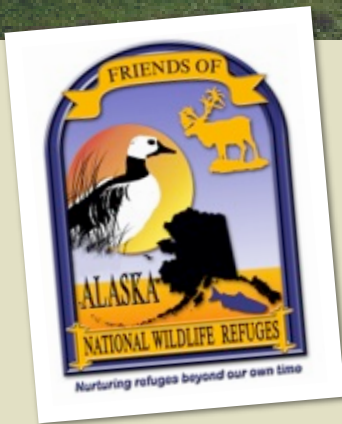


2 0 0 8 W I N T E R E D I T I O N

The Alaska Refuge Friends Newsletter



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3rd Annual Meeting 2008
National WLF Refuge Week
Alder Pull
iPods & Honeybuckets
Volunteering on Adak
Tugiak's Tuya
Arctic Visitor Center
Kanuti Weed Pull
Allakaket Science Camp
Color It – A Page for Kids
2008 Volunteering

Header Photo by Jerry
McDonnell

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

...is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting the conservation of the natural resources of all the Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. The Friends promote understanding and appreciation of these refuges and assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in meeting its mandates.

Letter from our President - David Raskin

The last six months have witnessed an amazing increase in the activities and accomplishments of the Friends. Our membership has grown to 210, and our cooperative projects with the Fish and Wildlife Service flourish. Six refuges were provided assistance on 17 different projects, including Alaska Maritime, Arctic, Izembek, Innoko, Kanuti, Selawik, and Yukon Flats. Removal and control of invasive plant species on several refuges continues, and we participated in the control of two problematic animal species, rats and horses on the Maritime Refuge. Our rural outreach programs continue to be highly successful, and we are expanding the science camps and other educational programs in remote areas in and near the refuges. For more details see articles in this issue. Our outreach also included presentations by Sharon and me about Friends activities to the FWS national managers' meeting, visitor services meeting, and FWS retirees meeting, all of which took place at the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer.

Land exchange and oil development issues affecting Alaska refuges has occupied much time and effort by Nicole Whittington-Evans and me. The Izembek land exchange and road bill is still in the Senate Omnibus Lands package. After extensive and continuing efforts by TWS, NWRA, Defenders, and others to get it separated, the bill is moving forward in spite of good press about the negative aspects of the land exchange and environmental damage. Harry Reid has announced that it is a priority to get it passed, possibly in a lame duck session. There is broad political support for the package, but Coburn from

continued bottom of page 5

FRIENDS THIRD ANNUAL MEETING, 2008

by Jerry McDonnell

When you review a year's worth of accomplishments, have an educational presentation, info on new visitor centers, overview of Alaska's sixteen wildlife refuges, discuss future projects, elect new officers and have a pizza and salad lunch in one day, the agenda tends to flex its muscles and pant some. However, on September 13, 2008 twenty-five members and partners of Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, presided over by President Davis Raskin, gathered for the 3rd annual meeting in Anchorage at Alaska Pacific University and held fast, finishing off the agenda with only a few items of less than immediate importance left for the next conference call meeting.

Overall, what the annual assessment indicates is that "The Friends" in Alaska has in three years become a growing organization that is not afraid to put rubber boots on the ground, don a mosquito net if necessary, enjoy a bit of earth (wet or dry) and for those who are bush savvy a good bath in a cold stream is something to look forward to at day's end.

A most valuable asset to the annual meeting is to actually meet other Friends. After two years as a Friend the only people I have met face to face has been in a bush science camp, 300 miles north of Fairbanks in the vicinity of Coldfoot, or at the booth in Anchorage during the annual environmental gathering on Anchorage's Park Strip.

To date the friends ongoing project accomplishments have been the educational and outreach programs from hands-on science to art to photography, invasive plant abatement and environmental concerns on refuges; throw in membership recruitment and lending a hand to other refuges needs and it comes down to a full year of stretching man and woman power thin. The Friends membership is growing, 206 at present, but of course not everyone can—due to time, family or jobs—get into the trenches where labor is needed.

Betty Siegel, our volunteer coordinator, dug deep this summer to fill projects and was herself hands-on in several of them.

One environmental issue of concern to the Friends is the proposed road from King Cove to Cold Bay. A road that would run through the heart of the Izembeck National Wildlife Refuge. To find details on this proposal please see David Raskin's Compass piece in the Anchorage Daily News (ADN) on Sept. 18, 2008. The article titled "17-Mile road linking King Cove to Cold Bay not necessary," can be found on-line at <http://www.adn.com/opinion/compass/>

The issue of man/woman power was addressed during a 2-hour presentation by Laurie Wolf of the Foraker Group, an organization that helps non-profits get organized and stay effective. The analysis of our current status grades us not too bad, but room for improvement. We have to credit much of the organization to our continuing President David Raskin and our hard working board. Raskin admits to spending 20 hours a week on Friends projects, a revelation that may have thwarted any aspiring members seeking office. He, with some diplomatic reluctance, ran unopposed, upholding an Alaskan tradition. However, this is his third year and the bylaws dictate 5-year term limits. The same applies to continuing officers: Sharon Baur Vice-President; Patricia Wood, Secretary and membership chair; and Treasurer Ginny Harris (Ginny may want to be replaced in the coming months. Any takers?). It is time for others to be introduced to the roles of leadership as in the ensuing years we will need some new players in the executive branch.

