

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Tetlin

*National Wildlife
Refuge*





*Nestled within the
Tanana River Valley,
the abundant wetlands
and forests of the Tetlin
National Wildlife
Refuge welcome
thousands of birds and
people crossing the
border into Alaska
each year.*

Along the Chisana River
Hank Timm / USFWS

Natural Travel Corridor

For countless generations, the Upper Tanana Valley at the east central edge of Alaska has served as a natural travel corridor . . .

. . . A corridor for wildlife and the nomadic tribes that hunted them, for fur traders and gold seekers, and for World War II road builders who connected Alaska to the rest of the continent via the Alaska - Canada "Alcan" Highway. Today this highway brings adventurous travelers like you along this corridor to the edge of Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge.

The Refuge's 730,000 acres include snowcapped mountains and glacier-fed rivers, forests and treeless tundra, and an abundance of wetlands. These varied habitats provide important breeding and resting areas for migratory and resident wildlife.

In 1980 this land became part of the of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a national network of lands and waters administered for the conservation, management and restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.



This flying "Blue Goose" (a stylized Canada goose) was designed by renowned cartoonist and conservationist J.N. "Ding" Darling in 1935. It has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System and its more than 530 refuges.

Pasque flowers (wild crocus) are the first to welcome the warmth of spring.

A Welcome Stopping Place

Spring arrives on the wings of thousands of birds flying through the Refuge from their winter homes in the southern states and Central and South America. Like you, birds find a welcome stopping place on Tetlin Refuge.

Sheltering mountains of the Refuge reflect the sun's warming rays to melt ice early on many rivers, ponds and lakes. In April, ducks, geese, and swans congregate on open waters. Many continue their journey to other nesting areas in the state.

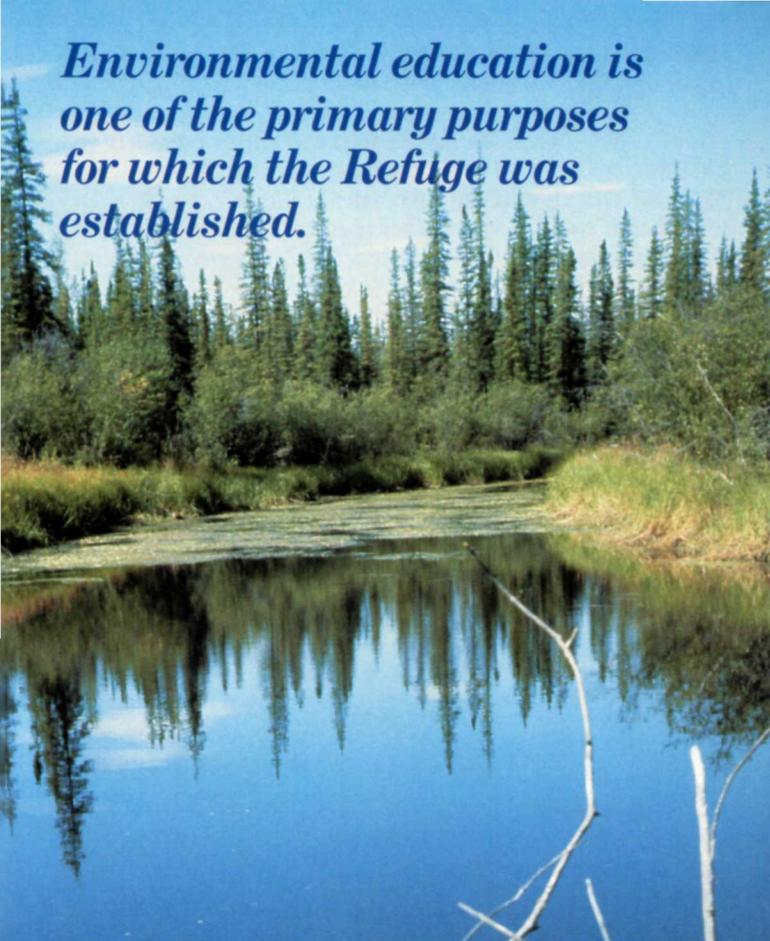


Welcome to the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge.

Alpenglow on the Mentasta Mountains as seen from Jatahmund Lake.

Hank Timm / USFWS

Environmental education is one of the primary purposes for which the Refuge was established.



A local student helps band a bald eagle nestling as part of the Refuge's environmental education program.

