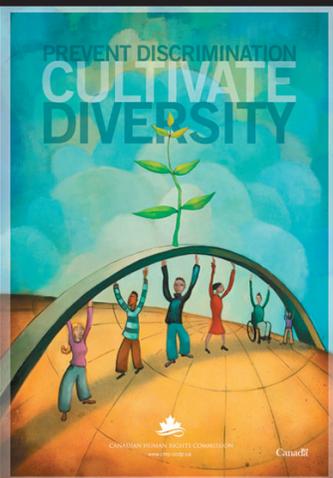




Cultural Diversity

National Weather Service
Alaska Region Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 3 December 2007



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By Laura Furgione

Importance of Decision Support to our Communities

As most of you have read and heard, the extent of the Arctic sea ice during this past summer reached an all time low. According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center (<http://nsidc.org/>), the average sea ice extent for the month of September was 4.28 million square kilometers (1.65 million square miles). This was the lowest September value for sea ice extent on record, shattering the previous record by 23 percent. It was also 39 percent below the long-term average from 1979 to 2000. The fear is now that impacts from this year's record sea ice minima could have a domino effect and cause the ice to retreat even further next summer. This is primarily due to the fact that this winter's sea ice freeze is starting from such a huge deficit, and the related feedback mechanisms involving sea surface temperature, albedo, etc.

A 2004 Government Accountability Office report stated, "flooding affects 184 out of 213, or 86 percent, of Alaska Native villages to some extent." The study was conducted on nine villages: Barrow, Bethel, Kaktovik, Kivalina, Koyukuk, Newtok, Point Hope, Shishmaref, and Unalakleet. The report indicates while many of the flooding and erosion issues affecting our communities are long-standing, studies indicate coastal villages are becoming more susceptible to flooding and erosion.

The impacts of a receding ice pack to our Alaska Native coastal villages could be significant. Sea ice typically protects our coastal communities from exposure to storms. Now coastal communities along the Chukchi Sea and Arctic Ocean coasts have a growing coastal erosion concern, not only based on wind driven waves but also swell. In the past, the ice pack has inhibited the development of a fetch driven swell. Wind driven waves have a much shorter period (~7 seconds) while swell driven waves have nearly double the period length. The wind driven waves also have less energy and are able to fade while the longer

