



The Oral History of Jamie Rappaport Clark

Interview conducted by John Cornely

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Jamie Rappaport Clark

Date of Interview: 02/19/2020

Location of Interview: Downtown Washington, DC in office of Defenders of Wildlife

Interviewer: John Cornely

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 14.

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Late '80s USFWS Headquarters, Deputy Assistant Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife's Ecological Services, Albuquerque, Region 2. 1995, Chief of Endangered Species and Assistant Director for Ecological Services, Washington, DC. Mid '97, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, served through the end of Clinton administration. Briefly worked for The Nature Conservancy and National Wildlife Federation. VP and later President and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife.

Most Important Projects: College project of working with peregrine falcons. Working with Bruce Babbitt on the Endangered Species Act. 1997 National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act.

Colleagues: Mollie Beattie, John Rogers, Dick Smith.

Mentors: Bruce Babbitt, Mollie Beattie.

Brief Summary of Interview: Ms. Clark grew up as a military brat, the second of five children and describes herself as a shy, introverted child. She grew up in numerous locations around the world. Her childhood proved a love of the outdoors and of animals. She went to college initially in Connecticut and then transferred to Townson University and University of Maryland, College Park. She worked on projects involving the white-tailed deer. She also reintroduced peregrine falcons into the wild as a hack site attendant for Cornell University. She earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in wildlife ecology. She was the only woman in her graduate school class. She spent the first part of her profession working for the military. Ms. Clark joined the USFWS in the late 1980s. She was instrumental in working with endangered species and rebuilt the Endangered Species Division in Headquarters. She was the first SES woman at FWS and was first bureau director to be pregnant in its 150-year history. President Clinton appointed her Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in 1997 and she held this post until 2001. Ms. Clark stressed the importance of partnerships and people-centric conservation and was instrumental in the signing of the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act. Ms. Clark led Defenders of Wildlife as President and CEO where she promoted endangered species and habitat conservation, retiring in 2024.

INTERVIEW

John Cornely: This is John Cornely with the US Fish and Wildlife Service Heritage Committee. And it's the 19th of February 2020. We're at the Defenders of Wildlife office in downtown Washington, D.C. And we have the high pleasure today to be visiting with former Fish and Wildlife Service Director, Jamie Clark about her life and her career. And with that, Jamie, I'd like you to just go ahead and start.

Jamie Clark: Great. Thanks, John.

First, welcome to Defenders. It's great to have you here. By way of background, I'm probably not, didn't come up, as many of my former Fish and Wildlife Service colleagues. I was a military brat. I grew up in the Army. And as a result, I was born in New York City, New York on October 8, 1957 because my father was stationed in Iran. And that was where my mother was from, so she went home. My mother certainly couldn't accompany him overseas [there] being pregnant.

Born in New York City. And then shortly after that, I was almost a year old when dad came home. And we just traveled. So, I grew up in Fort Benning, Fort Bragg, Fort Leavenworth, Okinawa, Lexington. And moving schools about every year and a half.

So, I'm one of five. The second of five. I have two brothers, two sisters. And we were a traveling Army family, like many families. I can remember really big points and times during that – my father was in Vietnam in the late '60s. And we were in Wilmington, North Carolina where I developed a real kind of... Well, I grew up always loving the outdoors. Being a military brat, we really ran free on the military installations. Very protected area, not like today. And so, as kids we were very close. And we spent a lot of time outside. I don't remember TV at all. I don't remember being inside much. We loved being outside.

And I grew up with a love of animals. I was a pretty seriously shy child. Surrounded by pretty noisy siblings. Which in later life, became well known as an introvert. So, I'm an introvert by any way you can evaluate personalities and behaviors. And I gravitated to animals. So, I always had pets. Everything from turtles to guinea pigs to dogs. And as a young child like many young girls had an intense love of horses. My parents, both city folks from Connecticut and New York, did their best to try to support my love of animals. Not really knowing where I would take my career. And I always thought I would go to vet school. Because that for an urban military kid was the track. I wasn't as exposed beyond domestic animals. So, I grew up watching all the kind of nature shows. And things like that.

And typical of my school jumping, I ended up graduating from high school in Huntsville, Alabama.

John: Okay.

Jamie: When my father was at the missile plant under the space command down there. And my parents shipped me north. So, I started college at Fairfield University in Connecticut. And then.

John: Wait. Give us your high school graduation year.

Jamie: Oh, okay. High school. Graduated from high school in 1979 [corrected to 1975 below].

John: Okay.

Jamie: Then, I went off to college in Connecticut. To pursue at the time what I thought was gonna be pre-vet. After a year in Connecticut – my father then was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground in

Northern Maryland – and my mother got very sick. And my youngest brother was very young. There were 4 older kids about 2 years apart. And then there was my younger brother – 9 years separation. He was called the coming home from Vietnam baby. But my mom got sick. My father was a military officer. Pretty high-powered. And very busy. So, I came home to be closer to home. And ended up finishing school at Towson University in Towson, [Maryland]. Graduated from, no excuse me. Graduated high school in '75, college in '79.

John: Okay.

Jamie: Sorry, I messed up there.

John: Okay.

Jamie: When I was at Connecticut, in Connecticut, in Fairfield. And I was talking about what I was interested in. And they said, “What? You wanna just work with animals. You’re in the wrong place. This is more pre-med. You should’ve stayed in Alabama. And just gone to Auburn or something.” And I thought that’s kind of crazy. I ended up at Towson. Because it was in driving distance to Aberdeen Proving Ground. Where I ended up getting some wonderful support and shifted into wildlife biology.

At that point, I was more exposed. I was doing some work on Aberdeen Proving Ground. But it was this sort of time between my junior and senior year of college that transformed my career. And that was the summer that I spent 8/9 weeks living out in the middle of nowhere as a hack site attendant for Cornell University reintroducing peregrines to the wild. And that was [part of the] leading edge of the whole peregrine falcon restoration program.

John: Right.

Jamie: And it was magic. I had a great support mentor if you will. He was a researcher. He had both a veterinary degree and a PhD in ecology. And he was the one that told me that if you go to vet school, get ready because you’re gonna be playing, you’re gonna be dealing with all the pets’ owners. And I was like, wow. I’m not a people person. I don’t wanna deal with people. I wanna be with animals. I wanna be with wildlife. And that’s when I shifted my whole kind of notion of pursuing a graduate degree as opposed to veterinary school.

