



Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

Fall 2009

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Old Harbor's Daisy Christiansen identifies sea creatures with Salmon Camp instructor Amanda Fan.

Salmon Camp Visits Six Kodiak Villages

Salmon Camp, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge's summer science camp, visited Larsen Bay, Old Harbor, Port Lions, Ouzinkie, Karluk, and Akhiok this summer. This was the first time in several years the Camp has managed to visit all six villages in one summer. The mission of Salmon Camp is to educate Kodiak's youth about the natural and cultural systems present on our island and to empower learners to investigate their own connections to the Island through hands-on learning, self-reflection and group discovery. The theme of Salmon Camp 2009 was water and its influences on the land, plants, animals, and people of Kodiak Island. Two Salmon Camp instructors visited each village for two days/one night. During that time, the instructors helped children learn about the water cycle, salmon anatomy and life cycle, plant identification, and tidepool ecology.

In addition to teaching, the instructors were learning during their visits. They were taught how to blow into freshly picked salmonberries in Akhiok, how to catch jumping salmon in Port Lions, and how to make salmonberry leaves turn into butterflies in Ouzinkie. They were treated with extreme kindness and generosity in each village and were provided places to stay, taken to see bears, and were even treated to "dinner and a movie" by Dan McCoy in Akhiok when they were weathered in one extra night.

The entire Salmon Camp staff and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge are extremely grateful for the opportunity to visit Kodiak's remote villages as part of Salmon Camp. They greatly enjoyed their time teaching and learning in your wonderful communities. They are looking forward to next summer!

If you have questions or comments about anything in this newsletter please feel free to write, call, fax, e-mail or stop in at the Refuge headquarters on Buskin River Road for coffee and a chat:

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1390 Buskin River Road

Toll Free: 1-888-408-3514
e-mail: kodiak@fws.gov
Fax: 907-487-2144
Web: <http://kodiak.fws.gov>

Bear Proof Fence Proves Effective . . .

...at the landfill. This photo of a sow and her two cubs outside Larsen Bay's landfill demonstrates the value of the time and effort taken to install and maintain an electric bear-proof fence. This photo was taken by a group of tribal and community leaders from Old Harbor and Larsen Bay who were at the landfill inside the fence to learn about its operation and effectiveness.

...at your field camp. An electric fence is one effective method to keep safe around a hunting camp. Secure it around your meat cache or where food and garbage is stored to help prevent human-bear conflicts.

...around livestock and feed. Electric fences have proven effective in small or large pastures where livestock graze.

...when you're away. Bears can and have done extensive damage to personal property, especially at remote locations when owners are absent. Electric fences are one way to help prevent property damage by these curious critters. When bears enter



A sow and her two cubs outside Larsen Bay's landfill.

(USFWS)

cabins they almost never leave the same way they came in, thus doubling the damage. Once a bear has learned of the rewards of breaking into a cabin it is likely to do the same at other cabins. In the words of one south-end setnetter this summer: "Our electric fence appears to be effective – we found fur on the outside already."



For more information on how to purchase and install an electric fence please visit:

- <http://wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bears.efences>
- <http://www.udap.com/bearshock.htm>
- www.gallagherusa.com/electric-fencing
- <http://www.enasco.com/>
- http://www.safefence.com/About_JLWIL.htm

DLP: Defense of Life or Property

If you're faced with a situation where your life or property are in danger by a Kodiak brown bear you have rights! But you must follow requirements associated with a DLP.

PREVENTION is your best bet!

If the bear is a threat to your life or property:

- Call the Police (911), your local VPSO or the Fish and Game office, and/or you may shoot the bear yourself.
- Remember, if the bear has been attracted to your home or camp by improperly stored food or garbage, it can NOT be legally killed.

What to do?

If you do have a DLP situation here's what you do:

- 1.) If you kill a brown bear you must remove the hide, salvage the skull and give both the hide, with claws attached, and the skull to ADF&G.
- 2.) You must also notify your local ADF&G Wildlife Conservation office or Alaska State Troopers Bureau of Wildlife enforcement immediately.
- 3.) You are required to fill out and submit a questionnaire concerning the circumstances within 15 days.



Larry VanDaele (ADF&G)

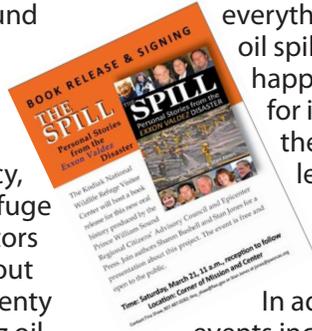
Bear claws its way into a home.

