Between 1925 and statehood, the Alaska Game Law undergirded land game management. Directors of the new Alaska Game Commission represented the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, and, after 1939, the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior. They, their agents, and the men who managed the Alaska Department of Fish and Game beginning in 1957 put into practice the evolving philosophies of wildlife management. Leaders among them made lasting contributions to habitat preservation and to public acceptance of wildlife protection and science.

THE ALASKA GAME COMMISSION

In addition to creating the Game Commission and structure for enforcing regulations, the 1925 Alaska Game Law directly set forth some conservation provisions. It prohibited killing cow, yearling, and calf moose and female and young deer or sheep and molesting beaver or muskrat houses. But “any Indian, Eskimo, prospector or traveler [may] take animals and birds during the close
season when he is in absolute need of food and other food is not available.” Heads and horns could not be marketed, nor could game birds and mammals be sold to commercial boats or canneries. No aircraft or powerboat could be used to directly pursue game nor any poison employed except by predator control agents controlling wolves, coyotes, and wolverines. Of these three species the law classified only the wolverine as a “land fur-bearing mammal.”

Under the Game Law, oversight of the land lay in the hands of professional wildlife managers, hardy and practical men whose experience in the bush made law enforcement feasible. Agents possessed a broad, in some cases scholarly, knowledge of Alaskan wildlife. The overwhelming majority of Alaskans prior to World War II engaged in hunting and fishing for subsistence rather than for sport, and wildlife agents viewed their central task as protecting wildlife populations for consumption by humans. Top law enforcement priorities aimed at preventing market hunting, use of poison by trappers, shooting of beavers and cow moose, and excessive trapping of martens. Field agents traveled by road, canoe, or small steamboats in summer; dogsled and snowshoe in winter. They sometimes employed packhorses, the Alaska Railroad, and aircraft on an experimental basis beginning in 1930. During the late 1920s nine men covered Alaska’s half-million square miles. They endured arduous working conditions: a lynx severely mauled one agent, and another disappeared on a solo trip up the Chickamin River. Threats from game violators added to the perils, as did accidents, especially in isolated locations, on fast rivers, or in cold temperatures. Arrests, however, yielded a high conviction rate. Agents normally assembled only once annually, and some never met during their careers. Mail from headquarters in Juneau often took several weeks to reach them.

Alaska Natives exercised very little influence on Game Commission deliberations, although the rules affected them considerably. Both the 1902 and 1908 laws gave them the right to hunt game out of season for food or clothing. The 1925 law weakened the provision, allowing hunting out of season when “in absolute need of food and other food is not available.” The commission interpreted the clause very strictly, granting the privilege to Natives not “adopting a civilized mode of living” or “exercising the right of franchise.” Going beyond the law, the commission required signed application forms stating that the applicant had no work opportunity or alternate food source. It withdrew the form in 1938 after using it for thirteen years.

While the Game Commission and 1925 Game Law represented a substantial upgrading of wildlife management and won the cooperation of many Alaskans, the arrangement did not satisfy the territorial legislature, which perpetually insisted on control of natural resources. In a 1935 joint memorial addressed to the president, it pleaded that
WHEREAS, the actions of the Alaska Game Commission have largely been and are oppressive and repugnant to a large majority of the people of the Territory of Alaska [and the commission] has made unreasonable, oppressive and unenforceable regulations governing the taking and marketing of skins and fur-bearing animals resulting in large financial losses and great inconvenience to trappers and fur dealers. . . . WHEREFORE, your Memorialist respectfully requests, That the repeal of the Alaska Game Laws and the abolishment of the Alaska Game Commission be made at the earliest possible date and that the legislative power of the Legislature of the Territory of Alaska be extended to include the game laws and laws relating to fur-bearing animals.4

The resolution shared the fate of numerous other pre-statehood Alaskan requests and demands for jurisdiction over wildlife.

activities consisted of (1) pursuing law violators; (2) issuing licenses and permits for hunting, fishing, trapping, fur raising and dealing; for serving wild game as food in nonprofit facilities; for taking wildlife for scientific, educational, or propagation purposes; and for special hunting of wolves, coyotes, and wolverines; (3) predator control; (4) public relations; (5) research; and (6) miscellaneous.5

Most enforcement actions involved illegal taking of wildlife (Table 11.1). In January 1936 warden Hosea Sarber arrested a man for using poison to kill foxes. The man forfeited 25 fox pelts, paid a $300 fine, and spent 140 days in jail. Later that year Sarber carried out several seizures of illegal beaver skins in the Dillingham district, including one cache of 536 pelts. Normally, agents visited trappers before the end of the season to seal the pelts, certifying them as legal.6

