

Yakutat Ranger District Trail System

Introduction

Welcome to the Yakutat Ranger District and the many opportunities that our local trail system provides including fishing, hunting, sightseeing, photography and wildlife viewing. The Yakutat Ranger District encompasses 1.7 million acres of forest, muskeg, mountains, glaciers, lakes, and rivers. Geographic boundaries of the District are from Yakutat Bay in the west to the Alsek River in the east, and from the coast across the Brabazon Mountain range to the Canadian border. The District includes the 350,000 acre Russell Fiord Wilderness Area, Hubbard Glacier Geological Area, Yakutat Glacier, Harlequin Lake, and world class beaches and scenery. The town of Yakutat and surrounding area provides a gateway to wild and remote experience.

Most of the District trailheads are accessed via the local road system with the exception of trails in the Italio River and Dry Bay areas. Many district trails were originally game trails, and are remote and primitive. Please be prepared for rain, water, mud, and adventure!

Many of our trails access fishing areas, especially along the Situk River. Bears will use these same trails to access their feeding areas. **Be Bear Aware.** Bear encounters are the norm not the exception! This is especially true along streams and rivers. Visitors should stop by the Forest Service Ranger station and get bear safety awareness information. If hikers know how to act appropriately, then a bear encounter can be a safe experience and is sure to be a memory that will last a lifetime.

Also available at the Forest Service Ranger station is information on **fishing etiquette** and **Leave No Trace** principals. **Forest Service cabins** are available for visitors to rent and can be reserved by visiting www.recreation.gov. The following pages are a brief description of our trails; we hope you have an enjoyable hike on the Yakutat Ranger District. Happy Trails!

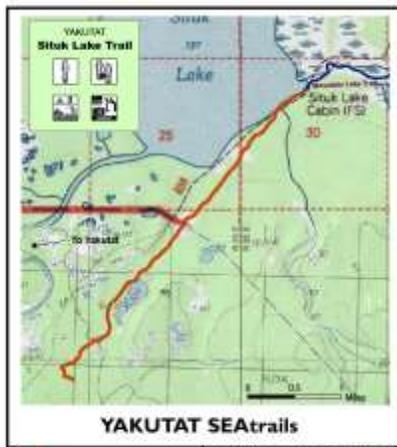
Trail Name: **Situk Lake Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **78 feet**

Length: **6.05 miles**

Ending Elevation: **140 feet**

Description: The Situk Lake Trail provides access to multiple activities including canoeing, sport fishing, hunting, birding and wilderness adventure. Situk Lake is a spectacular destination for fishing, scenery, hiking, and solitude. There is a Forest Service cabin along the southeast shore of the lake so you can extend your stay. The original trail begins at Mile Post 10 on Forest Highway 10 and traverses a large meadow for roughly 1.5 miles before entering the timber. The lower portion is also managed as an ATV trail, which is primarily used by moose hunters in the fall. This section of trail can be wet and hard to follow and is not recommended for novice hikers. However, the East Gate trail head cuts the distance to the Lake and the cabin to 3 miles. East gate access is located off logging roads built in the mid-1980's (FS 9955 then left on FS 9951). Tlingit people were the original pioneers of the Situk Lake Trail which they probably developed to access the abundant game resources in the area. The trail meanders through muskeg, ponds, and relic terminal glacial moraine typical of the uplands on the Yakutat forelands. Expect to encounter passerine bird species such as winter wren, Wilsons warbler, hermit thrush and, if you are lucky, grey-cheeked thrush. On the lake you might see trumpeter swans, gulls, loons, ducks and shorebirds. Also commonly seen are moose, bear, and beaver. Over the past several years the USFS has improved several sections of the trail with 1.5 miles of gravel turnpike and split log boardwalk that runs from the East Gate trailhead to the wilderness boundary. These improvements to the trail have made for a dry pleasant hike in any type of weather. During the fall waterproof boots are recommended, especially from the wilderness boundary to the cabin. The terrain along this trail is relatively flat, except for crossing the terminal moraine, with a gradual rise in elevation as the trail meets the lake and cabin.