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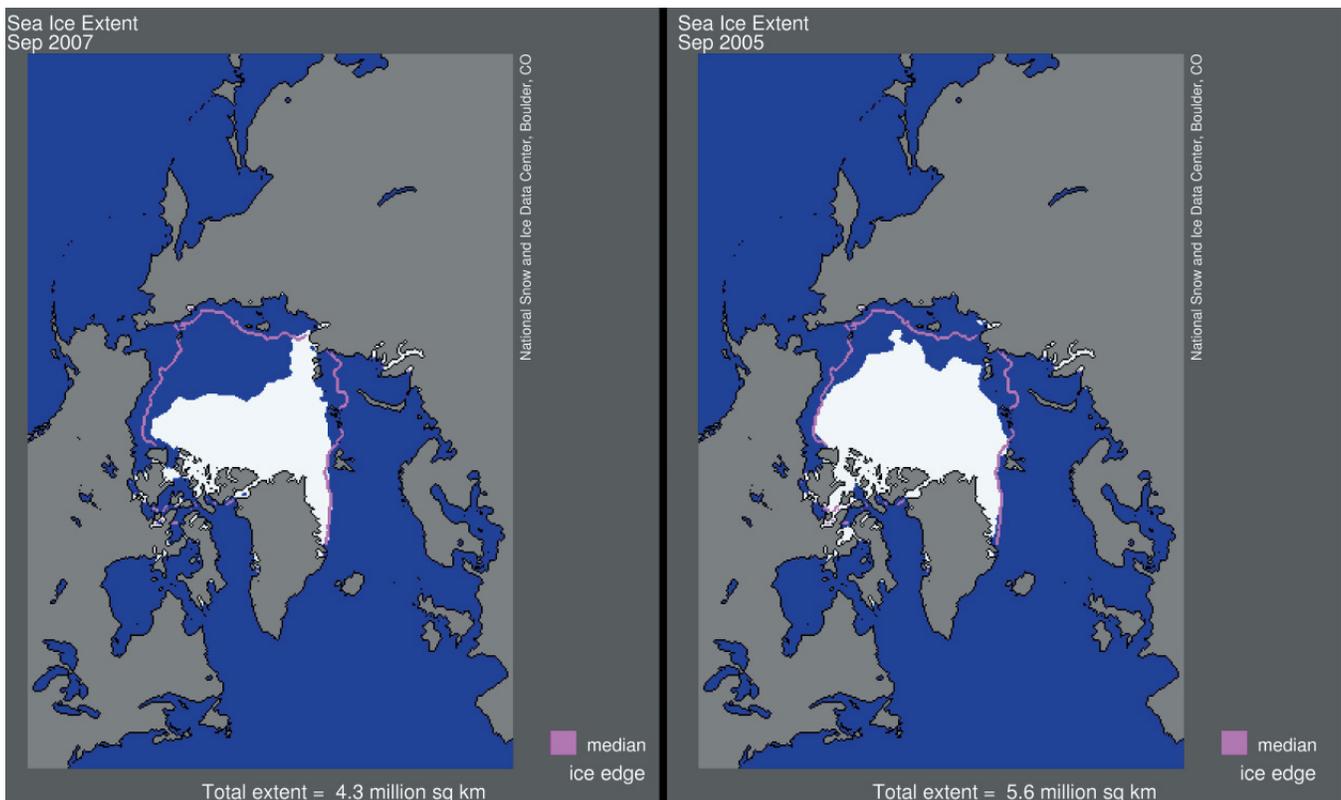
<http://eeo.arh.nwsar.gov>

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period waves organize into sets based on their periods. The more energy and the greater the distance they travel, the more significant they become.

The community of Barrow is also anticipating an increase of extreme Ivu events. Ivu is the Iñupiaq word for the collision of a massive ice floe against the shore-fast ice. The phenomenon can follow a rapid change in sea level sometimes due to distant winds pushing a surge of water, in this case, southward toward Barrow. On January 22, 2006, WSO Barrow was notified and confirmed first-year sea ice had pushed onshore with an average berm height of 6 to 8 feet. By January 24, the massive ice flow had continued to push onshore increasing to 25 feet and blocking roads within the North Slope community. This Ivu event was the first since 1978 when ice pushed more than 450 feet inland. Ivus are infrequent, usually happening every 30 to 40 years.

Protecting cultural treasures, our native communities, is one of our most important missions in the NWS. Our local connection to the Alaska villages is key to advancing preparedness activities. Engaging with our communities and emergency management will allow us to have a better understanding of the impending threat to our communities. In turn, we will be able to provide the more detailed and event specific forecasts and warnings for our decision makers and neighbors. ●



This image compares the average sea ice extent for September 2007 to September 2005; the magenta line indicates the long-term median from 1979 to 2000. September 2007 sea ice extent was 4.28 million square kilometers (1.65 million square miles), compared to 5.57 million square kilometers (2.14 million square miles) in September 2005. This image is from the NSIDC Sea Ice Index.

A 500th Bird-Sighting Goal Met

By Alberta Vieira

David Vonderheide is a Hydro Meteorological Technician at the WFO in Anchorage who is also a birder and the office's expert on birds. Recently, he claimed his 500th bird to his collection of sightings.

In 1990, Dave began his first job with the weather service on St. Paul Island as a weather observer. With little else to do and his love of nature, Dave found that St. Paul is a fantastic place to view birds that appear nowhere else on earth. In his one year on the island, he saw 30 bird species, and so began his hobby of birding. Dave's favorite bird on St. Paul was the puffin.

Now, he takes one big trip a year where he has a chance to add sightings to his 'life-list'. He studies his birding books and magazines and makes plans for each year's trip, taking into account what birds he wants to catch a least a glimpse of, where he would like to be, and what part of the year is best for bird watching in that area. Dave's next birding trip will be over the Western Great Plains.

