

North for Science! 2024 **Trip Report**

North for Science! 2024 was outstanding. Ten remarkable middle school students from diverse backgrounds spent eight warm sunny days camping and learning together along the Dalton Highway in the Brooks Range June 7-14, 2024.

While at Marion Creek campground on the south slopes of the Brooks Range, we first participated in bear awareness training with BLM's Steve Taylor, who was one of the trip leaders. We located radio collars using telemetry equipment under the tutelage of FWS biologist Kaiti Ott, also a trip leader. The Arctic Interagency Visitors Center staff (BLM, FWS, and NPS) conducted hands-on activities with the group, varying from identifying boreal forest plants to gold panning and local history of the area to Leave No Trace training. We caught macroinvertebrates and conducted various tests to assess creek water quality with BLM hydrologist Noel Turner, and conducted hare pellet counts for NPS biologist Donna DiFolco on our designated "North for Science" site on the Hammond River.



We visited with local State Wildlife Trooper Lemay, who described his duties covering a vast area of northeastern Alaska and showed us some of his essential tools, most notably his Piper Super Cub aircraft. We hiked to Marion Creek Falls, along the way learning about managing human impact on vegetation by helping to move materials for future boardwalk construction. We also helped to create a more bear-resistant pad for anchoring garbage cans in the campground, furthering our

understanding of how to effectively manage our natural resources. After gathering data on a boreal forest transect, we moved further north, stopping in the community of Wiseman to gain insight into the local mining history and a different perspective of living in the Brooks Range.



While camped at Galbraith Lake on the north slopes of the Brooks Range, Lynn DeFilippo, former board member of the Alaska Songbird Institute, introduced us to birding basics. The next morning, she wandered the camp area with us, finding many bird species to watch. We also spent a day visiting UAF's Toolik Field Station to learn from staff and researchers there about many ongoing Arctic research projects. We spent our last field day gathering data on a tundra transect and playing on a field of aufeis.

Throughout this fun-and-learning filled week team members were constantly active and engaged, enthusiastically soaking up every new experience and enjoying living outdoors (device-free!) with a new group of friends, all in awesome surroundings.

To describe the overall experience, participants wrote:

"I would say that it is such an amazing experience to learn new things and have tons of fun!

"I would tell people that this is a really fun and cool camp that shows an amazing part of Alaska. I would say that it's a great experience and you really get to bond as well as see and learn lots of cool things."

"I liked it a lot because we did actual biology projects like a real scientist would."



"... N4S [North for Science] is a free science camp for seventh and eighth graders that takes you up to the Brooks Range for a week. While there you get to meet researchers, learn about everything from bear spray to birds, meet new friends and retire to a tent each night. This camp is amazing and I would highly recommend it to anyone and everyone."