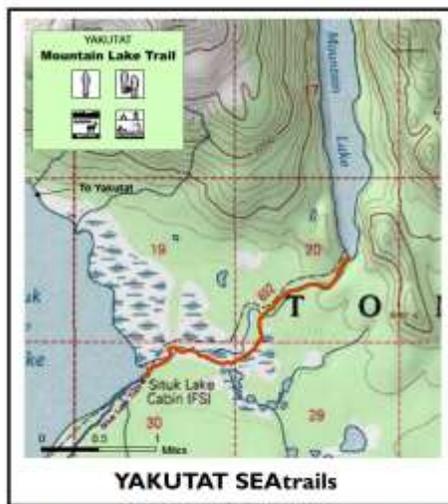
Trail Name: **Mountain Lake Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **140 feet**

Length: **1.95 Miles**

Ending Elevation: **314 feet**

Description: The Mountain Lake trail begins at the Situk Lake cabin and follows a stream to the outlet of Mountain Lake. This primitive trail is entirely inside Russell Fiord Wilderness Area. After passing the cabin the trail meanders through some younger stands of spruce and cottonwood forests. The trail follows the stream corridor most of the way except for a section in the middle where it crosses a 50 foot log bridge over a deep slough. In this area, it veers away from the stream and goes through some muskeg and wet meadows before returning to the edge of the stream. From this point there is a steady but gradual rise in elevation until you reach Mountain Lake. Forested sections of this trail are typically dry; the surface is native soil and well drained along the stream. Sections away from the stream and in the muskeg and meadows get very wet, so boots are recommended year round. The lower section of Mountain Stream Trail offers opportunities for fishing rainbow trout and Dolly Varden most of the summer as well as for sockeye salmon. When the salmon run is present, there are high concentrations of bears. Many of the bird species found in the Situk Lake area can be seen along this trail as well.



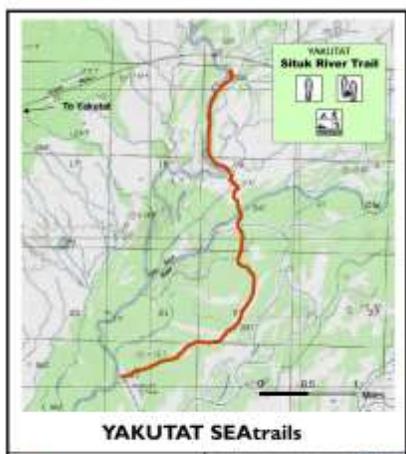
Trail Name: **Situk River Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **68 feet**

Length: **4.04 miles**

Ending Elevation: **60 feet**

Description: The Situk River trail departs from a parking area associated with the 9-mile bridge on Forest Highway 10 at the Situk River. This trail is primarily used for sport fishing access to the Situk River during spring, summer, and fall months, with opportunities for all 5 species of pacific salmon as well as steelhead, rainbow trout and Dolly Varden. Fishermen have created this “user developed” trail. The U.S. Forest Service is currently planning and implementing improvements along this route which will provide for a better trail and improved access. Generally, the trail follows the Situk River downstream as far as to the bottom end of the ten mile meadow, crosses the Old Situk River and continues to the Middle Situk Cabins. Several spur trails access fishing holes can be found along the way as well as some split log bridges crossing active streams. After hiking approximately 1.5 miles, the trail veers away from the river and eventually intersects with the Ten Mile ATV Trail. The trail crosses the Old Situk River, as well as a slough on either side of it; depending on season and water levels, waders might be needed to cross this section. After crossing the 2nd slough on the south side of the Old Situk, the trail is generally dry and easy to follow all the way to the airstrip. This section of trail goes through spruce and cottonwood forests and wide meadows, which when in season are full of amazing displays of wildflowers. Many bird species are found along the trail including bald eagles, thrushes, chickadees, wrens, and red-breasted sapsuckers. Along the river expect to see common merganser, spotted sandpiper, Wilson’s snipe, lesser and greater yellowleg, Northern waterthrush and belted kingfisher. Roughly ¼ mile above the Middle Situk airstrip is the Confluence Trail, which is 0.6 miles long and ends at the confluence of the Situk and Old Situk rivers. Eagle and Raven cabins are located just off of the gravel airstrip, which is an active airstrip. Another section of trail going downstream for 0.85 miles starts on the airstrip adjacent to the river. There are 4 short trails branching off which access fishing points. The trail is native soil and can be fairly muddy at times; a minimum of knee high boots are suggested. The only improvements are several split log boardwalks that cross streams.



