



"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 - Winter 2012-2013



The Research Vessel (R/V) Arlluk with a group on board, preparing for work. Orville Lind/USFWS

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### Refuge Floats First Season of Boat Projects

The Research Vessel (R/V) Arlluk had a very busy summer with Orville Lind as captain. A number of research projects were conducted while working cooperatively with faculty and staff researchers from the University of Alaska's Museum of the North, the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The vessel season began in May this year with a cruise from Kodiak to Chignik Bay, where a new berth awaited for our summer field season. The vessel supported a project with USFWS and National Park Service Law Enforcement in May, monitoring the bear hunting season on the Alaska Peninsula coast.

In July, Refuge staff and faculty from the UAF museum gathered for a cooperative project capturing and observing small mammals on Chiachi Island and Jacob Island. These islands, part of Alaska Maritime NWR, are close to Perryville. Wildlife Biologist Dominique Watts says voles and shrews were captured, and bears, mink, and fox were seen. Islands offer possibilities for identifying unique species. A thorough inventory of mammals present would take at least a few weeks. Also in July, Alaska Maritime NWR conducted seabird surveys on several islands.

In August, the vessel headed for Puale Bay to collect seabird data. Three large murre colonies were surveyed, located at Puale Bay, Oil Creek, and Cape Unalishagvak. In late August and through mid-September, the vessel transited to Cold Bay and worked along the Alaska Peninsula coast and on offshore islands to conduct eelgrass surveys in support of Izembek NWR studies and in cooperation with U.S. Geological Survey eelgrass researchers. Turn to page 2 to read more about projects on board the R/V Arlluk.

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Part of Atkulik Island seabird colony. Nora Rojek/USFWS

## Alaska Maritime NWR Surveys Islands

Nora Rojek, Wildlife Biologist at Alaska Maritime NWR, took advantage of the *R/V Arlluk's* summertime location at Chignik Bay to survey some nearby islands within her refuge. Nearshore boat surveys were conducted to count birds and marine mammals, and to document locations of seabird colonies.

The last surveys of seabirds for the islands of Atkulik and Spitz were in 1979. At that time, there were large colonies (for the area) of black-legged kittiwakes and murres. On this trip, the *R/V Arlluk* visited these two islands, as well as Chiachi and smaller islands around Chiachi.

At Atkulik, the *R/V Arlluk* put down an anchor to wait while Nora, assistant Dean Kildaw, and our Biological Science Technician Kevin Payne headed for the bird colonies in an inflatable skiff. After just 2 hours, 30 knot winds arrived suddenly, and Captain Orville Lind pulled anchor and retrieved the crew. But at the other islands, weather conditions were more cooperative.

At Spitz Island, 17,436 black-legged kittiwakes were counted. In 1979, there were 19,200. Although this year's count was lower than before, it is not different enough to warrant concern. Murres, on the other hand, numbered 17,600 in 1979; and only 5,511 were counted in 2012. The count in 2012 is only 31% of the count in 1979, a change large enough to suggest murre numbers have declined.

There is little information about seabird colonies along the Alaska Peninsula, Nora says, so it's not easy to draw conclusions. Alaska Maritime NWR incorporates coastal lands extending from Southeast Alaska to Barrow to the Aleutian Islands, protecting approximately 80% of the state's nesting

seabird population. Visiting each nesting colony at these far-flung locations is an enormous challenge. Surveys in some locales, like the Alaska Peninsula, can only be done infrequently. Now that our refuge has the *R/V Arlluk* and can support cooperative projects along the coast, it puts some of these remote areas within reach for further research.



Susan Savage counting seabirds. Orville Lind/USFWS

## Seabird Populations Estimated

Sea-based surveys indicate murre numbers continue to rise at Puale Bay on the Pacific coast of Becharof NWR. At and near Puale Bay, three colonies (Puale Bay, Jute Peak, and Oil Creek) of murres mark the largest concentration of breeding marine birds on the refuge. This year's counts from the *R/V Arlluk* confirm the population increase documented during the 2010 land-based counts.

