

**Our Nationwide System**

The Arctic Refuge is held in trust for current and future generations as a vital part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The System consists of more than 500 refuges whose primary purpose is wildlife conservation. People are encouraged to use and enjoy refuges in ways compatible with this purpose.

National Wildlife Refuges are found across the Nation from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys, and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific.

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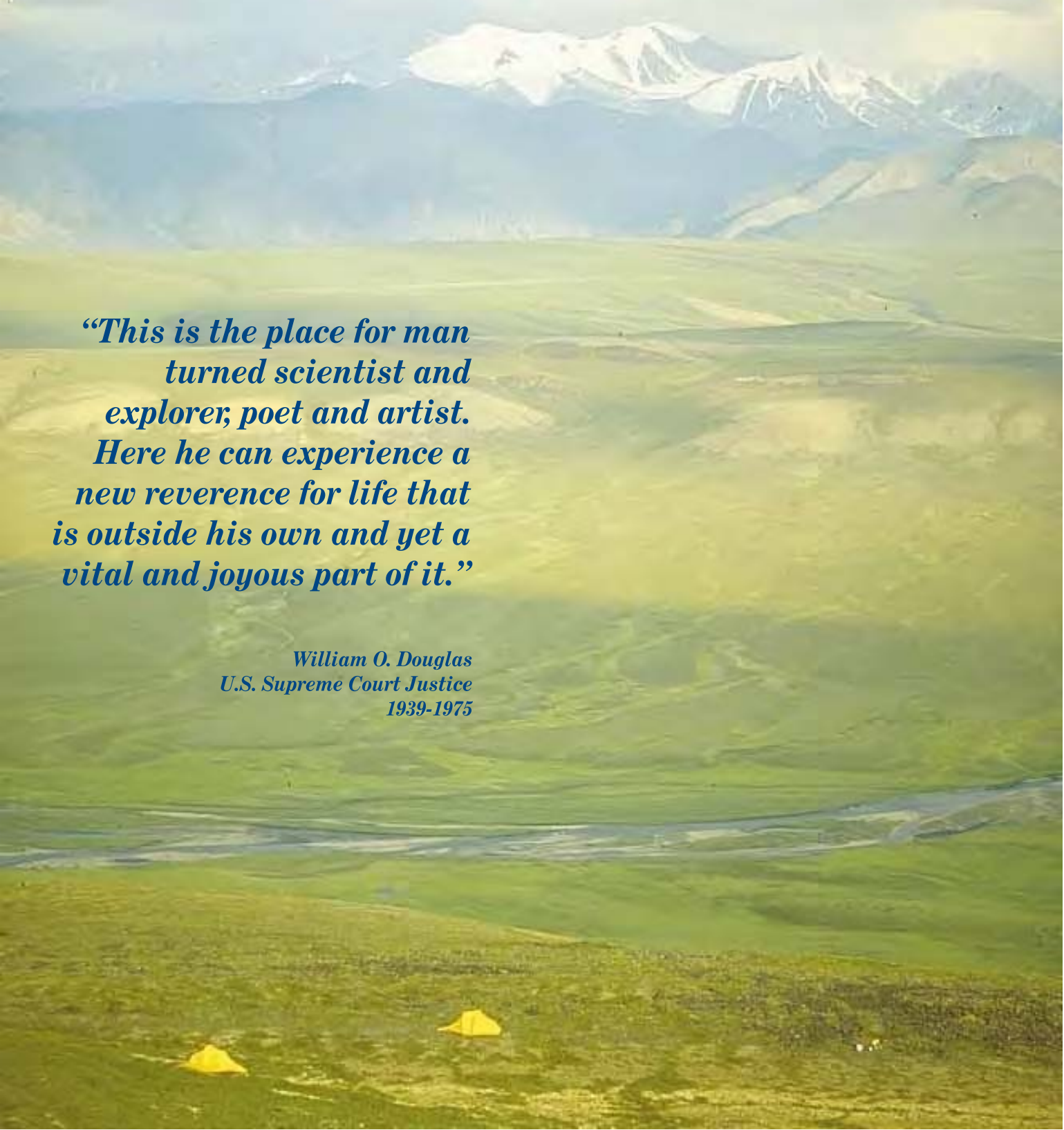
**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# Arctic

## National Wildlife Refuge



*Realm of the aurora  
and other arctic phenomena.*

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a vast, green valley with a winding river. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains under a clear sky. The foreground shows a grassy slope with two yellow markers.

