

# Eagle Trail State Recreation Site Nature Trail Guide



To ensure all visitors can enjoy this trail, motorized vehicles are prohibited. Please keep dogs on a leash and avoid picking any flowers or plants, so others can enjoy them, too. Take only pictures and memories with you, and leave only footprints behind you.

[www.alaskastateparks.org](http://www.alaskastateparks.org)



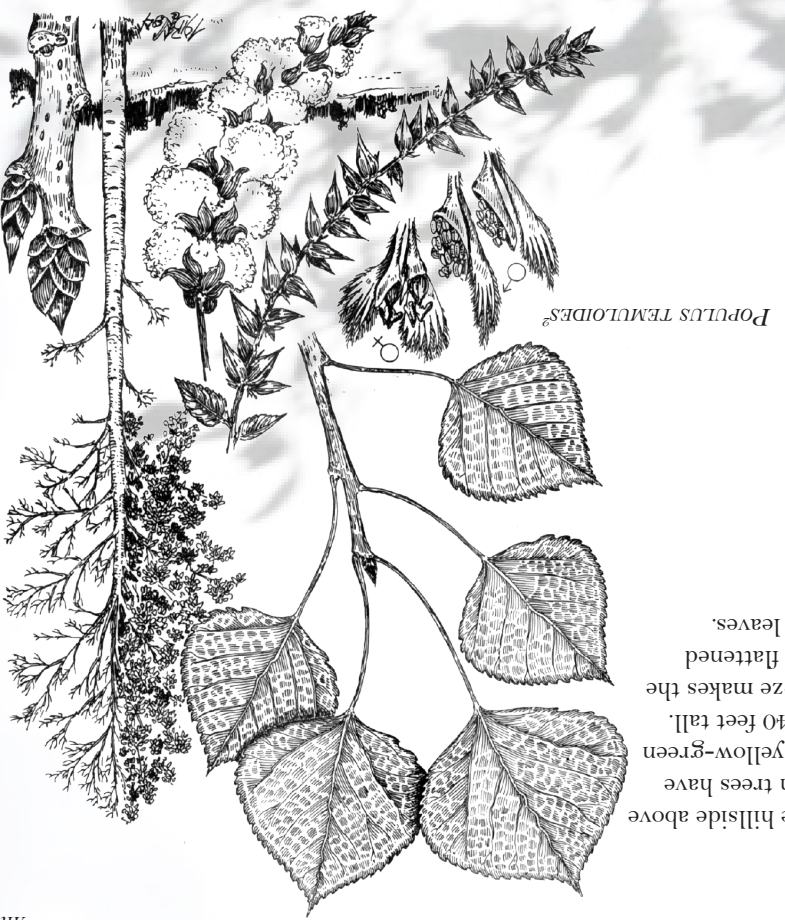
Northern Area Office  
Alaska State Parks  
3700 Airport Rd.  
Fairbanks, AK 99709  
(907)451-2695

**3. Geology**  
Many of the rocks exposed along this portion of the trail have a white coating on one side. The coating is a calcium carbonate deposit that formed on the bottom side of rocks because of water moving up through the ground, depositing minerals within 10-14 inches of the soil's surface. This is fairly common here and can also be found in local gravel deposits.



Example of calcium carbonate deposit on local rocks.

**4. Quaking Aspen** (*Populus tremuloides*)  
Growing mostly on the hillside above the trail, quaking aspen trees have smooth chalk-white to yellow-green bark and can grow 20-40 feet tall. Even the slightest breeze makes the leaves quake due to the flattened petiole, or stem, of the leaves.



*CHRYSOMYXA ARCTOSTAPHYLLA*



**5. Witch's Broom**  
Some spruce trees in this area are hosts to the fungus *Chrysomeyxa arctostaphylla*, also known as spruce broom rust. Infected trees are easy to recognize in summer due to the dense clusters of branches with a yellow-orange appearance, known as witch's brooms. The brooms can kill trees, but usually just cause growth loss, top-kill, and deformations.

**6. White Spruce** (*Picea glauca*)  
Growing from 40-70 feet tall, the white spruce is very common in Interior Alaska. They can live 250-300 years and are often used for lumber and to build log cabins. The narrow, oblong cones are 1.5 to 2.5 inches long and hang downward.



*PICEA GLAUCA*

Continued on inner fold

## 2. Soapberry

(*SHEPHERDIA CANADENSIS*)  
Found throughout Alaska, except the coastal areas, soapberry bushes produce small, edible, oval, red, bitter, translucent berries in late July to August that contain saponins, phytochemicals that get foamy. Alaska Natives whip them with sugar and water until they make a frothy dessert.