Regular sea-based population monitoring of the Refuge colonies began in 1989, the year of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill. Wildlife Biologist Susan Savage and Biological Science Technician Kevin Payne conducted colony counts during early August. While murre numbers are up at the Puale Bay site, they seem to be stable at nearby Jute Peak and Oil Creek.

The enabling legislation for Becharof



Common murres. Orville Lind/USFWS

NWR specifically names marine bird conservation as one of the purposes of this refuge. Besides these colonies and other smaller colonies of gulls, kittiwakes, alcids, and cormorants on the Refuge mainland, approximately 60 colonies on islands, part of Alaska Maritime NWR, are within 10 miles of the Refuge coast. As time and weather permitted, Susan and Kevin also counted birds at 8 islands: Ashiik, David, Hydra, Garden, Eagle, Kumlik, Unavikshak, and Lone Rock. Some of these sites had not been surveyed since 1979. Hour-long sea transects were also conducted, identifying seabirds as well as marine mammals as the *R/V Arlluk* travelled from one site to another.



Ty Donnelly of the USGS diving in eelgrass bed at Big Lagoon. Neils Dau/USFWS

## Eelgrass Survey Continues

A US Geological Survey study on eelgrass along the lower Alaska Peninsula continued this year, this time aboard the *R/V Arlluk*. Last year, a survey was done near Chignik Bay using a skiff. With the wider range of the *R/V Arlluk*, the survey was continued farther down the coast, to Sanak Island and Big, Middle, and Hook Lagoons. The surveys are part of a more comprehensive project to inventory and monitor eelgrass in southwest Alaska at 4 national wildlife refuges (Alaska Peninsula, Izembek, Togiak, and Yukon Delta).

Eelgrass is an important food source and forms vital habitat for a wide range of life. This study aims to estimate abundance and distribution of eelgrass in an initial baseline survey. Samples were collected for comparison with eelgrass from other locations. Environmental information (water temperature, salinity, depth, etc.) was also collected. Seaweeds and invertebrates associated with the eelgrass communities were identified and their abundance assessed.

## Participation in Statewide Landbird Survey Ongoing

To monitor population trends of birds, with a focus on landbirds, across the vast roadless areas of Alaska, the refuge cooperates in the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS) program. The US Geological Survey-Alaska Science Center (ASC) leads the statewide program. The project complements the road-based Breeding Bird Survey. The Refuge also gains basic inventory data from the survey.

The Refuge first completed 7 blocks in 2004 using helicopters for access. Since then, the program has been scaled back to use more cost-effective fixed-wing access. The Refuge established its last sampling block in 2012. Four blocks (designated survey areas), with blocks surveyed on alternate years, define our sample. We will sample the Dog Salmon and Kejulik River blocks in even years and the Lower Ugashik Lake and King Salmon River (south) in odd years.



*Kevin Payne on survey at Dog Salmon River. Liz Julian/USFWS*

### Ptarmigan Wings and Crops Needed

If you hunt ptarmigan, please keep wings and crops (with contents) for Susan Savage. Contact her at 907/246-3339. Your help with her study is appreciated!



*Marbled godwit. Rod Cyr*

Staff documented 30 species of birds on the Dog Salmon block and 31 at the Kejulik block. Biological Science Technician Kevin Payne discovered 2 active marbled godwit nests at Dog Salmon. None have been found there before, despite focused efforts in the past.

### Ptarmigan Study Continues

Despite ptarmigan's importance to hunters, few studies have focused on the bird in Alaska. Wildlife Biologist Susan Savage, incorporating input from other biologists, redesigned surveys begun in 2011. Susan, Biological Science Technician Kevin Payne, Wildlife Refuge Specialist Liz Julian, and Volunteer Robert Blush conducted 13 line-transect surveys from Naknek to Ugashik in May.

Surveys in May target the breeding season, when males are easily detected defending territories. Unfortunately, the late spring made access challenging as many remote runways were snowy or muddy as the ice went out. Surveyors walked 2.5 mile transects beginning 30 minutes after sunrise, counting all ptarmigan. They also noted the ptarmigan's distance from the transect, its behavior, molt code, and habitat.

Staff detected 300 male and 62 female or unidentified ptarmigan. Using Geographic Information Systems programs and a freeware developed at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, we generated a density estimate. Until we can sample more randomly and more intensely, however, the estimate only applies to the areas sampled. Susan hopes to obtain information from local hunters to gain insight on ptarmigan population cycles, habitat use, and predation.