*“This is the place for man  
turned scientist and  
explorer, poet and artist.  
Here he can experience a  
new reverence for life that  
is outside his own and yet a  
vital and joyous part of it.”*

*William O. Douglas  
U.S. Supreme Court Justice  
1939-1975*



## Untamed Country

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a vast and beautiful wilderness, one unique in North America. Unique because it has a full range of arctic and subarctic ecosystems. Unique also because the systems are whole and undisturbed, functioning as they have for centuries, largely free of human control and manipulation.

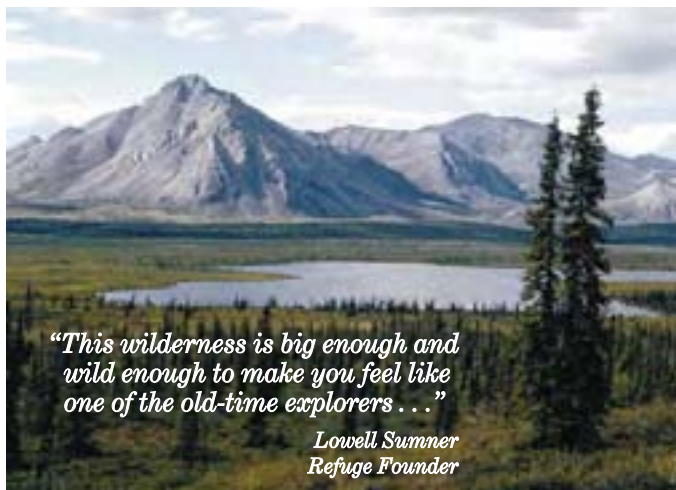


*A reservoir of biological diversity and natural processes.*

Inupiat Eskimos and Athabascan Indians live in this place, following their ancestors who survived here for generations.

## A Northern Frontier

One of the world's most remote natural areas, the Arctic Refuge is a frontier—perhaps America's last—like those that helped shape America's distinct cultural heritage. Here conditions exist like those that once surrounded and shaped us—as individuals and as a Nation.



*"This wilderness is big enough and wild enough to make you feel like one of the old-time explorers . . ."*

*Lowell Sumner  
Refuge Founder*

## A Conservation Legacy



## Grassroots Movement

The move to protect this corner of Alaska began in the early 1950s. Visionary conservationists George Collins, Lowell Sumner, and Olaus and Mardy Murie, considered founders of the Refuge, launched a spirited campaign to permanently safeguard the area. Their effort mobilized thousands, including conservation leaders, sportsmen's groups, garden clubs and individuals. The effort succeeded.

## Our Inheritance

The Arctic National Wildlife Range was established in 1960. This designation was a promise to the American people to preserve the area's "unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values." Twenty years later, Congress passed the "Alaska Lands Act." The Act renamed the area and more than doubled its size. Today the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge includes nearly 20 million acres (the size of South Carolina),

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*"It is a whole place, as true a wilderness as there is anywhere on this continent and unlike any other that I know of."*

*Morris Udall  
Former U.S. Congressman*

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three Wild rivers, and the largest designated Wilderness (eight million acres) in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Act also authorized a study of the oil and gas potential of the northern part of the Refuge (1002 Area—see map on inside back cover). This touched off an epic conservation battle that continues to this day.



## Mountains to Meadows

The majestic Brooks Range, with peaks and glaciers to 9,000 feet, dominates the Refuge. These rugged mountains extend east to west in a band 75 miles wide, rising abruptly from a flat, tundra-covered plain. This treeless expanse is cut by numerous braided rivers and streams. South of the continental divide, rivers wind serpentine courses through broad, spruce-covered valleys dotted with lakes and sloughs.



## Rich and Fragile Habitats

The Refuge includes an array of landscapes and wildlife habitats—from the boreal forest of the Porcupine River uplands . . . to the foothills and slopes of the Brooks Range . . . to the arctic tundra of the coastal plain . . . to the lagoons and barrier islands of the Beaufort Sea coast. Together these areas contain hundreds of species of mosses, grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and other plants.



The ground lies permanently frozen below much of the Refuge. This impenetrable “permafrost” layer causes many areas to remain wet during the summer. Plants grow rapidly with 24-hour daylight, but the growing season is short. These factors make the Refuge a fragile area easily impacted by human activities. In this most northern of refuges, plant communities take a long time to recover from disturbances.