Agents arrested a particularly unscrupulous pair of outlaws in 1938 in the Stony River country of the Kuskokwim drainage. The wardens found them operating traplines more than 100 miles in length nearly two months after the close of the season. They had killed no fewer than ten moose and cached much of the meat along the trail for dog feed, and it had spoiled. Their packs contained poison, and they had driven the Stony River Indians out of the country at gunpoint. A thirteen-year-old son of one of the men had been told to maintain...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violation</th>
<th>Prosecutions</th>
<th>Convictions</th>
<th>Fines/ Costs</th>
<th>Days in Jail</th>
<th>Seizures w/o Court Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aliens w/o license</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>770</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens buying/selling furs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonresidents hunting/trapping/dealing furs</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking/possessing game/fur/birds</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3,316</td>
<td>2,575</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing in protected game/birds</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking furbearers by illegal methods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession/use of poison</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaulting officer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (1936–1937)</strong></td>
<td><strong>144</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,515</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,125</strong></td>
<td><strong>185</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seizures: guns 117, furs 47, game animals and birds 2, other 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violation</th>
<th>Prosecutions</th>
<th>Convictions</th>
<th>Fines/ Costs</th>
<th>Days in Jail</th>
<th>Seizures w/o Court Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958–1959</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>$36,567</td>
<td>1,972</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seizures: licenses 160, guns 50, traps & snares 30, moose 55, deer 18, caribou 16, bear 16, sheep 8, mountain goat 5, elk 1, furs 43, birds 73, fish 23


To collect Alaska bounty payments, men smuggled wolf and coyote skins in from Canada. In 1937–1938 agents apprehended a fur dealer who had imported...
42 coyote skins. He paid a fine of $350 and returned $850 in bounty money. The next year, in cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, agents Sam White and Clarence Rhode set out on a month-long, 3,500-mile sortie into northeast Alaska during March and early April. Flying a rented four-seat Curtiss Thrush they patrolled the border region between Snag Creek and the Arctic Circle at temperatures of minus 30 to minus 40 degrees. Accompanied by Constable W.W. Sutherland they arrested a dozen men involved in taking furbearers by strychnine poison and smuggling wolf and coyote skins into Alaska. In quick trials seven men received convictions. Stopping at Fairbanks on the return trip, the agents discovered a cracked propeller hub that, if the plane had flown for another hour, would likely have caused a fatal crash. Nevertheless, Rhode concluded that this trip has further proved that airplanes are the only possible means of properly patrolling our districts. Likewise, they offer the cheapest method. The inspection that can be given the ground from a low altitude is almost unbelievable. The tracks of nearly every type of game or fur can be readily distinguished and it is easily possible to note where sets have been made along trails. All types of game can be observed from the air that would never be seen from the ground and such things as hidden cabins or caches are easily discovered. With hundreds of miles of remote country in all of our interior districts and the short period when patrol is essential for results, we can never fully police this country until we have our own planes to depend on.

Rhode suggested that lighter planes such as that flown by agent Grenold Collins would enable more flexibility in monitoring the ground and landing for quick action. The interior, vast and relatively inaccessible by water or land, made law enforcement far more difficult than in the coastal regions. Sam White, stationed at Fairbanks beginning in 1927, pioneered the use of aircraft in law enforcement. Taught to fly by Ralph Wien in 1928, he bought a TP Swallow and flew it on duty from 1930 to 1937. Thereafter he piloted aircraft rented by the Game Commission. A strong advocate of aerial law enforcement, he incurred the wrath of executive director Frank Dufresne in the mid-1930s by criticizing the purchase of expensive but poorly built boats instead of light planes. Frustrated by the slow pace of change, he resigned in 1941. The commission acquired five planes for patrol by 1943 and escalated aerial activity in 1948 under the predator control program (Chapter 13).

Agents rendered assistance in wildlife censuses and in the work of other federal agencies. They helped private parties in emergencies such as plane crashes. Edible meat from law enforcement seizures and railroad and automobile collisions went to Native villages or charitable institutions. In 1955, a typical year
for the 1950s, the Game Commission donated (in pounds): moose, 106,500; caribou, 2,000; deer, 500; and game fish, 258. When not in the field, agents engaged in public education and goodwill by attending fairs, meetings of outdoor sporting groups, school assemblies, and other gatherings. They showed films, gave radio talks, and visited Native villages.

