

## Our staff

John Toppenberg, Director

John is a veteran of the many battles AWA has fought over the last seven years. He and his wife Peggy moved to Alaska in 1996, from Ft. Collins, Colorado. He served on the board of directors of a Colorado based wildlife organization for six years before moving to Alaska. John retired from a 22 year career in law enforcement, having spent the last 11 years as a major crimes detective for the Larimer county Sheriffs department in Ft. Collins. He is a self taught naturalist, and a professional wildlife photographer. John's wife is a nurse midwife. They live on a lake near Soldotna with 3 golden retrievers.

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Connie Brandel, Office Administrator

Connie Brandel joined the Alaska Wildlife Alliance as office administrator in August. Born and raised in Iowa, she lived in Idaho, Oregon and California before making her home in Alaska 20 years ago. Connie is familiar with both Alaska's wildlife issues and the day-to-day operations of not-for-profit organizations. She spent the previous 10 years as a volunteer and staff member at Wolf Song of Alaska, a non-political organization dedicated to increasing public awareness, understanding and acceptance of the wolf through education. While at Wolf Song she managed its downtown Anchorage museum and gift shop, and continues to volunteer for the organization as a wolf adoption and membership coordinator. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism, and in several of her "prior lives" she was a newspaper reporter and a legal secretary. Her hobbies are reading, fiction writing, camping, travel, and anything related to wolves. She lives near Wasilla with her two shelter-rescue, not-very-wolflike dogs: China, an Australian Shepherd-mix trained for agility competition, and Wilson, an English Springer Spaniel.

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Nancy Wallace, Communications Coordinator

Nancy was raised where prairies once roamed free, in the flatlands of Illinois.

While poignantly studying physics and computer science at the University of Illinois, she spent countless hours watching wildlife while walking through Meadowbrook Park, a prairie restoration that offers "a glimpse of the former landscape of Illinois." She soon discovered there was more to life than superstrings and superhighways, and promptly left the University to create delectable edibles and efficaciously emit enormous soapfilm spheres. Then during a blisteringly hot day in July 1999, she packed up her truck, Sammy, and drove to Alaska in pursuit of mountains and forests and oceans and snow and wildlife more extensive than leashless pets, and was surprised to discover they weren't mere myths nor restorations, but the real thing. She is proud to be a part of the AWA team helping to protect Alaska's wildlife. Nancy enjoys spending her time hiking, watching foreign films, practicing yoga, reading obscure books, expanding her mind in useless directions, and fixing Sammy.

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