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

Volume 9: 1998

Raindrops on blueberry leaves

by
William R. Uhl

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

Volume 1: 1990

Volume 2: 1991

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Volume 6: 1995

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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.
Volumes 1-10 have also been distributed in PDF format on CD-Rom.

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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 or 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.

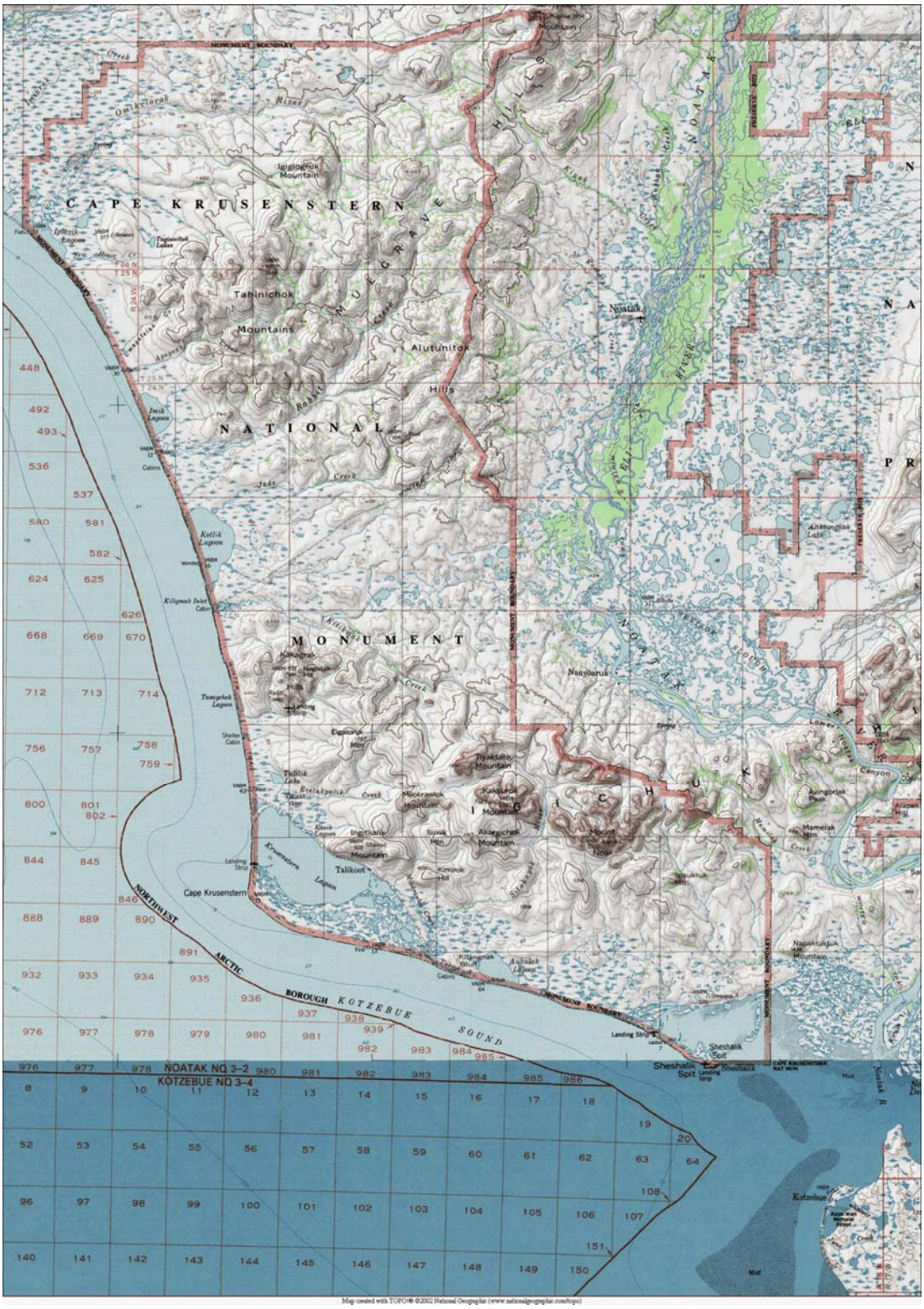
Various factors lead to the Uhls moving into Kotzebue for several months during the winter of 2003-2004. By June, 2004, they had returned to their coastal summer camp. Many people were pleased once again to hear Carrie back on the CB, greeting her friends and neighbors each morning and evening.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN NATIONAL MONUMENT

RESOURCE REPORTS

1998

WILLIAM R. UHL



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MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

JANUARY

Introduction

A rather remarkable lack of wind and snow in January 1998. There was only one day when winds reached a velocity of 30 knots. This was on the 14th and it came from NNE. There was one day of wind to 25 k, and two when it got up to 20 k. For a midwinter month in our coastal location this is indeed very little wind. There was snow on five days but very little accumulation, leaving us with very little total ground cover for the season so far. This generally seems beneficial to large game animals and the spread of the snow that we have is pretty uniform, so insulation for plants and small creatures that need it is not lacking.

We had two cold spells, one in the first week when temperatures got to a –41º F on the 3rd, and one in the last week when a –44º F on the 26th topped several days of intense cold. Both of these periods were relatively short, for which we were thankful. Extended periods of very cold weather in the short days of January can be a pain.

Mild spells didn't over-do it either. They were pleasant, reaching 26º F on the 11th, but with no above freezing temperatures and no rain, for which January is kind of infamous in some more blustery years. Rain in January in the Arctic is at least as tormenting as extended periods of ice fog and –40º F temps.

The most outstanding event of the month was word on the 7th that the person that had killed the bull moose in December and taken only the head and one hind leg had been identified. This was great news and came about by a good deal of luck and some good police work. An extended period of light or no snowfall made possible the recovery of cartridge cases and identification of sno-go track prints, which led to the recovery of the moose head. Only a small percentage of game law violations result in the waste of an animal of this size, and there certainly seems to needs to be some action against perpetrators. It is hoped that as word gets around that such actions can be costly, that it will act as a deterrent to other snowmachiners with rifles that unexpectedly run across large game animals that take some know-how and expertise to handle after they are killed. I am impressed by the training, knowledge and dedication shown by State of Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection folks involved in this case. At this writing the court hearing had not yet been held.

On this same date a clan family member, a niece, was buried on her home grounds at

Sisualik. We have had a number of January burials in Sisualik these last few years and they are always a bit of an adventure. Short days, cold weather, storms and the distance from town that loved ones must travel is the adventure. This one had cold weather, bright but short sun and a wonderfully majestic landscape: sun, moon, pink mountains and a sea of ice extending into eternity.

Carrie spent the two weeks after the burial unable to use one leg. She recovered with home rest without professional help but it was a kind of first for us, having not had serious health problems for our 50 years of marriage.

A few days after the burial some of the family went down to the Sealing Point house and were glad to find a large number of caribou wintering between there and Port Site. The meat was good and fat in some cows; this discovery of nearby overwintering caribou assured that many Kotzebue families enjoyed fresh meat early in the New Year.

Wildlife

The first month of the New Year was a good one for all wildlife. Some cold but not too much. Some mild spells but no thawing or rain. Some snow but not too much. Conditions were pretty ideal for larger animals. Moose, sheep and caribou had continued access to all of their normal food plants in the region. Few or no areas were restricted to use because of snow depth or ice crust. Annually, this is a critical time of little sunlight and little warmth generated by the sun to help herbivores through the winter. Later winter months with more and warmer sun helps to ready grazing areas for them, especially at higher elevations.

Though snow cover is light there is enough for the needs of smaller creatures, most of which depend on snow for some degree of insulation from deep cold. There is enough for ptarmigan and Spruce Grouse snow house use and enough for the small subnivian creatures to tunnel through. Voles, shrews and many insects in various forms depend on some insulating snow.

Predators, except for the human ones, have had good hunting conditions. The lack of snow has made it more difficult in rough terrain for snow machines to move swiftly. They are much less efficient this year than last when there was lots of snow by this date. This is probably good, as we can probably not tolerate the high take of wolverine that occurred last year.

Caribou

On the 9th, after the funeral and burial of a clan person, some of the family went

down to their house at Sealing Point and in a storm the next day were surprised to find caribou all around them. Up to this time it was not known where there might be some overwintering caribou. Only a few strays had been noted through the shortest days after the last wave of migrants had passed. This apparently sizeable group, ranging from Sealing Point to Port Site, was a great find and there will be fresh meat on many family tables in Kotzebue, Noatak and Kivalina very early in the New Year.

There were hunter parties out nearly everyday when weather was good enough through the rest of January. Initially, dry cows were found to be top quality meat, some with an inch or more of fat on their backs.

This good physical condition was a bit of a surprise, as this Sealing Pt. location is known to have been very heavily winter grazed for many years since the WACH has come back in such numbers. This last summer and warm wet fall caused pretty spectacular growth in lichens of the region and that may be the reason for such good graze condition. Also there was no hard snow or ice over the region and all tundra land was available for grazing.

Caribou hunting to the Sealing Point -Port Site area from Kotzebue and probably Noatak and Kivalina continued through the month.
On the 23rd we got two contradictory reports on caribou condition from the Sealing Pt. area. One reported dry cows with an inch or more of back fat. The other reported having to leave several dead animals in the field because of pus-filled sores.

On the 24th we were given most of two small female caribou from down that way by a friend that had gotten them a couple of days before. Both were very good quality meat with a show of back fat. It was good to have fresh meat, even though we still have meat from animals taken earlier.

Moose

Moose moved into and through our area in January, building up till the 16th when at least six grouped up just out side of the house clearing during the night and tramped down the sno-go trail pretty well. One came right up the trail to the front door and passed by. All this while we were sleeping. The tracks in the morning told the story. This has not happened with so many moose at one time through the house clearing since the house has been here.

On the 22nd one bull moose was laying in the sun near the back sno-go trail when Terry and I came along. When he stood up I noticed something odd about his head. I finally got my binocs out in time to see one large ear pointed straight down to the ground! It was indeed a very odd looking moose head with very large diameter shed antler disks with one ear straight up and one straight down. Two days later I

followed his tracks around a bit, but found no sign of blood or healing matter, so it is apparently an old healed wound.

This movement of moose through here in January is probably related to the light snow cover that we have. Moose can get around the country easily and seek out the best of food, which is probably still in the small creek drainages. These areas are usually covered by snowdrift by this time and are not available to moose. Now with the lack of snow, last season's tender new growth shoots are there for the wanderer. It is so far a very good winter for moose of this region. The only negative may be an abundance of wolves in some isolated places, though their numbers have been trimmed through this fall-winter in areas near villages.

Bear

We have no January bear stories this year.

Sheep

A mid month aircraft check on our two nearest sheep populations look pretty good. The animals are at a lower elevation looking abundant, healthy and no wolves were seen in their location by the survey aircraft.

Musk ox

I think a large musk ox has passed through our Sanningaruq tree patch this January. It may be the first in this century! The tracks were noted crossing our sno-go tail to the east of us, moving west into our spruce patch on the 31st. I will track it on snowshoes the first few days of February to learn more of the winter habits of this ancient creature. This is a much better subject than a groundhog! Just think, a musk ox in your backyard in January! We have quite an interesting backyard this winter.

Marine Mammals

During a mild spell, after a cold one in mid month (the 14th), there were one or more seal hunters out to the open lead at the mouth of Kotzebue Channel. Some Common Seals were taken and at least one Spotted Seal was given to an elder. We didn't get a good report on how many seals were taken. This is an early and first winter seal hunt. The taking of Spotted Seals at this date is rare but does happen more often when large areas of open water remain late in or near the Sound. Most of our Largha Spotted Seals retreat to the southern ice edge in the Bering Sea to spend the winter,

usually before Christmas.

The weather turned cold again after this mild spell and we did not hear of further activity out on the ice edge. The next mild spell, after some offshore wind, will again offer opportunity for those that want or need seals and are brave enough and knowledgeable enough to go out and get some. The daylight hours will be much longer in February.

Word came down the "grapevine" that Bowhead Whales were seen off Pt. Hope as early as the 23rd of January. It was reported that they were small bowheads and rumor has it that a single strike was made in early February, but without recovery. Only one boat crew was ready enough to make a try. Elders there have reported that there was a similar occurrence some 70-80 years ago. Other than that there seems no history of bowhead north of the Bering Straits in January or February. There are two current speculations. These whales were late moving south and may be ice trapped somewhere; or unusual ice conditions and/or water temperatures have triggered an early movement north by this species that normally winters at the southern ice edge of the Bering Sea.

Small Mammals

We have such a crowd of Short-tailed and Least Weasels and Marten around the camp (due lots of meat scraps and trapping effort nil) that there seems little chance for survival of either shrews or voles. There are no surface signs. Out in the country there are a few surface tracks of both.

Red Squirrels have had a good winter, apparently able to dodge the fat well-fed local predators, and all have stored good caches of rich seed-filled spruce cones.

Have not seen either Arctic Hare or Snowshoe Hare tracks yet this winter.

Porcupines seem uncommonly scarce locally, though I have seen a few.

Furbearers

We have had more marten tracks through the winter than ever before. We know of no local trapping effort. We also don't know how often the same marten makes new tracks through our spruce patch. Reports from some areas east of us indicate less marten sign than last year. Towards mid month we went for an extended period without tracks. They did come back again though.

Some wolf hunters north of us reported too little snow and lack of fresh fallen snow

for tracking as their reason for little success. That has kind of been the theme this winter as compared to last. Wolf and wolverine hunters have taken far fewer animals due to different ground snow cover.

There have been a few fox tracks in the country and we had a report of a fox into a neighbor's dog yard before Christmas that was killed by a chained dog.

There have also been some reports of little Land Otter sign compared to other recent years. It is likely that the nature of freeze up this fall left lots of under ice air space and rather unlimited access to open stream course pools where this species seeks food. Their need to travel into other drainages seeking food and access to undersurface areas is much diminished. Food and shelter for this species is available all over this year.

It is also true, to a lesser degree, for the Mink population.

Muskrat "push-ups" continue to indicate a growing muskrat population in the Krusenstern area.

Trapping effort throughout the region seems on a decline again after somewhat of a resurgence the past five years.

Birds

Sadly, we have experienced a downward trend in winter bird numbers in January. As feared earlier, White-winged Crossbills have pretty much knocked all the white spruce cones to the ground and have slowly moved out to better cone zones. Since Boreal Chickadees and Redpolls tend to clean up after crossbills, they too are pretty much gone. There have been a few strays or groups of two or three crossbills around through the month, as well as occasional pairs or triples of Pine Grosbeaks.

A rather sad, heart-rending situation has developed in the Kotzebue raven scene. After a history of "open dumping" the city has gone to baling of garbage, which cuts the raven flock's food potential way down. Numbers of ravens have grown dramatically as people of the city have grown more affluent and more careless with edibles. Now, through January, competition for food has become extreme around the city. Observations of fighting and ingenuity by ravens as they steal food from dogs and outdoor trash bags have become common.

A single Boreal Chickadee has been around camp several times. Don't know how he keeps warm overnight in cold weather.

Work of a single Three-toed Woodpecker has been noted in our spruce patch but did

not see the bird.

Plants

Well, as feared earlier in the winter, there were not enough spruce cones to hold the larger flocks of White-winged Crossbills all winter. Their rather wasteful method of working the cones to get the seeds out causes the cones to drop to the ground prematurely. Then, after a light snowfall, they are lost to the birds even when there are still seeds in the cones. Hopefully they have found other areas of retained cones.

It is interesting how many different plant species have portions still exposed to air this winter of light snow cover. Many seed heads of various plants have opportunity to get spread over much greater distance by wind, drifting snow, etc. than in those years when they are mostly snow-covered early in the winter.

Also related to lack of snow cover - many, many more willows are available to ptarmigan and moose.

Fish

The last week of January is historically, the earliest date when Sheefish and Northern Pike may be taken in numbers with hooks on Kobuk Lake. Catches are not made every year at this early date, but some were taken this year again during the mild temperatures of that early date. Catches are usually made in shallow water areas just off the north and east shores. We got word that fish were taken on the 30th and 31st in those areas. These two days could have fit well into April due to their mildness. Fishers will be quick to take advantage of any spring-like weather from now on.

We will try the Lower Noatak Canyon again for burbot early next month.

Shee catches from net for those that have continued to maintain them has been pretty good to fair. Net catches tend to diminish as sunlight hours get longer.

People

Sisualik people down to three old men for January, with occasional visits from family. Some family was down to the Sealing Pt. house for a few days. Rather heavy traffic developed down through the Sealing Pt area after an overwintering caribou herd was discovered to be there in mid month. These were mostly one day sorties out of Kotzebue with no overnighting.

For an unusual description of a January Sisualik burial see Journal entry of 7th.

Due to cloud cover, our long awaited "sun in the house" didn't happen till the 13th. We had hopes from the 8th on. The first "rainbows" from our window prisms happened the next day. Three cheers! The sun is back!

We got word on the 7th that the person that killed and wasted the bull moose on the upper edge of our tree patch had been identified. It was quite a good piece of police work. Now we shall SEE what the court will do.

Carrie spent the time from the 9th to the 21st unable to use one leg, even to get around the house. A neighbor Eskimo doctor came by, and with a massage and daily use of heat and *Artemisia* poultice, she eventually regained full use of the leg in time to make her annual Anchorage trip for the New Life Native Musicale in February.

An unusual visit by 6 moose to our camp on the 16th is documented on the Journal page for that day.

On the 18th an extended family person living in Point Lay reported to us on their –100º F chill factor temperature. That sounds cold!!

We had 6 hours of sun up time on the 29th. With an additional 3 hours of twilight and dawn that gives us a reasonable daylight time of 9 hours. Things are looking up. We will even "feel" the sun not too far into next month.

Also on this date (the 29th) there was a warning out of Kotzebue that white foxes had been seen in town.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

FEBRUARY

Introduction

It is a strange winter month in the Arctic when winds do not get stronger than 20 knots on any day. Thusly February 1998 continued the mild trend begun earlier and wind, temperatures and precipitation were all in moderation.

Winds did make it to 20 knots from the N on the 20th and from the W on the 22nd. No gales this month and no blizzard!

We had a low temperature of –32º F on the 27th, but cold spells were short and warm spells didn't overdo it either. The warmest day was the 25th, with a temperature of 25º F. There was a little snow on eight days, but very little accumulation, which leaves us quite short of snow around the region.

On Groundhog Day we solved the mystery of the strange animal tracks that passed thru our spruce patch a few days before. It was a large bull musk ox, which we have not seen here before in winter. It was headed for an overwintering group in the Sealing Point area, west of us. We have no idea from where it came. It was much to share a visit from a musk ox on Groundhog Day than it would haven to have a groundhog visitor. He did see his shadow, but then we expected to see at least six more weeks of winter anyway.

February 98 will not only be remembered for its mildness and wandering musk ox, but also for what is possible the earliest Bowhead Whale sighting and strike at Point Hope in 70-80 years. Bowhead sightings are typically made in April at that location.

As feared earlier, the rather wasteful way that White-winged Crossbills forage thru the white spruce forest has taken a toll. These cheerful and colorful birds disappeared from our scene. Most of a rather small cone crop had been knocked to the ground – the seeds still contained in the cones now lost under even a light snowfall. These birds know their business, so it is assumed that they simply moved off and into areas where cones could still be found in place on the trees.

Wildlife

Generally speaking the moderateness of this month would seem equally good for wildlife as it was for the human species. All ungulates (caribou, moose, sheep, musk ox) have had almost unlimited access to forage areas that are usually limited in this month due to winter snow cover. The light snows, mild temperatures and lack of major storms has been favorable. These same factors have to some degree limited mechanized transport, relieving caribou, wolf, wolverine, and fox from pressure from hunters and chasers.

Caribou

The caribou wintering in the zone between Sealing Point and Port Site were hunted regularly, probably from the three nearest villages. Reports that we have received indicate that meat quality has remained good. We have not heard an estimate of numbers in this group.

Caribou from more distant over-wintering sites (Selawik, Buckland) are also reported in good conditions. A small group of caribou (3-4) has lived for some time in and out of the trees on our creek, a couple of miles below us. There were not seen, but their tracks told a story of the group feeding just outside the trees and moving into the willows and trees when snow machine noise came too close. There was one large bull in the group, possibly a wounded and recovered, though impaired, animal plus a couple of other smaller strays. The tracks and feeding craters were found in mid-month after the animals had disappeared.

The only other caribou sign seen in our immediate area during the months was a lone track on Noatak River when Terry and I went to Amaktut.

Moose

We have had moose around by ones or twos thru the month and the unusual picture this February is that the moose are regularly using the small willowed draws that they normally quit using before Christmas, when snow drifts make them impassable. The small drainages, rather than the main river stems, are being utilized this winter by our local moose, and that is good since it spreads them out over much wider pasture.

On the 18th, after taking Carrie to town for an Anchorage trip, I found large running bull moose tracks crossing my morning trail on the Sound. The tracks seemingly came from Cape Blossom or the open Sound, headed for Jones Camp.

Moose have had a good winter this far. Legal harvest by humans has been low this late in the season with caribou available not too far away.

Bear

No bear stories – yet – but if mildness continues it won't be long.

Sheep

No new sheep reports except the general observations by aircraft noted earlier, that animals were down low, looked to be in good shape and seemed un-hassled by wolves (at least on that day). Both of our nearest sheep bands were checked.

Musk-ox

I have not had opportunity to know musk ox on winter range till this wandering bull passed thru the southern tip of our spruce patch the last few days of January. First noticed the unusual tracks crossing our sno-go trail from the east. They were somewhat drifted over, but the stride and pattern didn't match either caribou or moose, though the hoof prints were of bull caribou or medium moose size. Finding time to check out the tracks on snowshoes on February 2, I was able to ID them as musk ox on several counts, and followed the tracks for several hours to collect droppings, note preferred forage, and the animal's general movement strategies. It was an interesting day and an interesting animal with interesting winter limitations that I hadn't realized before. His direction of travel would put him in contact with our nearest known over-wintering group just north of Sealing Point, in not too many hours of travel. He seemed to know where he was going. See Journal entry for the second for more details.

Marine Mammals

On the 6th we heard that Bowhead Whales had been seen from Pt. Hope wind January 23rd, and that one had been struck with a "shoulder gun" on the 5th. It was not recovered. Whales normally show up in those waters early in April. These were said to be "small" bowheads. Elders of the village reported that bowheads had been seen early some 70 or 80 years ago.

There has been two speculations on this event. One suggest they are young whales that for some reason had not yet completed their southern migration to the ice edge in the Bering Sea, where the stock winters. The other suggests that water temperatures (El Niño?) a few degrees warmer may have triggered early movement north. Ice monitoring satellites have not indicated any particular lead system that would allow easy passage north from the southern Bering Sea.

There were some Spotted Seals reported by late January seal hunters out of Kotzebue. This is anther species that normally leaves these waters before Christmas and doesn't return till the last rotten ice comes out and passes in late June. This species also normally over-winters in the southern Bering Sea ice edge.

Small Mammals

No change has been noted in our meager microtine population around camp. Weasels (both species) and marten have made them real rare around our camp frozen food storage. Even shrews seem absent.

Red Squirrels around camp seem to be doing well in spite of the predators.

No Snowshoe Hare tracks noted yet, though we've had reports of multitudes in both Tok, AK and Anchorage. There are reportedly tracks on the Kobuk delta and the Baldwin Peninsula, "behind" Kotzebue.

Have seen a few more porcupines when getting around to look for woodcutting sites. Most located seem to be of small size.

Furbearers

Marten tracks continued to be made thru February, but on a lesser scale than in January. We have not heard of much trapping effort in our area. Last year the "grapevine" indicated much more activity.

Some neighboring wolf and wolverine hunters have set up camps to hunt from the Kiwalik-Candle-Buckland area. They have had some success.

Catch and effort spent on furbearers this February in our local areas are much down from last year, partly due to scant snow cover and lack of success of the few hunters that have ventured out.

As February comes to an end I am reminded again that most land furbearers would benefit from a season closing at this point. Red Fox, mink, marten, wolverine and wolf furs all begin to deteriorate in quality while the long daylight and milder temperatures allow more and easier access by hunters of marginal expertise in both harvest and skin care.

Birds

During the first week of the month there was a fair show of local birds. White-winged Crossbills, Boreal Chickadees, and even a large flock of redpolls were noted in the first few days of the month. But sightings went downhill from there. Crossbills were completely gone by month's end. Several chickadees stayed around for a while and left, and there never was another flock of redpolls after the 15th.

On the 5th, while standing outside just at dawn, I was startled by ol' Thunderwings (Spruce Grouse) moving from one tree by the house to another for his breakfast of spruce needles. The sound of strong wings in the pre-dawn light is a magical sound not heard too often in one's life span.

The Kotzebue Raven Spectacle is explained in some detail in the Journal entry for the 5th.

On the 19th, Terry and I ran across a huge flock of Willow Ptarmigan (three to four hundred) on the way home from Amaktut. We got six with one shotgun blast. Ptarmigan in numbers have been around all winter this year. The new tracks are often seen, but the birds themselves are less often seen, partly because of being in widely-spaced huge flocks rather than scattered small flocks. This situation develops often when there are numerous avian predators around; we have seen gyrfalcon, goshawk, and snowy owl this winter.

Two Boreal Chickadees moved in for good, maybe, towards the end of the month, and became a daily presence. We are glad to have them.

Plants

The apparent reason for all White-winged Crossbills leaving us this month is that they knocked all locally available cones from the white spruce and had to move to better forage zones. These cones containing seeds are deciduous – that is, they are shed each year and consequently are increasingly lightly fastened to the tree as winter progresses. The seeds fall out gradually thru the winter as the lobes of the cones open and close in response to temperature and moisture changes. As the crossbills seek to pry out the small seeds, the cones are often knocked from the tree to the ground where a first snowfall removes them from crossbill access even though they may yet contain seeds.

This bird in this area is entirely dependent on white spruce cones. No cones, no birds; and that is what happened in mid-February after a slow decline in numbers from the many that were here when we came up in mid-October.

Willows of all species are lacking the protection they get by being snowdrift-covered in late winter. Moose and ptarmigan, the principle "willow eaters" in the absence of hares, have wide choice of forage this year due to lack of snow. In the long run I suppose this is good for both plant and creature. Heavy concentrations of animals and birds caused by heavy snow cover in some years can be pretty destructive to those zones left available to the creatures.

Fish

Sheefishing thru the ice got off to a good early start on Kobuk Lake, the only complaint being size. On the 4th fair numbers of small sized fish were being taken in shallow water near shore on N and E Kobuk Lake (Theodore Creek and Assailavik). Again on the 10th there was a report of good fishing – small shee and Northern Pike from the same zone.

On the 11th we made a first fishing trip to Amaktut on the lower Noatak canyon. Ice was a surprising 3 ½ feet thick (with our mild winter?) and no sign of life in the water. We made two holes and jigged for 2 hours without a touch.

Another good report from Kobuk Lake on the 17th. Some larger fish.

On the 19th Terry and I tried again at Amaktut with the same "no fish" results. There was lots of sun though.

We did not make it to Kobuk Lake for fishing in February – maybe we will in March when the fish are larger and days longer. We do have daylight now from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. – a good long day.

Char fishing has been ongoing this month in Noatak, with some participation by Kotzebue travelers.

A few people still have shee nets out and are making small but steady catches. Generally speaking hooks are more effective than nets February through April.

People

On the 4th we got a first feel of the sun's warmth in the trees on the side of a mountain. It is a very good feeling.

Kotzebue City Dump shut down in favor of a compacting project. The local raven population much stressed. See Journal entry of the 5th for details.

On the 7th we traveled to town to celebrate the 90th birthday of a Sisualik neighbor. Lots of food.

The ice road to Kiana from Kotzebue was opened on the 7th. You may now drive your 4-wheel drive truck up the Kobuk River to Kiana.

There were numbers of cross-country sno-go travelers in the milder days of February. On the 14th a couple went thru Sanningaruq house trail (right by the house) without stopping to say "Hi." Unusual.

Our solar panel got our telephone batteries up to full charge on the 15th. Bu the 17th the sun was bringing daytime temperatures up in good shape.

A very good friend and neighbor in Sisualik died on February 28th and we will bury her there beside her Dad in a few days. We have had two major clan burials in Sisualik since January with many friends and relatives participating in spite of weather and season. Sisualik clan families are glad to have the opportunity to bring their widespread extended family members home for burial.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

MARCH

Introduction

Was March 1998 a strange one? Well yes! It followed the moderate trend of the whole winter. The coldest day was on the first at –26º F. (We often have –40º to –50º F temperatures in March.) The windiest day was the 31st with E-SE winds at 50 knots. That is about as perfect as you can get with the old adage, "In like a lamb, out like a lion."

We had 12 days of some kind of snow, mostly light, and rain showers on the 19th, maybe the first all winter.

A toasty 42º F on the 20th gives hint of why many folks are suggesting that we may have an unprecedented early spring. And indeed we may. On the 23rd we heard rumors that both Tundra Swan and crane were heard at Fish Creek on the NW corner of Kobuk Lake. If this rumor is true it will be the first record of both these species in the month of March for Kotzebue Sound. We have had Glaucous Gulls in March but never other long distance migrants, except Golden Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks.

Warm sunny days in mid month apparently sparked growth of the aments (pussy willows) and caused some on *Salix alaxensis* to pop their tough husks and expose the silvery, hairy blossom to the early spring air. We have wondered about this phenomenon for years. The beginning of flowering while roots are still frozen deep in the icy ground is not only old but makes the first flowering plant north of Arctic Circle on the unlikely early date of March 14th. We took a few cuttings from these stems into the house and placed them in a vase of water to check their viability and they started further maturing right away, becoming long and silver haired, probably producing pollen soon, very beautiful and refreshingly early. Imagine that, flowering plants in mid March in the Arctic!

Besides getting more than our share of good weather in March, we also got more than our usual share of sheefish from Kobuk Lake and more than our share of firewood from our mountains. March 1998 was good for us.

Noticed another oddity for March 1998. On the 29th I noted the first below zero temperatures for March since the 4th! That is nearly a full month of above zero temperatures, and that is odd for our location 30 miles above the Arctic Circle!

Wildlife

As might be expected there were some different happenings with wildlife due to light snow cover and moderate temperatures. None of them, on the surface at least, seem negative to the welfare of wildlife.

On the 7th it was noted that moose and Rock Ptarmigan were the major track makers north of our Sanningaruq house. The key to understanding here is that elevation goes up north of our place and this zone does not usually have moose at this season. This year snow cover is so light that the moose feed in the network of small willow draws (their favorite early in fall). It is still available to them. In most years those draws are completely drifted over by March.

By the 18th Gray Jays were singing display songs, a woodpecker was making more pounding noise than necessary, and on the 21st a male Willow Ptarmigan attacked the headlight on my sno-go. All these strange happenings are usually reserved for April.

Around the 20th daily record highs were being broken statewide.

On the 23rd rumor of Sandhill Crane and Tundra Swan calls were heard at Fish Creek. If this is true that is an all time early date for those species.

To top everything, we received a report in March that a flock of 100 swallows were seen on a Pt. Hope beach during a strong warm wind during the first week of February!

None of these far out reports have yet been confirmed.

Caribou

On the 2nd a traveler from Kivalina reported many Caribou on the beach between Port Site and Killikmaiq.

On the 7th a friend came by with a caribou taken from a small group behind Sealing Pt.

On the 24th our neighbors to the east saw 4-5 caribou inside the trees near their house. They got one of them on the 28th and reported that it had some fat.

Finally snowshoed out a firewood cutting trail on the 25th and was surprised to see sign of much winter caribou feeding areas inside the trees. There was no fresh sign

but these “eating craters” inside the trees were made long after we thought all caribou had left our country.

We did get a late estimate on the size of the group of caribou that wintered between Sealing Point and Port Site. There was said to be about 1,000 in small groups scattered through the area. The villages of Kivalina, Noatak and Kotzebue got fresh meat from that herd as there seemed no other overwintering caribou nearer to any of these villages.

The mild winter and light snow cover has been good for overwintering caribou.

Moose

Each year there is some erratic movement of moose around our area in March. This consists of individuals or pairs straying out into open country from their usual use of thick willow or spruce forest habitat. These sorties can be short or cover many, many miles. This March there was a difference in the pattern. Moose came by our spruce patch creek-side cabin pretty regularly through the month, by ones and twos, and followed small creek-willow drainages up through and around the watersheds. There is good new growth willow feed in these areas and moose use them heavily at freeze-up time in the fall, but are usually absent from those zones after Christmas when snowdrift fills the small draws-drainages in. This year our scanty snow cover permitted moose use and in March many made use of those zones, apparently not concentrating in major river stems as usual for this season. This should benefit both the moose herd and stressed willow zones that may have been overgrazed in past winters of heavy snow.

Toward the end of the month (when the legal hunting season closes) there was a little flurry of moose hunters out to fill out their unused tags. We did not hear of any late kills.

There does not seem much justification in this area for having moose season open February and March.

Bear

In spite of unusual mild spells in March, no early bear stories came to us. It was expected that there would be some out and when there were none we began to speculate on how come. There seemed to be much less bear activity through our area in this last year and rumors and stories of illegal kills have been common. Inland conditions were good for bears last season with a huge blueberry and salmonberry crop, not to mention the still high population of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.

This could have influenced coastal bear patterns.

Sheep

No sheep report for March.

Musk ox

No musk ox notes for March except aircraft reports that indicate a small group overwintering at the Palisades (Tallikut) behind Salluq, which is a rather recent use. There were seemingly fewer numbers in the Rabbit Creek-Killikmaiq group.

Marine Mammals

Not much seal hunting this March though the winter was good for it. There were hunters out on the 11th when there was open water near Sealing Pt. Several Ringed Seals were caught.

On the 13th a Kotzebue hunter got a first Uguruq (Bearded Seal) with thin blubber in the Sealing Pt. area. He saw several other uguruq lying on the ice. It is early for that many uguruq sightings in our area, but the lead location may have much to do with it. Old timers say when the lead runs across to Espenberg from Sealing Pt. and all of inner Kotzebue Sound is shorefast ice, uguruq are usually available in the Sealing Pt. area early in the spring.

On the 23rd our neighbors to the east caught a small Spotted Seal on the ground in willows. It was said to be eating willow leaves. This would have been a seal that froze in last late fall in the shallow lagoon waters, managed to overwinter in a series of breathing holes but ran out of available food. It then had to enlarge one breathing hole, climb out on the surface and travel, hoping to find a lead or crack in a different location. This one traveled in the wrong direction and ended up in a willow patch after climbing a steep bank on the edge of the lagoon. A tragic winter for this seal. It doesn't happen often but is not too rare with all three local seal species (Ringed, Spotted and Bearded).

Winter seal hunting activity continues to decline. Only a few older men participated this winter.

Small Mammals

This has been an unusual year for the smallest of small mammals around our winter camp. Out away from the camp site one could see the usual vent holes in snow, or tracks in light snow at the base of trees of both shrews and voles, but not often. Around the cabin site, where there is an annual accumulation of edible trash and usually a good number of Red-backed Voles and shrews, there have been none. In years past we have been intolerant of both weasels (Short-tailed and Least). We have found better and better ways to protect our food goodies (fish and meat) from both weasels and the smaller creatures, so this year we had a constant presence of weasels within the camp and rather regular marten visits just outside the camp. These hearty eaters had access to our abundant table scraps all winter, our "throw-aways." We had one whole caribou, gutted but unskinned, with no place to put it off the ground. I fully expected it to be worked from the inside cavity as in other years, by shrews, voles and weasels. When I finally dug it out of the snow at the end of this month I was pleasantly surprised to find the inside untouched by any animal. Going on past experience I wouldn't believe this to be possible. But the evidence if there! The weasels and marten must be pretty efficient mousers and when well fed not too prone to unnecessary damage of stored meat.

It is difficult to say what this means to the microtine population in our area as a whole because we usually use activity around our living place as an index, indicator of populations dynamics. It does seem that vole-shrew populations are depressed in both our wintering zone and Sisualik, which also shows little March sign of microtine activity.

Through all this our local Red Squirrel group has been well and happy with enough stored spruce cones to keep them busy. Sign out in other spruce patches indicate the same is true in general for the area in spite of the relatively high number of marten active in this area through the winter.

Furbearers

Fox tracks, of both species, have not been numerous through March. Apparently rabies and CDV is still present in surrounding localities and probably here also. We are not aware by grapevine or other means of any trapping or hunting of foxes or marten on Krusenstern this month. Wolf and wolverine tracks have been pretty much absent from the eastern mountain area and probably from the western half too. What wolves and wolverine might have been present around the 1,000 or so caribou that wintered between Sealing Pt and Port Site were probably taken by snow machine hunters earlier in the winter, as there was much hunting of caribou from that group by hunters from three villages and outlying camps.
The new local enthusiasm for marten trapping that bloomed the past two years seems

to have faded this year, possibly due to light snow cover and scarcity of tracks in some zones. There were more tracks and more frequently made tracks around our place than ever before, which is a good sign that this beautiful and graceful animal has established a presence on Krusenstern National Monument.

The usual few otter and mink tracks on our local small creeks and watersheds turned up again in March, indicating seed to continue our small populations of these remarkable northern furbearers.

Birds

Our local flock of Boreal Chickadees was around five in the first few days of the month and was around off and on through the month. A couple of males were getting vocal, with a beautiful song, usually unexpected from Boreal Chickadees. On the 7th a Black-capped Chickadee turned up but did not mix with the Boreal. We haven't had a Black-cap for sometime.

During the first week of March our front yard got quite "birdy" with the voices of Gray Jays, ravens and chickadees all at once a few times; even a Three-toed Woodpecker added to the diversity of sound in the still spruces.

A huge group of Willow Ptarmigan made fresh tracks on a sunny hillside down creek from camp on the 3rd. About this time a raven perfected his straight up and down "helicopter" flight so he could get at food scraps on the ground under a tree by the house. He has been practicing all winter.

On the 5th we got word from friends in Sitka that their early bulb flowers were blooming and they had seen a flock of Tundra Swans headed our way, northwest from Sitka. Hard to think of those spring happenings so early.

Beginning the second week of March, Rock Ptarmigan and moose were the major track-making creatures in the fresh snow of our more alpine areas. The Journal entry of the 8th has a little more info on our second place ptarmigan species.

I saw a fine big nearly pure white Snowy Owl take off down the sno-go trail on the 11th. He was also hunting ptarmigan. We have had a few avian predators around this winter since they again have a prey base.

On the 18th, called in the Journal the warmest wettest day yet in 1998, Gray Jays broke into a series of melodious apparently display song while a Three-toed Woodpecker hammered away in the silent distance. These were good sounds - a rather neat break to a rather silent winter.

A male Willow Ptarmigan attacked the sno-go (maybe the headlight) on the 21st. I

did not see any dark feathers on his head but display was obviously on his mind. In years of light snow cover dark feathers can begin to show on male willow ptarmigan during the last week of March; otherwise mid April is more likely.

Northern Pintail were said to be in Anchorage by friends there on the 21st.

On the 23rd after a long period of unseasonable warmth we had rumors, never substantiated of both crane and Tundra Swan seen-heard from Fish Creek on NW Kobuk Lake. If this were true it would be an early date record for both species.

While making a firewood cutting trail with snowshoes on the 25th, found quite a collection of Spruce Grouse. More than seen together in our spruce patches before. There were 10-12 just in the loop trail I was making for wood.

There was also constant woodpecker noise on this same trail loop.

The five Boreal chickadees were around camp again on the 29th.

Snow Buntings were reported from Kotzebue on the 29th.

On the 30th we got a strange report out of Pt. Hope of the sighting of 100 Swallows on the beach at Pt. Hope in the first week of February after a strong warm wind. We are still checking on that but have not heard that confirmed. It seems pretty far out.

Birds were not plentiful this winter but there were many more than in the last couple of years. We have had some huge ptarmigan flocks, small groups of White-winged Crossbills were common till mid February. There were a few winter birds of prey (Gyrfalcon, Goshawk, Snowy Owl) and Three-toed Woodpecker and Spruce Grouse could be sought out. Add to this the ever present Common Raven and Gray Jay and occasional small flock of Boreal Chickadees and we could call it a fair bird winter, much better that the near silence of the last couple of years.

Plants

Tundra and windswept alpine areas are going to have long growing season this year. Our scanty snow cover and early mild spells have made much snow free ground that the sun will warm quickly.

Extended warm spell at mid month sparked the swelling and shedding of the husks on the “pussy willows”, the aments of *Salix alaxensis* and the sticky aromatic buds on the cottonwoods (Balsam Poplar).

Just what use plants can make of early season warm spells and sunshine is not clear

to me, but with some plants-trees-shrubs there is sign of change even though roots remain frozen in icy soil.

The tender asparagus-like stalks of Eriophorum will be there, early again, for ptarmigan, caribou and early arriving geese and cranes. Those that have cursed the tussocks, over the years, that make walking on Alaska's summertime tundra so difficult are probably not aware of the great early sustaining food that these "niggerheads" provide each year for a variety of creatures.

Fish

Though there is normally no fishing on Cape Krusenstern in March (there can be, but normally isn't) most people who live or have roots there do get involved directly or indirectly in the March sheefish hooking activity through ice in March and April. This fishing takes place anywhere through the Hotham Inlet (Kobuk Lake), Selawik Lake area from the village of Kotzebue east through the deltas of the Noatak, Kobuk and Selawik Rivers.

On the 10th we got word that good catches were being made at our son's house on Kobuk Lake at Fish Creek. We made a round trip to there on the 12th and caught 27 shee. Most were small though a few were of good quality in the medium size category (See Journal).

We took another trip up there on the 15th and fished on the 16th and 17th. We took 50 shee, some of good size, making a heavy sled load for the homeward trip. Our 30-year-old granddaughter caught her first sheefish on this trip. See Journal of the 16th for some historical perspective and the 17th for some speculation.

Fishing was still good at that same location on the 22nd though we didn't go back again; we had a couple of fine Burbot from there given to us.

It has been a great year for shee hooking from Aklaq on the Kobuk Delta to Fish Creek on the NW shore of Kobuk Lake. Fishing and catching will continue through April and thousands will be taken.

We had Rainbow Smelt from both Kotzebue Sound and Pt. Lay during March, given and sent to us by friends. They are very good fried!

People

We buried a long time good friend and neighbor on the 4th in Sisualik. She was the daughter of a prominent Sisualik clan family, wife and mother and not much passed

middle age. Death was not unexpected as her problem was diagnosed 6 months ago.

The sun melted snow and ice on doorstep on the 6th. This is an annual March demonstration of returning sun power that culminates in late June, when most all snow is overcome by that increasing power.

On the 10th sun caused roof snowmelt and first icicles.

We shoveled the Sisualik tent out, the first time, on the 14th and found everything in good shape.

There were record daily high temperatures statewide around the 20th. Also on the 20th we got word that the person that wasted the bull moose back in December had his day in court. He was fined $2500, lost his gun, sled and hunting privileges for two years, but his snow machine was returned.

We did our Sisualik woodcutting in late March. A few others joined us. It was, relative to past years, a very few number of firewood cutters. There may be more activity in April but there has been a steady decline in woodcutting from this area to Kotzebue or summer camps. One reason is that the best, highest producing areas have been cut and there is little effort made to break trails into less productive areas. There has also been hauling from difference areas east of Noatak River.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

APRIL

Introduction

April 1998. My, oh my! Talk about "each year being different" and "no two are ever the same." April offers proof of all that and more.

We rejoiced through the usually hard months of winter - January, February and March - that we had gotten through so easily while farther south there were very severe storms of various kinds that generally made living, surviving very difficult. Here, 30 miles north of the Arctic Circle, we had nearly continuous mild temperatures, generally light winds and probably fewer storms that in any year of the past 50.

Now, April and May are usually months down to moderate temperatures and brief storms, and are months looked forward to each Arctic year. Not so in '98!

We had seven days with winds 30 k or better, four days with 35 k or better, and three days of 40 k or better. On the 27th we had winds of 50 k from the E-SE.

We had rain on the 10th, 14th, 15th and the 26th. We had rain or snow on 17 days.

Our coldest temperature of the month was 2º F on the 6th and the warmest was 45º F on the 24th.

Of course it must be remembered that April, for us, is also moving month. We move from sheltered winter quarters with a warm snug cabin to the open ocean beach tent fish camp where we spend the summer.

Our move this year was initiated on the 11th by warm spring-like weather a full two weeks earlier that ever before. You can guess where some of the mean weather of April caught us. We try very hard, every year, to time our move so that we miss drifting snow in Sisualik. We usually do pretty well with this timing. In 1998 we just moved into the worst of it and had bad drifting snow from both east and west in both April and May. It was not fun!

Other major events were the coming of many Willow Ptarmigan with early dark head feathers and active display pairing. This fell apart with the coming of strong west winds, snow and cooling, which caused re-flocking and a long interruption in spring

display. It does mean though, that the Willow Ptarmigan scene looks much better than in the past few years, if the interruption of display does not cause them to give up mating for the year.

Kotzebue and camp people enjoyed a most productive April ice fishing for shee with less distance traveling than in any year of the last 50. Hundreds of fish, many of them quite large, were taken through the month between the Arctic Lighterage Dock and the Noatak River mouth. It is not unusual for a few fish to be taken in this lower limit of the shee's winter range in late April, but never in numbers like those seen this April.

Finally and maybe most important, a snowshoe hare track was seen on Krusenstern Monument on April 3!

Wildlife

The severe conditions that gave us trouble certainly had effect on wildlife in general and probably were more than an inconvenience to some species. Small birds in early migration could have suffered considerable mortality. Sudden blinding snowstorms with heavy wet snow followed by a switch in winds with sudden cooling and still drifting snow can be dangerous to any warm-blooded creature. We had those conditions a couple of times and found some hints of avian problems: one dead Ruby Crowned Kinglet was found by our "rain catcher roof" and a Dark-eyed Junco was found alive, sheltering in our storage cabin in Sanningaruq. This is a big country with still relatively few people, so these hints of tragedy are only hints of possible mortality among early migrants. A couple of extremely early swan and crane sightings indicate that some larger migrants may have been on scene during tough times. Hopefully they were more able to cope.

Ground Squirrels and bears were out early. Squirrels at least had to return to dens for many days; later some very lean, fat free squirrels were reported.

Any early birthing of larger animals (reindeer, caribou, sheep, and moose) could have been at risk, but fortunately most of these animals do not come due until later in May-June when weather moderates.

We did have a strange early pre-breakup spring. The costs to wildlife may not be known till farther down the line.

Caribou

On the 2nd a single bull caribou track was noted a mile down creek from us where

some of the mysterious “woodland caribou” were active and reported in this Journal earlier. There was cratering and no sign of animals had been seen there for some time.

The only other caribou note for the month was an unexplained strange movement of animals from the north across the Kivalina-Noatak trail towards the south (our direction). Travelers to Noatak for a funeral noted this movement and they were surprised, as most caribou movement is northward by April 23, the date of this observation.

Moose

We saw few large animal tracks in April and it is rather a mystery where the moose went that were rather regularly making tracks through our zone of travel in February and March.

Two moose did turn up on the 16th and were around the creek for a time.

It is not thought that our spell of bad weather would be of any consequence to moose. Temperatures were warm and the natural shelter of normal moose habitat would protect them well. New late snow was not enough to be a problem. Moose had a good winter and early spring.

Bear

One would expect more bear tales with the kind of weather we had this April. Actually, we had none. These leads to speculation since there has been a steady drop in bear sightings and incidents these past two years. During this time there has been a number of illegal kills of bears for a variety of reasons, too close to camp, damage to fishing equipment and fish and high value on bear parts, claws, skin, gall bladders, penis bone etc. One wonders at this point, whether some bears have just left our area for some good reason of their own (food, den sites, peace and quiet) or whether the combined kill from all reasons has trimmed our local bear population center. For a short time each spring bears are very vulnerable to hunters with snow machines and especially with combination aircraft and snow machines. Last year tracking conditions and snow cover were super good over a long interval right at "den-out" time. This is all pure speculation but what we do know is that after 10 years of more than enough bears we have now had two summers of very few tracks on the beach and few traveler sightings.

Sheep

No sheep reports for the month. There were hints that our nearest populations were doing well this winter with considerable recruitment. It is not known if the late snowfall, icing conditions and generally bad weather could have given them some late range problems.

Musk ox

No musk ox reports for April.

Marine Mammals

There was not a lot of hunter, marine mammal action here in April due partly to unpredictable weather and the general downward trend in local early seal hunting participation. We heard that beluga whales were taken at Pt. Hope on the 14th.

A first Bowhead Whale was taken at St. Lawrence Island on the 17th and more beluga at Pt. Hope on that date.

The Sealing Pt. family, who returned from Anchorage, were eating seal (Ringed Seal) meat on the 18th and then caught one young uguruq (out of 5 lying on the ice) on the 20th.

A Ringed Seal hauled out on the ice several hundred yards from our front door on the 22nd.

The open lead this spring runs generally straight from Sealing Pt. to Espenberg. This means that all of Kotzebue Sound is non-moving ground fast shelf ice. This tends to concentrate and focus both Ringed Seal and Uguruq on those two land points and is considered the best of conditions for spring sealing at both Sealing Pt. and Espenberg. According to elders it also usually means that uguruq will be seen early. That seems to have been proven true again this year.

Small Mammals

Ground Squirrels were out early and plenty but all had to return to dens several times for multiple-day stays. Later in the month some were taken that were reported to be quite "skinny." Usually, they are quite fat when first coming out of hibernation. Perhaps the interrupted weather that caused "return to dens" was not a good scene for squirrels. It could effect the current large population through malnutrition and lack of stored energy for the breeding season, which begins shortly after coming out.

Voles are scarce in both Sanningaruq and Sisualik in April. (Red-backed inland and Tundra Voles in Sisualik.)

The single Snowshoe Hare track seen at Nasiksaugvik in fresh snow was the first and only sign of this species on the Monument in April. This was on the 3rd and no other track has been seen for many years. The animal was traveling from east to west and there were many marten tracks in the same area at the same time as well as Spruce Grouse and Red Squirrels. We hope that this rabbit survived and that others are following his pioneering tracks. We have been too long without rabbits in the spruce woods.

Red Squirrels seem to have wintered well in spite of tree born cones giving out in mid winter and marten tracks being rather constant. The squirrels, being prudent, obviously had put away a lot of cones underground, which they brought out to peel all through April.

Furbearers

There were more marten tracks around our area at this end of winter month than ever before, indicating that they have successfully made that range extension and also that trapping pressure was light this winter compared to the last couple of years. Lack of early winter snow and relative lack of the high profile species (wolverine and wolf) tends to diminish the enthusiasm of today's would-be trappers.

Fox populations, both species, continue to be depressed, probably due to continue high incidence of rabies and CDV (distemper) on our west coast.

The usual few spring mink and otter tracks were noted within the month.

Both weasel species are still easy to see - their tracks, that is.

Birds

A Willow Ptarmigan with dark feathers on its head was seen on the 2nd for the first time. This is early for that. There are more details in the Journal.

McKay's Buntings were noted in Kotzebue with Snow Buntings on the 6th and other reports from around indicate that returning migrant Snow Buntings are back in the country. This is the latest date that we have of McKay's Buntings.

A Glaucous Gull was seen west of us on the 11th; this is an early date.

There were lots Willow Ptarmigan with black heads around by the 12th. There is lots of ptarmigan noise around this year, not like the past several.

There was a rumor of geese at Buckland on the 12th and our neighbors to the east reported hearing one about the same date.
Geese reported on the upper Kobuk on the 16th.

There were many displaying Willow Ptarmigan during this mid month time.

Common Eiders were reported from the open lead off Sealing Pt on the 18th.

A gull heard at Sealing Pt on the 20th.

A male Willow Ptarmigan set down on tent eave at 6:00 am on the 24th and crowed three times.

On the 23rd we had a possible "fly by" by Jonathan. His call and action gave hint, but it was only a "fly by".

A goose was noted by our west neighbor the same day and some numbers were reported in the Noatak Flats on the 23rd.

Wide spread gull and goose reports on the 24th.

Check the Journal page for the 25th for a once in a lifetime willow ptarmigan incident!

Two large flocks (15-20) gulls in over Sisualik on the 26th.

A mean, wet, blizzard happened on the 27th and it is quite possible that early migrant birds of some species may have been at risk. This rough weather continued the three last days of the month and then switched to a cold west wind, with drifting snow scene for the beginning of May. It was a bad week for many creatures and especially for early migrant birds.

We did note webbed feet tracks by a fish head on the beach, made while temperatures were mild during or just before the 50 k blizzard of the 27th. It is our speculation that these tracks were made by Jonathan on his untimely arrival. These speculations are based on events of the first few days of May.

There is no doubt that this week, the ending of April and beginning of May produced life-threatening conditions for birds.

Plants

On the 5th it was noticed that in various plots around the house and along the creek, Felt-leafed Willows (*Salix alaxensis*) had bright silvery aments fully exposed to the late winter, early spring air. They had popped their husks and looked pretty vulnerable. We have wondered for years if these early "willow blossoms" could survive the rigors of west winds and possible sub zero temperatures. I cut a few twigs and took them into the house and put them in a water to see if or how far they could mature. By the 10th they had gotten long and silky and will likely produce pollen. An early flowering plant north of the Arctic Circle?

Due to light winter snow cover and some spells of strong winds there was much snow free tundra in early and mild April. We had a heavy blueberry crop last season so large numbers of Willow Ptarmigan got into a very early displaying mode, maybe drunk on overwinter blueberries. As it turned out they had to repent from this madness later on but it must have been a good time for them while it lasted; two plants supplied their early energy spree, tussock cottongrass (*Eriophorum* sp.) and tundra blueberries.

This early sun on snow free ground will give a head start to many of the plant complex that lives there. It is also likely that many lichens and mosses will have a longer than usual growing, producing season than normal, as early rains supplied good ground moisture that made up for lack of snow. This will no doubt benefit heavily grazed caribou feeding grounds.

Fish

Though spring sheefishing through the ice does not take place on the Monument, most all of the people of the coastal region, camp and village, partake in this activity through March, April and part of May. This is true especially in a year like this when shee are plentiful and far down in their winter habitat towards saltwater.

The winter distribution of this fish is interesting, to say the least, as it has pretty definite boundaries and pretty much the whole stock of the Kotzebue Sound watershed stays within these definite boundaries.

The shee is a brackish or freshwater species that cannot tolerate ocean saltwater for very long. It spawns far up the Kobuk and Selawik Rivers and overwinters in delta zones, moving back and forth on the water face where fresh, brackish water meets highly saline ocean water. This zone is dynamic through the winter of course, depending on volume of freshwater outflow and marine water intrusion due to normal tides and storm surges. The lower limits of this zone are right on the deep-water channel at the village of Kotzebue. The upper limit is less well defined and depends on salinity intrusion during storm surges. It is naturally very broad since freshwater tolerance is not a shee problem but the search for food, live smaller fish, is no doubt the dynamic driving force that determines where shee are found in the Noatak, Kobuk, and Selawik Delta zones. The large, relatively deep inlet zones are the hearts of this winter range. (Hotham Inlet, Kobuk Lake, Selawik Lake).

This April was a very productive year for shee fishers out of Kotzebue and surrounding camps. Many tons of fish were taken unusually near the Kotzebue water front. This high producing zone varied from 50 feet off Kotzebue's Front Street to 20 miles NE.

Probably the single most active day was on the Lion's Club Shee Derby Day, the 25th of April.

We went up to the Fish Creek, Kobuk Lake area on the 7th and 8th and took home 28 small to medium sized fish. We already had a good many from a March visit to the same area.

We went again the day of derby and got fish but none of prizewinning caliber. Most of the fishers and us were between Kotzebue and Noatak River Mouth. There were probably more fish taken in this zone this April that in any other year of the past 50.

Rainbow Smelt are another delicacy much sought after in both Kotzebue Sound and Pt. Lay in April. Several frying pans of smelt make a great feast and we were lucky enough to have some from both locations. Earlier in the month a batch from both

places were similar in size. On the 5th we had a report from Pt. Lay that big smelt were moving in. It proved to be true when we had some from there later on. This species seems to run, on the average, larger at Pt. Lay.

Female shee with unseasonably ripe eggs were taken near Kotzebue on the 26th. This is the second known occurrence in the past 5 years.

People

On the 4th the Sealing Pt. house family (Williams) came back to their house at the point from a winter spent in Anchorage.

By the 15th we knew that there would be two "dog yard" camps at Salluq this season and on the 18th there were three occupied camps west of Sisualik and seven on the Spit. (There were none on the west side over winter).

By the 22nd there were 5 camps west of Sisualik and that will probably be all until berry pick time.

We moved out of our cabin to Sisualik tent on the 11th, the earliest date that we have ever moved out of sheltering trees. Unseasonable warming trends and early bird sightings triggered this unprecedented early move. We shouldn't have done it! We spent the rest of April and part of May, moving back and forth and dodging into the dome for overnight to miss several blizzards and to get away from drifting snow. We burned up *all* the wood we had cut and hauled for summer and of course in time, found out that we were not going to have an early spring but a late one. Most birds knew that, but Jonathan didn't fare so well, either arriving in the midst of a warm blizzard that turned into a cold west wind with drifting snow that probably was fatal to some birds less hardy than Jonathan Livingston Sea Gull. He was in sore need of a good hardy feeding when it was over and we could make first contact with him.

We didn't appreciate again the "daylight saving time" switch on the 5th that puts us three full hours off of true sun time that we grew up with. Some say why does it matter? We say, sun time is "natural time." We don't like nor feel right being "unnatural!"

Town streets were already bad with water, slush and thawing on the 7th with lots of bare ground out in the country.

On the 10th the last two major dog races were on with warm wet weather with rain.

By Easter (the 12th) many camp people like us were scrambling to get heavy hauling done while snow conditions were permissive.

Our granddaughter won the women's snow machine race!

On the 13th I lost the home trail in a blizzard and was lost for a bit for the first time this winter, spring time indeed!

By the 15th town streets had gone to pieces as far as sno-go travel goes.

On the 19th everything was moved out of Sanningaruq and everything was white and frozen again!

On the 30th we were back in Sanningaruq cabin again hiding from coastal blizzards!

There was lots of traveling people on the trails of Krusenstern through April: camp families moving and hauling summer and spring stuff, a big Easter songfest in Kivalina, and some plain joy riding when weather permitted, which wasn't often, but trails did get into the best shape they had been all winter. Very smooth.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

MAY

Introduction

Well, spring did finally come to Cape Krusenstern but not easily nor in a timely manner. The first week of May was more like winter than some of our winter months.

We had a warm blizzard on the first followed by a west wind cold blizzard on the second and a low of –5º F on the 4th, our low temperature for the month. Meat and fish stored outdoors were well frozen for eating as quaq, which seldom happens in May. We wondered where the crane and goose were that we heard on the 1st and found a Dark-eyed Junco sheltering in our Sanningaruq storehouse. We were back up in our winter cabin hiding from the west wind blizzard on the 2nd and returned to Sisualik tent on the 3rd to find a cold and hungry seagull – Jonathan - crying in a loud voice for a helping hand in an UN-seasonal situation. His timing for getting into Sisualik was no better than our own!

