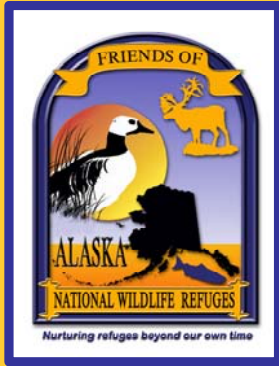


Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

September 20, 2006 Volume 1, Issue 1



www.alaskarefugefriends.org

Special Interest Articles:

- Learn about the members.
- A glimpse of Izembek Refuge.
- What your Friends are up to.

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Welcome to a New “Friendship”

The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges was born at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, which hosted our organizational meeting last November. Friends gathered from around the Great Land to draft our mission, design a structure, and elect officers (see officer biographies in the accompanying article). We divided the Alaska refuges into 9 regions, each of which has a coordinator to work with local refuge managers on program priorities and projects to help their refuges. Alaska Friends has the distinction of working with all 16 Alaskan refuges that encompass just over 76 million acres, approximately 90% of the national wildlife refuge lands. What a wonderful and rewarding opportunity! We meet monthly by teleconference and will hold our first annual meeting on September 23-24, 2006 at the Alaska Maritime Refuge Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer.

Alaska Friends have accomplished much in our brief existence. We were fortunate to receive a generous gift of \$500 from the Friends of Loxahatchee Refuge that helped us to get underway. We recruited over 50 new members from all over Alaska and as far away as North Carolina, became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, obtained a \$5,000 start-up grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, designed and printed 13,000 Friends brochures, obtained a course fellowship for our membership chair to attend the National Conservation Training Center, organized



Founding members at the Kenai Meeting.

and conducted invasive plant removal programs in six refuges (see article), assisted at Fish and Wildlife booths in providing information to the public at various events, were chosen by the Alaska Conservation Foundation to submit an exciting proposal in partnership with the National Wildlife Refuge Association to develop a model program for educating and obtaining public support for the national wildlife refuges, supported the Fish and Wildlife Service on issues concerning the threat of the proposed King Cove-Cold Bay road that would invade the most sensitive area of the Izembek Refuge Wilderness, the Tok Visitor Center that will provide information to those who enter Alaska by the Alaska Highway, and the Bettles Nature Trail adjoining the Kanuti Refuge. We will soon be online with our new website designed by one of our generous volunteers.

Continued on page two...



“Welcome” continued from page one



Volunteers at the Ocean Festival in Anchorage, Ginny Harris, Marvin Baur, and David Raskin - 2006

“In prosperity our friends know us; In adversity we know our friends.”

John Churton Collins



David on his boat in Homer, AK.

It has been an especially rewarding year for me. I was able to visit the magnificent Izembek Refuge to see firsthand its priceless habitat and wildlife and survey the potential impacts of the proposed road through its remarkable wilderness. I also had the thrill of a lifetime to travel all of the way to the end of the Aleutian Islands in the eastern hemisphere on the Maritime Refuge research vessel M/V Tiglax. I not only viewed the striking beauty of these islands with their millions of seabirds and marine mammals, but I had the opportunity to learn firsthand about the excellent research and rehabilitation work done by Fish and Wildlife scientists and support staff and other agency and university scientists from many countries. It has been a life-altering experience and great honor to serve as the first president of Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, and I

convey my heartfelt thanks to everyone for their wonderful support.

All of these accomplishments would not have been possible without the dedicated work of our many volunteers and the invaluable assistance of US Fish and Wildlife personnel and facilities for meetings, transportation, and housing. We owe special thanks to Maeve Taylor, Volunteers and Grants Coordinator in the Anchorage Regional Office. She is the moving force that made it possible for the Alaska Friends to become a reality, and she continues to be the guiding light in nurturing the Alaska Friends to achieve its full potential. It has been a very exciting first year, and we all look forward to more and bigger accomplishments in the years to come.

