



# Eagle River Nature Center

in Chugach State Park

## For More Information

Eagle River Nature Center  
32750 Eagle River Road (Mile 12)  
Eagle River, AK 99577  
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www.ernc.org

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"Chugach State Park" and ERNC



## ERNC History

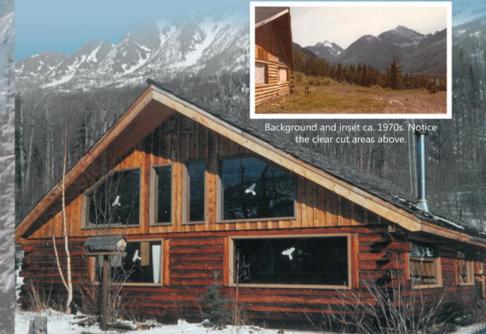
The Eagle River Nature Center was once the Paradise Haven Lodge. Operated by John Barclay in the 1960s and 1970s on his five-acre homestead, the lodge was popular with many locals for its food and drinks. There was also a racetrack for motorcyclists and snowmachiners. It was aptly described as "very Alaskan."

In 1980, Barclay sold the property to Alaska State Parks. In March of 1981, the lodge reemerged as the Eagle River Visitor Center. The building was completely remodeled to include a new second level of windows, hands-on interpretive displays, and nature photos.

In 1996, the newly created non-profit group, Friends of Eagle River Nature Center, took over operations. The nature center has had great success in increasing membership and programming, and enhancing recreational opportunities. In 2005, the organization was awarded a 25-year contract to continue operating the nature center.



Background and inset ca. 1970s. Notice the clear cut areas above.



Background photo courtesy of Jim Wood  
Calypsa orchid photos courtesy of Gina Smith and Nicole Acevedo.



Alaska State Parks



### Eagle River Nature Center Access:

Take the Glenn Highway to the Eagle River Loop exit at milepost 11.6. Turn right on Eagle River Road and continue to the end of the road.



### Legend

- Parking
- Trailhead
- Cabin/Yurt
- Picnic
- Skiing
- Bridge
- Camping
- Trail

### Bears

Alaska is bear country, but that doesn't mean you have to be "bearoid." Follow these tips and you'll make our parks safer for both humans and bears.

- Make noise. You don't want to surprise a bear.
- Buddy up. You are safer in a group in bear country.
- Use your senses and stay aware. Do not use headphones!
- Move cautiously, especially along creeks, on blind corners, and in highly vegetated areas. High speed=high chance of surprise
- Keep your pets on a leash or leave them at home.
- Carry bear spray, have it readily available, and know how to use it.
- Don't feed bears. Handle food, fish, and other attractants responsibly.
- If you're camping, know the safe ways to cook and store your food.
- Pay attention to posted signs about bear activity.
- Never run from a bear!
- Learn more about bear behavior at [www.alaskabears.alaska.gov](http://www.alaskabears.alaska.gov).



## Trails

Miles of trails can be accessed from the trailhead behind the center. Enjoy a short loop that takes you to a viewing deck or plan a multi-day hike on the Crow Pass/Iditarod National Historic Trail.

### Rodak Nature Trail 1

**Access:** Eagle River Nature Center  
**Travel Means:** foot, ski  
**Distance:** 0.7-mile loop

This interpretive loop trail offers you the chance to view spawning salmon and a beaver pond teeming with aquatic life. There are benches and interpretive panels along the trail, and it is groomed for skiing in winter.

### Albert Loop Trail 2

**Access:** Eagle River Nature Center  
**Travel Means:** foot, ski  
**Distance:** 3-mile loop

The Albert Loop Trail reaches the banks of Eagle River and provides an excellent opportunity to observe wildlife and an abundance of plant life. During the winter you can follow the groomed trail through the snow-covered forest. This trail is closed from August until winter freeze-up to reduce potential bear-human conflicts.

