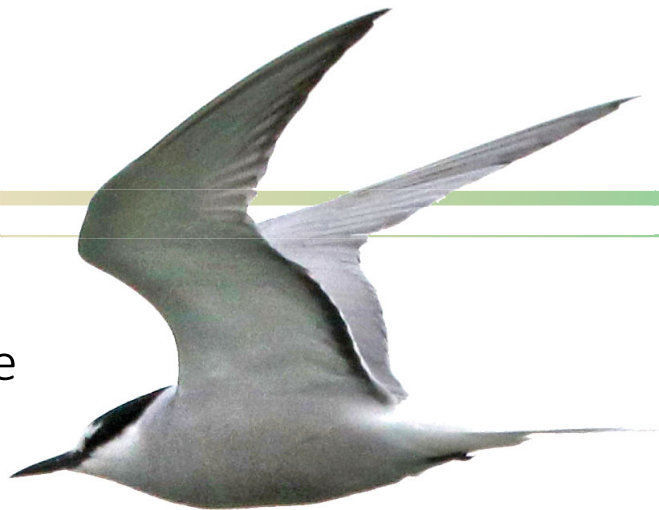


Yakutat

Town at top of the panhandle has several claims to fame

By SARA TEEL



Yakutat sits atop a glacier moraine, nestled between diverse protected lands and reachable only by air or sea. While the City and Borough of Yakutat is Southeast's smallest borough at 523 people, it encompasses an area larger than Vermont.

"Yakutat" is derived from the Tlingit *Yaakwdaat*, which means "the place where the canoes rest." While Yakutat was originally Eyak, Athabascan, and Tlingit, it has long been a melting pot. The town is a natural junction between Southeast Alaska and the Interior, and its location and many bays have long encouraged interaction and trade between tribes.

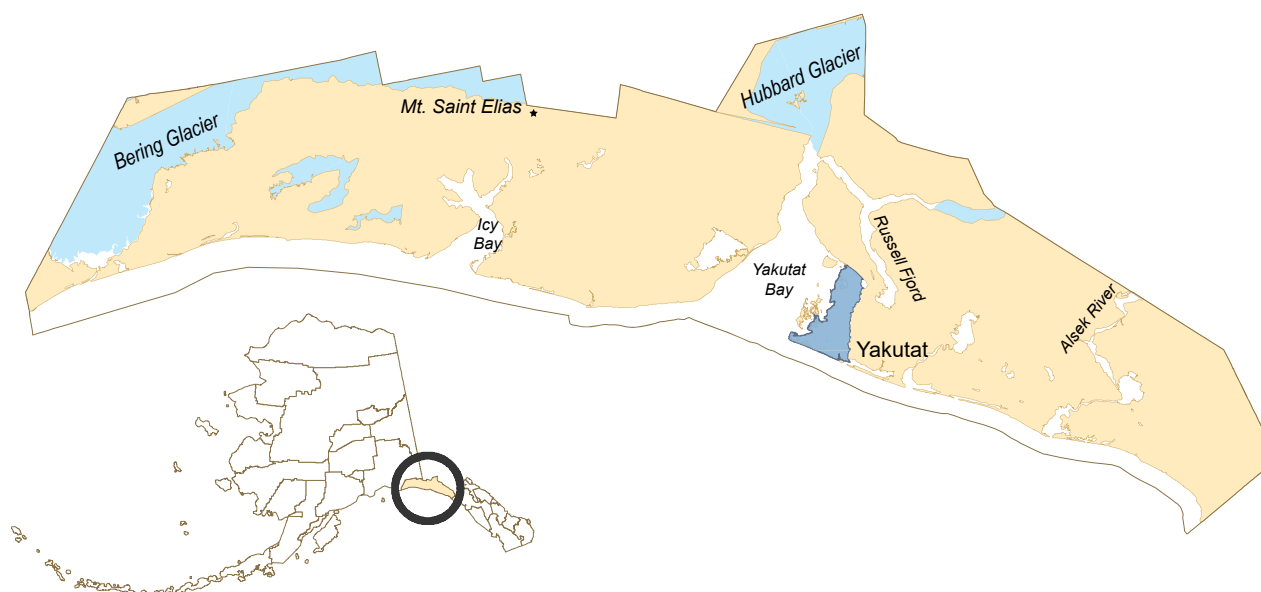
The surroundings are a modern draw as well. Residents and visitors alike can hike in the mountains or tidelands, kayak in lagoons and bays, or fish in freshwater rivers and lakes. But several characteristics make Yakutat stand out from every other scenic destination in Alaska.