A planned TV show about the Friends is in the planning stage, according to Raskin, which may help with recruitment.

Friends Third Annual Meeting, 2008 by Jerry McDonnell *-cont. from page 2*

A report was given by Michelle Stout on the planned Tok visitor center; Fish & Wildlife Service has procured 7 acres of highway frontage property. The center—Alaska Public Lands Information Center/Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center/Tok Mainstreet Visitor Center (APLIC) will offer year-round education and information to visitors and the local community. On the edge of the 730,000 acres of Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge and near the Wrangell Saint Elias National Park & Preserve—the largest National Park in the United States (a good trivia question for the youngins)—the center will be the first place visitors entering Alaska by road will encounter. Working with the Tok Chamber of Commerce the new facility will integrate with Tok's Mainstreet Visitor Center. APLIC will have a multi-purpose theatre, student classroom, an exhibit area and a bookstore. The local community will also benefit greatly from this center as facilities in Tok are limited.

Attendees came a distance to the meeting. Patricia Wood our secretary and membership chair came from distant Virginia. Other people who came the distance include: Brian McCaffrey, Bethel; Susan Georgette, Kotzebue; Gary Wheeler, manager of Kodiak NWR; and Joanna Fox, Fairbanks. Joanna, of U.S. Fish & Wildlife, saved the season this year on the Kanuti invasive plant project by finding the funding for the project. And of course our Homer and Anchorage members attended in force.

Maeve Taylor stopped by. Maeve has taken a new job so at present she isn't playing a role with the Friends. However, Maeve's supervisor, Debbie Steen is filling in until Maeve's replacement is hired. Maeve will be missed but we are trying not to let her get too far away.

Mike Boylan, Refuge Supervisor, gave a lively overview of the refuges, pointing out how the

introduction of species to areas where they are not native can have unintended consequences. Other areas of concern are predator control, land exchanges and climate change. The rat eradication project on Rat Island is now beginning. An article in the Anchorage Daily News, Sept. 22, 2008 announces the inception of this project.

Birding camps, photography camps, art camps, invasive plants, and environmental issues--some that require political involvement—are a full load for a membership of 200 in the largest geographic state in the U.S.

During a prior strategic planning meeting support for successful programs already in place was rated high on the list. The consensus was to do a few things well rather than add more projects to which we cannot supply the man/woman power.

Poppy Benson suggested we build on our successful birding camps. We have several birders in the group (i.e. a very active Betty Siegel for one) who could facilitate and maybe train others for such an endeavor.

For other items taken up at the meeting, dial in the next conference call.

At the end of the meeting photographers Mary Frische and Tom Collopy treated us to slide show of selected refuges taken last summer.

The annual meeting served to review the year and look toward beneficial projects to which we can contribute.

If you haven't had the opportunity to participate in any of the camps or other projects, I encourage you to reward yourself by working for a worthwhile cause out there in the out there. Consider it an expensive paid vacation to the heart of Alaska. The bush of Alaska is not a place "nobody has ever been" or "the
- continues top of page 4

middle of nowhere” as some people think of it. People have survived in all parts of Alaska for thousands of years. Volunteer and find yourself in the midst of “a very big somewhere” where the roads are

paw prints, hoof prints, footprints and waterways. Except for seasonal caribou travels there are very few traffic jams.

Celebrating National Wildlife Refuge Week

“Climate Change 101: Some hard truths you should know.”

The Alaska Region of the USFWS celebrated National Wildlife Refuge Week by underwriting four public lectures by Nobel Laureate Michael Schlesinger entitled “Climate Change 101: Some hard truths you should know.” On behalf of Friends, I invited Dr. Schlesinger, arranged his itinerary, and accompanied and introduced him at the various venues. The programs were presented from September 27–October 4 and were co-sponsored with substantial contributions by UAA, UAF, and the Alaska Marine Conservation Council. There was very good attendance at the Kodiak NWR, UAA, Fairbanks, and Alaska Maritime NWR, and a seminar at the UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. Although the presentations were highly technical and at times difficult for many to follow, the lectures were generally well-received. Richard Voss and David Payer of the Arctic NWR arranged a special meeting with Dr. Schlesinger and key refuge and regional staff at the USFWS Fairbanks offices.

Dr. Schlesinger’s visit was exciting and interesting, and the programs presented important scientific information about the effects of greenhouse gases on the climate,

lands, and oceans, especially in Alaska. Although it was trying at times, we succeeded in accomplishing our objectives of informing the public while publicizing National Wildlife Refuge Week and the Friends. The visit concluded with a lecture at Islands and Oceans Visitor Center in Homer, attended by approximately 120 people who contributed \$500 to the Friends and many who volunteered to work with us.

We wish to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of time and effort by FWS staff who arranged funding and publicity, especially Mike Boylan, Debbie Steen, Kevin Painter, Maeve Taylor, and Todd Logan at the Regional Office. Special thanks also go to Tina Shaw for arranging the lecture at Kodiak NWR, Sue Hazlett for arranging the Fairbanks events, Sharon Baur and Nikki Hinds for arranging the Homer event, Homer Sourdough Express for contributing refreshments, Alaska Geographic for assisting with publicity, and the many other FWS staff and Friends volunteers who are too numerous to list.

submitted by David Raskin

Coming Spring 2009...