Hank Timm / USFWS

A Nesting Place

Not all birds migrate beyond the Refuge. At least 115 of the 186 bird species stay to nest and raise their young. About 25 hearty species, from the petite boreal chickadee to the magnificent great gray owl, live here all year and survive temperatures that often drop to -50°F or colder.

Because of its eastern location, Tetlin Refuge typically hosts some birds that are rare or absent elsewhere in Alaska. Among these are the blue-winged teal, ruddy duck, ring-necked duck, osprey, sharp-tailed grouse, and red-winged blackbird. Unusual sightings of the American coot, sora, and brown-headed cowbird have also been reported.

A complete bird list is available from the Refuge or its website (*see back cover*).

Refuge biologists survey breeding waterfowl, raptors and songbirds

early each June. They also place leg bands on songbirds in fall during migration. These activities are part of state, national and international programs to learn if bird populations are increasing, decreasing or stable.

Tetlin Refuge hosts one of the most rapidly growing populations of nesting trumpeter swans in Alaska. These graceful, large swans were on the national threatened species list until biologists surveyed Alaska's swan habitat in 1968 and counted nearly 3,000 birds. Sensitive to disturbance, swan pairs seek isolated ponds and lakes for nesting.

The wilds of Desper Creek are enjoyed by boaters fishermen, hunters and photographers.

Elisa Butteri / USFWS



Keith Larson / USFWS

Thousands of birds, like this blackpoll warbler, are banded each fall at the Refuge's migration banding station near Tok.



Hank Timm / USFWS

The highest density of nesting osprey in Alaska are in the Tetlin area. Nestlings are banded for a cooperative study with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Year-round Home

Long, warm summer days help plants and tiny pond life to grow quickly, setting a banquet for wildlife.

Humpback whitefish, related to salmon, feed in lakes in spring and summer then migrate to specific river areas to spawn. Two of their six known spawning areas within the Yukon River drainage exist on the Refuge. After spawning, whitefish swim downstream for the winter.



Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle / USFWS Volunteer

Moose are an important subsistence food for local residents.

Moose calves, born in late May, follow their mothers for almost a year, nursing then feeding on wetland plants and the new growth of summer. Moose survive on willow branches in winter.

When the land is frozen, caribou feed on lichens as they travel through the Refuge between summer and winter ranges. Wolf packs often follow them.

Grizzly bears roam the foothills and mountainous areas while black bears prefer lower elevations. Hungry bears eat anything including plants, berries, fish, small rodents, carrion and moose calves. Some black bears here are cinnamon in color. All bears are dangerous: treat them with respect.

Caribou on Jatahmund Lake.

Check the Refuge website for a complete list of wildlife.



F. D. Stearns / USFWS

Ancestral Traditions

Generations of traditional knowledge of plants and animals on the Refuge are sewn into the birch-bark baskets, beadwork, stories, songs and dances of the Upper Tanana Athabascans.



Scott Pollock / USFWS

Moose hide is hung to dry after the time consuming process of tanning and smoking.

Today's indigenous people follow seasonal trails over hills, across frozen marshes and along major river systems to find moose, caribou, whitefish, waterfowl, ptarmigan and berries much as their ancestors did years ago.

Many places on Tetlin Refuge are historic sites for fishing, hunting and gathering. One of the purposes of the Refuge is to provide opportunities for subsistence activities for all local rural residents.



Larry Vanderlinden / USFWS

Even in the cold of winter, river otter frolic through the snow.

Floods and Fire

Wildlife benefits from flooding and fires that reshape and renew the wetlands and forest of Tetlin Refuge.

Summer flooding “takes” from one area and “gives” to another -- scouring new channels and depositing nutrients and sediments. Willows sprout on the gravel bars to become habitat for moose and songbirds.



Lightning-caused fires are common. Fire often burns unevenly through the forest, removing old vegetation and recycling nutrients into the soil. The result is a mosaic of old and young spruce, birch, aspen, grasses, herbs, and shrubs. This mix of plant communities meets the habitat needs of a greater variety of animals.

The Refuge policy is to protect people and homes while allowing fire to continue its natural role in the ecosystem within the scope of the Refuge fire management plan.

