



"The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System 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."

National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997

# Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuges

## Newsletter - Spring 2011



View from trail towards Kanatak Lake. USFWS/Julia Pinnix

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### Hunters' Help Welcome

Hunters and trappers can help with ongoing studies of predators by sending hair and whisker samples. Please contact Dom Watts for more information: (907) 246-1210.

### Report Deformed Bills in Birds

Chickadees, Northwest crows, and other birds appear to be afflicted with a disease that causes deformation. Deformed bills, claws, and feathers, as well as skin lesions, are increasingly being seen throughout North America. Researchers are working to reveal the cause.

Please report any observations of deformed bills or other issues in birds to Susan Savage, (907) 246-1205; or to [http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak\\_deformity/observerreport.html](http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak_deformity/observerreport.html).

### Grant Awarded for Kanatak Trail Project

Becharof National Wildlife Refuge was awarded a \$21,568 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant for work on the Kanatak Trail this summer. The Alaska State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation administers the RTP grant program.

The Kanatak Trail is an historic route once used by residents of Kanatak Village (on the Pacific shore) to reach Becharof Lake in spring; and to return home in the autumn. Portions of the route were incorporated into a road built by an oil company, later maintained by the State of Alaska as a postal route to Egegik. Kanatak was abandoned in 1956, and the road ceased to be maintained in 1957.

The Refuge has partnered with the Student Conservation Association to put together an eight-person work crew to clear brush from the trail in June. The lower sections of the trail are becoming heavily overgrown by brush. Upper sections of the trail remain clearly visible, even from the air.

Few people remain alive today who were born and raised in Kanatak. One, Paul Boskoffsky, although elderly, remains fit enough to hike the trail. He has volunteered to be a guide in the planning stages, to identify the route and historic landmarks, and to assist in bringing materials to the site in his boat. His generous assistance is invaluable.

From the route, views of the active volcano Mt. Peulik and the scenic Island Arm of Becharof Lake (Alaska's second largest lake) are spectacular. From the pass on a clear day, there are views across Shelikof Strait and the rugged, layered coastal range. Even without the rich history associated with the route and the former villages, this location is an amazing destination.

Access to the Kanatak Trail is by wheeled plane at low tide on the beach at the old Kanatak Village site. Ruth Lake, already a popular camping location for those with access to a floatplane, offers another access point to the trail. Contact the King Salmon Visitor Center (907-246-4250) or the Refuge (907-246-3339) before you go for more information, or to volunteer on the trail project.

# Winter Speaker Series Enlivens and Educates

Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuges hosted the First Annual Speaker Series in the King Salmon office's conference room. Five speakers brought diverse topics to light for groups of up to 38. Two guest speakers and one additional volunteer carried their topics into the Bristol Bay School in Naknek, too.

Each one-hour presentation, whether at 11:30 am or at 3 pm, was followed by a potluck. This allowed attendees time to talk to the guest speaker, as well as providing a welcome social outlet for local residents.

February's speaker was Susan Sharbaugh from the Alaska Bird Observatory in Fairbanks. Susan's PhD research was on chickadee winter survival adaptations. She delivered an excellent talk on Alaska's winter birds Sunday Feb. 20. The following day, she gave two different talks, the first geared for K-5 elementary students; the second for grades 6-12 and the public.



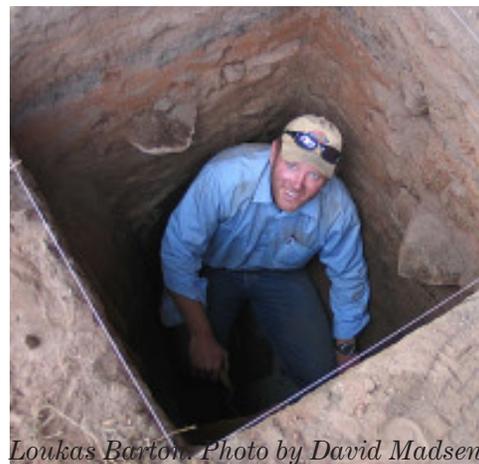
*Susan Sharbaugh. USFWS/Julia Pinnix*

On Friday March 4, the guest speaker was Meghan Riley, a biologist from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in King Salmon. Meghan's research was on Amur tigers in Sikhote-Alin Zapovednik, a Unesco World Heritage Site. Located adjacent to Japan and North Korea, the area has fascinating parallels with Alaskan wildlife. Village life there resembles that on the Alaska Peninsula in many ways.