Each year there are a number of DLP incidents in the Kodiak Region. Take a look at the past 5 years:

Year	Total DLP Mortalities
2005	7
2006	22
2007	12
2008	15
2009	13 preliminary

Kodiak Refuge Marks Exxon Valdez 20th Anniversary

Together with conservation leaders from the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustees Council and Tim Richardson, of the American Land Conservancy, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge provided thousands of visitors an opportunity to learn about and reflect on the event twenty years after the Exxon Valdez oil tanker hit Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound, causing the biggest tanker oil spill in U.S. history. In the words of Kodiak-based commercial fisherman Al Burch,



“The big lesson we learned: do everything you can to prevent oil spills, but they are going to happen again, so be prepared for it.” Twenty years after the spill, coastal Alaska has learned the importance of oil spill prevention, response and mitigation—but still seeks emotional closure.

In addition to our March events including a book signing for *The Spill: Personal Stories from the Exxon Valdez Disaster*, an oral history remembrance of how coastal communities of Alaska were affected by the spill, by Sharon Bushell, the

Kodiak Refuge Visitor Center hosted a new traveling exhibit that was produced by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. The exhibit arrived at the Center in June, at the start of a busy cruise ship season, and provided food for thought for visitors from all over the world. “People were surprised to learn that there were on-going impacts from the spill,” recounts Refuge interpretive park ranger, Shelly Lawson. Lawson explained further that the exhibit, “sparks communication about the impact on people, their connection to the land and the legal battle that’s been on-going for twenty years.”

Dig Afognak Harvest Camp



A feast of tidepool chowder, beach greens, seaweed and fish harvested at camp.

The Native Village of Afognak invited Refuge staff to help at this year’s Dig Afognak Harvest Camp. Nestled in the spruce trees on southeast Afognak Island, Dig Afognak is a cultural camp for youth, blended with the guiding hand of elders. Together participants enjoyed gathering tidepool limpets, chitons, sea snails, seaweeds, beach greens and other edible plants, as well as subsistence fishing for salmon and halibut. “Experiencing the many

wonders of the natural world with young people, and the chance to be together was pure joy”, recalls one elder. Harvesting from the sea and beaches made it valuable for everyone. Food was caught in nets, gathered in buckets, and cleaned and prepared by their own hands, giving kids a sense of value toward the land and food found near



Dig Afognak participants enjoy beach on Afognak.

home. In the tent-kitchen campers assisted with preparation of a variety of dishes including tidepool chowder and perok - a traditional fish pie.

2009 Federal Subsistence Hunting

Federal subsistence hunting regulations are slightly different than the State. In order to qualify for Refuge subsistence hunts you must be a Kodiak resident, hunt on Refuge lands and carry all the required state hunting licenses and tags. For qualified residents, designated deer, elk and brown bear permits (village only) are offered through the Refuge’s headquarters building on Buskin River Road.

Deer: August 1 – January 31
Elk: Sept 15 – Nov 30
Brown Bear: December 1-15 and April 1 - May 15

For a full list of hunting regulations please check the state and federal printed booklets or visit online:
For state hunts: <http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov>
For federal subsistence hunts: <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm> and search for regulations at these sites.

Applicants Sought for Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils

Deadline: January 8, 2010

The Office of Subsistence Management is accepting applications to fill seats on the Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council that advise the Federal Subsistence Board on subsistence management regulations and policies.

For an application or additional information, please contact Michelle Chivers at the Office of Subsistence Management at (800) 478-1456 or (907) 786-3877.

The Bears of Neriungri

Her hand pensively stroking the bear hide, Svetlana explained: "When my people kill a bear we have such respect for the animal that we need to make him think we did not do it, and we cry "kuuu, kuuu" to make it appear like Raven did it". Svetlana Mikhailova, an Evenk elder, explains the relationship between reindeer herders and hunters and the largest predator in the forest surrounding them. She reties a red ribbon under the ears, smoothes the fur with affectionate gestures, and looks at the bear as if he were a relative.

Her audience listens. They are members of the Northern Forum Brown Bear Working Group, formed in 1998 by biologists, wildlife managers and others to support conservation of brown bears in Northern regions, educate the public, and minimize conflicts between humans and bears. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has provided support to the Brown Bear Working Group from its inception. The Northern Forum consists of 18 regions around the northern latitudes, and provides an unprecedented avenue for cooperation among bear specialists.

