

Selawik National Wildlife Refuge

Visitor Information



A refuge is a dynamic living landscape. Life cycles continue as all things in nature renew themselves. Come explore with us! Watch animals and their activities on Selawik Refuge in north-western Alaska.

A DYNAMIC PLACE OF BEAUTY

January, February, March

Selawik's lands are locked in winter's fragile silence. Moose are scattered throughout the refuge browsing on twigs and branches in the willow and birch thickets. Caribou paw through the crusty snow searching for lichens and grass in the frozen tundra. Furbearers scurry through the ice-encrusted brush. Sheefish winter under the frozen coastal lakes and inlets. Burbot spawn under the ice of inland rivers. The winds are bone-chilling. Temperatures may drop to -60°F .

April, May

Everything is bright and the land is vibrantly alive. By the end of April, there will be $17\frac{1}{2}$ hours of sunlight. Birds are arriving from the Lower 49, Mexico, and South America. Owls, ravens, geese, cranes, swans, and some ducks begin nesting. Caribou band together to migrate to their calving grounds north of the Brooks Range two hundred miles away. Brown bear emerge from their dens, some with newborn cubs. Furbearers birth and moose calving begins. Sheefish migrate upstream as the ice begins to break. When the ice is completely gone the pike will spawn. By mid-May the sunlight melts the snow and temperatures reach the 40°F s.

June

Summer solstice! Temperatures reach the 50°F s and 60°F s as the sun stays high. By the end of the month temperature peaks in the 70°F s. Fox pups emerge from their dens. Crane, geese, and raptor eggs are hatching; songbirds are nesting. Insects are noticeable and bothersome by the end of the month. An integral part of the ecosystem, insects are vital food for fish and birds. Lightning from thunderstorms sometimes sparks tundra fires. In less than two weeks the vegetation turns from brown to green from the 24 hours of sunshine.

July

Portions of tundra blaze with color as wildflowers bloom. Afternoon temperatures rise above the 80°F s. Geese, cranes, and ducks forage as they nurture their broods. A wolverine and her kits feed on a winter-starved caribou carcass. One of nature's most famous scavengers — it seems to sense a change in the the season.

August

Blueberry bushes turn patches of tundra to glowing burgundy. Birch trees are crowned with autumn's orange colors. The brilliant colors of dying leaves add temporary warmth to the landscape soon to be dim and frozen. Sheefish, salmon, and whitefish are spawning. Geese and ducks put on weight — staging for migration. The days are shorter. The air is chilly on windy days. At night the temperature drops to the 30°F s. By the end of the month stars twinkle in the night sky.

September & October

Caribou herds return to the refuge. The white-throated bulls, sleek from summer grazing, brandish four-foot long antlers. They snort and spar seeking the attention of a potential mate. Their rutting sounds ring through the woods and tundra. Furbearers put on a heavy coat. A faraway skein of geese fills the air with an anxious chorus. Most birds fly southeast with the first northwest wind and cloudless day. A thin sheet of ice forms on the ponds. Winter comes quickly as the temperatures fall, reaching the 20°F s by October.

November & December

The snow-shrouded streams and lakes sparkle in the moonlight. Mink, wolverine, fox, and marten leave tracks in the powdered snow. Their prints are soon smooth and hardened by a relentless wind. Moose and caribou shed their antlers. Bears semi-hibernate although they may emerge on an unusually mild day. Cold, dry and windy days alternate with mild, overcast, and snowy days. An occasional blizzard blows in as arctic and maritime air masses seem to battle for supremacy. The average temperature remains below 0°F . By winter solstice the sunlight diminishes to one hour and 43 minutes.

