# New Wildlife Biologist Arrives in GMU 8

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

There’s a new wildlife management biologist in Kodiak. Nate Svoboda joined the Alaska Department of Fish and Game this week. He replaces Larry Van Daele, who has been promoted to Southcentral Regional Wildlife Supervisor.

The 39-year-old Svoboda hails originally from Nebraska, and has worked for several years as the biologist for the Ottawa tribe in Michigan. He’s currently finishing up a PhD project on predator-prey relationships. A hunter and avid fisherman, Svoboda has visited Alaska before, and said Kodiak has a lot to offer.

“Ah well I’m really interested in carnivore work and I’ve also done some work with ungulates in the past and it just seemed like a good mix. And plus I’ve been fortunate in the past I’ve spent quite a bit of time in Alaska. I figured it would be a nice good move here for me. It’s a good fit as far as the species on the island are concerned with my goals and interests and it just seemed to be a good fit.”

As the wildlife biologist for Game Management Unit 8, Svoboda says he has several duties and responsibilities, but the job also offers some opportunities as well.

“One of the main things in managing the population for the use of the community and the members of Alaska and the non-members of Alaska who come here to hunt. But there’s not only the management components but research components. It’s really important in my mind to include science in resource and meld the two together, to have a good science component to mix with the management component to make sure everything is done in a scientifically-based way that provides ample opportunities for the public.”

A rather unique aspect of the wildlife on the Kodiak Island Archipelago is the large number of outside species that have been introduced here over the years. Besides the brown bear, all the other large land mammals in the islands are introduced species. It’s not a combination that has worked well elsewhere.

“The habitat and the ecosystem here on Kodiak provides a unique opportunity for a lot of these species to coexist with one another. It seems to be a good mix, which seems to be counterintuitive when you look at some of the systems particularly the Lower 48 area, and really places all over. I think as long as you have responsible management and it doesn’t have any impacts on the native species or the ecosystem as a whole I think it can be a positive thing, particularly for the residents of Alaska and some of the Native communities that rely on those species for subsistence purposes and for hunting and recreational purposes as well.”

Svoboda replaces a longtime wildlife biologist in Van Daele, and says he’s looking forward to the opportunity to maintain his predecessor’s successful management:

“I know I have some really big shoes to

fill. I know the management on Kodiak and surrounding islands has been incredibly successful in the past and so I’m just really excited to be here, really excited to getting involved in the community and looking forward to meeting the various members of the community and the people who come to the island to hunt.”

Though Van Daele was promoted to regional wildlife supervisor, he says he will still make his office in Kodiak and still be involved in bear research.