Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Jim King
Date of Interview: Section #1: April 18, 2006
Section #2: December 16, 2013
Location of Interview: Section #1: Shepherdstown, WV
Section #2: Portland, OR
Interviewer: Section #1 Mark Madison
Section #2 Mary Lou King

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:
Full Time: 1951 to 1983 – 32 years
Rehired Annuitant: 1983 to 2013 – 30 years
Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: "Stream Guard" at Kenai, Alaska; Trainee in Fairbanks under Alaskan Game Commission; as Enforcement Agent under Management and Enforcement Division: Learned to fly and qualified as FWS pilot, single engine (land and sea), patrolled winter trapline areas, hunting areas year around and other duties as assigned including a muskrat study, big game census, waterfowl surveys, waterfowl banding, etc.
Colleagues and Mentors: Hank Hanson; Theron Smith; Ray Tremblay; Ray Wolford; David Spencer
Brief Summary of Interview: Starts off talking about being in college and having a summer job with the Park Service, and how he ended up working for Fish and Wildlife. He talks about the various positions he held, places he worked, flights he did, and people he worked with. He mentions some of the issues that not only he had, but other pilots had as well. And he briefly mentions working on refuge proposals for ANILCA.
Invented process and banded some20,000 diving ducks.
First Refuge Manager for Clarence Rhode NWR on the Yukon Delta.
First report of one million seabird colony at Cape Newenham, resulting in NWR there in 1962.
Reassigned to Juneau1964 as Supervisor of Waterfowl Investigations Alaska and Flyway Biologist Alaska and Yukon Territory Canada.
First proposal for seven new waterfowl refuges in Alaska covering some 34,000 square miles of waterfowl habitat that produces a fall flight of some six million ducks, established by ANILCA in 1980.
Seabird studies leading to a permanent monitoring program.
Bald Eagle studies on Tongass Nation Forest leading to conservation program there.
Wrote 470 pp Memoir, Attending Alaska's Birds
1st edition 2008 Trafford Publishing
2nd edition 2010 Hancock House Publishers

Section #1 April 18, 2006

MM: How did you come to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

JK: Well it's kind of interesting to be sitting here having walked in for this interview in front of my picture on the wall, and the airplane I flew for 1200 hours. But my experience with this airplane was interesting because I was the first biologist to fly it. It was redesigned in the Fish and Wildlife shop in Anchorage and I learned to fly it with the designer, Jerry Lawhorn, sitting in the back seat because there was no operator's manual.

MM: What could be better than the designer?

JK: And he'd tell me what to do. The panel controls were all mixed up and unlabeled. I told somebody about that later and they said, "Oh, well, you were our test pilot." "Oh really." Flying an uncertified airplane.

MM: What's the name of that airplane behind you?

JK: Well I called it Anseriform, Latin for Duck Family and I stenciled it on there, but it got called by a whole variety of other names, the mechanics mostly called it Pinocchio because of its long nose. Its number is 754, and I think people refer to it by the number more than anything; it's a Turbine Beaver.

MM: When did you first join the service and what were you doing?

JK: Well, I'll go back a little further than that. I was going to the University of Alaska, as an undergraduate, and I took a summer job as a Seasonal Ranger with McKinley National Park, as it was named then. And I didn't know anything about wildlife, it just sounded like an interesting thing to do. Adolph Murie was the park biologist and he and wife, Louise, were there. There was no road into McKinley Park then. The only road was from the McKinley Park Railroad Station, 90 miles toward the mountain to Kantishna where there had been a gold rush in 1915. Cars could be brought from Fairbanks or Anchorage on the train to drive on the road. There was just a small community of park people near the train station. This was the first year to hire Seasonal Rangers. Les Viereck, a Dartmouth Student and I were the first two. We had many nice meals at the Murie's house and I got to thinking about wildlife. When I got back to the University that fall, it was the first year of the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Alaska. Suddenly there were wildlife classes to sign up for and I signed up for wildlife management and waterfowl management with Jim Rearden. Do you know Jim Rearden?

MM: Yes, yes. We have an oral history with Jim.