So, I spent that summer working with the Peregrine Fund releasing 5 young chicks – all females. All named after luminaries like Harriet Tubman and Amelia Earhart just because they were really strong, Rachel Carson, really strong women. After graduating in '79, I thought about it for a bit. Still was trying to stick close to home because of the family commitment. And ended up at University of Maryland, College Park, pursuing a graduate degree in wildlife ecology, working on all things on white-tail deer.

And so spent 2 years, graduating in '81. Maybe it was early '82 from Maryland, College Park. Where I was the only woman in my graduate school class in wildlife at the time in the early '80s.

John: Umm hmm.

Jamie: And came out of school with a graduate degree in wildlife. And just as I was finishing, I got my first government job. I always thought I would be in the government. I was kind of a government-minded person, having grown up in the military. And I began working for the military – not a surprise working for the Army at Ft. Meade, [Maryland]. And my way into the government at that time was as a wage grade 3 laborer. And I learned how to run heavy equipment. And I was doing duckpond restoration and all

kinds of really cool stuff on big machines. Again, as the only female. And that allowed me to both finish my thesis and to kind of get anchored in the government system in the early '80s.

And from there I went on to come back to Aberdeen Proving Ground and worked in medical, kind of physiological research, working with, oddly enough, chemical warfare agents as a research person. And was really pushed to pursue a PhD and do research, and I realized that was not for me.

And I moved from working for the Army, let's see if I can get this right...to the National Guard Bureau also based out of there, but also, in the Pentagon, where I started working on a lot of endangered species issues, national environmental policy issues, but working on National Guard installations all around the country from Camp Shelby, Mississippi to Camp Grayling, Michigan to Fort Irwin – the translation with the Army. And enjoyed that immensely until the mid '80s or so when I transferred. I became, as a result of amendments to the Sikes Act in the late '80s, I became Army's first headquarters' wildlife biologist. And by then, I'm about a GS-14.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: And when I was coming up through the ranks, wage grade 3 to a GS-5 technician, I was, kind of, starting working my way up. I thought wow, you know, when you're supposed to have goals as your own person, and I just never really kind of got it all together. But about the time, I thought if I can just be a GS-9. That was my real big aspiration. 'Cuz that seemed like a really good place to be. And all of the GS-13s and 14s that I was surrounded by seemed really old to me. And they were all men. And I for some reason couldn't make the connection that I could be one of those people.

But serving for headquarters' Army as a wildlife biologist was really interesting and exciting. But it's also about the time that I was dating my now husband who was a Fish and Wildlife Service employee. And he was in Alaska at Yukon Flats [NWR]. I'd known him way before that, because he had worked for the Navy when I was working for the Army. But he transferred to the Service in Alaska. And so, the kind of commuter dating from Alaska to Maryland was kind of a heavy lift.

And then he transferred to Matagorda Island [Texas] right after the refuge became part of the refuge system as part of Aransas. And we commuter dated. And I always wanted to be part of the Fish and Wildlife Service. I wanted to be that guppy biologist in a whole sea of biological expertise. It was like the mecca for the federal government as a wildlife biologist.

And at that point I'd done a lot of endangered species work for the military. Working with the Fish and Wildlife Service the other way. And one thing led to another. I transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service in the late '80s (1988 I believe) here in Washington as part of then what was a Branch of Listing and Recovery for endangered species as part of a larger Habitat Conservation Department, because back then in the late '80s endangered species wasn't considered important enough or big enough or volatile enough to warrant its own kind of element in the Service.

A year later, within that year, I eloped on Matagorda Island, married the refuge manager. And through a series of different issues, Jim and I worked to combine our careers. First in, I moved, he/we moved together to Albuquerque, or Region 2, where I was the Deputy Assistant Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife's Ecological Services. And Jim was in Refuges.

And then I got a call from Director Turner, John Turner. At the time saying, "okay, it's the early '90s, we're gonna make a run at re-authorizing the Endangered Species Act. I need you to come back East for 2 years, rebuild (by then) the Endangered Species Division.' Because I'd been working on all kinds of

Mexican Spotted Owl issues and Forest Service issues, so I knew the ESA fairly well. And it was becoming a larger and larger issue for the agency.

And so, Jim and I came back East. He went to Refuges. I went to lead the Division of Endangered Species. And have never left Washington! So, the promise was I'd be here for 2 years and then I was gonna go to Region 6 or to Region 1 at that time. And, but we were definitely going back West even though we were both from the East.

One thing led to another. I then became, after Chief of Endangered Species, in 1995, I was promoted to the Assistant Director for Ecological Services. And at that time, it was the first woman SES ever in the Fish and Wildlife Service, which was always amazing to me in the mid '90s that I was the first woman. And at the time, Mollie Beattie was the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service and Dick Smith was the Deputy Director. So that was a heck of a combo to work with, as you can remember. And so, that was '95.

And it was shortly after that, and I was very entrenched with Bruce Babbitt and the whole Department because we had lots of endangered species' things happening, from wolves back to Yellowstone to Northern Spotted Owl to Alabama Sturgeon to Florida Panthers. We just had a lot of issues that were just eating the organization alive.

John: That's most of what Secretary talked about.

Jamie: I bet he did, yeah.

John: And said that, you know, he was very interested in dealing directly with folks in the field, because he's had really good....

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: Directors. And they were taking care of business. So, he was out a lot.

Jamie: Right.

He did like to get out and understand what was going on. And so, I developed a very close working relationship with Bruce Babbitt, who was Secretary Babbitt at the time. And he was bypassing all layers of organization to interact with me. And we had this kind of hot topic issue directly between me and him, which was pretty amazing. It started when I was Chief of the Division. So '95, shortly after I became Assistant Director is when Mollie Beattie got very sick and tragically died way too soon and right as she was hitting her peak.

So that was a very difficult time for the organization. And as a result, I became much more visible, holding together the regulatory stuff, well, and ESA, and John Rogers was the Deputy at the time. And then they just left it in limbo until the election.

So, this was first Clinton administration. Mollie passed away and then that was '96, summer of '96. Election happens. Clinton is reelected for a second term. I'll never forget it. It was shortly after that. A year turns into '97, I'm in my office as Assistant Director in the middle of a very heated conversation over Tongass. (See some things never change. We're still battling over Tongass). But I was with the Forest Service, dealing with the Forest Service and the Regional Director in Anchorage for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and we were debating issues on the Tongass when a call came through.

