



# The Dalton Highway

Highway

Visitor Guide



Driving.....page 6



Points of Interest.....page 8



Wildlife.....page 17

# Contents

## TRIP PLANNING

- 4 Preparing and Safety
- 6 Driving the Dalton
- 11-14 Maps
- 23 Planning Your Trip

## EXPLORING

- 8-11 Points of Interest
- 15 An Icebound Land
- 17 Watching for Wildlife
- 18 Recreation

## FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 5 Visitor Centers
- 18 Campgrounds

### The Dalton Highway

BLM Coordinator: Lisa Shon Jodwalis

Contributors: Eugene Ervine, Lenore Heppler, Lisa Shon Jodwalis, Pam Tacquard.

Produced and Designed by



All photos and maps courtesy of BLM unless otherwise noted. Special thanks to Alyeska Pipeline Service Company for use of the photo on page 3, and to volunteer Dennis R. Green for the following photos: pages 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 20, 24. Cover photo: BLM by Craig McCaa.

Printed by the Anchorage Daily News on recycled paper using soy-based inks.

*The Dalton Highway* Visitor Guide is published by the Alaska Geographic Association in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. It is funded by revenue generated from Alaska Geographic Association bookstore sales.

©Alaska Geographic Association

Cover photo: Mackey Hill at Dalton milepost 86.5.

# Ultimate Road Adventure

The Dalton Highway is a primitive road that begins 84 miles (134 km) north of Fairbanks and ends 414 miles (662 km) later in Deadhorse, the industrial camp at Prudhoe Bay. It provides a rare opportunity to traverse a remote, unpopulated part of Alaska to the very top of the continent. Traveling this farthest-north road involves real risks and challenges. This publication will help you decide whether to make the journey, how to prepare, and how to enjoy your experience. Please read this information carefully.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- There is no public access to the Arctic Ocean from Deadhorse. You must be on an authorized tour. See page 7.
- There are no medical facilities between Fairbanks and Deadhorse, a distance of 500 miles (800 km). For emergency information, see the back page.
- Food, gas, and vehicle repair service are extremely limited. See page 5.

For more information, contact the Bureau of Land Management at 800-437-7021 or 907-474-2200 or on the web at [www.blm.gov/ak/dalton](http://www.blm.gov/ak/dalton). In summer, contact the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center at 907-678-5209 or 907-678-2014.



## Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

Where can I look for musk oxen? How should I plan a hiking trip in the Brooks Range? How does permafrost shape the land? Resource interpreters and volunteers can help you discover Alaska's Arctic through exhibits, presentations, trip-planning, and Alaska Natural History Association bookstore at the visitor center in Coldfoot.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, Memorial Day through Labor Day  
Phone: 907-678-5209 or 907-678-2014; FAX: 907-678-2005 (summer only)



# Built for Black Gold

In 1969, oil was discovered at Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's North Slope. Excitement was high at the prospect of new money to fuel Alaska's boom-and-bust economy. The nation was in the throes of an energy crisis and pushed for an 800-mile long pipeline. But first, Native land claims had to be settled, permits granted, environmental safeguards designed, and a road built to get workers and supplies north to the oilfield.

When finally approved, construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline was run like a wartime project—money was no object and time was of the essence. The weather conditions, terrain, and the immensity of the project were all extreme. Engineers overcame permafrost, mountain ranges, and the relentless flow of the Yukon River in the process. Incredibly, the Haul Road was completed in just five months and the pipeline in three years (1974-77). The previously remote Arctic was changed forever.

## Haul Road or Highway?

At first, the highway was called the Haul Road because almost everything supporting oil development was “hailed” on tractor-trailer rigs to its final destination. In 1981, the State of Alaska named the highway after James B. Dalton, a lifelong Alaskan and expert in arctic engineering who was involved in early oil exploration efforts on the North Slope.



Pipeline workers endured temperatures to -50°F or colder in winter, and mud, dust and clouds of mosquitoes in summer.

The highway was open only to commercial traffic until 1981, when the state allowed public access to Disaster Creek at milepost 211. In 1994, public access was allowed all the way to Deadhorse for the first time.

Today, the Dalton Highway beckons adventurous souls to explore a still-wild and mysterious frontier. Respect this harsh land and appreciate the opportunity to visit a special part of our world.



*"...I trucked the Haul Road to Prudhoe a few hundred times and fished Grayling Lake and hunted the South Fork Koyukuk for 10 years in a row. I really, really miss it—the beauty, quiet, and the freedom it brings one's mind. It's definitely the best mental medicine on earth."*

Marshall Casteel  
Myrtle Creek, Oregon

# Preparing for the Long Haul

## Before you leave Fairbanks

- Inspect all tires and make sure they are properly inflated
- Check all vehicle fluids
- Replace worn hoses and belts
- Empty your RV's holding tank and fill the water tank
- Purchase groceries and supplies

## Bring for your vehicle

- At least two full-sized spare tires mounted on rims
- Tire jack and tools for flat tires
- Emergency flares
- Extra gasoline, motor oil, and wiper fluid
- CB radio

## Bring for yourself

- Insect repellent and head net
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Rain jacket and pants
- Warm clothes, including hat and gloves
- First aid kit
- Drinking water
- Ready-to-eat food
- Camping gear, including sleeping bag
- Personal medications
- Toilet paper and hand sanitizer
- Garbage bags

## Safety Tips

### Communications

- Pay phones: Yukon River, Coldfoot, and Deadhorse.
- Cell phones: Coverage ends about 35 miles (56 km) north of Fairbanks, although you may get a signal from hilltops farther north. Coverage is available in Deadhorse.
- Satellite phones: Some companies in Fairbanks rent satellite phones; check the phone directory under radio.

### Gear

Bring warm sweaters and coats, good rain gear, hats, gloves, and long underwear. Wool and synthetic fabrics, such as fleece, are best. Avoid cotton clothing.

At milepost 235, the highway climbs to Chandalar Shelf and leaves the forest behind. This 10% grade is one of several steep grades that Dalton travelers encounter.

## Weather

Summer temperatures can occasionally reach the high 80s F (27-30°C) south of the Brooks Range and average in the 50s F (10-15°C) in Coldfoot. Thunderstorms are common in early summer, especially between Fairbanks and the Yukon River, and may bring lightning and sudden squalls. In general, June and July are drier months, but rainy days are frequent throughout the summer.

Weather on the North Slope is frequently windy, foggy, and cold. Snow can occur at any time of the year, especially from the Brooks Range north. In Deadhorse, average summer temperatures are in the 30s and 40s F (0-5°C).

## Flash Floods

Heavy or prolonged rain can cause local flash floods anytime during the summer. Running water may cover the road or wash out culverts and bridges. Do not attempt to cross flooded areas!

## Water

It's best to bring water with you. If you must use stream water for cooking or cleaning, treat it first by boiling rapidly for 3-5 minutes, or by using iodine tablets or a water filter. *Giardia* is widespread in Alaska waters and is highly contagious.

## Wildlife

Treat all wild animals with caution. Keep a clean camp so you don't attract wildlife. Do not approach or feed any animals. Moose and muskoxen may appear tame, but can be dangerous if approached too closely. Never get between a cow and her calves. If moose feel threatened they will flatten their ears, raise the hair on their neck, and may charge. Wolves and foxes on the North Slope may carry rabies. Avoid all contact between these animals and yourself and your pets. See page 17 for more.



## Visitor Information Centers

### In Fairbanks

Alaska Public Lands  
Information Center  
250 Cushman Street  
(in the basement of the  
historic Post Office)  
907-456-0527  
(TDD 907-456-0532 for  
hearing-impaired)  
Open: May 26 to September 1,  
9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.  
In winter, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.,  
Tuesday—Saturday.

### At the Yukon River

Yukon Crossing Visitor  
Contact Station  
Located on the east side of  
the highway just north of  
the Yukon River bridge.  
No phone. Closed in winter.

### In Coldfoot

Arctic Interagency  
Visitor Center  
MP 175, Dalton Highway.  
907-678-5209  
Open: late May to early  
September, 10 a.m. to  
10 p.m. daily.  
Closed in winter.



## Services Are Limited

**Notice:** There are no public services at Department of Transportation maintenance stations or Alyeska Pipeline Service pump stations.

**Medical Facilities:** There are no public or emergency medical facilities along the Elliott or Dalton highways.

**Banking:** There are no banks and only one ATM machine (in Deadhorse). Most services accept major credit cards and traveler's checks.