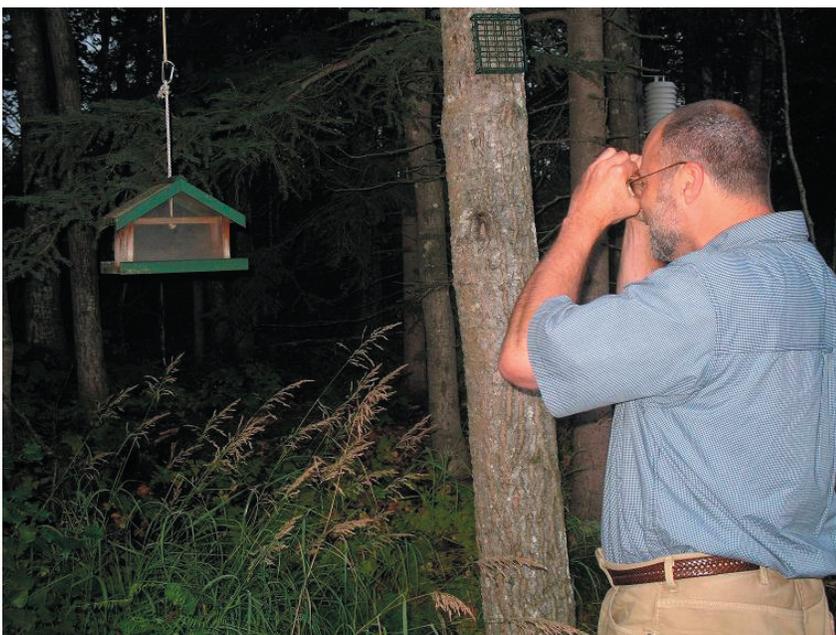
While on a trip to Nova Scotia last June, Dave saw four new birds. It was there he sighted his 500th bird, a Razorbill. After the sighting, Dave shared his excitement with those of us in the forecast center.



Brown Creeper

Here are a few tidbits about his bird watching - Dave's overall favorite is the Brown Creeper. The hardest to find was the Bicknell's Thrush. The bird with his favorite song is the White-throated Sparrow.

Most beautiful is the Elegant Trogon. Dave has one feeder at his home. He is attracted to birding because of his love of animals and nature.



Dave bird watching in his backyard.

David's advice for those interested in the hobby is to get a field guide, obtain a bird feeder, and purchase a good pair of binoculars. Though one can see birds anywhere, his favorite place to bird watch is southeast Arizona where human traffic is light and birds are plentiful.

It took seventeen years of bird watching, but finally, he met his goal. So, what does David want for a new goal? One million birds! 🌍

Traditions....

By Peggy Perales

On June 5, 2007, I had the opportunity to travel to Koliganek with River Forecast Center (RFC) folks Dave Streubel and Jim Coe, with the goal of reestablishing the river slope profile and obtaining flow measurements of the Nushugak River in Koliganek.

Our point of contact was who had done river observations in the past, or at least we thought he had.

Dave Streubel had contacted the village to find someone who would like to do the river observations. The original observations were discontinued in the 1970s, and would place the age of the observer near 81 years old. You can imagine Dave's surprise when he contacted Blunka Ishnook and Mr. Ishnook agreed to resume the observations. Assuming this was the original observer, Dave and Jim brought pictures of the original site to Koliganek to show Mr. Ishnook.

Upon arriving in the village, we were very surprised to learn that the new observer Dave, Jim, and I were meeting was Blunka Ishnook, THE SON. The photo album with the



Mr. Ishnook - senior

old pictures of "Dad" and the town were much appreciated since the town has new homes and buildings replacing the older ones. The family eagerly welcomed us into their homes, making us feel very comfortable and welcome.

Dave, Jim and I spent a very cold, windy day measuring the river slope. We weren't able to obtain the flow measurements due to the high winds on the river; however, we did leave Jim, looking very nervous, on a very small island that the bears like to use while we tried to stabilize the boat in the river.

