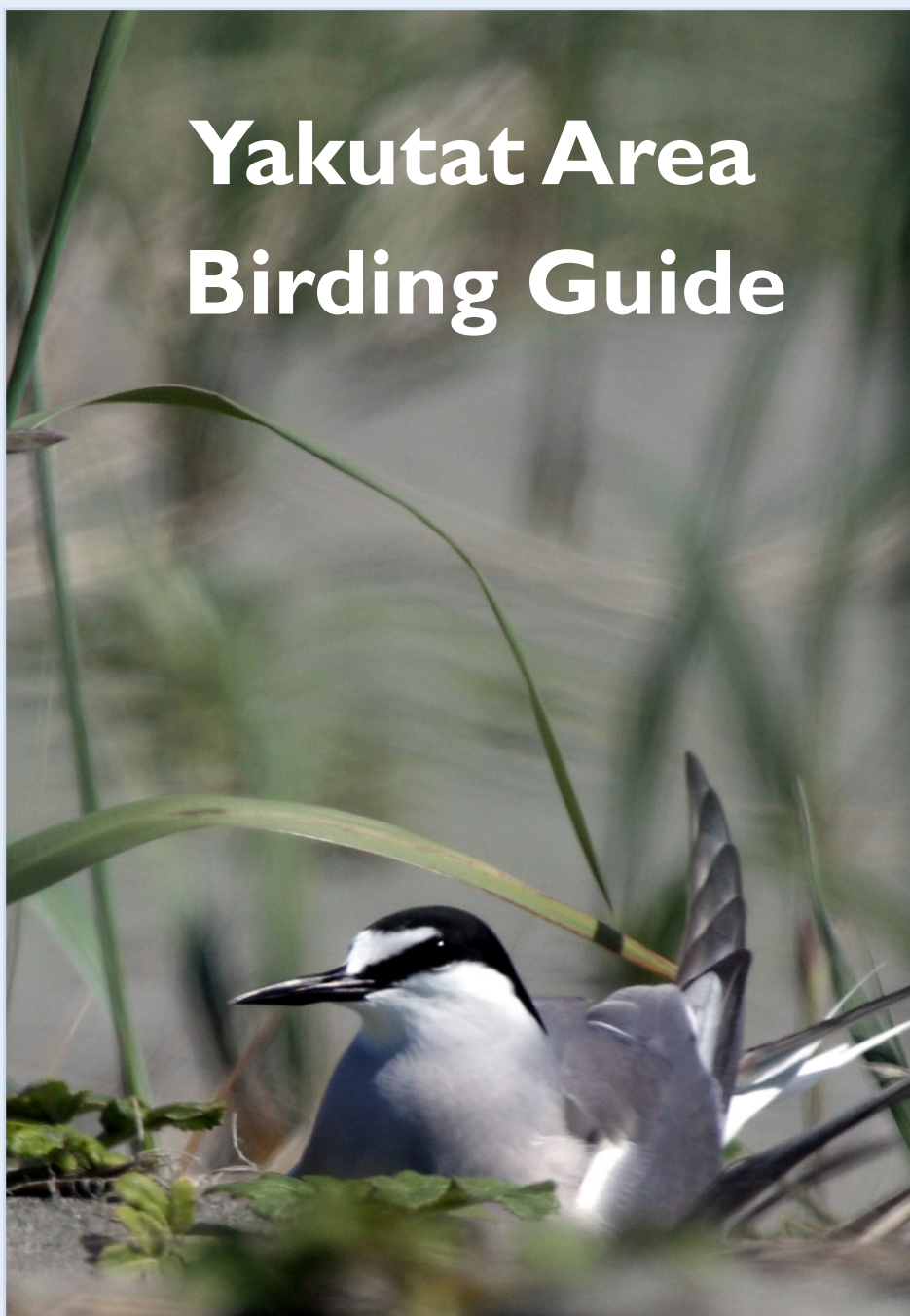


Yakutat Area Birding Guide



Introduction

Yakutat is a world-class birding destination with access to an incredible diversity of pristine habitats. In a short distance from Yakutat, birders can hike coastal rainforest trails, float rivers teeming with wild salmon, sea kayak or boat Yakutat Bay or the nearby fiords, walk miles of sandy beaches, or simply drive a car to gain access to prime birding areas.

Yakutat boasts more than 200 species of birds recorded to date, including more than 100 nesting varieties and many rarities. Spectacular mountain ranges and the Gulf of Alaska squeeze the Yakutat forelands into a narrow corridor for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. Spring and fall are prime times for birding. The southernmost known and one of the largest breeding colonies of Aleutian terns exists here. In addition, Yakutat offers spectacular scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities, including black and brown bears, wolves, moose, mountain goats, Sitka black-tailed deer, small mammals, and marine mammals.



Tern chick and egg | Nate Catterson

Cover photo: Aleutian tern on nest | Mike Denega

Overview of Description for Birding Sites

Yakutat lies within the Pacific Coastal Mountain and Coastal Western Hemlock-Sitka Spruce Forest eco-regions. The bird habitats listed for each site (see Habitat Codes) are a part of this unique system, and are further described in [The Birds of Yakutat, Alaska](#), 2007, by B. A. Andres and B. T. Browne, and on the Yakutat Ranger District website. Because the cover is often dense, vocalizations will be an important aspect of identification of passerine birds, especially during breeding season. Difficulty levels are listed for hiking trails. The “time to complete” listed for each site is an estimate of the minimum amount of time needed to arrive at the site, go bird watching, and return; total time will vary.