**Groceries:** There are no full-service grocery stores along the highway. Snack food and cafés are available at several locations.

**Phone:** There is no cell phone coverage from Elliot Hwy milepost 28 until just outside of Deadhorse.

SERVICES	Yukon Crossing <sup>▲</sup>	Five Mile <sup>▲</sup>	Coldfoot	Wiseman <sup>▲▲</sup>	Deadhorse
Gas	✱	✱	✱		✱
Tire/Vehicle Repair	✱		✱		✱
Restaurant	✱	✱	✱		✱
Lodging	✱	✱	✱	✱	✱
Public Phone	✱		✱		✱
Post Office			✱		✱
Shower	✱	✱	✱		✱
Water		✱	✱		✱
Laundry			✱		✱
Dump Station		✱			✱
Tent Camping		✱	✱		
RV Parking		✱	✱		✱
Gift Shop/Local Crafts	✱	✱	✱	✱	✱
Visitor Center/Museum	✱		✱	✱	

<sup>▲</sup> closed in winter

<sup>▲▲</sup> limited services in winter



# Driving the Dalton

## Road Conditions

The road is narrow, has soft shoulders, high embankments, and steep hills. There are lengthy stretches of gravel surface with sharp rocks, potholes, washboard, and, depending on the weather, clouds of dust or slick mud. Watch out for dangerous curves and loose gravel, especially between Livengood and the Yukon River (MP 0-56). You may encounter snow and ice north of Coldfoot any month of the year. Expect and prepare for all conditions.

The Elliott Highway is paved to its junction with the Dalton. The Dalton Highway is paved from milepost 90 to Coldfoot, milepost 175. North of Coldfoot there are 230 miles (382km) of gravel surface.

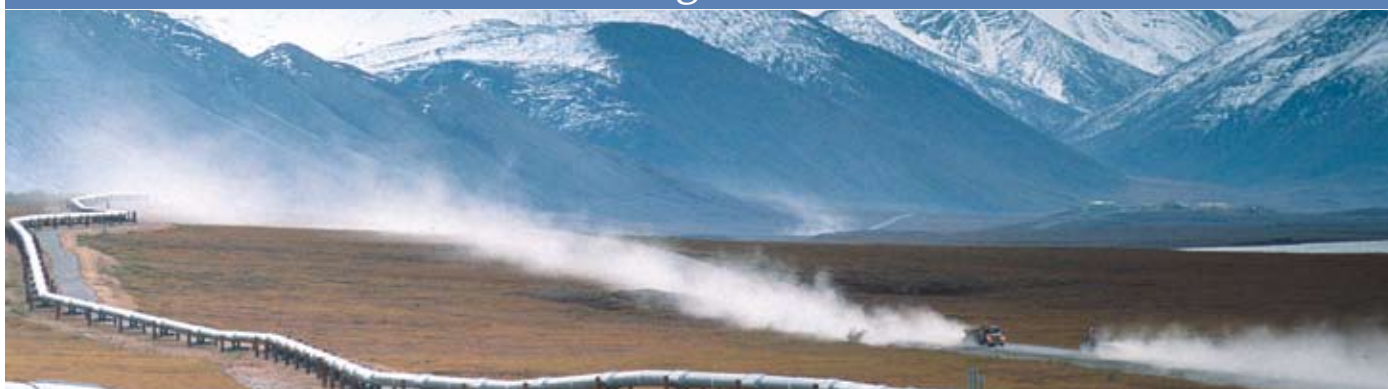
## For current road conditions:

- Coldfoot: Arctic Interagency Visitor Center  
907-678-5209 (summer only)
- Fairbanks: Alaska Department of Transportation  
907-456-7623, Alaska Public Lands  
Information Center 907-456-0527 or  
<http://511.alaska.gov>
- Yukon River: BLM's Visitor Contact Station (summer only).

# Rules of the Road

- ✓ Big trucks have the right of way.
- ✓ Slow down when passing other vehicles to avoid damaging them with flying rocks.
- ✓ Always drive with your lights on so others can see you.
- ✓ Keep your headlights and taillights clean so they are visible.
- ✓ Stay on the right side of the road.
- ✓ Don't stop on bridges, hills, or curves.
- ✓ Check your rear-view mirror regularly.
- ✓ If you spot wildlife, pull over to a safe location before stopping.
- ✓ Slower traffic should pull over at a safe location and allow other vehicles to pass.
- ✓ Slow down when a vehicle passes you to reduce the chances of a rock hitting your windshield.

## Mileage Chart



Miles (km)	Fairbanks	Livengood	Yukon River	Arctic Circle	Coldfoot	Atigun Pass	Galbraith Lake	Deadhorse
Fairbanks	•	84 (134)	140 (224)	199 (318)	259 (414)	328 (525)	359 (574)	498 (797)
Livengood	84 (134)	•	56 (90)	115 (184)	175 (280)	244 (390)	275 (440)	414 (662)
Yukon River	140 (224)	56 (90)	•	59 (94)	119 (190)	188 (301)	219 (350)	358 (573)
Arctic Circle	199 (318)	115 (184)	59 (94)	•	60 (96)	129 (206)	160 (256)	299 (478)
Coldfoot	259 (414)	175 (280)	119 (190)	60 (96)	•	69 (110)	100 (160)	239 (382)
Atigun Pass	328 (525)	244 (390)	188 (301)	129 (206)	69 (110)	•	31 (50)	170 (272)
Galbraith Lake	359 (574)	275 (440)	219 (350)	160 (256)	100 (160)	31 (50)	•	139 (222)
Deadhorse	498 (797)	414 (662)	358 (573)	299 (478)	239 (382)	170 (272)	139 (222)	•

# Road Tips

## Break Downs

If your car breaks down, get off the road as far as possible and set flares. If you need assistance, ask a passing motorist to contact the nearest service station or provide a ride to one (located only in Fairbanks, Yukon Crossing, Coldfoot, and Deadhorse). Wrecker service may be available at these locations.

## CB Radios

Truckers and road workers monitor Channel 19. With a CB you can ask them if it's safe to pass or tell them when it's safe to pass you. In poor visibility, you can warn oncoming trucks if there are other vehicles close behind you. You can communicate with flaggers, pilot cars, and heavy equipment operators.

## Emergency

There are no medical services between Fairbanks and Deadhorse, so be prepared for minor emergencies. In a critical emergency, contact the State Troopers by calling 911 or use a CB radio.

## Rental Cars

Many rental car agreements prohibit driving on the Dalton Highway and other gravel roads. Violating the rental car agreement can be very expensive, especially in the event of a malfunction or accident.

## Repairs

Prepare to be self-sufficient. Limited tire and repair services are available at only two service stations between Fairbanks and Deadhorse—a distance of 500 miles (800 km). They can have parts delivered from Fairbanks, but that's expensive. Towing is extremely expensive.



Carry two spare tires mounted on rims.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How long does it take to make the trip?

Much depends on weather, road conditions, road construction, and your own interests. The roundtrip to Prudhoe Bay and back demands at least four days. Under good conditions, expect the following driving times from Fairbanks to:

Yukon River:	3 hours
Arctic Circle:	4.5 hours
Coldfoot:	6 hours
Atigun Pass:	8 hours
Deadhorse:	13+ hours

Factor in an additional 1-2 hours per day for rest stops, wildlife viewing, construction delays, and bad weather.

## Can I drive, walk or cycle to the Arctic Ocean?

NO. Public access ends at Deadhorse, about 8 miles (13 km) from the ocean. Security gates on the access roads are guarded 24 hours a day and permits for individuals to travel on their own are not available. The Arctic Caribou Inn offers authorized tours; call toll-free 877-659-2368.

## Are the bugs really that bad?

YES! Hordes of mosquitoes emerge in mid-June and last into August. Biting flies and gnats last into September. Insects are worst on calm days and in low, wetland areas. Hike and camp on ridges or wide gravel bars along rivers where a breeze may provide relief. Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective. A head net and bug jacket are essential if you plan on any outdoor activities.

## When is the best time to visit?

A late May trip offers a chance to see thousands of migrating birds, but snow may still cover the ground. From June until mid-July wildflowers brighten the tundra and caribou congregate along the Coastal Plain. Mid-August brings rain, cool days, frosty nights, and the northern lights. Brilliant autumn colors peak around mid-August on the North Slope, late August in the Brooks Range, and early September south of the Yukon River. Snow begins to fly by late August or early September.