World War II, a time when the military comprised one-third of Alaska’s population, inexorably changed the territory. Wildlife law enforcement reflected the new conditions of population increase and demand for access to wildlife. Military personnel wanted outdoor recreation and found hunting and fishing opportunities far superior to what they had seen in the States. When they gained the full right to take fish and game during the war, problems multiplied. Wildlife managers had feared that a quantum increase in the number of hunters would put intolerable stress on big game at the expense of local subsistence hunters. Congress passed a bill, signed into law in July 1943, permitting armed services personnel to buy resident hunting and fishing licenses after living in the territory for a year. Anticipation of the law may have motivated the Interior
Department’s 1941 decisions to designate the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge and the Kenai National Moose Range. Military and related civilian workers provided justification for the wildlife managers’ concerns in 1945 and 1946. Seeing their last chance to kill an Alaskan game animal before going home, large numbers engaged in unnecessary, wasteful, and often illegal slaughter. In one locale near a highway they left the bodies of twelve cow moose.12

Wartime activities created hundreds of miles of new roads and numerous airports. Proliferating numbers of aircraft, both civilian and military, transported people to far corners of the territory. Trappers flew to their tralines, hunters to big game, and waterfowl shooters to flocks of ducks and geese. Pilots sometimes used their planes to drive the birds to waiting hunters. Wardens needed aircraft to seal beavers, curb violations, and perform other field tasks.13

The war, and requests from Alaska’s congressional delegate Anthony Dimond, prompted construction of the Alcan (Alaska) Highway. Arguably, the military neither wanted nor needed it to prosecute the war, although it provided valuable support for the air supply route to Russia.14 Strategic matters aside, a highway link to the States removed some of the isolation felt by Alaskans and embodied in stateside perceptions of Alaska. Tourists quickly seized the opportunity to travel the highway. When it opened to the public in 1948 it carried 18,604 travelers and, in 1951, 49,564 drove it. War construction had left roads, airports, seaports, railroad improvements, housing, and other facilities. It also added people; many former GIs stayed in Alaska. The territory’s nonmilitary population nearly doubled, from 75,000 in 1940 to 138,000 in 1950. Cold War events continued the effects of World War II; Alaska’s strategic position attracted $250 million annually in combined military and nonmilitary construction from 1949 to 1954. Greatly enlarged cash flows and road access accelerated and dispersed economic development.15

After the war, hunting activity rose faster than the population. Resident hunting/fishing licenses (Table 11.2) escalated from 28,316 in 1941–1945 to 124,836 during 1951–1955. Nonresidents bought 1,149 licenses in 1941–1945 and 11,141 in 1951–1955. Trapping fell off, however; resident fur dealer licenses declined from 1,249 to 792 in the same period. More roads, vehicles, and aircraft carried more people into wild areas. Sport hunting by aircraft climbed rapidly, greatly simplifying big game kills. Wildlife managers responded by employing aircraft and radio, increasingly complicated regulations, and research.16 In 1948 the Game Commission fielded 9 enforcement agents working out of Ketchikan, Petersburg, Juneau, Seward, Fairbanks, and Dillingham. By 1950 permanent posts had been added at Craig, Wrangell, Sitka, Cordova, McGrath, and Kotzebue, and enforcement staff totaled 21. More aircraft, boats, and automobiles, most of them radio- and telephone-equipped, improved the reach and efficiency of field operations.17 Agents increasingly traveled by aircraft and au-
tomobile (Table 11.3). As competition for fish and wildlife intensified, predator control, previously a matter of helping trappers and reindeer herders catch raiding wolves and wolverines, changed into a widespread and systematic undertaking conducted by aircraft.

Federal agents retained control over fish and wildlife management until the transfer of most responsibility to the new state on January 1, 1960. At Alaska’s Constitutional Convention, wildlife management sparked one of the salient controversies. Outdoor sporting groups lobbied vigorously for a bipartisan commission to manage sport and commercial hunting and fishing. The commission would be established in the constitution rather than created by the legislature and managed by the governor. Proponents argued that it would protect natural resources by taking them out of the realm of politics. Opponents believed the commission would usurp the proper role of the people and their legislature. The proposal lost 35-20, and a Board of Fish and Game, divided in 1975, managed the state’s fish and wildlife.18 The commission would probably have enhanced the power of the outdoor sporting groups in wildlife management, regardless of whether it would have better promoted conservation.

Frank Dufresne

The Alaska Game Commission owed much of its success to strong personalities in leadership positions. Edward W. Nelson had set the stage for professional wildlife management by hiring competent agents such as Olaus Murie, Lawrence Palmer, Seymour Hadwen, and Frank Dufresne. Dufresne (1896–
Alaskan Wildlife Managers