### Crow Pass Trail 3

**Access:** Eagle River Nature Center  
(To access the trail from Girdwood, take the Seward Highway and turn left onto the Alyeska Highway. Turn left onto Crow Creek Road.)  
**Travel Means:** foot  
**Distance:** 23.1 miles one way

The Crow Pass Trail from Girdwood to Eagle River follows a portion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail and is considered to be one of the best hikes in Chugach State Park. This challenging trail crosses a variety of terrains, offering diverse sights along the way, including glaciers, waterfalls, wildflowers, wildlife, gorges, sapphire tarns, and stunning alpine vistas.

### Dew Mound Trail 4

**Access:** Rodak Trail  
**Travel Means:** foot, ski  
**Distance:** 3 miles to Echo Bend with several loop options

This backcountry trail weaves through moraines and other glacial features before passing Dew Lake. Watch for wildlife along the trail, especially near Dew Lake—you may spot moose in the lake or even a tiny, elusive wood frog. The trail connects to the Crow Pass Trail in five places creating loops of varying lengths.

## Rules

- A parking fee or an annual ERNC membership pass is required.
- Dogs must be on a leash on the Rodak and Albert loops, as well as in all developed areas, and under control at all times.
- Fires are only allowed in portable camp stoves, metal fire rings provided by the park, and on gravel bars of the Eagle River.
- Camping is allowed at Rapids Camp and Echo Bend, but not within one mile of the nature center.
- Bikes and motorized vehicles are not allowed on the trails.
- Respect trail closure signs for your safety.



Black bear Photo courtesy of Bill Evans  
Dall's sheep Photo courtesy of Donna Dewhurst, USFWS  
Beaver Photo courtesy of Steve Neel  
Background photo courtesy of Brian Goodman

## Welcome

Nestled in Eagle River Valley and surrounded by the towering Chugach Mountains, the Eagle River Nature Center (ERNC) provides information, educational programs, and nonstop outdoor recreational opportunities. Whether enjoying the wood-burning stove after cross-country skiing, or listening to the wood frogs' chorus on Dew Mound Lake, the ERNC has activities for all ages and abilities.

The Friends of ERNC operates the nature center and serves over 40,000 visitors annually. Under the Friends' management, it is open year-round, providing access to over 10-miles of maintained trails, extensive interpretive programming and environmental education for schools (K-12).



All inset photos courtesy of ERNC  
American Dipper and wood frog photos courtesy of Gina Smith  
Background photo courtesy of Larry Anderson



Salmon viewing deck

## Public Programs

The elusive American dipper, the glittering northern lights, and bountiful wildflowers are just a few of the topics explored during ERNC's public programs. The ERNC provides environmental and wildlife awareness, and conservation education for all ages. The schedule can be found online at [www.ernc.org](http://www.ernc.org).

- **Kneehigh Naturalist Programs** offer nature exploration for children, ages three to five, accompanied by a parent. Children discover the natural environment through hands-on activities and outdoor exploration.
- **Junior Naturalist Programs** are designed for families with children in K-6th grade.
- **General Audience Programs** cover a wide range of programs dealing with Alaska's natural history.
- **Astronomy Programs** are offered bi-monthly during the winter months for the general public.

## Wildlife

Do you want to watch spawning salmon in a beaver pond? Or go on a naturalist-led hike to spot Dall's sheep? It's easy to observe wildlife in their natural habitat along the trails around the ERNC. Animals frequently seen include brown and black bears, moose, porcupines, beavers, and songbirds. Keep your cameras and binoculars ready—you never know what you're going to see!



Public-use cabin



Classroom yurt

## Public-Use Cabins

Fall asleep listening to the sounds of the Eagle River, or savor a cup of hot chocolate as you gaze at the mountains from the porch of the River Yurt. The two yurts and one public-use cabin offer cozy accommodations for groups of four to eight. Reservations must be made in advance, either by phone, in person, or online at [www.ernc.org](http://www.ernc.org).

- The **Cabin** is located off the Crow Pass Trail, about 1.25 miles from the nature center. It is equipped with sleeping platforms for eight people, benches, a table, a wood stove, and firewood. A latrine is nearby.
- The **Rapids Camp Yurt** is located off the Crow Pass Trail, 1.75 miles from the nature center and sleeps four. It is equipped with firewood, a bunk bed, table, and deck.
- The **River Yurt** is located off the Albert Loop Trail about 1.5 miles from the nature center. It sleeps four and includes firewood, a table, and deck.