## Does the highway close in the winter?

No. The road remains open year-round for trucks hauling supplies to the oilfields and camps. Winter driving conditions are challenging, so always check for a current road report (see back page) before attempting to drive between September and May.

## What's the earliest or latest date I can visit?

Although the highway is maintained year-round, visitor services are reduced between September and May. Prepare for extreme weather and check commercial businesses at Yukon River, Coldfoot, and Wiseman before leaving Fairbanks to make sure they're open. Travel between late October and early April is not advised.

# Points of Interest

## Hess Creek Overlook (MP\* 21)

This pullout looks over Hess Creek meandering west to meet the Yukon River. In 2003, the Erickson Creek Fire burned almost 118,000 acres (47,200 ha) in this area.



Take a break at BLM's Yukon Crossing Visitor Contact Station, located on the right just after crossing the bridge. Volunteers are there to assist from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in summer.

## Yukon River (MP 56)

The mighty Yukon River winds nearly 2,000 miles (3,200 km) from Canada to the Bering Sea. Athabaskan people first traveled this river in birchbark canoes. During the gold rush, wood-fired sternwheelers ferried gold seekers and supplies for trading posts. Today, Yukon River residents use motorboats in summer and snowmachines in winter to travel this natural highway.

## 86-Mile Overlook

At MP 86.5, turn west and follow an access road uphill to an active gravel pit for an excellent view of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge to the east. Watch out for heavy equipment.

Yellow Dryas



## Alaska's Record Fire Year

2004 was Alaska's biggest fire year since records began. Hot, dry, windy weather fanned the flames over 6.7 million acres (2,711,393 ha), an area the size of Massachusetts. Similar conditions returned in 2005, the 3rd biggest year with over 4.4 million acres (1,780,617 ha) burned. Between Hess Creek and Coldfoot fields of bright pink fireweed, an early colonizer of burned areas, lead the way for regrowth that will eventually feed much more wildlife.

## Finger Mountain Wayside (MP 98)

Stop at Finger Mountain to take in the panoramic views, explore the alpine tundra, and stroll the half-mile interpretive trail. Expect strong winds on this high ridge.

## Arctic Circle Wayside (MP 115)

Follow the side road a short distance to the Arctic Circle sign and viewing deck with interpretive displays. Enjoy your lunch in the picnic area or drive up the hill to camp. The Arctic Circle is an imaginary line at latitude 66° 33' North, where the sun stays above the horizon for one full day on summer solstice (June 21), and below the horizon for one full day on winter solstice (December 21).

## Gobblers Knob (MP 132)

The pullout here offers an excellent view of the Brooks Range to the north. To see the midnight sun on solstice, climb up the hill to the east.

## Grayling Lake Wayside (MP 150)

An ancient glacier carved this U-shaped valley and left a shallow lake. Moose feed on the nutrient-rich aquatic plants in summer. Charcoal, stone scrapers, and other artifacts found nearby indicate that Native hunters used this lookout for thousands of years.

\*MP refers to milepost from the beginning of the Dalton Highway.





▲ While in Coldfoot, visit the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center, open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. from late May until early September.

## Coldfoot (MP 175)

The original gold rush town of Coldfoot was located on the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River near the mouth of Slate Creek. It got its name in 1900 when early prospectors reportedly got “cold feet” and left before winter set in.

## Marion Creek Campground (MP 180)

This developed campground is operated by the BLM and offers 27 sites. See page 18 for campground details.



▲ Please note that all buildings in the Wiseman area are private property. Please stay on the roads.

## Wiseman (MP 189)

Just after crossing the Middle Fork Koyukuk Bridge #1, take the turnoff to the west and follow the signs 3 miles (5 km) to the historic village of Wiseman. Established in 1907 when miners discovered gold in nearby Nolan Creek, the town was once a bustling community. Many residents today subsist by hunting, trapping and gardening, and welcome visitors.



## ▲ Sukakpak Mountain (MP 203)

A massive wall rising to 4,459 feet (1,338 m) that glows in the afternoon sun, Sukakpak Mountain is an awe-inspiring sight. Peculiar ice-cored mounds known as palsas punctuate the ground at the mountain’s base. “Sukakpak” is an Inupiat Eskimo word meaning “marten deadfall.” Seen from the north, the mountain resembles a carefully balanced log used to trap marten.



View south from Upper Dietrich Valley.



▲  
“... we enjoyed the vast panorama of the Brooks Range ... endless mountains rising and falling as if the waves of some gigantic ocean had suddenly become frozen in full motion.”

Robert Marshall, Alaska Wilderness

### **Farthest North Spruce (MP 235)**

As you approach the headwaters of the Dietrich River, trees grow scarce until they disappear altogether. This last tall spruce, approximately 273 years old, was killed by a vandal in 2004.

### **Chandalar Shelf (MP 237)**

Dramatic views encompass the headwaters of the Chandalar River to the east. The next few miles traverse a major winter avalanche zone. State transportation workers stationed here fire artillery shells to clear the slopes above the highway.

### **Atigun Pass (MP 244)**

You cross the Continental Divide at Atigun Pass (elev. 4,739 ft/1,422 m). Rivers south of here flow into the Pacific Ocean or Bering Sea, while rivers to the north flow into the Arctic Ocean. Watch for Dall sheep, which are often on the road or on nearby slopes. Storms can dump snow here even in June and July.

### **Galbraith Lake (MP 275)**

This is all that remains of a large glacial lake that once occupied the entire Atigun Valley. Just downstream from the bridge is the spectacular Atigun Gorge and the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Toolik Lake (MP 284)**

The University of Alaska Fairbanks established a research station here in 1975, and conducts sensitive studies on arctic ecosystems and global climate change. Please take care to avoid their research sites, scattered throughout the surrounding area. There are no public facilities here and access to the station is by invitation only.

### **Happy Valley (MP 334)**

Originally the site of a pipeline construction camp, Happy Valley offers easy access to the Sagavanirktok River as well as room for camping. The airstrip is active, so avoid camping or parking there.



## Sag River Overlook (MP 348)

A short trail leads to a viewing deck with interpretive displays. On a clear day, you can see the Philip Smith Mountains 35 miles away. Watch for peregrine falcons hunting around the steep bluffs.

## Last Chance (MP 355)

Parking, an outhouse, and trash containers are available here. Scan the willow thickets nearby in June for the elusive and beautiful bluethroat, a rare songbird that winters in Central Asia and Africa.

## Franklin Bluffs (MP 383)

Iron-rich soils on the far bank of the river give the bluffs their vivid colors. They are named after Sir John Franklin, the British explorer who mapped the arctic coastline and searched for the Northwest Passage. Scan the gravel bars along the river for muskoxen and caribou.

## Deadhorse (MP 414)

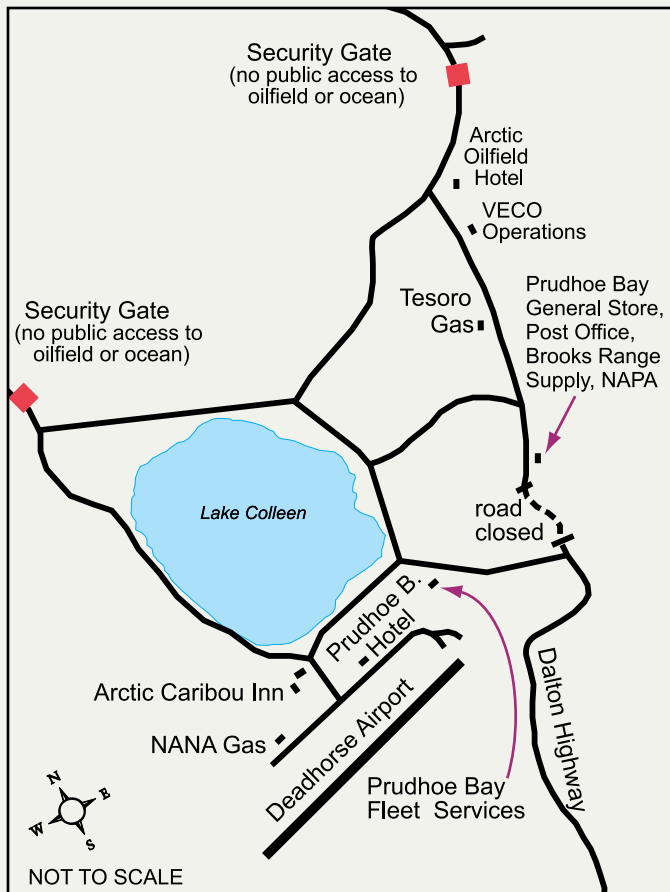
Deadhorse is the industrial camp that supports the Prudhoe Bay oilfield. The public highway ends here, about 8 miles (13 km) from the Arctic Ocean. There are no public outhouses or tent-camping areas.