## Freshwater Lakes Surveyed for Seabirds

The very name "seabird" points to salt water. Yet seabirds often use fresh water bodies for feeding and reproduction. The Refuge encompasses Becharof and Ugashik lakes, both ranking in Alaska's top ten for size. Mother Goose Lake is also substantial. Seabirds use the islands in the lakes for roosting and nesting.

Sixteen colonies had previously been reported to the North Pacific Seabird Colony Catalog (managed by the USFWS in Anchorage, <http://alaska.fws.gov/mbmp/mbm/northpacificseabirds/colonies/default.htm>), but the Refuge had not checked on them since the late 1990s.

In June, Wildlife Biologist Susan Savage and Biological Science Technician Kevin Payne with Airplane Pilot Pete Finley, flew a survey to remap colonies and roosting sites and estimate seabird numbers. Twenty areas were identified, 11 known and 9 new. Most were breeding sites for glaucous-winged gulls. Double-crested cormorants were found at two and Arctic terns at just one site.

Seabirds play an important role in freshwater systems. They bring marine nutrients into the lakes, provide food for predators such as bald eagles, otters, and bears, and provide subsistence food to humans. Seabird colonies face both natural and man-made threats, including volcanic eruptions, sea level rise, long-distance and food chain accumulated pollution, and possible overharvest. Monitoring them will allow managers to be aware of population problems and ensure their continued survival into the future.



*Gulls resting on a rock ledge. Kevin Payne/USFWS*

# Surveys at Ugashik Narrows Measure Use

Ugashik Narrows is one of the most popular sport fishing locations in the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge. The Narrows stretches only a half mile, connecting Upper Ugashik Lake to Lower Ugashik Lake, but offers anglers an impressive opportunity to catch Arctic grayling, Arctic char, Dolly Varden, and sockeye and coho salmon.

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges Volunteers Bret Greenheck and Tara Callaway spent an unforgettable summer at Ugashik Narrows from mid-July to late September conducting a variety of fieldwork for the Refuge. Both Bret and Tara are recent graduate students from Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA, where they received Master's degrees in Environmental Education and Biology, respectively.

The purpose of the project was to determine angler impact on the fisheries at the Narrows, and to gauge the quality of the visitor experience. To find this out, two surveys were used. One is a standard form intended to gauge general visitor impressions and expectations. The other, developed in cooperation with Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, targeted questions on what type of tackle anglers were using as well as the species and number of fish caught and released.

We compared the data collected from this summer to similar studies done in 1988 and 1998 at the Narrows. Between 1988 and 2012, the data show a 59.3% increase in total hours fished and a 109.5% increase in the number of fish caught. But the number of fish harvested decreased, with 423 in 1988 and only 94 in 2012.

Moreover, a shift in the number of different species being caught was noticeable. In 1998, anglers caught 991 Arctic grayling and 878 Arctic char and Dolly Varden. Conversely, in 2012, only 187 Arctic grayling were caught and 4,002 Arctic char and Dolly Varden. Similar catch numbers of sockeye and coho salmon were found across all three studies. Nearly all anglers use single, barbless hooks on fly rods, although this is not required.

Although the number of anglers present at the half-mile long Narrows sometimes exceeded 20 at once, anglers who



*Anglers at Ugashik Narrows. Tara Callaway/USFWS*



*Bret Greenheck contacting visitors. Tara Callaway/USFWS*



*Tara Callaway identifying plants. Bret Greenheck/USFWS*



*The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges promote the conservation of all Alaska National Wildlife Refuges through understanding and appreciation, assisting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife*

*Service, and through outreach to decision makers. Join or visit us at [www.alaskarefugefriends.org](http://www.alaskarefugefriends.org).*



*Bret Greenheck taking samples. Tara Callaway/USFWS*

responded to the longer survey still had positive visits. In nearly every category, their experiences exceeded their expectations. But their comments reflect concern over how many people were using the area at the same time. "Lots of fishermen in a small amount of stream," reflected one respondent.

