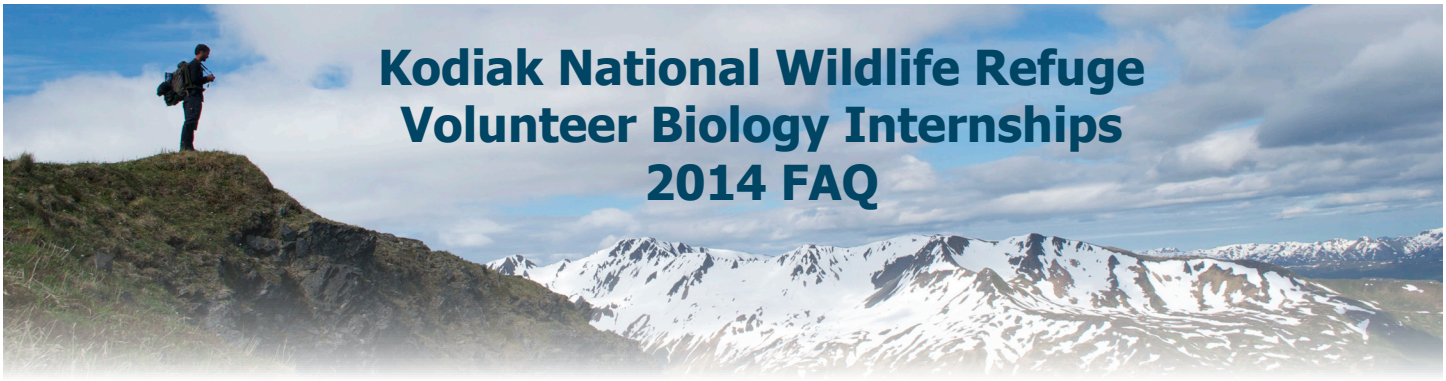

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Biology Internships 2014 FAQ

Hello! If you are reading this, you are probably thinking about applying to one of our posted internship vacancies. Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge! Spending a summer assisting biological research on Kodiak Island can be the experience of a lifetime, but also involves long hours of hard work in challenging conditions. We encourage you to evaluate the opportunity and your interests before you apply; this FAQ reference is designed to answer some common questions about the volunteer experience at KNWR to assist you in your decision, as well as provide further resources for information.

Q. What positions are available for the 2014 research season?
A. We will have 3 programs with open volunteer positions: **Kittlitz's Murrelet Nesting Ecology** research project (3 volunteers needed), **Avian Monitoring** (1 volunteer needed), and **Brown Bear Resource Use** study (1 volunteer needed).

Q. Do I need to be a current student or have a degree in biology to apply?
A. You must have completed your junior year of undergraduate study to be eligible, but it is not required that you be a current student or have a degree in biology. However, these positions tend to be very competitive, and we rank applicants using several criteria, including previous field research experience, related coursework, and academic interests.

Q. When do I need to be available for the internship?
A. All selected seasonal volunteers must be able to arrive in Kodiak by **May 12th, 2014 to participate in required safety training.** End dates are occasionally flexible; the position description will indicate a general end date for your project, but typically most projects finish field work by the end of August-mid September.

Q. Can I qualify for your internship if I am an international applicant?
A. At this time, the Fish and Wildlife Service does not have the ability to support volunteer visas for international applicants.

Q. What does the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge provide as part of a volunteer contract?
A. If you are a successful applicant, we will work with you to arrange round trip airfare from any U.S. city to Kodiak. While you are in the town of Kodiak, we offer shared housing in our bunkhouse. We provide necessary field gear such as tents, cookware, and first aid kits. You will work with your crew leader prior to field deployment to shop for food while you are in the field, and we will pay for these groceries. While you are in the town of Kodiak, we budget a living allowance of $30/day.

Q. What do I need to provide for my internship?
A. We ask that you be responsible for providing appropriate personal field gear for working in the Alaska backcountry, including your own sleeping bag (packable and warm), sleeping pad, large frame backpack, outdoor clothing for our cool and wet climate, good raingear, and good hiking boots that give plenty of ankle support, have some waterproofing, and can withstand a lot of hiking on rocky terrain.

Q. What kind of training do you provide?
A. We're glad you asked! Fish and Wildlife Service requires certain training before anyone (volunteer or employee) may go into the field. Arrival in Kodiak by May 12th is mandatory for this reason. You will receive a volunteer orientation session on May 13th, and we will begin 2-3 weeks of training on May 14th. We provide:

- Training and orientation for driving Refuge vehicles
- CPR/First Aid (consider completing before arrival)
- Six hour course on Bear Safety
- One day of safety training for the handling and use of firearms. You will have the opportunity to qualify for carrying a firearm in the field through a series of field target tests. We use Remington 12 gauge shotguns as a required bear-safety measure while in the Refuge.
- Aviation Safety (2 hour online course completed before arrival) and Aviation Water Ditching Safety. This course is required to fly in a Refuge plane, and consists of 3-4 hours of classroom instruction and 3-4 hours of exercises in the pool, including a simulated plane crash in a plastic "dunker".
- Depending on your project, you may also spend 5 days in a Motorboat Operator Certification Course
- We also have some brief administrative training and will provide you with a project-specific orientation and project-relevant training such as Kodiak botany.

Q. What is it like to work in remote Kodiak?
A. Kodiak is a beautiful, rugged island in the North Pacific ocean. Many people have compared Kodiak to the highlands of Scotland; terrain here can be steep, with jagged ridges and high alpine areas. Nowhere on the island is more than 15 miles from the ocean, but backcountry travel can be slow and hampered by boggy wetlands, rivers, thick alder and high brush. You may be carrying a 60 pound pack for several hours at a time through a wide variety of terrain. Depending on the area, you may encounter thick swarms of mosquitoes, black flies, and no-see-ums. The summers here are cool and rainy, with average temperatures ranging from the low 40s to the mid 60s. There are no established trails within the Refuge, and your study sites are only accessible by float plane or helicopter. While in the field, your only communication will be via satellite phone; each volunteer is allotted 15 minutes of time per week for use of the camp's sat-phone.

Specific data-collection duties vary by project, but most field work will have some aspect of monotonous work, whether it is performing transect after transect across scree slopes or conducting vegetation plot surveys for habitat research. Although wildlife sightings are abundant, the opportunity to handle wildlife is relatively rare and will be specific to each project. We are looking for individuals who thrive in these challenging, isolated conditions, who are detail-oriented and can stay on-task throughout repetitive tasks, and who can contribute a positive attitude to camp life in the backcountry.

Q. What specific skills do you look for?
A. While reviewing your application, we are particularly interested if you can demonstrate previous experience camping and backpacking in challenging conditions, if you are currently active and have a high level of physical fitness, if you have done course or field work using a GPS, if you have previous experience using a firearm, any previous experiences working in bear country, and your level of expertise using software such as spreadsheets, databases, and GIS. We may also be interested in your experience using telemetry, conducting audio-visual avian surveys, operating small skiffs in a marine environment, or plant-identification skills.