



Arctic Refuge: Solstice Base Camp

A SPECIAL DEPARTURE WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

June 18-23, 2012

The Brooks Range arcs across northern Alaska from the Bering Sea to the Canadian border. The eastern end of the range, the south side, and the lands north to the ocean form the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge is a truly spectacular wilderness area of towering, raw mountains, drained by busy glacial rivers that weave north through the softening foothills and across the vast, rolling coastal plain to the Arctic Ocean. The caribou herd attracts an array of predators such as grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines and golden eagles. A pleasing variety of birds sing through the 24 hours of daylight on their breeding territories. Musk ox often graze the foothills, Dall sheep dot the mountainsides, and a multitude of tiny flowers flourish in the brief summer. An intricate chain of life maintains an exquisite balance in this land of extremes. The treeless north side of the Brooks Range is our destination for this camping and day-hiking trip.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, join a representative from The Nature Conservancy and a Wilderness Birding Adventures guide on the longest days of the year far above the Arctic Circle. With the sun never setting, we will explore the Aichilik Valley on the north slope of the Brooks Range, part of the area known as the biological heart of the Refuge, the “Serengeti of the North.”

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Day 0, June 17

Fairbanks. The day before the trip begins, we will meet to talk over logistics, check personal gear, and answer last minute questions.

Day 1, June 18

We'll meet at the airport at 8:00 AM to check in and weigh in for our flight to Arctic Village, a Gwich'in Indian village on the East Fork of the Chandalar on the south side of the Brooks Range. Arriving there around 10:30 AM, our bush pilot will meet us and begin shuttling our group into the north side of the Brooks Range in the Arctic Refuge. Our plan is to be dropped off at a tundra strip near the Aichilik River in the northern foothills. If circumstances (e.g., weather) do not permit a drop-off there, we will be flexible about being dropped off at a different location. After arriving, everyone will set up their tents some distance from the kitchen area. This camp will be our home for the duration of the trip. The guide will discuss sanitation practices and bear safety to make sure we all stay safe, healthy and make as light an impact on the habitat as possible.

Day 2-5 , June 19-22

We have no agenda for the trip other than to hike and explore as much as people wish to, with the option of staying in camp always available. For the sake of safety, it's good to stick together as a group. However, we encourage people to have the wilderness experience they desire. If that means going off on your own to hike, guideless, or staying in camp while others hike, you have those options. The group will decide each day what they want to do and what direction they want to go. At this time of year, post-calving, caribou should be abundant in the foothills. However, caribou migration can vary greatly each year both in timing and route, so there are no guarantees. Typically, where there are caribou, there are predators such as grizzly bears, wolves and wolverines. The coastal plain and foothills are good places to see these mammals anytime during the brief summer season. We'll eagerly seek out the birds in their full breeding plumage (with duly respectful birding practices around nesting birds). With birds singing on their nesting territories, wildflowers bursting into bloom, and butterflies pollinating, we will be among the few who get to witness the eruption of life that characterizes the peak of the brief, intense summer season in the Arctic Refuge.

Day 6, June 23

We'll pack up and get ready for our bush pilot to arrive. He may not get in until later in the day, but those traveling in the first load will have to be ready and we can't wander too far from camp. Our day will look like the reverse of Day 1. After being shuttled to Arctic Village, we'll take an afternoon flight back to Fairbanks, arriving around 5 or 6 PM - weather permitting, of course. Logistical arrangements can change between now and when the trip occurs. We will keep participants up to date on actual logistics as they take shape.

Note: These human plans are subject to revision by the forces of nature - the essence of true wilderness travel. This trip is very remote; outside help can be days away. Participants need to be in good health, pack a positive attitude, and be capable of handling a variety of conditions. Intense winds, snow, lots of rain, wildlife at close range, stream crossings, and other elements are not unexpected, but they are not necessarily commonplace, either. We will be out of contact with “civilization” and under our own power for our entire trip. Thus, everyone needs to have a spirit of adventure and a willingness to accept the risks inherent in wilderness travel. This trip is not for everyone. In spite of, and perhaps because of these challenges, the trip offers countless experiential rewards for those who travel to this amazing Refuge. That said, base camping is the easiest way to experience the Refuge first hand. A typical trip in June has mostly decent weather with temperatures between 40 and 70 degrees F.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Guides

Wilderness Birding Adventures has been leading natural history explorations of Alaska for 25 years. While our guides are excellent birders, they are also excited about all facets of the natural world. As passionate naturalists with excellent people skills, they will share their appreciation and knowledge of birds, wildlife, wildflowers, insects and other aspects of the natural world.

COSTS & RESERVATIONS

Deposit to reserve your space, per person, payable to Wilderness Birding Adventures:	\$1,000
Final payment, payable to WBA, due March 20, 2012:	\$2,600
Suggested tax deductible contribution to The Nature Conservancy:	<u>\$300</u>
	\$3,900*

* \$50 early signup discount applied for those who sign up before January 15

Included in the trip price are: all air transportation (from Fairbanks to Arctic Village and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and back to Fairbanks), all kitchen and group camp gear, all meals during the trip, one WBA guide and a representative from The Nature Conservancy. We provide a detailed equipment list to help you prepare for the trip. Not included in the trip price are your personal clothing and equipment and all pre- and post trip Fairbanks costs (meals, lodging, ground transportation, etc.)

The contribution to The Nature Conservancy is tax deductible. Please make your check payable to The Nature Conservancy and send to their address (see below) at the same time that you sign up for the trip with WBA.

Contact WBA to sign up for this trip. Reservations are taken on a first-come, first-serve, basis. The trip is limited to only 5 participants (for a total group size of 7 with The Nature Conservancy and WBA leaders).



CANCELLATION POLICY

Should you find it necessary to cancel, your deposit and any payments, minus a \$100 administrative fee, will be refunded with notification to us at least 120 days prior to the trip start date. With 90-119 days notice of cancellation, all but your deposit will be refunded. With less than 90 days notice, 50 percent of your trip price is not refundable. The contribution to The Nature Conservancy is non-refundable.



The Nature Conservancy 

Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

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More Information

To download detailed itineraries for our other natural history excursions, please visit nature.org/travel

Questions?

Contact The Nature Conservancy
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