Table 11.3. Travel by Alaska Game Commission Agents, 1937–1959

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 1938</th>
<th>FY 1943</th>
<th>FY 1948</th>
<th>FY 1953</th>
<th>FY 1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial steamer</td>
<td>12,313</td>
<td>4,157</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGC patrol boat</td>
<td>31,073</td>
<td>22,580</td>
<td>25,433</td>
<td>23,552</td>
<td>17,563</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outboard motor</td>
<td>9,869</td>
<td>5,571</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>9,046</td>
<td>13,302</td>
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<tr>
<td>Automobile</td>
<td>35,377</td>
<td>37,680</td>
<td>78,352</td>
<td>184,559</td>
<td>254,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad</td>
<td>2,657</td>
<td>3,824</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airplane</td>
<td>25,349</td>
<td>120,031</td>
<td>112,046</td>
<td>315,037</td>
<td>325,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog team</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On foot</td>
<td>4,879</td>
<td>4,299</td>
<td>3,551</td>
<td>7,255</td>
<td>5,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseback</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Alaska Game Commission, 14th Annual Report of the Executive Officer to the Alaska Game Commission, July 1, 1937 to June 30, 1938 (Juneau), 2; Alaska Game Commission, 4th, 9th, 14th, and 17th Annual Reports, 1943, 3; 1948, 23; 1953, 29; 1958, 45 (all Juneau).

1966) became one of the best known of the warden-naturalists. Like Nelson he came from New England. As a boy in the White Mountains of New Hampshire he learned to love Nature. Following a stint in the trenches in France, he struck out for Nome on an adventure trip. He hoped to find an uncle who had left for the Gold Rush and never returned. His uncle turned out to be the mayor of Nome and still had gold fever. Attempts to get young Frank interested missed the mark. In Dufresne’s words, “The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that the real gold of Alaska had wings and fins and hair on it.” He had planned a short visit but, when offered a job as a deputy U.S. marshal, he stayed. His investigations of the outdoors produced an article that caught the attention of Nelson, who wrote to offer him a position as wildlife survey agent. Dufresne accepted enthusiastically. His reports to Nelson aided the writing of Alaska’s 1925 Game Law.

Dufresne’s extraordinary zeal for exploring Alaska’s wild almost cut short his career on his first winter dogsled journey. Nelson had instructed that he travel with a companion. Inspired by Roald Amundsen, in Nome training for a solo dogsled and plane trip to the North Pole, Dufresne thought, “If Captain Amundsen can do it, so can I.” He departed full of confidence until traveling down a remote stretch of the Aghiapuk River, where he and the team went through overflow ice into armpit-deep water. Soaked, he and the dogs managed to get to shore, and immediately his feet, hands, and face began to freeze. Struggling to the top of the bank, he beheld a trapper’s cabin and entered. Dunc McBain, an old trapper and the only person living on the river, had not seen anyone for months. He continued to cook flapjacks as he absorbed the situation. Then he rushed out, retrieved and fed the dogs, and insisted that the young man stay to thoroughly dry his clothes and gear. Their friendship lasted many years.19

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As an administrator Dufresne hoped to be away from the desk and in the field as much as possible. As a lover of wild creatures he preferred research to law enforcement. He believed persuasion rather than arrest and conviction would be the most effective means of instilling obedience to the law. In the early years around Nome he became known for meetings in Eskimo villages in which he explained game regulations, warned of the consequences of violation, and gave elders the responsibility for monitoring compliance.20

Dufresne worked for sixteen years in the northwest, north central, and Southeast as a warden and surveyor of wildlife species. In 1936 he received appointment as executive director of the Alaska Game Commission and in 1946 as director of information for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington.21 Upon retirement he signed on as West Coast editor for Field and Stream and wrote several popular books on his experiences in Alaska.

As did most other game managers, Dufresne articulated a predominantly utilitarian environmental philosophy. He passionately loved wild creatures but advocated predator control, particularly against wolves. He voiced deeply felt
concern for the grizzly bear’s future in the face of aircraft hunting, logging, and other threats.22 Yet he saw hunting as not only permissible but as actually beneficial. He protested the 1964 Wilderness Act and “raids” on national forest lands to create national parks, where hunting would be prohibited.23 Of Admiralty Island and other brown bear country in the Southeast, he wrote, “Because Alaska’s abounding fish and game resources are a resource needing to be cropped to hold them in bounds, National Park status is seldom recommended. Instead it is recommended that the region be managed with an eye to its recreational features in the years that lie beyond our own scope of life.”24 In a more private moment he told friend and writer Corey Ford, in reference to wild animals, “They were on earth long before we were, they have the prior right, and now that we’re on top after millions of years they deserve our respect and help.”25

Dufresne made two notable contributions to the Alaskan environment. He popularized wildlife, issuing somewhat ambiguous pleas for its protection. He nurtured the growth of and respect for game laws and their enforcement. His broad personal experience and connection to people in the bush fostered a cooperative relationship between citizens and game officials. On the other hand, Dufresne’s person-to-person approach to law enforcement did not comfortably fit the coming age of air and radio. Preferring the riverboat and dogsled, Dufresne resisted the development of an air wing, thereby losing the services of such talented officers as Sam White. Nevertheless, the Game Commission began to purchase aircraft for law enforcement before the end of Dufresne’s term in 1946.