Trail distances are one-way. Starting point for all destinations is the intersection of Forest Highway #10 (FH#10), also referred to as Dangerous River Road, and Airport Road, the main 4-way intersection in town near the Yakutat Ranger District office. All distances are reported in miles, and driving distances are one-way. Stay on hard surfaced roads. Avoid driving into soft spots, especially sandy areas. Note: included map shows general locations; more detailed maps are available from the Forest Service and National Park Service offices.



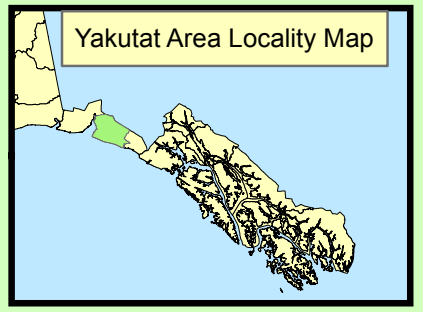
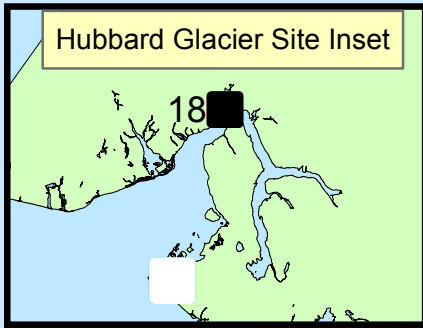
Immature bald eagle | Nate Catterson

It's no secret that Southeast Alaska is known for its wet weather. Travelers might wonder if the rain is going to affect their trip. However, finding sunshine is often a matter of luck. The longer your stay, the better the chances for some great days, but birders should not despair if the weather is not cooperative. Birds in this climate are accustomed to and active in the rain. In summer, thrushes will keep singing happily between showers, spring and fall shorebirds probe all day long, and raptors still hunt. Some warm layers and waterproof clothing and boots will ensure some good birding days regardless of the weather.



American wigeon | Susan Oehlers

Yakutat Area Birding Sites



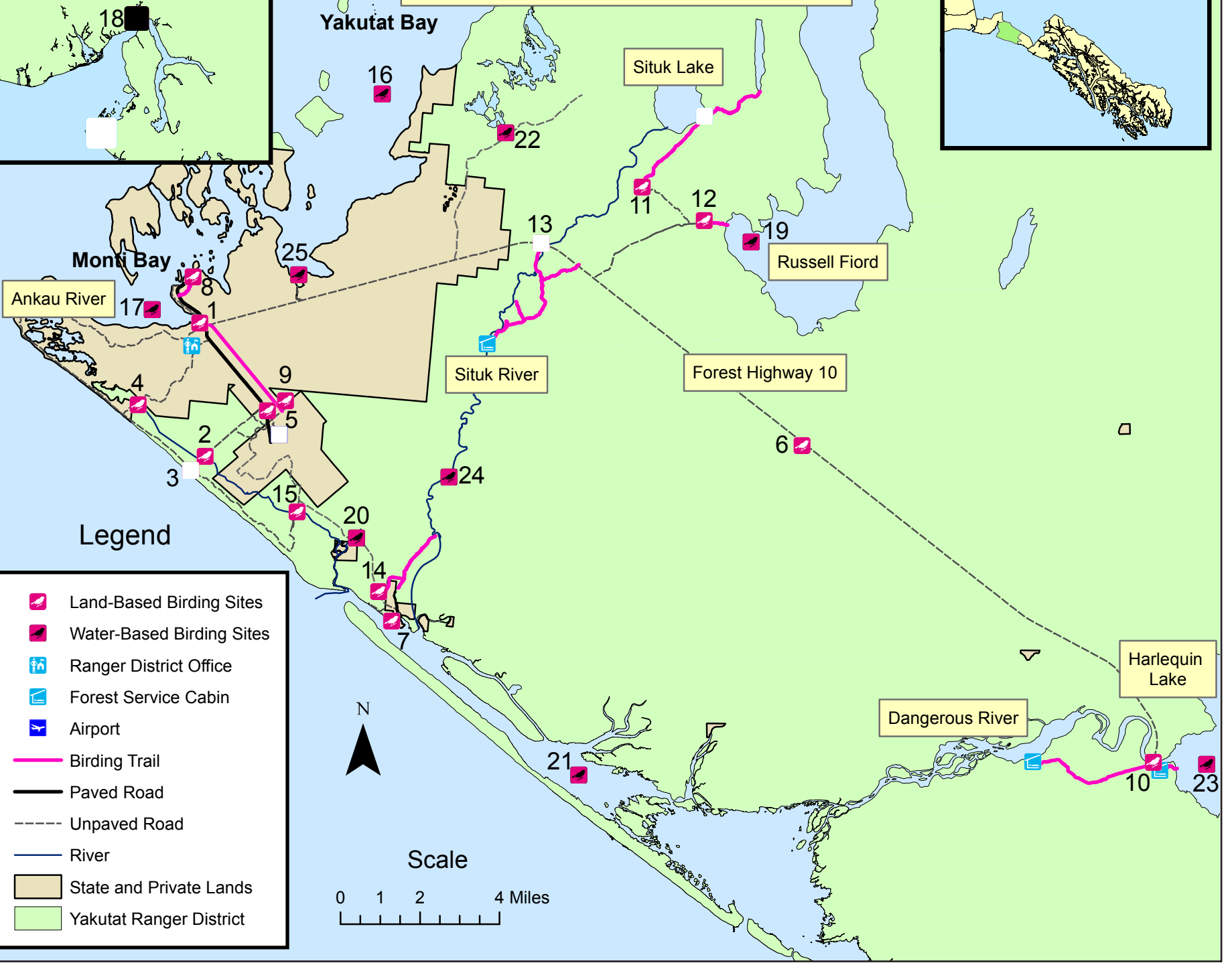
Legend

- Land-Based Birding Sites
- Water-Based Birding Sites
- Ranger District Office
- Forest Service Cabin
- Airport
- Birding Trail
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- River
- State and Private Lands
- Yakutat Ranger District

N

Scale

0 1 2 4 Miles



REMEMBER always leave information about your origin, destination, and trip plan with friends and authorities when traveling.