Permafrost lies only inches beneath the surface of the Coastal Plain, creating a bizarre landscape of wetlands and ice-wedge polygons. From here to Deadhorse, you travel over permafrost up to 2,000 feet (600 m) thick.



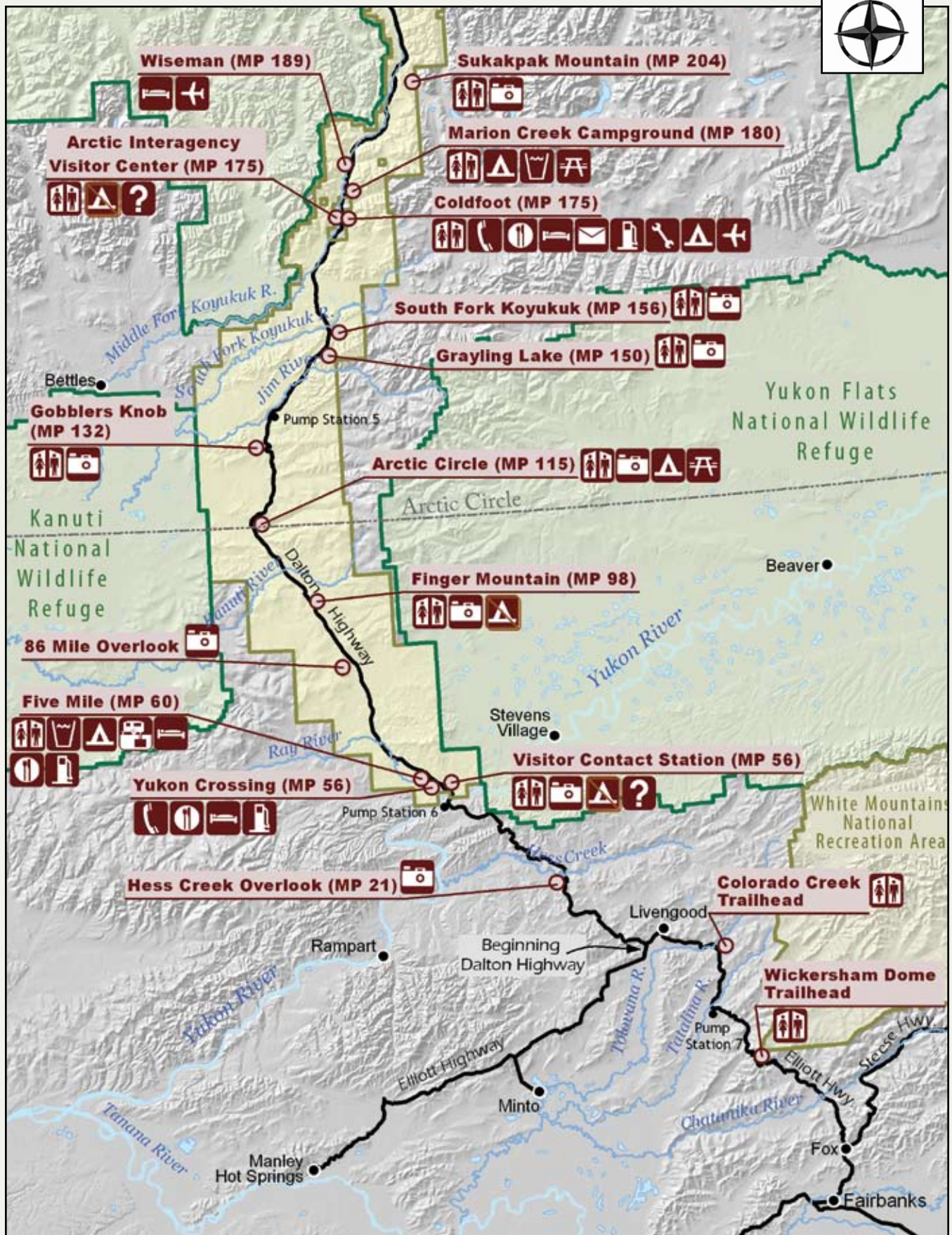
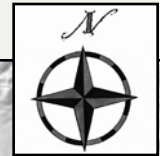
The caribou you see on the North Slope mostly belong to the Central Arctic Herd.