We had drifting snow on the 5th, 6th, 7th and the morning of the 8th when coming home from town after our 50th Wedding Anniversary party. Quite a remarkable first week of May!

Just to prove that spring did come we quote our high temp for the month of May. It was a toasty 71º F on May 30th. We creatures - people, birds and mammals - that survived the first week enjoyed very much the last week.

We had four days with winds to 30 k or better, scattered rather evenly through the month (from NE to SE on 8th, 15th and 28th and from the WNW on the 2nd).

Rain or snow fell on 15 days and kept the ground real moist through a critical month that often has dehydrating conditions on higher grounds that are snow-free early.

We passed an interesting milestone on May 8,1998 when Carrie and I celebrated our 50th Anniversary with many old time friends. It seems, on looking back, a very short time.

With respect to “old time friends” the celebration was made much more meaningful by a surprise part at the Senior Center, at which we were presented with a large quilt with many panels of drawings by very good friends through the 50 years, reminders

of the times that those individuals were and are a real part of our lives. A remarkable and valuable gift, probably the most impressive we will ever have. Taikuu!

Wildlife

Early migrant birds into our area were certainly at risk during the last week of April and first week of May. We found one dead Ruby Crowned Kinglet later in the month by our "rain dropper" post, which probably perished during that period, and there were a few other reports of passerines out of normal habitat though alive during blizzard conditions at Sealing Pt and Sisualik (Junco?).

Some large birds - gulls, cranes, and geese - were heard or seen through that period but no mortalities are known. Early geese taken from inland sites before May 15 seemed in normal migration condition, some fatter than others did but none emaciated, at least that we heard of. A few ducks were reported seen before local thaw ponds developed, but there again no mortality was reported.

Larger mammals, except those into early birthing, would be expected to be able to cope. The dates of the bad conditions were early for either moose or caribou but reindeer may have been into birthing and usual dates for sheep fall within the bad weather periods.

The wetness and "sticky" nature of warm snow blizzards abruptly followed by rapidly dropping temperatures on a west wind can induce problems of maintaining body temperatures, i.e., hypothermia.

Caribou

On the 12th we heard a pilot report of May caribou moving north between Kiana and Ambler. There was comment that there were many "small" caribou observed. We didn't know how to interpret this. Were they newborn calves? That seems unlikely since they are en route to calving ground but the late date and unusually late April-May weather makes one wonder. The "small deer" probably are "short yearlings." That there were "lots" is interesting.

On the 19th, a record-breaking warm day, a group of 30-40 caribou came into Sisualigrauq on the ice, apparently from Cape Blossom. Several were taken at Sisualik and then a few more when they reached the edge of the tablelands at a camp north of Sisualik. We were given some meat and it was in very good condition, fat.

The animals were mostly females with last spring's calves There were no other caribou notes for May.

Moose

No moose sign or sightings after our last trip to winter camp.

Bear

We had a gift piece of good bear meat from the Noorvik area on the 4th of the month but no other bear news for the month.

There seems a trend on Krusenstern of fewer bear incidents, which would reflect a drop in numbers the last couple of years.

Sheep

No sheep report, except that their calving time may have coincided with the extreme bad weather of late April/early May.

Musk ox

No musk ox news for May 1998.

Marine Mammals

As expected, early uguruq were taken in the offshore lead running from Sealing Point towards Cape Espenberg.

Two uguruq were taken on the 4th by Salluq hunters, and one by Sealing Point hunters. Our nephew brought a fine fat one home to us on May 7th. Another was taken on the 14th. Weather in the form of offshore winds kept ice hunters off the ice through much of this time period; the end portion of the month had too many days of offshore wind.

Since the number of hunters were few the total May catch of uguruq was quite high for this early date. June is the month of peak uguruq harvest off Krusenstern.

Many more were seen than taken, and distant hunters (Kotzebue) took a few more in May, than we recorded. The animals taken were good condition with a thick layer of blubber. Most were small to medium-sized animals, indicating a young portion of the

general population.

A few common Ringed Seals were taken. Local use of this species continues to diminish.

Small Mammals

The melting of the snow in May, which always reveals the activity of overwintering Tundra Voles, revealed a near absence of these busy little creatures in Sisualik this year.

Shrews, voles, weasels were pretty much absent from Sisualik in May 1998.

Ground Squirrel numbers seem still high in spite of my dog's resolve to make them extinct by the year 2,000.

He did find a small porcupine again in the patch of spruce just uphill of our winter house site when we went to get a last load of firewood on the 6th.

Furbearers

Tracks of fox, mink, otter and marten were noted in May but in the usual small numbers for this area. Of these, Red Fox tracks were seen most often in spite of depressed numbers. Notably absent were tracks of wolverine, wolf or lynx. These species have become quite rare since the advent of snow machines. There are often tracks in October and November.

Birds

Returning migrant birds in May is of course, a great annual happening. The silent and barren skies of Arctic winter become well populated again with those feathered, noise making, friends we have come to expect from lower latitudes. The last week of April and first of May is the time to expect early migrants. This year that time period involved some of the worse weather we have had for years. There was a lot of heavy wet drifting snow and a quick wind switch that swiftly dropped temperatures below zero. We later found at least two early birds that didn't survive it. One was a Ruby Crowned Kinglet, here at our Sisualik camp and a Dark-eyed Junco at Sealing Pt. We found another Junco inside our winter house storage shed when we went back up for shelter from storms on the first part of the month.

On that first day of May up at the cabin we heard for the first time this season the

loud clarion call of a low passing Sandhill Crane. A few minutes later a White-fronted Goose followed the same trail making his distinguishing call. The next day the whole world was white, the air full of snow particles and a plummeting thermometer that soon reached –5º F.

The next day (the 3rd) the storm was over and we returned to Sisualik to find huge snow banks. While fixing lunch after shoveling out, the sharp imperative call of a Glaucous Gull close at hand startled us! Jonathan! He is back! And after some track checking it seems that he arrived on the 1st in mild snowy blizzard and spent the whole next day of cold west wind and drifting snow somewhere near at hand. He was terribly hungry and gobbled up all the thawed fish and meat scraps we could lay hands on. This was quite a dramatic return by Jonathan Livingston Sea Gull in May 1998.

By the 4th there were many G. gulls in Kotzebue and a few geese had been taken on the Noatak Flats south of the village.

On the 6th, with still drifting snow, it was noted that Willow Ptarmigan flocks that had split early in April were flocked up again. This break down of flocks is for display and mating activities and it seemed remarkable that the weather could cause a back-pedaling of seasonal mode.

By the 8th we had noted Short-eared Owls, Tree Swallow, Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Junco, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle and American Robin. Heavy rain the night of the 8th terminated the drifting of snow till next October.

On the 10th a Tree Swallow claimed our camp box (that he will have to share with Jonathan).

The raven in a nest in a tower by a camp west of us has eggs this time. The nest was made last year but no eggs.

On the 12th Jonathan landed on his “landing pad” (the swallow box roof) for the first time. It takes him awhile to remember his learned routine from past years. On the 13th, during a round trip to Sealing Point, we saw a 1st Long-tailed Jaeger, a quacking Red-throated Loon and a Mew Gull. At Sealing Point they were cleaning out their swallow box and found two mummified birds of nearly flying age. Have never seen that before.

On the 15th there were a few flocks of Northern Pintail and passerines moving against the rain and wind. Five swallows came by and some put a few dried grasses in the box. There were two White-crowned Sparrows on our woodpile on the 16th and the first shorebirds made a showing on the 17th (Black Turnstones, Western Sandpiper). Both swallows turned up at the box on this day. On the 18th first Bar-

tailed Godwit noise spread over the salt marsh. We had 18 cranes and 2 swans in our backyard on this date. A first Arctic Tern was seen west of us; a Savannah Sparrow was seen here and Lapland Longspur at Salluq.

See Journal entry for the 18th for comments on the impact of bird sound in the salt marsh this month.

On the 19th many birds were flying. Kotzebue people saw several flocks of Snow Geese.

By the 20th there were many steady small flocks of N. Pintail moving west to east and many shorebirds were doing the same. Our Bar-tailed Godwit flock is over 100 now. Red-throated Loon and Northern Harrier were seen and a mosquito bit someone in another camp! The Tree Swallows (both) settled in to nest making.

On the 21st there were birds and their noise all over the salt marsh. Our birds are back again.

First Glaucous Gull eggs were found on the 26th. One nest had a full set of three eggs. One this day a strange pair shared our tent front yard, a Yellow Warbler and a Dunlin. Both are fairly common birds in the area but seldom in our yard.

Brant showing a little and the marsh is greening, with most waterfowl feeding on the greens since there is no ice-rafted mud this year.

On the 29th a flock of seven Canvasbacks was a surprise. This species continues its breeding range extension.

We gained 40 gull eggs on the 30th by a nephew staying with us. This again seems proof that birds lay eggs by the calendar not by weather and habitat readiness.

We had a fair bird migration this May but several species made poor showings. We are missing our favorite “near camp bird” -the Lapland Longspur is nearly absent from Sisualik. Brant and Snow Geese made hardly any showing at all here.

Due to light snowmelt and run-off there was no ice-rafted organic mud for migrants to feed from this year. When this happens we see fewer sandpipers, Red Knots and waterfowl that can’t easily switch to sprouting marsh greens or overwintered blackberries.

We have no hint as to why Lapland Longspurs are scarce.

Plants

We were surprised to find some pretty long sedge and *Potamogeton* greens in a gift goose taken on the Noatak Flats on the early date of May 4. The bird was an adult White-front taken while we were still dodging blizzards in Sisualik. It was quite fat. Have no clue as to the source of the early greens.

As the snow melted from the blackberry grounds, the huge bumper crop from last year became food for migrants of many species. Both the seeds and whole berries are eaten by many species. It is a good thing that they were there because there was no ice-rafted mud this second half of May with its usual abundant supply of *Potamogeton* corms and related worm life.

Blades of Iris plants were showing on the 22nd as the landscape began to turn from brown to green.

First bumblebees in numbers on the 24th mean that early S*alix* aments were available. By the 26th ground was beginning its change to a green hue from fall-winter brown.

By the 31st a rapid show of plants was happening after rain and warm air. *Elymus* blades were 4 inches long. Both chives and tukaiyuk (*Ligusticum*) were grown enough to eat.

The wet and warm (71º F) end of May set the stage for a green and colorful June in our Sisualik salt marsh and surrounding higher lands.

Fish

May is the month that if one is to continue to eat fish, when the urge comes, he must switch from hooks under the ice to nets that can be set in water without ice.

Sheefish by hook were still being taken in Kotzebue Channel near town till mid month.

In Sisualik and the rest of Krusenstern there was no fishing till we could put a net in an unusual open crack, several feet wide and perpendicular to the ocean beach, right in front of our tent.

We put a whitefish (3”) net in on the 21st but it wasn’t till the 24th that we got fish. Then in a few days there were all the whitefish anyone could want. Tomcod (Saffron Cod) were the only other species taken in May besides a few small bullheads and flounders.

They took good fish at Jones camp on the 23rd, always a little earlier than us.

The 25th was real fish day in Sisualik this May. Fish need to be plentiful at this first out run of over-wintering whitefish. Less than ¼ of the fish taken are fat and firm enough for cooking. The others must be half dried before cooking or completely dried to be eaten with seal oil.

We ended the month with the convenient crack in front of us as the only place in Sisualik to set a net. Several other families used the crack for fishing.

People

Snow machine travel from Sisualik to Kotzebue ceased on the 18th. By that time the camps to be occupied through the break-up period were established and wouldn't change till break-up in June, when numbers of Noatak and Kotzebue people come to set up camps for boat hunting of marine mammals.

There were nine occupied camps in Sisualik and five west of the Ranger Station at Anigaaq.

May 8th was a big day for us and a number of other people at the Kotzebue Senior Center, when they gave us a surprise party to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary. A quilt given to us at that time, contributed to by many lifelong friends, was the most impressive gift we have ever received. It made the trials of 50 years of marriage worth it all! A torrential rain on our return to Sisualik that night wet us to the skin but solved dramatically our early May problems of blizzards and drifting snow.

On the 14th a Baker Aviation plane went down a short ways from Nome. Some friends and extended family were on board. There were only minor injuries. Those folks were extremely fortunate!

A mosquito bit an inland neighbor on the 20th. That's an early date and no doubt is one of the costs of living inland in May.

On the 10th friends staying at Salluq for the spring had to make a medical trip to Kotzebue. He had to be later med-evac'd to Anchorage. Things had been going well for them. He had gotten two early uguruq and a lucky rifle shot at four early cranes (he got two) was making grapevine news. He has a long history of hospitalization for a chronic liver lesion. He did not make it back to camp in May and we missed his presence as a long time camp person and neighbor.

We had a first helicopter fly by on the 20th. Noisy things!

Kotzebue Channel finally opened on the 26th and boats got out from Kotzebue. Coincidentally the first G. Gull eggs were taken on that date.

On the 28th ice piled on Kotzebue streets as large floes came down from Kobuk Lake on the current.

Generally speaking, people living on Krusenstern during May 1998 had a good spring with early uguruq meat, good fish and waterfowl, and numbers of G. Gulls eggs. New greens for new seal oil were a special treat at this early date.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

JUNE

Introduction

June 1998 had many good happenings as usual for a major spring month of growth and reproduction, but there were also some bitter disappointments. “Bitter” because we seem not able to trace and understand the reasons for the happenings.

The Eskimo place name Sisualik means, of course, “Place of White Whales.” June is the month they are expected. They did not come, at least not very many. We personally saw and heard belugas only once. This was a group of less than 10 adults that were seen twice the same day on June 8. There were other sightings rumored through the month but none really confirmed inside a line drawn from Cape Krusenstern Point (Sealing Point) to Cape Espenberg. This is roughly the boundary of Kotzebue Sound.

The Lapland Longspur or Alaska Longspur, said to be the second most numerous passerine in NW Alaska, is a most favorite bird around camps, where it often nests to be close to a sure blowfly worm source to feed its nestling. Its early display flights and “tinkling” song is loved by all NW camp folks. They did not come to Sisualik this June! (and hardly last year) How come?

Toward mid-June, after the other loud-voiced birds have quieted or passed (swans, cranes, loons, gulls, godwits), the sound that fills the air or the shore as ice cover recedes is made by a true sea bird, the Black-legged Kittiwake. It is a bird that makes you know that you are camped by the sea as they get very excited over the tasty small creatures and fish in the newly freed ocean waters. During times of light winds their loud voices spread over the whole Sisualik waterfront, often drowning out all other bird sound for a time. They did not come this June! We have some hints, related to El Niño patterns, but don’t really know the answers.

I especially wanted an early and good show of *Gentianopsis detonsa* this year to get some extra good photos of this remarkable plant. Though flowers on the plant are not due till late July, on a year of abundant plants I have been able to locate early plants in June. Not this year!

To balance these negatives of June 1998 we must mention a few positives.

We had a good and early harvest of uguruq in June.

We had only two days of light frost early in the month, which means flowers and vegetation have a good early start and a berry crop will have a chance.

We had fine fat Kivalina trout-char available anytime a net was set from the 15th on. The fish were available in a long time window this year and it was a good thing, for the salmon run was slow to start.

Three local edible plants had good early and robust growth. Chives and the two wild celeries, *Ligusticum* and *Angelica*, were ready and abundant early this June.

We had a low of 30º F on the 5th and a high of 82º F on the 19th. Winds reached 30 k only once, from the E-SE on the 1st. There was precipitation on 10 days, scattered through the month, so early ground moisture was maintained which is so necessary in June for the development of berry crops.

There is an interesting account of an unexpected moment of joy on the 30th. See Journal - don't miss it!

Wildlife

Things seem to have gone pretty well through June for nesting and birthing with pretty moderate weather conditions. Insect harassment was bad on several days but spells were broken up by several days of cold winds off the ice pack that gave freedom from bugs for a time.

As mentioned in other sections for this month, three bird species we normally see good numbers of in June failed to show up. Black-legged Kittiwake, Lapland Longspur and Aleutian Terns were either completely absent or were very few in the Sisualik area. One can speculate on some of the reasons, but their non-presence is worrisome, especially since this is a second year for the near absence of Lapland Longspur.

Water levels on various salt marshes after early freshwater outflow did not fluctuate to extremes through June. It sometimes happens that marine storm surges bring flood conditions to the marshes and flood out nests of birds in low lying areas. Glaucous Gulls, both species of terns, Black Turnstones and some other sandpipers and waterfowl can be stressed by these conditions after eggs are laid. None of this happened this June on Kotzebue Sound, so nesting success for those species should be pretty good.

Caribou

On the 16th two caribou came to camps at Salluq and one female was killed. The animal did not have a calf this year and the meat was good with some show of fat building.

A large caribou was seen from Sealing Point on the 19th but not taken.

On the 21st a lone small caribou was taken west of Sisualik.

Around the 23rd a good group of caribou (20-30) was seen near Jones Camp and several were taken. The meat was in very good condition. We were given some later and the fresh, fat meat was very good.

No other local caribou reports were made for June. Actually these few reports are many for us for this month. Usually there are none here at this time. Considerable calving has been reported south of the Kobuk this spring and Pt. Hope-Kivalina have had caribou around in June.

Moose

There were two moose at the beach camp at Salluq on the 23rd and one passed the westernmost Sisualik camp during the last week of the month. These were the only reports of moose on the ocean beach for the month of June. This is not much different than in most recent years, considering that there are fewer resident people and less inland travelers down that way this year.

Bear

Bear tracks were seen rather early on the beach this June. A nephew saw small bear tracks at Akulaaq on the 5th. He was not sure if one or two; it was rumored that a female with cubs had been killed in the mountains behind during the snow machine time. These small tracks were not reported again. A larger bear had made tracks in the mud on the north edge of Akulaaq Lagoon towards the end of the month.

During June there were no new or old “drifted in” marine mammals on the beach between Sisualik and Akulaaq. There was nothing to attract bears to the beach and all the tender greens inland make foraging in June there pretty good. We will know more about our beachcombing bear population in late July or August after some dead whale, walrus or uguruq have drifted in and washed up on the beach.

Sheep

ADF&G and NPS 1998 sheep survey indicates only a slight downward trend from last year in our two nearest populations. This is encouraging because it means our harsh spell of weather at calving time was not too bad in the birthing mountains.

We had no first hand sheep reports in June.

Musk ox

Though there were several occupied camps just west of the Ranger Station in June, where musk ox have been seen each recent June and July, we don't have any reported sightings this June. Don't know why but expect the explanation is rather simple. We will keep in mind this lack of June sightings this year and see what additional info we might pick up.

Marine Mammals

Well, June is the major marine mammal harvest month nowadays, so there are a number of marine mammal notes.

First and most surprising is the complete lack of any beluga harvest in Kotzebue Sound during June 1998. We first saw a small group (less than 10) of large adult belugas on the 8th. Probably the same group was seen a few hours later, rapidly moving east from west through the point where they turned back from earlier. There was a beluga net set where they were seen the same evening after the second sighting. There were numbers of other beluga nets set throughout the Sound where ice permitted in the next few days. There was no catch and no further sightings from Sisualik or anywhere else in inner Kotzebue Sound (that we could confirm) for all the rest of the month of June. Belugas were seen in fairly large numbers several times between Port Site and Sealing Pt., often milling around or heading out to sea after reaching Sealing Pt. This was unusual behavior, as when beluga move along the beach from the west past Sealing Pt. they usually come into Sisualik and Inner Kotzebue Sound in a few hours. Not this year.

On the night of the 26th forty-four large white belugas were taken at Pt. Lay. That seems more than their self-established limit and must have amounted to a great deal of work to prevent spoilage.

This was a sad spring for beluga watchers and hunters in Kotzebue Sound. It was especially sad for those that live in Sisualik (the Eskimo name means "place of Sisuaq" beluga-white whale).

We did have a good uguruq season. A first small uguruq was taken out of Kotzebue on the 4th. Boats were able to get out into the ice pack from our side on the 5th and reported lots of uguruq and tame. One boat took home three and the other one. There were few boats on our side and Kotzebue boats were held back by ice running in the channel. Fog and rainy weather set in and the marine mammal hunt went on hold for a while. Noatak People moved down starting on the 11th. From then through the end of the month uguruq were being brought in a few at a time till everyone had some. We had four brought to us by extended family to be worked up. The uguruq were fat and in good condition. One of ours was the longest female I think I've ever seen. It was 99 inches long.

Several boats were caught out in the ice pack in the fog and one eventually had to be searched out and fueled by aircraft. Tough way to make a living! This was on the 24th-25th.

On the 19th a walrus was taken off Sealing Pt.

By the 18th the intensity of the uguruq hunt by Sisualik, Noatak and Kotzebue people had dropped off as most people had enough and hot weather and flies made working meat pretty wasteful. People continued to go out into the ice during good weather in hopes of seeing walrus or spotted seal and some took uguruq if opportunity arose.

Walrus were being taken in Pt. Lay on the 23rd.

Ice was in sight again from Sisualik on the 29th and extended family dropped one more uguruq here on the 30th. That brought our total to four for the spring, which means that we have about twice as much oil on hand as we have had for the past few years.

There were hundreds of spotted seals hauled out on the ice not far off Sisualik, as reported by hunters out in the last of the month.

Small Mammals

Tundra Voles were the scarcest of creatures commonly seen on Sisualik Spit in June. Arctic Ground Squirrels were the most common wild creature on the Spit in June. This is an unusual situation and kind of defies explanation. Lack of predators can account for the many squirrels, as well as a noticeable east from west drift of coastal squirrels on Krusenstern. One would think that the lack of predators (both animal and bird) would also benefit vole populations but something else seems to have happened to the hard-working little creatures of the ground.

One porcupine passed through Sisualik in June. Two loose dogs were quilled but have recovered well. The fate of the porky is not known. We didn't eat it - this time.

Furbearers

Foxes are scarce and most other furbearers are rare on the coast in June.

Birds

Migration is kind of winding down for most species as June comes on. Nesting, incubation, and with non-breeding waterfowl, feather change is coming on.

Several late migrants aren't expected until June and this year a couple didn't show up at all.

In mid to late June, as salt marsh "loudmouths" quiet down, Black-legged Kittiwakes, non-breeders for the most part, normally fill the ocean side air with their shrill cries. Not this year! Only a couple were heard from Sisualik in June.

Aleutian Terns, another latecomer with a much different voice than our regular Arctic Tern, were not seen this June.

There were also irregularities with passerines. For the second year there were no nesting Lapland Longspurs in Sisualik. This is a favorite camp bird and every camp laments its two-year absence. This is said to be the second most numerous passerine in NW Alaska. There are some possibilities for speculation as to their scarcity but nothing for sure. Common Ravens, our largest passerine, are about four times more plentiful in Sisualik than they have been historically. This seems directly due to the closing down of the open municipal dump in Kotzebue last winter. The additional numbers are causing competition stress between ravens and gulls. Ravens will probably diminish over time to what their new habitat can provide. One wonders about the time interval.

Eight large loons passed Sisualik from the direction of open ocean lead on the 2nd making a beeline for Kobuk River. These were probably Common Loons rather than Yellow-billed though the sighting was too distant and too short to be sure.

By the 4th our group of 300 flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans were the noisiest voices on the marsh. On the 6th our swan flock had increased to more than 500, often moving as a unit to newly greening plots around the marsh and occasionally to shallow melt water greening plots on the tablelands.

On the 6th, during a rare calm spell across the marsh, swans, ravens and cranes seemed to be competing to see who could make the loudest noise. It was beautiful, but not a symphony because of lack of harmony.

It was noticed around this time that there were more Canvasbacks on the marsh than usual, maybe helping to confirm that the extension of their breeding range to this region has been successful.

Flocks of Pintail and Wigeon, our two most important food ducks, were most numerous on the 7th. These are for the most part non-breeders or failed ones, which will begin molt in a couple of weeks.

Very few Brant passed our way this June, either in or out.

There were numerous flocks of what where apparently Hoary Redpolls around camp on the 10th. These large light-colored redpolls occasionally make a dramatic passage through here on rare occasions, either spring or fall.

By the 15th the absence of kittiwake, longspurs, Aleutian Terns and to some degree Semi-palmated Sandpipers was a point of concern. There were a few nesting Semi-palmated Sandpipers, but numbers are greatly reduced. This little "peep" is normally our most common nesting bird in Sisualik. There were very few this June.

On the 24th a Red-throated Loon got caught in the 6" mesh net I had out for early salmon. I had to cut several meshes to release the bird and it stabbed my hand several times. We were both glad when it took off with a croak of thanks.

By the 20th birds were scarce on the marsh. Early molters were down or gathered in secret places inland to be down shortly and broods were still tiny and hidden away by their mothers.

Swallows were busy feeding young on the 29th, when the first new flying Savannah Sparrows were noted.

Plants

If June if resident bird month on Krusenstern it is no less plant and insect month. Plants and insects do go together don't they? Just think, if there were no green plants there would be no mosquitoes. If there were no plants and mosquitoes there would be no ducklings, no whitefish and even no caribou and moose. Having this knowledge we find it much easier to tolerate the bad mosquito days of June. Terry the Superdog doesn't understand this and suffers the more for it.

June was relatively wet and warm and plant-vegetation growth was good. It was even phenomenal with some species. Our *Elymus mollis* (beach grass) developed seen heads to the height of my chin and beyond in some places. The "spears" were far earlier than the appearance of the first chum salmon this June. By Eskimo tradition the two are supposed to come at the same time in June. In most years they do, but not in June 1998.

Several of our leafy beach plants outdid themselves this year. *Angelica* and Ligusticum our two "celeries" were really lush, as was the medicinal *Artemisia*. *Mertensia* (bluebells) and chives showed early and robust development. Our one most important leafy vegetable plants, *Rumex arcticus*, reflected this same robustness of early growth later in July during harvest, due to warmth and wetness.

Gentians were a great disappointment this year and though July is their month of glory in a good year, growing plants of all local species can be found in June. Not this year.

On back beach ridges mat willows and dwarf birch had glossy new leaves out on the 2nd and the early-flowering creamy globes of bearberry were out, contrasting with the dark dried leaves of last year. This plant sends out flowers before leaves every year, as do a few others (*Salix* and *Eriophorum*).

The red edible shoots of Tall Fireweed were up the 4th .

On the 8th *Pedicularis* flowers were out on back beach ridges.

The 14th was a noteworthy plant day. First flowering of *Primula borealis*, Salmonberry, Rock Jasmine, Cranberry, and Hudson Bay Tea. *Angelica*, *Ligusticum* and chives were ready to eat. *Pedicularis Kanei* was at peak blossom time. With these flower beginnings we enter a critical period for the production of our 1998 berry crop.

The first yellow flower was seen in the marsh on the 16th – *Potentilla villosa*

The 17th brought flowers of poppy, forget-me-nots and a new colony of a nice little wall flower called *Erysimum pallasi*. I haven't seen it on the Spit before, but it has long been a part of the beach ridge flora farther west on Krusenstern.

Dandelions and bluebell flowers were out on the 20th.

By the 21st salmonberry and *Primula borealis* were approaching peak and blackberry plants had berries set on the vine.

On the 22nd first flowers of *Pedicularis sudetica*, the marsh "peppermint swirl," and

Beach Pea (*Lathyrus maritimus)* were out. On this same day there were some solid pink banks of *Primula borealis*. Color has come to the salt marsh! Very beautiful!

Yellow Paintbrush flowers were out on the 23rd and many of the two species of yellow *Potentilla*.

By the 24th there were lots of open salmonberry flowers. There seems more than last year and an eighth have already dropped their white petals. It is a critical time for pollination. Some flowers look worn, from cold nights and wind?

I saw a single gentian plant on the 29th probably a *G. propinqua*.

On the 30th the Journal notes that vegetation growth is great after rain and warmth. That's about the size of it for plants on Krusenstern in June 1998.

Fish

A record early chum salmon was taken on the 18th of this month last year. None were caught this year until July.

On the 2nd there were lots of fish for nets at the Point: small shee, lean char, whitefish and herring.

We were able to set net in front of tent for the first time on the 6th. Lean char and shee were the catch.

By the 8th out-moving lean char (slinks) were real thick. Three out of 30-40 caught in a net set of 22 minutes had ADF&G FRBX tags. The numbers of these were sent in to Fred Decicco, ADF&G in Fairbanks. These lean outgoing char mixed with small shee filled the water in front of our camp for nearly a week. Then on the 15th, after showing at Kivalina, Sealing Pt and Salluq through the week, fat char hit here. Big, fat and lots. These fish were fast moving and all in the direction of the Noatak mouth. These fish will be the late summer-fall spawners in the Noatak watershed. These fish are already very fat but feed opportunistically on their way. Fishing with rod and reel at fresh water outlets can be good during this passing. Sporadic catch of fat char continued till month's end.

No salmon were taken by us or reported taken anywhere in Kotzebue Sound in June. Last year we took a first chum on the 18th, a record early date.

The number of fat char available from the 15th to the 30th this year was unusual, as was the size of individual fish. These are fish that have come out of winter hibernation almost as fat as they went in during fall migration. They have fed

opportunistically and are heading into rivers early in the summer to spawn this fall.

Around the 10th of the month we made an interesting observation. There were many very lean char moving past our place in quite muddy water. Within this same muddy water there were multitudes of sub-adult Saffron Cod, 3 to 4 inches long. There were also some small and medium sized sheefish. The shee were stuffed to vomiting with the small cod; yet the char were lean and emaciated, and their stomachs, all of them, were empty. Later in the month as water cleared, fat char moving to the Noatak from the Kivalina system had stomachs nearly full with the same size cod.

People

People at the Point saw the first waves with white caps of the season on June 1st. This is an annual happening as "ice out " season gets underway. We in Sisualik will of course see enough white caps through the summer and into fall until ice again takes over the Sound.

The first boat got into Nuvugraq (the Point) straight from Kotzebue on the 2nd. This was also our first day of 24-hour sunshine.

We had our first "outside" visitors on the 7th. Old friends from Fairbanks that left their aircraft at the Point and walked over.

Our last snow in Sisualik melted on the 9th and the same day the last land-fast ice moved out at Sealing Pt. There is no more shore fast ice. It is all ice pack now.

A few new campers arrived on the 11th.

On the 12th I received a marine VHF radio as an early Father's Day present. We then became part of the switch that is on going with CB radios. VHF has many advantages over CB and the change from one to the other (exclusively) is ongoing. In the interim some of us have to keep both operating to be in touch with Search and Rescue events and general bush traffic.

More Noatak families down on the 12th. More families seem to be coming down this year than last. There are probably 10 occupied camps now peopled within the Noatak village portion of Nuvugraq.

State Fish and Wildlife Protection folks landed on the beach for a visit on the 15th - two old friends.

More people into Sisualik by the 17th, some from Noatak, some from Kotzebue and some clan and other family people to established camps now that boat travel ways

are open again.

Both blowfly and mosquito activity were becoming oppressive by mid-month. Lots of folks - most folks - have uguruq to work, hang and dry. Warm weather and flies make the work more troublesome.

Anore Jones, my former fishing partner's wife, arrived from California to stay a few days to help Carrie with the uguruq work. This was on the 18th, the first day of this year that we did not need a fire in the stove.

The 20th was a very bad night for Terry the Superdog because of mosquitoes. People, dogs and other warm-blooded creature are prime targets this date and for the rest of the month when temperatures and moisture are just right.

We visited the Point on the 22nd and found lots of people there in traditional camps. We remembered the days in the past when all the meat racks would be white with stripped squares of white beluga maktak. There was none this year!

On the 24th several uguruq hunting boats were caught out in the ice by heavy long-lasting fog. Most made it into shore but two at least were out for several days and one in particular turned up far from shore and out of gas. Through CB and VHF radio his needs were heard and he was located and re-gassed by floatplane. The boat and crew finally made it in and probably had a good sleep once they were safe on shore again.

On the 24th we heard that an allotment camp at Killiqmaiq has been occupied again this year for a while, as it usually is. There is seldom anyone living or camping between Sealing Point and Port Site nowadays. In the past there were several seal hunting camps in that area for the months of May and June. Generally they were people living the rest of the year in or around Noatak. During the era of local reindeer herd ownership, the herders and their deer would often be in this zone.

Around the 26th Sisualik people enjoyed the sight of numerous large yellow and black swallowtail butterflies around camps and the "spears" of *Elymus* sp. Beach grass had pushed up out of their sheathes, signifying that the first chum salmon should be here, but they were not. On this same date in the evening we heard the loud throb of a heavy barge and tug engine out of the fog to the SW as the first outside large watercraft arrived in Kotzebue Sound.

On the 27th Sam Williams' boy, John Wayne, was med-evac'd from here to Anchorage with internal bleeding.

On the same day we heard "forty-four beluga whales were taken at Pt. Lay last night." That's a lot of maktak and a lot of work.

The large barge anchored offshore of us and ice floes were in sight the last two days of the month.

The very last day of the month was capped by an unexpected and unusual aesthetic delight: a crown of gold on a clump of green dandelion leaves further topped by a large orange-black spotted butterfly. See Journal. Got a picture of the green crowned with gold, minus the butterfly.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

JULY

Introduction

July 1998 was marked by some poignant sadness, no frost, good weather, luxuriant plant growth and of course, mosquitoes.

Disappointments included the deaths of two nephews, very poor Gentian growth, and no new driftwood on the final outflow of summer flood waters. Also, early July brought no late run of Beluga Whale, which makes 1998 about the poorest in recent years of both whale occurrence and driftwood replenishment.

On the better side of things in July was the show of a good harvest, coming in August, of all four major berry species. There was also a good growth of some species of leaf plants, like sourdock, *Artemisia*, *Angelica*, *Ligusticum* and chives.

The annual *G. detonsa* surprise came on the 23rd and kind of saved the day, or rather the year, for this remarkable little flower and me. The only plot with a number of plants, a colony, was one of only two plots located last year. I was only able to find a few other plants in widely scattered places. My only consolation is that I did at least get to see the bright purple-blue of a freshly blooming flower and did not have to wait two years for that privilege. I had hoped to get quality photos this year, but that will have to wait again. Two poor years for this plant may mean more hope for next year.

We had no frost in July, which is good for things growing and berry development. Our lowest temperature for the month was 38º F on the 8th. A high of 82º F on the 22nd was a good high temperature for a station 30 miles north of the Arctic Circle. We had only two days of winds 30 knots or better. W-NW winds were at 30 k on the 7th and we had a giant thunderstorm on the 22nd, which caused gusts from the N at 40 k for a short time. Rain fell on only 6 days in the month, but ground moisture stayed pretty good this year.

Wildlife

The usual insects and warm weather of July brought some stressful hours to all warm-blooded creatures, but the sessions were short this year, broken up by cool

breezes or winds. Both beluga and Black-legged Kittiwake were no shows for the month, which remains a disappointment. A few broods of most common species of waterfowl were noted, but there was nothing out of the ordinary. Our Tree Swallow family managed to rear two youngsters to flying stage, with Jonathan standing on their roof most of the time. Semi-palmated sandpipers – our most common nesting sandpiper – were present in very low numbers this year. And of course, missing Lapland Longspurs were still a matter of concern.

Caribou

A large bull caribou was taken on the beach west of Sealing Point by extended family boat from Nuvuruq on the 10th. It was quite fat – good meat and all the old hair was shed. This kind of skin was valued in the past to make one man's parka. This skin was not saved but the meat was shared around and much appreciated.

On the 31st a female caribou without fawn was taken at Sealing Point. The meat was in rather poor shape – no fat - but useable, and the kids down that way made good use of it.

These were the only caribou reported in July '98. We were a bit too far south to entertain the large numbers of post-calving groups we heard of around Pt. Hope and Kivalina.

Moose

Moose sightings were few this July from Krusenstern beach camps. This follows a continuing downward trend from a peak several years ago, when July sightings were more regular.

One was seen as it passed Sisualik's westernmost camp on the 7th. Another made tracks through Sisualik, but apparently was not seen by anyone. The tracks were noted in mid month.

Bear

Bear tracks were not seen on the beach in July until mid month, when a few walrus carcasses turned up. There were tracks inland on my first sourdock trip on the 13th. Soon after that there were tracks around a walrus that someone cut chunks from near the most westerly Sisualik camps. When I made a second sourdock trip on the 25th, a very dark bear shared the scene with me. He was picking and eating half-green blueberries while I was picking sourdock. He made the trip ore of an adventure, and

though he never learned of my presence, I considered how great it would be if I could enlist his aid in picking sourdock leaves for a few hours. It might work under a trade agreement of some kind – say a trade for salmon heads.

So far as we have reports, this is the only bear seen on Krusenstern in July.

Sheep

On the 17th we received results of the ’98 sheep count and were relieved to learn that ewes and lambs were down only a bit from last year’s count, which means our worries over the terrible weather we had at Sisualik at lambing time last spring was not so bad back in the sheep’s mountains.

We had no other sheep reports in July.

Musk ox

No coastal musk ox sightings this July to our knowledge.

It is likely that some were seen NW of Sealing Point that we haven’t heard about. In the past several summers a group directly behind Salluq were regularly seen thru the summer by campers strung along the beach from Anigaaq to Sealing Point. The 1998 NPS musk ox survey indicates that these animals were more to the NW this summer, which would make them behind the mountains from the perspective of most occupied Krusenstern camp people.

The survey seems to indicate stable numbers and a good ’98 calf count.

Marine Mammals

Uguruq were still being brought in by ice pack hunters thru the 1st week of July, and a few walrus were seen.

On the 2nd and number of swimming walrus were seen near Port Site. Kivalina hunters were alerted. A walrus was taken by a Kotzebue boat on the 3rd and given in part to Sisualik people. By the 5th, marine mammal hunting had pretty well been discontinued. There was still ice in sight on the 7th, but large waves were building.

On the 8th, a dead and deteriorating Bowhead Whale was reported on the beach NW of Sealing Point. By the 19th it had moved to Salluq.

Marine mammal hunters have temporarily vacated camps, waiting for berries to ripen. There were about ten Noatak camps occupied this ice pack hunting season. The did well for meat and oil from uguruq, but here were no beluga taken this year in Kotzebue Sound.

On the 22nd a "dark" gray whale seen on Kotzebue waterfront displayed its barnacles. On the 23rd one Gray Whale was killed and butchered near Kotzebue. It was reported that three in a group were seen at one point. This was in Kotzebue waterfront channel. It is unusual for grays to be seen in nearshore waters in Kotzebue, but not real rare. They are seen a time or two each summer.

On the 24th we had waves – swells ¾ of the way up the beach. The drifting bowhead that seemed to be moving our way on the 19th disappeared. We have not heard of its whereabouts.

A walrus with skin and blubber good enough to eat landed at Sealing Point on the 30th. There have been three "floaters" landed between Sisualik and Akulaaq, two with heads and one bull without.

We thought we might see late belugas in early July, especially while ice was around, but that didn't happen. So 1998 was nearly a complete bust for beluga hunting and viewing. A sad year for "The Place of White Whales."

Small Mammals

Ground squirrels remain plentiful on Krusenstern. The Superdog Terry had the best hunt of his life on the 30th, when he caught three on his daily run. New squirrels, half size or less, were first out running around on the Fourth of July.

Tundra Voles remained one of the rarest creatures on Krusenstern, at least in our section, for the month of July. There are few shrews around. We heard of only one summer wandering porcupine.

Furbearers

There is sign of a few Red Fox pups, but only a very few, in the areas we have covered. No other furbearers are too likely to come to our attention on the coast in July. (Except perhaps Arctic Fox, and none have been noted.)

Birds

Fledgling Savannah Sparrows were noted on the first day of July. Savannah Sparrows and redpolls seem to have been the only nesting passerines in Sisualik this year, in the absence of Lapland Longspurs. (There was one raven nest with hatchlings at a west Sisualik camp.) Some Glaucous Gull and Mew Gull eggs had hatched, and swallows were feeding full time on the first day of July.

On July 4th my notes mention the silence of bird noise on the sea. It is at this time that the shrill voices of Black-legged Kittiwakes are the loudest. With their absence the silence was heavy, as there is no other species very vocal on the beach at this date.

Oldsquaw duck with tiny brood was noted on the 6th.

Box swallows still feeding on the 10th and mobbing Jonathan when he is brave enough to sit on their roof. They left on the 13th with two youngsters.

On this date (the 13th) I made a trip inland to Sourdock Lake and saw a lot of bird life there. There were two Glaucous Gull families, two Mew Gull families, a pair of Tundra Swans, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup females with broods and 30-40 adult wigeon in various states of feather molt.

There was a 2nd year Slatey-backed Gull west of us on that same day, and it later turned up in our gull flock, but stayed only a week. The Glaucous Gulls of our camp flock are not very friendly towards wayward Siberian gulls.

By the 24th some wigeon and pintails were returning to the salt marsh with brand new flight feathers. On the 26th Mew Gull, Arctic Tern, and Black Turnstone brought their families from nesting colonies inland down to the saltwater shore.

Many passerines in medium sized flocks were passing through by the 29th.

Two backyard cranes were showing off their half-grown youngster on the 30th. It could probably fly, or they wouldn't be so brave.

There was an unusual gathering of mixed non-flying duck broods noted on the 31st. This was at lake at Nuvuraq where many people have been moving around since eggs hatched, which may be responsible for the unusual grouping. Noted species were Oldsquaw (Long-tailed Duck), Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, and Greater Scaup. All the down young were herded as one group by the adults. The group probably numbered near a hundred. It was quite an unusual mixed group.

Plants

Most of our local plants come into their annual month of glory in July, and as usual some had a very good season while others have seen better years. It makes me especially sad to report a second bad year in a row for my favorite arctic plant, *Gentianopsis detonsa*. We need some good photos of this exquisite flower to go with an essay I have been working on – maybe next year.

Bluebells and Forget-me-nots had a good year and peaked in the first week; actually they were at peak on the first day of the month. The salt marsh "peppermint pinwheel" (*Pedicularis sudetica*) was also at peak on the first.

On the 2nd I noticed that some of the first flowering salmonberries had their sepals closing up, which means a berry will form. See Journal entry of the date for more details on salmonberry hopes.

We had lots of yellow flowers in the salt marsh by the 3rd. We have three *Potentilla* species – all are yellow and all blooming.

On the 6th a clump of lowly dandelion right in the 4-wheeler trail put on a spectacular show – a bright green leaf clump with a full golden-yellow crown. Had to take a picture of it.

On the 7th both *Saussurea* and Iris came into flower a mile back from the beach. This was a good example of how subtle differences a short ways inland may influence the time window in which similar species orient their lives.

The white petaled *Epilobium latifolium* colony near the airport is much diminished in number of plants. The few left are not robust; in fact the larger part of this species over there look malnourished and anemic. Don't know the reason. Our two white-petaled plants near the tent vary much from year to year as to robustness and flower number. Some years they do not flower, but the plants are long-lived. Plants at the Point were in flower on the 7th.

The salt marsh sported a lot of white and yellow on the 9th as Arctic Daisy and *Potentilla* came more on line.

Plant pollen began to fill the air within *Elymus* beds on the 9th and 10th. No *Artemisia* pollen yet.

Iris and *Senecio lugens* began blooming around camp on the 10th as the first buds of Grass-of-Parnassus were seen. A few *Gentiana propinqua* plants were located on this date as well.

On the 11th the first little "arc light" blooms of *Gentiana prostrata* were seen, making this neat, bright little flower the first gentian bloom in Sisualik for the '98 season.

Also on this date it was noted that several plants are showing super growth. *Elymus* grain heads are human head tall, and *Artemisia*, *Angelica*, *Ligusticum*, and *Mertensia* are showing great growth. Iris was at peak bloom on the 11th.

Did rather thorough *G. detonsa* plant search on the 12th in plots that have had high production in past years, but found none.

Did a sourdock trip to inland lake on the 13th and found good growth of *Rumex arcticus*. Got a good start on our winter supply.

The first tall fireweed blossom was noted on the 14th. Marsh sedges were showing the yellowing of past-peak greening – early signs of all already.

On the 15th the long 1998 search for the sight of a *Gentianopsis detonsa* plant came to fruition with the finding of three plants right in the "near tent" plot where there were some last year, and where I have been looking nearly every July day this year! See Journal entry of the 15th for some *G. detonsa* insights, as well as the entry for the 16th for more on this interesting and captivating plant.

Iris and low fireweed bloom peaked for the year on the 18th.

Found a few *Gentian tenella* on the 19th. *Senecio lugens* was making a great yellow show on this date, right around camp.

One of the *G. detonsa* plants found on the 15th was in full flower, with open corolla, on the 20th.

On the 22nd, the hottest and most violent (thunder, lightning, wind) day of the summer, a few *Gentiana tenella* flowers with open pale blue corollas were found in plots noted in other years. This flower is almost microscopic and is often overlooked by field investigators.

Artemisia Tilesii began throwing pollen on the 22nd.

The annual *G. detonsa* surprise occurred on the 23rd. See Journal. This plant continues to cast its spell of fascination over me. Perhaps, if and when I understand all its secrets, it will lose some of its attraction.

Also on the 23rd the first *Lomatogonium rotatum* and Grass-of-Parnassus open flowers were noted. These are the last species of the summer to come into flower, so the summer was complete with flowers with no more to look forward to for the year.

Made a second and final sourdock trip on the 25th and saw lots of unripe blue- and salmonberries. They are now being picked at Selawik and the Noatak Delta, where they ripen a week to ten days earlier than here.

See Journal entry of the 26th for a description of plant life a few miles inland from the ocean shore. One would not expect such a marked change of species in such a relatively short distance. The "wildflower" species seem to more reflect the inland plant changes.

Also on the 26th, while doing a survey of the only *G. detonsa* colony found this year while most corollas were open, I found 30 plants. Remarkably, this is the same small plot where only three plants were found on the 15th. Since this plot had a good colony last year it was scrutinized by me from the very beginning of summer. Prior to the 15th I found none. Finding the three which turned to 30 in ten days is an indication of the mysterious nature of this exquisite and interesting arctic beauty. See Journal entry of the 27th for a 1998 résumé of *G. detonsa* in Sisualik.

First berry pickers in sight from Sisualik were noted on the 28th.

Grass-of-Parnassus and Star Gentian were at peak bloom on the 29th, while *G. detonsa* and Iris were already fading.

Our first day of berry picking was on the 30th, when we picked blueberries for a pie and a bowl of salmonberries for the table.

Tall Fireweed flower banks were solid color and beautiful on the 30th. A *G. detonsa* search at Sisualik Point on the 31st (where many plants have been found in past years) yielded only one flowering plant. There were a lot of very small Star Gentians there (*Lomatogonium rotatum*).

The *Gentianopsis detonsa* turn out was of course a disappointment, doubly so since photos are needed. But there were some, and one does not have to wait two years for the exquisite experience of seeing one with its rich purple-blue corolla. Perhaps next year the earthen seed bank will release a super abundance, with many photogenic large plants.

Fish

If July is "plant month" then so is it "fish month." July and August are the months when most species of the region are most easily available, though not all are at their annual peak of edibility.

By July 1st, whitefish were already moving back east to rivers and deltas after nearly a month of feeding in coastal waters and lagoons. These fish were lean when they came down the rivers at ice out, but are now very fat and are top quality for cooking fresh or half-dried. They are generally too fat and oily to make good fully dried fish.

We didn't get a chum salmon until July 6th. Some were taken at other locations (Sealing Point, Kotzebue) a few days earlier, but last year we took one on June 18th.

There were multitudes of flounders of all sizes during the first week of July, and whitefish were abundant for those that wanted to set their net.

On the 9th we caught a King Salmon and our neighbors took three. This was the beginning of what was probably the strongest King Salmon catch Kotzebue Sound has ever had. There were over 200 taken and sold thru the commercial fishery, and of course no record of numbers not sold.

The first open commercial chum period on the 9th saw no boats or nets in Sisualik. Fishing time was twelve hours (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

We took a first Humpback Salmon (Pink) in our net on the 10th, the same day our sun set for the first time since June 2.

The 14th was a real good Chum Salmon day for our short push pole net. We got eight on the first set, ten on the second.

On the 20th another King Salmon came our way and was much appreciated. Two huge fat char were taken on the same set. The larger was 37" long, 8" wide at dorsal. Six Kings were taken east of us on the 20th.

On the 21st, a distant friend stopped by with a boatload of crab pots and about 20 large King Crabs! He gave us two with carapaces of 7". Big crabs! He said, "Lots of crabs out there." This is a prime example of the discovery of a "new" resource in our area. It seems likely that these crabs were not always here but are the result of range extension from farther south, possibly due to gradually warming sea temperatures.

The Kotzebue Sound commercial chum fishery got off to a pretty slow start. With continued low prices (15 cents a pound), few fishermen took part and those that did stayed pretty close to the selling dock, as gasoline prices are high. There was only one buyer and his capacity to handle the catch pretty much determined the length of the open fishing period. Trout, legally sold as incidental catch in the chum fishery, were again bringing 20 cents a pound. This seems a reasonable solution to circumstances beyond other control, but it is a situation that does tempt fishermen to maximize trout catch when opportunity is presented.

The large number of Kinds caught this year and the possible early closure of the chum fishery due to lack of market are the July highlights of the commercial fishery.

People

We started July 1998 off with a wedding in Sisualik on the first. It was a happy time with good weather and happy people. No one knew then of the tragedy that would take the life of one of the partners just a little more than a month later. Many of the same group of family and friends would gather again in Sisualik for the burial.

On the 9th we had another burial of a nephew raised in Sisualik, who died in Anchorage. On the 16th another nephew, son of the Sealing Point family, was laid to rest here in Sisualik. Being part of a large family has its joys and its pains – both in greater magnitude because of its many members.

The 5th was peak visitor day for the month, with two boatloads of town people and family, and many local friends. No special reasons for the visits, except the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

There was still ice in sight from the beach in Sisualik on the 7th, but none by the 11th when our midnight sun set after a long stint above the horizon.

Around the 19th people were leaving marine mammal camps as meat and oil were cured and packed away. Berries were unripe yet, and some families would be back to their camps for berry picking.

There were about 10 family camps occupied at Nuvuruq this July. That's up some from recent years.

On the 22nd we had not only the hottest day of summer, but the most spectacular. We had some family young folks in camp, and for once they found camp not "boring." A strong thunderstorm developed and the spectacular might of nature was demonstrated for all to see – thunder, rain, and lightning all came in turn at full magnitude. It was described as "awesome" by some of the young folks, and truly it was.

People were beginning to gather at Salluq by this time, anticipating the ripening of salmonberries (aqpiks) on this great salmonberry picking zone. We put in our first day of berry picking on the 30th.

There is expected to be a good crop of aqpiks harvested in the Salluq area during the first half of August. We would like to be there, but may not make it, as the open outlets present an obstacle we may not be able to deal with.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

AUGUST

Introduction

We may not have appreciated the good weather of June and July enough at the time we were having it – but we did when we got into August and were looking back in memory!

We had 22 days of rain in August, and 8 days of wind at 30 knots or better. In short, that is too many wet days and too much wind for our berry harvest month. We did manage to get berries, but it was not always when and where we wanted.

Our coldest day was on the 18th, when we recorded 33º F at thermometer height (6') and saw frost and light ice at ground level. It was enough to cause both black- and blueberries to color the hands that were picking them, and later the taste and sweetness of the blackberries especially. It was not enough frost to hinder the picking much.

The warmest day was on the 5th with a temperature of 66º F. On this date we made a pleasant trip to town in the large town family boat.

Winds at 45 knots from the SE on the 19th were the strongest of the month, but will so many days of near gale force winds and waves, the day of strongest wind didn't really stand out. What did stand out was that there were but a few days in the month when boating on the ocean was possible, and that is sad for folks who dearly wanted to travel west for a good salmonberry crop. Carrie was one of the most disappointed.

Probably and ultimately the worst hurt of August 1998 was the mechanics of the opening and closing of the two lagoon watershed outlets west of us. Waves, wind, and rain determine whether these outlets close - trapping multitudes of whitefish and giving a way to travel west on ATV – or stay open, allowing fish to escape back to the big river delta and limiting westward ATV travel.

On the 3rd, Anigaaq was closed but Akulaaq still open. On the 14th Akulaaq was closed. On the 15th Anigaaq re-opened due to wave action and constant rain in the watershed. Tons and tons of trapped fish were released to leave at will. These were to be ours for September and October fishing – all gone! Gone also was the ATV beach trail to salmonberry grounds.

Anigaaq re-closed early in September, but too late. Most fish were gone and Akulaaq may not produce much. We may be facing a winter without whitefish.

Carrie and nephew finally got off for Sealing Point and salmonberry grounds, only to run into a great tragedy. On the 27th they found an unmanned boat on the ocean side of the outlet. Going out to investigate, after leaving the women on the beach, they found no one on board but the anchor line partially out of the boat. On pulling it in they found the boat owner, drowned. We had attended his wedding to a Sisualik clan friend and neighbor only a month before.

Some good things happened in August. We got 16 quart-sized bags of salmonberries a half mile from home. Very good quality. There was a long run of very large trout (when the sea was down enough to set a net); and though blackberries were generally scarce throughout Sisualik, we stumbled into a great patch of large sweet berries that we picked from for several days. At the peak of the storm on the 15th we came within inches of serious wave damage and flooding. We count this as a good thing because of those good inches.

Wildlife

Waterfowl back from molt were very slow putting on fat due to prolonged high marine water level, which kept too much water of the best *Potamogeton* beds for dabblers. This also would slow the development of young birds-of-the-year, but they do have other options for food and probably managed, though at a retarded rate.

Flooded streams in late August can be detrimental to some fish reproduction and survival.

Most land animals benefit from the wetness of the land, for it promotes and extends green growth of plants. Insect activity is generally subdued by wet cool weather, and August 1998 had enough of that.

Caribou

On the 22nd a friend on an air taxi flight reported a caribou walking toward the beach just west of Sisualik. The single person that looked for it did not find the animal, but tracks were later seen right on the beach. This was the only local caribou report for August.

By the 29th caribou were reported crossing the Noatak way up, at Naikaulik as well as the Kobuk at Onion Portage.

Moose

Though moose season opened August 1, we did not hear of a kill or even a sighting of moose on Krusenstern this month. That is not surprising. With the coolness and wetness, even the few stray moose that might be near the coast would likely stick to their more inland willow patches. August moose hunters normally stick to rivers and waterways for the convenience of handling the large amount of meat.

Bear

Bears and their tracks turned up in a couple of unusual places in August. On the 12th, a bear was seen down on the Noatak Delta by some people gathering wood by boat. It is unusual for bears to be out on the Delta proper. With so much onshore wind there may be a walrus carcass way up in the mud flats.

On the 16th there were bear tracks around a dead walrus two to three miles west of us. On the 26th there were running bear tracks on the beach in between Frank Sheldon and Walter Kenworthy camps in far western Sisualik.

On the 18th a large bear ate from a walrus a few miles west of us. (The next dead walrus in line was right at our waterfront, thus our concern for beachcombing bear activity. We tried, but couldn't move the huge headless carcass in front of us.)

August beach bear activity was light compared to recent years. Probably all tracks made between Sealing Point and Sisualik were made separately by the same two bears, one quite large, the other quite small. The bears themselves were never seen by human eyes, only the tracks, which is normal for our zone.

Sheep

No sheep reports for August.

Musk ox

On the 4th, twelve musk ox were seen near the beach at Killikmaiq Our town family boat saw one at Lockhardt Point east of Kotzebue.

We received NPS musk ox count data on the 11th and the numbers look pretty good. Krusenstern had 121, twenty-nine of which were calves. The total from Cape Lisburne to Sisualik was 387.

ON the 18th there was a large musk ox around Jones Camp on the west Noatak delta.

Perhaps September will bring more news of these interesting and ancient animals. Some relocation of local groups has been hinted at by observers.

Marine Mammals

August is the month of lowers marine mammal activity in Kotzebue Sound. Most of our marine mammals are associated with ice, and August in the only month we normally have a complete lack of ice. Some last season ice is still around in July; new ice begins forming in late September.

A dead female walrus with one tusk drifted in with onshore winds on the 1st. There was also a dead uguruq on that date.

For dead walrus (headless) and two uguruq landed between Sisualik Point and Akulaaq on the 2nd.

Storm waves on the 20th left a large headless bull walrus on our doorstep. Also on this day a spotted seal lost his death grip on a large male chum salmon and large waves dropped it on the beach just in time for supper! Talk about timely answers to prayers! We haven't had a net out for some time due to heavy seas.

Small Mammals

On the 10th we finally saw the first vole we have seen all summer. These active little animals have been very close to non-existent in Sisualik since snow melt this spring. A building population is now probably underway, but they are starting nearly from scratch.

On the 28th, two dead shrews were found in a plastic bucket (rain water in bottom). So both shrews and voles seem to be beginning to make a population comeback. Maybe there will be no storing of meat and fish on the ground this winter.

Furbearers

We have a strange one this month. On the 290th our nephew, who took Carrie to Sealing Point with our little boat was a ways up the creek called Clam Creek (Ivillyukpalik) on the lagoon directly north of Sealing Point. He was with another family member. They saw a very dark-colored beaver in the water ahead of them.

They got quite excited, and trying to get a shotgun ready they ran over the animal and it surfaced behind them. They did get off a shotgun blast, but did not see the animal again. There are both certain that it was a beaver, as both of them have seen beaver in other areas.

Except for Pleistocene times, we know of only two other beaver sightings on Krusenstern in the last 50 years (and a human generation before that). One was killed swimming along the ocean beach near our Sisualik camp (15-20 years ago) and another was seen by Sisualik Point (10 years ago).

Though beaver have not established themselves on Krusenstern or the Noatak River (rumors and strays do persist on the river), they must be accepted as part of the fauna of the Monument. (Rare, but possible, and with global warming being suggested, their range extension from the Kobuk watershed may be eventually established). Moose and marten have come in this century, and beaver may be on the way.

The Sealing Point and Salluq area has several active Red Fox dens, so their population may be building too after several years of distemper and rabies epidemics.

On the 15th a large male wolf was killed at Jones Camp. It seemed to be attracted to a female dog with pups. This is a very unusual happening at this season of the year. Wolves do turn up around camps (especially those that keep dogs) in late fall and winter.

Birds

Nearly constant high level marine waters made conditions for waterfowl less than good in August. The aquatic plant *Potamogeton* sp. is very important to late summer and fall waterfowl. Great and extensive beds of it are found in our shallow water mudflats, lagoons and backwater area salt marsh. When marine waters stay unusually high for long periods, these beds are out of reach to dabbling ducks and geese. This August those waters were high for long periods, and waterfowl were slow in fattening up after molt. There are alternative food sources, so this is not a catastrophic situation. It is more a delaying process, and unless there is a very early freeze-up, it is not of much consequence. It does shorten the time the birds-of-the-year have to be ready for migration, however.

Many – most – ducks were back on the marsh by the 4th, after molting.

Pipsqueak (the Mew Gull) and her brood left on the 8th. This species may be the earliest of all birds to depart with their young-of-the-year.

Small family groups of Golden Plovers turned up on beach ridges on the same date.

On the 9th we saw a first flying Pintail brood. There were a few geese back from molt, but no swans yet.

Saw a first Sanderling on the 10th.

A large flock (200) of Whimbrel on the 12th marked the beginning of a time of seeing more of this species than we have seen for years. It is good to see the numbers returning.