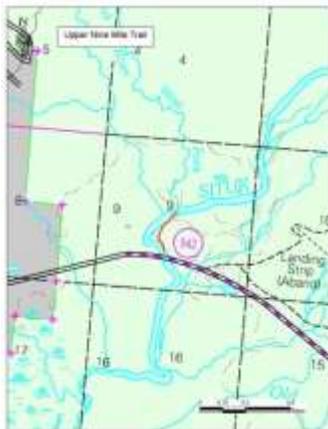
Trail Name: **Upper 9-mile trail**

Beginning Elevation: **67 feet**

Length: **0.5 miles**

Ending Elevation: **72 feet**

Description: The Upper 9-mile Trail was constructed/improved in 2010 using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The trail head is located at the bridge 9 miles from town on Forest Highway 10. This is a highly developed gravel turnpike trail with yellow cedar boardwalk. There are 2 spur trails which lead to fishing holes. A canopy of old growth spruce covers the entire section of this trail. This short trail is completely dry even during high rainfall and could be hiked without the need of waterproof boots. It is primarily used to access fishing holes above the 9-mile bridge mainly during spring steelhead season and summer sockeye season. Anglers should watch out for redds and spawning fish in this area. Redds are the gravel locations where salmon lay their eggs. To protect spawning fish, a closed area is located two miles above the nine mile campground from April 15 – May 15. There is a high concentration of brown bears in this area!



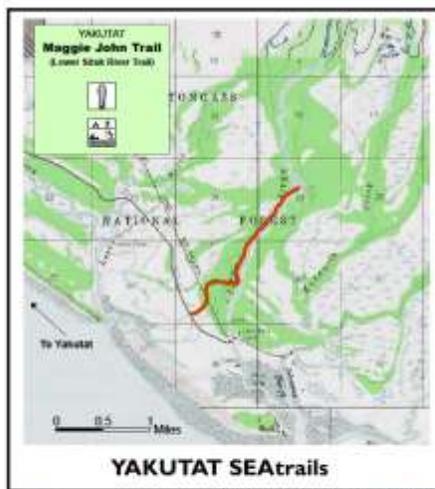
Trail Name: **Lower Situk River Trail**
(AKA Maggie John Trail)

Beginning Elevation: **10feet**

Ending Elevation: **16feet**

Length: **2.52 miles**

Description: **PLEASE NOTE the trail starting at the public boat launch facility on the lower Situk River is not a USFS trail. This trail leaves the public boat launch facility, which is owned by the State of Alaska, on to private property. No access without prior authorization from the owner is allowed!** The trail head for Lower Situk River trail is across the road from the lower Situk outhouse and parking area, 8.25 miles from the turn off of the paved road and 0.75 miles before the lower landing. There is an information sign on the north side of the road; the trail starts here and follows the edge of private property crosses over a historic rail road bed, and meets the Situk River at 0.9 mile. It then follows the river upstream another 1.6 miles with 4 spur trails to access fishing spots. The trail ends at a large oxbow 2.5 miles from the trailhead. This is a generally flat trail with some minor improvements along its route including some gravel turnpike, cable steps, two split log boardwalks, and a 52 foot log bridge. Most of the trail is native soil and is very muddy in places during most of the year so boots are recommended. Primary use is to access fishing holes above the boat ramp mainly during spring steelhead season and all salmon species the rest of the year.



