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SEJ 2003 -- Tip Sheet

Endangered Species Listing Litigation Update. The Service announced in June that due to a series of court orders and settlement obligations resulting from litigation, it had exhausted all existing funding for endangered species listing and critical habitat designations. As a result, the Service was forced to halt work on listing actions until new money becomes available with the start of the new fiscal year on October 1. A number of species were affected by this decision, including the Topeka Shiner, bull trout, California red-legged frog and the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl. The Service is preparing to resume work on these species but faces new litigation that continues to divert resources away from species that need immediate attention. As of September 2003, the Service is involved in 34 active lawsuits on listing issues with respect to 42 species and is complying with court orders for 31 lawsuits involving 73 species. In addition, in the last year we have received 33 Notices of Intent to sue (NOIs) involving 54 species. Contact: Chris Tollefson (202) 219-8104.

50th Anniversary of the Annual Waterfowl Survey: 2005 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Annual Waterfowl Survey. This survey, conducted by the Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service is one of the largest and most reliable wildlife surveys in the world. Pilots-biologist fly more than 80,000 miles at treetop level to track the population levels of waterfowl and other bird species. Ground crews from federal and state wildlife agencies add to the data collection efforts. These surveys determine the status of North American waterfowl populations and are a major factor in setting annual waterfowl hunting regulations. The Service will be coordinating opportunities for reporters to interview the pilot-biologists. Some unique opportunities for a select number of journalists to join the pilot-biologists in a plane to see how they perform their survey work will be made available.

Contact: Cindy Hoffman, 202-208-3008.

National and State Economic Impacts of Wildlife Watching. In 2001, 66 million Americans spent \$38.4 on activities such as observing, feeding and photographing wildlife according to a new report called *2001 National and State Economic Impacts of Wildlife Watching Addendum*. Direct expenditures by wildlife watchers generated \$95.8 billion in total industrial output across the United States. The full report is available on-line at http://library.fws.gov/nat_survey2001_economics.pdf. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

Birding in the United States. In 2001, 46 million birdwatchers in the United States spent \$32 billion on their hobby according to a first-ever report called *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis Addendum* to the *2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. Montana, Vermont and Wisconsin led the nation in birding participation rates as a percent of total State population. California, Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida had the greatest number of birders. Birders purchased binoculars, travel, food and big ticket items such as canoes, cabins and off-road vehicles. This spending generated \$85 billion in overall economic output, \$13 billion in federal and state income taxes and supported more than 863,000 jobs. The full report is available on-line at http://library.fws.gov/nat_survey2001_birding.pdf. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636. The complete *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Related Recreation* and 50 state reports are available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/fishing.html> or through <http://federalaid.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html>.

Invasive Mute Swans. The Service is facing legal challenges for issuing permits that authorize culling non-native mute swans annually in the Atlantic Flyway. Mute swans cause environmental damages to habitats, which jeopardizes native wildlife. There is documented scientific evidence of the negative impacts that a growing mute swan population is having on wetland habitats and native species of fish and wildlife, the threats that mute swans pose to human health and safety, and the damage that mute swans can cause to commercial agricultural crops. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

Resident Canada Goose Management. The Service is proposing that State wildlife agencies gain more flexibility in controlling resident Canada goose populations. Under a proposed rule, the Service would hand over much of the day-to-day management responsibility to States while maintaining primary authority to manage these populations. The proposed rule would authorize population control strategies such as aggressive harassment, nest destruction, gosling and adult trapping and culling programs, increased hunter harvest, or other general population reduction strategies. You may obtain copies of the draft environmental impact statement from web site <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov>. Comments are due by October 20, 2003. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

Wind Turbine Guidance. The Service recently published voluntary interim guidelines to help energy companies avoid and minimize wildlife impacts from wind turbines. These guidelines will help energy companies locate and design wind energy facilities in a manner that ensures protection of wildlife resources, while streamlining the site selection and facility design process and avoiding unanticipated conflicts after construction. The guidelines may be accessed on the Service's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/r9dhcbfa>. For more information on bird collisions with communication towers, see <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/towers/towers.htm>. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

Migratory Bird Strategic Plan. The Service's migratory birds office has produced A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds, a draft strategic plan to strengthen and guide the Service' migratory bird program through the next ten years. Please access the draft strategic plan entitled A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds and provide comments by October 10, 2003 at <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/mbstratplan/mbstratplan.htm>

. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

New Permit Application Fee Schedule. The Service is seeking public comment on a proposal to increase permit application fees for the majority of permits the agency issues. Since 1982 when the \$25 permit application fee was first established, the Service's costs to administer the permits programs have risen in line with cost of living increases nationwide. The proposed increase would apply to all Service permits except for permits for possession of eagle parts and feathers for Native American religious and cultural use and for refuge special use permits. To access the proposed rule and fee schedule, please visit: <http://permits.fws.gov/federalregister/federalregister.shtml>. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

Electric Utility Industry, Service Team to Protect Birds. New voluntary guidelines for protecting birds from electrocution and collisions with power lines now being developed by the Service and the industry's Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) promise improved safeguards for migratory birds. Electrocutions and line strikes are a particular threat to birds with large wingspans, such as eagles, hawks, and owls – all species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Avian interactions with power lines also cause power outages, which represent added cost and inconvenience for electric utilities and their customers. The new guidelines will give electric utilities a framework to use in developing voluntary Avian Protection Plans tailored to their specific operations. More information can be found at <http://www.aplic.org>. Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636.

