

## My South Dakota Experience

by Kathy Graham

I always go on the OFWIM field trips because I like the opportunity to have an adventure with my OFWIM friends and talk about things other than information management! This was probably the best field trip I've ever been on at one of these meetings. The trip included both the Badlands and the Black Hills, as we combined the two field trips into one.

About 30 of us boarded the motor coach at around 8:30am. I saw that we were going to have a guide and I said a silent prayer that he wouldn't send us all insane (this was an *all-day* field trip)! I was pleasantly surprised to find that Dave was really funny and knew a lot about the areas we were seeing. He pointed out interesting little things as we passed them. Evidently he had never had a group of biologists before, because he seemed a little surprised about how excited we got about every bird, bug and prairie dog we saw. We also saw a coyote!

We went to the Badlands first. I had never seen anything like it before, and I was awed by the beauty of the stark landscape. The vastness of the area, the many colors of the rocks, and the changing sky provided an ever-changing work of art.

We had lunch at Wall Drug, and I found that tacky tourist traps aren't nearly as tacky in South Dakota as they are in Virginia! The thing I like best about Wall Drug is its history (as the first stop in the Badlands where a traveler could get water) and the fact that they still provide free water and 5-cent coffee! I also found some great t-shirts for the kids.

As we approached Mount Rushmore, I didn't expect much. I don't usually go in for monuments and the like. I grew up near Washington, D.C., where monuments

were just a part of everyday life. However, as the sun made its way down the mountain and illuminated the faces there, I was filled with a reverence for the place, the people who worked so long to create it, and the land in which we live.

Leaving Mount Rushmore, I contemplated all that I had seen and experienced that day. I had seen different landscapes, wildlife, and lifestyles than I had ever encountered before. I realized

how diverse our country is, and felt thankful for the opportunity to have seen so much of it through my travels with OFWIM. Boarding the bus in the Mount Rushmore parking lot, I noticed with a start that those were mountain goats grazing on the median strip! Yep, I thought to myself, I'm not in D.C. anymore!



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## OFWIM 2003 Field Trip

by Becky Wajda

While I spent much of my childhood living in countries around the world, I haven't explored much of the United States. I always look forward to the field trips at the OFWIM meetings as opportunities to see the "nooks and crannies" of our country, while creating and renewing friendships with colleagues from other states and countries. This year's trip in South Dakota was no exception.

East of the Mississippi River, we find great diversity and variety in our landscapes; in Virginia, the transition zones allow for a nearly seamless shift from beaches to rolling hills to mountains. It's probably no surprise, then, that I found the stark contrasts of open prairie and landforms at the Badlands National Monument fascinating and intriguing. In many respects, the colors and views of geologic layers reminded me the Grand Canyon—imagine my surprise to learn



that the Badlands were and are shaped mostly by wind, not water! During the day, we were fortunate to see several different wildlife

species, including a magnificent lone bison—a spectacular experience. It wasn't until someone actually mentioned it that I realized that the wind had been blowing constantly during our trip. It left me with such an appreciation of the isolation and desolation that early settlers must have experienced themselves.

My original expectations of Mt. Rushmore were much less—carvings in the side of a mountain. As I walked through the visitor's center and learned about the work that been undertaken to translate an artist's vision from paper to that mountain, and read the moving words of four presidents who changed the course of our country, I felt a renewed sense of patriotism. A few quiet moments spent watching

the sun and clouds illuminate and cast shadows on the figures revealed new details with each change.

The day provided everything I expected—wonderful views of stunning landscapes and time with old and new friends. Next year, I hope you'll join us!!

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## President's Message

by Kathy Graham, OFWIM President

I am really excited about what is happening in OFWIM! We have an outstanding Executive Committee, and many of you have offered to work on other committees. The organization has been through a turning point, and I feel that we've chosen the path to growth. Through members' affiliation with major organizations such as IAFWA, NBII, USFWS, and others, OFWIM has been given the opportunity to be a major player in the present and the future of fish and wildlife agencies. Are we up to this challenge?