The National Wildlife Refuge Association’s

4th Annual

Digital Photography Contest

It’s not too early to start taking pictures,
so get out your cameras and get to a refuge today!

Contest details at <http://www.refugeassociation.org/contest/ContestHome.html>

Alder Pull

Oct 5, 2008 * Alaska Maritime National Wildlife * Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, Homer, Alaska

On a crisp and sunny fall morning, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges met at Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer to pull Alder. Poppy Benson, Outdoor Planner for Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, came up with the idea to have the weed pull in conjunction with the Michael Schlesinger Lecture which was held the night before, October 4th, at Islands and Ocean. Alaska Maritime NWR provided housing at the bunkhouse for the out of town volunteers. A catered breakfast for all volunteers was provided by none other than in-house chef, Poppy.



Alder, although native to Alaska, had invaded the area around the Islands and Oceans Visitor Center which had been landscaped for other native plants. It was threatening to overtake the less aggressive, more desirable natives. Friends also pulled clover, hemp nettle, and bird vetch. In less than 2 hours, the dedicated crew cleared a large area nearly to the back of the building. Both Volunteers and Refuge Staff

participated in this effort. Out-of-Town Volunteers were: Denise Lachowsky from Kodiak, Joe Cannon, Tara Walker, and Wendy Smith from Anchorage. The Homer Volunteers were: Carla and Wayne Stanley, Sharon and Marvin Baur, Anna Sansom, and Trina Fellows. Staff included, Greg Siekaniec, Manager for Alaska Maritime, Poppy Benson, and Nikki Hinds, Volunteer Coordinator for Alaska Maritime NWR.

Thanks go to all for a job well done!

Letter from our President, continued from page 1

Oklahoma still has a hold on the bill, and it may require too much floor time to fix the problems in order to get it passed quickly. If there is a lame duck session and the House receives the package passed by the Senate, we are in big trouble. Everyone is working hard to get Izembek out of the package, and we are hoping that none of this happens until after the election. If a new administration with a new director of USFWS is on board, things might change. However, Dale Hall will be retiring in January, and the acting director will be Rowan Gould, former Alaska Region director and a strong proponent of the Izembek exchange and road. I will be in Washington, DC to work



on this November 13-14, and Nicole will do the same the following week.

We have continued our efforts on the proposed Yukon Flats NWR-Doyon land exchange that would bisect the third largest refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System for oil development by Doyon Corporation. There is generally good news about the proposed Yukon Flats Land Exchange. Because of serious problems with the land appraisal values and process, the completion of the EIS has been delayed at least a year, probably longer. Rob Campellone has replaced Cyndie Wolfe as manager of the EIS process. We are hoping that the long delay and a new *Letter from our President - continues page 6*

administration will contribute to the demise of the entire proposal.

Sue Hazlett and I traveled to Fort Yukon to meet with Native leaders to inform them about the Friends and our programs, enhance mutual understanding, and increase cooperation on projects and activities of mutual interest. We were joined by Rob Jess, Yukon Flats NWR Manager and Shannon Nelson of his staff. Our presentation to the Village Council was well received, and we are hopeful that these efforts will result in protecting the Yukon Flats NWR and furthering our programs and cooperation with the Native communities in and around the refuges of the this great land. There are also some negative developments. Dacho Alexander apparently was not re-elected as the chief of the Ft. Yukon Tribe, although questions about the election process are yet to be resolved. There are concerns about why he was not re-elected and what this means for the future of oil development and the land exchange and our ability to work with Fort Yukon. In addition, Doyon is working to put together other oil development plans and partnerships in the area, and we need to keep on top of these issues.

We continue to monitor the Minerals Management Service (MMS) proposed Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil lease sales in Bristol Bay, especially in light of the political pressure to “drill baby, drill.” It would be located in the heart of the marine habitat of one of the most productive fisheries and marine mammal habitats in the world and could potentially affect six national wildlife refuges and eight State of Alaska refuges and critical habitat areas. Under the leadership of the World Wildlife Fund project headed by David Aplin (retired FWS), numerous organizations and individuals, including Friends, have submitted statements questioning the wisdom of such oil leases and pointing out the potential dangers to fish, wildlife, and habitat that could occur as a result of oil development on the OCS. Public comment and opposition are growing, and we hope that after the election there will be reinstatement of the moratorium on oil leasing in Bristol Bay.

I was fortunate to be invited to participate along with leaders of 24 other Friends organizations in the week-long Friends Academy in at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in West Virginia. This was sponsored by

the Fish and Wildlife Service and the NWRA. Trevor Needham and his staff arranged an outstanding and informative program that featured presentations by key Staff of the FWS, other federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. I left with many excellent ideas for our programs, and the meeting provided an opportunity for key friends leaders and the presenters to learn a great deal about our organization and programs in Alaska. Everyone indicated that it was one of the best, if not the best program, of that sort that they had ever attended.

In celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week, we arranged with the Alaska Regional Office a series of lectures on global climate change by Nobel Laureate Michael Schlesinger (see article in this issue). We are also participating in the plans to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Alaska Maritime NWR and Yukon Delta NWR in 2009. There will be events in various venues, including Homer, Anchorage, Sitka, Dutch Harbor, Bethel, and others. We are also working with the committee planning the 50th anniversary of the Arctic NWR in 2010. This will be a major effort to draw the attention of Alaskans and the Nation to the wonders of the Arctic Refuge and all of the magnificent refuges in the system. There are plans for a documentary film and a play about Olaus and Magaret Murie, who played key roles in the establishment of the refuge. The Friends are playing a key role in these preparations.