And my assistant came in and said, “the Secretary is on the phone.” And I’m like, “the Secretary of what? I’m in the middle of a conference call.” And she says, “the Secretary of the Interior.” So, I jump up and I run out. And Secretary Babbitt is on the phone, and he said, “Jamie I wanna talk to you. The election’s over. We’re kind of recalibrating and I was talking to the President.” So, I’m thinking... the President? You’re talking to the President? okay. President, Okay. And he said, “and we decided, we wanted to nominate you to be Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.” And I was like, What? That is so not gonna happen. That is not my career inspiration. I’m not..... this is a really big deal. So, I said, “I wanna go back to the field. You all keep promising me I can get back to the field.” And I said, “I’m not gonna be good in front all these people.” And I’m not. And he says, “well from one introvert to another, come upstairs and I’ll tell you how it’s done.” So, I went upstairs (probably way more than you want to know here), but I went upstairs. A long conversation with the Secretary. Ultimately, I went forward.

The first time that I ever testified in front of Congress, by myself, in a hearing was at my Senate confirmation hearing, led by Senator John Chaffee, surrounded by cameras and in colloquies; it is a pretty huge moment. And so, mid ’97, I became Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And I served as Director through the end of the Clinton administration, and made one of the most difficult choices of my life when the political transition occurred. While I was a career SES at the time, and the slots weren’t reserved, I was guaranteed a return to government service. I was too young at the time to retire. And I had 20 years in the government at the time. So, no combination for government retirement. And I was offered the job of Regional Director in Region 5. To go on leave... I had to leave, of course, the presidential appointed job, because I had this huge circle on me with a line through it. I fought the Republican led Congress over Arctic drilling, Alabama sturgeon, Northern spotted owl and they just wanted me out. I was a big target at the time.

And so, I had a long conversation, with my husband who was a Service employee still, and with the incoming Director Steve Williams, who was succeeding me. And I didn’t know, but I’d been talking to him quite a bit about the transition. And I thought it’s just not good for the former Director to stay in the agency. First of all, this was gonna be Steve Williams’ organization, led by then Secretary Kempthorne I believe it was. And it was inappropriate for me to stay. And so, I left the government. And that was incredibly painful.

I was in my early ‘40s. I wasn’t sure what I was gonna do. I had this vision of retiring at 30 or 40 and 60 and all kinds of things that you do when you join the government. So, I’d never... I didn’t plan to become presidential appointee. I didn’t plan to be Director of the Service. And so, I absolutely did not plan for what happens when you no longer have a government job.

But I’ve been incredibly fortunate. I came right out of government and started consulting on a retainer with the Nature Conservancy at the time. It was a soft landing for me to decompress, coming off being Director. It is overwhelming the kind of transitional time that you have to regather your wit. So, and I was offered a job with the Nature Conservancy as they were reshaping themselves.

But I was really pushed hard to join the National Wildlife Federation as their senior person over conservation program. And I literally took that job because it was closer to home. I commuted 45 miles from home, at that time out in the country. Our son was a year and a half. And I had him while I was Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. And I thought, wow I just have to take a breath and stay closer to home. And so, I was at NWF for a couple of years. It was not a good fit at all.

When I was recruited heavily to come to Defenders of Wildlife and they created a position for succession. And I was executive Vice President for about 7 years. Before I became President and CEO of Defenders in 2011 where I sit today.

John: Let me ask you. And some are not comfortable at all at talking about this. But if you would talk about some of your experiences both in your military jobs and with the Service when it was still a very white male dominated organization and you were named some firsts...

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: For a female? Do you have any thoughts about your experience? Or what it was like to be in that kind of a situation?

Jamie: Mm hmm.

Yeah, I've reflected a lot on it particularly as I get older. And I feel an important part of my role at this stage in my career is to both mentor and cheer on women and people of color to pursue their dream. And to follow their career goals. At the time, I was a pretty tough kid and a tomboy. So, I was never a girly girl to begin with.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: But I ended up...I had a couple of strikes against me. I don't hunt and fish. Though, I'm totally fine with it. It's just not something that I grew up being exposed to.

John: Right.

Jamie: So, and I'm a woman. And it was incredibly, when I worked for the military, it was like a blinking neon light around me. And so, you know I would get called honey and missy, particularly in the South. And so, I just I think it probably exacerbated my introverted nature.

John: Okay.

Jamie: But so, and then you realize that I had to work twice as hard to prove myself. And even in graduate school, I'll never forget. I was with graduate students... guys...with one of my instructors, and we were out in the field. And the instructor grabbed a couple of black rat snakes. And he is holding 'em. And he's like, "oh we need to figure out what these are, if they are black racers or black rats." And he comes over and he goes, "Jamie, hold out your arms." And he dropped 'em in my arms. And I'm just looking at him, thinking okay, just breathe. And they're kind of wrapping themselves around me. And everybody is just staring waiting for me to either scream like a girl. Or? And so, I was tested a lot.

And I didn't think about it at the time. You know, people trying to [determine] can she do this, can she do that? And at the time, I didn't really realize, John, that I was being tested to see if I could hold up. By the time I'd transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service, I was fairly well known in the military. And you know I figured that 4-star general at Fort Bragg put his pants on the same way I did. I was just faster than him and he had to listen to me about the red cockaded woodpecker.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: I mean it was the Endangered Species Act. And so, I was just very respectful. But you know, I just made sure I had my act together. And I was always well briefed. And I probably to this day, overprepare as a result of my early career knowing that I had to have – I was being judged differently.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: [At] Fish and Wildlife Service, I never knew that there were firsts and some kept people telling me. Like I never knew that I was the first SES until people made a big deal about it.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: And I also was really shocked. Because in 1995, it really struck me dumb that that was the first time that a SES slot was ever encumbered by a woman.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: Because that's in today's geologic time. I mean it's not like it was back with Abe Lincoln. So, it was pretty much a surprise to me. And people were... It was difficult. Mollie was hailed as the first woman Director. And she was wonderful. I became very close to Mollie, especially as she was dying. But Mollie wasn't Director long. She was really large in death. And she was amazing and I think would have been one of our best Directors ever. And was quite good. But she, you know, it was 2 years. And so, I did follow her. And I understand she talked to Secretary Babbitt about that, because I learned that from her husband after she passed away.