Bret and Tara also spent time at the Narrows working on other projects. They netted bees for Wildlife Biologist Dominique Watts, who has been cooperating with US Department of Agriculture researchers since last year to inventory bee species on the Alaska Peninsula. Additionally, they conducted plankton tows and sediment samples at the Narrows and Upper and Lower Ugashik lakes for Supervisory Wildlife Biologist Ron Britton.

The oldest archeological site on the Alaska Peninsula is found at Ugashik Narrows, dating back to 9,000 years ago. One of Bret and Tara's duties was to keep watch over the site to see how rapidly it might be eroding. Artifacts that eroded from the bank were collected and sent to Regional Archeologist Debbie Corbett for cataloging and study.

They also installed an outhouse and invited visitors to use it, in hopes of reducing human waste issues in this popular locale.

By the end of September, bears daily tested the electric fence that protected camp. "We could feel the ground shake when they walked past," Tara said.

Both Bret and Tara say they are glad to have had the chance to spend time at the Narrows on a Refuge project. "This was the best summer of my life," Bret remarked.

Ugashik Narrows is a place of importance and intrigue. Its diverse wildlife and abundance of salmon and other fish make it a crucial part of Refuge management. Balancing this with anglers' expectations of a remote and unspoiled fishing experience provides an interesting conversation for all the stakeholders involved.

## Volunteers Accomplish Many Projects



*Paula Burt teaching about insects. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*

“Volunteers aren’t paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless” (Anonymous). Volunteers are vital to a wide variety of projects at the Refuge.

Paula Burt arrived in April from New Jersey to take on the position of Visitor Services Assistant. She developed and delivered educational programs locally and in village schools, staffed the King Salmon Visitor Center, represented the Refuge at special events, and helped set up a field camp. She worked hard to help revise and update the websites for both Alaska Peninsula and Becharof refuges. The revised websites are scheduled to appear this winter.



*Jack Trout working at Bear Creek. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*

Jack Trout returned for his second summer as a maintenance volunteer. Jack was invaluable in helping to set up field camps, gathering and preparing gear to go into the field, repairing and building essential items, and using innovative approaches to problem-solve. He built new shelving for the lending library in the King Salmon Visitor Center and helped repair buildings at Bear Creek.

Paula Burt and Jack Trout, along with Janet Saczawa who put the educational lending library on-line, were given monetary awards from supporting organization Alaska Geographic for their outstanding service.



Ken Fawcett returned again this year, bringing Wes Linser. They took over visitor surveys at Ugashik Narrows for a week to free up two other volunteers for teaching at the Refuge’s science and culture camp. Dr. Chuck Iliff, traveling on a Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges grant, used a USFWS photography kit and designed a new curriculum for incorporating photography into camp activities. He arrived early to help complete repairs to the Bear Creek site in addition to being an instructor. Tom Prang volunteered as an instructor at camp, and conducted an archeology survey of upper Whale Mountain, including what Regional Archeologist Debbie Corbett describes as “possibly the first-ever cultural survey of snow patches in a refuge.”



*Dr. Chuck Iliff taking photo. Tara Callaway/USFWS*

Natasha Mann caught bees for Biologist Dom Watts, contributing to an ongoing inventory of local pollinators. Bob Blush assisted, as he has for many seasons, with research conducted by Wildlife Biologist Susan Savage. He also guided visiting paleontologist Pat Druckenmiller of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in the field, looking for dinosaur tracks. Ralph Saczawa scanned part of the Refuge’s slide collection into digital format, and donated the scanning device for further use. Tom Collopy and Mary Frische, from Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, donated an enlarged, framed photo as part of the USFWS office exhibits.

Two volunteers have donated probably hundreds of hours collecting and managing data about tundra swans in the area. Richard Russell and Rod Cyr have together collected over 2,800 collar sighting records, identifying 238 individual swans. Their work has added depth to the Refuge’s data set by identifying swan returns to their breeding grounds.



*Volunteers Janet and Ralph Saczawa. USFWS*

## Educational Lending Library Now On-Line

The multi-agency King Salmon Visitor Center has a large collection of educational materials available for teachers, but until this year, it has been searchable only in person. This summer, USFWS volunteer Janet Saczawa put the entire library on line.

