



Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

Spring 2009

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(Gary Wheeler, USFWS)

Geoblock installation at Portage trail

Pulling Together to get ATVs Out of the Mud

The Portage Trail is a historically-used trail crossing Koniag, Inc. lands between Larsen Bay and the salmon rich Karluk River. Tribal elders from the village of Larsen Bay have been frustrated for years by the rough and muddy conditions caused by ATV damage along the trail. However, after observing the progress made this year, Refuge Manager Gary Wheeler commented, "It won't be long now before the elders and others from Larsen Bay will be able to more easily travel this trail for subsistence fishing, hunting, and berry picking."

Since 2003, Koniag and Refuge workers have installed 500 feet of wood plank trail, two bridges, and

2,400 feet of geoblock that creates a hardened trail and still allows vegetation to grow.

Koniag, Kodiak Refuge, National Park Service, Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation Service District, Larsen Bay Tribal Council, Natural Resources Conservation Service, local residents from the villages of Larsen Bay and Karluk, Kodiak Island Trails Network, and other volunteers have assisted in implementation of this project. Thanks to partnerships and team work, the Portage Trail is a good example of a resource project that is both cost effective and accomplishable.

We are glad to reintroduce a Refuge newsletter that will go out to village communities, permit holders and land neighbors. In each issue there will be an opportunity to provide feedback to staff at the Refuge. You may find additional copies at the Refuge Visitor Center downtown.

For more information on your Refuge, please also visit Kodiak Refuge's website at <http://kodiak.fws.gov> Or the Visitor Center's website at <http://www.kodiakwildliferefuge.org>



Kodiak Summer Science & Salmon Camp 2009

Kodiak Summer Science and Salmon Camp will be entering its 14th year of educating Kodiak's youth about their natural world and the human dimension of how people relate to, and are shaped by, their own backyard. This perennial favorite runs June through August and reaches a wide audience of campers across Kodiak. Short sessions of Salmon Camp are held in all six of Kodiak's remote villages when possible. In 2008 sessions were held in Old Harbor, Larsen Bay, Ouzinkie, and Port Lions.

Salmon Camp uses a discovery-based curriculum to encourage adventurous "get your feet wet" fun and melds age-appropriate scientific inquiry with the informal fun of camp. Salmon Camp also celebrated its third year of partnering with the Kodiak Arts Council, to co-teach an 'art-intensive' Salmon Camp.



Salmon Camp Nature Walk

(USFWS)

Meet Gary Wheeler, Refuge Manager



Gary Wheeler, Refuge Manager

(USFWS)

Gary Wheeler has served as Refuge Manager of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, since November 2006. Gary began his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1979 as a fisheries biologist in southern California. No newcomer to Alaska, Gary arrived in Anchorage in 1984 working as a wildlife biologist for the Minerals Management Service. In 1989, Gary transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Anchorage Field Office and in 1993 became Assistant Field Supervisor. In 2001, he transferred to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, in Fairbanks, and in 2003 became Deputy Manager of the

Arctic Refuge. Gary holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology and Fisheries Science from South Dakota State University, and has over 33 years of federal service including 4 years as an Air Force officer. When asked about future plans, Gary said, "I really look forward to visiting the villages of Kodiak Island and to meeting many of you. The Refuge strives to be a good neighbor and to partner with others in being good stewards of our lands and wildlife and fisheries resources."

New Visitor Center Welcomes Visitors from Around the Globe, Breaking 25,000 Visitation Count!

After opening its doors to the public on November 17, 2007, the downtown Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center experienced a surge of interest from the public with more than 25,000 visitors for its first year in operation. Refuge staff anticipated annual visitation to crest at 20,000 visitors. This high visitation was directly linked to the Center's central location, near the City of Kodiak's ferry terminal and larger cruise ship dock. During the 2008 summer port season from May through September, the City of Kodiak welcomed sixteen cruise ships and more than eighty Alaska Marine Highway ferry vessels. A goal of the Visitor Center is to introduce the resources of the Refuge to folks who may never travel there. A



