

Daily Observations from Sisualik,
Cape Krusenstern National Monument,
Northwest Alaska

Volume 3: 1992



Coastline, Cape Krusenstern National Monument

by
William R. Uhl

Daily Observations from Sisualik, Cape Krusenstern National Monument,
Northwest Alaska

Volume 1: 1990

Volume 2: 1991

Volume 3: 1992

Volume 4: 1993

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Volume 9: 1998

Volume 10: 1999 & Appendices

Volume 11: 2000

Volume 12: 2001

Volume 13: 2002

Volume 14: 2003 (with 2004 summary)

In 2004, the NPS printed 50 sets of Volumes 1-10 which were distributed to
libraries.

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ABOUT THE UHLS

William R. "Bob" *Kalluchuq* Uhl was born January 4, 1927 in Sacramento, California. His first introduction to northwest Alaska was in February of 1948 as a member of the US Military. While stationed in Kotzebue, he met and married Carrie Williams. His marriage to Carrie and a growing disillusionment with the state of affairs in the Lower 48 lead to his decision to establish a life in northwest Alaska.



Carrie Williams *Qisiliaq* Uhl was born on November 30, 1922 in Kotzebue, Alaska, to Whittier *Kalluchuq* and Edna *Napaktuq* Williams. For most of her lifetime she has lived in the country, away from town and any public services, such as running water or electricity (although her family did spend some time in Kotzebue while the children attended school). Her family led a very subsistence-based lifestyle which meant that they depended on hunting, fishing, and gathering to provide food for themselves and their extended family. Carrie's father was the first Alaska Native pastor at the Friends Church in Kotzebue. In fact, Carrie was named after Carrie Samms, an early Friends Church missionary to the region.

For over five decades, Bob and Carrie have lived in rural camps. Summertimes were spent in a tent (and later in a tiny cabin) on the beach at Sisualik, where they were able to fish and to hunt marine mammals. In the wintertime, they moved inland to a more sheltered cabin where trees provided wood for heat, a stream running under the winter ice provided water, and moose and caribou provided food. These camps were present long before Congress established Cape Krusenstern National Monument through the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.

Since its inception, Carrie, Bob and other local residents have been gracious neighbors to the National Park, its visitors and staff. They and others have openly shared stories, wisdom, insights, and food with those interested in learning about their lifestyles and homelands. In fact, Bob and Carrie authored *Tagiumsinaaqmiit: Ocean Beach Dwellers of the Cape Krusenstern Area: Subsistence Patterns* in 1977, a publication which has aided the National Park Service in the planning and management of the monument.

Where historically many families lived year round at Sisualik and Sealing Point, today only the Williams camp (Carrie's nephews) is occupied in winter. As times have changed, families still maintain summer camps on the Krusenstern beach, but almost all reside in Kotzebue or other villages, taking advantage of educational, employment and other opportunities. Carrie and Bob represent the last family maintaining their historical year round lifestyle within what is now Cape Krusenstern National Monument.

ABOUT THIS SET OF JOURNALS

Bob and Carrie Uhl have maintained a subsistence lifestyle at Cape Krusenstern for 54 years – beginning well before the establishment of Cape Krusenstern National Monument in 1980. In fact, they are the last full time residents of the Monument.

Bob has kept a daily journal of resource observations of the Cape Krusenstern area and its resources since April of 1990. Bob has generously given permission for the National Park Service to edit and publish his journals for library use in order to better share this invaluable insight into a vanishing lifestyle.

Bob Uhl's diaries provide an invaluable `window` into a vanishing culture. They also provide a daily, ten year record of resource observations made by a keen `naturalist` who has spent 54 years observing and documenting the natural processes of the monument and the subsistence practices of the resident Inupiaq people.

The National Park Service is indeed fortunate to have access to this historic record and is pleased to be able to share it with a broader audience through publication. The information in the journals will be of value to students of natural and cultural history, as well as of general interest.

This set consists of the first 10 years of his journal entries: 1990 through 1999. The National Park Service is in the process of editing entries for the years 2000 through 2004.

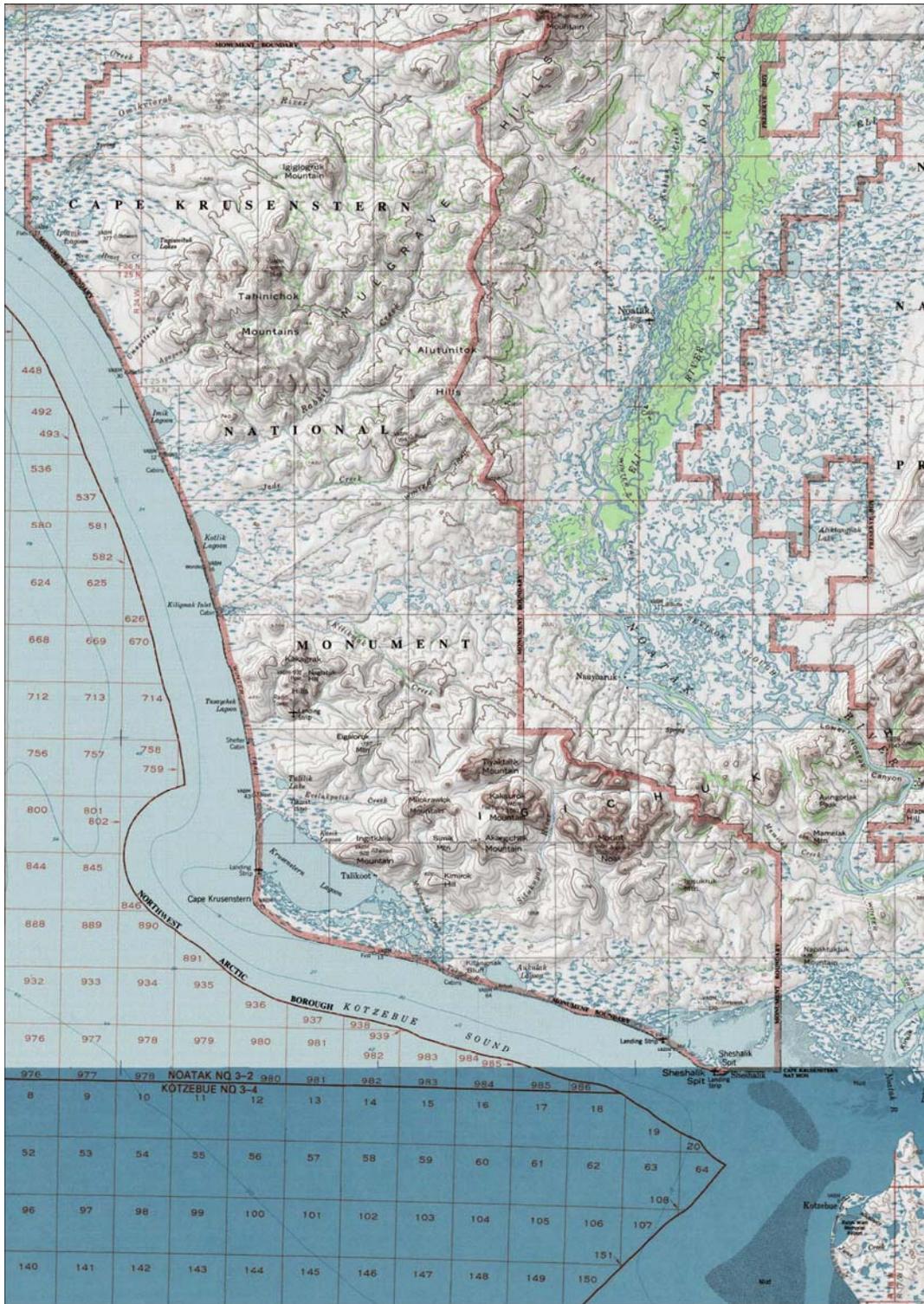
Various factors lead to the Uhls moving into Kotzebue for several months during the winter of 2003-2004. By June, 2004, they had returned to their coastal summer camp. Many people were pleased once again to hear Carrie back on the CB, greeting her friends and neighbors each morning and evening.

**CAPE KRUSENSTERN
NATIONAL MONUMENT**

RESOURCE REPORTS

1992

WILLIAM R. UHL



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MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

JANUARY

Introduction

It is not very often that, within the span of one human lifetime, it can be said, “The month of January on Krusenstern National Monument was warm.” This is of course a relative statement that invites comparison with other years, but it is also a simple statement of how it was to be here during January 1992 - and that is how it was, a warm and pleasant January!

Only five days in the month had a daily high temperature below 0° F and four of those were at the end of the month when an intense cold spell was beginning to build. Oddly there were no “hot” days, i.e., above freezing. The warmest day was the eighteenth at 26° F, though several days at 20° F were pleasant. The coldest day was the last day of the month when the high was only -28° F and the low was a -36° F. Looks like February will be our cold month this year.

N and NE winds several times to 35 knots or more dominated the month with some east and several very long (for here) calm spells where soft, fluffy, “swan’s down” snow lay over all the land for many days.

Two incidents stand out over others in this month and they occurred on consecutive days. On the ninth, a combination of temperature, wind, and prior fresh, light snowfall produced a remarkable happening for my 44 years of tramping the landscape. It was the day of snowballs. See Journal entry for January 9 for more details. On the tenth, our moose for the year was finally secured, and though it didn't go according to plan, the results turned out well for us which is, more often than not, the way our life tends to unfold. Again the Journal entry gives some details.

We finally did our Christmas Bird Count on New Year’s Day and though we didn't find many birds (there aren't many!), we do appreciate the turn out of seven other more or less crazy folks that were willing to spend their day searching for birds and paying for the privilege! Eight participants found six species and fifty-one individual birds. If this seems a small number, try looking around in your area for three hours and see what you come up with. A census of Kotzebue Ravens and Snow Buntings would certainly be interesting. We are grateful for the fine crew that did come out to give us a hand.

Wildlife

The temperatures of the month, to all those creatures that live here and were prepared for the worst that winter could throw at them, might have felt a “let down.” I expect though, that most species just relaxed and enjoyed the mildness, knowing that winter is not over yet. There are some indications from the moose we took that many creatures may be in better physical shape than is usual for this month. The strong N and NE winds we had for a long stretch towards the end of the month may have produced hardship for microtines in some places. The eating away of the snow cover that had been in place since fall sometimes destroys the subnival runways, caches, and nests of numbers of tundra dwelling voles; sharply dropping temperatures right after the snow removal, such as those we had in the last few days of the month, can be disastrous. There does not seem to be any other creatures that would be immediately affected, though a shortage of microtines later on in the year might be a problem to their predators.

Caribou

Two lines of caribou tracks, traveling west to east, were noted by CBC folks on New Year’s Day. Two more were reported at month’s end behind Anigaag. These were the only reports to come to our attention. There was a rumor of caribou moving our way from the Kivalina-Red Dog area, but it was never substantiated. The “grapevine” feeling seems to be the only direction to go caribou hunting is towards Buckland.

Moose

The influx of moose into this NE section of the Monument noted after Thanksgiving (early December) has given us a much greater local moose population than was noted in October and November. This is not the usual pattern of local Moose over the past fifteen to twenty years. Numbers are usually high in October and November and fade away to very few for midwinter and early spring. Super willow growth (reflecting the last growing season with good moisture and hot weather) and a zone of light snow cover at the elevation of our camp may be contributing factors to this apparent anomaly.

These moose seem to be mostly male. Though antlerless males were noted from the very first of the month (on the tenth when we took an antlerless male), we observed four other males still carrying their antlers. Two were small antlered young animals and two were old busters with full size adult bull crowns. The male we took was surprisingly fat, a young animal with well scabbed over antler bases. For further details and descriptions of this event see Journal entry of January 10.

Monthly Report

On CBC day, while looking for birds in a spruce patch, I ran across the fresh tracks of a feeding subadult moose. Within a patch of *Salix* sp. it was seeking out *Betula glandulosa* a shrub form of the ubiquitous *Betula nana*. There had been some speculation that this birch species might not be utilized by moose due its glandular resinous nature.

January has been a fine month for moose, weather and food wise anyway, and except for our activities, we have not noted any other predator activity.

Bear

No bear stories for January. We trust that with the mild but not wet weather they slept well and probably without cold feet.

Sheep

No sheep tales either.

Musk-ox

No report of Musk-ox either. A new awareness of Musk-ox reproductive potential from Canadian reports of the Banks Island herd. What's the limiting factor on our transplants?

Marine Mammals

Even though January had some good seal hunting days and January is the traditional month that is recognized as safe to get out on the shelf ice with land surface transportation, we did not hear of any hunter activity in Kotzebue Sound. There was a report out of Point Hope that Common Ringed Seals were sinking and those recovered were in very poor physical condition. This report, if true, is very disturbing. Ringed Seals are known to be at their peak of fatness in January and of all the months in the year, January would be the least likely time to have even one sink with ocean salinity at its yearly peak, due to most freshwater being frozen. There is some urgency involved here in lieu of a recent Eastern Arctic Seal die off due to a canine distemper virus. Will alert Kathy Frost at ADF&G at first opportunity.

Small Mammals

Microtines might be the only local species to suffer from environmental stress this month. An extended period of rather high velocity N and NE winds in midmonth ate deeply into established "old snow" areas on the south sides of ridges and hills. In areas where voles have established themselves for the winter, this can be catastrophic, especially when immediately followed by intense cold periods. And that is what we had in late January. The effect this will have on local total vole populations, which have been building since last summer, cannot be known just yet. The resulting effect on vole predators will be further delayed, since they will have a supply of fresh frozen prey for awhile.

The single Red Squirrel in camp area shows no sign of being around. There is activity in the colony at firewood cutting site. Least and Short-tailed Weasels continue to leave their traces behind. Porcupine populations unchanged. We haven't even eaten one yet.

Furbearers

Mink and Otter tracks have been noted infrequently during the month. There are not many, but they are pretty regular.

Fox, both white and red, are in evidence but few in any areas were seen.

Wolf tracks (denoting a pair, no packs), have been reported and none to our knowledge have been taken. Three Wolverines, by report, were taken during the month by a Kotzebue family, up river above Noatak village.

In midmonth, two individuals expressed interest in hunting and trapping fox. It has been some time since anyone has shown interest in those activities locally. At least one of these hunters had some limited success before the end of the month.

Birds

The six species of birds recorded on January 1, CBC day, were: Common Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Willow Ptarmigan, Rock Ptarmigan, Gray Jay and Three-toed Woodpecker. Last year we had a Spruce Grouse but no Rock Ptarmigan.

Actually it's what we haven't had in the last couple of years that is most interesting. After more than ten years without Varying Hares, we lack those birds of prey that used to be common winter residents. Goshawks, Gyrfalcon, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-owl, Horned Owl and at least one winter, at the peak of the hare population, an overwintering Golden Eagle. In those years when the White Spruce cone crop is

Monthly Report

abundant we have good flocks of White-winged Crossbills, Redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks, and two chickadee species. When open water and beach Rye Grass heads are abundant we have had Common Eiders, Black Guillemots and both McKay's Buntings and Snow Buntings on our ocean beach sector. Lots of species when they are all here. As for numbers, one year we had more than a thousand Willow Ptarmigan and nearly one hundred Common Ravens plus eleven Spruce Grouse in the tree besides the house. It is indeed, in many categories, a boom and bust country.

Plants

Except for the already mentioned utilization of the shrub *Betula glandulosa* by moose, there is little to report on plants in January. This is the time when last season's *Salix* seed production and the plant gall termed "Willow Roses" or "Willow Cabbages" stand out in bold relief against the snowy background and in the absence of other leaves.

Fish

Nothing to report on fish for this January except that in the last week of the month many years ago, we made the earliest catch of Sheefish by hook on record. Some 250-300 good sized fish. Sheefish hooking will, from now on, become a potentially high producing activity on Kobuk or Selawik Lakes. Like seal hunting, though, it depends on someone getting out and doing it.

People

From midmonth on to the end, as the sunlight hours grew longer, snow machine travelers became more common, especially on the eastern portion of the Monument. At least one breakdown occurred toward the end of the month as temperatures dipped. Concern for an overdue traveler prompted a short after dark search. The fellow walked in and there were no further problems.

A couple of active fox hunter/trappers showed up in midmonth and a rumor of caribou between here and Kivalina prompted some investigation. The only results we heard of was the sighting of two caribou and two wolf tracks. None of the animals were reported taken.

Some regular but light travel between Kotzebue and Kivalina on the coastal route took place and early next month, the Coastal 250 dog race will be run on that route. Only two camps in Sisualik were regularly occupied through the month and except for weekend visits, none of the camps between Sisualik and Red Dog were occupied.

January

Some light use of trails from the Hatchery to Kotzebue across the far eastern edge of the Monument occurred. Some very light firewood cutting was noted toward the end of the month.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

FEBRUARY

Introduction

The return of the sun may be the greatest event of February 1992 worthy of celebration. No other eventful happening through the month would seem to be of greater value, either aesthetically or pragmatically. Few exceptional events in the day-to-day functioning of the natural world were noted. It seems strange though, to regulate to the ordinary the day-to-day struggle of creatures great and small to eat, sleep, and keep warm during any February. This year, this month just seemed to lack things spectacular.

The first week was cold. Maybe the coldest of the winter with the first five days having lows beyond our -40° F NPS thermometer calibration. The coldest “guesstimate” was a -46° F on February 3. After a blizzard with east winds to 55 knots on the eighth, our warmest days this month occurred on the ninth and tenth, with a temperature of 22° F. This means that there was no outside thawing this month, which seems to contradict the Eskimo name for the month which can be translated as “month of icicles forming.” Except for the first week, the month was quite moderate in temperature, wind, and precipitation. We did get a boost in snow depth during the blizzard. Our snow accumulation, however, remains far short of last year's super blanket of the remarkable white stuff.

Wildlife

“Living weather” was again good for such wildlife as we have in residence. In comparison to other years, our only problem is that we have few creatures spending the winter here. Mostly the same few birds, the same male moose and the few fox, weasels and otter that were around last month. Most absent and most missed for late January and February, as the sun comes back, is the Snowshoe or Varying Hare. They faded away in the early 80's from an extreme high and have not returned to this habitat for a very long, lonesome time. Have yet to see a hare track this winter.

Caribou

No hint of caribou on the Monument through the month of February. Around midmonth (February 14), hearsay information had some caribou crossing from the Buckland-Selawik area towards Noorvik. On the twenty-eighth some were reported seen on the Noatak flats, south of the village. Nothing more surfaced on these two reports so they pretty much remain in the rumor category.

Moose

Moose sightings remained similar to those reported in January; probably the same local group of males moving from one feeding area to another. A break in this pattern was noted on February 25 when moose tracks began to appear in wide open spaces far from normal winter habitat. As explained in the Journal entry for this date, this is or seems to be, an annual dispersal with unknown purpose. After a tour around local “wide open” spaces, most animals seem to return to normal willow or spruce-willow habitat. There may be a better word for the happening than dispersal, but it does seem to be an annual occurrence of late February and early March. Late June and into July is a second time window where moose, locally, are regularly seen in wide open spaces.

No antlered males were noted this February, though memory, such as it is, recalls seeing at least one antlered animal as late as the first week of March. No moose harvest in February came to our attention. Snow level at the end of the month remained slightly below an adult moose's knees, so they have no trouble getting around in undrifted areas yet this year.

Bear

No bear stories for February.

Sheep

No Sheep or word of sheep.

Musk-ox

No mention.

Marine Mammals

A Bowhead Whale catch from St. Lawrence Island on February 13. An unheard of early date, from our perspective.

A report out of Point Hope indicated Common Ringed Seals were sinking when shot, and those that were recovered were very lean. Their blubber is at its annual peak of thickness during January and February. Ocean water is also at its greatest undiluted salinity through these months. Therefore sinking seals are extremely rare at this season and cause for some concern if it occurs often. Contacted Lloyd Lowery, ADF & G Marine Mammal Coordinator in Fairbanks, to alert him to the situation. He indicated that malnutrition, though rare at this season, is not unknown across the Arctic. He also said they would make an effort to collect body fluids to test for CDV, the nightmare new North Atlantic Marine Mammal Virus.

We heard of only two seal hunters out in Kotzebue Sound during mild calm February days. One saw only the large, male, black-faced, and smelly animals that are not useable for human consumption. He was unable to recover one he did shoot as slush covered and hid it. The other fellow had a mechanical breakdown, spent all night walking home in a blizzard, where luckily a search and rescue squad found him in the morning. He was not physically impaired.

Small Mammals

The Red Squirrel colony located earlier in the winter has fallen on hard times. There are only a few active animals in their tree patch. The last hard east wind blizzard left a lot of snowbanks in that small tree patch. Don't know if they dispersed or perished from some other reason. There are scattered individuals around other spruce stands, though few in number

With deeper snow and a resident weasel at our camp site, vole and shrew numbers are unreadable. There is very little surface sign after the last snow fall.

Not even one Snowshoe (Varying) Hare track sighting in this area yet. There are said to be some on the Kobuk delta. None on the whole Noatak watershed (to our knowledge.)

Furbearers

Sign very scarce through February. A single Land Otter and a lone Mink have passed up or down the creek a few times. Fox tracks are uncommon, except for the one that visits near the camp area regularly.

Birds

Our winter bird scene hasn't varied much. The three Boreal Chickadees, two Gray Jays and two or three over flying Common Raven have remained constant. The Three-toed Woodpecker hasn't been around often and small flocks of Willow Ptarmigan stay around for a few days and then are absent for a week.

There was a flurry of interest when we had many cones on the ground after a fresh snow and little wind. We were sure there must be a small flock of White-winged Crossbills, a couple of Pine Grosbeaks or at least some Redpolls that we couldn't catch in the act. We did one day catch them in the act and was surprised to see our familiar trio of Boreal Chickadees high in a spruce tree, working very roughly for so small a bird, in a thick cluster of cones. Maybe we just have to wait till late April for a change on the bird scene.

Plants

Much rich willow from the last growing season remains above the snow surface for use by moose, ptarmigan, and rabbits. This brings to mind a sometimes overlooked fact of life for many creatures in the Arctic. Lots and lots of prime habitat with abundant food may go for years and years of re-establishment before multitudes of caribou, hares, ptarmigan, or moose settle in on it. It seems all spaces of land lay fallow for many years in order to be able to sustain the multitudes when they come and still retain the ability to refurbish over time when they're gone. Don't know if we should ever consider changing that. Don't know how long we can afford the luxury of that kind of natural system.

Fish

Fish are back in the news this month, though not quite within the boundaries of the Monument. On the twenty-second we made a trail up to the lower Noatak Canyon called Amaktut to check ice thickness and Burbot numbers. This is the nearest winter/spring traditional ice fishing site to our camp and the Monument Boundary. Burbot are the target fish, though sometimes a few Northern Pike or whitefish are taken. It is a site rich in legend and place names as it is on the trail of fall and spring movement of Noatak watershed travelers. All boat travelers past and present must pass through and under the enchanted place. See Journal entry of February 22 for a bit more description.

Monthly Report

The ice was not as thick as in some years (thickness noted in journal). The fish were more accommodating than in some years and their stomach contents may produce a new page in biological knowledge of some of the lesser creatures within the Noatak watershed. Again please refer to the Journal (February 23) for the interesting possibilities.

Rumors of a first hooking catch of Sheefish on Kobuk Lake came through on the fourteenth. This goes unconfirmed, but on February 25 a catch of fifty good sized Sheefish by one fisherman at Theodore Creek started the Sheefish hunt for March, April and May on Kobuk Lake.

People

For the amount of good weather in February, people use may be at an all time low. Low numbers or absence of desirable game species (caribou, hare, ptarmigan, wolf, wolverine) is part of the reason; the re-routing of the Kotzebue Hatchery Trail is another. Fewer overwintering Sisualik households is also a factor. Some of these things may change next month, but for February, people were scarce on the Monument.

The Coastal 250 Dog Race was run on the fifteenth but with so few teams and such good weather that they were not present on the Monument for long.

Rather regular, but moderate traffic by Kivalina travelers did occur throughout the month.

On the morning of February 26 there was a lot of helicopter noise on the far eastern corner of the Monument. The craft passed back and forth over our place several times. May have landed either in Sisualik or halfway between here and there. Could not see any marking on the craft to identify it, but it was in the area for more than an hour. Visibility was poor, with fog patches and light snow; if they had planned to travel west on the coast they may have had to get out of icing conditions.

We had ten hours of sun up time on the last day of the month! What a change from last December.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

MARCH

Introduction

Can you imagine the month of March on the northwest coast of Alaska without wind? Historically, this is typically the month when hunters get lost and freeze, airplanes crash, school children can't find the school and forest birds get blown away from their trees and perish over the ice or tundra. A shudder will often course through an elder's frame if he or she is asked about the cold west winds of March on Cape Krusenstern National Monument. Well none of the above describes March 1992. On only one day, the twenty-fourth, did wind velocity even reach a paltry 20 mph; hardly enough to roll the abundant light and fluffy snow along the surface, let alone make it hard. And therein lies the beauty of this March. Snow fell on seventeen days during the month and accumulated as a light "swan's down" cover over all the land. Most amazing, it remained where it fell throughout the month! This surely must be a record of some sort, as anyone who has lived in the region for long knows that "horizontal snow" is the norm for Kotzebue Sound in March.

The first week of the month was cold - intensely! On four days the mercury of our thermometer was beyond the -40° F mark which is the end of the scale. We guesstimated a -47° F for the fourth as the coldest temperature for the month and maybe for the winter.

Warmth? We had it too! Except for the first week, the rest of the month was quite mild. Thawing temperatures at 38° F on March 19 and 36° F on March 24 occurred with the help of a bright sun very high in the sky when cloud cover broke up.

Wildlife

The gentle nature of this March continued the benevolent winter season for those creatures that we do have overwintering here. The only problem is that, compared to many years, we have but few species in residence this year. The week of intense cold, since it was only a week, would not be more than an inconvenience to healthy creatures, including humans. Snow cover, though quite deep, is very soft and fluffy, neither compacted nor crusted. Warm insulation for those that live under or sleep in it and not much of a bother to those that have legs long enough to move through it. It is a very "quiet" snow for those predators what move through it. Conditions would benefit mechanized predators in those areas where the fluffy stuff is not a

hindrance to the vehicle. Both aircraft and surface craft have ideal tracking conditions.

Caribou

A small group of caribou (10-15) were found in the mountains behind Sealing Point a week before the twenty-fifth and three were known to be taken. This was a surprise, since no overwintering caribou were known in this area. The persons that located them thought they might have overwintered there and not come from somewhere else recently. Lots of caribou and fat in the Ambler-Shungnak area reported by returning midyear conference and NANA Day travelers. Some were hauled all the way back to Noatak, where fresh caribou meat has been scarce this winter.

Moose

Three males have spent much of the month on our little creek, with maybe a stranger passing through occasionally. No known late harvest close to here, but as usual there was a good deal of talk through the region and some action taken (with kills) as the March 31 closing date drew near.

A second incident for the winter was noted where an adult bull went to a lot of extra effort to eat *Betula glandulosa*, with the usually preferred *Salix* sp. very abundant and more easily accessed.

In contrast to last year, we have not heard, region wide, of moose mortality unrelated to predation. On the contrary, those known to have taken moose after Christmas, report on the good quality of the meat, which is unusual.

No antlered bulls were noted in March.

Bear

Rumor of a Kivalina traveler seeing three Polar Bears between Sealing Point and Rabbit Creek in late March is probably true, though without confirmation. Polar Bear sightings in that area would probably be more common if people were more often in that area during March. Nearly every year sign or sight is noted by passersby.

No early rising Brown Bear activity was noted this year, though in some years they have been seen out of den at this early date.

Sheep

No report.

Musk-ox

No report.

Marine Mammals

No hunter activity in this area for March. This is the continuation of a trend away from early Common Ringed Seal hunting that was begun when mechanization replaced dog traction. Apparently the seal's value for all purposes is not great enough any longer to override the risk and expense for hunting them in Kotzebue Sound. Some other villages carry on the tradition.

Small Mammals

Voles and shrews have little chance to give a hint of their presence with so much fluffy snow around. Tracks can be seen only around creek overflows and camp building floors. Our "live in" Short-tailed Weasel hasn't allowed our camp population to build.

On March 20 a scolding Red Squirrel in camp was a welcome, though startling surprise. This seems to be the only remaining squirrel in our tree patch and he had to move out when we permitted the weasel to stay. Guess he'll be back when the weasel goes.

The squirrel colony at the early wood cutting site has dispersed.

Monthly Report

No hare tracks locally, though travelers have reported tracks on a big island just north of the Hatchery on the Noatak River and below Noorvik on the Kobuk Delta. Maybe they are coming back. This is a very lonesome country without rabbit tracks!

Furbearers

Locally, a single Mink, an Otter or two, and a very few foxes of both species are the only resident furbearers besides the Short-tailed and Least Weasels that have left their tracks on the snows of March.

In the region, wolverine catch on the upper Noatak and wolf harvest on the upper Kobuk are reported to be considerable. Wolf density is reported high on the upper Noatak with little effort towards harvest. Overwintering caribou in that area and relative lack of mechanized noise may be a factor in Noatak densities. Perhaps it is the annual variation in these factors and limited aircraft involvement that will maintain a healthy wolf population in the region. There is always the potential for an unbalancing of dynamics though.

Birds

Things have picked up a little in the avian line during March. Though one Boreal Chickadee perished after bumping our reflecting window, we still have the overwintering three, so the unlucky one must have been a stranger.

A large bright looking Gyrfalcon was noted at close range on March 21 and at another time or two later that week.

Also on March 21, a flock of eight White-winged Crossbills were seen. On the thirty-first a flock of more than ten Redpolls flew past the house window.

These are momentous sightings since our bird scene has been pretty dry and much the same each day since December. Three Boreal Chickadees, two Gray Jays (joined by a third this month) a weekly visit from a male Three-toed Woodpecker and the ubiquitous and entertaining Common Raven has been about it. A few small flocks of Willow and Rock Ptarmigan do seem to be coming more common as March fades, into the hopefully better bird month of April and oh! The birders joy of May!

Plants

Incidents of well nourished adult moose in good browsing areas seeking out *Betula glandulosa* with only a twig showing continues to spark interesting speculation as to why. A good deal of energy is expended by adult bulls to acquire a very small quantity of this shrub.

The possible endangerment of a long established White Spruce grove on the very edge of the species range is discussed in the Journal entries of March 27, 28, and 31.

Fish

On the ninth we made a second trip to Amaktut for ice fishing and found only an inch or so of additional ice thickness after the week of intense cold. Snow cover and already thickened ice cover slows ice thickness growth considerably at this season.

It was a nice, warm, pleasant day this time, but the catch remained similar to the first trip even though we had two fishers instead of one. Our total catch was ten Burbot, one Humpback Whitefish. and one juvenile Sheefish.

Good Sheefish catches were made right through the cold weather of the first half of March at Theodore Creek on the north edge of Kobuk Lake. Some sled loads were taken, with numerous individual fish within the catch weighing between 10 and 20 lbs. Some fish greater than 20 lbs. were probably taken.

People

With the long days of March and moderate temperatures after the first week, more people were encountered. Travel across the Monument increased, but was still at a low level compared to other years. One reason, no doubt, was the poor visibility on many days due to fog and falling snow and the great accumulation of light fluffy surface snow. Long distance travelers and hunters are leery of these conditions since a sudden wind can change your whole world into a simple white mass with complete disorientation. It was unusual for these conditions to last through a whole month.

On March 21 the house camp at Sealing Point was reoccupied, probably for most of the coming year and another clan family camp in Sisualik was reactivated. More will surely follow next month.

Monthly Report

Our camp and one other Sisualik camp were the only two camps occupied over winter this year within the Monument proper.

Travel to and from Kivalina-Port Site continued sporadically. No noticed increased volume.

Our personal “visitor's book” has the fewest names ever. The rerouting of the Hatchery-Noatak trail closer to Jones' camp outside the Monument Boundary is one factor. The difficulty of finding our trail from Kotzebue is another and maintaining that trail with so many snowy days has been a problem this month. The good clear weather that is best for a round trip visit to our place did not occur often on weekends this month and this year. Poor visibility and obliterated trail conditions were more the weekend norm. Too bad!

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

APRIL

Introduction

April 1992 seemed pretty much a “mark time” month this year. No great milestones and no spectacular happenings. More warm days than cold ones. Light winds except for three days when 35 – 40 knot winds prevailed. Precipitation was light except for the first week. April 1 was the coldest day at -30° F and led into a cool week. But by the sixteenth a rather remarkable temperature of +50° F gave an indication of the warm midsection of the month, which then led into a cooling trend, delaying most signs of spring and breakup at the end of the month. Our move from winter quarters to spring-summer fishing camp on the coast, which often happens this month, was a kind of comedy this year. We did get most things moved during the last week and spent the night of the twenty-eighth in the tent, but a monster west-northwest wind system brought renewed winter chill factors to the region.

During the last week and especially beginning on our first night in the tent, chill factors of -35° F to -50° F developed. We dropped back to the tree patch and warm house to wait out the late breaking cold and wind and were still waiting on May Day when record breaking daily lows were forecast. All this had its effect on other living creatures too. Squirrels and bears were out, a few Glaucous Gulls and Rough-legged Hawks had arrived, and one Common Snipe (with his parka on?) were reported into the region. Goose and crane sightings were limited to the headwaters of the Kobuk and Selawik River.

Wildlife

Most wild creatures - those who are resident over winter - should not have experienced habitat or environmental problems this April (except for a moose collaring operation on the middle Noatak). There could have been some effects on early waking hibernators and early migrants when temperatures and winds got nasty during the last week of the month. Ground Squirrels and bears probably came out pretty strongly during several warm sunshine days at the beginning of the last week. Then came the westerly system that chilled things down. Bird migrants had made very little showing so its not likely there were many into the area when it turned suddenly cold. A few Glaucous Gulls and Rough-legged Hawks – they are hardy creatures. The one exception was a Common Snipe and possibly an American Robin that had been noted around the Hatchery during the last week. The

stream that runs open water all winter there provides a limited wetland habitat on its banks for this “early bird.”

Caribou

The only caribou news from the area for the month was from other places. On April 2 a large group of caribou was rumored to be headed toward the Monument from Ivik on the north shore of Kobuk Lake. They never turned up. On the April 13 a local hunter from the Noatak Delta area made a round trip to Ivik, which is possible with today’s travel equipment. The animals were reported fat and plentiful. Kiana and Selawik hunters, as well a Buckland hunters, had access to caribou throughout the month.

Moose

A few moose walked by or browsed around the cabin throughout the month. The most often seen were two bulls, always together, probably the same two that have been around periodically around since last fall, while they had their antlers. They often sought out isolated shrubs of *Betula glandulosa* at considerable energy expenditure, for reasons unknown.

Bear

Brown Bears were first reported out on the seventeenth. An observed kill of a bear out on the ice west of Sealing Point was reported on the twenty-eighth, but happened a few days before. The observer thought the bear had been chased out onto the ice from the nearby hills and was not on the sea ice for reasons of its own. No other known kills on the Monument, but sno-go tracks headed from Kotzebue to the “bear hills” of the Monument were common throughout the last half of April, and tracking conditions were often ideal.

Sheep

No sheep reports.

Musk-ox

No report.

Marine Mammals

A few Ringed Seals were taken throughout the month (less than 15); all were hauled out on the ice since there was not nearby open leads. On April 21 Sealing Point hunters traveled a reported two hours out on the ice with snow machine without finding an open lead. That is a remarkable distance off shore. Later in the week some offshore wind occurred and open water reflection was noted on cloud cover, but no one that we know went out to check it out. On April 22 or a few days before, Bowhead Whales were reported seen from Point Hope. On April 23 an aircraft reported many Beluga Whales in a small crack just west of Krusenstern. It is not known that any hunters acted on this information. If they did, there wasn't much success.

Please note Journal entry for April 27 for an odd seal report.

Bowhead and Beluga were taken at both Point Hope and Kivalina in the second half of the month.

Small Mammals

Snow cover and the nature of that snow cover precludes any assessment of vole, lemming or shrew populations. Surface travel, by what are apparently lemmings, was noted a couple of times in April.

Our lone remaining Red Squirrel - the house squirrel that moved to a safer midwinter location, probably because of our resident weasel – returned in April. By the end of the month it had moved back into our out buildings. Though pretty scarce, tracks of single Red Squirrels appeared in most tree patches during April, after the sun had crusted snow surface so that travel over long distances became easy. This is apparently a time of real wide ranging of this species, maybe because density is relatively low.

See Journal entries of April 5 and 30 for a detailed Arctic Ground Squirrel story.

Furbearers

A few Mink and Otter tracks were noted through the month. A few more Mink than in earlier months as they range more widely during pre-breeding and breeding time.

Double sets of Red Fox tracks became very common in April. A great increase in this locality over earlier months, but this too reflects mating activities and den

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search travel that is common to every April. No real reading on local population trends can be made till dens are located, occupied and pups born.

No wolf or wolverine tracks noted or reported on the Monument through April, though one winter wolverine story surfaced at this time. A large wolverine ate numerous times from caribou meat stored at the cabin just west of the Ranger Station. There is no indication that it was taken. It is encouraging to know that wolverine do still roam the Krusenstern area.

Birds

Though April is the month one expects bird population to pick up and diversify a little, not much happened in this April due primarily to an extended cold spell through the last ten days that discouraged even those few pioneers that did make it in. Two Glaucous Gulls at Sealing Point on the twenty-fifth stayed around a few hours and may have been seen by other people at different locations on the same day. The day was a warm one and a Common Snipe and an American Robin were reported on that day at the Hatchery. On the twenty-ninth a large group of Glaucous Gulls was reported around Kotzebue town.

Eiders were reported from around Point Hope and Kivalina on April 17. On the same date, geese and cranes were reported in Fairbanks.

As for local overwintering birds see Journal entry of April 3 and 26 for interesting notes on our Three-toed Woodpecker. Our three each Gray Jays and Boreal Chickadees stayed on through the month.

A single Gyrfalcon and a very large 200 plus flock of Willow Ptarmigan were seen off and on.

Sign of a single Spruce Grouse in our tree patch was noted April 18.

A first dark headed Willow Ptarmigan noted on the late date of April 25.

Plants

No new developments on local use of *Betula glandulosa* as a forage plant by moose. It maybe that this plant supplies a nutrient that is lacking in the *Salix* complex for the well being of moose.

A long lasting and very strong NNW wind system during the second week of the month completely removed snow cover from large patches of tussock tundra on N-NW facing higher ridges or knolls. This early exposure to direct sunlight

immediately benefited both Willow and Rock Ptarmigan, by making several species of berries available as well as evergreen leaves such as cranberry and *Dryas* sp. They really worked the area over and did quite well as there was a good crop of most berries; many of them were in good shape when frozen last October.

A second effect a little farther down the timeline is early sprouting, brought about by sunlight and warming, of those plants like *Eriophorum* sp. These are much used early on by caribou, reindeer, cranes, and geese. These land areas are a kind of parallel to polynya (ice free) areas in northern oceans where sunlight causes phytoplankton-zooplankton blooms ten days to two weeks earlier than the surrounding ice or snow covered areas, and provides sustenance for early migrants (whales, birds, fish and animals).

There were outdoor flying insects in April but only “blowflies” (Bluebottles?) and these only around old cabins, large dark objects with tar paper roofs where adults have hibernated and a few hours of sun provides enough warmth for a limited return to flight freedom. No doubt other crawling things on berry bushes and moss are given short periods of warmth to allow some rejuvenation also.

Fish

Kobuk Lake (Hotham Inlet) and Selawik Lake especially continued to provide good to great catches of Sheefish through April. The area of the Noatak River around the village produced sporadic good catches of Char (Trout).

No known fish activity on the Monument proper except that provoked by that great fisher the Land Otter; his activities under ice are very difficult to monitor. What we do know is that they have been present on most drainages off and on all winter, and that allows us to assume a source of fish throughout the winter on Krusenstern National Monument - if you are an Otter.

People

Travel (by snow machine or dogs) to or across the Monument increased in April over earlier months which is not unexpected. Some bear hunters, wood cutters and/or ptarmigan hunters were active during different weather circumstances. Surface travelers to and from north coast villages increased due to whaling activities and successful hunts in both Kivalina and Point Hope. Some summer coastal campers were moving various loads to or from their camps, and a few were getting settled for the season of breakup.

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We, with a number of others (less than 10), hauled firewood into summer camp sites. Peak of this activity was probably around April 29, though we did our cutting early in the month and final hauling in the last week.

Last year we moved out of winter camp to Sisualik on April 21. This year we tried one night in the tent on the twenty-eighth. A period of cold westerly winds began and we slipped back into the warm tree patch house and were still there when this report was finalized on May 3.

A coastal trip originating at Prudhoe Bay got into Sealing Point on the ninth. There were three rigs - sleds and drivers. We missed them so details of their trek are unknown to us.

A long distance round trip caribou hunt toward Buckland by a hunter from the Noatak Delta happened on the thirteenth. This is not the first time for this, but it is noted because it is a continuing trend of “long reach” resource use that may be the most significant factor of change in resource exploitation in this region in this decade.

The birthday of April 14 came and went this year with no word of a spring migrant. In years past, two Sandhill Cranes were the main course on that date. This year, a Common Snipe, an American Robin, and Glaucous Gulls were first reported on April 25 at widely separated points in the region.

In the Journal entry for April 30 there is an interesting description of “people thought” and customs with respect to activities of Arctic Ground Squirrels. This is kind of a local Ground Hog day happening that this year became pretty easy to read. It may detract a bit from the faith you have in elder ability to read the natural signs of weather and seasonal changes. But then we allow the official Weather Bureau forecasters quite a consistent margin of error too.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

MAY

Introduction

I don't know if it can legitimately be said that, "The anomaly is the rule in Northwestern Alaska," but sometimes it certainly seems that way. May 1992 offers a good deal of proof that "normal" conditions cannot be much depended on in the area of Cape Krusenstern National Monument.

May and June are generally considered to be the months of most moderate weather conditions in this subarctic zone. That is why this year the "wildness" of environmental conditions this month were such a surprise and trial to most creatures - including people - of the region. Stress conditions were magnified because this is "moving month." Birds, animals, people, and even insects and fish and plants are beginning the transformation and adaptive processes that allow them to exist in the two worlds of winter and summer. The testing of a species ability to cope comes to the forefront when a kink in the jet stream or whatever brings about abnormal conditions. With this kind of introduction, one would expect all sorts of catastrophes across the State; there may have been more problems than we are yet aware of, due to on going migrations and interrupted processes, but at this writing the severe weather of May '92 seems to fall more in creatures rather than tragedy. Time will tell, and at the very least production in some species will probably suffer.

The month started cold right off the bat, with chill factor temperatures of -50° F forecast for Kotzebue by the Weather Bureau on May 1. A cold record was broken on May 5 when Kotzebue's thermometer dipped to -11° F. The old record was -9° F. On May 2, we had a temperature of -12° F; on May 6, it was -11⁰ F. Blizzards on the eleventh and the fourteenth, with S to SE winds in excess of 40 knots brought a little warmer weather but lots of fresh snow. The month ended relatively warm with a temperature of 58° F on the May 24 and 25, and a temperature of 59° F on the thirty-first. To maintain the contrast of this May to others, we point out that in other years we have had Tree Swallows to the box site as early as May 2. This year they arrived on the twenty-fifth.

The heavy snowfall through several days in midmonth, with temperatures hovering around 32° F may have been the most unusual occurrence. Mountain areas that had been free of winter snow by wind and sun were very thickly re-covered. Because of high winds, most of the snow at sea level was piled in new drifts of monstrous proportions. The effect of this on migrants and already awakened hibernators is

unknown. See Journal entry of May 11 for firsthand details of a most stressful May day.

We made our final move from the house at Sanningaruq to the tent at Sisualik on the eighth after a couple of false trials. Made a last trip to close up the house on the twentieth. That may be a record late date for a trip up that way.

Wildlife

The effect of the unusual weather conditions on wildlife will not be known right away, and of course some incidents will never come to light. There certainly was potential for serious problems with some species. Heavy, wet snow, high winds, and sudden cooling temperatures could have been deadly to creatures in vulnerable situations. The long time interval of difficult conditions could cause loss of fat reserves in long distance migrants and navigation could have been altered in some species. We have gotten hints of some strange happenings, but as yet no word of major catastrophes. Production in some early nesting species is sure to suffer, especially since these conditions were pretty much statewide.

Caribou

The weather conditions of mid-May would have been especially difficult for animals in birthing mode. Some reindeer may have been in that process. Hopefully most caribou would hold off till June when conditions should be better. We don't have any first hand information of timing, but calf survival would seem to be minimal through most of May.

Caribou tracks were reported in mid month on the mountain portion of the Hatchery trail, where there had been none all winter. On May 28 a group of 15-20 caribou were seen behind Killiqmaiq. This is a late date for caribou to be in this area; some say they will stay. Growing tussock grass flower shoots (*Eriophorum* sp.) are well developed and the deer love them.

Moose

Just before our leaving the house on the eighth, several moose (3-5) made tracks through our tree patch after a ten day absence of any tracks. When I made the last check out trip on May 20 there were numerous tracks around the house. Most likely these were the animals that spent the winter in the locality and that we saw them from time to time. That many tracks at that late a date is noteworthy since usually there are none at the end of winter.

Sheep

No observations.

Bear

Bear tracks were noted in the mountain portions of the Monument by the only two travelers we know of through those land features in May. No harvest came to our knowledge from this area except the one in late April.

Musk-ox

No report.

Marine Mammals

A first ugruk taken from the lead west of Sealing Point on the eighth was early for that species here. After the weather quieted a bit and a trail far out (40-50 miles) to the lead from Sealing Point was established, many Ugruk were brought in to camps all along the line from Sisualik to Sealing Point. This unusual early good catch of Ugruk in May (less than 20) was fortunate for Monument campers, as the trail out on the ocean deteriorated by the last few days of the month. The Ugruk were very fat with 3 to 4 inch thick blubber being common.

Ringed Seals were plentiful and in good physical shape. Not many were taken as oil needs were better met by the Ugruk take. Probably a few more than 20 taken.

Polar Bear tracks (unusual) were seen around the open lead.

This distant open lead was about twice as far as is common. The great distance, in traditional lore, explains both the Polar Bear tracks and the abundant Ugruk.

Small Mammals

Ground Squirrels seemed to be the most abundant form of life in this part of the north on the few good "non-drifting snow" days we had in mid month. Their population is very high. When the sun came out, the squirrels came out, and with

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our nearly total snow cover they were the only dark things on the white blanket and their presence had to be noticed.

As some of the snow melted on Sisualik Spit, voles and signs of their overwintering were very scarce.

Furbearers

Red Fox became very common through the month, having moved into this area from somewhere. It is likely that local den sites are being reactivated and our Red Fox population will be building.

Since people don't hunt muskrats locally anymore it is a little hard to judge their current population status. There are hints that the population has been depressed for many years and some have suggested that the presence of caribou in numbers at some critical times after freeze-up are responsible. The rationale here is that many hoofed animals around lakes destroy "push-ups" and cave in bank or island houses and tunnels.

Some wolf tracks were noted around the country in the soft snows of late May and some wolves were reported seen from Noatak village. It is rather unusual to hear these kinds of reports at this season.

Birds

May is of course "bird return month," but this year it couldn't have been easy, especially for the forerunners. It could have been a year to set records for the late date appearance of some or even most species. Our Tree Swallows, for instance, which usually show soon after May 1, didn't make it till the twenty-fifth this year. Individuals or small flocks of some species were reported by normal calendar dates but who knows what became of them then! We saw a large flock of Sandhill Cranes disappear into a blizzard headed NE on the sixteenth. A large flock of Pomarine Jaegers came in out of the north after one May blizzard on the eighteenth and immediately landed in a group on the ice and didn't move for several hours.

A "goose" was reported on May 4 and two American Robins, two Sandhill Cranes, and three Geese were reported from the Hatchery on the May 7.

A single Sandhill Crane reported from Sealing Point flats on May 8. Numbers of Glaucous Gulls were over flying Sisualik Spit on this same date.

An almost complete lack of Willow Ptarmigan till after mid-month was remarkable. Their noise and display activities did pick up a bit before month's end.

Some early Snow Geese reports came in. The first on the sixteenth. A few (less than ten) flocks of 50 were seen around May 20, but that was all. A very poor Snow Goose showing in the coast.

First harvest we heard of in this locality didn't happen till May 21. Our pot didn't take on a spring bird until the twenty-second. Very late.

Passerines and shorebirds didn't make a showing on the coast till after the twentieth.

Short-eared Owl and Longspurs were not seen till the twenty-fourth; a Northern Harrier on the twenty-third with a Ruddy Turnstone and Long-tailed Jaeger probably make "late" records for those species that often show earlier in the month.

Since the unusually late storms, snowfall, and cold weather were nearly statewide, it is likely some species lost ground, either in numbers or production potential. Time may tell some of the sad story. It may also demonstrate the remarkable survival strength of seemingly delicate creatures.

Plants

Three Willow Ptarmigan given to us on the twenty-third had crops filled with 2 ½ to 3 inch long *Eriophorum* flower stalks. Again, this species of plant stands out as the most early and obviously utilized new season growth. Willow flower buds (pussy willows) are in the same category, but development is slower than the Cotton Grass.

Other new plant growth or change, sprouting etc., may occur in May but is for the most part hidden away from prying eyes and beaks or teeth.

Moose will do some stem peeling of willow late this month and next as sap rises; peeling of the sweetish cambium layer makes a first treat from winter forage for them.

One wonders just when White Spruce growth changes begin.

Fish

Hooking for Sheefish finally dropped down as close as Pipe Spit so we finally made a trip on the night of the May 21. We had a very soft trail and no overnight freezing. We started home in the morning just when the fish were starting to feed with several hundred pounds - just enough for the very soft and slushy trail.

See Journal entry of May 24 for a Monument fish story.

People

During the month of May there was a lot of people traffic through the coastal portion of the Monument. Local families moving and hauling things back and forth were one group, and successful Bowhead and Beluga Whale hunts in Kivalina and Point Hope sparked a bigger crowd. Many Kotzebue folks have family and friends in the whaling villages and when hunting is good, many make an effort to get on the scene for a share. The heaviest traffic, both surface and air, was during the period of May 5-15. For awhile after that the trail was pretty slow due to storms and blowing snow. Though some traffic continued to the end of the month, it never quite reached the volume of the earlier period. Local camp travel continued past the end of the month.

Waterfowl hunting effort very light this spring in this direction. The late stormy weather was one factor. Late arrival of birds was another. There also seems a continuing trend in this part of the region toward diminishing effort, probably for a combination of reasons. There is some hint that there is more hunting taking place closer to Kotzebue by a younger age group. The man-made water and mud around the city is a great attractant to early arriving birds too, especially when the surrounding country is still snow covered.

There are sixteen seasonal occupied camps this May from the tip of Sisualik Point to the base of the Peninsula on the west at the beginning of the table lands. There are four additional occupied camps west of the Ranger Station. These 20 occupied camps are the total at the end of May, coastwise on this side of the Port Site location. One of the camps at Rabbit Creek was occupied for awhile in May but not through to break-up.

Normally one would not single out a day in May as being the toughest as far as human survival goes. Usually, after one has survived the rigors of the preceding five months with short daylight and many sub-zero days, May is considered a delight. There is an old saying in the country that "No one perishes in the month of May, either from freezing or starvation." May 11 this year destroyed forever (at least in some folks) that feeling of well being and seasonal security concerning the

May

month of May. You may read the Journal entry of that date and get a firsthand feeling for a bad day in May 1992.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

JUNE

Introduction

June '92 was a good steady month, pushing doggedly into summer, undoing the ravages of late winter in May. By the end of the month, most flowers, birds, and butterflies we have come to expect of the month had turned up, and most ice and snow had disappeared, though some remained. There were mosquitoes!

On only four days in the month did the temperature drop below freezing. The coldest temperature of the month was 28° F on both the ninth and tenth. On June 29, a temperature of 82° F wiped out all records before on the date - even at the Kotzebue Weather Station. It did reach 70° F on the twenty-eighth and the high 60's on several days through the month. The warmth was very pleasant after the ordeal of mid-May. Precipitation was scant and was in the form of showers. Wind velocity was over 20 knots on only one day (June 24), when it blew from the NW at 25 knots. Quite a wind free month for this year.

Within the month distance travel changed from snow machine and dog team to boat and ATV. The last snow machine crossing happened on the June 2. The first boat arrived on June 9.

The sun was above the horizon all of every day of the month except for one, the first.

The world kind of changed from white to brown to green within the month.

Many eggs changed to birds and others to bugs. June is like that. Seeds became flowers too, and then, there are both the seeds and eggs that got ingested and thereby transformed to maybe something greater. Whatever would we do without June?

Wildlife

Those creatures that survived May or were not yet in the region for the rough mid part of May probably did very well here in the month of June. Even the newborns. The greening, sprouting, and hatching of so many things in the water and on the ground in June make food not a problem. With temperatures above freezing,

necessary body heat is relatively easy to maintain. The lack of wind further aids the warm blooded creatures - until the mosquitoes and botflies move. The world belonged to the insects the last two days of June. Those creatures that can retain enough blood to keep their body functioning will go on into July, toward the end of which the insects will give back the world. Oh what a treat an afternoon sea breeze off the ocean ice is as June '92 becomes history!

Caribou

Although there was some talk of caribou around Noatak Village earlier, it wasn't until June 8 that we had more than rumor to go on. On that date, village CB indicated a good bull was in sight on an island in the river bed. There were some rumors of calving in the area but never confirmed. There were some reports after that of caribou being seen around Lockhart Point east of Kotzebue. On the Monument proper, a good group of 20+ caribou were seen on or near the beach of Akulaaq on June 28. To our knowledge no caribou were taken on the Monument during June.

Moose

There were no coastal sightings of moose that we heard of during June. There were some seen: at least one with calf around the Hatchery area, and a couple seen by a hiker en route from the Hatchery to Sealing Point. June sightings have been more common in the recent past than were reported this year.

Bear

There was only one bear incident. On June 16 a small two or three year old animal crossed the Sealing Point lagoon on a bee line for the Sealing Point occupied house from the rocky cliffs on the north side of the lagoon. His line of travel intersected a scent line five or six hundred yards from the house and he made a right angle left turn at a run and disappeared into the distance. The observers felt that this was a much smaller animal than the one that broke into their house late last fall.

Sheep

On June 25, we heard of a sheep report we missed earlier. Two were seen in the mountains of the Monument in the late spring. Exact date not known but this is the only sheep report we have run across in two years.

Musk-ox

No Musk-ox report.

Marine Mammals

June, of course, is a peak marine mammals harvest month. Historically this peak included May, but with the evolving pattern of powered boat harvest, June is without doubt the time of most intense activity. May, of course, retains activity by those that live close to the hunting grounds.

An unusually large numbers of Ugruk were taken by campers with snow machines in May, but ice conditions became risky around the first of June. Uguruq hunting continued by boat on June 17, weather and ice permitting, and continued through to the end of the month. The catch was slow. Most boats got one or two animals per sortie. The most common complaint was that there too much ice with the Uguruq far out of reach. Ice pack loosened up toward the end of the month, but competition between boats by that time was considerable. As usual under these circumstances, many animals killed or wounded by hunting them in the water instead of on the ice were lost. This year's harvest by month's end seemed less than in recent years. No telling yet how long into July the ice will be around.

As usual, a few Ringed Seals are taken at this time, but only incidentally. Spotted Seals had not yet turned up by months end.

Conditions for Beluga to come in occurred in the early part of the month but none were reported seen until the June 20. None were caught until June 28 when a subadult was taken in a net. By month's end there had only been a handful of sightings and four taken, all in nets. One of the four was a cow with a small calf also taken but not counted because of its small size. By the end of the month the north side of Kotzebue Sound was quite full of beluga nets due to the early net success and lack of chasing-harpooning opportunities. Again this year, the beluga scene is not good in Kotzebue Sound.

Furbearers

No June report except an apparent continued depression in local Muskrat population.

Small Mammals

Tundra Vole population, after a tough Sisualik winter due to late floods and rain are, by June, doing well and staging a come back of numbers.

No sign of shrews which is not unusual at this season.

Arctic Ground Squirrel populations continue very high along the coast. Not much dent was made in their high numbers by hunters this spring due to fluctuating weather conditions in mid May that confounded the small effort by local people.

No local weasel incidents.

No beach combing porcupines here in June. There probably will be some in July.

Birds

Bird migration was weak and late this year and by some indications nesting and egg laying was also late.

We had report of only one Glaucous Gull egg laid by June! This is unusual for the first batch of eggs is expected by the last week of May. By June 3 nests were abundant but not eggs. Peak egg laying for this species came around June 11.

June 4 was noted as a good noisy bird day. Bar-tailed Godwits, Red-throated Loons, Sandhill Cranes, and Tundra Swans with screeching Long-tailed Jaegers made quite a loud symphony on a day of light winds and reverberating sounds.

A first Black-legged Kittiwake on June 7 sounded great but it turned out to be a rare sound this month. Though there were stray individuals around off and one, they were remarkably scarce here this spring.

We had 1500 Northern Pintails on the eleventh in the backyard and they increased some and fed on the ice rafted mud locations till those locations fell apart. Two large loons on the water of lagoon edge (ice on most of lagoon surface) appear to have been Arctic Loon.

First Aleutian Tern heard on June 13. They were around for awhile, but faded away after a few days, probably to the nearest developing colony site. These birds are very erratic in choosing a colony nest site each year.

We noticed the first Red Phalaropes on the ocean on June 15. The numbers of these pelagic birds we see vary much from year to year.

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A rather unusual report of some large flocks of Snow Geese and Tundra Swan making landfall just west of the Ranger Station on the late date of June 16. These are probably flocked non-breeders, a pattern more common with Tundra Swan than Snow Geese.

Our local 500 group of flocked non-breeder Tundra Swans didn't make themselves obvious from here till June 17-18. From that date on they were noisily around, chasing new greening zones into July.

Last "good" Glaucous Gull egg taken on June 22. A second year Slaty-backed Gull joined our local flock for a few days on June 27.

There were lots of pre-molt waterfowl in back basin on June 30. Northern Pintail and Wigeon will all be down shortly, a few probably already can't fly. Tundra Swan and Greater Scaup won't drop their flight feathers for another two weeks.

Compared to other years, this June was not an outstanding bird year for Sisualik. The number of birds that stay to nest depends much on local snow, ice, and mud conditions during migrations. We had all normal migrants again this year, but local conditions were late so nesting waterfowl and passerines were relatively scarce. Semi-Palmated Sandpipers, Savannah Sparrows, Lapland Longspurs, Yellow Wagtails Northern Pintails, Wigeon, Greater Scaup, Black Turnstones, and Arctic Terns are our most abundant nesters.

Raptors activity rare here this month and mostly restricted to Northern Harrier. No known nesting sites.

Plants

June is not the spectacular plant month that July is, but maybe since it is the beginning time, it has near equal value. The ground took on a green tinge in contrast to the brown on June 13. By June 16 our two local "wild celery" as well as surat (Diamond-leaf Willow) were big enough to have a first taste in seal oil. The first natural greens of the year and new oil. They are good and make the sixteenth of this year a memorable date.

First flower (other than pussy willow or cotton grass) was Coltsfoot (*Petasites* sp.) on June 21. The first real flower *Primula* (Primrose) first bloomed here on June 23. It is assumed that *Pedicularis Kanei* (bumblebee flower) on the back beach ridges bloomed a few days earlier than these, but we didn't get back there at the date, and they are rare down here closer to the water.

Forget-me-nots and Dandelion were first noticed on June 28. Two days later poppies and Beach Pea flowers were noted.

As the world turned green there were no hard frosts; more importantly, as flowers developed temperatures stayed moderate. Though moisture in the form of rain was scarce, there has been enough of to for another great berry year.

A first mosquito on June 9 was followed by the humming masses on the nineteenth and insects of all kinds took over the world on the twenty-fifth. Short relief will be had on windy or cool days until early August and even then there will be relapses. The last day of the month was especially good for mosquitoes and consequently bad for all warm-blooded creatures in the zone.

Fish

First net catch of the new season was of Humpback Whitefish through a short “right angle to the beach” crack in the ocean ice on the eighth.

The Hatchery released their fry on the eleventh and ocean beach ice moved on the twelfth. The first char and Sheefish amongst the plentiful whitefish were taken on June 13. Two days later the first of millions of Starry Flounder showed up.

The herring that normally spawn in our section of the lagoon in early mid-June did not show up this year. It seemed strange but a reasonable explanation revolves around water temperatures. Our section had heavy, long lasting overflow ice and did not clear the bottom till late. Presumably other portions of the lagoon system provided temperatures and substrate that was suitable and was used in a timely manner.

A very heavy Char catch was made on June 18 and one with a white tag (number given on Journal page) was taken on June 19. This spring out-migration of Char was unusual this year in its high percentage of fatter fish to very lean spawned out fish. These would be single winter fish of just under the size that would get caught in Chum Salmon gear. Their gonads-ovaries appeared to have potential for spawning within the coming year. Noatak out-migrating fish in most years are notable for the very high percentage of “slinks” - spawned out multi-winter fish that are not of cooking quality.

By June 20 the Sheefish catch incidental to whitefish or char netting was still very high. This is a new phenomenon. They are subadult Sheefish up to 5 or 6 lbs and are not targeted at this season for a number of reasons. A catch of 20 to 50 in a short 4 ½” mesh net, in an hour soak was common; considerable waste was the

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inevitable result of fishing any kind of net off Sisualik beaches through this period. Historically, Sheefish were rare at any season off Sisualik.

No salmon were known to be taken in Kotzebue Sound by the thirtieth but some were reported on the first day of July. They just missed June this year.

All char and Sheefish stomachs, as well a whitefish, were checked when they were cut for drying. The char were mostly empty, but a few had freeze dried, scavenged, winter killed Arctic Cod and a few juvenile Saffron Cod. The Sheefish stomachs were always stuffed full of 3 to 4 inch Saffron Cod, Rainbow Smelt, Nine-spine Sticklebacks, and Herring of various sizes. Never anything else.

People

A first Kotzebue boat made it across on June 9, opening the boating season to the Monument (part of it). Boats were able to travel the "summer trail" straight from Kotzebue on the twelfth, concurrent with the peak time of Glaucous Gull egg take on the eleventh. Prior to these dates it was only local campers that would be encountered out in the field.