*Dick Russell's crowded presentation. USFWS/Tom Prang*

On Sunday, March 20, Loukas Barton from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Katmai National Park shared his archaeological research on the Alaska Peninsula. Luke is mapping the ancient shoreline predating eruptions by Aniakchak and Veniaminof volcanoes. He showed how the cultures of the Alaska Peninsula have changed



*Loukas Barton. Photo by David Madsen*



*Tom Prang in Bristol Bay School. USFWS/Julia Pinnix*

over time, focusing especially on the last 600 years, when Kodiak immigrants brought new house styles along with different beliefs and customs.

Following up on Luke's presentation, archaeologist Tom Prang provided 1.5-2 hour programs in the Bristol Bay School for seven grade levels. Real artifacts were passed around for students to handle, and activities helped them learn essential observation skills. Flint-knapping demonstrations and discussions also provided insight. Refuge Visitor Services Manager Julia Pinnix assisted.

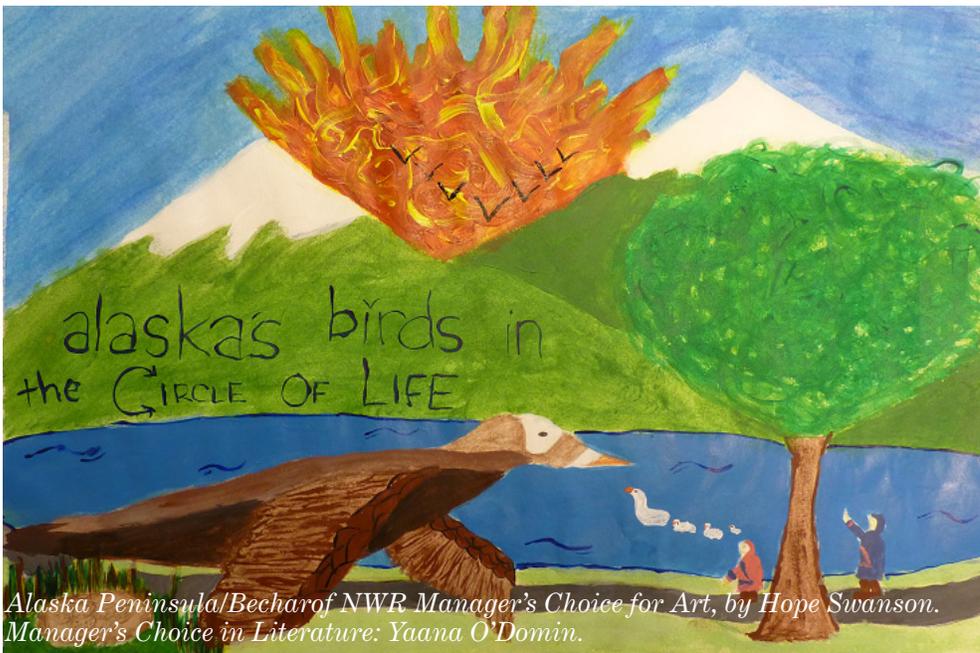
On Friday, April 1, Richard Russell, retired Alaska Fish and Game biologist and local naturalist, gave a slideshow on the eruptions of the Ukinrek Maars, which occurred 34 years ago from March 30-April 8. His photos of this rare kind of eruption are used internationally by researchers. Dick described what it was like flying near the event, and later walking in the impacted area.

Dinosaurs were the subject on Sunday, April 17. Pat Druckenmiller of the University of Alaska Fairbanks shared the results of last year's field trip onto Chignik Bay Corporation land adjoining the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Tracks in the layers of a cliff were first noted in the 1970s, but not verified until now. The tracks are 150 millions year-old evidence of therapods, relatives of *Tyrannosaurus rex*, and the oldest tracks thus far found in Alaska.

The 2011 Speaker Series served 155 in the community and 415 in the school. Word of mouth and local advertisements boosted attendance so much that the USFWS conference room was at full capacity. The Refuge looks forward to offering the Second Annual Speaker Series in 2012.



*Pat Druckenmiller with students. USFWS/Julia Pinnix*



Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Manager's Choice for Art, by Hope Swanson.  
 Manager's Choice in Literature: Yaana O'Domin.

## Alaska Migratory Bird Calendar Winners Selected

Students all over the Alaska Peninsula entered the annual Alaska Migratory Bird Calendar Contest. Entries included posters and short written pieces. Each refuge selects its own winners, and forwards them to the USFWS Regional Office for the statewide competition. State winners appear in the 2012 calendar.

