



IN MEMORIAM
Victor Van Ballenberghe, 1943–2022

Victor Van Ballenberghe was born in Bayshore, Long Island, New York and grew up on a dairy farm in upstate New York. He received a biology degree from State University of New York (SUNY) at Oneonta and then entered the University of Minnesota in 1967 where he earned MS and PhD degrees. Vic's PhD (1972) research focused on wolves as part of a larger moose study in northeastern Minnesota. His research occurred in the early days of radio-telemetry and was of the first to employ the pioneering technology.

Vic's first job was as an extension trapper at South Dakota State University. Two years later, he was hired by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to investigate the effect of the trans-Alaska pipeline on moose migration. In 1980, he joined the research branch of the U.S. Forest Service and conducted moose and wolf research in Denali National Park and the Copper River Delta. He initiated long-term, well known investigations into moose biology and behavior that extended over 40 years. A truly unique aspect of this research was Vic's documentation of the ecology, breeding activity, and mortality across the lifespan of multiple bull moose. Although Vic retired in 2000, he continued these studies until Parkinson's disease limited his activity.

Vic was a "boots on the ground" field biologist and believed that one had to spend time in the field and patiently observe animals in their natural habitat to truly understand selection processes affecting behavior and survival. He was well known for his consummate field skills and knowledge of natural history. Vic was a collaborative researcher, advising and supervising numerous graduate students including those researching moose and wolves in the Copper River and Denali. Vic authored and co-authored over one hundred technical journal articles, book chapters, and symposium papers. He published many popular articles and wrote numerous newspaper opinion pieces on controversial wildlife management issues. He worked with multiple film crews including the BBC, National Geographic, and Animal Planet, while accommodating National Park Service naturalists, private photographers, and so many others seeking his expertise and commentary. His exemplary professional efforts and leadership were recognized by his receiving the Distinguished Moose Biologist Award (1996) from the International Alces Working Group.

Vic was appointed to the Alaska Board of Game by Governor Bill Sheffield in 1985, serving one full term and two subsequent partial terms in 1996 and 2002. He was a strong

advocate of scientific, evidence-based wildlife management, including support for bears and wolves. Fittingly, his last publication in Alces addressed large carnivore management in Alaska, advocating for stronger scientific versus political approaches.

Vic was an avid and extremely skilled photographer. His beautiful book *In the Company of Moose* (2004) contains 120 photographs from Denali National Park and elsewhere, set to Vic's

descriptive and passionate writing portraying the year-round ecology and behavior of moose. The final chapter "*Death of a Warrior*" won awards for creative nonfiction.

Vic is survived by his wife Linda Masterson, daughter Andrea Bradford, son Jonathan Van Ballenberghe, and several nieces and nephews. He was truly a pioneer and stalwart of the moose world, with a professional legacy for future moosers to recognize and appreciate.

