

Pioneering Wildlife Biologist Returns to Kodiak

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Diana Gish/KMXT

Kodiak's brown bears live well on the island, thanks in part to Will Troyer. Troyer was the manager of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in the 1950s. During that time he pioneered the live trapping of brown bears for science. He also flew to remote spots around the state to conduct surveys on many species of Alaska's wildlife. Troyer was awarded the prestigious Olaus Murie Award in 1987 for his life's work in wildlife conservation

When Troyer arrived in Kodiak in 1955, bears were regarded as a nuisance on the island. Local ranchers lobbied the Alaska Territorial Legislature to declare open season on the brown bear in order to reduce their population. So Troyer, a wildlife biologist, decided to conduct research on live bears in an effort to win support for their protection.

This week the 83 year old wildlife biologist is back in Kodiak. He spoke with KMXT's Diana Gish about those early attempts to study Kodiak's most famous mammal.

-- (Will Troyer 4:39 "When I read...I'll admit that you know.")

Troyer regrets that some bears were injured in the trapping but is pleased that on-going monitoring of the same bears indicated that they recovered well and went on to live long lives.

After his retirement from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Troyer started writing about his experiences. So far it's taken three memoirs to tell his story. His latest book is titled "Bear Wrangler: Memoirs of an Alaskan Pioneer Biologist."

This month Troyer is touring the state as keynote speaker for National Refuge Week events.

He'll give a talk and slide show Saturday (tomorrow) at 7 p.m. at the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitor's Center.