INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND RESEARCH

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Winter 2002

WATERFOWL CONFERENCE 2002

September 17-18, 2002 Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador

This 3rd conference sponsored by IEMR will focus on recent population trends in waterfowl management. The themes of the conference will focus on population shifts, emerging new population monitoring tools, as well as leading edge information on how climate change may impact waterfowl populations within Labrador.

Objectives:

* Enable IEMR Board members, waterfowl researchers, wildlife managers, and interested members of the public to review the recent trends in waterfowl populations within North America.

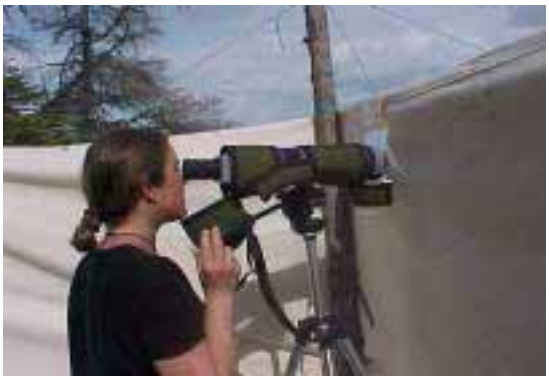
* Provide IEMR Board members, waterfowl researchers, wildlife managers and interested members of the public an opportunity to understand the potential impacts of climate change on waterfowl populations within Labrador and Quebec.

* Provide an opportunity for IEMR, CWS, DND, and the Provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec to share the results of their research and monitoring activities on waterfowl within Labrador.

* Provide IEMR Board members, waterfowl researchers, wildlife managers and interested members of the public with an opportunity to review the emerging tools and technologies associated with waterfowl monitoring.

* Provide IEMR Board members with an opportunity to assess emerging knowledge gaps in waterfowl population surveys.

The conference will focus on presentations from a wide range of leading researchers in the field of waterfowl management from across North America. The conference will also feature a keynote speaker on climate change and it's potential implication for waterfowl across Labrador and Quebec.



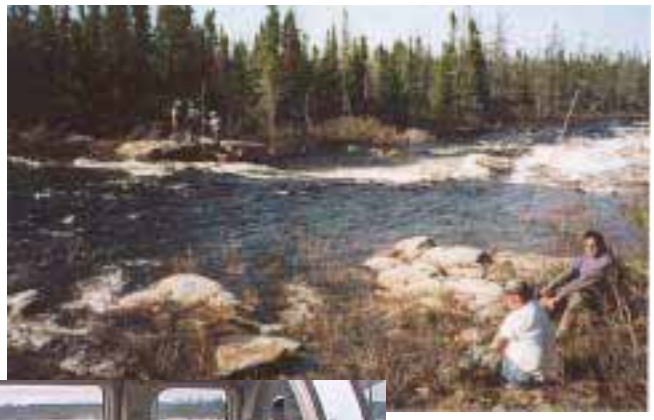
Visit our web page for conference updates on schedules, speaker information, and field trips at **www.iemr.org**

Inside this issue:

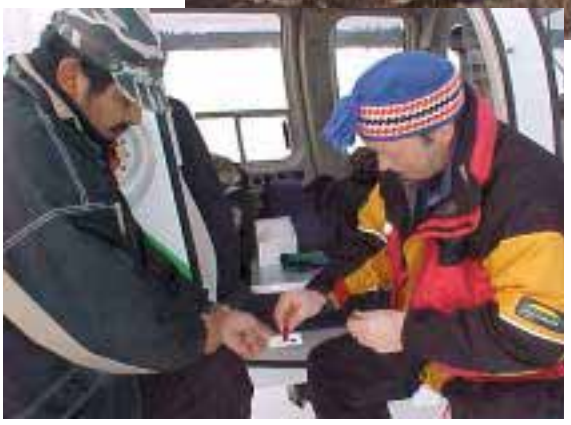
FIRST NATIONS COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGY

This program, which began in 1998, was established to provide a communication link between the aboriginal communities affected by military flights and the Institute's researchers, members of the Scientific Review Committee, and non-aboriginal members of the Board of Directors.

