



Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge
101 12th Avenue Room 262
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
(907) 456-0329
kanuti@fws.gov

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Kanuti

National Wildlife Refuge

What's New with Kanuti

Refuge staff have been very busy this past year. Here is a look at some of the projects that took place on the refuge.



Kanuti Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP):

Many of you have already received a flyer about our plans to update Kanuti Refuge's management plan, or CCP. Every 10 to 15 years each National Wildlife Refuge must take a look at their plan and consider changes to it. We would like to hear comments from everyone interested in the management of Kanuti Refuge. We have already made informal personal contacts with some of you, but we want to make sure we hear from everyone. If you are interested in learning more or would like to

contribute comments, please contact the refuge manager, Bob Schulz, at (907) 456-0329 or write him at: Kanuti Refuge Manager (Re: CCP Comments) 101 12th Ave. Room 262 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701. The next step in this process is to hold public scoping meetings. We will keep you informed about when and where these meetings will be taking place.

Arctic Interagency Visitor Center Opens in Coldfoot:

The Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are in a partnership managing the Coldfoot Visitor Center. Since 1989, we have been providing information to people traveling the Dalton Highway. The original visitor center was a small two room cabin. This past winter a brand new 10,000 square foot facility was built across the street. The new visitor center opened July 4th, despite the fact that there were only temporary exhibits. Visitors from across the globe stopped by and marveled at the woodwork and enormous amount of space. In addition to running water, the new center has a 60-seat theatre for nightly programs, a trip planning room for hikers to sit down and plan their treks with the help of maps, an expanded sales area where the Alaska Natural History Association sells items, and a lot of space for dioramas and displays. The new exhibits and dioramas will be installed this month and should be ready for the Grand Opening next summer. The new visitor center will be opened Memorial Day through Labor Day. Contact Jody DeMeyere for more information (907) 456-0361.





Moose Surveys:

The Kanuti Canyon and Henshaw Creek trend areas were surveyed on the refuge in early December. Due to insufficient snow earlier in the winter we barely managed to complete the survey before bulls dropped their antlers. The Kanuti Canyon trend area (86 square miles) is in a 1972 burn and the Henshaw Creek trend area (106 square miles) burned in 1991. Results from 2000-2002 are shown below. Sex and age ratios have varied among years. Surveys will be conducted this year as soon as we get enough snow to cover the vegetation. Full reports on the 2000 and 2001 surveys were sent to the Tribal Council offices and copies are available on request. Contact Lisa Saperstein at (907) 456-0508.



Kanuti Canyon Trend Count Area: Aerial Moose Composition Counts, 2000-2002

Year	Bulls:100 Cows	Yearling, Bulls:100 Cows	Calves:100 Cows	Percent Calves (%)	Moose Counted	Moose/ Square Mile
2000	38	7	7	5	87	1.01
2001	40	9	23	14	57	0.66
2002	16	4	13	13	72	0.84

Henshaw Creek Trend Area: Aerial Moose Composition Counts, 2000-2002

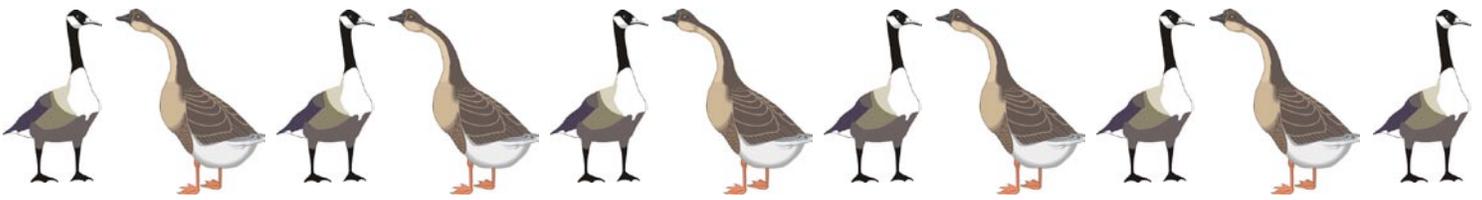
Year	Bulls:100 Cows	Yearling, Bulls:100 Cows	Calves:100 Cows	Percent Calves (%)	Moose Counted	Moose/ Square Mile
2000	129	18	24	9	43	0.41
2001	106	0	31	13	38	0.36
2002	72	6	28	14	36	0.34



Beaver Cache Survey:

A beaver food cache survey was conducted last September. There were an estimated 1,148 caches found on the refuge. This is the first time a refuge-wide estimate was obtained. Although there is little information about how many beaver use a cache, this survey will provide an index of the beaver population. If any trappers have information about how many beaver tend to use a lodge, the refuge would be interested in hearing about it!