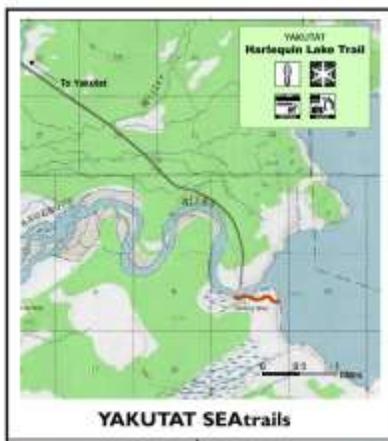
Trail Name: **Harlequin Lake Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **121 feet**

Length: **0.7 mile**

Ending Elevation: **112 feet**

Description: Harlequin Lake is an awesome spectacle of nature at the headwaters of the Dangerous River. The Yakutat Glacier is located at the northern edge of the lake and is a site of glacial studies in Alaska because of its rapid retreat. The Harlequin Lake trail begins at the end of Forest Highway 10 (32.3 miles from town) on the east side of the Dangerous River Bridge. There is a short trail which begins at the edge of the parking lot. When the trail levels out on the high bank terrace turn left; Harlequin Lake is about 0.75 miles. The Harlequin Lake trail follows the river upstream for roughly 900 feet before turning into the woods away from the bank. There is a short climb up a relic moraine; at the top you will enter the Russell Fiord Wilderness area. Lower portions of the trail can be quite wet during rainfall events so boots are recommended. Many species of birds dwell in the area including mew gulls, Arctic terns, red-necked phalaropes and Canada geese. There are also grey-checked thrush and passerine species such as varied thrush and ruby-crowned kinglet. There are also opportunities to view moose, bear, lynx and wolf in this area. Vegetation along the trail varies from willow flats to young mixed spruce and cottonwood stands. Harlequin Lake has a tremendous amount of icebergs with a scenic backdrop of mountains along the north side of the lake. Once at the lake more adventurous hikers can continue and explore the extensive shoreline of this amazing location.



Trail Name: **Middle Dangerous ATV Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **121 feet**

Length: **4 miles**

Ending Elevation: **23 feet**

Description: The Middle Dangerous ATV trail begins at the parking area at the end of Forest Highway 10 in the parking area on the east side of the Dangerous River Bridge. This trail shares a common trail head with the Harlequin Lake trail. Take the trail side slope up the short hill and continue toward the right. Harlequin Lake airstrip and shelter is at about 0.25 mile. The trail then follows the gravel airstrip to the west end where it enters a young mixed spruce and cottonwood forest. The trail passes through interspersed willow/alder/cottonwood forest and wetland areas varying from moderately to very wet. Many species of wildlife use this area including black and brown bears, moose, lynx and wolf. Look for their tracks in the soft silt and mud along the trail. Some trail surface improvements have been constructed including three sections of ATV boardwalk and roughly 1,500 feet of gravel turnpike and rigid black plastic structure called "geoblock" in the wet areas. The Middle Dangerous trail is primarily used to access the meadows used by local hunters in the fall. This trail is usually very wet so waterproof boots are a must. At the end of the trail is the Middle Dangerous River cabin which has access to the river and excellent views of the Brabazon Mountains.



Trail Name: **Ten Mile ATV Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **86 feet**

Length: **1.6 miles**

Ending Elevation: **69 feet**

Description: The Ten Mile ATV trail begins on the edge of Forest Highway 10 at milepost 10; the trail head is marked by 2 wood posts along the south edge of the road. After passing through some old growth spruce stands, the trail follows the east side of the ten mile meadow; it is 1.6 miles to a slough. The trail intersects with the Situk River foot trail that comes downstream from the 9-mile bridge; please see the description of the Situk River trail for more information. The ATV section of the trail ends at the beginning of the slough. This trail is primarily used by moose hunters in the fall but is also used as an alternative route by sport fishermen to reach the Eagle and Raven Cabins on the Situk River. Gravel and geoblock have been installed on the upper section of this trail in addition to one ATV bridge on the uppermost stream crossing. The vegetation starts out in old growth spruce and then transitions into a mix of willow flats, spruce stands, and open meadows. It is usually a fairly dry trail but during high rainfall events there are sections that become flooded.