Janet has been a teacher and librarian for 30 years. Now retired, she was eager to help. Janet arrived June 1st, and by July 15th, had accomplished the daunting task. The collection is now on Library Thing: <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/KingSalmonVC>. Contact Debi Tibbetts (907-246-4250) or Julia Pinnix (907-246-1211) for help or to borrow materials.



*Office exhibit. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*



*Swan collared in 2010 during avian influenza study. USFWS*

To learn more about volunteering, contact [Julia\\_Pinnix@fws.gov](mailto:Julia_Pinnix@fws.gov); call 907-246-1211; or visit [www.volunteers.gov](http://www.volunteers.gov).



*Students set out for a hike at Bear Creek Camp. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*

## Taquka Kuik Science and Culture Camp Held in September

Ten students from Lake and Peninsula Borough schools spent a week in the Becharof Wilderness in September, learning about science and culture with Refuge staff and volunteers. What did they like best? Each student had a different answer...

“I really liked the hiking.” Taquka Kuik (Bear Creek) Science and Culture Camp emphasizes being outside, exploring the area. One hike led to Bear Creek, crossing open, windswept terrain dotted with clusters of willow and alder. At the creek, students watched bears feeding on sockeye salmon, collected aquatic invertebrates, and examined layers of soil and gravel in an eroding bank for clues to the geologic and human past.

“The best thing I did at camp was observe the sow and her cub.” On a beach walk, students spotted a brown bear and cub walking towards them a mile away. As the bears came closer, they entered the water, snorkeling for salmon. The students moved up above the beach and sat down to watch. The sow and cub swam past, stopping to eat a salmon right in front of the group. It was an unforgettable wildlife encounter.

“I liked the fact that there were all types of specialists here.” Eight adults led activities, often tossing ideas back and forth in group discussions. Topics the students liked best included botany, geology, archeology, and the traditional way of life. Volunteers Tara Callaway and Bret Greenheck taught students about plants, aquatic life, and insects. Dr. Chuck Iliff, a volunteer from Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, taught photography using a USFWS kit. Archeologist Tom Prang taught students the science of our past, as well as animal behavior and biology. Ronne Richter, a teacher with Lake and Peninsula Borough, taught a variety of topics, including geology. Refuge Ranger Orville Lind helped students improve their artistic skills. Visitor Services Manager Julia Pinnix took care of logistics and operations.

“What I learned most was how people lived back then.” For most students, this was their first time without electricity and running water. Elder Paul Boskoffsky talked about his life growing up in Kanatak, a village on the Pacific side of the coastal mountains. His story made a big impression.

## Bear Creek (Bible Camp) Site Improved

In 1967, a group of local people pooled their resources and started a bible camp on the north shore of Becharof Lake. The cabins are still in use today, now as a site for the Refuge’s annual Taquka Kuik (Bear Creek) Science and Culture Camp.

Bible Camp, as Bear Creek Camp was long known, is showing its age. In 2007, the refuge had to stop using the site because of contaminants. Lead-based paint flaked from the cabin walls, and diesel fuel had pooled in the soil. While the Refuge sought funding to start a clean-up, the largest building accidentally burned. “I wish we still had that building,” says Refuge Manager Bill Schaff.



*Replacing a wall in the main cabin. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*



*Replacing windows in the sleeping cabins. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*



*Sawing boards for bunkbeds. Bret Greenheck/USFWS*



*Above: Clearing brush. Julia Pinnix/USFWS.*

*Right: putting up a temporary roof. Tara Callaway/USFWS*

The largest cabin remaining needed substantial work: a new roof, a new wall. The smaller sleeping cabins needed new windows, doors, and sections of wall. Bunkbeds needed new plywood. The steambath was taken over by porcupines. And old materials, from rusty bedsprings to fuel barrels, had to be hauled out.

Work began in 2011 to bring the buildings up to usable standards and continued in 2012. Hundreds of pounds of debris were taken out by Refuge aircraft. A contaminants crew painted the cabins to seal lead paint and dug up creosote-soaked logs for removal. Volunteers and staff worked for days to complete repairs in time for students to arrive.