Aerial Survey of Molting Geese:

An aerial survey of molting white-fronted geese was flown in early July for the third year. Canada geese were also counted. Results are in the table below. In addition to counting birds, the refuge is also getting a better idea of what areas are important to geese during the flightless period.

Results of aerial goose surveys on Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge, 2001-2003

Year	Adult White-fronted Geese	Young White-fronted Geese	Adult Canada Geese	Young Canada Geese
2001	332	142	67	54
2002	121	56	87	122
2003	313	65	51	78

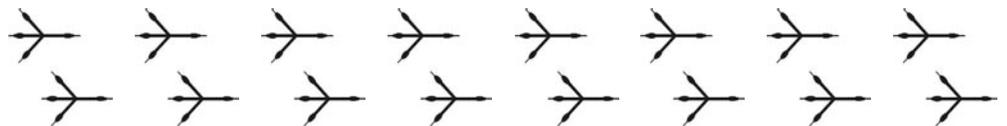


Photo by George Jameson

Breeding Bird Surveys:

For the sixth consecutive year, refuge staff surveyed birds in the Kanuti River Canyon in June, contributing to the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) program. We recorded 670 individuals of 40 species. Most noteworthy was the detection of eight Townsend's Solitaires at six of the 50 stops. Townsend's Solitaire, pictured on the left, is a rather rare breeder in some of Alaska's canyon and alpine open country. With its unusual habitat, including sagebrush and juniper, Kanuti Canyon is likely the only location on the refuge where solitaires can be found. Next year we hope to launch another BBS upriver of the Canyon.



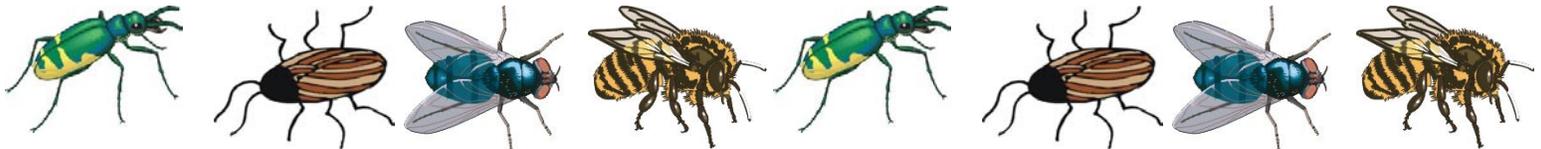
Breeding Bird Survey Habitat:

Birds have been monitored in and near Kanuti Canyon from 1993-1995 and 1998-present, but no information has been collected on the type of habitat they use. New methods to examine habitat were tested in June. The data will be analyzed this winter and methods will be changed as needed. This project will continue until habitat information is collected for all 50 bird survey points.



Alaska Landbird Monitoring System:

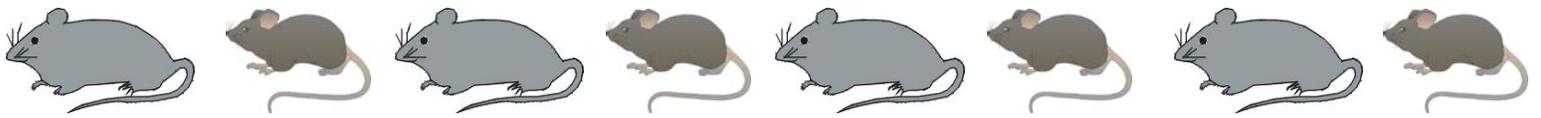
Refuge personnel participated in the first year of the Alaska Landbird Monitoring System (ALMS). ALMS is a statewide program designed to inventory and monitor landbird populations on Alaska's public lands, like refuges, parks, and forests. Kanuti Refuge is only responsible for two of the 200 monitoring plots located throughout the state. Our plots are in the Four Corners and Minnkokut Lake areas, respectively. Because 1) we only have one plot to monitor annually and 2) the diversity and abundance of birds on portions of the refuge remain largely undocumented, we hope to survey additional plots to help inventory the rest of the refuge.