(Gary Wheeler, USFWS)

and continues to welcome local community groups and other partner organizations to share in discussions of conservation topics. A highlight of winter events at the Center is the Kodiak Audubon lecture series, co-sponsored by the newly formed Friends of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

major draw for visitors was the new Kodiak Refuge orientation film, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge—Home of the Great Kodiak Bear. This 12-minute film recently received two national awards—an Award of Excellence at the 14th Annual Communicators Award, and a Silver at the 29th Annual Telly Awards. Produced by the Service's National Conservation Training Center and Kodiak Refuge staff, this beautiful film touches on the past, the present, and the future of Kodiak Refuge. Through the winter the Center is open Tuesday through Saturday

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center
402 Center Street

Winter Hours (September-May)
Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 AM- 5:00 PM

Summer Hours (Starting Memorial Day)
Open Daily 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM

Admission is Free.

Sea Bird and Duck Identification in Village Schools

Bird mounts from the refuge, Servant Air and local lodges are being used in village schools to help kids identify birds in their local area.

The focus is on learning nine common sea birds and a dozen or more ducks and geese, each with unique characteristics, some with outstanding colors and features. Kids who may already know the local or Alutiiq name are given a chance to learn common and scientific names as well as habitat or interesting behavior. Students are reviewing waterfowl sounds and features through a DVD program, games, puppets and coloring pages. Kids will also be introduced to some species with populations of concern on a national or international level, such as the



(Tonya Lee, USFWS)

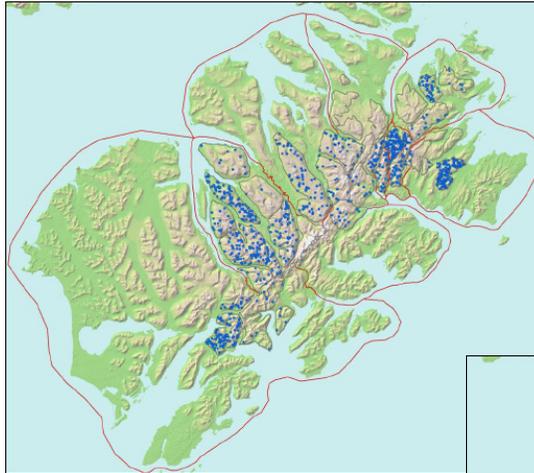
Sea Duck Identification, Ouzinkie High School

Steller's and Spectacled Eiders and Emperor Geese.



Mt. Goat Population Climbing

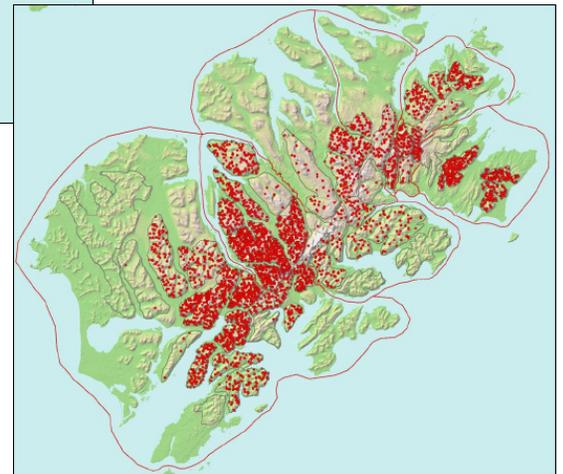
1952 -Hidden Basin, Kodiak Island
Seventeen mountain goats were introduced from the mainland. Rapidly expanding to all suitable habitat on Kodiak, the mountain goat population is now estimated at 2,200 goats. Originally the Alaska Department of Fish and Game(ADF&G) set a management goal at 1,000 goats. After continuing increases such as in 1999 to 2008 comparison, pictured on right, concerns about habitat damage have led to the passing of new hunting regulations. Beginning in 2010 Game Management Unit 477 will be combined with 475, and registration will be open to all who want to hunt this area. The concentration of goats between Deadman and Uyak Bays, comprise nearly half the entire island's population. In cooperation with ADF&G, the Refuge surveys goats each year in August.



Mountain goat population - 1999



(USFWS)



Mountain goat population - 2008

New Regulations for Caribou, 2010 Hunting Season

At the recent Board of Game meeting, a decision was made to modify season dates and bag limits for Kodiak Island's caribou/reindeer. The reindeer, originally introduced in 1921, have run wild since the 1960's. Their range area is in the southwest part of Kodiak Island, within boundaries of the Refuge. Herd size has remained at about 250 animals.