David

Friends President David Raskin

David C. Raskin is a retired university professor, having served on the faculties of the University of Utah, UCLA, Michigan State University, and University of British Columbia. He has been passionately involved in environmental activities for 35 years, having designed and implemented the first environmental studies program at the University of Utah in 1971. He has lived in Homer, Alaska for over 11 years and has held volunteer positions in nonprofit organizations, including president of the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Committee, Trustees

for Alaska, Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee, and conservation chairman for the Sierra Club in Utah. He has participated in programs and projects of many federal and state agencies, including the National Park Service, US Forest Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Bureau of Land Management, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Because of his experience in these activities, he was asked to participate in the formation of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges and was chosen to serve as its first president.



Weed Warriors – Friends Against Invasives

Just a year old and already getting down to business, the new non-profit Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges took on a summer project to help combat one of the greatest threats to wildlife conservation – invasive plants. Invasive species are the second greatest threat to biodiversity (behind habitat loss). This unwelcome vegetation destroys natural habitats, reduces wildlife populations, decreases wildlife-related recreational opportunities, and causes great economic loss. In the United States invasive species cause an estimated loss of \$120 billion each year. Once established, it is nearly impossible to eradicate invasives and restoration of disturbed land becomes extremely difficult. The continental U.S. has already lost millions of acres of natural habitat to invasive plants.

Alaska still has the opportunity to halt the spread of noxious weeds, as our invasive plant patches are relatively small and are located in towns and along the road system. The Friends hope to keep invasives from spreading from the borders of our wildlife refuges into their wild interiors.

This summer the Friends conducted “weed pulls” and community education events to remove invasive plants from six of the sixteen national wildlife refuges in Alaska. Volunteers contributed over 1,000 hours and traveled hundreds of miles to pull weeds at Izembek, Kanuti, Kenai, Kodiak, Tetlin and Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuges. Target weeds included Canada thistle, white sweet clover, orange hawkweed and the common dandelion. Funding for this project was provided by “Volunteers with Invasives,” a national program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Some of the “pulls” lasted only one day, and involved educating ourselves and local residents about invasive plants as well as the difficult job that it is to control these weeds once they become established. Most of the actual weed pulls were demonstrations of what can be done with the cooperation of volunteers and guidance and support of various agencies. Some efforts were to eliminate blooming plants in areas where specific weeds were just beginning to invade or threatened to move into refuge land or “putting out spot fires”! The Friends attacked by pulling, digging, and as a last resort, spraying the invaders. For many, this was a new experience.



Friends at the Tetlin Refuge weed pull.

The Tok Musher's Hall was the gathering place for a training session on June 17, which included staff from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, Alaska Department of Agriculture, Alaska Department of Transportation, and British Petroleum. The community of Tok turned out as well as the Tok Boys & Girls Club and the Tok Volunteer Fire Department. Together with seven Friends, these dedicated weed pullers focused their attention on the white sweet clover at Tetlin Refuge's Lakeview Campground, which is 57 miles from the U.S./Canada border.

The most extensive effort was July 10 -16, six days of work and travel along the Dalton Highway, a mostly gravel road that parallels the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline and connects Fairbanks with Prudhoe Bay Oil Field and Deadhorse, 414 miles north. A partnership of the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service, AmeriCorps (sponsored by the Tanana Chiefs Corporation,) and the Friends cooperated to make this remarkable accomplishment happen. The AmeriCorps group was made up of 8 strong young people from Arizona and Alaska, allowing the Friends an opportunity to reach out to young people with messages about the importance of our refuges.

The combined effort was to clear white sweet clover from the roadway and river crossings along the Dalton Highway from the Kanuti River just south of the Arctic Circle to Atigun Pass. The greatest attention was needed between Coldfoot, 60 miles north of the Arctic Circle, and the Kanuti River. The heaviest infestation was at Pump Station 5 near the Jim River. Dedication, curiosity and a sense of adventure allowed part of the group to drive over Atigun Pass to Galbraith Lake at mile 275, just to make sure there

Invasive Weed Pull - Continued

were no more invasive plants to pull. The trip, despite heavy rain, was awesome.