Since 1998, the Institute's Liaison Officer, Natalie D'Astous, has made seven visits to the communities bordering the Goose Bay flight training zone. Participating communities in Quebec include Mingan (Ekuanitshit), La Romaine (Unamen Shipi), Pakua Shipi and Kawawachikamach. Labrador communities involved are Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet (Utshimassits).



In each community, the Liaison Officer met with a committee of experts composed of four members, each recognized for his or her knowledge of the territory and its wildlife. The primary goal of this program is to inform the expert committees of the Institute's work and to promote understanding of the concerns expressed by the First Nations Committees to the Scientific Review Committee. Over the course of the meetings, aspects of Aboriginal Environmental Knowledge were discussed. The subjects of discussion varied according to the interests of the communities. Whenever possible, local radio broadcasts were arranged to inform residents of discussions between the liaison officer and community experts.



After these meetings, the liaison officer met with the members of the Scientific Review Committee to report on the most recent meetings and to prepare for the upcoming visits to the communities. In addition, the Institute's researchers were strongly encouraged to anticipate devoting a portion of their budgets for travel with the liaison officer to the communities affected by their research findings.

The major preoccupations of the First Nations experts regarding the military flights were pollution, airplane noise, and the tools employed in the scientific studies, such as the radio collars used on caribou.

Last year, in response to the comments of the aboriginal expert committees, the Institute began a study on the ecosystem of the river valleys. At the request of the members of the Scientific Review Committee the liaison officer will evaluate the possibility of carrying out a morphometric study on beaver, marten or mink. In addition, in view of the next planned inventory of the Lac Joseph caribou herd (scheduled for 2001-2002), the Institute's researchers have at their disposal a map of the potential zones of frequency of the caribou identified by the Quebec Innu.

Some young members of the First Nations communities were employed in fieldwork for the Institute's research, and they were invited to share their experiences with the aboriginal experts.

Finally, the liaison officer is at present endeavouring to evaluate the possibility of improving the design of the radio telemetry collars in collaboration with Institute partner Robert Otto of the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Division. They hope to redesign the collars to take the animals' comfort into consideration and to respond to some of the concerns expressed by the aboriginal experts.

MEET THE NEW RESEARCH MANAGER

In March 2002, Sean Sharpe will assume the responsibilities of Research Manager for the Institute. Sean is excited about moving to Happy Valley-Goose Bay and working with the Institute and its partners.

Sean graduated from the University of Calgary with a B. Sc. in Environmental Biology and Physical Geography in 1982. In 1987 Sean continued his education with the completion of the M.Sc. Zoology at the University of Western Ontario with graduate thesis research concentrated on small mammal population ecology and dynamics. In addition to a strong grounding in ecology and wildlife, course work and training has also included economics, social geography, and First Nations anthropology and ethnology. Sean taught at Queen's University for two years and subsequently became an adjunct professor for a Resource Management program at Nipissing University and has continued to teach courses to college and continuing education students in ecology and wildlife management.

Since the late 1970's Sean has worked in various field of biology including management of ungulates in a predator fee environment at the Elk Island National Park, work on a range of marine research projects including the study of feeding and behaviour of grey and killer whales, and as an environmental consultant for projects that included assessment and restoration of acid stressed and logged forest ecosystems. In 1991 Sean assumed the position of biologist for the Northern Region of British Columbia Parks where he was responsible for conducting and monitoring a wide variety of research and inventory projects in Provincial Parks, Ecological Reserves, and surrounding areas. He then went on to spend a couple of years as the Provincial Carnivore Biologist in Victoria. In 1995 Sean relocated to Smithers, British Columbia, assuming the position of regional biologist. For the past six years Sean has spent much time on Woodland Caribou recovery and management and other co-management wildlife work with First Nations. He has pioneered two First Nations wildlife management programs British Columbia: the Northern National Summit Wildlife Technical Group and the Northwest Harvest Project. As the Wildlife Section Head for the Skeena Region, Sean has been responsible for the overall wildlife management program for the northwestern quarter of British Columbia.