Boat marine mammal hunting got underway on June 13 but the first Uguruq wasn't brought in until the seventeenth. Beach travel by 3 and 4 wheelers became possible on the fourteenth as snowbanks receded from the gravel and sand. That was timely, as the first driftwood on the ocean began landing on the fourteenth.

A day of extreme heavy air traffic was noted on June 18. Many small and medium sized craft able to land on bush strips were noted, including at least one float plane. The reason for the excessive traffic is not known, but char fishing (both sport and subsistence) would be a timely reason for some of it, as the various lagoon outlets to the sea are known as hot fishing sites at this season.

The first Noatak families came down to camp at their site on the point on June 21.

An unusual accident occurred at Sealing Point air strip when a local camp dog ran out to meet a landing Air Taxi that was to pick up hikers. The plane's prop struck the dog and killed it on the twenty-first.

A few people who were neither not local campers and possibly not residents of the region were known to have visited the Monument or passed through. The level of use was not much different than recent past years at this season.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

JULY

Introduction

Our first real “summer month” this year was characterized by lack of rain and light wind, mostly from the west. The eighth was the only day it really rained with light showers on three other mid-month days. By the end of the month some vegetation zones on the coast dried out and died before producing seeds. Berries were affected, but all is not lost. Because there was a good crop set on plants all over the place, those plants in areas that remained moist or where fog and dew was heavy, developed well; by month's end berry production was assured for picking in August. The light winds gave some afternoon relief from mosquitoes, of which there were plenty. Twenty five to 30 knot winds on July 5, 11 and 12 were the strongest winds of the month.

Salmon (chums) began to run right on time. The first was taken July 1 with increasingly more through the first week. They were large fish, probably five year olds, which seemed to dominate the run through July. Not the best of situations, as four year olds should dominate as the run gets deeper into the month.

The report of four wasted musk-ox NW of Kivalina and the taking of a Gray Whale in a beluga net west of the Ranger Station were notable events for July. The Gray Whale incident was a first for the circumstances of the taking. The whale was butchered and divided amongst the local residents.

The warmest day was July 5, when our thermometer registered 82° F. The seventeenth wasn't far off with a temperature of 79° F. With a temperature of 78° F on July 2, 4, 6, and 11, we had a good warm and dry July for being 30 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

Some other highlights of the month. “The dance of the midges” on July 5 was pretty spectacular this year in Sisualik, where it doesn't often happen. It is a more regular happening, annually, at Sealing Point. More details in Journal for the date. Two Snowy Owls and two year-old Slaty-backed Gull, a Siberian gull species, gave our local bird watching a boost. Both species and the same individuals were here all month, unusual for July in Sisualik. Both of the two Snowy Owls seem to be males. The Slaty-backed Gulls went through the molting process, changing from the confusing plumage of first year (in terms of identification) to a much more readily distinct species coloration and feather patterns. One is a step ahead of the

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other and by the end of the month the pattern was obvious. Sandhill Cranes summered on Krusenstern in numbers far surpassing those of any recent year.

The effects of the storm tossed gravel of two years ago gave us a super crop of *Elymus*, commonly known as Lyme Grass. The heads are chin high to an average adult. Though there is no known real connection to the run of Pink Salmon (Humpback), salmon for July has exceeded anything in the past 50 years.

The discovery of two colonies (at least 30 plants) of white petaled *Epilobium latifolium* in Sisualik upped our knowledge of their rather rare variation in petal color. We have known of only two plants in the last ten years or so and the gravel throw up almost, but not quite got them. Those two bloomed profusely this year too, after growing only leaves last year. Discovery day was the July 13, although blossoms opened before that.

All in all the month of July 1992 was a pretty good experience. Heat above 70° F and mosquitoes were the most trying times, especially in the first half of the month when "Mosquito coils," which supply the smoke that does in the insects, were not available in much of the state, including Kotzebue. The state supply was all used up! Later in the month supplies were replenished and of course, with the lack of moisture and toughening of vegetation, mosquito numbers dropped considerably. Insects did not take over the world, though for a time they did seem in control.

The taking of a Gray Whale, the lack of Beluga, and the wasting of four Musk-ox north of Kivalina were items of concern during July '92. A super abundance of Pink Salmon (Humpies) and mosquitoes demonstrated the extravagance of nature for the month. The "dance of the midges," the abundance of Sandhill Cranes, the presence of summer Snowy Owls and multiple Slaty-backed Gulls rounded out the month. As of the last day only two blooming *Gentianopsis detonsa* blooming plants had been located.

Caribou

A very few scattered caribou reports came in during the month. To our knowledge, none were taken on the Monument. One bull was seen on the flats on July 1, two on July 10. We had a piece of fresh meat from one small animal taken around Lockhart Point (Kotzebue side) on July 6.

Moose

Reports of moose were also quite rare for July. A few (less than five) different tracks were seen on ocean beach and lagoon margins, and around and near by lakes

during sourdock harvest. This low moose count in July on the coast started last year and has continued, indicating a probable low local summer moose population. In those years when there was known to be many they were quite often seen in the hot month of July out in the open coastal zone.

Bear

Bear tracks and sightings were also few, especially east of Sealing Point, even though there were some driftline marine mammal carcasses. One animal was seen on July 14 west of Sealing Point, and tracks were regularly made on the ocean beach between Sealing Point and Port Site. No tracks were noted all summer on the beach section between Sisualik and the Ranger Station.

Sheep

No sheep sightings reported. Public announcement by ADF&G and NPS that there would be no hunting of sheep east and south of Noatak river, including the coastal Monument hills.

Musk-ox

On the first of the month, the killing of four Musk-ox between Point Hope and Kivalina, with only a couple of heads and a little meat taken, was reported over the local radio station. That is hard news to take and reminiscent of a similar wasteful kill last year on Rabbit Creek, within the Monument.

Seven live musk-ox were reported around Battle Rock on July 30. A single early Musk-ox track was noted on the large lagoon east of the Ranger Station.

Marine Mammals

There were no additional Beluga taken in Sisualik or Kotzebue. The final report on harvest from Elephant Point was a total of five for the whole season. This was another low harvest year for Kotzebue Sound Beluga. The five taken in nets from the Kotzebue-Sisualik area make a total of ten known taken. Fair numbers were seen in the vicinity of Sealing Point a few times in late June, and a large group was seen the first week of July (on the fifth) at the same location.

A few Uguruq were taken in the last ice during the first week of July. The last sighting of ice on the ocean from Sisualik was on the eighth. There was a fair to

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good harvest of Uguruq through both the sledding time and boating time, but effort and catch were relatively low compared to other years at boating time.

A Harbor Porpoise was found drowned in a commercial fisherman's Chum Salmon net on July 28.

A Gray Whale towing a Beluga net west of the Ranger Station was killed by a returning Uguruq hunting boat. This was a "first of its kind" happening. The animal was cut up and passed around to all that helped and some that didn't. It was - is - a special treat.

Small Mammals

Tundra Vole numbers are building quite steadily. No other microtine has given surface hint of presence, but these small mammals don't stand out at this season because of all the thick vegetation growth. They can be sought out in likely habitat.

Arctic Ground Squirrel populations remain high all over the Monument and have become a veritable plague just west of the Ranger Station, as the half grown young of the year join the already high adult population in getting in to things human around the several camps that are in the area. These rather cute little creatures are probably the reason we have summering Snowy Owls.

Another summer with no Porcupine incident around camp in July. Don't quite know what to make of this. For many years we had beach combing Porcupines fairly regularly - maybe one a week from mid July to late August. They were a threat to dogs and a great change in diet from the fish we eat mostly at this time.

Furbearers

No incidents to report, which is about normal for July.

Birds

Three birds species stand out from the multitudes for July. On July 8 a very rain soaked and bedraggled Snowy Owl killed and ate a young Ground Squirrel several hundred yards from the tent. A few days later another or rather two others were seen at the same time on fall "owl poles" on our back flat marsh areas. These two could be seen nearly every day through the month. On seeing them at closer range and based on lack of dark spotting, they appear to be two adult males. Besides ground squirrels and voles, a number of Northern Pintail wings and bones have

been noted at their perching sites. We do not often have summering Snowy Owls. The North Slope is more to their liking in July.

Sandhill Cranes have been super abundant, especially on the Sealing Point beach ridges and to a lesser degree here behind Sisualik. Most of these are adult non-breeders. We regularly have a few nesting pairs widely scattered through the region. It is unusual for us to host, through July, such crane numbers.

In mid month two gulls in subadult plumage, slightly smaller than our ubiquitous Glaucous Gull, with dark bill, wing tips and tail, were noticed in our camp gull flock. Awhile later a third turned. As the molt that these birds were going through developed, it seems quite likely that they are second year Slaty-backed Gulls. We have noticed a few of these every year and now that we have better ID material for subadult gulls, it seems likely that we regularly have a few of these Siberian gulls at this age. By late August or September the dark back and top of wings plus the broad white light trailing edge of wings makes ID certain.

Our Tree Swallows produced three offspring and they all left the box and camp on July 15. They come back for a visit for a few days and are then gone till next May. See Journal entry of July 17 for a little more on Tree Swallows.

Our back marsh area became quite deserted by July 14, with most waterfowl off to secretive molting areas. First Northern Pintails with new feathers noted on the twentieth. There may have been a few earlier, but by the twenty-fourth returning numbers were rapidly increasing.

Tundra Swans were gone by July 12 and none had returned at month's end.

Newly flying Arctic Terns were quite numerous on July 28.

Marshes came a bit alive on the fifteenth when many, apparently male, Pectoral Sandpipers passed through.

Several large flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes were noted on the ocean, apparently feeding, on July 31.

Our numbers of Longspurs and Savannah Sparrows has remained very low in comparison to past years.

Raptor activity though July very limited. An occasional Northern Harrier and the two resident Snowy Owls were the only birds of prey noted besides jaegers, which were also scarce. Noticeably absent were the Short-eared Owls which are usually present and Merlin sightings which were common the last couple of years.

An earlier report indicated a nesting of Peregrine Falcons on Sealing Point bluffs. This further confirms the alternate use of that site by Gyrfalcons and Peregrines. An interesting, now more surely and established fact.

Plants

July, of course, is our “month of flowers,” a great time for those sensitive to the color, design, and remarkable diversity of flowering plants north of the Arctic Circle.

Two things stand out this July 1992. The discovery of two colonies of white-petaled, pink-sepaled *Epilobium latifolium* on Sisualik Spit. Some ten years ago we had noted a single plant close to our camp site. A second plant developed from this first plant. They sometimes bloom in consecutive years, but have skipped single years a couple of times. On July 13 near the end of the air craft runway at Sisualik Point, four miles from our first discovered plant, two colonies of maybe 30 plants were discovered. While this plant is common on the Spit, the petals are normally pink-purple. This white petaled form is rare.

Each year, once one is aware of their existence, the sight of the beautiful and unexpectedly large, purple-blue flower of *Gentianopsis detonsa* becomes something yearned for, which one finds difficult to communicate in words. There are many other flowers of similar color and even larger or more distinctive shape. They are, however, what shall we say? Too common? Yes, in comparison to *G. detonsa*, which seems to be found only at the mouth of major Arctic river deltas - Coppermine, Mackenzie, Noatak. And then, even in the heartland of its existence, you might not find even one plant in some years. In other years there can be several thousand flowering plants on one acre of salt marsh. In July 1992, even though a diligent search was made for plants on Sisualik Spit at areas where they were known to be before, only two flowering plants were found, on July 23. No plant was found on the acre where there were more than 1,000 plants last year. See Journal entry for July 23.

Blueberries and salmonberries were both ripe enough to eat a few handfuls on July 28.

Two new plants were recognized to be in the area, which I have not noted here before. They were *Saussurea angustifolia* and *Linnaea borealis* (Twinflower).

We have a very high growth of *Elymus* grass this July on the storm tossed gravel surface. The whole area has grain heads, chin high to a tall man.

July 19 was the peak bloom time for Iris; it was also the date of first noted *Gentiana prostrata* (first gentian to bloom). Fireweed (tall) bloom peaked around July 23, as the first bloom of Grass-of-Parnassus was noted.

Two other events in the month somewhat related to plants were noteworthy. A super performance for Sisualik of the annual “dance of the midges.” This year's action took place on July 5-6. A brief description of the event can be found in Journal. This swarm of midges is truly spectacular every year on one or two days in early July at Sealing Point. It rarely happens at Sisualik as intense as it was this year. It is speculated that the insect species involved is a chironomid but that is not confirmed yet. The creatures rise from the grasses of the salt and fresh marshes in a one or two day super hatch or rather super swarm. It is quite a sight to see and gives the same description of uncountable multitudes as does “grains of sand” or “stars in the heavens.”

The other event (?) – “the sound of the sea.” See Journal entry for July 12.

Didn't make the first trip to Sourdock Lake this year till July 21. The growth was good, though a little tough and stringy due to a very dry July. Grass growth has also started to replace the solid beds of *Rumex* on previous best spots which is normal plant succession. Made a second trip on the twenty-eighth to fill our quota for the year (fifteen gallons of finished product).

No blackberries, *Empetrum nigrum*, were ready for picking as July ended.

July 4 was butterfly day in Sisualik this year. There were lots.

Fish

July is an important month for many fish species and many fishermen. July 1992 didn't seem to generate much in terms of unusual patterns; the “normal” happenings from year to year are remarkable enough!

A first Chum Salmon was taken right on time on, July 1. A run of large, mostly 5-year old fish built rapidly through the month, with a fair season - in July - for the commercial fishery, though prices remained constant and low. As the month ended, escapement, especially in the Noatak system, was of concern and kind of indicated a possible limit of fishing time or early closure in August.

The run of Humpback (Pink) Salmon was exceptional for this area this July and led to another monstrous waste of one species because of the dollar value of another. Incidental catch of pinks in Chum Salmon gear was of record proportions and fisherman for the most part had no other option than to discard the dead pinks. The

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shame is that such a mass of good quality fresh run salmon flesh should be returned to the system. The hope is that the "system" will benefit from this beautiful man caused food source. It is quite likely that it will since there seems at times to be large areas of northern sea waters that could use food sources of any kind for its creatures. Dates of abundant Pinks in the Sisualik area this summer was from July 6-20, but with some Pinks present every day through the month.

Pinks with unexpectedly full stomachs were noted on July 11. The contents were subadult capelin and/or sand lance.

An apparent noted first occurred on July 15 when a 6 lb. Sheefish from Sisualik ocean beach had a stomach full of adult capelin. Hadn't noticed before that these two fish have overlapping habitat range.

More King Salmon and King Crab were taken in waters off Sisualik in Chum Salmon gear this year than in previous years. This follows a trend noted 10-15 years back.

Whitefish making a return trip east were first noted July 9 with some big catches at the Point on the seventeenth.

Lots of lean Rainbow Smelt were taken in a net of 1 inch mesh on July 18 and a couple of other dates in the month when cold, saline, jellyfish water brought by strong westerly winds was here. One adult Capelin was taken in this net on July 16.

In the last week of July numerous fat Char were taken with short soaks of a 4 ½ inch mesh net. These fish, quite fat, contained egg skeins filling their body cavity between quarter and half full. They were mostly females. My question is: Will these fish spawn this late fall or are they part of the population that will not return to the ocean again until they go up the streams next spring to spawn early in the late summer/fall of 1993, overwinter up there after that, and not return to sea until spring 1994? If so, those individuals will indeed be "spent" by the time they return to feed in the summer of '94.

People

It can be said that for the month of July 1992 there were not enough people on Krusenstern National Monument to satisfy the needs of all the mosquitoes there. That is a true saying though it doesn't give much hint of the number of people in July - only the number of mosquitoes. There were lots!

Apart from local residents, in holders for the most part, and NPS crews of various sorts, there were only a few July visitors that we know of. A pair of kayak travelers

(two in one craft) came out of the Noatak River sloughs portaged over Sisualik Spit and set sail (literally) for Sealing Point. Many local people noted the neat method of travel that many of us older folks have used but no longer do.

A handful of hikers of tourist type and temporary commercial fisherman camps were the only other noted visitors of July. Salmonberry picker invasion won't occur till early August.

An attempt was made by local folks to close the outlet at Anigaaq on July 26. Effort was given up after several tries.

A first barge of the shipping/freight season appeared on the horizon on July 3.

A late (end of month) show of good, log-size driftwood showed up west of the Ranger Station and especially around Sealing Point. Local campers were busy for a few days cutting and hauling this late bonanza.

Several headless walrus drifted in during the month, but less than ten. Not near as many as in some years.

People numbers and activities did not seem to be much different than in the last few years. The trend toward less intense subsistence activities in most categories continues. New uses such as sightseeing, camping, trekking, and kayaking by non-residents continues, but at a slow and apparently tolerable rate.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

AUGUST

Introduction

The only thing worse than a late June freeze for vegetation at flowering time is an early mid-August freeze before seed or berry has ripened. It happened this August. Frost on August 12 with a temperature of 33° F, a temperature of 32° F on August 13, and frozen water buckets on August 14 at 29° F. All this, after a very dry July that had already stressed the drier vegetation zones. Some of the results of this anomaly of weather were readable immediately. Half mature blackberries turned soft and bitter and Tall Fireweed blossoms shriveled and dried, not having quite enough time to produce seed. Interestingly *Epilobium latifolium* had already blossomed and presumably the near matured seed would be unaffected by the low temperatures. Similarly, Salmonberries were already formed and ripe and were unaffected, as were Blueberries except for a little softening of an already sweet product. Cranberries, later even than Blackberries were hit hard and in most places won't recover. The key to understanding the effect on some berries and developing seed is to recognize that topography of the land can provide some oasis of non-freezing air temperatures. Therefore all is not lost. We have located some spots that will produce good blackberries and maybe even some cranberries if it doesn't freeze again. We are very thankful for our bumper crop of salmonberries.

Our warmest day was a pleasant 76° F on August 1.

Thirty-five knot NW winds on August 12 were the strongest from that direction and brought our cold spell. Southwest winds to 35 knots on August 15 brought our flood for the month and the summer. This is a great example of how wind direction, over greater or lesser lengths of time, is a great influence on the whole web of living things in this portion of the north. The weather cells-systems that power these winds seem to determine our very destiny.

The marsh began it's yellowing from summer's green on the very first day of August. Our Cottonwood tableland copse turned golden yellow on the twenty-fourth, really ushering in the fall season.

Wildlife

The coolness and wetness of August this year may have much to do with early news of caribou on both the Kobuk and Noatak. Combined with the horrific late spring weather conditions, it also had an effect on the early and scant numbers of most species of birds. The freezing spell, troublesome for vegetation, will of course influence the amount of forage available at critical fall fattening time. Because all species were not affected the same, it is hoped that no critical situation will develop in any wildlife species, though it seems certainly a possibility. Migration energy in the form of deposited fat is quite necessary for most species. Of course if they can't get it here, things may be better somewhere along the migration route.

The few waterfowl we have in hand through August indicated a slow or late buildup of the migration fat. Some insect eating birds, because of the timing of the cold spell, may have found the lack of insect activity a hardship for a few days, probably more so to the north where temperatures were colder and the spell lasted longer. Large numbers of Yellow Wagtails, Savannah Sparrows, and Lapland Longspurs were noted moving through during that early mid-month time.

Larger animal species were probably affected more in their body hormones than their food supply. Early cooler weather hastens the onset of fall rut in most antlered animals and this of course drives movements, migrations, and general behavior.

Caribou

In the past few years a few caribou have been taken by campers along the beach in both July and August. That did not happen this year though a few sightings were reported. This is not especially surprising as we are talking about a small number of stray animals, generally less than ten in any given summer. This year the few animals and people involved just never came together at an opportune time. In this century, there has not yet been a heavy movement of caribou through the Monument in either July or August, though they do come in numbers in some years a bit farther north, i.e., Kivalina and Red Dog.

We did get news in mid-month that caribou were moving through a little north of Noatak village; on August 28 caribou were reported down on the river right in front of the village of Noatak. As August ended, Kivalina, Noatak, and several Kobuk villages had caribou close at hand. We have a full month yet for the bulls to fatten and remain good, so perhaps we will be lucky and some will get down this way. In the meantime we are not without caribou meat. Friends, family, and others that travel up to where the herds are, are generous in their gifts of meat when they return. Several have made overnight trips to return with a loaded boat.

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A backpacker reported seeing three caribou on an inland trip across the Monument, from Hatchery to coast, late in the month.

Moose

Coastal sightings of moose have also been very rare this summer and through August, though again the few inland travelers report a good deal of moose sign and a few sightings. Don't know how to interpret this lack of coastal moose sightings as they have more frequently appeared in past seasons. Perhaps there are less animals on these close fringes of habitat than in past years.

We have not heard of any moose being taken amongst acquaintances, family, and friends since the season opened on August 1.

Vegetation condition and relatively hot and cold spells could be a factor in whether Moose are seen from coastal locations.

Bear

August brought several bear stories, which was not unexpected with a good coastal crop of salmonberries, lots of people looking for the berries, the outlet at Anigaaq closed, and an unequal distribution of headless uneaten walrus. The only casualty to date seems to be a single, unhealthy looking two-year old that wandered into a camp.

We made an overnight berry picking trip up the coast past Sealing Point to near Battle Rock on August 18. The story was pretty well written in the broad expanse of beach sands.

Until this date, bear tracks had been absent from the beach, from Sealing Point cabin east past the Ranger Station to Sisualik Point, even though there were nearly ten drifted in marine mammals on that stretch of beach. West of Sealing Point towards Battle Rock, where the small coastal mountains come directly to the beach, there were many bear tracks, fresh and old, and a few marine mammal carcasses completely eaten up and scattered around. The number of bears involved is a little difficult to determine. There seems to be a number of different sizes of small tracks, suggesting multiple cubs of the year and also several two-year old animals. The sow with cubs of the year also seems small. The one large set of tracks was seen headed toward Sisualik from the Ranger Station, after the bears moved their activity east of the Point during the last week of the month, probably belong to a large male.

Several things happened after our trip on the eighteenth. Two women berry pickers were startled to see a bear loping along behind their moving ATV. They got stuck in the willows. The bear looked them over at close range and they looked him over. One of the women shouted and the bear took off. Around this time the bears began nightly feeding on the marine mammals east of the Point; one small bear entered a small storage tent at an occupied permanent camp and scattered things around. Later that day at another camp, a small, sickly looking bear was shot as it entered an occupied camp. After this incident, though bears fed nightly, no other occupied camp incidents were reported by month's end. However tracks on the beach became common all the way to the first west Sisualik camp, which is no surprise once this beachcombing group finally bypassed the outpost camps at Sealing Point. With human activities switching to fishing from berry picking in September, the stage is set. People and bears dodge each other throughout the month of September and some of October.

Though circling small planes have been noted a time or two during the month, it is not known that the circling was motivated by bear sightings or activity, though it did take place over inland areas that these beachcombing bears are known to frequent.

Sheep

No sheep reports for the month except for the public announcement of closure of the Monument area to all sheep hunting.

Musk-ox

No report.

Marine Mammals

A possible Killer Whale sighting was reported on August 24 by two observers. A Harbor Porpoise was caught and drowned in a neighbor's net on the twenty-fifth, the next day. There is the possibility that there is a relationship between these two incidents. Both animals are similar in shape with a dorsal fin and dark backs, and though there is great difference in size (and shape of dorsal fin), light and distance make size hard to discern. There have been confirmed near shore Killer Whale sightings in the past from this area, but they are rare. Harbor Porpoise are usually seen each August and September and each summer a few are drowned in commercial salmon gear.

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No other live marine mammal happenings were noted. The numerous walrus carcasses on the beach are from late July and August onshore storm waves. No live walrus yet reported but there should be some again in September and October.

August is the month in which the local ocean is most free of any species of seal. Even the most common summer seal the Spotted (Largha) Seal is most likely seen up inside the mouth of large fresh water rivers, rather than on the ocean.

Small Mammals

Fall digging around cotton grass patches show a healthy population of Tundra Voles (*Microtus autumnus*). Runways around camp reinforce that assessment. There is no indication of a high population yet. Bird predators have been few, with no Short-eared Owls, an occasional Northern Harrier, and no jaegers, but our ever present Snowy Owls may have kept very local populations in check.

Ground Squirrel populations remain especially around established camps where some protection from bears and Snowy Owls exists.

A couple of beach traveling porcupines have been reported this month.

Furbearers

No indication for August of furbearer populations. It would be unusual for there to be that kind of indication unless a species was at such a high density that it would be commented on by berry pickers, traveler hunters or other travelers out on the land. First ice and especially snow will give an indication of abundance.

Birds

August, a migration time for many species, gave pretty solid confirmation that production in most species, with a couple of exceptions, was poor after our very erratic early spring weather.

The exceptions were Arctic Terns and Yellow Wagtails; both are late nesters that wouldn't be affected by bad weather in mid May. A mid August freezing spell on the North Slope brought us a rather abundant bird day on our trip down the coast toward Sealing Point on the thirteenth. The *Elymus* beach grass was literally full of passerines, mostly Yellow Wagtails with some Savannah Sparrows and Longspurs, hundreds of birds. Meanwhile on the beach sand at water's edge were numerous large groups of fifty or so mixed adult and young of the year Arctic Terns. Many

miles of this scene was repeated between the Ranger Station and Sealing Point. There was an impressive number of birds in an often nearly lifeless place!

Waterfowl adults (Northern Pintail, Wigeon, Canada Geese) were slow to put on migration fat this August, judging from the in-hand specimens that came our way. All adult birds in most years are quite fat by late August. This year, by our sample, only one out of three or four were as fat as expected. This applies to adult birds. Birds of the year aren't expected to be fat until later in September.

An unusually long spell of high marine water levels at critical early fattening period may be the reason. *Potamogeton* bed growth and accessibility are affected by these levels and it is the most important source of fattening food for species mentioned.

First Geese (White fronted) were noted back on the marshes from molt period on the August 3.

Flying Tundra Swans were not noted until August 22.

A Bank Swallow was seen around the beach mud bluff just east of the Ranger Station on the twelfth. There are usually a few nests on this bluff. This seems a late date for swallows around a nest site but then Bank Swallows are later nesters than our box Tree Swallows and we don't have Bank Swallow records.

Lots of flying young of many species were noted on the fourth. Early bird movement was further hastened by a reported 26° F low in Barrow at this early date.

On the thirteenth the first fall Sanderlings were noted and since this was the day of our first distant trip west, the rather constant sound of Red-throated Loons as we got out of the Commercial Fishery Boundary was beautiful to hear and very immediately noticeable.

Plants

After a very dry July we finally began to get some moisture in the first week of August. It was really just in time, for most plants had blossomed well but in the drier zones were beginning to parch and dry up before seed had sufficiently matured. The rains came in time but the early freeze at mid Month almost un-did what the rains had helped.

The greatest surprise of the summer came on the second. After waiting, searching even yearning for the sight of the unique *Gentianopsis detonsa* plant and flower all the month of July, and finding only two plants on the whole Spit, I had become resigned to not finding any more as July ended. Then lo and behold on August 2

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my eyes caught the rich purple-blue that I so much yearned to see, only six feet to the side of a trail I had followed every few days all summer actually searching for this plant and not finding it. A small colony of thirty healthy, blooming plants, some with even the corollas open. A further search of nearby locations known to hold plants in the past revealed several more sites of multiple blooming plants. What a thrill! What an experience of priceless value! See Journal entry of August 2 for a few more details.

The freezing nights of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth did some real plant and berry crop damage. Salmonberries, luckily, were not effected as they were already mature and ripe. Blueberries also were ripe, so only softened. Blackberries and cranberries, however, were nearly completely spoiled since they hadn't yet fully developed. Later we found some zones where blackberries recovered; all were not lost, but it was close.

Late blooming plants like Tall Fireweed and *Artemisia* were nipped in the blossom stage and little viable seed will be produced. It is a very complex scene to read, but a hard freeze at that date has its greatest impact on vulnerable vegetation. Other forms of life are more able to “hang on” through several nights of freezing. The kink here is that many other forms of life depend on vegetation, and sooner or later, will feel the impact that vegetation did to some degree.

The marsh lands started their noticeable yellowing on the first day of August and oddly enough, the first open blossom of our last species to bloom was noticed on the second. This late blooming, showy plant is commonly called Star Gentian though it bears the Latin name *Lomatogonium rotatum* rather than the *Gentiana* genus name.

The first day of berry picking for us was on August 3 with a few hours spent looking for soft ripe salmonberries. We did get enough for several meals, but it wasn't till the sixth that we got a good day of ripe berries to start our winter supply. The peak day for people on the salmonberry ground was probably around the fourteenth. There were many people on Krusenstern through that week, each seeking and finding the delicious Cloudberry, or as more commonly call locally, the Salmonberry or Aqpik. The prize was measured in the number of five gallon buckets picked per day.

The last flowering species (Star Gentian) reached a peak bloom stage on August 17. The Journal entry for August 29 gives a summer assessment of how vegetation fared during the '92 growing season.

On August 31, a rare (for here), interesting, and rather hideous insect turned up on our wood chopping block. Try the last page of August journal for a little more information.

Fish

The prevailing west winds of August again gave strong potential for over harvest during the '92 Commercial Chum Salmon Fishery. This has happened twice now in the last five years and some action should probably be taken to better insure sufficient escapement when anomalous meteorological conditions put all the gear and all the fish in an extremely concentrated confined zone. The explanation and rationale for this situation is too complex and speculative to detail here, but it will at least document a situation that needs some attention.

Along with this concern, the heavy incidental reported Char catch of 2,000 fish needs some action to lessen the impact on such a valuable resource. Char are not a "trash" fish and need a good deal more consideration as a species that may need closer monitoring before irrevocable damage is done.

First true "fall Char" was taken in our table net on the tenth. (This determination made on gonad-ovary condition.)

The Pink or Humpback Salmon run in Kotzebue July through August was the greatest known in recent time (at least 40 years).

The King Salmon and King Crab incidental catch in the Commercial Chum Fishery also seemed to exceed passed years for these species.

The Krusenstern waterway outlet at Anigaaq did not close until the ninth which is generally considered to be too late for a super whitefish harvest in September and October. It may, however, still produce a moderate to good fall catch. Time will tell.

The Char run continued strong through the twenty-first.

People

There was quite a lot of people action through August '92. The usual number of commercial fishing site camps was down considerably due to two factors. Total number of permits fished this year was down considerably and weather patterns pressed the Chum Salmon run almost exclusively against the south side of the Sound (the Baldwin Peninsula). As the season moved into August, fishermen found that in order to make any catch at all they had to all move from the Krusenstern side to the Baldwin Peninsula beaches.

A bumper crop of salmonberries brought near record numbers of pickers to the Monument in August. This was compounded somewhat by the convenient closure of the Anigaaq outlet that permits ATV access by beach, so that a boat was not

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necessary to reach many good berry picking spots. The week of the fourteenth was the peak time of this activity.

A boat swamped at the beginning of a storm time in Sisualik. It swamped while anchored on the ninth and wasn't recovered till late the next day as waves diminished. No one hurt, but good deal of equipment was lost.

We first used our electric lights on the evening of the fourteenth. No more midnight sun.

We had a tent quite full of a wet and cold family from Paris, France on the seventeenth. The group was said to be looking for a day of adventure out of Kotzebue. They had it with an over loaded boat, west wind, and shallow water.

Around the seventeenth a new situation developed involving new heavy use ATV travel. After a flood storm on the fifteenth it was found that Pleistocene ice mud had caved in and blocked passage by ATV's on the beach line at the bluff site just east of the Ranger Station. It was found that by traveling the west beach of Akulaaq lagoon to a point nearly directly behind (north) of the Ranger Station one could climb the ridge, travel less than a mile of tussocks and slide down to the ocean beach to continue clear travel West. This route had been used a few times in the past and was not unknown, but this time traffic was very heavy due to berry picking and travel to camps west of the Ranger Station from Sisualik, Kotzebue, and all points east. The new trail became an overland road in a few days since there was no other option at that point in time. After a week or ten days the ice mud on the bluff sloughed off, marine waters dropped to lower levels, and the shorter more convenient ocean beach trail became usable again when water and waves were not too high.

This was a good example of a legitimate need to run a short trail over a somewhat "fragile" area for a shorter or longer period of time that at the very least will cause considerable scarring of the earth, most especially from an aircraft perspective. If and when restrictive use of ATV's is contemplated, some flexibility to deal with such circumstances would be desired.

August 1992 probably set a record for number of local people (NANA Region) moving on and off the Monument for various lengths of time after salmonberries.

No unusual level of use by outside visitors was noted, though there were a few, usually around established camps.

Potential is growing for bear-human confrontation in the month of September. This may be averted by the appearance of large numbers of caribou not too far off. If that doesn't happen, the dead walrus and the bears will be together often and as fall whitefishing gets underway, bears and people will meet.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

SEPTEMBER

Introduction

Do we live in odd times? It would appear so judging from this year in general and this month in particular. This was a cold September. It was a dry September and except for N and NW winds it was a September without storm winds. High points include a tremendous whitefish catch in both Anigaaq and Akulaaq. Low points include a complete absence of caribou while most other places had an abundance and while they were fat. Willow Ptarmigan, our most dependable food bird, is almost non-existent locally.

A beach line that has stayed relatively constant for several generations now looks like a half eaten slice of melon with jagged indentations and sheer Pleistocene frozen mud bluffs that are sometimes impassable by beach travelers. This condition is the result of a couple of year's dominance of westerly flood storms and the lack of equalizing forces from east systems. There may, of course, be other dynamics involved that are not so obvious.

The cold, early freeze and snow of September after last May have caused poignant and heartrending situations this fall. Many species of various life forms just didn't have time to complete their annual cycles. This September was then a reckoning for those inadequately prepared.

A low temperature of 23° F on September 9 was a prelude of what was to come later in the month - nearly ten days of broken daily low records at the Kotzebue Weather station. The coldest temperature recorded was 10° F on the twenty-ninth, but the lows were often in the teens from the twentieth on. September 25 was the first of several days that the air temperature did not rise above freezing. Very unusual for any September date.

A high of 59° F on September 1 and 58° F on September 6 made the first week of September the warmest period.

N and NW winds dominated and strong blows from these quadrants were followed by very cold temperatures. NW winds to 35 knots on the eighth and 25 knots for three days from the same direction provoked cool temperatures; N winds of 40 knots on the fourteenth and 35 knots on the eighteenth continued the trend.

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We do not recall a September with so many days below freezing. It has been a cold September. We have a feeling, though, that October will warm and probably be milder and slow in completing the freezing up of trails, especially for travel between villages.

Wildlife

The animals probably fared better than some other living beings more able to cope with temperature extremes, although most are indirectly affected through food variance.

Caribou

For us and the Monument proper, rumors and predictions are about all we saw or heard of Caribou during the month of September. There was a lot of activity nearby, especially east of the Noatak River. On the first, a neighbor, upon hearing there were caribou around Noatak Village, took off with his small 18' Lund Boat in the morning, spent the night in Noatak Village, and returned with a load of caribou meat (killed by him) to Sisualik in the late afternoon. Again, a demonstration of how local residents have extended their reach. During this time many caribou were crossing Noatak River between the village and Kelly River. Many boats from Kotzebue took part in the hunt. They were said to be crossing from east to west or south to north depending on river bend flow direction. By the fifteenth many caribou were reported on the north shore of Kobuk Lake and around Fish Creek. Many Kotzebue boats hunted there also. One animal was reported seen north of the Ranger Station at Anigaaq on this date by whitefish fisherman. It could not be reached as it was on the opposite side of a deep creek and so survived. On the twenty-ninth four caribou were reported by Air Taxi close behind western Sisualik camps. They were never seen by any one else though there was a lot of looking. Not even a stray caribou taken on Monument this month to our knowledge. The few boats that did go from here to Noatak or Fish Creek did share some meat with those that didn't go, so everyone had at least a little fresh caribou meat.

Moose

Moose news from the Monument is nil for September, which is not unusual. Though access to moose habitat is pretty limited until next month, a few are often seen and/or taken. Not only were there none reported seen or taken, but hunter success reported very low from other normally heavy hunted areas along river systems.

We know only of one taken by friends from Anchorage in the Candle area. It was in very good condition for a young male.

Bear

Lots of bear notes in the journal for September but we are glad to report no injuries either to bear or people. Since the beachcombing bear group on the coastal section of the Monument ran out of walrus carcasses west of Sealing Point, it was predictable that they would show up between Sealing Point and Sisualik where several walrus had gone through the summer untouched. They did, and as heavy fishing activity got underway at Anigaaq and Akulaaq lagoons, the bears also joined in the effort to capture and eat egg laden whitefish. It is not a pleasant experience to have your full net checked by a bear before daylight. They use different techniques but none of them indicate much concern for the condition of the net and its future use. That's probably because the use of nets is kind of new to them and they don't understand the principles involved. They usually eat the nylon meshes right along with the fish much as you would eat blueberry leaves and vines along with the blueberries. It makes sense in bear logic, I guess, but is not much appreciated by the human net owner. Even those that would more or less gladly share fish don't take kindly to equipment destruction. Several nets were bear worked this fall. Ours was a kindly bear - left us more than half the fish and meshes. That incident happened on the nineteenth just as ice was forming. We had no further problem as ice became thick enough to walk on.

Two bears were killed within the village of Noatak around the sixth.

A two bear fight was witnessed two times just before dark as they approached a walrus carcass between Sealing Point houses and the tower. This occurred on September 9 and 11 and was probably a "pecking order" scrap to see who gets to eat first. Several bear sightings on the eleventh may have been the same pair of fighters 10-15 miles away. On the seventeenth a much larger bear walked the beach at night passing the two most westerly Sisualik camps and turning off inland a few hundred yards from the third camp, which is the first to have many dogs (chained sled dogs) around camp. This was the closest approach by bears to Sisualik to date.

Fishing got so good toward the end of this month that lots were left for a time, some sacked, at the beach outlet where they are taken in a ditch trap. Of course the bears started to help themselves every night. Twice it was noted that the bear must have "over did it." Several piles of vomit of chewed up fish were noted. Several sacks were dragged off into the willows up on the hill. This happened on September 25 while on the twenty-seventh, a larger bear was seen in the day time crossing the large Sealing Point lagoon though the ice was thin with open holes around. One night around the twenty-eighth fishing was so good (fish coming out in the ditches) that those that were there stayed on till 11 pm when a bear joined

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them and they decided it was time to go home. Remarkably in all these incidents: there is no hint of a shot fired in anger. Bears and people can live and interact together?

Sheep

No sheep notes.

Musk-ox

No musk-ox notes.

Marine Mammals

The early cold brought early ice-slush in the rivers and that soon passed out into the ocean, attracting seals quite early. Lots were reported in front of town in the main channel on the twelfth. These were probably mostly Spotted Seals with a few yearling Uguruq. A few Common Seals can also be in that great feeding place for seals. The first and a mixed bag of seals were landed in Sisualik on the nineteenth. First slush in the ocean off Sisualik showed up on the twentieth and a walrus was reported taken off Cape Blossom on the twenty-eighth.

Small Mammals

Arctic Ground Squirrel numbers have remained high in spite of an additional predator pressure in the form of scattered summer Snowy Owls. As the ground began to freeze early it became obvious that Tundra Vole populations have grown considerably over last year. The near absence of Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers, plus very low over summering Jaeger numbers have produced a predator free summer season. No evidence yet of shrew and weasel populations. With the large amount of frozen fish stored around, next month will give an idea of their numbers when snow cover is accomplished.

Furbearers

Tracks in the sand at various places on the Monument indicate that Red Fox production was strong this year and maybe a few families of White Fox were also produced.

Muskrat populations seem to continue to be depressed for unknown reasons. Other furbearer information will necessarily be postponed till snow and ice permit wider surface traveling.

Wolf sign has been mentioned around the Hatchery, which would indicate the possibility of wolf production in or near the Monument on the central-western portion where there is a rather large area of relatively little people disturbance. Hints over the past few years may indicate a den site in that section.

Birds

September, like May, is a big migration month; it was a disappointment like May was. Sandpipers and passerines were pretty much gone due mid-August cold spell and waterfowl were having a tough time putting on migration fat for unknown reasons but possibly due to a cool high water level summer that slowed aquatic plant maturation.

The Journal entry of September 3 notes passage of numerous raptors and scarcity of waterfowl and passerines for this early date. The two observations are probably related. By the seventh passerines and sandpipers were deemed rare. A record low temperature of 23° F on the ninth froze the whole surface of our near camp "duck pond." This lake is a favorite of Northern Pintail and Wigeon and is heavily used each fall. On the same date a snow squall left the ground white. Lots of Wigeon were noted on this date in areas of shallow moving water that provided good feed.

A storm at sea on September 9-11 with NW winds brought many small groups of Red Phalaropes to sheltered lagoon areas where they stayed for several days. We don't often have many of this species unless there is a storm during their southern movement.

Several hundred Tundra Swans were noted on the twelfth with no young in the group. This species was hurting this production season. It wasn't till the eighteenth that families with young began to show around and then with few cygnets per family. One to three, mostly, and very small in size. At least two young were found in starved condition.

Fat content of some adult Wigeon and Northern Pintail was found to be low as late as the twelfth. This is nearly unheard of here with adult birds.

Record heavy snowfall was reported from the Interior (Fairbanks) on the fourteenth so migrants across the state may face problems.

A Merlin was noted on September 14 and a late Peregrine was seen briefly on September 26.

The lagoon was half frozen over by the fourteenth.

Our camp “swallow box” adult Glaucous Gull, Jonathan, disappeared on the eighteenth (check journal account for more details). We thought he'd gone south or worse but he returned on the twenty-first and was still doing his duty as the month ended.

Due to low marine waters, several bends in a local slough remained open for feeding waterfowl after all other waters had frozen. There were a hundred Tundra Swans and eighty or so mixed ducks on September 26; by the twenty-ninth, nine swans and twenty ducks; and on the thirtieth there were three swans - two adults with a small youngster they repeatedly tried to get to leave the area of feed. He would fly from one hole to the other (1/4 mile) but would not follow adults if they sought to pass the open water, on that day at least. Did not see them again though the holes stayed open a few days longer. These are poignant times.

On September 29 there were three Dunlin and two Sanderling at the running water fish trap ditch at the Anigaaq outlet.

Willow Ptarmigan were exceedingly scarce this month. A time when in the past they have been super abundant. I personally have seen only one small flock of six and have heard of only four being taken by local folks. Rumor has it that they are more abundant on the NW end of the Monument. I hope that is true.

Snow Bunting movement very weak in the month and Short-eared Owl completely absent.

Plants

The first week of September had the usual late blooming few plants (Arctic Daisy, Star Gentian) and insects, but frost and snow early in the second week canceled all plant growth and drove insects into winter modes. Dragonflies on the sixth and flying insects in the sunny times between snow squalls on the ninth were about it for September plant and insects.

We had only one short week of blackberry picking and no cranberries to pick. It has been a long time since we have had so few berries of these species. Luckily we have lots of salmonberries and some sourdock.

Fall colors were spectacular again and all at once before they faded.

Fish

Fish were the bright spot in a rather gloomy September '92 report on harvestable resources.

Akulaaq Lagoon closed quite early and could be expected to have trapped fish for harvesting in September but is a small system compared to Anigaaq and lack of rain made the water level extremely low. The fish trap ditch principle only works well when the enclosed lagoon area water level is higher than the ocean level. Anigaaq closed well into August and cultural history indicates any closure as late as August might have let most fish escape, the ripe egg layers and big males first. This discussion involves three species of whitefish: Humpback Whitefish, Least Ciscoe, and Bering Ciscoe.

First nets were set on the fifth at Anigaaq and confirmed the presence of fish, but no indication of the great catch that was to come later in the month. On the twelfth a huge catch, maybe tons, was made by seine at the outlet. Many more nets were set and several ditch traps were shoveled out in the last half of the month. Everyone got all the fish they wanted to work, including at least three bears. The fish were mostly, slightly subadult. The big egg layers had gone out but the next age class were extremely abundant. One "fly in the ointment" was the trail between Sisualik and Anigaaq. Extreme erosion from too many NW waves have eaten deep into the permafrost of the bluff just east of the outlet and left no beach to travel on for a short but impassable distance. A new trail, the one used as a portage up over the hill by salmonberry pickers earlier, had to be used and that is a tough to for people and machines when hauling heavy loads like fish. Fishing was still going strong as the month ended.

For a few that didn't have the machines and or the guts/strength to make the Anigaaq haul a pleasant surprise was waiting when they test netted Akulaaq. We were in that group and got great quantities of big egg laden whitefish from tending a single net in that lagoon system with an easy haul road. One bear helped us in that operation and we were glad when it froze ice thick enough to discourage him. We're not stingy but he is such a hog, eating meshes and all!

Ocean fishing was alright for Saffron Cod but extreme jellyfish conditions prevented our usual take of cod and herring. The jellyfish, like the shore, is the result of too much, too long, NW wind-weather systems.

People

Only local folks were involved in this September's harvest efforts. That is, people that were living for the month in Sisualik or the couple of camps west of Sisualik. In past years when fishing is good or caribou hit this side first, there would be

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numerous people from various communities in the region come in September by boat to get some of whatever for themselves. That did not happen this year for several reasons, two of the major ones being the early sharp freeze causing boating difficulties and caribou in all “other” directions.

Two kayakers from Greenland (Italian?) landed and spent the night at Sealing Point on the seventeenth. They spent the next night at the base of Sisualik Spit and the following day made their way into Kotzebue through dangerous sharp young ice. Anything for adventure!

A lot of helicopter noise disturbed birds and a few hunters on the third. Presumably survey crew working the area benchmarks for allotment survey.

The Noatak River started running ice on September 17 and effectively stopped boating early.

Walked across lake ice on trail to winter cabin on the twenty-third. The earliest ever for that happening. Dog team and ATV made crossing on the twenty-sixth.

Last year around this time it was Snoopy. This year I had to retire Buck on the thirtieth. Time marches on and old friends, human and other, will be missed!

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

OCTOBER

Introduction

I suppose October could be called “change month.” With us it surely is. We move from a cold wall tent to a warm house in a cozy spruce tree patch, far from the raging, growling flooding ocean beach. With some fellow creatures, primarily ungulates, quite the opposite circumstances develop. After a stressful spring movement, a hot and unbelievably stressful insect time in July, the coolness and lushness of August and September bring on a very docile time, at least amongst your own kind. Then in October all hell breaks loose. The rut is on! Changes in relationships between all members of the herd take place in October. Over the land and water, the snow and ice blanket forms. Whether a creature walks, runs, or rides, land and water have come to be the same for surface travel. That is October. Many other changes also occur, of course. Bears, Arctic Ground Squirrels, mosquitoes, blowflies, and some butterflies go to sleep. Strange that there seems to be no hibernating birds. One would think that even with wings it would sometimes be desirable to sleep away the short days, cold weather, and food shortages.

The first few days of the month continued the record breaking cold temperatures of September and ice on freshwater lakes and non-current areas was 6-10” thick by the third. A month of north wind ended on the fourth and SE winds of 55 knots on the fifth and 60 knots on the sixth brought back warm temperatures and caused us to overnight in the Dome (which doesn't flap like the tent and is on 3' pilings). The Weather Bureau didn't give us a lot of hope for the sixth. Their forecast continued a high wind warning, a blizzard warning, and a coastal flood watch. Point Hope and Cape Lisburne developed winds to 80 knots. Our high temperature for the month, 38° F, developed out of this on the sixth and seventh. Another flood watch and blizzard developed on the eleventh and after this one we felt we had seen the “face of the monster,” as waves with large blocks of ice lapped over the sod line. Fortunately, the water level began to drop just before things got out of hand. Winds got to 38 knots from the SE in the a.m. on this day and then rather rapidly switched to SW and then NW, while diminishing. A sustained SW wind at 40 knots would have pretty much done Sisualik in.

All this weather with milder temperatures undid all of freeze-up on saltwater. Back to square one. Freshwater lake ice remained thick in still water areas, and the snow build up made for good over land trails. Refreezing began with the wind switch to NW at the end of the last flood. We were first able to cross the sloughs and get up to the house on the fifteenth and were able to move on the seventeenth, one day

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earlier than last year. There was no further “heavy weather” in October, but we sure enjoyed our warm house and high elevation!

Our lowest temperature for the month was -20° F on October 31. Our first below zero temperature occurred on October 20 at -12° F.

Wildlife

The two most noteworthy October events are both negatives. We usually have considerable waterfowl into October (Tundra Swans, Wigeon and Northern Pintail). September's record cold temperatures froze most freshwater habitat. The second problem was no coastal migration of caribou through the Monument this year.

Mid October rough weather was no particular threat to wildlife except the floodwaters to microtines. A low water table due to the dry summer and a population explosion of voles meant that many had their winter storage and nests below October storm flood levels. Many perished, and gulls and ravens did well. The portions of Sisualik above floodwater level increased (doubled?) its vole population overnight. Safe storage of food, fish, and meat became a real problem.

Caribou

It was a sad October for people and caribou on the Monument. No major fall movement passed through in either September or October. Our hopes were up in the first week of the month when caribou were said to be moving toward our sector from both the west side of Noatak Village and the mouth of the Aggie (Agashashok) River. Though a few scattered small bands did get onto the Monument from these large migration movements, no real numbers did. The first caribou was taken near Sealing Point on the seventh, a young bull. On October 9, a number were taken at Jones' camp from a good bunch of thirty to forty. Of six large bulls taken, three were said to be “smelly.” (Rut begins early this year as expected, due to early freeze-up and a cold fall.) On October 10 two Sisualik boys got eight bulls in one small group. They gave most of the elders of Sisualik a whole animal. They were fat and very good meat, as they were younger bulls. On the eleventh lots of caribou were reported at the mouth of Noatak River, but were gone the next day towards the east. On the eighteenth several Sisualik hunters got their daily limit (5) from a single group of forty or so. We got four from a group of twelve close to the house on the nineteenth. After that only groups of two's or three's were reported, except on October 22 when I startled a bunch of forty or so, not knowing they were there. At this time of year and with good snow cover, few caribou in the hills behind Sisualik or Sealing Point have little chance to survive or remain undisturbed. Many eyes hungry for winter meat are on the look out. This year is

one of the leanest we've had for several years. Still, most families did get or were given a few. At month's end it is not clear if there will be overwintering caribou within reach or whether there are still caribou north of us that might yet pass through in November. They have before.

Moose

There were a good many moose at favored spots (high, south facing willow patches) early in October. For the first time in years (partly because of the missing caribou migration and partly due to good snow cover for vehicles) these "favored spots" were invaded by early local hunters and the moose scattered. We know of three killed and possibly some others, though not a lot. There was, however, a lot more activity in this moose habitat with machines than is usual for October. In several days of looking for a moose for winter meat twelve animals were seen. Only one was of interest and there was no opportunity to take it. No large bulls were seen and two cows were with calf. Our local moose are of different make up than last year when they were mostly large bulls.

Bear

A number of bear tales this month. The larger coastal bear of early fall and a smaller partner were still walking around the fishing area bluff at Anigaaq in the drifting snow on October 10. The Noatak Flats large bear was still making tracks in the snow on the eighteenth and for the first time after moving inland I ran across tracks of a small sow with cub, about halfway from our place to the Hatchery. They had been hunting voles and vole caches, though the droppings showed leaves and bone fragments from a very old caribou leg bone as well.

Have heard that they had some late bear activity around the Hatchery but haven't talked with those folks yet. We heave a sigh of relief as this month ends, for a season passed without bear or people getting in each others way too much.

Sheep

No sheep report.

Musk-ox

Also no report.

Marine Mammals

Though October is traditionally a boating seal hunting month, there was little activity out of Sisualik this year. The rough mid-month weather was not good for boating, though we heard that Kotzebue boats were out during good spells with some catch of Spotted Seals and Uguruq. We did see numbers of seals laying on the broken ice pans far out after storms. Close in beach waters were nearly free of seals this October. No special reason. When the Arctic Cod do not show up right after the Saffron Cod in early October there is no reason for seals to come into the Monument beaches. Arctic Cod did turn up around months end and Sealing Point folks did get both beached Arctic Cod and a few Common Seals and at least one large fat Spotted Seal. Two Spotted Seals were taken by a Sisualik boat on the second.

Small Mammals

Well, our population explosion of Voles (maybe both Red-backed and Tundra) got a boost from two floods before mid-month. The dry land area in Sisualik was very small and the voles from the flooded area had to move or perish. They did some of both and the number of voles per square yard in Sisualik got pretty high. Difficult to store meat or fish and we had lots of fish to store. We were surprised to find a similar situation at our winter house with what are probably Red-backed Voles - there are lots! And the things they will eat at high density is always a surprise. October 13 was the date the invasion was most obvious and numbers continued high through the end of the month.

Shrews were not much in evidence though they would or could be obscured by vole sign. There is occasional sign of Least and Short-tailed Weasel. Their sign will probably increase as voles decrease.

Only one located den of Red Squirrels so far. With the first bumper crop of White Spruce cones in years this seems strange, but in our marginal habitat for this animal it does make sense since there has been a gradual decline as spruce cones have failed.

There is some evidence of Porcupine presence, numbers probably slow to fluctuate.

Furbearers

Fair numbers of Red Fox young are about but with a small harvest of caribou in this area and much greater harvest in near by zones, concentrations may be greater in other places. High vole numbers and low fur prices will probably mean an abundance of fox for awhile.

Mink and Otter tracks have been noted in our creek by the cabin. The first otter passage was on October 27. Numbers are small, which is normal for here.

A single wolf, probably a pup of the year, makes tracks through here occasionally. He won't last long as snow cover gets greater or his curiosity around camps that have sled dogs continues. Tracks were seen on the twenty-ninth and several other times.

Birds

The super cold of the latter half of September had its expected effect. The first day that no Tundra Swan was seen in Sisualik was October 1. A few (less than 10) Wigeon, Northern Pintail and Scaup were noted on October 1 and 2.

Our two '92 fall camp birds, Sanderling and Jonathan Livingston Seagull, did well until they disappeared. Sanderling last seen round and plump from much camp scraps on the tenth. We bid Jonathan farewell on the seventeenth when we moved, leaving him sitting on his cold feet at his favorite perch on top of the swallow box. We will expect to see him next May.

A huge Yellow-billed Loon went lumbering by on the beachline after our first blizzard on the seventh.

A White Gyrfalcon was noted on the ninth.

As we moved to winter quarters on the seventeenth, two items, maybe three, stood out prominently. Our White Spruce trees were just loaded with golden cones, with many little winged seeds falling to the ground each day as the warmth of the sun triggered opening of the cone segments. Many Redpolls and White-winged Crossbills are feeding on these rich "pine nuts." The voles took its turn out. The other item of surprise, no Gray Jay around camp. No Camp Robber to steal fat and eat scraps. This is unheard of but was still true at months end. The third item may have something to do with the second. A Northern Hawk Owl spends several hours each day sitting in a tree top in the house clearing. We did not see this species last year at all.

We first set our Snowy Owl traps on the seventh. A week early because of the early fall, but didn't make a catch until the eighteenth. The owl taken on that day was an adult female and fairly fat. It made good soup to celebrate our move to winter quarters. We closed all of the traps next day as we might not be able to tend them daily from our new location.

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Two Boreal Chickadees seen on the twenty-sixth were the only birds of that species noted in October.

We ate Willow Ptarmigan on the ninth. These were a gift from a young hunter. Some Willow Ptarmigan are moving into the area.

There were few Snow Buntings this October.

Plants

Two outstanding items this October. Our already mentioned bumper crop of White Spruce cones and abundant seed after several years of hardly any will assure us of more winter birds than we have had for awhile.

Most species of willow have retained many more leaves than usual. Some of these retain their green color. All this is caused no doubt by our early and hard freeze. One wonders if there is harm done to next year's leaf and flower bud system. And if so, is there a nutritional lack in the new growth material that moose, ptarmigan and rabbits depend on so heavily?

It is also noted this fall that growth of new needle twig tips on White Spruce is very much less than the past several falls. Perhaps that is normal in years of heavy cone production.

Fish

The fishing for whitefish at both Akulaaq and Anigaaq was exceptionally good the first few days of October. We made the largest catch of fish in one net at one time that we have ever seen on the first. This was at the northwest end of Akulaaq Lagoon and the net was of 3" mesh. They were very large Humpback Whitefish which is a contradiction. Akulaaq usually has smaller fish than Anigaaq. Not this year. The reason is related to the date that ocean waves closed the outlets.

Catches of Bering Ciscoe, a very fat and somewhat rare whitefish, became great in nets set inside Anigaaq on the sixth. The day before, the fish trap area at the mouth of Anigaaq that had produced so much fish through September, was wiped out by tons of slush thrown up by the ocean waves and frozen in place. Only net fishing continued into October in that system.

Our last day of netting in Akulaaq was the tenth. Other than Least Ciscoe and Humpback Whitefish our only "other fish" catch for the full fishing time was one Bering Ciscoe, one Sheefish and one Starry Flounder. Remarkably few species for that system, from a historical perspective.

On October 21 several men from Sisualik traveled up across the Noatak River Delta to set sheefish nets under the ice at the N and NW end of Kobuk Lake. This long distance sheefish net tending was not possible prior to the snow machine era. The nets need to be checked every couple of days. The fishing there was good with some very large, fat fish. We were given several by friends.

One fisherman from the Anigaaq area late in the month set a net in the Kiligmaiq Lagoon and reported a good catch of big fish. He took the net out early because of the long distance of travel and already large harvest at Anigaaq.

Arctic Cod began to land on the beach in frozen numbers in the last few days of the month. Folks at Sealing Point picked up several hundred pounds.

People

Sisualik people and the other few camps west on the ocean beach had the usual late fall storm stress in early and mid October. Very strong winds with snow, flood, and huge waves took their toll in the form of sleepless nights and beach erosion. No real damage done again. It always seems to back off just before that happens! After the first storm on the fifth and sixth, the whole gravel area between water level and sod line was left filled with an iced slush wall a bit more than we'd ever seen before. The next storm on the eleventh took it all away. We thought for a while the giant waves would pile it all up in the middle of our camp like it did the gravel two years ago. It didn't, though it could have, for which we are very thankful.

First ice crossing to Kotzebue by sno-go from the north shore was October 19. First crossing from Sisualik was on the twenty-first. October 12 is the all time early date for that happening.

There was a last boat trip made on the ocean from Kotzebue to Sisualik and back on the twentieth.

We had our first visitors on the twenty-fourth and several rigs from Noatak village made it to Kotzebue on the same date.

On October 27, a light blue aircraft with white trim and very large wheels made numerous passes very low over a ridge to just SE of and/under Mount Noak. There were very strong winds blowing from the N and NW. The plane was in the area at least two different times of the same day. The action seemed unusual, to say the least, and the observer was not at an "oversight" location so it is not known whether the plane actually landed or not. The mystery is what reason the plane would have to be attempting landing in that location with those strong winds. (Caribou very scarce, it was out of normal Moose habitat.)

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See Journal entry of October 25 for a “gut feeling” trend that may or may not be valid.

To our knowledge only local living people spent time on the Monument in October. “Local living” means residents living on the land or in Kotzebue or Noatak.

For an additional story of Sisualik people's trials and tribulations don't miss Journal entry of October 14.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

NOVEMBER

Introduction

November just kind of “coasted” by this year. No particular extravagances. As usual, it is this month that you notice that the lack of daylight is becoming an inconvenience. You also notice, during clear cold spells, frost inside your dwelling or your clothing at weak points. Maybe even a spot on cheek or nose takes on the burned look that is the healing residue of frost bite. There are very long nights, a very bright moon, and starlight on those nights when the amazing Northern Lights don't steal the show; and there are “coal” black sun lights and sometimes a silence that is deafening. Sunlight has become a cold but welcome rarity on those days it is not weakened by clouds, fog, or drifting snow. Small things like voles, shrews, cones, and chickadees become important, as do big things like moose and Polar Bear. Out on the land a sound, any sound, becomes a big thing on some days; in contrast, in centers of human population only the most catastrophic of sounds can catch the attention. It is a strange thing, but a characteristic of November and the couple of months to follow: an intense storm-blizzard can be absolutely deafening and how the complete silence of a super cold and absolutely windless Arctic night can be equally deafening!

Temperature range for the month was a cool -28° F on twentieth and a near thawing 32° F on the eighth. An early cold spell brought temperatures to -21° F on the first and mid month cooling of a -24° F on the 19th. As usual, warm temperatures came during or right after high velocity east or south winds and cold temperatures develop most quickly after W and N wind systems. On the eighth, wind was from the E at 52 knots and 35 knot winds from the NW on the thirtieth were the high winds of the month. There were only four days in the month when the high for the day was not above 0° F. A taste of a midwinter cold spell, with ice fog, vapor, and silence came with the calm -28° F temperatures of November 20. Snow cover was approaching 24 inches in timbered areas by month's end.

Wildlife

Weather wise there seemed no problems for wildlife this November. With no major movement of caribou through the Monument in either October or November, no overwintering is expected. The lack of caribou did and is having an affect on local moose populations. The good snow cover and general lack of caribou nearby

Monthly Report

through November puts all the big game hunter pressure on moose. This hasn't happened in recent years till now, so the final outcome is as yet unclear. Much more effort and time has gone into moose hunting in our area than is usual for November, a time when large bulls are especially vulnerable.

Forage for both moose and caribou seems in good shape, as well as for ptarmigan and rabbits though these creatures remain scarce. There are some, though few, ptarmigan. Of rabbits, i.e., Snowshoe Hares, there is as yet no sign on the Monument.

Probably the wildest life among creature species on the Monument is occurring in the vole populations. They are extremely plentiful and may be composed of more than one species. Red-backed and Tundra Voles seem the most likely species. I have not yet got a satisfactory confirmation of species involved, though I have numerous specimens on hand.

Vole predators show some signs of increase over early fall.

White Spruce cones went through a period of being "iced up" after a spell of freezing drizzle, which may or may not account for the situation of less cone eating birds than we had predicted for this winter. They do become free to dispense their good seeds again with time and weather action. Some Redpolls and White-winged Crossbills have kept busy.

Caribou

As stated above, no real caribou migration passed through the Monument this fall in either October or November. A few fresh tracks were seen on various days more or less evenly scattered through the month. These were small groups of from three to twenty and their general direction of travel was from west to east. They were of mixed aged and sex. Report of those who caught a few was that they were not fat, but some were good meat. We have not heard by "grapevine" where or if there are any caribou overwintering in the NANA region.

