



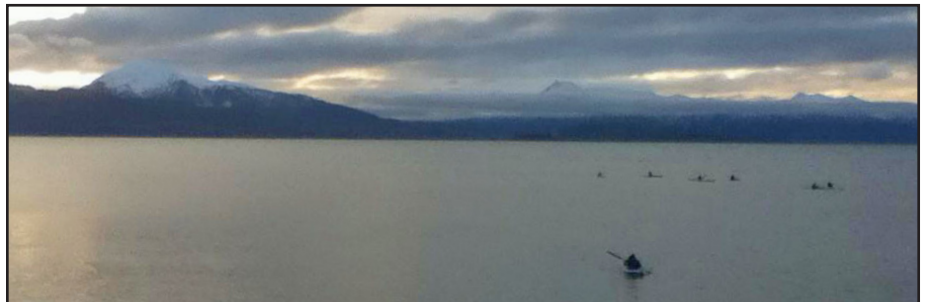
## Alaska State Parks Celebrates Fourth Annual First Day Hikes



Carole Haas pulls son Triton Haas at the Quartz Lake event, photo courtesy of Cindy Lou Aillaud



A group of kids leads the way on a First Day Hike in Eveline State Recreation Area, Homer, photo courtesy of Willy Dunne



Kachemak Bay Water Trail event, photo courtesy of Hal Shepherd

Alaska State Parks and local community groups sponsored two First Day Hikes, a First Weekend Paddle, and a First Day Family Bonfire to encourage families to get out into state parks during winter and start the New Year with fun and healthy activities. These events are inspired by a national First Day Hike initiative to unite people and their state parks in all 50 states.

**First Day Hike in Eveline State Recreation Area, Homer:** The Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park hosted an event that took place at Eveline State Recreation Area at noon on New Year's Day. Guides led the group of 39 people, ranging from one-year-olds to 70-year-olds, on a 2.5-mile hike around the Eveline trails as there was not enough snow to ski. The group enjoyed identifying animal tracks and birds, photographing the distant mountains and glaciers, and observing the remains of a moose carcass that a brown bear had fed on last autumn. Fortunately, the bears are safely in their dens at this time of year. Hot drinks and gourmet snacks provided by Two Sisters Bakery warmed and refueled hikers after their walk.

**First Weekend Paddle, Homer:** The Center for Water Advocacy and the fans of the Kachemak Bay Water Trail sponsored a 1.5-mile winter paddle along the Homer Spit on the first Saturday of the year. Twenty hardy people participated, either paddling or as support crew, for this fun afternoon event. Afterward, warm fire, snacks, and hot drinks revived folks as they told tales of the 26-knot winds, white caps, and three-foot swells on Kachemak Bay.

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**First Day Hike in Quartz Lake State Recreation Area, Delta Junction:** The Delta Junction Trail Association and the Delta Nordic Ski Club hosted a family event at noon on a balmy, 25°F New Year's Day at the public-use cabin located on the upper edge of the parking area at Quartz Lake. From there, the group of over 70 people hiked, skied, or snowshoed half a mile to the historic Glatfelter Cabin where hot drinks and snacks were provided. Fun was had by all!

**First Day Family Bonfire in Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park, Kodiak:** Kodiak enjoyed a 35°F, sunny, and very windy, New Year's Day. Approximately 15 people stopped by the fire to enjoy hot chocolate, hot cider, s'mores, and other snacks. Good campfire conversation helped folks warm up after being chilled by the wind during their hike in the park. Some visitors were aware of the event, while others were pleasantly surprised to find the rangers hosting a campfire with refreshments supplied by Friends of Kodiak State Parks.

A mid-afternoon vehicle count found 32 vehicles at Fort Abercrombie, with an estimated 80-90 day-use vehicles throughout the day.