As always, we are fortunate to have wonderful board members, volunteers, and others who have contributed so much to the development of our organization and our important work protecting and enhancing our magnificent National Wildlife Refuges. It is an honor and a pleasure to work with all of you, and we owe special thanks to all of the dedicated personnel of the Fish and Wildlife Service, who tirelessly strive to maintain and improve our wonderful National Wildlife Refuge System in these trying times. Having the opportunity to work with colleagues and partners who share our passion for the refuges and our vision for the future is what makes this job so exciting and rewarding!

David

Unique volunteer opportunities abound in Alaska Refuges. It's a great way to experience Alaska and have the trip paid for too!

iPods and Honeybuckets by Vera Stein

This past summer I had the pleasure of spending a week at Camp Sivunniigvik (Sivu), an Inupiat fish camp outside of Kotzebue, Alaska, just north of the Arctic Circle. The purpose of the camp is to teach children Native values, such as respect for Elders, knowledge of and respect for nature; knowledge of the Inupiat language and preservation of traditional ways of life. The camp brings together young and old alike.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had a grant to send volunteers to various camps in the wildlife refuges throughout Alaska. I went to Camp Sivu as an art instructor. I had a number of nature-based art projects for the kids to do. Every afternoon there were three art classes held in the main dining area, which doubled as a recreation area.

Initially I was supposed to go to Camp Kiana, a smaller camp. I brought enough material for twelve students.

The Kiana camp fell through and I went to Camp Sivu instead. When I got to camp, I found out there were thirty four students, more than double the amount of Camp Kiana! So I had to stretch out my art supplies to make sure I had enough art projects for the kids to do throughout the week.



The kids were great. I had quite a few enthusiastic students who enjoyed painting, making jewelry and doing collages. The paintings were wonderful. Many of the children painted pictures of the water and the sea and painted eagles and beluga whales.

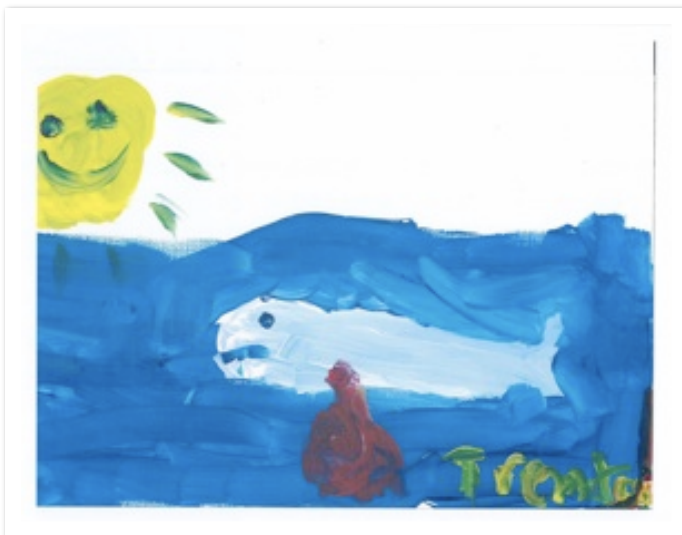
It was interesting contrast to see the kids with their iPods and Nike sneakers; and have honeybuckets for toilets at camp. The camp was rustic but comfortable. Adults slept in cabins and the children slept in tents. There was plenty of good food and

lots of things for the kids to do. Their days were filled with Inupiat language classes, taught

by Sunii; beading classes taught by Edith; caribou hunting stories taught by Johnson & Wendell, and more. In the evenings they played basketball and board games. Morning started with devotionals and singing followed by breakfast.

I particularly enjoyed mealtimes. It gave me the opportunity to connect with the Elders and listen to their stories. I learned a lot about Native Inupiat culture and met many wonderful people. Mandy Hill, the camp director, got everyone at camp started and on track. Vera and Langford Adams run the camp year-round, and saw to it that everyone was safe and sound. Langford ran the boat back and forth from camp to Noorvik and Kotzebue and knows the waterways in the area like the back of his hand.

There were no showers at camp and by day four I was ready to jump in the river and bathe. Boy, was that water cold!! It was the quickest bath I think I've ever had. I slept in a cabin a few nights. Other nights I slept on a couch in the kitchen. It felt like a big slumber party! I was woken up every morning by the smell of freshly brewing coffee at around 6:15 am. Everyone filtered in slowly, and the conversations, stories and laughter started. My mornings were spent helping Beulah, the cook, in the kitchen. I was also out with Sunii on the boat on the river checking the nets for fish, and learning how to use an ulu knife to cut up fish. She was also teaching kids how to smoke the fish we caught. In the evenings after dinner I would help Beulah again. I sometimes wondered if I was more of a



hindrance than a help; in any event, I really enjoyed talking to her.

The teen counselors were always helping the elders when they could. I admired the tremendous amount of respect they paid the elders throughout the week. A Park Service volunteer named Ross was also at camp. The two of us wandered off in the evenings. We went canoeing and hiking. The blueberries on the hill were ripe so we ate blueberries as we hiked. Camp Sivu is situated in an incredibly beautiful spot, and the tundra just north of camp is a wonder. I was given the nickname "Anugaaq" (pronounced roughly as ah-noo-ak) and I responded to Anugaaq or Vera.