Moose

The lack of available caribou has put additional hunter pressure on local moose. Early in the month, moose tracks were fairly easy to locate. By month's end it was difficult to find a fresh track within our orbit of activity. As for animals seen early in the month, only cow and calf combinations and subadult bulls with quite large antlers were noted. It is not known how many animals were taken in this east

portion of the Monument, though word of mouth indications are that there were several. Probably less than ten, though that is a guess.

We had not taken one at month's end, being too particular as to what kind we wanted. Have spent a good deal of time looking for the right one, probably more time in that pursuit than in any previous November.

Bear

No bear stories for November.

Sheep

No sheep or reports thereof.

Musk-ox

No Musk-ox news.

Marine Mammals

Although there were a number of people active along the coast, from Sisualik to Rabbit Creek, who would take marine mammals if they were around during November, we did not hear of much to report. This is not unusual for this month. Forming of new ice, lots of heavy slush, short days and erratic movement of marine mammal prey/food source, makes November a significant producer of marine mammals in only a rare year.

Small Mammals

This category is our success story for the month. We don't recall having seen mice (voles) quite so abundant in any month or year within the last 45 years as they were in this November 1992. The reason for the abundance and the ID of species that are involved is not clear. Red-backed Voles and Tundra Voles are the most likely candidates, with Red-backed probably the species of super density, both on the coast and in timbered inland areas. Geographic area involved with the high densities is quite large, as most camps on the north shore of Kotzebue Sound and

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Kobuk Lake report unusual numbers of these cute but troublesome little creatures. Three and four year cycles of abundance are mentioned in some studies of *Microtus* species. Both our winter and summer living quarters are vole proof but it was not always so when we lived in log or sod dwellings. This year those kinds of dwellings would be pretty exciting through the long nights. At population highs, voles are remarkably omnivorous in filling their dietary needs. Meat and fish and about anything else that humans eat seem contrary to their normally supposed vegetarian nature.

A resident (at winter cabin) Hawk Owl and a rapidly increasing local population of both weasel species are noticeable increases of animals that prey on voles. If only a pair of stray marten would pass through!

Red Squirrels are very scarce but present and will have to devise storage methods for their goodies to protect them from the horde of voles.

While snow cover was thin and all small mammals were making surface tracks, it was obvious that a number of species were doing well, including shrews and a larger microtine, probably lemmings. It is obviously a good year for these smallest of mammals. Grasses and their seeds had a very productive year. There may be a relationship.

A large pile of spruce twigs, cones attached, was found on the ground near a Red Squirrel colony site on the twenty-first.

Furbearers

Tracks of the lone young wolf were seen on November 13 and fresh Land Otter sign on November 23. The tracks of both of these animals were seen on a few other days in the month but as the month ended the young wolf's track hadn't been seen for some time. Weather and holiday travel limited visits into other areas and may be the reason more furbearer tracks were not seen.

Short-tailed Weasels have increased.

Red Foxes present, but no concentrations noted.

Birds

Two unusual happenings this month. We have still have not had a Gray Jay around camp, though some have been seen at other locations. Very odd. The Hawk Owl was absent most of the month too.

We hadn't seen a chickadee until the ninth and then on the eleventh, five began feeding around camp. On November 12, for the first time ever, a Boreal Chickadee came into the house through the window-ventilator to look for flies and other treats. It began at this point to come in every day through month's end. See Journal entry for November 16 for some comments on chickadee diversity.

Glaucous Gulls and Redpolls were seen near the water and on the beach in Sisualik on November 3 and there were yet many Glaucous Gulls in Kotzebue around the tomcod fishing holes at that time.

The Hawk Owl and many mixed flocks of Redpolls and White-winged Crossbills were around a lot through the first half of the month but thinned out in the latter half as some dirty weather took over.

Willow Ptarmigan have become a little more common through November but are still not up to normal numbers. A few Rock Ptarmigan were seen around the higher rocky knolls.

Plants

Visited the site of the farthest north colony of *Heracleum lanatum* on the seventh and found a real increase in size and number of plants. Check Journal entry for a little more background. This is a neat place and a very robust plant. They appear to have had a great seed year.

Our bountiful White Spruce cone crop was sealed in ice in some places for various lengths of time during the latter half of the month, after freezing drizzle, fresh snow, and icing. They are being freed up gradually as more warm temperatures and wind undo what prior storms brought on. This may be a reason for fewer White-winged Crossbills and Redpolls than we had early in November.

The presence of so many dried leaves on red willow (diamond leaf willow) has led to their plants being more and early depressed by heavy wet snowfall. This may have more meaning later on in the winter if our snow fall is excessive. Moose, ptarmigan, and rabbits, where there are some, could be affected.

Fish

Monthly Report

Net catches of Sheefish continued to be good at proper water levels with unusually big, fat fish. Kobuk Lake is the scene of this under ice fishery.

The Noatak catch of Char by hook and line reported unusually good for this month. Size was reported as unusually large.

Fishing within the Monument closed down in late October though some Arctic Cod might have been available on the ocean beach into November.

People

The first “straight trip” to town from Sisualik Point (the route of the normal winter willow staked trail) occurred on November 1. A well staked trail over the nine mile distance was in place by the tenth. The staking of these wide stretches of ice on the approaches to Kotzebue are very important life savers and the earliest they can be done after the ice is safe the better. The use of larger willows and routing the trail away from shallows that overflow easily and often are what makes a good job. This year it looks fine from Sisualik Point to Kotzebue.

We made our first ice crossing on November 3.

Quite an unusual lot of wood cutting by local camps from nearest timbered area was going on around the sixth. Reason? A need and snow cover enough for easy trail making. This puts additional cutting pressure on the closest groves to the ocean.

We had our first visitor from the north (the Hatchery) on the eleventh.

We used our “straight line” trail to town for the first time on the sixteenth. It was a great short cut, but our hopes that it would be good all winter were dashed when it overflowed much before Thanksgiving.

Journal entries for November 15, 17 and 18 contain moose stories and trend information that might be interesting.

Point Barrow sun set on the eighteenth and won't rise till late January. Don't envy them!

Rain gear would have been appropriate for our trip into town for Thanksgiving on the twenty-fifth. We didn't have rain gear on and got fairly wet from rain and melting fresh snow.

First rough bumps were noted on the trail on the twenty-ninth. Things were so smooth before that date!

By the end of November only five camps were still being regularly lived at by the owners in Sisualik. The one occupied camp between these and Port Site was in process of vacating as the month ended. That leaves a long stretch of uninhabited shoreline from the last house in Sisualik to Port site. It can be a long walk for a broken down traveler.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

DECEMBER

Introduction

The shortness of daylight hours is of course the “big thing” in December for those creatures, including humans, that live in the far North. The constant sunlight of June seems incredible from this point in time. Does it really happen? Oh yes, it really happens. In case you've forgotten, ask that bird over there, any one, or that clump of dried grass, or that willow branch. Better yet, if you could rummage through the leaves and litter of the marsh floor with sufficient knowledge and magnification you could ask an adult mosquito about sunlight, warmth, and June. He, or she, would probably tell you all about it!

December started off with a bang or rather a blow, here, this year. On the first, east winds on to 60 knots were reported at Kotzebue Weather Station, and we were probably not far behind here. The day before, northwest winds at 45 knots brought temperatures down to -21° F overnight and before the day was over they were back up to near thawing (28° F). This is quite a wide range for a December day which most often will vary 10° F or less between night and day temperatures. With this beginning it is not surprising that we can say December brought some pretty heavy weather. There were six days of winds to 40 knots or more, with snow enough to qualify them as days of blizzards. Calm, cold weather settled in around “short day” time and continued through Christmas Day. Temperatures of -40° F on the twenty-second, -42° F on the twenty-third, and -40° F on Christmas Eve provided a clear cool prelude to Christmas. Then, before New Year's, three days of winds in the 50 knot range, with snow, brought temperatures up, but at tremendous cost.

A high of 32° F on December 2 was a record breaker for the date.

Weatherwise this was a “wild” December!

Wildlife

A “wild” month for wildlife? Well, probably not. For one thing, we don't seem to have a real lot of any particular species of wildlife, with the possible exception of Red-backed Voles. There are still plenty of them and no environmental aberration of December 1992 is known to have impacted them in their snug world beneath the ample and growing snow pack. Probably because of their inflated numbers, **they** are the impactors of their winter environment. We will not see the results of that until next May or June.

For another thing, December '92 can be seen as more unusual in its lack or scarcity of creatures than in its abundance. There are no Varying Hares (rabbits, Snowshoe Hares.) There few, if any, White Foxes or Arctic Hares. Willow Ptarmigan, Red Squirrels, and Spruce Grouse are at low ebb. With these creatures in short supply it is not surprising that sightings of Snowy Owls, Gyrfalcons and Goshawks are at a premium.

Moose are the only big game animal whose tracks are seen occasionally. Even that sighting has become a rather rare privilege on the Monument proper, due to several reasons. The major reason is probably high local hunter interest after freeze-up this fall, when caribou were not locally available.

Many of the species named above in some Decembers are found in uncountable multitudes on the Monument. All creatures, except Red-backed Voles, are rather scarce this year. The reasons, for the most part hopefully, are natural high and low cycles and circumstantially, a point in time where an unusual number of species are at low ebb at the same time. Think of the times historically and pre-historically when these conditions began to build! Snow cover is also building quite rapidly toward month's end.

Caribou

None - not even a stray's tracks through December. The grapevine has it that the NWAH is still at peak numbers, but they dipped deeper into south and southeastern range this fall, though some have been reported to be returning to the near Selawik region not long ago. There are apparently lots of caribou, but not here.

Moose

Two antlerless moose moved into the “near house” area on the twenty-ninth. The snow in many places is up to and beyond their leg length. A spooked animal's track now looks like the ski tracks of a different species on the new snow slate. There is,

Monthly Report

besides these two partner bulls, a lone, lanky looking female with a very short “bell.” This animal will probably eventually become our midwinter meat, as there seems to be few other alternatives. As the month ended no opportunity to accomplish that goal had presented itself.

We have not traveled much through December, but in those areas we have covered there seems to be few other animals. There are said to be numerous moose in the Noatak Flat area just north of the Hatchery.

Bear

No bear tales. Nothing has happened in December to disturb these slumbering beasts.

Sheep

No report.

Musk-ox

No report.

Marine Mammals

Little or no effort was put forth to take marine mammals in December. The best that can be said for December is that, within the month, hunting daylight will begin to increase. It is also the last month that, by tradition, the seal hunter is forbidden to venture out on the landfast ice shelf. Beginning in January, the world of the Arctic Ocean ice fields opens its doors to the brave or hungry!

Small Mammals

As mentioned before Red-backed Voles continue a super high density, but snow cover by now has limited their surface showings.

The only predators to show increase at this early date in the vole high are the Least and Short-tailed Weasels. Their increase locally is probably due to moving into the area, or good survival of last season production.

We have noted only two Red Squirrel locations in areas we've been through this month. Those survivors should have a good winter with all the cones, and the

population should pick up next year. There probably are numerous other isolated individuals. December is not a month when Red Squirrels travel much. February will give a better picture of survivors.

Porcupines seem to be maintaining usual numbers, though most that have been seen are quite small. This would indicate a younger than usual population if the trend is valid throughout their range.

Furbearers

“Few” is word that best describes local furbearer numbers and this is a bit strange on the face of it. Though there has been little local trapping for several years, numbers of animals involved have shown no particular increase. Otter and Mink tracks have been noted a few times during December. Otter more often than Mink, though that may be because we haven't sought out “Mink places.”

Red Fox are locally scarce which is strange considering high vole populations.

White Fox have not made the “grapevine” at all, though there may be a few around. They often aren't noticed much in the dull light of December unless they get into people's possessions, which they invariably do, being very tame and not shy around human activities.

No wolf or wolverine tracks were noted during December though several wolves were said to have been taken north of the Hatchery.

Birds

December has come to be the time of the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count across much of the continent. We try to schedule a day within the limit (Dec. 17 through Jan. 3) and with help from a crew from Kotzebue do our bit for the project. Except for Prudhoe Bay our count is the most northern in recent records. After this year, though, we are pushing for a change of timing. We would like to do our Christmas Bird Count on the Fourth of July! We scheduled and canceled three different days. Blizzards, high winds and super cold temperatures brought on the cancellations. We finally did it on the last possible day, January 3, 1993, with a reduced crew of three. Many thanks go to the willing and brave folks from Kotzebue for their effort in standing by in case the weather would give us a chance.

We do have a few birds around this winter due to a good White Spruce cone crop and a good stand of *Elymus* and *Poa* grain heads on the ocean beach.

Monthly Report

A few flocks of mixed Snow Buntings and McKay's Buntings were using Sisualik ocean beach areas throughout the month. The presence of McKay Buntings this far north has just been established since we began our CBC. We have wanted to do a bit more of a project to better understand the movements of these birds through here.

Though our White Spruce cone crop iced up a couple of times during the month due to freezing drizzle, a few White-winged Crossbills, Redpolls, Pine Grosbeak and chickadees could be found in the various tree patches. On the sixteenth, a Black-capped Chickadee joined our three Boreal Chickadees at the daily back yard feeder tree and came everyday thereafter. We still have frequent visits from a wise and aggressive Hawk Owl. He actually made contact with a passing raven on the fourth. They tumbled half way to the ground before breaking apart. We think he is responsible for our complete lack of Gray Jays around our camp. It is the first time ever. We do see Gray Jays out and around in different areas, even a group of four on the twelfth. The Hawk Owl does ogle the four feeding chickadees when he is here.

Willow Ptarmigan tracks and birds are increasing slowly through the month.

One Boreal Chickadee continues to visit inside the house through the ventilating window each day. It checks out the saucer put out for the flies that Carrie might have caught since its last visit. It has a real passion for fresh killed or dried flies.

There is a strange raven dance described in the Journal entry for December 21.

Plants

Another visit to the *Heracleum lanatum* place on the fifteenth for another reason further confirmed the good growth, seed production, and expansion of this isolated colony of the "warm ground" plant. Wonder what animal or bird might make use of some part of this plant?

The storms of December are beginning to take a toll on healthy White Spruce saplings. I sometimes wonder if this is not one way northern conifer forests are wiped out prior to a new glacial epoch. During storms of very strong winds and heavy drifting snow with fresh snow, many tree branches of trees at various positions inside the groves gather a tremendous snow load on one side. Temperatures are usually quite warm and sapling trunks are supple-limber. They bend over, clear to the ground sometimes, breaking or being held there till later temperature drops permanently warp them that way. Seldom do they recover their upright stance, and eventually perish. That process has occurred in some of these December storms.

Check Journal entry of December 20 to see how July plants affect December life.

Fish

No fish news from the Monument in December except that we are still enjoying our great and abundant fish catch from the Monument last summer and fall.

Hook and line fishing through the ice will get underway again as the sun comes back in late January and February at various locations throughout the region. Noatak Village site for char, Noatak Canyon for Burbot, Kobuk Lake for Sheefish, and Kotzebue for Smelt and Saffron Cod.

People

In a way, December is kind of a people month amongst rural folks, and maybe as much or more so with urban populations. With short daylight, weather extremes, and general difficulties following outdoor pursuits, people tend to focus more on their family, neighbors, and interactions with other people. This culminates at the end of the month in what we call the Holidays.

Dog training, leading up to holiday and beyond, racing, travel between villages for shopping, visiting etc., puts many people at various risks whether that travel is by plane, snow machine or dog team in December.

On December 2 en route to town we met three large dog teams on the staked trail out of Kotzebue. More teams than we had seen in one day all fall. On the seventh two teams training for international races dropped in for a visit and brief rest for the dogs. On the ninth, with 24 hours of bright moonlight, heavy traffic by snow machines was reported on the coastal trail through the Monument en route to and from Kivalina and Red Dog Port site.

A tragic house fire in Noatak on the eleventh took the life of an adult man with some injuries to others also reported. During snow machine races at Christmas week games, another young Noatak man was killed. It was a difficult month for Noatak folks and their more distant families and friends.

Notes on journal pages for December 12 and 16 give some “short day” feeling and “blizzard experience.” In the entry for December 17, there are some comments on the “Goals of Resource Management” prompted by the current controversy over ADF&G Predator control plan and FWS Hagemeister Island Reindeer Solution. On the entry for the twentieth, with one hour and 43 minutes of sun up time, there are some comments on side benefits of sourdock picking last July.

Monthly Report

With all the rough weather of the month it was quite a surprise on the twenty-first to be able to report we actually saw the sun. Also reported on the same page is an unusual “dance” performed by a Kotzebue Raven.

On December 27, our nearest neighbor suffered a bad wrenching fall that caused a leg dislocation or fracture. It was quite “blizzardy” outside and a terribly rough and bumpy trail into Kotzebue. She was in much pain and a local EMT duo made a very brave trip to bring her stabilizing medication and get her to hospitalization the next day. It is small wonder that CB communications became a rural household necessity a few years back, in spite of the rather high cost of maintaining a continuously operating unit.

Four camps within the Monument boundaries have been continually occupied through the month. Three others completed three quarters of the month; a few camps were visited occasionally by owner with or without an overnight stay.

Traffic through the Monument, to and from Kivalina, probably increased some this December over last. Shopping in Kotzebue's larger stores and continued or slightly escalating affluence are probable reasons. On the other hand, local hunting sorties out of Kotzebue were few, due to absence of caribou and lack of interest in taking fur available, which was not much (Red Foxes). Early in the month, considerable snow machine seeking of moose carried on from November but dropped off as moose became scarce and daylight hours short.

A little wood cutting occurred - mostly by local residents. A few loads may have gone into town to supplement those houses that burn both wood and oil.

A few “overdue” snow machine travelers were reported during the month, but were located by CB or short successful searches.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JANUARY

January 1

Low -14° F
High 10° F
Calm, light N wind
Clear but clouding

The Christmas Bird Count - we did it! Today! A great day, a good group of people, a very few birds. Eight participants, six species, and fifty-one individuals: Common Raven. Willow Ptarmigan, Rock Ptarmigan, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Three-toed Woodpecker. Very fine weather for a day in January. Happy New Year!

Followed a fresh moose track today while on snowshoes and found it had been seeking out dwarf birch (*Betula nana* or *B. glandulosa*) There has been some speculation that they might not be able to tolerate this species because of its resin. This was a subadult animal.

Two stray caribou tracks moving east were reported by birders. Strays have been few this past month.

Our sunlight hours have increased to 2 hours 28 minutes.

January 2

Low -7° F
High 10° F
Light N wind
Cloudy, broken clouds

On way to get load of firewood just after daylight this morning noticed an antlerless moose standing in the creek willows not far up creek. Was not close enough to determine the sex. After cutting wood and getting the load home I snowshoed up to check out the moose. It was there and for awhile, but even at long rifle range (300 yards) it was difficult to note through binoculars the horn bases. When the animal finally turned so I could see his rear, the dark unbroken brown of the anal area indicated that it was bull. This was later confirmed with a little better light and especially when his left antler base showed plainly. It was still difficult but possible to make out his right antler base. It indeed takes time and care to distinguish between sexes on adult animals now that many bulls have dropped antlers. As noted before, we have seen a bull as late as March with an antler and two large adult animals both retained them just a week ago. A good look at the rear

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of an animal is the best indication from now on. Bulls tend to be nearly solid dark brown, broken only by a little spot of some what lighter anus. Females tend to have varying amounts but always larger areas of light or white coloration in the area just below the tail.

January 3

Low 6° F
High 18° F
E wind to 25
Cloudy

An aborted town trip. Weather forecast sounded good but weather seems to have a mind of its own. We got an early start but couldn't see anything down on the ice. Yesterday's and birder's trail wiped out by falling and drifting snow. Not much chance to intercept the staked trail.

Weather Bureau was right about the temperature, nice and warm. Continuous snow and strength of wind was their downfall. A lot of aircraft flying patterns or going around snow squalls.

Tried to find a fresh moose track during the rest of the daylight time but couldn't. Visibility very poor all day.

Our gas supply very low again. Generator eats lots these short days. Our sun up time approaching 3 hours!

January 4

Low -18° F
High 12° F
NE wind to 10
Clear but air misty

A quiet birthday. Sixty-five years seem such a very short time.

Sky cleared early today and temperatures dropped quickly. Our trees and willows ended the current snowfall time more burdened. The wind didn't get strong enough in sheltered places to dust them off. Moose feeding spots are recognizable from a great distances as dark against white where they have caused snow to drop as they browse.

January 5

Low -22° F
High 2° F
NE wind to 10
Clear, clouding PM
High humidity

A cool humid night; lots of vapor in the air since yesterday. Kotzebue and some other low lying areas had fog until afternoon. This is a “spring” kind of fog different than the “ice fog” around villages during extreme cold.

Well the “up creek bull” of last winter fame may be back. I observed an antlerless bull for some time this afternoon in the same willow patch last year’s animal spent three of the worst months of a bad winter (snow wise). Overall impression is one of looking at an old friend. His “bell” is pouch shaped, and if memory is correct so was the animal that was there last winter. He has been here all week now without antlers and may have been the “antlered bull” reported off and on all fall close to the cabin here.

We still have our lot of “fluffy” snow around on trees, willows, and wires. Tomorrow's forecast of fairly strong east winds may change that. We have more than 6" of it around, so that may again prevent our town trip. If so we may be short of reading or writing light by tomorrow night - gas and blazo both down to nil.

January 6

Low 2° F
High 18° F
NE wind to 10
Broken clouds

An unusual weather pattern that sure worked to our advantage today. You'll remember that we need to go to town. Fuel for lights, sno-go etc. Also some other things we've grown used to - milk, onions, etc. You will also remember we have lots of light fluffy snow all over. The kind that fills the air when the wind blows hard.

This morning at 6:00 a.m. the radio weather man reported that Kotzebue had E winds to 35 knots gusting to 45 knots. We had less than 10 knots. What to do? Sixteen miles separate us from Kotzebue, but man, with that kind of wind with this layer of swan’s down snow? Sisualik trail is staked but there is only nine miles of that. It was still gusting to 40 knots when we got there.

We loitered around till after 11 a.m. and then decided to load up and climb to the top of our hill trail. As I'd found out earlier, our lower creek trail was full of overflow water. When we got up there, wow! Lo and behold, the air was super clear, warm, and you could see more than 35 miles (Kiana Mts.)! Quite a pleasant

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surprise. There, as a misty line in the shadow of Lockhart Pt through the last two miles of ice to Kotzebue. We hightailed it to Kotzebue and made it in less than two hours. Remarkable! We did overnight though, since our business chores and shopping didn't leave time for a round trip.

January 7

Low 0° F
High 25° F
E wind to 25
Broken clouds

A nice warm January day. We love warm January days!

Made it home and found the first noticeable snow bumps of the year. Yes, the wind did get across here most of the way and piled the level "swan's down" into pillows but our tree patch willows and trees still hold their white burden. Lots of open water in Kotzebue Sound now. Seal hunting conditions becoming good. Wonder if anyone will go out?

Weasel and/or his family have taken over the camp. They are packing everything off. Don't know how long we can bear the luxury of a live- in weasel and/or his family.

Our creek has overflowed badly again, clear across and even the side branch that the trail crossed. That portion of our trail was unusable yesterday, though I could walk on it lightly this evening. The water is sandwiched between ice and snow, so it freezes to a weight bearing surface quite quickly even at a relatively warm temperatures like now. Our snow cover is building.

Found out we dropped our tied on jerry jug and a small plastic bucket some where between here and Kotzebue. Will make a gas run and try to find them tomorrow.

January 8

Low 20° F
High 24° F
E to NE wind 10-20
Cloudy, light snow

Another warm January day. My, this is great. When storm systems keep January temperatures warm we are lucky. The inevitable extended cold weather periods usually fall in February or March (if they haven't happen in December). The higher and warmer sunshine in those months tend to warm midday at least. There is no such warmth in a January sun.

I was able to find our back trail all the way to town and found our jerry jug with spout and strainer but no berry bucket. Carrie is not pleased. Found the trail bumps

in much smoother shape than yesterday. Continued light fresh snow with an east wind to keep the snow rolling tends to level up the snow surface.

The sky was cloudy covered today so we did not note the sun come into our window. We think it's due on the eighth, ninth or tenth. A lot of light fresh rolling snow obscuring trails quickly today. Our overall surface will have a new configuration when this period of mild snowy weather is over.

January 9

Low 2° F
High 20° F
NW wind to 20
Cloudy, fog

Another January day above 0° F. Lucky us. Yesterday and today the rays of the sun were again scheduled to enter our window and into the house. Cloud cover has prevented us from proving that the universe is functioning as scheduled.

Hunted around in the fog a bit today but could see only the up creek bull that was standing close to the sno-go trail. He'd better watch it. Some hunters might not be as choosey as us.

Saw a small, dark bird flying over open spaces today. No chance to binoc it. Probably a Redpoll or White-winged Crossbill, though it somehow looked different.

There seems no end to strange happenings. Today was “snowball day” in the mountains. Snow condition, temperature and wind came together just right to produce naturally, on the lee side of willow patches, perfectly rolled snowballs from fist to head size. Hundreds of them. I couldn't understand what I was seeing at first. The NW wind shook the snow laden willows just enough to drop a hunk to the snow surface which immediately started to roll, by wind push, and growing in size as it rolled on the sticky snow surface. Once the ball reached a certain size, the wind could no longer move it, and there the round balls of fist to head size stopped and stayed on the otherwise table flat level surface. In some cases, from a few hundred yards they looked exactly like a flock of 40 or 50 Willow Ptarmigan. Groups of the larger ones looked from a distance like a herd of Arctic Hare. I have not seen this phenomenon so perfect as today in 44 years of snowshoeing the Arctic.

One can only imagine what frustration might develop when the first Gyrfalcon, Snowy Owl, or Goshawk flies over this area. There are even little track like marks where the ball has rolled over the surface. Had I not caught on to what was going on before seeing a perfect “flock” I might have blasted away with the shotgun at 40 yards!

January 10

Low 4° F
High 14° F
NE wind 10
Cloudy – snow

A full day today and a rich one. Put on my hunting gear and tied snowshoes to sno-go about 11:00 as daylight was coming on. Though we have caribou meat from last fall yet, its cooked quality is no longer number one. With no chance of fresh caribou meat on the horizon and our inability to locate and take a female moose, the need for fresh meat has grown more intense with mid January approaching. After locating a couple of day old moose tracks on a mountain to the west I donned snowshoes and followed them. In thick willows I did come upon one which spooked from its bed without my seeing it. Followed for awhile, but turned off soon when long range open country loomed ahead with no sign of the alerted moose in it. Noted two other yesterday tracks headed down hill, and decided to follow for awhile before returning to sno-go. Caught a glimpse of movement in thick willows ahead. After standing quietly for a long while, a full antlered moose head came into sight only 200 yards ahead. Putting the binocs on him I recognized the antlers of the bull last seen back in November in the company of a young cow. Now excitement was building because this animal was close and I had been following two old tracks. I readied my rifle and waited some more. There! There! Another moose head with no antlers. I try to see through huge gobs of snow flakes. Is it really a cow or another antlerless bull? Can't tell for sure from the head. The animal turned sideward and some of the rear is visible. The backs of the legs up to the hips are light but, gad! I wish these snow flakes would thin. Oh, oh! Something alerted them. They are taking off! Last chance. Shoot or not? Through the scope sight the antlerless animal stopped to look back. The hair and color contrast looked real good. I fired and heard the bullet strike and everything got out of sight down hill and in thick willows. I quickly moved sideways to a higher point that gave better visibility. I saw one antlered moose looking back as if waiting for another. Then I saw another! What's that- it has a little antler too. Can't believe it! They are out of sight again. I run a little more sideways to get a good view when they cross a downhill clearing. There they are and yes two antlered bulls! Neither show any sign of being wounded. I've now decided there had to have been three moose. I turned back to look over the spot they had spooked from. There, laying in the willows, head buried in deep soft snow, was a dead moose. I walked up, admiring the bright coat of hair (often a sign of fatness) and reached down in the snow to expose the area between eye and ear. They were there - two healed round disks where the young bull antlers had been not too long ago. Too bad! Not what we really wanted. But wait! Another surprise. As I cut the skin over the brisket to remove the innards there is fat! More shows as the innards tumble out and I feel much better and Carrie will be pleased tonight!

We have not seen a bull moose killed later than October 1 with this much inside fat though we have not taken one this late in the year before. His condition probably reflects the good feed and mild winter temperatures so far. Taikuu!

Snowshoeing back the several miles to sno-go and just before reaching, it two large dark moose walking my way turn up above me into the willow thicket. I get out the binocs and find they are the twin antlered big bulls that were down near the cabin ten days or so ago. Lots of bull moose on this hill today! Four with antlers one without and one animal spooked without being seen. The “hill” involved is the one that has the large patch of golden willow shoots mentioned back in November.

January 11

Low 3° F
High 12° F
Light winds
Heavy clouds, light snow

Well, well the “sun in the house” date is well past and still no sun. We don't think the Universe has become out of sync, its just that we haven't seen the sun for a week due to cloud cover. Anyway its still warm and that may be better than seeing the cold sun rays at this near mid January date.

Snowshoe-packed the deep snow area trail into the moose meat today. Since there is an uphill haul I thought it better to let the packed trail firm up over night.

The two antlered bulls seen late yesterday went down to the tree the sno-go sat by all day yesterday while I was walking and did some bashing about. Strange behavior. Makes one wonder if they would have done the same to the sno-go if it had been still there. One fresh moose bed nearly in the trail up the mountain this morning. I saw one animal a quarter mile from the dead bull.

Only one fox track in the fluffy snow cover we have between here and moose carcass.

Another fine Saturday here around the house with no visitors. Out in the open has kind of been a different story though. Fog and light snow all day has made visibility poor and the day dull, especially for travelers.

January 12

Low 0° F
High 14° F
NW wind 10
Cloudy, light snow
Clearing late p.m.

Skinned and cut up the moose today. The operation turned out fine. No frozen places all the way around and meat has aged enough without freezing to be tender when cooked. At this season a moose skinned, cut up and frozen right after it is killed always turns out to be the toughest meat you could imagine. One can try different techniques of keeping the meat from freezing for several days if possible. This one turned out fine due to mild temperatures and fluffy insulating snow. There was much inside fat. We are fortunate and thankful.

Sky cleared and moon is small but bright tonight. Sure hope we get to see the sun some day. It must be quite high now. So long since we have been free of cloud cover. But then it will get cold! It is still January.

Several sno-go loads of family visited today. Good to see them.

A couple of ravens cruising through the mountains, very high, noted from their elevation the skinning of the moose. It appears even when ravens are scarce that there is very little that goes in their land that they don't know about.

January 13

Low -14° F
High 12° F
NE wind 15
Clear, some cloud banks

We missed the sun again. A cloud bank in the east hid it from us all the time it was up.

Finally hauled and cut up for packing the rest of the moose. Thanks to our mild temperatures and abundant fluffy snow all the meat remained unfrozen till today. Well-seasoned, it will be tender and tasty.

Several helmetted sno-go riders roaring around the county today. Two buzzed by the house without stopping. Rather unusual behavior.

Some drifting snow in the open today and more and stronger NE winds forecast. That's probably the end of our too fluffy snow.

It has been a full day. Ice haul this morning, sled load of wood by noon, and the moose by sundown. Some days are just naturally strenuous. Glad the temperatures are moderate.

January 14

Low 6° F
High 14° F
NE wind to 35
Cloudy

A very windy day but mild. Our fluffy snow is flying and white Christmas trees have turned dark. Our trails undergoing transformation again. There may be some rough snow bumps in places again.

Fresh Otter tracks on the creek in our tree patch again today. Ravens absent from around the camp for three weeks are back doing some checking I guess.

Open water reported close to the beach at the Army base at Cape Blossom, south of here. Will have to check Sisualik tomorrow. It could be open there too.

January 15

Low 0° F
High 10° F
NE wind 35, diminishing
Cloudy, snow

Nice mild weather again. Wonder if there is any connection to the El Niño effect recently mentioned as reoccurring again. Kotzebue does have a blizzard warning out for late this afternoon and evening. I think it has already happened here. Visibility very bad until late afternoon when cloud cover thinned, moon showed through, and a cooling trend began. Most aircraft out of Kotzebue canceled their flights.

Walked around a bit in our spruce patch during the storm today but nothing much of interest to report. Our fluffy snow is all in the creeks, draws, and low places now. Tussocks are exposed all over the country again. Strong winds (NE to 40) have whisked all the snow off of the flats and left few bumps in places. If we go to town tomorrow as planned it will be over a different surface.

Saw four Willow Ptarmigan out in the tussocks, looking for berries again I guess.

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January 16

Low -4° F
High 14° F
NE wind 15
Mostly cloudy

Town trip today. Good day for traveling. The trail, after the several days of strong winds that took away our large accumulation of fluffy snow, left part of the trail very washboard like. The Sisualik staked portion of the trail is good. The “cut off” portion of the lagoon out in front of Sisualik Point before we hit the staked trail is very lumpy. The trail over the uplands has a few bad bumps, but is mostly good. Our traveling up to this point all fall/winter has been, for the most part, over very smooth “high speed” trails. Now traveling time is much increased and a bouncing snow machine is harder to hold onto. Tired tonight.

Had a great short time in town. Lots of friendly people. Most back from holiday vacations.

Town Ravens certainly enjoying the mild and windy weather. They were the only non-human wildlife we saw today.

January 17

Low 4° F
High 20° F
NE wind 10
Cloudy, lt snow, clearing

A very pleasant January day today but we still haven't seen the sun coming in the house window.

Made a trip to Sisualik today and from our hill I could see the open water (ocean) lead line. There is a mile or so of shelf ice off shore of Sisualik and continuing down past the Ranger Station to the west. The edge continues in an east curving south direction at the mouth of Kotzebue Channel. It should have been good sealing today. Don't know if anyone went out.

There were fresh moose tracks on second creek crossing this morning. It had been feeding right in the trail. We may have disturbed it.

Lots of tussocks showing to the sides of our Sisualik trail of last fall. The packed snow on the trail shows plainly again. There are a few “washboards” across the trail, but its not bad.

January 18

Low 12° F
High 26° F
E wind to 18
Broken clouds

Finally! Around 1:30 p.m. today the broken clouds allowed the sun to peek through and stream, for a minute, sunlight over the back wall of our house. We have 4 ½ hours of sun up now. A pretty rapid increase from the 1 hour 43 minutes we had on December 20.

A good visit today with some friends.

Ran over the trail down to tide lands this morning. It is pretty good. Only two or three unexpected snow lumps.

With mild temperatures, the open ocean Qisuq (reflection of open lead on low cloud) showed plainly and indicates a lots of open water. Good seal hunting when the wind is down.

Was gone from camp for one hour or so this morning and on returning noticed lots of tree bark particles on the snow by our front door. A busy woodpecker, secretive too, did a big job in a short time. Seems too much for our Three-toed friend but what else would you expect at this season? Carrie didn't notice the happening from inside the house. Wonder if a Northern Flicker could wander out here at this season. Weather has been warm enough for more than two weeks. This was a warm January day!

January 19

Low 14° F
High 26° F
Light NE wind
Cloudy – light snow

Another warm January day. A quiet one too. With such mild weather we thought there might be some visitors but visibility has been poor and dog races in town may be a distraction. Our sunlight hours are working toward five hours now and still, except for one ten minute period, its rays have not entered the house. A rather strange development. We have gotten so comfortable with warm weather that now our worry is how hard it will be to get used to cold weather when it comes again, as it surely will.

There is a hint, this weekend, of some interest in fox trapping in the Sealing Point area. Don't know yet what sparked the effort. Red Fox seemed to be the target. Hunting and traveling will pick up some from now on as fresh meat becomes more attractive and lengthening daylight makes many projects more possible.

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January 20

Low 10° F
High 18° F
NE wind to 10
Cloudy, fog, snow

Very low visibility all day. Air full of small snow flakes. Very high humidity. Continued our great January warm.

Got a load of firewood today. Terry (the dog) went along and quite exhausted himself around the Red Squirrel colony. Fresh moose tracks in and out or out and back in to Sanninaruq tree patch today. Am curious to see what kind, but ran out of energy and daylight before I got around to looking him up.

A few ptarmigan track, several ravens, and our regular camp birds only sign of other creature life in our building fluffy snow cover (about 5" now). Another swan's down blanket of snow building all over the region for another stormy time when the wind blows.

January 21

Low -16° F
High 10° F
Light winds
Cloudy, clearing

Got to see the sun for a bit today but it didn't get in the house because of cloud cover again. With the partial clearing, our p.m. temperature dropped quite rapidly. The warm spell has been good and long. Wonder what's next?

Lots of bull moose in Sanninaruq spruce patch. One with small antlers was at the lower creek trail crossing. Two others, maybe one being the up-creek bull without antlers, and the other a stranger with small to medium sized antlers. None of them were very wild. The antlerless bull seems to have a right ear notched.

Five hours and three minutes of sun tomorrow. Things are looking up. It won't be long till we have 8 hours of sunlight again.

Got ice for washing clothes today. We haven't had our washing machine going since the move up here so we have a lot of work for it now.

A single fox, the three bull moose, and four Willow Ptarmigan were the only fresh tracks seen on the fresh fluffy snow.

The moon is a couple of days past full and the darkness after the southern sky lost the late rosy influence of the sun was intense. Black! Pale stars, no aurora just darkness. A difficult evening to walk home if you have been far on snowshoes.

January 22

Low -24° F
High -6° F
E wind to 15
Clear

Clear and cold and lots of sun. Daylight still showing in the sky after 6 p.m. this evening. Not much warmth coming out of the sun though.

Fired up the washing machine today. The project went smoothly. Doing laundry in the Arctic, in the winter is always a project. Melt ice for water one or two days in advance. Figure how many clothes you can get in one load and then how many loads you can do without a change of water. It is always a tiring day without a whole lot of feeling of accomplishment.

There seems to be more ravens around right now than usual for this time of year. Wonder what they know that we don't? Weather has turned clear and cold. Sometimes between now and the first of March we'll have our cold spell for this year. Hope it's short.

January 23

Low -26° F
High 0° F
Lt winds, NE to 10
Clear

Lots of sun but cool air. Pt Barrow saw three quarters of the orb for 45 minutes today. This is the first they've seen of it since November. We have over five hours now.

We still have a lot of fluffy loose snow around all over. Temperature keeps jumping around this p.m. Some breeze. Got a few pieces of ice today. Will give dogs a run.

No travel out from town today. Am wondering how the trail has come to be. Have some business errands to do. We will see if the trail is real bumpy.

Breeze picked up before midnight. Temperature at 11:30 p.m. was 0° F. It was -26° F at 8:00 p.m.

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January 24

Low -28° F
High 2° F
NE wind 15
Clear

Another town, gas trip. At the rate daylight is increasing our gas (generator) consumption will be dropping rapidly. However our snow machine use will probably use whatever gas is saved by shut down time on the generator!

The remarkable saga of the Common Raven in Kotzebue continues. We noted “pecking order” domination, selective separation (neatly done) of edibles from non-edibles, and an apparent salvaging of a curio for nest sight beautification.

A caribou rumor out of town - a group moving this way already past Kivalina into the Mulgrave Hills.

Snow seems to have been drifting all day over the trail in 2-3 mile wide zone from Sisualik Point up through Qikiqtaitchaaq. A mink and two fox tracks on town trail.

January 25

Low -28° F
High 4° F
NE to NW wind to 18
Clear

A very bright day today. Temperature fluctuated up and down as wind switched from NE to NW and back to calm. Dry, clear air. Refreshing - not like the stagnant air of dead calm cold spells.

Got load of fire wood today and saw a good number (8-10) of fresh moose tracks. Local numbers continue higher than October-November. There is even a few more Red Fox and Common Raven about.

Could see the “smoke” of newly opened lead through the old edge one and a half miles off Sisualik in an arc towards the mouth of Kotzebue Channel. Brave seal hunters would have a chance. Lots of oil on one adult Ringed Seal this month, the seasonal peak of blubber thickness. A remembered record is three 5-gal blazo cans full. It is at this time too that when one is out at the lead edge a diving water bird (small) is often seen when the lead freshly opens. It is a winter plumaged Black Guillemot that is, oddly, quite white. It is always a pleasant surprise to see this hardy bird in midwinter that is said to live in seal breathing holes in intense cold spells when no open water is present.

January 26

Low -15° F
High 2° F
N wind to 20
Clear, bright

Another quiet Sunday with no travelers or visitors. Pretty strong winds out in the open though it was nice inside our tree patch.

A report of two wolf tracks discovered by ptarmigan hunters north of Sisualik. They were not seen but tracks were fresh and the folks involved went home to pick up a second snow machine before following the tracks. The wolves made their way to the higher hills and rough country and were never seen.

A moose passed through our house area on its way down creek.

Temperatures continue mild for January, even though the sky has cleared, due for the most part to continuing winds.

January 27

Low -9° F
High 3° F
N to NNE wind to 20
Clear

Another fine bright relatively warm January day here in our spruce patch. Went down to Sisualik this afternoon after getting ice and firing up the wash machine again and it wasn't a good day down there! Ground drift and building, changing snow banks. Wide open spaces alright and plenty bright in the full sunlight, but pretty miserable ground drift if you have nowhere to go to get out of it. This reminds of how joyous it is to go into a snug snow house or even a tight, well set up tent after spending a January day out in the drifting snow caribou or hare hunting or Shee fishing. Under those conditions the small snow house or fired tent is a most valuable "mansion". Strange how circumstances can give a very intense value to the most common things.

Ravens still patrolling Sisualik, making food out of extreme conditions that other lesser creatures might, or are, perishing in.

Strong constant northerly winds have whisked away all loose snow, so all-winter's traveled trails stand out in bold relief. Any indiscretion you thought might be hidden forever under the snow is exposed for the world to see again.

Journal

January 28

Low -15° F
High -2° F
N wind to 20
Clear

A long period of northerly winds with relatively warm temperatures. Air clear and bright locally but lee side of mountain ranges and far distant visibility poor, due to constant sculptured snow drifts in mountains. Also very hard snow and ice, both very slippery.

A neighbor report of two caribou seen on the Monument during the same day as the wolf track report last week.

Our sun time up to six hours now. In past years of Hare presence/abundance, hunting would be on in earnest this week. Snow cover is usually substantial and increased sunlight make the less than white little animals easier to see. No track in our region is yet reported this winter. We are into our second decade of Varying Hare absence.

One of the most astounding things after 44 years residence in this region is the amazing abundance of the numbers of some species for a time (several seasons) and then the total or near total absence of those species. This of course is not apparent in a 5 or 10 year sojourn. One must wonder what a second 50 years would produce.

A tame fox turned up around camp last night. Rabies?

January 29

Low -30° F
High -7° F
N wind 15
Clear

An unexpected town trip. Strange story. A granddaughter won a snow machine door prize last night at KIC annual meeting. She immediately gave it to her grandmother. (Carrie) We went in to get it. Left our 2 year old one and made it home with the new one.

The week of hard steady N winds left the staked trail with spaced bad bumps but improved over the several mile stretch of lagoon that was worse last week. It is a good test for snow machine under- carriages, new ones; it is death to old ones.

Lots of vehicles and ravens in town. Noisy!

Our morning was quite warm again, with the late p.m. cooling off quite rapidly.

January 30

Low -36° F
High -26° F
Variable winds
Clear cold

Well we didn't quite get out of January without a biting cold spell. Our hope now is that it won't last long but that will depend on a benevolent low coming along from somewhere. It is likely that we are into our cold spell of the year.

A rather odd cross country Otter track near camp today. Odd because it did not drop into the creek as it got close to it but continued cross country. There was some soft snow bordering the creek and it may have wanted to keep traveling on the firm icy and hard snow where it could make much better time. It came from the west and appeared to be alone.

Our three Boreal Chickadees are still busy around camp but only short visits. The two Gray Jays show up each day. There are a few Willow Ptarmigan tracks around and a few fox. Moose around camp have moved off for awhile.

The sun came up in the “notch” (a break in the tree sky line through our NE window) this morning- a sure sign that February is close!

January 31

Low -36° F
High -28° F
Variable winds
Clear, cold

Six hours and 15 minutes of sun up today. By the end of February we will have all the daylight we can regularly use.

Sun in March again at 11:21. The way the sun rises and dips below horizon again at this season is interesting.

A missing person alert this evening caused a short tour of ridge tops to the west after dark to locate a light. State Troopers were alerted but because (I guess) of cold weather their small plane couldn't get in the air. They would in the morning at daylight. The only lights seen were those of the other searcher (the missing person's partner) and I and some Sisualik house light. Returning home after an hour or so we found out through the “skip” on CB that missing person had walked in to town. All's well that ends well. At these temperatures, without survival gear an even slightly injured person might have a tough night.

Another antlerless bull moose in between creek crossing today.

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Farewell to January. It is usually a good month to have behind you though one couldn't complain much about the temperature this year.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

FEBRUARY

February 1

Low -44° F
High -32° F
Calm
Clear, ice fog

Cold continues and intensifies. Great ice cutting weather. Cracks are wide and deep and huge chunks easily break off with a pick.

Got a load of wood and then a load of ice. The air much milder at higher elevations. At today's temperatures, exposed skin freezes quite quickly where wind presses is against it while traveling on a snow machine.

This is the third day we haven't used the generator in the a.m. The saving in gas is very good. Our local pump per gallon price is pretty extreme (\$2.00).

The long period of N and NE winds we have just come out of left pretty rough trails in the mountain/hill sections of the country. Tussocks tops and grasses visible again over wide areas.

A low approaching Adak this weekend seems our only chance on the horizon for a break in our cold spell. Ice really making in the ocean now. Unborn Common Ringed Seal pups getting big enough to be utilized (skins) if/when adult females are taken.

February 2

Low -45° F
High -34° F
Variable light winds
Clear

Groundhog Day and maybe the coldest day of this winter so far.

We'd given up hope of visitors due to cold weather but were pleasantly surprised when a lady dog musher dropped in for short visit and a warm up. She said it was fine weather once you get started. That about sums up our midwinter calm colds spells. Once you get started its alright, dogs or things mechanical.

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Several loud "sonic boom" like noises this morning just before noon. These noises are not uncommon at cold temperatures, especially when ground ice surfaces are free of nearly all loose fluffy snow. The noise seems to be generated by cracks forming in frozen ground and/or ice. The noise is spread over several long seconds, as if the noise follows the crack from beginning to end.

February 3

Low -46° F
High -14° F
Light winds
Clear, cold

Continues very cold though mid afternoon temperatures rose to near a -20° F.

This week several moose have moved into or passed through our creek drainage, all from the west side. No reason discernable.

A good flock of Willow Ptarmigan at our creek crossing. A fox or two walking around here and there each night. Ran the dogs around the track to thaw them out.

Just about sundown, a N breeze picked up to 15-18 mph and brought our temperature up to -16° F. This has temporarily broken our windless intense cold spell.

February 4

Low -43° F
High -26° F
No wind
Clear, cold

Yesterday's "warm up" was indeed temporary! As the wind died during the night our temperatures dropped back down to near -40° F in a short while and the days high around 2 p.m. hardly reached -20° F. Our cold spell continues and we would like to make another town trip.

Didn't do much outdoors today except chop wood and work up something for the dogs. It was a good day to be in a heated place!

Report on KOTZ from out of a whaling captain's meeting at Point Hope of Common Ringed Seals sinking when shot and some recovered ones in very poor physical condition. One hopes this is a nutritional problem rather than a virus problem like in the Northern Atlantic. Asked ADF & G Kotzebue to notify Lloyd Lowery, Marine Mammal coordinator. He was already aware and will probably get tissue/serum samples to check it out. The Eastern Arctic CDV problem in hair seals is new and very tragic.

February 5

Low -41° F
High -18° F
Calm, clear

Seven hours of sun today. Made a town trip. Saw lots of sun but not much warmth. It wasn't real cold though since it warmed to -20° F at leave time and was only -25° F at sun down when we returned. Trail is bumpy but not bad at moderate speed.

Had couple of good visits in town. Ravens active and vehicle ice fog present.

Our tree patch or open water ice fog, if one must have ice fog during intense cold, smells better than the town variety. A thin silver of New Moon tonight. The calendar says "new moon" begins on the third but we never really seen the thin silver until we are a couple of days into it.

February 6

Low -36° F
High -20° F
N wind 10
Clear, some clouds

The weather man promise milder temperatures and even some new snow for tomorrow night. Hope it happens!

Our sky has been so remarkably clear for so long that the several strings of clouds that drifted in from the west just at "moon time" seemed to belong somewhere else, something foreign to our clear yellow world.

Our "sun up" time passes seven hours today. If the weather warms a little, more outdoor time will be in order.

February 7

Low -30° F
High -3° F
E-SE wind to 25
Cloudy, light snow

Our cold spell is broken and old, dirty, tracked up snow getting a new clean surface!

Went after a load of firewood today. Inside the trees very nice with milder temperatures and light snow fall. Outside, on the open tundra, ground drift is pretty

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heavy. Couldn't see the surface bumps and holes due to whiteout, though distant (5 mi.) landmarks were visible.

Red Squirrel group still around and moose tracks of various ages. Willow Ptarmigan tracks seem to be building again. It would be a great and timely change of diet to have some. Will probably try that on the next clear day.

We're glad to have the clouds and milder weather but we missed the bright sunlight we have been having. Guess you can't have everything.

February 8

Low -14° F
High 16° F
E-SE to 55 (Kotzebue)
Cloudy, blizzard

Storm! The a.m. warm, with some snow and wind. The p.m. closed down with blizzard - unforecasted. A "shut down" day for most surface creatures. No visibility.

When major winter storms are infrequent, as they have been so far this year, one tends to forget that one of the most worrisome things that happens is the way that the air fills with snow particles. Not just drifting snow on the ground or even at higher levels but wherever air goes, it carries some size of snow grain that can at some temperatures adhere to most things it comes in contact with. Extreme drifting snow conditions around spruce patches often cause such a great load of snow particles to build on the lee side of a young tree that the top bends over to the ground. Last year there were many spruce destroyed by this means. Today's blizzard has begun the process again.

February 9

Low 16° F
High 22° F
SE wind 35, down to 15
Cloudy, snow, fog

A blizzard warning forecast this a.m. Canceled a couple of hours later. Another instance of weather bureau a day late and a dollar short? Several people unaccounted for around the country last night, but most that we know of turned up today.

Our three dark little Boreal Chickadees turned up healthy and hungry this afternoon as the wind dropped.

Six foot deep drifts were reported on Kotzebue streets and airport this morning. Both Kotzebue and Noorvik airports were opened around noon.

Seal hunting conditions may be good during this coming week. Wish somebody from here would go out to assess the health of our Ringed Seals.

Word got around yesterday of the first fatality of a local hire Red Dog worker. It was a young man from Kiana.

February 10

Low -10° F
High 22° F
Light winds
Clear – fog

Another town trip. Saw the sunrise on the trail but very heavy freezing fog rolled in on a light SW breeze and we had to travel half of the lagoon (2 mi.) to the stake trail totally blind. We luckily hit one willow stake and then crawled into town trying to see the next stake down the line. I often couldn't see from one stake to the next, so the fog was indeed very thick.

Town showed the usual signs of “a day after blizzard.” Our side of the bay has smoothed out a lot from the pre-blizzard rough trail. We didn't expect fog today and it kind of spoiled the beauty of the sunshine after storm sequence. It did clear on the home trip though, and the small world of fog expanded into a very bright, bigger than life world of mountains, trees, and blue sky.

The first quarter moon rose this morning before the sun. Odd?

There were fresh Otter tracks on town trail today.

February 11

Low -2° F
High 20° F
E-SE wind to 35
Cloudy – snowstorm

Storm ground drift and fine snow in the air all day. Not much accumulation. Warm, no sun.

Coming down with light flu again. Hope it stays light.

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A seal hunter out overnight. Search was beginning but he was reported found in good shape this evening. Glad for that. It was quite foggy yesterday and wind, with drift, began during the night.

Our snowbanks inside the trees growing quite rapidly. Hope we don't reach last year's monstrous amounts.

Our tame fox around again last night and probably tonight. Also a live housefly buzzing around the house tonight. Haven't seen one for a month.

Moon not showing tonight again either. Heavy cloud cover is keeping all our new found "natural" light from us. Generator on all day today again.

February 12

Low -7° F
High 18° F
Light winds
Broken clouds, no snow

A very fine day, but the sun never came fully out. We would have felt its warmth if it had.

The flu is there, but tolerable this time - to this point.

Got ice this morning and rode up the Hatchery trail to see how bad it is snowed in from the last two blizzards. Went as far as the Miluraq ridge. Some parts of the trail are discernable and not too rough from sculpted snow. The next segment - the low valley north of Nasuqsaugvik - will be soft the first time over, but old trail base may be observable.

There was a small male moose in the last willow draw the trail crosses under Miluraq Peaks. He moved quite rapidly to the shelter of the trees, in spite of the growing depth of snow.

No other tracks were noted on our fresh snow surface except the very small, light made tracks of our increasingly tame camp fox. This may be a White Fox and based on past experience, it may or may not be in the early stages of rabies.

Oddly, the lack of wolves amongst the current high density of musk-ox on Banks Island (Canada) is said by biologists there to be due to a large White Fox population and the rabies epidemic that periodically sweeps through them.

February 13

Low -8° F
High 16° F

Light variable winds
Partly clear, patchy fog

Made a short run along western ridges and later tried to get through the squirrel colony wood hauling trail. Not much to see except the land, mountains, and open ocean lead from the western run.

Found that the squirrel colony patch of white spruce collects much of the snow from an easterly blizzard. Is that why the squirrel colony is there? Heavy early snow might offer some better protection from Short-tailed Weasel or, in years past from Hawk Owl and Great Horned Owl? Anyway, the heavily drifted snowfall out canceled out my wood haul trail. Will need to seek out a new area of wood.

Lots of fog patches around this week. News of a first Bowhead taken from St. Lawrence Island is the earliest we have ever heard of.

The flu and the nightly tame fox are still hanging on. Both are still tolerable.

The Sealing Point family has made an early return. Some may take up living there. Most will stay in town for another month or so.

Only five teams scheduled to run the Coastal 250. Lots of prize money. In its short existence it has gained a mean reputation as a tough race.

A few minutes short of eight full hours of sun.

February 14

Low -12° F
High 6° F
N-NW wind 10
Cloudy, fog

Cloud cover continues to be a mixed blessing. It is keeping temperatures up through our usually coldest time of the year but at the same time prevents a full view and full light from our now eight hours plus sun period.

Valentine's Day has for some reason brought considerable bird activity to our backyard. Shortly after sun up this morning, the whole gang of our wintering birds was very active by our door step. A male Three-toed Woodpecker was stealing the show with his loud tapping and flying bark chips. Three Boreal Chickadees and two Gray Jays seem to have been intimidated by the hyperactivity of the Woodpecker and increased the tempo of their search and feed activity.

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Made a trip to Sisualik today and found the trail in pretty good shape, as was the camp site. Hadn't been down that way since the last two blizzards. Snow cover very thin on upland tussock areas. No indication of other living creatures in sight on the trip. The weather fine for sealing and we expect to hear from family at Sealing Point as to how that goes.

Rumor trickling down from Kobuk Lake that some Shee hooking is being done. Success rate for time/energy put in has not yet come to our ears. Fresh fish would be a treat now. Brought the ice auger up from storage for that purpose.

February 15

Low -20° F
High -6° F
N-NE to 10
Clear

Lots of bright sun today especially at higher elevations. Low lying areas seemed misty or smoky due to high humidity. Mountains and high tree patches crystal clear, bathed in bright sunshine.

Coastal 250 took off this morning at 10 a.m. and first two teams were in Kivalina by 7 p.m. Six teams are entered and six places pay. The weather this year near perfect for the first time maybe, in this young race. The route through the Monument altered this year in order to avoid Sealing Point houses; instead, it follows the normal trail back against the face of Ingitkalik and overland to the old Aitilik shelter cabin.

Ran over our trails today both towards town and halfway to the Hatchery on the north side. Very beautiful landscape but no apparent living creatures. Fresh tracks of any kind scarce, though search in proper habitat rather than on overland travel would disclose existence of a few fox, weasel, moose, porcupines, squirrels, mink, and otters.

Woodpecker didn't come back today, though the fox was again around last night.

No seal hunter report yet.

February 16

Low -30° F
High -14° F
Light winds
Clear

Cold, calm weather again, but not yet to extremes. All week the Weather Bureau record daily lows out of the past have been in 50 below category.

Another quiet sun here. Rumor has it that some Shee and Pike hooking is going on in or near the Kobuk Delta area. Also some caribou are said to have crossed from the Buckland side to the Noorvik area. These rumors unconfirmed, but could explain absence of weekend travelers around here.

Also a pile of dog races this weekend. The amount of prize money available for race competition is truly amazing. Coastal 250 came off without a hitch. They had the best weather and trail conditions ever and records were set.

Midwinter lack of animals and birds has kind of settled over the Monument. This doesn't necessarily mean there are less creatures but less activity, due to snow cover and a kind of "settling in" where each creature has found the best of suitable habitat available and will make do there till milder seasons develop. Much the way our three Boreal Chickadees, two Gray Jays, and weasel have done around our camp. The late coming fox seems to have the same idea.

No fresh moose tracks have been made in our near area since the last blizzard.

February 17

Low -30° F
High 0° F
E wind to 20
Clear

A town trip for gas and mail. Trail is in pretty fair shape. The world was quite bright today. The wind swept out the cold weather moisture, smog, and Arctic haze to give us some crystal clear air and brightly lit snow covered mountains.

Makes one think of getting out of storage and making a trip some where. Sheefishing? Caribou hunting? Seal hunting? Rabbit hunting? Char Fishing? Wolf, Wolverine hunting? All possible someplace in the region.

Town kind of subdued after a weekend of dog races and a Monday holiday.

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Today's low of -30° F occurred after midnight. It warmed towards morning and was quite a pleasant -10° F by sunup and 0° F by noon as wind picked up. It was a real pleasant day in the mountains.

February 18

Low -14° F
High 9° F
E wind to 25
Clear, high clouds

A nice mild but windy February day.

Didn't stray from home today. Mail call yesterday brought a good deal of material for consideration. Everything from international park projects to update on Trumpeter Swan restoration progress report.

A raven did drop out of a tree to the ground to inquire of the reason for the lack of outdoor activity around here.

February 19

Low 0° F
High 8° F
E wind to 25
Partly cloudy

Ice haul and wood cut today. Nice mild temperatures but continual ground drift over most open range. Great wood working day within spruce groves.

One large fresh moose track through the wood cut area.

Several small flocks (10 to 20) of Willow Ptarmigan about today. Haven't seen that many ptarmigan for a long while. Also noted several places where many spruce cones have been knocked from trees. This a sure sign that some cone seed eating birds have come by but have not seen which kinds yet. (White-winged Crossbills, Pine Grosbeak, Redpolls?)

February 20

Low -17° F
High 6° F
NE wind to 15
Clear, few clouds

Another beautiful day in Sanningaruk. We were joined this morning by two bull moose, apparently rather lately rid of their antlers. The bases show very

prominently and are reddish in the sun. These two partners are very likely the two mature antlered bulls noted at various times through the fall and winter.

On a trip a couple of miles down creek today was rather surprised to see additional moose sign that seems to add up to at least three that have been in that area of thick willows and trees for sometime. I did not search them out to determine what kind. Bulls still carrying antlers may be getting quite rare.

Also saw two active Red Squirrel dens today. With this mild mid February weather, their activities are now plain to see wherever they are present.

Local seal hunters from last week have a pretty poor report. One broke down and required search and rescue activities in near blizzard conditions. One saw several seals, but most were the smelly large male seals that are strong at this season. The one he did shoot covered with slush and was unretrievable.

February 21

Low -22° F
High 2° F
N-NE wind to 18
Clear, a few clouds

Made a trail into the Noatak River just below the lower canyon (Amaktut). This is an old trail we used to use when we had dogs to go ice fishing in February. Just broke the trail today. Hope to go fishing soon. This is the nearest historic spring ice fishing location to our camp. The target fish are tiktaaliq (Burbot) a fresh water cod with a tasty liver. Other fish (Northern Pike and small Shee) are sometimes taken. The fishing site is right under a rocky bluff with an outcrop which, in profile, looks like a woman with a baby on her back. Stretching the imagination a little further, one can see an Indian on the opposite side of the river crouched as if drawing his bow. Legend is made anew while you sit over your fishing hole, made through 4 to 5 feet of ice, working your jig line and waiting for a fish to grab your lure.

Haven't been over that trail for a few years and was surprised to see many new large buildings on the bank of Noatak River.

Also crossed the "new" Hatchery to Kotzebue trail through Jones' camp. A few moose tracks in willowed draws.

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February 22

Low -32° F
High -2° F
N-NE wind to 10
Clear, cold

Fresh fish today! It seemed a little cold for fishing and once I got to the river site it took awhile to get the auger going. It did finally fire up and the finished hole through 56 inches of ice was finished still sooner that it would have taken with our old arm driven chisel (tuuq).

Was surprised to get a good sized Burbot in less than 5 minutes and another shortly after.

This was the first hole made this season in this fishing location. Fishing catch varies each year but this seems to be one of the better beginnings. Within two hours, four Burbot and a whitefish were taken. Three other Burbot were lost on their way up through the ice. The long line (2 1/2 fathoms) allows for loss of lightly hooked fish. The water under the hole was a bit too far from the edge.

The weather being so cold and having enough fish to cook, the return home was made early.

This single fishing hole was made in the main Noatak River channel edge on the north side of the river at Amaktut.

There were numerous moose trails at “Big Island.”

February 23

Low -36° F
High -2° F
NE wind
Clear, cold

Lots of sun but little warmth. “Smoky” long distance visibility typical of twenty below or more. Temperature did come up around 1 to 3 p.m. at our elevation due to sun. A north wind to 15 or so kept the temperature up as we head into a welcome warming trend.

A note of interest on stomach contents of Burbot taken yesterday. Since the fish were taken from an ancient traditional fishing site, the question arises as to why the overwintering fish are consistently there instead of scattered throughout the Noatak watershed. Speculation has run from underwater rocks (from canyon walls, which might supply limited shelter for small prey) to lake-drainage outlets which would trickle out some small prey fish and cause a winter concentration of predator fish.