Being participants in this weed pull was rewarding for all of the Friends who traveled north to help. Almost every blooming white sweet clover plant was removed from the Kanuti River south of the Arctic Circle to Coldfoot, Alaska. This activity produced well over a ton of the targeted plant, which was turned over to Alaska Department of Transportation for destruction. The organization and energy of the BLM and NPS employees who guided and assisted was remarkable.



Friends and AmeriCorps on the Dalton Highway Weed Pull.

The rain and wind couldn't keep the weed busters away from Kodiak's Second Annual Orange Hawkweed Pull on June 23. It was a true community-wide event sponsored jointly by the Woody Island Tribal Council, Kodiak Soil & Water Conservation District, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, and the Friends. Additional support came from the Department of Transportation, the City of Kodiak Parks & Recreation Department, and the Kodiak Summer Science and Salmon Camp. More than 30 participants pulled 32 bags of orange hawkweed. Local businesses donated pizza and ice cream for the hardworking weed pullers. The event was such a success that the Kodiak crew looks forward to an even bigger one in 2007.

On July 22, at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, a highly motivated group of weed pullers was busy at the Hideout Trail, going after invading exotic plants -- those stubborn dandelions. Volunteers stayed in cabins near the Outdoor Education Center, which is 18 miles up the Swanson River Road. Hideout Mountain's meadow was full of dandelions and the Refuge wanted them gone! A group of eight Friends volunteers joined two biologists from the Refuge in an area that includes an alpine plant community, which should be dominated by Jacob's ladders and alpine sweetvetch. Armed with pronged digging tools and large plastic bags, the group started up the 1-1/2 mile trail to the meadow, digging out the bright, yellow "*Taraxacum officinale*" along the way. About six hours later, the diligent volunteers had filled eight or nine large sacks full of dandelions! Afterwards the group enjoyed dinner together in town, a well-earned meal for sure.

At Izembek, Canada thistle has become established over the years, mainly near the Refuge headquarters. A hardy group of four Friends flew out to Cold Bay the weekend of July 28-30. An informational community meeting was held in Cold Bay on Friday, to generate interest in future projects. The following day the Friends "attacked" the Canada thistle plants. Thanks to the Refuge staff, equipment was ready and problem areas targeted. Individual plants were doused using hand sprayers and Roundup – a safe and effective herbicide. Results will be evaluated in the weeks and months ahead, but it is hoped that most of the problem plants have been eliminated.

The Friends invasive plant project rounded up in the most exciting way possible – with three Friends and one Fish and Wildlife educator braving a typhoon on the remote island of Unalaska on September 6-10. The Friends were blown out of their weed control effort on the small patch of Canada thistle. However, they did an excellent job of educating the locals about the threats of invasives through a community program, a school program, and radio and television interviews. The Friends also worked closely with local land owners to demonstrate how to get rid of the invasives that are there once the storm died down.

Permanent control of invasive plants is an effort that is rarely completed in one year. In order to control invasive plants, they must be pulled and cut back repetitively over a few years because of their extensive root and seed systems. Watching for the occasional "missed" plant requires diligence. If the control methods are persistent enough and the infestation is small, it is possible to eventually get rid of them. The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges have taken "ownership" of the areas visited in the summer of 2006 and hope to work with Fish & Wildlife Service staff to continue monitoring and controlling these invasive sites. We look forward to a continued partnership in this important effort.

Many thanks to everyone who donated their time, resources and energy to this summer's inaugural invasive weed pulls. Your commitment and enthusiasm have inspired us all. Participants took time away from tending their own gardens to nurture our Alaska wildlife refuges in a most "hands-on" way. For those of you who would like to take part in the future, stay tuned. Watch for more opportunities

Sarah Ford, Development Chair
and Carla Stanley, Vice President



Izembek National Wildlife Refuge: A Land of Extremes

The first thing one takes note of when stepping off a plane in Cold Bay is the topography. The variations are extreme and dramatic. When I first arrived in June, I was immediately impressed by the expanse of tundra climbing from sea level to the bases of the many large volcanoes which dominate the landscape. The contrast is, to say the least, stark and breathtaking. Equally impressive is the realization that at Izembek you are standing on a narrow spit of land sandwiched between the Bering Sea and Pacific Ocean, and thus subject to some of the most extreme natural conditions on the planet.