Other sites that were visited were Ekwok, for river flow measurements and a river slope profile; and Tikchik Narrows Lodge where we established a slope profile for lake measurements.

The RFC receives daily river observations from the Ishnook family with precipitation, if available. 



Mr. Ishnook - junior

Elders and Youth Conference History

from the First Alaskans Institute site (<http://www.firstalaskans.org>)

In 1984, the first Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Youth Conference, attended by 54 high school students, convened in response to a resolution passed by delegates to the previous AFN Convention. By allowing Native students their own gathering, modeled on the main Convention, the conference was a training ground for issues and leadership development.

The conference was planned and run by the students, with staff support. It introduced them to processes of group decision-making: debating and voting on the floor, adopting resolutions, meeting in regional caucuses, and electing representatives. In addition, it opened a new forum for Native issues like subsistence, sovereignty, education, economic development, health, and wellness.

In the late 1980's, AFN added a Native Elders Conference to its Convention-week activities. Before long, these two groups - youth and grandparents - were meeting together in an Elders and Youth Conference.

Twenty years later, this idea has developed into a significant event for the Alaska Native community. The Elders and Youth Conference combines the best of both worlds: our young people, the next wave of leaders; and our Elders, the culture bearers who are the vital connection to our own heritage.

Participation at the conference has exceeded 1,000 participants, both urban and rural, representing the five main Alaska Native cultural groups. The event brings together an eclectic mix of youthful energy and time-tested wisdom, as well as indigenous leaders from statewide, national, and international arenas.

The conference offers motivational and educational speakers and panels. Additional highlights include exhibitors, a job fair, a youth dance, and an Elders' dinner.

The conference strengthens the knowledge and self-confidence of Native people to speak out and to create change within themselves and in their communities. Celebrating the Alaska Native intellect, the event encourages young people and Elders alike to pursue the great task of maintaining our traditional Native values and practices, while thriving in the modern world.



From left to right - John Lingaas, Jim Brader, and Ed Plumb are shown working the NWS booth at this year's Elders and Youth conference.

The 24th Annual AFN/First Alaskans Elders and Youth Conference marked the fourth year that First Alaskans Institute supported and managed the event. Given the purpose of the Institute, to advance Native Peoples, the conference is a natural fit and a powerful mechanism for developing future Native leaders. That is the vision begun, and still continued, by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

This year's Elders and Youth Conference took place October 22 - 23 in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Don't Shot the Messenger Just Because you do not Like the Message

By Stephen J. Ahn

I arrived in Los Angeles, California in early 80s as an immigrant from Korea. In America, one of the most impressive things to me was the number system of the city. I was able to easily locate any addresses with a street name and number. In Korea, it would be almost impossible to find a place with street name and number. Korea is more likely a “dot” oriented country, connecting people, or businesses by one village to another. America, in contrast, is a “line” oriented country, connected by roads. Now I realize that it is also a cultural difference, well beyond the geographical concept. For instance, I mostly talk about my family and relatives in general conversation, but Western people mostly talk about what they like, dislike and things they enjoy. Instantly I see a definite difference in the thinking process. Understanding mind functioning is important for more and more diversified work places. As humans, we have the same operating system, but the operating systems are diverse individually. It is not surprising that the applications and programs of our mind bring forth different results because people actually do seek, understand, and process information quite differently.

From California, I have moved to Puerto Rico to the Gulf States to Japan to Guam and, finally, to Alaska. Originating from Korea to the West, back to the East and again back from the East to the West, I have encountered many different cultures, languages, people, work places, and physical environment. They are beneficial and enrich my life values, but also challenging. Diversity in the workplace adds a special richness and challenges. If one wants to develop effective working relationships with diverse people at work, you should start with similarities, not differences. As a scientific professional, manager, supervisor, coworker, or staff member, effective diverse work relationships are critical for success.