New season dates are August 1 to January 31 consistent with the subsistence deer hunt season on the Refuge. Bag limit is one per year of any sex and a same day airborne restriction is in place.



Feral Reindeer, Red River Flats. October 1976

(Gerry Atwell, USFWS)

Critical Habitat Designation for Southwest Alaska Sea Otters

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed the designation of approximately 6,000 square miles of critical habitat in near-shore, shallow waters in five separate units for the southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the northern sea otter. Since 2005, this population of otters has been protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

A critical habitat designation identifies geographic areas that contain the specific habitat elements essential for the conservation of the species. The designation would have no influence on private land unless proposed activities there are federally permitted or funded.



(USFWS)

The Service recently worked with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to analyze that agency's commercial fishing database. The results indicated that the species which otters most often prey upon have little or no commercial interest. In addition, the areas proposed as critical habitat, as described above, are not areas where significant commercial fishing occurs.

The proposed rule is available on the internet at <http://alaska.fws.gov>.

[gov/fisheries/mmm/seaotters/criticalhabitat.htm](http://www.fisheries.mmm.seaotters/criticalhabitat.htm) or from the Marine Mammals Management Office at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Regional Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503.

Coastal Alaska Natives may continue to harvest sea otters for subsistence and handicraft purposes.

Ursa Major, the Great Bear



(Jeff Lewis, USFWS)

Refuge this vessel is used for law enforcement patrols, biological surveys, and hauling public use cabin materials, to mention a few tasks. Many government agencies use Refuge boats to accomplish a variety of jobs year round. This year the Ursa Major II will be conducting biological surveys on the east and west sides of Kodiak Island and along the Katmai coast.

The Kodiak Refuge vessel, a 48' research boat the Ursa Major II, has a certain meaning behind it's name. Ursa Major means "The Greater Bear" and actually is a constellation in the night sky with the group of stars including the Big Dipper. The handle of the Dipper is the great bear's tail and is visible in the Northern Hemisphere all year long. Here at the Kodiak National Wildlife



Did you know... something new about Kodiak brown bears:

Recent breakthroughs in genetic techniques have allowed biologists from the Refuge staff, U.S. Geological Survey's Alaska Science Center and Alaska Department of Fish and Game to confirm that brown bears of the Kodiak Archipelago have extremely low levels of genetic diversity - lower than any documented brown bear population in North America. This data suggests that the Kodiak bear population was probably founded by a small number of bears isolated from populations on the Alaska mainland for a long time (probably since the end of the last ice age 10-12,000 years ago). Genetic data also suggest that movement of bears between Kodiak and Afognak is so limited that Afognak's bruins comprise a distinct population from those on Kodiak Island.

Kodiak Refuge Public Use Cabins –New and Improved!

With the help of some skilled volunteers, most of the Refuge's seven public use cabins have received substantial repairs and renovations during the past three years. One of our most popular cabins at Uganik Lake was completely rebuilt with reused materials from a former storage building in Kodiak. The new structure sleeps four to six people comfortably and offers spectacular views of Uganik Lake from the covered front porch.



NEW! Uganik Lake Cabin

(USFWS)

In the coming year, the Refuge plans to complete renovations at two administrative cabins (located in Deadman Bay and at Waterfall Lake on Afognak Island) and to make those cabins available for public use. With these additions, the Refuge public use cabin system will

grow from seven to nine – the first expansion of the system in fifteen years!

All cabins are available by reservation for \$45/night. Reservations are scheduled by lottery four times each year, and they are available on a first-come, first-served basis after each lottery

drawing. Currently, all reservations are handled at Kodiak Refuge Headquarters, but this summer we will begin transitioning to a computer-based system that allows reservations to be made on-line or by telephone from anywhere in the world. For more information about reserving a public use cabin, call the refuge at 907-487-2600.

Bird Quest Outdoor Activity

Go outside and circle the birds you find. The birds are labeled with their English common name and their Alutiiq name. Thanks to the Alutiiq Museum for providing the bird drawings and translations!