Some unusual raven activity around mid month presented a mystery never solved. There were many walking-marching through the grasses of the salt marsh. Presumably it was a food march, as our population of ravens is inflated and there were probably picking sedge seeds or comatose insects.

On the 17th the first flying Tundra Swan adults were back from molt. Also this day numbers of Dunlin, Sanderling, Black Turnstones and a very swift Merlin were noted on the mudflats, marsh and ocean beach. A little frost on this date reminded all creatures including us that fall and freeze-up was on the way again. It is hard to realize that in July, but as August winds down there are hints.

By the next day cranes and whimbrels were giving us a great show with voice and flights that we haven't seen for a while. This was not a straight thru migration passage, but more of a practice for that time, and getting young-of-the-year and old timers used to handling flock flight and calls.

On the 19th a few terns were seen at a distance. Most Arctic Terns have been absent for a while – these may have been Aleutian Terns, who nesting activities are ten days or so later.

Some adult ducks came onto our table on the 21st, and were welcome. They were good but very lean. Lack of fat reflects high marine waters for too long.

On the 22nd we picked up a first dead sea bird. This was one of only three noted in August. A die off was more or less expected, but didn't materialize – in our area anyway. This bird was a Short-tailed Shearwater, as was one of the other two. It was much deteriorated. The third bird was a Common Murre.

Three flying Glaucous Gull "squabs" turned up on the beach front on the 23rd – begging food from Jonathan. See Journal entry.

A few Brant flocks were feeding in unusual places this last week of August. Passerines are already becoming a rare sight.

Plants

Eel Grass (*Zostera maritima*) was back on Sisualik beaches again on the 1st and 2nd after prolonged south winds. This plant is most surely extending its northern range into Kotzebue Sound.

Our last flower peaks happened the first week of August. Tall Fireweed, Grass-of-Parnassus, and Star Gentian bring to a close our glorious summer of color. Constant rain, wind, and salt spray treated these last flowers poorly in August, and brought both floral displays and insect activity to an early halt.

We picked several bags of salmonberries nearby on the 4th. About ¾ of the berries available were ripe for picking. On this date also, large "white" cranberries were showing and promising a good later crop. Sisualik blue- and blackberries look sparse this year.

On the 7th we picked a full 5-gallon bucket of salmonberries from a nearby plot. Most of the berries were ripe, here and farther west on the biggest and best salmonberry grounds at Salluq. Carrie dearly wanted to get down there to partake, but bad, bad weather (rain, wind, waves) and untimely opening and closing of our western outlets prevented that until it was too late. This "one bucket day" turned out to be our best day on salmonberries. Better than nothing, but a far cry from some better years. August 1998 was about the worst in our memory for berry picking weather. There were good berries, but dry picking days and calm traveling days were extremely rare.

Tall Fireweed was still making a good show on the 8th.

Storm conditions on the 16th were tough on remaining *Artemisia* and fireweed plants.

We located a rather super place for blueberry picking on the 19th, a few miles off. Light frost on that date made them a bit soft, but still good picking. We got enough.

On the 26ht we lucked out again and found a super, super, good crop of blackberries, right in a large plot we picked last year. We worked hard on these right after Carrie got back from a "too late" trip down to Salluq and Sealing Point. We picked a full 5-gallon bucket on the 31st and kept at this plot for several days, hoping to get our full share before birds (geese) and neighbors finished them off. There is great competition for ripe berries when the crop is sparse or spotty. There was no competition at all last year in Sisualik. There were berries all over and tons were never picked. This year was a different story. We ended up with less than our share of salmonberries, but more than our share of black- and blueberries.

We did survive August 1998 but it was close!

Fish

Our summer personal use fishing is the only summer fishing we do now, and it is done by using a long "push pole" (35-40 feet long) that we use to push out a sack of gravel tied to the end of nets of various size mesh: 6" for chum salmon and large trout, 3" for whitefish and saffron cod, and 4 ½" for medium trout. This kind of net setting can only be done when there are moderate to small waves. We did not do a lot of August fishing for obvious reasons. We do keep up usually with household needs by taking a few more than we will use the same day, dressing them, and slipping them into the freezer – not with the intention of freezing them but keeping them cool for 3-4 days. It works well and gives a hedge when contrary weather like we had this August prevents net setting for a long time.

The alternate opening and closing of our two western outlets for fall fishing completely cancelled any hope for whitefish in September. August 1998 was a mean one to us.

On the 8th we cooked large flounders for the first time this summer. They were thick and good. After tiring of trout and salmon by mid August we always look forward to the first thickening and fattening flounders.

The first fall-run trout found our net on the 10th, an early date for that event. See Journal entry for details.

On the 20th the high swells and a spotted seal gave us a free freshly-killed chum salmon which was quickly cooked. It had escaped the seal's grasp but was mortally wounded, and the waves threw it up on the beach. Thank you!

We had a good catch of large trout and fresh run salmon on the 23rd. Two of the trout were over 10 lbs. Trout were still in the water the next day and we had a good catch.

A trout with tag no. 0638 ADF&G was part of our catch on the 27th, when we got a record catch of 20 salmon-sized trout in our short little net.

There was also a brightly colored spawned-out trout in the catch. This seemed an early date for a fish already thru with the spawning process. The big question this fish posed was how would it survive the coming winter till feeding time next summer?

By the 29th, only flounders were taken in the 6" mesh net. The major trout passage was over. We enjoyed a long and plentiful trout run this August, much unlike last year when there were few.

We did take another tagged female trout, no. 0215, 25" long on the 31st.

People

It is probably plain by now in this August '98 report that Sisualik-Krusenstern people were not pleased with the weather given us for this berry-picking month. Twenty-two days of rain and two nights of ocean swells within inches of washing over all of Sisualik is not what one would prefer for this only full berry-picking month of the year. It could have been worse – Sisualik lower camp sites and all are still here. There could have been no berries and find weather every day. Instead, working in and around storms and personal desires and frustration, we did get a good quantity of berries. They will taste doubly sweet for all the trouble. We and most other folks, after all is said and done, are quite thankful for the fruits of August '98 and will eagerly await the coming of August '99 to see how it compares to this wild one.

The resident population of Sisualik and the rest of Krusenstern is in rather sharp decline. There are a number of reasons, but perhaps the aging of a generation, the last generation of people that made their living "off the land" is the reason of most concern. If the present trend continues, in a very short time there will be only recreational camps visited by town dwelling extend families on sporadic occasions and for short stays.

The folks that did make it down to Salluq for the good salmonberry crop almost stayed there all summer. They had berries and rain but ran out of most everything else. When a lull in high seas did occur, those that had been waiting to gown that way did – the brave ones – and those that were overdue for home-going were glad to get out and had no thought of returning – this year!

Carrie and nephew family made it down that way on the 27th just in time to discover the worst tragedy of the summer. It was the drowning of a young fellow-friend-relative that had been married in Sisualik just the month before. See Journal entry of the date.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

SEPTEMBER

Introduction

The best that can be said about September 1998 is that it was better than August, with less rain and wind. There was, however, enough of both since we were still soaked from August wetness. Water levels, both fresh and marine, remained too high. We didn't get washed away in August, and we should be quite thankful that we didn't in September.

There were several disappointing events in September that will color our whole freeze-up time and winter. The caribou didn't come – there were only a few strays. And our two high potential whitefish fishing places failed to produce any fish for winter use. When both of these usually plentiful resources fail, life can be tough for people living fall and winter in the area. Nowadays, with well-supplied stores available (at a distance and for a price), it is less of a catastrophe than in times past, when one depended exclusively on resources from the land. Most folks on Krusenstern lived well through the fall because of family or friends their shared their harvest of meat and fish from other areas.

There were lots of waterfowl, mostly Tundra Swan and wigeon. Flowers, small birds and berries were pretty much absent after the first week however. We were spoiled from last September when the unusual late warmth and wetness provided a full September of flowers and pickable berries.

Our warmest day was on the 10th with a temperature of 67º F. The coldest day was the 29th with a temperature of 25º F – a good start on an early freeze-up that has not yet materialized.

We had winds of 30 k on the 15th from SE, S and SW and again on the 22nd from NE and E. Gales to 30 k from SE and E on the 24th were surpassed by 40 k winds on the 23rd from E and SE. These winds, and rain on 14 days, tended to keep our water levels high and waves active.

The September 1 burial of the drowning victim, son-in-law of a dear Sisualik neighbor, started the month off on a somber note. The late evening sight of several hundred Tundra Swans completely covering our backyard duck lake on the 15th did

much to dispel the somberness and restore the everlasting hope that things will be better – sometime!

Wildlife

Several patterns of behavior and movements were noted to be different this year with some species. Cranes were around much later than usual and Canada Geese and Pintail left earlier than usual. Some of the reasons are readable, some more obscure. For instance, the thin blackberry crop would influence the date that most geese depart, and long periods of high marine waters would discourage pintails. By contrast, Wigeon, whose usual food source is floating green algae, were around in high numbers very late, extending their stay into October.

Caribou

It is always our hope that caribou will enter our area some time in September from habitual summer range, always north of us. The reason is simple: it is this month that caribou, especially bulls, carry more fat, sweet fat, than any other month. This fat (and meat) of bulls is lost and becomes tainted early in October. Most years they do not reach our "out of the way" corner. We are SW of their early, usual migration routes, where they cross the Noatak River north (or east) of the village, and Onion Portage on the Kobuk. There were a few "stray" animals on Krusenstern this September. We waited for more in vain!

Our town family brought us one caribou on the first that they got from the Kobuk River, above Kiana. It was a young male with healthy meat, but little fat. They brought us another on the 8th, also from above Kiana and also a young male, but carrying much more fat, which makes better eating. We were pretty well set for early fall eating after these deliveries entered our freezer. The gifts were timely!

On the 6th we had word that good bulls were available not far above Noatak Village, but only small animals. Young males and cows were to be found above Kiana on the Kobuk.

By the 11th there were many caribou rumors – the closest reported caribou were at Lower Noatak Canyons (not far from us). On the 12th it was reported that a large group had crossed the river to our side at the canyon. On this same day, four Tundra Swans up on high ground behind our camp in Sisualik attracted the attention of someone who thought they were caribou, and put the word out on VHF that there were caribou behind Sisualik. When the swans flew off, this report was cancelled. Probably more people heard the first report than heard the cancellation, however!

That's how caribou rumors are born. Everyone is uptight, wondering when they will show.

On the 14th lots of caribou were reported on NE Kobuk Lake area – Wolf Creek. On the 17th a few caribou were reported around the Noatak Hatchery, while many were still at Wolf Creek.

One caribou was taken from a small group of cows and calves between Salluq and Sealing Point on the 19th. On the 22nd three caribou went through the whole of Sisualik, from west to east, and then all the way back, off the Spit to the mainland – and not seen by anyone! The tracks were noted the same day, but no one saw the animals (a cow and two calves).

On the 23rd five caribou were seen near Jones Camp (none taken). A cow and calf were seen at the same location on the 24th.

Two caribou were seen west of Sisualik on the beach and may have been taking on the 29th.

On the 30th, the nephew who stays with us traveled west past Sealing Point to the old Army Base, but he saw no large animals.

Moose

One moose is good condition was taken inland from Salluq on the 24th. There is usually a moose or two that summer and stay into early fall in the large patch of willows and cottonwoods surrounding a spring, where the large freshwater creek called Tuqsruq comes out onto the grass flats.

We heard of no other moose taken or seen in September.

Bear

On the 8th we got word (by VHF) of a problem bear on the Kobuk Delta. It was visiting unoccupied camps, tearing things up as usual in search of food or out of curiosity. It is unusual for that area to have problem bears because of its distance from the mountains that our bears seem to be fond of. Folks with camps in the area were looking for help to rid themselves of the problem They were advised that the bear could be killed by anyone who had opportunity. After a few days things quieted down and we never heard if the bear moved back to the mountains or was killed.

On the same date we had lots of bear tracks around a deal walrus on the beach west of us, close to the westernmost Sisualik camp. Checking out the tracks, it seemed there are probably only two bears that come by at different times to eat from the carcass. It will soon be finished and then we may have the "beachcombers" moving into Sisualik proper, where there are a couple of untouched dead walrus. One track is quite large, one is quite small.

On the 29th, three bears traveling together from the west ate from the same old walrus and turned back west – we are glad to say. These same three bear tracks were seen by nephew the next day, five or six miles west of Sealing Point.

Sheep

No report of sheep this month.

Musk ox

No reported sightings.

Marine Mammals

This is the month that ice and marine mammals make their way back into Kotzebue Sound – usually both, normally in the last week. So it was this year, with a first ugurachaik (short yearling uguruq) seen on the 28th, the same day that ice formed on small lakes. Two Common Ringed Seals were caught by hunters from Sisualik Point on the 28th as well.

Small Mammals

High marine waters, which flooded the back marsh several times in August, did so a couple of times in September too. The greatest and last time was on September 26, when we had unusually high marine waters without wind.

As a result, Tundra Voles and shrews are on the narrow strip of land that remained above water. There are indications of building numbers after a time of near nonexistence during early and late spring – we may see a rapid jump in local populations. This local area is, of course, the same "high ground" that camps and people are on, so we will expect to see increased small mammal numbers as snow comes in October.

Our ground squirrel numbers remain high, in spite of the number Terry has killed this summer. His range has been necessarily limited, so that he has much reduced numbers in the places he visits, numbers remain high outside of that zone. Squirrels have remained unusually active clear through the month, presumably due to slow fat build up because of competition for the best food.

Furbearers

There is reported to be numbers of young Red Foxes in the Sealing Point area. Though there has been little sign this summer in or behind Sisualik, there will probably be a drift of foxes into the area, as young born and raised in other places deplete food sources around denning areas.

There have been stray muskrat wandering around in strange places with all our high water and flooding. This may be indicative of a high population in the better habitat locations. There have been hints of growing populations of this species in the last few years, and human harvest has dwindled to almost nothing.

There are some hints that beaver are extending their range west and north from the Yukon Delta. We may be getting more surprises as time goes on. There have been several species of creatures that have moved into and become common in our area in the past two decades.

Birds

We got to see lots of waterfowl this September. Our long periods of high water, both salt and fresh, somewhat slowed and prolonged staging activities for some species, and hurried the departure of others.

On the first we were given four whimbrel. They were extremely fat and very good. These are probably the most tasty and choice of all wild birds that we eat. Numbers have been low here for several years, but were quite plentiful this year for a change. They are probably similar to the Eskimo Curlew in edibility, which helps explain the disappearance of that once plentiful bird.

Our Sisualik salt marsh-mudflat complex was really full of birds through the first week of September. Shorebirds of several species, Canada Goose, and Wigeon were especially numerous, while all passerines were quite rare.

Arctic Terns and Mew Gulls were long gone. And cranes were starting to move through on the 3rd.

Dead calm waters on the 6th gave us lots of goose music from the back marsh and mudflats. This abundance of geese did not last long because of our limited blackberry crop, but we enjoyed this truly Northern Symphony while we had it. Calm days to magnify the calls were also rare in September.;

Saw a new – this year's model – Northern Harrier on the 7th. Lots of reddish tan coloration.

On the 9th, another calm evening gave us a different symphony when our local flock of Tundra Swans grew to a thousand. Quite a loud and enthusiastic bunch. On the 16th at 10:30 in the evening, our backyard duck lake was completely covered by white Tundra Swans! There was no lake water showing. It was a rare and memorable sight, though the noise was whipped away by strong winds.

With temperatures in the 20's again on the 13th we saw several large flocks of cranes passing through. Our three "backyard" cranes were still around on the 18th, a late date for cranes. These are a pair that raised one youngster to adulthood and have been in sight behind our tent nearly every day in August. There were still here on the 19th when several Dunlin scooted by, chased by a Merlin. The first Snow Buntings showed up also on this day.

On the 20th a large flock of cranes (30) passed high overhead. I thought our three backyard cranes would join them, but they didn't.

By the 20th waterfowl numbers were dropping rapidly.

There is a great new gull story in the Journal entry of the 21st! Don't miss it!

By the 23rd many Wigeon and some Canada Goose were around, but Pintails and Tundra Swan had pretty much left.

A last crane was heard on the 25th, and a surprise high water flood on the 26th, without wind, covered the whole salt marsh and made it into a single lake. A very odd happening. Hard freezing began on the 28th as the sky cleared. These conditions cleared out most waterfowl except for 200 Wigeon, 18 Dunlin, and a few late swan families with small youngsters.

On the 30th, with half of the lagoon iced up, we were still able to count 300 ducks (mostly wigeon) and 100 swans in family groups.

Plants

With respect to plants, September 1998 was very different than September 1997. Last year was very unusual in that we had a second blooming of marsh species due to a warm wet September after a dry summer. We were surprised last year to see iris, bluebells and cranberries flowering in the midst of bright fall-colored leaves.

This year was very much the opposite, with the last flowers disappearing early in the month, and no late flowers at all. Most years there are lingering few.

Fall colors were taking over the landscape by the 3rd. The same evening we first used electric lights again.

There were still Arctic Daisy, Poppies, and Marsh *Potentilla* on the 4th.

Our last blackberry pick was on the 7th, and a good cranberry pick on the 9th ended our berry season. There was a heavy frost on the 11th that pretty much ended everybody's picking.

Back marsh floodwaters on the 24th and 26th probably redistributed summer seeds throughout the sat marsh and determined next summer's plant growth patterns.

The big show in the plant world this September was turning of leaves from the green of summer to the brilliant colors of autumn during the very first week of the month.

Fish

It was in September that we found out for sure that we would have to face a winter without whitefish – a staple we are quite fond of. There will be other fish but none can quite fill the niche normally filled for us by Anigaaq and Akulaaq whitefish.

Trout were still running strong on the first of September. We had a long window of time when fat trout were in Sisualik waters this year. The trick was to catch waters quiet enough to permit a net set. The first were quite large and super fat from August 10th into September.

After the first week of September we took an unusual number of deep-colored, very lean, spawned-out trout. The first catch of these was on the 12th, and eight were taken on the 14th, making about a total of 20 for the week. Usually only two or three are taken all month. These were taken in a 3" mesh whitefish-tomcod net as incidental catch. They are the part of the trout stocks that are the earliest spawners of the current year. They won't have time to fatten up till next summer, so we wish them luck in survival. It seems a cruel situation.

A fresh run chum was taken by a neighbor on the 9th.

Our Saffron Cod catch was not great this fall. There were some good days, like on the 21st when the net took three full 5-gallon buckets in a couple of hours. We had a heavy catch on the 25th and more on the 28th, with one Red Salmon (jack) – good eating for a change. That was about the end of our open water net fishing for 1998.

Rain through mid to late September was bad for those making late dried fish. Many people in Noatak and on the coast like to make dried fish after flies and rain have quit. This year there were no flies but too many consecutive days of rain was not good for fish drying.

People

We started September off on the first day with a funeral and burial of a young fellow drowned at Anigaaq under unfortunate circumstances. He was the new husband of the daughter of a dear family of Sisualik friends. We celebrated their marriage in Sisualik in July. It was a sad occasion for Sisualik people.

The population of Sisualik began to drop early in the month. With a poor blackberry crop and no activity at either whitefishing outlet, as well as caribou coming closer to Kotzebue from an inland direction, our resident population was down to maybe an all time low for this century. By the 15th there were only six people from the tip of the Point to the westernmost Sisualik house. There were two old women, three old men, and one middle-aged man.

There were three occupied camps west of Anigaaq to Port Site.

We started a generator for electric lights for the first time on September 3rd. Summer daylight has been long and welcome. We will dream of it again in December.

There were few people in Sisualik for the Labor Day weekend. Most boaters were up Kobuk or Noatak Rivers for caribou.

On the 18th, during fog-rain-mist, a plane en route between Kotzebue and Point Hope ran into our highest coastal mountain. The pilot was killed. There were no passengers. The crash and the bad weather was on the 17th; the plane was found the morning of the 18th when the weather had improved.

Don't miss the people-gull story in the Journal entry for the 21st! It is a good one!

There were a few more people in Sisualik on the 23rd for late waterfowl hunting or closing camps down for the year. They didn't stay long as we had some super high floodwater in the back salt marsh lagoon area.

September 1998 was not a great month, as past Septembers have been. No caribou, no whitefish, and few blackberries with considerable wetness and high water made it seem poor. Still it was good living with lots of variety of good things to eat, and no lasting damage by wind and waves. Even firewood was still available, so our complaints are mostly born of remembering past, better fall freeze-up months.

MONTHLY RESOURCE REPORT

OCTOBER

Introduction

October is historically our "freeze-up" month, which usually includes formation of an "ice bridge" that makes it possible to travel to and from Kotzebue. In October '98 there was limited freezing. Ice did form, but there was also rain, wind, and snow that may have given us some record late freezing and ice conditions.

We were able to cross some ice and get to our winter shelter on the 28th – ten days later than our moving date for the last two years. We did not appreciate much not being able to get to our warm spruce patch house till so late considering the shortage of firewood in Sisualik, the ocean waves, and our flapping tent.

Our earliest ice crossings to Kotzebue in past years have been October 10 (with bicycle), October 12 (dog team) and October 14 (sno-go). This year the only crossing in October was by boat, and that method was still in use on October 30th. As it turned out, crossing to Kotzebue was delayed a full month – well into November.

In recent years, October has often passed quickly, with hundreds of caribou in sight every day nearly all through the month. This year the numbers did not pass through our way. There were a few strays and we had meat, but little of the thrill and excitement that the large herds always bring.

Our lowest temperature for the month was 16º F on the 23rd; high temperature for the month was 43º F recorded on the 2nd. It wasn't until the 17th that we had freezing temperatures all day and night.

We had five days of winds to 30 knots or better. The windiest day was the 3rd, with 35-knot winds from the N that brought our marine water level down to "rock bottom" for the first round of early ice making. This brought delays later on in the progress of freeze-up and ice-trail formation. With marine levels so low there was no water for ice over mud bars, which is where the first ice travel is done for safety's sake.

It also seems likely that these conditions caused the rather early departure of Jonathan and his family. Usually he doesn't leave Sisualik until we do. He left us behind this year. We missed him but glad he went before he learned to follow us to

our winter spruce patch. I've worried over how we could accommodate his needs for the winter if he ever did follow us there.

We had fourteen days of rain-snow through the month. Much of it was rain on snow, which further slowed the freeze-up process.

As a package, the months of August, September, and October have not been too kind to Sisualik people this year. We have survived without real hardships, but we do look forward to better times.

Wildlife

The lack of a severe cold spell in October extended the time that wounded or late-hatched waterfowl had to get ready to migrate. Our extreme fluctuations in water levels through the month made for boom and bust times in terms of food availability for waterfowl and gulls.

There were several Tundra Swan families that hung on late, probably for the sake of their late-hatched small cygnets.

Bull caribou came into rut early in our area, and there was a high percentage of bulls in the few scattered bands that did move through our zone in October.

Ground squirrels were off and on, out all month. Some were quite lean. This and the temperatures were probably why they were out so late – not enough stored fat to hibernate. Their extremely high population on Krusenstern these last several years may have added to their nutrient problems. We know a few plant species – favorite foods – are nearly wiped out.

Most creatures probably were able to cope, as we did, with late freeze-up conditions. It is unseasonably early severe cold that can take a heavy toll on young and unprepared migrants.

Caribou

Our local caribou scene was sad this October (and September). We have been fortunate these last few years to have multitudes of caribou pass right through Sisualik during October and September, even though we are removed (southward) from their normal long time migration path. There is no hint that either the Red Dog Road or decline in caribou numbers is the reason for their poor showing here this October. It is more likely the simply erratic whims of front-moving animals when

migration gets underway. Their more regular migration routes from the North Slope cross the Noatak River above the village and on to the Kobuk at Onion Portage.

We had a few small groups and a number of wandering lone bulls that would probably not find un-mated cows.

On the 2nd, a group of 20-30 caribou were reported on the beach west of Sealing Point. These were the first reported on the beach and gave hope that a big movement was coming.

On the 3rd, lots of caribou were reported inland from Battle Rock. On the 4th, a good-sized group was seen at Clam Creek, north of Sealing Point. On the 7th, that group was still there.

Several hundred caribou were reported (by a pilot) at the mouth of the Aggie River (east of the Hatchery) on the 7th. By the 14th, numbers of caribou were reportedly coming off the hills to Salluq and Anigaaq. A few were taken. On the 15th, one hunter went inland behind Akulaaq and got four females – good meat – and one smelly bull. The bull was lean, too!

On the 16th, nephew got one young bull behind Akulaaq – good meat. Others got one or two animals along a line inland from Jones Camp (Noatak Delta) to Sealing Point. Apparently a few scattered groups were present all along this line. On the 17th I finally saw and got one bull just west of Sisualik. It had a swollen neck and empty stomach, but no smell. There was some inside fat but no back fat. It was useable, though not choice.

A good bunch of caribou were at Salluq. Some crossed to the beach and a few were taken on the 18th.

When I was able to get the 4-wheeler across the ice and up the trail toward our house, I saw six caribou but didn't shoot. Saw another group of six across the creek from grave digging site. I met a bull on the trail west out of Sisualik on the 21st. There were three caribou at Jones Camp on the 26th.

After our move inland on the 28th there were numerous small groups of caribou north of us. On the 29th I got a couple, as well as on the 30th and 31st. See Journal for a Sanningaruq Halloween story.

Moose

There were tracks of two moose when we got to the house on the 28th. This was the first

sign of moose and the only sign we know of this October.

Bear

There were bear tracks in the snow around beached walrus west of Sisualik on the 11th. These were the only ones noted in October, as there was not much forage to bring them to the beach. Caribou guts and crippled animals gave them fresh meat inland.

Beachcombing bears were few this late summer and fall. We are pleased to report that they treated our house and things inland well this year.

Sheep

No sheep reports from Krusenstern this October.

Musk ox

The occasional travelers west of Sealing Point looking for caribou probably sighted musk ox from time to time, particularly between Army Base mountains and Rabbit Creek. Since everyone's focus was on caribou, musk ox sightings were not of much concern and not widely reported. We didn't hear much of musk ox this October, which is probably a good thing. The general mindset this fall would make it possible for musk ox to be blamed for the diverting of caribou away from Sisualik. The Red Dog haul road, Port Site activities, and Kivalina hunters have all fallen under suspicion.

Marine Mammals

October is a major seal-hunting month in Kotzebue Sound, primarily, though not exclusively, by powered boat. All species of hair seals are attracted by early first-forming ice, which first occurs at the mouth of large freshwater rivers. The basin and shoal area between Kotzebue and Sisualik is prime hunting ground. Seals leave a wake when chased in shallow water, which makes them easy to follow. The seal can then be shot when it surfaces for air. They also tire and become relatively easy prey. In years past there was much competition in this activity, but interest, need and expense have brought about a real drop in participation. There are still hunters out though, some from Kotzebue and a couple of boats from Sisualik this fall.

On the first few days of the month there were lots of seals and gulls reported right in the channel n front of town. This is the time herring and Saffron Cod are moving into their wintering grounds, of which Kotzebue Channel is a part. Both birds and seals feed on these. In addition, seals are seeking the first ice pans thick enough to "haul out" on. These would be mostly Spotted Seals, with a few yearling ugruk and sub-adult Ringed Seals.

On the 2nd, a floating bowhead carcass was found just east of Sealing Point. This was a great find, as it seemed to be in fair condition with maktak on the bottom. This would mean lots of dog feed and probably blubber good enough for human use. The finder tied it to the beach, but swells and waves broke the tie down overnight and the carcass was never seen here again. It was a sad day for the finder and friends who have large dog teams.

By the 9th we had lots of slush running in Sisualik, but a surprising lack of seals. There were many reported in Kotzebue Channel.

A two-man crew from Sisualik Point took one seal on the 12th. A calm day on the ocean o n the 17th produced lots of banging over water as boats traveled and shot at seals. The next day was also good, with much expended ammo.

On the 24th, one boat out of Sisualik took two seals; on the next day he took five.

There were lots of seals lying on the ice by the 25th. By the 27th, the large sheet of ice out from Sisualik Pointed held more than a hundred "hauled out" seals.

A ground based hunter at the Point caught a rare and beautiful Ribbon Seal on the 27th

There were only two fall ugruk taken in Sisualik this October. Moe years there are many.

The total catch of spotted and common Ringed Seals in Sisualik for October was less than 15. No sighting of beluga was reported.

Small Mammals

After a spring and summer of almost no sign of Tundra Voles throughout Sisualik, the off and on light snows of October revealed a rapidly increasing population of both voles and shrews. This eruption of small creatures could only be explained by movement into the area from some other locale and not by local reproduction. This has become a rather regular pattern for the coastal zones of Krusenstern.

Terry made a last dig for a ground squirrel on the 23rd. He didn't get the squirrel.

There were many comments on how late the squirrels were out and active on Sisualik Spit this year. Also, some of those killed were noted to lack fat for so late in the season. Some favorite food species of plants are known to be much depleted. The squirrel population has been very high for several years. Avian predators have diminished due to many years of Snowshoe Hare absence and a few years of Willow Ptarmigan scarcity. Fox populations have also been depressed in recent years.

Furbearers

After a late summer and early fall period of a few fox tracks, we had a rather sudden influx of foxes around the 18th. These may be both red and white, and many appear to be young of the year.

A bit earlier in the month, a similar influx of Tundra Voles or other unidentified microtines occurred, which may or may not be related to the fox invasion. This fox movement is not unusual. Their normal pretty may become depleted around den sites when reproductive efforts have been good; dispersal may be the result. This scene does not happen every October, but has been noted in past years with both Red and White Foxes. It has been noted more often with white than with red.

We did have wolf tracks in the snow near the house the last couple of days of October. There were mink and otter tracks on the creek when we arrived.

Birds

Late migrants had a mixed bag in October. Temperatures remained mild and areas of open freshwater were numerous, but we had several spells of high marine waters that flooded feeding areas too deeply for some species.

Canada Geese left early this year due to a much reduced blackberry crop. They stayed very late last year when berries were abundant. Northern Pintail left early due to too much water of *Potamogeton* beds. Tundra Swan, Wigeon, and Mallard stayed well into October.

Our camp gull flock started shrinking rapidly soon after the month began. All adults had well freckled heads. Jonathan, Lucinda and squab were around until they were alone on the 12th. We had a very low water period around the 20th and no camp gulls, including Jonathan and family, after that. Extreme low water in the lagoon and on

mudflats at this date means lots of stranded cod, herring, and smelt. Easy unfrozen pickings for gulls, which is what we believe drew Jonathan away early. He usually stays till we leave, but then, we didn't leave on time this year either. There are some other possibilities, but we don't like to consider them! We will see next year, on the last day of April.

On October 5th, when we had our first snow, there were still a hundred swans around, a couple of hundred mixed ducks - Wigeon, N. Pintail, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, and a lone crippled Canada Goose. Our nephew brought us five very fat wigeon on the 9th, when there were still eighty swans, a hundred Wigeon and thirty Mallards in our back outlet water. We saw swans on the 11th, but not any time after.

We had lots of passerines on the 15th, traveling and feeding in rather large flocks. Snow Buntings and redpolls were around in more or less numbers throughout the month, with a peak at mid month.

On the 24th and the week prior, we had a local late loon flying and feeding along Sisualik beach. It appeared to be a Red-throated Loon, apparently doing all right with flying, swimming, and feeding. He looked lonesome though.

Large flocks of Willow Ptarmigan were reported west of us (Anigaaq - Salluq) early in the month. They apparently moved east to our area towards the end of the month. Took five Rock Ptarmigan near our tent in mid-month. This is an unusual event with this species. Willow Ptarmigan numbers seem to be up a bit again, from recent past years of scarcity.

Our bird scene changed of course when we finally got to our spruce patch inland on the 28th. We were glad to find a fair cone crop and small flocks of White-winged Crossbills and redpolls working the trees at almost any hour of the day. Only two Gray Jays met us at the door, and as usual enjoyed a super feast on the hundreds of dormant houseflies we swept out of door jams and various items hanging on the wall. These are adult flies that crawl into cracks and crannies for winter hibernation. They are a favorite food of Gray Jays and Boreal Chickadees, for they often fill cracks in dry standing spruce timber.

There were signs of a local Three-toed Woodpecker, as well as Spruce Grouse droppings.

Plants

As mentioned above, there is a moderate white spruce cone crop, which assures a happy winter for our hardy overwintering passerines and rambunctious Red

Squirrels. Voles probably also benefit more than we know, since the little nutmeats from the cones filter out onto the ground and snow layers throughout the winter.

There are an unusual number of "willow roses" showing just above snow level. These are the result of gallfly/sawfly activity that causes willow leaves to grow in a cluster (like a rose) rather than normally, along the stem. There is a little white worm in the heart of each "rose" that presumably becomes an adult sawfly when the time is proper. The marvels of nature that we often overlook! There are lots of willow roses this year. Some call them willow cabbages.

The numbers of *Artemisia* and *Elymus* plants around our cabin continue to increase each year as we inadvertently cart more and more seeds up here from our beach camp.

Fish

By the first of October we were feeling the hurt of the failure of our two local whitefish harvest spots. These locations get heavy netting pressure through September and October, and usually give us a winter supply of quality whitefish. We miss both the fish and the activity of catching them. There is no real substitute.

We do a little net-setting in the ocean, but after the passing of the Saffron Cod and the beginning of running slush, the marine waters are empty until the coming of Arctic Cod, which are not normally taken by net. It becomes clear at this season that the parade of fish migrating past Sisualik from June to September is just that. There is a surprising lack of marine life when the migrations are finished.

On October 5th a set of the 3" mesh net took two large-toothed and colored Chum Salmon, as well as ten Saffron Cod. There were numbers of both male and female chum (colored) in Sisualik water during the first week of October. These are fish that are washed back out into the sea by river flooding and high water.

On the 6th we had a good catch: two buckets of Saffron Cod and an unusual catch of a large egg-laden silver salmon. We don't have a regular run of silvers, but there are always a few through September and early October.

On October 12th the 3" mesh net took five Saffron Cod and one bright-colored female chum.

An overnight set of the herring net took late small Saffron Cod, a few Rainbow Smelt, and the first Arctic Cod of the year. There were also two small late-running trout. This was the last net set in the ocean for 1998.

People

On October 7th, our westernmost neighbor was whisked off to Anchorage hospital, leaving our population at eight. That may be the lowest ever for the month of October. He passed on October 23, making him the second of our westernmost neighbors to leave us this fall. Frank Sheldon died on October 14th.

On the third of October a search got underway for three young men from Buckland whose boat probably swamped south of Cape Blossom on their way to Buckland. One was the second son of our nearest Sisualik neighbor to be lost in the sea; as yet, no recovery of bodies has been made.

Finally made the ice crossing to tablelands with the "pike pole" on the 18th, and with the 4-wheeler on the 19th. Usually this crossing can be made on the 4th or 5th of the month.

We saw our first real display of aurora for the fall on the 18th – real intense and real beautiful!

We finally made it to our winter house in the spruce patch on the 28th. What a relief to trade the noise of the crashing surf for the soothing babble of a brook! This move was ten days later than it has been fro the last couple of years, but at least it was in October.

An ice crossing to Kotzebue could not happen in October at all this year. That event normally occurs in mid-month.

See Journal entry of the 29th for an unusual display by the sun, on the trail from Sanningaruq to Sisualik, and entry on the 31st for a Sanningaruq Halloween story.

Besides losing elders this October, there were other pains. In the past, when everyone depended every day on the land and water for food, this would have been a hard near-starvation time for Krusenstern beach dwellers. With circumstantial shortage of whitefish, caribou, seals and ptarmigan, and with the ocean unfishable due to high waves and water, there just wouldn't have been enough resources for the larger population of people and dogs that were active here. The two lagoon outlet waters can produce such large quantities of fish and are so terribly important each year to this group of people. When they fail, a huge migration of caribou in several waves, like we have had in other recent Octobers, can save the day. But when both of these great resources fail, it is pretty tough, daily, scratching to keep everyone, both people and dogs, fed. Small game - ptarmigan, squirrels, snow owls, marine

mammals – make it possible to make it through, but it would have been tough in earlier days with more people and less supplemental goods from town stores.

There was no hardship this year among the small group of Sisualik residents, but living through it one could easily envision the trials of the past when circumstances failed to produce the expected resources. We hope, as always, that the next October – that beautiful harvest month – will be better.

[Editor's note: From this point on, Mr. Uhl did not write monthly summary reports]

CAPE KRUSENTSTERN JOURNAL

JANUARY

January 1

High 4º F
Low –22º F
Cloudy, snow showers
Clearing
Light winds

Lots of fresh snow on old trails entering or leaving thickets. There is some 4 inches in around the house with less out in the open country as the wind was strong enough to drive the fluffy new snow into sheltered places.

New Year's Eve sno-go race and fireworks display postponed till tonight due to weather.

The new moon is showing bright and clear in the sky tonight.

Several fresh marten and fox tracks in the new snow this morning. One caribou fawn was feeding by the trail near tide flats till Terry and I came along. I didn't see him but Terry did and a long chase followed. I looked for Terry and the fawn for a while but couldn't locate them. He returned home about an hour after I did, without the fawn.

We did see a nice flock of Willow Ptarmigan but no sign of White-winged Crossbills or droppings of cones on the new snow. Maybe they have moved out to better feeding areas.

We may run into town tomorrow.

Did not see any big game track today or any size snow machine tracks but my own.

January 2

High –8º F
Low –24º F
Clear
NNW-N-NNE wind to 10

Town trip today with several wind directions and ground drift with some of them. The latest 3 inches of snow that was reasonably level this morning was pretty well lumped up and swept away, so the ground and grasses show well again.

Quite a town patrol by ravens now with the dump closed down. We met one raven coming from town before daylight this morning more than halfway to our place. He apparently is going to try the caribou kill sites today.

We received word today that a niece died in Anchorage. She will be buried in Sisualik so there will be an early January burial in Sisualik again. We hope the weather will not make the chore more difficult.

Today's trip was a cold one coming home. The wind was behind us on the way over and not so bad. Our one-hour trip now takes one hour and a half due to new snow and new bumps. We did not see any travelers today.

The sun above the horizon (a 7 minute gain today) is looking great. The new moon came up almost immediately chasing the same course the sun just took. Sunlight *is* coming back. Our coastal mountains were painted orange by it today.

January 3

High –20º F
Low –41º F
Clear, few misty clouds
Calm

We managed to finish the marks on our thermometer today. It records only temperatures to –40º F. The Intense Cold Monster has us in his grip! Propane stove acting up or not acting, all internal combustion engines difficult to get into operation, and skin exposed to air needs constant monitoring. You also get to test your new or old clothing at bottom line survival value.

And how will our pretty little crossbills fare? Tiny cold spruce seeds do not seem an adequate breakfast after a 15-hour night at forty below.

I didn't see any newly dislodged cones yesterday but today there were a few.

It is ice-making time on the ocean! Wonder how many inches of saltwater ice is formed on a snow free surface at these temperatures? And life goes on in the "warm"

water beneath the ice and snow cover. Female Common Ringed Seals are filling up their skins to capacity with annual blubber thickness peak; large growing fetuses to be born in a month and a half. And the White Bears are remembering.

On land that heavy thick coat of moose, caribou and sheep is protecting and maintaining the body heat of the creature within.

Winter is a wonderful time of testing, sometimes painful, sometimes fatal but wonderful nevertheless to the survivors.

January 4

High –36º F
Low –40º F
Clear
Calm

Monster Cold continues, even in the face of 2 ½ hours of sun. We know by this time though that the sun will prevail, in late June and July.

Even Gray Jays and ravens seem intimidated by the cold today. There were some around but they were pretty lackluster in their activities.

Our nephew is back from Anchorage to help bury his sister, who passed on this past week. He had a cold trip from Kotzebue to here. Grave digging may begin as early as tomorrow. No burial is fun; a January one in Sisualik is out of this world. We do hope for a little milder weather.

Terry is enjoying the cold weather in the house. He is becoming more of a housedog but missing his daily run since I haven't tried to start the sno-go engine for two days. May have to try that tomorrow.

One thing sure is that after this frigid spell a minus 20º F will seem good travel weather.

The moon is coming on strong. We pretty near have the short day period licked. By the time our moon begins to wane again our sun up daylight hours will have increased enough so that we have a more balanced day and night. We appreciate this more this year since our shortest days and dark of the moon came together in December.

January 5

High –30º F
Low –36º F
Clear
Calm

Cold spell continues. It begins to hurt when the daily high stays within the –30º F range.

We definitely had to have firewood and ice today so I gave a starting the Arctic Cat a try. (We have other non-mechanized options but they are less efficient and poorer quality). It did start after a little sweat and tears and I did get the ice and wood but not without worry. Here is what happens when temperatures are between –30º F and –40º F. I put on lots of clothes, sno-go suit, down parka, got too hot working chainsaw on trees, sweating, took down parka off, continued working, finished the hard work, tried to put parka back on to load the sled; the head hole to the hood was frozen because of wet sweat, almost didn't get it on (scary), did manage, it thawed right away from remaining body heat, loaded the sled, took off snowshoes, started sno-go engine, warmed it up, tried to go, no way, track wouldn't go around, frozen stiff again! Lifted, grunted bounced it around, wore down some belt but it did start to move, slowly, faster and faster, then on the way home some skin on cheek exposed to air draft, quick sharp pain, almost like knife cut, adjusted hood to shut off draft, made it home, hot coffee, hot stove, hot soup, and hot stove for the night. Bright sun, a good day, even in the clutches of the Intense Cold Monster.

January 6

High –12º F
Low –34º F
Clear
Calm

Weather a little less cold. Snow machine still hard to start. Not a bad day for grave digging in Sisualik with a very bright red sun, above but close to the horizon yet. It is up for 3 hours now already, from the 1 hour 44 minutes on the shortest day.

The funeral for our niece will be tomorrow in Kotzebue and then burial in Sisualik. We will go down from here to fire up a house close to the gravesite for some shelter to the burial group. Another of the clan returns to the place of beginnings.

Creatures are beginning to move around again as temperatures moderate or they get more used to the inconvenience of low temperatures. Saw a Moose on our creek today and new marten and weasel tracks around the house. A few new cones have been dropped to the new snow surface indicating that a few crossbills are still around. There may be larger flocks at higher elevations where temperatures are always warmer in this kind of cold snap.

We hope for reasonably good traveling day tomorrow, as there will be many on the trail for the burial.

January 7

High 4º F
Low –22º F
Clear
NE-E wind to 10

A little warmer, still nippy, but fine weather for a January burial in Sisualik. The landscape was quite dramatic: sea ice and low brilliant sun on one side and a near-half early rising moon and sculptured snow banks on the other (lagoon side), not to mention the highest coastal mountains to the NW lighted by both moon and sun. Wonder how many caught the wonder and beauty of the scene. It may have been easier to appreciate the scene with warm clothes and body which some of the travelers from Kotzebue lacked. At any rate the body of the much-loved person is well put away.

Another note of importance today was being informed that the person that killed and took the head and one hind leg of the moose reported earlier had been identified and would have his day in court. It was a surprise that the one responsible was found. Some fortunate circumstances and some good police work allowed it to happen.

It would be good if this incident and its outcome could become a real deterrent to others that might be tempted by large antlers and the invincible demeanor of a bull moose to make a kill and find that they have taken on more than they can handle. It appears in this case that giving in to the temptation to kill may be costly. It also shows little respect for the moose as well as the people of the country. These large animals are our neighbors and the killing of one demands both awe and respect.

January 8

High 10º F
Low 0º F
Cloudy
NE-E wind to 15

A nice mild January day. It is the first day we would expect the first rays of sun in our windows and through our prisms. It was cloudy!! Disappointment again. Anyway we know now that the first day the sun has a clear path to our window the rays will be in making rainbows on our wall. Spring is coming!

Got a late load of wood today and did not see any crossbills. There were three around camp. They seem to have gradually diminished through December.

The two moose down creek seem to be the only hoofed animals in the country.

A Gyrfalcon chasing Willow Ptarmigan was reportedly seen yesterday in our area.

Marten, weasel and Red Squirrel continue to make tracks around the house but not much else. A Red Fox drifts in occasionally and there were White Fox tracks down near the ocean yesterday.

Travelers in the country may get more numerous if the mild weather holds. There is still chance to find wolf tracks close to Kotzebue.

January 9

High 18º F
Low 6º F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 15

No sun again due to cloud cover that thwarts our hope to see the rays of the sun inside the house again. In past years that event has happened on either the 8th or the 9th. When we do clear again it will be there to see, without warmth, though by next month this time warmth will come, especially at higher elevations.

Kotzebue had much worse weather than us again today.

Took Terry for a short run around his track. He is limping on one side and Carrie is down for the day and maybe more with a sore ankle stemming from burial day no doubt. Hope she recovers quickly.

With the mild weather creatures around camp are active. Short-tailed Weasel and Least Weasel compete with a couple of Red Squirrels for some of the same scraps. They seem to have a mutual agreement not to bother each other. Sign of voles and shrews is very scarce around a camp dominated by the *Mustela* clan, including marten.

Some of the Williams clan went down to their Sealing Point house last night. We may get a report of things down that way on their return. It is probably difficult to see anything down that way today. The location of the ocean open water edge will be of interest as well as possible caribou over-wintering. Maybe a stray Polar Bear?

New “pressure ridge” on western shore of Kobuk Lake. A large ice mass expanding as temperatures moderate? Traveler warning on radio.

January 10

High 25º F
Low 19º F
Cloudy, snow, fog
E-SEE wind to 25

Our warm spell continues, which is fine, but we would really like to see the

"rainbows" from our prisms in the window! Today was exceedingly dull with thick clouds that neither the sun nor growing moon could penetrate. We have gained a couple of inches of snow; some trails may need to be re-established. Our nephew, who stays with us part time, went into town today by stakes and lost them near Kotzebue. He followed the wind in and hit another line of stakes (Jones' trail?) and followed them in. This is a poor report for Sisualik staked trail! There have been other complaints about that trail. The red plastic stakes used are hard to see in daylight. A mix of willows and reflector tape has proved good in past years.

We are kind of into mild winter doldrums. Carrie down with one leg not working (sprained ankle?) and some stomach trouble. Both conditions seem improving. The additional nursing chores leave me little time for projects set aside for this deep winter period. The mild weather helps and cuts down on firewood use.

We seem to have very few White-winged Crossbills left in the country. The larger flocks seen everyday earlier were a great source of winter pleasure, the original Christmas tree ornaments no doubt.

Perhaps things will get brighter soon.

January 11

High 26º F
Low 22º F
Cloudy, breaking a.m.
NE-E wind to 15

A beautiful preview of the sun this late afternoon. It would have come into the house had the clouds broken a half hour earlier. The mild temperatures continue and are wonderful. Generator, sno-go and chainsaw start with one or two pulls.

Ravens and Gray Jays busy from early daylight till late. Sometimes wonder if they don't use the bright moonlight we have now when the temperatures are mild.

We had a little fresh snow late last night and it was pretty well unmarked through today except for the camp weasels and red squirrels.

Saw a single crossbill today. No nearby trees show recent cone droppings. We may have lost our big flocks of crossbills to better feeding areas.

Sisualik has shelf ice now, about two or more miles of it. The open lead seems to run in a diagonal line from Kotzebue Channel off Cape Blossom toward Anigaaq and Sealing Point, with a varying width of shelf ice distance. It is a common circumstance for late December and early January after a moderate easterly storm.

Some seal hunting could have been done today but probably wasn't as people now have other things to do and different needs.

The night is nearly as light as the day with a large and still growing moon.

January 12

High 24º F
Low –7º
Some clouds, lots of fog
Light winds

A solo town trip today, as Carrie still operating on one leg. It is improving and she has hopes of soon being able to travel in a normal fashion.

Had a fine warm trip into town without even a thought of fog. Twenty minutes after arrival fog closed in and it was difficult to see across the street.

Had a hectic time shopping, not being much used to it. Finally got everything ready and not wishing to leave Carrie alone overnight, I decided to try to find my morning trail and make the 12-mile ice crossing without seeing either side of the Sound. Things went well enough as distant visibility picked up about halfway out. It did shut down again, but I was only a bit off our normal landfall at the edge of tidewater. Freezing fog on this side has coated trees, willow, wires, grasses and anything above surface.

Had a great report from the Sealing Point crew - lots of caribou over-wintering there, some with back fat ½ to 1 inch. This is a sign of a healthy herd. Up until this report we were unsure of how close some over-wintering caribou might be. This report will cause Kotzebue, Noatak or Kivalina hunters to converge on the area as fresh meat is attractive now, even though one still has meat taken in either of the two fall movements of caribou through here.

It is not known how many animals might be involved.

January 13

High 14º F
Low –8º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 20

A fine clear day with lots of sun. Its rays did come in through the house window off and on for nearly an hour. The "off and on" is because of trees or clumps of trees blocking the sun out on its as yet low orbit. But it is climbing everyday and will soon be over or high on the trees and will put many rainbows into the house.

Got a load of ice and then a little firewood from close by. The day is still short to do much of anything.

There was a single new moose track and our camp scrap eaters have tracked up the snow, but haven't seen our marten tracks for a couple of days. They may have found someone's trap, though we don't know of any trapping effort near at hand. You would think an animal as beautiful and graceful as a marten would be a little more knowledgeable towards the danger of traps. They are as easy as a weasel to trap and the Short-tailed Weasel is known locally as the easiest of all animals to trap. Children used to learn the art of trapping by first catching weasels.

It would have been a good day to see Willow Ptarmigan. It was that bright and I carried the shotgun but didn't see any. There are lots of tracks though.

January 14

High 8º F
Low –2º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 30

A bright day of gusty north wind, not nearly as bad here as the statistics look. The sun came in the house for a short while between 1 and 2 and we had the first bright and abundant rainbows of 1998. Beautiful and hopeful.

Saw three different birds today, without my binocs on, but from their actions they must have been Pine Grosbeaks. It is seldom that I am caught without binocs but invariably when I am a "different" bird shows up.

Took Terry for a run down through a neighboring camp that hasn't been occupied again this winter. Saw both fresh moose tracks and a lone large caribou track and feeding place. I didn't see either animal but they were not far off. Haven't seen large caribou tracks for a while and this "straggler" must be one with an old healed wound. At this season large caribou that are healthy are always in the company of other caribou.

At least one and maybe the other marten are back making tracks, checking my near camp snowshoe trails to see what I have been up to.

I dislike having our dominant Short-tailed Weasel scream at me from our house doorstep once in awhile. This step has an opening that only a weasel can use, and is dog proof. The weasel has learned this and accounts for his bravado. Makes you think you have stepped on a snake!

January 15

High 4º F

Low –23º F
Clear, clouding
NE-E wind to 15

The sun was bright enough but clouds interfered off and on during its now 4-hour trip across the horizon.

Two moose came down the creek and passed through the old cabin site not far from the house, feeding here and there on the tenderest willows. Didn't see them but their tracks looked pretty bullish, very blunt. Most have probably left their antlers somewhere by now.

Catches of caribou that are "good meat" are being made almost daily now west of us. Still have no estimate of how many might be between Sealing Point and Port Site.

One Sisualik camp resident has returned after a two-month absence. There are now three camps occupied by three old men.

A neighbor's camp with dogs is having a fox coming in amongst the dogs. Earlier in the fall one dog that had killed a fox in turn had to be destroyed due to unusual behavior. Sounds like rabies is still a local threat.

Crossbills have gotten very scarce, at least in our spruce patch. We hope they have just moved on to better feeding zones. Cones in place have gotten scarce here.

We did hear yesterday that a Kotzebue seal hunter had been out to the open lead and has been somewhat successful. He gave a neighbor a small Spotted Seal, which is not a common catch at this date. We may hear more of his success later on.

January 16

High 0º F
Low –22º F
Some clouds, clearing
N-NE wind to 10

A fine day, taken up mostly by visitors for a change.

One aircraft-ski protection officer checking out the illegal moose kill site for upcoming hearing. We talked for sometime and soon after he left our nearest neighbor, a practicing Eskimo doctor, gave Carrie leg a massage treatment. He stayed for lunch and Carrie's leg seems better.

Soon after daylight this morning, when I first went outdoors, I noticed one of my snowshoes had fallen down. I thought that strange. When I went over to look at it,

only 30 feet from the house door, there were moose tracks! Not only that, but leaving the snowshoes the tracks came right to our front door, then passed on up the trail to an old CB antenna just off the trail. After checking that out he got back on the hard packed sno-go trail and continued moving through.

A bigger surprise yet came when I walked out our main trail, one hundred yards from the cabin, and found just out of sight (from the cabin window) the whole wide sno-go trail tramped solid by moose tracks, 50 yards of the trail. It was an amazing sight! And the explanation as to *how* the tracks were made or why they were made that way is not easy. It seems likely that several bulls were involved and light "sparring" (which is normal behavior) may have been on going. Checking in a circle outside the trampled section there seemed to have been 6 moose involved and possibly eight. Our aircraft visitor saw four nearby on his flight out.

January 17

High –6º F
Low –23º F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 10

A pretty bright cool day with a trend for more cooling yet. Our hope, as always, is to get out of January without any –50º F temperatures. The longer days and higher sun of February makes those kinds of temperatures more tolerable, if we have to have them at all.

Terry found a moose that would run from him today. He likes that. The ones that just turn around and make faces at him he is scared of.

We got both firewood and ice today in two different directions so both he and I got enough exercise. Carrie's knee is slowly getting a little better but she is still finding it difficult to get around the house.

An aircraft was up into sheep country yesterday said he saw many sheep at a lower level than ever before, and did not see any wolves. That is a great report as our nearest sheep populations have been closed to hunting for several years due to low numbers.

We are missing our friendly White-winged Crossbills. Though there are still a few singles or pairs around we haven't seen flocks for some time.

Our tree patch is pretty well tracked up by moose. I don't recall another time when there were so many tracks between fresh snowfalls. It is difficult to know total numbers and how many are reruns. We as yet have no good handle on the why of the moose movement through here at this time.

January 18

High 6º F
Low –18º F
Cloudy, snow
E-SE wind to 20

The weather worked up a small storm today, kind of a surprise to everybody, including the Weather Bureau. Extreme chill factor conditions were forecast for north of us. The Noatak Valley and the Cape Lisburne-Point Lay area were having near –100º F. We had a phone call from family at Pt. Lay that confirmed this!

My Superdog helped recover one of the first two W. Ptarmigan I have taken this winter. It was kind of his first experience as a bird dog. You may remember that he is a squirrel dog and I have seldom fired a gun in his presence. Today on his run I had the shotgun and a small flock of W. Ptarmigan stay in place long enough for me to get off a shot; one was killed, another wounded. The shot caused my dog to put his tail between his legs and act whipped, until he spotted the ptarmigan running away. From then on the unfortunate ptarmigan became simply a white squirrel with no chance of escape. After a few dives in willows and snowbanks, Terry caught and killed it and brought it back to the sno-go, though he wouldn't surrender it right away. He did eventually and though there may be a few broken bones we will have a two-ptarmigan soup tomorrow. Also, the dog may try every ptarmigan he sees for the rest of his life, expecting to catch it. Don't know what he will make of the gun noise as it relates to the ptarmigan chase.

No travelers this way today.

Caribou hunting continues almost daily (weather permitting) in the Sealing Pt. area.

January 19

High 10º F
Low –2º F
Cloudy, light snow
NE-E wind to 18

No sun today but nice moderate temperatures to help us through January. Each day this week when the weather bureau gives daily record low temperatures in the –50º F range, one has a tendency to break into a smile and think how fortunate we are *this* year.

Carrie's leg is much better and she is about ready to take over some of the house chores again and make a belated town trip. This is the longest she has been down in our near 50 years of marriage.
Ran Terry down to tidewater and back today with no side incidents. Didn't notice

any fresh tracks.

With the apparently large number of caribou wintering between Sealing Point and Port Site now being hunted regularly, we are expecting some to move this way, maybe through the back hills.

No moose to see today, but there probably are some not far off.

In years past we used to spend many days in this last portion of January hunting Snowshoe Hares on snowshoes for both dog feed and people feed. It was kind of a first major hunt of the New Year. Where are those rabbits now? This used to be an annual event. We have yet to see a Snowshoe Hare track this winter again.

Our winter bird scene has deteriorated. Our Gray Jays and Camp Ravens are about it this week.

January 20

High 10º F
Low –6º F
Cloudy
N-NE wind to 10

Carrie is getting around better and Terry and I made a trip to Sisualik today to get the washing machine. We may be able to do some clothes washing soon. We still have abundant unfrozen water in our creek that can be used for washing but not for drinking due to high mineral content.

It was a rather dull day due to cloud cover, but the sun continues to pick up time at the rate of 7, 8, 9 minutes a day.

Sisualik seems quite deserted though we know there are still three older men living there. Today was quite a contrast to mid summer when the place bustles with activity.

A lone Boreal Chickadee worked around camp for a while today. We are sure missing our crossbills.

We are fortunate to be working our way through January with such mild temperatures.

We are already approaching what used to be for us a second milestone in the year. I mentioned Snowshoe Hare hunting the other day as a first activity as days lengthen in late January. We also have hooked sheefish successfully through the ice of Kobuk Lake in past years during the last week of January. That was when we lived closer to

the Lake and only happened when good weather prevailed. When you do make a hole with fish the day is far too short. Often in shallow water the catch is mixed Shee and Great Northern Pike.

January 21

High 10º F
Low 6º F
Cloudy, some clearing
N-NE wind to 15

Fine day. Got a load of firewood from the spruce patch a mile or so west of us.

The sun got quite high but the cloud bank seemed to purposely obscure its bright rays.

Carrie continues to gain more use of her crippled leg. She may soon be back to normal.

Our spruce patch has become pretty devoid of birds except for three Gray Jays and two ravens. Our hope for a full winter of White-winged Crossbills has not come to be.

We have not been able to make much use of this spell of good weather due to Carrie's leg condition. We have been pretty much "holding tight" waiting for improvement and catching up on indoor chores.

January 22

High 6º F
Low –10º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Got ice and ran the dog early. Fine day for cutting our nice clear ice.

A large bull moose without antlers was lying down in the rising sun as we came down our back hill. Terry saw the bull when he stood and barked his moose and porcupine bark and took off into the soft snow off trail. He found it pretty soft and came right back with a couple of barks. By that time I had binocs out and was able to confirm that it was a bull, probably with large antlers recently shed. The large disks were quite prominent. Then another unusual sight registered. The animal's right ear was pointing straight down while the left ear stood straight up! Will probably look for him again some time to see what might have caused the strange condition.

We had visiting neighbors around 1:30 PM and we enjoyed their visit till almost sundown.

The sun did get quite high and the rainbow prisms put on a good show. We have over 5 hours of sun now. It's looking great.

Neighbors have gotten rid of a number of dogs, which is good since they don't use them anymore.

January 23

High 6º F
Low –14º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

A beautiful day for traveling. We made a trip to town and got in just as the sun cleared the horizon; we got home just after it set. The trail is hard and a bit rough but do-able with 1 ½ hour travel time - no more 1 hour trip.

Ravens are still the high point of wildlife in Kotzebue. Somehow they seem to fit in with the rest of the hustle and bustle! We met two on the trail coming our way before sun up. They were quite vocal, no doubt discussing the tragedy of the closing of the Kotzebue Municipal Dump.

