

ERICH H. FOLLMANN (1943–2010)

Erich H. Follmann passed away on 26 July 2010 in Anchorage, Alaska. He is survived by his wife, Ardella, and stepson, Aaryn Valencia, as well as by two brothers, Roland of Oklahoma and Reinhard and his wife Rosalie of Wisconsin.

Erich was born on 15 June 1943, in Chicago, Illinois. He received his BA in biology from Loyola University, Chicago, in 1965, and his MS (1968) and PhD (1973) in zoology at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the ecology of gray foxes.

From 1972 to 1976, Erich was a senior biologist with Woodward-Clyde Consultants, conducting environmental assessments on proposed pipelines in Texas, on the East Coast, and in Alaska, where he was a scientific adviser regarding the environmental and biological impact of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline. He also supervised scientists and engineers for other environmental projects on Alaska's North Slope.

In 1976, he became a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Institute of Arctic Biology (IAB). During 1976–79, most of his time was spent at the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL) in Barrow, where he conducted research on cold adaptation in arctic foxes, wolves, wolverines, and grizzly bears, using radio telemetry. He devised a unique application of modern technology to traditional practices by inserting a transmitter in whale harpoons to allow tracking of animals struck by Inupiaq hunters, thus reducing wounding loss. He was also the first to develop adaptations of telemetry that used subcutaneous transmitters to record the temperature and heart rate of free-ranging grizzly bears.

Erich joined the UAF Department of Biology, Fisheries and Wildlife in 1985 and became a tenured faculty member in 1989, with a quarter-time appointment in IAB. He especially enjoyed teaching and advising undergraduates at UAF. He also took great pride in the accomplishments of the master's and doctoral candidates whom he mentored at UAF. Erich's strong sense of integrity, scientific background, and consulting experience complemented his easy-going personality and sincerity to make him an ideal mentor, particularly for those intimidated by the academic environment. He cared deeply about the well-being of students in their journey to becoming scientists and helped them maintain a good perspective on balance of career and life. Former students commonly developed a lifelong friendship with Erich, and many continued professional collaboration with him after moving into positions with natural resource agencies.

Erich's personal research focused on northern wildlife of particular interest to Alaska Natives, especially the arctic fox and polar bears. He was concerned with the denning habits of grizzly and polar bears and the subsistence use of whales. Because of the practical nature of his work, Erich was an important ambassador for UAF among the people of northern Alaska. He was honored to work with the subsistence hunters in Barrow and Kaktovik and appreciated the knowledge of the Arctic they shared with him.



Erich H. Follmann, April 2010 (UAF photo by Todd Paris).

Erich was revered by his many students for his warmth, humor, and dedication to their success, which extended to his support staff as well. He always made time to stop by to say good morning and good night. And his sense of humor wasn't limited to humans. He was known to have played a mean game of tug-of-war with a 1000-pound polar bear named Irish during his time at NARL in Barrow. In addition to his devotion and study of Arctic animals, Erich took great pleasure in his golden retriever, Charlie.

Erich actively encouraged student participation in professional organizations, even covering students' membership dues or conference costs out of his pocket on several occasions. He also stressed the international nature of science. He was a member of the Arctic Institute of North America Board of Governors from 1994 to 2010; during this time, he was chairman of the AINA bi-national Grant-in-Aid Program. In 2010 the program funded 18 out of 39 proposals; the total amount distributed in grants of \$1000 during Erich's chairmanship exceeded \$120 000.

A member of the Wildlife Society since 1966, Erich was active in the Alaska Chapter of the Society from 1975 onward. He was a long-time member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management, and from 1993 to 2001, he served as Chairman of the Grant Review Committee, overseeing grant awards for bear research, primarily for the much-needed research and conservation projects in developing countries. He received a special recognition award from the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society in April 2008.

As an active member of the Department of Biology and Wildlife and IAB, Erich served as Chairman of the UAF Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee beginning in 2001, and was Chairman of the Department's Memorial Scholarship Funds, which included a special fund for his former student, David Burnett Dunn. In addition to all of his research, mentoring, and administrative activities, he taught three courses every year.

The Erich Follmann Memorial Scholarship has been established at the University of Alaska Foundation to assist students who pursue careers in Arctic biology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Ardella Follmann, Tom Paragi, Harry Reynolds, and Brian Barnes in preparing this tribute to Erich Follmann.

*Carl S. Benson
Geophysical Institute
University of Alaska Fairbanks
903 Koyukuk Drive, PO Box 757320
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7320, USA
benson@gi.alaska.edu*