



Sierra Borealis *alaska report*

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
DECEMBER 2018



Alaska Chapter election--VOTE for up to Four!

This is election time for the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club's Alaska Chapter. Three of our seven ExCom members' terms will end at the end of December: Yasuhiro Ozuru, Susan Hansen, and Toshihide Hamazaki. There is also a vacancy for vice chair. All three of the ending ExCom members have been extremely helpful:

- Yasuhiro has been a valuable advisor to me, a new chapter chair.
- Susan organized a workshop with guest Sierra Club's national political director Ariel Hayes on political advocacy, and constantly stays on top of conservation issues.
- Toshi has tirelessly led hikes with Alaska Outdoors, and hosted a web training for the rest of the ExCom to learn how to use the "Campfire" Sierra Club database..

Thank you to Yas, Susan, and Toshi for all the great work you did in 2018, and thank you for running for a second term!

Hope Meyn is the candidate for vice chair.

The bios and photos of the four candidates are on pp 2 and 3. Please read their statements carefully. You will receive your ballot soon; it is being mailed separately. If your household has two Sierra Club members, you can both vote on the same ballot, using both columns to right of the names. In a single-member household, just vote in the first column. Please be sure to sign your name or names on the return address.

And, a special Welcome to Denise Saigh, our new administrative assistant as of November 2, 2018! (see page 4)

With political and corporate powers aligning to damage the wildest and most beautiful places in Alaska, your vote and your involvement in Sierra Club are more important than ever. Also feel free to contact us on general Alaska environmental matters that you care about. You can get in touch by emailing me at mushroomchristin@gmail.com.

For now, enjoy happy holidays and look for more news early next year on combatting threats to our precious environment--and please come to our January 16 general meeting--see box. ❖

-- Christin Swearingen, Alaska Chapter Chair

You are invited!

to the next general meeting of Sierra Club Alaska Chapter, on Wednesday January 16, at 7:00 pm, at Arctic Rec Center on Arctic Blvd. south of International Blvd., Anchorage. **For Chapter members and interested public!** (email Denise at katmaien@gci.net, or call her at 338-2238 for details.



Alaska Chapter seeks Volunteer Coordinator

If you enjoy working with people, this is the role for you! A volunteer coordinator is the "welcome wagon" of the Alaska Chapter, You don't need to know much about the issues; just need willingness to help others get plugged in.

NOTE: This is an unpaid volunteer position. Benefits include being part of the largest and most effective environmental groups in the country, access to club funding for recruitment events, and possibility of paid travel to training events.

Position Summary: Under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Alaska Chapter, the Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for recruiting new volunteers, as well as communicating and coordinating with active leaders.

Detailed Responsibilities: recruit volunteers; post opportunities; respond to applications; route volunteer applicants to leaders; develop orientation kit or volunteer handbook; provide orientation for new volunteers.

Location: Alaska (Preferably Anchorage or Fairbanks)

Time: 5-10 hrs/month

Apply online at JoinSC.org. Click "volunteer in-person".

Alaska Chapter Election Candidates and Statements

Toshihide Hamazaki, Anchorage

Susan Hansen, Fairbanks



Toshihide Hamazaki has been organizing and leading public hikes around Anchorage for 15 years. He enjoys taking people out and letting them experience the beauty of nature and natural world. He has served as an elected Ex Com member for two years, and leading Sierra Club outings. His contribution to Sierra Club is providing “back end” technical support, updating websites, setting up listservs, making sure the Chapter’s activities are in compliance with National Sierra Club policy and the Chapter’s overall objectives. Originally from Japan, he came to the U.S. in 1989 and has lived in all corners of the U.S.—Georgia, Massachusetts, and New Mexico. He has visited many national parks—and earned a PhD in Ecology. Currently, he works at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, analyzing data and scientifically determining harvest limits and escapement of Alaska salmon and crab stocks. Through his job, he has traveled in the Alaska bush, listening to rural residents’ views on fisheries and needs for economic development. In off-time, he enjoys hiking, not only to peaks, but also discovering off-beat trails. He founded the Alaska Outdoors hiking group, leading public hikes twice a week year around. This year his group was regularly featured on KTVA’s Get-Out section.