JK: Jim wrote the Foreword for my book, <u>Attending Alaska's Birds</u>

MM: Yeah, yeah.

JK: I wanted to go back to the park the next summer and applied early. I didn't hear anything for a long time. Then Neal Hoseley, head of the Wildlife Research Unit, asked if I'd be interested in a Fish and Wildlife job for the

summer, and that one of them was banding geese at Shishmaref, which is a little Western Alaska Eskimo Village that's making some news now because it's washing away. So yeah, that sounded good to me, I'd go someplace new and I hadn't heard from the park, so I said okay. A few days later I got a letter from the Park Service, from Grant Pearson, saying yeah I could have my job back, but I had already made another commitment.

MM: Their loss, our gain.

JK: So then I was told a day or two before my final exam that spring to get to Anchorage as quick as I could and report to Holgar Larson, who was known as "the Howling Dane". As a young man he had served in the Danish Navy.

MM: Did you meet the Howling Dane?

JK: Oh yes, and I got to see him perform that summer too. We rounded up about100 drift net fishermen off the Kenai River during the Red Salmon run, for letting their nets get too close. They were ordered to appear at the little Court House in Kenai next morning. They were not in a good mood as Holgar began calling them up from the steps of the court house. One burley fellow elected to trade some verbal blows with Holgar. Holgar in his accented voice roared "Yoo Wong, Yoo Absolutely Wong. You broke the law and you have to pay. If you can't obey the regulations there won't be any fish or anyone. Now get in there and pay your bill". The force of his voice left everyone else speechless.

I went off to Anchorage and went to the office there and was told that Holgar was down the inlet and the secretary asked me to fill out some papers. And then she said there was an empty boxcar on the railroad siding just down the hill from the federal building and there were some cots and sleeping bags in there. There were two of us, Jim Caroll and I from the University and she told us we could sleep there.

MM: In a boxcar?

JK: Yup

MM: So accommodations haven't changed much.

JK: Well that was 62 years ago. The two of us fooled around Anchorage all day and the next morning we went up and Holgar still wasn't there and the secretary assured us that we were on the payroll but to come back tomorrow morning. So I guess it was the third day of my employment, I came into the office and Holgar was there and he said, "You're going to Kenai." What I wound up doing was a Stream Guard, as they called them then, for the Kenai River, which is a major salmon river. The job was to keep; the fishermen who would anchor in the river during the closed periods and they could fill their net while sitting there during the big runs in just a few minutes, so I'd have to keep touring around in my boat watching to make sure none of the anchored boats had a net out. And then there were the big driven traps up the beach in both directions and I had to watch them in the two closed periods every week. They had to secure those beach traps closed with a metal box car seal, I had to check seals to make sure they had closed their entrance. So I did that all summer, I was pretty disappointed at first but then I

got to having fun with my 14 foot skiff and got involved with a few cases. That fall I got offered a trainee position in Fairbanks and I thought, well I had one more year of college but maybe it would be easier to get back into college than to get a trainee position next year. They wanted me to agree to stay for a year, so I did. And it took me seven years to get back to college. I was working under the Alaska Game Law, which was a little different than working under the other programs of the Fish and Wildlife Service in other states. It related to an Alaska law, but we were Fish and Wildlife Service employees and we were in the Management and Enforcement Division. There hadn't been many biologists in Alaska, and the game agents were involved with a lot of wildlife work besides just law enforcement. We did game counts and I did a little muskrat study. That was 1951, in 1954 Hank Hanson came to Alaska as the first waterfowl biologist pilot. He was a one man show then. He was in the M&E Division and when he needed people he had the provision that he could call on the agents. Most agents were more interested in big game and fur, and I liked doing the waterfowl work. I started working with Hank periodically on call and doing transect surveys, and I did the Western Alaska Survey in 1956 with Hank. Actually that was kind of interesting because he was a pretty experienced pilot with a lot of wartime flying over Germany, the Service had a rule that any pilot that's new to Alaska would do some flying with one of the local agents, so I flew Hank around. I'd been flying for I guess three or four years. I had learned to fly in Fairbanks. Another guy and I bought a little Taylorcraft airplane that wasn't encumbered with much technical stuff like lights, radios, navigation equipment or starters, all that extraneous stuff. You just had to flip the prop and make sure you had the throttle in the right position, jump in and go. But I got my private license there in Fairbanks in that airplane.

