

A Trail from Ruth River mouth



B Trail along Ruth River

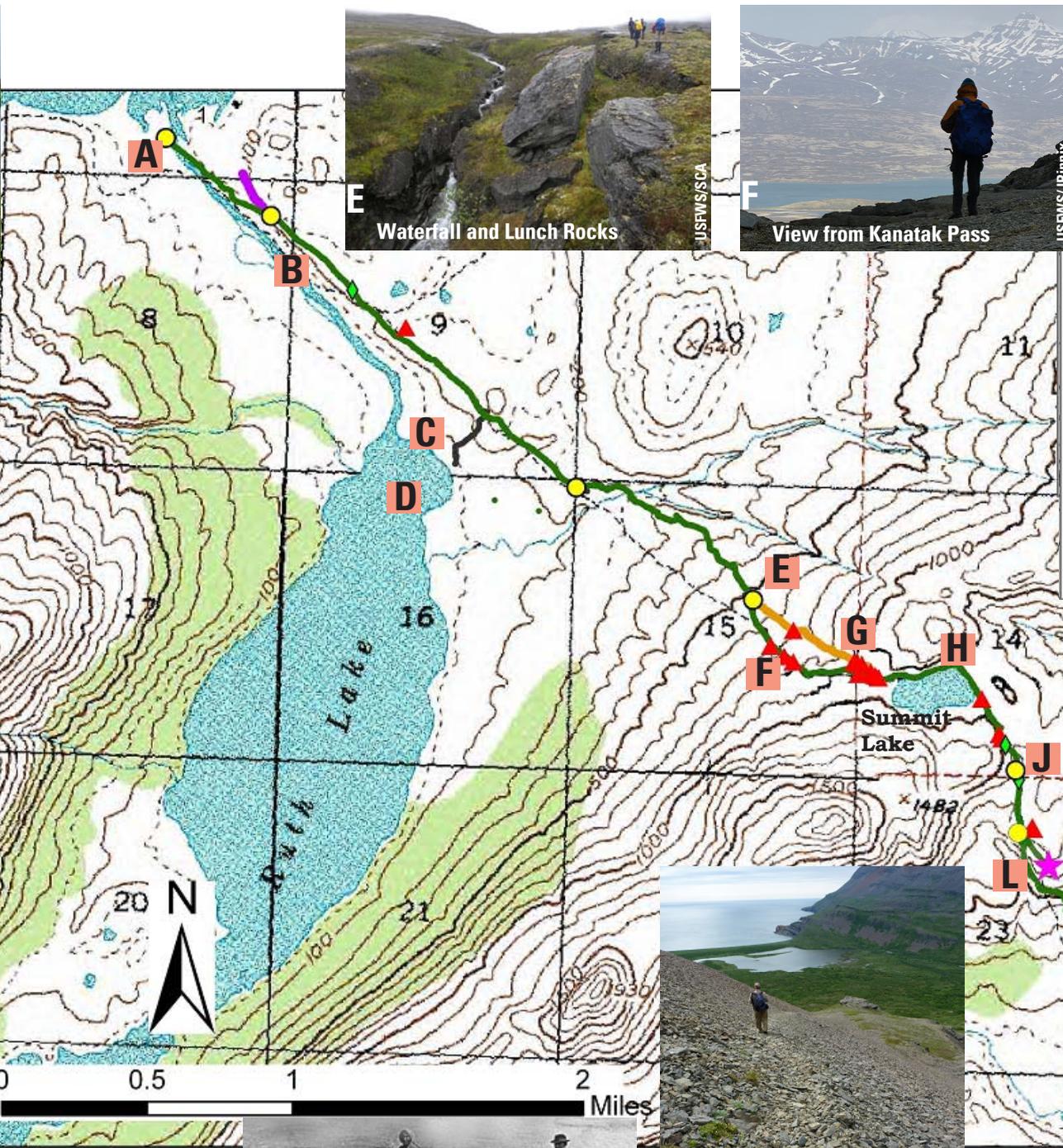


C Ruth Lake



D Floatplane in Ruth Lake

Kanatak Trail map



Legend

- Main Kanatak Trail
- Shortcut
- West Spur
- Ruth Spur
- ▲ Cairn
- Trail Feature
- ◆ Historical Feature
- ★ Overlook