And Mollie and I used to talk about being women in the Service and what that meant. And she didn't hunt or fish either. And so, we always felt like we were having to explain and justify ourselves. And I think I'm feisty enough and opinionated enough that I would just power through it. And I quit apologizing.

I completely upended the whole notion of women in leadership positions when I got pregnant. I was pregnant as Director. And had our son when I was Director. That set off a firestorm that I was ill-equipped to handle. Because I was a very private person, and being pregnant was kind of visible, because you just kind of get fatter in front of everybody. And I can clearly remember a lot of State Fish and Game Directors and my own colleagues in the Service say "okay, when are you gonna resign? You have to resign. You can't be pregnant and be Director at the same time."

And I freaked out. You know, I went and talked to the Chief of Staff about it. I went and talked to Babbitt. I remember clearly where I was at NCTC when I told the Secretary. We were at a big political retreat. And I waited until he had a couple of drinks. And then I went up and told him that I was pregnant. And you know, he was great about it. He said, "oh, that's great. You can take off the afternoon to have the baby. And come back the next day." It was quintessential Bruce Babbitt. But he was incredibly supportive.

But it was a rocky deal being pregnant as Director. Because even my own male colleagues, Assistant Directors and Regional Directors, kept thinking, okay when is she gonna resign. And it was a little bit destabilizing on the heels of Mollie dying. So, at first, they just thought I was ill. And I said, "no, I'm not ill, I'm just gonna get temporarily fat. I'm not gonna get stupid, I promise."

And so, that was difficult. And since that time, to answer your question, to this day, I hear from Service employees that have babies. It was remarkable to me for about the first decade after I left the Service, and people kind of knew who I was by virtue of 'she was the first one to have a baby in 150-year career.' How'd they say it? 'I was the first person, first bureau director to have a baby in 150-year history of the Interior Department.' I'm thinking well what am I gonna do with that factoid? And I thought to myself, well, I'm actually probably the first woman of breeding age that that was in those positions. So, let's not make this like some award-winning thing.

But for many women, it demonstrated that they could have it all. And many numerous women from all grades in the Service would call me or send me a card with their baby and say, “you allowed the paradigm to be shattered. Because if you can be Director and a mom and a wife, then so can I. And I don’t have to apologize.” Because my whole career (these are G-7s and 9s. Early in. Particularly in some of the more male dominated pieces of the organization, of the Service) [they] were told, ‘you have to pick between career and family.’ And they were really struggling, I mean, they were fabulous biologists and researchers and ornithologists and whatever. And they were told, ‘it’s one or the other.’ And so, when I shattered it, it paved the way.

So, you know, there are days I think wow, I’m probably remembered not really for what I accomplished in a conservation way, but the fact that I had a baby in office, a baby who’s now 20, I might add and in college. But you know, I’ve gotten to feel really good about that as time has gone on because I see women struggling so much with the career track versus the parent track. I’m thinking to myself well dads have a tough time too. I mean they’re the other half of this. But women in particular, even to this day, are judged very differently.

John: Right.

Jamie: Because they’re pregnant. So that was, it was a big deal.

John: Yeah. Well, I really appreciate your sharing that. Because as you know, a lot of things have improved. And changed....

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: for the better. But there’s still an awful long ways to go. And in....

Jamie: There’s still stigma.

John: my opinion. And just as a graduate student, I was asked to take a female assistant into the field with me. And that was very, this we’re talking 1974 or so,

Jamie: Mm. That was probably pretty earth shattering. Yeah.

John: My major prof asked my wife’s permission, which I thought was really....

Jamie: Ohhh, that’s interesting. Yeah.

John: really good. And there I had the fortune of working with so many very talented female biologists...

Jamie: Right.

John: and managers. And sometimes you’d have to. Things don’t ever change as fast as you think they should...

Jamie: Right.

John: or you want them to. But you have to look back every once in a while. And say, “Wow.”

Jamie: Exactly.

John: The playing field is very different.

Jamie: It absolutely is. I mean, I remember during, while I was pregnant, there were no women State, Directors. And I'd go to the AFWA meetings or the North American meetings during my pregnancy and guys would just talk to my stomach. I mean, they wouldn't talk to my face. And I kept saying, "Look up at me. You know, the stomach isn't gonna go anywhere."

John: Right.

Jamie: And it really, really. And there was.... I just felt the rumble, "Can you believe the Director of the agency is pregnant?" Like it was I'd committed a crime or did something bad. And so, it was weird. But I was surrounded.... I had fabulous support from the Department. And really good friends in the Fish and Wildlife Service and on the Directorate that were really, really good about it. And looking back now, I realize just how challenging it was for many folks to absorb. And you know, we all made it through.

John: Right.

Jamie: Baby was born. Nothing blew up. But it was not socially acceptable at the time.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: Today you know, we've kind of.... It's very different. We have.... we are a younger demographic here at Defenders of Wildlife. And we have lots of babies. And lots of Defenders babies. And I go back. I reflect back on it. So, it's informed how I now lead.

We celebrate that opportunity. I've had women come in and apologize, "Jamie I can't, you know, I'm pregnant. I'm gonna have to take off this amount of time." And I was like, "you go, you go girl. Your job's here when you get back. You go be a mom. You're not gonna get that back."

I was so paranoid and feeling so responsible, I took off very little time after Carson was born. And I had a home office. So, I was working immediately. I remember going to a Directorate meeting at NCTC when he was 4 weeks old. I just toted him up there. And we hung onto him during the day. And everybody was very supportive. [text removed for clarity] You know most people step away for 4 months now. And that was just not gonna happen.

So, but, so as a woman those are plenty of times I was told, 'you can't do that. You shouldn't do that. You're not ready for that' or 'you're a woman.' And I would say, "Yes, I am. And it's okay you know. Times changes."

John: So, talk about Defenders of Wildlife. And your time. You've been here for quite a while.

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: And I was introduced to Defenders when I was at Malheur.

Jamie: Oh yeah.

John: Early in my career, because I was trained as a mammalian ecologist.

Jamie: Oh yeah. We're a lot alike.

John: And originally. And I had an officemate at Northern Arizona University from Oregon.

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: And I knew that I wanted to be. I did all my graduate research at National Parks. And I knew that I wanted to be a federal biologist. Or resource management person. Or whatever.

Jamie: Right.

John: So, I learned all about how to get in the system. And I was the go-to person at Northern Arizona University for people that wanted federal jobs. ‘Cuz.

Jamie: Oh wow. You were like the conduit. Yeah.