## Deadhorse vicinity map



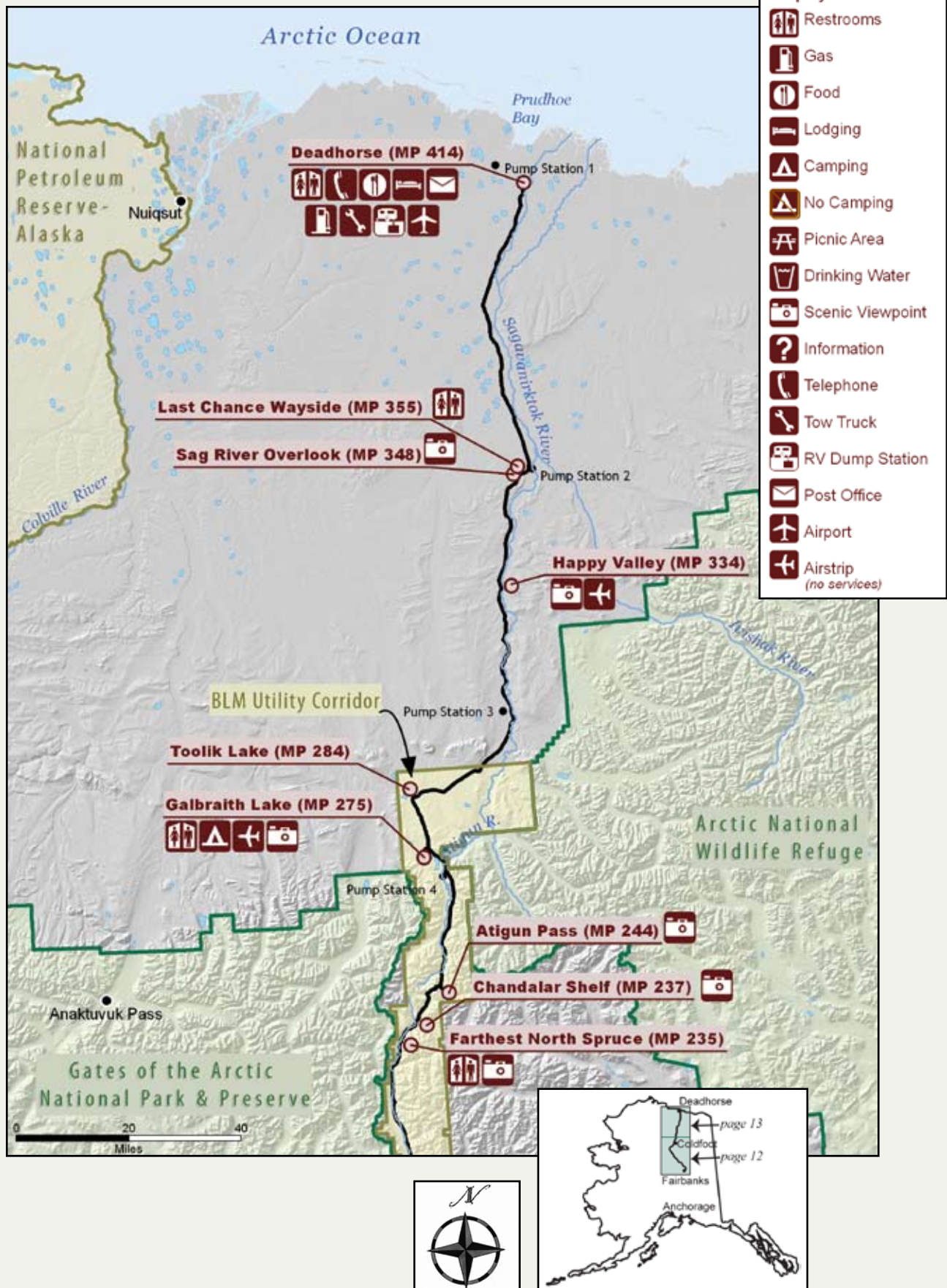


## Fairbanks to MP 215

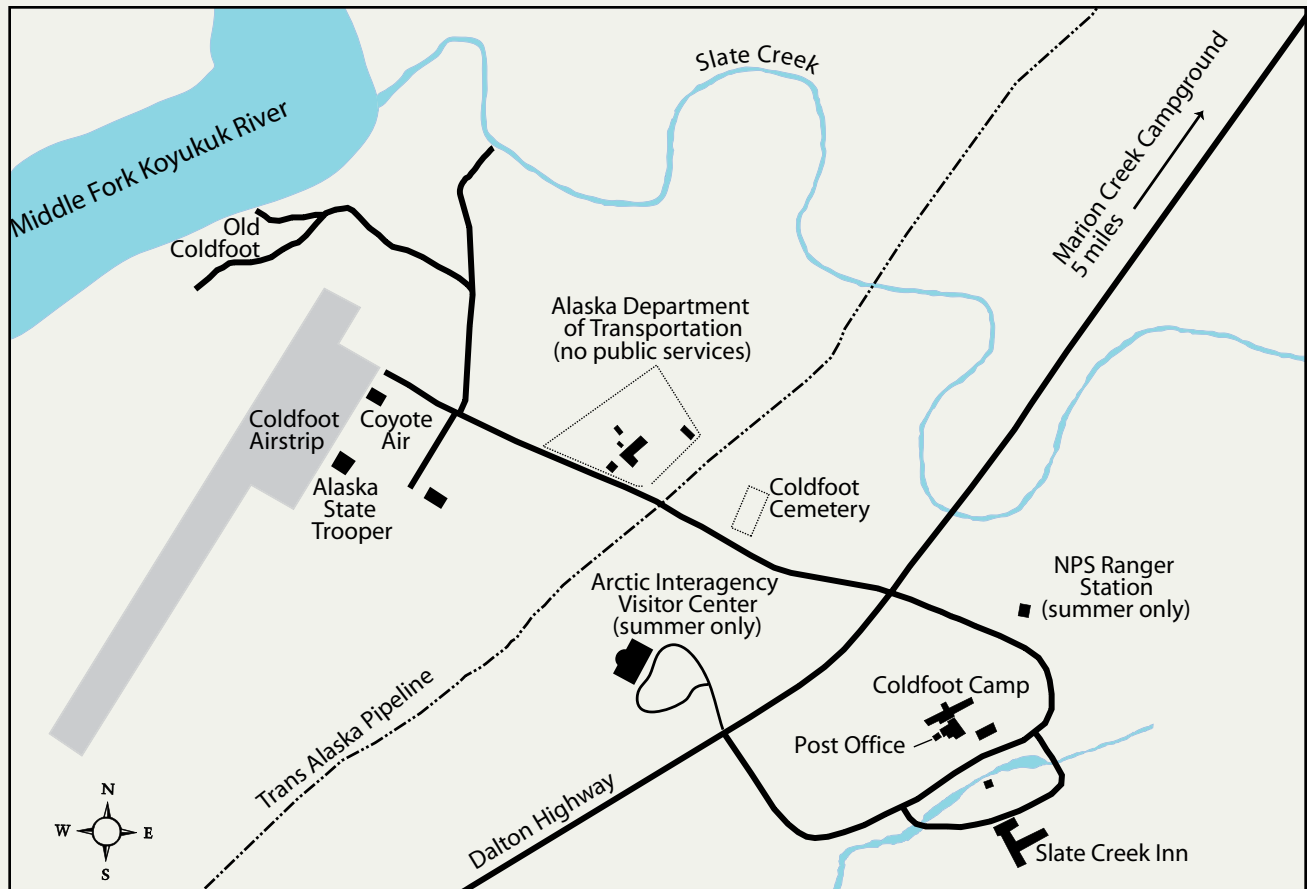




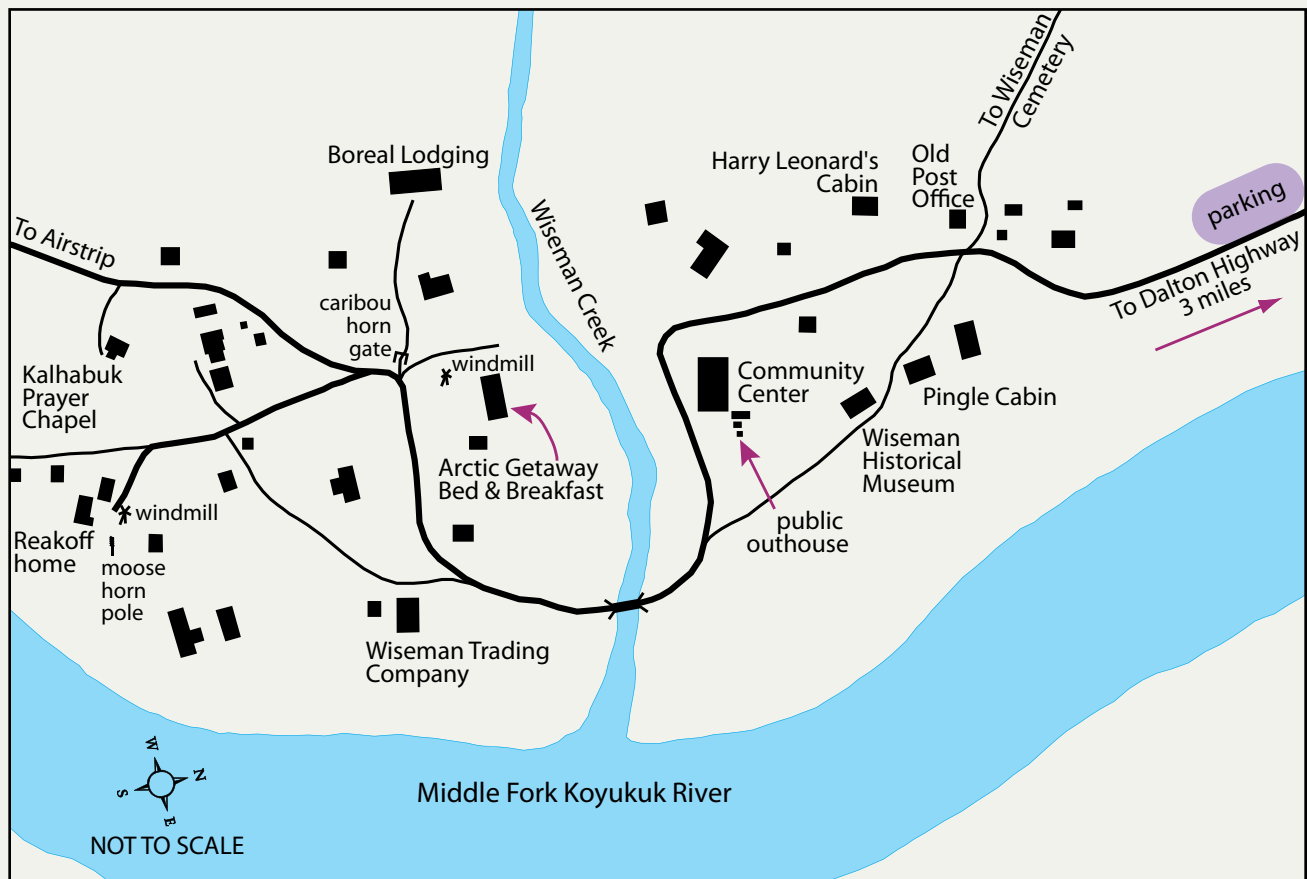
## MP 215 to Deadhorse



## Coldfoot



## Wiseman







Pingo near milepost 376

## Exploring the Northern Landscape

### The Boreal Forest

#### Livengood to Coldfoot (MP 0-175)

A cold, dry climate and sporadic permafrost dictate what grows here. Those scraggly spruce trees may be more than a century old! Lightning-caused wildfires benefit wildlife by recycling nutrients into the soil and creating new sources of food and shelter. The largest forest ecosystem in the world, the boreal forest circles the northern hemisphere.