Puffin, tuungaq



Ptarmigan, qateriuq



Magpie, qallqayaq/u



Oystercatcher, kuRiickiiq



Eagle, kum'agyaq



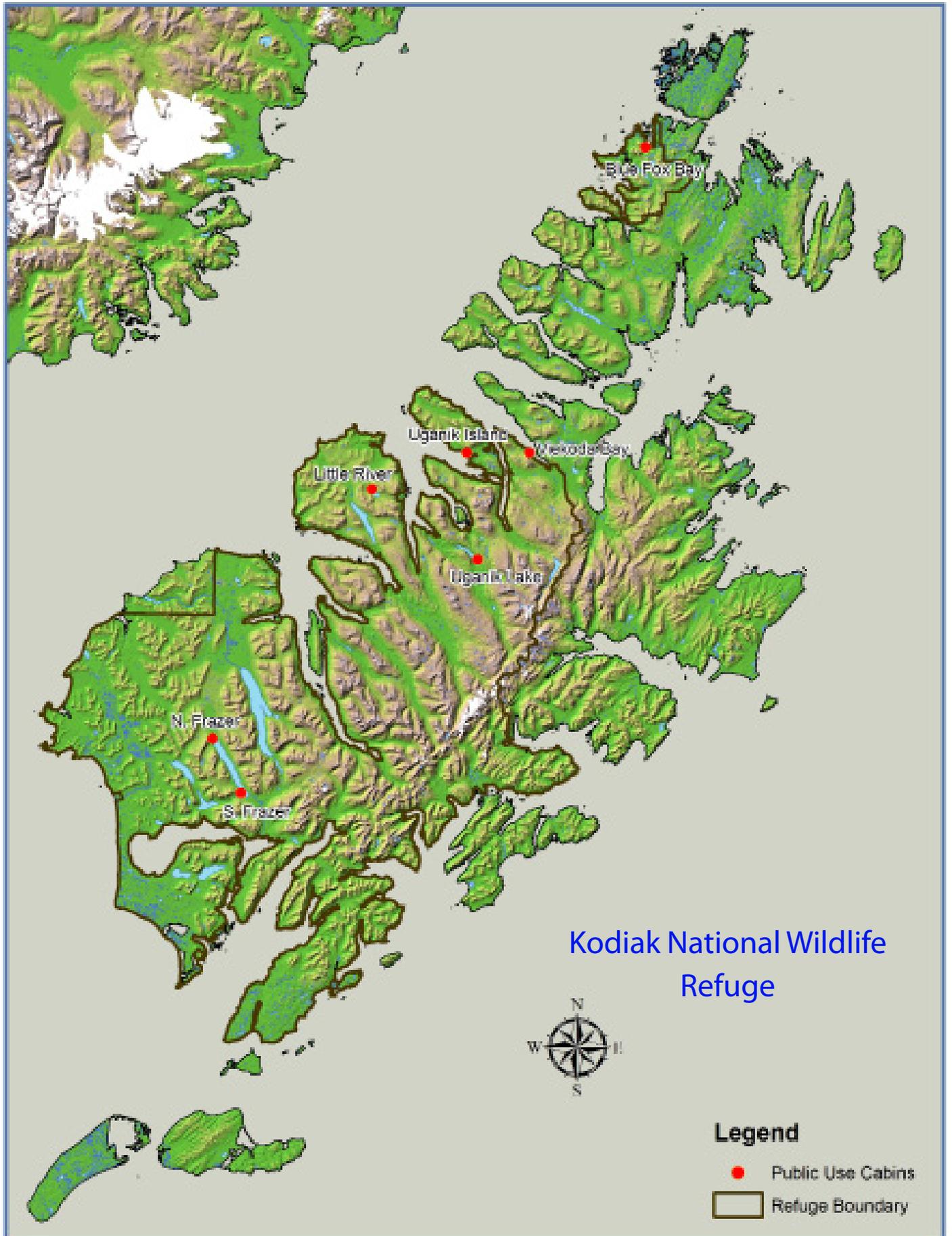
Loon, tuullek



Seagull, qatayaq



Sparrow, ikuwitiq



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The National Wildlife Refuge System

The Kodiak Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The System's mission is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

There are over 450 Refuges in the System with at least one Refuge in every State.