But that's the charm of the place. On a typical day in Cold Bay, you might have to contend with the wind. The wind is ever-present, a byproduct of the interface between Bering and Pacific. But unlike most of Alaska, we rarely have to contend with our state bird, the mosquito. Rain and fog are frequent visitors too, but without them we would not have the incredible variety of plants and animals that make Izembek unique and elicit a "wow" on virtually every outing. *Incredible* is a good way to describe the resources here – colorful flowering plants like the lupine, salmon runs at every turn, berry picking, a potpourri of birds to enjoy, and of course, the bears.

Seeing a brown bear for the first time is memorable. Seeing a bear with small cubs transcends one from being a participant in a Polaroid moment to having a truly unique life experience. What makes it unique is the wildness of the place. No line of photographers, no Kodak picture spot. Nobody. Just you, a handful of volcanoes, and three furry rear ends moving away at the speed of light. Wow.

There's no question that Izembek is a recreational paradise. Hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, kayaking, or similar pursuits – they all contribute to the scrapbook of memories for those willing to tackle the logistics of getting to



Izembek Lefthand Valley Wilderness

Cold Bay. During the warmer months, Izembek is a veritable buffet of things to do. For the refuge, it's also the time of year to gear up for field work. Field season activities are varied and can include such things as aerial bear and caribou surveys, sea otter counts, eider banding, and goose forage estimation.

Winter is just around the corner. The bears will be sleeping, most of the birds will have moved on, and I'll be ready for some new memories. I can hardly wait.

Val Urban

Deputy Refuge Manager
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

"When we contemplate the whole universe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty".

John Muir

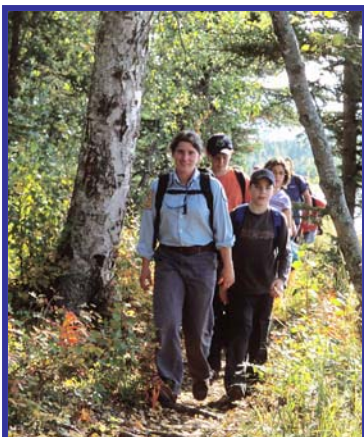


Public Comments Needed for Kenai Refuge Use Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in collaboration with the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, has developed a draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area located on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Southcentral, Alaska. The Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking public comment about some proposed changes for the area that are listed in the plan.

Kenai Refuge manages the 44,000-acre Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area to provide wildlife viewing, environmental education, and interpretation opportunities. The Skilak Area was identified as a special management area 21 years ago in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. It is one of the most heavily used areas on the Refuge due to its close proximity to large population centers, easy access, and diversity of public use facilities provided in a natural setting.

Due to its location situated between the Kenai Lowlands, Kenai Mountains, and Skilak Lake; a diversity of habitats; and relatively undisturbed condition; many of the 199 wildlife species found on Kenai Refuge are believed to inhabit the Skilak Area. Some common wildlife species includes the famous Kenai moose, black and brown bears, coyotes, lynx, caribou, snowshoe hare, spruce grouse, and a wide variety of raptors, songbirds, waterfowl, and fish.



A Refuge Ranger leads an interpretive hike in the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area.

The area contains a wide assortment of public use facilities, including boat launches, cabins, campgrounds, day use areas, interpretive sites, trails, and wayside pull-outs. These facilities provide services for a multitude of outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the year including archery hunting, camping, cross-country skiing, hiking, ice fishing, nature photography, sightseeing, sport fishing, snowshoeing, and wildlife viewing. The area is enjoyed by local residents and out of state visitors, individuals and families, young and old alike.

The plan identifies three management alternatives for providing compatible public use facilities and programs that facilitate wildlife viewing, environmental education, interpretation, and photography opportunities. One of the alternatives proposes a change in hunting opportunities – opening a general entry firearm hunt of small game (e.g., grouse, snowshoe hare) and fur animals (e.g., red squirrel, lynx) in the Skilak Area. Small game hunting is currently allowed by archery only, and fur animal hunting is not allowed.