Trail Name: **Redfield Lakes Access Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **133 feet**

Length: **0.08 miles**

Ending Elevation: **140 feet**

Description: To access Redfield Lakes Access Trail, take Forest Highway 10 approximately 6.5 miles, and then turn left onto road 9951 for 3.8 miles. Redfield Lake trailhead will be located at the pull-out on the left side of the road, it is not marked and not obvious. This short trail goes up the side of a glacial moraine then drops down into the first of a series of lakes. It is all native soil in old growth spruce forest and follows along the edge of an old patch of blown down trees. With the exception of the far end by the first lake, this trail is relatively dry. Short portages are required in between each small lake. This trail provides access to several lakes. Explore this very scenic area with a canoe, there are small islands and rock piles, towering trees and abundant wildlife. One can expect to see Sitka black-tailed deer, moose, and bear. Redfield lakes are actually a series of kettle ponds and they host a number of species of birds such as chickadees, flycatchers, nuthatches, kinglets, thrushes, crossbills and hairy woodpeckers. Red-tailed hawks and olive-sided flycatchers are uncommon summer residents in the area. There is also an opportunity to fish some of the larger lakes for rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.

(NEEDS MAP)

Trail Name: **Vonderheide Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **75 feet**

Length: **3.4 miles**

Ending Elevation: **342 feet**

Description: The Vonderheide Trail begins at mile 27 on Forest Highway 10 on the north side of the road. The trail goes through a series of small meadows and mixed spruce and cottonwood forest, enters the Russell Fiord Wilderness, and ends at the base of the Brabazon Mountains near Miller Creek. The first 0.25 mile has had gravel turnpike installed but beyond that there are no other improvements and the tread is all native soil. Much of the lower trail is wet and several sections are flooded by recent beaver activity with some stream crossings, so waterproof boots are recommended. The Vonderheide trail is unique in that it approaches the base of the mountains near Harlequin Lake, traveling out of the mostly flat "Yakutat Forelands". Beware there are several heavily used game corridors which intersect the trail toward the base of the mountains. For experienced wilderness hikers, it is possible to cross-country hike beyond the end of the trail and into the mountains, but that will require some "bushwhacking". Once you are above tree line, the coastal and mountain views are worth the effort. The Vonderheide trail is another low use trail and is primarily used for sightseeing, photography, wildlife viewing and occasionally for moose hunting in the fall.

(NEEDS MAP CORRECTED< TRAIL ENDS AT BASE OF MOUNTAIN!!)



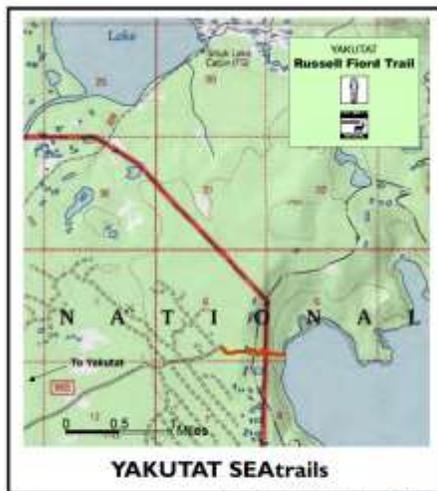
Trail Name: **Russell Fiord Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **220 feet**