In the many years they have worked together now, they have seen the same honor and deference to the bear from the Ainu of Hokkaido, the Koniag, the Yupik in Alaska, and the Saami in Sweden.

This visit by bear biologists from USFWS and ADF&G in August 2009, focused on the southern part of the Sakha Republic in Russia, also called Yakutia. Here, the government has recently devised mega development plans, including extending the Trans Siberian railway to Yakutsk, opening new roads, developing mining operations and laying out a new gas line from the Pacific Coast to central Siberia. Unfortunately, this is cause for concern. Workers are brought in from other places where they have no experience with bears - they feed the bears, leave trash lying around, and unwittingly create opportunities for brown bears to come out of the woods and become a threat to people. However, wildlife managers in Yakutia disagree with the idea that the bears should simply be killed if they become a nuisance. This could lead to an overkill of bears, in an area where the actual number of bears is not known because of remoteness



Natalie Novik (Northern Forum)

A bear ceremony in Yakutia Russia. and harsh climate. Visiting Alaskan biologists provided well-received information on methods used at industrial and village sites for preventing human-bear conflict. The group left this quiet, isolated corner of the North with concrete plans for close cooperation and support. Upon returning to their respective offices, Russian colleagues immediately set forth collecting tissue samples for a multi-national genetic study of brown bears, and when they meet next year they will have a much better understanding of these bears and what is happening to them.

RIT's Share Learning and Art with AFN Youth & Elders



(USFWS)

AFN participant feels for mystery objects hidden in an old fish trap.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's Refuge Information Technicians (RITs) had another successful year at Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) as they counted the number of ways they saw people's faces light up from all around the state. An old-style handmade fish trap, created by RIT Clara Demientieff and her grandson,

caused people to stop as it sat displayed at one of two tables at the Youth and Elder's conference. The theme for the booth this year was *Healthy Waters Make Healthy Fish*.

Inside the enclosed fish trap laid several mystery objects related to fish. The items could not be seen but were discovered as participants put their hand in the trap and felt textures, shapes and sizes in a guessing game that brought both smiles and surprises.

On the second table, the RITs gave people a chance to be creative with a fish art project using bright colors. A variety of fish prints were painted and pressed onto scarves to make a colorful take-home item.

On the other side of the table Jon

Dyasuk had a laptop with biological data illustrating the migration of walrus along the Bering Sea, an opportunity for learning.

Many other opportunities for education were available and all added to this year's theme: *Healthy Waters Make Healthy Fish*. These words were printed on the backdrop in 7 Alaska native languages.



(USFWS)

Fish prints make beautiful scarves.

Kittlitz's Murrelet - Alaska's Secretive Superbird



Adult Kittlitz's Murrelet at sea.

The Kittlitz's murrelet is one of the least known and rarest of North American birds. This small seabird, closely resembling the marbled murrelet, resides mainly in waters on the Alaskan coast and nests in coastal mountains. Surveys, however, have indicated a steep decline in the population from an estimated 100,000 in 1973 to 10-15,000 today. In 2006 a plant survey crew found a nest high (3,000 ft.) in the mountains of Kodiak Island, the first documented in this region. Following this, another survey crew documented high levels of calling and flight activity in the low mountains of southwest Kodiak Island in 2007. These remarkable discoveries, coupled with concerns about population health, prompted launching an intensive study in 2008 involving the Alaska Science Center/ USGS, the Refuge, and the Service's Endangered Species Division.



A red fox caught in the act of depredating a KIMU nest.

In early June 2008 a crew of three biologists was deployed to the mountains south of Karluk for 70 days to study the bird's nesting biology. They hiked hundreds of miles of steep mountain slopes and found five nests. Behaviors rarely or never seen before for this species were discovered. In the summer of 2009, 13 nests were found on the slopes above Sturgeon and Ayakulik River valleys on the Refuge. Researchers continue to test radar technology to identify murrelets flying to and from nests. Coastal surveys of the western waters of the Refuge will target Kittlitz's and

Kittlitz's Murrelet "Superbird" Characteristics

Though little is known about this rare seabird, what we do know seems to qualify it as a "superbird."