John: My officemate graduated before I did, got his PhD, and went to Patuxent. And so.

Jamie: Oh sure. Sure, sure, sure.

John: He was shipping me the green sheets. And I was putting them on the board. Well, my new officemate came in one day. And he said, “you have to apply for this job.” And I said, “well you know I’ve really got quite a bit of time left. I’ve got my classes done. I’ve got my fieldwork done. But I haven’t started taking exams. And I haven’t started writing my dissertation.” And he said, “doesn’t matter.” He says, “this is the best place to work in the face of the earth. You need to apply for this job.”

Well, it was Malheur. And I said, “why would they hire me at a bird refuge?” Well, my major prof one day came in. And he said, “this refuge manager from Oregon just called me. And he’s interested in you. He says you’ve applied for a job there.” I said, “yeah.” And, but he said, “he’s concerned, because you’re a PhD candidate. And he’s concerned that you’re just wanting to get your foot in the door.”

Jamie: To do research?

John: And then go to a Coop Unit or something like that. And I said, “and what did you tell him?” And he said, “I told him you were kind of weird. That you always wanted to be a management biologist.”

Jamie: Right. Yay!

John: So. But when I got there, I found out that they had serious predation issues. And I did coyote predator prey work research. And I also had a fire ecology background.

Jamie: Oh no. How perfect!

John: And they wanted to start a fire program. So.

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: It all came together. Although I think maybe Joe Mazzoni is one of the few people that would’ve hired somebody like that. ‘Cuz he also wanted somebody to...

Jamie: He thought big.

John: Yes. And he wanted somebody that could work with and deal with the Coop Units and ornithologists...

Jamie: Mm hmm. You could translate or liaise back and forth?

John: Yeah. And I actually participated in some of that work. But I was just you know...

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: What. What are these people thinking?

Jamie: Exactly. Exactly.

Now that I think about if I have a regret, it is not finishing my PhD. After Maryland, I started a PhD program ostensibly in Land Use Planning, Environmental Planning and Habitat. Because while I'm well known as an Endangered Species person just because of my career track, it's really all about the habitat. And so, I'd finished all the course work, and I was starting work on dissertation using back then remote sensing and habitat detection change and all that. Just didn't finish it. I'd gotten into working in the government at the time. And thought I do not want to do research. I wanna make it happen. I wanna just apply. But that exposure I think it's been really helpful in understanding the linkage between science, policy and law. And that's where my career came together in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

I thought I was of management. I'd be in hip boots banding canvasbacks on the Chesapeake Bay which I can remember like it was yesterday. And/or tracking spotlight white-tailed deer or, running Havahart traps for raccoons. All kinds of 'in the field stuff.' And when you make the connection that there is a huge intersection between science, policy and technology, that's the sweet spot.

When I first came to DC for what I thought was two years in the early '90s, I came thinking that we elected the best and brightest in our country to Congress. And that everything you read in the Washington Post was the truth. That's how naive I was. And I also came thinking that science and facts really matter and that they will rule the day. Because all through undergraduate and graduate school, I wasn't taking courses in negotiation and political science and conservation ethics and that kind of things that are being taught now.

I just was an 'ologist' as I say. You know, I took all of mammalogy and zoology and ornithology and herpetology. And all of sudden, I realize wow it matters what happens in DC. It matters what our elected officials have. And the bedrock environmental laws that this country was built off of in the late '60s and '70s, if they're at risk, our entire infrastructure of conservation will fall apart.

John: Right.

Jamie: So, I enjoyed when I was Director of Fish and Wildlife Service. Some of my highlights - certainly working with Bruce Babbitt and others on demonstrating the flexibility of the Endangered Species Act. We tried really hard multiple times to get it reauthorized. Dangerously close once. Really close. And it kind of blew up on us because of the Senate. But Bruce Babbitt was tireless in demonstrating that it's not just the hammer, there's lots of flexibility. That has informed my whole career and my work at Defenders.

I was in the oval office. When President Clinton signed the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: Speaking of which, that was 1998. That picture goes down in history. And it shows up so much. ‘Cuz it was President Clinton sitting at the desk with the pen in hand surrounded by 30 people. You know how they surround, behind ‘em. And I was the only woman. So, it’s a photo that just magnifies the issue. Somebody just showed it to me the other day. But I can recognize many of the Congressmen and Senators of the time, Clinton and then me. So, that was a biggie. So, Refuge Improvement Act – bigtime where we set the whole course of “Fulfilling the Promise,” you might remember, and....

John: Right.

Jamie: and the refuge [system]. But I think it was also the early days. I remember sitting in Charlestown, South Carolina at a Directorate meeting with a big cabal on the Directorate. And I was sitting there, and I can remember who I was sitting with, when we were trying to figure out how to evolve the Service to breaking down the barriers to the ecosystem approach. That was very, that was a heavy lift, to break folks out of their silos and to start managing informed by the ecosystems, not by regional boundaries or regional. That ultimately gave rise to the landscape conservation cooperatives. And I’m not sure what’s going on now. But that’s a whole different issue.

But yeah, it was the whole understanding of politics, and I mean little ‘p’ politics, really do influence our ability as conservationists to protect and conserve. And the Fish and Wildlife Service was always (I absolutely believe to this day) the premier conservation agency in the world. And so, they lead by example. It was eclectic. It was just really the best and brightest. You know, best in breed.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: I come to Defenders. And I ended up at Defenders, it’s my place now. I miss government every day –just to be clear.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: I think I’m kind of hard wired as a government employee. I’m just sure of that. But I came to Defenders and I’ve stayed here, because I think in my deep down, I feel it’s a microcosm of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

We, you know, we work on species, landscapes, federal lands. And a heavy emphasis for work on the National Wildlife Refuge System. Climate change adaptation. All the kinds of issues that are facing the Fish and Wildlife Service. Only we’re a rounding error of size. Fish and Wildlife Service has over 9,000 people. Here it’s about 160-165 folks. Way bigger challenge.

And I always thought I’d go back to government honestly. And I had the chance when President Obama came into office. It just didn’t feel right at the time. Though, I just thought I’d pop back. And then now I’m so darn liberated. I don’t have handlers. You know I say what I want. I don’t have a 40,000 signature surname route. And at this point in my career, I have taken up the mantle to be that voice for my former colleagues who are kind of silenced.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: So, it’s an important role that Defenders plays.

John: Yes.