Answering the call to growth involves risk. What could be the risk in getting bigger, stronger, and accomplishing more? Some people might feel that we could lose the close-knit feel of the organization, for one. OFWIM has been around for a while as a small "family" of dedicated folks. Will we lose that family feeling? I don't think so—because the committees will provide opportunities to work together in small groups.

Others might feel that another risk is that the organization will need to rely on many more members to handle the responsibilities in order to accomplish all that we are setting out to do. This might lead to a feeling of loss of control. Also, others may not do things "the way they've always been done". However, long-time OFWIM members will be called on to teach and mentor others so that they can pass on their knowledge and experience. And, with strong leadership and good communication, we can maintain OFWIM's high standards of quality while sharing the responsibility among many members.

Finally, taking on new challenges could be seen as a risk because it sets us up for potential failure. If we do not continue to work well together, stay committed to our goals, delegate appropriately, mentor new members, and just plain work hard, we *could* fail to reach our goals. Or, we could achieve more than we ever thought possible.

I believe that growth is always worth the risk. We must move forward and continue to pursue our ideals. I believe that we can keep that close-knit feeling, get more members involved, mentor, teach, and succeed. All it takes is communication. And commitment.

The most effective way for you to be a part of OFWIM's growth is to [join a committee](#). The committees are empowered to accomplish goals that they set for themselves this year. Committees will be recognized at the annual meeting for their accomplishments. But more importantly, committees are where the work of OFWIM will take place. Committees are how OFWIM, and you, will shine.

I am available to talk with you about OFWIM and how you can be a part of our present and future. I believe that there is a real need for this organization now, more than ever before. Effective information management is the key to effective natural resource management. OFWIM is here to shape the future of natural resource information management.

Kathy Graham  
OFWIM President



OFWIM 2003 Field Trip Participants

## Welcome New OFWIM Executive Committee!

Elections were held during the OFWIM Annual Business meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota and the following candidates were voted in as the new members of the Executive Committee. Congratulations to them and welcome to the ExComm!

<b>President:</b>	Kathy Graham (804) 367-9717 grahamk@dgif.state.va.us
<b>Past-President:</b>	Art Smith art.smith@state.sd.us
<b>President-Elect:</b>	Bruce Schmidt bruce_schmidt@psmfc.org
<b>Secretary:</b>	Barb White barb_white@fws.gov
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Daniel Vichitbandha Daniel.vichitbandha@mail.state.ky.us
<b>Member-at-Large:</b>	Beth Stys beth.stys@fwc.state.fl.us



W i n t e r  
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## OFWIM Committees

### We Need You!



If you are interested in any of the following committees and would like to sign up for one, please contact the committee chair or vice-chair to do so.

For more information on each committee:

<http://www.ofwim.org/org/committees.html>

There will be an "Outstanding Committee of the Year" award presented at the 2004 meeting - this is your chance to join the committee that might win!

#### Continuing Ed

Chair: Art Smith [art.smith@state.sd.us](mailto:art.smith@state.sd.us)

Vice-chair: Jeff Waldon [fwixchg@vt.edu](mailto:fwixchg@vt.edu)

#### Communications

Chair: Amy Martin [martina@dgif.state.va.us](mailto:martina@dgif.state.va.us)

Vice-chair: Barb White [barb\\_white@fws.gov](mailto:barb_white@fws.gov)

#### Membership

Chair: Dave Morton [mortond@dgif.state.va.us](mailto:mortond@dgif.state.va.us)

Vice-chair: Daniel Vichitbandha  
[daniel.vichitbandha@mail.state.ky.us](mailto:daniel.vichitbandha@mail.state.ky.us)

#### Data Standards

Chair: Lila Wills [lborge@vt.edu](mailto:lborge@vt.edu)

Vice-chair: Beth Stys [beth.stys@fwc.state.fl.us](mailto:beth.stys@fwc.state.fl.us)

