

Natural Resource News

UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

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Agency honors student employee

Working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), senior resources management student Curtis Knight



Curtis Knight.

—USFWS PHOTO

received the agency's Regional Director's Excellence Award for Workplace Improvements. While in the agency's Student Temporary Employment Program, Knight was challenged to apply his creative thinking and construction experience to site condition problems at the administrative cabin in the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge. The relatively inexpensive improvements he designed and implemented made an outstanding contribution to the safety of employees, and they reduce the effects of human activity on the site.

At the Kanuti Lake cabin Knight created two walkway systems that protect eroding banks while allowing safe and efficient boat launches as water levels fluctuate. He also created two carrying systems for safe transport of heavy boat motors and fuel barrels. In Bettles, Alaska, he built a storage and fuel shed for a USFWS float plane dock.



Kanuti River and Lake, location of the cabin site improved by Curtis Knight.

—USFWS PHOTO

While serving as an environmental compliance and safety officer for the refuge, Knight investigated and improved human waste systems for all Kanuti field operations. Using his geographic information system skills, he contributed to revision of the refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan by creating maps and images. He also developed spill response systems for Kanuti in case an oil spill occurs near one of the many refuge waterways. Knight has worked for the USFWS since 2002 and is currently a biological science technician with the agency.

Knight's senior thesis research was conducted in the Kanuti Refuge, where he investigated the relationship of habitat diversity to avian species richness. His work was featured on the UAF website during April, as was the resources management senior thesis program. See uaf.edu/news/featured/06/snras/. Two web-published senior theses and a list of completed theses can be found at uaf.edu/snras/afes/pubs/SeniorTheses/index.html.

The 1.6-million-acre Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge in interior Alaska, about 150 miles north of Fairbanks, provides nesting habitat for numerous waterfowl species, including Canada geese and greater white-fronted geese. Ducks representing all major flyways in North America also can be found there. As wetlands along these flyways south of Alaska are lost due to drought and human activities, the importance of the refuge as a waterfowl nesting area increases. Refuge vegetation and wildlife are typical of boreal forest and muskeg, and an active fire history has created a complex mosaic of forest succession. Its wetlands are formed by the Koyukuk and Kanuti rivers.

Candidates focus on natural resources

In mid-April more than two hundred and fifty people came out to hear Alaska gubernatorial candidates talk about natural resources. The panel discussion, an initiative of the student Resource Management Society (RMS), included candidates John Binkley (R), Eric Croft (D), Ethan Berkowitz (D), Andrew Halcro (I), and Sarah Palin (R).

"This event gave the candidates a public forum for addressing Alaska's natural resource issues and policies," said RMS head Jason Mercer. "It was the first candidate forum scheduled in the Interior, and we were pleased with both the public and candidate participation."

The RMS provided a set of questions to each candidate before the event, which gave the candidates time to think about important resource issues and develop their responses for the panel discussion. It also gave Fairbanksans an opportunity to compare participating candidates on some of the issues. The event introduced our RMS

students to the community and some of Alaska's political leaders. After the formal question and response, people in the audience had an opportunity to ask their own resource-related questions.

Dean Carol Lewis introduced the program, and communications graduate student Kathryn Arlen served as panel moderator. Nina Schwinghammer and Zach Baer of RMS posed the RMS questions to the candidates. The assistance of Gary Newman of the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences managed the sound system for the event and recorded it so that people can now download and listen to the candidates from the KUAC website at publicbroadcasting.net/kuac/news. It will also be posted on the SNRAS website (uaf.edu/snras/).

The RMS is the official student organization of the School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences (SNRAS) at UAF. Faculty advisors are Peter Fix and David Valentine.

Palmer wind power measured



Raising the met tower—A project to investigate wind energy potential at the Matanuska Experiment Farm in Palmer involved installation of a wind and meteorological instrument tower (met tower) to collect wind data for a one-year period. SNRAS professor Norm Harris of the Palmer Research and Extension Center is working with Mia Devine of the [Alaska Energy Authority](#) (AEA) on the project. Members of the Sustainable Energy Society, a student organization at the University of Alaska Anchorage, helped install the tower. The AEA wind energy program provides information, technical assistance, wind monitoring equipment, and educational opportunities for Alaskans interested in this increasingly viable energy source. In areas with the potential for utility-grade wind energy projects, the Anemometer Loan Program supplies met towers, data logging equipment, and technical support to utilities and communities interested in wind power production. Wind resource potential is quantified by collecting wind speed and direction data, as well as temperature for air density calculations. After a year's data is collected, towers are relocated to other communities. Such onsite met data allows for more precise modeling and feasibility studies. The program is funded by the Denali Commission and the U.S. Department of Energy.