### The Brooks Range

#### Coldfoot to Galbraith Lake (MP 175-275)

Steep, rocky slopes and glacier-carved valleys dominate this rugged landscape. Extending over 700 miles (1120 km) from east to west, the Brooks Range creates a formidable barrier across the Arctic for plants, birds, and weather systems.

### The North Slope

#### Galbraith Lake to Last Chance (MP 275-355)

This far north, the sun never sets between May 10 and August 2, and never rises between November 18 and January 23. Only tough, ground-hugging plants can survive the frozen ground, frigid temperatures, icy winds, and weak sunlight.

### The Coastal Plain

#### Last Chance to the Arctic Ocean (MP 355-414)

Annual precipitation is only about 5 inches (13 cm) but underlying permafrost seals the ground. Water remains on the surface in vast wetlands where protein-rich sedges and huge populations of insects thrive, providing a banquet for migratory birds and other wildlife.

## An Icebound Land

The low angle of the sun means less heat to combat frigid temperatures. Thus, permanently-frozen ground, or permafrost, lies beneath much of northern Alaska and keeps water close to the surface. Ice creates strange features in arctic landscapes, some of which you can see along the Dalton Highway.

**Pingos** look like small hills but have cores of ice covered with a layer of trees or tundra. As groundwater freezes, it expands to form a lump of ice. As the lump grows over many years, it forces the ground upwards. Look for an aspen-covered pingo just west of the road at MP 32.7, and a larger pingo at MP 376, about 3 miles (5 km) west of the highway.

**Palsas** are mounds with cores of ice and peat that look like miniature pingos. Look for palsas in various stages at the base of Sukakpak Mountain, MP 203. They are thought to arise as groundwater moves downslope through the soil above the permafrost and freezes.

**Thermokarsts** form when underground ice thaws, often after disturbances such as wildfire, earthquakes, climate change, or clearing ground for construction. These ponds or lakes often have unstable shores with trees or tundra collapsing inwards from the edge. Look for a thermokarst lake west of the highway at MP 215.

**Ice-wedge polygons** form when the ground freezes, contracts and cracks. Water seeps into the cracks and eventually forms thick wedges of ice that push the soil into geometric ridges. Look alongside the access road to Galbraith Lake camping area. Polygons are especially prominent around Deadhorse.

**Aufeis**, or overflow, forms on streams during winter when the channel ice thickens, restricting stream flow underneath. This forces water to flow onto the surface where it freezes. Over the course of the winter, these sheets of ice build up into thick layers that can fill river valleys and last into August.



Lapland Diapensia

# This is Bear Country!

You may encounter bears anywhere along the Elliott and Dalton highways. Both black and grizzly bears are found south of the Brooks Range, and grizzlies roam all the way to the Arctic Ocean. All bears are potentially dangerous. It is illegal to feed wildlife or leave food where they can get it. Food-conditioned bears become a threat to people and frequently must be destroyed.

These tips provide minimum guidelines. Learn as much as you can about being safe around bears!

## Avoid Encounters

**LOOK AND LISTEN:** Bears are active both day and night and may appear anywhere. Fresh tracks and droppings indicate that bears may be close.

**DON'T SURPRISE:** A startled bear may attack. **MAKE NOISE:** Let bears know you're in the area—sing, yell, or clap your hands loudly. Bells may be ineffective. Be especially careful in thick brush or near noisy streams.

**NEVER APPROACH:** Stay at least 1/4 mile (400 m) from any bear. Sows may attack to defend their cubs. **KEEP A CLEAN CAMP:** Store food, scented items, and trash in airtight containers away from your tent.

## If You Encounter a Bear

**DO NOT RUN!** Running may elicit a chase response. If the bear does not see you, backtrack or detour quickly and quietly away. Give the bear plenty of room. If the bear sees you, back away slowly. Speak in a low, calm voice while waving your arms slowly above your head.

**IF A BEAR APPROACHES** stand still and keep your pack on. Remain still until the bear turns, then slowly back off.

**IF A GRIZZLY MAKES PHYSICAL CONTACT, PLAY DEAD.** Lie flat on your stomach and lace your fingers behind your neck. Your pack will help protect your back.

**IF A BLACK BEAR ATTACKS, FIGHT BACK.**



Bears often appear tame but are unpredictable. Keep your distance!

## Should I Carry a Firearm?

Firearms are permitted for personal protection in the Dalton Highway Corridor although they are prohibited for sport hunting within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway. If you are inexperienced and cannot load, aim, and fire accurately in an emergency, you probably should not carry one. An injured bear may attack more violently or create a problem for other people.

## Does Pepper Spray Work?

Pepper sprays have been used successfully to deter bears. Most sprays have an effective range of about 30 feet (9 m), but are greatly affected by wind. Spray should not be used like insect repellent—don't spread it on your clothes or equipment. Before taking it on an airplane, tell the pilot so it can be stored safely.

Wolves have approached and occasionally attacked people along the Dalton Highway, most recently in 2006. Some of these incidents appear to involve food conditioned wolves. Never approach or feed wolves. Do not walk pets in an area where you see wolves or fresh wolf sign—wolves may act aggressively toward pets, even those on a leash.

## Do your homework

- Ask for the brochure Bear Facts, free at any state or federal visitor center.
- View the video Staying Safe in Bear Country at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center.
- Read the book Bear Attacks by Stephen Herrero, available in many Alaska bookstores.
- Visit [www.wildlife.alaska.gov/aawildlife/bearfax.cfm](http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/aawildlife/bearfax.cfm).

# Watching for Wildlife

Muskox, caribou, snowy owl—will you see these and other wild creatures on the long drive north? Your chances improve when you know where, when, what, and how to look for wildlife. With these tips, we hope to increase your chances of spotting something exciting. If you're lucky, hundreds, or even thousands, of caribou may cross the road, right in front of your eyes.

## Tips for Viewing Wildlife

- Be patient.
- Take time to scan open areas along mountain slopes, riverbanks, lakes, and meadows.
- Use binoculars, spotting scopes or telephoto lenses for a closer look.
- Stay inside your vehicle—it acts as a viewing blind and animals are less likely to flee.
- Animals tend to be more active in the evening and early morning.

## Boreal Forest

While traveling between Fairbanks and Coldfoot, you are most likely to see wildlife if they cross the road. To enhance your experience, stop to listen and look. In early summer, the woods provide a symphony of bird song; beaver and muskrat splash in clear waters; and ponds may harbor scaup, Pacific loon, horned grebe, or northern shoveler.

### Jim River (MP 140)

Look carefully for grayling and salmon in the clear water (fishing for salmon is prohibited). Watch for cliff swallows darting around the highway bridges.

### Grayling Lake (MP 150)

Look for ducks, loons, and shorebirds. Moose feed on aquatic plants in the shallow lake in mid-summer.



Arctic fox

## Brooks Range

As you traverse the Brooks Range, scan clearings for moose, wolves or grizzlies. Look up to spot golden eagles and search rocky slopes for marmots.

### Atigun Pass (MP 244)

Dall sheep graze the steep slopes and come to the road to lick the calcium chloride used for dust-abatement.

## North Slope

In this wide-open landscape you can see animals from great distances. Wolf, wolverine, grizzly, red fox, musk ox, and caribou sometimes forage near the highway. Northern harrier, short-eared owl, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, and small birds such as Lapland longspur and golden plover hide in the tundra. Scan open slopes for wheatear and brushy swales for yellow wagtail and bluethroat, rare songbirds from Africa and Asia.

### Slope Mountain (MP 302)

The steep, rocky sides of this last mountain shelter Dall sheep. In late May and early June, grizzlies search for food along the sun-warmed slopes.

### Sagavanirktok River (MP 309)

Watch for muskoxen in the flats north of the Sag River Maintenance Station (MP 306), near Happy Valley (MP 334), and Franklin Bluffs (MP 383).

### Ice Cut (MP 326)

Peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons, and other raptors hunt along the steep, rocky cliffs above the Sagavanirktok River.

## Coastal Plain

Here you may see arctic fox, snowy owl, pomarine and parasitic jaegers. In the numerous ponds look for tundra swan, ruddy turnstone, long-tail duck, Sabine's gull, and the eiders—king, spectacled, and common. Caribou congregate here to feed in late June and July.

### Deadhorse (MP 414)

Snow buntings and arctic fox may be seen around the buildings. Look for waterfowl in Lake Colleen. Caribou may seek relief from mosquitoes and parasitic flies on the elevated gravel pads or in the shade of buildings. Watch out for grizzlies!