Jamie: We balance idealism with pragmatism. I have moved Defenders from what many people remember as litigious. And well we do have a law firm.

John: My introduction to Defenders was very different.

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: Although I became a member back then, but John Grandy was in charge.

Jamie: Oh yeah. It's a very different.

John: And his person in Portland was – now I gotta remember her name – Sara I think was.

Jamie: Vickerman.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: Yep.

John: Which I...

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: came to know pretty well and would run into her at the North American.

Jamie: Sure.

John: For years. But I was astounded at the time. Because of our predation issues at Malheur, I had a little experience with taste aversion. Because I was working with coyotes in Joshua Tree.

Jamie: Oh sure.

John: People were feeding the coyotes in campgrounds. Because I was working with them, they were my coyotes.

Jamie: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

John: And so, they asked me if I could do something about it. And so, I actually made the coyotes in this one big campground sick with taste aversion and they left for a year. And eventually, there's new coyotes and they came back. So, I said, well let's try some taste aversion. Predators [such as] ravens, raccoons, coyotes were taking eggs.

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: And so, we put together an EA and did other stuff. And Defenders came charging out. And I said, "this is non-lethal."

Jamie: Right, right, right.

John: But. And they said, "well," [and] they thought there wasn't enough known about maybe sublethal impacts of lithium chloride which we were using. But that was my introduction with Defenders.

Jamie: Yeah.

We've calibrated a bit. I mean it was a big deal as a former fed to come to an organization like this and then ultimately take over. So, we run a duality of mission now. First, conserving biological diversity in North America. So, we've confined ourselves to the migratory – Canada, mostly United States. Though we do have activity in Mexico and South America.

And then something that is incredibly important to the future of our movement – broadening and mobilizing a constituency for conservation. So, we do a lot of work in the environmental community talking to our self. So, the diversifying, however you define it, of the movement is a big deal. And so, there are some values that are important to Defenders – balancing our idealism, which you were exposed to, with pragmatism.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: And focus on solutions. I spent a lot of time in the Gulf after the Deepwater Horizon spill working for Defenders. It was just heartbreaking. Not only to see the damage to the coastal refuges, but plucking wild pelicans and turtles out of the water. It was just really overwhelming on so many levels. I was at some of those incident command areas with the Service and multi-agencies where I came home and I said, “you know what? We just can't sit and criticize ‘em. We need to do something.” And out of that came our renewable energy program where we pursue what we call our Smart-from-the-Start. So, it's all about location. It's all about siting. But we are very involved in and engaged with primarily the wind and solar industry...

John: Okay.

Jamie: to overcome the dependence on fossil fuels. Just have moved some of our work offshore, particularly along the East Coast.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: ‘Cuz mostly about siting and Smart-from-the-Start. But Defenders 20 years ago would never have thought about renewable energy. We do have an inhouse law firm. And I love, love, love being a biologist in control of lawyers. But it's a tool of last resort.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: What we're increasingly known for, which I am very proud of is coexistence....

John: Yeah.

Jamie: the whole notion of how do we live with wildlife? People want to live where wildlife live. It's not the other way around. People are moving to the foothills and along the riverbeds. And so, addressing conflicts, and increasing acceptance for co-living is a really important issue. Particularly in the West. Though we do a lot of this work in the Southeast. It's making a difference especially with an increasingly urbanized society.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: That isn't out there as, you know, we're looking to hopefully see wolves restored to Colorado. You know it would be a great day when wolves are running all the way down the spine of the Rockies from the North Country all the way down into Mexico.

And so, coexistence is becoming a hallmark of our how we do work. I don't care if it's Florida panthers or grizzly bears or red wolves or southwest resident orcas. [It's] the balancing or ensuring a coexistence of nature and people.

For somebody that grew up as a shy military brat, very introverted, I've finally accepted that saving wildlife, pursuing my passion, pursuing my career goals is all about people.

John: Yeah. That's true.

Jamie: It really is.

John: When I take all those tests, I'm an introvert.

Jamie: Most of us are as biologists.

John: Most biologists are.

Jamie: Yeah.

John: And I think a lot of us have. Some of us probably have never gotten there. But a lot of us have seen this. Gone through this transition of saying, "well, that's somebody else's job."

Jamie: Right.

John: And then after a while, you see nobody else is doing that job. And you say, "well I may not be the best at that. But somebody's got to do that. Whether it's Visitor Services sorts of things."

Jamie: Right.

John: "Environmental Education."

Jamie: Everybody's got a role. And it's just nice to see the whole area of our field growing and expanding to understand the human element, but stay focused. Defenders is laser focused on saving critters, saving habitat, saving nature. But we realize, we can't do it in a vacuum. We came to a screeching realization that science is not just the only answer. And that was shocking for people like myself.

But values matter. And that kind of evolving or instilling the values of saving nature, ecosystem services. Clean water doesn't come from your tap. It comes from healthy headwaters of national forests. And so, that's been a real eye opener.

But it's a labor of love. I can't imagine going to work for a job. It's going to work for passion. And you know I've done a lot of speeches about our responsibilities to the next generation. It became very real after having our son who now looks at me and says, "Good grief. Thanks a lot. Look at climate change. Look at the habitat loss." And we have a lot of work to do.

I think the biggie that wasn't; that is very dominant today that was less dominant during my time at the Service, even though we talked about it quite a bit, is the impacts of a changing climate.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: And the impacts on migratory species and habitat shifts. And that's a game changer for all of us as biologists.

John: Mm hmm.

You know, obviously already seeing changes.

Jamie: Absolutely.

John: In birds and especially, but many, many years ago I started writing Mammals of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and it's kind of morphed into surrounding Harney County which is a huge county. And up on Steens Mountain are probably, I have to go back and see if there are some pikas up there.

Jamie: Still.

John: They can only go so high.

Jamie: So high up they can climb. You know, you're right.

John: In the Rockies we have those issues.

Jamie: Yeah.

John: So, I have another thing that comes to mind. I've obviously worked with, supported many different conservation organizations over many years. And I've seen some of this. For example, I was on the board of the Refuge Association for 6 years and their care group. But I've often wondered if there wasn't/shouldn't be more of National Wildlife Federation and Defenders and all of these groups that have a lot of overlap in their passions and interests....

Jamie: We should lump not split?

John: Yes. And they're obviously splitting the funding pie.

Jamie: Yes.

John: Quite away.

Jamie: Yes.