Susan, a lifelong Sierra Club member, is a biologist who worked as a ranger-naturalist in Katmai National Park, Alaska in the 1970s. Later she did a marine mammal subsistence survey in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta for University of Alaska, Fairbanks. The National Park Service then hired her as a research anthropologist to interview and record Yup’ik Eskimo elders talking about their subsistence and oral cultural traditions. For the last two years she has been the Alaska Chapter Conservation Chair and delegate to Council of Club Leaders. She has organized Chapter workshops in Anchorage in 2017 and 2018 and in Fairbanks in 2018, in an effort to attract more Alaskans to learn about wildlife issues and to promote support for conservation of Alaska’s iconic wildlife—especially of predators. Rick Steiner and Representative Andy Josephson were workshop speakers. Last summer, she organized workshops presented in Anchorage and Fairbanks by Ariel Hayes, Sierra Club Political Director, and associates from the Club’s Legislative Office in DC. Alaska voices at these workshops included Representative Andy Josephson, Valerie Brown, of Trustees of Alaska, and others. Susan seeks to continue these efforts and to encourage Alaskans to support 2020 political candidates for the Alaska Senate who will promote wildlife conservation, renewable energy, etc. Susan also volunteers for Alaskans for Wildlife in Fairbanks.

Alaska Chapter Election Candidates and Statements

Hope Meyn, Anchorage



As a lifelong Anchorage Alaskan I enjoy and appreciate our abundant nature and am concerned with protecting and preserving it into the future. I've been involved with Sierra Club since 2013, when as a University of Alaska/Anchorage student I worked with Sierra Club and students to fight the proposed Chitna Coal Mine. Since then I've represented Sierra Club Alaska at two national conferences, the Power Shift and the White Privilege conferences in Pittsburgh, PA; served as an outings leader for the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter locally, and served the Anchorage group in various roles. After taking a sabbatical to focus on my studies, graduating with my BS from UAA last May, I'm ready to get back to work ensuring that Alaskan voices are heard on issues affecting our health, environment, and way of life.

Yasuhiro Ozuru, Anchorage



Yasuhiro has been living in Anchorage since 2009. He is a psychology professor at UAA, teaching classes such as research methods and statistics, and doing research on decision making and reasoning processes. He has been an Executive Committee member for the Alaska Chapter for the past two years. He served as Chapter chair for the year 2017, during which he organized a meeting to discuss the importance of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge by inviting the Gwich'in leader to speak. He seeks another two year term on the Executive Committee to help Sierra Club members and others explore, enjoy, and protect this beautiful Alaskan environment. He loves Alaska. He would like to work so that future generations have opportunity to experience the joy that this special place can offer. You'll find Yasuhiro fly fishing and hiking every weekend in Chugach and Kenai areas. He is very concerned with people's tendency to treat the natural environment without the respect it deserves—a tendency likely to damage the earth beyond the potential for recovery.

Sierra Club and Alaska Political Action *Elections Have Consequences!*

To preserve Alaska's wildlands and wildlife and promote renewable energy, we need to get involved in State politics. We need to identify and promote better politicians in Alaska. We need to campaign for them AND WE NEED TO VOTE!!

As you know the results of the November 6, 2018 election put Republicans in power in the Alaska State House, the Senate, and the Governor's seat. The problem with this majority is not their political party but their push for development over environmental protection.

Alaskan conservationists are alarmed at the new commissioners that Governor Dunleavy has selected. They are promoters of the oil and mining industries. We may even see the Canadian mining Company

Northern Dynasty given the green light to proceed with the huge Pebble open pit mine, in the Bristol Bay headwaters.

We need to start working NOW on the 2020 elections.

One election result still uncertain

The election of the Representative from House District 1 in Fairbanks is still in question. The November 6 election resulted in a tie between Democrat Kathryn Dodge and Republican Art LeBon. Both had 2,611 votes! Only 42 percent of District 1 voters voted. A recount put Art LeBon one vote ahead of Kathryn Dodge. If LeBon prevails, it would give the House Republicans a majority (21-19).

Kathryn Dodge has decided to appeal to the Alaska Supreme Court and is asking them to review four ballots that she thinks are questionable and were counted erroneously.

The Court must decide by early January. The 2019 legislative session starts on January 15 in Juneau.

If you would like to support Kathryn Dodge's legal fund, please google ALASKANS FOR DODGE to make a donation.

