

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Kenai

*National
Wildlife
Refuge*



*From the Harding
Icefield's five thousand
foot peaks, over
windswept alpine
tundra slopes, marshy
wetlands and through
boreal forest to the
ocean, the Kenai
National Wildlife
Refuge is often called
"Alaska in miniature."*





This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Alaska in Miniature

The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in south-central Alaska was originally established in 1941 as the Kenai National Moose Range. In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act broadened the Refuge's purpose to include conserving all of its fish, wildlife and habitats in their natural diversity, fulfilling international treaty obligations, protecting water quality and quantity, and providing opportunities for scientific research, environmental education and interpretation, land management training and outdoor recreation.

This nearly 2-million acre Refuge is home to over 200 species of fish and wildlife, including moose, brown and black bears, wolves, lynx, bald eagles, trumpeter swans and salmon. More than one hundred migratory bird species use refuge wetlands, tundra and forests during spring and fall migrations.

One of 16 national wildlife refuges in Alaska, the Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Kenai mountain stream

Bill Hickey/USFWS



Hoary marmot

USFWS



Lynx

Steve Hillebrand/USFWS



Brown bear

Wildlife and Habitat Diversity

Harding Icefield: Ravens scavenge on nunataks, mountains surrounded by ice, where a select few animals including snow buntings and hardy plants can be found in isolated communities.

Alpine Tundra: Dall sheep, mountain goats and marmots survive and thrive on these windswept scree slopes in the Refuge's interior.

Boreal Forest: Deciduous and coniferous trees mix in sun-dappled woods, where lynx hunt snowshoe hares and moose browse on young birch, aspen and willows.

Lakes & Wetlands: Birds like trumpeter swans and common loons make their summer homes on over 7,000 lakes, raising their young on these protected waters. Beavers, muskrats and river otters also cavort in these important zones, where young salmon prepare for long migrations to the ocean and back.

Rivers: The Kenai River, with its world renowned salmon populations, winds through the heart of the refuge from glacially-fed meltwater and clearwater streams. In summer, brown bears feed on these salmon, spreading important marine-derived nutrients into the forest.

Sockeye (red) salmon



Berkley Bedell/USFWS

David Kenney/USFWS



Bald eagle



Brown bear tracks

Wilderness

In 1980, Congress designated 1.35 million acres of the Refuge as the Kenai Wilderness, a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