#### Technology Trends

Chair:

Vice-chair: Art Smith [art.smith@state.sd.us](mailto:art.smith@state.sd.us)

#### Outreach

Chair: Keith Wethington

[keith.wethington@mail.state.ky.us](mailto:keith.wethington@mail.state.ky.us)

Vice-chair: Kathy Graham  
[grahamk@dgif.state.va.us](mailto:grahamk@dgif.state.va.us)

## Ad-hoc Committees

### Vision and Goals

Chair: Kathy Graham [grahamk@dgif.state.va.us](mailto:grahamk@dgif.state.va.us)

Vice-chair:

Jake Faibisch [Jacob\\_faibisch@fws.gov](mailto:Jacob_faibisch@fws.gov)

Lila Wills [lborge@vt.edu](mailto:lborge@vt.edu)

### 2004 Meeting Planning

Chair: Stan Allen [stan\\_allen@psmf.org](mailto:stan_allen@psmf.org)

Co-chair: Karen Reay [reayk@dgif.state.va.us](mailto:reayk@dgif.state.va.us)

Program Chair: Bruce Schmidt

[bruce\\_Schmidt@psmf.org](mailto:bruce_Schmidt@psmf.org)

### Fish & Wildlife Reference Service Steering Committee

Chair:

Vice-Chair:

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Products and Materials from the 2003 OFWIM Annual Meeting in Rapid City, SD are available online at:

[www.ofwim.org](http://www.ofwim.org)

### 2003 Business Meeting Minutes

<http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2003/SecretaryReport2003.pdf>

### 2003 Treasurer's Report

<http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2003/TreasurerReport2003.pdf>

### Presentations from 2003 Meeting

<http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2003/O2K3Summary.html>

### IAFWA Survey Results

[http://66.34.41.67/IAFWA/IOS\\_Results.php](http://66.34.41.67/IAFWA/IOS_Results.php)

## Databases and science-based management in the context of wildlife, habitat and conservation: Towards an ISO standard for objective decision-making for the informed global community by making effective use of the Internet.

This is a summary, for full article:  
[\\_http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2004/DB\\_ScienceManagement.pdf](http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2004/DB_ScienceManagement.pdf)

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Adapted and science-based management is widely accepted to safeguard wildlife, habitats and their conservation. However, many of the decisions in this management field are still based on unproven ideas, soft concepts, beliefs and even myths, which lack a true back-up and validation with real data and their analysis. It is common sense that decisions based on such soft foundations can be very harmful to wildlife, habitat and its conservation. Here, I suggest a new management approach which becomes possible, if not imperative, with improved technology and increasing access to availability of free data over the Internet, partly as a consequence of the effective implementation of the U.S. Freedom of Information Act and the National Spatial Data Infrastructure inaugurated by President B. Clinton in 1994 as its fundamental core.

The concept and implementation of this new management scheme is relatively simple and follows common sense: **the listing, use and full investigation of available databases needs to be added voluntarily or legally as a**

**pre-requisite for any management decisions relating to wildlife, habitat and conservation.**

Obviously, managers often MUST make decisions without adequate backup and information: certainly they must not be penalized for doing so, even should they be proved wrong when the research and data analysis eventually get done. Perhaps this problem could be circumvented in the following second suggestion for this new management scheme: **Similar to ISO Standards, each major Conservation Management Decision needs to add a standard management documentation system as a backup for conservation decisions, which documents what data and research were or were not available, and what the recommended research needs to address in order to complete its data situation and improve the data uncertainty.** For instance, a self-rating system for decisions might be included, from “1 = based on no research data at all” to “5 - complete research available and acted upon.” Somewhere in this scheme would be an explanation of why the decision was actually made if based on incomplete research – for instance decision “not backed up by existing data”, “data not available”, or “unlikely to have research and data available in the foreseeable future”.

