

## YCC Crew Wraps Up Summer Refuge Work

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Each summer, a handful of local youth join forces with the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge as members of the Youth Conservation Corps or YCC. Kodiak High School alumna Leila Pyle worked as a crew member in the past, but this year she took on a larger role as the crew's leader. Pyle said YCC is actually a nationwide program that employs high school age students on public land all over the country.

Here in Kodiak, four high school students make up the team, in addition to a college-age crew leader. Pyle, who is entering her sophomore year at Reed College in Oregon, said the crew works in town and at various remote locations throughout the refuge over the the summer.

This year the crew had the opportunity to travel to Tugidak Island and participate in Kodiak Island Trails Network's marine debris clean up.

"Tugidak is on the very, very southern end of the archipelago, like you were saying. It's very flat and there's no trees on the island. It's just totally different than any of the landscape around town or even on other parts of the refuge. We were there four or five days, like Eunice said and we were picking up marine debris. There was a team of 11 people there at the time, us and some ITN — Island Trails Network people — and we picked up so much marine debris."

She estimates they picked up around 8-10,000 pounds of debris just in the few days the crew was on the island. That experience prompted the crew to create a marine debris display that is at the refuge visitor center downtown.

"I think that all of us took away from Tugidak how huge of a problem marine debris is and how much it threatens the wildlife and the fishing and the beaches of Kodiak and so we really wanted to communicate that to the public and there's a really great display down there and some art projects they did for the art walk."

The YCC crew also traveled to other remote parts of Kodiak to restore and maintain public use cabins owned by the refuge. There are about nine public use cabins available for rent in remote parts of the island and the crew worked on the cabins at Fraser Lake and Little River. For most

of them, it was their first time traveling off the road system. Kyla Villaroya will be a junior at KHS this year and said she enjoyed seeing different parts of the island.

“I’ve never been to parts of Kodiak outside the city, well, I’ve been to Ouzinkie once, but it was so beautiful and it made me really love the island.”

Villaroya said the summer made her want to pursue environmental science or education later in life and opened her eyes to a different side of Kodiak.

You can hear the full interview with Villaroya and Pyle, and their fellow crew members, Tuesday on KMXT’s Talk of the Rock. Tune in to KMXT 100.1 FM at 12:30 p.m. or stream us live online at [kmxt.org](http://kmxt.org).