

Volunteer biological technician (birds) opportunity at Kanuti Cabin, spring 2008

Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge is looking for an enthusiastic, "woods-wise," and fit individual interested in spending about 4 to 6 weeks at Kanuti Lake cabin, a remote area in the heart of this roadless and pristine refuge.

The time period would be approximately mid-April to mid-May. The crew (volunteer and staff bird biologist) would be transported to the cabin by ski-plane towards the end of our wintertime ski-access season and would remain there through the spring "break-up" of rivers and lakes. The main purposes of this volunteer opportunity will be to help: a) gather general bird arrival date information, b) determine early nesting season conditions, and c) investigate the area's feasibility for future Rusty Blackbird and/or Solitary Sandpiper breeding ecology studies. It has been more than a decade since we had staff at the cabin during the spring and we would like to update our bird arrival information.

We are looking for a fairly experienced birder who can take good field notes, fill out data forms, hike in fairly challenging terrain, and is pretty independent and comfortable with staying in remote areas. Knowledge and experience in use of canoes, boats, two-way radios, first aid, and firearms is preferable. Kanuti NWR will pay for travel between Fairbanks and the cabin, and will provide food, field equipment, and minor subsistence expenses. Prior to travel to the field, volunteers will attend safety training classes such as First Aid, CPR, bear safety, firearms safety, etc.

The volunteer must be willing to serve in a very remote setting for a month or more and be comfortable in "bear country." While bears are not abundant and usually are not a major problem at this site, both black and grizzly bears do occur on the refuge and may be encountered. The crew will be carrying both firearm(s) and bear spray for protection.

Fieldwork will always be conducted with the bird biologist. Much of the reconnaissance will occur along/near the Kanuti River where walking is uneven and frequently challenging because of marshes, bogs, tussock meadows, and wetlands. For about a two-week period at the height of spring breakup, access to the area will not be possible by airplane. While the river and lake waters are breaking up, the only means of leaving the site would be a helicopter, which would be used only in case an emergency evacuation was needed. The cabin has comfortable amenities such as propane cook stove, wood stove, bedrooms, solar electric power system, refrigeration, but no running water. Contact with the outside world will be via satellite phone and two-way radio. Water is hauled from the river or lake and filtered to meet safety standards.

Come help Kanuti's bird biologist monitor the bird life at our remote field cabin! If interested, please contact biologists

Chris Harwood 907-455-1836 or
Lisa Saperstein at 907-456-0508.