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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces 2013 Endangered Species Recovery Champions**

On May 16, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognized individuals and teams for their exceptional efforts to conserve and protect the nation's rarest fish, wildlife and plants by designating them 2013 *Recovery Champions*. Among the award winners honored for their work this year were two recipients who have worked on recovery of several Alaska Region species: Hiroshi Hasegawa, Ph.D., Toho University, Biology Department, Chiba, Japan, and Sonja Jahrsdoerfer, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Coordinator for the Alaska Region from January 2006 to December 2014.

"We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to these dedicated conservationists who are on the front lines fighting the battle against extinction," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "Their spirit and determination is the application of Aldo Leopold's counsel to 'keep every cog and wheel,' and they provide hope for all of us that our children and the generations that follow will be able to enjoy the same tremendous diversity of plants and animals that we do today."

Dedicating his career to the short-tailed albatross, a North Pacific seabird, Professor Hiroshi Hasegawa has led the way in advancing its recovery; fewer than 200 of the birds existed in 1976, and today there are more than 3,500. Because of Professor Hasegawa's census and banding work, scientists now have detailed population records and demographic information. After identifying environmental conditions that were depressing reproductive success on Torishima, an island with an active volcano off the coast of Japan, he worked with partners, including government agencies, to find solutions—that is, planting vegetation to stabilize slopes on windswept terraces and establishing a new colony using decoys and recorded colony sounds. These initiatives helped ensure that the species would not face extinction from a volcanic eruption. Professor Hasegawa documented his work through scientific papers and popular articles, as well as books for adults and children. Treasured by Japan and the United States, the short-

tailed albatross spends most of its time foraging at sea from California to Alaska and nests primarily on Torishima.

Sonja Jahrsdoerfer led the way on a range of issues including recovering the wood bison, polar bear, and Steller's eider. Her leadership was crucial in reintroducing wood bison as a non-essential experimental population—thanks to the partnership with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. She also played a key role in progress to reintroduce Steller's eiders onto Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, collaborating with staff from the refuge, the Fairbanks office, and the Alaska Sea Life Center. The goal of the project is to create a viable breeding population on the refuge and restore the species to Western Alaska. With regard to polar bears, Sonja Jahrsdoerfer communicated a well-received message that advanced conservation progress, starting with presentations on planning and developing recovery criteria. An essential element of success was the trust that she established through the years—engaging the many stakeholders, including Native Villages—in partnership initiatives.

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 2013 Recovery Champions, please visit:

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

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/>, or connect with us through any of these social media at <http://www.fws.gov/home/socialmedia/index.html>.*

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