A moraine is created by material a glacier deposits as it retreats: usually unconsolidated rock and sediment.

An unexpected surfing destination

While Alaska isn't normally associated with surfing, Yakutat is the exception. The town and its Cannon Beach are known for world-class surfing; of course, in Alaska that means donning wetsuits, gloves, and booties.

The area is also home to Hubbard Glacier, which is unusual because it's advancing while most glaciers are shrinking. (See the photo caption on page 9 for more.) Hubbard is a tidewater glacier that intersects



with Valerie Glacier before flowing into Disenchantment Bay, and it's more than six miles long where it meets the water. The glacier is highly active, and its massive calving causes earthquakes. In less than a week's span during 2015, Hubbard's calving produced 28 glacial quakes.

Fishing still drives the economy

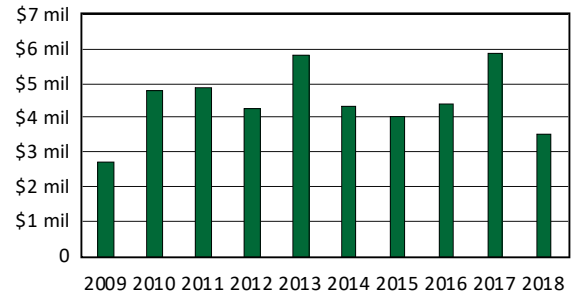
While the area has a history of trade in copper, furs, skins, shells, and canoes, fishing has been the heart of the local economy and culture for many years.

In the early 20th century, the Yakutat and Southern Railroad was built to haul salmon from Situk Landing to a cannery in Yakutat. The railroad is another Alaska outlier in that it's the only railroad in the state that was never linked to mining. The timing of the trains was based on the tides, and the trains ran seasonally for 60 years.

Local fisheries are invaluable for subsistence, and they provide substantial seasonal income through commercial and sport fishing. While halibut, sablefish, rockfish, ling cod, and trout are common harvests, salmon is the biggest by far. All five salmon species — king, sockeye, pink, chum, and coho — run in the area and about 90 percent of commercial harvesters fish for salmon.

1 Yakutat Fisheries Earnings Dropped Sharply in 2018

TOTAL EARNINGS,* 2009 TO 2018



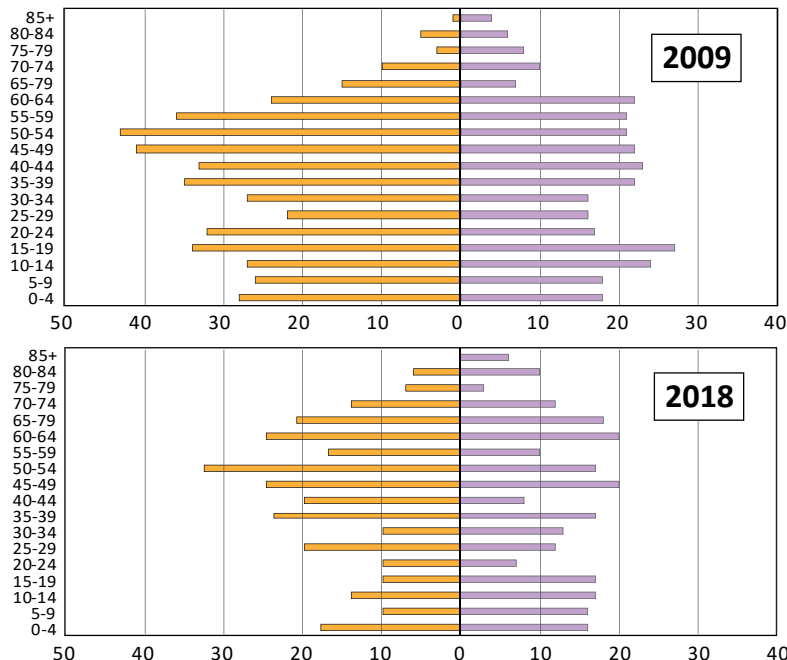
*All earnings adjusted to 2018 dollars
Source: Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

According to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, Yakutat's estimated gross earnings for all fisheries in 2018 were almost \$3.6 million, 42 percent of which came from salmon fisheries.