Two interesting reports of caribou conditions from the Sealing Point area. One report was of the leaving of maybe three killed, one because it was "sickly" looking meat (lesions, pus, etc.). Some that they killed were good meat. The other report was of the taking of fat dry cows, one with an inch or more of back fat.

There is very little loose snow around the country now in open areas so tracking is difficult except within timbered plots.

The caribou in the Sealing Point area are coming under more and more hunting pressure, which may cause them to leave.

January 24

High 2º F
Low –16º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Another fine bright day; very good in sheltered places but a cold wind with a little drift out in the ocean.

Ran the dog a bit this morning and snowshoed some this afternoon on the tracks of the lop-eared bull. This is the bull moose seen day before yesterday with one ear pointed to the ground. I wanted to check his trail and bed for signs of blood or a

festering wound. There was no sign of either.

Walked through some of the area today where we used to hunt snowshoe hares during the last week of January. It is hard to believe now that 20 years ago those willows were full of rabbit tracks. There are W. Ptarmigan and moose tracks and even marten and fox tracks but no sign of a small hare. How long will it be? And *why* has it been so long?

Several visitors today, which reflects the longer days and brighter sun. One came from the north and left us a fine whole caribou. It was killed a few days ago and is well frozen and in very good condition. We will have fresh meat without going to caribou wintering grounds!

Good friends become even more valuable when you pass the 70 milestone.

January 25

High –16º F
Low –26º F
Clear
N-NW wind to 18

Lots of sunlight again (5 ½ hours) but with a cooling trend; the twenty below temperatures make you feel it right now.

A quiet Sunday at home. Kotzebue temperatures at –20º F kind of keep people at home unless there is a special reason to travel out.
A report from the wolf hunters that have been out north of us this last week is that there doesn't seem to be many fresh tracks. Much of the region is so wind blown that predators don't make tracks on the hard icy snow.

We have little snow cover so far this winter. It has so far been a very good year for our large game animals. Even sheep are looking good, at least in our two closest ranges.

We have still not made a trail into a good firewood cutting place yet. We have been getting a few sticks from here and there every few days.

Have seen a few very small flocks (2-3) of White-winged Crossbills, so they are not all gone yet anyway.

Their presence has been encouraging through the short day period. One only has to note their enthusiasm for life to feel better. If such a small creature can survive the time of short daylight and escape the clutches of the Intense Cold Monster we might be able to do the same!

January 26

High –26º F
Low –44º F
Clear
Calm

The Intense Cold Monster has us and there is no hint that he will release us any time soon.

Too cold to start the sno-go again and our firewood pile, as sometimes happens, was down to nothing.

Spent most of the day hauling in wood by hand and snowshoe. Funny how easy it is to work up a sweat when it's –40º F.

A very bright sun but ice-fog moisture in the air took off some of the sharpness. We are approaching 6 hours of sun now and the moon will be starting up again tomorrow, so light is much improved from December. Groundhog Day is just around the corner.

Saw a large flock of passerines today, the first for a long time. They seemed smaller than White-winged Crossbills. I didn't have my binocs, but they could have been a mix of redpolls and crossbills. There were maybe 25-30.

Our snow surface is pretty old and pretty well tracked up. Weasels, Red Squirrels, Marten, Gray Jays and a fox keep the tracks around the house building from day to day. The last 10 days of moose tracks near the cabin still look impressive, though I haven't noticed new ones these last few days.

Our several nearest Red Squirrel colonies show the characteristic cone leave piles. These tan piles are made up of cone segments as the squirrel sits and peels them off one by one to get the rich minute seeds underneath. These piles have been absent from our white spruce patches for a couple of years.

January 27

High –16º F
Low –35º F
Cloudy, clearing
N-NW wind to 18

Some gusty wind through the night brought temps up and some clouds in.

I managed to get the sno-go started with enough pulls, after which I got a load of ice and then some firewood. Terry had a good run in both directions.

Apparently our “too cold” spell isn’t going to last for too long, which is good.

Few travelers in the country, this part anyway. All the nearby hunting is down the coast from Sealing Point to Port Site and inland to the Noatak River from there. We have not yet heard of other caribou wintering places.

The ocean is busy with ice making and carries on pretty much unseen by human eyes. It is making a new world that may be pretty well explored until June-July when it disintegrates.

Travel between villages will increase in these longer days, coming to a peak in mid March with the Friends Mid Year Conference and the Annual NANA meetings.

It is reported that some locations lack even traveling snow. This may be good for caribou and moose but a hardship on hunters and travelers.

January 28

High –2º F
Low –37º F
Cloudy, clearing late
N-NW wind to 18

Turned into a pretty good day with a slow dark start of cloud cover that delayed morning light. Cloud cover brought a warming of temperatures that were headed down again late last night.

Peeled the skin off of our gift of fresh caribou and sawed it into pieces small enough to get into protective drum or shrew-vole-weasel proof large plastic container (summer water catcher). The meat is from a young female without calf that has fat through the meat but only a light show on the back. It is high quality meat for this season.

Loosed Terry and we walked through Sanningaruq spruce patch for the first time in a long time. Terry needed snowshoes too but had to make do without.

Our snow is quite old but the number of weasel, marten and moose tracks is quite remarkable. There have probably not been this many tracks since our snowshoe hares disappeared in the early 1980's.
Marten, weasel and moose tracks are abundant no doubt because of the semi-resident nature of these animals in a place of food sources - some natural, some here because of our activities. (Fish, meat scraps, moose and caribou gut piles and of course the wasted moose carcass which is still in place at the upper end of our tree-willow patch).

It is good to see so many tracks but it is sad that none of them are snowshoe hares. Where *are* those rabbits? Frankly we had nothing (oral history, scientific papers) to prepare us for such a long absence of both Snowshoe (Varying) Hares and the large Arctic Hares.

January 29

High 5º F
Low –4º F
Cloudy, broken
W-NW wind to 15

Pretty good outdoor day today. Things are bright enough and warm enough with our now 6-hour sun. This makes a day of nearly 9 hours now, with our long predawn and twilight hours.

Took a sno-go run with the dog down to the creek but didn't see any living creatures, though there are a multitude of old tracks.

A report out of Kotzebue today warns of white foxes seen in town. There have been none taken or tested for rabies yet, though that is likely to happen. There are more fox tracks around our side too and some of them are white foxes.

White fox are always a bit worrisome. They are highly nomadic and at times exceedingly tame. Some may wander into coastal villages from off the ice of arctic seas where they have never before seen a human. By habit and from a young age, they follow Polar Bears about to feed on the leavings of that great hunter. They are used to staying close to but just out of reach of the bears and with humans they may act the same. Consequently it may be difficult to tell a tame rabid fox from a tame healthy fox.

Travelers continue to use the coastal route north to caribou - Port Site, Kivalina, Point Hope. Few have reason to pass through our area.

Have noticed active woodpecker work on a number of large Sanningaruq white spruces recently. This is kind of a "death knell" for the ancient giants. Spruce bark beetle infestation seems the cause.

January 30

High 8º F
Low 4º F
Cloudy, some sun
W-NW-N wind to 15

A town trip today. Trail still bumpy and partial whiteout conditions made the trip a

little trying. The mild temperatures were fine and distant visibility was good so there were no navigating problems.

We had visitors while we were gone but that happens. Stay home for weeks with no visitors, then several when you are gone for a few hours.

Willow Ptarmigans visited too. Up till today there have been no tracks at our creek crossing closest to the house. Now there are lots of fresh tracks of a very large flock. They seem to utilize these large creek felt-leaf willows more through early spring.

Raven stories in Kotzebue are flourishing. Closing down the dump shuts down their major winter food source so the carefree life of a raven in Kotzebue is no more. They still have street lamps to warm their feet on in sub zero temps, but food and stored energy are going fast. There are still two pretty tough months ahead for a raven.

There is a report in town that a few fish are being taken on northern and eastern Kobuk Lake, with hooks, the first of the '98 hooking season. That sounds good. We will want to try again when the weather and the fish offer a good chance.

January is about gone. That means our two most critical months of the year for keeping things together are gone again. They weren't so bad this year.

January 31

High 14º F
Low 3º F
Cloudy, breaks
Light wind

Quite a day for the last of January. The last couple of days of January would fit very well into April, except for the length of day and night.

Went down to Sisualik to look for a few things in the dome and tent. It was nice, white, and lots of sno-go traffic.

Our Superdog made the trip on his own in the blackness of night, between 8 and 12 midnight last night. I found his tracks this morning. That was unexpected and we worried when he was gone so long. Traps, porcupines and wolves are some threats. He returned just at 12 when I was turning off the generator, none the worse for wear. I am constantly amazed at how dogs and wolves navigate over distant and dark land. They seem so certain of the right routes to get where they are going. Landmarks? Map? Memory?

I let him come along again today so he has had enough exercise for a while. Our Sisualik camp is about 6 miles from here.

One large animal, probably a moose, entered our tree patch last night. The tracks are large but blunt and too close together – musk ox? If I have time I may check them out tomorrow.

Some Willow Ptarmigan hunters were out today and no doubt there were some caribou tracks down Sealing Point way.

Farewell to January. One month of the New Year gone and groundhogs are stirring in their dens.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

FEBRUARY

February 1

High 4º F
Low –7º F
Cloudy, fog, light snow
Light winds

Distant visibility poor today with misty air, fog, and cloud cover.

Checked out the unusual tracks noted yesterday. They are apparently made by a bull caribou, somehow impaired, but healed, and able to make do. It does not seem to want to leave the willowed zones but has some trouble getting through deep drifts. It leaves a "bear-like" furrow in the snow through the willows. Found some droppings and where it had eaten dry grasses under trees and some low growing willows. There was no cratering. Though it might be a stray musk ox since I am unfamiliar with that species on winter range. That possibility remains depending on feces ID. The animal may still be not far off, as tracks are only two days old.

Don't seem to be any fresh moose tracks around Sanningaruq now.

There is some sign of a few cone-eating birds (crossbills, Pine Grosbeak), but cone supply still on spruces is limited.

Well, February is here. Its longer days and sometimes warm midday sun will be great and may prompt us to go fishing again – probably to the lower Noatak canyon (Amaktut) first for burbot. We didn't find any fish there last year.

Quite a few fresh snow-go tracks traveling west through our ridges today. Probably caribou and wolf hunters, though tracking snow is pretty scarce to the west.

February in some years has very good weather. In others it has been intensely cold or – in others – very stormy. We shall see about February '98.

February 2

High 18º F
Low –12º F
Some clouds, some sun
Light winds

Groundhog Day. Radio reports two saw their shadows, one did not. Our tree squirrels were out – and saw their shadows. We didn't catch any ground squirrels out looking for their shadows (which they would have seen) and no one that we know was up into Hoary Marmot habitat to tell us what happened there. I think we can safely say – with all this data – that we are in for 6 weeks more of winter and probably then some.

It was a nice day for February in the Arctic. No wind and temperatures around 0º F or above. Some reported feeling the sun and seeing vapor rise off exposed tar paper.

Had a couple of interesting visitors today - commercial fishing folks. We got caught up on current hopes for the industry and various saved up biology questions.

Our helper nephew has also returned.

After the visitors I had a couple of hours to check out – with sno-go this time – and solve the strange animal track mystery. It was a musk ox, probably a large bull making his way back to musk ox overwintering sites in the hills behind (north of) Sealing Point. This was my first winter opportunity to track this species and get a feel for the nature of the critter.

They can't handle a deep soft snowbank – they back off and look for a way to go around. They eat dried grasses and low shrubs in small quantities, not like either moose or caribou, and their winter droppings (which I had never knowingly seen before) are very similar to a large caribou's, but very dark and just barely noticeably larger than a caribou's. Nothing like moose droppings. What made the ID positive was backtracking and finding a track where the hoof shape could be plainly discerned. The hooves are blunt but straight, lacking the point of moose and rounded curves of caribou and reindeer. Their gait is distinctive too, especially in a foot and a half of snow.

February 3

High 24º F
Low 6º F
Broken clouds, snow late
NE-E wind to 15

Such fine February weather we are having – and I have the feeling we are wasting it by not hunting, fishing or traveling.

We did do a big washing today, which is always a midwinter challenge.

Weather on both the east and west coast of the Lower 48 is so terribly miserable it makes one wonder if the Arctic is not the place to be in February.

Birds are back or around our area again. Saw a flock of eight Boreal Chickadees today – the largest group of that species so far this winter.

One flock of twenty White-winged Crossbills and another smaller flock passed through. Haven't seen that many in one day for awhile.

Very little else to report from here today. The dog and I got a few sticks of firewood and didn't see any other creatures.

Both our camp weasels and jays are so fat they spend little time in feeding any more.

Snow began to fall late – 10 p.m. It may finally give us a new surface. We haven't had a decent snow fall for ages.

February 4

High 24º F
Low 0º F
Clear
Light winds

Such fine weather! Followed the musk ox west for awhile before Terry and I got a few sticks of wood. The sun could be felt up in the tree patch on the side of the hill today.

The musk ox got up on our ramp of a ridge that leads to our highest coastal mountains to the west. It fed pretty extensively in an area of thin snow just after it topped the ridge. Target food seemed to be lichens. There was a multitude of sno-go tracks from last weekend on the ridge top, but none followed the musk ox tracks.

This fine mild weather has brought some fisherfolk out on the north and east shores of Kobuk Lake. We know they are getting some fish, but haven't heard yet how much and what size. The fishing area is a two-hour run from here. Kind of far for this month, though we do go in March and April. We have 6 hours, 54 minutes of sun up now, with long dawn and twilight, time enough to make a hole in the ice and catch a few fish.

We had a lone Boreal Chickadee in camp this evening for a change. That may be only the second time this winter. For several years in a row we had chickadees in camp every day. For the past 2-3 years we had only sporadic visits. Over the years we've had one boreal that regularly ate from the hand, and even came into the house. One Black-capped Chickadee would regularly come to Carrie's call for hand feeding. During those years there was a dead spruce right at our front door. The chickadees used this tree as an escape route from Gray Jays. The tree blew down in a storm and we have not had resident chickadees since. Our house windows have taken a toll.

February 5

High 15º F
Low 1º F
Clear, clouds, ground fog
NE wind to 10

A good town trip with sunlight to spare! Trail has gotten somewhat better, but it is still bumpy. Our promised snow for the last two days has only amounted to less than a half inch. Just a little "dust."

An unusual ground fog – only a bit higher than a person's head – was over the ice of the tidelands all day. Stagnant air lying on the surface in the "floor" zone that is so often windy and drifting.

Kotzebue ravens very visible. What does on do with that kind of a human made spectacle? For some, like myself, it is impossible to look away. Even if one did, it is likely that other ravens will be in that direction. Briefly, what this is all about is a history of an open city dump, where a growing and increasingly affluent community deposited more and more edibles (for ravens and gulls). The bird population increased accordingly. Now all trash is being compacted.

We were getting ready early for the trip to town and just before dawn I was out fueling up, when the dawn silence was broken by "Old Thunderwings" himself – an adult Spruce Grouse moving from one spruce tree to another. More tasty needles no doubt. The sound of wings is a wonderful sound – especially when unexpected.

We have a good friend and neighbor who will celebrate her 90th birthday Saturday. That's a ripe old age! It is hard to believe that it is only 20 years down the road.

February 6

High 16º F
Low 0º F
Clear, some late clouds
Light winds

Our lower creek crossing flooded by overflow today and not useable. There are springs just above and there can be a chronic overflow problem. It is difficult to make detour due to willows. We do have a way around that involves climbing the ridge west of us. However, a visitor coming from town or Sisualik would, could have a tough time.

We do still seem to have a single local caribou a mile or so down creek that fades into the creek trees and willows when disturbance comes along. The musk ox and large caribou tracks and feeding plot are mixed in a maze.

Possibly for the first ever "small" Bowhead Whales have been seen from Point Hope in late January, and a strike was made yesterday. The animal has not yet been recovered. Will check around further to see how unusual this is. April is normally the time when whales make an appearance at this northern point, though it is known that they winter within the southern ice edge of the Bering Sea.

There seems to be much sea life geared to water temperatures. Even slight changes in that regiment will cause unusual straying from what was thought to be the norm.

February 7

High 23º F
Low 8º F
Broken clouds
N-NE wind to 18

Town trip to celebrate a 90th year birthday of a Sisualik matriarch clan person. She is a very dear "old" friend and neighbor and it will be good to celebrate with her when she reaches 100! There was a good crowd and a lot of good food from the land. Any get together like this is always great fun and becomes a kind of reunion where you see clan and distant relatives that you haven't seen for years.

There were raven tracks on the thin layer of snow on the outdoor porch of the building the party was held at. Don't know whether they were sitting there waiting or if it is a night roost. Kotzebue ravens going through a tough period of readjustment due to the compacting of municipal garbage.

Good catches of shee are being made up around the Kobuk Delta – some sled loads.

An ice road (for cars and trucks) opened yesterday – Kotzebue to Kiana. It was closed at 11 p.m. tonight due to ground drift this afternoon and evening. Kind of a short life, but there was lots of traffic and hauling. It probably will be opened again quickly if there is not a lot of fresh snow.

February 8

High 16º F
Low –14º F
Clear, few clouds
NE wind to 18

A quiet Sunday with a little continued ground drift and a sun that could be felt again in shelter. There were lots of prism rainbows in the house. Quite a beautiful sight in this early spring world, especially with daily reports of such bad weather in many areas Outside. It may be second only to a good display of aurora borealis.

Got a little ice from our "clear ice" lake and was surprised by four sno-go's just as I was ready to leave. They were town folks on an outing – looking for a trail t the Hatchery. Had to direct them to the Noatak cut off trail between here and Jones Camp, since I don't know the conditions between our place and the old Hatchery Trail. And our overflowed creek crossing, which I did successfully cross this morning, looks pretty treacherous to the uninitiated.

After lunch I took snowshoes to check this place down creek where mysterious large caribou tracks keep turning up. They are caribou tracks and not another musk ox. The animal has been feeding out in the open and then dashing into the trees and willows of the creek when sno-go's happen along. This ruse has apparently worked well to this point in time. There is one lately fresh track, so the animal is probably still around, though I haven't seen him yet. It is probably a nearly healed wounded animal.

Very little loose snow around the country now. Light but kind of constant winds have polished up most exposed surfaces.

February 9

High –4º F
Low –26º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

A very sunny day but our normal cold for the season is back, and that required inside warming of the light generator this morning for the first time in a week. We have gotten used to above 0º F weather too soon in the year.

Terry (the dog) and I broke a trail nearly halfway to the fishing site at Amaktut on the Noatak River. We are hoping to get up there the next warmer day we have. Snow cover is so light we may have a little trouble crossing a couple of steep-banked creeks.

Neighbor young men hunters back from Kiwalk area wolf-wolverine hunt. They had two machine breakdowns. They brought some caribou meat home and the man with the unbroken machine caught one wolf and one wolverine. These long distance wolf-wolverine hunts have become common with young adults that can afford it in time, gas, parts and enthusiasm.

Lots of Willow Ptarmigan tracks around but have not seen any birds for two weeks.

There was one moose track coming down our creek from the Noatak River. There were hardly any other kinds of tracks up that way. We should see more tracks when we get into the Noatak canyon are when we do go fishing.

February 10

High 10º F
Low –18º F
Cloudy, snowflakes
N-NE wind to 15

Another day of washing. The creek continues to have a good supply of easily available water. It is crystal clear but heavy with mineral (calcium?) so that soap curdles almost as if it was salt water. This water is mostly from springs that percolate up from limestone bedrock. It is odorless, tasteless and colorless, but makes poor tea and coffee. We use it for washing clothes, dishes, and hands, but prefer lake ice for drinking, cooking, etc.

The weather warmed again so the generator didn't have to come in the house prior to starting. There was near whiteout conditions for travel due to cloud cover, but only a few snowflakes fell.

Went to Sisualik to pick up ice auger engine. We are about primed to make a trip to the canyon for burbot fishing. Some friends who went to the east shore of Kobuk Lake yesterday caught lots of sub-adult sheefish. It was kind of a cold day for fishing.

Our nephew went down to Sealing Point and back today. There was lots of sign of overwintering caribou, but he only saw one small group – very wild. It was pretty windy down there today. His report was mostly negative: no fox, no caribou, no ptarmigan, no open water, no travelers. But the trail was good.

We have an extended family person living at Pt. Lay again this winter. They have had nearly three weeks of continual strong winds at low temperatures: 50 to 80 below wind chill factors every day. Sounds rough from our balmy February.

February 11

High 8º F
Low –4º F
Cloudy, some sun
N wind to 18

A trip to the stone figures at the Noatak lower canyon today. Both the Indian and the Eskimo are there. There seems to be some subtle changes in the escapees. The baby on the back seems to be growing larger – or the mother is growing smaller. Time and erosion take their toll even on stone figures.

The ice is thick (over 36”) and there was no sigh of life under the ice. We jigged for two hours thru two holes without a touch. The same was true with our two trips up there last year. The year before that we had pretty good fishing.

This is a traditional-historical fishing place for burbot, which is supposed to produce each year. The suggestion has been made that chum salmon returning to the Hatchery a few miles up river has produced a mass of food (in the form of salmon carcasses) for rearing burbot. The rich food source may hold them in that location at this season - another apparent lesson in the side effects that occur when humans manipulate ecosystems. This remains speculative but there are strong hints that support the idea.

Our trip up river was one of rather hard work. Our small amount of snow makes deep gullies (small but steep drainages) difficult to cross – no snowbank bridges. I had to snowshoe and fix one up, and then we couldn’t climb it with the sled hooked to the sno-go. Had to resort to the use of a long rope. We made it well on the way home as the snow had time to firm up a bit.

Moose are still in small drainages up that way.

February 12

High 6º F
Low –2º F
Cloudy, clearing
NE-NW wind to 10

A trace of snow on things this morning. Not enough to really cover our accumulated dust tracks and caribou hair.

Made a half-hearted attempt to get nearby firewood today, and almost didn’t. Feel a little worn after yesterday’s trail-breaking and auger operation. Our dull old auger is a monster to use. Haven’t been able to get new cutting teeth for it.

Finally chose an old-branched tree with a few green branches near hard snow surface for sno-go. After cutting into the tree, I found the "heartwood rot" that we generally don't use because of the lack of "solid" wood. It does burn though, and this tree had produced a lot of resin to heal its aches and pains, so I cut it up and hauled it home. It made a whole sled load of wood.

Not much to see in our country this week. We have ravens and gray jays, but we didn't even see a raven on our long trip north yesterday. There was only one moose track on the main river. Because of light snow ground cover the moose are in the small tributary streams whose tender willows are usually hidden under snowbanks by this time of year. Since they are still available there is a much greater variety of food available to them so far this winter.

Willow Ptarmigan tracks are much easier to find that the birds themselves. We ate one bird and the broth last night, and still had a little left over today. Ptarmigan meat and broth seem to have almost medicinal properties – like chicken soup? Anyway, they are good and make one feel young this time of year.

February 13

High 7º F
Low –6º F
Cloudy, few snowflakes
NW-N wind to 10

Another town trip. A pre-Valentine's Day run. The trip went well and we returned early. We have quite a bit of daylight time now: eight hours of sun above the horizon plus the 1 ½ hours of dawn light and 1 ½ hours of twilight. Eleven hours to see outdoors is pretty good for only the middle of February. All northern creatures, including or especially humans, are enjoying the new freedom the light gives.

It is suggested that the Bowhead Whales sighted at Pt. Hope may be some that didn't make it south. Satellite ice pictures haven't shown any open leads to the south that whales might have come north thru.

A further hint that this might be true is the spotted seals taken locally this winter. They normally drop to the southern ice edge in the Bering Sea for the winter months. Finding a good food source and large areas of open water, some Spotted Seals and Bowhead Whales may have overwintered north of the Bering Straits, and may not be able to move south now due to ice. Point Hope elders report a similar situation some 70 years ago.

Town ravens continue a war to win their fair share of human garbage.

Twelve good-looking bull caribou tried to cross Kobuk Lake last week from the Buckland area. This sparked rumors of an early northward movement of some of the WACH, but may have been only a group spooked from winter range.

A lonesome Boreal Chickadee was on the generator shed this morning. There is some grit from an old flowerpot there.

February 14

High 10º F
Low –6º F
Cloudy, clearing
NE wind to 15

A find day with more and more sun coming through the clouds as the day moved on.

Got a few pieces of firewood and saw some rough trail while searching out a place to cut. Still can't locate a place with good enough standing dry timber to make a trail into. We do have enough snow inside the trees to make trail construction a major chore. Will have to do it soon so we can get some summer wood into Sisualik.

Not much to see in the country traveled today. There is a ¼" of new tracking snow now. There are old moose tracks and Willow Ptarmigan tracks in just about all suitable willow and/or spruce habitat. Did not see any of either species today.

Two sno-go's came through the camp while I was gone. Carrie was trying to catch the big sno-go race winners on the radio and when she did get to the door they had apparently decided that there was no one home since there was no sno-go in camp. She hollered "Hello!" just as they took off, not looking back. We don't know who they were but Carrie would have welcomed their company.

There have been fair numbers of travelers out "riding around" this week of mild temperatures and good visibility. Some from town that may not have been this for "out in the bush" before.

Our camp weasels and squirrels are getting more tame.

We have not yet had a dog team into the house this winter. Times are changing. The recreational team fad of a few years ago is giving way, till only racing teams are left.

Surgery went well for our great-grandson yesterday and today's report is good. We are very thankful for that.

February 15

High –5º F
Low –22º F
Clear
Light winds

A perfectly clear day with a very brilliant sun for more than eight hours. Even our solar panel, which runs the phone system through a charged battery, was vibrating with energy. Battery pack is up to a good charge level again after dropping to danger low levels at the end of January.

A quiet Sunday in Sanningaruq again. We have not been overwhelmed with visitors again this winter. With the Hatchery shut down and the Noatak trail rerouted through Jones Camp, there are few "accidental" visitors.

Rant Terry the Dog up the north trail for 5-6 miles this afternoon. There are a few fox tracks but not much else. He located something in a great willow patch, but didn't tell me what it was. Most likely it was a porcupine (in the willows?) or a fox den.

Town probably pretty quite after a long day and night Saturday, as many out-of-towners came in for the sno-go race to Kiana and back. Lots of prize money with a $350 entry fee. We had a grandson place 5th. Only the first three finishers get cash prizes. Our family feels that we are winners when we get both driver and machine back in one piece. The make some remarkably fast times between villages.

Saw a number of birds in the air today. Probably redpolls due to their small size and light color. It is not unusual to see an increase in a few species of birds in the last two weeks of February.

We may be headed for another cold spell. We haven't had much real cold weather so far this winter, and the record daily lows have been in the minus fifty range.

February 16

High –10º F
Low –31º F
Clear
Light winds

A cold night and early morning with some short midday warming. The early morning, just as the sun rises, has that typical misty cold weather air that gathers in periods of stagnant air flow around timber patches. It is probably related to additional air moisture associated with conifers surrounded by open tundra.

Some of the Williams boys went down to their Sealing Point house a couple of days ago and were able to bring a load of fresh caribou meat into town. It is likely that this group of animals is moved back and forth through their chose overwintering zone (Port Site to Sealing Point) by hunters from Kivalina, Noatak and Kotzebue. It is a characteristic of caribou on their winter range to move back and forth thru it when pressured by hunters on snow machines, rather than leave the zone where they have found fair feeding conditions. This reluctance to completely leave the area that they have tracked and cratered can be costly to their numbers if too heavily hunted.

Not much news is out on the grapevine in regards to where other groups of overwintering caribou might be, except for the Buckland-Kiwalik area. Those are reported to be in good condition.

February 17

High –6º F
Low –31º F
Clear
NE wind to 10

Another very bright but cool day. The sun is doing a good job of bringing the daytime temperatures up.

Ran the dog and got ice today, and helped pack Carrie up for her trip to Anchorage Thursday. She is going down for the Native New Life Festival.

Sheefishing news from Kobuk Lake is pretty good. No huge catches, but some good-sized fish on some days.

The weather is a little cold to enjoy a fishing trip, since the travel from here takes so long. Those that live closer to the fishing grounds are working at it every day.

A moose came down into the creek from Napaaqtuuraq this afternoon. The dog saw and barked at him, but I saw only tracks. Wonder if it was the lop-eared bull?

Haven't seen ptarmigan or crossbills for ages. There are tracks and fallen cones though.

There were a lot of fox tracks on the trail down to tidewater today, the most I have seen all winter. Red fox are at the beginning of their mating season now and there are a lot of double tracks around the country. They also begin to travel far and wide from wherever they have spent the winter.

February 18

High 2º F
Low –24º F
Clear
E wind to 18

Town so Carrie can make Anchorage tomorrow. It was a good trip with ground drift in strips.

Was surprised to see on the way home new tracks of a bull moose, coming in from the ocean and headed for Jones Camp – running hard too. And then a second surprise – the tracks of a very small seal traveling on the snow surface, with a sno-go track right behind it. All these tracks made while I was in town.

We apparently have another moose on the creek below us, feeding on the big creek willows. This is the one Terry saw and barked at yesterday that somehow I did not see.

News of some good shee catches on the east shore of Kobuk Lake. If weather stays moderate I may take a run up to try my luck while Carrie is in Anchorage.

The sun felt quite warm on the sheltered side of buildings in town this afternoon. The power of the sun is returning!

There were some unusually shaped northern lights late last night, and the "morning moon" is still of fair size in its last quarter phase. We have all kinds of light now with only a few dark hours. Soon there will be no darkness again – April is not that far off!

February 19

High 8º F
Low –8º F
Clear
NNE wind to 18

Terry and I made a trip to Amaktut today and found lots of sun but no fish again. The sun has cleared the rocky bluff across the river – the one with the stone Eskimo woman with child.

This was Terry's first time up that trail this year. What amazes me is how he seems to remember each twist and turn of previous year's trails when he has been up there. He seems to remember the porcupine that lives under the old house up there too!

There were three new moose tracks and one stray caribou track on the river today.

On the way home we ran across a huge flock of Willow Ptarmigan (300-400) in a small patch of willows. We managed to get off one good shot and picked up six. There were also two others with broken wings – a side effect of slack shooting that is deplorable fact of life to all who use a shotgun.

This small patch of hillside willows must offer choice feed, or its hillside location facing the sun may be especially nice for ptarmigan in the late afternoon. They certainly have spent a lot of time there.

Carrie will be glad to have several meals of ptarmigan when she gets back.

The new "cutter teeth" on the old auger makes all the difference in the world. It is now rather easy to make a couple of holes in three and a half feet of ice.

February 20

High –6º F
Low –22º F
Clear, few clouds
N wind to 20, late

Kind of a cold night, but lots of sun in sheltered areas today.

Hand-hauled some wood in and ran the dog down to tidelands. Had hopes of running up to Kobuk Lake for fishing, but too cold this morning.

Red squirrels getting lively and more vocal, even in the cooler weather, as their feelings of spring in the air take over their actions.

The Kobuk 220 dog race took off this afternoon and the Yukon Quest is finishing up. Bruce Lee of McKinley Park the winner there.

There seems to be a continued decline in recreational and racing dog mushing in the region. The year round care and upkeep is probably becoming more intolerable.

There are a couple of new moose tracks around camp, but haven't seen any animals for a while. They are sure free to come and go without any hindrance from deep snow thus far this winter. Food choice is pretty unlimited.

Food for Willow Ptarmigan is in a similar state as few willow patches are snowbank covered this winter.

Crossbills have pretty much disappeared locally. Hope they have found a source of cones somewhere not too far off.

February 21

High 2º F
Low –10º F
Cloudy, light snow
W-NW wind to 15

No sun today for a change. It was a pretty dull day without it!

The air has that west wind feel – damp penetrating cold, small snow particles, and misty air. We haven't had those conditions for ages. A spell of west wind can take us back to a real arctic environment again. We have gotten soft with all this good weather and moderate temperatures.

Hauled in a bit more firewood (by hand) and ran the dog a bit. Spent several hours working on January journal material. I'm pretty late getting it out again.

The country and camp pretty quiet with Carrie in Anchorage and the dog race they are having in Kotzebue (the Kobuk 220 taken by Ed Iten and Jim Wilson). There are also junior races this weekend.

Westerly winds – if they take over – will cause us to forget about spring for a while. Not only us but all our neighborhood creatures will again worry only about keeping warm and finding something to eat.

February 22

High –2º F
Low –24º F
Cloudy, lt. snow, clearing
WSW-W wind to 20

West wind air! Some snowing and drifting snow in Kotzebue with limited visibility.

Carrie got in on the evening jet but it seemed too late to go in to pick her up. Will need to get some gas tomorrow too.

Temperatures are dropping quite quickly since it cleared up this evening. Tomorrow may be a cold trip.

The solar panel really has our battery up now. Two weeks ago the charge needle was beginning to bump the red warning zone for discharge. Now it's way up in the 14-16 zone, indicating a nearly full charge, even though we use the battery for the phone most of the day now, with the generator on only in late afternoon and evening.

Had a long distance phone call from central California last night. A friend and I talked more than an hour. They really have a lot of water running off down there and the sun has been a rare sight.

Very little going on around our home site. It is time to get at cutting and hauling wood to Sisualik, but getting a trail made to where there is some wood to cut is, and has been, and stumbling block. Maybe I will get at it this week.

February 23

High 10º F
Low –31º F
Clear, cloudy, clear, cloudy
N-NE wind to 18

Rather strange pattern of rapid clouding and clearing.

Made a town trip to pick up Carrie and it went pretty well. Whiteout on the way over, but good sun on the return. Soon after we got home the cloud-fog bank moved in again from the SE. We may get some snow out of these clouds. It did warm up, which was nice after the difficult time I had starting my sno-go at thirty below this morning.

Took Terry for a run after we got home and it looks like there may be at least one caribou down creek in the location where a caribou or two have spent most of the winter inside the timber. At this site the animal or animals feed out in the tussocks and move quickly into the trees whenever snow machine noise breaks the silence. This is probably an injured but now healed animal that has found a way to cope with its limitations. I had thought that these animals dispersed, but it seems that there is fresh cratering today. I would like to see the animal.

Town ravens still in stress. The town-village-city also continues to bustle.

February 24

High 24º F
Low 8º F
Cloudy
N-NE wind to 18

A little surface drift in the open today and a dim sun, but very pleasant temperatures.

Ran the dog north and saw several new moose tracks in a narrow thick-willowed small draw that moose don't generally sue this time of year. This is another indication of moose being able to move around at will to seek out the best feeding sites.

Went thru the hillside willow patch where we found the big flock of ptarmigan last week. They were not there today!

We probably should have made better use of this fine long mild day, but it was a good day also to just take it easy and recuperate a bit.

The weatherman keeps promising snow but it never seems to come. Don't know whether to be glad or disappointed. We do need more snow, but the idea of light fresh snow blowing around as a blizzard isn't very attractive.

There were two Boreal Chickadees around Terry's scrap pile this evening and something – probably them – has been eating on the piece of bear fat hanging over the generator shed. We would really like to have their constant company as in the past, but seems like the Gray Jays won't tolerate them.

February 25

High 25º F
Low 16º F
Cloudy, early a.m. sun
Light winds

A very pleasant warm day, but dim without sun. Two inches of snow overnight gave us the first new "slate" that we have had for some time. Red Squirrel was first to make a track, but a small marten was not far behind. I thought our camp was full of weasels, but they didn't make tracks during this day.

Cut a little firewood and chatted with the three young men that dropped by on their race machines for a break.

We need to make another town trip for the packages Carried shipped up while she was in Anchorage.

The couple of Boreal Chickadees are making a daily check of our camp for a bite. They keep a sharp look out for Gray Jays.

Terry went along for the wood cut and found a porcupine right off the bat. His barking brought me running (on snowshoes), not sure whether his bark meant moose or porcupine (I'm still keeping an eye out for the lop-eared bull). I also don't fully trust Terry's resolution to not grab a porcupine by the hind leg to drag it home, like he did to the first one he ever saw. After that painful experience he has assured me it will never happen again. He still gets awfully excited though. I didn't have a rope with me so I had to drag him back to the sled and his chain by "hand-in-collar" method, which is not fun on snowshoes. He did quickly forget the porcupine once he got out of sight and smell. This is an interesting characteristic of Terry's. I know he doesn't really forget because he has a memory like an elephant. But once out of sight and smell I can turn him free and he will follow me home and not return to the porcupine – thank God.

February 26

High 20º F
Low –6º F
Cloudy, snow
SW-W wind to 18

An aborted town trip today. Always a frustration to start off for somewhere and not be able to make it. Visibility was up and down early this morning due to coming and passing of snow showers. We started off about 10:00 a.m. in the midst of a shower that we thought would pass. It never did. We went down our tablelands trail to tidelands as the snow and visibility permitted. We could see a mile or so, but ground was white with no old trails showing. We thought we might make it to Sisualik Point and hit the staked trail to follow in. We couldn't, and the snowfall increased and west wind picked up. That "snow shower" lasted 4-5 hours. It did clear and the same through a bit about 6 p.m.

We now have 5-6 inches of very light fluffy snow – a new white blanket covering all things dark. It also gives us good potential for a blizzard.

all our cabin clearing community – Gray Jay, raven, Short-tailed Weasel, Boreal Chickadee – are scratching snow to find the edibles. The Red Squirrel seems most successful. Sued the broom to sweep snow off some of their "trash" food.

After not having a real snowfall for along time, all of us ground dwelling creatures will need to get used to the fluffy stuff again. There is also a chance that west or north wind will pile it into new surface bumps that will be a traveler's pain.

February 27

High –6º F
Low –32º F
Sun, mist, clouds
Light W-SW wind

Town trip through a very unusual landscape. It was the same 18 mile landscape, but today it was a different world though at the same time familiar. all this strangeness was due to lighting, misty air, incomplete but fantasy clouds, and over all and penetrating through all, a super-brilliant overwhelming sun. There was nowhere you could hide from it. Adding to all this remarkable ambient wonder or maybe really the base of it all was the three inches of new immaculate white snow that fell yesterday when there was absolutely no sun. (We searched mightily for it yesterday to guide us into town in zero visibility conditions – it was nowhere to be seen.)

Mating foxes, weasels, ptarmigan and one moose have already had the audacity to disturb this immaculate whiteness – our sno-go was no less and probably much more a destroyer of uniformity. Thank God an 18 knot wind from any direction will obliterate all of our transgressions.

We have light in the outdoor world now from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Midyear Friends Conference and NANA meetings are to be held a week early this year. The conference will begin next Wednesday the 4th of March, in Kiana. It may be a "cold" conference the way weather patterns are shaping up.

As often happens, the dark frustrations of traveling yesterday made the bright great traveling of today much more intense. If we hadn't have had yesterday, we would not be as appreciative of today. That is a truism to be remembered!

February 28

High –6º F
Low –30º F
Clear
N-NW wind to 10

Well, February is going out cold and bright, with daylight from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Not sun up time, just daylight to see by.)

Two Boreal Chickadees have joined our camp community. They have been around off and on since Christmas, but now they spend most of the day here. This is the smallest overwintering bird species that we have. Have you ever wondered how a tiny little body like this, with its need to maintain such a high body temperature, manages to spend a long, long night at –50º F in early January? I have, and though I have some hints, it still seems another of those miracles that occur and pass with hardly anyone taking notice. These new friends are very tame, very vocal, very dark (yearlings?) and always very busy. We are glad to have the company. In past years we have had chickadee finger perchers, a Black-cappped that would come to call, and one bird that would come into the house (thru the air vent), eat from a saucer, and return to his own cold unheated house.

A very close Sisualik neighbor passed on to a better place today. We will miss her greatly.

Ran Terry the Superdog today to warm and loosen him up. It is a joy to see this dog run. He is aging some, but still has that Superdog gait. He was born for speed but has come to believe that his mission in life is to be the best ground squirrel hunter in NW Alaska.

There is an ideal tracking surface these last two days, and it is likely that there have been wolf and wolverine hunters out. It still seems to me that the last of February should be a closing time for the hunting and trapping season on some species.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

MARCH

March 1

High 4º F
Low –26º F
Cloudy, some snow
NE-SE wind to 20

Not a great day for the Weather Bureau since they forecast a day of sun. There was a little sun this late afternoon, but not much. Wind and drifting snow was the day for unsheltered zones (Kotzebue-Sisualik). That last 3-4 inch layer of white fluff took off today. Later in the afternoon our trees shed their frosting and became dark green again.

No visitors traveling this way today. There will be lots of travelers by all means this week to the village of Kiana, as they are to host the Friends Church Conference Wednesday through Sunday and then NANA yearly shareholder meeting the following Monday. It will be a busy week for the host village and a lot of traveling for visitors, sometimes as many as four or five hundred.

Our Boreal Chickadee group is growing. There were three regulars today. They are our smallest winter passerine and of course the raven is our largest winter passerine. Two hardy birds, quite able to eke out a living year around on the living edge of harsh, near impossible conditions. Can you imagine the easy time they have in the summer with the variety and abundance available to them then?

Didn’t fire up the sno-go today but it will get a workout this week with a funeral and a burial to do. Carrie will need to get into town to spend a few days in Kiana.

Our new moon, showing tonight, is very high in the sky. The sun is said to follow to that height this month.

March 2

High 10º F
Low –12º F
Sun, thin clouds
Snow showers
E-SE wind to 15

Grave digging in Sisualik today for our long time good neighbor. She will be greatly missed. There was a good group of strong young men to complete the grave in a short time.

Our chickadee flock has grown to five. It is quite amazing how quickly word of a good feed source get around to the residents of this region. Ravens and chickadees seem to share this communicating talent among their compatriots.

A young fellow traveling from Kivalina today stopped at the grave dig site and reported he had seen a lot of caribou on the beach near Rabbit Creek - probably in the beach zone between Killikmaiq and Port Site.

Our fresh snow around here has gone pretty much unmarked for two days. It would be good to walk around with snowshoes on a range that is being used by several thousand caribou.

Saw the new tracks of Willow Ptarmigan (a small flock) on the edge of the tablelands on our homeward trail today, but that was all.

Time is flying! Only two months left to enjoy our house in the trees. They are days of long daylight though, which makes them go all the faster.

March 3

High 4º F
Low –14º F
Clear, misty
N wind to 15

Visitors today, friends that are moving to Anchorage and a better job. We will miss them.

Funeral and burial tomorrow of a dear Sisualik neighbor. We will try to make both.

Ran Terry and picked up a few pieces of firewood down creek. Terry may have seen a moose again as he took off pretty excited and was gone for 20 minutes.

Huge flocks of Willow Ptarmigan on a hillside facing the sun downstream today. Didn’t see any birds but the tracks were very fresh and there were many hundreds of tracks, just like an invasion force.

Not much other sign of life except a few foxes.

We have accumulated a four to five inch fluffy snow layer over everything in our region. We will have ground storm when it first blows to 20 k.

Our flock of five Boreal Chickadees is probably the most regular we have ever had. They are busy birds and are getting quite vocal.

Our camp raven has found a way to get to the ground near the house corner for the scraps that are there. It takes some helicopter-like maneuvering to get in and out of that spot.

March 4

High 14º F
Low –3º F
Clear, clouding over
N-NE wind to 18

Early town trip, funeral at noon, to Sisualik burial site 3-4 PM then home. There were a lot of people at the funeral service and a lot of snow machines at the burial. Weather was chilly but tolerable.

Our trail in to town pretty lumpy. We followed our visitors of yesterday, which made us appreciate the sacrifice they made to come say good-bye. They are moving to Anchorage.

We followed the Sisualik staked trail to gravesite and found it much better. Tomorrow when I take Carrie to town for her trip to Kiana we will cross the lagoon (no trail) to Nuvugraq and use the staked trail in and back. A little longer trail but much smoother.

The raven took advantage of our absence to work a couple of food sources around the house where he is afraid to go when we are home.

It would be great to know how many sno-go's there are in Kotzebue now. They may out number the people!

Wildlife, except for ravens, was pretty rare today in the zone traveled.

March 5

High 20º F
Low 10º F
Sun and clouds
NE-E wind to 20

Made an early trip to town so Carrie could get off to Kiana. East winds were much stronger down in the tideland areas and Kotzebue than here at our place. The ground drift was heavy and we followed the Sisualik staked trail in for the first time. The new drifting piles of snow made a wearisome trail. That trail was good yesterday. Today, both ways, it is something else.

The temperatures are nice and so far there has been no new snow.

Some melting on dark things around the front of the house this afternoon. That sun is gaining power!

Got a note from friends in Sitka today that have first bulb flowers blooming and large flock of swans moving by towards the NW. Spring is spreading north!

Our Gray Jays, chickadees and raven were the only creatures beside Terry the dog and I that were enjoying the warm and colorful sunrays around the home site.

There are many regional people in Kiana tonight and there will be many more on the coming weekend as mid year Friends Conference comes to climax and NANA Day develops on Monday. In some years, visitors outnumber village residents. It can be a "cozy" time and a lot of fun.

March 6

High 24º F
Low 18º F
Clear, come clouds
NE-E wind to 20

Continued mild temperatures and offshore winds with ground drift continual. We will have a new travel surface when ground drift quits. Maybe better (smoother), maybe worse. One never knows till the process is finished.

It was a beautiful day on our front doorstep. The sun warmed enough to melt the snow on the boards (for the first time in 1998) and though the wind sighed in the trees and occasionally shook them a bit, the ground drift stayed out in the unsheltered flatlands.

Gray Jays, Boreal Chickadees and the raven gave the warmer air a melodious definitely spring-like flavor. All three of the species are coming out of their secretive

winter silence. One who has only a moderate acquaintance with the species would be surprised at the varied repertoire of melody that comes from the throats of these common species.

Flowers may be blooming (crocuses-daffodils) and swans may be heading NW as a friend wrote this week from Sitka, but today the signs of spring were felt and heard in Sanningaruq. Different signs but just as valid.

Ran Terry and got some household ice. Did not see any living creatures outside the shelter of Sanningaruq spruce patch.

March 7

High 23º F
Low 17º F
Clouds, sun
NE-E wind to 20

A fine day out of the same mold as the past several days: warm, ground drift, and pleasant long daylight.

Went up to the mountains to get a little wood, see how the trail is developing for real firewood haul, and to look over the country.

Moose and Rock Ptarmigan seen to be the major track makers up that way.

There were three “new” moose tracks around the house last night and several more fresh tracks up creek in willow draws not usually used by moose this late in the season. Light snow cover this year.

Flocks of 100-200 Rock Ptarmigan are tracking up the higher elevations. This species feeds mostly on dwarf or shrub birch rather than the coarser “red willows” that willow ptarmigan utilize and there is a lot of that plant where I visited today.

A friend came by this late afternoon from the Sealing Point area with a good-sized freshly killed caribou on the sled. Good meat good bone marrow.

Was surprised to see a bright colored Black-capped Chickadee mixed with the Boreal Chickadees. This a first for this time of year and adds class to our “around the house” bird flock. I didn’t get a leisurely look at him with binocs but the longer tail, whiter back, and larger white cheek patches and lack of brownish sides made the ID pretty straight-forward. Had hoped it might be a Siberian Tit but not quite!

March 8

High 23º F
Low 18º F
Cloudy
E-NE wind to 18

Same weather without the sun and still without snow. Quite a long spell of mildness without interruption.

Today was a quiet day here in Sanningaruq without interruption. My visitor last evening left a lot of thoughts to roll around today. I am very glad for his stimulation.

Plucked the two Rock Ptarmigan this morning and noticed the contrast between this species and the more common (here) Willow Ptarmigan. They are smaller with a smaller head, beak and gizzard. The black stripe from beak base through the eye (the usual field ID) seems to be formed of skin and small tight modified feathers. They do not have a red comb or wattle over the eye. Their winter feed seems to consist mostly of over wintering leaf buds from the birch alpine and tundra shrubs *Betula nana* and *Betula glandulosa*. These buds are much smaller than those found on *Salix pulchra* and *Salix alaxensis* utilized by willow ptarmigan. The relationship between these species and their plants must be pretty tight since elevation is a prominent factor in habitat location for both the birds and the plants.

Our moon is big and high and so is our sun. Having enough light for outdoor activities is rapidly becoming only a memory of past months or future ones.

March 9

High 24º F
Low 16º F
Cloudy, light snow
NE-E wind to 15

NANA Day and whiteout in the country, so caught most of the Kiana meeting on the radio. There were some good words and thoughts from the native people of the region.

Moose continue to wander through Sanningaruq one or two at a time, but probably at a more regular rate than in recent years. This may be due to our lack of snow and not to more moose in the local population.

Have not seen a marten track for more than a week. They and our White-winged Crossbills have not lasted out the winter. More than likely both have had to move on in their constant search for specific foods. Both species are keyed to specific foods that tend to be locally limited.

Haven’t been able to catch sight of the Black-capped Chickadee again. Our three

camp Gray Jays are pretty possessive. They don't tolerate other jays and all chickadees must keep looking over their shoulder and stay alert to avoid trouble.

Our temperatures keep climbing a bit each day so that what little snow we have is shrinking.

Most people will be traveling home tomorrow from Kiana, including Carrie, and Kiana will be losing about half of last week's human population.

March 10

High 28º F
Low 8º F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

A perfectly beautiful day and the first day this year that the sun was strong enough to warm roofing paper and wood enough to melt snow that made roof edge icicles! The west side roof of our cabin (the afternoon sun side) is lined with 6 to 12 inch icicles. They look very fine in the sparkling sun.

Carrie got into Kotzebue on a morning plane from Kiana and I picked up her and a bottle of propane this afternoon. Our propane went dry this morning before my coffee pot boiled, always a poor start, even to a good day.

Our town trail is lumpy after all the east ground drift of last week, but is not too bad. We used our straight trail in again.

Good fishing news from Fish Creek on Kobuk Lake. Our son got 10 today right in front of his house at that location. That is not a bad run from here if the trail is not too bumpy. We may check it out shortly, now that things are pretty much together for a while.

There were a few new very small fox tracks on the trail in today. They are probably white fox from the ocean side.

Those and a few Willow Ptarmigan tracks were the only creatures to disturb the new quiet snow surface on the 18-mile stretch to town.

The whole creek crossing at our second site was water-filled this morning. I thought I would have to turn back and go out the back route over the hill, but I found that it was frozen over from last night's temperatures and that I could walk dry across it. So I did cross it with the sno-go. It cracked but held.

March 11

High 24º F
Low 6º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Another fine day with a little ground drift in open country.

Got firewood and ice to be ready for a shee fishing trip to Kobuk Lake.

Saw a very large, very white Snowy Owl today. This is the first I've seen since before Christmas. To see such a large bird that is not glossy black is at first quite startling. I immediately thought of Jonathan or even a Tundra Swan. I first noticed the bird rather close, going straight away with flapping wings, climbing.

A seal hunter report from yesterday: there is open water around Sealing Point and at least one Sisualik clan hunter got seals (Common Ringed Seals). We did not yet hear how many. They are nice and fat by this time, with most pups probably already born. Some may still be carrying unborn pups. The newborns or unborn pups have beautiful thick silvery hair. They used to be much prized for trim on parka or mukluks. There are few winter seal hunters now and fewer workers of skins that might clean up and work the skins, were there some taken home.

Noticed numerous very small rodent tracks at the base of small trees on the side of a mountain. They are so tiny that they must be shrews. It is remarkable that these smallest of warm-blooded mammals have successfully populated some of the harshest of habitat on this continent. One stands in awe at their ability to find food and shelter to match and sustain their high body temperatures and metabolism rates.

March 12

High 22º F
Low 7º F
Clear, some clouds
NE-E wind to 18

Made it to Kobuk Lake (Fish Creek) and got 27 Sheefish and one Northern Pike. The shee are small to medium size, the pike is large.

The trail up there was disappointingly bad in two long stretches. The west side Noatak Delta was all mud and snow mixed with moderate rough spots. The east delta to Little Noatak was just plain rough. Our lagoon, Qikiqtaichaiq, stretch was good and Little Noatak to Fish Creek was all right.

The trip up took 2½ hours and back took 3 hours, much too long for the distance.

There were fishers at three locations: in front of Augie Nelson's house, at Killaugun,

and at Fish Creek. There were only three or four fishers at each location and all were getting the same kind of small slim sheefish with an occasional medium-sized but slim fish. They are kind of scrappy looking, not high quality human use fish, except for drying or half-dried cooked.

Our snow machine developed some strange sounds, which worried me some since half the trip was cross-country off well-traveled trails. A break down would be rough as Carrie can't walk out and I would be slow doing so. She does have a "shelter box" to travel in and that would be an adequate shelter to wait out rescue time.

These worrisome thoughts add to the cost of fresh fish along with high priced gas and oil. We do appreciate the taste of fresh, top-quality fish, but it doesn't come free.

March 13

High 32º F
Low 15º F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

An unusually warm sun today for the date. That is especially true when they gave the record low for the date as –42º F in 1929. We have had probably a lot more good weather this winter than we deserve and one can only hope that it continues, knowing that it is not too likely.

We spent the day getting things, including ourselves, back together after our strenuous trip yesterday. The poor trail made it strenuous.

Remarks from around the region comment on the unseasonable warmth.

Today would have been good for just about any outdoor activity.

Carrie saw the Black-capped Chickadee around the house again today. I have not yet got a look at it with the binocs. We still hope someday to have a Siberian Tit, so when any chickadee turns up that is not a Boreal we check it over pretty carefully.

Very few travelers our way even with all the good weather. There are too many good things to do in other directions - fishing, sealing and caribou hunting.

With our light snow cover and early warm temperatures, inland travel may end early this year and we have a lot of hauling to do.

Tonight we will have a pot of duck soup. A privilege we enjoy at this date since acquiring a freezer.

A Kotzebue hunter got a full sized uguruq today, unusual out of Kotzebue Sound this

month. He reported others lying on the ice. The one he got had thin blubber, also unusual at this season.

March 14

High 28º F
Low 3º F
Clear, some clouds
Light winds

Awoke with a bit of flu this morning but felt better after lunch so we went down to Sisualik and shoveled out the tent before the sun makes the snow heavier and maybe harder. The frame held together again but one 2 by 4 roof support cracked under heavy snow weight on the south side (drift from N winds).

There are a few places in the hills and mountains (south-facing windswept zones) where the sun is melting snow, making those places darker against the surrounding white snow-covered ground. This is usually a sure sign of spring but not this early in March. It normally happens April 14! We wonder greatly at this point in time how our weather will turn out between now and May 1. Our radio weatherman is still giving record low temperatures for the date: -42º F in March 1927.

We have not had any west wind, for which March is infamous. If we do, our temperatures will get back down and stay there for some time. March and April temperatures can stay quite cold in spite of long warm sunny hours. Siberian air masses?

We shall see about the weather, but the mud and grasses around remind that Jonathan's expected return time is only two and a half months.

Willows, trees, shrubs are getting strong doses of sun and warmth. I would be surprised if there were not some beneficial effect from this early Season warm caress. If nothing more it at least generates hope for a time not too far off when all plants will flourish.

March 15

High 20º F
Low 2º F
Clear, clouding late
Light winds

We took a leisurely run up to our son's house (camp) at Fish Creek (Ikaluligagaruq) with the intent of over-nighting and doing some sheefish hooking tomorrow.

We decided, after making the trip the usual route a few days ago and finding it terribly rough, that we would try a less direct route in hopes of having smoother traveling. Boy! Did we ever luck out! Under the bright sun we could see the rougher

snowdrifts and could zig-zag at fairly high speed from level to level. When we got to Lockhart Point we found the strangest thing! A newly opened Ice Road (for cars and trucks) going right in the direction we needed to go. The road is made by scraping snow off the ice just wide enough for small "pickups" to pass. It was great traveling, no bumps at all! And it lasted a third of the way to our destination. Then bumps again for a few miles, and then another smooth high level trail on a berm along Kobuk Lake beach. It was a good and easy trip and now we are ready to fish in the morning. The fish are here too since Sunday's fishers have had some good catches. The sky is rapidly clouding this evening and snow is coming, the first for a long time.

A new landscape, a new house and a new challenge - sheefish here we come!

March 16

High 22º F
Low 16º F
Cloudy, snow
Light winds

Four inches of new snow this morning and more coming.

There are fish only a quarter mile off the beach and they bite pretty well. Size is a problem as only about one in ten are six pounds or better. There are a few nice fish ten pounds or better.

Snow and poor visibility all day so we will overnight again and fish a bit more tomorrow morning as it clears.

We caught over 50 shee today and the number of fish seems to be growing, gathering to bait fish along the shallow water areas.

A number of our extended family came up this evening and fished for a while. A granddaughter, age 30, caught her *first* sheefish on a hook this evening! I don't quite know what to make of that surprising fact since her dad owes his very existence through parts of many years to the presence of sheefish taken by hook February through April. It is a surprising revelation that times have indeed changed. Sheefish have not. Their strengths and weaknesses are still readable by humans that would subsist on their fine flesh.

March 17

High 28º F
Low 6º F
Cloudy, snow
NE wind to 15

Snow stopped and visibility got real good.

Fishing was good this morning with a greater quantity of larger fish.

We headed home afternoon with a heavy load of fish and a white world with 4 inches of new snow. Kind of a slow homeward trip with whiteout surface conditions. We are glad to be home with lots of fresh fish and our lonesome dog (two nights) is so happy to have us home too.

We haven't brought home this many fish for some years. There are close to 100, but there are many small ones that will go to some friend who has a dog team.

The sheefish are showing a bit of unusual pattern where we have been fishing. The numbers as well as size seems to be increasing day by day, which may mean a concentration of small "bait" fish trapped against shallow water and/or an underwater ice shelf. Fair to increasing fish catches have been made at that site for 10 days now. There have not been a lot of people and augers working the site, which may allow it to last much longer as a productive fishing site.

It is again obvious that modern technology, efficiency and growing human populations may sometime endanger this possibly limited stock of sheefish.

March 18

High 33º F
Low 25º F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 15

Unusually warm and wet with the air full of small snow flakes that melt against dark objects. Very poor visibility.

This is the warmest, wettest day we have had so far in 1998.

In the still somberness of our morning the new warbling voice of displaying Gray Jays were very beautiful and loud. For several hours we had a working woodpecker within hearing distance. Good and different bird noise from our spruce patch. It was the kind of day that one would expect to hear the deep booming call of mated Great Horned Owls. Maybe we will again if our snowshoe hares ever return. We once had two Horned Owl nests in our spruce patch within hearing distance of each other, with our house in between. That was 20 years ago when our last hare high was on. There was lots of hooting around this date.

We are getting late snow and maybe more yet to come. The weatherman is still giving all time record lows for the date near forty below. We expect west winds to bring temperatures back down for a spell before May 1.

We have taken it pretty easy today, recovering from our fishing sortie and counting our blessings at being home and satisfied with our fish catch.

Let it snow, let it rain and let it blow. We are, for the moment at least, safe and secure at home.

March 19

High 38º F
Low 24º F
Cloudy, rain showers
NE-E wind to 20

Heat wave! First real thaw we've had this winter. We often have a warm period like this in January but not this year. We do consider March a winter month and this is a warm spell and not "the spring thaw." I keep reminding Carrie of that since she tends to panic when our roof starts to drip way inland here. She prefers to be out on the Sisualik beach when thaw begins in earnest.

