



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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News

13-11

May 16, 2013

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Alaska's Endangered Species *Recovery Champion* Award Winners

The story of endangered species conservation in the United States over the past 40 years involves many heroes. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) recognized 16 teams or individuals across the country for their outstanding efforts to conserve and protect endangered and threatened fish, wildlife and plants by designating them 2012 *Recovery Champions*. Among the award winners honored for their work were two Alaskans, Brian McCaffery and Margaret Peterson.

“Recovery Champion awards acknowledge individuals and groups who have excelled in their efforts to protect and recover our most imperiled species,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “They exemplify the dedication and determination that has helped save countless animals and plants from extinction and that continues to raise the bar in the field of endangered species conservation.”

For over 20 years, Brian McCaffery with Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in Bethel, has played a pivotal role in Steller's and spectacled eider recovery, including serving as the Eider Recovery Team leader. The team credits its success to Brian's ability to create an atmosphere of openness and to encourage participation. He is the primary author of the Spectacled Eider Recovery Plan, has helped evaluate the feasibility of reintroducing Steller's eiders to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and is developing structured decision-making methods and other advanced modeling techniques for critical management decisions. By writing and performing music about birds and habitat conservation, including a rap song that was aired on local radio, Brian also communicates with audiences that the Service might not otherwise reach.

For two decades, Dr. Margaret Petersen who worked with the U.S. Geological Survey's Alaska Science Center in Anchorage, until her recent retirement, served as an expert on the recovery team for Steller's eiders and spectacled eiders in Alaska, consistently providing valuable insight on their biology and ecology. Certainly the achievement for which Dr. Petersen will be best known is her satellite telemetry research that identified the location of the spectacled eider during the non-breeding season. Winter telemetry locations helped discover previously unknown concentrations of spectacled eiders in broken sea ice in the Bering Sea. Waterfowl biologists have used these insights to target marine ecology studies, model winter energetics and effects of winter weather on survival, and focus thinking on the potential effects of impending climate change on spectacled eiders and associated benthic communities.

The *Recovery Champion* awards began in 2002 as a one-time recognition for Service staff members for their achievements in conserving listed species. However, in 2007, the program was expanded to honor

Service partners as well, recognizing their essential role in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

For information about the 2012 Recovery Champions, please visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/recovery-champions/index.html>.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. To learn more about the Service's Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>. For Alaska-specific Endangered Species information visit <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/endangered/index.htm>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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