Site Description Codes

Access

1 = land vehicle-based
(short walk to viewing sites)

2 = land based hiking or walking

3 = water based
(canoe, kayak, or charter boat)

Difficulty

Easy (1): Level surfaces, distance 1 mi. or less, less than 100 feet of elevation gain.

Moderate (2): Some uneven surfaces (roots, sand, or mud), less than 5 mi., less than 500 feet elevation gain.

Advanced (3): Rough surfaces, perhaps water crossings, knowledge of navigation or maps helpful.

Habitat

Inshore Waters = IW

Rocky Shore/Cliff = RS

Sandy Beach/Dune = SB

Tidal Flat = TF

Salt Marsh = SM

Lake/Pond = LP

River/Stream = RS

Bog/Meadow = BM

Tall Shrub = TS

Broadleaf/Mixed Forest = BF

Needle Leaf Forest = NF

Developed = DE

Alpine = AL

Time to complete

1 = 1 hour or less

2 = 1-4 hours

3 = 4 hours to full day

4 = multiple days

| Site Name and Number | Access | Difficulty (hiking trails) | Distance in miles (hiking trails) | Habitats | Time to complete |
|--|--------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Sandy Beach | 1 | | | IW, SB | 1 |
| 2. Tawah Creek/Cannon Beach Bridge | 1 | | | BM, NF, RS, TS | 2 |
| 3. Cannon Beach | 1, 2 | | | SB, NF, IW | 2 |
| 4. Summit Lake | 1 | | | IW, SB, BM, TS, LP, NF | 2 |
| 5. Yakutat Airport Area | 1 | | | BM, NF, TS, DE | 1 |
| 6. Dangerous River Road | 1 | | | NF, TS, LP, MB, BF, RS | 3 |
| 7. Strawberry Point | 1 | | | IW, SB, TF, SM, RS | 2 |
| 8. Totem Park Trail and Yakutat Boat Harbor | 2 | 1 | 0.7 | | 1 |
| 9. Railroad/Fish Train Trail | 2 | 1-2 | 2.5 | NF, TS, BM | 2 |
| 10. Harlequin Lake Trail | 2 | 2 | 0.75 | NF, TS, RS, LP | 3 |
| 11. Situk Lake Trail | 2 | 3 | 3.1 | NF, BF, LP, BM, RS | 3 |
| 12. Russell Fiord Trail | 2 | 2 | 0.75 | NF, IW, RS, LP | 2 |
| 13. Situk River Trail | 2 | 2,3 | 4.0 | NF, BF, RS, TS, BM | 2,3 |
| 14. Maggie John (Lower Situk) Trail | 2 | 2 | 2.5 | NF, BF, RS | 2 |
| 15. Christmas Tree Bridge (Tawah Creek) | 2 | 1 | 0.16 | NF, RS, BM | 2 |
| 16. Yakutat Bay | 3 | | | IW, RS | 3,4 |
| 17. Open waters around Monti Bay and Yakutat Bay islands | 3 | | | IW, RS | 3 |
| 18. and 19. Russell Fiord and Hubbard Glacier | 3 | | | IW, RS | 3,4 |
| 20. Tawah Creek/Summit Lake/Lost River | 3 | | | LP, RS, TS, BM, NF | 3 |
| 21. Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary | 3 | | | IW, TF, SM, SB | 3,4 |
| 22. Redfield Lakes | 3 | | | NF, LP, BM, RS | 3,4 |
| 23. Harlequin Lake | 3 | | | NF, TS, RS, LP | 3,4 |
| 24. Situk River | 3 | | | NF, BF, RS, TS, BM | 3,4 |
| 25. Sawmill Cove | 3 | | | IW, RS | 3,4 |



Scenic overlook at Cannon Beach | Mike Denega

Overlook and Scenic Drive Sites

These sites are all easily accessible by vehicle or even mountain bike, some with options for additional short walks. Several are accessible close to town or the airport, allowing good viewing opportunities for birders with limited time. Be sure to make noise to avoid surprising bears.



Scenic overlook at Cannon Beach Bridge | Mike Denega



Western sandpiper | Mike Denega

1. Sandy Beach

From the intersection, drive or walk south towards the ocean on Ocean Cape Rd. In approximately 0.1 mi., veer to the right, downhill towards the bay, continuing to stay to the right. Drive along the water towards the cannery/Alaska Marine Lines dock to the Sandy Beach pavilion/picnic area. Total driving distance is 0.5 mi. A parking and picnic area is located on the right side of the road.

This is a small, pleasant beach offering great views of Monti Bay. Covered shelters make this a good choice on rainy days. Fish scraps from the nearby cannery attract large numbers of gulls. Northwestern crows and common ravens are opportunistic feeders here. In summer, mew, Bonaparte's, herring and glaucous-winged gulls predominate, but a rarity is always possible.

Black-legged kittiwakes and both Arctic and Aleutian terns may be feeding as well, along with more sea-going species such as pelagic cormorant, marbled murrelet, and pigeon guillemot. During migration, shorebirds such as dunlin and western sandpipers may appear. It is a good place to see uncommon seabird species that arrive during big storms. Keep an eye out for marine mammals such as harbor porpoises, harbor seals, and whales.