In addition, for management decisions both, the scientific raw data, as well as their peer-reviewed interpretations, should always be presented over the Internet or elsewhere. Situations with unclear legal data ownership issues need to be identified and clarified in order to reach the mentioned goals of this new management scheme.

Besides data on wildlife populations and ecology, the crucial importance of habitat information has long been recognized. However, currently it is still very difficult to obtain on a global level even basic habitat data and GIS maps for specific wildlife species such as consistent landcover maps, vegetation structure information, satellite

images and Digital Elevation Models (DEM). This lack of wildlife and habitat data is particularly true for applications in the developing world and for the ocean (these two regions cover over 80% of the globe and capture huge proportions of the global biodiversity). Currently, most free wildlife and habitat data warehouse approaches are found in the U.S. (e.g. GAP program), with some other countries such as fCanada (e.g. GeoGratis <http://www.geogratis.ca/>, CBIB <http://www.cbif.ca>) and Mexico (e.g. CONABIO <http://www.conabio.gob.mx/>) readily following these approaches. It is obvious that the E.U., U.N. and others still need to do much more towards a well funded and consistent global perspective and vision, making full use of their potential.

Ignoring data and their availability in the management process may lead to fatal decisions that harm wildlife, habitats and humans alike, and much still needs to be done towards a sound and transparent decision-making in the field of global wildlife management.

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## You can help make future OFWIM Meetings better.....

### Provide needed input for the 2004 Annual Meeting!

The OFWIM ExCom is already working on the 2004 OFWIM meeting, which will be held in San Diego, September 23-26. Before putting out a call for papers, we would like to select an overall theme for the meeting, as well as explore some potential symposium topics. We want YOUR input into topics and themes that you think would be of interest!

Topics that have already been suggested include:

- Data Standards (which might be very timely right now considering that NatureServe, TNC, and the states are all trying to work together on the comprehensive wildlife plans)

- User Needs Assessments
- Software Development Models for Natural Resource Application Development.

A suggestion that came from the recent questionnaire was to increase focus on fisheries topics, since the last meeting was more terrestrial oriented. Do you agree?

Please send your ideas about these and/or other topics to the ExCom ASAP! We would like to select the meeting theme by the end of the year so that the first call for papers can go out in January. Your input will be greatly appreciated!

Bruce Schmidt  
2004 Program Chair

### Fill out the "Participant Satisfaction Survey"!

Another way you can help is to fill out a satisfaction survey for the recent 2003 meeting in Rapid City, SD. If you attended and would like to provide us with feedback, please visit the webpage listed below and fill out the survey.

From this same link you can also see the comments others have made about the 2003 meeting and see the results of surveys that have previously been filled out.

[http://66.34.41.67/OFWIM/OMSS\\_Responses.php](http://66.34.41.67/OFWIM/OMSS_Responses.php)

By taking a few minutes to fill out this survey, you will be helping the OFWIM 2004 Planning Committee make the 2004 meeting the best that it can be.

We thank you!

## 2003 OFWIM Raffle & Door Prize Donations

### Graciously Provided By:

#### Canadian Wildlife Service

2 Canadian Wildlife Service Corduroy Caps

#### Colorado State Division of Wildlife

2 one-year subscriptions - "Colorado Outdoors"

Video – "Colorado Deer Hunting"

Video – "Colorado Elk Hunting"

Video – "Colorado Outdoors Getaway"

Video – "All About Colorado Trout Fishing"

Video – "Life at the Top"