I had a wonderful experience at Camp Sivu, and hope to reconnect with the great people I met there. Many thanks to Maeve Taylor from USFWS for making it all possible. Also a multitude of thanks to Susan Georgette for opening her home and helping me when I arrived in Kotzebue.

Daigu (thank you),

Vera Stein
Anchorage, Alaska
October 2008



For more information about future volunteer opportunities at Alaska's Refuges go online to: <http://alaskarefugefriends.org/opportunities.php> and/or contact:

Betty Siegel
Volunteer Coordinator
907 235-1598

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GoodSearch – powered by Yahoo– www.goodsearch.com

Volunteering on Adak – April 29th to June 10th

From 5-29-08 to 6-05-08 Marvin Baur Radio Operator, shuttled cargo and crew from airport to Tiglax or the bunkhouse. Marvin also constructed Rat Traps and did some light Maintenance. He continued to pick-up freight and passengers at the airport etc. He was on hand both morning and evening by radio, keeping in contact with the biologists on the islands.



6-05-08 Ken and Donna Hinkle and Gino arrive. 6-06-08 Begin spraying the Orange Hawk Weed



06-07-08 Finished Spraying. Gino leaves

6-08-08 Tiglax arrives, Donna, Ken and Marvin Bird Surveys. Marvin continues the shuttles and radio operations in between Bird Surveys



6-09-08 Bird Surveys and Rat Traps finished

TOGIAK'S TUYA

BY TERRY FULLER

I'm a bit biased about Togiak Refuge. After all, I do work here. As the Education Specialist for Togiak, I like to portray my refuge as incredibly unique and special (it is) to the classes that I get to present to. And while the reality is that much of what's found at Togiak (mountains, coniferous forests, salmon, moose, etc;) can be found at other refuges across our state, we do have one thing that other refuges can't claim: a tuya.

A tuya is a type of volcano that looks a lot like a butte: steep sided and flat on top. Tuyas form when lava erupts through a thick glacier or ice sheet. On a worldwide scale, tuyas are fairly rare, being confined to regions or areas which were formerly covered by continental ice sheets that also had active volcanoes during the same time frame. You get the idea: conditions had to be just right.

Tuyas are a type of subglacial volcano that consists of nearly horizontal beds of basaltic lava. They

form when a small volcano erupts beneath a glacier or ice sheet. At first, the lava erupts in much the same way oceanic volcanoes do, forming piles of lava pillows. But in this instance, the lava shatters as it comes in contact with the ice, leaving a glassy type of rock called hyaloclastite. After a while, the ice above the eruption melts away to form a lake, and subsequent eruptions involving both fire and water continue to produce more hyaloclastite. When the lake that formed is either filled or boils away, lava flows in a gentler, more normal fashion again, eventually resulting in beds of horizontal, fragmented volcanic rock. The result is a tuya.

Tuyas often stand out in stark contrast to the lands surrounding them. As mentioned, they're not found just anywhere. Many have been identified in Iceland and British Columbia, as well as parts of Oregon. Also, Antarctica has quite a few. Tuyas in Iceland are sometimes

called 'table mountains', because of their flat tops.

The name tuya, by the way, was coined by a Canadian geology grad student in the 1940s named Bill Mathews. While researching these odd mountains, he used that name or term to describe them in a paper he wrote as a part of his research. It's the name of a butte and river in the part of northern British Columbia where he was conducting his studies at the time.

As I mentioned, Togiak has a tuya, which does make it irrefutably unique: it's the only one known to exist in all of Alaska. Our tuya is located northeast of the village of Twin Hills. It's approximately three miles long and a bit over a thousand feet high. So while there may be other really cool refuges in Alaska to see a brown bear or schools of spawning salmon, if you want to see a tuya, you'll have to come to Togiak: we've got the only one around.

To all Friends Members who helped put this newsletter together

Thank you!

Your submissions are needed for the Summer 2009 Newsletter. Please email information about your recent and ongoing Friends events & Refuge involvement to Tamara Clark at:

clark@alaskarefugefriends.org

Save the Date: 2009 National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Conference, February

21-23, 2009. Washington, DC. For more information go to: <http://www.refugenet.org/new-events/>

[FrConf2009.html](http://www.refugenet.org/new-events/FrConf2009.html) If you would like to be on the list to receive information about this exciting event, please send an e-mail to cstoker@refugeassociation.org with "2009 Friends Conference List" in the subject line.

Volunteering at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

Friends members Sandra Noll and Erv Nichols volunteered for three weeks in August at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center, above the Arctic Circle along the Dalton Highway in Coldfoot.

