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German Immigrant Honored for Role in U.S. Wildlife Protection



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On January 9, the inaugural Pioneer Festival in Sebastian, Florida, will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Paul Kroegel, a German immigrant who was instrumental in the creation of the U.S. wildlife refuge system, one of the major achievements in the nation's long commitment to wildlife conservation and protection.

In 1903, Kroegel became the first volunteer, [game](#) warden and refuge manager of the first unit of what is now the National Wildlife Refuge System. What started with Kroegel and the 2-hectare Pelican Island, now the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, has grown to a [network](#) of more than 560 refuges totaling almost 61 million hectares. His statue (above) is located in Sebastian.

Kroegel came to Sebastian in 1881, when he was 17. His [mother](#) had died in his native Chemnitz, [Germany](#), and he, his father and [brother](#) were immigrating to Florida, homesteading along the west bank of the Indian River Lagoon overlooking tiny Pelican Island.

“Kroegel had a hard childhood [and was](#) resolved to work for things he considered important, such as wildlife conservation,” a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) [biography](#) says.

Eventually, Kroegel was named warden of Pelican Island.

The festival, which will commemorate Kroegel's life, is designed to reconnect Sebastian and its business community with the nation's first refuge. “It is also designed to inform Germans about their native son's legacy in America,” USFWS said. “Barbara Ludwig, the mayor of Chemnitz, is traveling to the festival to hear in person Sebastian Mayor Bob McPartlan proclaim January 9 as ‘Paul Kroegel Day.’”

USFWS said Kroegel's work to protect the dynamic ecosystem of the Indian River Lagoon “is worthy of global respect.”

A [video on Kroegel's life \(http://www.marvoentertainmentgroup.com/agpk-home\)](http://www.marvoentertainmentgroup.com/agpk-home) is available on the Marvo [Entertainment](#)

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