## Wildlife—A Special Mix

The Refuge contains the greatest wildlife diversity of any protected area in the circumpolar north. The animals are well adapted to the arctic, able to withstand a range of extreme environmental conditions. Some species are at the northern limit of their range. Many depend on the Refuge's undisturbed wilderness.

*“The great natural spectacle, one of the last of its kind, where its native creatures can still have freedom to pursue their future, so distant, mysterious, and to us . . . scarcely imaginable.”*

*Lowell Sumner  
Refuge Founder*



### **Birds**

Nearly 180 species of birds have been seen on the Arctic Refuge. They come from four continents to breed, rest or feed. A majority nest on the Refuge.

Nesting and related activities occur April to July, depending on the species. Owls and jaegers cruise low over the tundra hunting for lemmings. Golden eagles, rough-legged hawks and peregrine falcons build aeries high on cliffs. Loons and oldsquaw sound their yodeling calls from coastal lagoons.



Pairs of tundra swans dine on submerged plants in the quiet lakes of river deltas. Sandpipers, plovers and sparrows tend well-camouflaged nests on the open tundra.



In July, ducks and shorebirds start gathering in lagoons and lakes to prepare for migration. In late August, thousands of snow geese arrive on the coastal plain to feed on cottongrass, building fat reserves for their journey south. By mid-September, most birds depart for wintering areas in Asia, Africa, South America, the South



*A living landscape where ancient rhythms still beat.*

Pacific and every state except Hawaii. Ptarmigan, ravens, gyrfalcons, dippers and a few other species remain to winter in the long arctic night.

### **Mammals**

Forty-five species of mammals live on the Refuge—thirty-six occur on land, nine are marine species that can be seen along the coast. Some are herd animals, many are not. Some migrate, most do not. All rely on the unconfined open spaces of the Refuge.

*“Here was the living, moving, warm-blooded life of the Arctic . . . with the wisdom of the ages, moving always, not depleting their food supply, needing all these valleys and mountains in which to live.”*

*Margaret Murie  
Refuge Founder*



Each year the Porcupine caribou herd journeys more than 800 miles to and from its ancestral calving grounds. In May and June, the herd migrates to the coastal plain to give birth. By early July, the caribou leave for wintering areas south of the Brooks Range.



Groups of agile Dall sheep roam the mountainsides, grazing tundra plants and watching for predators. Moose browse willow thickets near rivers and lakes. Herds of shaggy muskoxen forage year-round on the coastal plain, mostly along rivers. Polar bears dig maternity dens in snow drifts during winter, returning to the sea ice in spring to hunt seals.



Age-old struggles for survival continue on the Refuge just as they always have. Grizzly bears chase ground squirrels, digging like backhoes into their burrows. Wolf packs pursue caribou and moose, seeking those unable to keep up or defend themselves. Lynx zig-zag through the forest after snowshoe hares. Weasels and fox pounce on voles and lemmings. Lone wolverines scavenge the leftovers.

### ***Fish***

The Refuge provides habitat for 36 species of fish, mostly in the rich coastal lagoons. Several coastal plain rivers contain arctic char and grayling. Many rivers south of the mountains support grayling, northern pike and whitefish.





## A Wilderness For The Ages

The Arctic Refuge is recognized as one of the finest examples of wilderness left on the planet. It is among the last to be visited by

modern man and among the least affected by his doings. It's a place where the wild has not been taken out of the wilderness.



Untold mountains, diverse wildlife and a wealth of habitats give this unspoiled national treasure first-rate cultural, scenic, scientific and experiential values. Values that are ageless. Values that make the Refuge a national symbol of wilderness.

*"The Arctic has a strange stillness to it that no other wilderness knows. It has loneliness too—a feeling of isolation and remoteness born of vast spaces . . ."*

*William O. Douglas  
U.S. Supreme  
Court Justice  
1939-1975*

The Refuge is a place that changes those who visit. It's a place that is precious to millions who never will. It's a place whose existence strengthens our awareness of and sense of responsibility for the natural world.



## Protecting the Values

The entire Refuge is managed to maintain its natural condition, diversity of wildlife and habitats, scenery and other special values. Management efforts focus primarily on surveys, research studies, monitoring and education.

*"It takes a lot of territory to keep this alive, a living wilderness, for scientific observation and for aesthetic inspiration."*

*Olaus Murie  
Refuge Founder*



Refuge employees survey wildlife and plants to determine their abundance and productivity. The information helps ensure the long-term health of wildlife populations and habitats while allowing for human use.