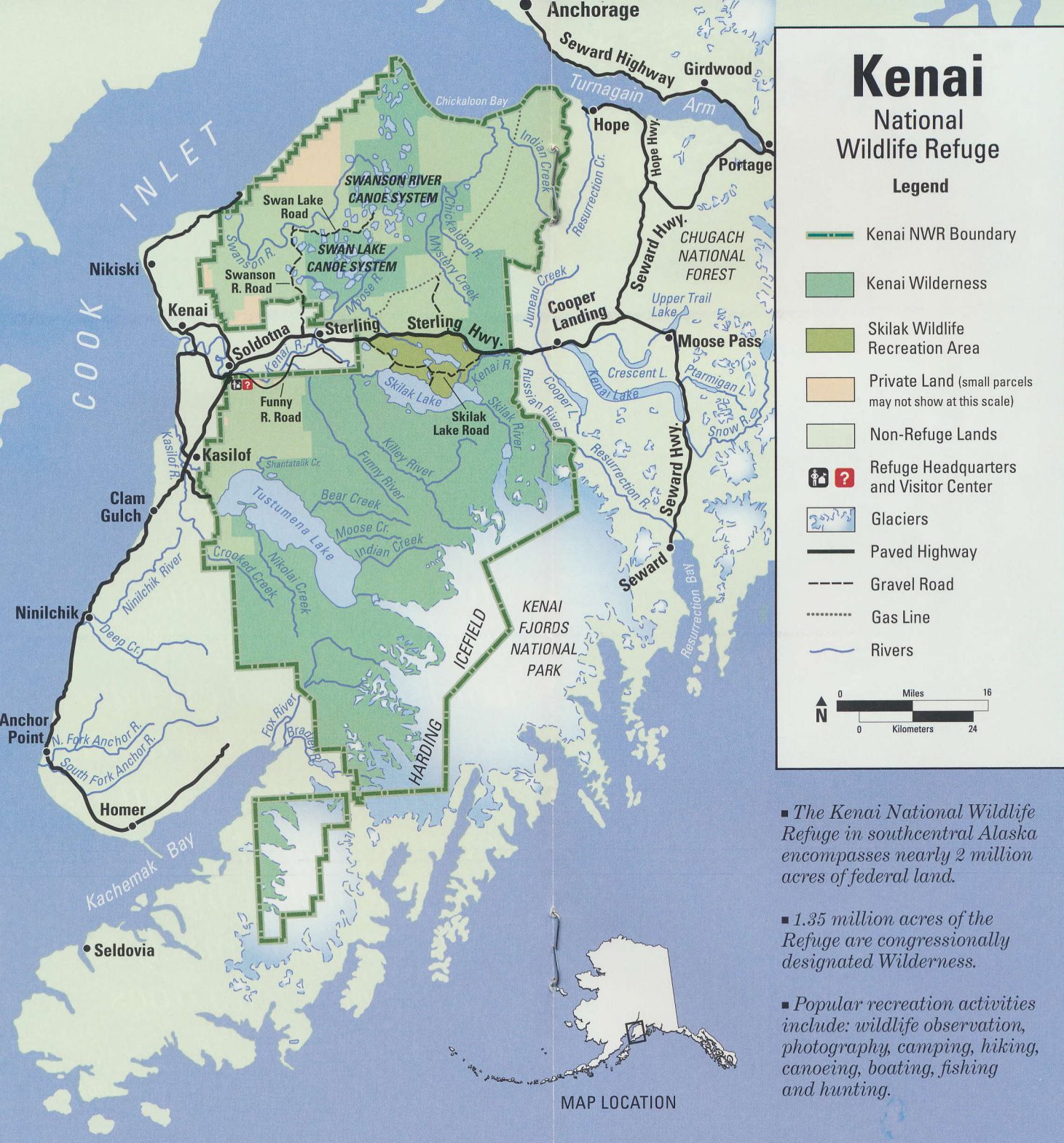
Consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Kenai Wilderness is managed to preserve its wilderness character—representing undeveloped and natural qualities that provide opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation.

The Kenai Wilderness includes three distinct units: the Dave Spencer Unit which includes the Swanson River and Swan Lake National Recreation Canoe Trails; the Mystery Creek Unit north of the Sterling Highway and the Andy Simons Unit which includes much of the Refuge's backcountry south of the Kenai River and Skilak Lake.

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.

- Wilderness Act of 1964

Nunatak on Harding Icefield



Water: A Vital Resource

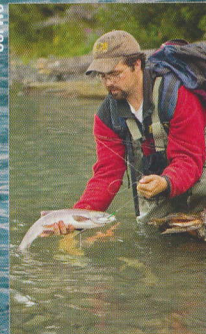
The Kenai Refuge still shows signs of its glacial past. Freshwater lakes, surrounded by glacially carved mountains and moraines are fed by clearwater streams and provide excellent habitat for many species. The turquoise blue glacially fed rivers of the Refuge mix with these clear tributaries and run to Cook Inlet.



Tustumena Glacier

Berkley Beadell/USFWS

USFWS



Flyfishing

These connected waterways provide habitat for all five Pacific salmon species, in turn providing food for other wildlife and recreational fishing opportunities for the public.

Other fish species thrive in the cold waters of the Refuge including grayling, trout, Dolly Varden char and stickleback.