—PHOTO BY CONNIE HARRIS

Scholarship honors the late Lawrence Tingook Davis

The [Reindeer Research Program](#) Scholarship Fund has been renamed the Lawrence T. Davis Memorial Scholarship Fund, in honor of Lawrence Tingook Davis, who died of cancer in Anchorage on February 4, 2006. Davis, owner and operator of a reindeer herd in Nome since 1967, was 75. The state of Alaska flags were lowered to honor Davis for his many contributions to the state.

“Larry Davis strongly supported agriculture, education, and our Reindeer Research Program,” said Program Director Greg Finstad. “Through his commitment to education, he passed on much knowledge and experience to people that he met throughout his life, as well as the future generations. After speaking with his family and reflecting on his accomplishments, it seemed fitting to rename our scholarship in his honor.”

Davis, who founded the Reindeer Herders Association, had a range of knowledge that encompassed such things as subsistence hunting, fishing, gathering, and gold mining, as well as reindeer herding.

“He was very supportive in helping us establish the reindeer

research herd at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm, and even supplied us with deer from his herd,” Finstad said. “He also helped us establish the current and future direction of reindeer diet research and was very involved with our research to establish an Alaska-grown feed source for reindeer.”

Davis was born February 24, 1930 in Deering to Lucy and Elmer Davis. He completed the ninth grade and later was a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard of Deering (1944–1948) and the Alaska National Guard of Nome (1951–1958). Davis served as president of Sitnasuak Native Corporation, as a councilman on the Nome City Council, and as an Alaska state representative. He worked on the establishment of rural Alaska community colleges, and he received historical recognition for the Iditarod Trail.

The scholarship fund is supported by proceeds from the Fairbanks Experiment Farm research herd. Scholarships are awarded as funds allow.

UAF task force holds sustainable living conference

The Sustainable Campus Task Force held an April conference aimed at promoting a sustainable future. Day one included introductory speeches, a panel discussion on local food production, and an Alaska-grown and organic potluck dinner and cooking contest. The next day a tour of the Cold Climate Housing Research Center was followed by a panel discussion on sustainable building in the north. Waste reduction was another featured topic, with a “Reduce and Reuse” workshop followed by a recycling panel. The final day included a home bicycle repair workshop and a discussion of the future of transportation in Fairbanks.

Audubon International (AI) Executive Director Ron Dodson

attended the conference. Last year UAF Chancellor Steve Jones formed a Sustainability Leadership Group, chaired by Dean Carol Lewis, to focus on sustainability issues. UAF is partnering with AI in their sustainable community campaign and is working toward becoming an AI certified sustainable campus. The nonprofit AI organization fosters sustainable human and natural communities by promoting development and land management that protects land, water, wildlife, and natural resources by working with communities to balance economic priorities, social responsibilities, and environmental effects of their actions. The group is not affiliated with the National Audubon Society. See www.audubonintl.org/ for more on AI.

Community Outreach at SNRAS

• *Polar Dream*

Author and explorer Helen Thayer visited UAF in late February to present the first of the International Polar Year lecture series. She gave a lecture and slide show about her ski trek across hundreds of miles of perilous arctic wilderness with all of her life-support, food, and shelter pulled behind her on a sled. She is author of *Polar Dream: The First Solo Expedition by a Woman and Her Dog to the Magnetic North Pole*.

In 1988, at the age of 50, Thayer became the first woman in the world to travel on foot to the magnetic North Pole, one of the world's most remote and dangerous regions. Her only companion was her dog Charlie, a husky who was integral to her survival. *Polar Dream* recounts their trip and their relationship as they faced polar bears, unimaginable cold, and a storm that destroyed most of their supplies and food. The program shows the beauty of the Polar Ice Cap and the polar bears that live there. The lecture was sponsored by the University of Alaska Geography Program at SNRAS, the UAF Geography Club, and the Alaska Geographic Alliance.



