea, but keep 'em, and see what they turn into." With my best friend, Chris Thoms, I studied, measured, photographed, and raised everything in our kitchens. Our husbands were very patient. There had to be a way to identify small larvae without either killing them or bringing all of them home to raise into frogs and salamanders. Eventually we published a book, *Amphibians of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia*. It still surprises me.

I continue to work part-time as an independent wildlife consultant. My husband just retired from teaching. We both still advocate for environmental protection. Our son is now an environmental planner and is busy with his wife in raising my next two field assistants.

If I could give some advice to budding biologists it would be this. There are any number of ways to get where you want to go. Some are expensive, fast, and apt to lead to a well-paid job – which may require you to sit at a desk a lot. Others are cheap, glacial, and apt to lead to a lot of fun – which may require you to get an unrelated job. Whatever path you take, try not to rush headlong to the summit. Education is wherever you find it: in universities, in friendships, in detours, in your own backyard. And it never ends.

Gaining first-hand experience is at least as important as learning in classrooms, and often the very best way to gain experience is to volunteer.

Alaska Amphibian Conference

The First Statewide Conference on Alaska's amphibians was held in Juneau, Alaska, from March 30 to April 1, 2004. Before our northern frogs and toads began their annual spring chorus, biologists gathered during an early spring snowstorm to discuss distribution and ecology of amphibians and reptiles in Alaska. Identification of information gaps was a common theme for presentations.

An overview of the *Amphibians and Reptiles of Alaska a Field Handbook* by Stephen MacDonald (<http://alaskaherps.info/>) and discussions of current taxonomic frameworks set the tone for the meeting. Michael Adams (US Geological Survey) introduced the "proportion of area occupied" estimator adopted by the Amphibian Research and Monitoring Initiative.

A review of survey methods used in the Yukon and British Columbia (Brian Slough), provided perspectives on how Alaska amphibian monitoring could be standardized.

Species survey and monitoring data from around the state were presented by biologists from state, federal, and non-governmental groups. Detailed maps flanked the room providing opportunities for conference participants to record previously unreported species occurrences. Numerous previously unreported observations were added for wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) and western toads (*Bufo boreas*).

In the Juneau area, of 42 randomly selected ponds with characteristics that would appear acceptable for toad breeding, only three were found to contain tadpoles during the 2003 breeding season. Review of anecdotal data dating back to the 1950's suggests that this low occupancy represents a dramatic decline from past toad populations. Investigation of potential breeding sites farther afield on the Taku River and at St. James Bay found an abundance of toads in 2003.

Records of sightings of the four marine turtle species found in Alaska (Bruce Wing, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) suggested differences in between the behavior of small, hard-shell versus large-body turtles, particularly their feeding strategies and cold water tolerance. All hard-shell turtles found were emaciated; carcasses found were primarily on beaches in the fall. Leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*), on the other hand, were more commonly recorded by fisherman at sea.

Presentation of the new Amphibian Curriculum for Juneau schools (Anne Post, Alaska Department of Fish & Game) energized the meeting, giving rise to discussion of potential methods for collaboration with educa-

tors. In particular, the need for amphibian awareness, problems from collection, release of non-natives and captive individuals and the resulting potential disease introduction into wild populations are perceived as real problems in Alaska due to small populations and limited distribution of some amphibian species, making them more vulnerable to catastrophic events.

Conference proceedings are available at: <http://www.stikine.org/akherps2004>. Organizers plan to make the Alaska Amphibian Conference an annual early spring event. Funding for the conference was provided by US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska Natural Heritage Program and the US Forest Service.

-Deborah D. Rudis
Deborah_Rudis@fws.gov

Scholarship

SNVB will award a scholarship of up to \$1000 at the 2005 meeting. Details will be available on the SNVB website soon (www.snvyb.org). Students conducting research and/or monitoring on vertebrates in northwestern North America are eligible. The scholarship is intended to support travel, equipment, and supplies for student research (proposals requesting salary support will not be considered).

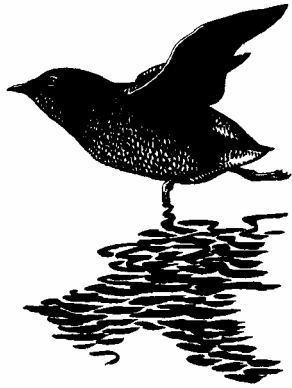
For more information please contact :

- Tara Chestnut
(tarachestnut@zhonka.net)

Northwestern Naturalist Back Issues Available

SNVB has a healthy supply of back issues of *Northwestern Naturalist* that we want to reduce to a more manageable size. We have an excess of most issues and plan to make these issues available at a reduced rate. Look for details in the next Murreletter.





2005 Annual Meeting
Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology
Managing Ecological Complexity
February 22-25, 2005

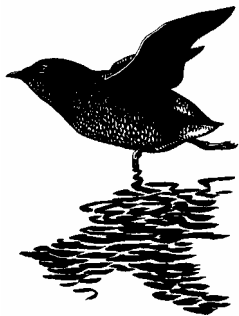
In conjunction with:
The Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society

LaSelles Stewart Center
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon

Visit the webpage for complete details:
www.snvb.org/snvb05meet.html

Abstracts due: December 3, 2004





For more information about the
Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology
Check out our updated web page:
<http://www.snwvb.org>

Don't Forget—Early Dates

SNVB Annual Meeting February 22-25, 2004
Abstracts Due: December 3, 2004

See page 7 for more information