*SHEPHERDIA CANADENSIS*

Alaska Highway, Tok-Slana Section. Tok Valley—southwesterly at mile 51.3 from Slana. Photo courtesy of University of Alaska Anchorage UAA-hmc-0285-p16-3

## Exploring the Nature Trail

Eagle Trail SRS lies near the historic route of the Valdez-Eagle Trail. Even after this pioneer route was no longer used, this corridor became important again when the Slana-Tok Cutoff, or the Tok Cutoff, was built during World War II. The nature trail includes small portions of both historic corridors. This mile-long trail leads you through uplands and wetlands of the northern boreal forest, and a surprisingly diverse array of plants and trees.

### 1. Old Slana-Tok Cutoff

Constructed in 1942 by the US Army Corps of Engineers the wide portion of this trail follows the Old Slana-Tok Cutoff route. The section from Tok to Slana connected the Alaska Highway to the Richardson and Glenn highways. In 1950, a realignment moved the road near its present-day location.



## 7. Lupine

(*LUPINUS ARCTICUS*)

During June and early July, fields and roadsides throughout Alaska turn blue due to showy lupine flowers blooming on tall stalks. When they are not in bloom, look for lupine diamonds, drops of water held in the center of their palmate leaves, or look for their distinctive pea-shaped seed pods, but be careful—the entire plant is poisonous.



*LUPINUS ARCTICUS*<sup>1</sup>



*VARIOUS SALIX SPP.*<sup>1</sup>

## 8. Willow

(*SALIX SPP.*)

Numerous species of willow are found throughout Alaska, but even professionals have difficulty identifying them, especially because species tend to hybridize. Look for signs of wildlife near willows because grouse, ptarmigan, hare, porcupine, beaver, and moose all browse on them. Willow bark contains salicin, similar to aspirin, and is used by some to relieve pain.

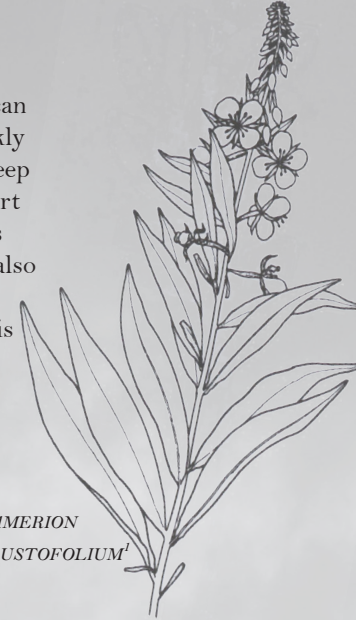


*ROSA ACICULARIS*<sup>1</sup>

## 9. Fireweed

(*CHAMERION ANGUSTIFOLIUM*)

Fireweed is common all over Alaska and can grow up to five feet tall. It can grow quickly after a disturbance such as a fire, due to deep horizontal roots. The magenta flowers start blooming at the bottom and as the blooms progress to the top of the stalk, summer also progresses. When the seeds start blowing in the wind, Alaskans know that summer is drawing to a close.



*CHAMERION ANGUSTIFOLIUM*<sup>1</sup>

## 10. Prickly Rose

(*ROSA ACICULARIS*)

The prickly rose has showy, pink, five-petal flowers. This prickly shrub grows in woods, tundra, bogs, and thickets throughout much of Alaska. After the blooms fall off, the fruit of the plant, known as rose hips, ripen in late August. Rose hips are loaded with vitamin C, and make delicious jams and syrups.



*LEDUM PALUSTRE*<sup>1</sup>

## 11. Labrador Tea

(*LEDUM PALUSTRE*)

Touch the leaves of this evergreen shrub and smell the aromatic fragrance it leaves on your hands. White or pinkish flowers bloom in clusters usually during June. Some people use the leaves for tea, but be cautious—labrador tea contains ledol, a poison that causes cramps and acts as a diuretic.

## 12. Lowbush Cranberry “Lingonberry”

(*VACCINIUM VITIS-IDAEA*)

In spring, tiny pink and white bell-shaped flowers, cluster at the ends of the branches of this 3-8 inch-tall, ground-covering shrub. The small, round, deep red berries are best if picked after a frost, usually in September. Lowbush cranberries are not only tasty; they are also high in antioxidants.



*VACCINIUM VITIS-IDAEA*<sup>1</sup>

Squirrel midden showing spruce cone debris and an entrance to the food storage area.