Burbot are early winter spawners of the year. A concentrated food source would seem to be the most logical reason. The stomachs contained some far gone whitefish bones and a mass of dark, unrecognizable, and deteriorated kind of stuff. On magnification, this contained some small ribbon like stuff that resembled a 3 to 4 inch eel like creature. The most likely species would be the Arctic Lamprey. We may have accidentally discovered a spawning/rearing location on the Noatak Drainage for the Arctic Lamprey. Such a discovery might be of importance to major Chum Salmon and Char populations in the watershed.

February 24

Low -16° F
High 10° F
N-NE wind to 15
Clear

A beautiful bright and mild day. We could use a month of this kind of day!

Made trip to Sisualik to get a load of old hooks and papers to do some sorting. This is necessary every few years but I've given up hope of discarding much. I always intend to though.

Two bull moose around again today but they split this time. One went up the creek, the other down. We continue to have more moose in the area for this late date than maybe any other recent year.

Carrie may be home from Anchorage tomorrow as a town trip is in order. We then may get upriver for some more fishing if this kind of weather holds.

February 25

Low -24° F
High 5° F
N-NE wind to 15
Clear, clouding late p.m.

Made the trip to town, the “better half” is home and glad she doesn't live in Anchorage.

Lots of moose tracks on the Kotzebue trail! (None on the ice but to the limits of land on this side) No tracks have been noted in this area earlier this winter. The early spring dispersal of moose is on. Each year in late February or more usually in March, one begins to see moose tracks out in the wide open spaces - away from usual thick willows or timbered areas or creek-river margins. Don't know the reasons for sure but it seems like a kind of “moose cabin fever” movement. They do go back to usual feeding areas, but just seem to want to run around out where

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the snow has blown away - where snow cover is shallow - sometimes even out on sea ice. This characteristic seems to occur twice annually, probably for different reasons. June-July is the other "wide open spaces" time for local moose.

Biggest rumor in town is that one of our neighbors is Sisualik had a catch of fifty Sheefish at Theodore creek (north Kobuk Lake) yesterday. This is enough to stampede every Shee fisherman in Kotzebue. Hope it builds to a real good spring Shee hooking scene. Haven't had a one for a few years.

February 26

Low -6° F
High 7° F
N-NE wind 15
Cloudy, light fog, snow

A lot of helicopter noise this morning. Visibility poor with light snow and fog patches. The craft made several east-west passes and south to the Sisaulik area several times. The noise was audible for nearly an hour. No hint of the reason for the activity. No visible markings on the craft.

Wood and ice haul today.

Sno-go traveling hard work today due to surface white out. Hard or impossible to see/follow trails and every bump comes without warning.

Our sun up time 9 hours 43 minutes now!

February 27

Low 0° F
High 10° F
NE to NW wind 15
Broken clouds

Distant visibility a little better today and old trails easier to see. Carrie having trouble with her arm and didn't feel well enough to go fishing. Maybe tomorrow.

Got a few more sticks of firewood from Red Squirrel colony patch. Snowshoed around a bit and found a few squirrel tracks but nothing like earlier. They have either dispersed, perished or do some long midwinter long sleeps. It was noted early on that cones were nearly absent in that patch and feeding activity seemed pretty exclusive to new growth tips of spruce boughs.

Ravens and Gray Jays showing some increased interplay between individuals. The slight hint of spring is in the air with nearly ten hours of sunshine.

Our camp weasel very brave today too. Seems to be packing off enough stuff to last all summer.

February 28

Low -10° F
High 4° F
NW wind to 20
Cloudy, snow

Very fine-grained “cold weather” snow all day and more into evening. The air full of snow all day, but little accumulation. Very squeaky when you walk. With a dog team and sled with iron runners this is the very hardest dragging. Water coated wood runners are the solution. (Were the solution - plastic may now be the better solution, when available.)

A visitor down from the Hatchery today.

Rumor of a few caribou on Noatak flats. Also a report of one Kotzebue trapper with a winter catch of seven wolverines from the upper Noatak.

Visibility down to 1/2 mile most of the afternoon and evening.

February 29

Low -35° F
High -10° F
W-SW wind 10-20
Broken clouds, fog

February came in cold and leaves the same way. In between were some pretty good living temperatures, especially for February, which is looked on somewhat fearfully as our coldest month. The brightness and even warming of midday hours by the sun is always a welcome characteristic of February.

It is confirmed - some good catches of Shee are being made at Theodore Creek. (north shore of Kobuk Lake)

The west wind and “cold weather” snowfall have left a different pattern of bumps across the trail. Let the dogs run down to the grass lake to pull some for their bedding and rode around their exercise track. Didn't see any kind of fresh track on the new snow. Creature movement at a very low ebb again.

Our sun is now up for ten hours as we head into the west wind month of March. If older folks wait with some concern for the expected intense cold spells of February, in March it is west wind periods that are a threat to man and beast. We got a taste

Journal

of that today with temps dropping rapidly to the twenty below zone late this afternoon and probably on down to thirty below before morning. Outer Capes (Tin City, Point Hope, and Point Lay) have chill factor temps to -80° F this afternoon.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

MARCH

March 1

Low -38° F
High -18° F
Clear, ice fog, calm

An intense cold morning but bright days now. During the course of a short walk down to the creek this morning there were two surprises. One was the lack of disturbance of surface snow - only one lonely Willow Ptarmigan track. The other surprise - a large Otter track headed upstream. The lack of other tracks (moose, vole, weasel, fox) shows the midwinter lack of creatures, or lack of movement. One of the most infrequently seen tracks on our little creek are otter tracks. Strange and somewhat revealing that Otter tracks are the only ones showing today. This is revealing in the sense that so often the unexpected is the reality in this region. It is no wonder the Weather Bureau has a tough time.

A Sunday without visitors again. Weekend cold spells and storms have been the rule so far this year.

A town trip for Carrie's medicine tomorrow.

March 2

Low -46° F
High -20° F
Light winds
Clear, ice fog

Made the town trip and it was a cold one though we had sunlight over and back. It was a rough one too. The SW winds after "cold weather snow" the other day left many "washboard" fingers across the old trail. They were somewhat soft (not "hard-sculptured") but made a continually lumpy, tiresome, slow trail.

This intense cold belongs back in February. The hope again is that it won't be too long. Old dog Buck may not make it through till warm up. Growing old in northern latitudes has some inconveniences that don't exist down closer to the equator.

Shee hooking news continues good from Kobuk Lake for last week. We may get up there soon.

Journal

March 3

Low -46° F
High -22° F
Light N-NE wind to 10
Clear, ice fog

Intense cold continues.

Caught two Boreal Chickadees foraging in a white spruce cone cluster, which seems to solve the mystery of what has caused a local fall of cones especially noticeable after each new snow fall. No Crossbills, Redpolls or Pine Grosbeaks. Only our three resident Boreal Chickadees!

The burial of an old timer taking place today at his camp on the Noatak Delta.

Took dogs for short run today and got some ice.

The air pretty sharp on exposed flesh with a little wind to force it. No relief in sight yet from the weather man.

Ice really building in the ocean. They may have a good sealing-whaling season this spring.

March 4

Low -47° F
High -26° F
N wind to 10
Clear, ice fog

Our cold spell continues. The low in Kotzebue last night was within three degrees of the all time low for this date.

A fuel plane crash at Selawik last night and delayed garbage pick up in Kotzebue may both be blamed on the extreme cold weather.

The air over the whole country has the “smoky look” of intense cold in bright sunshine all day.

Wind against bare flesh cuts like a knife.

We are lucky to be caught up on most traveling needs and can be inside where its a little warmer. In the past, when living by dog team, a late intense cold spell like this was pretty mean if you didn't have a back log of dog feed, and often you didn't by this date.

The weatherman does give hope for a break by Friday afternoon. Hope he's right this time. Our outdoor activities pretty much on hold. Ambler had a low of -55° F last night.

March 5 Low -42° F
 High -16° F
 Calm winds
 Clear, ice fog

Our intense cold moderated a little today and is forecast to do a little better tomorrow.

Another town run for us tomorrow. Carrie may be headed for Shungnak and Friends Church Midyear Conference next Wednesday.

Made a run to Sisualik today and saw a good many fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks though I didn't see any birds.

Far distant visibility poor again today due cold weather moisture in the air.

Fox tracks present but scarce.

No fresh Moose tracks close locally since the last fresh and blowing snow period. The dispersal mentioned around that time may be a clue.

March 6 Low -41° F
 Winds less than 10
 Clear, ice fog

Town trip. The promised warming trend very, very slight and the trail just as lumpy.

A good bunch of fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks on town trail and even a group of very tame birds on our way home. Town Ravens appear more aggressive towards each other. More vocalization too. Three-toed Woodpecker did a lot of work on tree front of the house while we were in town. Lots of chips on the ground.

A recent moose track on the lagoon edge amongst the ptarmigan tracks.

March 7 Low -34° F
 High 4° F
 NE wind to 15

Clear, thin clouds pm

Our warmer spell gradually developing. A rather nice afternoon with air clearing over distant mountains as steady though light winds replace the stagnant situation which our intense cold had brought about.

One week of March has passed already and the thin sliver of new moon was visible last night.

March 8

Low -8° F
High 24° F
N wind to 15
Cloudy, snow

We have warm air and new snow. It is so comfortable to be outdoors! Our slow warming trend accelerated this afternoon after steady snow this morning. Clouds broke up some in late afternoon and the sun came out a few times. The warmth, after extended cold, is so delightful. Everything is so much easier to do.

Another quiet Sunday. Visibility was poor all morning until late afternoon so potential visitors were once again given a pretty marginal traveling weekend.

The rumored trapping operation on the upper Noatak continues to generate some pretty good catches of wolverine and recently a trapped wolf. Number of wolverine maybe up to ten. This operation is based in Kotzebue.

With few visitors and little traveling ourselves there is not much out of the routine to report.

One of the greatest problems of people that live somewhat isolated from others is the times when everything is done and no new problem or happening has yet occurred. With most younger, modern people the time becomes unbearable - boring. Those that have been with it for awhile often have a particularly good feeling for the time of inactivity - they know it will not last long.

March 9

Low 9° F
High 24° F
NE wind to 18
Clouds, pm sun

Light snow and fog patches as we headed for Amaktut and the Burbot fishing grounds this morning. Turned out to be a fine, warm, sunny day up there. Fishing was not very good, though we did get a few small ones. Total catch: ten Burbot, one Sheefish, and one Humpback Whitefish.

Very little sign of creatures on the way. Old tracks of moose, ptarmigan, and fox. The only fresh tracks were of mink (one) and fox (two or three).

The -40° F cold spell of last week only increased the ice thickness by an inch or so. Made four holes this time. The one in place of first hole (made on first trip) produced most of the fish. One hole very close to a cut bank had very deep water. Over three fathoms.

One can start thinking of seeing a Golden Eagle or even a Rough-legged Hawk around the rocky peaks up that way soon. We didn't this trip though.

March 10

Low 12° F
High 31° F
Snow, cloudy, fog

Town trip in the blind again. It always seems such a long stretch to the stakes by "dead reckoning." Mine were the only tracks on Sisualik trail today. Coming or going.

A very warm, sticky, and poor visibility day - whiteout.

March 11

Low -16° F
High 18° F
W wind to 15
Snow, cloudy

Iditarod won by Martin Buser in record time early this morning. Some six hours was cut off of Susan Butcher's old record. A rather remarkable race when compared with the last several years.

Journal

A full twelve dog team with five loose pups lost at Callahan, headed toward Kotzebue this evening. This side of portage, south Kobuk Lake, Buckland trail. A nightmare loss for the owner and nightmare potential for the finder.

Another real white day. Snow in the air, some blowing and drift, as wind switched to west and temperature dropped rapidly.

The sun broke through an hour before it went down and revealed a new surface as it was a couple of days ago when the sun shined last.

The camp fox came close in again last night. The hope again is that he is just tame or brave and not sick.

We heard in town yesterday great catches of good sized Sheefish were being made at Theodore Creek, north Kobuk Lake. Some large fish in such shallow water that they are difficult to get started up into the hole in the ice.

Carrie has gone to Shungnak for midyear conference and I have orders not to go fishing till she gets back, so guess I'll cut some spring firewood.

Snow cover is building. Nearly 4" of new stuff to blow around from yesterday and today.

Fresh tracks will be easy to see under the sun - if there are any.

March 12

Low -30° F
High 4° F
E wind to 15
Some clouds, sun, fog

A quick surprising low last night and a rather quick re-warming afternoon today. Sun and wind change from west seems to be the causes.

A very small moose wandered up the creek today. Obviously a small short yearling. He seems to know his way around but probably not long separated from his mother.

The three Boreal Chickadees returned today as did the male Three-toed Woodpecker, with a nearly pure white back. Haven't seen any of them for awhile and as the sun broke through the clouds it almost looked spring-like around here.

Got a load of wood from former Red Squirrel colony site and didn't see a single squirrel track.

A fox and several Willow Ptarmigan the only other markers on the fresh snow tablet.

March 13

Low -10° F
High 12° F
NE-E wind 10
Sunny, snow showers

A changeable day, from very dull with poor visibility to very bright with miles and miles of white on the horizons.

Made a visit to grass lake for dog bedding and to firewood haul site for load of wood.

Marginal flying weather parts of the last three days have been a hindrance to the large number of people that would like to be in Shungnak for midyear conference. Also a problem for Selawik Refuge Moose Survey.

I must make a trail to a better dry wood cutting area for coming spring-summer woodpile. This chore, though necessary to our lifestyle, gets a little harder to do each year because choosing a location condemns that site to extreme heavy cutting by others that come along in time to make use of the firm trail into the soft snow of timber plots. One is torn between the recognition that others also have a need for firewood and the rather complete alteration those "others" will cause to a quiet dense spruce patch. Sometimes the inevitable destructive action one human must take is hard to live with when the consequences are so obvious.

March 14

Low -12° F
High 10° F
N-NW wind to 10
Cloudy, some sun
Snow flurries

We are gaining snow cover slowly but rather constantly. There is now some 4-6" of very loose snow over the whole area. It has blown just enough to roll it around loosely, no drifts nor piling in sheltered places. Forecast is warm and more snow.

Explored the near mountain areas today for dry wood source. Didn't locate anything suitable. The air and timber was full of loose snow making it difficult to locate clumps of dead trees from a distance with binoculars.

Little sign of living creatures. A few foxes and ravens. No fresh moose sign.

Journal

There was a very long weasel under the house and about camp today. Weasels of that size must be a terror to Red Squirrels.

Most regional activity centered in Shungnak (Midyear Conference), NANA Day, and Sheefishing in Kobuk Lake this weekend.

March 15

Low -6° F
High 25° F
Calm
Snow

Well, it is the middle of March. Only another month and a half to enjoy our inland house, spruce tree patch and then out to the wide open spaces again.

It is remarkable how bird-free the air has become again this winter, especially when contrasted with the multitudes of late May and June. We have, of course, our three camp chickadees, Gray Jays and a weekly Three-toed Woodpecker, but one may walk or travel many, many hours and many, many miles seeing only an occasional Common Raven. What would we do, in the north, without those rascals? It is hard to believe that somewhere on earth this morning the air is virtually filled with bird wings and bird noise. Our air has been pretty much filled with snow all day. Very straight down, very silent snow.

We are only ten minutes short of twelve full hours of sun above the horizon. Half and half. Before long we will have a full 24 hours of sun and a very lot of birds - if they have found refuge for the winter.

March 16

Low -2° F
High 10° F
Light W wind
Snow, fog

Another full day of snow-fog to increase our loose surface snow cover. We have a real ground storm potential now for the first day the wind blows more than 20. Seven to eight inches of "swan's down" all over.

With Friends Midyear Conference and today's NANA meetings ending, the very poor flying weather into Kotzebue and Shungnak will cause some delays in people's plans. Fog and icing with poor visibility has been a part of every day for some time.

Followed the short yearling moose tracks today for awhile (two days old) to see what food choices it made. It seemed most attracted to the lowest, shortest *Salix*

March

lanata Richardsonii tips and pretty much ignored the taller, thicker *S. alaxensis*. This animal is very small. It must be a female calf possibly not long separated from its mother. I have not seen it yet and it seems to have passed on up the creek.

The loose snow is getting a bit much for the snow machine. A lot sifts through the engine area.

The only “outdoor” creatures noted today were our two Gray Jays.

Probably another town trip tomorrow to pick up returnee from Shungnak.

March 17

Low -4° F
High 12° F
W-NW wind to 10
Cloudy, snow, fog

Whiteout this morning. Aborted town trip down at lagoon edge. Later CB reported Shungnak planes had gotten through and family boys would bring the traveler home. Very deep soft fluffy snow so I ran over the trail down to the lagoon again to firm it up a little. Met them down there.

Two moose tracks on lower creek crossing moving up towards the house.

We sure have the makings of a fine wild storm for the next wind in excess of 20 knots. This eight inches or so of light fluffy snow extends all the way up the Kobuk and Noatak drainages and both up and down the coast. Wind from any direction will lift it pretty high.

Lots of fat caribou reported in the upper Kobuk (Ambler-Shungnak). Conference travelers from Noatak hauling some all the way home by sno-go; fresh meat is scarce there again.

Sno-go wolf catch reported high from residents of Shungnak-Ambler. Our local lack of overwintering animals always makes far away places so attractive!

Hope it quits snowing soon. Fat caribou and moose at this date gives hope of a good winter for those animals if something unusual doesn't fall on us. The extended clouds and snowy weather has kept temperatures mild.

March 18

Low -2° F
High 29° F

NE wind to 15
Broken clouds, sun!

Oh my, what a beautiful day! Not only some blue sky and sun, but warm sun. Its the finest day of this late winter-early spring that the sun has gotten warm enough on dark things to melt, actually melt, the white snow flakes around the edge.

However, another phenomenon was apparent today. With the light fluffy uncompact snow the moose have lost their legs. Two large bulls wandered by on their way up the creek and only the bodies showed above the snow. This came as kind of a surprise. Up to this point in time the snow had hardly seemed much more than ankle deep. The extreme fluffy nature of what we have now, much of it held up by willows and grass give the "swimming" impression of legless moose moving along. It is no impediment to them yet, like it was last year. That may come later as this amount blows around and more snowfall follows. April is not far off.

We have 12 hours and 10 minutes of sun now and a good deal more daylight before and after sun up.

The sedentary nature of moose is again apparent for this season. Several to many days may be spent in or on one small willow plot. We have three sharing our spruce patch again.

A third Gray Jay has turned up with much fighting and chasing.

March 19

Low 22° F
High 38° F
N wind to 15
Cloudy, snow

A very warm day with dark surfaces and roofs dripping. It has been awhile since our daily high has been above freezing.

A discovered tragedy today. I was making a load to take down to summer camp where I needed to shovel snow off the tent roof. On moving an empty barrel under our outside window I noticed what seemed to be a small ball of feathers. When I picked it up I found it to be a frozen Boreal Chickadee. Probably one of our faithful all winter group of three. Thawed the little carcass and skinned it to find out cause of death and found what we expected. A bloody bump on the skull. Our glass windows on rare occasion and with the light just right, mirror a reflection that looks like the window isn't there - only a grove of trees to fly through at great speed. It has happened before and will probably happen again for we don't know what to do about it. Such a sad ending for a friendly little creature that has come by for a visit

nearly every day for six months. One of the little tragedies, unintended, that tugs at the heartstrings and can sometimes unexpectedly return to drain further remorse from one with a sensitive spirit towards all creatures both great and small. Have not seen the remaining two birds. It is quite possible the new third jay had something to do with the small bird flying into the window as it is a very aggressive bird.

Three moose and twenty Willow Ptarmigan in our spruce patch today.

This warm air and moderate wind will be compacting our too fluffy snow, which is probably good. The surface is quite level all over the country right now before the next wind piles it in bumps and lumps.

March 20

Low 6° F
High 29° F
SE-SW wind to 15
Cloudy, snow

Another day of light snow and whiteout conditions. Was surprised today to be roundly scolded by a Red Squirrel while trying to get the skin off a frozen Caribou. I could hardly believe my ears since I hadn't seen a track near the house for several months. He didn't stay long but I wouldn't be surprised if he is back again. Some day it would be interesting to mark a few of our local squirrels to better understand their local movement. Seems like they move about a lot, maybe when they don't have much opportunity to store lots of good stuff.

Our local Willow Ptarmigan flock seems to be growing too. All this on the first day of "official spring."

The local mink has made an "up and around and back down" circuit again in the last few days.

Moose seem to have moved on up the creek since I couldn't locate any. Their access to food is so much better this year than last year by this time.

One Boreal Chickadee ate at the fat for awhile today. Don't know if he is the only survivor or if the other just didn't come around.

Journal

March 21

Low -12° F
High 14° F
SE to NW wind 15
Cloudy, snow

Another day of poor visibility with light snow and fog. Not much additional accumulation but we already have a foot of loose snow over everything.

Was surprised today by a very well marked Gyrfalcon. If I were a ptarmigan I'd have been out of luck. He flew directly overhead at about 30 yards. Haven't seen one for ages. This one was quite sharply marked. Very likely an adult slated for his nesting site. We were both looking for ptarmigan. I didn't find any. Hope he had better luck. The Gray Jays were quick to sound the alarm.

Later in the day a flock of eight White-winged Crossbills landed in two adjacent spruces with cones.

A great bird day today compared to the rest of the winter. Family has moved back down to Sealing Point house. With April fast approaching various camps will again begin to come to life.

Woodcutting will also get underway. The very soft snow and continued fall has not been good for that operation this month so far.

There have been only two constantly occupied camps this side of Port Site this winter. We are one and Sisualik has one. (That is, within the Monument Boundary.)

March 22

Low -28° F
High 6° F
Clear, clouding pm

A very bright "full of sunshine" day. Quite a wonderful change. Quite a change in temperature too. As the sky cleared late last night the temperature went down fast and far for this date.

Late this afternoon another surprise - three Boreal Chickadees were busy at the fat feeder! Was the "reflecting window" killed bird then a stranger that didn't know his way around? Or did the "trio" gain another recruit? One of the three has gotten quite vocal as usual with calendar spring already on us.

A couple of visitors stopped by for coffee. They were headed up to make a wood haul trail. They have their work cut out for them with all this soft snow. They also seemed interested in taking a moose. The season is not scheduled to close till the

end of the month. From August 1 till March 31 is a very long time to be fair game in the NANA Region in the year 1992.

Travel on the coastal section of the Monument is picking up with a family in residence at Sealing Point; another family has returned to Sisualik clan camps.

Forecast is for more snow and a return to warmer temperatures. We need to make a town trip again for mail and business. Hope the weather permits.

March 23

Low 0° F
High 28° F
N wind to 15
Cloudy, fog, snow

Well, weather permitted the trip to town but just barely. We were able to navigate by the sun on our way over and our deep grooved tracks on the way home. Otherwise the trip was kind of like traveling inside a paper bag. Visibility a few hundred yards and every thing white: surface, sky, and straight ahead. Light snow has continued all day again with little depth but adds to the great lot of loose snow that has fallen in the last ten days. Probably every person in the region that has to travel is hoping, like us, that we are home when the wind becomes strong enough to put all this snow in the air.

Enjoyed the great black birds of Kotzebue again. Looks like their activity is reflecting our nearness to the month of April.

March 24

Low 16° F
High 36° F
N-NE wind 15-20
Cloudy, snow
Fog, drizzle

A day of thaw. This winter has been a bit unusual in that our warm spells, though frequent, have not reached an above freezing temperature for long. In most years at the end of a southern weather system we have some hours of thawing temperatures and or rain. Late last fall we had an overdose of that, but as we got into winter, temperatures stayed in the twenties or lower. Today then, has caused trees and willows and roofs to drip and eventually icicles and snow crust to form. If the thawing or rain is enough, it will negate the heavy snow drift we anticipated from the 8 to 10 inches of soft fluff on the surface.

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With the rain and warm wind one could almost imagine hearing a gull or a goose. Only one more month to wait.

With fresh soft sticky snow all over today, there wasn't much outdoor work that it was reasonable to do. Even snow machine travel is difficult and hard on machines due to "snowballing" on track and engine-clutch heat.

March 25

Low 0° F
High 20° F
N-NW wind to 18
Cloudy, snow, some sun

Cooling air and some late afternoon sun through broken clouds promise a break in our long "snow in air" period. Visibility was still limited through most of the day.

A couple of visitors dropped by today and surprised us with a little caribou news. Earlier this week they had taken three from a small group they found a little NW of Sealing Point. Their thought was that these animals had overwintered in that area between Rabbit Creek and Sealing Point. That is, of course, quite possible, since the only travel that far west of here all winter has been on the coastal trail and these animals would have been unobserved inland. The hunters were headed down that way again today but weather may have deterred them. No hint of numbers of animals involved except "a small bunch" and obviously more than three.

It was also rumored that a Kivalina-Kotzebue traveler reported seeing three Polar Bears west of Sealing Point recently.

Now with an occupied camp at Sealing Point and these "grapevine" news items getting around when the weather improves, there will be hunter activity down that way. Both marine mammal sites and land areas will be more thoroughly scrutinized.

March 26

Low -30° F
High 8° F
W wind to 15
Clearing, sun!

Finally a bright day. Some moisture in the air so mountains and back country hazy.

Made a trip up to Igaichaaq to look for firewood cutting site. Very deep soft snow all over. Another late season time when all animals very vulnerable to mechanized man.

There are very few creatures in our area now to make a track in the new snow.

A several mile walk through white spruce revealed no hare, no squirrel, no weasel, and no moose. People living "off the land" as in the past would again have a rough late winter/early spring time of it. If marine mammal hunting or Kobuk Lake Sheefishing were not good then, starvation would spread throughout this region.

There was a real sharp drop in temperatures between 8 and 10 pm.

The three Boreal Chickadees were around again today so the unfortunate window bumper must have been a stranger.

March 27

Low -33° F
High 2° F
NE wind to 10
Clear

A cold night, but the sun warmth after 10 a.m. was great.

Two large moose came up the creek and passed during the night. A few more days and they will be legally safe till August.

Finally settled on a place to cut spring firewood. Our choice will be a disappointment to those that might come from behind seeking a good trail to lots of easy dry wood. We will cut and pile into decks before making a haul trail. The dry wood is from porcupine killed trees in the small grove SW of here called Napaaqtuuraq. It is a small patch of trees and cannot really afford the excessive porcupine kill. There is however, a strong growth of new trees and if porcupine numbers drop and people don't haul off green timber the grove will come back into better shape. As a user of dry firewood one never quite knows whether to rejoice or despair when porcupine numbers are high. One also wonders about checks and balances. Where White Spruce is relatively rare the destruction of one or a bunch is a matter of concern.

Our last night low not far from the daily record low for this date. It looks like April will come in cool!

The visiting Red Squirrel approached camp again today from the north side. This is a very cautious creature. Maybe the last of his kind in this patch of trees.

Journal

March 28

Low -22° F
High 16° F
E wind to 15
Cloudy, light snow
Sun late p.m.

Finally a start on spring-summer wood cut. There seems a real heavy die off of white spruce in the hillside copse I've decided to work on.

Why the die off? Well, in speculation, since trees of all ages are affected the most likely possibility seems to be initial injury of tree bark by porcupine then infestation by bark beetle. Very few of the dead trees are completely girdled by feeding Porcupines. Our recent summers of extended very warm spells may be a positive factor for beetle development. Porcupine populations may be high due to lack of human predation and absence of more natural predators. There was a much greater harvest of this animal historically.

Saw a very large Gyrfalcon while working down there today.

Fresh moose tracks behind the house today.

The lone squirrel approached the house again today from wherever its headquarters are.

March 29

Low -6° F
High 24° F
Broken clouds, sun!

A quiet Sunday with absolutely beautiful weather.

Two adult bull moose were feeding intensively up creek at 2 p.m. in the warm sunshine. I would expect them to be laying down in the sun. They look in very good condition. Even their coats are quite bright and shiny.

Some 45 years ago a family member with his family wintered in this same patch of trees and the greatest of family catastrophes came on them about this time of year. The sight and sign of three bull moose in this patch today and the hundreds of pounds of meat they represent made me think of this incident. Their dogs starved. It was just after the great reindeer herds had disappeared, moose didn't exist in the region yet and caribou through this area were not yet known in numbers in this century. Varying Hare were absent and the people were living on a few ptarmigan taken in snares. Stored food (dog and human) had been used up. There was no open lead in the ocean and Kobuk Lake with its potential for sheefish is too far to travel

with starving dogs. Tough times, when one considers the abundance of so many species now, and in just the past twenty consecutive years.

The moose converting the creek willows into such an abundance of meat is truly a remarkable thing. Quite a boost in quantity, at least over ptarmigan, of meat produced primarily from *Salix* sp.

Three Boreal Chickadees, three Gray Jays and two Common Ravens are still our end of March bird count.

March 30

Low -12° F
High 24° F
NE wind at 10
Few clouds, sunny

A very easy and fast trip to town. Maybe the easiest for this winter. Confirmation of a small group of caribou north of Sealing Point. Maybe not more than ten or so.

Weekend sheefish catch of two hundred or so at one of the Kobuk Channels. No update report for north Kobuk Lake (Theodore Creek).

March 31

Low -24° F
High 12° F
N wind to 10
Clear, fog patches

March fades away in the lamb mode.

A whole flock of birds past the window this morning. More than ten, probably Redpolls. This is a first for the “new” bird season and timely.

Firewood cut today at Napakturat. This small grove of white spruce and alder, the closest to the ocean in the whole NANA region may in a few years fade away. Its geographical position makes it especially vulnerable to the dynamic balances involved in a plant species (white spruce) living on the "edge" of its range. How long has it been there? Some of the trees have very thick butts. Have not tried a ring count, but would expect some are 400-500 years. It has been heavily used by creatures, including humans, probably for as long as the first trees were large enough for a fish pole (drying racks) or a spear handle. How many Varying Hare and Lynx cycles have waxed and waned, both creatures finding food and shelter within its cool or warm, depending on the season, close growing trunks. Moose and

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bear, Gyrfalcon and Northern Goshawk, White-winged Crossbill, and Pine Grosbeak, Horned Owl and Hawk Owl, an island haven of habitat at the very edge of truly barren lands for those creatures. Why do I suggest now that its time of existence is limited? Change in dynamic balance, porcupine, spruce beetle, human impact of a different nature. The several loads of dry wood I will take from there are the product of many hundred years of growth. I wonder at the impact of removal of that much detritus, its effect on the health of the grove.

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APRIL

April 1

Low -30° F
High 10° F
NE wind to 15
Clear – cold

Wood cut continues almost without audience. Two Gray Jays and a lone raven inspected the operation. No indication of their opinion.

Last night Kotzebue recorded a low equal to the all time record for the date.

Point Hope whalers lack open water. They hope for a NE wind to open a lead for beluga and bowhead. They have yet to clear a trail through the ice to the potential lead.

Though the nights are quite cold, the sun warms things up pretty well by 10 a.m.

A fair sized mink has been exploring around the Mills Valley area.

April, so far, doesn't seem much different than March. The promise of return of some species of birds by the end of the month will have to be enough.

Checked some of the latest local bull moose browsing tracks today and noted one going to considerable trouble (expended energy) to feed on *Betula glandulosa* specifically, in a location where several typically browsed *Salix* sp. were juicy and abundant and much easier to reach.

April 2

Low -14° F
High 8° F
Light wind
Fog and snow

Resent the time off from woodcut but trail to town very good and some business needed our attention.

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Not much visibility coming or going but because of fluffy snow cover and lack of wind for ten days the sixteen mile trail “furrow” from here to town is just like a railroad track. You don't need visibility - just follow the rails.

Rumor has it that a group (large?) of caribou passed through Ivik (north shore Kobuk Lake) headed this way (toward the Monument). We'll keep our ears and eyes open.

Sheefishing reports not too exciting though some catch continues. There maybe some interesting, odd urban raven nesting sites, at least attempted sites, in Kotzebue this month. Wonder if anyone will notice.

April 3

Low -12° F
High 24° F
NE wind to 10
Cloudy, light snow a.m.
Clear p.m.

A beautiful day, especially the second half. A nice warm sun.

Wood cut continued today, with the help of a real wood worker, a male Three-toed Woodpecker. Spent an hour or so working at removing the bark at several trees I had cut. He didn't seem to think much of the chain saw. In the sometimes too silent northern forests, the resounding tapping of a woodpecker can seem a monstrously loud sound. The call of ravens and the hard working woodpecker put bird sound in the air for most of the working day today. A welcome change from too much silence this winter.

April 4

Low 8° F
High 14° F
E wind to 18
Cloudy – snow

Big sno-go race on hold due to whiteout, wind, snow, and drift. Weather not that bad over here but with all the loose snow around to fly in the wind, it is good that proper caution is being taken. There is a big pressure ridge on the Kobuk Lake side that is also potential hazard to races.

A great flock of Willow Ptarmigan (100 plus) has made tracks in the creek the last several days. I never see the birds, only the tracks.

Chickadees have not been around the last few days.

We set our clocks another hour ahead tonight. That puts us again 3 hours out of sync with the sun. A whole generation is going to miss the experience of a high noon sun and a midnight low Arctic sun.

April 5

Low 12° F
High 35° F
SW wind to 18
Snow – snow

Rather steady snow a.m. - mild. Heavier snow and wind developed in the afternoon with more westerly winds. The great snow machine race on hold throughout the day waiting for conditions to improve.

Thawing temperatures at midday gave a real spring feel to the day.

Common Raven and Gray Jay the only birds to show today.

Snow machine race postponed till 6 p.m. then finally canceled and wouldn't you know it? The sky cleared, wind dropped and the sun came out. It is now scheduled for 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Our temperatures reached thaw point for several hours at midday which hopefully will anchor some of the light snow down. We have 3 or 4 inches of new snow today. Temperature dropped sharply as sky cleared. It may be a fine day and fine trail for the race tomorrow.

A very early report of two Arctic Ground Squirrels out of hibernation on Sealing Point trail today. This is very extraordinary. Ground Squirrels are expected out the last week of April at this location but never the first week. As for reason why – speculation - one remembers the heavy rain we had after freeze-up last October. Squirrels were already into hibernation then and the rain lasted so long on frozen ground that some burrow chambers would be flooded. A move by the occupant would be necessary and winter survival would be touch and go. Those animals that survive but in inadequate places would likely be quick to emerge when sun and warm temperatures happened. We will hear more on this as squirrel numbers were very high on beach ridge complex last summer.

April 6

Low -6° F
High 28° F
Clear and calm

A very sunny day and a fine one for the snow machine race. The results were rather a surprise. The new snow on the mean portage from Kiana to Selawik trapped most

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of the big new powerful machines. The lighter machines and local drivers took most of the prize money, which is good for a change.

Continued the firewood cut today. A very warm sun on the hillside facing it.

Fox and ptarmigan track on the fresh snow surface. Nothing else.
A single Boreal Chickadee was around today. The trio hasn't been seen for awhile.

April 7

Low 6° F
High 26° F
SE wind to 20
Snow – fog

Air full of snow particles and freezing drizzle again. Very poor visibility. Canceled out town trip in hope that tomorrow might be better. Whiteout conditions prevailed all day.

Willow Ptarmigan are working through the heavy cover of timbered areas again. Presence of Gyrfalcon may be part of the reason.
This pre break-up month is passing quickly. With so much fresh snow and poor visibility we may be behind in our chores and freighting needs when the final thaw begins. Have a lot of stuff to move yet.
Only one Boreal Chickadee has been around today and yesterday.

April 8

Low 22° F
High 38° F
SW wind to 15
Fog, snow, some sun

Town trip to pick up a great grandson to baby sit his great grandmother while I finish my wood cutting.

A very soft trail on the way home on the lagoon after leaving the stakes. We traveled over a surface where there was no previously broken trail and midday temperatures reached 38° F on this side. More snow is forecast for tonight over the region and cooling Thursday and Friday. Hope it turns out that way for the sake of the woodcut project.

Few tracks to see except Willow Ptarmigan and fox on the new snow surface. Pretty heavy going for other animals and travel distance is probably limited for them due to warmth and sticky nature of the new snow at today's warm temperatures.

April 9

Low 0° F

April

High 30° F
NW wind to 35
Broken clouds, some sun

Kotzebue has NW winds gusting to near 50 mph today. We have only light winds till late afternoon when it picked up to 35 here with drifting snow. It is strange how strong west and north winds always leave a lumpy surface when often east winds leave a level surface.

Some more wood cut today while the young fellow entertained his great grandmother.

A single Boreal Chickadee inspected the downed dry trees at Napaaqtuuraq.

The local Gyrfalcon and I pestered the ptarmigans today. I don't know how he did but we got one. We see him nearly everyday now. Our local limited group of ptarmigan has to watch their step these days.

Our mild easy living weather moved off quickly this afternoon. We are now back to more normal early April weather. Hope the NW wind doesn't continue too long or we'll be back to March weather.

The lone Red Squirrel approached camp again today but remains shy. The shyness of survivors across all species I guess.

A party of three snow machines with sleds reported through Sealing Point today from Prudhoe Bay! Reported to be non-Eskimo. No other details.

April 10

Low -4° F
High 12° F
N wind to 35
NNW wind 50+

A bright, but very windy day today. A lot of snow being moved, but various crusts on the snow have kept drift and snow pile development to a minimum.

Wind increased in the evening at 10:30 p.m. A front yard tree blew down. Hope a larger one doesn't fall on the snow machine or sled.

Our wind this evening from NNW much stronger than reported in town. Probably 50+ knots. Our location is on the down slope of mountains facing into the wind direction which magnifies the wind force. Our trail will probably be monstrous, with pits and piles of sculpted snow.

April 11

Low -4° F
High 20° F
N wind 25-40
Clear, partly cloudy p.m.

Ground drift from north still heavy in a.m. Dropping off slowly so drift quit by 6 p.m. Yesterday and last night wind a real monster. It was the strongest we've had for ages. Was that the result of a wind free March? Our countryside shows the handiwork of the monster. All our level snow cover altered to pits and piles. Much of south slopes of ridges and mountains are tussocks tundra again. Very little sign of living creatures after the wind ceased.

Dog racers in the Kobuk 440 had a long night and half a day breaking trail. Most are midway between Ambler and Selawik this afternoon.

Found one of my cut firewood log piles nearly covered with snowbank. Also it was very serene and warm on that hillside this afternoon even though away from the timber patch ground, drift was still heavy.

Had an interesting visitor-neighbor this evening, a man who has traveled widely this winter. He is recently returned from the Purcell Mountain hot springs and Huslia.

April 12

Low -6° F
High 24° F
N wind to 25
Cloudy

Cloud cover returned overnight and wind picked up to drift speed again but dropped off before noon.

April half gone and little sign of spring except for ground squirrel activity last week and black underfeathers on one male ptarmigan neck that we plucked two days ago.

A good lot of visitors today, in spite of the bumps. It was a beautiful afternoon.

A moose reported by visiting travelers down on the cut bank of the lagoon edge. Willow Ptarmigan and ravens too.

Our Red Squirrel finally made it to the trees next to the house. Fresh otter tracks in the creek today.

April 13

Low -12° F
High 16° F
SE wind to 15
Clear – high clouds

Another day of woodcutting. Sore back, sore arms, sore muscles.
Very nice working on the sheltered hillside in the sun.

The three Boreal Chickadees around again today. Red Squirrel tracks at Napaaqtuuraq where they were not seen all winter.

An interesting report of a Noatak Delta family hunter making a round trip caribou hunt to the Buckland area. There were lots there and fat. It is a long ways for a round trip Caribou hunt.

April 14

Low -2° F
High 32° F
NE wind to 15
Clear – sunny

A beautiful sun-warm day.

Made a shoveling trip to Sisualik to begin the process of move to spring camp. Tent was in pretty good shape. The trail for hauling wood and household things is less than number one but is not as bad as some past years. Some short stretches have deep "washboard" sculpted snow.

Willow Ptarmigan tracks all over the place but we didn't see a single bird. Probably all in a huge flock as they sometimes are at this date.

The memorable date is here again. The very earliest that migratory fowl has been found in the extended family soup pot. Two cranes were taken on this birthday date on the upper Noatak River many years ago. No migratory bird sighting yet reported this year.

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April 15

Low 12° F
High 38° F
NE wind to 20
Clear – few high clouds

Town trip. It was a fair trail except for three mile stretch across lagoon to Sisualik stakes. Staked trail has been dragged for weekend sprint race and was nice and smooth.

Kotzebue caribou hunters very active out of Kiana and towards Buckland to get spring meat for freezer and drying while the trail is good and before caribou get moved out to the North Slope.

The warm wind really has the feel of spring in it this evening. No hint of early spring birds yet though.

A second bowhead reported taken at St. Lawrence Island. No news yet from Point Hope or farther north.

April 16

Low 28° F
High 50° F
NE wind to 15
Cloudy – warm!

We may have a day for a high temperature reading. Kotzebue recorded a high of only 36° F but we topped that considerably by being on the sunny side of the coast range hills here.

Except for softness of snow and dripping roof we have no other indication that break-up is on the way, i.e., no birds, bears, whales or anything like that.

Took a load of stuff to summer camp at Sisualik, the first of many. Shoveled off newly drifted snow from tent (from yesterday) and made some trail adjustments around the rougher spots.

Several extended snow showers today too; even though the weather is warm we didn't lose much snow. A couple of days of rain at this date would be pretty hard on us with both our house stuff and summer wood supply yet to be hauled.

Visitor traffic has been pretty good this week and more promises to come.

April 17

Low 22° F
High 37° F
NW wind to 15
Fog – clearing

Things lightly frozen this morning with freezing fog right down in the trees.

Took a load of things to Sisualik and enjoyed visitors and sun in the p.m..

Red Squirrel peeled and ate a spruce cone next to the trash pile. Looks like he is considering moving back in.

A report from north coastal village that eiders are around; Canada Geese are into Fairbanks.

Moose collaring project above Noatak Village successfully completed. Will be interesting to know how far they wander.

Quite a lot of loose snow around Sisualik yet. With temperature trend cooling we now have a good chance to get our wood hauling and spring camp hauling done, hopefully most of it this coming week.

Report of bears out, but nothing specific.

Fog returned late p.m.

April 18

Low 16° F
High 28° F
Heavy fog a.m.
Broken fog p.m.

Finally a moose to watch from the window. One of the bulls that came down the creek a couple days ago is feeding and laying around, sometimes in sight from the window. Growth of new antlers has begun, but very small bulbs.

Ran down the trail I must haul wood on for first time today. It will be ready now as it firms up overnight.

Made a trip to Sisualik with a few things and found the mitt I had dropped yesterday. There were some very small bird tracks around Sisualik fish racks. Probably Redpolls. Also nearly ran over a flock of twenty Rock Ptarmigan on a nearly bare hillside. They were probably finding berries.

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Pioneering Red Squirrel tracks through most tree patches. Maybe the same one since all the tracks are of a lone individual.

We have a Spruce Grouse in our tree patch again. There were signs early last fall but none through out the winter. Maybe we'll have a rabbit again some day.

April 19

Low 10° F
High 34° F
NW wind to 10
Clouds, fog
Clearing p.m.

An overnight visitor made for a pleasant Easter of conversation.

Made an afternoon trip to Sisualik and shoveled out the door of the camp tent. Things in good shape inside. We put the stove in and will be ready to build a fire and move in when ever we figure the time is right (no more snow drift).

A large flock (by their tracks several hundred) of Willow Ptarmigan crossed our trail while we were down at Sisualik. Didn't see a bird though.

Good numbers of Common Ringed Seals laying on the ice in the area of the Ranger Station.

A porcupine in sight from house window this evening near the spot where the moose was last night. The Moose lay down just before the visitor arrived by dog team. With all the hollering by dogs and people he never bothered to stand up. Seemed to welcome the noise, probably a contrast to his too silent winter.

Saw a pair of very faded Red Foxes near the trail on the way home from Sisualik.

April 20

Low 1° F
High 28° F
Fog a.m., clear p.m.

Five trips down the hill before the sun got too warm on side hill trail. Hope to get the rest out tomorrow as the weather man promises another cool night.

Ran into a flock of several hundred Willow Ptarmigan in the fog this morning.

A couple of moose moved out from our tree patch headed west.
Good hauling surface early in the day for spring movers.

April 21

Low -4° F
High 32° F
NW wind to 10
Clear

Wood haul today. Most of it out of the tree patch and piled halfway to Sisualik. Made two jumps out of it because the trail inside the timber only permitted smaller loads. It was a nice warm day up here. Kotzebue didn't get out of the teens due to a steady stronger NW wind.

Saw a big flock of Willow Ptarmigan today and got only one due to some trouble getting shotgun pointed in the right direction. We ate the one tonight and in process of dressing, found its crop filled with berries from large snow free sections of tundra. Blueberries, cranberries, and bearberries were noted.

No spring birds yet reported. Glaucous Gull, Sandhill Crane, and geese are often reported in the last week of April.

Sealing Point hunters reported no open lead. They traveled a remarkable two hours out (southwest-west) without a sign of open lead. Some springs the lead is very far off shore. In a few years there has been no reachable open water to hunt in. It has been a while since open water has been far off. A stiff offshore wind may change the scene - if it occurs.

April 22

Low -5° F
High 34° F
NW wind 10
Clear

Fired up Sisualik camp site stove today after hauling a load of wood. Dug out CB cable and, remarkably, found cable and antenna working well. Was able to contact Sealing Point even though there was some skip. We are barely able to contact them from up here when airways are crystal clear.

Temperatures continue quite cool. Last year we moved out of here to Sisualik on the twenty-first. Next time it warms we will have to go, but often that is not until after May 1.

A number of double red fox tracks about. Maybe there will be more occupied dens in this area - with pups.

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Bowhead Whales reported seen from Point Hope in these last few days. No strike yet.

No bird news yet.

April 23

Low 0° F
High 34° F
Calm
Clear, clouding late p.m.

Town trip on a very beautiful day. The trail for a change and unbelievably, was straight and firm. Town showing signs of thawing with gravel water puddles and a little midday mud. Also a report of redpolls. If there have been overwintering redpolls this year in this area they have stayed well hidden. No gulls, goose, or crane report yet.

An aircraft report of Beluga Whales in a crack off the old Army Base west of Sealing Point. No way of knowing if they might be trapped by ice or if snow machine people will respond and go check. Time will tell. It is known that open water is very limited in the area.

Warming trend may be on with snow forecast for next couple of days. Hope it doesn't rain. Wood to haul yet and some heavy things out of Kotzebue.

April 24

Low 10° F
High 30° F
NE wind to 10
Cloudy, snow p.m.

Three big loads of wood delivered to Sisaulik. Cloud cover thickened on last load so that ground-trail was hard to see and follow, so further trips put off for awhile as temperature forecast to stay below freezing.

Looks like spring won't begin this year till May for a change.

No bird reports yet. No further ground squirrel report.

The Red Squirrel and the raven pair can't wait for us to move and get out of their way. Red wants the whole site. Ravens want the winter scraps and undisturbed nest site.

Some firewood cut activity in timber west of here by local Sisaulik campers (2-3 camps). It appears at this point in time dry wood harvest from the Monument is continuing to drop off. Last week, in conversation with neighbors, there were

intentions to switch to oil heat for early spring camps. These were younger folks given the chore of cutting and hauling wood for their elders' traditional camps. Considering the time, cost of gas, and wear and tear on snow machines they are right. Don't know how the heads of clan will react.

April 25

Low 24° F
High 48° F
NW wind to 10
Snow, clear, hot p.m.

A very dramatic weather change shortly after noon from near whiteout to brilliant clear sunshine and high temperatures.

Glaucaus Gull report, maybe the same two birds all over the place. This is a first migrant report for spring migration '92. Two seen at Sealing Point, two this side of Sealing Point and a report of two yesterday at Kotzebue City dump that we just heard about today. Spring is here!

Finally, two Ringed Seals caught by family at Sealing Point. They will be enjoying fresh seal meat tonight.

Took load of wood to Sisualik this a.m. and some household items in p.m.. We built fire in tent stove to dry inside out. Soon had the tent full of visitors and talked all afternoon.

Now that ground squirrels should be out, only one was reported out on this beautiful warm day.

A male Willow Ptarmigan with a full black head was seen by us today. The first noted in that full head neck change from winter white.

A red fox that ran away but stopped to watch when it found out it wasn't chased amused one crew of youthful travelers today. Kind of led into a discussion of my feelings that there are no "wild" animals.

Hope tomorrow is a little cooler. Too hot and bright this afternoon, though it felt good for a change.

An interesting bird report from the Hatchery. A Common Snipe settled into the edge of the open running water stream they have there and a robin reported in the trees. These are pretty early dates, especially this year when continued cold promises to carry on into May.

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April 26

Low 14° F
High 42° F
Clear

Another beautiful day, with visitors. Yesterday and today have been peak visitor days for this season. We are glad for the visits and hope they come again soon.

Noticed a “different” flying bird today at Napaaqtuuraq. No chance to binoc it, but was probably a Northern Shrike.

A surface traveling lemming noted (tracks).

All the “assembly” seems to be back together to wish us farewell till next fall. The woodpecker, the gray jay, the boreal chickadee, the ravens, the weasel, and the red squirrel were all here and vocal today.

The Three-toed Woodpecker male is kind of interesting. It has been around once or twice a week all winter except for the last couple of weeks and now it has been here all day. It has a nearly clear white back, which seems a little odd. According to National Geographic Field Guide this would indicate the “dorsalis” form which occurs in the Rocky Mountains. In “Birds of Russia,” their description gives the Three-toed Woodpecker “a white back.”

We may move to Sisualik tomorrow.

April 27

Low -2° F
High 36° F
Light winds
Clear, cool, beautiful

We didn't move, though we were down at Sisualik all day. Hauled several loads of wood and another load of “living gear.” Trail remained well frozen all day. A reason to get the wood moved to where it will be burned.

Family crew at Sealing Point left us the fresh meat of half a Ringed Seal on their way to town for gas. Fresh seal will be good for a change.

Another seal story today. A friend and neighbor was traveling the staked trail to Sisualik from Kotzebue and saw what he took to be a bag that had dropped from someone's sled. It was a bit off the trail so he steered towards it. As he got close, the “bag” raised its head and then dived in its breathing hole which he had enlarged to haul out in the sun. Our friend was much surprised and had gotten very close to it before it dove into its ice hole. He said he thought it was a Spotted Seal (Largha).

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Normally Spotted Seals drop south to the ice edge. Often some do get frozen in place and survive much as Ringed Seals do, by having several breathing holes in the ice which they keep open all winter. It is rare to have one haul out in the middle of a major trail. After being all winter so near a well traveled trail, that animal is probably much used to engine noise and is not startled by it.

No new bird reports but a Bowhead Whale was taken in Point Hope and another at 11 p.m. this evening reported taken at Kivalina . Big news since they don't get one every year.

A very tame fox is claiming the camp even before we leave.

April 28

Low -6° F

High 16° F

Clear, some pm clouds

We moved! This will be our first night in Sisualik for 1992. Brrrr - in the tent!

One of the camp ground squirrels was out and standing straight up around 11 a.m.

An interesting bear rumor from last week. While out on the ice, hunters from Sealing Point saw a pair of sno-go's kill a bear out on the ice by the old army base west of Sealing Point. It was said to be a brown bear. They put it in the sled without skinning and headed back toward the beach, the way they had come, without waiting for the Sealing Point family to reach them. Have not yet talked with observers directly, but will check for other details when opportunity comes.

Lots of ground squirrels reported out yesterday and today west of here.

Lots of traffic, both air and surface, through here today. Kivalina will have lots of help working their Bowhead Whale.

No bird reports today. Hope it warms soon. We've had Tree Swallows as early as May 2 in other years.

Old Buck got off the trail on his move down to Sisualik and I had to retrieve him from half way to Kotzebue. After I caught up with him I had to teach an old, big dog a new trick quickly. It was quite a struggle trying to balance a reluctant and scared 80 lb dog on a sno-go seat. It did me and him both in for the rest of the day, but we made it home.

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April 29

Low 6° F
High 12° F
NW-N wind to 35
Clear

A cold tent night. Not the temperature, but the wind got quite gusty during the night. The dogs and I got little sleep. I took them back up to the shelter of the trees and finished the wood haul. The wind continued through the afternoon and the forecast didn't promise much but more cold, so we are spending the night in the shelter of the trees -with the dogs. May get back to Sisualik tomorrow. Only a few things left to move down: propane stove, generator and the rocking chair.

Report of large flock of Glaucous Gulls (20) in/around Kotzebue yesterday.

Two Sisualik camp squirrels didn't go out today. Too much wind and cold.

We even "qauqed" fresh Sheefish today. Its' not always that you can do that this close to May.

Taking of a brown bear on the ocean ice vicinity of old army site confirmed. It was not far off shore and observer says it was probably chased there from the hills.

No one, to our knowledge, has yet got to the open water lead shown by cloud reflection last week. It is speculated that it is far out.

Ground squirrels at Sealing Point said to be nice and fat.

No geese or cranes reported yet locally, though they are reported into the upper Kobuk and Selawik drainage.

Woodcutting at peak effort this week. There was a minor controversy amongst locals as to location for cutting, as most effort to date was in one location. Result was a making of several other trails to spread cut over a wider area, which makes for minimal impact and is good.

April 30

Low -6° F
High 16° F
W-NW wind to 40
Clear

Kotzebue chill factor -40° F this morning. A firm way for April to exit one might say!

I made a town trip today for gas then back up here to the house. Faced a 35 knot west wind with blowing snow. April - out like a lion. It is a good thing squirrels were close to their holes. Do bears have cold feet?

It is interesting to reflect back to the first week of the month, when a couple of squirrels were seen and speculation by some was that we would have an early thaw. An "early" thaw would have begun mid-April and things would be pretty wet by now - with birds. Just the opposite, though: very cold, no birds, and no break from the cold in sight. The most interesting thing about this is the effect on local resident thought. Some few people will remember that in spring '92 early waking squirrels did not forecast an early break-up. Most people will retain the old "cultural baggage" thought that early squirrels means thaw in April. Over time, some circumstances can lead to an acceptance of an interpretation that may be less than the truth. This must be true within the bulk of any culture's bag of thought tools. Farewell April, 1992. No showers, flowers or birds but your wonderful warmth of sun and length of light will set the stage for all those great things of May.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

MAY

May 1

Low -7° F
High 20° F
NW wind 40 a.m.
Clear, cold

Very low chill temperatures this morning for this date. Frost back inside the house.

Wind dropped off up here in the trees around noon so we went down to Sisualik camp, intending to build a fire and thaw things out again. As we got down to the lagoon edge we found the wind from a little different angle (WNW) blowing very hard with cold air and drifting snow. Our whole tent door area was drifted in. We just got the things we needed and quickly returned up here to the house where it is still a beautiful day with a warm sun on the front porch. May 1 didn't bring any additional sign of spring this year. All the ground squirrels back in their winter holes again, like us.

We haven't broken any daily cold records but the way the temperature has stayed below freezing, even below zero, for so much of so many days, the coolness has caused a halt in migrations and processes in this area.

There is no longer any “dark night” time. Only a few hours of twilight which is characteristic of May until the last few days of the month, when the midnight sun period extending through June begins. A real lot of sunshine coming up. It seems remarkable that there can be so much powerful sun each day and it can still be so cold. The forecast is for chill factors to -50° F tonight!

May 2

Low -12° F
High 22° F
NW wind to 25
Clear

Kotzebue weather station within three degrees of all time daily low. The record is -11° F; last night's low for Kotzebue was -8°. The unseasonable cold is the result of constant W-NW-N winds over several days. It is not an unusual pattern at this time of year. It is the reason our break-up or freeze-up can vary from year to year as much as ten days or two weeks.

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May 5

Low -9° F
High 32° F
W-NW wind 10
Clear a.m., high fog p.m.

A record breaking low at Kotzebue weather station with a temperature of -11° F. Old record was -9° F.

We are in Sisualik tonight. Maybe for good this time. Got the dogs and the propane stove down this evening.

No report of birds today and a remarkable absence of ptarmigan. Their calls should be everywhere now but the only bird sound heard today was raven. A remarkable silence of air for this date.

There was noise though. Lots of engine noise - land and air. Coastal traffic very heavy for lots of reasons. Many more people back in coast camp sites. Wood hauling still on going.

It seemed warm enough for squirrels to be out but they were not around the camp. Maybe due to high overcast.

A few Shee caught at Pipe Spit for the first time this spring. We'll soon be ready to give fishing a try.

May 6

Low -11° F
High 34° F
Light winds
Clear, some a.m. fog

Town today for plywood and more gas.

A nice warm sunny afternoon. A Glaucous Gull at Sealing Point, ravens in town and a noisy Snow Bunting at Sisualik camp. This is the first Snow Bunting we have seen this spring though a few are around all winter in some years.

Very little excitement over anything much in town. Birds or fish will probably be the next excitement. The Sheefish Derby happens this Saturday and birds may come any hour now. The streets are just needing a few more hours of sun to make puddles and lakes.

This second night in the tent went better than the first. It was cold but no wind.

We quaq Sheefish when we came home from town again. May is the month when natural frozen food breaks down. Every day in May that frozen food can be eaten is good luck. Holding cold in May has other advantages besides trail condition. We are even able to still use ice for camp water instead of snow which is another advantage that is lost to the warmth of May.

Traffic on the coastal trail is a little subdued today but still active. Noted one poor squirrel whose winter hibernation hole turn out to be right in the middle of the heaviest traveled trail. He was out as we came along, but dived back in the hole, as he must for every new rig that comes along.

May 7

Low -2° F
High 42° F
W wind to 10
Clear

A beautiful day with lots of sun, lots of visitors and a fair smattering of bird reports. Two robins and two cranes from the Hatchery, three geese yesterday from Lena Jones' camp, and one Glaucous Gull from Sisualik today.

A lot of ground squirrels out on the full beach line portion of the Monument.

Because of light winds and a sky clear of clouds and fog, the sun got quite warm and did a good deal of melting around dark spots. Real spring feels a little closer.

A real lot of traffic again today. Spring camp haulers, some "basking seal" hunters, and some joy riders.

Number of ground squirrels out in hazardous places (middle of sno-go trail) has increased with a number of different incidents.

A Snowy Owl reported by one traveler. No sighting all winter until now of this species.

May 8

Low -4° F
High 34° F
W to S and SE wind 15
Clear a.m.
Clouding, snow p.m.

Numerous Glaucous Gulls passing over Sisualik in the p.m. from SW to east.

Journal

Small numbers of geese and cranes reported from inland sites. One crane reported from Sealing Point flats.

Rumor of a good take of Beluga Whales at Kivalina, maybe today. Lots of traffic through here in that direction this p.m.

We finished our move here to Sisualik today. Closed up and bear proofed the house.

The remarkable complete absence of ptarmigan continues. Wonder what's up with them this time.

Forecast has a good deal of snow in it again with a continued slow warming trend.

Cleaned out the tree swallow box today. Expect the owner in from the south any day now.

This may be the last time till next October that we will see our tree patch and house.

There were a lot of fresh moose tracks around the house trail today, as if they came to see us off. They are probably the same group that has overwintered around there, but the tracks and presumably the number of animals is greater than most winters by this date.

Report of a first Ugruq taken west of Sealing Point. Said to be a very large one.

May 9

Low 25° F
High 36° F
S to SE wind 15
Cloudy – snow

Several inches of fresh snow got pretty sticky as temperatures went above freezing. Some new snowdrifts, but not bad as wind was moderate.

Lots of overhead Glaucous Gulls today. Nothing else around here, though I'm sure some other birds are arriving in more sheltered places.

An extra lot of traffic both ways on the Kotzebue-Kivalina-Point Hope free way. A wet sticky day for travel.

A good number of spring camps are being set up between Sisualik and Port Site. Probably a few more than last year, but still local clan families.

Bowhead and Beluga Whale catches and reported good trail makes for near record traffic these last three days.

This wet fresh snow on top of every thing may accelerate snow melt. Temperatures begin to hang above freezing and some flooding may be the end result.

Sheefish Derby done today had some good catches made with some good large fish and some heavy wt. catches.

The limiting of the Derby to a one day, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. effort was a good step in the right direction.

May 10

Low 20° F
High 36° F
SW wind to 20-25
Broken clouds

24 hours of sun begins in Barrow today. Our turn will not come till the end of the month.

Kind of a wet day, with snow drifting and melting at the same time. Looks like we're stuck in our tent with a few more hours of drifting snow. We do have a pair of Glaucous Gulls standing around out by the dogs, waiting for a handout. They may be Jonathan and his mate. One is very tame and insistent, and acts like our favored bird from last year.

A few cranes reported from the Ranger Station area.

Sno-go travel pretty sticky again this afternoon.

One of our camp squirrels, who had been out several days ago, finally came out again for awhile till the drift got to be too much for him. The complete absence of ptarmigan locally at this time remains a remarkable mystery.

Another surprise tonight. After a whole wet day of snow and drifting snow, we now have an evening "winter heavy snow warning" for late tonight and tomorrow.

This turning out to be an unusual early spring.

May 11

Low 32° F

Journal

High 37° F
S wind to 40
Snow!!!

This was a very remarkable day! If nothing else, it proves that no matter how long you stay in one place, there is always something new. We have never, at this late date, had such a fierce, severe storm. And mostly because of two degrees of temperature. Had the temperature risen to 34° F instead of hanging at 32-33° F during the intense snowfall, it would not have drifted and filled the air so thoroughly.

We had to leave our tent and spent the day in a neighbor's house, for our door entrance hole in the snow bank attracted too much drift. This was a potential killer storm for migrant birds. The heavy snow/wet immediately and sticking to everything can cause hypothermia quickly. Time will tell if the various creatures were able to cope. Cranes, geese, and gulls are known to be in the area, but they are more hardy and able to cope with such things. The smaller passerines, some of which were likely en route and some here, are probably at risk.

There is rumored to be a heavy beluga catch at Kivalina, but no real handle on numbers. Maybe more later.

Report of a goose over Kotzebue. Should be some mud and water there after this rough day. Often man's workings around a town provide the only ready habitat in times of anomalous environmental stresses.

This large amount of fresh snow will give the sun a bit more to do if and when it comes out again.