Helen Thayer

—PHOTO COURTESY OF www.helenthayer.com/

• *How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*

Author and academic Jared Diamond drew an overflow crowd when he spoke at the UAF Davis Concert Hall in late March as part of the International Polar Year lecture series. More than 1,000 people heard Diamond speak, while hundreds were turned away when the crowd exceeded the building's capacity. In his newest best-selling book, *Collapse, How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, Diamond looks how environmental and geographic factors can explain why certain human populations have flourished, while others have fallen apart. A *Science Magazine* review of the work said, "It is probably the most important

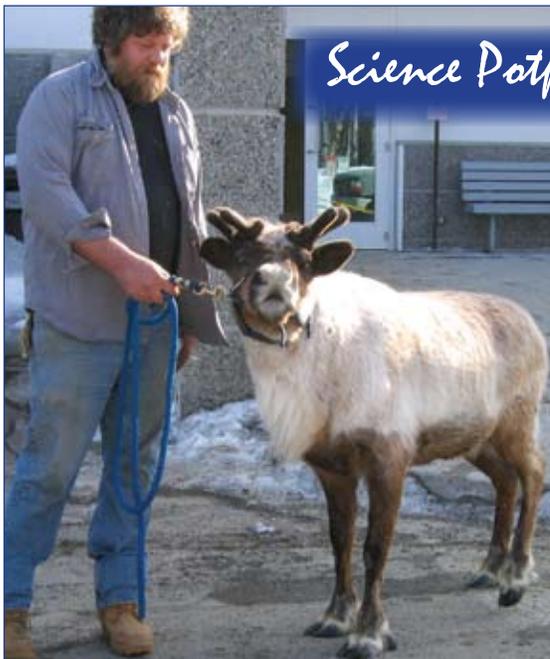
book you will ever read." Diamond's book *Guns, Germs and Steel, the Fates of Human Societies* won a Pulitzer Prize and has been a top-seller for five years. Diamond holds a doctorate from Cambridge University in physiology and membrane biophysics. His career has touched on such fields as biology, physiology, ecology, environmental history, and geography. His other books include *The Third Chimpanzee, the Evolution and Future of the Human Animal*, and *Why is Sex Fun? the Evolution of Human Sexuality*. His UAF lecture was sponsored by British Petroleum, ConocoPhillips, UA Academic Affairs and Research, and the UA Geography Program at SNRAS.

• *Mining Development Panel*

Alaska is experiencing a new wave of mining projects as the price of gold and other metals rises. A public educational forum was held April 26 to explore the implications of these developments. The panel discussion, "Exploration in the Interior and Tangle Lakes" was co-sponsored by the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and SNRAS.

Speakers representing several perspectives made presentations about the future of hard-rock exploration in the region and mining-related issues. One of the speakers was Tom Lewis, exploration manager for Anglo American Exploration, the mining company now exploring the Tangle Lakes region. He said the current work is focused on test drilling and further development depends on test results. Representing the Alaska Department of Natural Resources were Jack Kerin and Ed Fogels, DNR acting deputy commissioner. Dr. Dave Chambers, director of the Montana-based Center for Science in Public Participation also spoke. Representatives from the Nevada-Star Resource Corporation and the Anchorage-based Alaskans for Responsible Mining were invited, but did not participate. A question and answer period after the presentations allowed members of the public to interact directly with the panelists.

Panel organizers were Meg Schlesinger of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and Julie Lurman, resources law and policy professor at SNRAS.



Reindeer Research Program handler Rob Aikman poses with Rip during an outing for the 13th Annual Science Potpourri, an open house sponsored by the UAF College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. During the day, "kids of all ages" can participate in science activities and watch demonstrations and shows.

—PHOTO BY JEFF DRAKE

Notes

Staff and faculty recognized in April for milestone employment at UAF were: 35 years, **Lola Oliver**; 25 years, **Gary Michaelson** and **Jan Hanscom**; 20 years, **Mike Sfraga** and **Barb Pierson**; 15 years, **Darrell Blodgett**, **Keith Barton**, and **Jim Ericksen**.

