

# Get some nature into your kids at Kenai Refuge Summer Camps

by Michelle Ostrowski



*Two children participating in the Refuge Summer Camp.*

Last summer, the weather in our part of Alaska left a lot to be desired. However, the one week of our “Get Out and Get Dirty” Refuge Summer Camp was the only full week of sunshine and blue skies. This year we are hoping for at least four weeks of fantastic outdoor weather since we have expanded the camps we are offering. There will be two different day camps offered and each session is limited to 15 campers; led by four skilled Refuge staff leaders. Each week will be 99% outdoors and 100% hands-on!

**Critter Camp:** This brand new camp is available to students going into 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade this fall. We will be outdoors learning about plants and animals, their habitats, life cycles, and adaptations. The two separate sessions of this camp will occur July 6-10 and July 13-17 with each day starting at 10am and ending at 2pm. Pre-registration will be required and there will be a \$50 supply fee per session.

**Get Outside and Get Dirty Summer Camp:** This camp is available to students going into 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade this fall. The majority of the week will be spent outdoors learning about orienteering, plants, birds, fish, and other animals. The two separate sessions of this camp will occur July 20-24 and July 27-31 with each day starting at 9am and ending at 3pm. Pre-registration will be required and there will be a \$75

supply fee per session.

Camp leaders this year are: Michelle Ostrowski, Refuge Education Specialist; Eve Smallwood, Park Ranger; Betsi Oliver, Refuge Environmental Education Intern; and Te’Audra Sanders, Refuge Summer Camp Intern. We are all very excited to be creating and facilitating these camps for the youths in our local communities. Through trail exploration, crafts, science experiments, digital photography, journaling and more, we hope to inspire kids with nature’s wonders. You can get a summer camp registration packet at the Kenai Refuge Visitor Center on Ski Hill Road in Soldotna or by e-mailing [michelle\\_ostrowski@fws.gov](mailto:michelle_ostrowski@fws.gov). The registration deadline is June 30 or until each session fills.

Being outdoors is important—intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and physically. National Wildlife Refuges across the United States are making efforts to find new and creative ways to draw people of all ages back to the outdoors and the Kenai Refuge is no exception. In addition to the summer camps we will also be offering family activities throughout the summer.

**Celebrate Wildflower Fun Day (June 19) and Wild Berry Fun Day (August 14):** These two community special events take place at the Environmental Education Center next door to the Kenai Refuge Visitor Center. These events will be from 11am to 3pm and will include displays, games, craft activities, theme inspired snacks, and guided ½ mile wildflower or wild berry identification walks on the Keen-Eye trail. Pre-registration is required for the guided walks.

**Campfire Programs:** Held at Hidden Lake Campground Fridays and Saturdays beginning June 19 and lasting through the end of July, and also the first three Saturdays in August. Programs start at 8pm at the amphitheatre. No pre-registration required.

For directions, pre-registration, or additional summer program information please call Michelle Ostrowski at 260-2839 or e-mail [michelle\\_ostrowski@fws.gov](mailto:michelle_ostrowski@fws.gov). You can also e-mail Michelle to be added to our event notification list.

So my fingers are crossed and I’m doing a “sun-

shine dance.” I hope the month of July will be beautiful weather. But our camps will occur rain or shine and we will be prepared to get wet and dirty while exploring nature. For families without students entering grades 2-5, start planning your outdoor summer fun and get outdoors. Join us for a Refuge-sponsored event or get out on your own to camp, fish, hike or watch wildlife on your National Wildlife Refuge and

encourage others to do the same.

*Michelle Ostrowski is the education specialist at the Kenai Refuge and has assisted with educational school groups and outreach since 1997. She is the 2009 recipient of the US Fish & Wildlife Service Sense of Wonder Award for Region 7. Previous Refuge Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.*