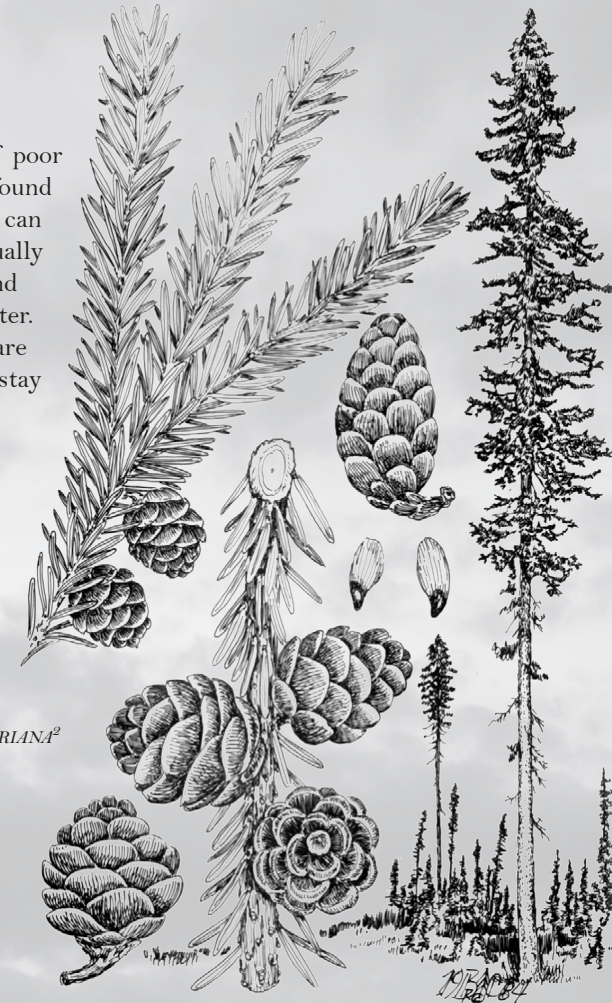
## 13. Squirrel Midden

Red squirrels can be territorial and make plenty of noise with their calls throughout the campground. They usually create middens near favorite feeding places where debris from spruce cones accumulate in piles, like in this area. They use the midden to store food, too, so look for their entrances. Their nests, built of leaves, twigs, and shredded bark, are usually found in trees near the midden.

## 14. Black Spruce

(*PICEA MARIANA*)

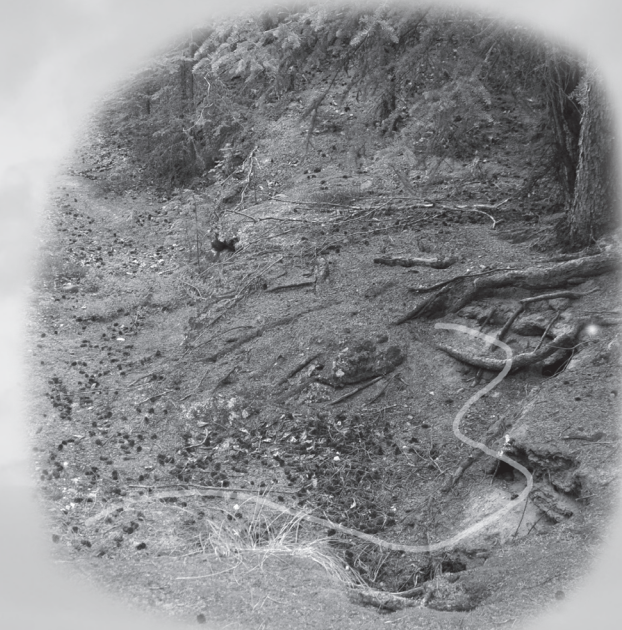
Black spruce are tolerant of poor conditions and are usually found in wet and cold areas. They can live up to 250 years, but usually only reach 15-30 feet tall and three to six inches in diameter. Their one-inch long cones are rounded and dark and may stay on the tree for a few years.



*PICEA MARIANA*<sup>2</sup>

## 15. Permafrost

Permafrost is ground that remains frozen throughout the year. The depression hole you see is what happens when permafrost melts. If the insulating layer of vegetation, usually moss, is removed, the frozen soil will melt and sink. Imagine the engineering that must go into building roads and buildings on permafrost.



View of the depression hole caused by melting permafrost.

1. Drawings from “Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories: A Manual of the Vascular Plants” By Eric Hulten Copyright © 1968 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University

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