E Waterfall and Lunch Rocks



F View from Kanatak Pass



G Shortcut Trail



H Summit Lake



J Bellybutton Rock



K Overlook of Kanatak



M Crossing the Kanatak Lagoon



L Visitors to Kanatak circa 1930s. Photo courtesy of Anchorage Museum of History and Art



L Dropping down to Kanatak

For More Information:

Contact Becharof National Wildlife Refuge at 907/246-3339; or call the King Salmon Visitor Center at 907/246-4250. Visit the Becharof National Wildlife Refuge website: <http://becharof.fws.gov>.

History, Wildlife, Scenery, and Botany on the Kanatak Trail

Striking scenery, beautiful wildflowers, and abundant wildlife make a hike on the Kanatak Trail something to remember.



The Kanatak Trail is an historic route used for centuries by Native Alaskans, linking the Pacific Ocean with a water route to the Bering Sea. Early Russian and American visitors also used the trail. Recent archeology fieldwork has revealed evidence along the route that dates to thousands of years ago. Today, the route is used by hikers, hunters, anglers, and other refuge visitors.

Trail Description

The trail follows the historic route for nearly all of its five mile length. From Island Arm in Becharof Lake, beginning from a gravel bar at the mouth of Ruth River popular with fly-in anglers (see **A** on map), the trail eases up the north side onto a low ridge and parallels the river **B**. A short spur trail drops to Ruth Lake **C**.

The trail continues across a stream, climbing gently to Lunch Rocks, a landmark beside a small waterfall **E**. The high point of the trail is Summit Lake **H**. Crossing the pass, the trail rolls over open ground to an intersection with a former road. Bear left to Bellybutton Rock **J**.

A small rock cairn marks another intersection by the edge of a steep south slope. Go straight east to find a dramatic overlook **K**; or drop down the south edge of the bluff and angle down across a steep scree slope for a quick descent to the base of the cliff **L**. The improved trail ends here; but to reach the Kanatak beach, a hiker can choose their



Residents of Kanatak circa 1922. Photo courtesy of Anchorage Museum of History and Art

own route. A lagoon separates beach from mainland, but knee deep crossings are possible **M**.

A shortcut from the west side of the pass to Lunch Rocks is marked with old rock piles **G**. According to Paul Boskoffsky, a former resident of Kanatak, these cairns once held sticks to guide travelers through blowing snow.

Patterns of Use

The trail was used by residents of Kanatak, Ruth Lake, and Fish Village (or Marraatuq) at the mouth of the Ruth River).



Dogs and sled at Kanatak. Photo courtesy of Paul Boskoffsky

Families moved frequently during the year to find employment, hunt, trade, and gather food, and visit friends and relatives.

Villagers in Kanatak packed supplies over the trail by horse, pack dogs and dog sleds, and on their own backs. Other supplies arrived by boat.

In the early 20th century, Kanatak grew to hold more than 200 people. Times changed, and



families moved to larger towns. In 1954, Kanatak was left uninhabited.

All along the trail, traces of former inhabitants remain. Please do not disturb these remnants of the past: they are protected by law.

Getting There

Floatplanes can land at Ruth Lake and in Becharof Lake's Island Arm. Wheeled planes may be able to land on the beach near Kanatak. The nearest safe anchorage for boats on the Pacific side is in Kanatak Bay. Access is subject to local weather conditions: expect travel delays. Although the area is not designated wilderness, the same conditions apply. Be prepared for communication difficulties, biting insects, and potentially dangerous wildlife.

Partners

Partners on the Kanatak Trail project include:

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation, Recreational Trails Program, who provided a grant in 2011; and the Student Conservation Association. Special thanks are owed to Paul Boskoffsky and refuge volunteers of 2011.

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Hike the Kanatak Trail in Becharof National Wildlife Refuge



Kanatak Trail. Photo courtesy of Paul Boskoffsky