That was the period when the Service was just starting to get Piper Pacer Airplanes. And there were two pilots in Fairbanks then that were a good deal more experienced than I, Ray Tremblay had a few hundred hours, and Ray Woolford, who'd been flying there for ten years or so. And so I was doing patrols with them, and being a licensed pilot, it was legal for me to fly the airplane. So on routine trips they'd let me fly in the left seat and I would be the observer when we were out checking on trap lines or something and heading home I could fly and log some time. I got a few hours doing that. At that time when we had a hundred hours we could take a check ride with Theron Smith and get a letter of authorization to fly government planes. The initial letter was to fly government planes under the supervision of a project leader who was more experienced. Getting qualified was very easy compared to what they're asking perspective pilots to do now. I got a lot of help and a lot of encouragement as I built up my experience. I flew out of Fairbanks from 1951to 1962. In 1962 I went with the Refuge Division; that was after Alaska statehood.

The Alaska Game Commission went out with the Territory and the Fish and Wildlife Service took a big cut in part because one of the political stunts of the people promoting statehood was too bad mouth federal mismanagement of

wildlife. So the answer to that and I don't know who dreamed up that answer, was to cut all the funding for Alaska projects and send everybody south except there was still Migratory Bird money and Refuge money. So the Fish and Wildlife didn't disappear but most of the agents transferred outside. I didn't want to leave Alaska, so I transferred to the Refuge Division. About that time was when under the Johnson administration I think, Secretary Seaton. Would that be right?

MM: That would be right.

JK: Established the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge and within days they changed the name to Clarence Rhode, because Clarence Rhode had disappeared in an airplane in the Brooks Range the year before. The third refuge established that year by executive order was the Artic Wildlife Refuge, Wildlife Range it was called then. But anyway it was just a few years later that, OAS (Interior Department of Aircraft Services) was inaugurated and I don't want to be negative but OAS had a mission to get rid of what they called us 'duel function pilots.' OAS did not consider the Fish and Wildlife pilots as professional pilots. Suddenly everything became much more difficult. Instead of getting help with our flying we got hurdles. Costs for OAS demands came out of our wildlife allotments so less wildlife work was possible. We had to devote a week or so to ground school every year, and after flying government airplanes for 20 years I had to get an instrument rating. I did and it took me a whole month, well it was a month away from the wildlife work I was doing. I filed an instrument flight plan for my check ride, and I passed that and got my instrument rating. And that was the last instrument flight plan I ever filed. There just was no reason for me to be flying around in the clouds and as Walt commented earlier today, "there's things in a lot of those clouds in Alaska" (Laughing). But that was just one of the hurdles they thought they would throw at the Fish and Wildlife pilots. When OAS started managing the Fish and Wildlife, and Bureau of Land Management flying BLM had quite a few airplanes and pilots that were related to firefighting primarily. So these little things they tossed at us, we're working for BLM. One of the sad cases, I thought, was when Ave Thayer who was the first refuge manager of the Artic Wildlife Refuge and a really good pilot. He learned to fly like I did, and went to work and got his, written for his instrument rating and then did the flight training, but he hadn't past his test. Then he was asked to take this airplane, 754, they had it on skis and they wanted somebody that had a lot of familiarity with skis to try it out. So he had scheduled his, I guess his instrument check ride, for certain date and OAS asked him to do this flight with this airplane on skis. So he was flying on the North Slope for about a week and when he got back he had a memo from OAS that he had failed to meet the deadline for getting his instrument rating, so he was grounded. Thayer never flew a government plane again, he was just hurt.

MM: Terrible story.

JK: That sort of thing was happening. And the reason I bring it up is I think it's still important. I now see fewer and fewer biologists want to fly; they're not

getting into that. Most of the refuge pilots in Alaska now are sort of retooled transportation pilots with no biological training. They have entirely different objectives in life, then the kind of pilots the Fish and Wildlife Service brought up back in our day. So I've been trying, lately to make the point that the Service needs to take a look at what's happening to the flying game or it's going to disappear. It was wildlife biologist/pilots who invented the aerial surveys on which the Service depends so much, not the retrained OAS people. So that was my flying experience.