Greater yellowlegs | Mike Denega

2. Tawah Creek at Cannon Beach Bridge

Drive 2.6 mi. on Airport Rd. to Cannon Beach Rd. Turn right and drive 2.1 mi. to Cannon Beach Bridge, which crosses over Tawah Creek. Park in the small pullout area located on the left, immediately before the bridge. Interpretive sign panels are located here.

This is a designated Forest Service NatureWatch site. From the bridge, one can view Tawah Creek and its associated wetlands and open meadows. Waterfowl such as mallards, goldeneyes, buffleheads, greater white-fronted geese, and trumpeter swans are often observed here in the spring and fall. Greater yellowlegs, belted kingfishers, and bald eagles are common from spring through fall. Watch for the occasional northern goshawk, great blue heron, or northern harrier.

The adjacent tall shrub, open meadows and conifer forest add a variety of species to the area, such as golden-crowned kinglet, varied thrush, and several species of warblers and sparrows. In the fall, scan the nearby meadows for moose and bears.

3. Cannon Beach

Follow directions to site #2 (Tawah Creek/Cannon Beach Bridge), but continue on past the bridge for 0.2 mi. to the end of the road and beach access. Park in the parking area near the day use picnic area. Three platform campsites/picnic areas also are accessible by driving the inner beach road to the right (north/northwest). From Cannon Beach, the beach is open for walking for miles in either direction. Consult a tide book as extremely high tides in spring and fall may force you to hike the beach bluff.

This is a long, scenic, sandy beach, flanked by beach grass and abundant flowers in summer, and bordered by coastal rainforest. Forest birds, such as pine siskin, golden-crowned kinglet, and varied thrush, may be visible at the forest edge. Gulls and terns often fly through. Watch for seabirds beyond the breakers. Thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl pass through during spring and fall migration. Also watch for whales, especially in the spring. In summer, look for nesting semipalmated plovers. Watch for bear and other tracks in the loose sand.



Semipalmated plover | Mike Denega



Trumpeter swan | Caleb Wiseman

4. Summit Lake

Drive 0.3 mi. on Airport Rd., cross the bridge over Ophir Creek, turn right on Ophir Creek/Coast Guard Rd., and drive 3.1 mi. Ophir Creek Rd. is a poorly maintained dirt road but generally passable in a passenger vehicle. This is accessible by mountain bike. Look for a narrow break in the vegetation on the left with a small area to park. Summit Lake will be in sight.

This is also a good canoe access point during high water conditions. See Summit Lake/Tawah/Lost River canoe route (site #20) for viewing by canoe. Alternatively, the junction can be reached from Cannon Beach Road and combined with viewing at Tawah Creek Bridge (site #2) and Cannon Beach (site #3): turn right (northwest) onto Inner Beach Road from Cannon Beach Road to the intersection with Ophir Creek Road in 2.3 mi., and turn right; Summit Lake access point is half a mile from this point. The inner beach road is also poorly maintained but generally passable in a passenger vehicle.

Tawah Creek drains Summit Lake, empties into Lost River, and flows to the Gulf of Alaska via the Ahrnklin/Situk Estuary. This waterway is part of the Yakutat to Dry Bay Ancestral Tlingit Canoe Route. The system from Summit Lake to Cannon Beach Bridge hosts a variety of waterfowl. Trumpeter swans can usually be seen from this vantage point. This is a popular area for waterfowl hunting during September and October. Birders are asked to respect this tradition and stay visible during this time.

Listen for coastal forest songbirds such as brown creeper, ruby- and golden-crowned kinglet, and red crossbills in the big trees along the road.

5. Yakutat Airport Area

Follow directions to access the Fish Train trail (site #9) near the airport. Park near the airport fence before you get to the trailhead, or park at the trailhead and walk back along the airport fence towards the housing area. Alternatively, from Yakutat Airport simply follow the road towards town. After it veers right, go less than 0.5 mi. and turn right onto the gravel road in front of the residential area.

Summer months nearly always yield something interesting. Swallows nest in the old buildings. Shorebirds such as least sandpiper have nested in the open areas, and other species such as whimbrels can be found foraging here during spring migration. Semipalmated plover and killdeer can be seen in the open areas during spring and summer. The marshy areas are good for Wilson's snipe. Nearly all the songbirds found elsewhere on the Yakutat Forelands can be found here. Northern waterthrush is a rare, occasional occupant of the area. During migration, the open areas might attract unusual migrants. In early fall, Lapland longspurs are commonly migrating through the area.



Hiking and Walking Sites

Yakutat offers a variety of hiking and walking opportunities, from maintained trails to open beaches. Visit the Forest Service office or Tongass National Forest website and www.seatrails.org for more information on Forest Service trails. Wear comfortable shoes, ideally waterproof, and stay alert for bears. When walking through town, stay to the sides of the road and watch for vehicles; there are no sidewalks in Yakutat. Many trails can be accessed with a mountain bike; however, bikes are not allowed in designated Wilderness Areas such as Russell Fiord.

3. Cannon Beach

See the Cannon Beach overlook (site #3) for driving directions and highlights. From Cannon Beach, the beach is open for walking for miles in either direction. *Consult a tide book as extremely high tides in spring and fall may force you on the beach bluff for access.*



View from Dangerous River Bridge | Mike Denega

6. Dangerous River Road

From town, travel along FH#10 towards the Dangerous River Bridge and the trailhead for Harlequin Lake. Expect washboards, ruts, and loose gravel; it is a good idea to have a spare tire and let someone know when to expect your return. Drivers may pull over at nearly any point along the road. A suggested stop is at the Situk River/9-mile Bridge (site #13), a designated Watchable Wildlife Site. Note: point on map corresponds to Dangerous River Road (FH#10) approximately 20 mi. from the intersection with Airport Road.