Fish Passage: The Service's Fisheries Program continues to expand and develop Fish Passage Projects across much of the United States. Fish Passage seeks to help fish find a new way back to old homes – habitat and spawning grounds that were blocked over decades by all manner of obstructions, from roads to small dams, many dating back to the Industrial Revolution and long ago considered obsolete. Fish Passage projects are voluntary. The Service has enjoyed support for this program from municipalities, civic organizations, national conservation groups and state and federal agencies. Miles and miles of choked streams and rivers have been reopened, helping the comeback of species like the American Shad in the East. Contact: Ken Burton, 202/208-5657.

Native Trout Restoration: The Fisheries Program is working aggressively – and successfully – in restoring native trout. Biologists are delighted with the progress of the Gila Trout in the Southwest, and work continues apace on behalf of the Coaster Brook Trout in the Great Lakes. Call to find out if a native trout restoration project is underway in your part of the country. Contact: Ken Burton, 202/208-5657.

Endangered Aquatic Species: The Fisheries Program is about far more than fish these days; at least two-thirds of the 69 National Fish Hatcheries are involved in some kind of work involving endangered or threatened aquatic species, and that might include everything from freshwater mussels to salamanders and a few species in between. Fisheries biologists in the 21st century have a highly-integrated mission: they know that healthy habitat doesn't just include healthy fish. It includes all the aquatic species that call the water home. Call to learn if a hatchery near you is involved in another exciting and exacting project that includes an endangered or a threatened species. Contact: Ken Burton, 202/208-5657.

Wetland Reserve Program . The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service has spearheaded an effort to introduce listed plants into key habitats on permanently protected private land via the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). In 1997, two private landowners collectively enrolled 750 acres of land at Baldock Slough in eastern Oregon's Baker Valley into the WRP. This property contains valuable habitat for fish, wildlife, and Howell's spectacular thelypody, a plant listed as threatened. Thanks to a partnership including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (which developed a source of thelypody seeds and plants and provided monitoring assistance) and the Baker Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (which provided project assistance), this plant is now on the road to recovery. Contact: Kemper McMaster, 503-231-6985.

Revisions to Safe Harbor and Conservation

Agreements: The Service recently proposed two separate rules that would revise regulations governing conservation agreements for listed and candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. The proposed changes are designed to make conservation agreements that benefit imperiled species on private land easier to understand and implement. The Service developed Safe Harbor Agreements and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) in 1999 to remove potential disincentives for landowners to manage their property for

the benefit of listed and candidate species. Both agreements provide certainty to landowners that actions they take to benefit listed and candidate species on their land won't result in additional land-use restrictions. Some landowners have made it clear that they need a better understanding of the obligations and benefits provided by Safe Harbor Agreements and CCAAs before they will agree to sign them. In other cases, property owners may be willing to enter into a Safe Harbor Agreement or CCAA only if they can limit the area to be occupied by the species through intentional take, particularly when species expansion would interfere with activities outside of the area covered by the agreement. The Service is proposing two rules to address those concerns and more fully describe the range of activities that can be permitted in conjunction with a Safe Harbor Agreement or CCAA. Contact: Mitch Snow (202) 208-5634.

Walk a Mile in My Boots: The Service and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) are trading places. In July, the "Walk A Mile In My Boots" program was established to improve communications and foster greater understanding between the two organizations. Through the work-exchange venture, ranchers and biologists will take two to 10 days to explore, identify and undertake conservation approaches and develop solutions that are mutually beneficial to NCBA and the Service. During the exchange, cattle ranchers can visit a Service office, refuge, regional office or even travel to headquarters in Washington D.C. They will have the opportunity to shadow biologists, managers, educators, conduct outdoor field activities, attend government meetings, and work with other officials. Likewise, Service employees can visit a cattle operation and shadow producers in their daily activities, which could include anything from moving cattle to mending fences. The program recognizes that wildlife habitat maintained by ranching and farming operations has become increasingly important to conservation. Ranches and farms provide open space and valuable habitat for many species of wildlife, including those that are threatened and endangered. At the same time, economic pressure threatens the rural lifestyles and operations of cattle producers. Both organizations hope to establish contacts and develop mutual understanding that will lead to proactive conservation solutions that preserve ranching traditions while enhancing wildlife conservation. Contact: Heather Johnson (304) 876-7479.