I stayed in Bethel as the Clarence Rhode Refuge Manager for a couple of years. Then Hank Hansen, who was the Supervisor of Alaska Waterfowl Investigations, but also functioned as a flyway biologist for Alaska and the Yukon, was offered a supervisory position in Washington with the M&E Division. That left the Alaska Supervisor of Waterfowl Investigations position open. I'd done quite a few surveys with Hank and done a lot of duck banding on the Yukon Flats, which is now a National Wildlife Refuge. Earlier before going to Bethel, I had also been assigned to do duck banding for the Rampart Dam Study. We were not given much time for that Rampart Dam study. There were two seasons and the report had to be done the third season, so it made sense to band a lot of birds and we did. But anyway this meant I'd been doing quite a bit of waterfowl work, so they asked me if I wanted to apply for that position in Juneau. I didn't really want to leave Bethel, I was having a good time on the Yukon Delta; my wife was enjoying Bethel. You hear a lot of bad mouthing of Bethel because it's a funny little place to visit, but we were having a good time there. She was managing the library, they had a little library that nobody had been taking care of. I was developing programs on the refuge I had a little different approach to my flying than a lot of the biologists do now-a-days because I started flying as game warden essentially. That meant go out and see what's going on. More and more government pilots, write out a study outline and then go out and do the sampling procedure or whatever and come right back; I didn't have any restraints like that. I flew down the coast as far as the Unimak Island and the Aleutians to watch the birds moving up in the spring, and kept records. And then I got flying around Cape Newenham, which has an enormous bird colony on it. I looked in Gabrielson's book and he didn't have any reference to Cape Newenham; nobody had written a report about all those seabirds there. And then there were two lagoons that were full of eelgrass, and the brant, and emperor geese, and pintail ducks would use those lagoons. And I enjoyed going down there and I found a couple of places I could land. I was working for Dave Spencer then, he was the refuge supervisor. I Thought well, "I'm a 160 miles the wrong direction from my refuge. I better have a good story in case anybody squawk's." I'd take my wife Mary Lou along and she'd take pictures. Eventually I wrote a report proposing Cape Newenham for a National Wildlife Refuge with photographs by my wife, and sent it to Dave Spencer. Just about that time Stewart Udall, his term was about done, and he queried the Alaska Area Office, if there were any places that ought to be a refuge in Alaska and here they had my report on the shelf. And it was for one hundred and sixty-five thousand acres, I think. Spencer called

up and ask, "Can you cut down the acreage any?" I thought about that and I said, "No, this is the logical line," it included drainage for the lagoons. I said, "No, I don't want to cut it down. That's what it should be." So in due course the Cape Newenham National Wildlife Refuge was established by executive order. I'm not sure exactly how that works, but I think the Secretary of Interior does in fact sign that kind of executive order, so it came from Udall; all hundred and sixty-five thousand acres. And it was kind of interesting because that was in 1968, I think, and within another few years the ANILCA was generating and I did a lot of work on the refuge proposals for the ANILCA. And we weren't talking about thousands of acres anymore, we were talking about millions.

MM. I know Jim I got to cut you off, end of tape. We haven't even gotten to the end of your career. Maybe we can do some more tomorrow, if you're game.

JK: Well whatever you want.

Section 2, 4-16-2013

The tape ran out on Section 1 but Mark Madison's questions have been clear enough that I can fill in the rest of my career, sadly without his presence.

After two years in Bethel we moved to Juneau where, with Hank Hanson's departure, I became Supervisor of Alaska Waterfowl Investigations and nominally Flyway Biologist for the State of Alaska and Canada's Yukon Territory. FWS maps show this as the top of all four North American Flyways. I remained in that job for 20 years, until retirement.