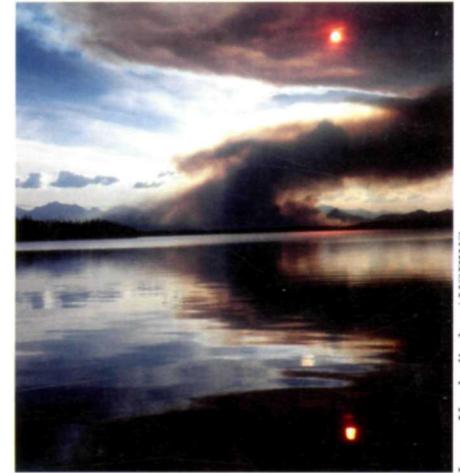
Fireweed is an early successional plant that comes into an area after a disturbance, such as fire.



Fire fighters burn out fuels ahead of the Tok River Fire.

Refuge staff may ignite prescribed fires to reduce fuel hazards around villages or enhance wildlife habitat according to a written fire plan. This plan specifies the weather conditions, equipment and personnel needed to complete a burn safely.

Researchers study the results of fires on the Refuge to learn more about their effects and to improve future decisions about managing fire.



The Trail Lake Prescribed Fire was ignited to improve wildlife habitat and ecosystem diversity.

Cooperative Opportunities

Tetlin Refuge shares a common border with Alaska’s Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Together with Canada’s Kluane National Park, they form one of the largest contiguous conservation units in the world.

Inside the Refuge’s borders, about 22 percent of the land is either owned or claimed by private landowners, Native corporations or the State of Alaska.

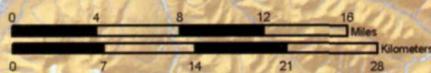
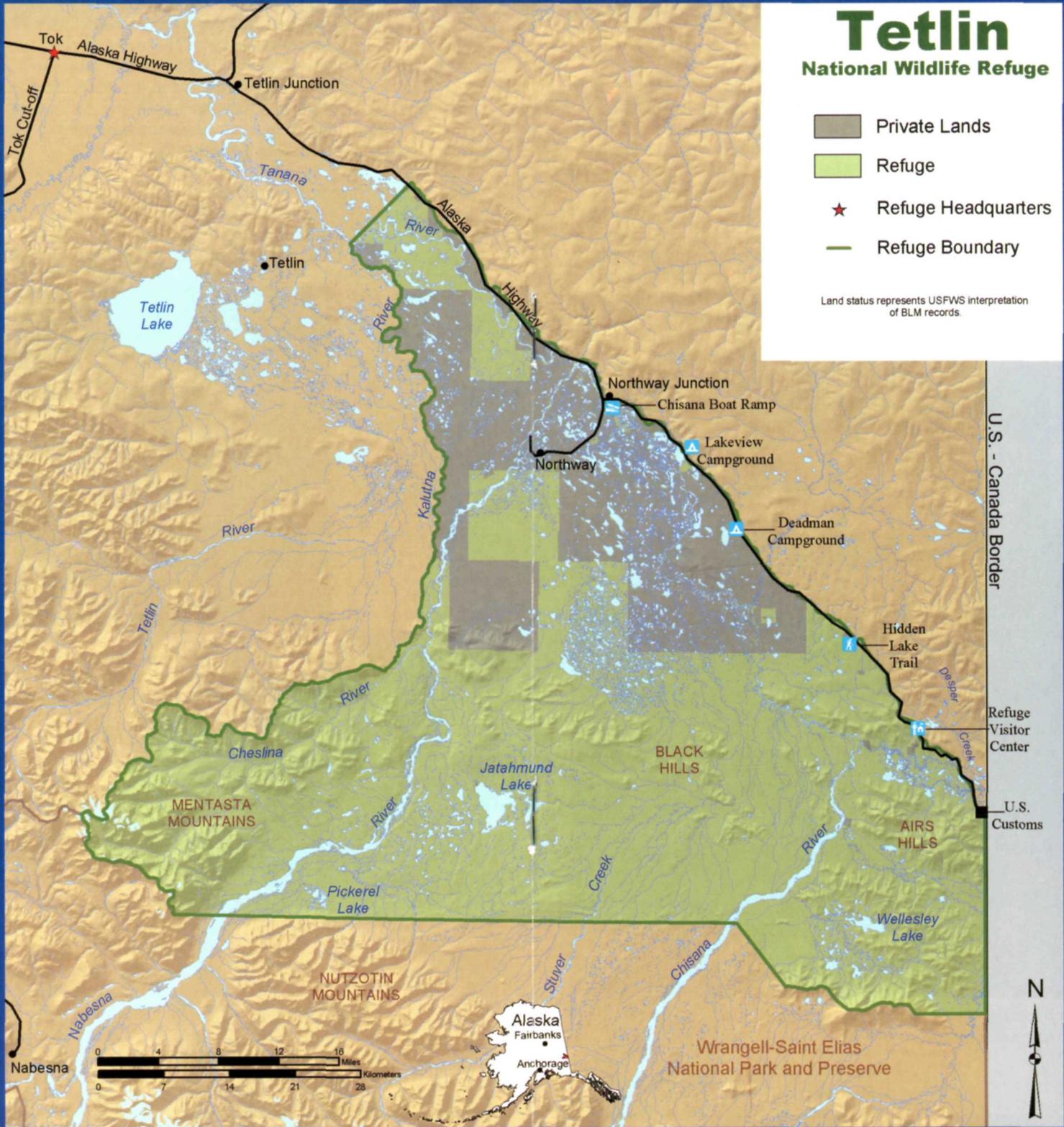
Because fish and wildlife resources know no political borders, the challenges of managing wildlife and habitat can best be met by working with state, federal and international agencies; tribal organizations; businesses, and private citizens. A good example of this cooperation is the regional and local planning for fire management.