Forest Highway 10 crosses a variety of inland habitats in the Yakutat Forelands, the broad terrace above the beaches and dunes that stretch to the foot of the coastal mountains. A stop in each main habitat should yield nearly all the songbird species found around Yakutat.

In summer, expect an abundance of fox sparrows, orange-crowned warblers, yellow-rumped (myrtle) warblers, and Lincoln's sparrows. Greater yellowlegs, and occasionally lesser yellowlegs, nest in the open marshes. Red-breasted sapsuckers and Swainson's thrushes may be found in areas further out the road with large cottonwoods; they are very scarce elsewhere around Yakutat. Bald eagle nests are visible at approximately 18 mi. from the Airport Road intersection, and near Miller Creek past the Ahrnklin River bridge. The dawn chorus out the road is truly a wonder: listeners will be surrounded by a "wall of sound" from the waking hermit and varied thrushes. Also watch for wildlife such as moose and bears on FH#10, especially at dawn and dusk.



Long-billed dowitcher | Mike Denega

7. Strawberry Point

Drive 3 mi. on Airport Rd. and turn right on Situk Landing Rd. Drive 8.7 mi. to the Strawberry Point road sign, past the Maggie John Trailhead, and turn right. Stay right at the fork in the road, towards the estuary. Turn left at the only road that parallels the beach/estuary. Park at the end of the road located 0.6 mi. from the Strawberry Point sign. Walk east along the beach to reach the tidal flats. Stick to the beach and respect private land boundary signs in this area.

Strawberry Point is where the Situk River enters the Situk-Ahrnklin Estuary. The area is a magnet for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds like American golden, Pacific and black-bellied plover, dunlin, long-billed dowitchers, and western sandpiper. Over 300,000 shorebirds use the tidal flats during spring migration; low tide is the best time for viewing. Peregrine falcon and merlin follow migrating waterfowl during spring and fall. Aleutian and Arctic terns are seen feeding from this vantage point during the summer. Semipalmated plovers nest in the area. Numerous bald eagles congregate here especially to take advantage of fish scraps during salmon fishing seasons.



Bonaparte's gull | Mike Denega

8. Totem Park Trail and Yakutat Boat Harbor

Drive 1.5 mi. on Mallott Ave., the main paved road through town, to the Yakutat Boat Harbor parking lot. Just before the harbor, a salt water lagoon and the totem pole at the water's edge across the lagoon will be visible on your right. Pass the Leonard's Landing sign on your right and park at the harbor. Walk the road towards Leonard's Landing a few hundred feet. Look for a wooden walkway on the right for the trailhead.

This is a quick, easy trip for those with limited time. The trail provides a nice example of fairly mature forest. Expect to encounter thrushes, kinglets, and even brown creepers. Waterfowl and shorebirds are common in the lagoon and along the shoreline in spring and fall. A side trip to the harbor may yield murrelets, sea ducks, cormorants, gulls, and eagles. Sitka black-tailed deer are commonly observed in this area.

Combine this site with Sandy Beach (site #1) by walking from the harbor along Max Itallo Dr. towards Sandy Beach. These lower town roads provide good views of Monti Bay: the shoreline and open waters of Monti Bay will be in view for most of the walk. Expect large shorebird flocks along the shoreline during spring migration. See additional highlights for Sandy Beach (site #1), Monti Bay (site #17), and Yakutat Boat Harbor (site #8).



Yellow-rumped warbler | Lora Wade

9. Railroad/Fish Train Trail

The Fish Train Trail has two access points. For access from town, park at the Ranger District office, and walk 0.1 mi. on FH#10. The trailhead and interpretive signs are on the right side of the road near the Public Safety building. For access near the airport, drive 3 mi. on Airport Rd. and turn left onto a gravel road directly across from Situk Landing Rd. Drive 0.4 mi. straight to the end of the road where a trailhead with sign is located. This wide gravel trail is suitable for either walking or biking.

On the 0.4 mi. gravel road leading to the Fish Train Trail near the airport, look for birds in flight in the open areas, including alder flycatchers and warblers such as the myrtle (yellow-rumped) and orange-crowned warblers. In addition, look for conifer-loving species such as white-winged crossbill and pine grosbeak in wooded zones.



Ruby-crowned kinglet | Mike Denega

10. Harlequin Lake Trail

Drive FH#10 for 30 mi. crossing the Dangerous River Bridge to the end of the road to park at the trailhead. The trail parallels the river (upstream) from here, and ends at Harlequin Lake about 0.75 mi. from the parking area. More advanced hikers can continue along the shore, or once back at the trailhead follow the 3 mi. trail downstream to the Middle Dangerous cabin.

Harlequin Lake is a spectacular spot located at the headwaters of the Dangerous River. Massive icebergs, calved from Yakutat Glacier, can be seen floating from shore. Mew gulls sometimes make their nests on the ice. Yakutat Glacier is visible across the lake. Look for cliff swallows nesting under the bridge, Arctic terns diving for fish, molting Canada geese, and red-necked phalaropes. Extensive willow thickets along the lake shore in this relatively inland area are good places to look for interior-dwelling species like gray-cheeked thrush. Watch for gulls along the shore and passerine species like varied thrush and ruby-crowned kinglet. Scan the surrounding mountains for mountain goats and black bears.

11. Situk Lake Trail

Drive FH#10 10.4 mi., turn left on East Gate Rd. (FH#9995). Drive 3.5 mi. and turn on to the only road on the left. Drive another 3 mi. to the trailhead. From Situk Lake, the trail extends another 2 mi. to Mountain Lake.