Condos for Clapper Rails. Along the heavily developed southern California coast, only about 500 light-footed clapper rails remain; these endangered shorebirds having

fallen victim to disappearing tidal wetlands habitat. With so few birds left, successful breeding is crucial, and biologists at Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge have begun testing prototype “clapper condos” made of tulle-colored fiberglass on plastic frames. These artificial nests float on platforms that rise and fall with the tide, much like nests originally constructed by clapper rails, and offer extra security against the elements – and avian predators like the peregrine falcon and northern harrier. The rails also use the floating condos during the non-breeding season, especially at high tides when they are normally forced to retreat to the outer edges of the marsh where lack of natural cover makes them more visible and vulnerable to predation. Contact: John Bradley, Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge, (562) 598-1024.

Drawbridge Revisited: A Salt Marsh to be Restored.

Unbeknownst to many people, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge isn't just home to abundant waterfowl and other species. It also has a ghost town – one that is slowly being reclaimed by the salt marsh around it. And that's just the way the refuge wants it. Drawbridge sprang up in the late 1800s on a small island between two sloughs in south San Francisco Bay. Once a remote rural hamlet surrounded by wildlife, Drawbridge grew into an urban outpost surrounded by industrial salt ponds and the burgeoning Bay Area metropolis. Pollution, urban sprawl and habitat loss ruined the natural attractions that had drawn people to the area. The town was slowly abandoned. It literally began to sink in the mud. The Service has owned the drawbridge for 20 years, and recently acquired 15,000 acres of South Bay salt ponds. It will soon become the focus of the largest wetlands restoration ever attempted on the West Coast. A living history train ride is being offered to the public on October 4, 2003. The restoration project will take years. Contact: Marge Kolar, Refuge Project Leader, for information on the restoration project, 510-792-0222. Sandy Spakoff, October 4 event, 510-792-0222.

Detroit River International Refuge. Travel to a 44-acre site on the river in Trenton, Michigan, the former site of an auto plant. Donated to the Refuge by Daimler Chrysler, the site will be the gateway to the refuge, housing the headquarters and a Visitors Center. Nearby is Calf Island, a 16-acre tract of untouched beauty donated to the National Wildlife Refuge System by the nonprofit Nature Conservancy. Grassy Island, also part of the Refuge, was formerly used as a dumping ground. Chemicals, metals and oils dredged from the Rouge River ended up behind the clay-and rock dike. The area will have to be capped or

cleaned up to protect wildlife and visitors. At the 28-acre Mud Island, donated by National Steel Corporation, visitors can climb up a low, rocky bank, and pass through a snarl of barrier trees into quiet woods carpeted with dried leaves. You can hear the traffic from nearby Jefferson Avenue, a highway in the heart of the city, but you have been transported into a world of natural sights and sounds. Contact: Doug Spencer, 989-777-5930.

Bandon Marsh. Anaflo Q. Smith, a Silicon Valley philanthropist who was a contributing founder of Hotmail, donated 34 acres to Bandon Marsh Refuge on the Oregon coast. Transferred to the Service July 16, the 34 acres feature freshwater, forested wetlands, shrub-swamp wetlands, riparian habitat, an anadromous fish stream, uplands and a cranberry bog. The donated land will become part of a 400-acre tidal marsh restoration project, the largest ever undertaken in Oregon, allowing cranberry bogs to return to forested wetlands. A small dam that is blocking fish passage will be removed and the stream will be returned to its natural channels. Bandon Marsh Refuge contains 857 acres in the Coquille River estuary near the town of Bandon. Contact: Roy Lowe at 541-867-4550.

John Heinz at Tinicum. John Heinz Refuge is one of a handful of urban refuges, protecting natural resources for a community better known for concrete than cormorants. That's just the reason that the Friends group has thrown its weight behind The Nature of Learning, the Refuge System's environmental education program. The results of the multifaceted program have been startling: Longsteth Elementary School's kindergarten class planted a certified Schoolyard Habitat with the help of the refuge and its Friends. The students, living in one of Philadelphia's most blighted neighborhoods, collected \$121 in pennies to buy plants, soil and wood slats for the native species they nurture. The neighborhood is enthralled with the program, buying seed packets that the youngsters create. Each packet is graced with a hand-drawn label by one of the kindergarteners. The refuge's Friends group sells the seed packets in the Refuge Visitor Center store, returning the full 50-cent price to the class so they can expand the garden and show it to other schools. Visit Larry Stier's Life Skills classroom at Vare Middle School. There, mentally disabled students are struggling to learn how to master everyday skills of living. They come to the John Heinz Refuge weekly throughout the year, learning to be comfortable and independent in the quiet beauty of an urban oasis. Contact: Erika Scarborough, 610-521-0662.