Working to change Alaska politics

There is no Democratic caucus in the Alaska State House so far. We lost too many Democratic candidates in the State House to maintain a caucus. A few Democrats from Anchorage lost by only 200 to 300 votes. More voters might have helped them win.

The Alaska State Senate is under Republican control. After Nov. 6, Republicans won 13 of the 20 Senate seats, and Democrats won seven. Senator Cathy Giessel (Republican from Anchorage) was voted in as the Senate President for 2019.

Scott Kawasaki (Democrat from Fairbanks) defeated Pete Kelly on November 6. Scott's election greatly benefited from a Fairbanks opposition group that created a web site and exposed Pete Kelly's lies. They also found funding for radio ads against Kelly.

This kind of targeted action is needed in Anchorage to defeat

Meet Denise Saigh: Alaska Chapter hires part-time Chapter staff

Denise Saigh has worked as an oceanographer out of college with a biology/chemistry degree. She worked for Alaska Department of Fish & Game as a fishery biologist in Kodiak and King Salmon and for the US Forest Service as an ecologist in Sitka and Ketchikan. With a Master's degree in Environmental Science she traveled throughout Alaska to many villages acquiring permits for water and sewer projects. She was president of the Alaska Society of Environmental Professionals and spoke at conferences. She has been on the board of Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council and the Alaska State Forestry Council and other boards. She taught biology and chemistry at University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University for 15 years.

After growing up in New Jersey, Denise went to college at University of Miami in Florida so she could scuba dive as much as possible—graduating in 1976. As Denise describes it: "I also scuba dove in Alaska for many years and ocean kayaked. I was also in Nordic Ski Patrol and Mountain Rescue for 25 years and have climbed Denali. I am a pilot with Civil Air Patrol and in the Alaska Women's Flying 99s."

Welcome to Denise! ❖



Denise Saigh with dog Cliff

candidates in 2020 who do not support Alaska wildlands, wildlife, or renewable energy,

We in the Alaska Chapter need to work individually and together with partner groups to change the Alaska legislature and support candidates who value conservation of Alaska's wildlands and wildlife and will promote renewable energy as well as a diversified Alaska economy--no matter which political party they are from. ❖

-- Susan K. Hansen skhansen@ak.net



Forget-me-not, *Myosotis alpestris*, as seen on 2018 national outing to Alaska's western Arctic

Sierra Club's National Marine Team Talks Story in Alaska



Anchorage dinner brings together Alaska Chapter reps and Marine Team visitors: l. to r. Yasuhiro Ozuru, Su Chon, Alli Harvey, Wes Hoskins, Brice Boland, Doug Fetterly, Sherryl Shook.

For the past two years, members of the Sierra Club's National Marine Team have met in Alaska with professors and students, primarily, to advance the exchange of concerns, ideas, and friendship.

One year ago, two of us (myself, from Hawai'i, and Brice Boland from Washington State) met with three different environmentally-focused classrooms in Anchorage, and with members of the Eyak Preservation Council. Two months ago, I was back in Alaska and met with an Environmental Toxicology class in Fairbanks, along with three professors. In both cases, we also met with local Sierra Club members.

(For the astute reader, who asks "Why Fairbanks?" given that this community is far from the coast, one of the professors spoke to that question—without it being asked—by acknowledging that Alaskans have a deep relationship with all things, whether ocean or mountain, grizzly or orca.)

Volunteers from the Marine Team focus on fisheries management, marine & coastal ecosystem conservation, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and marine wildlife and habitat—essentially working to further Sierra Club objectives on ocean conservation. As you might imagine, we oppose any activity that pollutes or otherwise fouls the ecosystems, large and small, where those who depend on clean and healthy oceans are impinged adversely. Conversely, we look to ensure sustainability in every human interaction, whether regarding land, water, or wildlife. Eliminating offshore oil exploration, especially the industry's use of seismic testing / explosions, and subsequent offshore production has been a principal focus of ours in all coastal regions, including Alaska.

What about that oil industry? Given that many in Alaska depend on the economies developed by the oil industry, why would we venture into a potential fray? Keep in mind that Alaska has more coastline than all the Lower 48

coastlines combined, and some of the most vital salmon populations in the world. Simply put, we must engage in those courageous conversations with folks in such an important state as Alaska if we are to stand any chance of opening minds—on both sides of the fence. We know it is not our place to come into a region and simply give our opinion of how they live or should live. Rather, we seek to approach these newly-forming relationships with curiosity, asking questions, and yes, sharing some of why we oppose offshore oil exploration and production, for example.