A U.S. Forest Service cabin with canoe is at the lake for public use. Please make reservations in advance at www.recreation.gov. On the trail, expect passerine bird species like winter wren, Wilson's warbler, hermit and, rarely, gray-cheeked thrush. On the lake, expect trumpeter swans, gulls, and various types of waterfowl such as goldeneye and mergansers. Shorebirds such as yellowlegs and spotted and least sandpipers are possible. For a longer hike, continue up the trail to Mountain Lake, with similar species expected and good viewing of spawning salmon along Mountain Stream during late summer into fall. Be aware of bears during any and all fish runs and follow guidelines at the end of this guidebook.

12. Russell Fiord Trail

Same as Situk Lake Trail (site #11) except do not turn left off of East Gate Rd. Follow East Gate Rd. 4 mi. from the juncture with FH#10 to its end at Russell Fiord Trailhead.

In a short distance, this forested trail leads hikers to the open waters of Russell Fiord. Walk the beaches (pay attention to tides) and look for murrelets, loons, white-winged scoters, pigeon guillemots, Aleutian and Arctic terns, gulls, phalaropes, and jaegers. On the shore, be alert for black oystercatchers. Note the effects on the near-shore habitat from the Hubbard Glacier damming the fiord in 2002.



Russell Fiord beach | Susan Oehlers

13. Situk River Trail

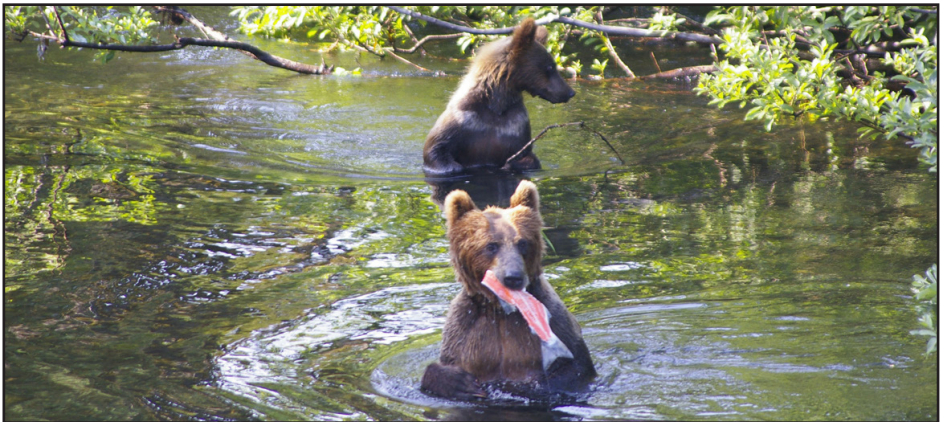
Drive FH#10 for 9 mi. to where the highway crosses the Situk River. Park on the north (left) side of the road. The main trail starts on the south side and goes downriver 4 mi. ending at a Forest Service airstrip and two public use cabins that require reservations. A very short trail also heads upstream from the parking area. The 10-mile Bog ATV Trail starts on FH#10 1 mi. east of 9-mile Bridge and connects with the Situk River Trail at the 1.25 mi. point.

From 9-mile Bridge, the Situk River flows 14 mi. to the Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary. In addition to passerine bird species associated with the forest, such as thrushes, chickadees, and wrens, expect to see red-breasted sapsucker, common merganser, spotted sandpiper, Wilson's snipe, lesser and greater yellowlegs, northern waterthrush, belted kingfisher, bald eagles, and various species of swallows and waterfowl. Wilson's, yellow-rumped, and yellow warblers are also common.

14. Maggie John (Lower Situk) Trail

Drive 3 mi. on Airport Rd. and turn onto Situk Landing Rd. on your right. Drive 8.3 mi. to the trailhead and parking area on the right side of the road. Restrooms are available at this location. Trailhead and signs with interpretive information are on north (left) side of the road.

This trail begins in closed forest and first connects with the river about 1 mi. above Situk Landing. This trail is heavily used by anglers during the spring through fall. **Use caution, as bears are very common in this area!** Refer to Situk River Trail (site #13) for highlights.



Brown bears with salmon in Situk River | Nate Catterson



Bald eagle | Mike Denega

15. Christmas Tree Bridge/Tawah Creek

Drive 3 mi. on Airport Rd. to Situk Landing Rd. Turn right. Drive 4.9 mi. to an obvious fork in the road. Stay right on the smaller, less traveled road. Drive 0.3 mi. to Christmas Tree Bridge over Tawah Creek. Park and use the short walking trail that heads downstream on the south side of Tawah Creek.

This section of Tawah Creek is downstream of Cannon Bridge and Summit Lake, and about 0.5 mi. upstream from the confluence of Lost River. In meadows bordering the creek, look for savannah, Lincoln's and song sparrows and various species of swallows. In the narrow creek channel you may surprise waterfowl, like mallard and American wigeon, and shorebirds such as least sandpiper. There are plenty of fish in the stream for belted kingfishers. Keep an eye out for river otters and mink.



Yakutat Bay | Mike Denega



Water-based (boat, canoe, kayak) Sites

Yakutat offers a multitude of water-based bird watching opportunities, from lakes to rivers to saltwater. Contact the Yakutat Chamber of Commerce for information on charter boats, guides, and kayak rentals. Independent travelers are advised to contact the Forest Service for more information before undertaking any water travel.

16. Yakutat Bay

Yakutat Bay is accessible primarily by boat, and most trips leave from the Yakutat Boat Harbor (site #8). Most tours designed for fishing trips or glacier viewing also would be suitable for birdwatching. Note: point on map corresponds to Yakutat Bay near the boat harbor. Alternative kayak launch sites include Sandy Beach (site #1) or Sawmill Cove (site #25). Kayakers are advised to use caution in open water and keep an eye on weather and changing conditions.

