

# Free fun on the Refuge

by Michelle Ostrowski

Summer is here. The kids are out of school, visitors are arriving, fish are in the Kenai River, the mosquitoes are out, and many people are looking for summer fun. In addition to the normal recreational opportunities on the 1.92 million acre Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, we offer a variety of free, fun, and educational summer activities for all ages.

## **Programs at the Refuge Visitor Center in Soldotna.**

Films for all ages: Alaskan wildlife films are shown daily on the hour from noon until 4:00 p.m. These films are a great orientation to the Refuge, its history, and the fascinating wildlife of our great state.

For people wanting to stretch their legs: Guided nature walks on our “Keen-Eye” trail are held on most Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 11:00 a.m., starting July 3 and running through August 15.

For children: There is a Junior Explorer program for ages four and older. Kids use a worksheet to explore Visitor Center displays. Once completed (takes 15 minutes), they receive a Junior Explorer button. There is a more in-depth Junior Ranger program for children, ages six to twelve, who will be in the Refuge for two or more hours. After a certain number of booklet activities are completed, they receive a Junior Ranger patch. Children can also pick up Junior Ranger booklets from camp hosts at Hidden Lake and Upper Skilak Campgrounds.

## **Programs in the Skilak Lake Recreational**

### **Area.**

Campfire programs: Hidden Lake Campground, Fridays and Saturdays, at 8:00 p.m. from June 25 to August 14. Campfire programs are also scheduled on July 10, 17, and 24 at Upper Skilak Campground. This summer our campfire programs feature topics including: bears, wolves, and salmon.

Join an interpreter for discovery hikes on Saturdays at 1 p.m.: Hike Burney’s Trail (at Hidden Lake Campground) for “Exploring Using Your Senses” on June 19, 26, July 10, 24, and August 7. Hike the Vista Trail (at Upper Skilak Campground) and learn about the “Hidden Creek Fire of 1996” on July 3, 17, 31, and August 7.

Refuge volunteers host several of our summer programs. Volunteers play a key role in creating interpretive programs and staffing our visitor centers. This summer our interpretive volunteers, Leah Rigall, Chelsea Aldrich, and Kendra Bush are very excited to share their wildlife programs with Refuge visitors.

For directions and more information about any of these programs and activities, please contact the Refuge at 262-7021. Save the dates and times and don’t forget to bring your mosquito repellent!

*Michelle Ostrowski is an interpretive park ranger at the Refuge who has enjoyed leading campfire programs and discovery hikes since 1998. Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.*