Grade	Student Name	Home	Refuge Winner	State Winner
K-2	Malea Voran	Port Alsworth	poster	
K-2	Micah Estrada	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster and literature	literature
K-2	Breanna West	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster	poster
K-2	Caleb Alsworth	Port Alsworth	literature	literature
K-2	Katie McGee	Port Alsworth	literature	literature
3-5	Conner Romer	Kokhanok	poster	
3-5	Cierra Johnson	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster	poster
3-5	Abigail Swanson	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster and literature	poster
3-5	Coleson Voran	Port Alsworth	literature	literature
3-5	Anna Jones	Chignik Lagoon	literature	
6-8	Michael Etuckmelra	Pilot Point	poster	
6-8	Ruth Nashookpuk	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster	
6-8	Andrea Hall	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster and literature	
6-8	Allen Palmer	King Salmon/ Naknek	literature	
6-8	Yaana O'Domin	Kokhanok	literature	
9-12	Jade Grunert	Chignik Lagoon	poster	
9-12	Jesse Sherman	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster and literature	literature
9-12	Hope Swanson	King Salmon/ Naknek	poster and literature	literature
9-12	Anmie LeFevere	Egegik	literature	

Hope Swanson was selected as the Manager's Choice for artwork this year. Yaana O'Domin's literature submission was selected as Manager's Choice.

The purpose of the contest is to encourage local children to learn about bird conservation. Each year, a different theme is chosen.

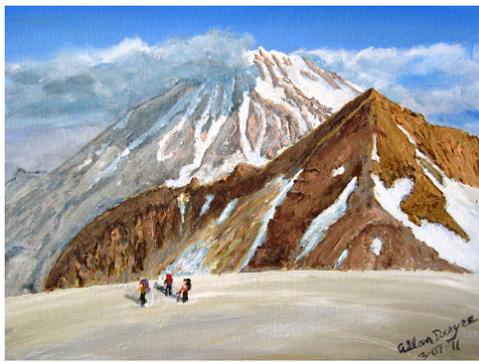
Entries are usually due in February. Visit <http://alaska.fws.gov/external/education/about.htm> for more information. Free copies of the 2011 calendar are available in the King Salmon Visitor Center. Look for this year's winners in next year's calendar.



## Other Youth Opportunities Available

The Junior Duck Stamp Program, a kids' version of the prestigious Federal Duck Stamp Program and Contest, engages K-12 students in an integrated arts and science curriculum, culminating in a design challenge to create a North American waterfowl art piece for submission to their state contest.

For more information about the Junior Duck Stamp Program, and to download the curriculum and entry materials, visit <http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck>.



USFWS/Allan Dreyer

## Arlluk Ready for Busy Project Season

The Refuge's 63 foot vessel, the *Arlluk* ("Killer Whale" in Alutiiq), is ready for a full season of projects. Included on the list is a cooperative venture with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the US Coast Guard, conducting surveys for oil spill response contingency planning.

In cooperation with the USGS Biological Resources Division, invertebrates will be collected in Chignik Lagoon for an ongoing eelgrass study. Eelgrass surveys will also continue in the Cold Bay area.

Seabird surveys to record population estimates will be conducted all along the Pacific Coast. Many of these colonies have not been surveyed for years.

The vessel may also be used by law enforcement. Having a seaworthy vessel to patrol the coastline is new for the Refuge.

## Volunteers Lending a Hand, Finding Employment

The Refuge is lucky to have quite a few people interested in helping on a variety of projects this summer. In addition to the Student Conservation Association partnership on the Kanatak Trail, volunteers will be working on special projects, doing maintenance in the field, and assisting on biology programs.

Allan Dreyer will be the Refuge's first Artist for Public Lands. Allan is a longtime volunteer in Mount Rainier National Park in Washington State, where he is part of the popular Meadow Rover program. He gives talks in the visitor centers, and his paintings hang in many of the offices around the park. Allan will be producing paintings for both the Refuge and for Katmai National Park for public display.

Jack Trout will be flying up from Oklahoma. He will spend part of the summer assisting on a range of projects around the Refuge, helping to maintain cabins, install outhouses, and assist in the rebuilding of Taquka Kuik (Bear Creek) Camp (formerly known as Bible Camp) on Becharof Lake.

Robert Finer, a graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz, will be working on ptarmigan and other land bird surveys, seabird surveys, and other biology projects. He is coming from Petaluma, CA.

Other volunteers, including local residents and guests from other areas, have offered to help on the Kanatak Trail project, in the visitor center, and wherever there is a need. The generosity of volunteers improves our communities and our public lands.