The waters in Yakutat Bay are relatively sheltered and during calm weather can be good for bird viewing; use caution, however, because weather conditions can change quickly. Look for marbled and Kittlitz's murrelets; sea ducks including scoters, harlequin ducks, and Barrow's goldeneye; cormorants; and occasionally other pelagic species. The rocky shoreline also might be good for turnstones and other shorebirds. Areas with foraging flocks of gulls and terns are also likely to include marine mammals such as sea otters, harbor seals, humpback whales, and sea lions. Watch for Sitka black-tailed deer on the island beaches. Mountain views are spectacular on clear days.



Kittlitz's murrelet | Milo Burcham

17. Open waters around Monti Bay and Yakutat Bay Islands

This route can be combined with a Yakutat Bay tour (site #16), and similarly accessed by boat, canoe, or kayak from the Yakutat Boat Harbor (site #8), Sandy Beach (site #1), or Sawmill Cove (site #25).

This a great place for seabirds, such as gulls, scoters, and cormorants. Common loons are abundant year round, and Pacific loons are common migrants. A variety of waterfowl species are viewable in the Ankau River mouth, with Arctic terns nesting and foraging nearby. Keep an eye out for the famous Yakutat human surfers, and marine mammals. See additional highlights as described for Yakutat Bay (site #16).

18. and 19. Russell Fiord and Hubbard Glacier

Contact a charter boat company to view Hubbard Glacier from Disenchantment Bay. Day or multi-day kayak/canoe/camping trips are optional within Russell Fiord. Access is from Russell Fiord Trail (site #12) on foot and includes a 0.75 mi. portage. If you choose to land in the fiord by small float plane, packable or portable kayaks or canoes are recommended. This route is recommended for experienced paddlers only. Inexperienced wilderness campers take note.

There are two points on the map corresponding to Hubbard Glacier viewing area in Disenchantment Bay (site #18; by charter boat) and south end of Russell Fiord (site #19) near watercraft launch site.

Spectacular views of islands, rugged coastline, and ultimately the Hubbard Glacier make this a trip worth the extra effort. Look for similar bird species to Yakutat Bay (site #16), although some rarer species such as Kittlitz's murrelets are also viewable. Seabird colonies featuring gulls and kittiwakes are found on Haenke Island or Egg Island, near the face of the glacier. Look for common, Pacific, red-throated, and the occasional yellow-billed loons at this site. See additional species highlights listed for Russell Fiord Hiking Trail (site #12).



Hubbard Glacier from east | Mike Denega



Tawah Creek | Susan Oehlers

20. Tawah Creek/Summit Lake/Lost River

This trip is part of the Yakutat to Dry Bay Ancestral Tlingit Canoe Route. Launch at Summit Lake (site #4) or Cannon Beach Bridge (site #2), and kayak or canoe Tawah Creek to Lost River, traveling upstream on Lost River to the bridge on Situk Landing Road. This requires vehicle shuttling from either end as it is not a loop. Please plan additional time to paddle both directions.

During summer low-water periods, some sections of the water will be slow and weedy, particularly between Summit Lake and Cannon Beach Bridge. Portages often are required near the outwash of Summit Lake due to fallen trees and beaver activity. Downstream from Christmas Tree Bridge, multiple small portages are required due to logs across lower Tawah Creek. Consult tide books as it is easiest to travel upstream on Lost River on an incoming tide.

Summit Lake to Cannon Beach Bridge is 2.5 mi., and Cannon Beach Bridge to Lost River Bridge is 6 mi. Paddlers also can take-out at Christmas Tree Bridge (site #15), 4 mi. from Cannon Beach Bridge, for a shorter trip. Note: corresponding point on map identifies Lost River take-out point at Situk Landing Road.

See highlights for Summit Lake (site #4), Tawah Creek Bridge (site #2), and Christmas Tree Bridge (site #15). Belted kingfishers hunt from the bridges and nest in the banks along the Lost River. Watch for hawks in the open meadows along the creeks.

21. The Situk/Ahrnklin Estuary

This trip is part of the Yakutat to Dry Bay Ancestral Tlingit Canoe Route. The closest watercraft access point is at Strawberry Point (site #7) or Situk Landing. To reach the landing, follow directions to Strawberry Point by turning right at the Strawberry Point sign, and then proceed on the left fork and continue straight to the parking and boat launch area.

You might wish to combine a visit to the estuary with the Summit Lake/Tawah/Lost River route (site #20) for a long day or multiple day trip. The site is accessible by canoe, kayak, and local charter boat or small plane.

Consult a tide book for easier travel. At Black Sand Island, paddlers have a choice of going around the island on the east side of the island between the island and the mainland, or continuing on the estuary side. The inland side might be a better choice when high winds are expected along the coast. This route is not recommended during dry periods in summer. The estuary is always passable but might be more difficult during an extremely low tide. The entire estuary is approximately 8 mi. long; travel beyond the mouth of the Ahrnklin River is difficult and therefore is not recommended for inexperienced wilderness travelers.



Nesting Aleutian tern | Mike Denega

As a large pristine wetland, the estuary hosts thousands of migratory waterfowl and sandhill cranes and is excellent for shorebird viewing in spring and fall. It has been nominated for a Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network site (www.whsrn.org) because it is a spring stopover for thousands of dunlin, western sandpiper, least sandpiper, and long and short-billed dowitchers. It is also diverse; 23 shorebird species were recorded here in a study of spring migration.

The busiest time for shorebirds is generally early to mid-May, but large numbers may be seen during the more dispersed fall migration starting in late July and ending in October. Summer is likely to bring a variety of gulls, terns, breeding waterfowl, and the adjacent willow flats and freshwater marshes are also used by breeding land birds.