Our great sheefish catch didn't get to freeze clear through. I had to bury them half frozen in snow today. Cooking quality will go down but their quality is okay as spring quaq (thawed raw, but aged fish eaten with seal oil in spring time).

Got a needed load of firewood today. Very hard work with the super sticky new snow with rain on top. We have a lot of wood cutting yet to do and we'll look forward to freezing temperatures again!

Since we haven't had a thawing spell this winter till now and have relatively light snow conditions, it is super soft inside the timbered areas. Deep snow tends to pack or compact itself over time by its own weight. Warm air-rain also compacts snow. All this compacting makes for good snowshoeing or sno-go trail making after things re-freeze. Today was the beginning of this process and snow was super soft and sticky for both our snowshoes and sno-go.

Saw fresh large marten tracks today, the first for some time.

March 20

High 42º F
Low 36º F
Clouds, sun
NE-E wind to 25

Got word yesterday that the "moose waster" finally had his day in court. He lost hunting privileges for 2 years, fined $2,500, lost gun and sled, but got back his sno-go.

El Niño has caught up with us. The whole state except the North Slope is under a

period of record-breaking daily highs.

Our air temperatures indicate that we didn't freeze last night, but the snow surface was frozen this morning making sno-go travel good. Different than the sticky snow conditions of yesterday that "snowball" the tracks.

We saw two large, probably male Willow Ptarmigan acting like they were at a cockfight! We did not see dark heads, but it won't be long. In some years (years of light snow) male ptarmigan do begin to show darkening heads the last week of March.

The trail to town was not bad today. The warm wind and rain late yesterday softened the outstanding bumps.

The reflection of open ocean lead today seems to indicate a lead edge running from Cape Krusenstern to Cape Espenberg. This is a surprise since we thought the edge would still be in inner Kotzebue Sound. This would account for uguruq taken and seen a week ago from off Sealing Point lead.

The lead location is ideal for the spring marine mammal hunt from Cape Krusenstern and is why Sealing Point (the place) is called Sealing Point!

March 21

High 38º F
Low 19º F
Broken clouds, snow
E-ESE wind to 30
W wind late

Hopefully our temperatures are on the way back down where they belong for the date. Ground level was pure ice (icy snow) this morning when the dog and I went down to Heart Lake for household ice water. It was terribly slippery and tough on dog's feet, with no loose snow for slide rails of the snow machine. That was remedied a couple of hours later when an extended snow shower changed the nature of the ground surface - good traction and ample slide rail lubrication.

A male Willow Ptarmigan appeared to be thinking of attacking the snow machine headlight this morning. He gave his cockfight cackle and landed a few feet away already for trouble. Didn't see any dark head feathers but it won't be long. Willow Ptarmigan now have access again to ground berries and leaves due to rain and thaw.

Ice crust may inconvenience moose and caribou a bit but it's not a real problem. Light snow cover in sheltered places has benefited moose and the ground is bare in many windy places for caribou feeding needs.

Much open water has developed in mountain creeks where snow and thin ice were the only winter covering.

Northern Pintail were reported in the Anchorage area today by friends and family there.

No migrating birds reports from the NANA Region but there will surely be some: gulls, Golden Eagles, and Rough-legged Hawks.

March 22

High 34º F
Low 22º F
Cloudy, some late sun
E-ESE wind to 20

Our winds switched to West for a few hours last night and that was long enough to bring temperatures down to good freezing level. A few snow showers at the same time cured the extreme slippery conditions caused by earlier rains. Since we didn't have thawing conditions all winter we had real soft conditions through this spell. Now if constant freezing prevails we will have good trails for our firewood hauling and moving to spring-summer camp.

We will have some pretty heavily crusted snow but it is relatively shallow snow so it shouldn't be a problem to moose. A lot of caribou range will have no snow at all.

Ice fishing still going strong with good catches continuing. We had a good burbot feed the other evening as someone gave us a couple of good quality fish. Their livers were quite thick, fat and firm, the sign of high quality in this fish.

The reflection of the open lead on the clouds today gave a picture of a corner offshore of the Anigaaq Ranger Station and the edge running towards Cape Espenberg.

We normally have useable trails into our winter camp here into the first week of May. We wonder at what date this unusual year will close that down. With light snow accumulation and mild weather, we are set for an early spring, but there may be surprises. West winds, especially constant ones, could change all these unseasonably mild conditions.

March 23

High 35º F
Low 23º F
Cloudy, snow, clear
E-SE-S wind to 18

Warm again through midday - broken clouds allowed the sun through to melt the top

of the new three inches of snow. Very sticky while warm, but to some degree keeping the under surface from thawing.

Rumors are running rampant with the long extended mild spell. Both cranes and Tundra Swans were reportedly seen in the Fish Creek area today. (This is where we were shee fishing last week.) If the rumors are valid this will be the earliest date either of those species has been seen in this area.

Have not even heard "bear out" rumors yet but expect to any moment.

Late March extended warm spells are not too rare. Just a few years ago we had Glaucous Gull sightings for the first time in late March. But then the usual pattern is a cooling in early April and sometimes the cooling is extended through April giving a late spring rather than early. Usually this cooling is brought in by west winds off the sea and out of Siberia. So far this New Year has produced very little west wind. Once it begins we will probably have west winds through the Fourth of July.

It is a little disturbing when weather and seasonal anomalies are accentuated by bird and animal migrations. We will worry and we will see.

Our neighbors made a strange catch yesterday as they visited their summer camp. A surface wandering Spotted Seal was wandering on land far from ocean water. It was said to be eating willow leaves and had very thin blubber. Another strange happening for this winter.

March 24

High 34º F
Low 20º F
Thin clouds, sun
N-NE wind to 18

Town trip today. Fine trail now through the Sisualik staked trail.

The cooling trend continues but slowly. The record daily lows are still in the minus 30's so we still have hope of a near normal break up in May and not March.

Neighbors reported seeing 3-4 caribou inside the trees when they went to get wood today. This may be the little group that spent a good deal of the winter a mile or so down creek from us.

It seems likely that both Kivalina and Noatak hunters shared with Kotzebue fresh meat from the 1,000 or so caribou wintering between Sealing Point and Port Site, as we have not heard any hint of other groups of caribou nearby.

Kobuk Lake sheefishing continues to be pretty good. The numbers of shee taken on a

good year like this is astronomical. We often wonder just how much harvest the stock can tolerate. The spoon, flash lure seems to be a pretty efficient catcher compared to the older ivory hooks of a couple of decades ago.

We must get at woodcutting and hauling while we can. That is our next work priority. Carrie would prefer more fishing but that will have to wait a while.

March 25

High 38º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, sun
N-NE wind to 18

Finally made a wood cut trail. Spent most of the day it packing down with snowshoes, the short section in through the trees. It was hard work. The snow inside is remarkably soft for trail making. Snowshoes sink way below the surface. Having had no winter thaws (till this week) and relatively light snow cover (20") there has been no compacting. Under heavy snow or crusting from rain or thaw, snowshoeing and making trail is much easier. However once the snowshoed trail has frozen (overnight) it should quickly support a wood-loaded sled. We will see tomorrow when I go over today's snowshoe work with the sno-go.

Was surprised to see considerable caribou feeding areas deep inside the trees, with absolutely no sign out away from the forest. I wonder if mechanization is not conditioning some Barren Ground Caribou into Woodland Caribou. There were no fresh tracks but yesterday our neighbors, also going after wood, actually saw a small group of caribou that faded farther into the woods. This is a kind of new thing on an old theme. We may come to find out more of what is going on. The first thought is that they are not completely healthy animals.

A few fox and ptarmigan tracks up that way not much of any other tracks, except in the trees where there were a number of Red Squirrels running about and Spruce Grouse flying about. A surprising number of both.

March 26

High 26º F
Low 10º F
Cloudy, light snow
SW-NW wind to 18

Temperatures are coming down and there was no bright sun at midday to bring them up too high.

Got up to the new wood cut trail and made it over the snowshoed trail with the sno-go alone. It still seemed too soft to try with the sled.

Started the wood cut and found that there is probably more than first estimated. Some fine large dry timber within the new trail loop.

Several marten made tracks overnight and seemed to be actively hunting squirrels and voles. Yesterday there were only squirrel and vole tracks.

Terry, the dog, went up with me this morning and immediately found a caribou fawn leg cached by a fox. It must have had good bone marrow as he spent the morning chewing and breaking up the bone.

Cut several trees and sectioned them until my chainsaw tank became empty. I have trouble restarting the saw while it is hot and the recoil starter stuck so I had to quit for the day. It was probably a good thing because it was past lunchtime and my back and arms were already tired. Did get a good start on a Sisualik woodpile.

The multiple marten were a surprise and an encouragement. Krusenstern National Monument seems destined to have, in these latter days, a self-sustaining marten population that was not a part of the historical scene. Moose and marten are two new creatures on very old lands.

March 27

High 10º F
Low 4º F
Cloudy, light snow
SW-W-N-NE wind to 15

The weather got cold enough to freeze one of the large fat shee we caught last week and allowed us to eat a good frozen fish for lunch today (quaq).

We are really working the summer firewood today and yesterday. Located a pretty productive spot, snowshoed a loop up into the mountain spruce, ran over it with sno-go without sled and today was able to get two small loads out. Have been cutting several different times in the two days so that we have a pretty good pile by now. Our nephew working with us; today he went in to pick up a large “family” flat sled to help move our hard-earned wood into Sisualik. It is hard to believe we have less than a month to enjoy our winter cabin before moving to the seacoast again. Jonathan Livingston Glaucous Gull will be glad to see us there again.

There certainly is a lot of marten activity where we have chosen to cut wood. There may be den sites near. There were many new tracks this morning and they dug up the piece of fawn leg bone that Terry so painstakingly buried yesterday. There was little on it for a marten, though Terry found the bone marrow good when he cracked the bone with his strong jaws.

There was near constant woodpecker noise in the area today, when the chainsaw was

not running.

We are promised some below zero temperatures this coming week. Sounds good. Too early for spring anyway.

March 28

High 20º F
Low 3º F
Cloudy, light snow, fog
W-NW wind to 10

For several days now we've had light snow and fog with hardly a look at the sun, and very poor distant visibility.

We've been pushing it on the firewood cut and haul. Our nephew and I cut and haul, while Carrie keeps the home fires burning and deals with the lonesomeness of being home alone too long. She does want wood this summer, however.

Our neighbors got one of our spruce dwelling caribou yesterday and reported that it had a "little fat." This is kind of an on-going puzzle, as there is a lot of rather old caribou feeding sign in the large trees where we are cutting wood. The depth of snow within the trees has not quite reached a level that caribou can handle. The puzzle is why the animals stay in the trees when normally the open tundra is their preferred habitat. In the trees, foraging effort is right at the base of individual trees. Their trails are a maze connecting each tree base to another with no feeding except at tree base. This is an unusual situation and involves only small groups, two to five animals, and they appear to be all "resident" animals, that is animals that have spent the winter doing what they are still doing. They could even be reindeer that mixed and ran away with caribou last spring. The scene is pretty common through our NE spruce patches within the Monument.

Marten tracks are quite plentiful in the same zone.

Chickadees around yet. Five yesterday, two today.

March 29

High 16º F
Low –4º F
Clear, some thin clouds
W-NW wind to 20

Finally a below zero temperature. Our last recorded below zero reading was on the 4th. That is amazing! Nearly a whole month of above zero temperatures in a midwinter month north of the Arctic Circle. Well well! Daily low records given each day by the Weather Bureau have been –50's early in the month, -40's through the month and in the -30's these last few days.

We feel so fortunate to have some of the large fat sheefish we caught last week now frozen hard enough to eat as frozen quaq.

Lots of visitors this Sunday: a couple of moose hunters (season closes March 31) and a crew of friends from NPS. Both parties had to travel back into town with worse weather than when they came out, due to 20 k west winds with cold moist air.

Our nephew has been a great help in moving our firewood from mountain cutting site to Sisualik, not to mention limbing the cut trees which is always a slow process when single handed. We've had good weather and a good hauling trail these last three days and are pretty well up on our woodcutting needs. It is a good thing, since we have heard today that other wood seekers are into our hard earned cutting trail. This is common practice and makes one a bit wary to try to get the best, easiest wood out before the existence of a new trail gets out to the general public. Anyone can *make* a new trail deep into the spruce patches but few do.

Snow Buntings reported in Kotzebue today.

March 30

High 4º F
Low –12º F
Clear
Thin clouds building
NE wind to 18

The old saying for March is proving true, again: "In like a lamb, out like a lion." We have at long last a blizzard forecast for tonight and tomorrow. It promises to be a real one. We have had so few storms this winter that we are getting anxious that once they do start they might be monsters and might not stop. They are promising a good deal of fresh snow, which could change the face of things.

We have gotten a good lot of firewood out this week and can relax a little and slowly start moving our things out to the exact April day of the move. Hopefully it will be the very day that Jonathan the Glaucous Gull returns to his swallow box landing pad.

We are still checking out a remarkable early February report of a flock of 100 swallows on the beach of Point Hope. The idea seems impossible, until confirmed.

Our new woodcut trail has already attracted two other woodcutting teams. The appearance of a pile of firewood on top of the snow in Sisualik attracts quick attention, much like a dead fish on the beach quickly attracts a host of gulls.

Making that half-mile trail from edge into a spruce patch for good big dry trees is a chore most folks like to leave to someone else. We lucked out on this one, having

three days of cutting and hauling till competition turned up. We got the most and the best until the trail is extended.

March 31

High 21º F
Low 7º F
cloudy, snow, blizzard
E-SE wind to 50

March out like a lion! It was a short but intense blizzard due to light snowfall and the "iced down" old snow cover conditions that even the 50 k winds couldn't move. Winds had dropped and blizzard warning canceled by early evening. Temperatures have warmed some but no threat of rain or thaw on the horizon yet.

As we do get into April we will need to be on the alert for a good "moving out" date. The mild winter and light snow pack could give us a moving out problem. We will not be quick to move until snow surface seems warmed enough to quit drifting. Many years we have not moved till after May 1, but times and seasons seem to be changing.

We are glad to have our firewood cut and can now slowly move needed odds and ends back down to summer camp.

Another fishing trip will be in order if April weather is not too severe. We have had such good weather all winter while things have been tough outside the region that our worry now is that our turn for the bad side will be oncoming. Who ever heard of a "bad" April?

Living creatures pretty inactive today sitting out the gales. Gray Jays, chickadees and raven did make short visits to the cabin clearing.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

APRIL

April 1

High 30º F
Low 20º F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E-SE wind to 20

A very dull colored day today, with snowflakes of many different sizes and little accumulation. Temperatures have grown steadily warmer again.

We did have some trail breaking to do today. The strong winds of yesterday moved all loose snow into the borders of willow and tree patches.

Overflow on our lower creek was dry this morning, but had water later this evening when I ran Terry down that way. I have not seen overflow ice at this level at this crossing - it is several feet higher than ever before. Reasons are not clear. Springs are the source of the water and long cold spells are usually the building force. Water comes down the creek, ice prevents it from the following normal gravel channel, and so it rises up to the ice surface and flows downstream on a bed of ice. This process continues through the winter and gradually the ice reaches a level quite high above the creek bed. This surface freezes quickly and when sky is clear and the water is not snow-covered it soon changes to ice.

Saw only our camp jays and raven today, no other creatures.

The strong winds yesterday have left much dark colored ground exposed again. If we don’t get more snow this will hasten our spring thaw, maybe earlier than we want.

Have not seen any large animal tracks for a while. Don’t know where the moose have gone. The season closed yesterday and we had a moose hunter come through the day before that who had been unable to find one.

April 2

High 37º F
Low 22º F
Clouds, clear, clouds
E-SE wind to 25

Town trip for gas. Only a little snow left to drift until more falls. Most of our winter snow cover is pretty well fastened down - iced over due to rain and warm winds. We do have another low bearing down on us with the promise of snow, drifting snow and warm temperatures.

It was a fine windy day with good trail and bright light.

Took Terry for a run on returning home and was surprised to find fresh bull caribou tracks and cratering at the site a mile down creek from us. It has been mentioned off and on through the winter as a place where several caribou fed outside the trees and retired into the trees when snow machine noise was heard on the air. There seems only one large animal; we heard that our 5-mile neighbor killed one timber-dwelling caribou a few days ago. These may all be from the same group of four that overwintered secretly here on our creek. Don't know which way the animal went this time. Terry was excited on the feeding craters, but didn't want to get left behind while he figured out the way.

One male Willow Ptarmigan flew from close to us on the way out this morning and I could see several blotches of dark feathers on its white head. This is the first spring-colored head we've seen so far and it missed the last week of March by only a few days. The earliest we have seen dark heads has been when there's little snow and lots of thawed spots of ground around. Returning Snow Buntings and dark-headed ptarmigan are signs of the spring!

April 3

High 38º F
Low 33º F
Cloudy
NE-SE wind to 25

A long waited great happening today! I saw a genuine fresh snowshoe hare track in the new snow that fell on the 1st. The animal was traveling from E to W through our woodcutting site in the trees, on the northwest side of Nasiksaugvik (Lookout Mountain). This may be the first track on Krusenstern National Monument in 15 years. There were many thousands in the late 1970's and it was our most common animal through a long period in that era. In years of abundance it fills an important niche in the diet of people that live close to the land and provides a prey base for many furbearers, birds of prey and other flesh-eating creatures. The hare's long absence has caused a remarkable paucity of species that become common when rabbits return in numbers. A number of shrubs, young spruce, and cottonwood

(balsam poplar) have had a 15-year grace period during the hares' absence.

The hare made it in time for Easter! We hope there are more to follow. The quickest way to build a new population is to have good numbers of migrants.

There were also fresh marten tracks at the same site and also fresh marten tracks near the house today.

Five years ago I never thought I would live to see a year when marten tracks were much more common and regular than rabbit tracks, but it was so this winter and last.

We have had no moose tracks in the area for a long time now.

April 4

High 36º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, snow showers
SE wind to 20

After a light pre-dawn snowfall (1/2") we had broken clouds with sun sometimes and a few more light showers. The air was quite mild and the sun quite warm during the few spells that it was out. We seem headed into a cooling trend again. Which is fine. A spring that is too early is almost as bad as one that is too late.

Was able to cross, dry, at the lower creek crossing this morning as the overflow water had drained out some.

Made two trips to Sisualik, one with the washing machine and bags and bags of clothes and stuff we will use down there this summer. The other load was large blocks of ready cut firewood.

There was drifting snow and "whiteout" down that way, not very spring-like. Our tent door was snowed in again but the tent roof is clear.

It is not difficult to hear ptarmigan this spring, unlike the last two years. They have gotten quite vocal. There is a little head color on some males but they remain in flocks.

Sheefishing and sno-go racing occupy many these weekends. Shee catches are being made from various sites over the whole of Kobuk Lake.

Sealing Point house family has returned from Anchorage and will be staying down there again. They have lots of open water on the sea right now and marine mammal hunting may be good for them this year.

April 5

High 30º F
Low 14º F
Cloudy, snowflakes
SE-SW wind to 18

Winds down today and switching to a cooling quadrant. Maybe spring will come in its usual monthly pattern.

We added the additional "out of synch" hour to our time scheme last night. To live 3 hours out of synch with sun time is a penalty we do not deserve as citizens of the State of Alaska.

Noticed this afternoon that one of the willows near the house has a number of the flower buds (pussy willows) out of the "husk" covering. This does not seem to be an unusual happening, as some can be found every year at this early date. This seems to indicate plant growth; change in its above ground portions while roots are still frozen into frozen ground. This happening has been a bit of a puzzle for years. It does seem to be a fact of local reality. That probably makes the species *Salix* the earliest flowering plant in our region, a fact not known by the general public. Flowers in April in the arctic? Well, now it seems so. Not jonquils or daffodils but flowers nonetheless.

A phone call from Point Lay today reports "the large smelts are moving in." We had a shipment of Rainbow Smelt from there this week of a size similar to those in Kotzebue Sound. We had expected large size like we had last year from there. This fishery is a new one and many facts are yet unknown. The size of both the fish and their eggs last year were larger than we have known from Kotzebue and Buckland.

April 6

High 32º F
Low 2º F
Clear, few clouds
NW wind to 18, a.m.
Calm p.m.

Shoveled out summer tent site in Sisualik and had a hot fire in the stove to dry things out. It is now ready to move in to.

There was ground drift up here on south facing slopes this morning, but dead calm in Sisualik. Just after we got to the tent Carrie's brother from Sealing Point got in and reported strong winds and drifting snow at Sealing Pt.

Everything was well frozen this morning and we were able to eat more frozen sheefish for lunch. They have not been hard frozen enough for most of last week.

We did have a water puddle by our door when we came home from Sisualik, but Kotzebue temperatures stayed well below freezing all day.

We probably are going to have an early spring. The sun working on much dark material (ground, grasses, rocks, willows) because of our light winter snow cover is raising temperature of the ground even on the cooler days.

Our lower creek crossing was well frozen and dry to cross today. Trails remained in great shape all day.

Had a call from Kotzebue this evening indicating that there are some McKay's Buntings with Snow Buntings. This is an interesting report and hope to hear more. We know there are over wintering McKay's but don't know when they return to islands for nesting. Some reports indicate that migratory Snow Buntings have arrived.

April 7

High 30º F
Low 26º F
Clear, some clouds, fog
Snow late
Light W wind

To town and then to Fish Creek house to overnight for another sheefishing trip.

Kotzebue streets in good shape for autos but poor going for snow machine - lots of gravel.

The staked trails are in good shape. Use has leveled off possible snow lumps that prevail a short ways off the trail and over much of the off trail landscape.

The ice road (Kobuk) we used last trip is all filled in and the new one under construction is not yet a "good trail." The regular staked trails are the best route now. Our trip up was good but late and there was little sign of fish or fishermen. One late fisherman had just caught four small fish about halfway between Augie's and Fish Creek, near the beach where fishing has been ongoing for more than two weeks. We will probably end up fishing that area, as we didn't come prepared to travel a lot farther. Rumor is out that large fish are being caught in Asailivik in shallow water, but that site is clear across Kobuk Lake.

Fog and snow showers came in late evening. We spent the night at our son's house at Fish Creek with other family and friends. We will try fishing in the morning. Fog and snow showers turned things somber for the night.

Bare ground is common up this way as it is down in our area and spring will come

quickly.

April 8

High 28º F
Low 18º F
Cloudy, fog, broken sun
NE wind 10
Light SW wind

We got an early start fishing, making a couple of new holes in front of Fish Creek house where we got fish last time. There was no sign of fish so we moved toward the area SW, where we saw one fisherman with a few fish yesterday afternoon. Successful sheefish depends as much on looking for people as it does for fish. Sheefish are very gregarious, where there is one there are usually more and finding one is critical to getting started.

After a few miles of travel we stopped and made a new hole in the near 36" of ice. After 5 minutes Carrie did get a hold of an apparently large fish but had trouble getting it into the hole. It came off the hook. Two friends came along and we found there was a new hole in the ice a few feet from the new one we had made. It had been covered with new drifted snow. One of the ladies sat down and started fishing 6 feet from Carrie! She soon got a medium sized shee with a deep scratch under the head. We decided this was the one Carrie had lost. After half an hour of no further show of fish we moved off a mile so two where the hole was that had a few fish yesterday evening and the same person was now there and catching fish! He quickly made a couple of new holes and began catching small fish. Together we got 28 small to medium shee and one Northern Pike and hit the long trail home. We arrived around 5:00 p.m., tired and worn and glad to get home with our modest catch.

April 9

High 36º F
Low 18º F
Clear, clouding
E-SE wind to 40

A fine cool bright morning and we feel somewhat rested though we won't do much today.

Part of the reason for our weariness is due to the fact that a third of the travel distance home yesterday was off trail, cross-country over lumpy, hard snow piles. We went up through Kotzebue. The homeward trip bypassed Kotzebue and was much shorter, but much rougher, tiring.

We now have blizzard watch hanging over us for tonight and tomorrow. April blizzards are often short and wet. Hope this one doesn't get too wet.

We are a bit worried about our move out this year. With so little winter snow cover, our 6-mile moving trail could deteriorate quickly under rainy conditions. If we move too soon the prospect of sitting out a late blizzard in our tent in Sisualik is not attractive. We have never moved out of winter camp to spring quarters earlier than April 18.

The early outdoor "pussy willows" taken indoors as cuttings and placed in water in a vase started immediate maturing growth. They probably will produce pollen in a few days. This early shedding of the outer husk on the Felt-leafed Willow shrubs has been noted for years but never much understood. This early flower development on upper branches while roots remain in frozen soil seems unusual to say the least. Mild weather spells must trigger the action but where the energy comes from and how it moves through frozen stems is still a mystery to us, though botanists must have answers. It does mean spring is not far off.

April 10

High 38º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, snow, rain
E-SE wind to 35

A miserable wet day today. There are two major dog races on: the Kobuk 440 and the Arctic Circle Championship spring Race.

There was three inches of new snow this morning, wet sticky snow, and then during the day, periods of mixed snow and rain with fairly strong winds. Trees, willows and any dark thing (including dogs and people) above ground level are quite wet and dripping.

Carrie is feeling stress as water drips off the roof past the window. She has a long time fear of getting stuck inland at this near moving time from winter camp. We are looking sharply now for freezing temperatures which will make all trails good. Continued thawing temperatures and especially rain will further complicate life for many people and travelers this weekend. There is a women's sno-go race to Noorvik and back tomorrow. Each year Kivalina hosts an Easter sing and worship weekend that attracts many long- distance travelers from throughout the region.

Temperatures cooler than 35º F will be welcomed by many. Unseasonably warm temperatures at this season can cause more problems than cold, north of the Arctic Circle.

We shall see what nature has in store for us in the next couple of weeks. Jonathan seagull may have trouble finding us if he comes two weeks early.

Snow and water surface freezing at 9:00 p.m. under a clearing sky.

"Pussy willows" taken inside a few days ago have grown large and silvery; very beautiful spring growth independent of roots.

April 11

High 34º F
Low 27º F
Cloudy, clear
Snow showers
NE wind to 10

We have never moved to Sisualik at this early date but we have done that, tentatively, today. The light snow cover and continued warm temperatures prompted us to load up some essentials, shovel out the door of the tent again, and at least overnight here. We will see how the weather goes.

There was a report today of ground squirrels out and a Glaucous Gull seen west of us.

There were many displaying Willow Ptarmigan on the edge of the tablelands as we came down the trail this morning. We shot a couple of dark-headed males and had them for supper. They were very good and so was the broth. Ptarmigan broth seems to be therapeutic. We did have a busy day with much shoveling and the warm fire in the bright tent is very nice!

Terry hasn't found out yet that the squirrels are out. He will get quite excited when he finds out.

Lots of travel down here in Sisualik on this Easter weekend, both sno-go and aircraft. Kivalina is the goal for many this Easter. There will be much good singing and feasting.

Some people are moving out to spring camps like us and hauling boats, gas and provisions, adding to the travel load on the trails.

There has been saltwater overflow on the Kotzebue-Sisualik trail. It can be missed by detour and is not a serious impediment to travel. There has been little overflow of this kind all winter for a change.

April 12

High 31º F
Low 24º F
Cloudy, snow showers
E-SE-S wind to 18

A quiet Easter in Sisualik, our second day in Sisualik tent. We again notice the

differences of living in a house and in a tent, especially in the morning after the fire has burned out.

Made a trip up to the house for a sled load of odd shaped things: telephone battery box, extra generator, solar panel (for telephone battery), sheefish, and heavy things that need to come out before the snow gets softer. Trail is still very good, as long as it freezes overnight. Even the lower creek crossing was good and dry.

Lots of Willow Ptarmigan noise in the air now. There seem to be lots of birds and they are in full display already, colorful chestnut and black heads with very red upright combs. Last year this bird was so scarce we longed to hear the spring song of the Willow Ptarmigan. This year it is all over the place.

Big weekend for the last dog races of the year. They have had warm sticky weather and trail for both the Kobuk 440 and the Arctic Circle championship. Local musher took the 440 but visitor teams took the first two places in the Arctic Circle.

Our granddaughter won the women's sno-go race on Saturday, both her class and overall. Quite an achievement for a quiet, soft-spoken, girl.

This is the earliest date we have had to move that we remember, though we are coming down on the 14th with its historical significance as the earliest date that a crane filled a birthday pot of soup. It seems we will have an early spring, but not far out of bounds of historical norms.

April 13

High 34º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy, blizzard
NE-E-SE wind to 30

Back to Sanningaruq and the shelter of the Spruce Patch. It was an absolutely miserable day with mixed snow and rain, mostly snow, but melting on contact. We caught the hint from the weatherman this morning and decided to come back up here for the night since we have a number of things to do before closing the winter cabin down for good. The weather turned bad an hour after we got here. After lunch I loaded a sled full of odds and end and headed back down to Sisualik. Drifting and falling wet snow made very poor visibility and it worsened after I unloaded the sled and started back to the spruce patch. Lost the trail before reaching the lower creek crossing and had to back track a mile on my new made trail to re-orient. First time this season, for a while, that I have been lost. I was able to find the old trail after backtracking and follow it in.

The storm warning we got from the weatherman was for tonight. All this adventure happened in midday! Now we are wondering what tonight will be like. Glad we are

in the spruce patch.

Some Easter travelers to Kivalina are not so fortunate. They left Kivalina for Kotzebue and have the storm as well as overflow on the Sound to contend with. We finally do have overflow on the staked trail crossing to Kotzebue. Maybe the first all winter. Overflow on the Sound has been unusually rare this winter.

Neighbors to the east heard a lone goose day before yesterday.

April 14 High 38º F
Low 34º F
Cloudy, snow, rain
NE-E-SE wind to 18

Back to Sisualik tent early today with good trail (all white) with no more drifting snow. Things turned mean again with mixed snow and rain and then just rain for several hours. The air cleared but clouds remained late this evening.

Terry, the dog, got most uncomfortable with rain from above and snow beneath. I finally shoveled out his plastic house box to give him some relief. It was far under the snow and by the time I got it out the rain quit. It has been that kind of a week anyway!

Squirrel out reports from Sealing Pt and a bear story from last week by a visitor. Still only one G. Gull sighting and one goose, heard but not seen by locals.

There is news of beluga catch at Pt. Hope. Some travelers headed that way to join whaling crews there.

The man whose birthday is today had two cranes for birthday soup many years ago, and is at Sealing Point this year. He is not having crane soup today as no one has seen any yet in that area. Maybe ground squirrel will have to do.

It was a first day for raincoat and hip boots and one traveler had them on. The rest of us just got wet.

We still have hauling to do from inland house. We are counting on a freeze tonight. It didn’t last night.

Town travelers have been passing all day.

April 15

High 35º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, snow, rain
NE-E-SE wind to 18

A rushed trip to Sanningaruq this morning for propane tank, moose meat and rocking chair and then a trip to town for gas and some spring provisions.

The surface snow started to freeze as we went to bed last night. Was surprised and dismayed to hear raindrops on the tent when awakening at 6:00 AM.

The trail inland was still firm and good with no problems but I didn't stay long. We are down to only one sled load left up there and then it becomes property of the bears for 5-6 months.

Kotzebue has gone to pieces with spring thaw. Mud, water and potholes abound. Drain water is already running out on the ice in front of town and making a traveler's mess. The rest of the 9 miles of Sound crossing is good and white and dry yet. The trail neatly goes around two large marine overflow patches. There are lots of travelers and trail users in spite of snow-rain. People are scrambling to get heavy stuff out of town to camps (gas, sugar, flour, etc.).

Two dog yard camps will be down at Salluq this year; there was only one last year.

With all the mud, water and habitat there are as yet no migratory birds, even gulls. Squirrels are out though, a few, and bears.

The date is too early for real lasting thaw, but both the birds and we are unwilling to gamble on our intuition.

April 16

High 34º F
Low 24º F
Cloudy, snow showers
W-NW wind to 15

New wind and new temperatures and a fine firm travel surface on the coast, but not as firm inland. We both went up to Sanningaruq this morning and came out with another full sled load, still leaving a few things. The snow surface up there began to soften as the sun got higher and we had to rush to get out. It was still very cold and frozen in Sisualik when we got back.

There were two sets of moose tracks on the trail and numerous displaying male Willow Ptarmigan.

People with traveling yet to do and Pt. Hope whalers will appreciate this west wind. We have heard that they have taken belugas but no bowhead strikes yet.

We need to get a drum of gas out of Kotzebue, which will be our next challenge, maybe tomorrow. With temperatures in the teens late tonight the surface water in front of town should be well frozen.

There is report of geese on the upper Kobuk. Still no additional gull sightings locally.

Funeral day in Kotzebue for well-known clan person - another, rather young mother with family. Many folks attended the funeral.

This cooling trend may make our "early spring" a little more normal. The last week of April is a normal "early spring" not the second week!

April 17

High 41º F
Low 26º F
Clear
W-NW wind to 15

Cooling continues, clouds gone, lots of sun and warm at midday (3 PM clock time).

Made the trip to town this morning on the best trail we have had all winter. Returned with drum of gas and propane on a still frozen trail. An easy trip and relieves our need for gas for a while.

Two family boys hauled some pallet boards over to help for our firewood. One of them reported that his gas gauge had fooled him and he "borrowed" gas for the trip back to town.

A first bowhead taken today from St. Lawrence Island. A number of belugas taken at Pt. Hope.

Lots of town travelers, both by air and surface vehicles.

The snow surface was softened by warm sun this afternoon and inland trails must have been soft again.

We have at least one more trip to make inland to winter cabin and then we'll be free to do some April things. Sheefish Derby is a week from tomorrow, if there is still trail to sheefish grounds by then. We would also like to travel down Sealing Point way while trails are good.

Still no real sign of spring birds. This may be a spring again that proves that birds move by calendar time and not early or late seasons.

Jonathan has a lot of choice scraps waiting for him, but he is a wise bird and probably won't show till the last day or two of April, big and white and wild and ready for trouble. Wonder how he found the weather where he wintered?

We have displaying Willow Ptarmigan in the backyard tonight.

April 18

High 28º F
Low 22º F
Cloudy
W-NW wind to 20

Well, a probable last hauling trip to Sanningaruq and now that we are out of the shelter and into the tent, wouldn't you know it, cold west wind weather. No thawing hot sun today!

I did nail the "bear protector" over the door and we have everything out that we intend to take out. The difference of the feel of the air there compared to here on the Spit was quite noticeable today. Inland has rather warm air.

The Sealing Point folks have fresh seal meat to eat tonight. They saw Common Eiders on the waters of the lead today. The eiders are nice and big and fat right now, very colorful too

We have a lot of snow free ground inland.

Three occupied camps now west of Sisualik and seven on Sisualik Spit. There will be a few more in both places next week and then for the ice-free season.

Picked up the whole carcass of a female caribou that we had left on the ground at our cabin site through the winter. The inside was untouched by voles or shrews or weasels. It is a fair sign that those small creatures are at an extremely low population density at our home site and that the several weasels we have hosted over winter have enough "other" food and that *they* are responsible for low density of shrews and voles. Normally we cannot leave meat or fish on the ground unprotected.

Saw three small passerines on a snow free plot on our flats today. They are probably redpolls. There have been numerous reports of redpolls this week after winter absence.

April 19

High 24º F
Low 14º F
Fog, cloudy, light snow
W-NW wind to 30

A quiet first Sisualik Sunday. Amos and Flora Green over for lunch.

It was great to wake this morning to almost complete silence. When we went to sleep last night the wind had built up to near gale force and the tent flapping and CB antenna howling gave more noise than we needed. Cold, too, when the fire went out. Low chill factor temperatures. Quite a night, when you have moved down here because of thawing wet weather. Seems like it happens every time. Everything is frozen hard and fast this morning, making a great traveling surface, even where there was open water and slush a few days ago.

Light snow and fog, clouds dulling the sun's energy all day with some improvement in the evening.

We have 16 hours of sun up now and no real darkness.

This west wind period has, as expected, delayed "quick" spring. No new bird reports. We will probably hear in the next few days of some ocean ice changes that will benefit marine mammal hunters both here and at other hunting points on our northwest coast. Onshore winds after large open leads can give exceptionally good hunting conditions, as marine creatures concentrate in the small open water areas after the ice has jammed in against shore.

Hopefully we will see, hear and get more reports of spring birds and events this week.

Our move from winter camp is now complete. The sooner spring comes the better for us.

April 20

High 34º F
Low 12º F
Cloudy, snow showers
Light SW-S wind

Town trips for spring supplies. Super fine trail around the country, with surface well frozen and a dusting of light fresh snow.

We did manage to find a soft place in the old partially frozen overflow on the Sisualik staked trail. We know there is a nice dry detour around this overflow but we decided to take a short cut. Bad decision. The sno-go track went down into super-

saturated saltwater and threw some over the sled and Carrie. We went home with our load nice and dry, the long way around. Traveling is really great again with hard and level snow surface.

Our Sealing Pt. extended family hunters got one small uguruq today and they sure do need it. They reported that there were five uguruq lying on the ice. They got one and lost another as it was not shot where it should have been. These appear to be yearling uguruq, young ones. They have very good meat.

It is reported that both Kivalina and Pt. Hope are catching beluga, but no bowheads yet.

A Kotzebue crew is making a trip to Espenberg, Shishmaref for crabbing. This is a new activity for the region. We will hear the results soon. Hope they do well.

One gull heard but not seen at Sealing Pt. No reports from Kotzebue at all yet. The water on the Sound quite white again from low temperatures and fresh snow.

April 21

High 31º F
Low 15º F
Snow, clouds
Minor blizzards
E-SE wind to 25

Have forgotten how it is to live in the coastal land of drifting snow, thanks to our spruce patch winter cabin. Today it all comes back - the difficulty of getting in and out the tent door for wood, water and whatever. Coastal people generally catch up on their sleep during times of blizzard. It is very UN-spring like today with everything white again. We appreciate the wisdom of Jonathan and other feathered creatures that don't let a warm spell in early April entice them into moving into mating habitat that could be detrimental to their purposes. They seem to be wiser than we are.

Was able to make a run into town for a drum of gasoline this morning. Hooked up our propane after that so we are a bit ahead in spite of whiteout weather.

I suppose that there is a chance, despite all that has gone before, of us having a <u>late</u> spring!

The ice and tripod moved yesterday at Nenana, the second earliest date in history.

Some airlines have shut down for the day due to fog, drifting snow, and generally poor flying conditions.

A woodcutter had a sno-go break down above our winter cabin and broke in hoping

to find CB or telephone there. There was neither, so he ate a candy bar found there and walked all the way down to Sisualigrauq where they live. He called and told us from there. I will need to make a trip back up there to check out our bear- proofing gimmicks.

Soft conditions too early have frustrated some late firewood gatherers. We have already burned up a good deal of our hauled wood and will probably seek more if spring is much later.

April 23

High 41º F
Low 18º F
Clear, few clouds
NE-E wind to 15

A possible "fly by" by Jonathan at 8:00 am this morning. At least a Glaucous Gull flew by high and hollering from ocean side to Lagoon Island nesting areas. One was also seen in Kotzebue around fishing holes yesterday. We are now in normal Glaucous Gull arrival times. Another reports moving inland from the open lead at Sealing Pt.

Made another trip to Sanningaruq this morning to get Carrie's "travel box." She might need it if we try to make the sheefish contest on Saturday.

Our clear sky today has given us a very warm sun in late afternoon. Trails may deteriorate rapidly.

Squirrels in our backyard are out this afternoon for the first time. Two at least. One may be Cedric if he survived the purge ordered by Carrie late last spring.

It seems we <u>are</u> early this year, but within the historic expectations for seasonal happenings. We are now into the last week of April, which is the regular time for first early migrants.

Neighbor to the west reported a goose over his camp an hour ago.

An unusual caribou movement reported last weekend by travelers from Kivalina to Noatak for a funeral. Many caribou were crossing the trail southward. Had they kept coming they would've reach us. The folks that made the report wondered why they were moving south instead of north.

April 24

High 45º F
Low 19º F
Clear, few thin clouds
Light winds

Geese on Noatak Flats and around. Shee in numbers on Kotzebue Bar, channel and Front Street. More tomorrow.

Another cool night and warm midday with reports of waterfowl getting closer on the Kobuk and Buckland side, but with few additional local sightings.

More ground squirrels showing - two today in camp.

More and wider spread Glaucous Gull reports, but still relatively few.

Tomorrow is the day for a lot of hopeful shee fishers with the local Lions Club sponsored Sheefish Derby. We hope to take part again, as trails to the fishing grounds have remained fairly stable. We do not have much of a handle on where we might find a big one, but we shall see.

One who takes part in the contest stands to benefit, money prize or no, because sheefish caught and cut and air-dried are special at this season. They can be either cooked when half dried or eaten fully dried fish in this early fly-free drying season.

One of our far western neighbors saw a hairy caterpillar walking away from his house on the snow the day after they moved in.

Several seal hunters are out on the lead from Sealing Pt. today. This is the first windless day for a while and we expect to hear of some kind of a good catch.

Saw numerous pairs of Willow Ptarmigan on our back blackberry picking grounds. This is great news, as we have not had breeding ptarmigan on our berry flats for several years.

April 25

High 38º F
Low 12º F
Clear
Light winds

This was the day of the great Lions Club Sheefish Derby, but for us the greatness came before the fishing. At 5:32 this morning, just as I was thinking to turn on the radio, there was the loud clattering call of a male willow ptarmigan as he descended on the tent roof. The call was loud and very harsh and close. We will be celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary in a week and this is the first time a ptarmigan has

perched on our tent and given its full better challenging call! There were only few inches between the tent roof and our ears. This was without doubt the clearest and closest of all ptarmigan calls we have ever heard. Each small detail was plain, even the clump, clump of ptarmigan feet on the tent. This will be a long remembered incident.

We did get up and away and in town at 9:00 am to sign in for the Derby.

Yesterday, Kotzebue people caught a lot of good sheefish right on the bar across the channel from the Arctic Lighterage dock. This morning there were a few fish there but nothing like yesterday.

We ended up at the mouth of Noatak and got some fish, but nothing long enough to enter in the contest. We will cut what we got for half-dried cooked fish.

There were a lot of people on the ice today and a lot of hooks in the water. We have not yet heard the official winners.

There was a very bright sun today and people generally looked different when they came in off the ice than when they went out. Brown or red!

April 26

High 37º F
Low 10º F
Cloudy, snow, rain
E-SE wind to 30

Wind all day, temperatures gradually rising, and heavy wet snow coming down at 9:00 pm. It is a miserable night to be out for man or beast or bird. We are all again remarking on the wisdom birds and animals seem to have about developing weather conditions. Few have come into the country so far and though much thawed habitat exists, none of it is very pleasant tonight.

Did see a couple of large flocks (15 –20) of gulls coming in from the west (ocean lead side), working hard into the wind just a few feet off of the ice. Scattered goose sightings have been reported. Probably at the end of this storm there may be, if it doesn’t end with strong west winds, a greater and more rapid influx of birds!

We had visitors from town today and enjoyed good conversation over a good baked sheefish, rice and half a pot of black beans. Their return trip to town was timely; though they had to buck a strong wind, air was clear. The heavy wet snow began an hour after they got home. The worst of this storm is to be tonight and early tomorrow. It could be tough on early-arrived birds.

Another adult sheefish carrying full size roe skeins was caught in front of Kotzebue

yesterday. That is the second in hand example of UN-seasonably mature ovaries in the past two or three years. Their normal egg lying time is late September.

Ocean lead is very, very wide again. These strong off shore winds are bad for seal and whale hunters.

If we have much snow tonight we may have trouble getting out of our door in the morning.

April 27

High 36º F
Low 24º F
Cloudy, blizzard
S-SE gusts to 50, a.m.

Well, we had it: a late intense blizzard with mild temperatures but dangerous to man, beast and bird because of the mildness.

We moved out of the tent into the dome just before midnight, with temperature at 34º F and heavy wet falling and drifting snow. Our tent door opens outward and prompted our move to the dome to sleep, which has a "Dutch door," that is, a door that permits exit from the top half if a snowbank prevents the full door from opening.

Danger from this kind of storm is real enough in several ways: unexpectedness, lack of visibility, and wet sticky new snow that clings to everything, both the falling snow and drift. The latter quickly wets and cools destroying insulation properties of clothes, hair, fur, feathers, etc., causing rather rapid onset of dangerous hypothermia conditions. It was a bad April night with broken CB antennas, stovepipes and power and phone lines.

By 8:00 a.m. conditions were much improved. All snow had stuck together and there were breaks in the clouds. We moved back into the tent for stove heat, coffee and breakfast.

Terry (the dog) had a rough night, his house filling with snow. He is real clean white now - like just coming out of a washing machine.

There were web-footed tracks in the snow around fish head and scraps on our front beach. This is a first for this year and indicates that Jonathan or some of his relatives survived the night and had an early breakfast. That's why the scraps were there!

The blizzard returned this early afternoon with more snow.

April 28

High 32º F
Low 10º F
Blizzard, cloudy, clearing
SE wind to 40
SW-W wind to 15, p.m.

Blizzard continued overnight till nearly noon. We spent a second night in the dome and got back into the tent, fired up and had first coffee around 9:00 AM. That was another break in routine as I usually make coffee by 6:00 AM.

We are experiencing extreme weather for the last week of April. Any birds in the region have had a couple bad days, even the few gulls we have seen.

There was a lot of fresh new snow late yesterday and this morning, and all of it constantly drifting in the 40 k SE winds.

We have spent two inconvenient and somewhat worrisome nights in the unheated dome now and hope for a better night in the heated tent.

We have lots of bigger snow banks around the tent. Trails that were deteriorating from melt are now all repaved with new snow.

Ran the dog up the Sanningaruq trail this afternoon and found that trail filled in with new snow, though grasses on tussocks are still showing through. A few hours of warm sun and we will have much snow free ground again.

Travelers stopped by in blizzard yesterday afternoon but got on their way today by noon.

Terry the dog had a trying couple of days and nights. He has not spent much of his life sleeping out in drifting snow. Yesterday morning he looked as if he had come out of a washer.

No sign of bird life this evening as this April storm passed on. It does explain to some why so few birds came early, even though habitat was ready.

April 29

High 18º F
Low 8º F
Cloudy, light snow
NE-E wind to 18

Continuing to get things together after the big storm. Two generators pretty well plugged with drifted snow that must be melted and then the generator dried out.

Steady snow began late afternoon with enough wind to keep the light fluffy stuff moving in ground drift. This, of course, fills up the holes and depressions, including our tent and dome doorways. This is the very reason why we don't move to Sisualik until it seems like it is through drifting for the year. We sure got fooled this year and we are not out of it yet, as another storm is expected for the weekend. We are not only not going to have an early spring, but may end up with a very late one.

No bird reports today. Gulls and geese seem to have retired to better country to wait out the delayed spring.

Did see a huge squirrel out for a bit today from under the dome. It is probably Cedric the Great from last summer.

Everyone in the area just kind of marking time since hunting, fishing or distant travel is too difficult with the rapidly changing weather conditions.

We are lucky to have enough to eat and wood to burn.

April 30

High 28º F
Low 22º F
Clouds breaking up
NE-E wind to 20

It is the last day of the month and we are back in the winter cabin in Sanningaruq! After early threats and promises it doesn't look like spring is going to come at all this year.

With much loose snow and more forecast, along with substantial wind, it seemed a good idea to come up where there is no drifting snow. It is nice to be up here again. The snow in the trees has iced so thickly one can travel right through spruce patches with a sno-go or walk around anywhere without snowshoes! Quite an unusual situation; maybe in some areas this is hard on moose and of benefit to wolves.

There are a lot of fox, weasel and marten tracks around the cabin, cleaning up the winter scraps.

There is a report of lots of gulls in Kotzebue today and some folks have gone to the Noatak Flats or Ambler for goose hunting.

Our trail up was in very good shape, but there are some areas of ground covered only with the snow that fell at the end of the last storms.

Only one moose has been through Sanningaruq since we left.

There are a lot more pussy willows out; blowflies taken over the house.

We are supposed to make a wedding in town tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. We don't know if the weather will allow it.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

MAY

May 1

High 36º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy, snow, rain
NNE-NE wind to 20

Well! Spring has really come, finally, and we didn't make it to the wedding, though we tried.

The morning was not too bad with snow showers and some breaks in the clouds. We decided, on basis of weather forecast, to leave stuff and dog here at winter cabin since fresh snow and drifting makes Sisualik kind of messy. We left here and got to Sisualik in a kind of minor blizzard and just in time to catch a phone call from our son in Kotzebue. He knew we were coming and said that maybe we had better wait a while, as Kotzebue was experiencing exceedingly heavy snowfall with wind. We did wait but conditions worsened and we turned back to winter cabin. We had to buck a headwind with heavy wet snow that wiped out sunglasses and goggles, and had trouble finding the trail we had just come down on because of the low visibility and whiteout.

We did make it home, had lunch, and after a short nap the outside air looked surprisingly bright with sun showing a bit through overcast. It turned out that the air looked bright and visibility improved because snow had changed to rain! That makes a mess but it does stop blizzards and drifting. By that time it was 5:00 and the wedding was at 6:00. We gave it up and just rejoiced that drifting snow in Sisualik wouldn't begin again (after rain), till freeze and more new snowfall.

Right around suppertime I heard goose noise; twenty minutes later I called Carrie to hear the first crane call (for us), so that made our day - that and the junco we are sharing the camp with. Sisualik tomorrow! And maybe Jonathan.

May 2

High 23º F
Low 10º F
Cloudy, snow, blizzard
W-NW wind to 30

Well! Spring has not come! Strong west winds, snow and plummeting temperatures have plunged us back into winter with snow on trees, willows and grasses and a full day of heavy drifting snow. One wonders what happened to the birds of yesterday. Did not see the junco today; even the numerous willow ptarmigan of last week are gone somewhere.

We have not had west winds with this degree of blowing snow here at Sanningaruq for two years or more.

This has turned out to be one of the meanest early springs that we remember in 50 years. It is mean because of the abundance of new snow, rain, winds and rapid changes in temperature, not to mention long periods of very limited visibility. There will be casualties among early migrant birds.

We do have hope of getting back down to Sisualik tomorrow. Probably the same kind of hope that squirrels have of getting out of their holes again and the geese and cranes have of relaxing in a more moderate habitat. It is the small birds that are at risk.

Several people were lost for a while yesterday and all local air taxis and scheduled flights were cancelled for today. Even the Anchorage jet cancelled today's flights.

We had such a great winter, weatherwise, that these last 10 days seem kind of like a bad dream.

We feel fortunate to be able to stay on top of the difficult conditions – so far.

May 3

High 14º F
Low –1º F
Clear
W wind to 15

After a most miserable yesterday with a west wind blizzard (a bad one!), we awoke this morning to a bright clear blue sky. There was wind blown snow still stuck to the trees and white was all over, much like January after a bad storm. But the wind was gone, dead silence reigned, with not even a jay or a raven or a crowing ptarmigan. Where was the junco? Or the goose and crane that were so loud day before yesterday?

We enjoyed the bright and warming of the sun in the spruce patch in the morning, and then packed up to see what the west wind had done to our summer tent camp. A west wind blizzard at any time of year can be a monster for birds, animals and people.

We got down to Sisualik, noting that Willow Ptarmigan had flocked together again and were no longer displaying. West wind can do that. Our shoveling was not as bad as expected, but we had some new monster size snow banks. After the tent warmed and we were starting to eat, a plaintive Glaucous Gull call came from close at hand. Jonathan!

Yes, and half starved by the look of him, and not too proud to accept an immediate meal of what little we could get together that wasn't frozen. My, what a dramatic arrival! After eating while carrying on a kind of clucking noise, he flew 100 yards out on the ice, squatted on his legs and feet and snoozed in the slightly warm sun.

Just before we left Sanningaruq, Carrie saw the junco headed for the generator shed.

No squirrels out today. Maybe the sun will warm a little more tomorrow and we can get on with spring. Jonathan must have had it tough here yesterday; saw web footed tracks from yesterday.

May 4

High 28º F
Low –5º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

Town trip for business. Everything frozen, good trail but a little bumpy from west wind drift.

Fish and meat outdoors frozen enough (like a rock!) for lunch or supper quaq. It is unusual to have that cold weather privilege in May.

Didn't see Jonathan today, though we left scraps enough to thaw around midday; most were gone when we came home. We do have a roughneck gang of ravens around here so we don't know who got the scraps.

Tracks in the little loose snow around the dome indicate that Cedric (the super ground squirrel) was out for a bit, even though it is still too cold for ordinary squirrels.

Lots of gulls around Kotzebue edibles.

A few geese are being taken in the Noatak Flats below the village.

Brought a White-fronted Goose and a piece of fine young bear meat home from town (gifts from friends).

Other friends west of us (that didn't have to go to town today) hunted the ocean under near ideal uguruq hunting conditions. They found three uguruq hauled out on the ice together. Our old friend and neighbor sneaked to them and got two. The third jumped in the water after the second shot. Lots of fresh meat for everyone for a while. Good cooked blubber and meat, a favorite at any time of the year for people that live on Cape Krusenstern. This is our specialty. Some groups of west coast peoples have specialties with walrus, bowhead or beluga. Bearded Seal, uguruq, is a Sealing Point/Cape Krusenstern specialty.

May 5

High 30º F
Low 15º F
Cloudy a.m., clear p.m.
N wind to 20

Snow moving again in Sisualik. Drifting began in afternoon. Temperatures have warmed a bit but not enough to stop the rolling.

We had quite a supper tonight, with fresh white-fronted goose soup (the first of the year), boiled bear feet and tongue. For tomorrow we have fresh uguruq. All these are gifts from friends and family and I reflect a fine characteristic of the Eskimo culture. Sharing of the foods from the land is deeply ingrained in the individual.

People traveling today, by air and snow machine. We have a group of gulls, numbering five, sitting down on the ice waiting for scraps. Reports of both cranes and geese sightings here on the coast have been made today. We have a couple of days of N and NW winds forecast, so both us and the birds still have some days of trial to get through before the relaxing time of "real" spring.

Some squirrels were out in Sisualik today for a while.

A probable rabid fox was killed in Salluq today.

A Kotzebue hunter also took one uguruq yesterday, making a total of three yesterday for the north shore of Krusenstern. That is a good early catch. Surely more will be taken if the weather will be a little more cooperative.

A traveler from Deering today missed Kotzebue (traveling Kotzebue Sound) and landed west of us at Akulaaq grave, and continued west until he found people that pointed out that Kotzebue was 30 miles back east, not farther west. There are always strange happenings around here!

The shee catching continues from town front to Noatak mouth - lots yesterday evening.

May 6

High 24º F
Low 6º F
Clear
Light winds

Fine sunny weather here today but drifting snow from the N-NW north of us (under the mountains) and west of us at Salluq. Surprisingly, Sealing Point (west of Salluq) had light winds just like us.

Went up to get more firewood and found the strong N winds up there. One can drive with sled and sno-go right through timber patches now, at least in the morning.

Terry found the same little porcupine in the spruce patch up hill from our cabin. I was glad it was in a tree this time and that Terry doesn't climb well.

Willow Ptarmigan are still back in flocks. Strange how they can back up in mode at this season in response to weather conditions. They had been broken up into pairs for 10 days prior to the big west wind. Now we're into nearly a week of re-flock mode.

Seal hunters were out today and report open water holes all covered by sikulaiq, thick young ice. This means hunters can only hunt seals lying on the ice. Some did get a few Ringed Seals, but no reporting of uguruq this time.

The "old timer" friend at Salluq who shot the two uguruq a few days ago fired a random rifle shot today at four distant cranes and got two with one bullet! This must be his year. These were probably the first cranes they have seen this spring so far. There have not been many yet.

Lots of travelers today for many purposes.

There is reportedly a boat and engine and snowed in sno-go out on the ice at lead edge off Krusenstern. Very unusual.

May 7

High 28º F
Low 4º F
Clear, thin clouds
E-SE-S wind to 10

Town trip for another drum of gas to replace the one yesterday that was found to be half empty from a slow leak in a tiny rusted out hole in the bottom of the drum.

Fine day today with a warm sun.

Many squirrels out and glaucous gulls are numerous. Little sign of other birds except ravens.

A few travelers today, including dog teams. Trails remain in great shape through this western portion of the region.

Our nephew is on the way home to us this evening with the uguruq he caught today on the ice out from Sealing Pt. Early season uguruq have not been so plentiful in recent years. They are making a good start this year. It is the preferred seal of the region.

A friend visiting yesterday reported that Noatak had received some King Eiders from Pt. Hope and some beluga maktak. Pt. Hope has not gotten a bowhead yet and time is running out for them. Wainwright has already taken one.

Our nephew and uguruq did get here and we got it butchered by 11:00 PM. It was a medium sized female, very fat. It is indeed a prize catch for this early date. There is a lot of meat and oil in one animal.

Neighbor travelers saw two female caribou with last year's fawns behind Sealing Pt. yesterday.

May 8

High 42º F
Low 8º F
E-SE wind to 30
Cloudy, rain

Big day today, a long one too! Fifty years ago today Carrie and I were married by Friends Church pastor-missionary Delos Westbrook, in the presence of a couple of witnesses. Today we celebrated that event with the help of many witnesses due to the energy and thoughtfulness of many relatives and friends. The evening was very successful, capped by a most remarkable blanket-quilt put together and decorated by the individual art work of many "over the years" old friends. Taikuu! Our word of thanks seems so inadequate! It is by the grace of God that we have been able to be a part of this great day.

As a final blessing, since I have been complaining long and loud about late season drifting snow, we got soaked clear through on our late homeward trip by the first heavy spring rain. This of course brought an immediate halt to any threat of drifting snow for sometime (at least till it freezes and snows again).

Many "new" birds reported today. The list to date is as follows: Short-eared Owls,

Tree Swallow, Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Glaucous Gull, White-fronted Goose, Junco, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, and American Robin.

As noted above it was a long and varied day with many human and natural events, from drifting snow in the AM to tropical deluge in the evening.

May 9

High 42º F
Low 37º F
Clouds and sun
NE wind to 10

A very pleasant spring day with gull, crane and willow ptarmigan noise in the air at almost any hour. Temperatures warm, snow soft, and the ground getting black in the meantime. The air is warm and dry, no more drifting snow.

Cleaned out the Tree Swallow box. Last year's canopy large upright duck feathers to keep hatchlings warm during periods of west winds is pretty neat. Wonder if the parents in warmer climes do that? One swallow was seen at Sisualik Pt. yesterday. It is recommended that nesting material be removed each year to lessen parasite-development for the young of this year.

Lots of sno-go travelers out and around this evening, most without sleds but with shotguns.

Shee catching still on-going near Kotzebue's Front Street.

We spent a slow day recovering from yesterday, getting done some of the chores melting snow brings on.

We have numerous things to get into artificial refrigeration as temperatures rise.

The surface snow has shrunk a lot today. All that recent fresh snow shriveled up a lot under steady 40º F temps.

Maybe we are free from further drifting snow!

May 10

High 48º F
Low 28º F
Clouds, sun
Light SE-S wind

A fine day in Sisualik with many hours of soft snow surface, though it did freeze on the surface overnight. It was a great day for squirrels and many were out enjoying it, some for the first time. We have a fair number around camp again.