By not making anyone wrong, we stay open to hearing what others think, and in the process we learn about and become more sensitive to, how people feel who are affected by the presence of the oil industry.

As to listening, last year in one of our meetings a fellow from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) took exception to NGOs interfering with the local fisheries by—in his words—"imposing Marine Protected Areas when they, the fishers, already police the overfishing and overfished issues." We didn't quite agree on this point, but it was important that we took to heart what he had to say. After all, he lives here in Alaska.

As a result of these Marine Team visits, perhaps 200 Alaskans, mostly students with appetites for knowledge, have had increased exposure to thoughts about marine policy, about conservation policy and practice, while we on the Marine Team came away with insight from the people—whether fresh, youthful views, or wisdom from the sages—who live in this vast, magnificent state of Alaska. Most importantly, we all shared our stories, our experiences, with all of us coming to know that we had formed relationships that will advance understandings and, yes, friendships, across borders. Outreach, talking story, is where it should all begin. ❖

-- Doug Fetterly, Chair, Sierra Club Marine Team Conservation Chair, O'ahu Group; Grassroots Network Support Team; Land, Water, and Wildlife Strategy and Engagement Team. FETT4PAZ@gmail.com.

Be part of the ocean action

Join the Sierra Club's Marine Team

Here's how you can sign up:

1. Go to: <https://content.sierraclub.org/grassrootsnetwork/>
2. Click on Register now (or if you are already a Grassroots Network member, log in and skip step 3.)
3. Fill in the registration form and click "Create New Account" at the bottom of the page
4. Under "Find A Team" on the left side of the page, type "Marine Team" into the window provided and press Search.
5. When the list of teams comes up in the body of the page (Marine Team should be first), click "Join Now". Then, you're done. Try it. However, If you have problems, try emailing to Marine Team Chair Doug Fetterly, FETT4PAZ@gmail.com, or Sierra Borealis editor Vicky Hoover, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act 50th anniversary celebrated nationwide But U.S. Supreme Court to decide fate of Wild and Scenic Rivers in Alaska

This year, during 2018, as the environmental community around the country celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Alaska's 24 designated wild and scenic rivers are under attack.

In the Alaska Lands Act of 1980 (ANILCA), 25 navigable rivers were added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 13 in national park system units, six in wildlife refuges, and six managed by the Bureau of Land Management. There are no wild, scenic, or recreational rivers in the two national forests, although Forest Service planners have identified numerous eligible and suitable rivers waiting for consideration by Congress and the President for potential additions to the System.

Now all are threatened. Hovercraft owner John Sturgeon, supported by the State and other groups, is suing the National Park Service (NPS) in an effort to overturn the agency's ban of his hovercraft on the navigable Nation River in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (*Sierra Borealis* Dec. 2017, March 2016, Dec. 2015, June 2012).

Sturgeon and his supporters claim that section 103(c) of the Alaska Lands Act prohibits the NPS from regulating uses on navigable rivers inside national park system areas if, as with the Nation River, the bed and banks up to the ordinary high water mark were unreserved public lands when the State joined the Union in 1959. At statehood the unreserved submerged land and the banks of the navigable rivers became state property under federal law that originated in colonial times.

Sturgeon argues that this ownership gives the State exclusive ownership of the navigable waters, too, and hence exclusive control of uses of the waters.

At the federal district court in Alaska and at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals the NPS successfully defended its regulatory authority under the constitutional doctrine of navigational servitude. Sturgeon appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, which found it inadequate and sent the case back to the appellate court. The appeals court again found in favor of the NPS, this time based on federal reserved water rights in rivers within park system areas.

Heavily financed by his private supporters, Sturgeon successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to review the Ninth's second opinion. On November 5 the high court will hear [heard] oral arguments on "whether [Sec.103(c)] prohibits the National Park Service from exercising regulatory control over state, native corporation and private land physically located within the boundaries of the national park system in Alaska."

Sec.103(c) also applies to the other national conservation system units. If the high court revokes NPS regulatory authority, Fish & Wildlife Service, BLM, and Forest

the units they manage would be subject to legal challenges by the State or others.