USFWS



Canoeing

A variety of boating experiences beckon visitors to the Refuge. They include power boating on Skilak and Tustumena Lakes, rafting and drift boating on the Kenai River and canoeing in Swan Lake and Swanson River Canoe Systems.

Careful preparation and adequate gear, including life jackets, are essential when safely recreating on these very cold waters.



©T. Collopy/M. Frische

Moose

Recreation

The Refuge provides opportunities for visitors to engage in all six of the National Wildlife Refuge System's priority public uses.

Hunting

The majority of the Refuge's 2 million acres are open to hunting activities year-round. From physically intense sheep and goat hunts in the Kenai Mountains to weekend youth hunts for small game in easily accessible areas, there are a wide range of options available.

Fishing

Wet a line on the Kenai Refuge. Lake, river and ice fishing opportunities abound. Local guides, outfitters and tackle shops can help you gear up for your adventure.

Consult both refuge and state regulations before planning any fishing or hunting trip.

Wildlife Viewing/Photography

Visitors can view wildlife along scenic drives in the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area, during hikes on the over 50 miles of maintained trails or during sightseeing tours from commercial guides. An overnight stay at one of the Refuge's public-use cabins affords photographers the time to get that perfect shot.

Use caution around all wildlife and keep a safe distance. Stay in your vehicle when watching or photographing from the road.

Photographing native plants



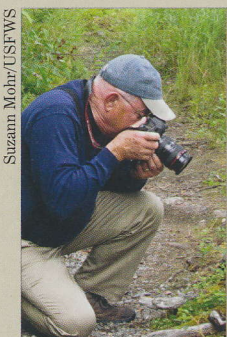
Berkley Bedell/USFWS

Salmon fishing



Bill Kent/USFWS

Black bear



Suzann Mohr/USFWS



USFWS

Exploring nature during a summer camp



USFWS

Orienteering

Environmental Education

Field trips, school visits and summer day camps connect visitors to natural science topics in hands-on exciting ways.

Community events offer seasonal activities for refuge visitors of all ages and abilities.

Interpretation

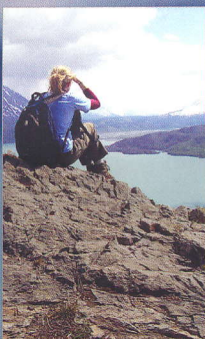
Meet refuge rangers on a guided nature hike or learn more about the Refuge's history and habitats during an interactive talk at the Visitor Center. Programs change frequently. Consult the Visitor Center staff for current offerings.

Discover a dragonfly up close at a summer nature program

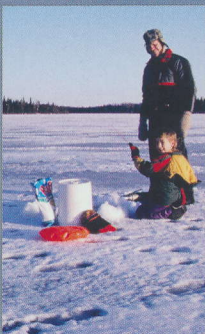


Dave Stimme/USFWS

©Tom Collopy/Mary Frische



Alpine hiking



Ice fishing

Plan Your Visit

Climate

Summer temperatures range between 40 and 65 degrees F. Late August and September have the most rain. Winter temperatures vary between -20 and 40 degrees F.

Clothing

Be prepared for changeable weather conditions and dress in layered clothing that keeps you warm in wet, windy conditions. In summer, insect head nets are often needed for back country trips.

Camping and Cabin Rentals

Campgrounds and cabins spread across the Refuge in Wilderness and front country locations are available year-round. Cabins are rented through www.recreation.gov. Campgrounds are first-come, first-served.

Visitor Center

The Refuge Visitor Center is located in Soldotna and offers recreational information, interpretive exhibits, hands-on family programs, skiing and hiking trails and the Alaska Geographic Bookstore. Admission is free.

Explore this Refuge on its terms. Make demands on yourself not the land. Leave no trace of your presence and pack out what you pack in.

Help ensure the qualities you experience on the Kenai Refuge will be there for those who follow.



Short-tailed weasel

Steve Hillebrand/USFWS



Trumpeter swan

Berkley Bedell/USFWS

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.