Like all fishing-dependent villages, Yakutat is subject to fisheries volatility. (See Exhibit 1.) The area felt the shock of the Gulf of Alaska pink salmon disaster in 2016, then was hit again in 2018 by the unprecedented closure of the sockeye salmon fishery due to extremely low returns. (See the article on page 4 for more on 2018 job losses in salmon harvesting.) Landed poundage was 45 percent lower than the year before and down 20 percent from 2009.

2 Big Demographic Shifts Over Decade

YAKUTAT, AGE BY GENDER, 2009 AND 2018



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Census Bureau

More than 200 species of birds nest there

Variety is the word for the local bird population as well. With more than 200 bird species in the area, Yakutat is a popular place for birdwatching. Birders can brave the drive on Dangerous River Road to catch a glimpse of red-breasted sapsuckers in the cottonwoods or watch a multitude of fox sparrows and orange-crowned warblers among the marshes. Visitors can also charter a boat to view marbled murrelets, harlequin ducks, or turnstones along the shoreline.

The most famous seabird that nests in Yakutat is the rare Aleutian tern, a small migratory bird related to gulls. Yakutat is home



Hubbard Glacier calves in Yakutat Bay. The photographer witnessed calving chunks of ice he estimates were as high as 20-story buildings.

Hubbard Glacier is unusual in that unlike other glaciers, it's advancing rather than receding. According to University of Kansas glaciologist Leigh Stearns, this is due to the glacier's large accumulation area, which extends far into the Saint Elias Mountains. Snow that falls in the basin flows down to the terminus. The glacier also sits at a growing moraine, which has created a barrier that stabilizes the glacier and allows it to keep advancing while preventing it from floating.

Photo by Flickr user Kenneth Cole Schneider

to one of the world's largest known breeding colonies of Aleutian terns, and 2020 will mark the 10th annual Yakutat Tern Festival, a four-day spring event not just for birders but for hikers, kayakers, and runners in the annual Wildman Race.

Population has declined, and Yakutat had no births last year

Like the rest of Southeast, Yakutat has lost population over the decade, and its population is getting older.

2009 was the last year more people moved to Yakutat than left, and the population jumped by 50 residents that year. It's been on a steady decline since, falling 30 percent from a peak of 744 residents in 2009 to 523 in 2018.

Yakutat has the smallest population of all Alaska boroughs and census areas, and it has also seen the greatest population decline in percent terms since the 2010 Census.

Because Yakutat's population is so small, the movements of a small number of people can shift its demographics. Younger people are more likely to move and more likely to have children, so a smaller population has driven a nearly seven-year rise in the median age, from 38.5 to 45.3. (See exhibits 2 and 3.)

Yakutat had the lowest birth rate in the state in 2018, at zero births per 1,000 people. (See

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3 Yakutat Has the Lowest Birth Rate

BIRTH RATES AND MEDIAN AGE, ALASKA AREAS, 2018

Borough/Census Area	Births Per 1,000	Median Age
Kusilvak Census Area	28.7	24.1
Bethel Census Area	22.8	27.3
Lake and Peninsula Borough	22.2	32.5
Northwest Arctic Borough	19.3	28.2
Nome Census Area	18.3	28.5
Dillingham Census Area	17.1	30.2
Fairbanks North Star Borough	16.7	33.9
North Slope Borough	16.1	33.4
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	15.8	38.1
Skagway Borough, Municipality	14.7	42.0
Statewide	14.1	35.2
Anchorage, Municipality	13.9	34.5
Kodiak Island Borough	13.7	34.6
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	13.0	35.6
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	12.8	36.4
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	12.6	40.7
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	12.6	38.8
Kenai Peninsula Borough	12.0	41.5
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	11.6	39.7
Sitka, City and Borough	10.9	39.8
Petersburg Borough	10.6	42.8
Wrangell, City and Borough	10.3	48.0
Juneau, City and Borough	10.2	38.3
Haines Borough	9.7	48.6
Bristol Bay Borough	9.1	43.7
Aleutians West Census Area	6.9	41.3
Denali Borough	5.5	43.2
Aleutians East Borough	4.4	44.1
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2.8	46.8
Yakutat, City and Borough	0	45.3