- It can dive to depths of 100 feet or more.
- It can fly up to 100 miles an hour, faster than most major league fastballs.
- It nests in moonscape-like tumbles of rocky mountain slopes.
- During breeding season, it must fly out to sea several times per day, in some cases 40 miles, to catch and return with small fish to nourish its single chick.
- On top of all the above, many of these activities occur in the dark or twilight between the hours of 4-6 am!



Bob Day

the closely related marbled murrelets. Data gathered will help identify nesting habitat and help solve the puzzle of this birds' decline across Alaska.

Crew Circumnavigates Island

Kodiak Island is known for its diverse habitats, remote landscapes and beautiful scenery. Most of us who live here love its uniqueness and want to keep it...purely Kodiak. Noxious and invasive weeds can be brought in by curious gardeners, on boots or backpacks and can take over native vegetation, crowd out your favorite wildflowers and ultimately cause ecological and economic damage. A quick investigation of what these invasions have done to places in the lower 48 demonstrates we can work now to prevent unforeseen and extremely costly damage. An inventory of what is around remote Kodiak is in the works.

A crew on the Refuge M/V Ursa Major II set out to find invasive weeds this summer as they circled the island in an 8-day coastal survey.

One of the Refuge's goals is prevention of invasive plant establishment and, in cooperation with other landowners, control or removal of existing infestations. Partnering with the Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District the survey crew visited 63 sites beginning at old Port Bailey cannery, then Uganik, Spiridon, Zachar and Uyak Bays, then south to visit Alitak, Moser and Deadman Bays. A final stop was made in Old Harbor where they visited familiar faces and checked on previously surveyed invasive species. Among the 63 sites, nine species were identified including orange hawkweed, ox-eye daisy, giant knotweed, and common tansy. The crew re-visited four Refuge



Blythe Brown and lodge owner Steele Davis discuss options for orange hawkweed scattered across an area overlooking Uyak Bay.

setnet sites in Uganik where small infestations were identified in 2008. Permit holders at these sites had taken steps toward eradication with positive results so far.

Bears and Salmon, Bears and Salmon, Bears and Salmon

While the 2009 season marked the 2nd straight lowest record of Karluk River salmon (based on a fisheries scientist trend from 1985 to the present), bear biologists were busy tracking home ranges and dispersal of Kodiak's hungry brown bears.

In cooperation with ADF&G and the Kodiak Brown Bear Trust, the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge captured eleven brown bears near Karluk Lake and on Sitkalidak Island near Old Harbor from May 21-25. Brown bear biologists fitted seven females and one male with GPS collars to follow their movements and determine patterns of habitat use. The average estimated age of the captured bears was 8.2 years and average weights were approximately 432 pounds. During the summer over 50,000 precise locations for these collared bears were collected. Bears on Sitkalidak and near Old Harbor were very faithful to remarkably small home ranges. Bears near Karluk Lake exhibited similar levels



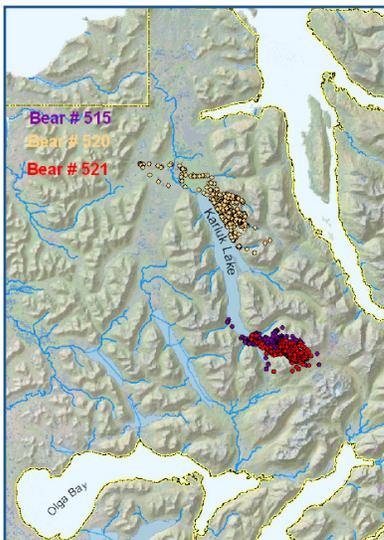
Bill Leacock (USFWS)

A sow with four cubs on Dog Salmon River.

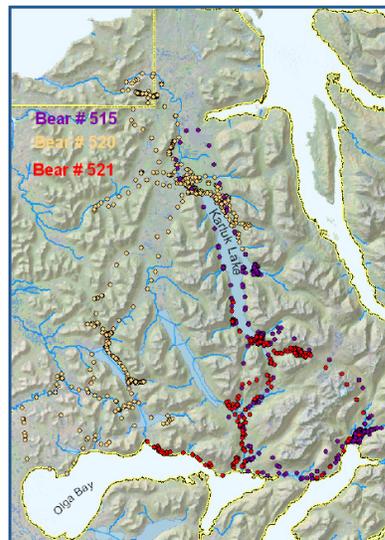
of fidelity until it became evident in late July that the sockeye run into Karluk had failed. The Karluk bears then went on a walkabout – moving great distances in search of food. Refuge biologists and volunteers hiked to over 500 remote locations to collect detailed and valuable

information on bear activities, food resources, and habitat characteristics associated with these locations.

