



# Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Winter 2011

## In This Issue

- Old Harbor Bears . . . . . 1
- Subsistence Announcements . . 2
- Chinook Salmon Update . . . . . 2
- Deer Harvests . . . . . 3
- Visitor Service Permits . . . . . 3
- Seabird Colonies . . . . . 4
- Brown Bear Research . . . . . 5
- New Staff . . . . . 5
- Youth Opportunities . . . . . 6
- Eagle Rescues . . . . . 7
- Marine Mammal Strandings . . . 7

## Dump Bears Withdraw from Junk Food

A Tribal Wildlife Grant in support of a landfill improvement project in Old Harbor is starting to power up. Old Harbor residents are working to fix what has recently been a difficult situation for their next door neighbors: the Kodiak Brown Bear (Nuniatq Taquka’aq).

At a community meeting elders expressed concern that there are too many bears coming within the village and something needs to be done.

During Old Harbor’s Alutiiq Week, Refuge staff was invited to work with local students. Primary students learned more about wild foods bears depend on, and performed skits with right and wrong behavior around bears in their community. Secondary students installed an electric fence around a smokehouse and tested its power and effectiveness.

A mother bear reared her 3 cubs next to the Old Harbor landfill last summer,

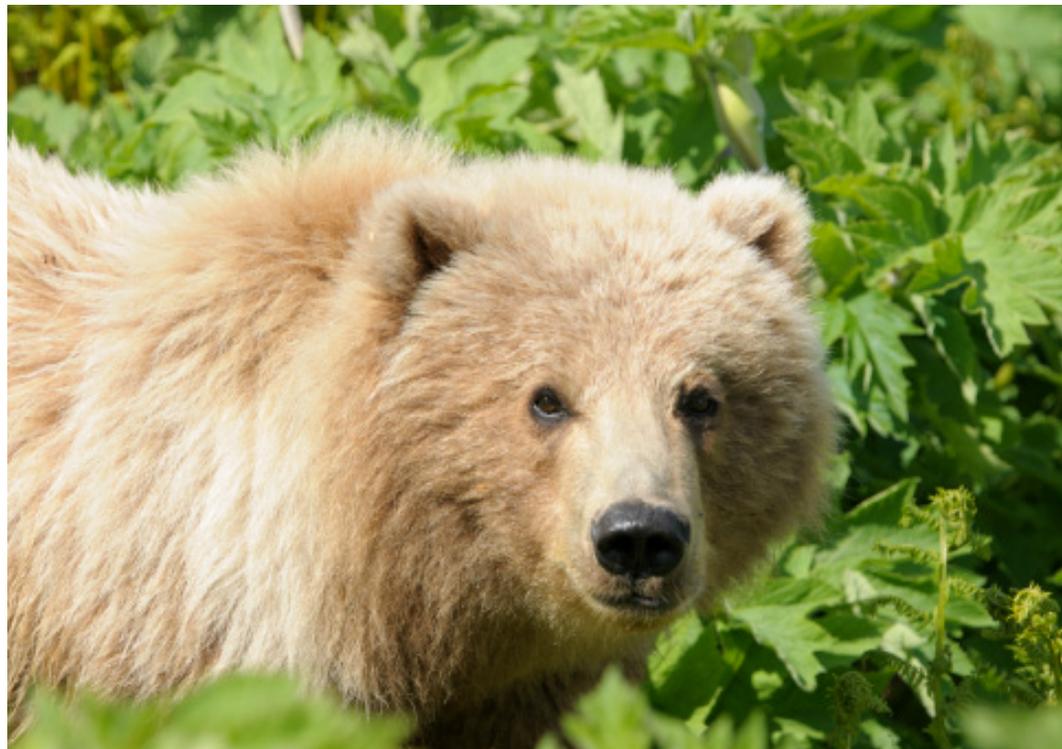
teaching her cubs that their primary food source was easily accessible garbage found at the dump yard. With the work that’s being done including clearing brush, rearranging waste articles, using a burn box and erecting an electrified chain link fence this spring, bears will no longer be able to access the landfill area. This work will encourage the bear family and other bears that hang out at the dump to change their “junky” behavior back to lush, native foods.

