



**National Park Service Updates
Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve
North Slope Regional Advisory Council Meeting
August 20 and 21, 2013**

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Dall's Sheep

New Approach to Dall's Sheep Monitoring - Josh Schmidt and Kumi Rattenbury with the Arctic Inventory & Monitoring Network have a paper in the current edition of the Journal of Wildlife Management describing new methods for monitoring Dall's sheep. The new methods are providing better information while reducing costs by as much as 80% over existing survey approaches.

The majority of sheep habitat in six national park units was surveyed in 2010-11 using the new technique, and the estimated population for the surveyed park units is currently 26,000-27,000 individuals—similar to the number present in the early 1980s when many of the park units were formed.

The approach uses aerial distance sampling techniques to estimate overall population size as well as the composition (lambs, ewes, full curl rams, and < full-curl rams) of each population. It was first implemented in GAAR in 2009 where park-wide surveys were completed for the first time in nearly 30 years.

This is one of the few ways to get a rigorous estimate of both abundance and composition from the same survey. The higher quality data and lower costs will allow NPS to more consistently monitor populations and improve sheep management over time.

Aerial distance sampling is combined with an analysis that incorporates prior knowledge and information from other surveys to improve estimates. Using prior knowledge allows the scientists to get accurate estimates from areas with small or dispersed sheep populations, such as in Denali National Park and Preserve, as well as in areas with larger populations, such as in Gates of the Arctic.

Schmidt and Rattenbury are hopeful that this approach will help other agencies decrease costs and improve management of this species throughout Alaska. Balancing good science and minimizing costs is a constant challenge in Alaska, and this new approach gives both. Several parks and the I&M program hope this will lead to a formal management plan for Dall's sheep.

To access the papers and to see a video describing the methods.
visit: <http://www.nps.gov/akso/nature/outside/sheep.cfm>.

Weather and Climate

Gates of the Arctic Spring 2013 Weather Summary – Please see handout

Summer 2013 Research Field Studies

** Please see the ARCN Summer Newsletter and ARCN Summer Field Activities Sheet **

Subsistence Updates

The Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) held a meeting in Ambler on April 9 and 10, 2013. Agenda items included: Park project updates, the Foothills West Transportation Access Project (Road to Umiat), and the Ambler Mining District Access Project.

Ambler Mining District Access Project – Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve traveled to the communities of Kobuk, Shungnak, Bettles, Evansville, Alatna, and Allakaket to share information regarding the Park Service’s role in the Ambler Mining District Access Project and to hear concerns from community members as they relate to the upper Kobuk River southern preserve portion of Gates of the Arctic. Please see handout for more details.

Education and Outreach

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Education Specialist, Kristen Friesen and Ecologist, Kumi Rattenbury gave educational programs in Anaktuvuk Pass at the Nunamiut School on May 1-3, 2013. Students pre-school aged through fifth grade participated in the programs, as well as high school-aged students. Class lessons included food web concepts, arctic animal adaptations, owl pellet dissections, science writing, and Dall’s sheep research conducted near Anaktuvuk Pass. Many thanks go out to Nunamiut School staff, ranger Al Smith, all of the students, and especially the elders visited with during lunch. The National Park Service appreciated the opportunity to spend time with AKP students, exploring ecosystem science, while learning about subsistence traditions and Nunamiut culture.