These efforts are giving us important new insights into bear biology as well as unsurpassed information to use in bear management decisions.

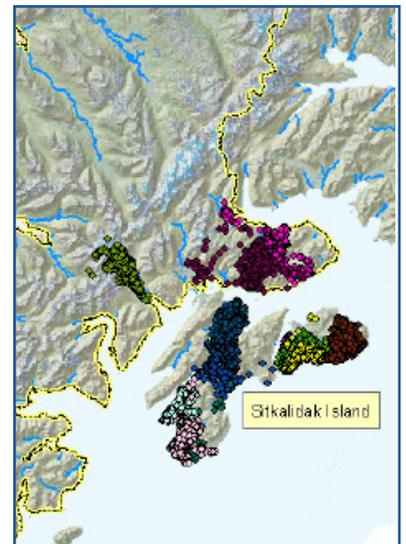


Early Summer 2009. Karluk collared bear locations (3 bears).



Late summer 2009. Karluk collared bear locations (same 3 bears).

Maps illustrate 2009 locations of Karluk bears in search of food versus Sitkalidak bears in close home ranges where food was plentiful.



2009 Sitkalidak collared bear locations

Volunteering for Kodiak Refuge

An hour here, an hour there: volunteer hours quickly add up and help Kodiak Refuge achieve many goals. Indeed, with volunteers spending several weeks in the field, the total for 2009 reached nearly 11,000 hours—the equivalent of five full-time employees. Of course, those hours represent the collective efforts of about 100 individuals. Volunteers assisted with Refuge projects by greeting guests at the new KNWR Visitor Center, delivering educational programs such as Salmon Camp and Families Understanding Nature, repairing public use cabins on the Refuge, and assisting with biological field work, such as invasive species management, bird surveys, and bear monitoring. For every individual interested in volunteering, there is a task or skill the Refuge likely needs to complete a project. And while the feeling of accomplishment that comes with volunteering is its own reward, the real benefits of volunteering are many—from learning new skills, visiting amazing locations, seeing wildlife in a whole new light, and making new friends. In fact, the benefits of volunteering add up as quickly as volunteer hours.



Volunteer Wilford helps build a new cabin at Uganik Lake with maintenance crew David King and Paul Banyas.

Interested in volunteer opportunities with the Refuge?
For more information about our volunteer program, contact
Volunteer Coordinator, Lisa Polito at lisa_polito@fws.gov or
(907) 487-0285.

Farewell to Mike Getman, Welcome to New Employees

This summer, after 30 years of government service and 10 years at Kodiak Refuge, Deputy Manager Mike Getman retired and moved south to be closer to family in Colorado. Before coming to Kodiak, Mike worked at National Wildlife Refuges in South Dakota and Montana. Here in Kodiak he helped lead the Refuge through numerous challenges, including completion of

Robin Corcoran captured an injured storm petrel and aids in its recovery at Refuge headquarters.



Isaac Bedingfield hands out homemade cookies to Port Lions school kids.



our Comprehensive Conservation Plan, implementation of three major conservation easement agreements, and management of hundreds of special use permits for guiding and other commercial activities on the Refuge.

While the Refuge was sad to say goodbye to our good friend and coworker, we are thrilled by the addition of several new staff members over the last two years. Isaac Bedingfield joined

the staff in 2008 as a pilot and law enforcement officer after several years in Bethel with Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Kristin Donaldson, a Kodiak High School graduate, joined the staff in April of this year as Environmental Education coordinator. Most recently, we welcomed Robin Corcoran, in May, as refuge Bird Biologist. Please join us in welcoming Isaac, Kristin, and Robin to Kodiak Refuge!

Thank You and Farewell Mike !



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Check out
insert especially for kids.



**Kodiak National
Wildlife Refuge
is part of the U.S. Fish
and Wildlife Service**

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

(Though the USFWS does not manage sea lions - they are under the umbrella of National Marine Fisheries Service - we do enjoy them a lot when they're smiling. The marine mammals managed by the FWS include sea otters, walrus and polar bears.)

"It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know of wonder and humility." (Rachel Carson)



Megumi Inokuma (USFWS)

Volunteer Megumi Inokuma captured this photo of a sea lion rookery while out on a bird colony survey. If you have a photo of Kodiak wildlife or kids enjoying nature and would like to see it printed in this newsletter please submit to tonya_lee@fws.gov