Tetlin

National Wildlife Refuge

- Private Lands
- Refuge
- Refuge Headquarters
- Refuge Boundary

Land status represents USFWS interpretation of BLM records.



Enjoying the Refuge

Tetlin Refuge is one of two national wildlife refuges in Alaska that can be reached by road. Travelers entering or leaving the state on the Alaska Highway drive 65 miles along the Refuge's northern boundary. Fairbanks is 230 miles northwest on the Alaska Highway. Anchorage is 350 miles southwest along the Glenn Highway/Tok Cutoff.

Along the Alaska Highway you will find the Refuge Visitor Center, two campgrounds, and seven scenic pullouts with natural history exhibits.

Canoeing and fishing are favorite summer activities on the Refuge. Hunting is the most popular activity during the rest of the year.



Floating rivers and creeks is one of the best ways to see the refuge.

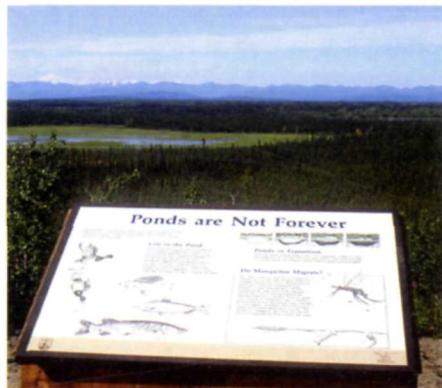
Mary Timm / USFWS

Panels along the Alaska Highway describe interesting refuge features.

Welcome Station

In the Refuge's rustic log Visitor Center, eight miles from the Alaska-Canada border, you will find natural history and cultural presentations, wildlife exhibits, and a spectacular view from its deck. An Alaska Natural History Association book store has books and gifts specific to this area.

The Tetlin Refuge Visitor Center is open from May 15 to September 15.



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Auto tour tape

Listen to an hour tour of Tetlin Refuge from the comfort of your vehicle as you travel along its northern boundary on the Alaska Highway. An audio tape features stories of local wildlife, Native culture, and construction of the Alaska Highway.

The tape can be picked up and dropped off at either end of the guided route at the Refuge's Visitor Center near the border or in Tok at the Alaska Public Lands Information Center. The center in Tok also has wildlife displays and offers statewide information for travelers.

Larry Vanderlinden / USFWS



Colorful lupine line the roadsides in early summer.

Roadless Interior

You can explore the interior of Tetlin Refuge with your own canoe, river boat, snowmachine or small aircraft on floats or skis. Tok is the regional hub for charter air taxi services.

There is no designated access on Tetlin Refuge for motorized vehicles except for snowmachines, aircraft and watercraft. Snowmachines may be used when the refuge manager determines that snow depth is sufficient to protect plants and soil.



Larry Vanderhinden / USFWS

Exploring by snowmachine is a popular winter activity.

Cultural Courtesies

When traveling within Tetlin Refuge, please be sensitive to the needs and customs of the local residents. Respect subsistence fish nets, camp sites, traplines and cabins.

Native corporations, private citizens, and the State own land within the Refuge. Request permission before traveling through non-refuge areas. If you are uncertain of the land status, check with Tetlin Refuge.

Recreational Opportunities



Wildlife Viewing

Spring and fall bird migrations are the premier wildlife events on Tetlin Refuge. You will see the greatest variety of birds typically between mid-May to early June. For awesome numbers come in September when, after storms, flock after flock of swans and sandhill cranes cross the sky on their way south.