Kanuti Canyon Plants and Insects:

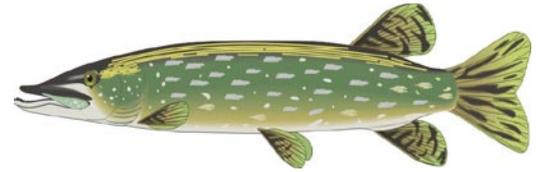
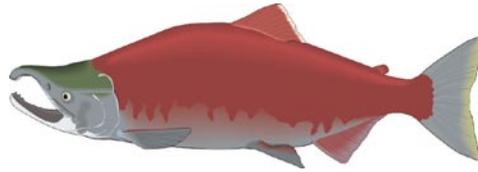
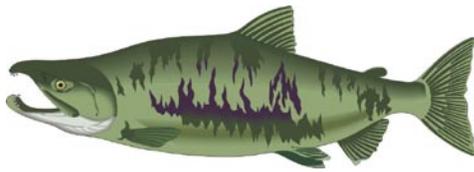
The refuge is starting to conduct a more complete inventory of resources, including plants, insects, small mammals and birds. Little is known about insects in Alaska despite their importance in the food web and their potential role as pests. Scientists do not even have a complete list of what insect species occur in Alaska. Refuge Information Technician Harvey Williams has been working on an insect collection since 2001. This July, we visited Kanuti River Canyon to collect plants and insects. This area is not typical of most of the refuge and may be home to unusual species of plants and insects. A specialist on willows and insects also came on the trip. Harvey has been busy pinning the insects, which will be sent to a specialist for identification, and plant identification will be checked by botanists at the University of Alaska Fairbanks museum.





Small Mammals Collection:

As part of the refuge’s inventory process, small mammals were trapped in vegetated sand dune habitat near the Nolitna River in late August. It was hoped that the dunes, which appear to be low lichen-covered ridges with stunted aspen from the air, would be home to small mammals not found in other parts of the refuge. Snap and pitfall traps were set for three nights. Only two red-backed voles and three shrews were captured, but the project allowed refuge staff to visit a unique area of the refuge. Although no unusual plants were seen in late August, it might be worth visiting this area earlier in the summer for botanical work.



Whitefish Project:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife fishery biologist, Randy Brown, worked with the staff of the Kanuti Refuge to identify the whitefish species present in the South Fork Koyukuk and Kanuti Rivers during the early summer, and on the main-stem Koyukuk River downstream from Allakaket in the fall. Humpback whitefish and least cisco were found in all three locations and broad whitefish were identified in the Kanuti River. All the fish were feeding in the early summer, and most were of adult size. Fish caught in the fall were all adults and the females had greatly enlarged



eggs, indicating that they were preparing to spawn later in the fall. Otoliths, or earbones, were collected from all of the sampled fish and ages will be determined later this winter. The fish caught in this study were donated to residents in Bettles, Alatna and Allakaket. This sampling project was a first step to a radio-telemetry study designed to locate important habitats of whitefish that is planned for next year.





2002 Jim River Fire:

The refuge can get maps of fire boundaries, but we have little information of how severely burned different areas are within those boundaries. In early August, the refuge, along with specialists from the Anchorage office, tested a method to document fire intensity in the 2002 Jim River burn. The method used satellite images taken before and after the fire to map different levels of intensity. The burn then had to be visited to collect field data to verify the map. Data are currently being analyzed.



Fuels Reduction Project:

The village of Allakaket has been identified as a community at high risk from the threat of wildfires originating on Federal lands. The new housing development is on a slope located in a continuous stand of black spruce. The potential for fire to spread from the forest to the houses was high, so this summer a fuels reduction project took place to limit that threat. The goal was to provide a fuel break between the new housing development and the adjacent public wildlands of Kanuti



National Wildlife Refuge. Some fuel reduction work was done in the area in 1997 but the slash was only partially disposed of. The current project got rid of the old slash, removed low brush, thinned the black spruce and limbed the remaining spruce to overhead level. A fire crew made up of village residents and led by Chief Pollack Simon, began the project in July. Approximately 35 acres have been thinned to date. The slash was put into piles near the river and burned.

