

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

Just a short note before I return to Kodiak AK for fall photos. As I mentioned last time, the manager of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge invited me to photograph for the refuge's 75th anniversary in 2016. I spent 2 and a half weeks there in July, and return soon for most of September. I want to share some initial images and insights from my first trip.



Kodiak Bear Steps Across Tundra Bench Bears have repeatedly walked this bench—each time stepping in the same place—for what some think could be a hundred or more years.

Kodiak is absolutely beautiful. This archipelago's rugged mountains and majestic valleys and fjords were sculpted largely by glaciers. Except for its highest peaks and ridges of bare rock, Kodiak is covered with lush vegetation.

Kodiak's latitude and maritime climate make for plenty of rain and snow — an annual average of 5 1/2 ft each. Rain provides for so much of Kodiak's beauty and attraction. In summer, abundant sunlight combines with rain to deliver the basics for dense, over-head height alder, cow parsnip (Pushki) and cottonwood at lower elevations, and for the rich growth of tundra vegetation at higher mountain elevations.



Bushwhacking Caroline and Shelby are assistants on Kodiak bear research projects. They showed me areas of bear feeding activity, and generously offered to carry some of my equipment on our walks.



Lake Shoreline

Summer rain flows in many rivulets down through this alpine tundra. These small waterways coalesce into creeks, streams and rivers on their way to the sea. Salmon by the millions return from the ocean, migrating up the freshwater flows to spawn at their place of birth. Kodiak bears, foxes, bald eagles, and gulls feast on the migrating salmon. Sockeye (red) salmon that run up the Karluk River from May into November provide food for predators and scavengers for half the year. The bounty of Kodiak salmon is a common explanation for the great size of Kodiak bears.



Rivulets in Alpine Tundra One slope with a particularly high number of rivulets.



Rain Shrouds Distant Peaks and Valleys

For thousands of years, human cultures have also taken advantage of the islands' salmon. In 1901, 4 million Karluk sockeye were caught commercially and canned. That impressive number plummeted over the next few decades due to overfishing, but with subsequent regulation has mostly rebounded. Today, Kodiak is home to the largest commercial fishing fleet in Alaska (though many boats registered there also fish other Alaskan waters). And the Karluk River is considered by some to be the greatest salmon river in the world.

The city of Kodiak is one of the most energy efficient municipalities in the world. More than 99.5% of its energy comes from renewables, mostly hydroelectric power.

All these aspects of Kodiak — its vegetation, waterways, fish, wildlife, and human inhabitants — are shaped by, dependent on, and literally powered by the island's abundance of rain and snow. It seems to me the driving force of life on Kodiak. But, the obvious concern is climate change: what impacts will it have on Kodiak life?



Rain Falling on Sockeye Gathered at Mouth of Creek (creek mouth is to the far right of the scene) These salmon have already migrated from the ocean into this lake, and now await another signal to enter the creek.



Purse Seiner A commercial boat setting its net for salmon.



Sow and Cub Affection A moment of bonding after another meal of salmon. In the background, a second cub finishes its breakfast.

I thoroughly enjoy traveling and photographing in Kodiak by boat, plane, and on foot. I've seen numerous bears—including several sightings of one sow with four cubs—and creeks where bears feed then rest in the vegetation right next to their watery feeding grounds. Bald eagles seem almost as common as salmon.

Wildling Workshops this Fall Include New Panoramic and HDR Workshop

Once again, the Wildling Museum is offering two of my workshops. In 'Landscape Photography' (October 10-11), we are first indoors to discuss and practice compositional considerations for landscape photography. The following morning, we move outdoors into the Los Padres National Forest to practice those techniques in nature.

In the new workshop, 'Panoramic and HDR Photography' (October 17-18), we'll also begin indoors with learning and practicing sequential frame and HDR techniques. The following morning we'll head into the Forest to practice these new photographic skills in a natural setting. I will provide panoramic tripod heads for students to use with their cameras and tripods during this workshop.

Class sizes are limited, so sign up soon! [Contact the Wildling Museum.](#)

Cheers,
Jeff

www.lumnos.com

Previously, you expressed interest in my photographs or workshops. If you no longer wish to receive emails from me, please reply and ask to be removed from my list. I manage my own mailings, and never give your address to anyone.