Good weather came a little too late for some. Found a pitiful looking tiny carcass under our rain dipper today. It was a Ruby Crowned Kinglet, a beautiful little creature with a very prominent and colorful crown. It probably died in one of our storms after too early warming. This may be our smallest passerines and a bird of timbered zones, which is probably why it couldn't make it here on a stormy coast. It was an unforgiving early spring for such early migrants and there may be other species that experienced storm trouble.

Our Tree Swallow claimed his house today and spent most of the day looking it and the whole camp over. I just cleaned out last year's mess and he checked the inside thoroughly and sat on top, eyeing the several squirrels running around under the box. There were even some flies outside during the warmth of the day.

We are still not seeing small birds but there is now a lot of "tableland" snow-free ground with blueberries and ground insects in that zone. So what small birds have come are probably happy for the time in that zone.

Our good neighbor to the west (at Salluq) has to make a medical trip into town this evening. Hope they can fix him up and get him back soon.

May 11

High 38º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, snow
Clearing PM
Light S-SW wind

Another town trip to take in a generator that needs expert attention or junking, I'm not sure which.

Our whole morning was continuous a snow shower; clouds broke just as we reached the Point and our whole afternoon trip in and out was under a warm sun.

Snow surface froze pretty solid overnighte but thawed by mid afternoon as the warm sun broke through.

It was a pleasant trip. The only water was a shallow strip 50 feet wide right on the edge of Front Street, Kotzebue.

Lots of water and mud in town and lots of gulls. There are probably some small birds (passerines) in willows and grassy areas but no shorebirds yet.

The ravens that built a nest in the lookout tower of a far west Sisualik camp last year may be sitting on eggs now. The resident that lives there says he see a raven head on

the nest all the time now. Yesterday another raven brought the one on the nest what looked like a mouse.

Jonathan remaining in contact but not showing much interest in food; he has a mate and nest site to defend.

Terry caught his first ground squirrel of the season today, a youngster that had stayed too far from its hole. It seemed very skinny, unusual for this early season. We have had other "skinny squirrel" reports this week. Can't guess the reason.

May 12

High 42º F
Low 20º F
Cloudy, snow
Some late sun
NE-SE wind to 10

Jonathan finally landed on swallow box roof and did the "tossed food pick up" that is his trademark. Why it takes him a week or two to remember his old training each spring must have to do with what happens on wintering grounds from November to April.

We had a cold snowy morning again and are not seeing many birds. Our area is still pretty white with snow cover while inland, on the tableland, there is much bare ground with grass and willows for shelter. That zone is probably much more "birdy" right now.

Squirrels had a short but intensely active afternoon. There are quite a few around our immediate camp again. They are not much bothered by predators - yet.

Seal hunters staying on the beach the last few days due to the rather unprecedented weather.

The Tree Swallow has not been back again

While in town yesterday, we had word from a pilot that there was a heavy movement of caribou crossing the Kobuk between Kiana and Ambler. An unusual aspect of the report was that there seemed to be many cows with calves already dropped. Don't know how accurate this report is but it seems unusual for many cows to give birth before reaching northern calving areas.

Crane, Willow Ptarmigan, Raven and Glaucous Gull noise can be heard at nearly anytime, provided one is away from radio or generator noise.

May 13

High 40º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, clearing
Snow PM
E-SW wind to 15

Made an early run to tablelands with the dog, where we found one local creek running out onto the lagoon ice. Likewise at Jones Camp. These are the first local creeks to spill into and onto lagoon ice. In a few days, the lagoon will fill with melt water on top of the ice.

There were only a couple of cranes and some gulls around that water this morning.

Just before noon we headed out onto the Sound ice to visit family at Sealing Pt. The trail was fine, but many large ice piles made travel a little slow because of partial whiteout. The sun came out while we were having lunch and visiting and stayed out all afternoon. We had a much nicer home trip.

A first Long-tailed Jaeger was seen while we were there and a neighbor heard a first loon call, probably a Red-throat. I heard a first Mew Gull this morning in Sisualik and two Tree Swallows were at Sealing Pt.

Sealing Pt folks were cleaning out their swallow box and found two nearly fledged swallows still in the nest from last year. Strange! Has not happened to us before.

There is still a lot of snow down that way, but the crowns of the beach ridges are snow free and there are lots of blackberries and cranes. The air is filled with constant crane noise there.

Several town travelers today but we didn't catch word of trail condition at town front.

Several small passerines were seen at Sealing Pt. They were thought to be Lapland Longspurs, but this is not confirmed.

May 14

High 38º F
Low 30º F
Sun and clouds
NE-E wind to 18

A nice day after a frozen night with a warm sun and warm wind. Birds are beginning to move. Some large flocks of Northern Pintail were seen moving west today and some small passerines were on thawed ground.

The lone Tree Swallow was back today, looking lonesome.

There are still only a few birds in the air.

There was a Baker Aviation plane crash this afternoon. The plane was found on top of a mountain near Nome. The 9-10 passengers were all right except for couple of minor injuries. The wife and infant of a nephew were on the plane. As the "overdue" status was announced on the radio an hour or so before the plane was found, it was a difficult time for the family. Everyone was quite relieved when condition of the people was finally announced.

We have wind and rain and snow forecast tonight, with warming temperatures.

One of our extended family travelers got his sno-go stuck in a water hole on the way to Kotzebue today. He was walking in but got picked up from behind.

I went to Anigaaq and shoveled out our boat today. The trail on the ocean ice was really super after the overnight freeze and snow shower. The boat was full of snow, ice, and water. Got the snow and water out and will wait for ice to melt. Boat seems okay, though a fox tore open a gear lube container.

Salluq seal hunters were out today, home late, with rather strong offshore winds. They had some luck but we haven't heard a detailed report yet.

May 15

High 40º F
Low 37º F
Cloudy, rain
NE-E wind to 30

A first heavy rain today. Rain and wind are shrinking our snow pretty rapidly. The land on the Spit here is beginning to show its real contours, outlines of lakes and other early prominences that winter snows have obscured.

Shotgun noise from back at the edge of tablelands means that at least a few waterfowl are flying. Some short local creeks have spilled their water out onto the lagoon and that water is now rapidly spreading over the whole back area. We still have 90% snow cover here at tidewater, but at tablelands and higher, snow cover is less than 50% now. One of the consequences of this is that all the birds are back there.

We have seen a few flocks of Northern Pintail and some passerines moving against the rainy wind today. This reminds one that often our migrants come in from open ocean leads, passing us as they move east to Noatak-Kobuk Valleys, rather than passing us in a western-northern, coming out to the coast from an interior passage.

Haven't seen any shorebirds yet.

Last year's heavy black- and blueberry crop will provide early and abundant feed here on the Spit for quite a few different species, some of which one doesn't usually associate with berries as a food source.

It will be good to see some warm dry air and sun for a change. Bird noise has been suppressed today by strong winds and rain.

Two uguruq were taken yesterday by Salluq hunters.

May 16

High 38º F
Low 35º F
Sun, rain, snow
E-S-SW wind to 15

A pleasant day today, with lots of variety. Some sunny spells were quite warm; rain and wind are eating into our snow cover.

Birds are still pretty slow in showing, though we had a flock of five tree swallows this morning that looked like a family group. They did do a lot of "looking" around and a half an hour later the single bird that had been around for a couple of days was no longer alone. The two did some work on the ground and maybe even took a few grasses into the box. Dry grass is hard to find right now in Sisualik.

There was a bit of shotgun firing back at tableland edge. Water has spread around more today and the lagoon will soon be covered by local creek outflow.

Snow machines are having trouble with the Kotzebue Trail crossing. Last night our neighbor got stuck in an overflow hole and had to be helped out. Today several people in Kotzebue that were going to cross turned back and gave up the idea due to deep water. There were at least a couple of sno-go's that made the crossing successfully.

Our beach crack and tide cracks are getting a little wider each day. Not sure what that means but we may have an early departure of shore fast ice.

Two White-crowned Sparrows spent the morning on top of our pile of pallet boards.

The telephone installation crew didn't make it today - too much water. Now they plan to do the two installations on this side by air taxi charter next week.

May 17

High 43º F
Low 34º F
Sunny, clouding PM
NE-E wind to 25

Another nice dry day.

Soft air and snow. The surface did freeze overnight, but the sun got to that by midday.

Flat ice has much water on the surface now and there were no travelers from Kotzebue today. Jones Camp (both locations) isolated now by surface water.

Birds are making a better show around camp and in the wetlands in the backyard. Lake margins are showing now and most have a watery surface.

First shorebirds seen today - probably Western Sandpipers and Black Turnstones. Most numerous birds in the wetlands today are Northern Pintail. That is often the case here in Sisualik. They are feeding around grasses and lake margins and maybe on blackberries, of which there are a lot near melt water edges now.

Both Tree Swallows are around most of the day now and Jonathan demands a feeding two or three times a day. He (she) doesn't stay long and quickly heads back to nest site area. He is not going to appreciate our taking his first eggs again.

Our Spit snow cover is down to about 60% now. The rather constant mild wind and the days of rain this week has trimmed it down quickly.

Seal hunters have been few these weeks.

Still no bowhead taken at Pt Hope. They will have a poor year if they don't get a couple soon.

One and maybe two of our air taxi strips are useable now with wheels.

Runoff water has completely covered the lagoon.

May 18

High 48º F
Low 35º F
Cloudy, rain
NE-E wind to 10

A wet and warm day, good for birds. First Bar-tailed Godwit noise heard; some travelers west reported seeing a first Arctic Tern. We had a flock of eighteen cranes

and two swans in the backyard all afternoon. At this time of spring break-up one gets a feeling for how terribly silent the winter was; species just seem to fill a rapidly disappearing void of sound. Cranes, swans, geese, godwits, and loons don't hold back their clarion calls but let their enthusiastic voices resonate over the land on a windless evening like this. It is a great time to be alive!

Lots of water on ice surface now. There have been no travelers to or from Kotzebue yesterday and today. There were travelers down the beach toward the west (Anigaaq, Salluq, and Sealing Pt.) today. Well-drained ice close to the beach is still a good trail for snow machine.

Few birds are being taken from around here so far this spring. There are a few hunters, but they are older men rather than the "gung-ho" youngsters that do a lot of shooting without much killing.

Day-to-day life here is slowing down a bit. With no more drifting snow and relatively warm temperatures it feels like and looks like spring. Salt marsh snow cover has dropped to about 30%. Warm sun and rain are eating snow rapidly. We will soon be down to only drifts around buildings.

There is a report of a heavy influx of Lapland Longspurs at Salluq today. We have a pair of Savannah Sparrows around the camp this evening.

May 19

High 58º F
Low 37º F
Few clouds, clear
NE-E wind to 18

A record high temperature for the day at Kotzebue Weather Station.

Another record for Sisualik. A group of twenty to thirty caribou came from Cape Blossom on the ice to Sisualik Pt. People near there noticed them and a few shots were fired. A group of seven came our way, ¼ mile off the beach. They were cows and last year's calves. After passing our place they came back from their western travel and finally went up to the ground near our neighbor's house. They began feeding as soon as the reached the first lichens and soon lay down. One animal, probably wounded, did not follow the six but lay down on the ice.

Kotzebue Channel beginning to break up on the bar side.

Lots of birds today. The high temperatures and wind ate up a lot of snow. Our Sisualik snow cover now is only about 20% and soon the only snow will be drift around campsite.

Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Western and Semi-palmated Sandpipers were abundant noisemakers today when the wind dropped.

Lapland Longspurs are not making a very good showing again, though there have been numbers for a couple of day now at Salluq.

We did have travelers from Sealing Point today, but none to or from Kotzebue for two days now. It is not likely that there will be any more from Kotzebue till boating time, which is not far off.

Several large flocks of Snow Geese were seen today at Akulaaq. Their movements seem erratic this spring.

May 20

High 50º F
Low 35º F
Clouds and sun
Rain early
NE-E wind to 15

Small flocks of 15 to 30 Northern Pintail steadily moving onto and though Krusenstern today. There were lots of them, all from the same direction, west to east. They must have come in on the open ocean lead (Sealing Pt. to Espenberg), headed for Noatak-Kobuk Delta zone. Haven't seen such a heavy movement for years

There are also many shorebirds moving in. Our flock of Bar-tailed Godwits numbers over 100 now. There are many smaller shorebirds: Dunlin, Western and Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Black Turnstone, Golden Plover, and probably several other species. Most are moving from west to east. Red-throated Loon and Northern Harrier were also noted today, as well as many species of ducks. Lots of birds in the air today.

Yesterday a mosquito bit our neighbor, who is inland and to the NE, while they were picking cranberries. We may yet have a summer this year. There were lots of blowflies out around camp yesterday and today.

Tree Swallows have settled in to nest making.

Some areas that didn't have *Gentianopsis detonsa* last year but had many in past years had 2-3 inches of meltwater over them yesterday under the near 60º F temperatures. If that is a requirement for germination of old seed we should see some there again this year.

The caribou taken yesterday had very good meat. We were given several choice pieces by neighbors today.

Saw two huge dark colored geese today. Don't know if it was a trick of lighting or what ,but they seemed unusual. Also a first helicopter passed today.

May 21

High 48º F
Low 34º F
Cloudy, rain, clear PM
NE-E wind to 18
Light W wind

Several hours of heavy rain at midday, then a change of wind and a nearly clear warm sunny evening.

Local spring runoff is very light. Water level in the lagoon has dropped to summer mean level, which includes both winter ice and runoff water. Some of the lagoon is white or brownish, but ice has probably not floated. There is just insufficient runoff water to float it.

Put 4 ½" mesh net in the ocean crack in front of us today. Did not expect any fish down this way yet and there wasn't after an 8-hour soak. There are few over-wintering fish in this ocean location near shore, and no major species. It is a migrant fish place and none have reached here yet. The first will be out-moving whitefish, saffron cod, sheefish and the trout.

A first wheeled air taxi landing took place for the season at Salluq, bringing a couple of grandchildren to the elder couple staying there. That is now the only way to get to this side from Kotzebue. There has been no sno-go crossing for several days. Deep water on some sections of ice, and some parts of Kotzebue Channel with no ice makes surface travel too changeable. Sno-go travel on our side from Sisualik to Sealing Point and beyond is still good and getting better as the ice floats and water runs down seal holes and cracks. Uguruq hunting should be getting good shortly.

Birds and their noise all over the salt marsh.

Melt water is on *G. detonsa* habitat and temperatures are medium warm.

Seal hunters have been inactive because of constant offshore winds and ice with numerous cracks. They may have a chance tomorrow.

May 22

High 53º F
Low 37º F
Lots of sun, few clouds
Calm AM
W wind to 15, PM

A real warm day of sun, with afternoon cooling sea breezes which are eating up our remaining snow rapidly. Snow cover down to nil in Sisualik except on beach gravel and snowbanks around buildings.

Sealing Point seal hunters may be out this afternoon. Wind direction was too erratic this morning. Rotten ice and cracks are hazardous down that way and a steady onshore wind is required. Uguruq (Bearded Seal) are the preferred target. Our nephew, who is hunting for us, is down there hunting with Carrie's brother.

Vegetation is well on its way in starting this season's growth. Iris blades are showing and other perennials and biennials have new green shoots inside of last year's dried leaves and stems.

Bird of many kinds are plentiful, but some common local species are noticeably few. Lapland Longspurs and Semi-palmated Sandpipers are very scarce, though a few more are showing daily.

Have not heard of an egg found yet, but there should be a few G. Gull eggs and Sandhill Crane eggs, as there has been in other years by this date.

Our most abundant bird at this date is Northern Pintail. There are a lot of them and feeding areas are limited.

There is very little sign of voles in Sisualik, as ground becomes snow free.

Lots of blowflies at midday and one large mosquito this morning. Both of these insects are adults that have over-wintered in a good hiding places.

Red-necked Phalaropes seen today.

May 23

High 50º F
Low 32º F
Clear, clouding PM
SW-W wind to 10

Another nice day but looking like rain showers again late evening.

Things pretty quiet on the human side but the birds are noisy.

Anigaaq may be flowing out and Akulaaq should be soon. Water is rapidly draining from the surface of our ocean ice and sno-go travel west is still possible, thought there is no interest right now.

Glaucous Gull egg taking about to begin and some boating is not far off. Jones Camp did boat in their slough yesterday, but there is no way out of it yet.

Kotzebue Channel ice is still holding but rotting. Noatak River may be ice free to somewhere below the Hatchery.

Lots of Northern Pintail continue to use Sisualik early feeding zones; Bar-tailed Godwit are still feeding in marsh and grassy zones as no "ice rafted mud" is up yet in the lagoon.

This is a second day of net set in a convenient crack on our beachfront with no sign of fish.

Jones Camp had a good catch of good fish yesterday. Both Broad and Humpback Whitefish were reported fat.

Point Hope finally has a whale and maybe two. One was reported taken yesterday and another message today hinted that another named captain had taken a whale.

There are still only a few passerines on the Spit. We are nearly 90% snow free. Only snowbanks around camps remain.

These five to six days of 50º F temperatures may be good germination conditions for *G. detonsa* as melt water level is right. There remains the question of time between germination and plant growth - a whole month?

May 24

High 55º F
Low 38º F
Clear
Light winds

First fish from the ocean: large Saffron Cod and very black and lean Alaska Whitefish. Nothing really to cook and eat.

First bumblebees in numbers today.

Kotzebue Channel and Lower Noatak River ice still holding.

Two young fellows at Salluq looked for G. Gull eggs last night but reported that the

water is too high and there is no land where the birds normally have nests.

The sea ice on our front has turned white again, as nearly all the surface water has run through. This is what seals and uguruq have been looking forward to. Saltwater ice develops a soft snowy surface as it deteriorates and makes a fine resting surface for hauled out sea mammals. This characteristic of saltwater is very different than freshwater ice, which makes a very hard needle-like surface even while the ice is still thick and strong.

Net fishing, gull egg harvest, boating and uguruq hunting are all likely to get underway this coming week. Break-up activities will get underway quickly as main channels clear of ice.

Pt. Hope caught another bowhead whale today. This is their second for the year and they are still working on the first. Their catches came late this year, almost too late.

We had a very bright warm sun today, but clouds and rain showers are coming on this evening.

May 25

High 49º F
Low 33º F
Clouds AM, clear PM
Light winds

Quite a beautiful Memorial Day - also fish day. There were whitefish enough in the ocean today to give us a good lunch. With a second set of a couple of hours, we got enough to cut tomorrow for half-dried cooked fish, a Sisualik specialty.

We are fortunate to have a crack 3 feet wide at the right angle to the beach. We just drop the net into it and there are the fish. The seawater is no longer clear but reddish brown. It is the outflow of groundwater from local creeks and lagoon. There were no other species today except one bullhead. There were no clamshells in the stomachs, which is unusual, but can be explained by the unusually low volume of out-flowing break-up waters. When water level is higher, lagoon ice floats and winter-killed immature clams drop out of the ice onto the bottom, right into the path of migrating Alaska Whitefish. And they gobble them up, shell and all, making their digestive system separate clam meat from shells and pass the shells in their excreta. Sometimes the size of the shells is almost too much for their system.

Most all of our ocean ice is now white again, with all surface water having sunk through, leaving the ice floating high with a nice soft snowy surface. Now when dark spots begin to show it will be thin ice opening directly into the full depth of ocean water. Don’t tread on them!

We are still missing Lapland Longspurs in Sisualik.

Kotzebue Channel still iced with open holes throughout.

May 26

High 52º F
Low 32º F
Clouds, sun, rain
Variable light winds

A pretty good day with a couple of breaks for rain.

First gull eggs for us, though others have gathered some for the last two days. I found three in one nest on one of our points in the lagoon. Three is a complete set and these were just beginning to grow life inside; these may be Jonathan's or his mate's. It is early for 3 egg sets. Many gulls eggs will be taken around the country this week.

Carrie had two unusual birds by the tent door today - a Yellow Warbler and Dunlin. There are both common birds in local habitat, but our front door is not their habitat. Yellow Warblers are found in inland willows, Dunlin are found on mudflats.

Friends and neighbors came over to set net for whitefish in the ocean ice crack in front of us today. They had good fishing. This is still the only place in Sisualik where one can set a net right now.

There is a report of Brant in the country yesterday and today, though we haven't seen any yet. Brant are usually the very last of waterfowl to put in a spring appearance.

The ground is beginning to show some green and Tundra Swans and other waterfowl are seeking out new green shoots of *Carex* and *Puccinellia*. There is little or no rafted ice-mud this year, which means one usual food source for waterfowl and sandpipers is lacking. New marsh greens are a substitute for some.

Boats are out in Kotzebue, an early date.

May 27

High 48º F
Low 38º F
Cloudy, rain, fog
NE-E wind to 15

A wet day, with rain most of the night and most of the day. Conditions are going to work up for a break-up flood yet and maybe give us some driftwood for a change.

Did finally get the whitefish cut and hung, but they didn't dry much today.

A neighbor has really gotten a pile of whitefish from the crack these past two days. We set out net again for a couple of hours this afternoon and had fresh fish for supper. The quality is improving: fatter fish, but no other species.

Glaucous Gull egg taking continues, but weather has been good enough for only a few hardy souls.

Marine mammal hunting here has been at a standstill for a while and for a number of reasons, weather being a major one.

Pt. Hope has a total catch of three bowheads now. All are recent catches and that gives them a pretty good season. We hear that they are also continuing to catch beluga.

Four-wheelers have pretty much replaced sno-go's on this north shore of Kotzebue Sound. The only remaining snow is on our gravel beach and in drifts around Sisualik camps.

Our beach and tide cracks are moving around a bit. It may not be long till we have waves and an ice-free ocean. Timing of break-up is not too far off a historic average - maybe a week early.

Our Yellow Warbler, Savannah Sparrow, Tree Swallows and Jonathan are regular camp creatures now.

We are still lamenting the loss of nearby Lapland Longspurs. ATV's and snow machines could be responsible or there could be other reasons.

May 28

High 45º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, rain, fog
SE-S wind to 30

Another wet and cool day. The strong wind dropped off and some clearing began late evening.

Radio report of ice piling on Kotzebue streets, north end of town.

Our ocean-side waters high this evening but no real ice movement yet. Our beach and tide cracks are open and make small movements due to current and tide.

Not much fishing, egging, bird hunting or sealing hunting due to weather. It's not fun to be out, cold and wet.

While running the dog with the 4-wheeler, we passed a lone crane at long shotgun range. That is very unusual since they usually fly when approached.

Nephew took a lone Brant yesterday that had a recent old wound, making it unusable as food.

Our right angle crack is still the only place a net can be set in Sisualik. Only we and one clan family east of us have used it, though we have passed on the word that there is lots of room and lots of fish. Again, the continuing wet weather is a deterrent to working up fish for drying.

The bird world is rather silent, also dampened by wetness.

Green growth has accelerated with all the moisture and the snow gone. When and if the sun comes out plant growth will explode. If west wind and cold should follow, plant growth will be retarded again.

Squirrels have scattered with snowmelt and widespread food available.

Last season's huge blackberry crop is feeding a number of creatures this spring; there is now some ice rafted mud up with its worms and tubers.

May 29

High 46º F
Low 35º F
Sunny, few clouds
NW wind to 10

A fine dry, warm day today for a change.

Carrie got her uguruq skin cleaned up and we have a good barrel of oil making. She may be able to get her seal done tomorrow and will then be ready for our family boat hunters when the ice moves offshore.

Our outer beach crack did open quite wide today as our water level dropped. We thought the whole thing was going to go but it opened only about 10 feet.

There was an Arctic Tern and seven or eight Canvasbacks near the tent today. The Canvasback is another species that has extended its range to include us in the last few years.

We still have not seen even one Lapland Longspur, which are supposed to be one of the most common camp birds. Don't know what is the reason.

There has been some shifting of far offshore ice, as well as some in beach cracks. Our ocean monster may soon be free again and we may soon hear waves, kittiwakes, beluga, loons and the oddest sound in offshore Sisualik, Red-necked Grebe.

The only net fishing site is still our "right angle" crack, but there were no fishermen or women today.

May 30

High 71º F
Low 39º F
Clear, few clouds
N wind to 18, AM
W-NW wind PM

A real scorcher today while the wind was off the land. Lots of insects. It was a first day of periods too warm for working.

The sea ice continues to be restless, but no big change yet, just opening and closing of cracks and some piling at pressure points.

Lots of gull eggs around camp. Our nephew picked up 40 yesterday evening from Egg Island (Kikiktaich).

The last week of May is historically the greatest production time of Glaucous Gull eggs. It is proved again this year that most birds lay eggs by the calendar, not by local conditions.

These hot days of late May should be good for germinating *Gentianopsis detonsa*.

Carrie finished up her oil work for the time being today. It won't be long before the boats are out and there will be more to do.

Did some trash burning today under the steady north wind. We sure accumulate a lot of trash these days, plastic and cardboard.

Terry had a big but hot day on his run today. He dug out two large ground squirrels.

We ate our first new season half dried whitefish today for lunch. They were fine, as always, and are kind of a staple for much of the year.

We have good word of a heavy outflow of driftwood from the Noatak River yesterday and today. Hope some makes it down our way later on. We have had little driftwood the last few years.

Gull activity indicated herring in the lagoon today. Water is at low level in response

to north winds.

May 31

High 50º F
Low 34º F
Cloudy, a little rain
SE-S wind to 15

A very strong N wind early this morning, then a switch to SE with heavy rain showers. All this before 6 a.m. It has been cool and cloudy since 6, with occasional sunlight breaking through.

We also had a fairly heavy ice push onshore last evening. Much of this pressure comes from current or wind at other locations. There was little wind here except the after midnight gusts from the north. One time, 18-20 years ago, there was a push around this time that climbed clear up and over the beach bank and almost over some camp tents. Some chunks were 3 to 4 feet thick, and they bulldozed beach gravel into high points along the beach sod level. These remain today as the next generation in the high point beach ridge complex.

After our 71º F temperatures yesterday we have a rapid show of plant species green. The *Elymus* sp. blades are 4" tall with dangerous sharp points (dangerous to bare hands or dog feet or seal oil pokes). *Artemisia*, *Angelica* and *Ligusticum* are up several inches and new chive growth is there.

Lots of warm weather bugs yesterday - hornets, spiders, etc. - that we usually don't see till late June. It seems that they, like the plants, are just lying there waiting for proper temperatures to activate.

Most or all known former sites of *G. detonsa* no longer have melt water over them, though they remain in saturated soil under the 71º F sun of yesterday. If those are the conditions necessary for germination we should have a good show in mid July.

Rain has settled in again this late PM. We may yet benefit from run out of driftwood from high water on the Noatak.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JUNE

June 1

High 38º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S wind to 30

A very wet and windy night and morning with considerable ice pile up between here and the Point. At the Point it is reported that there are the first whitecaps of the year and the boat trail through that inner basin to Kotzebue may be ice-free. We shall see as winds and weather moderates.

Toward midday we got a report by telephone that lots of small pieces driftwood were landing as ice moved off the beach from Nuvugraq to Sisualigrauq.

Later yet, our ice in front began to develop a chain of larger ice- free ponds. We may soon benefit from living on the north shore.

Water level in the Sound continues to rise. The lagoon level is now about a foot higher than it was at local stream break up. Our front yard scene is about to undergo a very dramatic yearly change, from silent unmoving ice field to noisy waves, whitecaps, birds and hopefully beluga.

Wind and rain have been dropping off this early evening, so maybe we will get into more June-like weather and temperatures.

April, May and now June have all come in kind of mean this year. Maybe we have taken the change for the good these months represent in the north too much for granted. Now we know these spring months can have a hard side too.

Gull egg take continues but may have already peaked; water level is over some of the first nest sites. Wonder if the birds have trouble moving their eggs?

Very small temperature change. Cool for June!

June 2

High 46º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, no rain, cool
S-SW wind to 10

Kotzebue Sound ice has moved out a bit; open water with fish and driftwood is only ¼ mile off. A first boat from Sisualik made it straight into town from Nuvuruq this morning and came right back. There was no ice at all on the 9-mile trail. However, this evening Kotzebue Channel is running heavy ice from Kobuk Lake. This is phenomenon each year that thwarts and impedes boat travel into and out of Kotzebue, sometimes for more than a week. West or SW winds and incoming tides hold broken ice chunks, many of them 2-3 feet thick, back in Kobuk Lake (Hotham Inlet). When wind dies or changes the ice marches right down the full width of the channel. Early on crossing can be impossible for long periods of time.

Belugas were reported out in the ice a couple of days ago. This is not confirmed but it is time. The Sound is broken up enough to offer a trail into the Sound from the sea.

A flock of eight large loons followed Sisualik beach line today, making a beeline for Kobuk.

Got back onto the beach ridge country for a bit today, and as usual was surprised at the extent of greening on the land. Mat willow leaves and dwarf birch are out and the globes of that early flowering berry, bearberry (*Arctostaphylos alpina*), are out. Our beautiful salt marsh primrose will soon add that marvelous shade of pink to the somber but greening marsh grasses. It is our first "real" salt marsh flower.

Representatives of most bird species have been seen, but not the three latecomers: Black-legged Kittiwake, Yellow Wagtail and Aleutian Tern.

Lots of fish for the nets at Nuvuruq today.

We begin 24 hours of sun today.

June 3

High 40º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, dry, cool
NW wind to 15

A pretty nice but rather cool and somber day again.

Was able to get a net into the ocean again for a short while. It caught two sheefish and 6 healthy whitefish. One of the shee was of medium length and pretty fat looking. It was fat enough, and loaded to capacity stomach-wise with subadult

tomcod, smelt and a couple of adult herring. A real bag full.

The whitefish are in much better condition than the ones we first got through the crack.

The ocean probably does not have anymore beach fast ice between here and Sealing Point, but broken ice is still too tight for boating from here to there. Here to Kotzebue is open for boating when the channel in front of town is not plugged with Kobuk ice.

The group of flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans has turned up this week and is working the back greening salt marsh. There seems less than 300, but haven't been back there to check numbers. There was a 4-wheeler back there today and most of the swans moved up to a marshy area on tableland.

We have a very high population of ravens in Sisualik this spring, probably the result of Kotzebue Municipal Dump shutting down.

Lapland Longspurs remain very scarce.

No word yet of marine mammal hunters out.

Anigaaq is open. Akulaaq is not yet open at this point. When either of the outlets don't open it means they will not have fish next fall.

June 4

High 45º F
Low 33º F
Clear, cloudy, off and on
W-NW wind to 20

Flocked non-breeding Tundra Swan noise dominates our background noise now at "wind quiet" times of the day. They are a rambunctious lot!

The red shoots of Tall Fireweed poked through the greening floor around the clothesline and underground storehouse yesterday.

Light winds and clouds in the morning, brisk winds after noon, and an evening with the sun finally coming through clear and strong. There was frost, young ice and frozen snow this morning. We have only a few small snowbanks around camps in Sisualik now, as well as the usual west-facing drifts back in the tablelands.

We do have waves with white caps this evening as the west wind has again opened a long narrow lead parallel to the beach.

Water is quite low in the lagoon this evening, with a few Brant flying. We have seen very few Brant and Snow Geese this year.

The first bear tracks were seen on the beach today around Akulaaq Lagoon. It was a very small bear.

One small uguruq was taken the other day in shallow water out from Kotzebue. There has been no chance for a real hunt out into the pack ice because it is too tight yet.

There was no chance to put out a net today as wind and waves have kept a steady stream of slush and ice chunks moving parallel to the beach just off of the beach. Maybe tomorrow will be better. We are looking forward to fresh trout and more whitefish.

We can also expect beluga anytime now.

June 5

High 62º F
Low 30º F
Clear AM
Clouding, rain, PM

Frost, sun and "swan voice filled air" were the scene this morning under a bright sun. There was no wind and a bit later there seemed a contest on between Tundra Swan, Sandhill Crane and Pacific Loon to see whose call would be the loudest and echo the most. Bird sound was pretty overwhelming this morning, quite a contrast to the silent air of winter. The swans won the contest simply because of superior numbers. Our flocked non-breeders now number about 500.

Finally got the net out between ice chunks for a few minutes and got 3 whitefish, just enough for the lunch pot. A little north wind cleared the water later and a longer net set got some fine whitefish for hanging.

A couple of boats were out in the ice pack today from our side and reported lots of uguruq. One boat took home three and the other at least one. These are the first uguruq landed by boats in Sisualik for the 1998 season.

There were two small shee and a smooth-skinned flounder (Arctic Plaice) in the net besides the whitefish. Other species will increase pretty soon now, making netting more tedious. Bullheads and several kinds and all sizes of flounders can become a real pain in a long net set for whitefish or char.

Very low water in the lagoon today.

The land is greening, slowed a bit by frosts like this morning. Bearberry globes are out all over, contrasting their greenish cream color against the dark, nearly black leaves of last season.

Dwarf birch and mat willow new leaves are so glossy and "alive" looking.

June 6

High 58º F
Low 42º F
Sun, some clouds
Light N wind

We had a mostly sunny day while both Sealing Point and Kotzebue had fog most of the day.

Slush and ice blocks moved off the beach as marine waters rose overnight. We can now put our net out in front of our place for the first time. We did that and got the first outgoing lean char of the season, along with several sheefish and a few whitefish in 4 ½ inch mesh. Released the live shee and char as none were good for cooking and we don't dry many char or sheefish anymore. The shee were so full of 3-4 inch tomcod that they vomited some.

Our rowdy swans and ravens and cranes dominate our quiet time air in Sisualik. We have three or four times the usual number of ravens this spring, probably due to the closure of the Kotzebue Municipal Dump last winter. They found food to survive on and now have taken up residence in Sisualik, making it rough for any would-be nesters of other species here. Glaucous gulls, Mew Gulls and Arctic Terns don't trust the black bandits and show it at every opportunity.

We had fresh uguruq meat for lunch today from yesterday's catch at the Point. Very good. All three were quite fat.

Terry got another squirrel today after a very long dig.

We have a large group of flocked non-breeding Tundra Swans. It's a little hard to accurately get their numbers, but there are probably more than 500.

We also have more Canvasbacks this year than usual. Their range extension seems to have taken hold.

June 7

High 62º F
Low 36º F
Some clouds, lots of sun
W-NW wind to 18

A fine warm day with a cooling sea breeze off the ice so that it didn't get too warm. There were no mosquitoes, but it was ideal for blowflies and bumblebees.

Made an early search this morning while it was cool and calm for a first real flower (excluding "pussy willows"). Found a huge concentration of Pintail and Wigeon in a small lake just out of sight in our backyard, but did not find a flower yet in our salt marsh. This area of marsh is a few feet too low to have one species that surely is blooming by now (*Pedicularis Kanei*), but I thought that there might be a few early *Primula borealis*, our friendly little salt marsh primrose whose beautiful pink flower heads will soon color much of our salt marsh margin. Some plants had well formed flower head buds on the center stalk that was still resting flat on leaf rosettes. Like magic this stalk will soon telescope upward two to four inches without leaves and bloom, showing delicate deep pink that for a week or so will dominate the salt marsh color scheme. It will be quite a relief from the drab grays and browns now turning green. Any day now there will be color!

The ducks mentioned above are flocked non-breeders whiling away the time till molt at the end of this month. They are mostly males and usually quite fat.

We had distant visitors today, old friends who left their aircraft over at the Point and walked the 4 miles over here. They wanted to do that. Loaded them on the wheeler and cart and took them back to their plane after a good visit and lunch. First non-local visitors this year. Great fun!

About five uguruq have been landed at Sisualik these last few days. Kotzebue boats are having difficulty getting in and out because Kotzebue Channel running ice, so Sisualik-based boats haven't had competition. Their report is lots of uguruq and tame.

There are a few flocks of Brant still coming in off the ocean, moving east. There have been only a few of this species through here this year.

June 8

High 64º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, rain, fog
NE-E wind to 10
W-NW wind to 10

Rain all day with ground fog, poor visibility.

First belugas, seen from Sisualik today: large all white animals about 4:00 PM. There were 10 or fewer. They first came from the west, parallel to the beach 500-600 yards out. They seemed pretty secretive, not blowing loudly and not showing much body when surfacing. They milled around and retreated the way they had come before passing our place. About 20 minutes later, probably the same group came again from the west but traveling quite fast, blowing loudly and showing considerable body on surfacing. We had fog, and visibility was less than ¼ mile over water so we could not monitor their activities very far. It is good to see and hear again these unique animals for which our sand-gravel Spit is named. They were expected more than a week ago. It remains to be seen how the 1998 beluga season will go. There may have been a net set soon after word of the sighting got on the CB.

Real lots of trout in the water today. Two net sets of 10 minutes each took 30 char, not one of which was good enough for cooking! These are Noatak River "slinks" - outgoing spawned-out males and females. There were three ADF&G tagged fish. One escaped. The numbers are 3054 and 3847, 23" and 25" spawned-out females. We released very much alive and well all the char but two and ate a medium-sized sheefish for lunch.

These char are good only for drying and storing in seal oil and we did not want to work them. We wanted cooking fish. We used 4 ½" mesh.

Real *Pedicularis* flowers today, the first seen.

June 9

High 56º F
Low 40º F
Cloudy, rain
NE-E wind to 20

A lot of rain these last two days, very unusual at this season. The ground is soaked! All of our buckets, containers are full.

Our water is still full of fish, mostly trout-char and shee. A 15-minute set with 4 ½" mesh gets 20-30 trout and 4-5 shee. The trout are all Noatak out-run fish and all lean; we cooked a couple of smaller fatter ones for lunch. The lean fish in this run have reached Salluq today. That means the total mass of this group is quite large this year. They did get one large fat trout (Kivalina fish) at Salluq, which means we may get some here in a few days.

Ice finally moved off Sealing Point beach. That was the last shore fast ice on north Kotzebue Sound. The last handful of snow around our camp melted today. There are only a few remnants of snowbanks left in all of Sisualik.

This UN-seasonal wetness may cause some remarkable plant growth and development if we don't have late frosts. The land is just poised to take off in this season's growth cycle. The moisture is there; all that's needed is sun and warmth. The mosquitoes are set to move too!

We did not see belugas today and none got into the net set west of us last night.

Weather has brought marine mammal hunting to a halt. There will be much activity as weather improves.

We will soon have an influx of summer people into Sisualik. Noatak folks are set to come as rain lets up and Kotzebue dwellers will move to clan camping sites in Sisualik for short or long stays.

June 10

High 44º F
Low 36º F
Fog, clouds, rain
Breaking evening
S-SW wind to 15

Some ice floes back on the beach again. A continuous air and ground soaking, improving around 7 pm as fog and drizzle dissipated and upper clouds broke up. It has been a long wet spell for this spring season. Our ground is really saturated. Barring frosts, our vegetation growth should be remarkable. All berries will have little excuse for not being plentiful. We shall see.

One and maybe two beluga nets have been in the water for two days now but no catch as yet. Small numbers (less than 10) have been seen here at some time during the last three days.

Just a half hour ago Sealing Point reported a large number of beluga passing their location and moving in our direction.

Still lots of shee and trout-char on our waterfront. Most char are still lean but we did get a couple good for cooking.

We were able to pass on to Fred Decicco, ADF&G Fairbanks, our tag takes this week (3054, 3847 and 2213) as well as current char activity.

The contrast between char and shee in the same water is revealing. Shee are stuffed to overflowing; the nearly emaciated char that are moving through all have empty stomachs. Both are moving through turbid, muddy water with 3-4" saffron cod all around them.

Boating, uguruq, and beluga hunting getting underway again this evening as fog and rain moves out.

Still no kittiwake, Yellow Wagtail, Lapland Longspurs, or Aleutian Terns in Sisualik.

There have been numerous small flocks of Hoary Redpolls around camp these last two days.

June 11

High 52º F
Low 40º F
Few clouds, clear!
S-SW-W wind to 15

Oh what a beautiful day! The sky finally cleared in mid morning and the sun was almost immediately warm. We haven't seen it full out for some time. Everything in our world is basking in the sun this afternoon and rejoicing in it: people, plants animals, birds and fish. The insects may be enjoying it more than any of us - flies, hornets and yes, an early show of hairy mosquitoes!

A few large flocks of Brant are still moving into the area from the outer Sound or Espenberg. We have seen very few this spring.

There are three beluga nets out near us now. There has been no beluga catch yet in Kotzebue Sound.

Several boats in today with uguruq. Hunting and ice is good and now with decent weather most boats out should be loading up. Peak uguruq harvest will probably happen this week.

Several Noatak boats have gotten into their camps at the Point today including Carrie's sister and family.

Net out for a half hour this morning, got lean trout, small sheefish and one Bering Cisco. All were released and we ate ½-dried whitefish for lunch. The fat Kivalina trout have not gotten here yet from Sealing Point.

We are having trouble finding something to go in our soup pot this week. We have a number of different things to eat but usually like to have a pot of fresh bird soup once a week. Weather and wind direction have not been favorable. There are lots of waterfowl.

Saw several White-winged Scoters today. Haven't seen that species for a while.

Greening of the land will speed up now.

June 12

High 58º F
Low 46º F
Sun, clouds
E-SE-S wind to 18

A nice dry day, with periods of brisk wind.

Large group of beluga reported off Sealing Point both this afternoon and yesterday afternoon. They were expected to come this way but apparently did not. Or at least they were not seen nor were any taken in nets.

We did take a huge adult fat sheefish in the trout net this morning, and one trout. The out-moving lean char have passed for the year. Flounders are increasing, both Starry and Arctic Plaice.

There have been a few uguruq taken by boating crews this week. Traveling into, penetrating into the ice pack has been difficult because the ice is so tight. The uguruq on the outside have been shot at and have gotten wild and moved to inner ice places to haul out where it is more quiet.

We acquired a VHF marine radio yesterday as a Father's Day present. We now join the many people switching over from CB to VHF. It is much clearer and its range is greater than CB.

Fat Kivalina char have not reached here yet but a few have gotten as far as Salluq.

Our family hunting boat out since last night, but haven't caught anything.

Several Noatak families have moved down and are getting camps in shape before ice and beluga hunting.

A few little white flowers out today on the Spit. Probably Rock Jasmine. Others reported.

June 13

High 54º F
Low 45º F
Clear, few clouds
SE-S wind to 20

Fine dry breezy day. Real spring without mosquitoes yet. But they are getting close. There were a few out last night.

No ice (on the ocean) in sight from ground level today for the first time this year.

The red willow patches on the tablelands have turned green, obscuring the red-brown of winter. The contrasting light green of our distant balsam poplar (cottonwood) patch is also now discernable. This is the distant patch that will warn us that fall is here by its flaming yellow in late August or early September.

Our first real flower blossom in the salt marsh was noted today and several whole plants, with roots, were brought into the tent to watch at firsthand the magic unfolding of a very successful arctic flower species: *Primula borealis*, an Arctic Primrose.

Most plants have started leaf growth but are hesitant yet to send up a bud because of frost possibility. The next two weeks will see most of our plants coming to flower except a few of the latest.

We did not set a net today due to small pieces of driftwood and dirt running with the steady on shore wind.

There are only two patches of snow left visible in our immediate area.

A good neighbor is bringing us an uguruq this evening.

We are over populated with ravens this spring; wonder if balance will re-establish.

Ice is back in sight and coming up pretty fast this evening.

June 14

High 54º F
Low 35º F
Clear, few clouds
NW-W wind to 18

Ice came back rather quickly this afternoon. The boats had to come down and pull up their beluga nets. There were a few pieces of driftwood landing too. Hope we get some logs later.

We have not heard of a beluga catch yet.

Primula borealis, Rock Jasmine and Salmonberry flowers were seen today. *Pedicularis Kanei* is probably at peak bloom.

Ligusticum and *Angelica* as well as chives are ready to pick for eating.

We enter a critical time for berry crop. Flowering has begun. A hard frost will hurt; a

non-frost period with a little moisture will mean a good chance for the berry year ’98.

A fine cool wind for our meat to cure well today. Mosquitoes in numbers are not far off. The world is green again and temperatures and moisture will open the gate for them. The world without mosquitoes was good, but those pesky little insects have their role to play in the web of northern life in the next two months.

No net out again today. There is a report of fat trout at Sealing Point and Salluq so there may be some here now or not too long from now.

Waterfowl numbers are thinning out as molt time nears.

Hudson Bay Tea (*Ledum palustris*) and cranberry blossoms showing.

June 15

High 58º F
Low 36º F
Fog, clearing
SW-W wind to 15

Fat trout today! Kivalina fish, all consistently fat, with consistent roe size (between no. 4 and 6 lead shot size). Camp on west side reported them thick yesterday.

Primula borealis, Salmonberry, onion (chive), and Rock Jasmine all showing flowers.

Local waterfowl thinning out. No kittiwake and no Lapland Longspur.

Flounder, both smooth and rough, increasing as incidental catch.

Greening salt marsh and more so tablelands.

Carrie to town today for shopping and gassing family hunter boat.

Surprise visit by State Protection friends. Maybe a final goodbye to the one who helped with moose violator last winter. Was able to pass off a fat fresh trout to them.

Temps climbed late this evening. Mosquitoes may be close.

Tundra voles exceedingly rare in Sisualik this spring. Hardly any winter sign (cut grasses, nest, etc.).

The ocean is a bit lonesome without kittiwake, Red-throated Loon and Lapland Longspur noise. Nesting Red-throated Loons were made scarce in this immediate

zone by the amount of commercial fishing gear a few years back.

Very fine sea hunting weather this evening and a record (for this year) number of boats have headed out.

Our family crew and boat are also supposed to head out after bringing Carrie home.

June 16

High 60º F
Low 40º F
Clear
NW wind to 20

A dry day with a cool wind, but back inland half a mile there were large butterflies and mosquitoes. The breeze was a bit too cool for them down here on the edge of the ocean.

It would be difficult to find a vole in Sisualik right now.

A female caribou was taken today at Salluq. There were two animals and they may have been reindeer.

Some boats took uguruq today. Our family boat returned home without a catch.

No net out today. We had other tasks for our time and we have a number of chilled trout for cooking.

Very low water in the lagoon this evening.

We have had a paired couple of Tundra Swans on our nearby duck lake each evening for the past two weeks. These are apparently two to three-year-old birds establishing pair bonding, which may result in nest making and eggs next year. This seems to be a part of the routine for maturing tundra swans. They are probably breeding age at 3 or 4.

Flowers are really coming on. Many Salmonberry flowers now and Rock Jasmine smell wonderful.

Saw the first flowering *Potentilla villosa*. This will be the first yellow (but not the last!) flower on the salt marsh.

One extended family hunter has given Carrie his first uguruq this evening so we will have some more work this evening.

June 17

High 61º F
Low 40º F
Clear
W-NW wind to 18

A fine breezy day, which kept us ahead of the insects for another day. There were several large yellow and black swallowtail butterflies around camp.

The uguruq given us yesterday, which we worked today, was a very old, very long female - 99 inches long. That may be a record length, a little over 8 feet!

Flowers, new flowers are showing daily. West of us a short distance were the first poppies, forget-me-nots and a colony of *Erysimum pallasi*, a wildflower that I have not seen on the Spit before, though it is common west through Sealing Pt.

Only a few boats on the ocean today and the ice is out of sight of land again.

It is getting more difficult to see a local snowbank. There are a couple yet in sight on the edge of the tablelands and of course on distant mountains.

Belugas seen at Sealing Point again today but not in Sisualik.

No net set today. We are still eating from “chilled” freezer trout.

More people moving into Sisualik today and these past few days. We are nearing our annual population high, mid June to mid July. We are also approaching the time when the sun begins its downward trend, though we will have 24 hours sun till July 10.

Blowfly activity on our meat is rather intense this year.

We are expecting a visit for several days from my former fishing partner’s wife Anore. She is in Kotzebue now and expected into Sisualik this evening.

Still no Black-legged Kittiwakes or Lapland Longspurs.

There are many more terns now but have not yet heard the distinct voice of the Aleutian Tern.

June 18

High 72º F
Low 41º F
Clear
W-NW-NNW wind to 15

A bad long day! We knew it was coming but it still kind of caught us by surprise. Blowflies on freshly hung meat also a bad problem. We have yearned for good weather, now we complain that is too good!

Fat Kivalina trout still running this morning - five large ones in a 10-minute set. Passed on info on "Kivalina trout" movement since the 1st to Fred Decicco at ADF&G Fairbanks.

There stands to be considerable loss of uguruq meat due to flies and warmth.

Visitors in camp helping with uguruq work, Anore Jones, of Three River, California.

Flounders, both species, increasing. One Bering Cisco the only other species in the short net set.

We have 3-15 gallon barrels of uguruq oil now. A plentiful supply for our coming yearly needs.

Still no Aleutian Terns, Black-legged Kittiwakes or Lapland Longspurs.

Didn't check plant-flower development today.

First chum salmon taken on this record early date last year. Have not yet set 6" mesh this year. Maybe tomorrow!

June 19

High 82º F
Low 54º F
Clear
W-NW wind to 15

A hot day today with lots of mosquitoes.

We worked and put away the meat from the first uguruq and stripped the meat of the second - a good day's work, especially with the heat, the flies and the mosquitoes.

Kotzebue hunters took one walrus off Sealing Pt. A large caribou was seen inland from Sealing Pt.

Most people have their annual need for oil satisfied and though hunting continues, it

is a bit sporadic and less intense.

We have not had bad mosquitoes for several years and are due for large numbers. A wet spring and real sudden greening of salt marsh has provided mosquitoes with all they need and more.

Flowers have sprung up all over. Didn't see any new species.

No salmon in the water yet this year. Last year we caught the first salmon on the record early date of June 18th. I set our short 6" mesh net today but caught one trout and one large shee, no salmon.

Our freezer-cooler is getting a workout in this 80º F weather.

A day this warm and with this many mosquitoes is as bad as west wind blizzard at –30º F temp in midwinter, for men and dogs both. It is tough.

News of walrus in the area usually signals a near end to the ocean ice season. It won't be long now till the monster ocean is set free and ground swells again become part of life on the "edge" (the northern edge of Kotzebue Sound).

Ice in sight yet to the southwest.

June 20

High 72º F
Low 50º F
Rain, cloudy, clearing
SE-S wind to 20

Rain and wind early this morning turning to a fine day later on. Mosquitoes as the wind dropped but not as bas as yesterday. Terry survived a tough night. He has dug a pretty good shelter that protects most of the body but it is a rough go on the head, no matter how you do it.

Set the 6" mesh salmon net late this afternoon but apparently no chums yet.

Pilot reports indicate that there is a lot of ice yet on the ocean and our forecast of southerly winds for the next few days means that it may get closer to the beach yet. It was much in sight today.

There is some marine mammal hunting continuing but without much enthusiasm because of the hot weather and blowfly activity. People would like to be hunting beluga but they are not here (the beluga).

We have three missing community creatures this spring: Beluga Whale, Lapland

Longspur and Black-legged Kittiwake. All are favorite creatures of Sisualik and sorely missed.

Our tree swallows are acting strangely this year. They and Jonathan are both using the box and they may have eggs but obviously are not yet feeding chicks. Jonathan will become a stumbling block when chick feeding comes since they don't trust him sitting over their operation. They try to chase him off and are very brave.

We still have large char running a little and catches by rod and reel are being made at Anigaaq.

Dandelions and bluebells are bloomers today.

June 21

High 76º F
Low 46º F
Clear, some clouds
NW wind to 25

Salmonberry blossom and *Primula borealis* approaching peak.

The largest waves so far this summer. Some boats are still out. Uguruq are still being brought in though pack ice is getting to be far out.

One caribou taken just west of Sisualik yesterday.

Out world continues to green and diverse color in the form of blossoms continue to change the mode of the salt marsh.

Father's Day today and lots of best wishes to fathers on the radio.

Tomorrow we will probably finish up our uguruq work and may not have any more brought in. We were given three this year which is enough work of that kind for a couple of elders.

Was again surprised to find green "blackberries" already set on the vines as big as BB shot today. One seems always amazed that this plant develops berries so early and slips through its flowering stage with so little notice.

Our stronger cooler winds today gave welcomed relief from mosquitoes. Terry the dog, who is shedding his winter hair, is especially pleased to have some freedom from the bugs. They are bad this year and it is early yet.

June 22

High 60º F
Low 38º F
Clear
SW-W wind to 18

A nice cool night, breezy day and calm late afternoon. It is a good evening for hunting the ice pack and there are a number of boats on thier way out, including at least one of our extended family.

Saw first blossom of *Pedicularis sudetica*, the salt marsh "peppermint pinwheel" flower, and beach pea, *Lathyrus maritimus*. There are some solid banks of pink from *Primula borealis* now against the long dry grasses of last year. Quite a beautiful show by our first flowering "real flower" of the salt marsh.

Can't make out what is happening in the swallow box. They may have eggs that haven't hatched yet or they may have been intimidated by Jonathan and are just holding the box. They have colony visitors nearly every day, but there seems to be long periods when there is no swallow at the box, unless it is just sitting tight under Jonathan.

Finally heard two or three Black-legged Kittiwake today. With both the kittiwakes and longspurs absent there have been some lonesome hours.

Gulls are feeding heavily on some small near shore fish, maybe capelin, sand lance or herring, or maybe all of the above.

There are lots and lots of flounders of both species and maybe small numbers of other flounder species.

Two large fat char with cod-smelt in stomach and two salmon-sized shee in the 6" mesh. No salmon yet.

Beluga reported between Sealing Point and Port Site.

Made a trip to the Point this evening - lots of people, more than in the last few years. We were all remembering how their meat racks used to be all white with beluga maktak by this time. No beluga yet taken Kotzebue Sound.

June 23

High 58º F
Low 40º F
Clouds, sun
W-NW wind to 20

A nearly mosquito free day! Cool dry winds caused the bugs to retire into the grasses

and wait for warmer, wetter conditions.

We did a large, overdue washing today and it was a good day to do it.

Uguruq hunters are drawing a blank. There seems lots of ice and good weather at times, but few are being taken.

Walrus are numerous around Pt. Lay but beluga haven't reached there yet. There is a report of hundreds of beluga between Port Site and Sealing Point.

Some *Primula borealis* are already fading and a few Salmonberry flower petals are on the ground, off the plant. These are not promising signs for our berry crop.

Yellow Paintbrush flowers are coming on and building, as are *Pedicularis sudetica* and *Lathyrus maritimus*.

There are also growing numbers of yellow marshland *Potentilla*, *P. Egedii* and *P. villosa*.

Can't find sign of this year's crop of *G. detonsa* yet.

Set the 3" mesh whitefish net today and got a surprise. Four super size herring, two with ripe roe. These were the largest I have ever seen. Two of them didn't even get half way through 3" mesh. We have been noticing gull activity in near beach zones these last few days, probably water masses with spawning herring. When gulls get excited and dive into the water they look like beluga feeding. False alarms all of them. We have seen no beluga since the first day a few came in.

There were two moose at Salluq yesterday.

No sign of outward migrating whitefish yet.

A very large rotten smell has been reported far out in the ice off Sealing Pt. this week.

June 24

High 47º F
Low 34º F
Fog!
W-NW wind to 20

A very foggy, day with some clearing to the east early evening. Several boats spent the night and day in the ice waiting for fog to clear. Long night and day!

Continued report of many belugas from Port Site to Sealing Point; still no sign on

this side though fog has not allowed much distant visibility.

Nothing but many large flounders in the salmon net this morning. The net did get one Red-throated Loon; I had to cut several meshes to release it. He was not ungrateful but quite frightened and stabbed his rescuer (and tormenter) several times. That species has suffered great losses within this commercial fishing zone. There is little if any nesting success east of Anigaaq anymore, while the Sealing Pt. area has lots of nesting red throats and with rather continuous calling through the summer.

Many flowering salmonberry plants now. There seems more than last year. An eighth have dropped their petals already.

There has been an occupied camp or two these last couple of weeks between Sealing Point and Port Site, in the Killiqmaiq and Rabbit Creek sites. These are former use sites, native allotments, that are often used as camp sites for a week or 10 days anytime during the spring or summer.

This spell of cool temperatures has held up vegetation development, but we have escaped frost so far which would be catastrophic at this point for berry crops. Blackberries are already set on the vines.

A couple of boats riding out the fog in the ice found themselves down in the Deering area when fog partially lifted. We thought they were near here.

June 25

High 44º F
Low 34º F
Clear, few clouds
W-NW wind to 18

No more fog but cold air off the ice. Two large ice floes came out of the fog late last night and moved some beluga nets around and then grounded themselves a few hundred yards of us. This morning when the fog cleared there was no other ice in sight, but there was reported to be lots from Anigaaq, Salluq on down to Sealing Pt.

One hunting boat from Kobuk was lost in the ice and fog for a day and a half; today as the fog cleared they were out of gas and far off shore. Search and Rescue got a floatplane out to deliver gas to them but it took several hours to locate them between Sealing Pt and Espenberg. They are now making their way home.

6” mesh net out all day took one large fat male trout, a smaller female and only a few flounders this time. No salmon yet.

Swallows seem to be hauling food to the box, which means hatchlings. Didn’t think they would make it this year. We’ve put up a deterrent to keep Jonathan off the roof

while fledglings are in. Jonathan probably has near fledglings him-herself out on the lagoon edge.

Few marine mammal hunters are out, fearing fog entrapment.

Beluga sightings continue west of Sealing Point but not in Kotzebue Sound. No news from Elephant Point either.

Plant growth slowed and salmonberry flowers don't look too good. We haven't had a frost, but very near to it for a couple of nights.

June 26

High 50º F
Low 38º F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S wind to 15

The rain is timely for vegetation development. The near frost conditions earlier this week did impact salmonberry development. Several large yellow swallowtail butterflies have been seen around camp. Anore brought one in the tent found at water edge on the beach last evening and it is live and well inside, where the fire is.

A few very small pieces of sea ice on the beach this morning; no real floes in sight to the SW.

No salmon catch reported yet and today while running the dog I saw *Elymus* beach grass seed heads! That means, of course, that salmon should be here but aren't. Last year the salmon were a few days ahead of the grass heads.

There is the sound of a barge or ship engine towards the SSW in the fog tonight. Ice conditions may have allowed a ship into the Kotzebue anchorage from either Port Site or Nome region. From yesterday's Search and Rescue effort we learned that there was lots of ice packed in around Shishmaref and Wales but none towards Deering and towards Port Site from Sealing Pt.

Belugas seen at Pt. Lay. No hunt yet. They took only a couple last year.

Our net catch this morning was one large fat trout, five Bering Cisco and three Alaska Whitefish. The cisco, baked with garlic, were very good.

Birds are few on the salt marsh now. Some must be into molt or on location where they are going to molt.

June 27

High 56º F
Low 46º F
Cloudy, rain, clearing
SSW wind to 15

We are warming and drying up this evening and of course, the mosquitoes are too. It has been a pleasant few days of relief from insects for both our dog and us.

We have two large news items today. Carrie's brother's boy was med-evac'd from here two days ago and is just holding on in Anchorage Hospital. He is suffering blood loss probably from bleeding ulcers. Such a young person to have such a problem. We are anxiously awaiting word of improvement.

The second item is that we had word that 42 beluga were taken at Pt. Lay last night!

We had the 6" mesh net out all day and got two large fat char and a seal torn sheefish - no salmon yet or report of one.