This was a stressful day, a day on which you have to leave the security of a home you thought was secure. It was like after the big flood two August ago. A day when you wonder where the "love" in nature has gone.

May 12

Low 32° F
High 34° F
S wind to 15
Cloudy – snow

Another day of snow but much better than yesterday. Light wind and snow very sticky. No drifting.

No new birds.

A very poor day for traveling, wet, poor visibility.

Three searches for lost people from the weekend ended successfully. Nobody in bad shape.

Two days of not much forward progress. Mostly just hanging on. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

Sheefishing and another town trip scheduled.

An interesting note from a 1,000 mile Siberian Coast trip. Same winter birds as here, same winter fish (saffron cod, smelt) no trees, only a few short willows at one end and mostly rocky rather than tussock tundra.

May 13

Low 29° F
High 38° F
SW wind to 20
Cloudy, light snow

Drifting snow again p.m. When will it ever quit? Some more falling snow too - to drift – included in the forecast. We are indeed having a very odd spring and it maybe a cruel one. Reindeer maybe already calving and early migrant birds may be affected. A second storm forecast into our area late tonight from southern Siberia. We had planned a town trip tomorrow. Hope we make it.

Several hunters planning to go out in the ice from Sealing Point tomorrow.

Travelers slacked off for couple of days due to storm and trail conditions. They picked up some this afternoon. A number of Noatak travelers using this route (coastal) as they do sometimes at this season, due to softness or water on the river route.

No new bird reports. Glaucous Gull are the only common spring bird at this point in time and this location.

May 14

Low 30° F
High 36° F
SE wind to 40
Snow, blizzard

Well, well! One storm leads to the Dome, this time due to heavy drift. Wind switched to west and faded about 5 p.m. Quite a lot of fresh snowbanks again.

Journal

Was surprised to hear Nenana Ice went out today. Somewhere is having spring anyway.

Gulls are around awaiting their evening handout. No other bird reports.

Late and prolonged snowstorms are nearly statewide due, it is said, to an altered jet stream. Certainly is an unusual first of May. Wonder what the squirrels think? The bears?

May 15

Low 19° F
High 38° F
SW wind 30, NW to 15
Cloudy, snow
Clearing p.m., fog

Another rising at 5 a.m. to drifting and falling snow and a tent door clogged with snow.

A lot of light fluffy falling and drifting snow. Finally put sheet of plywood to roof the doorway and with some mighty shoveling, was able to stay in tent with fire all day. Wind, snow and fog rather abruptly fell away at 4 p.m. Had a rather beautiful late afternoon-evening of sunshine and promise of a cool night.

We finally heard two cranes this evening and we're told by some traveling family that two had flown by us yesterday evening without our seeing them. Anyway, cranes and singles and pairs of geese have been reported here and there this afternoon.

Everyone complaining and marveling at the large amount of new and drifting snow this week. Other creatures may be stressed too.

Our camp squirrel was out for a bit yesterday evening but didn't see him today. This waiting to get out and travel away from their winter quarters must be stressful to them.

There is a rumor of a small passerine in Sisualik today. Maybe spring will come after all.

An open lead is reported in sight from Sealing Point this evening. All that wind and weather did its work. Now the seal hunters with dogs to feed will have a good chance.

May 16

Low 12° F
High 37° F
Cloudy, heavy snow pm
Clearing late

A successful town trip, a blizzard to go home in. A lot of heavy fresh snow.

A flock of thirty plus Sandhill Cranes flying through the blizzard toward the NE over the ice in front of Kotzebue were either an encouraging sight or a pitiful one, depending on the future. The complete absence of Willow Ptarmigan through the month of May so far is noteworthy and remarkable. Even when numbers are fairly low, this time of year the aggressive noise and display as flocks break up is a sign of the season. Perhaps our strange late winter weather trends have been a factor.

All of our wind swept or sun thawed places have become a sterile bright white again this week!

Reports from friends around the state indicate birds holding at various peripheral locations. The large flocks of crane we noted today is probably a hint of how many species will travel into this country this year: in large groups and maybe all at once. Hopefully, they'll start arriving this coming week as a warm trend gets under way.

Lots of water and mud in town. Someone reported a flock of "snipes." Wonder what kind.

Even the abundant Glaucous Gulls are acting very aggressively hungry. A report today of Wheatear and some other passerines on Selawik Refuge last week.

Also a late evening report of a flock of Snow Geese west of the Ranger Station. Their coloration certainly fits in, though their early appearance is a bit of a surprise.

May 17

Low 3° F
High 41° F
NE to SW wind 18
Cloudy

A record low temperature for Kotzebue weather station for this date with a low of 4° F; the former low for this date was 12° F. What are our birds going to do?

Someone saw a single passerine on the spit today.

Journal

Gulls were the only other birds reported today. The afternoon was pretty sunny and mild enough (reaching 40°+ F) to warm snow surface and hopefully keep it from drifting. Squirrels were out for awhile. Quite a lot of fresh snow from yesterday.

No word of ptarmigan.

A quiet Sunday with few travelers.

A whaling crew member and a neighbor got in early this morning from Point Hope. Snow machine traffic from north villages down because of heavy snow. Peak of that travel was probably these last ten days of May.

At 11:45 p.m. temperature was still above freezing at 33⁰ F. Snow surface is still soft. Maybe spring is - birds can come!

May 18

Low 34° F
High 49° F
S-SW wind to 20
Cloudy

A town trip with slushy snow and a surprise on reaching home. The surprise was a flock of forty to fifty Pomarine Jaegers coming from out of the north! Must have been a blizzard lost flock.

Very soft sticky snow today.

Last night's warmth made this day the first in ages that freezing temperatures did not occur. That made for a very soft sticky trail and probably ushered in real "bird spring."

Lots of ground squirrels out this afternoon. Probably all of them, but still only by their overwintering holes. Surface all white yet and not many venture far from their burrows since there is no other place to take shelter. Density is locally high and apparently not much affected by late October rains of last year.

Glaucous Gulls, Sandhill Cranes and the unusual and unexpected group of Pomarine Jaegers are still the only spring birds we personally have seen.

May 19

Low 33° F
High 44° F
Fog, clearing pm

A heavy catch of Shee at Pipe Spit yesterday. We received gift of several hundred pounds.

A couple of breakdowns with sno-go's. The sticky, snowballing snow condition that comes with warm weather is tough on sno-go's.

Geese, cranes, and a few shorebirds reported along the coast. We saw only a Snow Bunting and numerous Glaucous Gulls. Not many birds at the Hatchery either.

It has been two full days now since the snow surface has frozen. Many areas getting quite soft and travelers hoping for a night surface freeze.

May 20

Low 28° F
High 54° F
Cloudy, fog, drizzle

A good freeze last night for enough hours to make good surface trail till mid afternoon. Made a last check of winter house area this morning. Very soft up there. Fresh moose and Willow Ptarmigan and Red Squirrel tracks up there. Heard a few cranes and ptarmigan calling. All was well for the summer at the house.

A new bird voice at the beach site. Hardly any dark ground or spots showing because of heavy and drifting snow last night.

Our plan is to try to reach Pipe Spit for a night and early morning Sheefish fishing trip. They have been making good catches there this week and it is only an hour away.

The new bird voice was an insistent Mew Gull.

This last snow fall dumped so much snow on the country that small birds and waterfowl do not yet have coastal habitat.

Trail in and out of town good this morning, slushy this afternoon.

Park Service bird crew down to Ranger Station.

Lots of Mew Gulls. No other "new" birds.

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May 21

Low 34° F
High 47° F
SW wind 10
Cloudy

Left for Pipe Spit Shee fishing at 11 p.m. last night and got home about 8 a.m. with a couple of hundred pounds of Sheefish. It was a very soft snow trail and difficult traveling - two hours up, a little over an hour to come home.

Birds finally beginning to fly. Cranes, swans, geese and couple of flocks of Black Turnstones.

It didn't freeze last night and the soft trail is indeed soft. Where it is deep, it gives some traveling trouble even before water forms under the snow. People are still traveling into town and back.

This has been best bird day by far for this spring but mostly larger waterfowl. Few passerines yet. It is a very late year for swallows.

First subsistence waterfowl take that we have heard of this spring here.

Lots and lots and lots of ground squirrels.

May 22

Low 29° F
High 40° F
E wind to 18
Clear

It is good to see the sun again. It was a pretty good bird day with clearing and E winds, a change from the more or less constant S to SW winds we've had for awhile. We also ate our first spring bird today, nearly two weeks later than usual.

Some large flocks of Lesser Golden Plovers and Bar-tailed Godwits around, but in unusual places - small thawed tundra patches. A good flock (35-40) of Snow Geese passed over the tent today.

Sealing Point is having some first that are completely without habitat yet. Three loons (Red Throats?) - one yesterday, two today - and an Arctic Tern yesterday.

Hunting of seals laying on the ice is good and a traveler across the mountains today reported bear and caribou tracks. The caribou are a surprise.

Water and mud, required habitat for many migrant birds, is very scarce yet all over the area. The last heavy fresh snow period is the reason for that and some species may have a poor reproductive year (White-fronts and swans). A few displaying Willow Ptarmigan are now around.

May 23

Low 23° F
High 49° F
Clear, clouding late pm

A hard freeze overnight but a clear warm sun most of the day. A real fine day.

The most remarkable thing is how the higher elevations, usually the first wind swept areas to turn dark under the sun, remain white. It is testimony to the heavy fresh snow fall in the unlikely month of May!
We may see some alpine birds at beach level.

“New” birds for the day - Ruddy Turnstone, Northern Harrier, and Long tailed Jaeger.

The two Geese we've had in hand- one Canada, one White-front -exhibit good fat reserves.

Seal hunters have finally got out on the ocean and have found a fair lead. Ringed Seals plentiful.

A friend left us with three male Willow Ptarmigan. Their crop contents interesting - a few berries and mostly 2 ½ inch long *Eriophorum* flower head stalks. The first new growth of spring on the tundra that reindeer, caribou, cranes and obviously Willow Ptarmigan go crazy for.

Small birds scarce yet on the coast due to heavy snow cover (still nearly 100%). Things are livelier a few miles inland around willow thickets and tree patches. Jones' camp reports many small birds and robins.

When is our Tree Swallow going to show? He is very late.

Looking at the whiteness of the land, one would not expect Glaucous Gull eggs next week, but there will be some. There always is. Nests often built on ice or snowbank.

May 24

Low 33° F

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High 58° F
Light winds
Fog and cloudy

A day of very dull colors and air almost smoky from partially dissipated fog. Very warm moist still air.

Snow melting fast but still 100% coverage on the flats and about 90% on the beach ridges. The mountains are the most amazing thing. They are still nearly all white. These higher elevations are usually the first to darken with thawing in early April. The land of Horned Larks, Rosy Finches, and Water Pipits don't look ready for those birds.

It is reported that ice in front of town collecting considerable water though traveling continues.

"New" birds for the day: Short-eared Owl, Lapland Longspur. No Tree Swallow yet. Where are they?

An unusual/unexpected fish story from the Monument today. A neighbor ran across a lot of gulls in a riffle of open water area just below the Cottonwood Grove on Tuquq Creek. This is where the Ranger Station slough enters the hills at the first riffle portion. There are a number of upwelling springs in this section where some fish spawn, and in other years when many fish are known to be trapped inside they even keep the water open by their numbers. It may have something to do with oxygen scarcity in the rest of the waterway. It was a surprise this year because the outlet closed very late and it was assumed that there were very few fish overwintering in there. It is an interesting and completely uninvestigated part of the Krusenstern Waterway aquatic life system.

May 25

Low 33° F
High 58° F
W wind to 15
Clear, clouds, snow

Another odd day in May! A very warm sun in the a.m. - even the Tree Swallows finally showed up. Then fog and west wind and clouds moved in, sharply pulling the temperature down to near freezing. Even some light snow fell.

“New” birds for the day: three Tree Swallows moved in on their box house, but didn't stay the night after it started snowing. Four Rusty Blackbirds were feeding around mud and vegetation at "Whitefront" Lake. A male Lapland Longspur was singing from a clothesline pole. A Red-throated Loon went quacking over Sisualik

this evening. A few Northern Pintail and Wigeon were flying about looking for a little water on mud. Some water is beginning to show on lake edges and bases of bluffs.

Two dog teams from Kotzebue today. Trail is still free of water except the edge on front street in town.

One uguruq, the first of the year for Sealing Point, taken by three hunters off Sealing Point today.

The four foraging Rusty Blackbirds showed comical display activity. Two males would point their beaks straight to the heavens and walk around that way before attacking each other.

Increasing Willow Ptarmigan noise can be heard through the upland areas. Some seem to have settled in at the last minute.

It was a good May day, though one of contrast.

May 26

Low 34° F
High 52° F
W wind to 15
Clear

A town trip, hopefully the last by snow machine till next October/November. There was a lot of water on top of the ice along Front Street. We had to go all the way up to the Tech Center to cross. We caught a car ride from there on a hurry up shopping trip, as water seemed to be getting deeper from inflow of flooded lagoon and remaining town ponds. The nine mile trail from Kotzebue Bar to Sisualik is still white, but pretty slushy; frozen old overflow ice beginning to show through the snow. It was good today, but will be deteriorating depending on heat of day time sun.

No new birds today, but numbers of passerines on thawed ground patches of which there are now many east and west of us, though we are still pretty white around camp. Recognized passerines were Redpoll and Longspur though others may have been amongst them.

Numbers of swallows around today with many flies and insects about. It is truly remarkable how these little bits of fluff survive their many thousand mile migrations twice and the vagaries of nature (storms, floods, cold weather, ice storms and such). One marvels when each spring he lays his own survival trials of

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the past winter alongside fellow creatures. How delicate appearing these little creatures are, but in reality how very tough.

Three Ugruq taken today at Sealing Point by two camp hunters. The Ugruq hunting season shaping up good and early.

May 27

Low 27° F
High 50° F
Light winds
Clear

A beautiful spring day. Lots of swallows.

Water sinking through the ice in front of Kotzebue. Better trail today, it is reported. Water coming up behind Sisualik. One of the smallest streams is running out on to the lagoon, but the larger ones are still holding.

Pintails, Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, White-fronts, Godwits, Northern Harrier, Dunlin, Western Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Greater Scaup, Longspurs and Shovelers at small creek outlet. Quite a variety but not many of any species and few birds flying. A single V-shaped flocks of 50 + Lesser Snow Geese flying a high compass course were an exception.

Seal hunters doing quite well with both Ringed Seal and Ugruq.

A few Tundra Vole winter working places are showing up.

May 28

Low 22° F
High 57° F
Light winds
Clear

A trip to Sealing Point. Very beautiful weather and hot in the sun.

It was hotter yet 30-50 miles offshore where the snow machine hunters and Ugruq were interacting. It was a good day for the hunters and good day for those Ugruq that the hunters didn't see too. Very hot in the furnace that high, strong sun rays, white snow, and shiny water make of that area around an open lead. Because of reflected rays it is a remarkable place at this season and Bearded Seals and Ringed Seal make the most of it by hauling out on the ice to speed their hair molt process among other things. The hotter the day, the sounder they sleep, and the better the hunters chances.

May

Our family group of three hunters got three, one for each sled. They brought them the 30-50 miles into Sealing Point camp and gave us a whole one, which we were very glad to get. We skinned and cut it up, load it on the sled and around 12:00 midnight headed home as the snow surface began to freeze. A great prize - 400 lbs of oil, meat, and skin from nearly 100 miles from home. A good day's work and profit. Taikuu!

As stated before, the open lead area is more than an hour's travel by snow machine off shore of Sealing Point. The distance is probably 40-50 miles. An unusually long distance for this time of year. Polar Bear tracks were seen too, which is also unusual for here.

Snow cover is less down that way, maybe 65% as compared to 80% yet here. Bird density increasing every day but continued cool weather slows the process.

Several good flocks of Snow Geese passing high today.

A group of fifteen to twenty caribou remain in the Killiqmaiq area, which is a surprise.

Very little running water yet. Most creeks have not flushed out yet.

Town trail has gotten better the last two days as water on top has sunk in front of Kotzebue Front Street and freezing nights make for a good supportive snow surface.

No eggs reported found yet, though in other years, we've had crane and gull eggs from the twenty-third on, with high production time the first week of June.

May 29

Low 28° F

High 49° F

W wind to 15

Fog, clear late p.m.

A day mostly of fog over ice and lowlands, while tablelands and mountains remained clear.

Our nearby lake outlines are beginning to take shape under the snow with water beginning to show on lake surfaces. The back part of the lagoon is filling with yellow waters that are beginning to march down this way. Soon the whole lagoon will be dark with water on the ice and then will turn white again as the whole mass of ice rises to float again.

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Many birds of all kinds down on Sealing Point flats now. There were not many here today.

Continued fog made hunting on the ocean not very productive though some may have been out.

A big Tundra Swan fight in the backyard this evening. Evidently an intruder on a mated pair. He or she? has been run off and the two have squatted on the ice for the night.

Galena flood waters down. Our local rivers just building with no reported ice movement yet.

No reported egg find yet though some G. Gull and Crane could be expected.

Update on that. One egg (gull-crane?) found from Jones' camp. Also the report from there that runoff water has halted travel till boat access possible.

May 30

Low 27° F
High 48° F
W wind 10
Clear

Used to be Memorial Day - the first day that the sun does not dip below the horizon if you are out on the ice at the edge of an open lead fifteen miles west of Sealing Point. The first day of midnight sun from that location and in terms of true sun time.

Four Black Turnstones around today. Semi-palmated Sandpipers displaying around small exposed ground plots.

Lagoon is near half full of outflow water. Snow cover about 60%. Town trail still being used though slushy.

Ugruq hunters still doing well with several being brought in today.

Very little bird hunting in the Sisualik area so far this spring. Most activity near the Ranger Station and west of Sealing Point. Bird condition generally reported to be pretty good though some Northern Pintails have been reported in poor shape (fat reserves low).

As the snow recedes here on the beach, vole populations and their winter activities are scarce. Ground squirrel populations very high.

Flood warnings on for upper Kobuk.

May 31

Low 28° F
High 59° F
W-NW wind to 18
Fog

A chilly day in Sisualik, especially when Point Barrow had a record breaking warm temperature for the date.

The ice at Noatak Village moved this morning and some high water at Shungnak.

Our lagoon about 3/4 full of outflow water.

Town travel continues.

A few local Dunlin cruising around today. Birds still pretty scarce down here with continued snow cover and lack of warm water areas. All those good things are more available back towards the tablelands.

At least it is not drifting snow on this last day of May.

Our swallows had to move back to more sheltered areas for the night. Expect them back in the morning. The Sealing Point Tree Swallow turned up for the first time one day later than ours.

The high temperature reading must have occurred during night or early morning hour with shift to north wind for a short while. Since 9 a.m. the temperature has been barely above freezing, with wind from off the ice (west). Great temperature contrasts occur at this season in both air and water. When wind originates from land mass instead of ice, higher temperatures result.

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JUNE

June 1

Low 30° F
High 50° F
Light winds
Clear

An unexpectedly good balmy day. Rather steady NW wind in early a.m., but soon dropped off to variable, even though 15- 20 knot winds continued through the day at both Kotzebue and Sealing Point.

Many small passerines are finally spreading over the land as melting snow recedes from last fall's berries, seeds, and insects. The lagoon has become wholly covered with water and more is coming.

Upriver areas still threatened by ice jams flooding, though Buckland seems to now be running free of ice. On the Noatak - village ice is gone, but no word as to how far down the river the ice has broken. Apparently it is still holding at the Hatchery.

Ice hunters are still out, but a late town trail traveler last evening warned that the water had gotten too deep on the staked trail. One traveler did cross to this side from Kotzebue, but through the outward "sea ice" trail. It won't be many days till Kotzebue channel opens and boating season will be on.

The beach cracks and tide cracks have opened on the beach - a milestone towards ocean ice break-up, though that will be some time off yet.

No report of gull egg harvest yet except the one; that is probably only because out-flowing meltwater has held searchers back for awhile. The first week of June is normally a high time for gull egg take.

The amount of blubber (to 4" thick) on some Uguruq taken last week is cause for comment among the hunters. Numbers taken so far are high for this early date.

Carrie noted a strange Gray Jay size bird catching flies around camp today. Couldn't get a good ID on it

Passing Red-throated Loons common today.

June 2

Low 34° F

June

High 54° F
Light winds
Partly cloudy to clear

No sunset till July 10-12. A pleasant day, though rain threatened but didn't happen in morning.

An unusual report of a rare duck take from westerly camp. Apparently two male Steller's Eiders were taken by young family hunters. This bird is rare in this area. It is aptly named as both male and female appear to have "browned" their belly feathers by getting too close to a stove. They are not often taken locally.

A pair of sno-go travelers made the wet trip from Kotzebue to Sisualik this morning. They may be the last to use the trail.

Ice movement on the Noatak said to be near the Hatchery this morning.

Uguruq hunters started out this morning, but after traveling awhile returned home, as some of the ice has begun to look weak. The risk didn't seem worth it since they already have a number of early season animals.

Bird movement pretty weak through here so far and date is getting late for most species. Many, in both numbers and variety, are reported yesterday and today west of the Ranger Station.

June 3

Low 32° F
High 44° F
W wind to 15
Fog till late p.m.

Sun, fog, and steady west wind till late p.m. It was a cool day.

First day of local boats in the water - on top of the ice.

A check of Glaucous Gull nests from several widely separated locations drew a blank. Nests are ready, some on ice, but no eggs yet, which is unusual at this date. Apparently some seasonal delay is possible to conform to unusual late or early environmental conditions.

Our snow cover dropping below 50% but birds are not numerous.

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Water level has dropped in the lagoon before it ever got very high. There is no floating mud yet. Outflow water has gotten quite farther than usual, probably because the ice is so flat with no holes or cracks for it to drain through.

Noatak River ice still holding at Hatchery.

Last ice hunter in this morning with few seals. He saw Uguruq too, but gun sights gave him some trouble. Hunters may or may not go out anymore. Trail conditions are marginal.

Many camps expecting airplanes for various reasons. The fog has held up considerable air taxi service. Most local landing strips have cleared of snow though some are not usable yet.

June 4

Low 36° F
High 64° F
N wind 10
Clear

A real summer day. No freezing and too hot around noon (3 p.m.).

Ice has moved at the Hatchery but holding down at Sam Henry's.

Lots of water on ocean ice (from melting snow); tide cracks are open. Traveling possible along beach tide cracks where water has run through and left a nice dry surface.

Glaucous Gull egg laying is picking up. Sealing Point and Ranger Station camps doing pretty well.

No seal hunting as trail is bad.

Snow cover down to 20% here. A number of bird species make the backyard quite noisy. Bar-tailed Godwits, Long-tailed Jaegers, passing Red-throated Loons, Sandhill Crane, and Tundra Swans the dominant noisemakers, though the undertone buzz of Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, and Dunlins round out the symphony.

Air Taxis busy again today. Air is now the only way to reach Kotzebue till boats get out, and many camps have first of the month checks coming.

Lots of little melt ponds over lowland areas. Much of the ground underneath yet frozen. Last year's blackberry crop in these areas now utilized by many species, both for seed and berry pulp and skins.

June 5

Low 36° F
High 66° F
W wind to 15, p.m.
Clear

A very warm morning and midday. It cooled quickly when west wind picked up.

The amount of water on the ice in front of Sisualik is more than we have ever seen. The reason is probably the flatness of the ice and lack of holes or cracks to drain through. Rather heavy snow on the ice and rapid outflow of local creek run off has made surface water very deep.

Saw a very large Tundra Vole by the doorstep today. The first, though neighbors report three recently in their tent.

Glaucous Gull egg laying picking up, but slow. Only one egg every few nests.

Back yard noise quite prominent when wind is down. Sandhill Crane, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Red-throated Loon dominate, by volume anyway. Pintail, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Dunlin, Wigeon and Scaup form an undertone. Occasionally the clarion challenge of a Tundra Swan rings out. A great spring symphony continues in Sisualik.

Noatak River ice moving nearly to the mouth. Kotzebue Channel said to have some ice moving this morning.

We worked up our Ringed Seals today. They were nice fat female seals. Skins and bones were discarded. Meat was hung and blubber saved.

Beach grasses (*Elymus*) showing green growth. Some mat willows (*Salix*) forming "pussy willows."

June 6

Low 32° F
High 48° F
W wind to 15
Clear, fog a.m.

A cool but beautiful day.

Journal

Noatak River ice woke Sam Henry at 4 a.m. this morning as it moved on down towards the mouth. Lots of noise. Channel may be open down to Kotzebue as soon as tomorrow.

Our lagoon water raising maybe in response to Noatak River outflow.

Our ocean ice slowly turning whiter as water drains through.

Bird action subdued, no doubt due to the cool wind.

Carrie heard a Savannah Sparrow today. It is very late for a first but we hadn't seen or heard any till this one.

Our ground area only 5% snow covered now.

No ocean ice hunting - trail out to lead still no good. Many people searching for Glaucous Gull eggs.

Several cranes carrying on a tremendous vocal battle across the water and a half mile away most of today. Haven't been able to figure quite what it was all about, but every creature with ears is aware that something was up - of interest to Cranes at least.

Well, we are a week into June and still freezing each night. We will have summer this year won't we?

June 7

Low 34° F
High 66° F
Light wind
Clear

A boat made it from Kotzebue up the Noatak River to Hatchery. They dragged boat across ice in front of Hansen's and boated up the shallow water of the bar to the jam, and at the mouth around the ice jams. On the way home they were able to land on beach at Arctic Lighterage.

A nice day with lots of Sunday school visitors.

Our beach cracks widening. Lots of cracks out on the main ocean ice. Sisualik may soon have boats.

Our ground snow cover down to near zero. There are only a few snowbanks left.

Thought I heard a single Black-legged Kittiwake today. Red-necked Phalaropes seem scarce to this date. Considerable black ice mud showing up in lagoon. Birds, sandpipers and dabbling ducks will benefit.

Ice piling in Kotzebue. Lots of boats out pretty soon.

June 8

Low 30° F
High 52° F
Light W winds
Clear

Another beautiful day.

The beach crack is opening to 6 or 8 feet and then closing again. Won't be long before we have open ocean again - and then wave noise.

Finally saw Yellow Wagtails and Arctic Terns. Doesn't mean they haven't been around earlier but we hadn't seen them yet.

First taste of net caught fish for the season. A short crack at right angle to the beach allowed a short whitefish net into the ocean. It is the only place along several miles of beach front that permits a net set right now, and everybody around shared in the fresh fish.

A CB report this morning alerted Noatak Villagers to a large caribou on a small island in front of town. There have been several reports of caribou near the village in the last ten days. This is good news this time of year. It is likely most are males and they may be around all summer.

Hatchery is about ready to release this year's fry, as the water drops a little more.

Made a first walk around backyard wetlands today and found a few landforms changed due to ice push and after freeze-up floods. Further landscape changes on our familiar grounds.

June 9

Low 28° F
High 49° F
SW wind to 15
Fog a.m., clear p.m.

Journal

A cool damp day until evening, when fog cleared and sun got pretty warm.

A waterfowl surprise this morning. When the fog lifted our back boat anchorage was covered with ducks and Brants, probably more than a thousand Northern Pintail, a few less Wigeon and a couple hundred Brant. A good deal of ice rafted muck was up and with the cold night, the warmed mud with *Potamogeton* buds and worms to probe for must have seemed good. It is the greatest mass of birds we have yet seen for this year. Numbers of shorebirds - godwits, turnstones etc. - mixed in with the larger birds made quite a multitude. Most of these, of course, are overflight birds, failed or non-breeders that will be molting in large flocks around the end of the month.

A lone mosquito turned up in the tent this evening. HmMMM!

Tide cracks continue to open and close on the beach. Large numbers of whitefish moving east to west under the ocean has progressed further with cracks and piling.

We had our first boat from Kotzebue today through the Noatak river and slough system to the lagoon and then around the edge to Sisualik.

Gull egg take pretty slow. Maybe fat reserves low from early weather patterns.

We're not looking forward to the advent of mosquitoes, but I guess that means warmer weather and flowers, both of which sound nice. Can't have one without the other.

June 10

Low 28° F

High 62° F

Clear, partly cloudy p.m.

This was a pretty warm day to follow such a cool night.

Carrie made a plane town trip and reports lots of dust over there.

There is a lot of water (open ocean) near the Ranger Station.

Our beach crack swung open again, but only to about ten feet before it then closed again. Hope it goes all the way soon.

Glaucous Gull egg take approaching peak. Some nests have two, a few three.

Marine mammal hunting at a standstill. Boat hunting will get underway as ocean as ice breaks up. It may be awhile yet.

Sealing Point beach crack has not moved yet. Our backyard lagoon has much ice, mud, and lots of Northern Pintails on it. Some Wigeon and a few Bar-tailed Godwits, but not much else. Only two Brant. We have had a very poor showing of Brant and Snow Geese so far this season.

A Savannah Sparrow is again nest building close to camp.

Saw a pair of very large loons today, that on the water showed considerable white on rear water line and least colored plumes (head neck area). Was not close enough nor had time enough to be sure, but it is likely that they were Arctic Loons.

Tundra Voles around. Numbers are not high, but as the snow melts there comes to be more than first supposed.

Our flats snow cover almost gone. Less than 1%. Mostly only remnants of snowbanks around camps.

June 11

Low 39° F
High 56° F
S wind to 10
Cloudy – rain showers

A nice warm day with little wind and clouds for a change.

Beach crack still moving around but no wider than twenty feet.

Had net out for awhile but the six whitefish it caught were pretty lean and scrappy.

Much ice rafts, mud up, and lots of birds on it but still mostly Northern Pintail.

Savannah Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Tree Swallow nesting around the camp. Also probably a Redpoll and a Northern Pintail.

Ocean ice still holding and preventing any marine mammal hunting.

A couple of large egg takes rumored within last few days on the Noatak Delta. One boat had two hundred, another one hundred. Hint of a few Brant eggs found too. We received eight Glaucous Gull eggs from a neighbor.

Probably 1500 Northern Pintail on ice mud in backyard. We don't have our usual large flock (500+) of flocked non-breeding Tundra Swan. We also don't have Black-legged Kittiwakes or Aleutian Terns yet.

Journal

Lesser Golden Plovers very rare this location this year.

June 12

Low 35° F
High 65° F
W wind to 18
N wind to 20
Cloudy

Report from Hatchery is that they released their fish yesterday or the day before. Peter will be ready to start his trek to the ocean.

Sisualik beach ice moved this evening about 8 p.m. after a day of steady but light NW wind, switching to N and picking up to 20 mph gusts.

All the whitefish you want. Folks just set their net for an hour or so and have enough to cut for drying for one day's work.

A single Bering Ciscoe is the only "other species" we caught today. All others are Alaska Whitefish (Humpback Whitefish).

Numbers of Arctic Terns following cracks and ice edges.

Boats able now to go through regular summer travel route from Sisualik Point to Kotzebue.

No reports of Char (trout) taken yet.

Pintails have thinned out some, though there are still several hundred on the backyard ice mud.

Still no sign of flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans and Black-legged Kittiwakes.

June 13

Low 50° F
High 67° F
Light winds
Partly cloudy

Sisualik ocean beach front wide open this morning. A new season comes on. It is the beginning of the "ice free" time.

Boat hunting for marine mammals begins.

The ground begins to have a green tinge with the brown. Our Arctic season of growth is on the way.

The first real rain of the new season today.

Fishing very good. Several trout (two fat enough for soup, two for drying).

A large catch of Sheefish (15 medium to small size). A couple of real fat ones. I released all those that were alive. The trend for increasing young shee on the ocean side of Sisualik continues. Some 3 ½ - 4 inch Saffron Cod in Sheefish stomachs.

Tried the very small mesh net for an hour, taking only one small Least Ciscoe.

Aleutian Tern noise today, the first one. Black-legged Kittiwake too.

Arctic Tern eggs found west of Sealing Point.

A real heavy catch of fish today all along the beach, wherever a net can be set. The only place that can't be done is Sealing Point, due to still solid beach ice.

Some very warm sun today in between rain showers.

No wood and no beluga yet in the open water.

June 14

Low 42° F
High 64° F
Variable W-N wind 15
Some clouds

The only snow left is that in banks near bluffs or draws.

Lagoon less than half ice covered.

The first small chunks of driftwood mixed with ice chunks on the sea. Beach not open to the Ranger Station yet, though some beach ice has moved between the shelter cabin and Sealing Point.

“Ice mud” in lagoon rapidly falling apart. Losing this convenient source of food, both vegetable and protein, the birds are moving on or spreading out into other habitat.

Journal

Some fair spruce driftwood this p.m.

Aleutian Terns becoming common.

No marine mammal hunting boat sorties yet, but ice is thinning so trails to the outer waters will be open this week.

A few new summer campers getting settled, but no boats from Noatak yet.

Four-wheeler traffic has begun on the beach as snow drifts fade rapidly away.

No beluga sighting yet.

June 15

Low 38° F
High 49° F
W – NW wind 20
Cloudy

A cool windy day, with wave noise all day for the first time this season. Ice has gotten far off shore with steady W and NW winds.

Noticed Red Phalaropes for the first time today. Numerous small groups of three to six, feeding in ocean waves fifty feet off shore. Many do not have bright breeding plumage. Don't know if this plumage difference means male birds or single year birds. Maybe late migrating birds/non-breeders.

Lots of good fish in the water: fat and lean Char, fat and lean whitefish, fat and lean Sheefish and even a few starry flounders.

A pretty good haul of good spruce driftwood.

Snow and “ice mud” about gone and once again, our beach gravel strip is greening before the tablelands. This strange change was first noticed last year on the edges of the great gravel throw up by the late August storm of 1990. The exposed gravel absorbs the cool nights and prompts quicker sprouting and growth. The tableland willow leaf growth used to give a green tinge to that area first. Both *Elymus* grass and scrub willow here on the beach are greening rapidly, even though temperatures have been cool. *Angelica* and Beach Lovage our two “eating greens,” are also forming leaves.

Loafing Pintails and Wigeon numbers have dropped rapidly as “ice mud,” their high quality feeding area, has disintegrated.

We have not yet had gull-herring interaction in our lagoon area. This is strange. Is herring spawning yet to come, or have some conditions, like water temperature, made our lagoon unusable this year?

June 16

Low 37° F
High 42° F
W wind 15-20
Cloudy

A cool June day.

Word has come down that two Uguruq were hauled into Kotzebue a few days ago, which makes that the first marine mammal boat catch of the season.

The ocean has become ice free over some large areas along north shore Kotzebue Sound, due to constant W-NW winds. Boat hunters should be quite active at the end of this week, but will be slowed some by ice running in Kotzebue channel from Kobuk Lake.

Some herring-gull action in our back lagoon. Unusually late and not yet frantic.

A strange report of some large flocks of Tundra Swan and Snow Geese making landfall over camps just west of the Ranger Station. It is probable that these birds come straight across the mouth of the Sound from Cape Espenberg. They are probably flocked non-breeders continuing north for molt.

Not much fishing today. Water cold and waves pretty big. Ice nearly out of sight but being driven back by wind.

Tundra Voles turning up pretty regularly with snow gone and new growth just getting started.

A large flock of Tundra Swans noted back against the hills. These may be the mid-June flock of non-breeders that have been, up to this time, missing.

Four newly greening plants have portions big enough to eat: *Salix*, *Ligusticum*, *Angelica*, and *Allium*.

A small bear crossed Sealing Point lagoon on the ice headed straight for the camp house. It turned off and ran as it crossed wind scent line. This is a first summer bear incident.

Journal

June 17

Low 35° F
High 46° F
W-NW wind to 20
Few clouds, sunny

Flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans, two or three hundred, are back against the tablelands.

Numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers passing west over the ocean. Small flocks of three to twelve.

Our wind has been out of the west for a long time again, and it is having its effect on temperatures and ocean currents, which in turn regulates all the different living things. Plant and insect development is slowed; fish movement and water temperatures are altered; and ice surface, on large ice pans of the kind Uguruq prefer, are re-shuffled, determining where the animals will be found. It amounts to more delay in an already late spring.

One boat appearing heavily loaded went in this morning from the ice pack. We haven't heard yet the nature of their catch.

Three or four Noatak boats came down last night to camp and hunt from their traditional spring hunt base at the point.

No beluga sightings yet. This appears more and more to be an example of a lost resource to this area.

Very few fish in the ocean here today after there were so many the day before yesterday. One Sheefish was quite full of Saffron Cod, Smelt, Herring, and even two Nine-spine Sticklebacks.

Herring and gull interaction picking up in the lagoon. At least some spawning is occurring.

Several boats will be taking off out into the ice pack as the wind drops this evening.

Some Glaucous Gull eggs still good from second clutches. It's quite late in the month for that to be true.

June 18

Low 38° F
High 54° F
W wind to 15
S wind at 5, p.m.
Cloudy – sunny p.m.

A quiet beautiful evening in Sisualik with almost shiny water. Floe ice moving in towards the beach as ocean current changes direction in response to constant westerly winds dropping down.

A great catch of char (trout) this afternoon. An old, torn up 4 ½” mesh short net that caught only two in a 24 hour soak this morning, held on to forty in a half hour this afternoon. These are out moving fish from overwintering areas on the Noatak. This catch was a little unusual in that 75 % were fat and good for cooking. The other 25 % were lean and emaciated, having probably spawned before overwintering. They are good only for drying.

The loaded boat we noted going in from the ice pack a couple of days ago had three Uguruq and a Common Seal, which makes it the first boat catch from the Sisualik side. A number of boats are out today.

Kotzebue Channel said to be running ice heavy since last night. When the steady west wind quits, broken-off chunks of ice from Kobuk Lake move out towards the sea and are sometimes thick enough to prevent boat traffic for several days.

A few more Black-legged Kittiwakes around today. Good to hear their “call of the sea.”

The “green chasers” (flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans) are much in evidence today. The flock maybe up to its 500 mark of the past few years. Haven't been close enough to them yet to give a more accurate estimate. They are quite noisy, even from a mile away, when there is no wind.

Many Arctic Terns working the ocean for small fish, probably sticklebacks.

One char stomach held winter killed Arctic Cod. Additional evidence of early season scavenging.

There was a lot of air traffic today by a couple of small, large wheeled, red and white planes, and later, a whitish float plane to the area near the Ranger Station apparently. We know of some camp air taxi activity, but this exceeded that by much and seems to indicate a major surveying activity. NPS may be moving personnel and supplies, and there is a hint of char fishing activity at the mouth of Anigaaq, both rod and reel and net, as the first spring run is in progress. This amount of small plane traffic in one day is unusual at any season.

June 19

Low 44° F

Journal

High 59° F
SE to SW wind 15
Sun and clouds

Quite a lot of boat traffic today, and a lot of trout again. They are mostly small to medium and most fat enough for cooking. One medium sized, spawned out (“slink”) female bore ADF&G tag no. 6556.

Drift ice coming back closer to Sisualik beach.

The mob of noisy Tundra Swans has moved to the west end of salt marsh area.

Flies, mosquitoes, and other bugs becoming active today as temperatures move a little higher.

Almost no other fish in the water beside trout and a few flounders.

Expecting our first summer visitors today.

Have not seen a true flower or a beluga yet. There are surely *Pedicularis* blooming back in the beach ridge zone.

Ice has quit running in Kotzebue Channel so this will probably be a weekend of lots of boats.

June 20

Low 42° F
High 63° F
Light onshore winds
Sun and clouds

Well, we've reached the day of most sunlight hours, on some parts of the globe. Don't quite know where that fits in where you have two months of 24-hour sunlight. It is, however, a milestone that makes you know we have reached a peak and are now headed in the direction of a December day when sunlight will be limited to 1 hour and 45 minutes. The moral: enjoy what you have, while you have it. We did today. Good companionship, good sunlight, a beautiful quiet and ice-filled sea, lots of birds, and few mosquitoes. No drifting snow either - we don't have too many days like this in Sisualik or on Krusenstern National Monument.

First report of belugas today - finally “a bunch” moving west, close to the beach and midway between the Ranger Station and Sealing Point.

Uguruq catch and effort in full swing. Catch per boat is low (one or two) because of large amount of ice and competition between boats. As ice thins and more hunting area becomes accessible, catch per boat will probably increase.

Catch of Sheefish high on Sisualik beach front today.

Flocked Tundra Swans still noisy over the newly greened marsh areas.

June 21

Low 48° F
High 63° F
N wind to 20, NW 18
Clear – sunny

A warm dry day - without bugs.

Ice Uguruq hung continues with some limited success.

A review of yesterday's beluga catch here re-stated. Earlier in the day a “large” group of belugas were reported by plane offshore of Kotzebue Army base - Sadie Creek area. No hunt attempt known. Around 7:00 p.m., a “large” group of beluga were found along the beach moving NW, passing Whittier Williams' house west of the Ranger Station. A little later, residents of Sealing Point had a “large” group of beluga passing and one animal was wounded.

A few more Noatak families have moved down and onto camping area at the point for marine mammal hunting.

Sheefish thick again here, trout fading, but lots farther west. Large Shee catches made accidentally when gear left in the water too long.

First flower here today (besides grass and willow): Coltsfoot (*Petasites*). Should be *Primula* too but haven't seen any yet. There are reported *Pedicularis Kanei* from back beach ridge areas.

Two flowers blooms of *Primula* reported from our backyard. This the first reported “real” flower of the season. Don't tell a bumblebee that, since they have been active from early in the month, but with less flower-like blooms.

The most outstanding “natural” noise for the past week has been the rowdy gang of flocked non-breeder Tundra Swans – four hundred plus.

Journal

An unusual dog/aircraft incident at Sealing Point. The dog killed by plane prop. The plane was picking up two hikers from the west.

June 22

Low 45° F
High 50° F
W wind to 15
Cloudy – rain showers

Visitors left after a very good visit. We had many good discussions.

Good Noatak char still here.

Beluga sighted again around the mouth of the Kotzebue Channel and the island. No known catch as yet.

Swan noise still loud.

The gull nest has no additional egg today after three were taken three days ago.

World turning green finally.

Bad mosquitoes reported from Hugo Mountain early this morning. Very few here yet because of coolness.

Kotzebue channel running some ice again.

Uguruq hunters taking it slow. Not many hunting on this rain showery day.

There were more than two hiker-campers in the group at the airplane dog kill incident.

Rain showers turned to fairly steady rain in p.m., which makes this day the first real rainy day since the last drifting snow day in May.

Our plant world will explode in growth if there is a day of warm sunshine after this soaking. There will also be a population explosion of mosquitoes. You can bet on it! It is that time of year.

June 23

Low 46° F
High 54° F
E to S wind 20
Clear – windy

A windy but bright sunny day. Not too warm and no bugs. A very nice p.m.

There was a rumor report of belugas seen around the tip of Sisualik.

Water still very brown. There is a few little driftwood, twigs floating around. Nothing much good. There is no ice in sight from camp for the first time today, though it will probably be back in sight as wind drops and settles. Too rough for net a.m., no try PM. We're still flush with cooking-frozen char. Even a few dried ones.

Some beluga nets going out.

Primula slowly opening their flowers. Distant Cotton Grass beginning to show white color. That probably means the first salmonberries are blooming inland from the coast.

Pack ice became visible again late p.m. Wind and current quite rapidly change the SW horizon from ground level at this season. Even a makeshift tower makes a lot of difference in the view. What is at stake is presence or absence of ice pack. When it goes, hunting is finished. We could have pack ice for two more full weeks or it could be gone tomorrow. It is hard to tell from ground level the extent of remaining ice pack.

The folks that saw the first "large" bunch of beluga stopped by today and said there seemed to be at least "a couple of hundred."

Looking back towards the mountains at the 11:30 p.m. sun, the greening hills, the few remaining snow patches, the forming "frost" of *Eriophorum*, and 500 Tundra Swans in the air, make an unforgettable, very dramatic scene.

June 24

Low 42° F
High 62° F
NW wind to 25
Clear

The lack of herring and gull activity in our lagoon system is noteworthy this June.

The abundance of fat char is also interesting. Sheefish numbers continue very high. Nearly fifty in the 4 ½" mesh. They are small, rearing-size fish with stomachs full of Saffron Cod (3-4"), Rainbow Smelt (3-4"), and Nine-spine Stickleback.

First day of some Kivalina char, very fat, some with full stomachs.

Journal

Water full of fish yet: Shee and char. Shee are stuffed full. Only rarely does a char have stomach contents. Water is still very muddy-turbid. Does the huge eye of Shee make the difference in forage success? Only four fry species noted in stomachs. No salmon fry. A real heavy, long run of both Shee and Char where Shee really shouldn't be!

A large flock (30) of Bar-tailed Godwit foraging on ocean beach today. Their usual forage zone is salt marsh, not ocean beach.

Salmonberry plants blooming and the *Primula* we took in to the warm tent a couple of days ago is in full bloom. It's beautiful. Cold temperatures (but not freezing) are delaying blooming close to the coast. A mile or so inland some flowering is well underway.

June 25

Low 45° F
High 62° F
Light wind
Clear

A beautiful calm morning with swan noise in the back ground.

There are three or four chunks of ice in sight to the SW. Otherwise no ice in close to Sisualik, though Kotzebue Sound probably has much ice farther off shore.

There was a single yearling (subadult) beluga taken in a net between Sisualik and Sadie Creek. The net was torn in second place and the owner figures a second animal (it's mother?) was caught for awhile. This is the first catch that we know of for the '92 season.

A late sheep report: two were seen in the mountains of Krusenstern Monument. This is the first report in a couple of years.

A very lot of different varieties of fish in the water. Fry of Humpback Whitefish, Saffron Cod, and Least Ciscoe noted, mixed with Noatak Char, Kivalina Char and some Bering Ciscoe adults.

Marine waters at very low ebb, probably in response to a northerly wind system over the years.

Butterflies and hornets today. Most stations reporting too many mosquitoes.

We are thankful for light westerly breezes off the ice pack.

The tableland area willow patches are pretty well leafed out, though some snowbanks remain. Some large areas appear burned because of recent snowbank melt - they haven't greened yet.

The first day that insects were bothersome.

June 26

Low 42° F
High 68° F
E wind to 20
Cloudy

Dead calm and lots of sun in late p.m. A first bad mosquito night for most all creatures except swallows.

First day for us to see belugas in Sisualik. A group of what seemed less than ten, mixed. Several white, one with a very small young one and several gray ones. Neighbors have short beluga net out and water is quite turbid but none got in it. They were within 300 yards of the beach and showing a good portion above water surface on their blow cycle. Neighbors fixed one shot and drew an oil slick but no blood.

We may hear of more beluga taken this evening as wind has died and conditions are ideal.

It is a good night too for Elephant Point people I suppose.

A one hour net soak this morning produced only one fat char and one Sheefish. Quite a contrast to the last ten days. Char catches continue to be heavy farther west.

We are hearing peak salmonberry plant bloom and *Primula* building. Peak of *Pedicularis Kanei* probably past.

June 27

Low 52° F
High 68° F
NE to S wind 18
Cloudy, windy, showers
Calm p.m.

A similar day to yesterday. Warm, showers, windy a.m., and calm p.m. with lots of bugs.

Fat char and shee in the net.

Journal

Uguruq hunting continues, but catches not large. Beluga seen again today at Sealing Point. No hint of numbers except "quite a few."

An odd gull today on our beach. Probably a second summer Slaty-backed Gull, based on whole dark tail rather than a dark band as per Herring Gull.

The "gravel overthrow" producing a lavish, lush green growth this second year after the storm. It is plain to see how well adapted *Elymus*, *Ligusticum*, *Angelica* and *Artemisia* are to this dynamic surface beach ridge country.

Flowers and butterflies still scarce in variety but showers and sun doing their work. It won't be long before all flowers are out. *Primula* still most abundant.

Tablelands' snowbanks getting fewer and smaller and "burned looking places" getting smaller, as greening of larger snowbank area wallows takes place.

Insects and plants coming into their own with these 50-60 degree temperatures.

June 28

Low 55° F
High 70° F
E-SE wind 18
Clouds, showers, sun

A few new flowers after showers and warmth. Forget-me-nots, Dandelion, Spotted Saxifrage, and Alpine Azaleas especially profuse with their beautiful light pink in the back, older beach ridge areas.

Uguruq catch continues light, though ice still in sight from Sisualik.

A female beluga with calf taken in net west of the Ranger Station. This is the second catch of beluga season that we know of in all of Kotzebue Sound.

Lots of visitors today by boat, airplane, and four wheelers. Most are family related or extended. They helped feed our local mosquito group. You'd think they (the mosquitoes) would now leave us two alone. No chance! It is a bad mosquito day! Or a good day for mosquitoes, depending on your perspective.

A group of 20 + caribou were rumored seen on the beach at Akulaaq this week. None were taken.

Pedicularis sudetica blooms noted today. Also chive blossoms.

There are still some Tundra Swans, but their numbers are diminished from the 500+ of last week.

June 29

Low 56° F
High 82° F
N wind to 18, SW to 15
Clouds, sun, thunder

A record high today for Kotzebue Weather Station. Sisualik a few degrees warmer when wind was from north, off the land. Too warm.

This was also the first day we have heard thunder. The cloud passed through the mountains over our winter camp.

Our ocean ice has come closer. It is characteristic of this stage of ocean ice deterioration that the remaining belt of pack ice, as it narrows in width, is forced shoreward by ground swells on the open water outside Sound areas.

This is peak salmonberry bloom time. Weather is just right for pollination so we may have another good berry year if we don't have a frost before the ocean ice leaves. Cranberries barely beginning to bloom.

There are a lot of pre-molt waterfowl in our back basin. Tundra Swan and Greater Scaup with some Wigeon and Pintail. Molt of some already underway in isolated inland lakes.

A super bad mosquito night and early morning. Dogs suffered.

June 30

Low 48° F
High 62° F
Light NW wind a.m.
Cloudy

The last day of a pretty good month, without extremes, except for yesterday's high temperature and multitude of mosquitoes.

Most of the earlier blooming flowers have blossomed. Noted the first poppies and beach pea flowers today.

Another beluga taken in a net today. That makes three for this season taken from north Kotzebue Sound. This was another small gray one.

Journal

Shee in Sisualik waters very plentiful. There seems nothing else except flounders. The Shee are small, probably five or six years old and weighing one to three pounds. Feed seems to be the attraction. Multitudes of fingerling Saffron Cod, Rainbow Smelt and Nine-spine Stickleback.

Ice still in sight from Sisualik, but not many boats out yesterday. Many will probably head out today. The Uguruq catch has been small.

A second beluga today from a different net. A nice big white adult. Is a more humane way of obtaining maktak.

Some high ice chunks-bergs getting closer this evening. Air is cooling too. Hope it continues so mosquitoes won't fly for a few hours. Dogs need a break.

This is probably the peak time for beluga net set and there are many out. The number of nets is something new in the past five years. It probably has not affected beluga population much but may have a great effect on movement and distribution of the Kotzebue Sound population. Beluga presence was already in decline locally before the impact of intense netting effort.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JULY

July 1

Low 54° F
High 67° F
E wind to 18
Some clouds

A first Chum Salmon today, taken by neighbors in a Char net. Very timely. Chum Salmon are supposed to begin their run in July.

A pair of kayakers moving west from the Noatak Delta today. One Kayak with sail. Two people, don't know their origin, but they came out the most western Noatak river delta headed for the beach ridges of Cape Krusenstern.

A walrus report north of here (from a village) seemed to have sparked a heavy movement of boats out into what is probably the last ice. This is a relatively new activity from this site, made possible by technology and affluence.

Total Uguruq catch and effort both seem at a lower level to date.

Heat and bugs bad again today, but tolerable because of steady breeze most of the day.

Word of the killing of four musk-ox NW of Kivalina very sad.

A single bull caribou reported on Sealing Point flats. Lots of Spotted Seals reported off Sealing Point.

July 2

Low 56° F
High 78° F
E wind to 20
Sunny – some clouding

Report of a second Chum Salmon and a first Pink Salmon. Also the radio announcement that the Commercial Chum season will open on the ninth.

Family dropped off for us a large female Uguruq with new hair at 5:30 a.m. Its now 5 p.m. The meat is hung, blubber is in a full barrel (12 gal), and I have yet to stake out the skin. Two of us have spent a long day on a single 400 lb animal.

No fish catch in our table net this morning except three kinds of bottom fish.

Bluebells (*Mertensia paniculata*) blooming today and our late local *Pedicularis Kanei* finally noted. It is in perfect flower shape all along the stalk. Also our *Epilobium latifolium* (white!) that didn't bloom last year has some nice big buds right now. This is an interesting plant. Only white one we can find and it is nearly ten years now since we first noticed it. It skips blooming some years, but then blooms profusely the next. The gravel throw up line just reached it, not quite covering it. The near smothering by new gravel caused leaves to appear half burned last year and no blossoms. It will be a treat to see its snow white petals bordered by bright pink sepals.

No *Gentianopsis detonsa* plants located yet. Will there be some, this year?

Wouldn't you know it, with a first salmon yesterday and one today it didn't take much of a search to find grain heads of *Elymus* poking out of the plants heart! Several of them were full length out. It never seems to fail. Wonder what the connection is between Chum Salmon movement and *Elymus* heads? Probably something to do with time and temperature. At this season there has to be a relationship between air and sea temperatures. Maybe the angle of sun rays.

A good size King Crab from beluga net today, 500 yards off shore.

First beluga taken Elephant Point, only one, we heard. Unusual for them to take one at a time.

Ground swells reported NW of us at Sealing Point. That means pack ice belt very thin and ocean will soon be ice free. Walrus reported off Kivalina and hundreds of Larga Spotted Seals off Krusenstern.

A record high for the day occurred at Kotzebue Weather Station.

July 3

Low 48° F
High 69° F
W wind to 20
Clear

A much cooler morning. Some freedom from bugs. There is the sound of waves.

Several hundred Tundra Swans and a few hundred mixed duck species in the waterfowl basin back against the hills.

Several “new” flowering species: *Potentilla Egedii*, *Andromeda*, and *Ledum*. Some salmonberry flowers dropping petals in the wind today.

This is the time when one can look at the ground, especially around the edge of a small lake, and see a marvelous diversity of growing life and wonder at the term “barren lands” as applied to Arctic and Subarctic tundra. So many colors, such succulent growth, and so many living things. Do you remember how absolutely void of life this same plot of land seemed a few months back, say in March, when the rolling white snow covers humps seemed absolutely sterile of life? Every inch of soil is now covered with some growing organism, and competition is fierce.

Chum Salmon are making a good early show on the Krusenstern beach! Sealing Point has ten or so and on this side of the Point, eight to ten have been taken.

A whale other than beluga taken in a beluga net west of the Ranger Station. Species not yet determined. It was towing the net away when a returning ice hunting boat ran across it and killed it. A crew cutting it up tonight. This is a first happening here of the sort.

This also is the day we cannot see ice from Sisualik Beach toward the SW.

A first large barge is anchored off shore today.

Kivalina reportedly had to go NW some distance to catch up with walrus. Not much chance for local boats that tried.

July 4

Low 43° F
High 78° F
W-NW wind to 10
Clear

A very warm, dry Fourth of July, with little wind and lots of bugs. We also had a long day's work of things that can't wait: making thin strips of Uguruq, preparing whale for freezer, cutting blubber, Uguruq to put in barrel, and working up first good show of Chum Salmon. They are making a good early showing.

The Gray Whale taken yesterday in a net was 24 ft. long. It was in very good condition.

Weather is proving too hot for taking care of our Uguruq meat. We may make it with most of it. Refrigeration is the only answer to prevent waste in July food preparation for preservation.

Journal

A real peak in flounder movement. The number of Pink Salmon (humpies) for this early is very high. The Chum Salmon we've seen are large and husky, probably five year olds.

Lots of butterflies today. The air is quite dry, but not enough to discourage the mosquitoes. It was a bad mosquito day.

Ice still in sight to the SW.

No more snowbanks on the tableland areas. A few yet in the higher hills. Lots of white cotton grass on tablelands.

July 5

Low 64° F
High 82° F
E wind to 25
Sunny – some clouds

A very warm windy morning. Mosquitoes having trouble flying but they're hanging on to the grass - waiting!

A large group of beluga active in place (circling) at the tip of Sealing Point.

We're going to have a great grain crop. The *Elymus* on the gravel overburden that grew leaves so great last year is really producing a lot of heavy heads. In the last two days they have really grown and appeared in most grass clumps.

A few buds on the *Epilobium latifolium* (the white one) are getting near to blooming. *Castilleja caudata* first blooms today (Paintbrush). They didn't do much last year.

Potentilla villosa and *Mertensia maritima* are blooming.

I cannot locate any *Gentianopsis detonsa* plants yet. Will there be any? I looked in last year's patches. Lots of dry plants no new growth.

Wind died about 6 p.m. (3 p.m. sun time) and since it was mid afternoon - not early evening - it got hot! With mosquitoes! It was an uncomfortable p.m. Wind picked up from north later on bringing more bugs and hot air. Summer can be over and done!

We saw the unusual (for Sisualik) phenomena of the "Dance of the Midges" today. Huge, towering, smoke stacks of midges, 30 to 50 feet in the air, like a veil or curtain over the land obscuring distant houses and camps for awhile and then

clearing again. Right temperature, moisture, and breeze for a tremendous insect hatch.

Dragonflies active today for the first time this year.

July 6

Low 54° F
High 78° F
Light E wind
Cloudy

Small ground swells - the first. Summer begins though there is still ice in sight to the SW.

Lots of Humpback Salmon and mosquitoes.

Finished putting our meat in oil and feel in pretty good shape for oil and meat for winter.

First lightning caused fires reported yesterday. Smoke in the air this morning, obscuring distant vision. Several fires on the Seward Peninsula - Pilgrim Springs, etc.

Water midge (Chironomid?) towers again today.

A local beluga net moved a mile or so by something (another Gray Whale?)

ADF&G put out western boundary buoy for commercial fishery today.

Town family overnighted with us. Helped feed the mosquitoes.

A piece of fresh caribou meat today from a Baldwin Peninsula kill through a friend. Fresh meat after a time of none is always good.

July 7

Low 62° F
High 76° F
SE wind 15, NW to 15
Sun – fog – smoke

A town trip and a rather hectic one. Good water both ways though. The level of activity amongst the human population of Kotzebue is quite intense.

Didn't find any *Gentianopsis detonsa* at Laykum site in Kotzebue.

Journal

Oiled dust scene in Kotzebue is always a shock. Dust alone and oil alone are tolerable. Mixed? A little more than a country person can get used to in one day.

Several plants in Kotzebue are ahead of blooming schedule in Sisualik - Monkshood, Daisy, Camomile, and Fireweed (*E. latifolium*).

Out hot and mosquito weather continues. A too long spell of both. Dogs and likely inland "wild" creatures are having a trying time of it.

Hearsay - Buckland-Elephant Point beluga take count of five or six.

July 8

Low 59° F

High 72° F

Rain!

Rain and about time. Our vegetation and ground were near parched. The wetting may be just in time for some berry species.

Still a few beluga nets in the water, but no activity by belugas. Most people involved in the Chum fishery are getting ready for the opening Thursday at 8 p.m.

We have an exceedingly good *Elymus* grain crop. Snow buntings and redpolls may benefit greatly this late fall and winter.

The rain should clear up some smoke, as well as slow the numerous lightning fires around the region.

Most Northern Pintails probably getting down in flight feather molt. Local group of flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans thinning out as they move into secluded areas to go through their flight feather molt.

We didn't notice ice in sight either yesterday or today on the ocean, so maybe it is gone from here for this year. Ice is still visible from Sealing Point.

A rain soaked Snowy Owl caught a ground squirrel and ate it in the backyard today. A bit of a surprise since we haven't seen a Snowy Owl for a month.

Lots of fresh run Humpback Salmon in the water. A short soak, less than an hour, produced eighteen. No Chums.

Commercial Chum season opens 8 p.m. tomorrow. Quoted price is twenty-two cents a pound.

A burst of *Oxytropis Maydelliana* flowering today after rain.

July 9

Low 56° F
High 63° F
NW wind to 15
Sunny – cool

It is so great a feeling to be cool and mosquito free for a change! Also, night is returning, at the surprising rate of 28 minutes in one day.

Humpback Whitefish on the return run today, along with a lot of Humpback Salmon. They are fat now and not so good for dried fish but make fine half dried fish.

Lots of Arctic Daises blooming now. Salmonberry flowers on the way out. Hope some got fertilized. The rains came maybe just in time.

Not many commercial fishing boats out on this side. Five or six probably.

Another King Salmon taken west of the Ranger Station today. Two known taken from this side so far.

We sure have developed a great crop of *Elymus* grain heads over the storm tossed gravel layer. All vegetation doing well since the rains came in time.

Swallows still in the box but adults working round the clock to feed the young ones.

July 10

Low 50° F
High 78° F
Light wind
Sunny – thundershowers

Thunderheads got close enough to hear thunder this time, this year's first.

The white petaled, pink sepaed *Epilobium latifolium* that didn't bloom last year but survived the gravel throw up is blooming. Buds probably opened yesterday. Five flowers are open - those buds facing north. The other smaller and younger plant has buds also.

The rainy day we had, and the thundershowers, are causing both our insects and vegetation to flourish.

Journal

First fishing period ends at 8:00 this evening. Some fair catches were made, though we haven't heard numbers yet.

Large numbers of fish reported around on Ranger Station.

Young Semi-palmated Sandpipers are out and the parents worrisome.

Three moose tracks reported at Akulaaq. This is the first summer report of moose this year.

Our *Elymus* growth spectacular and today is a critical day for them -their pollen is out. Most local salmonberry petals have fallen off, so that berry crop is on its way to a next stage.

No ice in sight here for several days now, though Sealing Point has some high bergs in site yet.

We've had a flock of fourteen Sandhill Cranes foraging back and forth across our backyard today. Wonder what they're targeting. They seem to be enjoying the hot weather.

Two caribou sighted tonight at Sealing Point, towards the tower.

July 11

Low 62° F
High 78° F
Calm a.m.
NW wind to 25 p.m.
Hot, thundershowers

A very warm calm morning. 76° F before 9 a.m.

A loss of 35 minutes of sun up time in one day. Remarkable how much sun up time lost each day at beginning of cycle.

A male, fresh run Humpback Salmon, with stomach stuffed full of what is apparently sand lance: a long, narrow 1 ½ - 3" inch fish with teeth and long overshot lower jaw.