If the Supreme Court does agree with Sturgeon, degradation of river resources and values would likely follow. Hovercraft, air boats, jet boats, and other high-powered river boats would have unrestricted access given that the vast majority of state public lands, not set aside by the Alaska Legislature for specific purposes, lack management. At high speeds boats create waves that erode banks, damage fish habitat, scare off waterbirds and other wildlife, and along with hovercraft threaten the safety and enjoyment of non-motorized boaters interested in observing undisturbed wildlife. All-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes brought in by boats and operated on stream banks and gravel bars, or in braided stream channels and fords can damage fish spawning habitat and pollute flows. All-terrain vehicle trespass on adjacent conservation system units can harm sensitive areas and critical habitats. Wildlife can be harassed. Hovercraft operated illegally off rivers can also disturb wildlife and destroy the solitude that draws many users to these protected areas.

Thus while the citizen supporters of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System celebrated its 50th anniversary and vowed to expand it, in Alaska 24 of the nation's most pristine free-flowing rivers face an uncertain future. ❖

-- Jack Hession

24 Designated Rivers in Alaska

Alagnak River - NPS, Katmai NPP and also on BLM land
Alatna River - NPS, Gates of the Arctic NPP
Andreafsky River - FWS, Yukon Delta NWR
Aniakchak River - NPS, Aniakchak NM & Preserve
Beaver Creek - BLM, White Mountains NRA
Charley River - NPS, Yukon Charley Rivers NP
Chilikadrotna River - NPS, Lake Clark NPP
Delta River - BLM
Fortymile River - BLM
Gulkana River - BLM
Ivishak River - FWS, Arctic NWR
John River - NPS, Gates of the Arctic NPP
Kobuk River - NPS, Kobuk Valley NP
Koyukuk River (North Fork) - NPS, Gates of the Arctic NPP
Mulchatna River - NPS Lake Clark NPP
Noatak River - NPS, Noatak NP
Nowitna River - FWS, Nowitna NWR
Salmon River - NPS Kobuk Valley NP
Selawik River - FWS, Selawik NWR
Sheenjok River - FWS, Arctic NWR
Tinayguk River - NPS, Gates of the Arctic NPP
Tlikakila River - NPS, Lake Clark NPP
Unalakleet River - BLM
Wind River - FWS, Arctic NWR

40th Anniversary of President Jimmy Carter's National Monument Proclamations-1978 to 2018

Sierra Club Local Outings

In December 1971, Congress provided for the withdrawal of 80 million acres of unreserved public land in Alaska for study and potential addition to the national conservation systems. The withdrawn land was closed to the mining and mineral leasing laws, state and Native land selections, and appropriations under the public land laws. Congress gave itself until December 1978 to act on various proposals for these withdrawn lands.

As the 1978 deadline approached, the Alaska Senators and their supporters had succeeded in stalling Senate action on bills to established new national parks, wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, national trails, and wilderness areas. In October the House and Senate principals and President Carter agreed to a compromise version that could be quickly sent to the president. But Sen. Mike Gravel (D-AK) opposed the compromise at the last minute. His filibuster threat ended further action on the bills, which meant that the withdrawals would expire and the withdrawn lands would revert to unreserved public land status.

President Carter did not let this happen. Using the authority of the Antiquities Act, he proclaimed 15 national monuments covering the same areas his administration and the Alaska Coalition were asking Congress to permanently establish as units of the national conservation systems. Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus withdrew another 40 million acres Congress was considering for addition to the national wildlife refuge system.

President Carter said his and the Secretary's actions were intended to preserve Congress's opportunity to complete its review of the proposed national interest lands and take appropriate action. In the following 96th Congress the lawmakers took up the various bills again. Ultimately, every one of the monuments and the refuge withdrawals was affirmed in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.

The scale of President Carter's use of the Antiquities Act was unprecedented. Previous chief executives had established monuments one at a time; Carter's 56 million acres exceeded the total acreage set aside by his predecessors. And the Carter monuments set off a boom in Presidential use of the Act. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama have proclaimed national monuments totaling millions of acres.

If you wish to send a note of gratitude to President Carter for his monumental action:

Address of the President and Mrs. Rosalyn Carter:

President Jimmy Carter
C/o Postmaster, Plains Post Office
119 Main St., Plains GA 31780. ❖

-- Jack Hession

Here are some Alaska Chapter hikes to end the current year and start 2019 off right!