These two days of rain have given vegetation another "shot in the arm" and with the warming trend things will really develop. Our last freezer bag of sourdock special is open on the table today. Last July's stock. It is now time to look forward to a trip to "Inland Lake" to see how the crop of *Rumex arcticus* looks for this season.

Ice is in sight again around the huge barge anchored a mile offshore of us since last evening. We don't know where the barge came from but it is the first of the season. This means our ice in the ocean is nearly gone.

Some uguruq are being taken again today. The seal that recently scarred the sheefish that was in the net today was probably a Spotted Seal, as they enter Kotzebue Sound with the last ice.

It also is near the time when we will find dead walrus.

June 28

High 59º F
Low 48º F
Cloudy, very little rain
SE-S wind to 18

A quiet Sunday in Sisualik, with some up and down and changeable winds. Our big family boat went down to the ice and then to Anigaaq to run around a bit with our little boat inside the slough system.

Our visitor from California left for home with a good sample of food from Alaska. We enjoyed a fine visit with an old friend who hasn't changed much.

She visited other friends up at Jones Camp and was there last week when they got four caribou from a group of 30. They had fine quality meat and she was able to make some good dried meat to take home. It's a favorite food of their family that they haven't had much of in recent years.

The number of beluga taken a couple of days ago at Pt Lay was 44, reported to be all large white animals.

Plant growth really luxuriant now after the current rains. *Artemisia*, *Angelica*, *Ligusticum*, and *Mertensia paniculata* are all especially lush and bushy.

The uguruq season has been good this year. Beluga sightings, with no known catch in Kotzebue, have been abysmal!

Some early salmonberry flowers spoiled by light or near frosts and wind. They are still blooming however and peak flowering may not have occurred yet, but will this week.

We are still getting one or two large fat trout and a sheefish occasionally in the 6" mesh net, but no salmon. The *Elymus* grass spears are up and out. Salmon have <u>not</u> made a show.

June 29

High 58º F
Low 52º F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S wind to 25
Clearing, calm late

Wet most of the day and then the rain stopped, the air warmed and the bugs came out.

Put the net in this evening; the water real muddy but little sign of 6" mesh size fish. No report in the whole region yet of a salmon taken. Heard today that Bristol Bay run is late too.

We do have ice in sight again as waves and wind died off.

Saw a couple of flying fledglings today, probably Savannah Sparrows. Family boat travelers yesterday saw several fist-sized Tundra Swans.

There are a few hunters out yet and uguruq still available. There are spotted seals about now too and a lot of swimmers are reported this evening in near shore waters at Sealing Pt.

There is as yet no sign of ground swells but the presence of spotted seals and walrus north of here means that sea ice is about gone and ground swells on the ocean will soon add their familiar pounding sound to our background noise.

There are still no kittiwakes or Aleutian Terns. The noise they make is a sure sign that you are camped besides a northern sea. Why they are absent from our waterfront this year is hard to say, though one can speculate that El Niño conditions could have something to do with it.

Two guys in a Zodiac were touring the beach this evening. They seem to have come from one of the two sea-going tugs or barges we have anchored offshore here.

A young downy Glaucous Gull was seen today on a small spit behind our tent - Jonathan's chick?

Swallows very busy feeding young.

Saw a first gentian plant today, *G. propinqua*.

June 30

High 65º F
Low 50º F
Clear
W-NW wind to 18

One of the small but intense joys of living in the Arctic came today on a path from tent to generator/freezer shed (less than 100 yards). A clump of what has been green leaves for over a week was suddenly topped with brightest of gold, quick-opening dandelion flowers in the warm sun, and on top of the top of gold was a broad-winged bright orange black-speckled butterfly. What an unexpected delight, on a regularly used path of green grass and gray gravel. As an added attraction, on the return trip there was a giant (for our area) yellow swallowtail on the new blooming dandelion clumps.

It is these kinds of small delightful interludes that make sweating out the floods and drifting snow worth it all!

At 7:30 a.m. this morning a nephew stopped by and asked if we could work up an uguruq. I was just finishing my first cup of coffee and Carrie said we could, so we did. The day turned quite warm but a good cool sea breeze made the working time good. We did finish it, even to getting the blubber into barrels, so it was a good day.

They got the uguruq not far out from here and saw hundreds of spotted seals on the ice. Their "haul out" behavior is very different than our other two seal species and it

is quite a circus to approach a large group out on the ice.

Bad mosquitoes late this evening as winds switched to north and then died.

Plant growth is great after the rain and now the hot sun. Haven't had a chance to check the salt marsh, but gentian plants should begin to show. *Primula* fading out.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JULY

July 1

High 66º F
Low 49º F
Clear, few clouds
W-NW wind to 20

Nice cool wind. Both mosquitoes and flies pretty quiet. It was a good break for a Sisualik wedding. It went well.

Still ice in sight and a few uguruq still being brought in.

Looks like the whitefish are moving out of the lagoons and back to the rivers. This is a regular occurrence around the first of July. These are the fish that came down from the river just when our ice on the ocean began to move around. They were in very lean condition at that time. Now they are very fat and ideal for cooking.

There were no salmon or trout in the 6” mesh after an overnight set. There were lots of flounders. I put the 3” mesh net out for only five minutes and it got fat fish for lunch.

Bluebells and Forget-me-nots are having a good year; there are many solid banks of blue through Sisualik. They are at peak bloom right now. *Primula* are past peak and *Potentilla* are just coming on. *Pedicularis sudetica* are at new peak too. They are quite prominent in the salt marsh now. The pretty peppermint whirls of this plant are colorful when freshly flowering.

There are hatched Savannah Sparrows and Semi-palmated Sandpipers. Mew and Glaucous Gulls as well as swallows are feeding young full time.

No report of a caught chum salmon yet in Kotzebue Sound.

The large catch of beluga at Point Lay may have been overkill. Some reports indicate that they haven’t been able to work them all before spoilage.

July 2

High 57º F
Low 42º F
Clear, clouding
W-NW wind to 18

Another nice cool day with some relief from both flies and mosquitoes.

Carrie stripped the meat from the last uguruq today and the weather was good for that.

I set both whitefish and salmon nets this morning and found both full of flounders of a size that fit. Lots, lots of flounders in the water! There are also nice fat whitefish but no salmon.

It seems a good number of the first salmonberry flowers are closing their sepals. This is a sure sign that fertilization has happened and given water and warmth without frost, there will be a berry. The salmonberry plant is quite interesting in what it takes to make a delicious berry crop. It is our largest berry, and many think the best. A good crop year means benefit to many. It differs from our other berries in a number of ways. There is only one berry for every two plants. The plant flowers are unisexual. Plants are male or female, therefore at best only half of the plants that flower can produce a berry. This, not being general public knowledge, makes blossom time every June-July give a greater expectation for a large berry crop than is warranted. Folks are chronically disappointed even in the best of years because of the ratio of flowers to berries. In spite of this, we do have some very high producing years when many tons are harvested and many go un-harvested by human beings.

Ice on the ocean yet – lots of spotted seals and uguruq still being brought in.

A number of swimming walrus were seen near Port Site today, and Kivalina hunters were activated as a result.

July 3

High 68º F
Low 43º F
Clear, clouding over
S-SW wind to 10
NE-E wind to 10

Salmon today! At least two in Sisualik and probably more that we will hear about later. Our short net had only flounders. Neighbor's one shackle of commercial gear may have taken several salmon.

A walrus was taken by a Kotzebue boat and divided amongst some Sisualik people.

Carrie made a swift shopping trip to Kotzebue this afternoon while I got a couple of cart loads of driftwood from the Point. She also picked up our box of beluga maktak from Pt. Lat.

Quite warm sun today, with moderate winds from many directions. Large high pieces of ice still in sight from Sisualik waters. Mosquitoes and flies bad today with the heat.

Flowers doing well. Low Fireweed blooming toward the Point, with high and low *Potentilla* adding lots of yellow. Speaking of fireweed (*Epilobium latifolium*), our two camp white petaled plants have buds this year. Some years they don't bloom. Maybe only in alternate years. Those plants on the Point have just started to bloom and are always a few days earlier than here. Their foliage doesn't seem as robust this year.

No Iris flowers yet, but the blade-like leaves are rapidly developing. The ground if very beautiful now with lots of variety in color.

Primula, *Pedicularis*, bearberry and salmonberry are all past peak flowering already, and it is only a week till the sun starts setting again. How time flies.

July 4

High 67º F
Low 54º F
Cloudy
Light winds

Young squirrels are out! Four, not quite half size, squirrels took off for their hole under the generator shed. These have a very protected home, but their nearest neighbor is Terry, the famous squirrel-hunting dog, and they are probably deaf since the generator on their roof (the floor of the generator shed) is going a lot of the time.

The salmon are here. We haven't got one yet, but neighbors on both sides, with longer nets, got some yesterday and today.

We still have sea ice in sight, but are missing the noise in the air that is usually very prominent at this season. Black-legged Kittiwake have not turned up yet to date. This probably reflects the low number dynamic across the NW seas due to El Niño die offs. Those that are normally here are non-breeders or migrants on their way north to "bird cliffs" up that way.

Made an afternoon jet boat (town family owned) trip to town to be at the wedding of a couple of good friends. It was a new experience. Super speed, goggles on, no life jackets and nothing to hold on to! Another new way to live dangerously!

We did make it on time and safely. It was a good wedding, especially so because both participants have a couple of half-grown children.

We came home with the family "big boat" (enclosed cabin) with most of the town family with us to overnight. It was and is a good family Fourth of July – despite some rain and mosquitoes.

July 5

High 74º F
Low 50º F
Cloudy, some sun
W-NW-NNW wind to 18

Peak visitor day today! Town family, local visitors, and a boat load of people from Lavonne's Camp.

Granddaughter caught a swallowtail butterfly and picked her Aana a bouquet of forget-me-nots and bluebells. This was a real summer day with warmth, wind, and mosquitoes. We even had a miniature dog that ate a "daddy long legs" fly after going to some trouble to catch it. (This paragraph was writing at the request of our great granddaughter.)

Salmon reports coming pretty good – a couple of "jumpers" here when the water was shiny, a catch of six at Sealing Point today and probably more on the Kotzebue side. The first commercial opening is set for the 9th. Things don't look good again for the commercial fishery.

Have not heard of additional marine mammals taken today. There was a rumor of a small beluga taken, but not confirmed.

Lots of herring activity off Sisualik yet. Many spent herring snagged by a rod fisherman today. Their long lasting activity on the ocean side this year is unusual. Lagoon activity was short.

Four-wheeler accident at the Point this evening. A young fellow with a probably broken leg. He had to be airlifted to the hospital. He is one of our clan. A bad ending for a good weekend.

Took a picture of an unusually beautiful clump of dandelion this afternoon – gold on green.

July 6

High 61º F
Low 44º F
Clear, some clouds
W-NW wind to 20

First chum salmon for our short "push pole" net. There was one female with a large trout on the first set, and three males on the second set. The salmon are rather lean looking. They are, of course, very silvery and of good quality, but share a "lean" rather than robust look. Chum salmon do vary from year to year as to amount of stored energy (fat) that they carry from the sea on their spawning run.

Young squirrels getting braver and straying farther from the safety of their burrows. Terry caught a first young of the year today.

Saw a first dragonfly today. There have probably been some earlier, but this was the first to cross our path.

There continues to be too many flounders.

There are still grounded ice floes in sight from Sisualik. Because the wind was from that direction it was a bit too cold today for both mosquitoes and flies.

We put the meat from the last uguruq down in bucket and oil today, which leaves only one last chore for our "oil up" season. The barrel of blubber from the last uguruq has begun to render and so needs to be moved into the "cool storage." We have nearly twice the oil we had last year and the year before.

Also saw an Oldsquaw duck with a handful of the tiniest chicks today.

We continue to have a large number of large "spent" herring just offshore of Sisualik. It is unusual at this season.

Summer Conference of Friends Alaska Yearly Meeting is coming on this Wednesday. It is a week early this year. It means a lot of village people will be in Kotzebue for the last half of this week.

July 7

High 52º F
Low 40º F
Sun, clouds, fog
W-NW wind to 30

Cold strong wind today, fog this evening. Through it all the swallows keep hauling load after load of compressed insects to their fledglings.

Took Terry on his run back to the lagoon inlet-outlet and was again amazed at how a little distance can make a different in plant growth and flowering. It is less than a mile, but back there Iris and *Saussurea* were both already blooming. This is the first seen of these species in flower. The Iris plants down here, around our camp on the beach, are far from bloom yet. The same is true of the *Saussurea*.

On a trip to Sisualik Point today to pick up my propane, I got to see a first close-up of the remnants of the 30-40 plant group of white petaled, pink sepaled *Epilobium latifolium*. The colony, for some reason, is losing numbers. Last year there were a few more than ten, this year there are less than ten. This is all down from the original 30-40 plants in two plots on the west end of the Nuvuruq airstrip. Our two plants in camp are far from blooming yet.

The number of plants of this species (normal purplish petals) are way down in this square mile area. That seems strange since the plant is a perennial.

No Gentian plants located yet. Haven't done much searching, but things aren't looking good at this point. What a frustration this plant can be!

We have our largest waves so far this evening.

There were still some large "bergs" and a few larger flat floes in sight before the fog set in.

Not net out today. Gulls feeding heavily in the surf and beyond, probably on spent herring.

First moose seen from far west Sisualik camp today. There have been several seen at Salluq earlier.

July 8

High 62º F
Low 38º F
Fog, clearing late p.m.
Light winds

Very foggy this morning with no wind and small ground swells. There were several small and one large piece of ice in sight, right on the beach this morning, which was as about far as we could see in the fog. We could see only about 100 yards off shore. Later, when the fog cleared, we saw many ice floes not far off.

Set the salmon net for several hours but then had to pull it to go on a grave digging chore for a nephew who will be buried in Sisualik tomorrow. The net held only flounder and jellyfish.

The iris buds brought home yesterday from back lagoon area are so beautiful as they freshly unfurl.

Over at the gravesite there were numerous *Oxytropis Maydelliana* plants just beginning their blooming period. The high squirrel population around our tent site has pretty much eliminated this plant around our place. It is a "pea vine" and a favorite squirrel food.

There are many half-size squirrels about Sisualik now. Terry caught one on his run today.

Mosquitoes are back. We have had a couple of days peace and we were afraid that it was going to frost the berries last night, but it looks like lucked out this time. It was close though.

There is a drifted in Bowhead Whale a few miles NW of sealing Point. Two reports: one says it is too old for any human use, the other says that the bottom still has maktak. It will be a large bear bait!

A few new passerines are flying and swallows are feeding heavily, even working hard in the cold foggy morning. Lots of bugs for them this evening.

July 9

High 74º F
Low 54º F
Clouds, sun, showers
N-NE wind to 20

Sisualik burial today – a clan nephew. There were lots of people and boats and mosquitoes. The boating weather was good and things went smoothly. Newly flowering fireweed against the very green background lent a natural beauty to the scene.

King Salmon are running in Sisualik! A neighbor to the east got three overnight and we got one this morning. Ours was small, about ten pounds. Haven't heard of the size of the neighbor's.

There are some salmonberries set on the plants and a few flowers still blooming. Some places will have some of these good berries again. It is too early to assess the kind of picking we will have at the end of this month.

The marsh is dominated by yellow and white right now, with *Potentilla* and Arctic Daisy dominating. Have not yet located any *G. detonsa* plants. Hope to search a little tomorrow. The suspense involved in the yearly monitoring of this odd plant is remarkable.

Saw some folks today that we haven't seen for years. That is the way it is in Sisualik at burials and weddings.

Today was the first open period for the commercial chum fishery. We did not see any commercial nets in Sisualik. Price per pound is 15 cents. This is the same as last year.

We had one salmon size sheefish in our net today, with one chum and the king. If there are numbers of large shee still down low (toward the ocean) in the fishery, they will be decimated by commercial chum gear. This displacement of shee, noticed last April and May, is not easy to understand.

July 10

High 72º F
Low 56º F
Sun, clouds, fog
SW-W-NW wind to 15

A warm and dry day after a heavy early morning rain shower.

Plant pollen is flying! Our *Elymus* beach grass started pollinating two days ago and many other "strand species" are into flower, including *Iris setosa*, *Senecio lugens*, *Saussurea*, chives, *Ligusticum*, *Angelica*, and Arctic Daisy. No *Artemisia* yet.

Made quite a thorough search this afternoon of several places that have had large colonies of *G. detonsa* and cannot locate any plants. As stated before in these pages, this plant is very difficult to see before the green encased purple-blue petals show. It is early for that, since in some years that doesn't happen till the last week of July. I did see a few plants of *Gentiana propinqua*, but no other Gentians. Very disappointing. Maybe later on.

I did see today a number of Grass-of-Parnassus plants with their characteristic long lasting cream white buds.

First noticed today around camp the first blossoms of iris and *Senecio lugens*. There are few plants left now that haven't bloomed, and they are mostly the Gentians.

Swallows continue to be busy feeding and mobbing Jonathan when he tries to use his landing pad. He can't wait for them to leave now and "get out of his hair."

First two commercial fishing periods pretty poor in both fish and fishermen. Fish less than a thousand, fishermen less than ten.

Our net had one pink salmon today, the first of the year. Nothing else but flounders and a very large saltwater bullhead (sculpin).

A bull caribou was taken on the beach NW of Sealing Point. It was taken by an extended family person camped with his family at Nuvuruq. It was very good meat.

July 11

High 66º F
Low 50º F
Fog early, clear, clouds
W-NW wind

A fine breezy, bright, cool day warming as wind dropped in early evening.

There is no longer ice in sight on the ocean and our sun set for 25 minutes last night (which was early morning by the clock under out 3 hr sun time differential!).

Saw for the first time this year flowering *Gentiana prostrata*, the little "arc light" flat gentian. This is the first gentian flower seen this season here in Sisualik. I have found plants of *Gentiana propinqua*, but no flowers yet. I have not yet located any of the other three local Gentians. Not being able to locate *G. detonsa* is particularly frustrating since I had hoped for pictures this year.

The fog this morning and the lack of ground swells indicates that there is still a belt of pack ice out in the Sound.

A nephew is near death in Anchorage hospital this evening. Carrie's favorite brother is living under very stressful conditions. Both his wife and son have not long to live. This is the Sealing Point family.

Several of our plants are having top growth conditions this year. *Elymus* spears are nearly head high. *Artemisia* growth is exception, as are *Angelica* and *Mertensia*. *Iris setosa* approaching peak. *Primula* and *Pedicularis* and salmonberry gone. Saw first yellow Marsh Saxifrage today.

Yet to come are Senecio pseudo-Arnica, Grass-of-Parnassus, Gentiana tenella, Gentianopsis detonsa, and Lomatogonium.

One drifted in walrus was found and lost by a boat with no knife. It was a good one to cut up for oil and quaq.

July 12

High 66º F
Low 50º F
Clear, few clouds
NW wind to 18

Spent several hours this morning on back salt marsh search for Gentians. Though it is early, plant growth should be showing. I found very little. One patch of flowering

Gentaina prostrata, a small colony of either *Lomatogonium* or *G. propinqua*. The plants are too young and small to know which. I didn't see any sigh whatsoever of *Gentianopsis detonsa*. It is just as if they never grew here! I covered places where thousands grew in different past years. How frustrating! Will this be a no *G. detonsa* year? In past years of scanty production I have not found plants till the last week of July.

Saw some N. Pintails with new wing feathers. Also saw a number of species with growing young: Mew Gull, Red-necked Phalarope, two Oldsquaw families, and N. Pintail. There was also one brood of Red-breasted Merganser.

Real lots of *Saussurea* blooming right now. Green strand and beach growth is about at peak with Tall Fireweed beginning to show buds, but no flowers yet. Grass-of-Parnassus is the same. What few *Oxytropis Maydelliana* the squirrels have left us are trying to bloom.

It has been a quiet few days in Sisualik with most everyone in Kotzebue for the last few days of Friends Summer Conference. Carrie would be there too if not for a sore knee-ankle and two close family members in Anchorage Hospital who need communication with their Sealing Point inner family.

It is ideal sourdock picking weather and it is time. Maybe I'll give it a try tomorrow.

July 13

High 64º F
Low 47º F
Cloudy, spots of sun
NW wind to 18

Made a trip to Inland Lake for sourdock. It was a good trip and a full day. I left before 10 a.m. and returned just after 10 p.m. Returned with nearly full gunnysack of 35-40 pounds. The leaves are tender and big. The tough part of the day was when the sun came out and the wind quit, just as I loaded up for the 3-4 mile walk to the four-wheeler. Mosquitoes and heat – whew!

Lots of life at Inland Lake. Two families of Glaucous Gull, two families of Mew Gull, 30-40 molting wigeon, two Tundra Swans, and a family each of Greater Scaup, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Pintail.

Found, when I returned home, that our nephew in Anchorage Hospital had died. His mother is also terminal and about to be taken into a nursing home. Tough burden on Carrie's favorite brother and the Sealing Point family.

Our package from Pt. Lay had also arrived. It was a large walrus foot and some "quaq" (skin, blubber and meat). We have been wonderfully lucky this season to have uguruq, walrus, and beluga.

The sourdock brought in today will be greatly enhanced with the cooked walrus skin. The gift is quite timely.

The sourdock trip is always a strenuous affair. It is in fact the measure of an elder. If you can still make the annual chore you are not old yet! It takes legs, lungs, and muscles and a certain stamina that involves coping with heat, mosquitoes and sweat. Most of today's younger folks have little tolerance for such things, mostly because the lack the initiative and motivation. Oldsters love the memories of the prepared sourdock product.

Swallows gone today. Maybe only two young. Jonathan is real happy.

July 14

High 56º F
Low 48º F
Cloudy, fog, rain, sun
SW, W, NW wind to 15

Salmon day in Sisualik. A first set of our short "pole push" net gave us eight fine silvery chum salmon. A second set brought ten. One could imagine what three shackles (three football fields) of commercial net in the water would do. It is remarkable that with all these fish in Sisualik waters that we have yet to see a commercial fishing boat this season. There is another 12-hour fishing period for today and tomorrow.

Saw first flowering of Tall Fireweed today on the back portion of the beach ridges.

Checked another couple of places where *G. detonsa* have grown in years past, without result. Is this going to be a year of no *G. detonsa*? Hate to think that thought!

Iris has come into near peak flowering. There are several sold blue-purple patches back along the edge of the lagoon. *Saussurea* flowers are also universal now.

Some portions of marsh grasses have yellowed already, even though we have had rather steady periods of rain scattered through the month.

We had a real Eskimo treat today that we haven't had for ages. It was fermented uguruq flippers that a neighbor brought over as he though they might be ready to eat. They were! We have quit making this delicacy ourselves for several not very good reasons. Uguruq flippers are put in a barrel of oil inside a cool storage area or buried in the ground until the hair and black epidermis slips off easily. It is oily and tasty and used to be made by every family.

Sun down will soon be before 12 midnight.

Saw a second year Slaty-backed Gull west of us yesterday.

July 15

High 69º F
Low 46º F
Cloudy, clear, mixed
E-SE-S wind to 18

Finally found three *Gentianopsis detonsa* plants! And could you guess where? Yes, right where I have been looking since the last week of June. This plant is surely remarkable for its ability to blend in to its surroundings prior to the appearance of its deep purple blue flower cone. These plants are not big and robust. They are nearer to the dwarf form, but one is 4" tall. The apical buds are not near showing color yet. They are on the exact site of the colony that was near the tent last year. There are a few *G. propinqua* in the same old salt burn denuded area and not far away are a few "arc light" *G. prostrata*. I have not been able to find any *G. tenella* or *Lomatogonium* plants yet. All of these Gentians are annuals – arctic annuals – which generally speaking, is rare. Most of our plants are biennials or perennials. That annuals can exist at all in the arctic is quite remarkable. It seems likely that these Gentians exist as a species by having seeds that are viable for multiple years. That is, they require special conditions to germinate, so can remain as seeds in or on the soil for many years before growth begins. This assures the plant's success as a species, since the "soil seed bank" will always have some viable seed, even if the seed for any given year should fail for various reasons.

Very calm quiet evening. The ocean is like glass – not even small swells. It is likely that there is still ice or an "ice belt" across the mouth of the Sound.

Lots of salmon in the water. Short net set (1 hour) produced five males.

Grave digging today, funeral tomorrow, for Sam and Myrtle Williams' youngest son. These are the Sealing Point family.

Kivalina boats – two of them – passed this evening. They sure had a quiet ocean.

July 16

High 70º F
Low 55º F
Clear, cloudy, showers
NW wind to 20

It is difficult to put into words the good feelings experienced yesterday upon finding a few plants of *G. detonsa*. Each year it seems – sometimes after a long search – that when the first samples of this unique, beautiful little plant are found, some kind of burden slips away and the world seems a finer place. Our plant growth is very vigorous here in Sisualik right now. Especially some high profile species like *Elymus*, *Mertensia*, *Angelica*, and *Ligusticum*. Some seed heads of *Elymus* are actually as tall as I am.

Today is funeral and burial day for a close clan young man. Two nephews in such a short time span is difficult for close knit families to bear.

Wind and waves picked up shortly after the burial during a feast time, and the two boats that were left managed to get swamped. It was more due to poor judgment by the owners than sudden waves. Nothing much was lost, but it was a lot of work getting them up out of the water. There were a lot of visitors and boats for the burial, and so lots of strong help for the boat rescues.

No net set today. Gave all salmon on had away so will have to set net again soon.

Wonder why there seems such a poor showing of Gentians this year? It may look better before August 1, when they all will have come out in color and are so much easier to see.

Well, hopefully things will settle down a bit and we can get caught up on things left undone.

July 17

High 62º F
Low 50º F
Rain, cloudy, clearing
W-NW wind to 20

A cool windy day with rain ending early in the day. Ocean somewhat rough, so the two swamped boats of yesterday remain on the beach. Some people are stuck in Sisualik, but may be enjoying it.

No net out today on the Sisualik ocean.

The swallows are gone for three days now. We miss them as usual, but Jonathan is so glad they are gone.

Another commercial fishing period today. No boats on this side though.

Terry got two squirrels again today. That is the third time this season that he has caught two on one run. The half grown young are rather unsophisticated.

Numerous small passerines are turning up around camp. Redpolls, Savannah Sparrows, but as yet no Lapland Longspurs. I did see a number with young around the mud banks at Akulaaq, though.

Saw several dragonfly adults today.

Kittiwakes have not shown up this year; Lapland Longspurs have been absent from

Sisualik.

We have had a couple of warm wet days when water midges have formed “smoke stacks” over the salt marsh. In some years, these can be real spectacular. High humidity, hot air, and a gentle breeze seem to trigger this Dance of the Midges.

King Salmon numbers continue high in the commercial chum catch and number of fishermen remain few (14?).

1998 sheep counts are down just a little. There seems no indication that bad weather in early May caused any problems.

July 18

High 64º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, fog, drizzle
W-NW wind to 20

A wet dark cold and windy day. Neither a mosquito nor a blowfly to be seen. Ocean has been rough, but waves still seem to be only wind generated - no ground swells.

Very little traveling done today due to fog and rough water. One of the swamped boats from the day before the burial is still on the beach. The other made it off and into town while the waves were smaller last night.

No fishing again today due to rough water.

Rain and thunder before “get up time” this morning. The first of the summer for us. These frequent wet days are just fine for the berry crop. Plants doing well. Though the air has been cool there has been no frost yet.

Iris are passing peak and though the colonies of *Epilobium latifolium* are much diminished at the Point, the species seems more prolific and robust in central Sisualik this year. That species may be at peak now too.

Now flower of Grass-of-Parnassus yet, though there are lots of buds. These dark days are not good for Gentian search. Nothing new in that line.

The sub-adult Slaty-back seen west of us on sourdock day has joined our flock of camp gulls. So also have a number of Mew Gulls, so Pipsqueak has lots of competition now for camp scraps.

Young squirrels are having a jungle situation right now in the thickness and abundance of beach-strand vegetation. It doesn’t save them from Terry though.

July 19

High 50º F
Low 40º F
Drizzle, fog, clearing
W-NW wind to 18

Fog finally cleared out by early afternoon, but cool steady wind and rather sold cloud cover kept the day too cool for insects. Things dried out this afternoon-evening from the real saturated night and morning air.

Iris peak passing. Maybe made the last cutting this morning for inside table vase. Many blossoms left, but mostly secondary flowers and few brand new buds just opening, which are best for inside.

Found a few plants this morning in a new location; they are probably *Gentian tenella*. When and if the sun ever comes out the ID can be confirmed. This is a beautiful, almost microscopic plant and flower that is often overlooked.

A lone, nearshore murre seen west of us today. It was alive but alone, and may become our first sea bird die off.

Salmonberries and blueberries close to camp are looking good. Blueberries are white yet, and salmonberries are red but hard. Berry picking time is not far off.

People are leaving camps for a while, at least till berries ripen. There is only one occupied camp west of Anigaaq now. The Noatak campers at the Point are hauling oil and meat from their uguruq catch to home village. they may be around for a while to see how the berry pick goes, but will soon return to homes in Noatak.

There is a great bloom of *Senecio lugens* in Sisualik right now. The pretty yellow composite flower with blood drops on the tips are named from Bloody Falls on the Coppermine River in Northern Canada, where Indians massacred a party of Eskimos in the mid 1700's. The Indians were with Sam Hearne.

The beached whale west of Sealing Point has passed Salluq.

July 20

High 56º F
Low 43º F
Fog, cloudy, sun
W-NW wind to 18

A great day today. The fog cleared, the sun came out, and it got warm!

Caught another King Salmon (14 lbs.) and on a second set of our "push pole" net we got one chum and two large male trout. One was a giant! Thirty-seven inches long and 8"

wide at dorsal fin. Both fish were extremely fat. These were an unusual catch for the date.

And the best thing of all was finding a medium-small *Gentianopsis detonsa* with an open corolla! It was in the small group located July 15. These are in a lightly vegetated area near the tent, which suffered a salt burn years ago. This place has regularly had plants the past several years. So far it is the only place I can find some this year. Last year the first bloomers were found in the same plot on the 14th.

Six King Salmon were taken by commercial chum fishers east of our place today. For the first time thee was also three shackles set to the west of us. We don't know their King catch. It is by far a record King catch in Kotzebue Sound this year. Warming ocean waters may be one reason, and there is the possibility that our watersheds can host King Salmon spawners.

There were about ten Noatak families camped at Nuvuruq this marine mammal hunting period. Some are returning already, other will go home after commercial fishing or berry picking.

The ocean finally calmed to glassy this evening.

The doors to a next door neighbor's house were found to have been broken into today. The owner came over to check it out and found nothing missing! A mystery!

July 21

High 78º F
Low 48º F
Some clouds, lots of sun
W-NW-N wind to 15

Another kind of "red letter" day today. A boat stopped by loaded with crab traps. The captain asked if we would like a couple of crabs! Well yes! He told me to take a bucket down to the boat. I did, and he gave me two large, live, genuine King Crabs. One had a carapace a little more than 7", the other a little less. My five-gallon bucket was almost too small. He said, "There are lots of crabs out there!" It is not new that there are King Crabs out there. We had that from '76-77 trawl surveys and incidental catches in commercial chum fishery gear. But numbers did not seem to justify fishing them. A small hand fishery at Shishmaref-Espenberg has recently developed and there seems evidence of growing numbers in Kotzebue Sound, probably due to warming sea temperatures. May be related to apparent King Salmon range extension into Kotzebue Sound as well.

The ADF&G crew placing boundary buoy stopped by for a short visit. It was very interesting – lots to talk about. They confirm the record King year and the lean quality of early run chums. Today's commercial opening of 12 hrs. had more catch and more

fishermen than any earlier openings.

A friend on the crew who also checks Gentians for me reports finding a few in Kotzebue town. That is good news since I can't find good samples here to photograph, and I need photos badly.

Carrie's bum ankle problem has kept both of us tied up around for several days now. I need to make another sourdock trip inland, besides the Gentian search. Both have a critical time window, which is right now! She does seem some improved today. We'll hope that continues.

Our fish catch was very unspectacular today. One well watermarked and deteriorating male chum and three flounders.

July 22

High 82º F
Low 60º F
Clear, smoke
Thunder, rain
Light winds
Squall gusts to 40

A noteworthy day of strong thunder-lightning storms.

Very warm and an evening period of rather violent thunderstorms. Our family "little boat" brought us some groceries and a whole pile of people. They got here before the violence began, luckily, and sat it out with us, enjoying the show of lightning and getting wet with the warm downpour.

I did finally find a few blooming *Gentiana tenella* today and a lot of small *Gentiana propinqua*. Didn't find any more *G. detonsa* but didn't have time to look. They will be easy to spot now wherever there are some with the buds well-colored.

Lots of chum salmon on Sisualik beach today. Too hot to handle many.

Pintails in our duck lake near tent today. Probably early returns from molt. Some Pintail hatchlings may be nearly ready to fly.

Late evening, after things quieted down, there were many salmon jumping on Sisualik waterfront. Family made it home okay and lightning didn't strike us.

A "black" whale was seen quite closely in Kotzebue Channel going in. A family member saw the animal and reported many barnacles on its dark skin. This sounds like a Gray Whale and we may hear more of it since it was going in.

The strong winds did not blow the bugs away. There were out again before midnight.

Quite a display of the power of nature today. Our visitors were quite impressed – some of the younger folks had earlier complained that camp and Sisualik are "too boring." Not today. The word "awesome" was in common use by the youngsters today.

Artemisia exuding its yellow pollen.

July 23

High 68º F
Low 54º F
Smoke, sun, clouds, fog
Variable winds to 18

The annual *Gentianopsis detonsa* surprise happened today. After the torrential rain and heat of yesterday, there were at least 20 plants with the beautiful deep purple-blue of petals bouncing in the stiff breeze, right in the ATV trial and plot near the tent that I have been monitoring all along. Again, there is almost a mystical aspect to this plant. They almost seem to appear magical right in places you were expecting and inspecting right along. Then there was the breathless aspect again – after waiting a year and with much visualizing thru that year, and then unexpectedly seeing your vision right in front of you and immediately recognizing that the newly opened corolla is more beautiful that even your fondest dreams. That's the way it was and is almost every year. There were a few additional plants scattered 1,000 yards down the trail from the first plot that I had found a few days ago, which had not flowered yet. The cue now is to visit every likely place the plant might be found, to assess the size of this year's crop. Since they all bloom within a few days of each other they will be easy to see. I hope I can get some photos.

Also saw a first flowering *Lomatogonium rotatum*. Grass-of-Parnassus have flowers since yesterday. This means that we have seen the first of all blooming species for this year, as these two are our last bloomers.

A Gray Whale was killed last evening a bit south of Kotzebue. One rumor has it that there were three whales and the killed the smallest.

Our ocean sounds like it is free tonight. Ground swells are ¼ of the way up the beach.

Carrie is still not able to use her ankle.

Tall fireweed just breaking into bloom around the camp.

July 24

High 64º F
Low 50º F
Cloudy, smoke, fog
SW-W wind to 15

A cool day with slowly improving distant visibility all day.

Had a first ripe salmonberry (one) today and saw a few large bluish blueberries. The berries are ripening!

Our camp Tall Fireweed is looking great. Saw a few more blooming *Lomatogonium rotatum* today. No new *G. detonsa* but many open flowers of Grass-of-Parnassus as well as many small flowering *G. propinqua.* Iris are past peak.

It is interesting to see a few late-blooming individuals of nearly all of this summer's species at this time. There is always a first flowering, a peak, and then a long lingering of individuals late coming into flower. A few species do not follow this pattern, and *G. detonsa* seems to be one of them. The flowers bloom all at once and fade all at once. It is perhaps a characteristic of annuals in the Arctic.

We had ocean swells all day so no fishing for us. It was a 12-hour opening for commercial fishers and the few brave ones that set their nets in the ocean swells did real well.

Pintails and wigeon with new flight feathers are becoming more and more numerous on the salt marsh. Flocks of small sandpipers are abundant.

Terry is still having the best summer of his whole life, catching one or two half-grown squirrels nearly every day on his run.

Have not seen our Slaty-backed Gull for a couple of days, after a week of presence. He is not accepted very well by the Glaucous Gulls or the Mew Gulls.

July 25

High 66º F
Low 47º F
Cloudy, clearing
S-NW wind to 15

Sourdock trip today. A good one and the last one for this year. The trip today was to the "dry lake bed" picking place that has been a favorite of mine for several years. It was a large lake before the year of the big Anchorage earthquake. Don't know if that was the cause of the lake emptying, but the outlet channel cut through in another place and cut much deeper than the old outlet, causing all the water to run out of the lake. It has become a high producing grass and sourdock place.

Left this morning a little after 9 a.m. and returned at 9:30 p.m. A long day of heat, mosquitoes and tussocks. The prize? A 40 lb. sack of large-leafed sourdock (*Rumex arcticus*).

Saw a summer bear! Very dark colored, meaning all his old hair was gone. He was apparently trying to eat those blueberries showing a little blue. There is a tremendous inland crop of blueberries set on the vines – big ones too. They are all white now, with only a few showing first shades of blue. The bear was less that ¼ mile away, doing his thing while I was doing mine. He didn't have binocs, so he was unaware of my presence. Was wondering if I could get him to help me pick sourdock. It is always a great day when one sees a bear in this country. They are common track makers and signs of their presence abound, but seeing one is always special and neat. Sharing the scene with one is always an adventure.

A few salmonberries are ripening in our area. They are being picked in Selawik and the Noatak delta.

July 26

High 65º F
Low 56º F
Cloudy, clearing PM
S-SW-W wind to 15

A quiet Sunday to recuperate from a strenuous yesterday.

A trip inland like yesterday always presents an interesting flower-plant mosaic. Inland, even a few miles, there is a different scene than the beach zone. Yesterday I walked into a strong two flower-plant mosaic: Tall Fireweed and Valerian. Pink and white dominated the floral scene a full three or four miles inland. That changes nearly every week from mid-June through July. It is interesting how the different species wax and wane – possibly so there are enough pollinators (insects) to go around. The scene program is similar near the beach, but with different species. Salt tolerance is no doubt a factor in determining species.

Bird observations are now dominated by new birds-of-the-year, a pretty miraculous happening. Within the last few days the first young of the year were brought down to the shore. Arctic Tern, Mew Gull and Black Turnstone have come down, but I have not seen any new Glaucous Gull down here yet. I did see half-grown Wigeon, Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal in lakes yesterday.

More and more ducks are coming back from molt, and life in the salt marsh is picking up again.

There are more than 30 *Gentianopsis detonsa* in the roadside colony. Most had open

corollas today when the sun broke through. The first three to open have faded petals now. This plant continues to demonstrate its very short time of glory. One week of color seems about all that can be expected.

We are so fortunate to have this one colony located near us. They are medium to small plants – very deep colors the first day of opening, then fading comes rapidly. A short reward for so long a wait. Took four pictures today but not satisfied with the results. Date on pictures in 25th.

July 27

High 66º F
Low 45º F
Clear, few clouds
SW-NW wind to 15

Another find day. Breezy, cool, but warm enough for berry pickers. They are at it up inside of the Noatak Delta and other inland places. Our coastal zone does not yet have any berries ripe enough for picking, though it won't be long now.

Carrie is doing better, hobbling around with a cane. She did dishes today for the first time in a week.

Left the push pole net out overnight and had four chums and six humpies this morning. That is a lot of humpies in 6" mesh net. With 4 ½" mesh the catch of humpies would have been large. Humpies make a good dried fish, but are difficult to handle in hot temperatures and lots of blowflies.

Well, *G. detonsa* are all up and out so they can be easily seen now. Some are already fading. Did a last check through close local plots that have historically had hundreds of plants. A number of those places did have one, two or three plants. It is an interesting pattern. The only real colony is the 30 or so in the 16x16 plot near the tent. It had many last year and is by far the most consistent producer of plants in the last three years. The flowering is early again this year, and fading is rather rapid due to dryness of the plots with plants. Several large zones that had thousands of plants a few years ago have absolutely no representatives of this species this year and last. The only place left to check is at the Point. This has been a second poor year for Gentians. We had two years of super abundance, and now two back-to-back years of scarcity. I am elated that there has at least been some, and the sight of the first day of blossom was worth the waiting. What a wonderful deep purple-blue!

July 28

High 60º F
Low 46º F
Cloudy, some sun
W-NW wind to 18

Ocean swells dominate the day. We haven't really had any to speak of since ice out, but today they are building. The top edge is halfway up the beach this evening. We have fairly high SW winds forecast for tomorrow, and our hopes will be, as always, that it closes our two west side outlets. That happening is needed now, the sooner the better, in order to trap fish inside and to allow ATV passage to salmonberry grounds at Salluq. There seems to be a good crop this year and the major harvest will happen in the next ten days.

Didn't set the net today as we have enough on hand for a while.

We had a first party of berry pickers in sight from here today. There is good salmonberry ground behind our west neighbor's house, and he is working in town. Only a small percentage of berries are ripe now.

The dead bowhead whale known to be drifting our way from the NW beach will probably get here on this SW blow. It is quite a large bear bait and will cause other problems if it is beached in Sisualik.

Berry picking is on in earnest now and will continue for the coming month – weather permitting. There will be lots of participants some places, and competition high for some species and places.

The Noatak delta salmonberry grounds have already been fairly well combed as they ripen a week or ten days earlier than here on our west coastal zone.

July 29

High 64º F
Low 46º F
Cloudy, no rain
SW-W wind to 15

Swells came up about ¾ of the beach last night and were quite loud this morning as wind dropped. Sounded like fall in Sisualik again, when we can hardly hear the radio when the surf is high.

Weather improved through the day, but swells continue. Folks at Anigaaq think that if the swells go down the outlet will be closed. Akulaaq, on the other hand, is said to be quite wide. If Anigaaq is closed, fishing should be real good there this fall. A closure in July assures a good number of fish are trapped inside.

Commercial fishers were unable to work Sisualik waters this period. Maybe tomorrow. There is a 12-hour opening.

Some medium-sized flocks of passerines are on the move today. Savannah Sparrows and redpolls were recognized.

Waterfowl still coming back from molt. Some older males just regaining the power of flight. Wing tip feathers still short on the tip.

Our sourdock has started a light fermenting. That changes the sharp "green apple" taste and makes a much milder and better product. We will soon be able to add cooked blueberries.

No new plants. We are now in the period of maturing seed and sporadic flowering of nearly all species that have flowered earlier. *Senecio lugens* has had a good season, as has the other local representative of the genus, *Senecio psuedo-Arnica*.

Gentians have had a poor year, just like last year. Star Gentian (*Lomatogonium rotatum*) is coming into peak as is Grass-of-Parnassus. Iris and *G. detonsa* are past peak. Tall Fireweed is at peak. They have had good foliage growth and are now putting on a great deep pink color show. We remember the one year that it was so cool in Sisualik that they didn't bloom!

July 30

High 70º F
Low 50º F
Clear, few clouds, hot
SW-W wind to 18

A first day of berry picking! Carrie finally felt able to hobble around a small part of the berry patch long enough to pick half-ripe blueberries for a pie, which she made when we got home. I picked a bowl of ripe salmonberries after considerable walking. It was hot on the berry grounds – no bugs, and most berries not ripe yet here. The same is true at the big salmonberry grounds west of us at Salluq. Next week will be better.

Put 6" mesh out this morning and pulled it when swells picked up. Got a whole lot of dirt, sticks, seaweed and plastic. There was one large female chum.

People beginning to gather at Salluq for berry picking.

Park Service all ready for some work at last summer's dig site, west of Sealing Point.

One beached walrus with edible quaq was reported in that area yesterday. There were no tusks.

Terry had a red-letter day today. He caught three squirrels in the heat of one outing.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull was very disappointed with today's net catch (he watches closely – that is his business). Not even one flounder. He say with me (six feet away) for an hour while I cleaned the net, demonstrating his sympathy. After the ordeal I gave him half the salmon in gulp-sized chunks. It is quite hard to favor one gull at this season, but we have worked out a system.

Our two local cranes were walking around in the backyard this morning, showing off their half-sized youngster. He must be able to fly now since they have kept him hidden until today.

Berry picking will be the theme of most of next month.

Neither Akulaaq nor Anigaaq closed on the big wave period. That is disappointing.

Tall Fireweed banks very beautiful.

July 31

High 65º F
Low 50º F
Cloudy, fog, clearing
W-SW wind to 18

Cool morning with low visibility to the west. Land cleared and then the sky cleared, and by early evening the sun had gotten quite warm. With the wind down it was a very nice evening.

Did *Gentianopsis detonsa* search at Sisualik Point this afternoon, where a few have been found before (in other years). I found only one medium sized plant, no on bare mud but in thick short *Carex* marsh grass. There a very lot of small *Lomatogonium* flowers (probably a peak time of flowering for Star Gentian). This "search confirms that Sisualik has had a very poor *G. detonsa* year. Other Gentians were also few in number, except for the Star Gentian, which seems to be plentiful, though small of size.

There are a lot of yet-to-fly ducks of several species on a lake over there. Oldsquaw, wigeon, and pintail were noted.

The people are complaining of a plague of ground squirrels over there as the half-grown young of this year are urged out of the birth places to colonize other places.

No netting on our sea beach today due to large swells and rough seas.

Anigaaq and Akulaaq remain open, though shallow.

All who have picked salmonberries in Salluq before are poised on the edges of their seats, ready to stampede to Salluq and the Krusenstern flats as this year's crop of berries is just about ready. The berries of August are looking good.

A female caribou taken at Sealing Point said to be lean, but the kids enjoyed the soup-broth.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

AUGUST

August 1

High 64º F
Low 52º F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S wind to 35

Very strong SE winds from early this morning till early afternoon when rain ceased and wind dropped off some. Rain was heavy before noon and we filled and re-filled our smaller rain container. There is a chance that we may fill up our storage container before this rain spell is over.

So far one walrus (female with one tusk) and one large log has drifted in. the forecast is for continued on shore winds, so there may be more flotsam and drift-in of some kind.

Our back salt marsh area flooded to its highest point so far this summer.

Akulaaq reportedly filling in. Hope both outlets do close this time. It will be timely both for berry picking and fish trapping.

Squirrel population very high in Sisualik, with young of the year half grown. May be some second litters about to turn up.

Tundra voles still nearly absent.

An uguruq with some salvageable blubber has drifted in beside the walrus. We are going to have lots of bear bait after this high water and high wave time. I think I have seen a few pieces of Eel Grass again. The wind and waves are right, but the time for them to get here from known beds across the Bering Straits seems too short. We may be developing beds in Kotzebue Sound.

Weather-wise August is off to a rough start. Weekend berry pickers are certainly not happy.

Sisualik people are patrolling the beach back and forth today.

Peak flowering Tall Fireweed are getting flattened by wind and maybe “atomized” by salt spray again if on shore winds get worse.

August 2

High 62º F
Low 52º F
Cloudy, fog, rain
S-SW wind to 18

Our water level got up to the rim this morning. The lagoon islands just showed the tops of their grasses, and the waves on the beach reached just to the sod line – not over. This is our highest water so far this summer. Hope it doesn't come any higher.

The on shore winds have brought a number of dead walruses and uguruq. At least one had one tusk, one with head but no tusk, and two without heads. One has skin-blubber good for cooking for human use.

We still don't know for sure if the two outlets are closed. Water and swells are still quite high. The last person down said that Akulaaq was open but very narrow. We hope very fervently that they both close before these on shore winds fade.

The reaction of the berries to this latest wet spell should be all good.

A traveler from Sealing Point to Killikmaiq reported a group of twelve musk ox at Killikmaiq today.

Had a gathering for Sunday School this afternoon. This first of the summer. Sisualik is kind of running out of people, for one reason or another.

Water levels are getting back to normal this late afternoon, but rain continues.

We finish this day still not knowing whether both Anigaaq and Akulaaq are open or closed. There is no one on the Anigaaq side to relay the state of the outlet; the last traveler from this side to Akulaaq earlier today said there was still a narrow channel open. That is hard to believe after the huge waves yesterday and last night. If there is even a trickle when the ocean water level drops, it will cut a large deep wide channel again. We hope that hasn't happened.

One musk ox reported at Lockhardt Point this evening.

August 3

High 60º F
Low 47º F
Cloudy, rain late
NW wind to 10
SE-S wind to 18 late

Eel grass is back on Sisualik beaches after the large swells and high water from the SW. Our winds never got too strong, but Shishmaref had SW winds of 40 k. The

fronds and seed blades look more tender and seed material more common. They appear to be younger plants than last year. With an increase of King Crab and King Salmon in Kotzebue Sound, probably due to an increase in water temperatures, it would not be surprising to find that Eel Grass has extended its range north into Kotzebue Sound from Norton Sound and the Bering Straits.

Lots of Pink Salmon moving thru from Sealing Point to Sisualik. We still had small swells all day, but did make three short net sets to get fresh fish to eat. Tried 3" mesh first and caught only three Saffron Cod. Tried the 6" chum net twice and got four male humpies. Gave up then because the swells would only let the net stay out for 15-20 minutes, and nothing good seemed to be running.

We found out today that Akulaaq is still open but Anigaaq is closed. It is good that Anigaaq closed, probably trapping lots of whitefish by this date. We expected Akulaaq to be closed by are disappointed that it is not. We cannot cross it with ATV and therefore cannot get to the fishing or berry picking on the west side.

We have four dead walrus on the beach now, between here and Akulaaq. One has parts that are edible for cooking, and some was cut off yesterday. The first traveler down this morning found very fresh bear tracks all around the walrus. He turned back from there to pick up a gun before continuing on down to check the outlet.

Commercial fishers may have done pretty good today. No sale of humpies though.

August 4

High 60º F
Low 50º F
Cloudy, drizzle, fog
Calm-NW wind to 10

We had hoped to make it to town today, but fog and drizzle and other things prevented that. Maybe tomorrow.

Put the net out late and got only humpies and a lot of saltwater dirt (seaweed, eel grass, willows, and grass roots).

We did pick several Ziplocs of salmonberries when the air dried and the sun almost came out. Berries are in good shape now with about ¾ of the local ones ripe. Carrie's ankle and my back didn't last long, but we made a start.

Lots of ducks back from molt now, but the very high water the other day made the water in feeding lakes too deep for dabblers. They are in alternate lakes now that often aren't regular feeding lakes, but are sources of sustenance for now. Ducks are normally quite lean when just back from molt, and often seek out a diet of high protein food such as insects, crustaceans, arthropods and other forms of animal life,

rather than their later season switch to nearly all vegetation and starchy corms.

Folks are anxious now to get down to the real salmonberry grounds at Salluq. One open outlet and one closed complicates the scene for access. While Anigaaq was open, one only had to run up into the waterway through the outlet. Now you will have to drag your boat over beach gravel. With Akulaaq open, one can't get down there with ATV. Some will combine boat and ATV use.

Noticed quite large white cranberries today. That promises a good large size berry and a heavy crop. We have had few these last two years.

A few more people showing up around Sisualik again now as berries ripen. Our lowland blueberry crop is not as good as last year's, but there are some. The tableland zone is full of big ones.

August 5

High 66º F
Low 47º F
Cloudy, rain squalls
NE-E-W-NW wind to 20

Town trip finally. Family boat picked us up early and we had a good trip in, though water was much lower than yesterday. The usual hectic business – meeting long lost friends, etc. – made a short day with little time to figure everything out.

By the time we were ready for the return trip the water had dropped a foot or two and heavy rain showers blocked our crossing. We were naturally heavier on the way home and barely made it across the bar. We did churn mud. Then, as we neared Nuvuruq, wind from the west picked up and shortly thereafter small whitecaps began to show. We decided to stay off the ocean and unload everything at the Point, and finish the 4 miles to go by ATV. That went well, but slow between heavy rain showers.

Feel worn tonight but Carrie's ankle held out and we are restocked, ready for August berries – with a bad leg for Carrie and a bad back for me! We shall see how berries '98 goes.

August 6

High 50º F
Low 44º F
Clouds, fog, rain
SW-NW wind to 25

Bad weather again. Wet, cold, with some clearing and dropping wind after 7 p.m.

Spent a good deal of time and energy rolling the walrus that was high up on the

beach west of us, down into the waves in order to get rid of it. It was less that a ¼ of a mile west of us. Finally got it down into the waves, but couldn't get it free of the beach because of the size of the waves. It rolled slowly towards our camp, and then finally stopped right on our doorstep! Well, anyway it will be close to the water when waves are down a bit. It is a rather small female drifted-in walrus, but is heavy for one person to roll around.

Weather and the open channel at Akulaaq are sure holding the salmonberry pickers back. There are a few people down there, but rough seas and the rough logistics of getting on scene down there have frustrated many that would be there otherwise.

Ducks on the marsh increase daily. These are adult birds straggling back with brand new flight feathers. It won't be long before the small groups of young of the year join the larger groups, and we will have our Sisualik salt marsh waterfowl peak of the season. The last week of August and first of September will host that interesting happening.

Moose season is on, but haven't heard of a successful hunter yet. Actually, we haven't even heard of a moose hunter yet. Most local people wait until September or later when air temperatures cool, as the meat has a better chance for choice quality.

Commercial chum fishers on this side didn't get gear in the water today due to rough seas and bad visibility. Their catches continue to be pretty good. Trout will begin running again soon.

August 7

High 58º F
Low 44º F
Cloudy, clearing
W-NW wind to 22

A fine bright dry cool day. Ideal day for berry picking and we did – mostly all day. We had an unexpected bonanza. We filled a five-gallon bucket with fine ripe salmonberries only ½ mile from camp. We consider ourselves pretty fortunate because there is great tension building over the picking of salmonberries. Weather has kept most of the berry picking gang from getting to Salluq, the next big berry picking place and it's usually a very late, high-producing area. Akulaaq is still open and Anigaaq is still closed, which complicates the issue.

The berry area we picked today was better than we expected. There were many small ones, but near grasses and small ponds there were groups and patches of fine big firm berries, with most but not all ripe. It was a good first all day berry pick.

There are lots of cranberries coming on the same ground as the salmonberries, but only about half size yet. Some already have red tops, though white bottoms. They are

the last berry to ripen.

No net set again today due to rough ocean. A few of the commercial fishing boys got nets set, but we haven't got a hint of results yet. August tenth is an early date for the beginning of the fall trout run.

So far as we know, Anigaaq remains closed. That will be great, though heavy rains and wave action could re-open it at any time. Akulaaq remains open.

With all our aches and pains we are doing remarkably well in the gathering line. Our two buckets of sourdock and five gallons of aqpiks put us well on the way to a winter berry supply. The cooked sourdock is fermenting a bit, and is a real treat now. It is ready for some cooked blueberries now, and then some ripe uncooked blackberries. This will increase its size to three buckets.

We did, by hard work, sweat and tears, get the dead walrus on to another location.

August 8

High 62º F
Low 37º F
Clear, some clouds
SE-SW wind to 15

After dropping into the thirties for the first time in a while, our evening temperatures were still in the 60's at 9 p.m.

Finally set the salmon net this morning, and when we came after berry picking, the net was out of shape from the swells. It did have one female chum and a bunch of healthy looking flounder. Decided to cook some of the latter for the first time this summer. They are getting thick and firm, with building roe sacks. They were pretty good and will get better soon.

Our large bull walrus is at our western neighbor's camp again. The one I worked hard at getting back into the water didn't come back, we are glad to report.

Ground swells are back again. The ocean was quite flat from midnight last night till noon today. Several boats made it down – dragged over the gravel dam and the mouth – and into the promised berry land.

We have gotten ourselves into a bind and probably won't make it down. It is a great disappointment to Carrie.

Three flower species continue to enhance the salt marsh. The cream white Grass-of-Parnassus, the baby blue eyes of Star Gentian, and the pink purple of Tall Fireweed. There are still some whites (Arctic Daisy) and some yellows (*Potentilla Egedii* and

Yellow Marsh Saxifrage).

Gnats have replaced mosquitoes as the most dangerous marsh insects.

The fall trout run may begin this coming week.

With the ocean so rough we are finding it difficult to have something fresh to cook each day. We have lots of stored oil-preserved food, it's just that we like to have something fresh cooked at least once a day. Ducks?

Pip-squeek and her brood of the year are gone! Mew Gulls seem the earliest migrants to return to their wintering grounds.

Several small groups of Golden Plover were seen on beach ridges today.

August 9

High 60º F
Low 52º F
Cloudy
SE-S wind to 15

A rather quiet Sunday with a late small Sunday School group.

The ocean has finally calmed this evening after a long spell of ground swells. No travelers today.

Salmonberry pickers still busy down at Salluq. There will be more going down and some leaving this week. The picking is still pretty good down there.

Finally cleaned out the freezer and was surprised to see so many blackberries from last year.

Saw a first new family of Pintail today – all flying on brand new flight feathers. Most Mew Gulls have left the area with their new flying young. Arctic Terns will not be around long now. Saw a few geese back on the marsh yesterday, but have yet to see Tundra Swans back from molt. There are good numbers of Black Turnstone family groups around.

A large dragonfly was working by the tent door yesterday.

We have a huge variety of insects around now in the jungle of our very high grown grasses. I wonder how many species there might be? And it is a jungle – every square inch of soil has some kind of plant, expect for paths and roadways. Inside the grasses are a host of strange creatures, most of which we don't even know. I suspect they carry on their own wars and peace probably does not reign through the jungle.

And of course there are the eaters – the eaters of the jungle making use of all this green summer growth.

Our sunset is now some minutes before midnight so we can no longer boast of having a midnight sun. We have missed the moon anyway. It was looking good last night.

August 10

High 57º F
Low 49º F
Cloudy, fog, rain
SE-SW wind to 18

A couple of first today, and kind of on cue.

The first "fall" run char were in the net this morning, with four chums and a first silver salmon. Years back the first "fall char" were not expected till August 15. Then a few years ago an early run began on August 10th. Since then the run has backed back and forth. This segment of the char population are those that came out of the rivers two months ago in very poor ("slink") condition. They have fattened up plenty, but their sexual development is at bottom rung. They will not take part in spawning this coming year. The will just overwinter, as all char must, in freshwater. There are some ½-developed egg-carrying char mixed with these super fat overwintering fish. They will spawn in this coming year. This is the time that the commercial chum fishery can take a heavy toll on our char stock, especially since fishermen have been getting a better price for char than for chums for several years.

Another first today was a lone lively Sanderling. This is the first I have seen this fall-summer. (These are fall species and part of the salt marsh is yellow, so "fall" is very near again.) Sanderling regularly come thru here in small numbers in the fall but are rare in spring or summer.

Silver salmon are uncommon here, there being no real run, just a few individuals each mid-August to early September. Usually our silvers have small spots – a few – above the lateral line. The male we took today did not have spots but a very characteristic "crooked" nose.

Someone reported seeing a vole in Sisualik today! Maybe they are coming back.

Pintail and wigeon flocks continue to grow, but continued high water keeps them from better feed. They are at an annual low as far as fat reserves go right now. Big feathers and only meat on the bones – very little fat. soon they will be too fat for soup and will require roasting to get rid of the oil.

August 11

High 57º F
Low 51º F
Cloudy, rain, fog
S wind to 25

A day of lament for berry pickers again. It will turn to a day of rejoicing if the onshore winds and big waves close Akulaaq and do not wash us away. Rain has been too continuous to consider berry-picking today.