Length: **0.8 miles**

Ending Elevation: **Sea Level**

Description: The Russell Fiord trail takes off from the end of Forest Road 9955 at the edge of an old logging area. It goes up over a relic moraine at the south end of Russell Fiord and drops down to the beach at sea level. At the top point of the moraine, you enter the Russell Fiord Wilderness. The entire trail travels through old growth spruce with the exception of the far end. This end of the trail goes through an area of dead standing trees that were killed off during the Hubbard Glacier closure and subsequent flooding of the fiord in 1986 and 2002. There are several sections of split log boardwalk just before the wilderness boundary, with the trail surface comprised of native soil. Many wet sections exist along the trail, especially toward the end of the trail, which descends the terminal moraine toward the shoreline. This side of the moraine has many fresh water springs and creeks and intercepts many areas of ground water seepage. Boots are recommended on this trail. The primary use on this trail is for sight-seeing, wilderness adventure, and photography as well as access for kayakers into Russell Fiord. Walk the beaches to see murrelets, loons, white winged scoters, pigeon guillemots Aleutian and Arctic terns, phalaropes and jaegers. During the summer months there are fish spawning on the shore near the end of the trail. Russell Fiord is teeming with wildlife including bears, wolf, moose, and wolverines. Kayaking the Fiord is a world class adventure; hiking along the shore at low tide is just as rewarding.



Trail Name: **Tawah Creek Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **8 feet**

Length: **0.16 miles**

Ending Elevation: **7 feet**

Description: The Tawah Creek Trail is a short trail to provide access along Tawah Creek downstream from the bridge on Forest Road 9965. The trail goes through a wet muskeg area and is constructed of geoblock to prevent foot traffic from damaging the muskeg. This trail provides access to sport fishing holes along the bank of Tawah Creek and is primarily used in late summer and early fall for coho salmon fishing. There are two short yellow cedar foot bridges at the beginning of the trail, but beyond that waterproof boots are a must. **(NEEDS MAP)**

Trail Name: **Italo River ATV Trail**

Beginning Elevation: **2 feet**

Length: **5.06 miles**

Ending Elevation: **2 feet**

Description: The Italo River ATV Trail provides an access route to get to the Italo and Akwe Rivers. The trail is unimproved and unmarked with portions of it that are inundated at high tide. There are two stream crossings both at the beginning part nearest the Italo cabin. The first is Hooligan Creek, the second is the Old Italo, which will require hip waders to cross. Once across the Old Italo, the trail becomes very well defined and will lead all the way to the Italo River, just upstream from where it joins the Akwe River. The entire trail is on beach sand and goes through a series of grass openings and alder thickets. There is an outer loop that begins shortly after the Old Italo crossing which leads out toward the coast and through the inner beach dunes with an intersection that leads out to the outer beach and also back to the main trail. Much of this outer trail does get submerged at high tide so hikers should check tides while planning hiking activities in the area. The outer portion of the trail would be more for beachcombing and sightseeing than for sport fishing. This trail is primarily used by commercial fishermen in the area but also by sport fishermen and beach combers using the Forest Service Italo River cabin.



Trail Name: **Colorado Trail**
Length: **2.75 miles**

Beginning Elevation: **42 feet**
End Elevation: **35 feet**

Description: Colorado Trail occupies an old roadbed constructed for oil exploration in the mid 1950's. This trail starts on State land at the east end of the Fish Train Trail near the end of the Yakutat airport. Alaska Department of Transportation installed an access through the fence; once through the fence the trail follows the road for a short distance before turning right toward the east. On this section of trail look for conifer loving bird species such as white winged crossbill and pine grosbeak in the wooded areas. As the trail turns east it crosses over 2 streams; in the fall hip boots are needed for the crossings, but the rest of the trail is fairly dry. Ditches run down either side of the trail, these ditches are lined with alder and cottonwood along with some spruce trees. When the ditches are flooded, look for mallards, goldeneyes, and buffleheads feeding. This trail extends far out into a very large muskeg area and is used primarily by moose hunters in the fall months. In these meadows, look for savannah, Lincoln's and song sparrows and various species of swallows. If hiking this trail in the late fall and early winter, users should be aware that there is a high density of brown bears that congregate along the trail to feed on spawning salmon in the ditches.