Volunteers often go on to find paid employment. Stacey Pecen, a biology



The Arlluk at harbor. USFWS/Orville Lind



Stacey Pecen and Marla Greanya in Puale Bay, 2010. USFWS/Amanda Boshers

intern for the Refuge in 2010, has been hired by Bird Research Northwest for a multi-agency research project. She will be studying Caspian terns, double-crested cormorants, and gulls on the Oregon Coast this summer.

Marla Greanya, also a 2010 Refuge biology intern, will be a groundfish observer for Saltwater, Inc., this year. Observers are trained through the National Marine Fisheries Service. Tracking bycatch (non-target species caught in the process of commercial fishing) helps to shape regulation.

If you would like to volunteer at Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuges, contact Julia Pinnix, Visitor Services Manager: 907-246-1211, [Julia\\_Pinnix@fws.gov](mailto:Julia_Pinnix@fws.gov). Housing, living allowances, and other benefits may be available.

## Duck Stamps More Than Just a Requirement

Most people know that “duck stamps” (officially the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp) are required for all hunters seeking waterfowl. Not as many know the purpose of the stamp, or its long history.

Migratory waterfowl are a resource shared by millions of people internationally. This means all states and nations must work together to conserve waterfowl for the future. A primary threat to any wildlife is loss of habitat.

The duck stamp was created in 1934 as a federal license. 98 cents of every dollar raised from their sale goes directly



## Newly Acquired Islands to be Surveyed

A land exchange organized between the Oceanside Corporation (Perryville), Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC), Alaska Peninsula NWR, and Alaska Maritime NWR is nearing completion. Lands on Chiachi, Shapka, Paul, Jacob, and Spitz Islands are being incorporated into Alaska Maritime NWR, giving the refuge complete ownership of the islands. Alaska Peninsula NWR is receiving lands along Slim Creek.

The exchange rounds out boundaries for Oceanside Corp. and improves access to hunting areas. BBNC receives subsurface rights to the same land.

Dom Watts, Refuge biologist in King Salmon, will conduct small mammal studies on the islands this summer. Since these lands are new to the USFWS, very little research has been done on the wildlife present. It is believed that foxes were released on the islands for the fur trade, but it is unknown whether any still remain.

The last time seabird colonies on the islands were surveyed was in the 1970s. A survey is planned for this summer.

to the purchase of land for waterfowl conservation. More than \$750 million have been raised over the years to protect over 5.3 million acres of habitat through the U.S. Nearly a third of all endangered or threatened species also use these protected areas.

Duck stamps have evolved to become a showcase of national art. Adult and youth contests are held each year to create the next Federal and Junior Duck Stamps. Visit <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/federal/stamps/fedimages.htm> for more information.

Remember, you must have your signed duck stamp with you when you hunt waterfowl at any time of year. Duck stamps are available at the King Salmon Visitor Center and in the Refuge office. Your *federal* stamp is good from June to June-- this is a different schedule from the calendar year *state* licenses, so don't throw away your duck stamps in December!

For more information about any of the articles in this issue, or to order a free printed or electronic copy, please contact Visitor Service Manager Julia Pinnix. [Julia\\_Pinnix@fws.gov](mailto:Julia_Pinnix@fws.gov). (907) 246-1211. P.O. Box 277, King Salmon, AK, 99613.

## Experimental Wind Turbines Soon to Be Installed

Izembek and Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuges aim to harness the power of abundant wind to lower heating costs in refuge-owned buildings. Experimental wind turbines designed by a Texas-based firm are expected to offset heating costs while minimizing impacts to wildlife. Refuge manager Bill Schaff says heating is the biggest drain on the refuges' power use in Alaska.

Unlike traditional wind turbines, these are tube-shaped vertical-axis designs. Birds are often killed or injured by traditional windmills. No guy wires will be used on the monopoles supporting the turbines.

The first turbine installed at Izembek NWR failed in high winds. The company is redesigning the sails and stiffening the towers. One or two more will be re-erected and monitored to see how they perform. Once the 25 foot towers have proven themselves in Izembek, 65 foot towers will rise in King Salmon. Izembek will have six towers, King Salmon four.

Electricity from the turbines will run to high energy-reserve furnaces, generating thermal heat. Like massive stone hearths, the furnaces will hold heat ready for release into the buildings, using the existing radiators. If the system proves effective, it could ultimately replace the current fuel oil furnaces altogether; but initially will run with fuel oil as a backup. Schaff says the new system is expected to reduce fuel oil costs by 40 to 50 percent. Marsh Creek LLC of Anchorage has already installed the furnaces and their plumbing in the Refuge office in King Salmon.

Wind turbines like these may one day be used for generating electricity as well as heat for the refuges.