CLARENCE RHODE

Wildlife management took a new direction under one of Dufresne’s successors, Clarence Joseph Rhode (1913–1958). Rhode hailed from Colville, Washington, the son of a state fish hatchery operator. A deputy warden at age fifteen, he attended business college but never completed a degree. Deciding to devote his life to wildlife management, he left for Alaska in 1934 and became a warden and Dufresne’s assistant in 1936. He picked up the idea of flying patrol from Sam White. Eventually, Rhode would encourage all wardens to do flying, and most did so. In 1948 he advanced to regional director for the Fish and Wildlife Service and executive director of the Alaska Game Commission.26

Rhode viewed the airplane as the key to effective law enforcement in the bush. On one occasion while flying his west-central district, he spotted five bull moose resting in the snow. They had been killed illegally and propped up so a flying warden would think they were sleeping. Rhode banked, passed over again, landed, and arrested Smoky Nikita, the violator. Rhode had noticed magpies perched on the antlers, something a live moose would not permit.27
Flying agent Jim King described the day-to-day work of airborne wardens:

The pilot agents learned to monitor the activities of people by reading their tracks in the snow. This required the ability to identify suspicious activity from the air and then to pick safe landing spots in the wilderness so apprehensions could be made. Agents had to be prepared to land at any location used by airborne hunters, including high lakes, ridge tops, sand bars, glacial rivers, beaches, and so on. Agents had to be prepared to snowshoe long distances, camp overnight, and heat up their airships after letting them stand in subzero temperatures. A successful flying warden had to master landings on skis, floats and tires.  

While crossing his territory during closed season on martens, agent Grenold Collins spied marten tracks and indications of an active trapline. Passing the trapper, he flew ahead to the cabin, entered, and prepared supper. When the trapper arrived Collins advised him that the situation had been radioed to base. The two sat down and ate, swapped stories, spent the night, and went out the next day to snap the traps shut. Then they loaded the illegal skins and flew back to the base where the trapper would face trial. In cold weather, pilots had to drain the oil soon after landing and heat it up in a pot and pour it back into the engine to restart it. Sam White witnessed a flyer who, having lost his oil through a leak, boiled down moose and bear fat. He poured it into the engine and returned to base. 

“No other pilot traveled so widely or monitored activities on the ground so closely,” King wrote of the wardens. In addition to investigation of fishing activities and smuggling of wolf skins over the Canadian border, “USFWS [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service] pilots delivered letters and messages, provided supplies to those in need, took the sick to medical help, reported medical emergencies, and saved lives. By the time of statehood, the ‘flying game wardens’ were regarded not as an outside and unwelcome force inflicted on the country but rather as an element of local society that provided a local service.” Citizens responded by assisting the agents, such as when they experienced mechanical troubles.

Aircraft changed the nature of hunting as well as law enforcement in Alaska. Transportation from other parts of the world and to hunting sites grew far easier after the war. Reflecting on the changes, Russell Annabel wrote that, in prewar years, “you used to see the same men year after year in the northern game ranges. . . . The Alaska game lands, because of the outrageous cost of getting into them, were virtually the private preserve of this group.” Traveling to and from hunting sites typically required three weeks to a month by a pack train of horses that had to be purchased and shipped to Alaska. “Now, however, the war-hastened development of aviation here has made the entire length and breadth of the north . . . wide open to you.” The first postwar polar bear hunter’s Kotzebue guide
had spotted bears in the vicinity and “radioed his customer to come north at once. It was a pleasant trip. Luxury liner from Detroit to Seattle, from Seattle to Nome; Alaska Airlines feeder-line plane from Nome to Kotzebue. Comfort all the way. Meals served aloft. No delays.” Within three days of leaving home the sportsman had been flown out over the ice and landed near a bear. Assisted by a hired Eskimo, he had taken possession of his long-dreamed-of trophy. Annabel welcomed the changes in hunting and fishing convenience “because so many more gunners and anglers can take part in it.”

Aircraft-facilitated hunting drew a different response from a National Research Council committee chaired by Olaus Murie and including Aldo Leopold and Robert F. Griggs. They considered the airplane “an intrusion on the wilderness” that could destroy “the incomparable sense of remoteness which comes to those who, upon entering the wilderness, place themselves beyond the ‘sights and sounds’ of civilization.” Ease of entry by motorized vehicles would cause a loss of “self-reliance and a series of skills and woodsmanship which have social values as antidotes for mechanization.”

Moreover, Murie’s panel believed aircraft could be a threat to fish and wildlife. They cited an outdoor sporting magazine advertisement guaranteeing a polar bear for $1,500 and promising “transportation to bear by airplane.” Entrepreneurs planned a 44-room luxury resort at Kotzebue Sound for hunting polar bears, whales, walrus, seals, waterfowl, and ptarmigan. “Similar reports have come from the field,” noted the panel, “pointing clearly to: New problems in law enforcement; the danger to wildlife species, especially such as walrus and polar bear, which obviously cannot survive the new refinement in hunting; and a new factor in the character of field sports, tending to reduce further the element of woodsmanship and sportsmanship already otherwise deteriorated.” The committee recommended that aircraft and other motorized transportation be banned in wilderness or wild sections of federal lands, that private inholdings in wildlands be purchased, and that no hunting or shooting by aircraft be permitted.