Employees cooperate with others on research, gathering information about the Refuge and the effects of human disturbance in the arctic. They seek to minimize the impacts of human activities on refuge resources, values and visitors through education, monitoring and law enforcement.



## Visiting the Refuge *Weather*

Snow usually blankets the ground from September through May, but freezing temperatures can occur any month, especially north of the mountains. Summers last only from June through August. Strong winds, cool temperatures, clouds and fog are typical near the coast. Blue skies, variable winds and moderate

temperatures are more common inland. Areas south of the mountains have more rainfall, greater temperature extremes and lighter winds.



## *Access*

The Refuge is roadless, so primary access is by air. Most visitors fly scheduled aircraft from Fairbanks to Fort Yukon, Kaktovik or Deadhorse, then charter to a river gravel bar or tundra landing site. Flights can be delayed due to weather, so take extra food. Please work with the pilot to

minimize impacts of your flights on the land, the wildlife and visitors.



*A gift to ourselves and our children's children.*



## *Cultural Courtesies*

The Refuge contains archeological sites important to local Native communities. Laws prohibit disturbing such sites and taking artifacts. If you come upon a site, leave it undisturbed for others to discover and enjoy as you have.



Be sensitive to the needs and customs of the local people. Many continue their hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering activities.







*"This land seems to be forever unfolding new surprises."*

*John Milton  
Ecologist*

## Wilderness Recreation

The Arctic Refuge, almost all of it north of the Arctic Circle, can challenge and inspire even the most experienced backcountry user. It's a place of discovery and adventure; a place for solitude; a place to be self-reliant and close to nature. It's a place to experience wildness in a truly unaltered environment.



## Wildlife Viewing/Photography

Patience, binoculars, long lenses and knowledge of the animals will increase your chances of seeing and photographing wildlife without affecting their normal activities. Most animals are inactive at mid-day, so you will likely see more in early morning, evening and at "night."



## River Floating

Rivers are the main travel routes on the Refuge. Rafts are suggested because they are most easily transported in aircraft and can most safely negotiate the rivers. Water levels are adequate on major rivers



from mid-June to mid-August. By mid to late-July, the sea ice is usually open enough to allow travel through the coastal lagoons.

## Hiking and Camping

Much of the adventure and challenge of hiking and camping on the Refuge lies in choosing the route you'll take,



*"Here there are no man-made trails . . . parking lots, visitor centers . . . that we've all seen within other public parks and refuges. . . . Within the Arctic Refuge expect to meet nature on her wildest terms."*

*Debbie Miller  
Author*

the things you'll do and the places you'll sleep. Learn the rhythms of the place—the light, the wildlife and the weather—then adjust your pace and schedule to meet them.

## Hunting and Fishing

*"In the Arctic Refuge the primal landscape is the overriding thing. It's like a museum, a time machine experience that can transport you back . . . before the world was altered. To hunt in that context is a profound experience."*

*Sandy Jamieson  
Refuge Visitor*

Hunters can pursue, under state and federal laws, a variety of big and small game animals including caribou, bear, sheep, waterfowl and ptarmigan. Those who fish should consider catch and release to help conserve slow growing fish populations.



## Special Considerations

The Refuge is a very remote area. Be prepared to handle any situation completely on your own. Proper planning and good equipment will increase the chances of a safe and enjoyable trip. Topographic maps and emergency supplies are essential.

*“The freedom of the wilderness is freedom from civilization’s controls . . . In such terrain, self-reliance is forced upon you.”*

John Milton  
Ecologist



Watch for bears and other potentially dangerous wildlife. Avoidance is the key. Make noise when hiking, keep a clean camp, cook/eat away from tents and stay off game trails.

Carry insect repellent and a head net; mosquitos are prevalent in June and July.



Know how to safely cross rivers. Cross in their upper reaches and early in the day. Take day hikes on the same side of the river as your camp. Remember that rivers rise rapidly after rains and glacial rivers rise on warm days.

Wear life jackets (with pockets for survival gear) when floating or crossing rivers, lakes and lagoons. Survival time is brief in the icy waters of the arctic.