Lots of Western Sandpipers on mudflats where there were none before.

Local salmonberry patch looks good, many sepals folded up.

Peak flowering time for Paintbrush, Arctic Daisy, and *Oxytropis Maydelliana* and the tail end peak of *Primula*, *Potentilla Egedii*. A few *Senecio lugens* beginning to bloom. White Fireweed doing fine. Blossoms are beautiful.

Another flock of eighteen cranes passed by. A flock of fourteen continues to forage back and forth over our back pasture. Many hatchling sandpipers and passerines are about out there too. You don't think those cranes are purposely beating the grasses for those little tidbits do you? Old berries? Crane flies? Caterpillars? Back and forth all day long, through mostly the low grassy areas rather than the higher berry ground, though they do go through the berry areas too.

Bugs not quite so bad because of wind and dryness.

July 12

Low 58° F
High 72° F
NW wind to 20
N wind to 30 late p.m.
Clear

The unmistakable sound of measured ocean swells this early morning. The monster is free again. The fetters of an icy breakwater are gone and the full awesome energy of the open sea is at any time the new potential for Sisualik's eroded beaches. The sound now is rhythmic, beautiful, and relaxing, a sound never uttered in sager interior sections of the region. It is the sound of the sea.

Iris are blooming today. The first for the year. This seems to be our largest flower.

A strong N wind developed after 7 p.m.

The Snowy Owl was again sitting on his pole upon the mud point of the lagoon.

Did some searching for *G. detonsa* plants this afternoon on the high producing areas of last year, with no success. Will there be any this year?

Also a first bloom of *Saussurea nuda* a very common near wetland plant here at Sisualik. The shade of purple-blue is similar to *G. detonsa* and though it's growth zone is usually on a few inches higher level of the wetlands, one's heart skips a beat at this season when the splash of color from a distance makes you think you have discovered the first *G. detonsa*.

The list of plant species yet to bloom on the Spit is getting pretty small. Gentians, Grass of Parnassus, Tall Fireweed and most *Artemisia* sp.

Journal

Our *Elymus* seed heads are nearly shoulder tall on gravel throw up zone and some clumps of *Ligusticum* are super clumps. An interesting study in plant succession and results of natural forces limiting or removing competition and resulting in super-growth for a time.

Swallows have been acting a little strange yesterday and today. Maybe soon to be gone.

Swans have been gone for several days.

July 13

Low 46° F
High 65° F
NE wind to 20
Cloudy, rain showers

At least two new swallows out of the box today.

Peak bloom of cranberries and a big crop of Kavlaq berries (bearberries) set on the plants and near full size already. (This is the berry no one uses) There are no more salmonberry flowers. There are some berries set on the plants, but appears to be not as many as last year, though they are not big enough to stand out yet.

A very great discovery today. We have had first one, and then two close together white petaled, pink sepaed *Epilobium latifolium* plants for nearly ten years. We have never found others in Sisualik until today! There are eighteen or twenty plants in a colony just past the west end of the Nuvugraq air strip. A surprising find, ten years in the making.

Very cold water in the ocean this morning after yesterday's strong N winds. Some small Shee, whitefish, and several humpbacks - even one huge Saffron Cod with a whole large size herring in the stomach.

There is a flock of a hundred Greater Scaup males behind Sisualik awaiting molt time.

There are no more swans on the tidewater flats. They and most Northern Pintails are off to inland lakes for molt. The first Pintails will soon be back with new flight feathers.

We still have our back lot foraging crane group and the Snowy Owl sitting on his hunting post mornings and evenings.

Ocean swells have diminished this evening after running fairly high for two days.

Commercial Salmon nets set at eight this evening did some immediate splashing, indicating a good early catch.

Elephant Point Beluga catch reported to total five.

July 14

Low 48° F
High 56° F
N-NE wind to 20
Rain showers

Very low water due to N winds system around the region.

Young swallows crowding out of the box, three inside yet. One was flying some out of the box for awhile today. We'll miss them when they go, which will be this week.

Both of our white *Epilobium latifolium* plants blooming now. Neither did last year. One wonders what is old age for some Arctic plants.

This fishing period less productive than the last. Weather, wind system is one factor.

This day of showers and cool temperatures a pleasant change. Few bugs and no sweat. The vegetation and berries will benefit much as the ground was getting quite dry again.

A bear was seen feeding on an old walrus a few miles NW of Sealing Point today.

The marshes are nearly empty of waterfowl due to molt and preparation for molt. Two swans we saw yesterday may be the last we will see for awhile.

July 15

Low 53° F
High 64° F
SE to NW wind 15
Clear – some clouds

A lot of Humpback Salmon in table net and one six pound sheefish apparently full of capelin.

We still have nine cranes in the backyard. Can't solve the riddle of what they are feeding on. Maybe insects and last year's berries.

Journal

Rather large numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers in salt grass areas and around lake margins.

Everyone hoping now that the first moderate storm wind will close the first two lagoon outlets to our west. The outflow from inland creeks is way down and it would be timely to trap multitudes of whitefish for the coming fall.

Took a short walk through the backyard salt marsh. There are lots of Pectoral Sandpipers in the short grasses and lake margins. There are hundreds.

Could not find a *G. detonsa* plant. There are a few *Lomatogonium* 3- 5" tall but not a hint of a *detonsa* plant in the acre that had a thousand plants last July. What has become of all those seeds?

A pleasant day today with the sound of the sea from light on shore winds. The morning was cool, without bugs, but the late afternoon and early evening warmed and the bugs were out.

Snowy Owl was sitting on his pole all afternoon. Maybe a way to hide from mosquitoes. He looks like an extension of the pole.

The capelin in the shee stomach are interesting. They were 4-5 inches long - mature capelin. Capelin are more salt water oriented than most other shee prey. Their ranges probably don't overlap often.

Jonathan (the Glaucous Gull) used the top of swallow box as his landing pad-begging site for the first time this summer. That means the swallows are gone. The parents lined up three new ones on the clothesline for inspection this afternoon, and though they will probably come back for imprinting in the next day or so, that will be it for Tree Swallows for this year.

July 16

Low 42° F
High 65° F
W wind to 15
Clear

Set the very small mesh (1") test net this afternoon for a couple of hours and caught several Rainbow Smelt, Least Ciscoe and Humpback Whitefish, all juvenile. There was also one genuine Capelin, with side ridge and exaggerated anal fin. This, in conjunction with yesterday's Shee catch (stomach full of Capelin), dates the time that adult Capelin are near shore in Sisualik. So far as I know this is not documented anywhere else. Also it is my first observation of Shee and adult Capelin occurring in the same saltwater environment and consequently the Capelin becoming prey to the Shee. On basis of this and a couple of other year's

observations it seems that Capelin are near shore in north Kotzebue Sound around mid July. It also has some value as a time window for multitudes of marine mammals and their food source farther north at Kasigailiq Lagoon. (Point Lay - beluga & Larcha Seals)

First open blossom of *Epilobium angustifolium* not quite a week later than *E. latifolium*.

Nearing peak bloom time for Iris.

Potentilla Egedii also near peak flowering. *Potentilla Villosa* in one small plot on neighbor's backyard grown very close to *P. Egedii*. One a dry zone plant, the other a wetland species.

Some good patches yet of *Primula* at low wet zone, but peak long gone.

Snowy Owl on backyard pole all day again. A few cranes continue to pace back and forth.

Bugs much diminished now but do turn up when wind is down and humidity is up.

Many commercial fishing boats tonight on this side.

July 17

Low 44° F
High 79° F
Light winds
Clear

A very warm day. Early this morning, as the sun climbed into the sky, it shone for awhile on our thermometer. That's when it reached nearly 80° F.

Very clear ocean water. There is a report of lots of whitefish at the Point. These will be out moving fish from Anigaaq. Calm water's have made for a rather poor third commercial fishing period.

Mosquitoes not bad till late afternoon. Not too surprised to hear that mosquitoes have had a good year across the whole state. I suppose the good that mosquitoes do (as pollinators and food) will outweigh the bad, but for the most part that fact will be unrecognized.

We miss the swallows today. One of the adults was around for awhile. Can you imagine the adventures those three youngsters are having, never having been

Journal

outside their box till a couple of days ago? How large the world must seem to their little eyes. And if one should live a full year, what a story he/she would have to tell!

July 18

Low 46° F
High 65° F
S wind to 15
Clear – clouding

A lot of small lean Rainbow Smelt in the ocean today. They are of low quality at this season, spawned out, but we fried a mess and enjoyed them as something for a change.

Salmonberries developing rapidly, showing a red top now and swelling.

The just past commercial fishing period rather poor.

A single adult swallow comes down and checks the box two or three times a day.

Ocean swells building tonight as S to SW wind begins. Water level in lagoon has increased.

A report is in that Akulaaq outlet is already closed. Hope it stays that way. The forecast southerly weather system may close Anigaaq.

Voles got into one shackle of our commercial salmon net during the winter. Luckily it was the oldest we have so it is not much loss.

Some rain forecast for tonight and increasing SW winds. We will have a welcome weather change, as long as it doesn't over do it.

Quite a few people back in Sisualik again after mid summer break. Sourdock picking the next activity goal, besides or along with commercial Chum fishing.

Snowy Owl on his pole again.

July 19

Low 50° F
High 60° F
S to W wind to 18
Some clouds, some sun

Found *Gentiana tenella* by our backyard little fresh water lake. None last year there, no blooms yet.

Our backyard fauna pretty neat and a bit unusual this July. We don't normally have Snowy Owl and Sandhill Cranes for July backyard residents. Five to fourteen cranes march back and forth every day and all day except when they are snoozing in the sun.

Peak Iris bloom time.

The Humpback Salmon run is heavy. The Chum run is not holding up to early promise. That may change or not; time will tell.

First bloom of *Gentiana prostrata* found also today.

Lots of *Lomatogonium* plants showing and many Grass-of-Parnassus buds developing. *Epilobium angustifolium* and Grass-of-Parnassus bloom building and may peak next week.

Medium swells without wind pretty loud this evening. Mosquitoes are dropping off, so you can almost enjoy a good day like today.

The evening fishing report (Chum Commercial Fishing) pretty poor. Percentage of four year olds very low.

July 20

Low 44° F
High 61° F
SW to W wind 15
Cloudy – clearing

High water, swells, and cooling in the a.m. Clearing, warming and rapidly dropping in the p.m.

Hopes ran high that the combination of swells and high water would close the outlets at Anigaaq. Apparently, by this writing time, it did not.

Iris peak blooming time is passed. Fireweed peak rapidly approaching.

First blossoms of *Senecio pseudo-Arnica*, our big sunflower, noted a couple of days ago. This rather ugly (gross) plant does well directly on the beach at sod line or even below, on either side of established camp sites.

Some of our *Elymus* grain heads have passed my chin in height. It is a great year for their growth, this second year of the storm gravel throw up.

Beach Peas also showing remarkable growth and beautiful flowering.

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Castilleja caudata having a great year too. That plant did poorly last year. Wonder if its off years are good years for *G. detonsa*? Last year that seemed so.

Water and conditions should be good for this commercial fishing period, but early sign don't seem so.

A couple of new Lapland Longspurs eating around camp. These very scarce this summer here.

July 21

Low 44° F
High 66° F
SE to SW wind 15
Clear

Finally a trip to Sourdock Lake. Trip turned out pretty good; lots of dock and pretty good picking, even though grasses keep building. This is the third year of a super crop for this lake and leaves and plants continue to be large, compared to other known lake margins. The edges around the lake have very unstable earth. It keeps dipping and rising, making new cracks and cutbacks, the habitat that *Rumex arcticus* prefers.

No Pacific Loon and chick this year. One adult was noted dead on ocean wave high water line. Probably from ocean commercial fishing net.

There was one molting adult Tundra Swan which was unusual. No sign of young. Two families of Green-winged Teal, one of Wigeon and one of Greater Scaup were in the lake.

Lots of salmonberries set on plants, red but not yet ripe. More than last year on the trail.

We seem to have a second good year for salmonberries. Blueberries scarce.

The present commercial fishing period seems to show a better catch than prior ones.

More King Salmon and King Crab in Chum Salmon nets this year than other years.

Unusual number of cranes both at Sealing Point and here for this season.

Only one moose track and one old musk-ox track on inland lake trail. No bear, no caribou.

The odd but startling color contrast (so bright and yellow) of *Utricularia* flowers was noted in a few shallow water areas of Inland lake.

July 22

Low 45° F
High 69° F
W wind to 15
Partly cloudy

A cool, almost fall-like morning, with ground fog. A few newly feathered Pintail in lake and cranes are stalking around. Even Snowy Owl with a yellow tinge to his feathers was sitting on his pole.

Fireweed patches becoming solid color.

A lot of Humpback Salmon running and the commercial chum fishermen did well enough that ADF & G will extend the fishing time to 36 hours, starting at 8 a.m. tomorrow.

We continue to have ocean swells, wind or no. Much drift wood reported still floating around down at Sealing Point. There are some large logs. One year at this late date we had many drift logs. We thought maybe from the Yukon or larch from Siberia.

One headless walrus drifted into the beach between Ranger Station and Sealing Point. The first of the year - the underneath portions are good for cooking.

King Salmon continue to roll up in Chum nets. Some pretty large, 40-60 pounds.

The one sack of green sourdock packed in yesterday cooked up to over 8 gallons of finished product today. A full day of work processing and a full day gathering. Two days for eight gallons of a priceless commodity.

Only a few young passerines and Semi-palmated Sandpipers around.

Still no located *G. detonsa* plant or blossom. Out of the ten million seeds dropped last August not a one seems to have sprouted this year. This is indeed a mysterious plant. What if I can't find even one this year? Must I wait another full year for the joy of seeing such a neat annual?

Journal

July 23

Low 64° F
High 47° F
W-SW wind to 15
Clear – some clouds

A fine day today. Few mosquitoes, not too warm, and I finally got to see *G. detonsa* again. What a privilege! I had almost given up hope. I went to Nuvugraq to check some of the backwater areas where there were some last year. After an hour or so of walking through flood water line I located a few clusters of *G. prostrata* and finally two *G. detonsa* plants, both with corollas wide open in the bright sun. Why I attach so much importance to seeing this plant each year I don't know, but it is a very unique and beautiful flowers. Plus, it is so abundant in some years and almost non-existent in others. What has become of the tens of thousands of seeds dropped last August? When will they germinate?

The two *G. detonsa* were on the same level zone as the *G. prostrata* and the delicate, fine, hair-like grass that grows in such areas that seem to be old salt-barren patches or at least a strip of dirt or mud rather free of other vegetation. Water level is at this zone in the late stages of break up time and this may be the key to understanding the wide variation in plant numbers between years. Germination may require an unusual combination of conditions (heat, soak, freeze, etc.)

We have accurate notes of twelve years of variation. One year of none located, one year only one plant, and several years of uncountable thousands of plants on Sisualik Spit.

Tall Fireweed nearing peak bloom. Iris just past.

One Grass-of-Parnassus bloom today. The first noted.

Checked out the newly discovered white *E. latifolium* patch at the Point today. There two patches separated by 50-60 feet. One of nearly twenty plants, the other (down wind from W) of ten plants.

Ocean swells finally quit. Cool dry weather nice, but we need rain, for berries and other vegetation.

July 24

Low 42° F
High 60° F
NW wind
Cloudy

A cool pleasant morning with clouds blocking out the sun, and fog patches in the mountains and far out on the sea.

A few more N. Pintail return to local lakes and mudflats everyday with new, but dully colored feathers. They are very lean and sometimes quite tame at this season directly after molt. We are talking about adult birds. Hens with young not yet flying, but most young are half grown. Some hens still flying, others flightless with their nearly ready to fly young.

Two Snowy Owls in backyard this morning. This is unusual and there is no hint of young, but it does seem to be a pair that has been resident during most of the summer.

The rather constant west winds have brought very cold and salty water on the ocean side and a great number of Rainbow Smelt are in the cold water. We stuck a small mesh "mist" net out and got many in a short haul. They are at a low point in their annual quality condition. They are spent and just beginning to building up body condition again. They were not bad fried, for a change of diet, and will be extra good at the beginning of fall.

Our two odd colored gulls (maybe two year old Slaty-backed Gull) are around regularly and getting darker. There is the possibility that they are Herring Gulls, but the all dark tail and general appearance, based on P. J. Grant's Gull ID, leads to the conclusion that they are most likely Slaty-backed Gulls. If they are two year olds, their plumage by summer's end should confirm the ID. We seem to have two year old Slaty-backed Gulls fairly regularly. Their comparison to Glaucous Gulls - slightly smaller, a straight "neat" bill, long neck, and all dark tail feathers.

July 25

Low 42° F
High 54° F
NW wind to 20
Fog, clearing, sunny

High fog in the early a.m. settled down over the ground in midmorning and then burned off by noon. It was a nice cool mosquito free day.

Journal

Was back in the beach ridge section today and found all the salmonberries still unripe. The blueberries still green and the blackberries still white. A reminder that it is still July!

A few families of Northern Pintail and Greater Scaup were seen. Since the water was low the marshes were kind of deserted. There were a hundred or so N. Pintails far out on the lagoon mud. These have recently returned from molt and more will be coming each day as early fall flocking gets underway.

Our two resident Snowy Owls seem to be males, judging from the amount of white and lack of dark spotting. Got quite close to one today. It was abnormally tame.

Found a new plant species for the area today. Hadn't noticed it before. We have a lot of *Saussurea nuda* in our wet or near wet land area. The closely related *Saussurea angustifolia*, a plant of higher drier ground, I found today on old beach ridge crowns.

Did not locate any further *G. detonsa* plants, though I searched their favored habitat back in that area.

Large blocks of color, pink and blue, can be seen right now on much of the landscape. Fireweed and Iris cluster together much like the folks that gather in cities.

The last commercial fishing period turned out to be a fair one, though not quite what was expected. There has been a great waste of Humpback Salmon tonnage from the commercial chum fishery this year. They have been unusually abundant and fishermen have nothing to do with them but throw them away.

July 26

Low 40° F
High 70° F
N to NW wind
Clear, some clouds

A warm day with wind off the dry, dry land. Things getting awful dry around here.

A plague of ground squirrels west of the Ranger Station at the camps on the beach. The half grown young are out and about and very tame and destructive. Almost as destructive as humans when their numbers are high.

First bloom of *G. tenella* around our little fresh water lake.

It has been such a long time since we've had rain and the high country is so dry that the absence of smoke is quite remarkable. It is probably partly due to our constant west to north winds.

Our tall fireweed at peak bloom. Very nice solid patches of color. Can't help but recall a summer in the 70's that was so cool that Sisualik tall fireweed did not bloom although plants in Kotzebue did.

An effort to close Anigaaq outlet manually was attempted today, a kind of new twist of community effort. Time will tell if effort paid off. Greater time will tell if the infant idea will become an old tradition.

July 27

Low 38° F

High 68° F

Fog a.m. and late p.m.

Temperature dropped into the 30's last night but not quite to frost. A frost now would do great damage to berry crop.

A lot of commercial fishing boats passed on the calm seas, just before and after the 8 p.m opening of the next 36-hour period. Lots of gear in the water.

Both Snowy Owls in sight after fog cleared.

Three big whitefish and a couple of humpies in table net. Extreme cold water in the ocean. Maybe not many chum salmon on this side. Jellyfish too.

Peak bloom time of *Saussurea nuda* on the salt marsh.

Fog socked in around 6:30 p.m. Usually it's smoke that gives visibility problems by this time.

Berries rather slow in swelling and ripening because of such dry cool weather. Rain and warmth will still make us a good crop.

The effort to close Anigaaq Channel has so far failed. It was said today that it was quite narrow without current and could be closed by lots of people shoveling.

Journal

July 28

Low 44° F
High 62° F
NW wind to 15
Some clouds, clearing

Another trip to Sourdock Lake today. Lots of mosquitoes; thought they were gone! A light shower early in the day must have brought them out.

A fresh small moose track on the trail up since I was there last. No other big game sign.

The molting Tundra Swan was gone, but there was a group of twelve flightless N. Pintails. Late molters, since many Pintail are flying again.

Sourdock still good but a little tougher due to lack of rain.

Many ripe salmonberries and some blueberries this time. Very pleasant to walk and stoop to pick two or three soft sweet berries. It will be a while yet before most are ripe and it will be time to pick.

A Harbor Porpoise killed in a chum net today. Carcass dumped at sea.

Saw a group of four Bar-tailed Godwits today. Haven't seen any for ages.

Many flying young Arctic Terns down on the beach today and lucky for them jaegers are very scarce.

A thunderstorm nearly made it to Sisualik but fizzled and faded just before it reached here.

There are a few young passerines around but they are pretty scarce.

July 29

Low 49° F
High 60° F
W-NW wind to 20
Clear

Two fat but egg laden char in table net.

Another west wind day, the land drier from the wind. Grass blades and other vegetation wilting.

A large amount of driftwood has been landing on the Krusenstern beaches, mostly west of the Ranger Station. There are said to be many large tree logs. It is late in the season for that much wood to be floating around.

Snowy Owls still around, but cranes not close by yesterday and today.

Still no other *G. detonsa* plants. There is an interesting pattern of abundance over twelve year period. It is quite remarkable how many plants there can be one year and how few there can be another.

Chum fishery in trouble from light catch of last period. Fishing time may be shortened.

Sisualik blueberries pickable.

A very cool dry day. August may be all rain and warm east wind.

July 30

Low 43° F
High 60° F
W wind to 15
Fog a.m., clear p.m.

A very wet early morning from fog. Another couple of very fat, egg carrying char in the table net with a very fat whitefish.

Salmonberries nearly ripe at Salluq. There will be a lot of berry pickers down that way next week.

The fat char with well developed ovaries caught this week (by subsistence and commercial nets) are the part of the population of "late spawners" that must move into the same stream they hatched from. They are the only trout passing through the fishery at this time until the run of overwintering fish returns, beginning ten days or so from now.

Checked the *G. tenella* plants today and found them blooming.

The two Snowy Owls in sight this evening. Don't know why Snowy Owls look strange against the green when Glaucous Gulls and Snow Geese don't.

Small driftwood showing this evening.

Tundra Voles making a comeback. There is considerable sign of them under every board around camp and quite a few with young.

Journal

A report of seven musk-ox in the Battle Rock area earlier this month.

July 31

Low 46° F
High 64° F
Variable a.m. winds
W-NW wind to 15
Clear

G. prostrata blossoms common. First sign of *G. propinqua* blossoms. No star gentian flowers yet. No other *G. detonsa* plants - only two for the season? Grass-of-Parnassus approaching peak.

A very warm clear morning with some dew, but not nearly as wet as yesterday.

Ground swells on the ocean for a change. Some little drift woods.

The last day of July a very beautiful day, weather-wise. with salmonberries and blueberries ripening fast.

A few of the cranes and the two Snowy Owls around today. The cranes have gotten very dark with new body feathers replacing the old.

Commercial fishing effort seems to be paying off for some this period, on both sides of the bay.

A big flock (30) of Red-necked Phalarope on the ocean.

Noticed that one of the Snowy Owls is using Keith's boat as a roost. There are even several regurgitated pellets of hair and bones.

Heavy fog rolled in 11 p.m.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

AUGUST

August 1

Low 44° F
High 76° F
W to NW wind 18
Clear, high fog p.m.

A cool breezy day without bugs.

July is gone and due to lack of rain, vegetation is now very obviously drying up. The condition is worse at higher levels, less at mud-marsh level where wetness remains longer. The floristic scene was a bit disappointing. Some of the favorite flowering plants didn't have a good year. The grasses did well and a few of the flowering plants did well (Paintbrush, Primula).

Ground swells have continued all day and wind pick up to near 20 mph. No table net out today.

A few heavy driftwood showing up; not landing but passing along the beach with west wind waves.

Two tourists walked by and returned toward the point this p.m. They didn't stop by or talk to anyone much on this side. They did wave. One was said to look like a Korean.

One of the three Slaty-backed Gulls we have in our local gull flock is more advanced in his color scheme than the other two. The dark back and top of wings, with its broad light trailing edge now shows plainly, confirming the ID as Slaty-backed and not Herring or the Raven Thayer's or Iceland (kumleim) gulls. One to two year old Slaty-backed Gulls seem to be the most likely summer resident gull with dark wing tips and tail of a size near our most common gull, the large Glaucous Gull. Herring and Glaucous-winged Gulls seem more rare than Slaty-backed.

Two Parasitic Jaegers came through today working as a team. Tough on newly fledged birds of many kinds. they are the first seen in some time and they were looking for trouble. Young Arctic Terns are often targeted at this time.

August 2

Low 41° F
High 58° F
NW wind to 30
Clear, some fog, clouds

A very cool morning. The radio reports Barrow temperatures dropped below freezing this morning.

A yellow tinge has touched our salt marsh areas. The bright and dark greens of July give way to yellows of fall. August, the month to establish your berry supply for the coming year.

A remarkable emotional experience this morning, though one is hard put to explain the basis of it. Releasing one of our dogs to give him an exercise run with the three wheeler, we went right down the trail to what we use as a boat harbor or Greene's Point. I have used this trail all summer for this purpose every two or three days. I was last over it day before yesterday. This morning where the trail leaves a marshy area and climbs through *Empetrum nigrum* ground (only a few feet higher zone level), my eye caught the characteristic purple-blue that I have been searching for through the last month. You guessed it, a full colony (thirty plants) of that large, beautiful, unique, salt marsh flower *Gentianopsis detonsa*. Prior to viewing this group of plants I had located only two others on the whole Spit (there were thousands last year). What is difficult to communicate in words is the depth of irrational emotional feeling involved in finding such a valuable treasure after so much searching. Also, how a plant unknown and unnoticed by most of the people in the world has come to be such an important part of my life. What a treat to see such a number of fine robust flowers of this plant and right in the trail too!

This has been a beautiful plant day. Though the signs of the end for vegetation (for the season) are apparent (drying and yellowing), first local blossoms of both Star Gentian (*Lomatogonium rotatum*) and *Gentianopsis detonsa*. Two plants of *G. detonsa* were found last week over at the Point, but today in our own backyard numerous blossoms in several different places were found. First in the morning the single colony by the trail mentioned above was found. Further investigation turned up other sites with anywhere from two to twenty plants. Full open and colorful. Today's surprise with this plant follows the pattern of past years. It emphasizes the narrow slim nature of a fast growing plant that is difficult to see in already mature grass growth. Then one day the large terminal bud unfolds its bright blue-purple corolla and the plant becomes very eye catching, nodding in the wind. By evening probably one hundred blooming *G. detonsa* were located on Green's and our allotments.

Some Star Gentian and *G. prostrata* were noted in the area.

It maybe that all species that are going to bloom this year in Sisualik have now at least produced some first flowers. Many, of course, will continue to bloom through August even beyond first frosts.

Such a great feeling to have a number of large flowered (4 to 5 cm) *G. detonsa* to see and enjoy for a week or so. They were a bit late this year.

August 3

Low 44° F
High 64° F
NW to N wind 20
Clear, clouding p.m.

First geese seen and heard today, back from molt. A flock of more than twenty G. White-fronted Geese.

Also a first attempt at berry picking today. The reward was not great. Without rain, the salmonberries have stayed medium to small size and in most places only a few are dead ripe. We did get enough for a couple of meals.

N. Pintails and Mallards are getting quite numerous in their favored feeding spots.

Star Gentians and *Gentiana* sp. blooms have become common.

A few rain drops just before midnight.

August 4

Low 42° F
High 57° F
NW to N wind 18
Cloudy

Extra low water today reflecting strong north winds all through the region. Westerly capes blowing 40 knots or so. Swells on the ocean dropped off late p.m.

A second berry picking trip today. It was somewhat better than yesterday as we found one good salmonberry plot. Nice big berries but all were not yet ripe.

Lots of young flying birds about: Arctic Terns, Longspurs, Savannah Sparrows, Redpolls, and Western Sandpipers. There will probably be a lot more soon. Barrow was said to have a temp of 26° F at this early date.

Our ground on several levels is getting exceptionally dry. Vegetation on those zones is actually drying up. In most summers our vegetation retains at least some

green parts (leaves, stems) until frost killed, usually in September. This dying by drying is reminiscent of California where most annuals dry up in midsummer, usually after producing mature seed. It appears some of ours have died before viable seed has developed. No single species, so far, is completely within the zones that have perished. Thus some seeds of each will probably mature, though some less than others.

A few dead, rotting salmon are washing up on the beach. These are usually large fish, too big for being gilled in net size but caught long enough to die and are then shaken off when a fresh fish hits the net or wave action when the net is being checked. The loss can be considerable when commercial chum nets are less than 6 inch mesh.

Mosquitoes are still around but only at certain times of the day and in certain places.

A freshly eaten N. Pintail from Snowy Owl perch. These owls seem to have a taste for waterfowl, more than one would expect. Have noted many N. Pintail bones and wings at their perching posts. Winter kills on the ocean ice of Common Eiders around open waters have been noted.

August 5

Low 50° F
High 68° F
N wind to 15 p.m.
NW wind to 20
Cloudy, rain

Finally a rainy day. It will help many things. It cleared in late p.m. and the warm sun came out. Perfect Gentician weather. On a tour of a backyard grassy lake bed it was noted that the ground had come alive with the bright jewels of Gentianaceae, little dots of the purest blue of blue (*G. prostrata* and *G. tenella*), the purple-blue one and the Queen of all, the deep blue with a hint of purple, *G. detonsa*, *G. detonsa*, the Queen of choice, only where large river meets the sea - Noatak, Mackenzie, Coppermine. This was a great Gentician day in Sisualik and all of them on the edge of a dry lake bed 200 yards from the camp. A real celebration of the land and vegetation for the remarkable blessing of rain.

We have lots of young passerines around now of several kinds; they were not hatched here. Not sure of their origin. They seem to be foraging, not traveling. They could be from north of here or simply from inland moving out to the coast to forage as many larger waterfowl do.

Fat egg laden char continue to feed us well. There are more of char in this condition than there usually are at this date. Must ask Fred DeCicco if these are late fall spawners or if they might be females that overwinter first and then head up to spawning beds instead of going out to sea next spring. Their body cavity is one quarter to half filled with eggs.

Both marine and fresh water systems are at a very low level today and yesterday. Our lagoon is mostly mud, as is the Kotzebue bar area. It is a late fall situation manifesting itself early.

August 6

Low 46° F
High 60° F
NW wind to 15
Clear a.m., rain p.m.

A berry picking day. I went back to the Sourdock Lake to pick salmonberries located earlier and Carrie went towards the Point to pick blueberries, where she doesn't have to walk far. We both had a good day. Salmonberries are very heavy to pack a long ways. The berries were thick and so were the mosquitoes. I thought they were gone but turns out they are guarding Sourdock Lake real well.

Found a freshly dead Pacific Loon on the beach this morning. Another late casualty to commercial salmon gear. Hope it's not a single parent; the chick will have a long fruitless wait if it was.

Found a Twin Flower on a cut bank of Sourdock Lake. Didn't know that species was in this area.

Water has come back in. The usual boating channels are being used again.

Less than five commercial nets on this side today.

A Pintail with five half grown young and a Mallard with three were sharing a part of Sourdock Lake with a Greater Scaup hen with eight small chicks. A Marsh Hawk with greedy eyes was perched not far off.

I got to see enough ripe Salmonberries today. What extravagance sometimes occurs in the natural frame of things. Ten million pounds of sweet salmonberries that will not be eaten by anything. That is the amount that will be left after every creature in the country has its fill. The extravagance of nature sometimes is awe inspiring.

August 7

Low 50° F
High 58° F
Light winds
Cloudy, showers, rain

Lots of marine water this morning and all day. Very light south winds here but lagoon filled to overflowing. A good day for a town trip since all bars (sand bars) are well covered. We tried before noon but water taxi broke down in front of Sisualik Point. We caught another boat and made it in. After a hectic business session hopped a third boat for home, all before 5 p.m. Quite an interesting time but part of it seemed a bit beyond reality. The trip was timely as both our gasoline supply and propane, were gone. What slaves we've become to artificially produced energy!

Was surprised to see a large portion of log with roots attached floating inward in the Kotzebue Channel as marine waters out thrust the fresh water systems.

Steady rain began about 9:30 p.m. and last night's showers kept grasses wet most of the day. These are not good conditions for berry pickers though some were out. Maybe the rainy season has finally begun and berry pickers will have to pick when they can. We can use the fresh water.

We have noted an extreme scarcity of black mussels over the past seven or eight years and have wondered why. Now with very low water last week, some swells, and today's strong insweep of marine waters, we have seen numerous clumps of mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) more like we remembered last decade. It is early too. Late August, September and October after storms was the normal time for beach combing for Avyaq. Maybe there will be plenty this fall. They are very delicious roasted on top of the stove, but the salt hardens stove tops!

August 8

Low 42° F
High 54° F
NW to SW wind 18
Clear, cool, windy

A very cool, fall-like morning after a very wet night. We gained some on our storage of rain water last night.

Lots of berry pickers moving out of the patches just before noon as the cool windiness promised to shake the water off of grasses and dampness off the berries.

The water level dropped all through the day even though the forecast is for continued SW winds. Seems like the "slosh of water around the saucer" syndrome

may be on. We may expect the water to come rushing back tomorrow. Some of our worst storms come from this kind of build up.

A lot of Western Sandpiper and a few Dunlin out on the mud spit this afternoon.

The yellows of fall are claiming larger portions of the marsh. N. Pintail and Wigeon are beginning to gather in the lakes they usually do for fattening.

Haven't seen the Snowy Owls for a couple of days.

August 9

Low 46° F
High 50° F
S-SW wind to 25
Cloudy, rain

Rough ocean with rain this morning. An anchored boat west of us swamped and over-turned in the ocean. Another "accident" that should never have happened. There will be considerable loss to the other members of the family, right at berry picking time too.

So far (12 noon) waves are only halfway up the beach though they are farther than any time before this summer. Waves may get higher if forecast is near correct.

This rain is timely for the blackberry crop. Those that didn't dry on the vine will turn from whitish to shiny black and continue to swell in size until frosted.

By 9:30 p.m. wind had dropped and some waves were dropping off a bit. No attempt to retrieve boat was yet possible.

Finally, it is reported that the channel at Anigaaq is closed. If that proves to be true there will be a lot of traffic down that way as the weather clears. Salmonberry picking time is full on and there is said to be a crop about like last year, which was a near record year.

Boats will have to be dragged over the gravel outlet or by ATV but both methods are sure to be used. For a week or so Sealing Point flats will be pretty well populated. A lot of salmonberries will be picked.

Journal

August 10

Low 50° F
High 56° F
Variable S wind to 10
Cloudy, rain, fog

A very wet day with very little wind. Made a lot of fresh water from our dripper.

The first fairly heavy chum salmon catches made in Sisualik today for a change. Some catches as high as six to eight hundred for the day.

The unlucky coastal salmonberry pickers that went down to camp for awhile day before yesterday have had nothing but rain since they got onto the berry grounds.

The swamped boat was recovered today since the swells were down. The anchor line was cut, the boat turned right side up in the water and bailed out. Haven't heard damage estimate but it is said the engine has been on the boat under salt water all this time. Since the anchor held the boat well off shore and upside down, damage may be minimal to the boat.

This day of rain kept us off the berry grounds (salmonberry) but we will benefit in a couple of weeks from size and sweetness of the blackberry crop.

A hunting Marsh Hawk (Northern Harrier) passed camp early this morning. Haven't seen one on the coast for awhile.

August 11

Low 46° F
High 56° F
Light winds
NW wind to 15 late p.m.
Cloudy, showers

Very large and growing swells all day today with very little wind here. The water level is dropping.

The outlet at Anigaaq is finally reported closed. However the cut bank just east of the outlet has swells breaking against it with no beach to run on. That may change a bit with time. The important thing is that the outlet is closed. Although it is a late closure there is sure to be some fish and ATV access for berry picking, wood hauling, and caribou hunting.

A couple of adult Pintails in hand today are in good shape. They are starting to put on fat for fall migration.

A real great chum salmon catch has developed this period here in Sisualik. Full nets, big swells, and lots of boats have made for a mid season exciting period.

Found several more *G. detonsa* plants today. One with the corolla still open. That makes four different sites located with probably less than a hundred plants. All sites are at extreme flood high water mark. The real upper limit of all little lagoon drainage systems. This is probably important concerning seed germination. No hint of what might have become of the million seeds produced on an acre or so of our backyard last year. It looks as though one good seed year may do this plant for multiple years. Wish I could decipher more of it's germination requirements.

Saw a small flock of Hudsonian Godwit today. Still fair numbers of Western Sandpipers. Very few Semi-palmated sandpipers.

Two near swamping of fishing boats on the beach today due to large swells. Nothing lost and no one hurt, though some boat or engine damage might have occurred.

August 12

Low 33° F
High 54° F
NW wind to 35
Clear, few clouds

Frost this morning and thin ice in outside dog pot and rain water in cart. Some vegetation nipped but berries not bothered. Only some locations had frost; it was not long or general. If the wind drops tonight it will probably freeze harder and may do some berry damage.

We picked salmonberries today north of the Ranger Station. We filled two small buckets and counted it a good, though cool and windy day.

Numerous berry pickers traveling both ways. Some have finished picking others just going. Those who have finished must have picked much in the rain.

One headless walrus and one uguruq on the beach in front of Akulaaq untouched yet by bears. There is a report that three were seen lately west of Sealing Point.

Waterfowl still scarce in the Akulaaq system.

There were two small but rather fresh caribou tracks on the lagoon edge.

Journal

The "ice mud" (Pleistocene) cut bank a few hundred yards east of where Anigaaq channel opens is still being lapped by swells. It is going to continue to be a tricky place to get an ATV around.

Bank Swallows are still present at that bluff site. Probably with young still in their burrows.

August 13

Low 32° F
High 50° F
NW wind to 20
Cloudy, some sun

Frost and skim ice again. Tough on the berry crop.

The fishing period that opens at 6:00 p.m. this evening will be cut to 24 hours due lack of escapement.

Water level very low again due to N and NW system.

Arctic Terns with young are still common around but they won't be for long. Before the month ends they and their graceful flight form will be confined to memory.

A first trip west "down the beach" past the Ranger Station for salmonberries. We turned off inland a few miles short of Sealing Point and filled our 5 gal bucket.

One headless walrus still in the water and three midway up the beach. None have been touched by bears yet. Considerable bear activity is occurring W-NW of Sealing Point. Later in the fall, as their source of food finishes on that side, these are sure to attract them.

There were literally hundreds of Yellow Wagtails on the beach line from the Ranger Station to Sealing Point. They are either in migration or forced south from North Slope areas by early cold and snow.

It was good to hear the "quacking" of Red-throated Loons again. They have been pretty much extirpated within the boundaries of the commercial fishery. They remain abundant on Sealing Point/ Krusenstern flats.

The first Sanderlings of fall were seen on the beach today.

Production very high this year for Arctic Terns. There are large flocks of mixed young and adults at the closed outlet of Anigaaq today. Also five hundred Glaucous

Gulls, four Slaty-backed and two Bar-tailed Godwits. A pair of brand new Mew Gulls were on the beach. First seen.

August 14

Low 29° F
High 50° F
Light winds
Mostly clear

Heavier freeze last night. Three nights in a row will be too much for some berries, some leaves, and some plants.

A fine but cool day with periods of warm sun.

Trout (char) are running strong. Large super fat fish.

Some of yesterday's Yellow Wagtails along the beach have reached Sisualik.

This commercial chum period will close at 6 p.m. this evening. Lots of char will be killed.

Fall yellows and browns will now be more prominent. Our little cottonwood patch up on the hill is still green.

Quite a lot of people traveling down to the Sealing Point salmonberry land. Boats, ATV's, and some air taxi. The surprising thing is that after all the people are gone and the geese are gone there will still be berries left!

The human population on the Monument may peak for the year this week.

The two Snowy Owls on their poles today.

The water level coming up in the lagoon, which figures with a forecast of 25 knot SW winds for late tonight and tomorrow.

Plugged our light system into the generator about 10 p.m. this evening for the first time. Fall is here.

August 15

Low 40° F
High 48° F
S-SW wind 35
NW wind to 20
Cloudy, rain

A potential for unforecast flood storm today. At 2 p.m. the lagoon grass margins were well flooded and the beach waves were beginning to touch sod line. Our winds have been up to 35 from S and SW. Kotzebue 10 knots less and forecast was for less yet. This is apparently a Wrangell Island low and the cold front associated with it. We've reason to fear Wrangell Island lows even when they are 500 miles away. Forecast of their movements usually err on the intensity of effects in Kotzebue Sound. This is the highest level of storm surge for this summer so far.

About 5:00 p.m. wind switched to west, sun came out for awhile and water level dropped rapidly. The monster spared us again and we will have a brand new beach all the way from reduced waterline to sod line. It's always great after a storm peak in Sisualik.

Not much other excitement today. On a storm day like this all creatures, including us, just kind of hang on and do what we have to when we are moved to it.

Minor flooding on the salt marsh will have flooded out some voles. Most young birds of all species can get around quite well by this late in the season, but still, stormy days allow more chance to hard hunting predators.

There are many young flying Arctic Terns still around and lucky for them, very few Parasitic Jaegers around. Working as a team, a pair of those rough guys are pretty efficient at catching new fledglings of many species.

August 16

Low 35° F
High 49° F
W to NW wind 20
Cloudy, showers

A cool morning. No frost but some reports of snow at high elevation on slightly inland mountains. Our cool weather continues and it seems more like mid September than mid August.

Many travelers wanting to use the ATV trail from Sisualik to or from Sealing Point but continued high water and swells makes the narrow passage under the mud bluff impassible and going over the top of the bluff pretty rough.

There were lots of ATV and airlift trips out of the salmonberry ground camps west of the Ranger Station.

Ocean swells and level of water down this p.m. The air is still cool though.

Snowy Owls sitting around today.

A rumor of caribou seen from Ranger Station area.

On a walk through our back marsh area this evening I was amazed at the number of erect *Lomatogonium rotatum* with huge buds ready to open on first sunny day. The reason for the amazement was the three nights of frost and freezing temperatures we had this week, with no apparent effect on these robust and probably latest species to come to flowering in our area.

The frost did have its effect on other species. Tall fireweed leaves and flower petals, some of them, killed before seed had a chance to develop. Some portion of each plant that hadn't shriveled will continue to develop and produce some seed if further freezing doesn't occur.

Half ripe blackberries froze, softened, and have an odd taste. With no further freezing they will firm up, swell up and become sweet and tasty. Remarkable how plants can meet the sometimes harshness of their environment.

August 17

Low 34° F
High 49° F
W-NW wind to 20
Clouds, squalls, clear

A tent full of visitors, half of them from France!

Snow on mountain tops this morning and probably peak blossom day for our latest blooming species, *Lomatogonium rotatum*, or Star Gentian.

One Snowy Owl caught another squirrel not far from the tent. He'll be fat come October!

Strangely enough, throughout all this unseasonable cold spell, our little "barometer" patch of cottonwood on top of the hill has not turned yellow but retains the light green of summer.

A lot of good salmonberries remain unpicked even though a real lot moved out in plastic buckets this past weekend.

A new trail has had to be made over the hill just east of the Ranger Station because of Pleistocene frozen mud caving in on what little beach remains underneath the bluff headland. This is a first and is good example of adaptations that must be made in lieu of circumstances.

Seems like we're headed for an icy night again. We are lucky that at least the salmonberries matured enough to get ripe. The blueberries will soften and the blackberries and cranberries may spoil before they ripen.

August 18

Low 32° F
High 48° F
SE to S wind 15
Cloudy, shower

Started off on a two purpose three-wheeler trip today towards Sealing Pt. We were to pick salmonberries and test the portage trail over the hill from Akulaaq Lagoon to Anigaaq outlet, which is temporarily the only route for ATV coastal beach travel due to a Pleistocene frozen mud blockage at one critical point. There is a half mile portage with a steep descent on the other side. Conditions are almost at the upper limits of what old decrepit - wheelers can make, though not too much of a challenge to a big 4 wheeler in good shape.

We made it, with decrepit machines, but not without some sweat and excitement. We decided to go on down to Sealing Point for the berry picking. When we got there we picked up another in-law crew and continued down the beach to just short of Battle Rock. There were lots of good berries. We picked and had lunch and picked some more until evening showers and the strenuous day's activities caught up with us. We overnighted at Sam and Myrt Williams' place (bro and sis-in-law) imposing on their hospitality for which we are grateful. We hadn't intended to go so far and were not prepared to over night. The trip was very worth it all. Fifty pounds of salmonberries, good company, and a wide free open horizon in all directions.

There were a number of long dead but "edible by bear" walrus and very fresh bear tracks. Now the stage is set again for bear-people contacts. Most untouched walrus are east of Sealing Point, while bears and nearly finished carcasses are all on the west side.

August 19

Low 38° F
High 60° F
SE wind to 20
Sunny, cloudy p.m.

Home from a little different world. It is always surprising in this country how each 20 to 30 mile separated place has its own peculiar characteristics.

First reported net catch of whitefish inside Anigaaq waterway since the outlet closed. The catch was good and is important to us all for next month's fishing.

Saw a first "Trout Bird" (Northern Wheatear) today. Nearly a week after catching the first fall trout. This bird nests in the highlands locally but don't show on the beach around fish camps each year till mid August. This annual regularity has come over the years to cause the bird to be called Trout Bird by local people.

Our trip west confirmed much fresh bear sign west of Sealing Point and none east at this point in time, though that is certain to change as fall comes on.

The sloughing off of the calving Pleistocene mud promises use of the beach trail again soon. That "over the hill" portage is tough on old people and machines!

Lots of flocks of Arctic Terns along the beach. Mixed birds of the year and adults, no jaegers.

Snowy Owls on Sealing Point flats too. The tremendous population of ground squirrels probably the reason.

Very few ducks and geese west side of Sealing Point flats. There are some cranes but not as many as early in the summer.

There are many Red-throated Loons down that way, away from the Commercial Fishery. So good to hear their harsh-spooky calls. Second only to the howl of a wolf as a most mysterious sound!

Four days of frost have not hurt the salmonberry crop since they were already ripe or ripening. Blueberry, blackberry and cranberry are another story. The crop is sure to be spoiled at some locations as the fruit had not yet fully formed. We'll see how things go after a week of warmer weather.

A flock of twenty-two Whimbrel flew by the tent today. These are the first I have seen this fall.

Journal

Ducks (dippers) are back in the nearby big lake. They haven't used it since the near flood last week filled it too deeply for N. Pintail to feed.

August 20

Low 52° F
High 58° F
SE wind to 25
Cloudy, rain showers

Very high water in the lagoon today. Ducks are at the extreme limits of their high water feeding areas.

Char were running pretty strong last night and probably today. Some are very super fat.

Volcanic ash fallout – from Mt. Spurr - in Anchorage yesterday and this morning. Interrupting jet flights.

The marsh "yellows" replacing any hint of green, but the cottonwood colony is not yellow yet.

Some Golden Plovers traveling and a few Dunlins. Not much mudflat habitat for sandpipers. They are all foraging in the short grasses.

More Mew Gull juveniles out on the beach today and less young Arctic Terns.

Marshes full of Star Gentians of all sizes. A sunny warm day after the rain showers will cause a lot of solid Gentian blue patches - our last great floral show of the year.

Steady rain late p.m.

Three girls tell a story of being in the path of a traveling bear north of Sealing Point. One of them shouted and the bear turned off. They were unarmed. Bear confrontations, formerly very rare here, are becoming more common.

The rain and warm air will probably revive our blackberry crop in some places.

August 21

Low 52° F
High 58° F
SE wind to 18
Cloudy, rain showers

A wet morning but lighter winds and rain may make a better day for berry pickers.

August

A check on local blackberries this afternoon was pretty depressing. The three nights of freezing last week did its damage. Most berries were a little less than ripe. Most were less than half ripe and freezing at that stage causes spoilage and softening as well as leaving the small berry with a "funny" taste. Some berries are firming up and will get good and sweet, but they will be mixed closely with the bad ones and difficult to pick. Some other area may be better but our backyard is poor this year. Whimbrels, geese, and plovers will sure miss a good sweet lunch.

Took home two *G. detonsa* plants whose pods hadn't dehisced yet from grasses - *Poa* sp. and *Elymus* sp. - that are colored similarly at this stage of development. This year has been a good example of how well *G. detonsa* blend into their environment. There is almost perfect camouflage except for the short seven to ten day window when corolla is a bright shining purple-blue that stands out like a beacon on a single sunny day or two. Prior to this they blend into the greenish growth around them; after opening, which maybe only one day, the fading of both corolla petals and greenish leaf and stem to dry grass color with a hint of reddish purple makes them similar to *Poa* sp. leaf blades. The closed pod was dark colored three quarters of the way down the ovary, with rest yet green to the base.

Trout running strong. A commercial fishing opening at 8 a.m. this morning will take a considerable number of large char.

A bear passed Sealing Point house last night causing the dogs to bark. It was headed east.

Grass-of-Parnassus fading. Star Gentian still holding at peak bloom. There are lots.

Lesser Golden Plovers with young are moving by and a flock of eighteen Whimbrel looked good. Geese are reportedly moving into the Sealing Point area where there hasn't been many to date. The heavy local summer concentration of Sandhill Cranes is just fading away over the whole area.

Continued high water in lagoon and delta area not good for puddle duck feeding. They are making do with various *Carex* sp. seeds, but will need lowering water and *Potamogeton* to fatten for fall migration.

August 22

Low 52° F
High 62° F
E wind to 18
Cloudy, dry

A kind of dark but dry windy day and warm.

Journal

Snowy Owls and cranes in the backyard most of the day.

Lagoon water remains high and our backyard duck lake has nearly a hundred Pintail and Wigeon. High lagoon water and flooded lakes from last week limit waterfowl feeding areas.

Numerous Wheatear around today. Lesser Golden Plovers, Western Sandpiper and Dunlin doing some traveling.

Trout running strong. Some commercial chum boats have an incidental catch of as many as two hundred. Trout being bought for ten cents a pound. A great bargain for some one!

A single female Humpback Salmon with very loose eggs was in the table net with trout today.

Blowflies and mosquitoes flew again today, for awhile, with the warmer drier conditions.

There may be a small flock of Tundra Swans back on the delta marsh from molt. Not sure because they were several miles away, but the white dots against the dark background were arranged like Swans, rather than Gulls.

August 23

Low 52° F
High 67° F
NE to E wind 20
Broken clouds, sunny

Summer temperatures have returned. Flies, mosquitoes, and late blooming individual flowers have, after the rain, bloomed again. (Poppy, fireweed and some others)

A lot of fish reported at Anigaaq outlet. That is a good indication that fishing for whitefish at that location will be good next month.

The big duck lake is full again (of ducks) but lagoon water is finally dropping so more feeding locations will soon be available to them.

A story of three West German visitors to a Krusenstern camp earlier this summer told by the campers today was a surprise. Some insights into how visitors to the Monument should conduct themselves around occupied camps and private property can be gleamed from the tale.

Salmonberry picking still good. Blackberry and blueberry picking pretty tough: soft berries and loose leaves.

News of big game pretty scarce. We haven't heard of the taking of a moose yet since the season opened on the first of August. Caribou news from either Noatak or Kobuk is pretty scanty.

Snowy Owls still around and some cranes.

The ocean is very quiet this p.m. The beach trail past the bluff to the Ranger Station has been usable again yesterday and today. We have hopes of using it tomorrow.

August 24

Low 56° F
High 66° F
Light winds
Clouds, showers, sunny

Five Tundra Swans arrived on the delta mudflats today. These were close enough to ID for certain and probably joined the few already here, reported a few days ago.

Had four adult ducks in hand today.

Passerines moving through pretty steadily. They seem to be mixed species - Lapland Longspurs, Savannah Sparrows.

Mixed small flocks of Dunlin and Western Sandpipers on the mud flats.

Report of good chum catch last night by a few Sisualik subsistence fishers will probably mean lots of boats here at the 6 p.m. opening of the next to last 24 hour commercial fishing period. A reported eight hundred char in last opening may be repeated.

Our copse of tableland cottonwoods shows the faint yellowish tinge that adjacent willows as yet do not. Fall, by this criteria, has come to Sisualik.

The four ducks in hand - a pintail, two wigeons - were interesting in their fat condition. One adult male wigeon was very fat. The other three were quite low in fat reserves.

The afternoon sun came out strong and warm. Seems like a July day.

Salmonberry picking goes on. Lagoon remains high.

Journal

Bear problems developing around Sealing Point and back this way. An unoccupied tent entered and stuff scattered. At another camp nearby a sickly looking cub of the year was killed as it approached camp. More information on this indicates a 2 year old animal.

Two caribou were sighted north of Sealing Point, too far inland to be taken. Local camps hungry for fresh meat. No moose or caribou have been taken this summer to this point in time. That is unusual for recent years. Not many opportunities occur each summer, but in the past five years a few have been taken each summer and shared widely.

August 25

Low 48° F
High 60° F
NW wind to 20 p.m.
Cloud, rain, fog p.m.

A town trip today, hitchhiking. Good trip over and back in different boats. A blow out on a front tire with family pick up loaded with store goodies half way home was a new adventure. Thought for years that I had gotten away from automobile troubles. No harm to anything was done (except for the tire).

Kotzebue streets in pretty good shape. No dust. Lots of vehicles. The areas I touched seemed short of bird life for this season. Don't quite know why.

There was some excitement at closure of the fishing period as swells and a 20 knot west wind had stirred up farther out waters. No swamped boats or gear left in the water but some shore buoys left behind.

Marine and delta waters remain high, limiting waterfowl and sandpiper feed. Their rate of building migration fat will be slowed. Eventually alternate food sources will be sought or different staging areas will be used at some other point on the migration path.

Caribou reported scattered in the Kobuk Valley and Noatak. Probably kind of normal with our run of cool weather interspersed with warm spells. The caribou mind is probably unsure whether it is summer or fall, or both at once.

A Harbor Porpoise drowned in neighbor's subsistence net. Though this animal is much like its relative, the beluga, its oil, meat and maktak has a different and to most an unpleasant taste. It is not usually utilized for human use.

August 26

Low 46° F
High 50° F
NW to W wind 18
Cloudy, showers
Clearing p.m.

A cool damp morning with a little better afternoon.

A few flocks of cranes moving slowly south on the tail wind, which is their custom in late August and early September.

Sixteen Whimbrel in a feeding flock. Not many of these fine birds this year.

Latest commercial fishing period apparently turned out fair, but no records broken. Char catch was less than last period.

A few more cranes moving today doing their characteristic travel awhile. They circle very high in the air and are very vocal. Always interpret this to be a behavior to strengthen wing muscles of young of the year since their flying time at this point in time is limited.

Sandpipers and passerines scarce. They seem to have been scarce this whole summer season.

Some are finding good firm blueberries in isolated patches. The same will probably be true of blackberries.

Our cottonwood copse is a brilliant gold yellow today, in the sun. Fall has arrived in Sisualik.

August 27

Low 46° F
High 60° F
SE wind to 20
Cloudy

A windy but dry day, sometimes dark and sometimes bright, somewhat warmer.

We picked blueberries today, which is a surprise. We found some real good berries, firm without loose leaves, inside and near willow patches over towards the Point. A neighbor alerted us yesterday. We had thought most blueberries were frosted too hard in this area. This causes soft berries and loose leaves making very difficult

Journal

harvest. It was a good day; we now have enough to cook and add to our sourdock for a delicious winter change in that product.

Saw a "streaking" Merlin early this morning. It was hunting and really pouring on the steam. Some hapless Black Turnstone was probably about to become breakfast. Haven't seen a Merlin all summer this year.

The scarcity of sandpipers and passerines for this date is outstanding.

Snowy Owls still around. Maybe no more Arctic Terns. Haven't seen any today and they seem to leave all together when the young demonstrate enough strength. They are usually gone by the end of August.

Only one trout in the table net this morning. The bulk of their run is probably passed.

New fish ladder at Hatchery working well. Returnees filing in, maybe the first of the season. Egg taking to begin next week.

Very loud Tundra Swan noise at daylight this morning. First waking impressions a little different than either the "cock's crow" or the alarm chimes.

Some flowers still blooming.

Last opening of commercial chum fishery this evening.

August 28

Low 54° F
High 63° F
E to SE wind 25
Clouds, some sun

A dry windy day again that only threatened rain.

Lots of caribou reported a short ways above Noatak village (at a place called Sugar). Hope they make it down this way before the end of next month, while the bulls are good. This has been a rather long meatless (big game) summer. Usually there is a caribou or moose or bear taken nearly every week, that gets passed around for a meal or two anyway. Not this year - yet. Maybe beginning with September.

A very large male "Noatak" Chum Salmon caught in the table net today. The first of it's kind for this fall. A "Noatak Salmon" is a regular chum salmon that has made it up into freshwater taken on breeding colors, gone through body changes is ready

to spawn but somehow (flood or disorientation) gets back down into the ocean. They make a very choice dried fish.

A few more waterfowl young of the year showing around - Pintail, Wigeon, Green-winged Teal - but passerines and shorebirds remain scarce.

Lagoon level remains high. Snowy Owls still around.

The table net also had a Bering Ciscoe and one trout which could be interpreted as the end of the trout run and beginning of the fall Bering Ciscoe run. One can not usually make such a determination from a single net set, but it is time.

A late evening report of a lot of caribou, right down on the river in front of Noatak Village.

August 29

Low 53° F
High 58° F
NE to SE wind 25
Cloudy, rain

Rain most of the day.

Waterfowl numbers picking up some. Young Pintails and adult Wigeon for the most part. The adult Wigeon are quite fat. The young Pintail have very low fat reserves.

Lagoon waters remain above normal water level.

The caribou at Noatak were down on the river in front of town last night. No one has said where they came from or which way they have gone. That is important to us. They may be coming down this way as the first report was from up river. However, they could be just crossing there.

As the month and the summer winds down, there are some interesting notes to be made on vegetation. Though growth of some species was extra good, it is now apparent that the long dry spell of late July and early August, followed by a cold spell in mid August, including four nights of frost, caused some seed and blossom failure. Tall fireweed and *Elymus* grain heads are two of the larger plants that had undeveloped potential, though salmonberries and blueberries fully ripened. Blackberries and cranberries which were not ripe when frosted failed over much of their usual producing areas.

Journal

It points out some of the mysteries that we barely understand of what various species of flora and fauna must go through to maintain a presence in the upper or outer limits of environmental compatibility.

Search and Rescue effort on today for a missing small boat out of Kotzebue en route to Noorvik. Strong SE winds very dangerous around Lockhart Point and Pipe Spit.

August 30

Low 54° F
High 58° F
E-SE wind to 20
Cloudy, some sun

Search and rescue reports the missing boat found with one body at Pipe Spit. Search for other three young men continues.

Final figures for incidental char catch in commercial chum fishery were 2,000 sold at ten cents a pound. The total take was probably between three and four thousand. That scene seems intolerable. Char population may be in jeopardy with that much of an annual take of Salmon size individuals. Last year's take was even higher.

Some boats traveling this way from Kivalina to join in search. Kivalina fishermen hoping to go home on coming offshore wind system. It is always hard to catch the ocean just right for a trip home to Kivalina at this season.

This was a drier day than it looked like it was going to be. Some showers but well spaced.

The portion of Hotham Inlet that is the scene of the boat capsizing has claimed a number of lives in the past. It is an area of very strong currents and when they are "outward" flowing, they cause terribly deep and choppy waves. Once you are into them with a small boat there is no turning back; no going forward either if the waves are beyond a certain magnitude.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER

September 1

Low 47° F
High 59° F
W to NW wind 20
Cloudy, showers

A first day of blackberry picking. Found some very good berries on back beach ridge areas. Lots of nice firm sweet berries. They will be good to pick until the next heavy frost, whenever that will be, hopefully not till near the end of the month.

Large numbers of ducks (Pintail and Wigeon)- hundreds - in long narrow lake in beach ridge zone. This is a good *Potamogeton* area that isn't flooded by high marine-lagoon waters. Most of the ducks in the area are currently using this one lake.

Saw several blooming flowers today. Star Gentians and Arctic Daisy. There are probably other late blooming species in other areas.

Several (8 to 10) good sized Char in table net this morning.

A neighbor and his wife made a two day trip to Noatak and came back with several caribou in their boat. They gave everyone some meat. Fresh meat is again becoming common though caribou are still many miles off.

A very interesting visitor from Israel today! An “exchange student.” Plans to hitchhike from Anchorage to Tok and down the Inside Passage. World travelers!

September 2

Low 36° F
High 48° F
W – NW wind to 20
Cloudy, rain showers

A cool damp day very close to snow.

Caribou reported as maybe as close as the Aggie. It is good to have “real” meat again.

Journal

A few cranes and geese flying with the west wind as a help on the way south.

A kind of wasted September day. Very cold showers every hour or so and wind. Sunny spells in between make you wish you were out in the berry grounds or duck hunting, but the wet grasses willows and sudden cold showers make you glad you are not out.

Water has finally dropped to low stage in the lagoon.

Quite a stampede to caribou hunting grounds in getting underway. With the Labor Day weekend getting close and caribou getting closer each day it promises to be a great weekend for those involved.

Sandpipers and passerines getting rather rare. Did see several Sanderlings today. There should be Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on the mudflats by now and finally today there are extensive mudflats.

We do not have a Tundra Swan flock yet on our back wetlands. Don't know which part or which delta the flocked non-breeders are on this year. They are not here.

Located a great place to pick good blackberries yesterday. Hope it doesn't freeze before we get them picked. Snow in the forecast tonight!

September 3

Low 34° F
High 50° F
Light variable winds
Broken clouds, clearing

A few before noon showers with snow, but a little more sun and no showers in the afternoon. We finally put in a few hours on blackberry picking. Got about half of a five gallon bucket. A good start towards a winter supply. The berries back away from the ocean beach a mile or so are in good shape.

A lot of helicopter activity this afternoon. BLM survey crew must have finally got to Sisualik.

Three char in the table net this morning.

Quite a day for birds of prey. Three Gyrfalcons stopped around on neighboring camp poles for a half hour break while the two Snowy Owls occupied their posts. The nearly complete absence of local waterfowl and passerines at this date is surprising. Some cranes and geese in high flying flocks passed today.

Two caribou seen west of Sealing Point today. Hunter boat traffic on the Noatak still heavy with good success.