Yvonne and Wally Leavitt at the halfway point of the first hike of the year at the Glatfelter Cabin in Quartz Lake SRA, photo courtesy of Cindy Lou Aillaud



Nancy King, Sam Mason, and Ellie Mason sledding at Quartz Lake, photo courtesy of Cindy Lou Aillaud



Dave McCombs, Tawnia Butorac, and Trek McCombs enjoy Quartz Lake's First Day Hike, photo courtesy of Cindy Lou Aillaud

## Fishing Season Starts Early for Birds

An American dipper feeds on salmon fry at the Eagle River Nature Center. Dippers, formerly called "water ouzels," can be seen in winter near stretches of open water. They often stand on ice or rock, bobbing or dipping up and down. To fuel their bodies and survive the winter cold, American dippers plunge into the water using the force of the current to push them to the bottom, grabbing any tasty morsels they can before making their way back to their perch.

Photo courtesy of ERNC volunteer Liza Sanden



## Northern News

- A notice of intent to award a concession contract for private operation of food services at Big Delta State Historical Park has been given to Smiling Moose. The restaurant will open in mid-May.
- Rangers Melissa Smith and Dane Happ braved crossing the Chena River and broke trail to Nugget Creek Public-Use Cabin in Chena River State Recreation Area. They cleaned the cabin and got it ready to rent. Dane also broke trail to the Angel Creek Trail shelter and is working on replacing the wood stove and stove pipe.
- Park Specialist Brian Charlton and ACC Mike Hitte continue to make great progress on the recreation and dining halls at Twin Bears Camp in Chena River SRA. The recreation and dining halls received new wall coverings, doors, and wood stoves. Next on the list are windows, a drop ceiling, accessible kitchen components, and flooring.
- The Northern Area is making headway on filling the Fairbanks Park Ranger position. Out of 25 applicants, nine made it through pre-screening for interviews.
- New carpeting greets visitors to the DNR building in Fairbanks. Renovations are almost complete with 80% of the building carpeted. Our Parks office is finished, so we were able to move back in last month and we're finally mostly unpacked.



ACC Mike Hitte looks out of the new door at the recreation hall at Twin Bears Camp in Chena River SRA. The new door was installed to increase exit separation and meet code compliance. Adoorable!



Ben Ellis revvin' up his sled in search of fresh pow pow.



Director Ben Ellis visited the Northern Area last month to attend a Citizens Advisory Board meeting. He joined Superintendent Brooks Ludwig and ranger Dane Happ the next day for a trip up Angel Creek Valley to do some cabin repair.



The Northern Area of Alaska State Parks is proud to announce the promotion of Jackie Cheek from Fairbanks Natural Resource Tech I to the Harding Lake Park Specialist. Jackie started out as an intern for the Fairbanks Public Information Center. For the past three years, she has worked for Alaska State Parks. She spent two summers at Harding Lake and one at the Upper and Lower Chatanika areas. She brings a lot of enthusiasm and a good work ethic to our team. Welcome Jackie!

# Babies, Babies, Babies!

Alaska State Parks' Design and Construction section has had an exciting holiday season. Design and Construction's chief, Rys Miranda, and his wife Jessi welcomed their third bundle of joy, Jillian Marie Seamount Miranda. She was born Jan. 3, 2015, at 3:43 a.m., weighing in at 7 lbs. 2 oz. and measuring 18 inches long. Jessi and Jilly are both doing well—sleep deprived, but doing well.



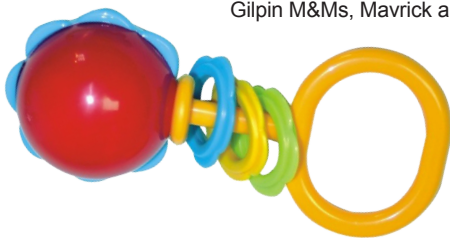
Ethan, Audrey, and Jillian Miranda



Gilpin M&Ms, Mavrick and Madison



Eleven days later, Design and Construction's admin officer, Teri Gilpin, and her husband Chris welcomed their second and third bundles of joy. Mavrick Gilpin was born Jan. 12, 2015, at 8:03 p.m. weighing 5 lbs. 12 oz. and measuring 20 inches long. His sister, Madison, was born 35 minutes later. She weighed 5 lbs. 5 oz and was 18 inches long. Mavrick, Madison, and Teri are all healthy and happy—as long as tummies are full and diapers are clean.



Jake and Tara

Stay tuned, though, the Design and Construction stork isn't done, yet. Engineering manager Jake Gondeck and his wife Tara are expecting a little girl in March.