Honor and appreciate our similarities first by not letting the pendulum swing too far into difference. This is the starting point we can create for understanding and appreciating diversity in the work place. Practicing diversity in work places can transform a business in to achieving greater success. At times, it makes so much sense and is so powerful for understanding culture, but then at other times, it spins me around and spits me out like a carousel at high speed. Some simple questions are not so simple sometimes because we have a different starting point in the way we understand the world. However, this should not stop us from practicing diversity. We need to provide the bridge in connecting the “beauty”, not the “ugliness” of different styles of thinking.

I can provide finer grain of details, but on one level, all people share universal emotions, drives and motivations. However, when it comes to reasoning and judgment, there are clear differences. Surely, gender should have at least some influences there. People think of relationships between different creatures, objects, and behaviors. Reflecting on our real life experience, none of these generalizations applies to all members of their respective groups, of course, but the variations between and within societies, as well as within individuals, should not blind us to the fact that there are very real differences, substantial on the average between different cultures. Everyone views the world through cultural “glasses,” and each person’s glasses are different. Being aware of your own beliefs and the beliefs of others is a beginning to cross-cultural understanding.

The way that people think isn't just a standard "thought process" with different cultural definitions provided depending on where one grows up, but that process of growing up and absorbing the meaning and values provided by the cultural environment critically and fundamentally shapes how one thinks. People literally see the world differently. It isn't just language, conceptions, values, or customs. Some people are addicted to a view of the world in which things, even personalities, are fixed, and events are linear, while other people think of humans as much more malleable and suspect that lines of progress are not linear, but invite interruption and contradiction. Who is smarter? Who is unethical? Who is crazy? There are no concrete answers to these questions. That is why understanding diversity becomes more and more important. We are most likely to be dealing with the differences on the micro level of interpersonal interactions every single moment in the work place. Some of us have strengths of logic, scientific view of nature, and higher order conceptualizing, individual emphasis, the object not the context, and the like.

While others are very relationship oriented, have relationships, changes, contradictions and contrasts. Both are valuable and both types of logic and context are needed. Both are gifts and tools for better human thinking. It is nonsensical and counterproductive to trash either type of individual. We can get along better through mutual understanding of mental differences. No need to debate the "rights" and "wrongs" among the different races or cultures.



Too often, the complicating role of culture is conveniently ignored. A work place with faint racist odors may have systems of loosely connected parts. This is neither new nor surprising to practice cross-cultural aspects of visual perception. The goal may be a satisfaction of a principle of justice and the presumption going into the arenas of conflict resolution is typically that there is a right and a wrong and there will be a winner and a loser. In contrast, the goal may also be hostility reduction, and compromise is assumed to be the likely result.

There seems to be one common goal we have, as we live in a more and more diversified world. Men are from Mars and women are from Venus, but a harmonized family can be the outcome. Likewise, we need to work together with differences to make our work places better than now. Are the different worlds now more in touch with each other, so that at the end of the day there is a synthesis between different individuals?

AAWU'S NEWEST ADDITION

By Alberta Vieira

Nathan Eckstein is our newest journeyman forecaster at the AAWU (Alaska Aviation Weather Unit) in Anchorage. Nathan ("Nate" for short) recently graduated with his Master's Degree in Climatology from Ball State University (BSU) in Muncie, Indiana. His work was in tropical ocean sea surface temperatures and eastern U.S. precipitation. As a graduate student, he taught physical geography to college freshmen, which included class work in meteorology, climate, geology, and earth-sun relationships. As an undergrad at BSU, Nate completed a month-long storm chase trip in May 2003.



Nate stands next to the middle school marquee bearing his name in Seattle, Washington.

As a member of the Army National Guard, Nate was part of peacekeeping operations from 2000 to 2005. He spent six months in Serbia where he was a communication technician, and part of the retransmission/relay team. While he was there, he visited Bulgaria, Macedonia, and much of Kosovo.

Raised in Ohio, New Hampshire, and Indiana, Nate enjoys traveling, the mountains, and the ocean. He likes to hike and hopes to participate in alpine skiing while living here.