Sean is a strong believer in community and spends much of his spare time involved in volunteer work for community events including the folk festivals and concerts. He enjoys outdoor activities and northern life. Sean prides himself on being task oriented and strives to do the best job possible. His professional experience has been diverse and demanding, and he is looking forward to leading the research team of the Institute.

RESEARCH NETWORK

Since November, Dr. Louis LaPierre has visited and presented at several eastern universities in an effort to develop a network amongst researchers and graduate schools and to entice students to work on Institute sponsored research issues. A great deal of interest has been expressed from professors and students and many students have applied for summer and graduate work on Institute sponsored projects. The Chair also continues to develop a collaborative research network with provincial governments, federal governments, and research agencies. To date, presentations have been given at the following:

* Memorial University, November 14, 2001
* University of Moncton, December 12, 2001
* Mount Allison University, January 17, 2002
* Laval University, January 30, 2002
* Dalhousie University, February 13, 2002

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LABRADOR CONTAMINANTS WORKING GROUP

During 2001, the Institute provided partnership funding to and became an active participant in the Labrador Contaminants Working Group (LCWG) for the development of a comprehensive and consolidated contaminants database for Labrador. This database will asses the status of contaminant research in Labrador, identify data gaps and important areas of concern, establish priorities, and ultimately target specific areas for future research efforts.

The LCWG held an information session introducing and highlighting the Metadata inventory on Monday, February 25, 2002, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. This inventory is a tool developed by the working group to assist in:

* Enhancing collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders working on, and affected by, contaminants issues in Labrador, and;

* Cooperatively developing a contaminants research and monitoring agenda for Labrador to help guide future efforts.

The group will be gathering feedback from users throughout 2002 on how to improve the system and make it easier to use. Building the metadata inventory is the first step in developing a better understanding of the impact of contaminants on biodiversity and ecosystem health in Labrador.

TECHNICAL MEETINGS UPDATES

On January 23, 2002, the River Valley Technical Committee met to review the 2001 field season and to define future work. In response to the limited wildlife populations found during the 2001 field season and the high costs associated with conducting research of this scale at Little Mecatina and St. Augustine, discussion shifted to the possibility of investigating optional sites as were identified during the initial scoping workshop of this project held in 1999. It was agreed that additional study sites would be investigated to identify the presence or absence of specific wildlife communities, similar river characteristics, topography, logistic suitability, flight exposure at the treatment site, and aboriginal significance. Presently, Institute staff is investigating alternative study sites and finalizing the project work plan for the 2002 field season. Updates of the River Valley Ecosystem project will be reported in future editions of Research Highlights.

During the November 2001 Board meeting a proposal for future work on the Red Wine Caribou Herd to be developed and carried out in collaboration between the Province of NF and Labrador and DND was presented. As directed by the Board, the Caribou Technical Committee has been convened to review the project, define the goals, objectives, and deliverables, and to establish a four-year budget for the presentation to the Board in March 2002. The first meeting of the Committee was held on December 10, 2001, with a follow up meeting held in St. John's on January 22, 2002. It has been identified that the primary question to be addressed relative to the Red Wine Mountains Caribou Herd is how local movements of animals differ in an environment disturbed by noise relative to a normal situation. Secondary question to be explored in this comprehensive study include how these differences radiate out to affect other parameters such as predation, productivity, and calf survival. It has been determined that GPS collars are the research tool of preference to conduct such a study. Institute staff are presently investigating options for the deployment of GPS collars for the 2002 field season. Future work on the Red Wine Herd will be discussed at the March 2002 Board meeting and updates will be reported in future editions of Research Highlights.

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Research Highlights

Information for this issue of Research Highlights was provided and compiled by Institute staff. If you have any comments or if you have information you would like to see included, please contact the Institute's office.