Regardless of whether aircraft diminished the “sport” of hunting, they could immediately jeopardize populations of some species. Over a two-day period in the spring of 1955 one of Rhode’s flying agents followed the tracks of twelve brown bears in the Anchorage vicinity. Each trail ended at a skinned bear carcass. Airborne hunters had simply followed the highly visible tracks of bears emerging from their winter dens into the spring snow, landed, and dispatched the animals. A February 1957 regulation by the Game Commission closed brown bear hunting in April and May to end the practice. Controversy over the use of aircraft and snowmobiles in hunting carried on into the 21st Century.
Rhode's views typified those of the game warden–conservationists of the era. He felt a strong commitment to the protection of game through vigorous law enforcement against all violators, the worst being commercial killers and those who wasted wildlife. Predators—wolves and coyotes at least—did not qualify as “game” and needed to be controlled. Politics, in his estimation, subverted the agent's work by failing to appropriate adequate enforcement funds and by interfering in professional game management.35

Rhode's Euro-American perspective and law enforcement orientation inevitably grated against hunting practices by Alaska Natives. Having seen and heard of wildlife waste by Natives, he determined to apply the law. Little or no enforcement had been done previously in the Arctic. At Shungnak in 1949 agent Ray Woolford and his partner apprehended some Eskimos for leaving piles of caribou in the woods after killing them. They required the Eskimos to bring in the caribou. The Eskimos argued that the caribou had been left for one day pending pickup and that, meanwhile, federal agents had found the carcasses and spread poison on them to kill wolves. The incident, and attempts to enforce the law at Anaktuvuk Pass and elsewhere, created enmity between Natives and the wildlife management community. It lent impetus to the movement for Alaska Native land and subsistence rights in the 1960s and 1970s.36

Rhode professionalized Alaskan wildlife management to a high degree. For a time he accepted only 2 percent of applicants as agents. He hired university-
trained wildlife biologists and helped institute a department of wildlife management at the University of Alaska. An intense, competitive, and highly capable organizer and manager, Rhode induced strong loyalties and resentments. His administrative interests lay much closer to law enforcement than to wildlife biology. Territorial fisheries biologists disliked him; they felt he short-changed fisheries research to build his air-based program. The belief that the federal government had mismanaged the salmon fisheries, and weak cooperation between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Territorial Department of Fisheries, generated negative feelings between federal and territorial officials. Rhode did care about wildlife habitat, however, and firmly endorsed the proposed Arctic National Wildlife Range (ANWR) and Izembek and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta wildlife refuges.

In August 1958 Rhode took off in a Grumman Goose accompanied by his son Jack and Fish and Wildlife officer Stanley Fredericksen, preparing for a visit by Wildlife Management Institute leaders Ira Gabrielson and Clint “Pink” Gutermuth in furtherance of the effort to establish ANWR. On their return trip south they planned to cross over the headwaters of the Ivishak River, one of the highest mountain passes in the eastern Brooks Range. Twenty-one years later hikers found the wreckage of their aircraft on a rocky slope below the pass. Agency officials memorialized Rhode in the Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Range along the Bering Sea, absorbed in 1980 by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

**JIM BROOKS**

Boone and Crockett member James Washington “Jim” Brooks (1922–) careered as an official of both federal and state wildlife agencies in Alaska. Raised in Detroit, Brooks gained an interest in Nature through outdoor forays and the books of Ernest Thompson Seton. He left home at age seventeen without benefit of a high school diploma and headed west for adventure, riding freight trains and staying in hobo jungles. Arriving in Alaska in 1940, he worked at a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, an airport, a gold ore processing mill, and on the Alaska Railroad; washed dishes, cut wood, did farmwork, and fished commercially for salmon. In 1941 he took over a trapline in Kantishna country.