Angie Christiansen, Old Harbor Tribal Council Environmental Coordinator, has taken the lead on most fronts of the project: “Now we have a dump”, she said. “By the time we’re finished we’ll be able to call it a landfill, a beautiful landfill.” In the end, bears may still be near the village, but without easy access to garbage, bears will be Old Harbor’s wild and healthy neighbors again.

This newsletter is delivered to Kodiak Island village communities and Refuge neighbors. The current issue offers a snap shot of some Refuge projects.



Gary Wheeler serves as Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge manager. To view past newsletters visit the Refuge’s website at:  
<http://kodiak.fws.gov>  
Or the Visitor Center’s website at:  
<http://www.kodiakwildliferefuge.org>



A beautiful sow foraging for food at Camp Island on Karluk Lake.

(Marine Drouilly, USFWS)



# Federal Subsistence Announcements



## & How to Address Your Hunting and Fishing Concerns on Refuge Lands

The Federal Subsistence Management Program in Alaska is a multi-agency effort including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest

Service (USFS) & Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to provide the opportunity for a subsistence way of life by rural Alaskans on federal public lands and waters while maintaining healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

**Public Participation** is the cornerstone of this program across the state. Every year, the public plays a vital role in proposing changes to subsistence fishing and hunting regulations. In addition the public makes comments on proposed changes so that these regulations can better meet the needs of subsistence users while conserving healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

To change a fishing, hunting or trapping regulation, to address time-sensitive issues that cannot wait until the next regulatory cycle (Special Action Request) or to submit a Request for Reconsideration if you have been adversely affected by a new regulation visit the Office of Subsistence Management website at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/index.cfm> and click on public participation in the left bar.

**Note:** The Federal Subsistence Board, the State Board of Fish, and Board of Game are all on two-year review cycles.

### Application Period Open For Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils

Deadline: February 18, 2011

Applications are being accepted to fill seats on the Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council that advise the Federal Subsistence Board on subsistence management regulations and policies on Federal lands and waters.

For an application or additional information, please contact Ann Wilkinson at the Office of Subsistence Management at (800) 478-1456, (907) 786-3676. or visit the Program's website: <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/index.cfm>

### Changes to the Federal Subsistence Board:

The Board met with Tribal leaders from around the state on January 21, 2010 in Anchorage to discuss and develop a Tribal consultation process to formally incorporate tribal opinion and feedback into the Federal Subsistence Program. Tribal consultation is an important way to support renewed efforts of the Obama administration to improve government to government relations.

Two new subsistence representatives will be appointed to the Board beginning next year. This is a change from the current Board which is made up of one Native Chairperson and agency people from BIA, BLM, USFWS, NPS, USFS.



**For State regulation changes,** visit the state's online website <http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/> and click the Board of Fisheries and Board of Game links. The following Salmon Update is from the State Board of Fish program.

## Salmon Update from the State Board of Fish

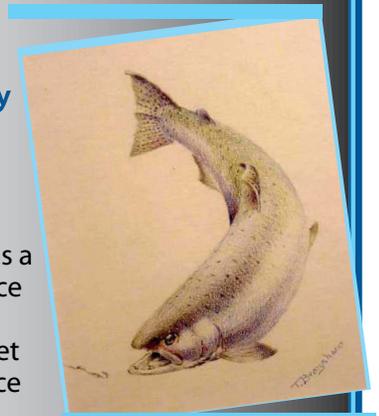
### Chinook 'Stock of Concern'

During September 2010, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) met to review salmon goals within the Kodiak Management Area. The review of salmon escapement goals is conducted every three years when the Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) is conducting its area meetings. Chinook salmon escapement goals were changed for the Ayakulik and Karluk River drainages. Chinook salmon returns within the Karluk River drainage have failed to meet the minimum escapement goals over the past five years. The low returns prompted ADF&G to recommend, and the Board to adopt, designation of this population as a "stock of concern". In response to the "stock of concern" designation, during its January 2011 meeting in Kodiak, the Board debated and adopted an action plan to address information and management needs geared to improve escapement.

