

## Summer programs at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

by Candace Ward

### Refuge Headquarters Programs:

Alaskan wildlife movies are shown daily at noon, 1, 2, 3, & 4 p.m. at the Refuge Visitor Center from June 1 – August 31. Center hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday & Sunday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Environmental Education Center** summer activities include Jr. Explorer & Trail Explorer Programs. Kids earn cool buttons and prizes while doing self-guided nature activities. Center hours are 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. daily from June 23 through August 13.

**Nature Talks** will be held at the Environmental Education Center from July 1 to August 12 at 11 a.m., 2 p.m. & 3 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays, & Saturdays. Talks last 20 minutes and topics include Alaskan wildlife, native culture and history.

Check out a **Discovery Pack** at the Environmental Education Center to explore the **Keen Eye Nature Trail** and learn more about Alaskan birds, wildlife and plants.

To find both centers at Refuge Headquarters, travel south from Soldotna on the Sterling Highway and turn left across from Skyview High School on to Ski Hill Rd. Travel one mile on Ski Hill Rd. to the Visitor Center parking lot. The Visitor Center is adjacent to the parking lot. To go to the Environmental Education Center, take a short walk on the Keen Eye Trail from the Visitor Center parking lot.

### Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area Programs:

**Hidden Lake Campfire Programs** are held on Friday and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and last one hour. Saturday dates are June 17 – August 19 and Friday dates are June 23 – August 18. Programs alternate between a variety of Alaska wildlife and cultural topics.

**Hidden Lake Campground** is located 3.6 miles from the east entrance of Skilak Lake Rd. Meet at the campground amphitheater. If raining, meet at the picnic pavilion next to the boat ramp. Travel time from Soldotna is approx. one hour.

**Discovery Hikes** take place Saturdays at 1 p.m. and alternate between Burney's Trail and Vista Trail. These hikes last 1 ½ - 2 hours. Hikers cover up to 1.5 miles round trip. A spectacular view of Hidden or Skilak Lakes awaits you at the end of each hike. Wear comfortable hiking shoes, bring rain gear, and carry water. Please do not bring dogs for these hikes. Travel time from Soldotna is approx. one hour to each hike location.

June 24, July 8, July 22 & August 5 – Meet at the **Burney Trail** in Hidden Lake Campground. Discover nature by experiencing a series of fun activities that use your senses. To find the trail head, travel to Hidden Lake Campground located 3.6 miles from the **east** entrance of Skilak Lake Rd. The trail head is located in the campground across from site #7, Skyview Loop. Park in the picnic area day use parking lot and walk to the trail head.

July 1, July 15, July 29 & August 12 – Meet at the **Vista Trail** in Upper Skilak Campground. Learn about the Hidden Creek Fire of 1996 and how plant and wildlife has returned in ten years since the fire. To find the Vista Trail, go to **west** entrance of Skilak Lake Rd. and travel 10 miles to the turn off to Upper Skilak Campground. Follow the road for two miles to the campground. Park in the picnic area day use parking. Walk to the boat ramp area and take the foot bridge over the creek to the "A" campground loop. The Vista Trail is marked and departs from the "A" loop across from the restrooms.

Whether you watch a wildlife movie or take a Discovery Hike, make sure your summer includes one of the Refuge's fascinating and fun nature programs.

*Candace Ward is a park ranger, who leads the Refuge's information and education programs. She works each summer to train and assist new staff in presenting nature programs for the enjoyment of Kenai Peninsula residents and summer visitors. Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.*