Note: Based on 2018 geography

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Census Bureau

4

More Yakutat Facts And Statewide Comparisons

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, VARIOUS PRODUCTS

	Alaska	Yakutat*
Race and Ethnicity as of July 1, 2018		
White	65.3%	35.9%
Black	3.8%	2.0%
Alaska Native	15.4%	39.6%
Asian	6.6%	6.8%
Pacific Islander	1.4%	1.3%
Two or more races	7.4%	14.4%
Hispanic or Latino (ethnicity)	7.2%	4.6%
White and not Hispanic	60.3%	32.6%
Population Characteristics		
Veterans, 2013-2017	67,004	50
Foreign-born, 2013-2017	7.6%	6.0%
Housing		
Housing units, July 1, 2018	318,336	459
Owner-occupied units, 2013-2017	63.7%	60.4%
Median value, owner-occupied, 2013-2017	\$261,900	\$185,000
Families and Living Arrangements		
Households, 2013-2017	252,536	255
Household size, 2013-2017	2.81	2.4
Computer and Internet Use		
Households with a computer, 2013-2017	92.4%	89.0%
Households with broadband Internet, 2013-17	82.9%	69.8%
Education		
High school graduate or higher, 2013-2017	92.4%	91.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher, 2013-2017	29.0%	19.6%
Health		
With a disability, under 65, 2013-2017	8.5%	4.9%
Without health insurance, under 65, 2013-17	14.3%	18.6%
Transportation		
Mean travel time to work, 2013-2017	18.8 min	6.5 min
Income and Poverty		
Median household income,** 2013-17	\$76,114	\$64,583
Below federal poverty threshold	10.9%	15.3%
Geography		
People per square mile, 2010	1.2	0.1
Land area in square miles, 2010	570,641	7,649

*Margins of error are significant for small areas like Yakutat.

**In 2017 dollars

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 estimates, American Community Survey 2013-2017, and 2010 Census

YAKUTAT

Continued from page 9

Exhibit 3.) While a low birthrate is common with an older population, not having any registered births in a year is unusual, even in a small place.

True to its indigenous roots, Yakutat is 40 percent Alaska Native, which is nearly three times the state's percentage. Yakutat also has almost twice the share of residents who identify as multiracial. For more details about the population and how it compares to Alaska overall, see Exhibit 4.

Government jobs play a major role

Government jobs play an important role in Yakutat, as they do in most Alaska villages where they provide basic services. They are also a source of stable income because they aren't seasonal like tourism or fishing.

Thirty-nine percent of Yakutat's wage and salary jobs were in government in 2018 compared to 24 percent statewide. While the federal shares were about the same for Yakutat and Alaska as a whole, at around 20 percent, Yakutat had a much higher share of local government, at 66 percent. In Alaska overall, 51 percent of government jobs were in local government.

Tribal government is included in local government, and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe runs the local senior center, community health center, and culture camp. The tribe also manages multiple grants in areas such as housing and water quality studies.

In the last decade, the levels of federal and state jobs have remained essentially the same while local government employment has fallen 34 percent. The increasingly smaller population suggests less demand and revenue for those services.

Earnings haven't taken a big hit

Yakutat's total employment and earnings have also declined over the past decade, but to a lesser degree. While population dropped 30 percent from 2009 to 2018, employment declined just 15 percent. The difference was mainly due to an uptick in jobs in 2018, primarily in health and social services.

Overall earnings have declined just 5 percent since 2009, in 2018 dollars. While government has been in decline, private sector earnings have increased 5 percent, mostly through tourism. Earnings in accommodation alone jumped 40 percent over that decade.

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