### Settler's Cove Personal Use Fishery

The Board, at its January 2011 meeting, also allowed dipnet as legal gear for the Settler's Cove salmon fisheries under wording as a Personal Use fisheries. Subsistence gear may still also be used.

Currently, if one is using a gillnet or gear suitable for the subsistence fishery a subsistence permit is required; if one is using a dipnet under the personal use fishery, a sportfish license is required.



## Overall Deer Harvest Declines

Sitka black-tailed deer harvest results on the Kodiak archipelago, including subsistence and sport hunter efforts, are assessed annually by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) via a hunter questionnaire. Since 2006, the Refuge has cooperated with ADF&G on harvest assessments, and added a question regarding harvest on federal land. Results from the 2009 – 2010 survey indicate that 40% (1,726 of 4,088) of deer harvested were taken on the Refuge, which is

consistent with the previous 4-year average of 39%. Results indicate deer harvests have increased 24% from 2008 – 2009 to 2009 - 2010. However, deer harvest levels have declined substantially over the past 10 years, and are currently only 30% of 1988 – 1989 harvest levels (Figure 1). Annual harvest trends are likely a reflection of available deer population sizes, although additional research is needed to accurately quantify deer abundances and distributions.

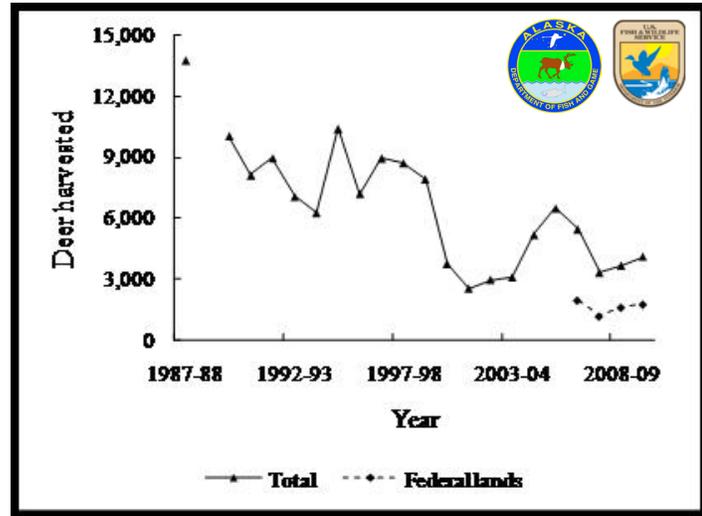


Figure 1. The estimated number of Sitka black-tailed deer harvested by subsistence and recreational sport hunters, Kodiak Archipelago, 1987 - 2010. The number of deer harvested on federal lands is indicated by the dashed line.

## Commercial Visitor Service Permit Activities

World-class hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities on Kodiak Refuge are a major draw for visitors as well as professional guides and other commercial visitor service providers. Although there is no limit on the total number of guiding permits that may be issued, the Refuge does limit permits for the most popular activities in the most popular areas. These limits help ensure that resources and the quality of visitors' experiences are protected.

In June, 2010 Refuge staff completed a year-long process to select guides and award 14 limited-entry sportfish permits for areas within the Uganik, Little River, Dog Salmon, and Ayakulik drainages. The permits will be valid through December 31, 2015 at which time they may be renewed for a second five year term.

In October, the Refuge awarded a single permit for operation of a structured bear viewing program at O'Malley Creek, on the north end of Karluk Lake. The permit was awarded to Karluk Wilderness Adventures, a subsidiary of Koniag, Inc. and will also be valid through December 31, 2015 with the possibility of renewal for a second five year term.