When asked what he wanted to be when he grows up, Nate said "I was an aspiring architect since the age of 8, which is until I went to college." He has traveled extensively and found knowing geography to be beneficial for meteorological purposes. "...never thought of it as a practical career until college when I found out I could major in geography and get a job." ●

Lunar Eclipse - Cold Bay
Hour before/During - 1:37 a.m./Hour after



Credit: Scott Frickey

NEW EMPLOYEES

A WARM WELCOME GOES OUT TO ALL NEW EMPLOYEES! HERE IS A LITTLE TIDBIT ABOUT SOME OF OUR LATEST ADDITIONS.

Dean Titus, a local hire from Anchorage, took a Maintenance Mechanic position at the Facilities Shop effective July 9.

Austin Cross was hired for a SCEP Student (Computer Clerk) position at WFO Fairbanks effective October 1 after moving from Berkeley, California.

Lee Hobart, previously a Computer Specialist at ARH, took a Computer/Network Manager position at ARH effective October 21.

Brad Sipperley, previously an HMT with WFO Fairbanks, took the Observing Program Leader position in October.

Meteorologist:

Alaska Aviation Weather Unit: Nathan Eckstein was effective June 25 after moving from Indianapolis, Indiana.

WFO Anchorage: Andrew Dixon, a local hire, was effective October 1.

WFO Fairbanks: Corey Bogel was effective November 25 after moving from Glasgow, Montana.

Met Intern:

WFO Juneau: Michael McLaurin arrived September 30 from WSO Cold Bay.

Met Tech:

WSO St. Paul: Stephen Phipps, effective April 2, after moving from Anchorage.

WSO Valdez: Ronald Williams, effective July 22, was a transfer from WSO Cold Bay.

WSO McGrath: Michael Walters, effective August 5, transferred from WSO Barrow.

WSO McGrath: Daniel Mundy was effective August 6 after moving from Sharpsburg, Georgia.

WSO Cold Bay: Jimmy Jones, effective August 20, after moving from Sumter, South Carolina.

WSO Cold Bay: John Bruce, effective August 20, after moving from Redding, California.

WFO Kodiak: Louis "Ray" Miller, effective September 17, after moving from Chugiak.

WSO Barrow: John Hinsberger arrived November 11 coming from Vail, Arizona.

WSO Annette: Franklin Stewart arrived November 13 coming from Fairbanks.

Recent/Upcoming Monthly Celebrations

January - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 February - National African American History Month
 March - National Women's History Month

As always, meeting minutes and other EEO/Diversity information may be found at <http://eeo.arh.nwsar.gov/>. EEO/Diversity Meetings for rest of the year are as follows:

January 22, 2008
 March 25
 May 27
 July 22
 September 23 (elections)

Officers and SEPM's for FY08 are:

Chair – Ursula Jones, WFO Juneau
 Vice-Chair – Peggy Perales, WSO King Salmon
 Recorder – Alberta Vieira, AAWU
 Alternate Recorder - Ursula Jones, WFO Juneau
 Alaska Native/American Indian - Carven Scott, WFO Anchorage
 Asian/Pacific Islander – Jocelyn Perry, EUA
 Person with Disabilities – Gina Sturm, WSO Barrow
 Hispanic-American – Albert Vieira, AAWU
 Upward Mobility – Nikole Gallegos, ARH/SIB
 Federal Women's – Amy Bedal, WFO Anchorage
 African American - Carlos Godfrey, ARH/DATAC, MOBEU
 Diversity Catalyst - Peggy Perales, WSO King Salmon

YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

Since July 6, 2007

Employee	Position	Office	Years
Charles Wilson	OIC	WSO Annette	40
Dale Rodda	Quality Control Specialist	DATAC	35
Larry Hubble	Upper Air Program Manager/PMO	DATAC	30
James Durr	ASOS ET	Electronics Unit Area	25
Philip Dutton	Information Technology Specialist	AFSU	25
Randy Davis	ESA	WFO Fairbanks	25
Jeffrey Osiensky	Deputy/Volcano Meteorologist	ESSD	20
James Brader	Lead Meteorologist	WFO Fairbanks	20
Victor Proton	Techniques Development Meteorologist	AAWU	10