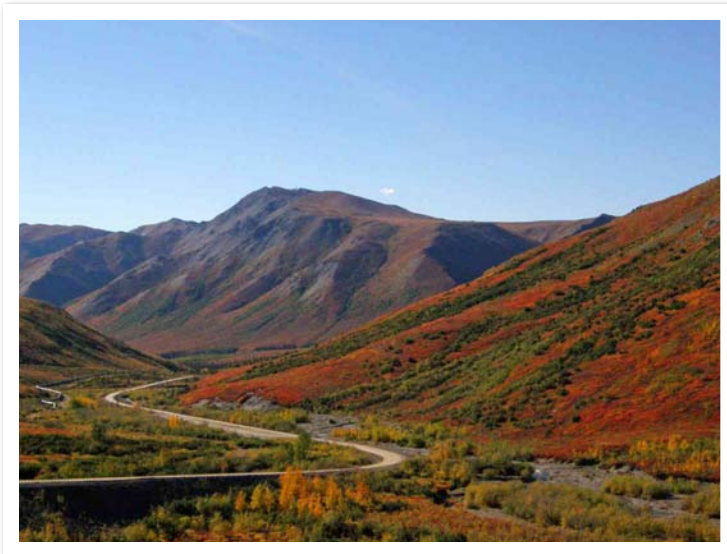
Sandra reports:

“We have worked all shifts (open, evening and split) at the visitor center and think we have learned as much as we have helped out. Erv has presented his bald eagle program several times to rave reviews and has also enhanced the Kanuti section of the FWS wildlife refuges power point program. I have developed a written Q&A interpretive program for the locked caribou antler exhibit which can also be used as a short interactive evening program.”

“Our other activities have included helping out at the desk and the small AK Geographic store and talking with visitors from many different states and countries, some traveling independently and many on tours. We have split daily 8 hr shifts every day here except our recent two days off during which we traveled another 100+ miles further north. We felt right at home (NM, AZ) camping at Galbraith Lake! We enjoyed a bit of Indian summer for the trip with clear, warm days which highlighted the spectacular fall colors of the tundra and were great for hiking. Nights were COLD, however - my toothpaste froze and the truck and our tent fly were covered



with frost each morning!”



“Bird-wise we have seen many flocks of white-winged crossbills, a short-eared owl, Ptarmigan (what an odd sound they make), Arctic warbler, Peregrine and American Tree Sparrow as well as a few unidentified ducks and the ubiquitous raven and grey jays. We have seen caribou, Dall sheep, moose, lots of Arctic ground squirrel and many sign of bear and wolf. And, although all the locals say it’s not been a good year for berries, we’ve been able to pick enough to enjoy for breakfast many mornings.”

“It has been a good experience overall and has given us the opportunity to gain a better understanding of Alaska and Alaskans in all their diversity.”

Kanuti And Other Weed Wars: Invasive Plant Projects

by Jerry McDonnell

Okay, it's hard work. Pulling weeds in the hot sun with maybe a bug or two pestering us is not what we took loans to train for in our educational endeavors. But when you're on your hands and knees staying close to the earth that's not covered in asphalt a nirvana seems to come calling and maybe you begin to think that some of those units on that college transcript were overkill—a thought which occurs to me when I'm out there in the out there either a long hike or a horseback ride from anything we call a road. Maybe I'm a class of one, but over the years when I have lived in the bush I found the world a better place and at peace. If this is selfish deal me in and I'll sweat my way through the hand. Which brings us to what this article is touting: invasive species management and how you can be a part of it.

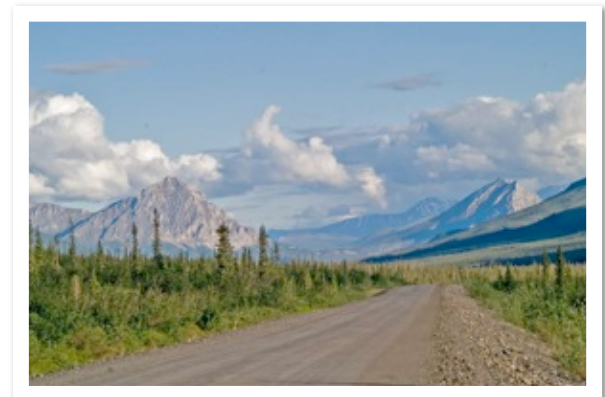
Two waves of the Kanuti Weed Wars battle against the WC

(White Sweet Clover) of 2008 took place, one from June 22 to 28, the second from July 21 to 25. Betty Siegel, Joe Cannon, Ulroan, Wayne Stanley, and Jerry McDonnell were the Friends members on the June pull, organized by Ruth Gronquist of the BLM and her summer intern/assistant Rehanon Nehus. The July pull was also organized and worked by General Ruth with Rehanon's assistance. The Friends' July member crew were Tom Balland, Dilek Tas, Alan Smith and again Betty Siegel.

The combined effort was to clear white sweet clover from the roadway and river crossings that feed into the Kanuti Wildlife Refuge along the Dalton Highway. 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 (see Side Bar). It was rewarding to find

on the June 08 pull the success of our efforts from the previous year. White Sweetclover had not reestablished in the areas cleared in the summer of 2007.

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. 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; economic losses have been estimated to exceed \$120 billion a year. Four hundred of the 958 species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act are considered to be at risk primarily *story continues page 14*



due to competition with non-indigenous species (Pimentel, 2004—see Invasive Plants of Alaska, Alaska Exotic Plant Information Clearinghouse (AKEPIC, 2005).

Another 2008 invasive project took place on Adak this 2008 summer. It was a project of multiple purposes. Taking place from May 29 to June 5, Ken and Donna Hinkle and Gino Graziano sprayed for Orange Hawk Weed. Marvin Baur, Radio Operator, shuttled cargo and crew from airport to Tiglax and the bunkhouse, constructed Rat Traps and did some light Maintenance. Continuing to pick-up freight and passengers at the airport and environs, Baur was on hand both morning and evening by radio,

keeping in contact with the biologists on the islands.