The plan will be made available for public review and comment in October 2006. The public is encouraged to state their opinion about the proposed alternatives in the plan. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the plan please email rob_campellone@fws.gov or call (907) 786-3982.

Rob Campellone
Natural Resource Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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President

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Vice President

Penny Bauder,
Secretary

Ginny Harris,
Treasurer

Sarah Ford
Development Chair

Sharon Baur
Membership Chair

Nicole Whittington-Evans
*Regional Representative
Coordinator*

Getting to Know Us



Penny Bauder - Secretary

Penny Bauder is a founding member of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges and serves as the group's Secretary. Penny holds a Bachelor's of Science from Western Michigan University and a Masters of Science in Environmental Science from Alaska Pacific University. Currently, Penny works as an Interpretive Planner for the Department of Natural Resources in Alaska.



Ginny Harris - Treasurer

Ginny states her "reason for joining the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges is, first and foremost, for the wildlife and working to save the habitat needed for their survival. Also, it is for the enjoyment of being in contact with people who feel as I do about nature."

Ginny credits her father for teaching her a respect for all living things. Wanting to share her interest in nature she became a counselor, nature counselor and Camping Chairman in the Chugach Council of Campfire Girls. She then joined the Sierra Club, where she held the offices of Alaska Chapter Chairman, Regional Conservation Committee Chairman and Alaska Regional Vice President. She became part of a group working to set aside more of Alaska's federal lands into parks and refuges as part of ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.) and learned about "Friends" groups. As a result, she also joined the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) in the early 1970s and was a member for a number of years.

(Penny continued)

Penny fell in love with the splendor of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges as a sophomore in college during a summer internship as a backcountry canoe ranger on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. This connection to Alaskan Refuges deepened while Penny was in graduate school. As part of her graduate thesis, she successfully designed two scientific studies for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service including *Recreation Use and Visitor Experience on the Karluk River, Alaska, a Comparative Study: 2002-2004* and *Sport Fishing Conflict on a Remote Alaskan River*.

As the Friend's Secretary, Penny has been busy applying for Recognition of Exemption under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and also organized a statewide invasive plant control event that the Friends successfully carried out as their first group project.

(Ginny continued)

In 2004, a ferry trip to Kodiak included a stop at the refuge office. While asking about the NWRA she was also given information on the new friends group. Sometimes when history knocks on a door, someone is there to answer!



Carla Stanley – Vice President

Volunteering is a big part of who Carla Stanley is. She was a Marine Science and Art Teacher at the Jr. and Sr. High levels for 29 years on the Kenai Peninsula. Carla was the Alaska Director of the Northwest Association of marine Educators for 2 years; next was the Alaska Art Education Association where she served as President for 2 years and was selected as Alaska's Art Teacher of the Year in 1991. She also serves on the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council board. For the last six years, she has been an EMT II with Homer Volunteer Fire Dept., but Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge is where she likes to volunteer now. With the emergence of Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, there is no better place to volunteer.





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Alaska's 16 Refuges:

- Alaska Maritime NWR
- Alaska Peninsula NWR
- Arctic NWR
- Becharof NWR
- Innoko NWR
- Izembek NWR
- Kanuti NWR
- Kenai NWR
- Kodiak NWR
- Koyukuk NWR
- Nowitna NWR
- Selawik NWR
- Tetlin NWR
- Togiak NWR
- Yukon Delta NWR
- Yukon Flats NWR

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

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Nurturing refuges beyond our own time.

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____

Circle one (1) level from the list :

Individual: \$25.00 Family: \$40.00
Best Friend: \$100.00 Student/ Senior \$16.00 (for our 16 Refuges)
Sponsor: \$500 Lifetime: \$1000 or more

Make checks payable to: Friends of Alaska Wildlife Refuges
And mail to the above address

Would you like to serve on a Friends Committee? If so, indicate your interests and we will provide you with more information about how you can help.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education and Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Budget and Finance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife-oriented Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Web design | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Description of what you would like to do:

Thank you for your interest in the **Friends of Alaska Wildlife Refuges.**
*Your membership today means progress in environmental
 conservation and education tomorrow*