TUNDRA WETLANDS PROVIDE HABITAT

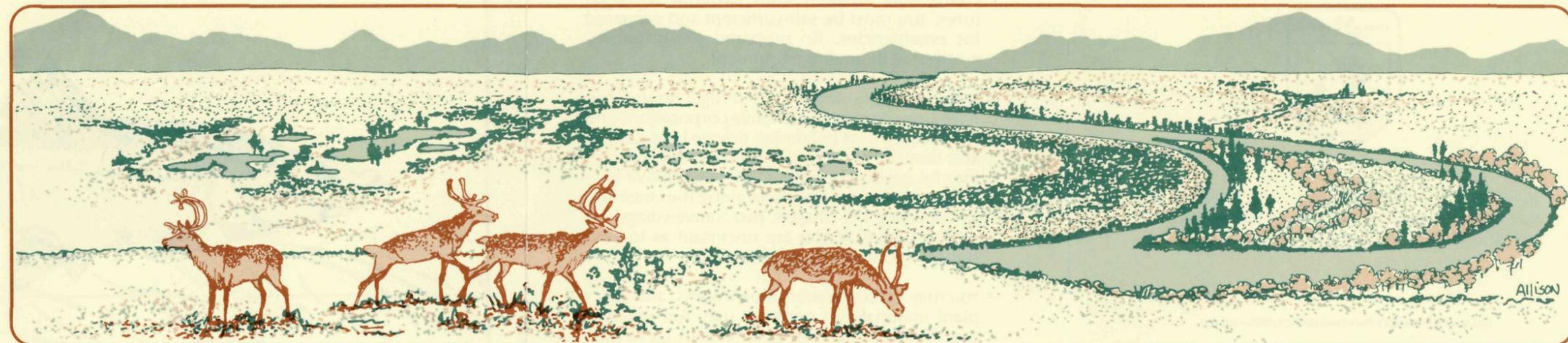
Selawik Refuge — a showcase of estuaries, river deltas, and tundra hills — straddles the Arctic Circle. The most prominent feature is the tundra wetlands nestled between the Waring Mountains and the Selawik Hills. These wetlands support an abundance of wildlife — waterbirds, waterfowl, and mammals. The northeastern part of the refuge (240,000 acres) is designated wilderness. The upper portion of the Selawik River is a nationally designated Wild River.

Selawik Refuge was established by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980. The 2.15 million acre refuge was set aside to conserve wildlife and habitats, fulfill international migratory bird treaty obligations, and provide opportunity for continued subsistence by local residents.



A SENSE OF HISTORY

Selawik's lands are a national treasure because of its role in human and wildlife history. The refuge is located near the Bering land bridge that once existed between Asia and North America. Many years ago animals and humans migrated across these lands connecting the continents. In later years prospectors searched these lands seeking gold. The refuge retains evidence of these ancient and recent migrations.



Selawik National Wildlife Refuge is part of a nationwide system of wildlife refuges under the administration of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation.



Information on hunting and fishing: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Box 686, Kotzebue, Alaska 99752 (Tele: 907-442-3420). Information on topographic maps: U.S. Geological Survey — telephone: (907) 271-4307 (Anchorage) or (907) 456-0244 (Fairbanks). The refuge is mapped on the Selawik and Shungnak 1:250,000 USGS maps.

For more information:

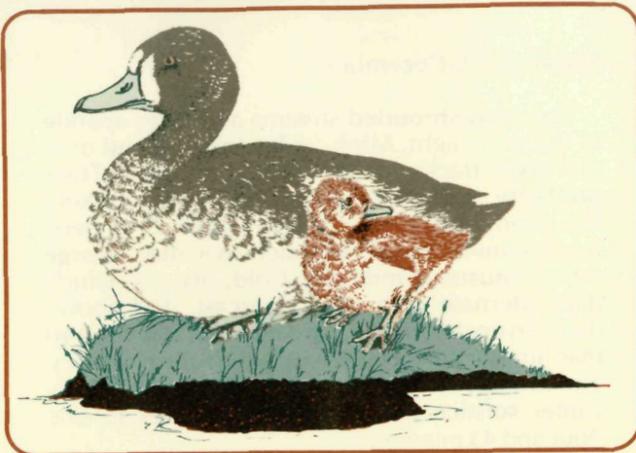
Refuge Manager
Selawik National Wildlife Refuge
Box 270
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752 Telephone: (907) 442-3799



BUY DUCK STAMPS. SAVE WETLANDS FOR WILDLIFE. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

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VISITOR INFORMATION

- Recreation on the refuge may include hiking, boating, camping, hunting, trapping, and fishing in accordance with state and federal regulations. It is advisable to check with refuge personnel prior to a visit to determine which activities are allowed and what regulations apply.
- The refuge is accessible by boat, aircraft, snowmobile, dog team, foot, and cross-country skiing depending on season and weather. There are no roads. Scheduled air service is available to Kotzebue from Anchorage — and to Selawik, Kiana, and Noorvik from Kotzebue. Charter air taxi service is available at Kiana, Ambler, and Kotzebue to anywhere on the refuge. Lodging is available only in Kotzebue.
- Selawik Refuge like most places in Alaska has changeable weather with extreme temperatures. You must be self-sufficient and prepared for emergencies. Be prepared for inclement weather with quality equipment.
- Large acreages within the refuge boundaries have been conveyed to Native corporations and individuals, thus becoming private land. Cabins and tent camps may look abandoned but they may be used seasonally. Generally, Native land holdings are most extensive along the coast and surrounding the villages. Two Native villages lie on the refuge. If you are uncertain as to land status — contact refuge personnel
- You may gather berries, mushrooms, and other plant materials for personal use. You may use dead or downed trees as long as usage is non-commercial.

