

## Winter 2022 Update for Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge

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January 2022



*Photo credit:USFWS*

Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge  
PO Box 779, Tok, AK 99780



## STAFF UPDATE

Tetlin NWR is hiring seasonal park rangers to help with the 2022 summer visitation. BLM is also hiring park rangers in Tok to staff the Tok APLIC.

Mike Garber, who grew up in the Upper Tanana, joined the year round staff in the fall of 2021. Mike is part of the regional business team that assists several offices with their payroll. In addition to his main role working with payroll, he also greets and assists visitors at the front desk. He issues permits, answers user questions, and directs phone calls.

## BIOLOGY PROJECTS

### Moose Twinning Survey

For the first time since 2007, a twinning survey was conducted to identify the nutritional status of cow moose on Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge. This information is important because it allows refuge biologists to monitor the moose population's proximity to the carrying capacity of the landscape, and therefore the health of the individual moose. Biologists flew for four days this spring and observed 31 cow moose with offspring. Of these cows, 6 had twins, resulting in a twinning rate of 19.4%.

### Duck Banding

Efforts continue on Tetlin NWR to monitor the migration and harvest of waterfowl. Refuge staff operated banding stations on multiple lakes last fall, and banded nearly 600 ducks for the season. Banding efforts are planned to continue in 2022.

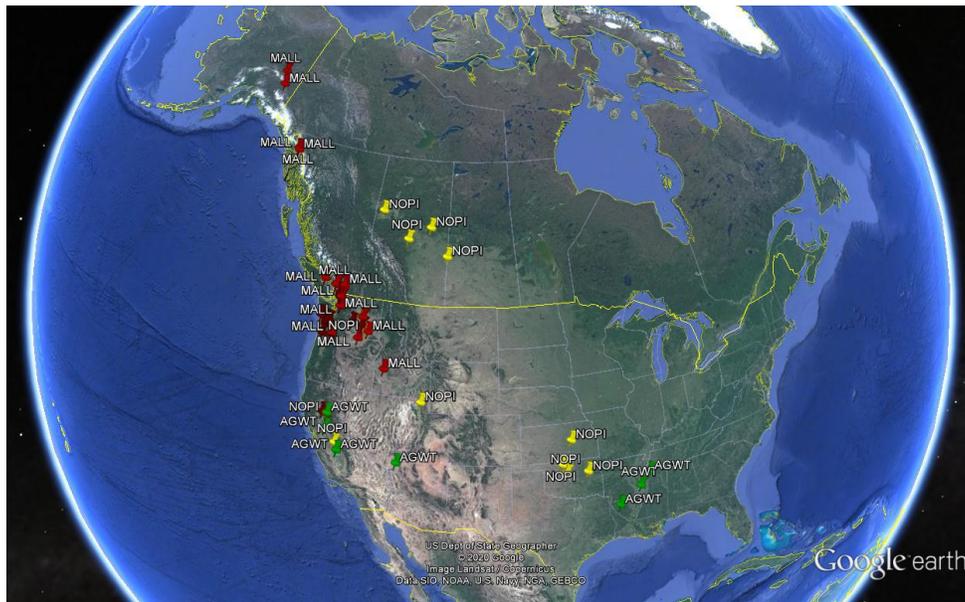


Figure 1. Harvest locations of 2021 ducks banded on Tetlin NWR. Red pins represent mallards, yellow pins represent northern pintails, and green pins represent American green-winged teal.

## Northwest Boreal Lynx Project

It was a slow year for the lynx project at Tetlin NWR and across the state. As we continue to move into a trough in the lynx population cycle, trapping efforts yield fewer and fewer lynx. In 2021, only one female lynx was captured and recollared at our study site on Tetlin NWR. Other refuges caught between 0 and 5 lynx.

Table 1. A synopsis of collars deployed on Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) captured on the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge.

Year	Collars Deployed	Alive		Mortalities	Collars Replaced	Collars Offline
		On Refuge	Off Refuge			
2015	6	0	0	3	2	1
2016	18	0	0	7	5	6
2017	20	0	0	2	9	9
2018	20	0	0	12	3	5
2019	26	4	1	19	1	1
2020	9	1	0	7	1	0
2021	1	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	100	6	1	50	21	22

Preparations continue for trapping efforts this winter (2022), which will begin in February.

## Wetland Digitizing

Biology staff has also helped with a project at the regional office to delineate surface water on satellite imagery. The goal is to validate a model that will then be able to identify surface water by itself. All bodies of water in the area analyzed were outlined by hand to ensure the accuracy of the model.

## 2021 Black Hills Fire

In July of 2021, a naturally-occurring wildfire ignited just west of Jatahmund Lake on Tetlin NWR. Alaska Fire Service responded to protect private property on the north end of the lake. The fire moved south and west of the lake, burning about 30,000 acres before rains extinguished the fire.