Alaska still has the opportunity to halt the spread of noxious weeds, as our invasive plant populations 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, and to that end have been active on previous Invasive Plant Projects on Izembek, Kenai, Kodiak, Tetlin, and the Alaska Maritime Wildlife Refuges.

The invasive plant projects can be warming work, which is welcome in Alaska after winter departs. The projects perform a necessary service and offer one a chance to see parts of Alaska that many

people would consider an opportune vacation. On the Kanuti Project BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, thanks to Joanna Fox, provides us with tools, safety equipment and gear, housing in cabins at Marion Creek, transportation from your home to Coldfoot, water and snacks. We also were put up at Fort Wainwright barracks in Fairbanks coming and going. Your travel and food expenses will be provided or reimbursed. A day trip over Antigon Pass onto the North Slope is also a “gotta do” as is the museum in Wiseman and the new Visitor’s Center in Coldfoot. The grayling fishing isn’t too shabby either. Do yourself a favor, the Friends and Alaska a service and sign up for these invasive plant projects.

At its nearest point, the Kanuti Refuge lies just eight miles west of the Dalton Highway, the road that leads from Fairbanks north to Prudhoe Bay. At least six Koyukuk River tributaries cross the highway and later enter the Refuge. Kanuti Refuge staff, the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges (Friends) and others are increasingly concerned that these waterways (especially Jim Creek, Fish Creek, Prospect Creek, and Bonanza Creek) could become routes for dispersal of invasive white sweetclover (*Melilotus alba*) into the Refuge. This non-native plant readily invades open and disturbed areas and has established extensive areas along early successional, gravel river bars in interior, south central and southeast Alaska. White sweet clover has rapidly colonized the Dalton Highway corridor near the Refuge, moving 120 miles northward between 2000 and 2007.

Since 2006, The Friends have cooperated annually with Kanuti Refuge, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service (NPS), Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT), Alyeska Pipeline Service Company and others to control white sweetclover at key sites where it could easily disperse into the Refuge, where currently no invasive, non-native plants are known to exist. To date, control efforts have focused on manual pulling. In 2007 the group continued removing plants manually, but also expanded the effort to include more mechanical control with weed trimmers. Subsequent cultural control (planting native grasses and forbs) is being considered.

The goal is to eliminate seed production, which will require infested areas to be visited during the growing season in June and July. In addition, staff will conduct early detection/rapid response surveys along rivers downstream of the Dalton Highway and within the Refuge so that newly established sweet clover can be controlled and eliminated quickly.

Allakaket Science Camp - Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge - Aug 12-14, 2008

Allakaket is a rural Native Village located on the South Bank of the Koyukuk River. This was the first Science camp held in the village of Allakaket. Friends Members Brenda Dolma, Sharon Baur and Debbie Jarosz assisted Brandy Birkbigler, Tanana Chiefs and Kristin Reakoff, Interpretive Park Ranger, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge during the 3 day camp.

We begin our days in the Tribal hall with hands on activities such

as owl pellet dissections, beading, instructional games aimed at teaching our students water quality, Salmon habitat, team work and careful stewardship of their lands through art, the classes were on more of a fun festival venue than classroom structured instruction. The students varied in age from pre-school to Junior high. The afternoons were spent at the river. We painted t-shirts, played games to help the children understand

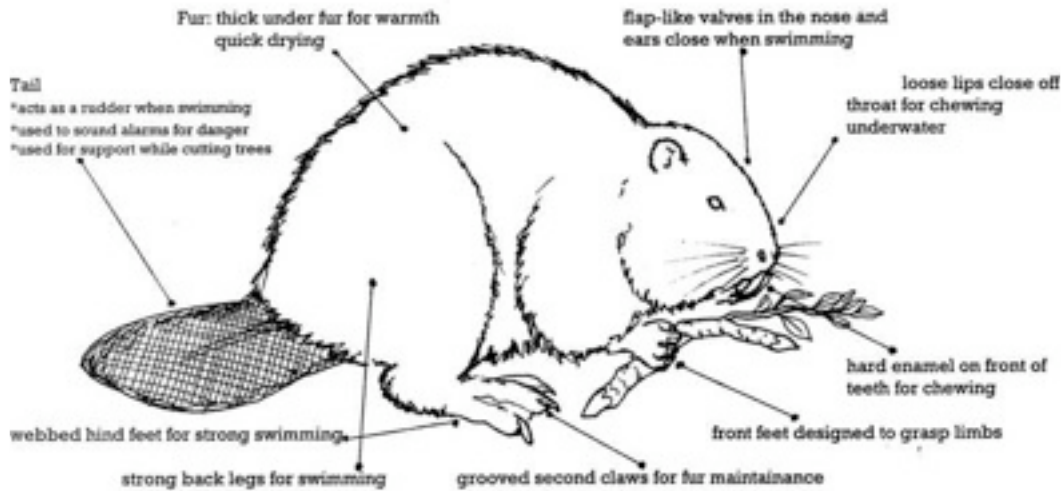
Salmon Life Cycles, and did invertebrate sampling. The classes were well attended, with participation of the elders all three days. The last afternoon of camp we took the opportunity to walk the village visiting with as many elders as we could. Regular school classes were soon to resume so this gave us a chance to introduce ourselves to the teachers and give them our input from the science camp.