Fishermen preparing for a float trip on the Uganik River.

### Looking Forward:

Twenty-five big game guide permits on Kodiak Refuge will expire at the end of 2013, and we plan to get an early start to make sure the guide selection process for the next permit term is completed before the new permits

need to be issued. The proposed schedule calls for opening the permit application period in August 2011, and completing final selections by December 2012. New permits will be valid beginning in 2014.

## How Do Kodiak Seabird Numbers Fare?

### Summer Seabird Surveys:

Kodiak Refuge biologists count birds in both winter and summer. During summer birds are nesting and tend to be easier to count. Seabirds such as kittiwakes and gulls are particularly easy because they often nest on offshore rocks and islands in high numbers and tend to come back to the same locations year after year. Historically these islands were free of predators so the birds feel safe and often nest almost shoulder to shoulder. Along with the kittiwakes and gulls, puffins like to nest in the colonies. Horned puffins like to lay their eggs in narrow crevices in the rocks but tufted puffins dig burrows in the dirt above the rock faces. The Fish and Wildlife Service has an on-line database where we keep track of almost all the colonies in the North Pacific. Beginning in June 2008 the refuge began revisiting all known colony locations around Kodiak and Afognak. It took us three seasons to visit all 318 colonies, and we discovered five new colonies.

Location	Black-legged Kittiwake		Glaucous-winged Gull		Pelagic Cormorant		Red-faced Cormorant		Tufted Puffin
	Birds Counted	Nests	Birds Counted	Nests	Birds Counted	Nests	Birds Counted	Nests	Birds Counted
Afognak	6477	3848	8364	1818	893	396	67	160	1147
East-side	62,226	23,756	5654	481	1714	103	257	71	6747
West-side	25,419	11,146	7520	942	568	72	172	25	15,806

Table 1. The number of individual birds and the number of nests counted for some of the most common species on the June seabird colony surveys, 2008-2010.



## Seabird Colony Nesting Zones

- When it comes to seabird colonies - Birds of a feather flock together...
- Each species prefers a specific section within the colony
- Black oystercatchers like to nest on the rocky beach, not far above the high tide line
- Kittiwakes prefer the narrow rock ledges in the center of the colony
- Cormorants and horned puffins like crevices
- Glaucous-wing gulls like the tall grass at the top of the colony
- Tufted puffins dig burrows in the dirt at the top of colonies



# Refuge Research: In the Tracks of the Kodiak Brown Bear

On Kodiak Island, people and bears often live in each other's backyards. While bear sightings are common, few people experience the land from a bear's perspective: foraging for food, ranging across mountains and through alder thickets, and bedding down in remote meadows.

2010 was the first year of a two-year study to collar and track brown bears within Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. The study will research their movement, habitats, and use of food resources. During early June, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game captured and fitted twenty-two adult female bears in the Karluk and Frazer River drainages with GPS/VHF transmitter collars. Throughout the summer, Refuge staff, a University of Idaho graduate student, and five volunteer field assistants monitored the collars – they recorded over 42,000 location points during the season!

Each week, the research crew selected GPS points from eight bears to conduct on-the-ground studies. Teams of two people hiked out to the points and collected information about the plants and landscape where the bears

had been just days before. These field studies usually took at least two or three days. The researchers carried camping supplies and a GPS, and often found themselves hiking several miles through thick brush, sliding down steep slopes, and setting up tents in the rain. Despite challenging conditions, volunteers and staff remained in good spirits and had a very successful summer.

The second half of the study will be

completed this summer. In the future, the Kodiak Brown Bear may face challenges such as climate change and increased human disturbance; refuge staff plan to use the information collected during this study to better predict, monitor, and manage brown bear populations.