Taquka Kuik Science and Culture Camp ran September 10-14, bringing 10 students and 8 adults together for a week of intensive outdoor learning. More improvements are planned for the site in 2013. The refuge is pleased to host camp at Bear Creek once again, in the heart of Becharof National Wildlife Refuge.



# Student Views of Camp Experience Revealing



Viewing swimming bears. Rylee Manning



Caterpillar. Annette Wassillie



Salmon jaws in sand. Tess Hostetler



Below: Bee imitators. Waylon Abyo

Observation was the theme of this year's Taquka Kuik Science and Culture Camp. The students took notes in their journals about animal tracks, bees, bears, weather, and plants. They dug into the tundra to explore the hidden soil. They examined flowers under microscopes. They sorted artifacts, prodded bones, and used binoculars to identify wildlife.

And they used cameras. Photography is an important tool in both science and culture. Images can be used to tell stories, reveal details, capture data and events. These are a few of the images caught by students.



Class in the field. Zoe Anelon



Above: Feather. Kaylynn Hobson.  
Left: Human and bear tracks. William Lind III



Above: Angelica lucida. Nathaniel Ward  
Left: Bonfire. Corey Olympic. Below: Bear Creek Camp trail. August Johnson



## Refuge Manager and Wildlife Refuge Specialist/Airplane Pilot Retire



*Pete Finley working on repairs at Bear Creek Camp. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*

Two employees are retiring from service this year: Refuge Manager Bill Schaff, and Wildlife Refuge Specialist/Airplane Pilot Pete Finley.

Bill's career with the USFWS had a wide span, from law enforcement in Los Angeles to Refuge Manager in the villages of McGrath and King Salmon. Bill's marine experience and connections in L.A. helped bring the *R/V Arlluk*, a vessel seized during a drug smuggling bust, to the Refuge to expand operations to the coast.

Pete handled permits, carried out law enforcement duties, and flew countless missions to support a wide range of field projects. He may be retiring from the USFWS, but not from flying. "I have a grandson," Pete says, "and whether he knows it or not, he's going to be doing a lot of flying." Pete is joining his family in the Dakotas.



*Refuge Manager Bill Schaff. Kelly Chase/USFWS*

## Bird House Event Draws Families

Wildlife Biologist Susan Savage held an event on April 14 to encourage families to build and hang tree swallow nest boxes. Six volunteers (Bob Blush, Carissa Turner, Kevin Payne, Sherri Anderson, Rod Cyr, and Tom Prang) and Visitor Services Manager Julia Pinnix assisted Susan with 37 attendees in a successful spring event.

Volunteer Bob Blush cut and pre-drilled all the parts for the boxes. When participants arrived, Susan explained the biology of tree swallows and chickadees (the species likely to use the boxes) and encouraged families to monitor the nests as citizen scientists. After the boxes were constructed, flyers and handouts were served along with refreshments.



*Constructing nest boxes in Refuge shop. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*



*Ranger Doug Stuart views photoframe on M/V Tustumena. Julia Pinnix/USFWS*

## Ferry Program a Cooperative Effort

Alaska Maritime NWR started putting a Park Ranger on board the Alaska Marine Highway System's *M/V Tustumena* ferry 20 years ago. Budget cuts have made keeping that commitment difficult. But Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, along with Izembek NWR and Kodiak NWR, have chipped in to keep the program alive.

2,670 passengers benefitted from presentations on board, including a digital photoframe purchased by our refuge. The photoframe played short programs continuously, and was popular with both passengers and crew.

Currently, the *M/V Tustumena* ferry program is the only one still operating in the state.

## Join In for Christmas Bird Count

On December 15, the Refuge will host the 27th local and the 113th National Christmas Bird Count. The Refuge invites public participation. Participants may join teams at the Refuge office in King Salmon at 9:30 AM, December 15. These teams, led by local experts, will scour the road corridors and other bird hot-spots, getting outside as weather allows. Then stop at the King Salmon Visitor Center to get warm and enjoy a holiday treat. If you have a feeder at home, you may participate from your living room. Call Wildlife Biologist Susan Savage (246-1205) for more information before count day, especially if you wish to do a feeder count. If you live outside the King Salmon/Naknek area and are interested in organizing a Christmas Bird Count, contact Susan.