John: And I only have so much splitting that I can do so sometimes I, well, this year, I'm gonna do this. And next year I'm gonna do that. And there's some like the Refuge Association and Defenders and Nature Conservancy that are constant, but do you talk about that with some of the other groups?

Jamie: That's a great question. You know, that's an important observation I've made now in my time in the nonprofit world. I think it's a challenge. I think we need to resolve it. It is incredibly confusing to major donors to members, to supporters. They don't know the difference between these different groups. And I get asked that a lot from donors. Like now tell me again: why, how are you different from National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Defense Council?

The good news about the Defenders of Wildlife is our name. It's not hard to figure out what we do when you see our name – Defenders of Wildlife. But as the CEOs of these groups start to retire, we're going [through] that kind of tumbling out and transitioning, I wish that there would be smart conversations about joining forces. I think [with] the governing councils, the boards of these different entities, it's just not realistic. Though we should look at that. And I'm very open to doing that. I think until it's funder-driven, funders saying, "you know what?"

John: Yeah.

Jamie: "I'm not gonna divide by 7 anymore." You know what I need to figure out. What I will say, is that the differences in philosophy and priorities and work efforts among and between these groups is pretty significant. It just isn't obvious to the folks that aren't on the inside. Like Defenders and National Wildlife Federation - incredibly different organizations, philosophies -- how we do, where we work. All that kind of stuff.

Doesn't mean we don't work together on some things. We do. And we leverage each other in important ways. But the environmental community by virtue of its proliferation of different groups is setting up a challenge for the future.

Fewer, deeper, better. It's kind of like what I used to say almost about the Fish and Wildlife Service regions. Fewer regional offices with combined administrative support stuff would allow more resources to go to the field. I say that the same. So, we all don't need personnel offices and budget offices. And so, there's natural alliances for environmental organizations to join. If we could get beyond our own politics.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: I sense its coming. I sense the funder community over the next decade is not gonna want to see the proliferation. I'll give you a really good example that happened to us: Friends of the Sea Otter in California.

John: Okay.

Jamie: They're a small group obviously, sea otters. And they made the decision to dissolve. They just couldn't hold it together anymore administratively. So, we became their offering. We allowed them to merge with Defenders of Wildlife and have taken their small assets. And it allowed us to power up more on sea otter and nearshore conservation along the Pacific Coast. And the whole infrastructure for their support base is now taken care of by Defenders. That's just in the process of happening. And we'll see more of that as these smaller groups [merge]. I mean Defenders is: we're kind of too big to be small and too small to be big. So, we're about a midsize group.

John: Right.

Jamie: But the ability to...we're looking at absorbing a small project, a project out in the West that's working with ranchers on coexistence. They just can't hold it together themselves. But bringing them in with our philosophy and our infrastructure allows the project to persist...

John: Hm mm.

Jamie: without the need to administer the project. 'Cuz that could be held by our administrative support. So, I see the baby steps being taken.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: But.

John: Let's get.

Jamie: There will come a time when that needs to happen.

John: 'Cuz it seems like. Like everything you know, communications.

Jamie: Right.

John: Is so important. And the different groups talking together. Because I'm sure that different groups have different strengths.

Jamie: We do.

John: Even though they may look alike to the funders and the public. But,

Jamie: Not a monolith. Yeah.

John: It would be like, 'you guys have the best lawyers...'.

Jamie: Right.

John: 'that are focused in this particular area. We'll help you. But you take this on and we take that on.'

Jamie: And we do a lot of that. We do a lot of collaboration and a lot of joining. There is also a lot of competition and conflict.

John: Yes.

Jamie: So, I don't wanna make it all sweetness and light. You know, Defenders' strength is certainly on some of the bedrock environmental laws like the Endangered Species Act. We launched a few years ago, as a big dream of mine, we launched Defender for Conservation Innovation where it's not bricks and mortar, it's GIS experts and scientists and policy that are looking for ways to more effectively achieve species conservation objectives. So, we've done a lot of work with both National Marine Fisheries Services and Fish and Wildlife Service to help when they can, especially with declining resources. And you know everything from online recovery programs to new habitat mapping techniques.

That's an important role that I think the nonprofit community can play, especially as government is going through some challenges, to provide the capacity and capability and innovation and thinking that is otherwise kind of challenged right now. But we could be way be more efficient in the environmental community, no doubt about it.

John: Let's before we end here. Let's go back to Fish and Wildlife Service during your tenure a little bit. A couple of things that I think really changed the way a lot of us were able to do our work in the Fish and Wildlife Service happened about the time that I went from being a refuge biologist (I went from Malheur to Western Oregon Refuges) [to] basically the Region 1 Dusky Canada Goose specialist.

Jamie: Oh wow. Yeah, Sure, sure, sure.

John: Sent me to Alaska every year to search goose nests which was fantastic. Yeah.

But when I moved to Denver in 1988, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan had just been signed in '86. And it was just gearing up. So, I was on 4 Joint Venture technical committees simultaneously. I don't know anybody else that was on that many. But they really made a difference.

Jamie: Overlap where you were probably?

John: It was Arctic Goose Joint Venture, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, Playa Lakes Joint Venture. So, they.

Jamie: Oh wow. Sure, sure, sure.

John: I was able to say,

Jamie: Follow the Flyway. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

John: “you guys need to talk to these guys.” But the partnerships...

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: and working with the states in a whole different way. Because we, before that, Migratory Birds were arguing with the states over regulations and that was our main nexus. All of a sudden, we find out that we’ve got about 90% overlap in our objectives and what we wanna see, especially habitat-wise. The other thing that started about that same period of time was the Partners Program.

Jamie: Partners for Fish and Wildlife. Yep.

John: I grew up working on my granddad’s farm in Kansas. And I’m a refuge biologist. And our neighbors are farmers and ranchers. And we’re not always getting along very well. And I said this doesn’t make any sense really to me. So, could you comment? So those things, I think changed our culture a little bit, and really from my perspective in a very positive way changed some of the ways that we did business with other people.

Jamie: I couldn’t agree more.

You know we didn’t come out of school branded Fish and Wildlife Service. Or State Fish and Game. Or Defenders of Wildlife. Or the Nature Conservatory. Or Arizona State University. We came out of school to protect and conserve wildlife and special landscapes. It’s the political boundaries and the political infrastructures of the employers that we were tied to at the moment that created the challenges for the most part. Wildlife doesn’t know borders. They don’t know if they’re on Quivira or the ranch next door.