Later that winter, Brooks heard about Pearl Harbor from Indians. He continued trapping until three of his four dogs ganged up on the other, his favorite, and killed it. Returning to Nenana, he met the U.S. marshal, who accused him of draft dodging. When Brooks proved his age of nineteen, the marshal apologized and insisted he stay for dinner. But the invitation suffered from unfortunate timing. In an overheated house, Brooks wore thick long underwear and he had not bathed for some time. He could not enjoy the food as he sat...
there roasting and growing riper by the minute. Nor did it help matters that the marshal’s attractive daughter sat close by. Never had he been so happy to hit the trail again.41

In Fairbanks, Brooks worked at the airport where he met many of the early aviators. He drove trucks and heavy equipment for the construction of the Alaska Highway. In September 1942 he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps and applied successfully for flight training. In January 1945 he began piloting 15th Air Force B-24s out of southern Italy on seventeen missions through the flak clouds of Austria and northern Italy. After the war he did bush flying for a year around Bristol Bay and then entered the University of Alaska, intending to study pre-dentistry. A weather service position at Wales rekindled his interest in sea mammals. While at Wales, in 1949 he made a hazardous January flight in a snowstorm to rescue an Eskimo whose two companions had perished on the Bering Sea ice. After accompanying him two years later on a trip, during which he gave all the leftover food and fuel to an old trapper, outdoor writer Jim Rearden remarked, “I learned what it is to be an Alaskan from Jim Brooks.”42

Returning to the University of Alaska in 1949 Brooks majored in wildlife management, writing a master’s thesis on walrus in 1954 that became a standard work on the subject. He then entered the Territorial Department of Fisheries, where he conducted research on sea lions and belukhas to determine their impact on salmon. Put in charge of predator control of harbor seals, a program he did not favor, he helped phase it out. In 1957 he transferred to the new Alaska Department of Fish and Game. An appointment as director of the newly organized game division, a post he held from 1959 to 1967, cut short his doctoral study in wildlife management at the University of British Columbia. In addition to the game program, his duties included establishing the state complex of game refuges. From 1967 to 1972 he served in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where he designed the polar bear research program and engaged in planning for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the trans-Alaska oil pipeline. He held office from 1972 to 1977 as commissioner of fish and game and, until retirement, as director of enforcement in the Alaska office of the National Marine Fisheries Service, managing ocean fisheries involving Canada and other nations.43

In his travels throughout much of Alaska and innumerable contacts with people of every station, Brooks absorbed what he termed a “generalized sourness” toward the federal government. He had witnessed unfair treatment of the Inupiat at Wales, heard of favoritism toward the outside-owned salmon canning companies, and regarded the reindeer industry as an example of federal mismanagement. Unlike most wildlife managers in the territory he looked forward to statehood and state control of fish and wildlife.
Jim Brooks conducting polar bear research, Chukchi Sea northwest of Cape Lisburne, 1971. Courtesy Jim Brooks. Trained in a modern ecological perspective, Brooks headed the game division of the new Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
Empathetic toward both wild creatures and people, Brooks steered a course midway between the conservationists and the advocates of vigorous exploitation of wildlife. He recoiled at the extravagant waste of walruses by his Little Diomede hunting companions, who killed large numbers only for the ivory. He proposed a bill that passed in 1956 permitting sport hunting of walruses, hoping that guiding would help the local economy. It did, but ivory hunting continued to increase. This and other experiences made Brooks skeptical toward claims of subsistence hunting rights. He regarded much of the predator control by both territory and federal governments as excessive and used his influence to limit it.44

Brooks represented the ecologically trained wildlife managers, increasingly from the University of Alaska, who replaced the traditional law enforcement–oriented agents. Professors John Buckley (a student of Aldo Leopold), Neil Hosley, Brina Kessel, and Jim Rearden initiated the university’s program. Their students, who set the direction of Alaskan wildlife management from the late 1950s through the 1960s, included Brooks, John Hakala, David R. Klein, Calvin J. Lensink, Jack Lentfer, A. Robert Rausch, and Ronald O. Skoog.

Brooks disliked the bounty system and the wolf control effort. He stopped the program of predator poisoning in 1960 and worked to get rid of bounties. He hired other ecologically oriented agents, encouraged research, and established a habitat division, giving the Alaska Department of Fish and Game a nationwide reputation for progressive research and management. Though not a strong supporter of parks and game refuges, Brooks personally moved the selection and designation in 1960 of the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary and furthered the establishment of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary as a fishing site for Alaskan brown bears.45 In 1989 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Alaska. During the wolf controversy in the 1990s he facilitated ballot initiatives in which the public opposed the use of aircraft to pursue wolves, land, and shoot them.46