Black Sand Spit, viewable from the estuary, is an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA). Thousands of nesting Arctic and Aleutian terns can be seen here from May through July; also gulls, eagles, ravens, semipalmated plovers, and parasitic jaegers use the spit. Watch for brown bears and coyotes in summer and fall. Terns are highly sensitive to disturbance, and Arctic terns are highly aggressive towards intruders near their nests. Minimizing stops on land near the nesting colonies and keeping below the high tide line reduces disturbance. Harbor seals are commonly seen in the estuary.



Black Sand Spit | Nate Catterson

22. Redfield Lakes and the Westgate Road Areas

Drive FH#10 6.4 mi. to West Gate Rd. Turn left and drive 3.8 mi. to the turnout that provides boat access on the left side of road. The turnout is more visible than the boat access. Walk a short distance (> 0.1 mi.) on the unmaintained trail into the woods to reach the watercraft launch access. A good map, GPS, and compass are recommended for navigating these undeveloped waterways.

Continue driving 0.7 mi. to a bridge that crosses the west fork of the Situk River for more views.

The area along Westgate Road has experienced heavy disturbance from high wind events that created numerous “blow down” areas with fallen trees in the 1980s and early 2000s. These areas also were impacted by subsequent salvage log harvesting. These openings, combined with nearby waterways, host a variety of birds such as chickadees, flycatchers, nuthatches, kinglets, thrushes, crossbills and hairy woodpeckers. Spotted sandpipers and yellowlegs can be seen on the West Fork Situk River from the bridge. Red-tailed hawks and olive-sided flycatchers are uncommon summer residents in this area.

23. Harlequin Lake

Suitable for experienced kayakers; canoeing is not recommended due to common, high winds and rough conditions. Access is from Harlequin Lake Trailhead (site #10). Launch at the river below the bridge, and, for safety, line out kayaks parallel to the shore in a single line until you reach the lake. Paddle the lakeshore and/or up to Yakutat Glacier (Harlequin Lake is approximately 7 mi. long and 3 mi. wide). A round-trip paddle to Yakutat Glacier amounts to a long day. Also consider camping overnight along the shore. Plan accordingly and prepare a contingency plan for inclement weather.

There is a gull colony at the north end of the lake. See Harlequin Lake Trail (Site #10) for further description.

24. Situk River

Follow directions to Situk River Trail (site #13). Launch at 9-mile Bridge and float to the Lower Situk Landing. This requires a vehicle shuttle or pick-up. The more adventuresome can launch with packable canoes or kayaks from Situk Lake for a longer river float of an additional 4 mi. See species description for Situk River Trail.



Red-breasted sapsucker | Mike Denega

25. Sawmill Cove

This cove is an alternative launch site for accessing the inner islands of Yakutat Bay as described in site #17. Drive 2.5 mi. on FH#10 to Sawmill Cove Road. There is no road sign here. Turn left and continue driving 0.7 mi. to the cove on Yakutat Bay. Paddlers can launch a short distance from their vehicle.

Sawmill Cove provides excellent vantage points to view Twin Islands and Mt. St. Elias. One-day trips are recommended from this site: arrange for a pickup and drop-off *since leaving vehicles overnight is not recommended.*

Bird and Wildlife Viewing Tips

Time your birding trips to maximize viewing. Dawn and dusk are usually when many wildlife species are active. Migratory birds are more active in the late morning.

Keep a low profile and take a viewing stance slowly and quietly. Use binoculars so you can watch from a distance without changing wildlife behavior.

Help keep wildlife wild. Never attempt to feed wild animals and keep attractants like food locked in a vehicle away from your viewing location.

Be considerate of others in the outdoors. Give hunters, anglers, and others plenty of space while viewing. Respect private property rights. Keep pets leashed for their protection and for the protection of wildlife.

Bear Safety in the Yakutat Area

The Yakutat area has a dense concentration of brown and black bears. Making noise while traveling in bear country will lower your chances of surprising a bear. Be alert while traveling through thick brush, along noisy streams, and when visibility is poor.

If you see a bear, stay calm. If the bear has not noticed you, then leave quietly. Keep your eyes on the bear, wave your arms, and talk to it calmly. If it approaches you, stand your ground. Do not run from a bear.

If a bear is surprised at a close distance, it might feel threatened and act defensively, especially if it has cubs or food. Stand your ground. If the bear strikes or bites you, lie on your front, protect your face and neck, and remain still. In rare instances, bears can be predatory. Fight back if the attack is prolonged. Be aware of moose, especially during calving season, May through June. Be vigilant and keep your distance.



Bird watching on Summit Lake | Susan Oehlers

Information

Yakutat Ranger District, P.O. Box 327, Yakutat, AK 99689,
(907) 784-3359 Birding information and publications are available from
the district office or visit <http://go.usa.gov/gJvP>.

Yakutat Bird checklist:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/viewing/birds/pdfs/yakutat_checklist.pdf

Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=southeastviewing.yakutat

Yakutat Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 510, Yakutat, AK 99689

(boat and air charters, kayak rentals, guided trips, lodging, etc.)

www.yakutat.alaska.com

National Park Service Yakutat Visitor Center, 602 Mallott Avenue, P.O.

Box 137, Yakutat, AK 99689, (907) 784-3295, or e-mail:

wrst_interpretation@nps.gov

Yakutat area climate: www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?akyaku

Walking, hiking, cycling, kayak trails: www.seatrails.org



Do you E-bird? Your observations are valuable to other birdwatchers and biologists. E-bird is a webpage supported by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Audubon Society. Now you can easily report your bird sightings to an online database. <http://www.ebird.org>.


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Tongass National Forest • Yakutat Ranger District
712 Ocean Cape Road • Yakutat, Alaska 99689
(907) 784-3359

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