Among distinguished students honored at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' annual student awards breakfast April 29 were four from SNRAS: **Jason Mercer**, forest sciences; **Maria Anastario**, geography; **Jennifer Hack**, plant, animal, and soil sciences; and **Zachary Baer**, resources management.

Professor of Forest Management **Edmond C. Packee** retired in February after twenty years at UAF. His sendoff from UAF was a potluck retirement party at UAF and another gathering in Palmer. Packee taught silvics and dendrology, silviculture, forest health and protection, and ecosystem management. Ed, who holds a PhD from the University of Minnesota, has returned to that state.



Spring is calving time for the Reindeer Research Program herd. As of this writing, 24 of the 31 expected calves have been born.

—PHOTO BY ROB AIKMAN



The University of Alaska Fairbanks is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. UAF is an AA/EO employer and educational institution.

Mark your
calendar!

Join us

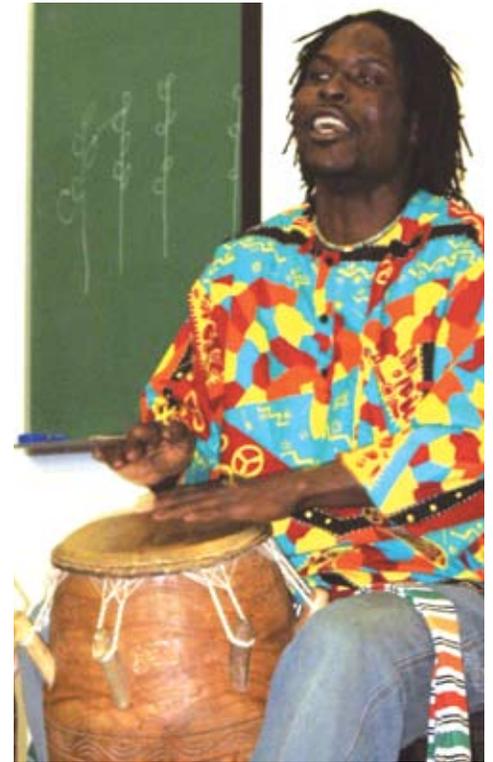
Saturday, June 24
Noon to 5 p.m. at the

Fairbanks
Experiment Farm

AFES and SNRAS
will celebrate the farm's
100th anniversary with
an open house for the
community. The event
will feature interactive
displays, demonstrations,
and activities related
to the work of the
experiment station and
the school.

Two SNRAS faculty members have been promoted from assistant to associate professor: **Cary de Wit** in geography and **Scott Rupp** in forest sciences.

Field Courses: NRM 290 students once again take to the road this month to explore **Alaska's natural resources**—from forestry to fisheries, dairy cows to alternative livestock, parks to potholes. Students in Geography A390 will travel through and explore the **Balkan Peninsula** from May 16–June 6. Full participants complete a research project. Mark Carper of the University of Alaska Anchorage anthropology and geography department is conducting the course. **Geographic Explorations: The Denali Landscape** (Geog 495 or 595) includes a residential field week in the Denali area. Designed to give students basic skills in geographic field investigation, course topics include local geology, stream morphology, natural resource potentials, historical human uses, wildlife issues, impacts of tourist development, and interactions between interest groups, policy makers, National Park mandates, and private development pressures. The course is conducted by Mike Sfraga, UAF geography professor.



Cultural Diplomacy

During a Fairbanks visit, African drummer and dance master Maputo Mensah spoke with professor Cary de Wit's world regional geography class about his life in Ghana and his experiences as an immigrant to the United States. The energetic Mensah is committed to helping Americans understand Africa and to promoting unity and cultural awareness through African dance, storytelling, drumming, and song. He gave several classes, lectures, and demonstrations while on campus. Maputo, who is from Accra, Ghana, teaches African Dance at the University of Colorado and the Bantaba (dancing circle) World Dance and Music Studio in Boulder, Colorado. His visit was presented by the UAF Office of Multicultural Affairs and Diversity, the Black Awareness Student Union, and the Arctic Aka Dondo (talking drum) Club. More at www.logoligi.com/bio.htm.

—PHOTO BY DOREEN FITZGERALD

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