#### Ducks Unlimited (Rapid City Chapter)

2 Ducks Unlimited Caps

#### North Country Trail Association

1 North Country Trail Association Ballpoint Pen

#### ND Game and Fish Department

1 ND Game and Fish Water Bottle

1 ND Game and Fish Coffee Mug w/Lid

2 ND Game and Fish Mouse Pads

2 ND "Fishing, a ND Heritage" Baseball Caps

1 ND "Hunting, a ND Heritage" Baseball Cap

1 ND Watchable Wildlife Baseball Cap

1 ND Watchable Wildlife Polo Shirt

#### Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

3 PSMFC Baseball Caps

1 PSMFC Black Polo Shirt

1 PSMFC White T-shirt

1 PSMFC Black T-shirt

1 PSMFC Gray T-shirt

2 PSMFC Black Munsingwear Vests

1 PSMFC Hooded Green Sweatshirt

1 PSMFC Fleece Vest (Reversible)

#### SD Game, Fish and Parks (Parks Division)

1 Small Print "A Gift of Solitude"

1 Small Print "In Good Company"

#### SD Game, Fish and Parks (Wildlife Division)

1 2001 SD Migratory Bird Restoration Cert.  
Stamp and Print (Mallards)

1 2002 SD Migratory Bird Restoration Cert.  
Stamp and Print (Canvasback)

1 2003 SD Migratory Bird Restoration Cert.  
Stamp and Print (Pintails)

#### SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation

2 SD Parks and Wildlife Polo Shirts

2 SD Parks and Wildlife Pullover Windbreakers



## Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

- 1 Limited Edition "Virginia Wildlife" Knife and Leather Sheath
- 1 Fox Art Print
- 1 Watchable Wildlife Gift Ensemble (notecards, collector pins, binocular strap, and "Oliver the Owl" stuffed animal)
- 1 Watchable Wildlife T-shirt
- 1 VA Wildlife Largemouth Bass T-shirt
- 1 VA Wildlife Largemouth Bass Cap
- 1 Set of VA Wildlife Coasters
- 1 VA Wildlife Mantle Clock

### Vince McClain (Personal Donation)

- 1 Alaska Smoked Salmon (Gift Box)

### Barb White (Personal Donation)

- 1 2002-2003 Migratory Waterfowl Stamp (Federal Duck Stamp)
- 2 2003-2004 Migratory Waterfowl Stamp (Federal Duck Stamp)
- 1 Poster (Badlands National Park)

## THANK YOU!!!!

**Thanks to all of these wonderful donations, we were able to raise over \$450.00 through the raffle. This money will be added to previous raffle revenue and will be used to fund the Student Scholarship.**

**For more information about the OFWIM Student Scholarship Award, please visit**

[http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2003/OFWIM\\_Scholarship.pdf](http://www.ofwim.org/docs/2003/OFWIM_Scholarship.pdf)

## Thank you NatureServe!

Kathy Graham, OFWIM President

OFWIM extends its heartfelt thanks to NatureServe for inviting and providing travel support to Kathy Graham, OFWIM President, to participate in two panel discussions at the recent Southeast Region Natural Heritage Conference held November 15-19 in Pine Mountain, Georgia. The conference was held at the beautiful Callaway Gardens, and included field trips and evening activities such as visits to the Day Butterfly Center and the Virginia Hand Discovery Center, as well as welcoming remarks from Bo Callaway himself. Kathy was a panel member for two sessions: "Collaboration, Culture, and Politics: Facilitating cooperation with state fish and wildlife agency information managers" and "What will we tell Congress? National standards in the statewide planning process." Mary Klein, Vice President for Natural Heritage Network Operations, facilitated these sessions.

Kathy was given the opportunity to talk about OFWIM's mission and role in providing recommendations to IAFWA regarding data management for the comprehensive wildlife conservation plans. Kathy also gave the state wildlife agency perspective on what is needed from NatureServe and its member Natural Heritage programs in order to facilitate data sharing and build relationships. The attendees, which included predominately Natural Heritage program and NatureServe staff, but also included TNC, state wildlife agency, and private industry representatives, were very receptive to Kathy's presentations and showed a high degree of interest in working with the state wildlife agencies in a win-win relationship to provide support for developing the wildlife plans. This conference was an important step toward the development of an ongoing relationship between OFWIM and NatureServe.



**OFWIM 2004**  
**Pre-Announcement**

**Paradise Point Resort and Spa**

<http://paradisepoint.com>



**San Diego, CA**  
**September 23-26, 2004**

**Hope to see you there!**