Large fresh bear tracks noted just east of the Ranger Station.

September 4

Low 37° F
High 54° F
NE wind to 20
Cloudy, rain showers

A wet morning but a better afternoon. These showery days getting a little tiresome, if you want to pick berries.

Birds remain relatively scarce. What ducks there are, are in several large feeding flocks and difficult to approach. Geese are plentiful but scattered.

The BLM helicopter doing Sisualik Native Allotments all day was a very disturbing factor to local waterfowl and waterfowl hunters. There were few quiet moments during the working day both yesterday and today. Most local birds have never seen or heard anything like that.

Very low marine waters now (since last night) after strong N-NE winds. We may have an extended time of low water after having above normal lagoon water level for so long. Lots of mudflats and waterfowl feeding areas now but few birds to benefit by it all. Wonder how widespread this shortage of waterfowl and sandpipers is. It is kind of frightening.

Who knows why Snowy Owls do not prey on gulls? Either adults or flying young. It would seem an easy meal compared to ground squirrel, pintail, or ptarmigan. Our two local Snowy Owls don't seem to have given it a thought.

September 5

Low 45° F
High 54° F
N to NE wind 15
Cloudy, light rain

Wet air most of the day again. Some spells of warm sun. There were a few mosquitoes and flies flying about again.

Lots of jellyfish and flatfish in the table net this morning. One small salmon, a trout, a Bering Ciscoe, and several herring gave the appearance of a full net if not the substance.

Journal

Saw a single passerine (probably a Savannah Sparrow) today and several Sanderling on the beach.

A Northern Harrier flew by, hunting, in between the two non-hunting Snowy Owls.

No further success in search for bodies, though the search goes on.

First serious nets set at Anigaaq outlet.

A few late flowers still blooming, Star Gentian, Grass-of-Parnassus, Arctic Daisy. *Artemisia* seems to have had some trouble during or after our hard freeze. Don't know if they will produce viable seed.

Local squirrels looking fat, but waterfowl seem to be slow fattening.

Hope our weather dries some time. Many boats up Noatak and Kobuk rivers for moose and caribou this Labor Day.

Helicopter back to finish its survey work on the Spit early this morning.

Some duck hunters out but not much shooting.

September 6

Low 37° F
High 58° F
Calm a.m.
N wind to 15 p.m
Few clouds, clearing

A beautiful day! A flock of very purposeful migrating cranes passed this morning. They must have heard the weatherman's dire forecast of snow and freezing temperatures this coming week.

There was a real lot of shotgun shooting yesterday, later into the evening. The most by far for this fall. More or less normal for a Labor Day weekend.

Very low water continues in the lagoon.

Two moose seen behind Sisualik. First for a long time. Both may be young males.

Report of two bears being shot in Noatak village early last week as a safety measure.

Lots of caribou heads reported left on Noatak River beaches.

Caribou guts, heads, and unretrieved carcasses may keep bears home so they don't join the beachcombing gang here on the Monument.

The late afternoon sun really warmed the area. Dragonflies, various moths, mosquitoes and blowflies, and several kinds of gnats represented the insect kingdom in Sisualik today. There are not many "flying insect" days left in this summer.

The first net setters at Anigaaq are not catching much. Most of the whitefish may have gone out prior to its closing. We'll see soon.

Still no results in search for three missing in boat accident at Pipe Spit.

September 7

Low 36° F
High 48° F
N-NW wind to 20
Clear a.m.
Clouds, showers p.m.

A cool beautiful breezy day until early evening, when showers and fog clouds drove in on stiff westerlies.

We picked a full 5-gallon bucket of Blackberries. It took all day, but very worth it.

A real lot of young duck hunters this weekend, lot of ammo expended. Retrieved kill probably not great though may be diverse. To many of the school age hunters, a duck is a duck. It's the parents and the one that cooks and/or plucks who are choosey.

Quite a few blackberry pickers out, a kind of last chance since we have located some good berries and the weatherman has promised freezing temperatures and snow. It may turn out better than forecasted, but you never know. It is, after all, only the first week of September. We can sometimes pick blackberries into October.

Waterfowl are much more plentiful yesterday and today. Sandpipers and passerines rare as hen's teeth!

Caribou reported around Red Dog haul road, headed this way? Also a report that they are reaching Kobuk Lake north shore. We may yet have some local animals while bulls are fat.

Journal

No net out today due to rough ocean. No fish report from Anigaaq.

September 8

Low 33° F
High 45° F
W-NW wind 30+
Nearly clear a.m.
Rain, snow, clouds p.m.

A very light frost this morning. Couple of healthy snow showers late in the day.

We managed to pull off half a day picking of good blackberries.

A real lot (several thousand?) Wigeon have settled on Sisualik low water lagoon areas. A high percentage of them seem to be young of the year. This is kind of a surprise since there was no particular indication earlier that Wigeon had such a good year. Sample birds are little less fat than usual for this date but probably building rapidly. Birds are just right for soup. A little lean yet for roasting. There sure are lots.

There were several large flocks of sandpipers far out on the mud today for a change. Probably a hundred birds. Didn't get close enough for positive ID but they were probably Dunlin.

Fishing at Anigaaq has somewhat conflicting reports. A reported lot of fish jumping in the slough but a poor net catch. We'll set a net or so ourselves this week, since air is getting cold enough now, and we'll have better idea of winter whitefish potential.

A surprise whitening of our whole landscape at 10 p.m. this evening! A heavy snow squall, in a few minutes time, changed our world to a Christmas card scene, a little early.

September 9

Low 23° F
High 38° F
Cloudy, snow squalls

Ground white till 2 p.m. Warm sun with insects in between snow showers.

Kotzebue broke record low for the date with a temperature of 30° F. Previous recorded low was 32° F. Our low of 23° F was enough to freeze our nearby big duck pond clear across, and salt water in a fish washing bucket. Our section has cold wind off the land. The wind died during the night, which is the reason for our

much colder temperature; ground cover of snow is also a factor. These are very unusual weather conditions for this early date in September - ten days too early.

An early traveler found a bear in the portage trail behind the Ranger Station. The bear moved off as expected, to the relief of the early traveler. Don't know if he was armed or not. He probably will be the rest of the fall.

ADF&G retrieved their marker buoy from Anigaaq today with some mighty large swells for a small boat. It was a good show for those folks.

There was 4 inches of snow on the ground at Sealing Point at 2 p.m. today.

Our odd weather is, as usual, from a system north of Barrow and Wrangell Island. It is said to be a cold front from that system. It is indeed cold!

Sealing Point residents report witnessing a fight between two bears tonight.

Multitudes of Wigeon about today and they will need to change feeding areas as lagoon waters are rising this evening.

September 10

Low 34° F
High 42° F
Squalls and sun

Another day of NW wind with snow showers. An odd long period of the same kind of weather, apparently from a low north of Barrow. Also, a NW wind usually brings low water, but yesterday and today marine waters have been almost at flood stage. Ducks having trouble finding their normal food.

There are lots of Wigeon and Canada Geese and a few swans. All the swans noted have been adults. Have not seen any young at all yet.

A large dark Gyrfalcon was sitting on the Snowy Owl's pole today. Snowy was sitting on the ground directly under the 4 foot pole. It was a strange sight.

Ocean swells quite large last night but didn't reach the grass. An erosion warning was out for farther north yesterday, and here for today, but our swells and wind dropped today. Wind was very strong last night, probably gusting to 40 knots.

Ground turned white several times today and then thawed to dark again. Unusually heavy squall activity.

A few sandpipers (mostly Dunlins) remain and lots of waterfowl, but no passerines.

Journal

No further show of Sealing Point bears today or last night after the wrestling match.

No net set here due to rough ocean, but Sealing Point net in lagoon got seven whitefish. This is significant because even that small catch way back in the lagoon means there are considerable fish in the Anigaaq system and fishing near the outlet may be good soon.

The two wrestling bears were putting on their same show tonight a couple of hours before dark. There is a dead walrus between the house and the tower and apparently a wrestling match occurs prior to feeding to see who gets to eat first.

September 11

Low 30° F
High 44° F
NW wind to 20
Snow squalls, sun

Same kind of day as yesterday and day before. Our weather stuck in an odd rut.

It has brought us numbers of Red Phalaropes though. There were many small groups of 10-15 birds scattered in many sheltered sides of sand spits feeding steadily. Lots of stranded jellyfish in the same areas after marine waters dropped down to normal this afternoon.

Lots of geese, swans and wigeon around but difficult to get anything with the water so high. It began to drop late this afternoon.

Fishing at Anigaaq reported good last night.

Two bears were seen on portage behind Ranger Station. One reported to have visited fish racks at one camp. Another reported seen near portage trail. Lots of bear stories today. Its quite possible the two wrestling bears seen at Sealing Point last evening and in today's reports are the same bears.

As the ocean swells faded today there were lots of grass and sod clumps deposited along the beach. Probably due to wave erosion farther north.

Ocean really quieting down. May be able to set net tomorrow.

September 12

Low 33° F
High 42° F
Light winds
Cloudy

A white morning again. Snowdrift melted off till about 2 p.m.

Several hundred swans back against the hills. Have not yet seen a young of the year. The swans seem to be flock non-breeders.

Still a few Red Phalarope in the lagoon, though water level has dropped much.

Most ducks seem to have a good start on their migration fat, though a couple we had in hand this day were pretty lean for this date. They were Northern Pintail, maybe late hatch. Wigeon seem in better condition than Pintail, probably because lagoon water level has been high for too long. Wigeon do well on a floating green algae; Pintail seem to require *Potamogeton* and often eat blackberries, but maybe not algae.

A few caribou taken in lower Noatak Canyon today. A long haul to river by 4-wheeler.

Reports from Caribou hunters on Noatak River indicate very few moose seen or taken.

First tomcod catch today. Big ones too (Saffron Cod). There is a lot of dirt and jellyfish in the water yet from erosive waves this week.

A lot of seals (probably Spotted Seals) reported in Kotzebue Channel, probably feeding on herring. We will have to try to get some herring soon.

Seining at Anigaaq resulted in a great catch for those involved.

September 13

Low 32° F
High 40° F
N wind to 20
Nearly clear

A nearly clear cool fall day. Still nearly a month ahead of time. An early morning snowfall nearly all melted by 6 p.m. A little will remain overnight again as the air seem quite cool and it will probably freeze pretty hard tonight with no cloud cover.

Journal

Water level in lagoon approaching rock bottom low as a north wind system takes over marine systems.

Still a few Red Phalaropes and larger waterfowl plentiful. The coolness of the air and a hard freeze tonight may make waterfowl scarce.

It could also cause a new early date for running ice in the Noatak River. It is now, by our records, the sixteenth.

A report of a bear checking net at Anigaaq. Sorry to hear that.

Also, more bad news from that area: a large chunk of bluff mud blocks the beach trail and the overland portage must be used.

September 14

Low 26° F
High 38° F
N wind to 40
Clear – winds – cool

A bright cool windy day. Some ice didn't melt today. Very early coolness.

Had planned to go set a net at Anigaaq today. Carrie made the town trip for some pre freeze-up shopping. I set the tomcod net soon after coffee. After a couple of hours I was ready to head west. Since the net was still in the water I thought it should be hauled before departure. I hauled it out and found a ton or so of Saffron Cod! A real choice haul at this time and place. They were fine big fish and the weather just right for cutting and drying. No char. Spent all day processing Saffron Cod.

Real low water in the lagoon and a snow bank of swans. Quite a large flock of adult Greater Scaup in back duck basin, three hundred or so.

A report of some one catching four Willow Ptarmigan today. They are very scarce and this is the time they should begin showing here in great flocks to eat blackberries. The catcher said they were all brown yet except for the wings, which makes the heavy snowfall reported in Fairbanks that much more strange and unseasonable.

Fishing going well at Anigaaq except for bears tending nets and tough hauling trail.

We were surprised by the 40 knot N winds today since 15 knots was the forecast. Some boat and Air Taxi travelers didn't make it home due to strong winds and cross winds.

A late Merlin sighting today. It was hunting shorelines; except for Red Phalaropes there isn't much prey available.

September 15

Low 24° F
High 39° F
N wind to 15
Clear

Cool spell continues. Half of the lagoon iced over this morning, as were even some of the larger ponds.

Very rock bottom low water in the lagoon and marine systems.

Lots of caribou reported north shore of Kobuk Lake and Fish Creek area. One reported seen behind the Ranger Station by whitefish fisherman.

Netting going pretty well. No new bear interaction.

Carrie reported ice even up on near shore band in Kobuk Lake. Noatak River will be soon running ice. The sixteenth is the earliest for that happening that we recall in 45 years.

The frozen gravel and light winds allowed air taxi flights to get Carrie and others back to their camps.

Missing NPS crew in float plane reported on this evening news. Stan Caldwell, our friend from Anigaaq, is part of the crew. We hope the search goes well.

Still a few Red Phalaropes around and considerable geese and swans. This must be a hard year for young swans.

September 16

Low 24° F
High 40° F
N wind to 18
Clear

A very busy day. Made trip west to Akulaaq and put net in the west end slough between two lakes. A few fish got in it right away: Least Ciscoe and Humpback Whitefish. Should be quite a few overnight. However, there are potential problems. Lots of bear tracks and that net site is on a bear retreat route from beachcombing to mountains. Hope I'm lucky; left some "bear scare" material.

Journal

After returning home for late lunch, set the Saffron Cod net and went back to the waterfowl basin to see how much water (unfrozen) and waterfowl were still around. There is more ice than open water today, even in lagoons and larger lake. There was not much open water but lots of waterfowl. Four to five hundred Tundra Swans, three hundred mixed ducks (Wigeon, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Mallards). Shot a couple of Mallards and Wigeon.

Erosion from last strong NW winds is monstrous west of us. Deep cuts far into the sod and frozen mud on the bluffs. It may yet eat the beach away from Akulaaq and leave it a dry lagoon.

There are at least three or four bears making recent tracks east of the Ranger Station. They have pretty much finished the two marine mammals that are in the section. Don't know what they will work on next - hope not my net!

Saw one Snow Bunting today and one yesterday, the first. There was a juvenile Northern Harrier in the backyard today. The two Snowy Owls are still around.

Saffron Cod net got a bucket full of cod and a lot of jellyfish.

September 17

Low 20° F
High 40° F
N-NE wind to 18
Clear, a few clouds

Continued unseasonable cold with record or near record low temps.

Well, the bear didn't find the loaded whitefish net at Akulaaq, thank goodness! There was about 150 lbs of Least Ciscoe and Humpback Whitefish, a good catch for so short a net.

Akulaaq Lake has more ice than open water with a few swans and gulls and very few ducks.

Ice cover and overnight freezing temperatures interfering with Anigaaq whitefish effort.

Noatak River is also running ice, so picking up the Hatchery spent salmon carcasses not possible right now.

Only new caribou news is on the north shore of Kobuk Lake. They are reporting large bulls today.

Lots of fresh (overnight) bear tracks on the beach west of Sisualik. The largest traveling from the west came within a few hundred yards of the first inhabited camp at Sisualik's west base.

A few Red Phalarope and a couple of Sanderlings were the only small birds seen on the beach between Sisualik and Akulaaq net site.

Marine waters started to rise, but dropped back down to low levels as N, NE winds picked up a bit.

Two kayaks from Greenland into Sealing Point tonight.

September 18

Low 24° F
High 36° F
N wind to 35
Clear

A very windy day, finally dropping off about 8 p.m. A number of local people wanting Air Taxi service, but N is direction of cross wind here and not much chance till the sun was very low.

A good catch of Least Ciscoe and small size Humpback Whitefish in Akulaaq net this morning, but taking them out of the slushy net with that cold freezing wind was torture, for both fish and fisherman. Also a good catch for others of bigger fish in the bigger system at Anigaaq. They are using both nets and the old style ditch fish trap (qadagisaq).

Didn't notice fresh bear tracks on the trail this morning. Hope the ice and cold weather keeps them in the mountains working on their dens. Torn up fish net or face to face confrontations are no fun. Real exciting though!

Lots of birds today considering that there hasn't been much but waterfowl for some time. There were several small flocks of very light colored redpolls, several Sanderlings and Red Phalaropes, a lone Long-billed Dowitcher, six very brown-red Willow Ptarmigan (first seen for ages), and our two Snowy Owls are still about. Strangely, Jonathan our camp swallow box Glaucous Gull has been missing since last evening. He has been real regular since late egg laying time. Hope he has had sense enough to move a bit south and didn't get shot for his friendly but rather "grasping" ways. We'll miss him, but he kept the swallow box alive long after the swallows left us. Even if he only used it for a landing pad. He looked very statuesque and added a bit of salt flavor to this seaside camp. We wish him well,

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wherever he has gone. Its not every camp that can boast of its own Jonathan Livingston Seagull!

The two kayakers from Greenland that reached Sealing Point last night left there about 3 p.m. hoping to make Sisualik Point to camp tonight. We haven't seen them yet and it is 10 p.m.

The Tundra Swan birds of the year, though few, are showing up. Mostly two to a family and quite small compared to the adults.

September 19

Low 19° F
High 37° F
Light winds
Clear

A record cold at Kotzebue weather station again. A real beautiful afternoon. The N wind died and the sun, without wind, got quite warm and pleasant.

Well the bear did it! He took a little less than half of the fish, which is probably his share, but he didn't have to eat the net webbing with the fish!

Lots of fish pouring out of Anigaaq. Fishing turning out better than expected, but low percentage of roe fish. They are the first to go out during the summer and the late closure of the outlet permitted them to do that.

Waterfowl holding plentiful in spite of cold and ice. Slow fat build up probably partly responsible, and continued low marine waters expose good feeding areas where it hasn't iced up yet. Wigeon, Swans and Canada Geese are dominant species.

Saw a flock of eight of what was probably Dunlin at a non-tideland site today. A rather unusual sighting for this time and place.

The bear-people confrontation potential builds every day the bears stay out of the den. Night fishing at the outlet trap sites, and night travel to and from fishing site add to the potential, as does storage of large quantities of fish at various places around home camps or fishing site.

Had Saffron Cod net in the ocean for several hours but caught only jellyfish of which there are a lot and seem to have no earthly value. Maybe the value just hasn't been recognized yet.

September 20

Low 16° F

September

High 35° F
N to NE wind 15
Cloudy, clear

Record lows again but marine waters have come up a bit and wind has a NE slant. This is the second night in the teens, unusual for mid September.

Not much sign of birds this morning. With waters a bit higher they have either left or retreated to more sheltered parts with open water.

Whitefish still pouring out of Anigaaq and people picking them up. There will probably be stockpiling which will draw our friendly bears.

Lots of visitors today, from Kotzebue, Sealing Point, Sisualik, and tomorrow from Anchorage. You never know when you'll have a big week end!

Caribou have faded from current events. Nobody talking about them for the last week except to comment on their being not present. They will surprise somebody, somewhere, sometime.

First seals of the fall season, taken yesterday. Mixed Spotted, yearling Uguruq and Common Ringed Seals, about six. Light ice and slush in salt water brings them around.

A real calm shiny evening with the first ice slush on the ocean beach of Sisualik.

A flock of Red-breasted Merganser went by, fishing just ahead of the slush. One caught a fish (Saffron Cod) too big to swallow and the whole family came running up on the gravel after him and the fish. , He turned back to the water with fish horizontal instead of crosswise, and with much neck stretching finally got it down. All this was taken in by an audience of five Sanderlings lined up on the beach sunning themselves. It was quite a show. Real too!

Jonathan has not returned. How easily one gets attached to another living creature if you permit yourself the luxury of getting to know its living problems a little better. We miss Jonathan after two months of steady company. The swallow box sure looks lonesome without him on top of it.

Journal

September 21

Low 18° F
High 36° F
Variable winds
Clear

Overnight visitors from Anchorage, lots of talk. Good to see old friends.

A bucket of Saffron Cod (with large shrimp in stomach) caught in table net.

Report from both Noatak and Kivalina that caribou are headed this way. Sounds good.

Fishing at Anigaaq slowed some as marine level has come up some.

Lots of waterfowl moving south past the Ranger Station area today. Jonathan back this afternoon! He didn't say where he has been but probably either east to bare mudflat area with stranded sticklebacks or west to fishing operation at Anigaaq. Good to have him back. Thought we might not see him again this year.

September 22

Low 14° F
High 36° F
Variable winds
Clear

A beautiful fall day warmed by the sun in the p.m.

It was reported that Noatak River is iced over and near thick enough for aircraft landing at the Hatchery site.

It was a cold night for water fowl.

Good conditions for seal hunting right now and suppose there are some hunters out.

Fair numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers have moved in on the sea.

At least one young Uguruq taken today.

Five Lesser Snow Geese out on Green's Point this afternoon. Two white adults and thirteen gray young.

A young hunter brought in four Willow Ptarmigan today. Willow Ptarmigan are almost as rare as caribou here so far this fall.

Only six Saffron Cod in table net with jellyfish.

Two swans of the year found west of Sealing Point - one dead, the other nearly so, apparently from starvation.

September 23

Low 15° F
High 36° F
N-NE wind to 15
Clear

Our early cold spell and interior snow cover seems to be nearly statewide “record early.”

Just as last spring’s weather during migration time must have been deadly to some birds, so too will this early freezing be deadly to some. Swans, loons, scoters and mergansers will be especially vulnerable. For late nesters and slow maturing young there just wasn’t time.

There are still open holes where birds can feed in a few choice spots. There were some fifty Tundra Swans, forty Greater Scaup, fifty Wigeon, and thirty Pintails in the four open areas noted. One flock of forty Canada Geese eating berries were all of that species noted.

A few Sanderling and one flock (20) of Snow Buntings were seen.

Squirrels and bears still out.

Was able to walk across the ice on trail to winter house today. Both ends of the lake have open holes at place of currents. Waterfowl activity also helps to keep them from freezing.

Was also able to haul big load of wood in cart over the ice at Akulaaq narrows.

A neighbor set net under ice in Akulaaq last night and he had a great catch today. Except for my early efforts at opposite end of the lagoon this was the first net set in Akulaaq lagoon. The good catch the neighbor had was a bit of surprise, both in regards to number and size.

The seal hunter catch yesterday was four yearling Uguruq and one large Common Seal.

Journal

September 24

Low 14° F
High 34° F
Light variable winds
Clear

Another bright cold (still breaking low records at Kotzebue) September day.

Scaup, Wigeon and Mergansers at open water hole slough. Others saw a few flying Tundra Swans. Not many unfrozen places in freshwater left.

Set a larger mesh size net at Akulaaq's NW end under ice about noon today and was surprised to find lots of big Humpback Whitefish hitting it right away. Went back to take the fish out about sundown and found enough to fill $\frac{3}{4}$ of a 100 pound gunny sack. A remarkable "daylight" catch. Hope the bear will leave it alone so we can see the overnight catch! They are nice large whitefish. Akulaaq is known for its small whitefish.

A try with the herring net totaled zero herring and ten million jellyfish. It is a great year for jellyfish but don't know who or what is rejoicing.

No new caribou news and time is running out.

Was surprised to see the larger bears tracks this side (east of) two most westerly Sisualik Camps. He is coming closer!

Our remarkably early freeze-up continues.

Haven't noticed the two Snowy Owls today. They may have moved on with the waterfowl.

September 25

Low 15° F
High 30° F
E wind to 18
Cloudy, few snowflakes

First day this fall our temperature didn't rise above freezing. Nearly a week of records lows.

It is a little hard to read this very early freeze-up, at least in terms of its ultimate affect on the living creatures round about. A flock of nearly a hundred Tundra Swans made up of family groups were in the few open water holes in the bends of the slough behind the beach ridges. There were also thirty Greater Scaup and a few Pintail and Wigeon in the waters.

A great overnight catch in the Akulaaq whitefish net, probably close to two hundred pounds. A lot of fish in one net. Quite a site and sight. The catch was pure Humpback Whitefish.

Lots of local camp travelers today, some in and out by Air Taxi.

A single Sanderling hanging around camp for scraps.

Snow Buntings are showing in small numbers. The summer Snowy Owls were not seen again today, though a Northern Harrier did pass.

Only caribou news is from N. Kobuk Lake, where there are lots.

The bear visited the fish trap area last night. It ate from sacked fish, then from the trap, and then vomited several times. Must have over done it! We are step closer to a serious bear-people confrontation.

September 26

Low 22° F
High 30° F
N to E wind 15
Cloudy, clearing

Another nice day with some sun in the mid afternoon and the ocean just like a lake. How long can this last?

Another great catch in the Akulaaq net. I don't believe I've ever seen more fish in one net. It was really loaded after all day yesterday and overnight. The catch was again pure Humpback Whitefish, some fat, some lean, some carrying big roe, some not. There was more than two hundred pounds. There was one young Sheefish.

Still around a hundred Tundra Swans in open slough curve, with mixed ducks.

Good to see passerines around camp again. A few Redpolls dropping by to eat *Artemisia* seeds and an occasional small flock of Snow Buntings.

Several falcons moved by from the west. Even a single Peregrine with three different single Gyrfalcons. None of these birds were together, but all were moving south along the beach in apparent migration rather than hunt.

There are also a few Sanderling about.

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Ice cover nearly complete over fresh and brackish water areas with no current. Remaining waterfowl feeding areas (except for loons and Red-breasted Merganser) limited to bends or outlets where water is shallow and moving. Some cygnets pretty small and one wonders how well they will fare on migration.

A dog team and an ATV crossing on the ice have been made yesterday and today. Usually that isn't possible until well into the first week of October.

Several bear stories floating around from the Hatchery, an upriver (Noatak) camp, and Noatak Village. An awful lot of bear stories across the state this season. Wonder what is a good reason?

Quite a lot of microtine activity about now, showing plainly on the lightly frozen soil.

September 27

Low 14° F
High 31° F
N wind to 15
Clear

Another record breaking low. We really are having a super early freeze-up! Freeze-up of un-moving freshwater is pretty complete.

It is a very poignant time, if that's the proper word. The late spring and early fall have made a difficult time for swans and some other waterfowl. We still have a hundred Tundra Swans in small, and growing ever smaller, open water holes where food is available. Some of the young birds are pretty small yet and those small holes are the only feeding places left to grow stronger and fatter. Some won't make it and adults are reluctant to leave youngsters behind, close knit family ties. It is very painful to stand by and watch the slow process. The change of seasons seems so harsh and unforgiving in some years.

A single Canada Goose was flying west a few feet above the water right along the beach, giving a plaintive call at short intervals. Wonder what he lost and how far north and west he will fly to find it.

A single Sanderling camped here by our walkway to the beach; also a one-legged Glaucous Gull of the year.

A large bear was seen making his way back to the mountains across the ice on Sealing Point lagoon at about 10 a.m.

September 28

Low 12° F
High 31° F
N wind to 15, variable
Clear

Another bright, clear, cold day but warm late afternoon with no wind.

A disappointment at Akulaaq net - only a few fish and the ends frozen in. I will have to winterize the net.

Jonathan the Glaucous Gull, Snowy Owl, Oscar the Sanderling and Humpy the Porch Moose are all still with us.

Only five Tundra Swans noted today with thirty mixed ducks in the open water hole.

Marine waters very low today, which makes travel by beach all the way to the fishing outlet possible. Also makes for good fishing with the ditch traps.

The bear visited that site again last night and overate again - piles of vomit.

Several boys were working the fish trap ditch after dark a few nights ago. A bear decided to help them out. One of the boys thought he saw a shadow but when it turned out to be a bear, they all quit fishing for the night.

Eggs in the Humpback Whitefish are getting loose.

No caribou yet.

Another record daily low set Kotzebue Weather Station.

Report of a walrus taken off Cape Blossom.

September 29

Low 10° F
High 28° F
N-NE wind to 15
Clear

Beautiful cool weather again. The coldest yet and another record breaker at Kotzebue Weather Station. A week of record breakers and maybe the earliest freeze-up on record.

Journal

Saw nine Tundra Swans again today and twenty or so mixed Greater Scaup, Northern Pintail, and Widgeon. One of the young gray swans was having trouble keeping up with the flying parents.

A few single and small flocks of Snow Buntings moving through.

An Air Taxi flight reported four caribou behind one of our west neighbors' camp today. Apparently the plane is the only one that saw them as no ground travelers reported seeing caribou today.

Fishing continues good at Anigaaq and we put our net back in again at Akulaaq. The net showed signs of fish again after a few minutes in the water, though the catch may never equal the two great nights of fishing there last week.

Our first big day of slush on the ocean. There was a lot of it, but pretty soft with no pieces big enough or thick enough for seals to lay on. We did see one on the ice far out. Only one boat from here hunting seals off and on, with pretty good luck when they are out. Multiple yearling Uguruq have been a part of the catch.

Microtine numbers much higher than last fall.

Several Dunlins and Sanderlings around the fish trap ditches.

September 30

Low 14° F
High 28° F
N-NE wind 20
Cloudy, some sun

Another day's low temperature record broken. September weather statistics must look pretty odd on the cold and precipitation side.

Two adult Tundra Swans in west water hole with their lone cygnet. The younger one lags when they fly. A lone adult buzzed camp going west just at sundown.

Bear still eating from fish around the trap at Anigaaq. Fish catch from our Akulaaq net less than half a sack, but good big fish.

Herring net got two buckets of small Saffron Cod and only four Herring.

No further mention of four caribou seen by plane yesterday.

Had to retire old Buck today. Last year about this time it was Snoopy. One of the greatest problems of getting to know creatures intimately is the earthly end of that

relationship. It is seldom easy, but must be considered as part of the price of a treasure of priceless value. Fifteen to sixteen years with Buck and Snoopy were well worth the full price.

As the month closes down we can't help but wonder what October might have in store for us. Freeze-up, for most practical purposes, has all ready happened. Last year it took all of the month of October to freeze up.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

OCTOBER

October 1

Low 15° F
High 30° F
N-NE wind 18
Half clear

A very nice, mostly bright day.

Fish have come back to Akulaaq nets. A great catch in our single net. A packed full 100-lb potato sack sewed up and some over. Probably near 180 lbs weight. A lot of fish on one net! Some females are losing their roe. These large Humpback Whitefish are uncharacteristic of Akulaaq. It usually has small young fish. This year it has fish bigger than Anigaaq. One Bering Ciscoe, one Sheefish, and one Flounder are the only other kind of fish to date with the 3" mesh size.

Birds scarce today. The first day with no Tundra Swan, though a few mixed species of ducks remain in open water holes.

Our camp Sanderling is gone and so, it appears, are our summer Snowy Owls. There are migrating Snowy Owls moving through now. Glaucous Gulls and Common Ravens are coming to be the most numerous species again.

No caribou news. Our time for good bulls is growing short.

Another record low for Kotzebue Weather Station.

October 2

Low 10° F
High 30° F
N wind 15, variable p.m.
Clear, few clouds

A bright beautiful day with lots of slush in the ocean. Some heavier ice several miles off shore contained hundreds of seals "basking" in the cool sunlight. (Actually it is not so much "basking" as it is "resting" from swimming all the time.)

Sanderling is back today from several days absence. Don't know if he tried migrating and couldn't forget his good food here and came back or what. How little of the real life of the creatures around us do we really know!

Another good overnight catch in Akulaaq, net but only a little more than half of yesterday's catch. Some very large Humpback Whitefish.

A few ducks in the same open hole to the west. There were less than ten N. Pintail, G. Scaup, and Wigeon.

No Willow Ptarmigan and no caribou. Two species we expect to see much of in October. Hope we are not disappointed. To date we have neither.

One of our neighbors moving to town early and we were able to buy their leftover gas. It is a great help to us as that substance is difficult to come by right now at freeze time.

A real heavy fish catch at the traps at Anigaaq last night. This is the action that gives the place its name. Lots of fish "came out," or "Ani'ed" last night. Tons!

Two boats out in the slush hunting seals today. Haven't yet heard their catch.

October 3

Low 8° F
High 32° F
W to NW to N wind 15
Clear

Another clear and bright day with wind from several directions.

Camp Sanderling and gulls still around. Ducks in the open water number six: two Wigeon, two Northern Pintail, and two Greater Scaup. Lots of travelers again today. Some by plane to town, most back and forth to fishing site.

Yesterday sealers got two medium size Spotted Seals. Several sunk which makes it difficult to get a boat load.

No word of caribou again. Bear activity seems to have tapered off though they are still around. Fishing at the trap site has gotten so regularly good, with a lot of scrap fish around, that bears, gulls and people all have enough and are not so much in each others way.

Freezing continues; several days without thawing temperatures. Ice crossing to Kotzebue will not be for off. However, marine water level has remained so low since it started freezing that mud flat and shallow water areas have not had water enough to make good solid ice. Freshwater lakes and channels of non-moving water are 6 to 10 inches thick.

October 4

Low 26° F
High 36° F
SW to S wind
Cloudy – light snow

A brand new weather pattern promises high marine waters and warmer temperatures. Our near month of northerlies, with low marine waters and unseasonable coldness has apparently come to an end, for better or worse?

Last night after sundown we heard great news. Multitudes of caribou were just beginning to cross the glare ice of Noatak River at the mouth of the Aggie River, just below the Hatchery. They are headed in our direction. Our recent wind change will give them a whiff of salt air and if past patterns are followed, we will have caribou on the ocean beach of Krusenstern Monument in a few short days. Hope nothing goes wrong with this projected happening. We have the feeling of being left out on the caribou scene thus far this season. Most other communities have had opportunity for fresh meat already.

There were bear tracks in the new snow this morning at the Anigaaq Bluff fishing site.

Sanderling has moved in with us. He is not yet coming inside the tent but is getting under foot right outside the door. Don't think he knows which direction he is supposed to go. Don't know how to tell him either. May try to put him in a large envelope and mail him to Bodega Bay, CA.

Anticipation runs high tonight, the herds are coming! The caribou are coming! It has been almost a year since the familiar and exotic sight of thousands of animals has come to us. Sometimes moving as a single huge organism, at other time as small individual groups each with a mind and purpose all their own. The campers up at the mouth of the Aggie reported many crossed the river moving in this direction today.

We also have a high wind warning hanging over us for tomorrow and tomorrow night. High winds from the forecast direction means high water and wave action. We had almost forgot about the monster out there with all the low water and lack of wind this fall. We must survive to pick up the clams and meet the caribou. They expect it!

October 5

Low 30° F
High 36° F
SE, E wind to 55

Cloudy, light snow

Strong winds today but not the expected high water at least not by 3 p.m. Very extensive amounts of slush flattened the waves from 11 a.m. till 4 p.m. Our weather warning is for SE to SW high winds tonight (to 50 knots); we already have E winds gusting to 50 by 3 p.m.

In lieu of the strong winds forecast there was not much traveling, fishing or hunting to report on today. Everybody and everything just hanging on including Sanderling, Jonathan and Peg (the Glaucous Gull of the year with one leg he can't use much).

Gulls were finding some small fish in new overflow water back in the mudflats areas.

Caribou report from campers near Aggie is that a good bunch have moved off from there towards here, and that large herd bulls are still good meat.

A lot of dust blowing off the Noatak Delta with the strong winds.

Our tent set up - frame, staples, tarp etc. - getting tested tonight. We are moving to the Dome for the night. There is now a coastal flood watch for tomorrow morning, though marine waters have dropped very low this evening as the E winds exceeded 50 knots.

October 6

Low 36° F
High 38° F
SE wind to 60, a.m.
Cloudy, rain, snow

Well, we are still here! Winds during the night were remarkably strong. We had a fairly good quiet night in the Dome. Was surprised to see tent, stove pipe and all, still standing. Except for a bit of a problem around the stove pipe hole, things came out on good shape to this point. There was a blizzard warning, high wind warning and coastal flood watch for today. Warmed to above freezing and rain replaced snow. Our gusts were still up to 60 knots at 8-9 a.m., but soon moved to S and dropped to 30 knots. Waves quite big and noisy but haven't reached grass line yet. Back mudflat areas are not much flooded yet at noon.

If this moderating trend continues we may escape the monster again. Point Hope and Cape Lisbourne had winds of 70-80 knots last night. We still don't feel out of it at noon, but things are looking up. SW winds are our destructive wave producer. We have that change to come yet and we'll hope the winds are down to something like 20 by then!

Sanderling missing after the storm. There is probably thawed land and sea all the way to Bodega Bay now.

The catch of Bering Ciscoe in the nets that remain active at Anigaaq has increased as other species have become scarcer. They are super saturated with oil-fat. Their stomachs are stuffed full of a big eyed, transparent shrimp-worm like little creature. May be Euphausiid or Mysid? The reason these fish are so consistently fat remains cultural mystery. Perhaps their choice of food is so omnipresent. It is a mysterious fish whose numbers anywhere seem limited, but by what?

Coastal flood watch was canceled at 9:30 p.m. Our back lagoon mudflat area flooded real fast and to the brim this afternoon and was still at brim full at dark. We also still have 18 knot winds from SW. We hope the cancellation is valid.

The whole freeze-up situation, as far as trails go, is of course disrupted and freeze-up must be begun all over again.

Caribou are still supposed to be headed this way. We will have trouble getting back to Caribou range until the water level drops and freezing begins.

The fish trap area at Anigaaq is wiped out, with some minor loss of equipment, though the outlet stayed closed and uncaught fish are still there.

October 7

Low 34° F
High 38° F
SE wind to 15
Snow showers, sun

A snowy-rainy a.m., with some sun breaking through in the p.m. Swells and slush on the ocean, with one very small and shiny Common Seal riding a small ice pan just his size past the camp, only a hundred yards off shore.

Just as the sun went down a huge loon went flying by only fifty yards off shore and forty feet high. A very headlong, lumbering flight. My impression was that it was a juvenile Yellow-billed Loon.

Finally a lone young male caribou turned up behind Sealing Point and the boys caught it. It was reported to be good meat (fat). They sure need the meat. Hope that was the first of many.

The ice in the lagoon didn't break up much so at least some of the trail will be retained as freezing begins again.

Slush ice covered the gravel over much of the fishing outlet site. It will at least temporarily close down that operation.

We do have a little snow on the ground, but it pretty much melted as it fell today.

Sanderling came back today! Peg and Jonathan still here. Set four Snowy Owl traps today. Haven't seen our two summer owls for some time. Hope they have gone far away.

October 8

Low 29° F
High 35° F
NW wind to 15
Cloudy, clearing p.m.

Marine waters still high but dropping. The ice wall that lines the gravel beach from Sisualik Point all the way to Sealing Point is getting eaten up by NW wind generated swells. This "wall," fairly unusual, is the crushed ice that became very thick slush during our great storm the first part of the week, and then piled as soft snowy slush 4 feet deep at the water line during the day or so of moderate SE to S winds. It has solidified on freezing and nearly fills the area between grass line and water edge on the ocean beach. It is right where the ATV traffic would be if it wasn't there. It has spoiled much of the ATV freeway to the west.

Jonathan, Peg and Sanderling are still here.

No catch in the four pole traps set yesterday.

Gulls of the year are having great feeding as flood waters drop on dead Nine-spine Stickleback.

A summer dead walrus with considerable meat on yet drifted slowly by yesterday evening. We didn't want it to stop here - bear bait - and it didn't.

Set two more Snowy Owl traps and saw one owl in the distance. Maybe tomorrow we will have owl soup.

Journal

October 9

Low 23° F
High 31° F
N-NW light winds
Cloudy, snow showers

Light snow mixed with periods of sun all day. Snow melted as it touched dark objects part of the day, which made it wet.

Made a first trip west to reset the Akulaaq net. This was the first trip since the big storm-built slush wall was formed. The normal ATV trail on the ocean beach is no longer usable because of the wall of ice. One must use the "land" trail up in the grasses above flood storm high level. The time of travel from Sisualik to Anigaaq is nearly doubled, but is not bad going. Only slow.

Got the net set and saw fish hit within a few minutes. Two bears passed through the net site two nights ago - tracks in the snow while it was wet.

Caribou news today! Some have finally crossed the Noatak River to our west side delta area. Jones' camp, which is right there, killed several from a good bunch (30-40). Bulls are reported to be fat but three out of six were strong smelling. Early this year, which agrees with the prognosis of the result of early cold weather. October 14th is the time rut and strong bulls usually begin.

Carrie made a town trip today (by plane) and two boats made the crossing.

Did not see our camp Sanderling today. He had grown quite plump. Hope he makes it to Bodega Bay.

A white phase Gyrfalcon reported by a west neighbor today. It caught and ate a Willow Ptarmigan in sight of neighbors camp.

Noted a freshly killed yearling Glaucous Gull near the trail today. That could also be the work of the White Gyrfalcon, as it was in the same area.

Finally saw a good flock of Willow Ptarmigan today, fifty or so, wet looking and lots of brown feathers yet.

October 10

Low 24° F
High 32° F
NW to SW wind 20

A bit of sun between snow showers.

A rather strange weather day. Huge masses of dark-black snow squall clouds marching across the sky from west to east. The snow showers were very dense and long lasting.

Picked up the Akulaaq whitefish net which had a good overnight catch and didn't put it out again. Think we have enough fish for this year.

One partnership of Sisualik caribou hunters did well today, taking eight and dropping off a whole carcass to several camps of elders. These were younger males with very good fat meat. Thank you very much boys!

The other Sisualik hunters didn't do so well, though they saw lots of tracks. It is good to have fresh meat again.

Most of the caribou taken so far seem to have been from the one bunch of 30-40 reported earlier. Where the caribou have come from and where they are going behind Sisualik has yet to be established.

The larger bear was out walking around the Anigaaq fishing area bluff last night in the new snow and moonlight. He didn't bother our net site.

Sanderling is gone for good it seems. No sign of him again today. Its about time. Temperatures are dropping again.

October 11

Low 24° F
High 33° F
SE wind to 38, a.m.
SW-NW wind to 30 p.m.
Cloudy, snow

Woke this morning to SE blizzard with already formed snowbanks. Another weather front from out of Siberia with considerably more strength and different wind directions than forecast. Water level stayed fairly low through the night but coming up again quite rapidly this morning. Our hope is that wind will diminish as it swings to NW. Our largest and most destructive waves come from the SW.

Its now 3:30 p.m. and they just put a high wind watch on the radio. Shishmaref and Wales have had SW to W winds to 50 knots for the last two hours. Our winds and Kotzebue winds are down to 20 from SW. We will be in trouble if the winds here must follow those farther down the coast. The low that is causing the conditions is expected to come over land north of Kotzebue later this evening. High winds watch is till 7 p.m. Our marine water level has continued to rise all day.

Journal

We are getting our needed snow from this weather system. We'll soon be able to move to winter camp - away from the ocean!

At 7:00 p.m. high wind watch was canceled, but around that time the tips of the breaking swells were reaching our beach grass line. The waves were quite huge, noisy and contained large blocks of ice, the face of the monster! We may have lucked out again, just barely.

How sweet the little cabin in the trees will be!

October 12

Low 20° F
High 33° F
Light winds
Clouds and sun

Finally, a clam feed! Marine water level and swells dropped dramatically through the night and though it was not a great clam take, there was more than we could eat at one sitting. Very good. First we've had this fall. The poor showing of clams after such a storm was due to slush in the water, which doesn't allow the wave action full power. There were also a lot of starfish, but few crabs.

Caribou excitement has moved away again. Yesterday there were lots around little Noatak mouth and the East Noatak Delta. Also a report of a non-moving group at Nauyauraq, the big bend of the Noatak, above the Hatchery.

Everyone that was stranded yesterday due to storm and high water got home today.

We also ate a couple of Willow Ptarmigan, the gift of a neighbor's boy. Ptarmigan are moving into the area.

No catch in the Snowy Owl traps. One was taken at Sealing Point this week.

We have enough snow to break the winter house trail, but the high water overflow and snow make getting out of Sisualik difficult. Guess it won't be long if the weather ever settles down. More wind and snow forecast for next few days.

Lots of Glaucous Gulls around yet. Many are adult birds that will begin to disappear from the scene this month.

October 13

Low 18° F
High 30° F
NE to SE wind 25
Cloudy, snow

A day of snow and drifting snow. This will make for a good trail to our winter house and for the multiple trips necessary to make the move. We may yet make it before last year's eighteenth (which was an early date).

There was a lot of slush on the ocean. This morning before visibility closed down. Some of it was large white, snowy pans that could support seals. There probably were seals, but snow in the air has limited visibility to quarter of a mile.

Some sealing continues. Only one boat active in Sisualik. They got two young Uguruq yesterday.

No recent caribou news. The only harvest by people in this area (Sealing Point to Noatak mouth) for far has been sixteen by three different hunters. Normally each adult hunter would take about this many given opportunity at this season.

Many Glaucous Gulls yet, many adults.

A fox came running up to camp this morning and almost got shot. On observing his actions for awhile it seemed likely he was young and inexperienced rather than rabid.

Our bird diversity getting pretty down again. Hope it picks up a bit when we get up to our tree patch. And we wonder about the long missing rabbits (i.e., Snowshoe, Varying Hare)

Since our flood waters the other day people are talking and evidence is growing that a major invasion of maybe both Red-back Voles and Tundra Voles and possibly Shrews is on. Our big pile of whitefish is going to be a problem.

October 14

Low 18° F
High 31° F
NE to E wind 20
Snow, freezing rain

Visibility very poor all day with snow-rain in the air. Several people with appointments been waiting all day again, yesterday too. No plane.

Journal

A neighbor ran into three caribou on his way home last night and caught them all. No other tracks.

Woke up at 3:00 a.m. with tent full of smoke! Took twenty minutes to figure out the trouble. We have been loading the "air tight" stove at bedtime to help us through the night. Yesterday, when fairly stiff wind stayed in the east quadrant, I erected our three plywood sheet windbreak and we enjoyed the lee side at the door of the tent. Wind and windbreak were still in place when we went to bed. Waking at 3 a.m. with tent full of smoke, I couldn't figure out what had happened to our nice warm stove! And worse, I couldn't get it to stop puffing more smoke into the tent every few minutes. I had cleaned out the pipes just a couple of days ago so couldn't understand what had clogged them now. After sleep cleared out of my head (20 minutes) I had another thought: had wind direction changed a bit and Dome and windbreak together created a wave of air flow forcing downward on our stove? Quickly checking wind found it had gone more northerly and removed windbreak immediately. Whew! Carrie had wakened when I'd pounded on the stove pipe to "unclog" it but hadn't noticed the smoke and had gone back to sleep. My feeling was, "If its not one thing its another around here!"

It was a very somber day today. Fog, freezing drizzle, rain and snow. "Playing out" was not much fun. We are promised some better weather in the next few days. We may even get a chance to move to winter quarters. It's time! The ice on the trail didn't move on the floods, so as weather clears thing should be in shape.

A Slaty-backed Gull joined our camp flock for awhile today. Haven't seen one for awhile. It is of the same age group as the several we had through the summer. Probably going into its second winter. Back and wing tips dark, bill still black, the full length head white-freckled, some tail band.

No catch in the owl traps yet.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull is still here on his swallow box. His head is freckled now too.

No Snow Buntings this October.

October 15

Low 29° F
High 34° F
E wind to 30
Cloudy, becoming clear

A windy, warm clearing day. Lots of sunshine in p.m.

First trip to break trail to winter cabin. Very glad and thankful to report the bears, squirrels and woodpeckers have been kind. The cabin is just as we left it, ready to move into.

Some other interesting reports are a super cone year on our White Spruces. This means winter birds! We haven't had a good cone year for many years.

There are moose tracks by the cabin. There are mice and a tree squirrel. There was a bird not seen at all last year perched on a dead tree by the cabin, a Northern Hawk Owl. Redpolls are present.

The trail was good with 6-8 inches of sticky fresh snow. You just touch the tops of the tussocks, which is good.

There was one west to east fresh bull caribou track.

Air Taxi finally got in to pick up locals that wanted out. It has been an unusual three day wait for some.

The microtine density on Sisualik higher ground since the flood is quite remarkable. We stand to lose a good deal of our great whitefish catch if we can't figure a way to protect them.

October 16

Low 26° F
High 30° F
E to SE wind 25
Clear, high clouds

A second trip up to the house with a few things.

A moose checked out our yesterday's tracks and disturbance in the snow, following the trail to within a few hundred feet of the house.

Lots of fox tracks at the edge of tablelands. Only a few farther back - the snow is deeper farther inland.

Another three caribou turned up between Anigaaq and Sisualik and a few more west of Anigaaq. These appear to be scattered bands. We hear that there is a good sized bunch just behind these coastal mountains at the bend of Noatak River, above the Hatchery and below the village. These may be strays from that group.

Some net fishing continues at Anigaaq.

Journal

A couple of snow machines made a rather long trip inland, but not to the other side of the mountains. They saw only four caribou.

The slush on yesterday's trail well frozen this morning, making a fine dry trail at critical crossing points.

No catch in owl traps to date. Only one trap disturbed in all this time. Some kind of a record for this date. Snowy Owl production must have been real poor this year.

October 17

Low 26° F
High 31° F
SE wind 20, diminishing
Some clouds, sun

We moved to Sanningaruq! How wonderful to be in the forest again, and out of reach of the ocean. We'll miss Jonathan though. He was sitting on his swallow box when we left, crouched over his featherless feet and legs. Told him this was it and that we would look for him early next spring. He shook his now well freckled head and let loose with his gull "Tarzan" call. Not sure how to interpret that. We'll see what develops.

A moose with very large feet made new tracks around the camp since yesterday.

Report of another few caribou taken east of us today (this side of Noatak River).

The most strange thing on the return to winter quarters, besides the number of mouse tracks and abundant White Spruce cones, is the amount of leaves remaining on the various willow species. It is very notably unusual and is presumably caused by the early and continuing freeze of mid September. What affect this will have on Moose and Ptarmigan nutritionally speaking, I couldn't say, but next year's leaf and aments buds are an important part of both creatures' diet.

It is good to be home and in the house, where your back is as warm as your front, consistently, very unlike tent living at this season.

October 18

Low 20° F
High 34° F
Light winds
Cloudy with clear holes

A calm warm day. Made two trips to Sisualik. Was surprised to find a large group of caribou had spent some time about halfway on our trail after we came up yesterday afternoon. They were long gone though, and may be the group our

neighbor's got some from late evening yesterday. I did finally see three in the distance on the second trip down.

A later report indicates some Sisualik hunters got their daily limits today.

Lots of slush, thick, in Sisualik today.

The pole traps finally produced one Snowy Owl. We will have soup tomorrow. I sprung all the traps since I may not go down that way for a few days.

With our live-in Hawk Owl, other birds around the house site are scarce and cautious. We've heard one Gray Jay but have yet to see him.

There are lots voles over the country. New and wider areas come to our attention this week. Not clear whether both Red-backed and Tundra Voles are involved, but at this point it looks like it. The grasses (Gramminae) had a great growth year. There may be a relationship to microtine density.

A rumor about yesterday that a bear is still making tracks on the Noatak Flats area.

October 19

Low 4° F
High 31° F
Light winds
Clouds around

A fine mild day with a few brief periods of sunshine.

There were ten caribou on a ridge top across the creek this morning, when I climbed the hill to look around the country. Using snowshoes and then crawling as far as I could, they came to be in long rifle range. I didn't shoot well, blaming both the weak sounding ammo and my sight setting. But luck held small animals in the group. Two females and two young males were the catch. One of each sex had a good show of fat. The other two were poorer quality.

Two large bulls passed the group during my stalk. It is no longer worth the gamble that you might be lucky enough to get a herd bull that isn't strong, so no more bull shooting till late January.

Carrie reported lots of birds on the cones in the trees around the cabin today. Redpolls and White-winged Crossbills and the Northern Hawk Owl overseeing the whole lot. She's about to do him in to defend the cone eaters, but I'm suggesting that he is more interested in the super-abundant voles in the cabin clearing. He'd better watch his step; Carrie likes small birds, but not mice.

Journal

There seems to have been a first ice crossing from north Kobuk Lake folks to Kotzebue. This means there will soon be much surface travel between that section and town and from Sisualik to town. Usually the same early fall crossing is made on the same trail. People in Kotzebue will be anxious to put in sheefish nets up that way and to go caribou-moose hunting in all directions.

There were also boats into the ocean side of Sisualik from town today - seal hunters - and today at 10 p.m. one aluminum boat was unaccounted for between Sisualik and Kotzebue.

A few whitefish nets continue to be tended at Anigaaq.

October 20

Low -12° F
High 16° F
Light winds
Clear

A very bright day. Very cold in early morning and after the sun goes down.

Our first below zero temperature for the winter. Don't suppose it will be the last. So nice to be in the house and in the trees for the event.

More travelers today over the ice to Kotzebue from north side to Kobuk Lake. Have not yet heard of a crossing from Sisualik, though it is probably possible now.

A boat made it back to Kotzebue from Sisualik, and the missing hunters from yesterday made it in during the night.

A few scattered reports of caribou today.

It is great to watch the White-winged Crossbills work the great golden spruce cone crop. This has the making of a great bird winter.

October 21

Low -11° F
High 12° F
NE wind to 15
Cloudy (clear early a.m.)

A first snow machine trip to Kotzebue and back by Sisualik neighbors. Earliest known date for this event is/was October 12 some years ago. We're only a little more than a week late this year. Last year we'd gotten into November before it had frozen enough. With September cold weather we thought a record might be made

this year, but the warmth, wind and snow of early October undid nearly all the ice making of September, on saltwater anyway.

We made a trip to Sisualik today for more things we think we need here. The high vole population is causing us to haul mouse proof containers for all edibles (meat, fish etc.). This is another of those situations that you can't really know about until you live through it. People in the past have no doubt been caused to starve (to death eventually) by a hoard of microtines early in the winter that spoil the huge piles of harvested food that could not be protected from the little creatures. Meat and fish are not usually considered normal fares for voles, but during population explosions just about anything people eat, voles and shrews do too.

Several Sisualik men set Shee nets in Kobuk Lake today. Another activity not possible before mechanization.

Jonathan was not in Sisualik today.

October 22

Low -8° F
High 16° F
N wind to 15
Cloudy until late p.m.

A first day of moose hunt, north to Miluuraq lookout knoll, and a two to three hour walk to see what tracks are in the backcountry. There were some surprises: bear tracks and a multitude of moose tracks of various sizes, but mostly in an easterly direction. A single old small wolf track and no rabbit tracks again.

It was also a surprise to see a group of thirty caribou already alerted to my presence by my sno-go engine noise, only a half mile from the house. This should have been a snowshoe caribou hunt day. I know better than to leave camp on a hunting day this time of year without climbing up to look around. I have lost a good opportunity like this before. There were some good looking animals in that bunch, and they were too spooky to stand for a shot or two from an active machine.

Only saw one moose in the flesh and that was a large bull, not far beyond the caribou. Not interested in one bull moose at this point in time.

The late bear tracks were also probably a week old, a sow and cub still feeding on vole nests and caches under the 6 to 8" snow cover. They were about half way between here and the Hatchery, on the last drainage before Mamailiaq Creek. They may have a den in the area. May follow the tracks a bit more, given the spare time. Have only seen bear tracks one other time after our late October move up here to our winter house. Took home one small pile of scat to thaw and look through.

Journal

White Spruce cone crop is great throughout the area.

A few Rock Ptarmigan track noted.

A remarkable lot of willow new growth feed available for both moose and rabbits, if they ever come back.

Bone chips and sinew with caribou hair and a few pea vine leaves in bear feces. Looks like she chewed up caribou leg bones of last year.

October 23

Low -12° F
High 18° F
NE wind 15
Cloudy – snow

A second partial day of moose hunting. Saw two potential candidates, but a couple of snow machines coming on the scene at the wrong time canceled out the attempt.

We had a very fluffy snowfall today without wind. Because of so many leaves retained on willows they were very white with the clinging snow and moose were so very black. Wherever they moved or fed through the willows was also well marked.

With the ice trail opening to Kotzebue and few caribou around, the number of snow machines out running around the country is liable to be excessive for the next couple of weeks.

A rather strange occurrence: we have not seen a Gray Jay around camp since we arrived. There has always been several, usually the first day of moving in. The presence of the Hawk Owl might have something to do with it.

A number of neighbors made the town trip today.

October 24

Low -12° F
High 14° F
Light N winds
Cloudy

First visitors today. Hunters from a camp north of here.

A small group of Noatak snow machines apparently made it to Kotzebue yesterday, traveling through between here and our east neighbors.

Two moose known to be taken from this area yesterday.

The very high density of microtines around the country became very noticeable after the 1" of new light fluffy snow yesterday. They are all over! There is a report of "white ones" at a camp in Sisualik. Hope to check further on that report to see if there might be some collared Lemmings about or the strain of white masked Tundra Voles.

Still no Camp Robber, the strangest thing. The Hawk Owl sits around on his "look out" tree, usually surrounded by Redpolls and/or Crossbills.

Another interesting observation: microtines in the trees are feeding on grounded spruce cone nuts. Have not heard of a possible relationship between heavy cone years and presumably Red-backed Voles.

The few Red Squirrels that are about are going to have easy going for food this winter. It may be the spark to bring their population up again. What if we see nesting activity in January, amongst White-winged Crossbills, since it is said they have been known to nest in every month of the year.

October 25

Low 10° F
High 24° F
N to NE wind 15
Cloudy, snow 2"

A Sunday of snow and abundant quiet solitude, with the nearest neighbor four snowy miles away.

I suppose it was inevitable, but sorry to have it happen. For many years I've enjoyed the quiet wilderness like aspect of our cabin site area in October and early November after first snows, but before snow cover is sufficient to allow general public access. This interval of time, what's left over from moving and renovating the house, is normally used for caribou and moose hunt. This year, the day after moving, I glassed the country round about saw a group of twelve caribou. Spent some time stalking and shooting. Just as I had finished shooting four that looked the best, a couple of snow machines pulled up and raced off after the remnants of the group. They got them all. A few days later, after a morning of poor visibility with new snow, it cleared and I went up to a favorite feeding spot for moose and saw two females immediately. I donned snow shoes and started off, but before I'd gone far, that's right, two snow machines came along and split - one below the hillside willow patch and one above. The moose spooked.

Journal

Can't really say yet whether this is only a happening peculiar to this year or a trend. I have a sad feeling that it is a continuation of a trend that began with mechanization and is spreading out through all areas, some more slowly than others. The quick one day coverage of all good habitat until the sled is filled is now pretty much possible at any season by anyone with the equipment and the will to do it. In addition, secrets of success in techniques, locations, methods and means tend over time to become universal knowledge amongst those that are the hunters. Hunters then become more and more efficient and circumstantial escape of game occurs less frequently. Ultimately, then, the health of game herds depends on the user group being willing to limit the individual to his/her "share."

October 26

Low 10° F
High 28° F
Variable light wind
Cloudy, light snow, fog

Another day of moose hunt without much success. Did cross two fresh tracks and followed them. Couldn't tell by tracks if they were two adults females or a cow with a big calf. Followed them for several miles, then cut across a point and there they were. A big cow with a big calf. Could not locate any other animals or tracks.

Did see two good flocks of Willow Ptarmigan.

No recent sign of caribou.

The 2" of snow overnight made for good tracking.

A real lot of surface tracks of microtines. We are really into a region-wide microtine high.

Saw two Boreal Chickadees today.

Our hope for moose is a large female without calf. Don't know if there are many of that kind this year. Successful moose hunts in this general area have been numerous this month.

Ice on the creek crossing has melted with mild temperatures and new snow. I can still walk across, but it wouldn't support the snow-go.

October 27

Low -4° F
High 24° F
N wind to 20
Clear

A fine clear windy day. Ideal for hunting with the untouched new snow surface of yesterday. I did hunt moose again today, without success, though a young male did come into the rifle scope. Saw the animal from considerable distance and only for a moment. Not being able to decide the sex of the animal at such a great distance I had to walk up to make sure it was not a lone female. It was not.

A current mystery is "where are all the moose?" There are lots of old tracks but only a couple of new tracks in the fresh snow.

Another mystery developed today. A small light blue, white trimmed plane flew into the wind toward Mt. Noak and got very, very low. It had oversize wheels but not skis. The slope it appeared to be trying to land on is the ridge slope that leads up to the large rock out crop called Naparauq. An hour or so later it came back and made another single pass. Do not know if it was ever able to land. Do not know what might be of interest that one would land with wheels on such uneven ground with so much snow.

Lots of cones and birds in the next major spruce patch to the NW of us.

A small group of caribou were seen NW of us today. Otter tracks in the creek.

October 28

Low 6° F
High 20° F
Light winds
Broken clouds

A trip to Sisualik today to clean up the tent and close it for the winter. The ocean had some small swells making ocean noises yet. The ice for traveling and open water line is its classic form for late October and early November. It runs from the very tip of Sisualik toward the Radar site on the Kotzebue side, mostly through the outer bar shallows where ocean depth meets delta shoals.

Saw one adult Glaucous Gull, one gull of the year and one Snowy Owl.

There were two caribou tracks moving from E to W on the Sisualik Trail. Those and a couple of fox tracks were the only disturbance in the fresh snow.

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Neighbors had left us three huge, fat sheefish on our cache. They sure look good and disprove a usual rule that large fat sheefish are usually difficult to come by in October.

Our spruce cone and microtine density are so great it takes a while to comprehend. They both kind of boggle the mind. There was a group of nearly a hundred small birds (Redpolls, White-winged Crossbills) mobbing the Northern Hawk Owl this afternoon. Must alert the Christmas Bird Count group early for this finally is the year we have been waiting for. How accurately can you separate numbers of crossbills from redpolls when they are milling about a Hawk Owl?

October 29

Low 2° F
High 16° F
Light variable winds
Broken clouds

A good day with some periods of sun through the clouds.

Another moose hunting day. Lots of tracks. Some moose but no good chance to shoot at the right animal.

There is a fair number of Gray Jays scattered around the country, all the more mystery then as to why they aren't around camp as usual eating scraps.

A heavy landing of Arctic Cod NW of Sealing Point. Maybe of a greater magnitude than for many years. These delicious little saltwater fish get very close to the beach in late October and November; when wind waves are at a right angle they get pushed right up on the gravel and freeze immediately. They are good frozen or fried. They have a large oily liver, two white egg skeins, and a cod like taste. They are characteristically the last fish available from the ocean for the season. Any wave action from late October through November can produce a good haul. In some years, in some areas there are none. They are a favorite food of many marine mammals and seabirds.

A single wolf track in the new snow a half mile north of camp, traveling west to east.