Color It - A Page for Kids

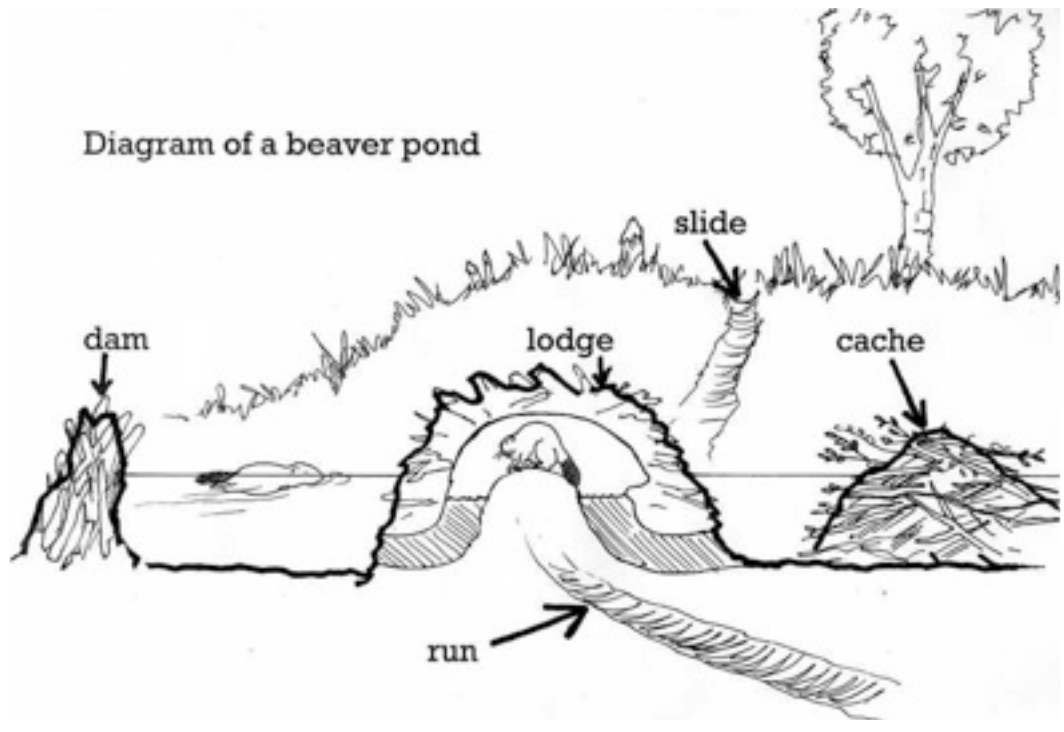
The beaver - *Castor canadensis* - loves living in Alaska's Refuges

A beaver's many adaptations...



Inside: large liver for dealing with excessive CO2 levels; large lung capacity to stay underwater for long periods

Diagram of a beaver pond



2008 has been the busiest year yet for Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuge

Here is what we have done for eight of the sixteen refuges in our state. The number after the project indicates the number of our volunteers participating in the event.

| | |
|---|--|
| Yukon Flats NWR | Unalaska Non-Native Horse Gelding Project (3) |
| Earth Work Quest Internship Summit (1) | Michael Schlesinger event and Weed Pull (10) |
| Selawik NWR | Kanuti NWR |
| Kotzebue/Selawik Spring Bird Walks (2) | Henshaw Creek Weir Science Camp (1) |
| Kivu Culture Camp (1) | Allakaket/Alatna Science Day Camp (3) |
| Innoko NWR | Arctic Interagency Visitor Center, Coldfoot (2) |
| McGrath/Iditarod Science Camp (1) | Dragonfly Days, Fairbanks and Tok(1-2) |
| Alaska Maritime NWR | Dalton Highway White Sweet Clover Weed Pulls I (5) |
| Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival (6) | and II (4) |
| Ocean Festival, Anchorage (8) | Arctic NWR |
| Pribilof Islands Photography Classes (2) | Kaktovik Educational/Coastal Field Work (1) |
| Adak Orange Hawkweed Invasives Project | Arctic Village Science/Culture Camp (2) |
| (also office and maintenance projects) (4) | |

In addition, Friends in Cold Bay worked for Izembek NWR and Friends in Kodiak and Kenai helped with their refuge projects on their own.

Many of our projects required talent in Science, Art, and Photography, and volunteers had to be flexible and adaptable. Our volunteers were outstanding in these areas and more. Their experiences were varied, much appreciated, and memorable. Many of the refuges indicated they may have similar projects for 2009 and hope the volunteers will return then. It is expected that all of the refuges will consider other projects which will provide additional volunteer opportunities for our members. Remember to keep checking the Opportunities tab on our website in late winter or early spring as projects are formulated and volunteer recruitment begins. For members who live in the lower 48, you may also volunteer if you plan to visit Alaska in the summer. Transportation is provided from Alaska locations to the events and projects through grants and refuge funds.

Thanks to all who volunteered in 2008. The refuges and I especially appreciated those who took leave from their jobs without pay or used valuable vacation time. You are all heroes to me.

Betty Siegel
Volunteer Coordinator
betty.siegel@alaska.net

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Thank you AK Friends

We appreciate all of our members and wanted to send a special Thank you out to those of you who are Best Friends, Sponsors and Life Members. Your donations are key to our success.

Thank you for all that you do!

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