The FWS presence in Alaska had greatly diminished as the new State developed its own Department of Fish and Game. I had a primary mission to do the Duck Breeding Pair Survey for the head of all four flyways and a less specific mission to represent the Service in any appropriate way. I had no staff.

About half my annual responsibility was the duck survey. I would fly 214, 16 mile survey segments over the major waterfowl habitats, the same way each year, producing an index for 10 species of ducks, 4 species of geese and 2 species of wild swans. If the index was up from the long term average, hunting restrictions could be relaxed somewhat or if down, limited. We knew where each species was being shot from the band returns. There are normally 6 or 8 Flyway Biologists who round out the survey across Canada and the northern states. This is the way North American waterfowl hunting has been successfully managed for the past 60 years. The survey has produced a wealth of specific data and I would frequently be asked for bits and pieces of Alaska data by land managers, other agencies or people writing impact statements, etc.

Perhaps the most dramatic request I filled was for a refuge proposal on each of the 7 of my survey strata and – right now. I was very familiar with each of these areas having been a game warden and duck bander in each so was able to write 7 proposals in one day covering acreage of habitat, 10 year average of 16 species of spring waterfowl, observations, also observation of big game, number of resident people,

expected fall flight of game birds and so forth. The next day while the secretary typed my report I cut and pasted 4 mile to the inch USGS Maps to show wetland boundaries and that night got two sets of maps and reports in the mail, one to the FWS Central Office in Washington, DC and the other to my friend Jack Hession of the Sierra Club who had recently asked for refuge proposals in Alaska. Nearly ten years later in 1980, when President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) it included 7 new National Wildlife Refuges covering more than 3 million acres of wetland habitat that produce an expected fall flight of more than 6 million ducks. My little reports had largely survived ten years of debate in Washington D.C.

Another effort occurred when Agent Fred Robards determined the US Forest Service was selling huge tracts of timber in America's largest National Forest, the Tongass, with no effort to save the Bald Eagle nesting trees that should have been protected by Federal Law. Fred's concern led to an enquiry from the Forest Service about how many Bald Eagle nests there might be on the Tongass. In the spring of 1966 we few 60 hours to sample eagle nests on Admiralty Island and estimated there were 1144 eagle nests on that one island that composed about 6.5 percent of the forested coast of Southeast Alaska.

In 1967 Fred and I flew another 60 hours and estimated there would be 4 thousand active nests on the whole Tongass Forest plus an equal number of inactive nests also protected. The Forest Service didn't like this news, but Sig Olson Jr. their wildlife expert held their feet to the fire and an agreement was reached that the Forest Service would provide maps of their sale areas to FWS who would find and mark all eagle nests. The Forest Service would exclude about 5 acres from cutting so blow down would not be a problem. Hundreds of Bald Eagle Nests were saved in the next few years.

After my experience at Cape Newenham, I remained interested in seabirds. The FWS in Alaska had no program to monitor the welfare of seabird colonies and feeding areas though clearly it was not the State or anyone else's responsibility. We were getting reports of oiled birds in Cook Inlet and other sites along the shore. I wrote a number of little memos to the Regional Office, gave talks at an Audubon Society and an American Ornithologist Union annual meetings and tried to stir things up. I tried some near shore air surveys in Bristol Bay the way we did wetland duck surveys and determined there were times we could get a total bird index of birds per square mile for specific places indicating places and times oil spills should be avoided. Individual species were harder to identify. This led to my inclusion on a month long cruise on the Coast Guard's icebreaker Glacier. I wanted to see if duck survey techniques could work from ships at sea. The Glacier had a heated conning tower 65 feet above the sea which was not unlike my airplane position a hundred feet in the air. It seemed developing bird indexes from shipboard could work.

A few years later after passage of the Environmental Protection Act and pressure from the oil industry to lease off shore tracts, FWS finally developed a

seabird program. One of their first projects was to create a seabird colony catalogue for Alaska. Their first edition in 1979 showed over 3 thousand sites where 40 million birds were thought to nest.