Animals are most active around sunrise and sunset. If you stop at a scenic pullout and watch quietly, you may see a moose or beaver in a pond, waterfowl resting on a lake or birds fitting in nearby shrubs. For their safety and yours, do not approach moose or other animals. When observing wildlife along the highway, please pull off the road completely at a safe place.



Hank Timm / USFWS

Lynx are solitary predators that may be seen throughout the year.

View across Scottie and Desper Creek Flats near the Tetlin Refuge Visitor Center.



USFWS



Camping

Two free Refuge campgrounds along the Alaska Highway are open from early June to mid-September depending on weather and road conditions. Deadman Lake Campground (MP 1249) has 15 sites and can accommodate larger motor homes (maximum length 33 feet). Lakeview Campground (MP1256.7) has 8 sites for tents and small RVs.

Campgrounds have picnic tables, fire pits, garbage containers and toilets, but no drinking water. Firewood is sometimes available. Refuge rangers give evening talks throughout the summer.

The interior of the Refuge is open to wilderness camping. If you choose a site along a river, please be alert to the danger of flooding.



Canoeing and Boating

One of the best ways to explore Tetlin Refuge is by canoe. Lakes at both campgrounds and Desper Creek offer easy canoeing.

Fast, glacier-fed rivers such as the Chisana and Nabesna can be more challenging. Melting of snow and glaciers usually keeps river levels high through July and can cause local flooding when combined with excess rainfall. For updated river conditions, check with the Refuge in Tok.

Small boats and canoes can be launched from the highway at Desper Creek and at Chisana River near the Northway Junction. A boat ramp is also available at Deadman Lake Campground.



*Looking across Gardner Creek Flats
along the Chisana River.*



Hiking

You can stretch your legs and walk into Tetlin Refuge along two established trails off the Alaska Highway.

Taiga Trail is a quarter-mile interpretive walk at Deadman Lake Campground (Milepost 1249). Hidden Lake Trail explores a mile of forest and bog habitats beginning at Milepost 1240 (boots are suggested).

If you come to hike the back-country, bring compass and topographic maps to find your own route. Because of low, wet terrain, trails marked on the maps typically are used only in winter.



Fishing and Hunting

Some fishing streams are easily accessible from the Alaska Highway at the following mileposts (MP):

Scottie Creek (MP 1223.4) and Gardiner Creek (MP1246.6) for arctic grayling, Desper Creek (MP1225.7) for arctic grayling and northern pike, Deadman Lake (MP1249.4) for northern pike, and Hidden Lake (MP1240.0) for rainbow trout.

The region's waterfowl, caribou and moose attract both sport and subsistence hunters.

All anglers and hunters on Tetlin Refuge must follow federal and state regulations. For details, check at the Refuge office or with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Tok (907/883 2971).



*Fall colors on
Little Scottie
Creek Flats.*

*Aspen turn
vivid orange and
gold in the fall.*

Weather

Safety and Comfort

Compared with other parts of Alaska, the climate of the Interior is warmer in spring and summer; colder in winter, and has fewer cloudy days and less wind.

June and July temperatures often exceed 80°F dipping to 40°F at night. By mid-September, 45°F days and 25°F nights are common. Weather can change rapidly. Snow can fall as late as June or as early as August. Winter temperatures can sink to -50°F, or colder.

Travel Plan

Leave a travel plan with your family or friends, and remember to notify them when you return.

Insects

Mosquitoes and biting gnats can be annoying, so come prepared with repellent. Headnets are recommended when traveling away from developed areas.

Bear safety

To avoid encounters with black and grizzly bears:

- Make noise when hiking.
- Keep a clean camp. Store all food items away from tents and out of the reach of bears.
- Place all garbage and waste in the bear-safe garbage containers or carry it out. Bears will dig up garbage if you bury it.
- Discard fish refuse in deep water or place it in bear-proof garbage containers immediately.
- Treat both black bears and grizzly bears with the equal respect. Please keep your distance.

More Information

For details on brochure topics, please visit the Refuge website or contact our staff (*see back cover*).



“Wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of the people who are alive today, but the property of unknown generations whose belongings we have no right to squander.”

A summer evening at Jatahmund Lake.

Jennifer Smith / USFWS

President Theodore Roosevelt

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Tetlin

National Wildlife Refuge



Trumpeter Swan
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