# Recreation Along the Dalton

Here you can experience wild Alaska, where the land beyond the highway and pipeline lies virtually untouched. There are no trails, bridges or signs to point the way. Choose your own route, encounter your own challenges, and make your own discoveries.

This wild country demands caution, preparation, and self-reliance. Even for a short day-hike, prepare for challenging terrain, unpredictable weather, and medical emergencies. If you have questions about where to go or how to prepare, talk with staff at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot.

## Camping

Recreational camping is limited to 14 days at any one spot. Park well off the road—passing vehicles can fling rocks more than 30 feet (9m) off the highway—and do not block access roads to the pipeline.

There is a fee for Marion Creek Campground and a host is on site from Memorial Day to Labor Day. All other campgrounds are free, undeveloped areas.

Toolik Lake Area of Critical Environmental Concern: Camping is prohibited from MP 278-293 and the surrounding area without prior written approval from BLM.



## Hiking

The best hiking is in the Brooks Range, where ridges and stream drainages provide firm footing and the forest thins to low-growing tundra. Throughout the Arctic there are wetlands and bogs that hinder walking. Areas of tussocks—basketball-sized clumps of sedge surrounded by watery moss—are particularly aggravating. Tussock fields occur in mountain valleys and dominate the landscape of the North Slope. Waterproof boots with good ankle support are essential.

Hiking east from the highway will lead you to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge while hiking west leads to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Choose your route with care and bring topographic maps and a compass with you; a GPS can also be useful. Note: the declination varies 27°-30° or more east of true north, be sure you adjust your compass.

## Campgrounds

NAME	LOCATION	SERVICES	NOTES
<b>Five Mile</b> undeveloped	4 miles (6.4 km) north of the Yukon River at MP 60	potable water dump station	Best sites are on high ground near north entrance.
<b>Arctic Circle</b> undeveloped	MP 115, up the hill behind viewing deck and picnic area	NO WATER outhouse trash containers	No camping at viewing deck or picnic area.
<b>Marion Creek</b> 27 sites, some for RVs	5 miles (8 km) north of Coldfoot at MP 180.	potable water outhouse trash containers	Wheelchair accessible. A two-mile hike upstream leads to a 20-foot waterfall.
<b>Galbraith Lake</b> undeveloped	MP 275, follow signs to airstrip, then continue past buildings 2.5 miles (4 km) on unimproved road.	NO WATER outhouse trash containers	Spectacular views of the lake and Brooks Range. Good hiking nearby; wildflowers abound midsummer.

## Hunting

Sport hunting is permitted in most areas, but there are special regulations. From the Yukon River north, hunting with firearms is prohibited within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway. Bow hunting is permitted within most of this area. Hunting is prohibited in the Prudhoe Bay Closed Area. Sport hunting is prohibited in Gates of the Arctic National Park, but permitted in Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. Be sure you have accurate maps of the boundaries.

For complete regulations, maps of closed areas, and assistance in planning your hunt, please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-459-7206.

## Fishing



Arctic grayling, whitefish, Dolly Varden, arctic char, lake trout, burbot, and northern pike can all be found in the far north. Fish in the Arctic grow and reproduce slowly and are susceptible to overharvest. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch-and-release fishing techniques and to use barbless hooks to minimize injury.

The following regulations are in effect 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway: fishing for salmon is prohibited; lake trout are catch-and-release only; daily bag and possession limit for arctic grayling is 5 fish. You need an Alaska sport fishing license and a current regulations booklet for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Region. The free brochure Sport Fishing Along the Dalton Highway is also helpful and available at the visitor centers.

## Off-Road Vehicles

State statute prohibits off-road vehicles within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway from the Yukon River to the Arctic Ocean.

## Canoeing and Rafting

There are several excellent river trips along the Dalton. For more detailed descriptions of these rivers, check with the Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Fairbanks or the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center (see back page).

- The Jim River and Middle Fork, Koyukuk River: Class I-II, several access points along the highway.
- Atigun and Sagavanirktok Rivers: Class III-IV+ whitewater, access Atigun at MP 271; Sag at MP 306.
- Ivishak National Wild River: Class II, access by chartered air service from Deadhorse or Coldfoot.

## Gold Panning

Panning is permitted on any federal stream segment along the Dalton Highway south of Atigun Pass (MP 244) with the following exceptions: no panning in the pipeline right-of-way (27 feet/8.2 m on either side of the pipeline) and no panning on federal mining claims without permission. Suction dredging is prohibited in the Utility Corridor.

For detailed information, pick up a copy of Dalton Highway Recreational Mineral Collection at one of the visitor centers. This free brochure lists creeks and rivers that are open to recreational mineral collection and rates their potential for gold.







## Backcountry Hazards

If you venture off the highway, know that there are very real risks and proceed with caution. You will probably not see anyone else and you are likely to be far from help.

- Streams and rivers are bitter cold, and heavy rain or snow can swell them to dangerous levels. Know the proper techniques before attempting to cross, or change your route to avoid hazardous crossings.
- Minimize animal encounters (see page 17); Keep your camp and gear clean; cook at least 100 feet (30 m) from your tent site; use bear-resistant food containers and store them away from camp and cook areas; carry out all waste.
- Treat all water to prevent infection by Giardia.
- Prepare for sudden and severe weather; snow can fall anytime in the Brooks Range and on the North Slope. Know how to prevent, recognize, and treat hypothermia before heading out.



## LEAVE NO TRACE

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

## Where's the best place to view the midnight sun?

At the Arctic Circle, the midnight sun circles the northern horizon and drops behind the Brooks Range. The best view is from the top of Gobblers Knob 17 miles (27 km) north of the Arctic Circle and 43 miles (69 km) south of Coldfoot, or north of Atigun Pass where you can experience a full 24 hours of sunlight.



## How cold does it get in winter?

The coldest temperature ever recorded in the United States was  $-80^{\circ}\text{F}/-62^{\circ}\text{C}$  at Prospect Camp, 39 miles (62 km) south of Coldfoot in 1971. Winter temperatures in Interior and Arctic Alaska commonly range between  $-20^{\circ}\text{F}/-29^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}/-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ , or colder.







## Wild Spaces, Public Places



Most of the land you see from the Dalton Highway is federal public land, a legacy for future generations. These areas are so unique that Congress established special designations which honor their special values to the nation and the world.

### The Utility Corridor

In 1971 after oil was discovered on the North Slope, the Utility Corridor was established to protect the route of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The Corridor's boundaries vary from less than a mile to nearly 12 miles from the pipeline. While the corridor's primary function is the transportation of energy resources, the Bureau of Land Management encourages recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, gold panning, and canoeing on these lands.

### Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

Much of the Brooks Range west of the Dalton Highway lies within one of the premier wilderness areas in the National Park System. Forester and conservationist

Robert Marshall explored the area in the 1930s. Impressed by two massive peaks flanking the North Fork of the Koyukuk River, he called them the "Gates of the Arctic." Encompassing 8.4 million acres, the park and preserve protect primeval landscapes, their flora and fauna, and the culture and traditions of Native people.

### Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Bordering the Utility Corridor near Atigun Canyon, this refuge extends east across the Brooks Range and

North Slope to Canada. It offers extraordinary wilderness, recreation, and wildlife values. The Porcupine Caribou Herd (named for the Porcupine River on the herd's migration route), polar bears, muskoxen, and snow geese depend on its unspoiled environment. Pioneer Alaska conservationists Margaret and Olaus Murie traveled the region by dog team and canoe, and were instrumental in gaining refuge status for the area.

### Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

Located west of the Finger Mountain area and slightly larger than the state of Delaware, this refuge protects large wetland areas that are critical to nesting waterfowl and other wildlife. These resources provide sustenance for the people of the Koyukuk River valley.

### Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Encompassing an area larger than Vermont and Connecticut combined, this refuge protects a vast complex of lakes and rivers in the Yukon watershed upstream from the Dalton Highway. Wildlife, especially migratory birds such as ducks, geese, and songbirds, thrive in these wetlands and support the hunting and gathering tradition of Yukon River villages.



Woolly Lousewort

# The View from the Haul Road

by Lisa Shon Jodwalis

The 18-wheeler loomed in my rear-view mirror like the T-Rex in Jurassic Park as I headed down a steep, narrow hill. Alarmed by a sudden loud clank under my car I grabbed the CB radio and warned “Something’s wrong, I’ve got to stop!” A calm voice replied “Yeah, you’ve got a flat tire. Pull on over.” John, a driver for Weaver Brothers, quickly helped me wrestle a spare into place.