## Preserve the Legacy

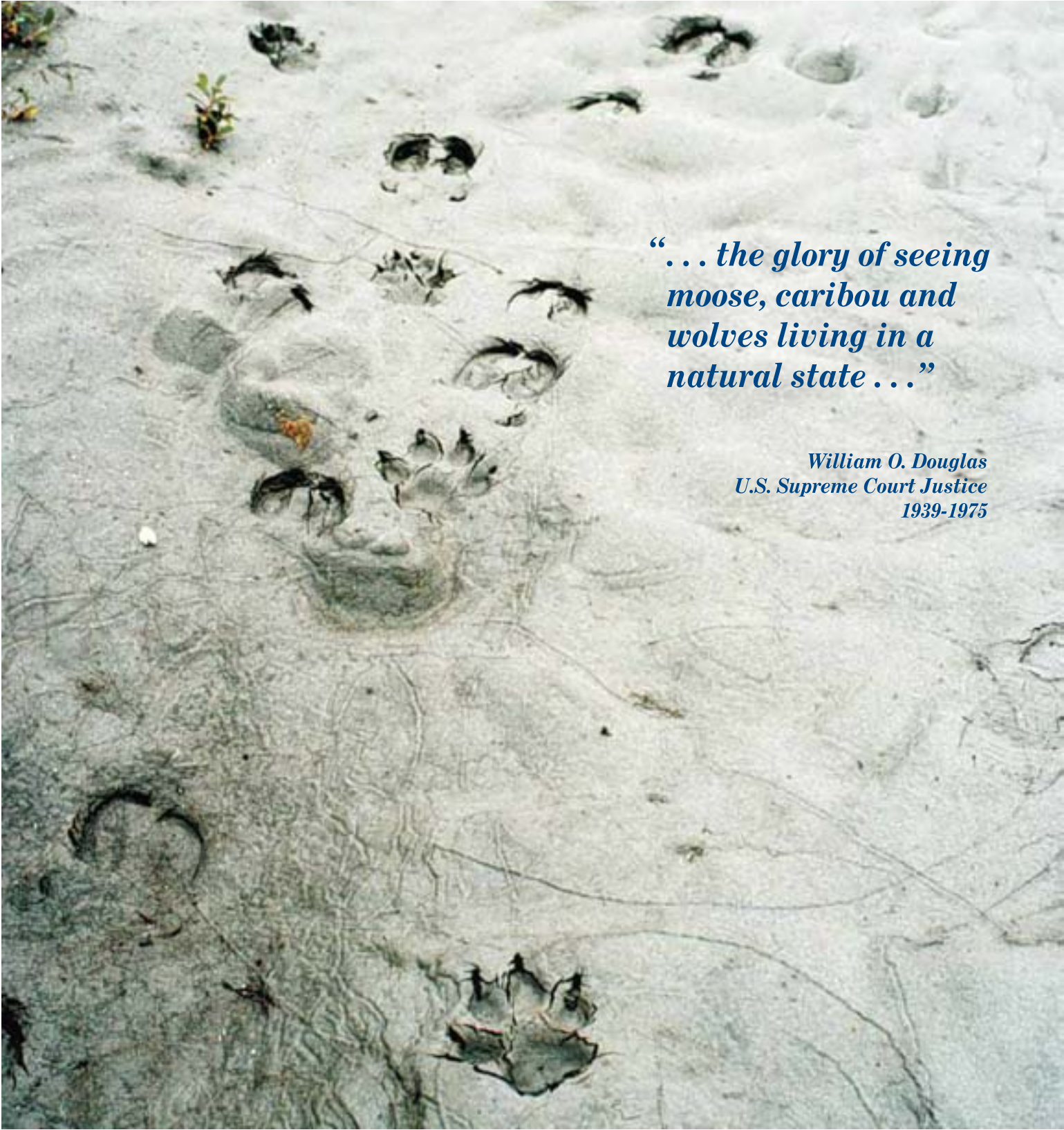
Explore this wilderness on its own terms. Make demands on yourself, not the land. Leave no trace of your presence; pack out what you pack in. Help ensure that the qualities you experience on the Refuge will be there for those who follow.

*“Certainly a wilderness area, a little portion of our planet left alone . . . will furnish us with a number of very important uses. . . . If we are wise, we will cherish what we have left of such places in our land.”*

Olaus Murie  
Refuge Founder







*“... the glory of seeing  
moose, caribou and  
wolves living in a  
natural state ...”*

*William O. Douglas  
U.S. Supreme Court Justice  
1939-1975*



# Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Boundary



Wild River



Community



Dalton Highway



USA-Canada Border



Beaufort Sea



Prudhoe Bay

Deadhorse

Kaktovik

1002 Area

Wilderness Area

Arctic Village

To Deadhorse  
239 miles

Coldfoot

To Fairbanks  
258 miles

Fort Yukon



Alaska