October 30

Low -8° F
High 8° F
N wind to 15
Clear – ice crystals

A need to haul ice and wood today. Some pretty cool temperatures around the state and here.

A single Caribou in sight today from our "lookout knoll." It is probably a fawn.

Not much traffic up this way with caribou scarce. Shee net setting and tending a big attraction right now.

Some trails are getting staked, early this year.

A few more Willow Ptarmigan tracking up the snow, though the real snow track makers right now are the voles. There is such a very great number!

The pair of ravens and Hawk Owl continue their daily tag playing. Can't read what the reason is behind it all, but suppose they know what they're doing. It looks like a dangerous tag of talon and beak.

There appears to be more moose in the area than last year, but most in a maybe mobile group that is here today, gone tomorrow. Made up of young age adults. There are scattered cows with calves and older cows without calves, usually paired with another female. Bulls so far observed seem to be young adults, not the several old "moss backs" we had last year.

October 31

Low -20° F
High 6° F
N wind to 15
Clear

The last day, again. Daylight has dwindled to 8 hours, the sun coming up until 9 a.m. and setting at near 5 p.m. In one month we will have a lot less than that.

A lot of redpolls and crossbills today. They are very active as the sun warms the cones and causes them to open wider. Redpolls seem to glean along in the path of the crossbills to retrieve what the Crossbills drop. Much like the relationship of Tundra Swans to Wigeon.

At Sealing Point some very large Spotted Seals are being seen and a few taken. A multitude of Arctic Cod present down that way. These fish are at this season a very

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rich and rather easily caught food for these seals and they (the seals) grow exceedingly fat at this season. The fish hug the shore, which brings these ordinarily shy adult Larga Seals in right on the shore line, within rifle range. Just a "pick up" kayak is required. There is no chasing by powered craft like earlier in the season.

A lot of weekend traveler-hunters out of Kotzebue. A good many moose may be taken if caribou are as scarce locally as they seem to us to be.

Twenty below this evening. The coldest recorded this far this fall. Winter is not far off!

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November 1

Low -12° F
High -4° F
Variable winds to 10
Clear

A cold night, coldest yet and a bright cool day. A quiet Sunday after Halloween, with no travelers over this way.

Finally crossed the creek with the sno-go and broke in the regular winter trails north and south.

The lone wolf tracks met up with the stray fawn track. It doesn't look good for that fawn but they are both yearlings and anything can happen.

Lots of birds, lots of cones and lots of voles.

A report last night that someone went straight to town from Sisualik. This means the trail is getting good and the path of the normal winter staked trail can be followed. For the past two weeks there has been an extended detour in an arc towards the Noatak River mouth. We may make our first trip to town tomorrow.

November 2

Low -14° F
High 10° F
Light winds
Clear

Bright and cool. For the past couple of days an odd but not rare wind system has been in effect. It seems to be related to topography. To the south of us, Kotzebue has had winds up to 30-40 knots, to the north, the Hatchery area has had the same. These are easterly winds and we have light winds through the period, but never over 10 knots. At least a partial reason for this seems to be that Kotzebue lies at the mouth of Kobuk Valley and the Hatchery area lies in the mouth of the also E to W running valley of the Aggie River. The mountain range walls on the two locations seem to funnel the winds down these areas and leaves us in a relatively dead air space. It's nice sometimes. Sealing Point, at the tip end of the coast range out on the Cape, has had drifting snow for a couple of days too.

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Was surprised to see cow and calf moose tracks south of us on the willowed tableland areas today.

There was also quite a pile of snow machine tracks from weekender activities. These are town folks that spend a day out in the hills making tracks. Was surprised at the apparent number of rigs.

No recent caribou tracks in our area again.

Didn't make the first town trip today, maybe tomorrow.

November 3

Low -6° F
High 12° F
SE wind to 20
Clear

Town trip today! Wasn't so bad. Fine trail and a nearly a straight one. We had to go the long way though through Sisualik summer camp and on into town on regular staked trail route. (No stakes yet.)

Sisualik ocean water nice and calm, quiet and un-iced. Glaucous Gulls flying around and some Redpolls on the beach grasses. Snowbanks beginning to build.

Overflow was beginning to come up just as we got to town and was spreading rather rapidly along Front Street through the day; we kind of hurried up to get back across. Didn't get some of the chores and visits done that we wanted to.

Someone ran across a small group (6) of caribou NW of Sisualik today.

There were moose tracks on our creek this morning at the second crossing heading down stream. First new tracks since we moved up this way.

We used the normal winter creek crossing trails today on our town trip for the first time.

Lots of birds in Kotzebue watching the tomcod holes. The usual ravens and a good number of Glaucous Gulls.

November 4

Low -6° F
High 22° F
NE wind to 15
Clear, few clouds

Rather mild bright weather. Spent most of the day cleaning out generator fuel system. November, December and January will mean heavy use of the generator again.

Will try moose hunt again soon. Hopefully on a warm windy day.

Not much new around here today.

The Redpolls, White-winged Crossbills and Hawk Owl were around. Neither Chickadee nor Gray Jay have made an appearance. That is very strange.

The warm weather causes cones to open and the Spruce nuts are all over the snow surface. Quite a tiny but rich food.

A rest up day from yesterday's town trip.

The moon is in first quarter phase already. Lots of moonlight till midnight.

November 5

Low -2° F
High 18° F
N-NE wind to 15
Clear

Another moose hunt day. Tracks and moose but no shot. Walked through the upper Mamailiaq watershed without seeing an animal, though there were many old tracks and a few new. Returned to snow machine at near sundown, started off for home and within 1/4 mile noticed a single moose in a clearing not far off the trail. In the binocs, couldn't see any antlers and it seemed a large animal so thought I could walk a little closer for a better look. Made it halfway to rifle range when three moose moved out where I had seen the one. Being closer I could see a single paddle-like little antler on the largest, with a very long rope like bell. The other two animals were smaller and showed no antlers, though one was very dark from the rear and the other showed the light under tail area of a typical female. Since they had been alerted I hurried back to the snow machine and found a way through the willows to get in front of them. They were not spooked by the snow machine and allowed a close approach at 100 yards. From there, since they were all on even ground I got a good size up. They appeared to be brother and sister, and the larger

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animal the paddle antlered bull. We have found that fully adult cows without calf are always much fatter and of course a lot more meat. I chose not to shoot, hoping for a larger animal some other day. As I turned away and headed home the animals began feeding. This was another instance where noise from walking through soft snow, though not much, spooked the animals whereas engine noise and sight of snow machine did not. Some moose do not associate the sound-sight of an engine with danger. During boating season this is also true.

Lots of small birds back through the timbered areas. No sign of rabbits.

The Kotzebue trail area overflowed a good deal last night, but the water level dropped early and the trail was usable today.

November 6

Low -10° F
High 16° F
Cloudy – light snow

A trip to Sisualik to haul some whitefish and other odd and ends.

There was young ice down there, moving in with the current and making the puppy-like squeals that young ice on the ocean is famous for.

The overflow that was just coming out the day we went to town did happen in many places of shoals and all edges where ice and land meet. Water level dropped quickly and all of the overflow not covered by snow is frozen now and is no problem except for its slipperiness.

Cut a small load of firewood from north of us this p.m. Several Sisualik camp people are cutting wood to warm their camps at this time. Very few tracks around the country. Mice, a few ptarmigan, a few fox and stray moose. No other fresh tracks.

Daylight hours are getting short again. Barely time to get the day's necessary chores done. And then there is December, not far off!

November 7

Low 16° F
High 20° F
E wind to 15
Cloudy – light snow

A rather warm day with snow in the air; not much accumulation.

Made a circuit through the mountains today but saw no moose. The only fresh track was one entering our house tree patch from the SW. That was at nearly dusk on the way home. May have a chance to find out what kind of moose that is tomorrow.

Took a side trip to check on the "farthest north" recorded *Heracleum lanatum* colony, which we discovered ten or so years ago.

It had a good year, many plants spread out some (100's). Lots of good looking seed on umbels and some stalks higher than my head. We have rumor of a colony on the upper Squirrel River that may be north of this location but is not confirmed. Prior to having knowledge of these colonies, the plants at Pilgrim Springs halfway between Kotzebue and Nome were considered the furthest north.

There are some huge flocks (hundreds) of redpolls in the higher altitude white spruce patches. Very little signs of Red Squirrels.

We had lots of Red Squirrels a few years ago as cone years became progressively worse. Wonder how long it will take for squirrels to build again.

November 8

Low 16° F
High 32° F
E wind to 52
Cloudy, snow, storm

First winter storm since our move to winter camp. Lots of fresh snow and E winds to 50 knots give us blizzard conditions but at mild temperatures. World looks different already this a.m., and forecast includes more snow before storm is over. Glad we are in our tree patch, though we will have to make new trails to get out.

Winds dropped off and sky cleared late p.m. Tussock areas nearly free of snow again and the snow has collected in creek drainage and low lying holes.

A small group (6) of caribou were on the hill across from camp today. Didn't know of them until they had departed.

Pretty mild weather today. Very close to thawing.

November 9

Low 10° F
High 28° F
E wind to 20
Broken clouds

A fine day with some newcomers to our spruce patch. A single Boreal Chickadee dropped by and ate a bit of fat. The first this year. We hope he will be back with his

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family. An antlerless and rather small moose met me at my morning lookout point. Couldn't make up my mind to shoot or not. Things didn't quite add up. Size of bell (very small), size of body (seemed not large). On a rear view though, back of legs were light as was the under tail portion that usually is quite light colored on females. Before I made up my mind, however, "it" took off and settled the question.

I continued up to the second lookout point (the north end of our tree patch) and there was a very large, dark bull moose with large very white antlers. The freezing drizzle we had last night had formed a thin layer of ice and snow on top of his great palms which he had no way to remove. He seemed to be alone with no cow in hiding, so left him to his willow munching. Checked him several hours later and he was in the same spot doing the same thing.

The same icing the bull antlers got may have caused the plane crash last night between Kiana and Selawik, with three deaths.

We need to go town again, tomorrow, if the overflow will permit.

November 10

Low 16° F
High 26° F
SE wind 20
Cloudy, snow showers

The "overflow" did permit and we made a round trip, though a long one, having to go through the summer camp by the lagoon beach and then to the Point in order to follow the staked trail. And by the way, it is a well staked trail, all nine miles of it.

The Ravens of Kotzebue are still at it. Making a living that is. Raven watching could become a high priority activity among coming generations. It is one passerine that is sure to adapt to the future, no matter what that future becomes!

The trail on the way home was very "hard dragging." Steel runners on a sled vary much in their slipperiness with temperature, snow crystal type and salinity of ice. Young salt water ice with fresh snow undrifted is bad, enough but young salt water ice (6") covered with drifting fresh snow on an old track is the very hardest dragging for a loaded sled with steel runners. That is what we had today, and it can cause rapid belt wear.

There were a good many fresh caribou tracks on our trail in the lower tablelands today. They must be not far away. The tracks were a surprise.

Lots of moonlight on the way home tonight.

November 11

Low 8° F
High 28° F
S to SW wind 10
Cloudy, light snow

A first visitor from the Hatchery today. It has been a long time and we had a good long talk.

Another couple of inches of snow fell after we got in last night. Had off and on showers all day. Able to see fresh tracks.

We have a lot of moose up the creek from here today, our visitor reported. It is a very warm, wet weather, great to make a stalk.

Got a load of ice today. Weather so warm that it is difficult to cut blocks from deep cracks. There are no deep cracks! Must chip small pieces and shovel into plastic bags.

Another winter storm-blizzard forecast for late tomorrow. Maybe a chance to moose hunt early.

Tracks of Least and Short-tailed Weasel getting more frequent in the fresh snow. Microtines are in for a trimming!

Overflow conditions not improving much in the warmth and our creek crossing not useable again for several days. Hatchery visitor had to take boots along to visit!

Several chickadees were around camp for awhile today. We may yet have a camp winter bird. We've never gone without one!

November 12

Low 8° F
High 21° F
E wind to 20
Cloudy

A blizzard warning out for tonight with some improvement tomorrow.

A great happening today - we have been overwhelmed with Boreal Chickadees! A flock of nearly ten (unsure of exact numbers) descended on us and pecked on everything in sight. We have never quite had this number or this much enthusiasm before. They were hunting through every crack on the outside building (looking for hibernating bugs, we think). One little wise guy found the open window we keep

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open for ventilation and came right in the house! The first time he nearly panicked but he soon found he could go out the way he came in so he did come in, again and again! Maybe enjoying the warm draft through the hole but continuing to check each crevice for bugs. He never left the window sill but got comfortable and at ease there. Don't know what this may lead to. They have sure made us smile today.

We have had some freezing drizzle this week and it may have temporarily sealed most of the cones. There are no longer any seeds dropping to the snow surface. After such an abundance of easy feed from spruce nuts, some small birds may have been hungry for several days. That's how they acted. This whole episode is new to us with species.

The smallest female moose came through our tree patch (our??) last night again, attracted the attention of the large bull that has been feeding in the same willow patch for a few days and they ran off together. She has kind of become the target for the hunter, as hope for a larger animal fades. Spent time looking for her today but couldn't locate them.

We have not seen the Hawk Owl all week. Perhaps he thought it was his tree patch too and didn't care to share it with us. We are wondering if a Gray Jay will show up now. Carrie doesn't like Gray Jays around when we have Chickadees. They are so bully-ish.

November 13

Low 15° F
High 19° F
E-SE wind to 35
Cloudy, snow

A very windy day with only a little drifting snow till late p.m., when fresh falling snow was picked up by the wind and made some intervals of mini-blizzards.

There were two fresh moose tracks by the house this morning. Spent the day trying to locate them but didn't. It looks like the tracks of the bull and cow I spent yesterday looking for without finding! Our moose is coming hard again this year.

The chickadee gang was around again today and into the house through the ventilator window.

We have had quite a long time of wind and warmth. It will be hard to get used to normal winter cold again.

Saw a few Willow Ptarmigan today and a number of ravens coasting on the wind.

The long, young wolf has made tracks again coming down the main creek headed for Jones' camp dog smells.

November 14

Low -8° F
High 20° F
Light winds
Clearing

It has finally cleared and of course cooled! Now all the sloppy overflow places and open holes under snow will freeze and surface travel over watery areas will be a little less nerve wracking.

Made a trip to Sisualik today and found some still wet looking places in lagoon under snow. Could not recommend travel across the lagoon to the stakes on our "straight to Kotzebue" town trail today. Tomorrow, after this clear cold night, it could be recommended. I will probably run over it tomorrow.

Lots of open ocean water down at Sisualik but no gulls, eiders or seals in sight.

One fair sized Willow Ptarmigan flock and several fresh fox tracks were near our trail today, but other than microtines, there were no other fresh tracks.

We still have a problem with ID on Microtines. Though what we have here at Sanningaruq seem to have foot tubercles they are different that what we have at Sisualik. We assume those here are *Clethrionomys rutilus* (Red-backed Voles). At Sisualik the larger gray bellied (but reddish backed) are *Microtus oeconomus* (Tundra Voles). We may be wrong, Northern Bog Lemming or other microtines might be involved, or even Brown Lemming.

November 15

Low 0° F
High 14° F
Light winds
Cloudy, fog

The weatherman told us last night and again this morning that we would have clear cold weather for the next three days. Baa-h, we believed him!

Lots of sno-go's in the country this day. With damp air, a low ceiling, and no wind you could hear every one within five miles. It seemed you could hear engine noise as they left Kotzebue!

Our creek crossing was finally used again today, even though one side causes a splash yet. It will be dry by tomorrow if it cools and clears (?) tonight.

Our ventilator chickadee was in again today and Carrie reported one already hit one window while flying, though not enough to stun it. What a life!

A poignant moose story today. All week a smallish female without calf has passed through this tree patch. I have tried on several days to get close enough to scrutinize her, to see if we should take her for our winter meat. I haven't been able to do that for several different reasons on several different days. Today she was here again and slipped behind me to climb the willowed hill west of us. About that time two sno-go's came down our hill trail to visit. They were hunting, but didn't notice the moose up hill of them. After an hour or so of visiting they left in another direction to look for something to hunt. I climbed back up on the hill to see what had become of the "teenaged moose." It was near dusk, but I did locate her feeding along the edge of a willowed draw a quarter of a mile away. At the same time I heard a sno-go engine on the hill above and beyond her, but coming down the hill just across the willow patch from her, on the hunter's trail back to town. I could see through binocs that his sled was empty and he was running without lights. I held my breath; he passed on down the trail for town without noticing the moose. Now the quandary, she obviously is making or has made this tree patch a part of her winter feeding circuit. When not disturbed by the bull, the young wolf, or me, she finds time to feed well. We know from experience that she is too small and young to be as fat as a larger, older animal. However, it is looking more and more like there is no calf-less older animal available to us this year in our normal range, and with all the weekend traffic about, this animal is already living on borrowed time. Told you this was a poignant story, what to do? I'm already getting used to having her around, alive!

November 16

Low -5° F
High 14° F
Light winds
Fog, cloudy, snow, sun

A town trip today and weatherwise, a little bit of everything. With the still moist freezing air, the trees, willows and power lines all wore a thick white fuzzy coat by late p.m. Moose that feed tonight will have enough moisture in their food mix without eating snow separately.

A very good straight trail to town today. Wish it would stay that way all winter. All overflow well frozen. The Sisualik staked trail has a fairly sharp corner in it, right at our turn off. Very convenient as it runs straight towards our place from Kotzebue about three quarters of the way to Sealing Point.

Very little snow disturbance since last wind except for snow machines.

Came home with two sleds today with drum of gas in one. Snow machine handled extra drag well even on the steep climb up, One sled has plastic runners, one steel.

Town travel time less than 1 ½ hours at moderately rapid clip.

Four Chickadees about today. One comes in ventilator window and announces their presence vocally. Strange how individual creatures develop individual quirks. Continual amazing proof that all members of a species don't act the same. A certain unpredictability seems to permeate through all living creatures.

November 17

Low -2° F
High 14° F
NE wind to 18
Clear, sunny

Well, a strange day today. Don't quite know how to write about some of it. It was a nice bright clear morning. The chickadees and two moose hunters showed up at the same time, at least an hour before sun up. They were out of Kotzebue (the hunters). We hadn't met before, but names were familiar and one is married to a local girl, a distant in-law relative. They said they were moose hunting and it was such a clear day and warm, that they wanted to go through here to the Noatak River (big bend or Hatchery). They declined to come in for coffee, anxious to be on their way hunting. Told them where the trail was and they started off while I worked around outside. After about ten minutes I heard a single shot. My first thought was, "This year's up creek bull chose the wrong morning to be in his local favorite feeding place." I had made an up creek wood hauling trail through the upper side of this favorite feeding place, not realizing I was determining his fate, this day. The convenience of the ready made trail quite naturally attracted the moose hunters and the old bull was just standing there, expecting the snow machine to drive by like I do, since we don't normally take bulls in October/November. Made me feel sad. Like losing an old friend. I don't know that he was the original "up creek bull" of other years, but he was certainly settling in for the winter. Now the young cow will be harassed only by the young wolf and me. Today's events emphasize the need for us to take maybe the only available cow, if we are to have winter meat in the absence of caribou. This is a quandary and this is the mechanics of the subsistence lifestyle in practice, with many more people with snow machines than moose and active "sport," recreational, and subsistence hunters in competition. In the absence of alternate prey, local moose populations can rather quickly and unexpectedly come into jeopardy.

The final word? Bull moose are so vulnerable in the months of October and November, especially since the advent of the snow machine. It is a remarkable

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quirk of the human mind that one can be seen as challenge enough to a recreational or trophy hunter to be considered a prize at this season.

After hauling the meat out, the hunters came back by the house, again refused coffee, but asked if we knew there had been a bull moose only a quarter of a mile from our house? I said yes, we knew. He has been around for a week or ten days, off and on. We asked where the nose was, since they had skull and antlers on the sled. They said, back at the gut pile. That's the last word that separates truthfully the categories of moose hunters. "Where is the nose?" We will pick it up tomorrow.

November 18

Low -20° F
High 2° F
Light winds
Clear

A cold spell setting in. Packed in the discarded moose nose today. The gut pile showed normal or a little better than normal internal fat reserves for a large bull at this date.

We aren't normally aware of the great void that the removal of an animal the size of a moose from the northern ecosystem creates. Maybe the awareness only comes to those who have lived on and off the land for long periods of time.

In relation to the great expanse of surface area across the north, there are few creatures to track up the new snow surfaces each time that surface becomes new after wind or snow fall. The hoofed animals and their predators are the greatest "track makers" because of their constant need for new feeding areas. One bull moose marks up a lot of snow in one week, even at this time of wound down rut season. The less dense the local population, the greater the void.

The four Boreal Chickadees were in today, one in the house. They do seem to have stabilized at four and two come promptly to feed at 10 a.m., which is fair dawn, an hour or so before sun rise. Hawk Owl is gone.

Barrow sun set today and won't rise till January 22. It will probably look good to them then!

November 19

Low -24° F
High -10° F
N to NE wind 15
Clear, cold

Another town trip. Trial is so good and direct we're catching up with town visits.

While we were in town, three caribou used our firm trail to trot a bit before turning off to the east. That is the second small group of caribou to pass from west to east this week. Don't know if its the bottom of the barrel or the beginning of a movement from some where.

Also came home to find a real cone drop from a near house tree. Indication that birds of some kind were busy. We haven't seen redpolls and crossbills since the freezing drizzle a week ago kind of cemented the cones closed. Hope this is a pick up trend as CBC is not far off. Some of our earlier hopes from bumper cone crop are diminished as we've heard the upper Kobuk has cone abundance this year too. Maybe at all points in between; then our abundant bird feed won't be so unique. We'll have to wait and see.

Cold traveling today. Winter clothing gets a test. Our middle door hinge inside the house frosted tonight, sure sign of temperature lower than -20° F.

This is the second day this month that our daily temperature has not risen above 0° F. The other was on the first.

November 20

Low -28° F
High -10° F
Light wind, dead still
Clear, cold

A day of that still, quiet cold that is so characteristic of the far north. Our coldest day so far this winter. Didn't do much today. Froze a small patch of face yesterday.

Chickadees and ravens the only birds today.

Today was kind of a lazy day after traveling yesterday and such cold weather. No travelers today.

Tried to find SW corner of Carrie's allotment today. I didn't. Will have to replace a tripod that was there once. They might survey sometime.

This first cold spell of winter had its usual affect on birds, small mammals and to some extent, larger mammals. They moved about very little, probably catching up on sleep, food, and conserving body heat.

Smoke, steam, vapor rising from overflow on the lower creek. This is water vapor that forms at low temperature when unfrozen fresh water is forced out over already frozen ice and snow. It can be seen as beautiful, as ice crystals form on willows and

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trees in the vicinity, but most viewers only think of the potential: dangerous wet feet, equipment, danger to dogs etc. It is a midwinter characteristic of mountain streams, cold weather, and lack of wind.

November 21

Low -26° F
High 2° F
N to NE wind 15
Cloudy

An interesting day today with some surprises. It warmed during the night and by day light was quite comfortable out. Needed both wood and ice today, so got at that right away. Went up the creek for wood and down the Sisualik trail for ice. There was what looked like a single bull moose track into the north. Since this was the first fresh moose track I have seen since the taking of our tree patch bull, I glassed the creek willows pretty close but could not see any thing. Got a load of wood then turned Terry loose to run when I went down to get ice. Got home with Terry and the ice and had lunch. At the end of lunch, four boys "taking a ride" dropped by, some of them family. After they left, took a ride up to the newest moose track, following them to the willow patch that I had glassed with binocs twice already today. On coming up on the widest portion of willows I saw the characteristic tan-white color of moose antler. There was a huge bull with huge antlers and what was that besides it? You got it, another moose with small antlers, a surprise since there had been only a single track into the creek and I had already checked up and down the creek for recently moving moose.

The big bull which had stood up now walked three or four steps and laid down again! Now I was in plain sight, at 150 yards, on a willow free hillside, with my snow machine engine still running. I walked around the machine several times and waved my black mitts to see their response. There was none. Either or both of these bulls could have been killed easily from this spot. It is difficult to see any challenge for a "sport hunting trophy" in this scenario. Butchering for a winter meat supply out of this scene would certainly be justified. This location was less than half a mile up creek from the location of last week's "trophy bull" kill. Don't know where all the bulls have come from, since there didn't seem to be any earlier.

Small birds - redpolls, chickadee and crossbills - much more active today as the temperature has risen.

Found a large cache of spruce twigs with cones at " house cleaning" Red Squirrel colony.

November 22

Low -24° F
High 0° F
N to NE wind 15
Clear, few clouds

A quiet Sunday with a visitor from Anchorage and a third moose from down the creek joining the two bulls up the creek. Not sure what kind. Will check it out tomorrow.

Thanksgiving bearing down on us again. Time certainly does fly at this season. The day is so short that chores are never quite done by daylight's end.

Both Short-tailed Weasel and Least Weasel are showing much more sign, which is expected with such high vole populations.

Temperatures slowly moderating again. A little new snow and some wind forecast for the week.

November 23

Low -2° F
High 4° F
N wind to 18
Cloudy

Met two large bull moose as I walked up to our "lookout" point today. Decided to look around a bit for the small female or another female. Didn't find either one.

A few Willow Ptarmigan, two Gray Jay, a flock of twenty Redpolls and the two bulls were all there was to be seen today. Didn't even see any sno-go's today.

The single otter whose tracks show every few days has spent some time in the spring area a mile or so up the creek.

Eyes are sore tonight. Too much looking into a cold wind.

November 24

Low 0° F
High 24° F
N wind to 15
Cloudy, heavy snow

Six inches of snow today and still coming. Without much wind, the potential for ground storm is pretty high. Traveling people for Thanksgiving will need to be careful.

Journal

Our four Boreal Chickadees really appreciate our outside fat and meat sawdust today. Every thing else is shrouded with fluffy white snow.

Made a check around our tree patch to see if there were any fresh moose tracks, as it is fine weather for a stalk and fine for skinning and butchering. No such luck.

Us, the four Boreal Chickadees, and the multitudes of voles seem the only creatures in the spruce patch.

Tomorrow our travel day for Thanksgiving. Hope the weather cooperates. If we get there we will plan to overnight Wednesday and Thursday, with a hopeful return to routine on Friday. All this snow is said to be the tail end of a typhoon that came up from Japan. Hope it is near enough spent for us to miss the wind and high marine waters. We don't really need any rain either. Temperature shot up quite rapidly this evening.

November 25

Low 20° F
High 28° F
NE wind to 15
Cloudy, snow

Town trip for Thanksgiving. Glad for the stakes. We went through Sisualik and traveled all the way into town with 100 yards visibility.

Very deep light fresh snow on top of old snow and old trail. (Hard to find "old trail" most of the way.) Maybe 8" of fluffy snow. It is almost like traveling in a tunnel and the furrow of each snow machine indeed does look like some creature's burrow.

Snow melting on dark surfaces. Someone warned us this morning that we should wear rain gear. He was right! My inside clothes were wet at various points, including the "seat."

November 26

Low -14° F
High 31° F
N wind to 10
Cloudy, light snow

A very good day for Thanksgiving with light winds.

Lots of guests at the Church Feast. What is thought to be dying tradition seems alive and well. NW Alaskan villages are beginning to be envied by the rest of the nation as the two dinner feast is becoming a cultural artifact.

Ravens and loose dogs did well too!

Temperature warmed to near thawing at midday then cleared and became cool very rapidly. The -14° F came just before midnight and then rapidly warmed through the early morning hours of the twenty-seventh.

The light steady snow over several days is getting a little tiresome. Wet traveling gear and visibility are the main complaints, until the wind picks up to 20 knots. Then drifting snow will cover and obscure everything.

Wonder how the chickadees made out today. No one to sweep the accumulating snow from their snacks.

November 27

Low -2° F
High 22° F
NE wind to 15
Cloudy, snow
Clearing late p.m.

Home again through the same staked tunnel, but the tunnel wiped out from tablelands on up to home by rolling snow.

Everything okay at home but house cold and no sight of chickadees. Two of them did show just before dark and were surprised to see snow swept from their goodies.

Terry (the white super dog) was lonesome but felt better after a good run.

Lots of soft fluffy "swan's down" snow around up here. A little wind will cause a mighty storm for awhile.

A little marine overflow in town and on our lower creek crossing. Both frozen enough to cross this afternoon.

November 28

Low -6° F
High 6° F
NW wind to 20
Nearly clear, fog a.m.

Rather heavy fog all morning in various places. Sun was bright, but distance and near surface fuzzy due to drifting snow after fog.

Nothing much new to see in the country.

Journal

Chickadees very active today. The house bird was in and out.

There were a couple of moose tracks made after Thanksgiving at Unnigun so we are still in business.

Also, there were two Red-backed Voles in drop bucket this morning. Populations are still high and probably growing yet. ID is still tentative.

Our house chickadee getting braver. It came in the ventilating window, hopped about on a top shelf across to the CB, over to the closed window where it poked into a crevice to withdraw a dried fly, then went back on the exact same route to the outside world. This is a first time indoor Boreal Chickadee for us.

November 29

Low 5° F
High 10° F
N wind to 15
Cloudy, fog, light snow

A quiet Sunday with the wind down from yesterday. Visibility poor and light snow continues.

A lot of the "fluffy" snow moved around in yesterday's 20+ NW winds. Tussocks and old trails showing again; trail entrances through willows or trees piled deep with trail alternating with drifted soft snow.

Chickadees busy today, inside and outside.

One Red Fox and a few Willow Ptarmigan the only signs of moving creatures on the new snow surface in a short tour around cabin trails.

Our close creek crossing frozen enough to hold up the snow machine today. The ice gave out a week ago under fresh snow and mild temperatures.

Another town trip planned for tomorrow for Carrie's birthday with her family.

November 30

Low -4° F
High 10° F
NW wind to 35

Carrie's Birthday! Seventy years young and we are storm bound. An unforecast 40 knot NW wind in Kotzebue this morning and some hints of overflow in nearby marine locations was enough to cause us to postpone a birthday dinner with family to a better day. Part of the price one sometimes pays for rural living.

The ventilator chickadee spent quite a lot of time in the house today. We have tried several goodies to get it relax and eat in the in and out draft area. It seems interested only in flies, blowflies, and their parts. We tried mashed walnuts, fresh caribou fat, and cookie crumbs and graham cracker crumbs. No discernable interest. Outside of the house they readily eat all of the above as well as meat, bone, fat, and sawdust from the meat sawing block.

Went to get a small load of wood in the p.m. Didn't see any fresh tracks. Got stuck in the creek climb out and spent considerable time "straining." Finally made it, wood and all.

A very short dull, dark day. A preview of the short days of the month to come, beginning tomorrow!

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

DECEMBER

December 1

Low -12° F
High 28° F
NE to E wind 55
Cloudy, snow, blizzard

Kotzebue town, where we had planned to be yesterday and again today, had blowing snow and 60 knot winds today at noon from the east. Yesterday morning they had 45 knot winds from the NW. That westerly wind brought last night's temperatures quickly down to a minus twenty-one. Today's east gales brought them back up to near thawing. Back to back low pressure systems up from the Aleutians are the cause.

A lot of Chickadee activity today both outside and in. Only three birds seem involved, and though it is difficult to say for sure, two seem now able to come in the house by the ventilator window.

Three ravens were the only other creatures observed.

Forecast is for winds to diminish tomorrow. There is a real lot of soft snow in the country to be redistributed.

Tomorrow the sun will rise a few minutes after noon. Yes! That strange situation is an artifact of political involvement in natural systems. Sun time and human time should not be different. The sun should always rise in the morning, never in the afternoon!

Quite a temperature range this 24 hours compared to some of the variations of only a few degrees in the last couples of weeks.

December 2

Low -8° F
High 32° F
E wind to 35 a.m.
SW wind to 35 p.m.
Cloudy – snow

Finally made it to town to celebrate Carrie's 70th birthday, belated. Talk about weather! We've had it. A record high for the date in the morning after or as E gales

dropped off, then a very rapid cooling as SW gales took over. We made our crossing in midday right at the fortunate time of switch. Very high marine waters came with the wind switch and extensive overflow developed an hour or two after we made the crossing.

Because of snow and blow build up, trail breaking into and out of timbered or willowed trail areas has been necessary and strenuous, sometimes by snowshoe.

Because of strong winds open country trails have been cleared of snow, even down to tussocks in some places. Snowbank building in draws and streambeds is well under way. Ultimately this will mean much easier overland traveling. Right now it is a "pain in the neck."

We hated to leave our chickadees during this weather spell as their food covers with each new inch of fresh snow.

Lots of dog teams on the trail this day. Most we've seen all year. Three large, hard driving teams.

Saw half of the sun for five minutes.

December 3

Low -6° F
High -26° F
W wind to 15
Clear

Made it home to a different world than it was yesterday, on the trail at least.

Lots of overflow in lagoons behind Sisualik, much of the area our trail crossed yesterday. Fortunately for us, Sisualik staked trail did not overflow, even on Kotzebue bar where it usually does. Even Front Street in town, where there was considerable water last night, was no trouble to cross at noon today. A "land travel" detour was necessary behind Sisualik and we did tip the sled twice in snowed in gullies on the inland trail. No harm done except to muscles and tempers.

A raven had taken over camp. Tracks on the doorstep and chopping block. This is rather unusual for only an overnight absence. Also there is no sign of the chickadee gang. Hope he didn't eat them. I don't suppose that Carrie would agree to having a "live in " Raven as a camp bird. It would be kind of neat wouldn't it? The largest of passerines? A versatile voice? Certainly no trouble to feed. Wouldn't a raven landing on one hand and eating a snack from the other look neat? Would your eyes be in danger? It seems quite possible somewhere down the line that the Common

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Raven may be the only common bird around. We should probably be learning a little more of its "personality."

One Red Fox and the Raven kept Terry, our lone super dog company. The fox at night, the raven through the day?

The moon is nearly half and we haven't really seen it yet. Tonight we really will! Lots of moonlight from half a moon when it is crystal clear and cold.

December 4

Low -28° F

High -6° F

N wind 20

Clear, a few clouds

Drifting a little in the open today. Made a trip for ice, grass, and Terry's exercise.

After a quick lunch decided to check around at a couple of moose places to see if there had been any walking around. Was surprised to see fresh tracks close to the camp between tree patches. The track looked like the small female that has been around all fall. Circled the tree patch and found no moose track going out, so I parked, got on my snowshoes and followed the track into the trees. After nearly an hour of tracking I got a glimpse of the moose in thick cover. It did look like it was the younger cow without calf. No chance to shoot. It headed from this tree patch on the hill straight for our house tree patch and the darkness of late afternoon began to sweep down. Went back down to the house and saw the tracks within 100 yards of the house. Decided not to follow them as they seemed headed for a good feeding place and I would have a better chance when daylight comes again. We'll see how that decision holds up tomorrow. We have decided to take this young animal if the opportunity occurs.

Four Boreal Chickadees back today and they are working in various places to get a diverse meal.

There were fresh tracks of one good flock of Willow Ptarmigan (30-40) on the trail today.

A Short-tailed Weasel was in camp this morning and a Least Weasel made fresh tracks not far away. Bad news for the mice.

Hawk Owl was back after a long absence and he actually struck a raven from underneath. They tumbled half way to the ground before recovering.

Saw one Gray Jay at the tree patch where the moose was.

There were fresh otter tracks near the house today. Apparently a single animal.

December 5

Low -7° F
High 2° F
NE wind to 20
Clear a.m.
Cloudy, snow p.m.

All day (5 hours) on the small moose track with snowshoes. Though it started from a bedded place quite close several times I never was able to see it due to timber and willow. Because of wind direction it became aware of me early on and though it didn't panic it stayed much alert. There are no other moose tracks close around.

Chickadees very active around camp today. The inside bird made full use of his special privileges.

There was one good flock of Willow Ptarmigan (35) on the creek today.

No town travelers in this direction today.

Moon is barely showing through the dense cloud cover but it seems more than half.

December 6

Low 10° F
High 20° F
NE wind to 20
Cloudy, snow

Another 3-4 inches of snow last night and a few snow showers through the day. It was a pleasantly warm day. We had an early visitor from the Hatchery breaking trail for a possible dog team visit from there tomorrow, oh boy!

Hawk Owl was here again today with his retinue of Redpolls. Didn't get a chance to check for White-winged Crossbills. There is reportedly a large number of Ravens up at the Hatchery due to the fish pile they have had this year.

Ran over our local trails today and found some very soft fluffy snow in willows, trees. Overflow was no longer a problem though the first creek crossing 6" deep was open 3 or 4 feet wide. No obstacle, but an inconvenience.

Another weekend with few travelers, due in part to instability of the weather. It was a very comfortable day over here with good visibility, but from the town side the drifting snow and possibility of more snow would be intimidating.

Journal

Hope the weather settles some soon. We have a number of things to do before Christmas and the eve of Pearl Harbor Day is already here.

There is some potential for a good Christmas Bird Count. Hope we can pull it off.

December 7

Low -10° F
High 20° F
NE wind to 15
Clear

A very nice weather day completely clearing in the late p.m. and dropping below 0° F quickly.

Lots of dogs in the backyard today. Two teams of Kate Persons from the Hatchery came by and we had lunch and talk while the dogs relaxed. A handler and a friend of Kate's made an interesting lunch time.

The trail pretty soft and weather pretty warm for dogs, just right for people.

The chickadees very active today, including the "insider."

A very bright moon tonight. It is only a few days till full.

It is also not many days till our daylight time will begin to increase instead of decrease. Daylight time is sure short!

Hope weather settles so we can do timely Christmas shopping trips and be there on time.

December 8

Low -16° F
High 8° F
Light winds
Cloudy, light snow

A town trip on the straight lagoon trail again, finally. The distance is short but bumpy. Saw the lights of the big city all the way in for the first time this late fall. (Visibility has been poor on all of our other town trips.) The trip home was more normal - no more lights after a mile or two of travel.

Had a good day of conversation in town. Old friends, new friends and lots of interesting issues. It was a good break in routine. We may even have a Christmas Bird Count again if things go well.

Not much surface sign of life except raven and people. Actually a good many of both of those creatures seem quite satisfied to share the earth with only their own kind. There are of course in both groups, many individuals that see the value in diversity of life, thank goodness!

It is good to be home.

December 9

Low -23° F
High 10° F
NE wind to 10
Clearing

Weather clearing and rapidly cooling as is typical of this season. Lots of moonlight, for it is near full. Nearly 24 hours of moon light.

Got a load of wood today. There is a lot of soft snow in the country. Got stuck once on the way up, with the sled empty! Couldn't go forward or back. It took awhile to get going again.

Only one recent moose track in the draws up that way. Probably the young female I had played hide and seek with several days ago.

Saw two flocks of Willow Ptarmigan again today. They are slowly increasing in the area.

Chickadees were in and around again today.

No travelers, either dog teams or machines, though dog teams from the Hatchery were through yesterday while we were in town. They somehow found our missing flashlight, for which we are grateful.

Both creek crossings well frozen.

There has been a good deal of coastal trail traffic these last few days as weather has settled some. Probably both local people and Kivalina folks for Christmas shopping.

December 10

Low -8° F
High -27° F
Light winds
Clear, cloudy late p.m.

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A cold morning and day, then warming as cloud cover moved over.

A very bright day considering the short period that the sun was above the horizon.

At least four chickadees very active today. Two now make it inside to peck on the fat but never at the same time.

A few fox and Willow Ptarmigan tracks on the trail to Sisualik.

The ocean ice on Sisualik beach front looks like it might stay this time, till next June. Of course it may move out again with offshore wind and high water. Time will tell. If it doesn't move, we'll have no chance for sea birds on our Christmas Bird Count (Eider and Guillemots).

One Search and Rescue person by today looking for the snow machine that was left behind last week when a fellow walked out. He was found by search plane in good shape but now can't find his snow machine.

Dog team trainers didn't come down today. Carrie has a beaver hat finished for one of them and would like to get word to them.

Lots of microtine sign yet. No fresh moose tracks for nearly a week.

December 11

Low -20° F

High -2° F

NE wind to 15

Clear and cloudy spells

Unusual temperature fluctuations today. They seemed tied to clouds in the sky. Up and down several times: coldest on clearing, warming under the clouds.

Dog trainers came by today, two teams three people.

Hauled ice today. Hope to have one clothes wash day before Christmas. It takes several days to get ice melted to water and warmed for washing.

Only a fox and a weasel to make tracks within our orbit today. Daylight hours pretty short - so is our daily orbit.

Four Boreal Chickadees about today. Not much time spent inside but some by one.

News of a tragic house fire in Noatak today; at least one death and several injuries.

Hatchery still has lots of spent Chum Salmon to give away for dog feed due to early freeze of the river that prevented hauling away by boat. Bears and ravens have already benefited somewhat from this "windfall," not to mention mice, weasels, and shrews.

December 12

Low -18° F
High -2° F
NE wind to 15
Cloudy, some clearing

Though full daylight hours seemed very short (due partly to cloud cover) we did see the sun. The sun full above the southern horizon.

Went up to the lower hills to make a better wood hauling trail but after snowshoeing around a bit didn't find any dry wood to direct the trail to. Decided to pack a few sticks into the sled and postpone again the trail making. Need to have a little extra wood on hand to see us through the Christmas Bird Count and Christmas Holidays.

There were four Gray Jays - very vocal - traveling through the place where I was cutting wood. Still don't know why they won't come into our camp. It is a real mystery to this point in time.

A single Hawk Owl was in the same area. Fox, weasel, microtine and Willow Ptarmigan the only species track, and except for the microtine even those others are few and far between.

We are kind of developing into a winter of trackless snow. That is bad enough now, but as one recollects how those kinds of winters were in the near past, and imagines the trials of such times in the far past, one shudders. Clean white unmarked snow is beautiful but sterile. It is the mark on it, the disturbance of it, that offers promise.

We are only a little more than a week away from the shortest daylight day. It will be great to see each day's daylight time getting longer!

December 13

Low -20° F
High -6° F
NE wind to 15
Clear

Another very quiet Sunday. A few snow machines traveling the area, though none dropped by.

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Checked out Napaakturat (the hillside spruce patch south of us) for birds, moose tracks, squirrels, etc. There were only moose tracks, no squirrel tracks, two Boreal Chickadees and two Gray Jays. The "untracked" snow surface of that tree patch reflects the general lack of winter creatures in our general area. Both weasel species and their microtine prey are in evidence, as was the waddling tracks of the tree eater (porcupine). Old "cone eater" (White-winged Crossbill) activity was noted, but no recent activity. Frequency of seen Willow Ptarmigan tracks continue to grow. There was no sign of open water on the ocean from the top of the mountain.

There doesn't seem much potential for our CBC. I may recommend that we hold off until early January in hopes of a mild open ocean water happening or locating more tree patch activity between here and Hatchery.

The number of porcupine killed white spruce trees within the past ten years at Napaakturat is still the single most impressive thing about that little haven of shelter on the edge of the "barren lands."

The surface of the snow is again collecting a small smattering of spruce cone seed. Perhaps a mild dry day would bring down more of the crop in reach of microtine ground dwellers.

Another town shopping trip is planned for tomorrow.

December 14

Low -30° F
High -7° F
NE wind to 10
Clouds, few snowflakes

An early practice run to town. (On Friday, Carrie has an appointment at 9:00 a.m.) We got underway soon after nine and into town at 10:30. Maybe we'll try for 7:30 Friday. For some things, a rural lifestyle can be a pain.

The lack of wind the past week has been great for traveling and trails. In some areas the last wind and fresh snow left some pretty rough trails.

Our town trail is becoming often used by Noatak travelers through the fish Hatchery. To what extent and for how long will remain to be seen. Last year that use was funneled through Jones' camp. This year, for now, through ours. This is an example of yearly variation in trail placing. The reasons can be very minor, sometimes simply the whim of the first traveler and a reluctance by any one coming behind to make another trail.

No change in the direction of town of the status of creatures marking up the snow surface with tracks. Snow machines are by far the greatest track makers. Foxes and Willow Ptarmigan way down in frequency, but they are the only other track makers in that direction.

Our low for the day was in the early a.m. and we expected a cold day. The quick warm up between here and Kotzebue this morning, with clouds, was a surprise, both to us and the weather bureau. It was pleasant.

December 15

Low -24° F
High -6° F
NE wind to 10
Clear

A load of ice today. Then a trip to Milurag and Nasiksaugvik to check for birds. There were no birds at Nasiksaugvik, only moose tracks and lots of *Heracleum lanatum*. There were numerous birds at Milurag. A couple of Spruce Hens, a flock of forty to fifty redpolls, and maybe a few White-winged Crossbills. That will be a good spot for someone to visit during the CBC.

The only set of new moose track was on the NW side of Nasiksaugvik.

A visitor today when I got home. He and his young son were enjoying an outing. The young fellow named our "indoor" chickadee, bird-bird. Seems to go along with our dog's name Girl-Girl.

There seems to be several active Red Squirrel colonies at Mulurag. Some "twig-cone" piles.

It was a real pretty day; cool, but bright.

Mice tracks still plentiful around the country and Short-tailed Weasel and Least continue to increase.

December 16

Low -30° F
High 5° F
E wind to 60
Blizzard

A genuine blizzard today. Forecast by the Weather Bureau, it happened, right on time. Wind speed may have gone over 60 knots in Kotzebue. Early in the day, with temperatures still much below zero, chill factor temperatures were near -70° F. We are just about at the top limit of our weather condition extremes.

And, wouldn't you know it, with all the extreme weather a Black-capped Chickadee stopped by for a visit. The first we've seen this year. He looked pretty bedraggled. He was quite shy and I wished our four Boreal Chickadees had been around. He would have probably enjoyed the company and might have taken up residency. They were around earlier and in the house again. Hope he comes around after the storm.

Today's weather is an example of a winter storm-blizzard that pretty much stops everything in its tracks. At the beginning it can be extremely cold, at the end usually warm, sometimes wet and warm. Many creatures probably just rest or sleep at such times, though moose and caribou, in spite of everything, continue their daily browsing.

This day might be called a "natural" day off.

December 17

Low 0° F
High 16° F
SE wind 40 a.m.
SW wind to 20 p.m.
Cloudy, snow

Blizzard conditions through the night began to drop off early a.m. and wind direction switch began just before sunset. Yes, our sun does still rise and set but we didn't see it today. This week it is less than two hours from rise to set.

As hoped, the Black-capped Chickadee has joined our little group of Boreal Chickadees. They don't appear to get along too well, but Black-capped doesn't have much choice if he desires company and meat sawdust and caribou fat.

We did not get much fresh snow with this blizzard but there was quite a lot of loose snow on tundra land about the country and the 70 knot winds yesterday dug most of it out clear to the ground. Many of our fall-winter packed snow trails are standing two to three feet in the air in bold relief. Some lakes and inlets have large sections of glare ice.

The state of Alaska is not doing so well with respect to its wolf management program. It is probably time to roll around some of the definitions and make some decisions as to what kind of game management we should have. Not only in Alaska, but the world! Some of us are disappointed and thinking of that disappointment has brought forth, personally, some new, to me, thoughts. We should not be confusing game management with farming. We should, instead, be concerned with maintaining natural systems and rhythms more, now that most

citizens of the state are no longer at the "survival" level of existence, at least with respect to resource use.

Along this same line of thinking and again in light of current events, there seems less and less justification for considering guided hunts for non-resident hunters a legitimate use of those resources. Misuse of the privilege is too pervasive.

December 18

Low -17° F
High 12° F
NE wind to 15
Clear, some clouds

A fairly nice if short day today with a good surprise. A friend from Kotzebue checked out a trail around the overflow through the Noatak mouth so that we can have our Christmas Bird Count tomorrow. I was hoping we could somehow deal with the overflow problem to have the count while it is fairly mild. We may make it tomorrow.

I tried the trail straight across today and found that this side overflow could be crossed near the outermost point of Egg Island. The only problem would then be Kotzebue bar, but that is reported to be pretty continuous overflow this time.

A later report indicates that there were travelers today through the Sisualik staked trail, both from Sisualik and Kivalina, so the overflow is passable somewhere.

Found today that the 60 to 70 knot winds of the other day left some of the largest sculpted snow mounds I've ever seen. There are some real monsters, but for the most part they are rounded fore and aft and provide somewhat of a roller coaster snow machine ride when hit from the right angle.

Lots of mouse tracks around on the fresh snow but that's about all. Our four Boreal Chickadee and lone Black-capped survived in good shape and were busy around the camp today. Hope there are birds in other places to count tomorrow.

December 19

Low -12° F
High 6° F
E wind to 30
Cloudy, snow

Well, no CBC today. The sky was clear warm and a bit windy at 8 a.m. this morning, but Kotzebue already had E winds to 30 with drifting snow. Cancel message came around 9:30. Later in the day winds got stronger with much fresh snow in the air. Definitely not a good day for either traveling or bird spotting. Not

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much credit to weather bureau again for their beautiful mild forecast. Maybe tomorrow.

Got a small load of wood down at Napakturat in the warm snowstorm and was startled by an exploding Spruce Grouse. After I had chopped and chainsawed several dry trees, I walked a few feet away and hit a standing tree with the axe. Fllluuurpp. Startling! How a nearly black bird of that size could go unnoticed in a nearly white green spruce I don't know. It only flew from one branch to another, giving credit to its nickname in the north, fool hen. However, might it just be friendly? After all, other winter creatures in its environment are pretty scarce and lonesomeness in certainly not limited to humans.

A nice flock of thirty plump white Willow Ptarmigan flew up in front of the snow machine on the way home.

Our four Boreal and one Black-capped Chickadee camp birds completed the day's bird sightings in the snowstorm.

Sun up time 1 hour 44 minutes today. Daylight nearly four hours though.

December 20

Low -30° F
High 6° F
Light winds
Clear

It is a tough time of the year north of the Arctic Circle. Yesterday it was an E wind, cold and poor visibility that canceled the CBC. This morning at 9:00 a.m. it was a W wind with drifting snow that brought on another cancel. That was in Kotzebue, where our crew must come from. There was no wind here this morning, with crystal clear air and skies, but the had dropped from above zero after midnight to -30° F by 9 a.m. We'll see to the CBC after Christmas.

Our problem now is to make two trips into town and back this week with the "unknown" trail condition we have now in that direction. Frozen overflow and giant sculptured snow drifts are the "unknown" obstacles.

A quiet clear, bright but cold day today here at Sanningaruq. Our "house chickadee," Bird-Bird came in through the window, pecked on his caribou fat, and flew to the top of the wood stove where he landed! A quick movement toward him made him fly quickly. The stove was only warm, not hot, but it was frightening experience for the humans if not the bird. How do you keep a friendly chickadee from cooking his feet while trying to warm them, or does he/she know?

The lone Black-cap is getting fat and saucy and quite vocal.

A town trip planned for tomorrow in spite of -60° F chill factor in town tonight. Wind is supposed to diminish. Hope it does. We need gas.

We had sourdock at the end of our meal tonight and my mind couldn't help but wander back to the day and the place where the large green leaves were picked last July. The warm sun, the sparkling little waves on the lake surface and the creature audience round about. Wonder where those ducklings and unfledged gulls are by now? Some of them!

December 21

Low -36° F
High -26° F
Light winds
Clear

Made the town trip. It was a long haul. Too cold, too rough and daylight too short. However, there was no water on the trail to bother with, visibility was unlimited and we actually saw the sun! Also there was no wind.

Saw a raven in town. A special Raven. There were of course many other ravens. The special Raven was doing a dance on the flat top part of power line pole. It may have been a Rain Dance but more likely it was a Sun Dance since that red orb was just laying on the horizon, not rising above it as we have come to expect it to do just about any other day of the year.

This is the day of the shortest sunlight. Tomorrow will have a bit less than 1 minute of gain, but gain nevertheless. The Raven lifted one foot and plunked it down and vocalized a loud exclamation point. Quiork!! (Only more liquid than that.) He lifted the foot and plunk, Quiork! This continued unabated the full time it took me to approach, pass and get on out of earshot. A special Raven? Yes! Just warming his feet you say? (They are featherless) Noooo, it's not that cold and besides, he was so deadly serious about timing his "Quiork" with his stamp.

It is remarkable how a simple town trip can be so short and pleasant one time and so terribly long and tough the next time. It is after all only sixteen miles.

December 22

Low -40° F
High -16° F
Light NE wind
Clear

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We are approaching our limits again. At least our thermometer limits and possibly we are on the edge of some of our special limits. After stagnant cold weather air to -40° F we had a midday breeze that brought our temperature up to a comfortable -16° F. Started the sno-go fairly easily and took Terry the superdog for a run while getting a load of ice. Fine weather to get ice. The cracks in the surface of lakes are numerous and they go deeply into the ice so that a couple of blows with the pick gives junks you can hardly lift. This in contrast to the times of mild weather with snow cover when even with a pick you have to use shovel and trash bag to pick up small chips for house water. Hard to locate cracks and those old ones that were wide close tight as ice expands with warmth and contract with cold. The principles of physics are never more dramatic than when they enter you everyday need realm (ice gathering, gas siphoning, sled dragging on various surfaces)

Chickadees very active after midday warm up. Only one or two were early active.

Voles are still busy making tracks in spite of the cold and subsurface tunnels. We now believe that Red-backed Voles are the species they have demonstrated a late summer, fall, and winter magnificent high density. May be blanket density across all habitat. Seems like that's the direction our speculation is moving with the outward hints we have.

The weather man promised continued cold weather with some warming by Christmas Day. He also says tomorrow will have two minutes more of sunlight than today did. Oh, that wonderful man! A great Christmas present!

December 23

Low -42° F

High -26° F

Clear, calm, cold

We've settled into a cold spell. Those that last longer than two or three days during this month or next can be tiresome. The two minute gain of sun today and the promised one minute gain for tomorrow are at least a psychological lift and they do add up to three minutes total which is the way the good system works.

Two chickadees were active today. The others including Black Cap didn't show. Don't know what they did this cold day. One was in and out of the house several times.

An otter has come up the creek lately.

Tomorrow a town trip for Christmas festivities with family. Two lonesome nights for Terry the super dog. He doesn't much like his job as camp watch dog when no one is home.

Don't look forward to trying to start the sno-go in the morning with temperatures at 35 to 40 below. Hope we get even a gentle breeze, which will bring it quickly up to a more reasonable -20° F. Weatherman has promised some warming for Christmas Day.

December 24

Low -40° F
High -26° F
Light winds
Clear, cold

Town. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

The trip across was slow due to rough trail. We were able to use the "straight in" trail.

It was cold but no special problems with adequate clothes.

There were a lot of Christmas Eve people at the church. The program began at 6:00 p.m. and for once was out by 12 midnight. A good time of sharing with four to five hundred people and their kids.

December 25

Low -38° F
High -21° F
Light winds
Clear, cold

A kind of slow start today due to all the activities last night.

Christmas dinner today at 4:00 p.m. That turned out to be quite an affair too. A Barrow Whaling person sent down a lot of maktak and whale meat after their great (unprecedented) fall catch. This was made known prior to the feast and probably added to the number of participants. It was a good feast with the usual white and shee fish "qauq" and several refills of individual soup bowls with reindeer-caribou soup and berries. Attendance was a little under 400, somewhat above full house capacity for the building. Everyone had a good time and more than filled their stomachs.

A high wind warning for Saturday and Sunday. Kind of spoiled the late evening for folks like us who had hoped to get home tomorrow. We will see. Strength of winds will not build too high till afternoon, they say!

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The town ravens as usual shared in the celebration. What a lot of trash bags, some a disappointment for the large amount of only paper but then some of the very glittery stuff may be just the ticket for the coming nesting season. What female raven could resist that kind of offering?

December 26

Low -22° F
High 2° F
SE wind to 48
Early clear, some cloud

A very dramatic warming of thermometer temperatures. A moderate E wind beginning soon after midnight brought temperatures up enough to feel the effects inside the house after the super cold calm.

The morning updated forecast got us on our way by 9:30 as "high" winds were to begin in the "afternoon." They were already between 20 and 30 knots, with ground drift in progress by the time we got underway. We had a surprisingly good trip home. With fifty to sixty below chill factor temperatures on your back things are fine until you stop or turn around. We didn't do much of either and enjoyed the actual thermometer temperature of a minus 8 or 10 all the way home. Because there was no "new" snow (though there was "drift") we were able to follow our old trail all the way home.

A large moose track made since we were gone, out in the wide open but near our place indicated some animal Christmas traveling has also occurred. A large flock of Willow Ptarmigan on our creek crossing and a new weasel track around the storage cabin reinforced that observation.

We enjoyed a good Christmas break with family and were glad to get back in our more familiar orbit. What "kind" of a moose do you think that newcomer is?

Bird-Bird the Boreal Chickadee was in the vent crack and pecking away at his frozen caribou fat almost before we got the fire going. After the house warmed some, he did check around some of the house to see if any flies were yet about.

Black Cap was working diligently outside, looking much more lively and pert than when he first showed up here. Caribou fat will do that to you!

December 27

Low 2° F
High 11° F
E wind to 55
Building clouds, snow

High winds continue and warming temperatures. No new snow till evening. Everything canceled for the day.

Neighbor at Jones' camp had a badly twisted limb and EMT had to make a trip across in very marginal weather and trail. Brave people.

Our camp flock of chickadees did some "tern" like flying today to get their business done in the high winds by the door.

We have to make another trip to town to renew Carrie's medicine supply. We should have done it last week, but facilities were closed down for Christmas and weekend.

Hope the current storm improves the trail conditions. It may make them worse if too little snow falls.

Well today was our next hope for CBC after last weekend cancel. Seems like all you have to do to get a 50 knot wind is schedule a CBC! Maybe it will blow in some more birds.

Need to get some wood too but seemed like too much of a chore for today. Maybe tomorrow and town Tuesday.

Our camp birds and mice seem to be the only creatures in our world this after Christmas weekend.

The great winds have given up a second December day with the low temperature above zero, a treat after last week. Also our sun up time back up to 2 hours already. It won't be long till that is three!

December 28

Low 12° F
High 19° F
SE wind to 30
Cloudy, light snow, fog

Winds finally dropped off late p.m. to 15 or so. Quite a long high wind period. "High wind warning" finally canceled this morning. It was still quite a dull day with freezing fog and poor visibility. No chance to see our sunlight gain to over 2 hours now. Moon is coming back too, though cloud cover has kept that from us as well.

Got a load of wood today and found a day old moose bed right on my old workings. No time to look him up to see what kind. It is a big animal.

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They did get our neighbor into the hospital today and another traveler got stuck in soft snow and overflow trying to cross our creek in between our regular crossing areas.

Travelers have also made the Sisualik trail crossing late today so we may have a chance to make it to town tomorrow. Medication and gas require that we try as soon as possible.

Another winter day with the "low" above 0° F. That is always great, north of the Arctic Circle.

December 29

Low 18° F
High 22° F
SE wind to 30
Snow, freezing drizzle

No town trip. Visibility very poor till late evening and trail conditions unknown. No travelers to or from town today. Last successful crossing late last evening.

Found two moose tracks from last night crossing our outgoing trail on the creek bank. Followed them on snowshoes this morning and found two large bulls without their antlers. These may be the two that went through here several weeks ago with antlers still in place. They have similar coloration and the same pouch like bells.

While following the tracks, before the location of the animals was known, the angle of wind direction brought my scent to where they were feeding on short willows and shrubs birch. I saw them soon after and was somewhat surprised that they hadn't taken flight. They were about 300 yards away and downwind. They were of course aware of me and kept watch between feeding periods. Their lack of response (flight) is an indication that we (our particular human scent) are not new to them. They represent a very lot of legal meat since we haven't taken our yearly moose yet. We're still holding out for a calfless cow. It was good to see moose around again as they have been scarce here this month. Snow in the flat open area where they were feeding was only up to their first leg joint. It is very much deeper in creeks and draws where it has collected during our several strong wind storms.

Camp chickadees busy today, in and outside the house as we periodically swept snow off of their meat sawdust feeding area.

An interesting report from a person wintering in Sisualik. He sees Snow Buntings everyday. Open water ocean lead quite far from beach line.

December 30

Low 8° F
High 28° F
SE wind to 20
Some clearing, clouds

We did make the town trip! The forecast sounded impossible and the wind was shaking the house again this early morning. Considerable more snow had fallen during the night. Between 10 and 11 the air cleared and though wind continued, the air was warm and drift confined to low surface. We couldn't get a town report on overflow but we decided to give it a try. No problems except some loose snow "climb ups" caused some belt slipping. There was no overflow and the trail a little less bumpy and softer than before the storms. It is still a slow trail, taking us a couple of hours.

Two areas of large groups of Willow Ptarmigan tracks on our way home that were not there on the way over. Hope they are increasing.

Lots of vole tracks around the cabin yet. Red-backs most likely.

Chickadees doing well with this warm weather.

Didn't check the two bull moose out today.

We gain a whole seven minutes of sunlight tomorrow and the moon is again growing rapidly.

CBC set for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

A report of overflow beginning to show on Kotzebue street front. So glad we got our gas and other needs!

December 31

Low 20° F
High 28° F
SW wind to 40 late p.m.
Cloudy, snow

Well the year '92 is going out with a blast. This late afternoon and evening, after relatively light winds and steady snow, the wind switched to the SW and picked up to 40 knots. Overflow, drifting snow and cooler temperatures are the results. What will happen to our bird count? Only three days to go.

Our house Boreal Chickadee got brave today and did a thorough search of the inside of the house. No doubt looking for flies. His passion is blowflies. We catch

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two or three everyday and leave them for him. He has no doubt decided we are holding out on him and decided to take a look for himself. As reported before, this individual Boreal Chickadee is quite unique. Each year we have a few "backyard" Chickadees. We put up several pieces of Caribou or Moose fat for them. We have had different individuals eat from the hand and come to call but never one to come into the house till this adventuresome creature.

So often we cross off the different species as acting like every other one of his/her clan when in fact they often show the same individuality that people might, given the same habitat circumstances.

Spent a rather sleepless night last night due to an infected tooth. Things are better today, demonstrating another of the negatives associated with rural living. Things are not always free and easy.

An interesting note just came over the radio. All the reporting stations at this time and hour in the state have temperatures above 0° F on this the 31st of December. Who was that complaining about the weather? What's a little wind, snow and water when temperatures are not in the more common -40° F to -50° F zone for this midwinter date. Also a gain of seven minutes of sun tomorrow.