Imagine driving the 500 miles to Deadhorse 100 times a year, braving summer’s flash floods and wildfires and winter’s constant darkness, fierce winds, and temperatures down to -70° F. There’s a small community of people who do just that—truckers. Every day they haul supplies to the highway maintenance camps, pipeline pump stations, and massive oilfields of the North Slope. “We all help each other,” says George Spears, a Carlisle Transportation Systems driver with 25 years on the road. “Once you leave Fairbanks, you’re on your own. Even after all these years, it’s a dangerous situation in a harsh environment. You have to be aware at all times.”

For George and other long-time truck drivers, getting the job done safely is their main concern, but friendship and camaraderie are at the heart of the close-knit Haul Road trucking community. “There’s only about 150 of us compared to maybe 25,000 truckers on 500 miles of road in the Lower 48,” observes Bill Sturgeon, a Carlisle driver who has logged approximately two million miles since 1974. “We’re proud of what we do, where we truck, where we spend our life.” The CB radio crackles with greetings and chatter about home and truck repairs, families, and fishing trips. “We make good friends and it’s always enjoyable to meet them,” affirms George. I asked how they recognize each other since all the trucks look the same to me—mud-covered and alarmingly big. “Oh, someone’s got a certain kind of bug screen or winter front, a bumper that’s a little off, special colored lights. We see each other nearly every day. You just know.”

The truckers who started during the pipeline construction boom of the 1970s are nearing retirement. Some of them now teach new drivers, whose experience on Lower 48 Interstates ill prepares them for the Haul Road’s unique challenges. Today’s trucks are outfitted for extreme cold, have better brakes and heavy-duty, locking rear ends for hauling big loads and climbing



steep hills, but it’s experience that counts. On his very first trip back in 1974, Bill claims, “I spent all day at the top of Atigun Pass trying to get the courage to go down. Not many people would admit that. In those days the trucks didn’t have the brakes—they would get hot and the engine couldn’t hold back. That hill still scares me, and any trucker who says it doesn’t, is lying.”

If and when they leave the Haul Road behind, what will they remember most? “Up here I feel like I’ve done something very few men in the world have done or will ever do.” George agrees. “I feel very fortunate that I’ve been up here at the time that I was.” Retired trucker Marshall Casteel reminisced “... the beauty, quiet, and the freedom it brings one’s mind. It’s definitely the best mental medicine on earth.”

*Lisa is an Interpretive Resource Specialist for BLM’s Fairbanks District Office. Since 2001, she has served as coordinator at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot. She moved to Fairbanks in 1973, the year before pipeline construction began and survived the craziness of the boom years.*

## Dalton Highway Truckers — In Their Own Voices

Now you can listen to truckers’ own stories about building and driving the Haul Road. The latest Project Jukebox oral history program, developed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, integrates interviews with truckers, photographs, maps, and text to bring the past alive. Project Jukebox is available at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot (open late May to mid-September) and includes interviews from Coldfoot, Wiseman, and the Koyukuk River region. For more information:  
<http://uaf-db.uaf.edu/Jukebox/PJWeb/pjprojects.htm>

# Partners

For more information on the wildlife, geology, and history of the public lands along the Dalton Highway look to the Alaska Natural History Association. As the principal nonprofit educational partner of Alaska's public lands, Alaska Natural History operates bookstores with an extensive collection of materials on Alaska's natural and cultural heritage.

Look for our bookstore in the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot. Your purchases support educational programs offered by rangers, visitor center exhibits, volunteer programs, this visitor guide, and other services.

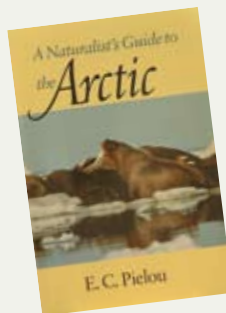
Alaska Natural History partners with more than 30 public lands across Alaska to operate informational bookstores and connect people to Alaska's rich natural and cultural heritage. Building a community dedicated to the future of Alaska's parks, forests, and refuges is at the core of our mission. Through bookstore revenues, membership dues, and donor contributions, we are able to play a vital role in connecting more people to Alaska's rich public lands. To find out more or to become a member, visit the bookstore at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center or take a look at [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org).



Alaska Natural History Association  
750 West Second Avenue, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-274-8440 or toll-free at 866-AK PARKS  
[www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org)

## Planning Your Trip

Visit the Alaska Natural History Association bookstore in Coldfoot located at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center to find these useful guides. In addition to books, visitors will also find maps, journals, posters, field bags, and more.



A Naturalist's Guide to the Arctic  
by E.C. Pielou

This book is a practical, portable, and indispensable guide to all of the Arctic's natural history from sea and sky to flora and fauna.

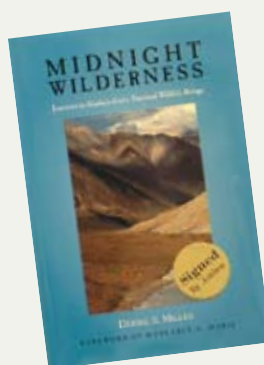
**\$19.95**



Riches from the Earth: A Geological Tour  
Along the Dalton Highway  
by Alaska Natural History Association and  
Bureau of Land Management

Mile-by-mile descriptions explain the geologic processes that continue to shape the magnificent scenery of the highway.

**\$9.95**



Midnight Wilderness: Journeys in Alaska's  
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.  
by Debbie S. Miller

Personal anecdotes, wildlife observations, and Native issues are woven together in this unique look at one of Alaska's greatest natural treasures.

**\$14.95**



Gates of the Arctic Trails Illustrated  
Topo Map  
by National Geographic

Waterproof

**\$9.95**

Also available on-line at [www.alaskanha.org](http://www.alaskanha.org)





Near Old Man, milepost 107

## **Recreation and Regulations**

### **Bureau of Land Management**

Central Yukon Field Office  
1150 University Avenue  
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844  
800-437-7021 or 907-474-2200  
<http://www.ak.blm.gov/ak/dalton>

### **Alaska Public Lands Information Center**

250 Cushman Street  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-456-0527  
TDD 456-0532 for hearing-impaired  
[www.nps.gov/aplic](http://www.nps.gov/aplic)

## **Tours and Commercial Services**

### **Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau**

550 First Avenue  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
800-327-5774 or 907-456-5774  
[www.explorefairbanks.com](http://www.explorefairbanks.com)

## **Road Conditions**

### **Alaska Department of Transportation**

907-456-7623 (recorded message)  
or 451-2200  
<http://511.alaska.gov>

## **Near the Dalton**

### **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

800-362-4546 or 907-456-0250  
TTY 800-877-8339 for hearing impaired  
<http://arctic.fws.gov>

### **Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge**

877-220-1853 or 907-543-3151  
<http://kanuti.fws.gov>

### **Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge**

800-531-0676 or 907-456-0440  
<http://yukonflats.fws.gov>

### **Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve**

[www.nps.gov/gaar](http://www.nps.gov/gaar)  
  
Fairbanks Headquarters  
907-457-5752  
  
Bettles Ranger Station  
800-478-5494 or 907-692-5494  
  
Coldfoot Ranger Station  
907-678-2004

### **Alaska Department of Natural Resources**

907-451-2740  
[www.dnr.state.ak.us](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us)

### **North Slope Borough**

Office of the Mayor  
907-852-0200  
[www.north-slope.org](http://www.north-slope.org)

## **Hunting and Fishing**

### **Alaska Department of Fish & Game**

1300 College Road  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
[www.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.adfg.state.ak.us)  
Hunting & Wildlife: 907-459-7206  
Fishing: 907-459-7207

## **Emergency Numbers**

### **Life-threatening medical emergency**

Fairbanks Dispatch 907-451-5333

### **Other medical injuries**

#### **Alaska State Troopers**

800-811-0911  
Coldfoot 907-678-5211  
Fairbanks 907-451-5100

### **To report wildfires**

#### **Alaska Fire Service**

800-237-3652 or 907-356-5670

### **To report hunting or fishing violations**

#### **Fish and Wildlife Protection**

Coldfoot: 907-678-5211  
Fairbanks: 907-451-5350