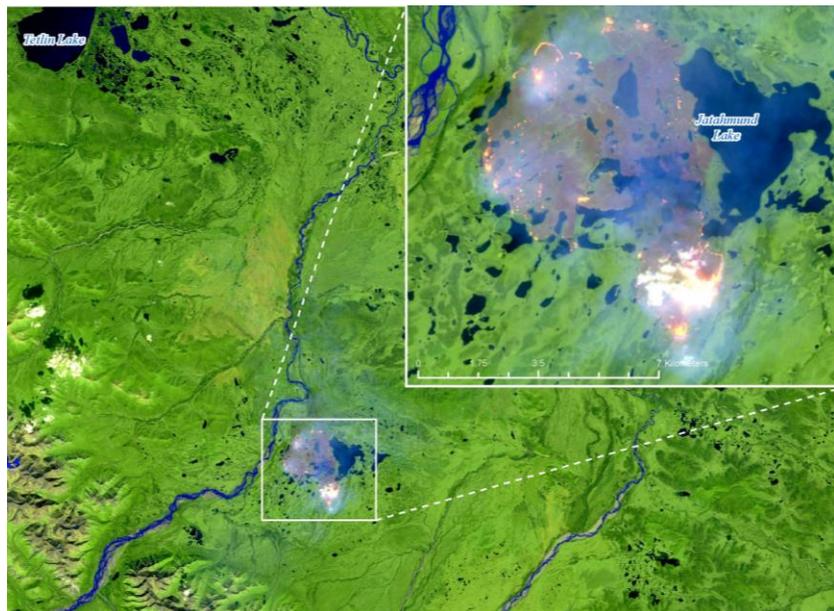


Figure 2: This image show the burn scar and the later stages of the 2021 Black Hills Fire.

## FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE

Nelchina caribou have not wintered in significant numbers within Tetlin NWR, which has resulted in reduced number of harvested caribou during the FC1202 caribou hunt compared to recent years. Nelchina Herd numbers are within ADF&G objectives.

The season will likely remain open until April 30 to a limit of one caribou.

## VISITOR SERVICES

Tetlin NWR intends to open both the visitor center near the Alaska border and the Interagency and Tok Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center in Tok in mid May. These centers will welcome the traveling public until mid September.

Most visitors are from out of state and have a variety of questions about the flora and fauna of Alaska. Our mostly locally-hired staff help tourists find their way throughout the state.

The Tok Chamber of Commerce received the State of Alaska's role of operating the Alaska Public Lands Information Center (APLIC) in Tok. ANILCA calls for four APLICs to be operated across the state. The Tok APLIC is being run cooperatively with the Tok Chamber of Commerce, BLM, and USFWS. Four seasonal park rangers work at the Tok facility.



Top: Park Ranger Marilyn Paul with proud students from a basket class. Bottom: Seasonal Maintenance Worker Dusty Carmello fixes a bridge at Sourdough Campground off the Richardson Highway.

### Refuge Staff Recognition

Tetlin NWR was awarded a national award by the Bureau of Land Management for Excellence in Service for their leadership with Tok APLIC and repairing a bridge at a BLM campground. TNWR employees and equipment restored access to the Gulkana River

### Years of Service Recognition

Cora Demit, Refuge Information Technician (RIT), completed her 30<sup>th</sup> season as an employee for Tetlin NWR. She continues to welcome the traveling public from the Tetlin NWR Visitor Center and has since the earliest days of the center's operation. She shares stories from a lifetime of living within the boundary of the Refuge with people from around the world.

Sylvia Pitka completed her 10<sup>th</sup> season as an RIT for Tetlin NWR. Sylvia since 2010, Sylvia has worked at the Tetlin NWR Visitor Center. As part of her duties as an RIT, she assists with Refuge and Regional projects and trainings.



### Environmental Education

For the summer of 2021 the refuge made over 200 outreach contacts with Northway, Tetlin, Tannacross, Tok, and Dot lake communities. We participated in the annual culture camps of Northway and Tetlin. During those culture camps we conducted hunter education on firearm safety. Tetlin NWR used National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) equipment to teach archery safety and fundamentals.

The refuge participated in the Tok School Outdoor Days, which is a three-day event, held



at Moon Lake. Canoeing, invertebrate collection, and water safety were all part of the Refuge's contribution.

Tetlin NWR also help multiple birch basket class. Staff collected materials under the supervision of local basket expert Marilyn Paul. With her help, we were able to conduct classes in Northway, Tok, and Dot Lake.

Currently, we are working on a digital system of outreach for grades 3-5. This is a new approach for the Refuge but we intend on making them in a narrated video format with stop points, handouts, projects, and making them easy to use. They will be loaded on to USB flashdrives with kits, and provided to local school.