Hank Hansen had been extremely interested in the idea that we could find Trumpeter Swans in summer throughout the coastal rainforest and the Interior boreal forest. The agents and refuge biologists had been recording them here and there. At the start of the 20th century, published reports indicated Trumpeters were either extinct or soon would be. Hanks final instructions to me were to organize a complete Trumpeter census in Alaska as soon as possible and in 1968 we found 2,867. Several Agents participated but all innovated a bit and I was not satisfied with this total. In 1975 I set out to do a total census myself using a technique that could be duplicated in future years. In 5 weeks flying every day, weather permitting, I recorded 4,170 Trumpeters. This caused some National excitement and it was decided to do an Alaska census every 5 years in August when family groups could be easily counted. My 1975 instructions were followed through 2005 when the Alaska tally was 23,692 (I retired in 1983). There was no indication of improvement in Alaskan habitat in that period. It was concluded that the increase resulted from Trumpeters, excluded from their traditional wintering areas in the estuaries of Western Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, learning to use farmland in those areas. Farm few Trumpeters were suddenly returning to Alaska fat and ready to produce large families.

The 7 censuses since 1975, all nicely archived in computer files, include a wealth of information yet to be analyzed. Questions include:

Productivity

1. What is the average brood size in late July to early September for each of the 3 regions in Alaska – Coastal Rain Forest, south central transition zones and the Boreal Forest that terminates in the subarctic north of the Arctic Circle at the foot of the Brooks Range? This might show summer mortality.
2. We know that August rainfall, water temperatures, day length etc., varies tremendously in these regions, so how does that affect Trumpeter brood sizes?
3. Does elevation affect brood size?
4. Good weather information exists from each of these regions but has never been correlated with brood size and numbers?
5. How does the percentage of young in the population each fall compare area to area year to year?
6. How does the percentage of productive to unproductive pairs compare year to year, area to area? Why?

Nesting Density

The FWS files include observations of swans, families and unproductive groups by latitude and longitude and USGS quadrangle maps. Square miles of wetland habitat for each quadrangle is also recorded. Computers now could easily quantify square miles of wetland per map. Nearest neighbor data for each brood could easily be determined and

correlated with wetland distribution. We know swan broods, unlike goose or duck broods, do not cluster. Understanding the density characteristics could be very useful in evaluating potential for future Trumpeter potential for expansion and how much winter habitat the States need to be prepared to provide. Have some areas reached maximum numbers and leveled off?

Analysis of this well documented data trove could be a bonanza for a future PHD student or other scholar.

After being pensioned in 1983, I remained available as co-pilot/observer and averaged about 100 hours a year for the next 20 years, about half with FWS and half with independent environmental contractors. I think the most important thing I did was to write a 470 page memoir about nearly 60 years of bird work in Alaska – Attending Alaska's Birds, A wildlife Pilots Story, published in 2008.

I had never kept a regular diary but I did have an airplane pilots log with time date and place for every flight I ever flew. As a Refuge Manager for two years I was required to turn in a Refuge Narrative Report every 4 months for which I kept a file in my desk drawer where I placed things I wrote or received that would go in the report. I've kept such a file ever since, binding them up once a year. So I had helpful records for my book. Now in my 80's I see more and more memoirs by my contemporaries and I am often disappointed by what they leave out. I tried to include everything. Mary Lou was a great help

I have learned a lot about what people look for first in a memoir before they read it. Some look at the index to see if their name is there, or in the list of references. Some look to see if it about a place they are familiar with and so on.

I think a good memoir should include:

1. How as well as what was done. Others might want to try it.
2. Names of people and places.
3. An index of people, places and major projects.
4. Maps as appropriate, showing places where things happened.
5. Citations and list of references.
6. List of Acronyms.
7. Anything funny.
8. Anything historic.
9. Don't be victimized by commercial editors who want to cross out names, projects, dates or other things in which they are not interested.
10. Get a few knowledgeable friends to proofread and comment.
11. Include pictures for illustrations which aid the story even if not artistic.
12. An index of pictures.

These are the things I tried to do, clumsily perhaps but it's all there except regrettably a photo index that I left out of my book. Don't be afraid of Print on Demand publishers, that is a good way to get your story out. It worked well for me.

So this concludes my interview with Mark Madison. I hope you are pleased with it. Further details are in my book.