**CHECK-OUT A VIDEO LINK TO THIS PROJECT BY SEARCHING FOR THE KODIAK BROWN BEAR PROJECT ON YOUTUBE.**



Lisa Hupp (USFWS)

Volunteer Barb Sobota checks a GPS point above Karluk Lake

## New Refuge Staff

Although Shelly Lawson is the new Education Specialist for Kodiak Refuge, she has been working with the Kodiak Refuge for a couple of years now. She first began as a volunteer in the winter of 2008 and then worked as a seasonal Park Ranger in the summers of 2009 and 2010.

After graduating from UC Santa Cruz with a degree in Environmental Studies in 1996, she came to Kodiak to work for Kodiak State Parks. She has also spent several years living and working in the Aleutians.

In her position at the Kodiak Refuge, she especially enjoys the diverse programs the refuge provides which gives her the opportunity to work with a broad range of students from preschool through high school.



Shelly Lawson with YCC crewmember Marjourie Solano

Kodiak Refuge recently hired Ava Kahn as the new Visitor's Center Manager. Ava previously worked at Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Westbrook, CT where she was an Outdoor Recreation Planner. Prior to working for US Fish and Wildlife Service she worked at numerous National Parks as a seasonal Park Ranger, a Biological Technician and an SCA Volunteer.

She enjoys traveling to far places, hiking, backpacking, spending time with friends, kayaking, canoeing, and meeting people from a wide variety of cultures.



Ava Kahn at the downtown Kodiak Refuge Visitor Center

McCrea Cobb observes radio collared elk at Point Reyes National Seashore in Northern California.



McCrea Cobb joined the Refuge staff as a new Wildlife Biologist. He will be focusing most of his time on subsistence species, especially Sitka black-tailed deer and mountain goat. He recently earned his Ph.D. in Environmental Science, Policy and Management from the University of California at Berkeley. His dissertation research was on the spatial ecology and population dynamics of tule elk at Point Reyes National Seashore, California.

## YOUTH: Kodiak's Most Valuable Natural Resource

The summer of 2010 was the second year for a Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) Program at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Our YCC program employs high school students for the summer in natural resource related work involving research, maintenance, environmental education and visitor services. In 2010, the YCC program expanded from a three to a five person crew consisting of four high school students and one college student crew leader. Kodiak High School students, Jeannelle Alejo, Kevin Gonzalez, Andie Wall and Shelby Dresdow made up the crew. Lacy Squartsoff, from Port Lions who is a current UAA/Alaska Native Science and Engineering program student, lead the team. High school students between the ages of 15 and 18 are eligible to apply for the YCC program. Students need to have housing on the Kodiak road system and their own transportation to the Kodiak Refuge Visitor Center for scheduled work days. For more information, contact Shelly Lawson at 487-0283.



(Shelly Lawson, USFWS)

*Kodiak Refuge Youth Conservation crew poses during a break after constructing the O'Malley bear viewing platform.*

## Careers in Engineering and Science

If you are a student thinking about going to college and have an interest in building things or exploring the natural world, you can find the support you need and you don't have to wait until college to start.

### Pre-College Component

The University of Alaska's Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) Pre-College component is the spark that illuminates a vision of a career in engineering or science for middle and high school students. Each participating student is expected to enroll and successfully pass Algebra 1 in middle school and Trigonometry, Chemistry, and Physics in high school. Some of the program's students are completing Calculus 1 in high school and others are completing Calculus 2. Pre-College students are academically ready for university level engineering and science coursework when they arrive at the University and they are now arriving in unprecedented numbers. So far, 1,000 Pre-College students have participated and 600 have graduated so far. Of the



(ANSEP)

*During the Pre-College Component students assemble a computer that they get to earn by completing trigonometry, physics and chemistry.*

graduates, more than 60% have completed all of the classes successfully. This compares to research completed by the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering that shows that of all minority students graduating from high school, only 4% are 'engineering ready'.