And so, it was, that’s about the time I came to the Service, the whole birthing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan which gave rise to my colleagues developing (‘cuz I was working in Endangered Species at the time as what? – a GS-13) the whole rise of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program that took it down to where the critters were....

John: Right.

Jamie: and where the land was. And started the active problem-solving and the collaboration. I think it started to reduce the walls that were built up between the federal government and the states. It opened up.

One of the highlights while I was at the Fish and Wildlife Service when I was Director was the Secretarial Order with Native American Tribes on harmonizing tribal treaty rights and endangered species conservation. That was, I remember it like it was yesterday, those unbelievably rich conversations about Indian country and wildlife and one with the earth, and the federal government oversight and intrusion.

So, I think these partnership programs – the North American, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, LCCs, whatever you want to call these different kinds of, what I now call our Defenders coexistence program – facilitated conversations.

John: Yes.

Jamie: It facilitated communications, and they facilitated the ability to come to a place of common ground and then solve the problem.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: So, it wasn't, 'somebody had to win because I regulate the Endangered Species Act and I'm right and you're wrong. And if you do this, and I don't like it, I'm calling in law enforcement.' That was never any kind of recipe for an enduring conservation outcome. And so, that's was kind of the philosophy of the administration I served with Bruce Babbitt when I was Director and even before that with Mollie. And it has been a part of my career since then that I have found the most rewarding.

Because these collaborative conversations or these joint problem-solving efforts – certainly stimulated by either federal subsidies in the Partners Program or the North America Waterfowl Management Plan objectives – have been the most enduring of solutions. You can win in court, but it's a snapshot.

John: Right.

Jamie: It's episodic. We need.... I mean, the work that we're in at the end of the day, I always have to tell myself, and we've started our conversations John, thinking okay, it seems really, really dire right now.

John: Yeah.

Jamie: But if you look backward, you see how far we've come. So, I tell myself every day, 'Okay, Jamie this is a marathon. Saving critters, saving habitats, saving the future, it's a marathon.' We're running all kinds of wind sprints. And we have to always be on our p's and q's and on your toes. But our work is not a battle wind sprint. It's about focusing on the goal of the long-term vision for how we want our natural environment to serve. And saving the environment, saving ourselves is the flip side of the same coin.

John: It's exactly the same.

Jamie: Flipside of the same coin. There was a long time in my career, which is now quite long, that somebody always had to win and somebody had to lose. And it's when we finally got over ourselves and started to realize that there aren't winners and losers. Because we're all gonna lose if we don't do this right.

John: Yeah. We're on the spaceship together.

Jamie: Right. It's not like we're gonna go out and get more land. Or get another planet - at least not in my lifetime. So, this recognition that wildlife doesn't understand borders and they don't know who owns this land. And I've never also met anybody, I don't care how conservative they are, that condones extinction. So, if you take those kinds of fundamentals, and you back up, and whatever incentives it takes to solve the problem is where the biggest success comes from, and the greatest reward. Because we're transforming not only the hearts and minds, but the business models, the rancher practices, the kind of belief system.

John: Mm hmm.

Jamie: And educating. Remember at the end of the day. We have an increasingly urbanized society. Kids aren't growing up hunting and fishing as much as they were in the '40s and '50s. They're not growing up running free like I did as a kid. And nobody, you leave at 8 o'clock in the morning and as long as you're home for dinner, fine. That doesn't happen. They're not growing up connected to nature. And so.

John: You know, that doesn't even happen in the small towns anymore.

Jamie: No, it's that 'fear of.' That's why issues, I know I'm kinda going circular here, but the whole urban wildlife refuge program kinda started when I was there with Minnesota Valley and Tinicum and Rocky Mountain via the whole Rocky thing conversion to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in Denver. That was a heavy lift back then. Like, what are you doing?

Refuges are in the wild. In the Okefenokee's. In the Kenai's. Those urban classrooms, those places for kids and grownups to connect, I think, are one of the most transformative contributions the Fish and Wildlife Service is making to the future of nature.

John: Yep.

Jamie: In a great way. And so, it's these really great nuggets of ideas that provoke and support and celebrate curiosity, that's gonna change us. But we have a lot [to do] ...

John: Secretary Babbitt basically said, "things are really bad."

Jamie: They are.

John: But he says, "I don't want to talk to that." He says, "it'll change again. And I firmly believe that. I would love it to be sooner rather than later."

Jamie: Yep.

John: But it's just kind of nonsensical from a long-term human and planet survivorship.

Jamie: Right. It is. It is undeniably selfish. That's the only way I can describe it. It's selfish. And this is probably the most dire, the most frustrating, and the most scary it's ever been in my career. But I have no doubt that it will change.

And I have every intention of being here to help restore and rebuild. I don't know what I'll be doing, or if I'll be at Defenders. But our responsibility to restore and rebuild and be responsible stewards is what drives me every day.

And I believe in doing the right thing. I think at the end of the day we'll do the right thing. And we're just not gonna stand for what's going on because it's just reckless. And it's not smart. And you know, so goes nature, so goes us. I say that all the time, "Without a healthy nature, we don't have a healthy economy, we don't have a healthy environment, we don't have a healthy infrastructure. And so, nature matters."

John: Yeah.

Jamie: At the end of the day, it's just, it's telling us every day what we should be doing.

John: Well, I wanna thank you very much for taking the time to share with us.

Jamie: Thank you.

John: I personally think it shows. I really think this is an important project.

Jamie: Mm hmm.

John: To preserve experiences among our folks. And have it there for archive forever and for other people to learn from. And so, I enjoy it. And I think most people that we interview enjoy sharing. And so, thanks so much.

Jamie: Thank you for taking the time to do that. This is an important project. I'm glad to be helpful.

John: Yeah. I love doing it.

Jamie: That's awesome.

KEY WORDS: Arctic; Bird banding; Birds of Prey; Careers; Children; Climate Change; Congressional Operations; Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill; Directors (USFWS); Diversity; Ecosystem Recovery; Employees (USFWS); Endangered and/or Threatened species; Forest Conservation; GIS; Habitat Conservation; Hiring; Human dimensions; Human-wildlife conflicts; Landscape Conservation Cooperatives; Leadership; Legislation; Military; National Wildlife Refuges; Partnerships; Reintroduction; Science; Tribes; Urban Refuges; Waterfowl; Wildlife Restoration; Work of the Service