JIM KING

One federal wildlife manager, James Gore “Jim” King (1927— ), carried on his environmental activities into the 21st Century. Born in Portland, Maine, where his father wrote for newspaper editor and future Alaska politician Ernest Gruening, King grew up in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Following Marine Corps service he attended Harvard and eventually completed a degree in wildlife management at the University of Alaska–Juneau in 1958. His first wildlife management position consisted of summer employment in 1950 as a park ranger at Mt. McKinley National Park, and in 1951 he began a Fish and Wildlife Service career. As an Alaska Game Commission agent out of Fairbanks
he performed wildlife studies, waterfowl banding, and law enforcement. During 1962–1964 he managed the first Fish and Wildlife Service station at Bethel, overseeing the Clarence Rhode refuge on the Yukon Delta and adjacent Bering Sea islands. Between 1964 and 1983 he supervised Alaska bald eagle and waterfowl surveys, compiling 33 years of accident-free flying. As a retiree he did aerial surveys on a part-time and contract basis for the Fish and Wildlife Service and published numerous articles on eagles, ducks, geese, trumpeter swans, and other birds. His waterfowl investigations, including work on the North Slope and investigation of a large oil spill in lower Cook Inlet in 1970, generated awareness and protective measures by public agencies. Not least of the accomplishments of King and other waterfowl biologists, their work on the Yukon Flats helped defeat the Rampart Dam project that would have destroyed one of North America’s topmost waterfowl breeding areas.

Most of King’s work consisted of waterfowl surveys, but his early warden years produced some memorable moments in law enforcement. On a spring day in 1957, he and agent John Klingbiel investigated an allegation of illegal goose shooting at Kotzebue. Refused entry to the suspect’s house, they returned bearing a warrant. The suspect departed in a jeep, waving at them. Pursuing the jeep, they found a stash of white-fronted geese in a snowbank. They carried the geese to the marshal’s house next door to that of the suspect, who tried to bar their entry until the marshal emerged, ordering him away. At the trial the prosecutor, allergic to feathers, had to stand in the back of the courtroom and shout questions at the agent holding the evidence. The court convicted and fined the suspect, a non-Native guide.

Typically, though, King flew over waterways and nesting sites the length and breadth of Alaska—the Southeast islands, the ponds of the interior and the Yukon Delta, the river courses, the Aleutians and the Bering Sea, the Arctic tundra—to band or census ducks, geese, and swans. Managers needed the numbers to control hunting and conserve the various species. Survey agents got to know people, Native and white, in nearly all the cities and villages; some dated from the Gold Rush and others came from Oklahoma for oil. When male agents declined to ride in the plane flown by the first female survey pilot, King volunteered to be her assistant. She proved a fully competent flier.

While manager of the Clarence Rhode refuge, King proposed the reservation of Cape Newenham to protect nesting seabirds. This resulted in action by Interior Secretary Stewart Udall in 1969, and the tract became part of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge in 1980. King and agent Jim Bartonek formed a Pacific Seabird Group that contributed to the expansion of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. In 1975 King and agent Calvin Lensink went to Washington to brief Interior Department officials and members of Congress on lands appropriate for wildlife refuges. Lands settlement bills envisioned
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vast acreage under federal jurisdiction, enabling the two agents to draft liberal boundaries for the refuges. Their proposals for waterfowl habitat at Innoko, Kanuti, Koyukuk, Nowitna, Tetlin, Yukon Flats, and other lands largely determined their 1980 designation as national wildlife refuges.50

In the private sphere, King helped organize the Trumpeter Swan Society (1968), the Pacific Seabird Group, and the Steller Society (renamed Juneau Group of Audubon Society); served on the boards of Alaska Conservation Society and Territorial Sportsmen; and presided over the state chapter of the Wildlife Society. On the state and Juneau parks advisory boards he played a leading role in preservation of the Mendenhall Wetlands and 2,000 acres of Juneau beach properties. He and his wife, Mary Lou, led efforts to establish the 2,800-acre Point Bridget State Park (1988) and the 13-acre Ernest Gruening State Historical Park (1989). The Kings helped create bike and forest trails and other recreational facilities in the Juneau vicinity. In the 1990s King initiated an effort to establish a Juneau Icecap International Park. He received many

Dufresne, Rhode, Brooks, and King exemplify the many territorial era officials—wardens, researchers, managers, and others—who carried the effort to safeguard Alaska’s wildlife populations during the long period between the heyday of influential private elites and the rise of national environmental public opinion in the 1960s. Paralleling the Bureau of Biological Survey–Fish and Wildlife Service directors who in some cases had been their agency superiors, they promoted the evolution of environmental management values in Alaska. All supported species protection, although Dufresne and Rhode expressed a traditional view of predators. They saw their main objective as ensuring a stable supply of game, fur, and fish for residents and, to a lesser extent, for nonresident sportsmen.

Schooled in more modern concepts of wildlife management, Brooks and King perceived their goal as something closer to ecological sustainability. Rhode, Brooks, and King all actuated this value through protective land designations. All four of these leaders articulated the necessity of a strong and responsible government role in wildlife management backed by sound research. As men-on-the-scene they also believed in grassroots participation in policy. In the absence of environmental groups in pre-statehood Alaska, most participation involved settlers, sport hunters and fishers, trappers, and guides. The success of Game Commission and fisheries agents in bridging the gaps between government and settlers gradually reinforced utilitarian conservationist values in Alaska, a step toward later and broader ecological concepts.