Pre-College is a suite of components that start in middle school and extend through high school. Each component

has been designed to be fun, provide students with opportunities to do science and engineering, and inspire them to complete the math and science courses they will need to be successful when they arrive at the University. During the 2009-2010 academic year more than 400 Alaskan students were involved.

Apply now!

For more information visit:  
<http://www.ansep.net/>

# Stranded Eagles and Marine Mammals are Rescued

## The Refuge Eagle Rescue Program

When the new year begins so do the eagle rescues near town. The Refuge has a long history of rescuing bald eagles and other birds from the woods, shores, boats, and streets of Kodiak. Staff is on-call at all hours of the day, especially during winter months when wild food can be scarce and cold weather creates a higher volume of injuries.

When a call comes in for an injured bird, the crew reaches for appropriate equipment that will ensure a safe and effective rescue in the field.

Eagles are held for observation at the Refuge headquarters. If the bird doesn't recover in a short period, it is shipped to the Bird Treatment and Learning Center in Anchorage where further medical treatment can be given.



(Robin Corcoran, USFWS)

*Above right: Other bird species are also called-in to the Refuge like this short-eared owl with an injured left wing that Robin Corcoran, Avian Biologist handled in early January.*

*Right: Jason Oles untangles the talons of a bald eagle from a snare trap in Monashka Bay.*



(Tonya Lee, USFWS)

## Marine Mammal Pups Took Different Fates



*'Kaladi', the orphaned sea otter pup.*



*A harbor seal pup found under the Old's River bridge.*

Last Spring on two separate occasions, an orphaned sea otter and harbor seal pup were discovered both near the Kodiak road system-and rescued from circumstances where they couldn't care for themselves. But each has a different story ending to their stranded fate. The 2lb sea otter newborn was nursed overnight then sent to the Alaska SeaLife Center where it was cared for until it was later sent to Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma, WA.

The harbor seal pup, was rescued about 2 weeks later from under the Old's River bridge in fresh water. It was immediately transported by vehicle 5 miles south to a beach where it swam to the nearby seal haul out. A seal mom may leave her pup ashore while searching for food while a sea otter may leave her pup in a protected kelp bed. In most cases the mother returns and the pup shouldn't be handled.

A sea otter pup relies heavily on its mother for up to 12 months which is very different than the weeks needed for maternal care of a seal pup.

**If you see a stranded or injured Marine Animal  
Do not pick it up**

**Call First !**

**ALASKA SEALIFE CENTER RESCUE AND REHABILITATION**

**STRANDED MARINE ANIMAL HOTLINE**

**1-888-774-SEAL(7325)**



Although just a few weeks apart in age the seal pup could return to the wild, but the sea otter needed 24/7 care in order to survive. Her caretakers named her Kaladi. To learn more about Kaladi the sea otter pup or the Alaska SeaLife Center's Rescue and Rehabilitation please visit the Center's website and follow the Rehabilitation link: <http://www.alaskasealife.org>



Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge  
1390 Buskin River Road  
Kodiak, AK 99615

Phone: 907/487 2600  
Toll Free: 888/408 3514  
Fax: 907/487 2144  
Web: <http://kodiak.fws.gov/>



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

"It is an interesting biological fact that all of us have in our veins the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and therefore, we have salt in our blood, in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea ... whether it is to sail or to watch it ... we are going back from whence we came." A life quote from John F Kennedy 14-9-62

***The Service's mission is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.***

In Kodiak, volunteers made this happen in 2010:

- 104 people volunteered for the Refuge
- Volunteers contributed more than 15,000 hours to Refuge projects and programs
- 35 volunteers worked within the Refuge at some point
- The most time by a single volunteer was 1120 hours

For more information on volunteering contact Volunteer Coordinator Lisa Hupp at 907/487-0285



Refuge vessel Ursa Major II during a harlequin duck project, with the Katmai Mountains in the background. During this project, birds are captured, banded and tested for avian influenza.