Five-year Review of the Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet. The northern spotted owl has been called the critter that thrust the Endangered Species Act into Americans' consciousness. It was the spotted owl and the marbled murrelet, another old-growth forest bird, that were at the center of legal battles leading to dramatic reductions in logging on national forest land in the Pacific Northwest. Concern over their status changed forest practices in the region. But that was a decade ago. How are the birds doing now? Find out in April 2004, when the Service is scheduled to release a report, based on comprehensive reviews, on how the spotted owl and the marbled murrelet are faring. Contact: Joan Jewett, 503-231-6211.

Sage Grouse Chicks Go "On the Air". Until recently, sagebrush steppe habitat throughout the West came alive every Spring with the lusty courtship calls and strutting of the greater sage grouse. Populations of this unusual-looking bird have declined sharply in recent decades, and sage grouse face addition to the federal endangered species list. Turning the situation around will require knowing more about this wide-ranging bird's habits. At Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge, deep in the sagebrush country of southeastern Oregon and northwestern Nevada, biologists are surgically implanting downy sage grouse hatchlings with tiny transmitters. Although these transmitters are about the size of your "pinkie" nail, they put out a signal that allows biologists to monitor the chicks and their mothers for the weeks to come. Contact: Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 541-947-3315.

A Paradise for Trees and Birds. Two hundred years of cattle and pig grazing on the island of Hawaii transformed much of the upper slopes of Hakalau Forest from a lush rainforest forest into weedy grassland shunned by wildlife. Established in 1985, Hakalau Forest NWR protects endangered birds and their forest habitat. In 1987, biologists launched an ambitious long-term restoration effort at Hakalau with the goal of reestablishing a thriving native forest ecosystem in 50 to 100 years by fencing out feral cattle and pigs, removing exotic vegetation, and replanting the slopes with koa trees and other native and endangered plant species. To date, volunteers have planted more than 230,000 koa and other native seedlings. Some of these trees are now at least 25 feet tall and once again harbor native forest birds such as the I'iwi.
<http://pacific.fws.gov/pacific/wnwr/bhakalaunwr.html>
Contact: Hakalau Forest NWR, 808-933-6915.

Refuge Planning Progresses at Hanford Reach National Monument. The development of the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) has been a long time in the process, but the draft version is now being written and is scheduled for release in the fall of 2004. The Service's only National Monument is 195,000 acres of lands formally administered as a buffer zone for the Hanford Atomic Energy facility – the very site of weapons grade plutonium production. The monument is home to untouched expanses of native shrub-steppe habitat, the last 51 miles of non-tidal free-flowing waters of the Columbia River and remnants of human history stretching back thousands of years. The draft CCP should be released in a few months. Contact: Ron Crouse, (509) 371-1801.

Oil Pits and Migratory Birds. Arkansas Law Enforcement. Contact: Bob Oliveri 601-965-4469.

Refuges of coral reefs and sea grass beds. Contact: Key West and Great White Heron Refuges Phil Frank, 305-872-2239.

Sea turtle nests. 25 percent of all loggerhead sea turtle nests and 35 percent of all green sea turtle nests in the United States occur in a 20-mile section of coastline from Melbourne Beach to Wabasso Beach, Florida. Contact: Paul Tritaik 561/562-3909, Ext. 275.

Merritt Island Refuge, Florida. Home to more endangered species, including Florida scrub jays and sea turtles, than any other refuge in the nation. Also home to 13 nesting pairs of bald eagles. Refuge manages wildlife in the shadow of the Kennedy Space Center. Contact: Ron Hight, 407-861-0667.

Florida Panther Refuge. Protects Florida panther. A total of 70-100 panthers left in State. In 2002, nine panther cubs were born on the refuge, nearly a third of Florida's total for the year. Contact: Layne Hamilton, 239-353-8442.

Mississippi Sandhill Crane Refuge. Refuge and surrounding lands hosts remaining population of these cranes. There are only 100 birds left, including 20 breeding pairs. Contact: 228-497-6322.

A Vacation Place for People, A Home for Northern Flying Squirrels. West Virginia's Snowshoe Mountain Resort has developed to save endangered northern flying squirrels while building 55 homes near the summit of Cheat Mountain in Pocahontas County. Known especially for its skiing, Snowshoe Mountain Resort is adjacent to the 900,000-acre Monongahela National Forest. Working with the West Virginia Field Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service, resort officials decided to develop a habitat conservation plan. An incidental take permit granted under the plan enables Snowshoe Mountain Resort to build Camp Wilderness, a community of townhouses and condominiums, on 39 forested acres while it protects 85 acres of habitat in perpetuity for the flying squirrels through a conservation easement. Contact: Tom Chapman, 304-636-6586 ext. 12.