

» HERE & NOW ALASKA

miles northeast of Anchorage, features hiking trails such as the nearly 13-mile-long Eklutna Lakeside Trail, which is also enjoyed by cyclists and, at certain times, ATVs and snowmobiles. Horseback riding, mountain climbing and picnicking are also popular. Eklutna Lake itself—7 miles long and a mile

wide—is perfect for kayaking (rentals are available at the campground) and fishing.

■ **Seward Highway:** Several popular Chugach State Park trailheads, a campground and a salmon fishing stream can be reached from the Seward Highway, a National Scenic Byway.

Less than 15 miles south of the city, McHugh Creek Day Use Area has hiking trails, picnic tables and a lovely waterfall overlooking Turnagain Arm. Farther south, Bird Creek offers fishing for pink and coho salmon, July through September. Bird Creek Campground has campsites and cabin rentals. —*K.M.*

From page 115 Only 10 miles as the raven flies from Alaska's largest city, that hidden canyon, like scores of similar wild treasures, remains unchanged 30 years later. For that we can thank Chugach State Park—which like the Alaska State Parks system is a half-century old this year—and the foresight of local Alaskans and state legislators who worked through the late 1960s to ensure the Chugach's creation on August 6, 1970.

Established to provide recreational and wildlife-viewing opportunities, preserve the scenic value of the Chugach Mountains, and protect pristine bodies of water such as Eklutna Lake and Ship Creek, 495,000-plus-acre Chugach State Park is today one of the nation's largest state parks.

Encompassing the mountains that form Anchorage's backdrop, the park expands east and north of the city to the Knik River near Palmer, south to Turnagain Arm, and across Whiteout and Eagle glaciers to the east. In between, it's all wilderness, simultaneously accessible and remote, a medley of crags, alpine tundra and forests readily reached from trailheads along the Seward Highway, and in the Glen Alps overlooking Anchorage, and along Eagle River and Eklutna Lake roads.

Visible from busy city streets, Chugach State Park promises respite for hikers, climbers, mountain bikers, Nordic and alpine skiers, and those who enjoy snowshoeing, kayaking, and seeing and photographing wildlife, from moose and grizzlies to marmots and grouse.

It's a gift for the ages, a wild contradiction to Southcentral Alaska's urban activity, a destination with something for anyone who enjoys the idea of wilderness, fresh air and wild blueberries hand-plucked from alpine tundra.

I'll pay tribute to the park this 50th year by revisiting that canyon where the little brook sings and golden-fins whirl in blue high-country tarns. I'll pitch my tent among the boulders where ptarmigan cluck, and in my pack I'll have a four-piece rod, some tiny dry flies, and a spool of leader fine as hair. ✕

Ken Marsh writes from Anchorage and spends many days venturing into the Chugach.

THE STORY CONTINUES

» In the Story Works Alaska

program, high school students craft true, meaningful stories and tell them before live audiences. The experience can be life-changing. Just ask Story Works alumna Anna Wen, right.

After participating in the program in high school, Wen now serves as a Story Works volunteer.

"Storytelling is so important because it allows you to connect with peers and classmates," says Wen, now a college student. "You are sharing stories that mean something to you, and that's really powerful."

Last January, this magazine featured the words of Nikka-Angela Macaraeg, who shared the story of her unshakable belief in Santa Claus. Today, thanks in part to an Alaska Airlines Foundation grant, the Story Works Alaska nonprofit continues to partner with high school English teachers to support youth voices through storytelling and writing workshops that develop skills, build confidence and increase access to storytelling resources.

The grant helps cover the costs associated with running story work-

shops, including staff time, volunteer screening and training, and printing costs—each student receives a workbook developed by Story Works teachers, alumni and volunteers.

Visit storyworksak.org for more information. —*Aurora Blandino, Sharon Jenkins and Hunter Wooden*

JOVELL RENNIE