*Turbine furnace on left; old furnace on right. USFWS*



*Donna Macy with tower section. USFWS*



Visitor Services Manager Julia Pinnix with Chignik Bay students. USFWS/Orville Lind

## Wolf Kit Completed, Ready for Use

Refuge staff have put together a wolf education kit, available for schools and homeschools to check out and use.

The kit includes a full-size tanned wolf hide, a model skull, retired satellite collars, an audio cd of wolf calls, useful videos, assorted books, rubber models of tracks and scat, track stencils, and materials for activities. A notebook offers background information, suggested activities/curricula, and worksheets.

The kit may be checked out for one or two weeks. Visitor Services Manager Julia Pinnix is also ready and willing to do presentations from the kit at any time of year. Contact Julia to schedule a program or check out the kit: 907-246-1211; Julia\_Pinnix@fws.gov.

Other kits are being planned and assembled. In addition, schools and groups may request presentations on special topics. Suggestions and requests are welcomed.



Debi Tibbetts, USFWS

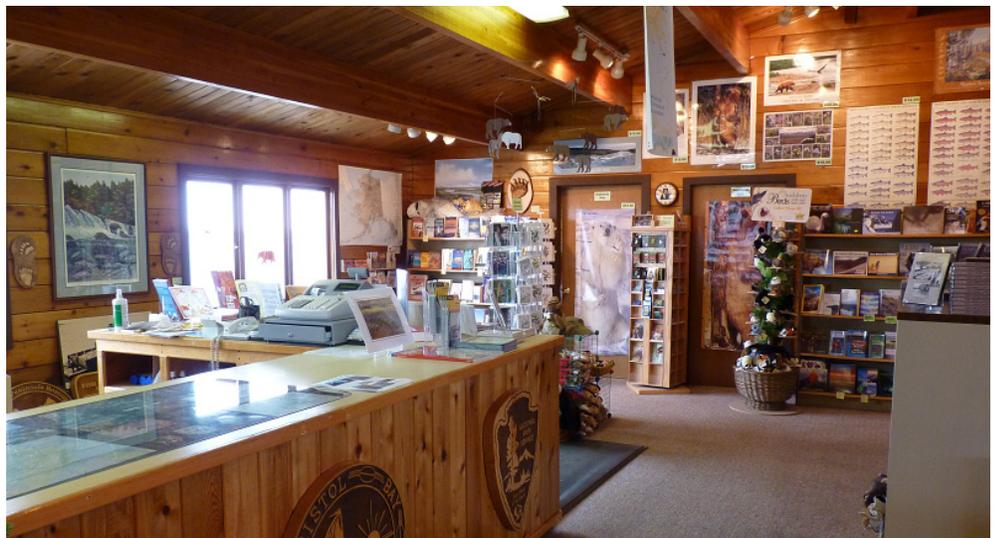
## King Salmon Visitor Center Remodeled

The King Salmon Visitor Center was altered in May to make the most of the remaining space. The handsome information counter was carefully re-cut to a shorter length, adding room to the Alaska Geographic sales area. A table and seating have been added to the sales area. New display counters are planned.

The visitor center has had exhibits added gradually over the years, slowly filling what was once open space. Now the building is crowded, with little extra room. A wall that had a Dutch (or half) door has had the door removed, adding wall space for displays. Additional shelving on the other side of the wall accommodates the ever-expanding educational lending library.

A short half wall allows for a minor expansion of the geology exhibit. Space for temporary exhibits will be created when sales counters are replaced. Outside, an all-weather bulletin board allows information to be posted for visitors to read at any time.

The King Salmon Visitor Center is a cooperative effort between the USFWS, National Park Service, Bristol Bay Borough, and Lake and Peninsula Borough. The partnership began in 1992. Approximately 8,000 visitors each year are welcomed into the K SVC. School programs, seasonal programs, and special events are also held in the building.



King Salmon Visitor Center, May 2011. USFWS/Julia Pinnix

## Visitor Services Ranger Joins Permanent Staff

The entire staff of Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR extends congratulations to Debi Tibbetts, Visitor Services Ranger. Debi has worked in the King Salmon Visitor Center for years, and has now been hired as a permanent employee of the Refuge.

Debi serves visitors and residents of the Alaska Peninsula in her year-round position, providing information and assistance with a ready smile. She has worn National Park Service and Alaska Geographic uniforms in the past. The USFWS recognizes the value of both the position and Debi herself in making the job a permanent one. Congratulations, Debi!

## Lead Shot is Illegal for Hunting Waterfowl

Lead pellets are eaten by waterfowl. Lead poisons them and the animals and people that eat them.

**Protect Wildlife.**

**Protect Yourself.**

**Use non-lead shot for hunting.**