North Bivouac Trail - December 16, 2018

Meet at 11:30 a.m. for a hike on the multi-use, 2.5 KM trail that starts at the North Bivouac Trailhead on the Campbell Airstrip Road. This will be an easy-paced hike on a moderate trail with some minor ups and downs, nothing steep or long. The hike will last about 1 or 1.5 hours. Trails are icy so bring a good pair of ice grippers for your boots. Dress in warm layers with



photo: Amy Murphy

What our trail may look like on our December hike

waterproof shell if it looks like snow. Bring water and a snack. The North Bivouac Trailhead is located on the left, 2 miles south from the Intersection between Tudor and Campbell Airstrip Road.

Turnagain Arm Trail - January 13, 2019

Help us kick off the new year with an easy hike on the scenic Turnagain Arm Trail with stunning views of steep mountains that reach from the waters of the Arm

to the sky. Meet at 11:00 a.m. at the Potter's Creek trailhead, located at Mile 115.1 of the Seward Highway. Our trail features easy ups and downs. We'll hike 30 or 40 minutes and turn around to return to our cars. Dress in layers appropriate for current weather conditions. Bring a good pair of ice grippers in case the trail is icy. Bring water and snacks. The pace will be slow and easy, with breaks as needed. We can do a group lunch somewhere if there is any interest.

Campbell Creek Trail - January 27, 2019

This will be an easy hike on the Campbell Creek Trail as it meanders through quiet greenbelts and neighborhoods. We will meet at 11:00 a.m. at parking lot behind the Peanut Farm near Old Seward and International Airport Road. From there we'll hike for 30 or 40 minutes on a flat trail and then turn around. Dress in layers appropriate for current weather conditions. Bring a good pair of ice grippers in case the trail is icy. Bring water and snacks. The pace will be slow and easy, with breaks as needed. Possible group lunch somewhere if there is interest. ❖

-- by Amy Murphy, outing leader and member Alaska Chapter Ex-Com

Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

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Find Sierra Borealis at <http://www.sierraclub.org/alaska>.

Chapter Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/SierraClubAlaska/



Featured in December 2018 issue:

Chapter election intro: VOTE	p. 1
Volunteer post	p. 1
Ex Com candidates: bios	pp. 2-3
Political action needed	p. 4
New Chapter staff	p. 4
Marine Team visit	p. 5
Wild & Scenic river threat	p. 6
Carter action 40th anniversary	p. 7
Chapter Outings	p. 7
Puffballs in Alaska	p. 8



All you wanted to know about Puffballs

I sat for a moment in the white spruce forest of Fairbanks, and it started to rain. Through the trees of the Bonanza Creek long term ecological research forest between Nenana and Fairbanks, I could see little puffs of brown smoke appear all around me, as puffball mushrooms were gently tapped by raindrops! A lot of kids know that puffballs will make an excellent cloud of spores when stomped, but their papery thin walls have actually evolved to disperse spores when it rains.

I love puffballs because they are so easy to recognize, and all species of puffballs in Alaska are edible! Slice one in half first to check that it is not actually a button *Amanita* mushroom-- true puffballs are totally white inside like a marshmallow. *Amanita* buttons will look like squished mushrooms, with gills and a stem. Old puffballs that are yellow or greenish inside, or even powdery brown, should not be eaten. The middle part that turns into spores is called the gleba. Some puffballs are all gleba-- perfectly round-- and others have a sterile base, like *Lycoperdon pyriforme*, the pear-shaped puffball. Some puffballs are smooth, others have bumps. The most striking puffball is *Lycoperdon perlatum*, the gem-studded puffball, with pyramid shaped bumps that flake off if you scratch them. All are edible if white inside.

Like tofu, puffballs are excellent when fried. They also make good accompaniment to fish or other meat. When trying

any food for the first time, be it puffballs or tofu, taste just a little first in case you have an allergic reaction.

Puffballs are "decomposer" fungi and can be found on rotting logs or grassy lawns in a wide variety of habitats, from suburban to wild, in extensive areas across Alaska.

Do not gather puffballs or any wild food where pesticides have been sprayed. If you find a good patch with many mushrooms, the forager's rule of thumb is to take one-third of the patch. Leave a third for other hunters and wildlife, leave a third for the fungus to regenerate. When that last

third gets old and brown, go back during a nice rain, and maybe you'll see the puffballs in action! ❖

-- Christin Swearingen



photo: Christin Swearingen