The water has been too rough to set a net. It was a good day to catch up on some long "put off" chores.

A neighbor has scheduled a new house dedication for this evening, but he has to come from Kotzebue and the weather is mean – we wonder if he will make it.

Our rain this summer has kept major drainages pretty full of water. For this reason we hope rains will drop off so berry picking can be pursued for the next three weeks. In some years, our heaviest rains come at this time. If that happens this year, floods will result and many salmon- and blueberries will go unpicked.

Musk ox counts for our area look pretty good: one hundred twenty-one for Krusenstern, of which 29 are calves. The entire west coast area, from Cape Lisburne to Sisualik shows 387. These figures are from Mike Schnorr, NPS. There seems not much change from last year in numbers of adults.

We have not heard of a moose kill yet, even though we are eleven days into the season. This is not unusual. There is usually not much interest among local folks for early August moose. As air temperatures cool, and if caribou do not turn up early, there will be more effort put into searching out moose.

The house dedication went well. Now we hope they made it home safely!

August 12

High 58º F
Low 48º F
Cloudy, fog, drizzle
SE wind to 20

The house dedication party did make it home to Kotzebue all right, but it took time and must have been a bit scary. The back lagoon flat-marsh area was all flooded, wind was above 20 k, and the sun had set. It was after 12 midnight before they got in. It was quite a time of fellowship and songfest and quite a great demonstration of faith by Christians doing a good work. Taikuu!

Water and wind are down. Ground is still wet, air is drying, but we are sorry to

report that Akulaaq channel is still open, blocking our hopes of getting down there yet for salmonberries.

We had fog and drizzle till mid-afternoon, when it dried enough to go get a cartload of driftwood and pick a few blueberries.

Seas were calm enough for a couple of boats to get down or back from Salluq.

A boating party from Nuvuruq looking for firewood on a slough of the Noatak Delta saw a bear today. That is an unusual place to see a bear. It was running away from them.

After a reasonably calm morning and afternoon, winds and clouds became active again from the SE. Forecast is not good.

Saw a very large group of Whimbrel on the blueberry grounds. There were probably 200, the largest group seen for years. There was a family group of Willow Ptarmigan in the same area.

No net out today. No new driftwood on the beach after all the on shore winds we have had.

Interesting interaction between newly-fledged Parasitic Jaeger, Northern Harrier, and jaeger adult.

August 13

High 54º F
Low 49º F
Cloudy, rain, fog
SE wind to 35

Very poor weather for any outdoor activity today. We are having too many of these kinds of days for berry picking season.

People that want to move from wherever they are can't (fishermen, berry pickers, etc.). Not much chance to hunt or fish either. Lucky we have some fresh caught stuff on hand to carry us thru for a few days.

Our big hope of course is that gravel movement from this storm system will close Akulaaq. That will make the inconveniences worth it all.

Marine waters are staying so consistently high that local adult duck flocks that are back from molt now have to find feed in unusual places. Pintails do well on old blackberries and new black- and blueberries, as well as various tender greens on the ground. Wigeon seem more inclined to stay on the edge of the flood-line eating

floating green algae and the more tender green sedges. Neither species will fatten very quickly until they can get at the aquatic *Potamogeton* corms that are out of reach for even the long-necked Pintail when the marsh is flooded.

Flying insects have been grounded for a while. The heavy rains and cool temperatures have made it rare to see a flying insect. The walkers and crawlers are still there, and the next time the sun warms and dries the grasses, the bloodthirsty gnats will be there. Some berry pickers will think that they have gotten the measles or a bad case of chicken pox.

Hope we have a better day tomorrow. There are berries to be picked!

August 14

High 52º F
Low 48º F
Cloudy, rain, rain
SE-SW wind to 35

A great but very mean day today. The mean part was nearly all day of strong winds and heavy rain, on top of an already flooded lagoon and wave tops lapping the sod line on the beach. Had to roll out at 4 a.m. to monitor wave height. There seemed reason to believe the waves might break over the bank and wipe out our camp. It is now 5 p.m. and that hasn't happened yet, but it is still a real threat.

The great part of the day was word from our nephew, who traveled this morning, that Akulaaq Lagoon was closed by a gravel dam thrown across it by our storm's big waves. Hurray! Now we can go salmonberry picking and whitefish fishing to our hearts' content. We will have an ATV trail west, probably as far as Port Site.

We are still at risk of flooding out and will not be able to relax until we see sure sign of wind dropping and/or switching to a different direction. A SW wind is our most dangerous for high wave damage to the shoreline, since the open mouth of Kotzebue Sound is in the direction from here - the waves of the Chukchi can enter Kotzebue Sound and reach us at Sisualik.

We hope the last half of August is a lot better berry-picking weather than the first has been.

There is some unusual happening with ravens. They are doing a lot of walking around in camps and in places that are not normally inspected by either ravens or gulls. It is apparently a food search because their numbers are inflated.

Wind switched to west at 8:30 p.m., rain stopped, air cooled, and flood waters went down.

August 15

High 51º F
Low 44º F
Cloudy, rain p.m.
SW-W wind to 40

If yesterday was a mean day, this one surprised us by being meaner, earlier. After a switch to west, some clearing and calming and dropping of water level and waves, we looked forward to a restful night's sleep. About 4 a.m. I awoke to loud waves and lots of wind from the same old dangerous SW direction. I had to put on clothes and take a closer look. Tops of waves were already up to the sod edge, with some water running down the path to the tent door! Water on the back lagoon side was already past the high level of yesterday. I had to wake Carrie and get her moved to the dome, which is on three-foot pilings. Water and wave levels didn't get much worse, but neither did they get much better. I stayed awake to monitor the scene. Flood waters, waves, and high levels stay about the same till 7-8 a.m., when they all began to drop. We came thru again without damage, but with only inches to spare. It was a worrisome early morning.

A large male wolf was killed at an inland camp yesterday, apparently attracted by a female dog with puppies. It is a very unusual occurrence at this season. During fall or winter young wolves often do turn up around camps, especially those camps that keep sled dogs.

Water levels, both in the ocean and the lagoon, remain high this evening. Wind has dropped however, showers are few, and temperatures are cooling. The sun was even out for a while. Perhaps the weather is leveling off. We will appreciate that.

We also need a chance to put a net in the water somewhere to replenish our fresh day-to-day menu.

Bad news at 7 p.m. this evening: Anigaaq channel has broken open due to so much rain, wind and waves. All our fall whitefish are free again.

August 16

High 52º F
Low 38º F
Cloudy, light rain
N wind to 18

Well! Quite a great change in our world today. Due to a widespread N wind system our marine waters dropped rapidly to almost the bottom of the bucket - from flood storm stage to exposed sand and mud bars within a few hours. Our ocean beach waters, which were so menacing yesterday and the day before, were flat this morning. No waves or swells.

We stuck a whitefish net out for a while to see if Anigaaq outgoing fish had reached here. A few had, but the net also got nearly a tubful of large Saffron Cod, which we don't really want this early. The seven rather small whitefish we got made a big pot of boiled fresh fish for our Sunday School group. They were good-flavored and fat – choice fish amongst our people.

There were a few coming and going boats to the berry grounds, but Carrie is still frustrated in her wishes to get down there. Our means and methods of getting there are still on hold due to circumstances pretty well out of our control.

Saw a large seal feeding close to the beach this afternoon. Haven't seen a seal for a while. It was probably a large Spotted Seal.

Flowers have taken a beating through this storm-flood time. Some salt spray (atomized supersaturated salt from waves breaking on the beach with onshore winds) wilted leaves of *Artemisia* and leaves and flowers of Tall Fireweed.

Bear tracks around a dead walrus 2-3 miles west of us last night.

We have another huge dead bull walrus less than a quarter mile to the west of us. We may sometime see bears on that one.

August 17

High 49º F
Low 33º F
Cloudy, sun, dry!
NW wind to 30

A little frost and a bit of ice in special places. Seems like we can't get thru mid-August these last few years without a frost to soften or alter the taste of berries.

A very cool but nice dry day today, and we picked blueberries most of the day. We may now have enough to mix with our two buckets of sourdock. We did discover a good place to pick good berries after spending most of the day in a poor picking place. We may be back to that place, circumstances permitting.

No net out again today because of rough seas. We would like to get a few more fish ahead for serious berry picking if weather should get and stay good for a while.

Lots of waterfowl now in our extensive mudflats with the extreme low water we now have. Many, maybe most, birds are back from molt. Even Tundra Swans are now represented with a flock of 20 or so. These are the first swans seen with new flight feathers.

Saw Dunlin and Sanderling. A swift Merlin missed a try at our lone camp

Sanderling. Merlins seem pretty deadly locally on Black Turnstones, especially on young of the year, when there is a family of three or four.

After today's good blueberry pick we have enough to change the color of our green sourdock mixture.

No flies, mosquitoes or gnats today – too dry and cool I guess. Fingers and hands got number, but the absence of insects was pleasant.

We have a sparse blackberry crop this year after the superabundant crop of last year. This year's crop has begun to sweeten, but are still quite bitter.

August 18

High 52º F
Low 44º F
Cloudy, light showers
SW-S wind to 30

A windy day of high waters - waves on the ocean side and flood in the salt marsh. The air was pretty dry however, with some sun breaking thru.

We had a great day in the blueberry patch. This is a newly discovered place to pick blueberries and there are pretty fine thick berries, which haven't been touched by other pickers – yet. Berries are a wee bit soft – hands colored a bit but leaves are still fastened solid so picking was good. It kind of took Carrie's mind off the disappointment of not getting salmonberry grounds farther west. This is still on hold for many because of more or less difficult coastal traveling conditions so far thru August.

A lone musk ox is being seen at Jones Camp.

Little change for fishing – none for us – because of rough waters and flood conditions.

It is also very difficult to get a bird for the pot because of flood conditions on the marsh. There are a lot of birds having to seek out alternative feeding places due to flood. The most plentiful fowl are wigeon and pintail, then geese, cranes, and swans.

A single large bear continues to make tracks around drifted in walrus a few miles west of us. It does not seem to eat – at least no much – just checks the walrus out every few days.

Cranes and whimbrels are showing around more, but no real movement thru here yet.

Only two Noatak families left at the Point now. A couple more went home this week

and others a little early. Total Noatak families for July: 10-12.

August 19

High 52º F
Low 46º F
Cloudy, rain
SE wind to 45

A day of high winds forecast. Hope we survive it with our already flooded conditions.

By 8 p.m. we were still having gusty high winds with heavy rain spells. Weather Bureau has given a pretty ambiguous forecast for tonight. Our fate will be determined by which wind direction prevails. One statement indicates a change to NE for stations north of Kotzebue and to south for those S of Kotzebue. Hope this bears out because if our winds go to NE we miss a rough ocean, which we don't need at all.

Rain has been so heavy on and off all day that berry picking was not possible.

Rough sea prevents net setting and flooded marshlands offer no chance for birds. We are eating a bit of this and that from the freezer.

Much of August is going down the drain due to miserable weather both for traveling and actual berry picking.

There may be a few Aleutian Terns still in our midst. Most Arctic Tern young are already out on the beaches; Aleutian Terns are up to 10 days later than Arctic in the breeding cycle.

A lazy day today while worrying about our coming night with high waters, high winds, and people held down by weather.

August 20

High 48º F
Low 40º F
Cloudy, rain
SE wind to 30
S-SW wind to 15
W-NW wind to 20

Awoke to an interesting situation this morning at daylight (6 a.m.): extremely heavy rain through most of the night and noise so loud on the tent that one could hardly hear the radio. Our back marsh area is flooded clear to the top. It has the highest water level we have seen this year. Our wind had shifted to S and on to SW in much diminished force from the SE at 40 we went to bed with. However, the switch in direction puts us at risk from wave action. The waves are only halfway up the beach now, but 25-30 knot winds from SW to W will put waves over the bank. We will hold our breath till water

level has a chance to drop while winds are 20 k or less. A few hours should tell the tale. A SW wind to 35 k right now would wipe Sisualik clean.

At 3 p.m. the scene change was hopeful. The wind stayed fairly light (15 k) as it passed thru S, W, to NW and then picked up to 20. The large swells from ocean began to drift in and build in height and frequency. Our wind though was very much from the side, and though waves are sweeping the beach clean, the tops are not quite touching the sod line. If they were, or if they do, very strong erosion would take place and we could lose some structures. The water level is dropping steadily in the rear. We have hope that the swells will not come any higher. The lowest house at Nuvuruq had water to the floor early this morning; a berry picker's camp tent had to move during the night to a nearby building.

By 6 p.m. it was clear that water and waves were well on the way down. This storm is over and we lucked out again. No loss, no damage, but the storm has left a large headless walrus nearly on our doorstep.

Picked up a fresh salmon (seal killed) from beach to cook for supper. Lucky day!

August 21

High 48º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, showers, sun
SW-W-NW wind to 15

Finally a partial drying out and the sight and feel of the sun for a change.

There was a frosting of snow on our nearby highest hills this morning – those to the north with an elevation of 1500-2000 feet. Last week the highest mountains east of Noatak were said to be white.

Our cottonwood copse on tablelands, which acts as our seasonal change monitor, has begun its color change. The deep green of surrounding willows highlights the slight yellowish tinge on the lighter green cottonwood (Balsam poplar) leaves. They may be a bright canary yellow in a few more days.

Our nephew got us a number of ducks today (Northern Pintail and Wigeon) that have kept us busy plucking and preparing for freezer. They are adult birds but some are quite lean. Too much high water over the marsh keeps these "puddle ducks" from their best fattening feed. The will be in better shape (for fat reserves) in another week to ten days.

The ocean is quiet enough today for some berry pickers to move around.

Our family boat brought our engine today, so nephew and Carrie may make it down to salmonberry land yet. New pickers are headed that way. There will still be many

unpicked berries and some, maybe all, will be white or light-colored rather than deep red. They don't look as pretty but they are much sweeter.

There is a huge amount of deep water *Potamogeton* stems and leaves rolled into huge clumps, all along our sea beach. There are also many floating in the water. These were torn loose by storm conditions from the Noatak Delta, and floated free when strong outflow of water began.

Put net out for a while but *Potamogeton* was the only catch.

August 22

High 52º F
Low 43º F
Clouds, sun
S-SE wind to 18

A fine berry-picking day and we used it for that – blueberries. The ocean was rougher than our local winds would seem to make it, so boat travel was limited to large boats with brave captains.

Some blueberries in our picking location were quite soft. Most are still good to handle.

A large bull caribou was reported walking our way by an air taxi passenger today. We didn't get the info till late evening. Someone may be lucky enough to see it. It should be a great piece of meat at this date, with much back and inside fat, with antlers still in velvet and a hide very good for clothing with soft new hair and relatively thick skin (the leather portion).

A first find of dead sea bird. There were two rather long-dead Short-tailed Shearwaters on the beach.

There is lots of dirty water on our beach today – even black water. Grasses, sea weeds, dissolved peat mud, willows, and all kinds of Noatak Delta grasses and vegetation. A net set would dirty its full length before fish got into it.

We are seeing Whimbrels in numbers we haven't seen for several years. Don't know why. They do like blueberries above all other food – while in their summer range. We have a great crop this year, but it was greater last year. They are a fine bird – to hear, to see, and to eat if you can fit that in. Their diet of berries in August gives their fat, tender flesh one of the most exquisite flavors found in wild game. They probably are still at risk to follow the Passenger Pigeon and the Eskimo Curlew into oblivion for this characteristic.

August 23

High 52º F
Low 37º F
Cloudy, rain
N-NE wind to 25

A flat ocean but a wet sky. Not having been able to set the next all week, and needing fish both for our table and Jonathan, I stuck the 6" mesh net out for a bit, even though we don't usually fish on Sunday. Pulled it up a couple of hours alter and had good quality fresh fish – three fat fall trout (over 10 lbs.), a bright chum salmon, and one male chum pretty well spent, having been to Noatak and back. It doesn't take very long to fill your personal fish needs in Sisualik in mid-August when the ocean lays down enough.

We hear by rumor that the caribou reported yesterday by air taxi passenger was taken by a neighbor – son of the passenger. Fitting! Haven't yet heard of condition, sex, etc.

The rain has not stopped since it started around noon today. It's not heavy, but steady. It is great to have the ocean silent with only wind and rain to make noise on the tent.

Berry picking weather is not improving, at least not until after tomorrow. "Rain, rain, Go Away!"

Three, yes three, "squabs" turned up here on the ocean beach today begging food from – yes, you know who – Jonathan! It appears now that Jonathan and his mate raised the young of all three of their eggs to at least flying stage. We've wondered where all that food he sometimes gets away with could have gone. Now we know. It may have all gone into one bird, but has eventually been divided into three small portions and two adult portions. We wonder how fairly Jonathan does the dividing. Outwardly, he seems pretty reluctant to share anything he gets his beak into with other gulls.

August 24

High 52º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, rain
NE-E-SE-S-SW wind to 15

All day rain again! Winds have been light and the ocean so very quiet. No berry picking though due to the wetness. How many days of rain this month?

Trout are running. There were five salmon-sized trout in the net this morning, two chum salmon, and numerous large and some fat flounders. We had flounders for lunch and they were very good. Many are fat and thick and their egg sacs are growing larger by the week.

Several boats made it home from Salluq salmonberry grounds today. They are probably

glad to be home since some have been down there too long due to rough ocean.

All waterfowl are back into their best feeding areas in the lagoon – there are none in the lakes where they spend high water time. They have access now to the good *Potamogeton* beds and will fatten quickly.

Tried a second net set with a clean "real" trout net (4 ½" mesh). SW wind picked up and filled it with *Potamogeton*, a couple bales of it, and only two fish – a slim sheefish and a small trout.

We are soon going to have to hook up our electric light to read or write after 9 p.m. Fall time is near. Insects haven't been common till this last week.

August 25

High 56º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, a bit of sun
Showers
SE-E-NE wind to 18

A fine nearly dry day. The sun looked and felt good the few times it escaped from the clouds.

We picked blueberries again, hauled two loads of firewood, and kept pretty busy, taking breaks for lunch and supper only. That sounds like fall camp hours and I guess it is. The marsh sedges nearest the water level are no longer green, but a bright golden yellow. The cottonwood copse has yellowed, but not to its bright lemon yellow yet, which really stands out.

Our ocean has really calmed tonight. That hasn't happened very often this month. We can hope it lasts a while. My large mesh net is too dirtied up to set before being cleaned, and we don't need fresh fish right now. The flood disturbed water was very dirty near the beach again today, as marine waters dropped dramatically, probably in response to a probably north wind system upcoming. Freshwater systems are still at near flood stage from previous long rainy periods. We are lucky to have marine waters dropping at this point so that stream floodwaters can easily disperse. Our location here on the delta is precarious when both systems flood at once. Usually, thank goodness, they don't.

There were both fresh caribou tracks (one) and bear tracks (one) a few miles west of us today. The caribou was coming up this way for a while, until it turned off to the tablelands. It is probably the one see and reported by the air taxi a couple of days ago. That animal, by the way, was not taken as we reported. Another misleading rumor. Seeing the tracks now does prove that there was one – or rather <u>is</u> one.

Have seen only two dead sea birds so far this August. The expected die off may be

south of Bering Straits.

August 26

High 56º F
Low 44º F
Sun! Few clouds
E-SE wind to 15

A fine bright sunny day. It was great and wonderful for a change.

Hauled firewood in the morning. The willows, grass, and ground were exceedingly wet from all night drizzle. The sun and stiff dry wind dried things up by afternoon and we decided to check some of the nearby blackberry grounds. We got a pleasant surprise at the first place we stopped. Fine, big, plentiful blackberries right where we picked last year. We spent an hours or so picking for our first tiŋulik of the year. This is the cooked livers of either trout or tomcod, made into a thin paste into which the large, juicy blackberries are mixed. That's all! A simple recipe but it produces a Sisualik treat that is special. The blackberries are big and juicy, but still a little bitter. They will sweeten soon.

Saw a new (bird-of-the-year) trout bird today. This is the Northern Wheatear. It is the second I have seen and is called Trout Bird here because it invariably turns up on the beach when the fall trout run begins or is going on. The adults birds nest in the hills and they and the young are seldom seen at sea level until mid-August. They are insect eaters and as the sun warmed today, there were many insects. So this bird has had a good day.

Had whitefish net out for a while this morning. Too much dirt on the bottom. It picked up a lot, got one trout, two small whitefish, and one large Saffron Cod. These made a good lunch, but now I have two dirty nets to clean up.

A small bear made fresh tracks on the beach, running west between W. Kenworthy's camp and Frank Sheldon's camp. Don't know if those folks know if its presence or not.

August 27

High 52º F
Low 36º F
Fog, cloudy, some sun
NW wind to 18

Took a char with tag no. 0638 yesterday. Char are running pretty good yet, but dirt in the water is still bad from last storm.

Carrie and nephew off for Salluq and Sealing Point salmonberry grounds – finally. They ran right into a new local tragedy. Two young fellows stopped by last evening on their way down to Katyauraq with plywood for building. Today, around noon, the boat that was taking Carrie and nephew down to our boat (her sister) found one of the boys

on shore. Their boat, still loaded, was off shore quite a ways. When they went out to bring it in they found the owner drowned. He is from Kiana, married just this spring here in Sisualik to Claude and Dora Wilson's daughter. Booze appears to be the primary cause of the "accident."

Had the 6" mesh net out for several hours today, in hopes of cleaning out the dirt. Trout really did clean the net – nearly 20 big husky, double-fat fall run Dolly Varden trout. Some catch for a short "push pole" net. It is now quite clean.

There was one spawned out, colored male in the net too. It is early for that stage of char to show. It must be one of the early spawning group – those that work their way upstream to spawn at "ice out" in spring instead of heading out to sea to feed.

Lots of Whimbrels around. A Merlin was sting on our clothesline pole today. Shorebirds of many species are moving through. Passerines are still plentiful too.

Hope this westerly flow of wind doesn't end in a bad frost. We have an as yet untouched crop of good blackberries and cranberries.

Carrie and nephew made it to Sealing Point by 7 p.m.

August 28

High 50º F
Low 45º F
Cloudy, fog, rain
W-NW wind to 18

A very dull-colored day. Even though the landscape is turning colorful with early fall, the cloud cover is so dense that sunlight hardly penetrates. Drizzle kept the outdoors wet all day.

One boat passed, headed for Kivalina, but held for a while at Salluq.

Spent the day inside working on journal material

Very few people left in Sisualik. There is only one Noatak family left at the Point, and people from other camps are in town or elsewhere, doing whatever needs to be done. We will soon have another burial in Sisualik.

The sky does seem to be improving this evening as the wind drops some. We have a forecast of northerly winds for tomorrow, which may dry up the air and give coast travelers a chance to get where they wish to be.

Sandpipers still moving through, and some small flocks of Brant are feeding around the area, sometimes in unusual places (for Brant).

Blackberry picking is on hold until air dries.

Labor Day weekend usually sees a number of tents set up again for a couple of nights. Duck hunting and caribou hunting will be Labor Day choices for most family outings. It has to be one or the other, not both, because usually ducks and geese are not where caribou usually are by this date.

Saw two dead shrews in an empty bucket with a little rain water in it. So there are some around!

Last night there were fresh small bear tracks between the two western Sisualik camps that are occupied and our camp. That is the closest bears have come for a while. I would like to get this dead walrus that is close to us back in the water and away from here, but it is tough and messy to move, being a large headless bull.

August 29

High 56º F
Low 42º F
Rain, clearing, sun!
N-NE wind to calm

What a beautiful early fall day. The sun came out full-blown in late afternoon. There were early morning showers, and then a steady moderate drying to a very late (7 to 9 p.m.) warm clear sun.

Carrie still at Sealing Point with her brother and family.

Sisualik people looked, somewhat in vain, for blackberries today for the first time. It's not that there aren't any, it is more that there was such a huge crop last year that the overall blackberry grounds seem barren this year by comparison. There are blackberries, and good ones, but the patchy nature of this year's crop requires searching them out.

We have some big flocks of Whimbrel and Wigeon around. This evening our lagoon is almost dry again from strong N winds in other places. Freshwater systems are still at near flood stage from long-lasting steady rains.

Many, many large flounders and nothing else in the 6" mesh net today. Six whitefish and nine Saffron Cod in the 3" mesh net. Trout may have made their final passage. The early commercial chum fishery closure helped preserve trout stocks.

A good deal of waterfowl shooting is going on this weekend, in part because caribou are still quite distant. In addition, weather has become tolerable after a long spell of difficult conditions.

August 15 would be a more reasonable legal fall opening than the September 1 date so long established.

Caribou should be getting a little closer soon. Currently they are reported crossing the Noatak at Nakaulik and the Kobuk at Onion Portage.

August 30

High 58º F
Low 37º F
Clear, a few clouds
NE-E wind to 15

A most beautiful Sunday, the likes of which we haven't seen for a long while. Even the ocean is flat and quiet. The sun got quite warm this afternoon and insects are out again.

Carrie and nephew left Sealing Point at 6:15 p.m. with our little boat. With luck they will have smooth shiny water all the way. Will be good to have them home again.

Flowers and small passerines are becoming rare again. Our Balsam Poplar copse on yonder tablelands is canary yellow against the green of surrounding Diamond-leaf Willow. Cranberries have turned a deep cherry red in the last two days; Bearberry and Dwarf Birch have started their change to fall shades.

Sisualik blackberry pickers are in a tizzy after checking the usual high producing areas yesterday. The general complaint is they are just not there! Carrie and I must have stumbled on a great bonanza the day before she left. We only picked enough for tiŋulik. Now I can't wait for her to get back so we get our share from the apparently limited Sisualik blackberry crop. We need them for our sourdock-blueberry mix. The plot we found won't last long when geese and people get word of its location!

Marine water level low due to northerly wind systems, but freshwater sources still high from rain run off.

Hope the whole month of September is like today.

Carrie home this evening on a glassy sea with a lot of strange stories to tell. One is of a large dark beaver a ways up Ivilyukpalik Creek (behind Sealing Point).

August 31

High 64º F
Low 40º F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 20

A good day in the blackberry patch. Carrie and I filled a 5-gallon bucket, which is

pretty good when everyone is complaining about the lack of blackberries in Sisualik this year. If we can get another bucket of blackberries, our sourdock will be complete.

Large trout still running. The 6” mesh took ten trout and a still silvery male chum salmon today. One of the trout, a female of 25”, carried ADF&G tag no. 0215.

Though it came close, there was no frost last night.

We have extremely low marine water today due to widespread northerly winds. This will not be too good for the opening of the waterfowl season tomorrow.

Caribou news is getting more intense, but not much closer. Nakulik on the Noatak yet, and Onion Portage on the Kobuk.

Well, September is just about here. Our sun is getting over water instead of over land, where it has been all summer.

A young neighbor brought us a Canada Goose this morning.

We had flounders and half dried whitefish for supper, with tiŋulik (trout livers cooked, made into paste, and mixed with blackberries).

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER

September 1

High 55º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, little sun
N-NE wind to 15

The funeral and burial came off smoothly, and took up much of the day. The rain forecast didn't materialize, except for a few drops. It would have been good for a full day of blackberry picking.

Trout still running strong, but only one long net fishing them There certainly are a lot of fine big trout this fall. It is quite a contrast to the meager run here last fall.

Family little jet boat brought us a whole caribou – from 15 miles above Kiana. They are having trouble getting home due to darkness and low water level. They are learning some of the problems unique to jet boat traveling.

A young relative of the person buried today gave us several whimbrel and a couple of ducks. The whimbrel are very fat. They have the most tasty and delicate flesh of all our salt marsh and tundra birds.

The 3" mesh net got lots of small flounders today and several trout. I had hoped for whitefish or Saffron Cod, but there was only a couple of each.

There have been a number of young duck and goose hunters out this last weekend. For some, I guess, it is Labor Day weekend and for others, I guess next weekend will be Labor Day weekend. Nothing seems to make much sense any more.

The jet boat gang just got home (12:30 a.m.). They will long remember this night of trials and learning and their parents and us, their grandparents, will have gained a few white hairs.

September 2

High 51º F
Low 41º F
Cloudy, showers, drizzle
N-SW-W wind to 15

Sisualik marshes have really filled up with waterfowl. The young of most species have joined adults on the staging-fattening grounds. There are four to five hundred Tundra Swans, as well White-front and Canada Goose. Water has started to raise a bit today from yesterday's rock bottom low. This will redistribute the birds.

Had the 6" mesh net out today and had one bright chum and one large male trout. There was a real pile of Starry Flounders of large size and quite thick (fat).

Population of Sisualik is dropping as school starts, berry-picking dies down, and caribou come closer and become more available.

Small passerines continue to be very few.

Wetness of air and ground and vegetation continues to keep berry pickers on hold.

Skinned the caribou given to us this morning and got it cut up in freezer-size pieces. It is a two or three year old male with very poor fat reserve. It is, however, fresh meat and several people enjoyed eating at our table this evening. We made soup of the brisket.

Bugs are lively again and back on their station as temperatures warm.

Anigaaq remains open; Akulaaq remains closed. No one has tried fishing Akulaaq yet. It won't be long now though.

Hard to believe we're down to our last month on the beach again. Our tree patch will be beckoning shortly.

September 3

High 50º F
Low 40º F
Cloudy, sun, showers
W-NW wind to 18

It was a cool wet morning but we did get out on the blackberry grounds about 4 p.m. and stayed till 7:30. We got half a 5-gallong bucket of fine big blackberries.

It was pretty chilly picking when the sun was hidden. We may have a frost before this west wind is over, and that pretty much ends berry picking.

No net out today due to fairly large wind-caused waves.

We sure have a lot of waterfowl in and behind Sisualik. This long Labor Day weekend may bring us berry pickers and duck hunters since caribou are still quite far.

The continuing westerly winds put the smell of our nearby dead walrus right across the camp. It is not pleasant but I have been unable to roll it into the water. It is a headless large bull and pretty hard to move, especially with one half of the skin too rotten to hold a tow rope. We really don't need it for perfume or bear bait!

Fall colors are really taking over the landscape. Colors will get brighter – the yellows more yellow, the reds more red – before the final curtain, when all will fade and become the universal white of winter. Summer is a colorful time on a smaller scale – fall color is painted with a larger brush.

Many sandpipers around. Cranes just starting to move. Whimbrels and Golden Plovers around and small passerines becoming rare.

If one were to look closely, he would likely find Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, those regular fall Siberian visitors to our coast. They are found here quite regularly during the last week of August and first week of September.

We are using electric lights again for three hours or so each evening now.

September 4

High 52º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, occasional sun
NE-E wind to 15

A genuine dry day for a change and we picked blackberries for the most of it. Three quarters of a 5-gallon bucket was our reward. We are in pretty good shape now for winter berries. We will pick a few more blacks and then a few cranberries. We were fortunate to get some fine big blackberries when there seems less in Sisualik that in most years.

Set the whitefish net this morning but didn't get much: one bright chum, two Saffron Cod, and one whitefish.

Waterfowl and shorebirds continue in good numbers, but one cannot see many small passerines.

There are but few flowers now: Arctic Daisy, Marsh *Potentilla* and a few poppies are about it. Bright fall colors continue until leaves drop.

Many boats and families heading somewhere this Labor Day weekend. So far there haven't been many around Sisualik. Most may be going for caribou or moose rather than berries and waterfowl

Our berry picking hands are quite dark-purple stained. Due to excessive wetness (rain) and a single frosty night in August, one or two berries out of ten burst in your hand and the stain is considerably hard to wash off. Blackberry pickers are branded – marked by their activity.

Blackberries and cranberries will continue to be pickable till the first real frost, which may not be far down the line.

September 5

High 53º F
Low 44º F
Clear
E-SE wind to 20

A find dry but windy day, calming towards evening.

Went the wrong way for blackberries today. We found that there is indeed a shortage of blackberries in the usual places in Sisualik. We knew we were luck to find big and plentiful berries in the plot we first went to, but after picking two days there we decided to shop around. Had we picked a third day we would have filled another bucket. Still, the quarter bucket we filled today is better than nothing! We will look forward to doing better on Monday. The huge bumper crop last year seems to have left the plants exhausted.

Wigeon and sandpipers plentiful. Some few passerines are still passing through.

We have a huge mass of Glaucous Gulls as our camp flock right now, with that headless walrus so close. Most are adult white Glaucous Gulls. Jonathan and his mate have three large flying young. That's a large family to keep fed at fall. There seems to be not much gull feed around right now, and pile up right here is getting to be a problem. It is not easy to play favorites with gulls. We would like to help Jonathan and his family along, but 150 other gulls want their share!

There has been some waterfowl hunting this week, but not a lot here in Sisualik. The hunts are pretty haphazard and unsophisticated – no artificial calls or decoys. Mostly young folks hunting for the family pot.

Whimbrels and cranes still around. Mew Gulls and Arctic Terns gone, as are most passerines.

Fall colors are coming on strong in the salt marsh, and on the tundra, tablelands, and foothills.

September 6

High 62º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, showers, clearing
NE-E wind to 1

A beautiful early fall day. There are few people in Sisualik this Labor Day weekend. Most are up Noatak River or Kobuk River hunting caribou or moose, catching river salmon and whitefish for drying, and picking blue- and cranberries. We have not had a frost yet and this newly dry weather spell, after all that August rain, makes people remember all those good foods that need to be gathered and cured in September. It is a great harvest month that weather can make or break.

Akulaaq remains closed and Anigaaq open, though the outlet is getting shallow and narrow.

Sky has cleared completely this late evening and we might be looking at our first fall frost. Hope not, for the sake of berries and our picking of them.

We had late visitors – some family with the jet boat.

Our nephew returned from a three-day trip to Noatak. He reports a lot of boats on the Noatak River – some on sand-rock bars too.

Caribou are much closer now than last week in the Noatak drainage. Many successful boats are already headed home.

There is a lot of good noise this evening from out on the salt marsh. We have dead calm and bird voices carry far on the still air.

There are some large caribou bulls being taken on the Noatak now. Kobuk animals are mostly females and young males. The larger the bull, the more fat he is likely to carry right now, and that is the first choice of hunters at present.

September 7

High 65º F
Low 44º F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 20

Picked blackberries all day under a fine warm sun. We didn't quite fill a 5-gallon bucket with fine, large berries. We took Carrie's sister and her daughter-in-law with us since berries are hard to find. They did well.

Saw a Northern Harrier today. Haven't seen one for a while.

Lots of boats on Noatak River and Kobuk Lake going home at the end of the Labor Day weekend.

Swans and other waterfowl are far out in the mud again as the N wind increases. There was a bird hunter from Kotzebue today and a lot of banging early on, but it has been pretty quiet this evening.

There are Canada Geese in numbers and Wigeon too, but not a lot of other waterfowl. There are only a few passerines. Shorebirds seems scarce, though some flocks of Dunlins are beginning to build. They have lots of feeding area now with low water induced by N wind.

For two evenings we have been trying to get a few Saffron Cod for tiŋulik. With a net set of a couple of hours we have not taken even one! That is very unusual for this date. It may be that the water is so full of flounders that a cod can't make a living. There are lots and lots of Starry Flounders and Arctic Plaice (the smooth ones). They are of all sizes. Some are thick and fat now. Those are good for cooking - very firm, sweet-tasting white flesh.

There was also one large fat fall trout in the net, with two deep fang tears in the rear belly. Some large Spotted Seal almost had a good big meal. The unfortunate trout tangled his sharp-pointed male undershot lower jaw in the 3" mesh net.

September 8

High 57º F
Low 37º F
Clear, clouding p.m.
Light winds

Town family brought us another caribou. It is a young animal, but much fatter than the first. Our freezer is rapidly filling to capacity.

We did get a half bucket of tomcod today, and yes we had tiŋulik – the first with cod livers for this fall. The bodies of the cod are split and hung and are especially good cooked after drying two, three, or four days.

They have a problem bear up on the Kobuk mouth, below Noorvik. It has been tearing up camps and causing considerable damage to things belonging to humans.

Many caribou are being hauled down both Kobuk and Noatak Rivers right now. People are getting a good start on their winter meat supply.

We've had four to five hundred Tundra Swans on our back mudflats today. Marine water level is very low again and boats don't have water enough to get into delta mudflat zones, so waterfowl are relatively undisturbed and fattening up quickly during their staging time.

Carrie took a day off from berry-picking to nurse her ankle. I hauled some old driftwood from the west side.

There are lots of bear tracks around the beached walrus down there. There may be only two bears making repeated tracks. One is quite large, the other much smaller. They don't seem to travel together.

There are still many cranes around in small groups. There has not been any large movement of large flocks through here yet, except for one day when there were three to four flocks of 20 birds or more.

Passerines remain real scarce.

September 9

High 58º F
Low 44º F
Cloudy, showers, sun
N-NE wind to 15

With still air and shiny water, our back lagoon zone has a thousand voices this evening. With low water so boats can't enter, our staging Tundra Swan group has grown to one thousand strong – what a chorus! The clamor would be overwhelming if we were closer. They are a mile from here.

Ate flounders this evening – not because we have to, but because they are choice. We have ducks, a find caribou from above Kiana that I skinned and cut up for the freezer, and fat trout. Ten flounders out of thirty are now very thick and fat with large roe skeins and flaky flesh. We usually crave some a couple of times a week when available at this season. They are especially abundant this year.

We picked nearly a whole winter's supply of cranberries in a couple of hours this afternoon. They are especially plentiful this year around a favorite picking place we have here n Sisualik. They are of medium size, with a few big ones and a lot of small

ones. We were surprised and pleased at the number and size. We are in pretty good shape for winter now, having a moderate number of all species and more of the sourdock, blueberry, blackberry mix than we usually have.

Neighbor caught five fresh run salmon today.

We have chartered Carrie's sister's boat for tomorrow to get our fall gas and groceries. Hope the weather and water level are good for our crossing.

Cranes are still contributing to the noise in the salt marsh, but are drowned out today by the Tundra Swan thunder.

Many boats still plying the rivers, hauling caribou in and heading out to hunt more.

Our town family has brought us two caribou. This last one they brought yesterday was a young male like the other, but quite fat.

September 10

High 67º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, shower, clearing
Variable winds to 10

Town trip – a very pleasant one with a great old local water navigator (the husband of Carrie's sister). Born and raised in Noatak, Sisualik and Kotzebue, working for years boating the river and delta both for pay-hire. Our marine waters are at a very low ebb and he took us thru the "low water route" most boaters are reluctant to use due to difficulty of recognizing distant landmarks to locate direction the deep water portion follows. Chester didn't even slow down going empty or returning with our drum of gas and groceries. He displayed great confidence in his ability to read water and keep us off the mud.

As usual we had a hectic day in town with business, old friends, and never time to do everything. Town life seems to us to run at such a hectic pace that no one can really keep up for long.

September 11

High 56º F
Low 30º F
Clear
Light variable winds

Heavy frost last night. Our first real frost of the fall and will render most berries un-pickable unless they have some days of non-freezing to firm up again. We are

fortunate to have a good stock of four berry species, and of course, our favorite sourdock-blueberry-blackberry mix that doesn't require refrigeration.

We've had an exciting bit of caribou news today. Some boats from Kotzebue got caribou yesterday from Frank Knapp's place. That is just across the Noatak River from our winter cabin and not real far from us here. Caribou coming down the east side of Noatak River and those moving west through the Squirrel River often meet at this Lower Noatak Canyon area. We heard that one large bunch crossed yesterday to our side of the river and would probably be around our winter camp by today. This is an interesting development, considering that it was only a week ago that Noatak boats had to go way up above the upper Noatak canyons. There were reports that there are caribou coming our way from up the coast also. It is that time of year again when rumors run rampant daily, and everyone sits on the edge of their chairs hoping that caribou do make it here while the bulls are fat and sweet-smelling (before October 10). We shall see – again.

It will be easier to wait this year since we have a lot of good meat in the freezer.

Our berry-picking may be at an end for the year, but then one never knows. Both blueberries and blackberries can be picked when frozen – lots in some years. And if there is not another frost, blackberries may firm up enough to pick again – and worth the effort because of greater sweetness.

September 12

High 54º F
Low 35º F
Cloudy, clearing
Light winds

Our whitefish net (3" mesh) took an unusual number of spawned out breeding-colored adult char (mostly female), moving from W to E yesterday. They are probably from headwaters of Tuqsruq (Anigaaq) Creek. These are locally called Brook Trout, Pai, or Paigrauq in Eskimo. The question of overwinter survival of these very slim, colored char always arises at this time of year when they are regular catches in low numbers. They are presumably the early char spawners that go up streams to spawn as spring ice comes out, when other char in the streams are headed out to sea for a feeding spree.

No frost this morning. A very fine day with lots of late sun and much shiny water, even on the ocean. We can hardly believe how many days our ocean has been quiet.

The extreme low water has come up a bit this evening. Our back lagoon area has been nearly dry for several days, and geese, swans and ducks have had a real quiet undisturbed time, as there is not enough water for boating.

A large bunch of caribou are said to have crossed the Noatak River at the lower canyons, from the east to our side. Today our neighbor alerted us around noon to a group of large white bull caribou on yonder tablelands, near our fall yellow copse of cottonwoods. I got curious, naturally, and went out with binocs to check. Sure enough there were four large white patches on the distant hill, but they didn't look quite right. At that moment, one spread his wings and took off! There were four swans on the ground in an unusual place for Tundra Swans! News had already spread through VHF radio that caribou were in sight from Sisualik. This had to be cancelled, though some that heard the first news may not have heard the cancellation. We are "uptight" about caribou again.

September 13

High 46º F
Low 27º F
Clear, some clouding
Variable winds

Temperatures in the 20's again. Hard frost and an eighth of an inch of ice in outside buckets this morning.

It was a quiet Sunday here in Sisualik with a few people back from the caribou chase. The light and variable winds continued through the day. Marine water levels have finally begun to rise and we may be coming into a new era of wind and waves, after our magnificent break of low and shiny water. It was snowing in Wainwright this morning and our forecast for Monday night contains snow above 2000 ft.

Our berry picking may be over for the season. Two nights of frost and ice formation, combined with midday warm sun has probably made all the berries soft.

Gulls are finding some easy pickings as freshwater table finally drops from heavy summer rains and late season thawing of deeper permafrost. This is an annual occurrence, usually in September where these "pot hole" lakes that fish may have gotten into during marine storm surge now find themselves out of water and into gull bellies. The most common species caught in this unhappy circumstance – from the fish viewpoint – is the Nine-spined Sticklback.

Our wetlands still contain large numbers of Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, Wigeon, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, and a few cranes. There were three large flocks of cranes close behind one another yesterday and a couple today. It is getting late for them. Most White-fronts are probably already gone.

We have several priority activities this coming week. We start our whitefish netting, collect a few waterfowl, and the never-ending quest for firewood accelerates.

Freeze-up is not far off.

September 14

High 50º F
Low 28º F
Clear, clouding late
N wind to 18
E wind to 25

A fine fall day, but it was beginning to blow in late evening with a promise of rain and more wind tomorrow.

There was ice in the outdoor bucket again; a couple of little ponds over permafrost had ice cover after 3 p.m.

Hunted waterfowl most of the day but didn't get much. There are lots of birds in the country yet, but the water level is still very low and birds are far from cover.

Caribou in numbers have turned up at York Wilson's old camp on the NE corner of Kobuk Lake. The place is not far from our son's Fish Creek house.

Had the 3" mesh net out today, all day, and it had eight spawned out Dolly Varden. That is near twenty we have taken in the last three days. That is a lot for this species during this time window. All of these are in bright breeding colors and completely spent – eggs all recently deposited and fertilized somewhere. These fish must be headed for Noatak River for overwintering. Stomachs are all empty and the question of overwintering survival remains. This must be the source of some of our early spring slinks. Their flesh color now is much brighter than the slinks, and their body form, though certainly not robust, does look much more vigorous than the spring slinks. Slinks are bright silver, with little color. These fall fish are very deeply colored with dark green backs, fiery red dots, an orange belly and fins brightly trimmed with white.

The net did get six large Saffron Cod at its outer limit, which was enough liver for tonight's tiŋulik.

Early netters in Akulaaq are taking some whitefish. The common complaint is that there are lots and lots of small flounders. They make net checking a chore.

September 15

High 50º F
Low 40º F
Cloudy, rain, clearing
SE-S-SW wind to 30

Real heavy rain through the night, stopping after daylight. Strong winds from the SE too, dropping somewhat through the day. Our marine waters are up to lower flood stage and waterfowl are moving to higher lakes, where water depth is unchanged. We have several hundred Tundra Swans in our backyard duck lakes this evening.

Three Northern Pintail taken yesterday are extremely fat, and are apparently birds hatched this year. Their throat and guts were filled with *Potamogeton filiformis* corms, very white and sweet looking. They are probably very starchy-sweet, a high energy food to be stored as fat for fuel for the southern migration.

We have swells a little more than halfway up the beach this evening, and they are moving our dead and smelly walrus up and down a bit. Not quite enough to move it away however. We hope that we will be able to shove it off before long.

We still have three cranes in the backyard. It is getting pretty late for cranes.

The netters at Akulaaq are doing pretty well on whitefish. We are at that magical date when whitefish can be sacked up and become the best quaq for winter. We may soon see if we can get a few fish from there.

Got a load of firewood today to try to keep ahead of demand. With little to no new driftwood this summer, keeping the fire going in the tent until we move inland in October will be a time-eating chore.

The nephew who stays with us most days now is off on a boat hunt to Noatak. That leaves our Sisualik population at one of the lowest ebbs every. There are three old men, two old women, and one middle-aged young fellow. Times are changing.

We have had a good harvest of food from the land each day. We are adding to that with much thanksgiving.

September 16

High 50º F
Low 41º F
Cloudy, fog, rain
SW wind to 15

A rare sight last night at 10:30 p.m. – our backyard duck lake was covered with adult Tundra Swans. And I do mean covered! The lake is three to four hundred yards from our tent. Looking thru binocs into the dusk one can see hardly any lake water. It is quite a large lake and is covered with white swan backs. We have noisy swells breaking on the beach that are still drowning out the swan noise, but wind has died and by early morning we may hear enough swan noise. The lake they are on is a very

high producer of *Potamogeton filiformis*. This, of course, attracts waterfowl, hence the name "Duck Lake." We have never seen this many Tundra Swans on it – we estimate five to six hundred.

Solid rain today all day. We thought we had enough in August for the whole ice-free season, but now we have more and no hint of clearing for this day or the next.

Did get a couple of Wigeon today and was reminded that a waterfowl hunter who hasn't been in our area in September would be surprised at the amount of fat our Wigeon and N. Pintail put on just before heading south. It is difficult to see any "meat" on a plucked bird. White or yellowish fat encloses the whole body.

Most of the swans are back again tonight. There are many more ducks with them this time. In their feeding activity, swans dislodge many small pieces of aquatic plants, which then float to the surface. Wigeon, with their short necks, follow feeding swans and snatch up the leftovers.

Our waterfowl are a bit late in fattening up this fall, due probably to too much high water in August. Most of our dabbling ducks are dependent on *Potamogeton* for fall staging and fattening prior to migrations. Too much deep water over beds of this aquatic plants prevents them from feeding.

September 17

High 50º F
Low 43º F
Cloudy, rain
NE-E-SE wind to 20

Another very wet day, making any outside work miserable.

We need to be putting up some birds and netting some whitefish, but this day was only good for digging another garbage hole.

We have a lot of waterfowl around for this late date. Wigeon and Tundra Swan dominate, but there are good numbers of Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Green-winged Teal and a lot of Canada Geese. There was also a good flock of Dunlin (12) and Long-billed Dowitcher (8) around the lagoon edge.

The rapid up and down water level this week has caused a lot of flying around seeking out proper water levels for feeding.

Terry couldn't find a trace of fresh ground squirrel activity today on his run. Maybe they slept in too.

Caribou rumors are weak these last few days. There are said to be lots around the NE corner of Kobuk Lake on Wolf Creek. The family at the Hatchery reports that there are some in the hills behind them, which is on our side of the Noatak River, not far north of us.

Our marine water level is still high. Waves climbing ¾ of the way up the beach last night prompted a 3 a.m. flashlight check to see if they would come higher. They were very loud with the wind from S and SW.

This evening the water is down some, waves are way down, and rain is less steady.

September 18

High 50º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, rain, sun late p.m.
E-SE wind to 20

After a dry night we had rather steady rain until 2 p.m. Then there was some gloriously dry sunny air for several hours.

Hunted a bit and prepared some exceedingly fat birds for the freezer.

Our three backyard cranes are still here – getting bigger and darker. We think these are the two adults that managed to raise one youngster locally. Why they are staying so late in the month is hard to say. Several large flocks passed through during the first week of September, but we did not have as many large flocks moving south like we do in some years. It was expected that these three would join up with a larger flock, but they many not have been ready yet, and are still waiting for a band to join for the long trip south.

There were several flocks of twenty or more Dunlin around lagoon shores today.

Apparently a local aircraft crashed into our largest coastal mountain yesterday, due north of us. Conditions were foggy. The plane was just found this morning. There were no passengers and the pilot did not survive. He was on a return mail trip to Point Hope

Set the tomcod net this morning. It stayed out only 20 minutes before waves moved it into the beach. There were only small flounders.

Our camp gull flock is not getting fed too well since we don't have a net out often due to rough seas. There are few blackberries behind our place to sustain them, as has been done in years past.

We've not heard any new caribou stories. There are still a few hunters coming and going.

September 19

High 49º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, rain
SE-E-NE-N wind to 18

The night and morning up till noon were rain free, but a steady drizzle began in the afternoon and continued into late evening. We are getting somewhat tired of wet sky, wet air, and wet grounds. Glad we don't have any cut fish to dry. Some people do and they may become a total loss. Lost of work for nothing when you lose your cut fish. They can survive a long rain time if they get a couple of good dry days when they are first cut and hung.

We had a fine catch of fish in the 3" mesh net in a couple hours today. We had a full 5-gallon bucker of large healthy-looking Saffron Cod, which was our target fish. We also got two kinds of flounders, a hearing, two kinds of sculpin, two Bering Cisco, and Alaska Whitefish, and a char. Lots of fish in Sisualik waters today. Tomcods stuffed with good foods again – shrimp, smelt, pricklebacks, and crabs.

We ended up with a fine large pebble beach after the last large swells. We have a wide variety of beach surface after each storm. It can be fine sand that blows with the wind, all large pebbles like now, or several mixtures of coarse or fine material.

There are still lots of waterfowl around, but they have diminished a good deal. Some may return from feeding areas in other places, but many have headed south. They are fat enough.

Our three cranes are still here. I saw a Snow Bunting today, and a Merlin in hot pursuit of a Dunlin. There were also some large flocks of a small passerine – probably redpolls.

A single caribou was taken between Salluq and Sealing Point today from a small group of cows and calves.

Several weekenders in Sisualik today, and there was some shotgun banging.

September 20

High 48º F
Low 35º F
Clear, drifting clouds
NW wind to 20

A dry day without a shower clear thru it. It was great and things are drying up. The air is cooling though, and ice and snow are not far off.

A large flock of cranes (30) probably had that in mind as they passed high overhead today. Our local three did not join them, probably figuring that they couldn't keep up or catch up with such a high-flying gang. Waterfowl populations seem to have diminished a lot in the last three days, though there are still some.

Our lagoon water rapidly dropped almost to the bottom this morning as wind picked up.

A quiet Sunday in Sisualik, with few people. We did have one visitor.

Terry caught another squirrel today. That dog, in his own eyes at least, has fulfilled his destiny. He is, or has become, the world's greatest Arctic Ground Squirrel catcher, the very thing he was born to be. That settled, this summer has proved beyond doubt that there is no other canine that can come close. Certain squirrel-wise bears may equal his skills, but then, they have bigger and better tools.

There seemed to be snow showers over the ocean today. None reached land in our area.

Several items were picked up west of us yesterday on the high wave line from the day before: a gas tank, a flotation vest, and a metal ammo case. Thought they might be from the lost boat and people of Wales – Diomede. The 18-gallon tank was over half full of mixed gas. The items were taken in to the state troopers.

A few caribou were seen from Sealing Point today. Possibly the same group that one was taken from yesterday.

September 21

High 46º F
Low 31º F
Mostly clear a.m.
Showers, p.m.
N-S wind to 15

Wash day and tomcod day in Sisualik. When the morning looked so good with sun and all, we decided to do the clothes washing that we had put off for a long time. At the same time I shoved the 3" mesh net out. We got into the washing and after a couple of hours, the net corks looked a bit heavy, so I pulled the net in. It was pretty well filled with very large Saffron Cod. There were three full 5-gallon buckets of the largest of tomcod – lots of livers and eggs and soon half-dried and fully dried fish. there was also one egg-laden chum and two medium sized trout. We haven't eaten

fresh-cooked trout for a while so we made a pot of curry flavored flour-char (trout) soup for lunch. It was great!

Hand an interesting gull episode today. We have one very small Glaucous Gull that is making herself attractive by her actions. We think it might be Jonathan's mate. She has become very tame, and when I am alone she will come and sit six feet away from whatever I am working out. If I put a bite of fish I hand and extend it to her, she will sidle over and take it from my fingers. This beats anything Jonathan will do, though I can at times get him to take a hand offering. Now other gulls of the camp flock, including Jonathan, are jealous of all this attention that she is getting, so we kind of have to hide around. We were lucky at that today while I was splitting the cod I got this morning. After a last successful exchange I was looking the other way when the loud sound of wings and feathers startled me. There, right at my feet on the ground, was the well-stuffed gull vomiting her food on the ground, and a large "squab" (bird of the year) greedily gobbling it up. Right at my feet! This is probably the greatest sign of intelligence I have seen in a Glaucous Gull. While this is standard gull feeding procedure for their young, this gull knew her youngster wouldn't have a chance for a normal feeding with 30-40 aggressive and hungry camp gulls around. But she was also apparently aware that not one of those 30-40 gulls would dare to go that close to my feet and also that her youngster would trustfully follow his mother's lead. I can't really say how her faith in my developed. Even Jonathan, after many years of association, wouldn't go that far. How did she know that I wouldn't grab both her and her "squab" to make a pot of soup? Mostly, I suppose, she knew the minds of the 30-40 camp gull flock and chose the relatively unknown quantity instead. I hope I can live to justify her faith in me!

A lone caribou was seen across the creek from the westernmost Sisualik camp today. There may have been a boat or two looking for it later, but we haven't heard if it was found.

Ice in the outside bucket again this morning.

September 22

High 50º F
Low 40º F
Cloudy
NE-E wind to 30

A very windy but dry day. All day the clouds and wind and the view to the east made one think that it would rain any minute, but it never did.

Our large wash of clothes done yesterday got whipped dry today.

Three caribou made fresh tracks thru Sisualik last night or today – without being seen! Everybody is looking for caribou and now the fresh tracks on the sand and gravel are a bit provocative.

No netting today due to strong winds. Those with nets at Akulaaq are not doing too well lately. Don't know the particular reason since it closed early enough to contain a lot of fish. If things don't pick up we probably won't be setting a net there, and that means no whitefish quaq this fall and winter, which is a sad state of affairs.

Our gull flock is pretty disappointed today after a great feed yesterday. They don't like the days we don't put a net out. Their options for the day are not great. The nearby walrus is hard for a gull to get pieces from that are small enough to swallow; berries are scarce. They need to get back to patrolling the shore of the sea and lake margins instead of depending on camp scraps.

Saw a fly or two today – insects are becoming pretty rare as weather cools.

We are only a week away from "freeze-up month." It's hard to believe summer is about gone – again! Ran across my Big Chief smoker and a supply of sawdust for smoke today and realized I hadn't fired it up this summer. What a shame!

September 23

High 48º F
Low 44º F
Cloudy, heavy rain, clearing
E-SE wind to 40

Very high winds through the night, with rain beginning after daylight. Winds dropped off and sky cleared in mid afternoon. Quite a day and night of extremes. With our floppy tent (when dry) the 40 k winds during the night made sleeping difficult. The sudden drop in winds was not forecast, so we don't really know what to expect for tonight, since there are very strong south winds just south of the Bering Straits. Our marine waters remained low in spite of or because of strong east winds last night and this morning, but this evening they are rising very rapidly.

Wasn't able to do much outside due to strong winds and rain till afternoon.

Some pretty good flocks of Wigeon and Canada Goose around, but Pintails and swans are either someplace else or gone. Our continuous high water levels are not good for Pintail; swans like lots of warm mudflats at this season.

Didn't see any small birds today. No net today.

Report of five caribou just east of Jones Camp yesterday. There seems to be a few scattered bands around our zone, and we are getting closer to early October, when bulls will begin to get smelly.

Our hope for a sack or two of whitefish for winter quaq is fading. Akulaaq is not producing much and Anigaaq is still open.

There have been a few more people in Sisualik these last few days - local back to their camps for a bit to do a number of things.

September 24

High 50º F
Low 42º F
Cloudy, some sun
S-SE-E wind to 30

Very, very high water in our back salt marsh and lagoon since early morning. Actually there was no more salt marsh. All the marsh and lagoons were one large lake, with only the thin line of beach ridge that Sisualik dwellings are on. The SE winds were oblique to the ocean side, so the large quartering waves only came ¾ of the way up the beach to sod line. Had the winds switched to SW, the sped would have been washed over again. About mid afternoon the backed to almost NE, and the water level dropped very rapidly, but only to moderate flood stage. It was enough though to relax Sisualik residents who had been a bit up tight as water seemed to continue its rise all morning. There was and still is some SW wind in tomorrow's forecast, but we hope water levels have dropped by the time sea swells become a problem.

The quick and long water rise was due to two factors. We are part of west Noatak Delta waters, and the Noatak River was at flood stage from last week's steady rains. Yesterday, a low pressure system out of eastern Siberia was generating 50-60 knot winds between St. Lawrence Island and the Bering Straits. The marine water surge from this gave our flood
conditions. We lucked out as the depression looped south again and headed inland over SW Alaska, instead of continuing our way, which would have given us a time of anxiousness.

All this has kept our temperatures mild, as well as leaving very little land, mudflats, or sedge meadows for our late "hangers on" of geese, ducks, swans and sandpipers.

We do hope for better weather conditions as freeze up gets under way and count down for caribou begins.

There was one female caribou with calf seen from Jones Camp today.

A moose was taken near Anigaaq last week.

September 25

High 47º F
Low 39º F
Cloudy, light rain
Variable winds

A rather windless, waveless day in spite of the Weather Bureau's promise of strong winds and rain. We are not complaining, for we have had enough wind and rain for a while.

We still have considerable numbers of waterfowl around. I even heard a crane today. We are promised a but of snow tonight so time is getting short for freshwater birds.

Set the 3" mesh net in the calm ocean this morning before I went west for driftwood. On the way back I saw a gull catch a fish, making an osprey-like splash. I knew I may have left the net in for too long a period. I pulled it right away and yes, there were too many large tomcod. There were two large plastic pails of quite large tomcod. Lots of tiŋgulik and dried cod. Our gull flock was quite excited. Spent the afternoon cutting one pail of fish.

There was also one large deep-colored female chum salmon that had been washed out of Noatak River. It will make good Eskimo style caviar.

Some cranberries are still firm and pickable, while others are very soft and mushy. Don't really know why.

Have not seen a flower of any kind for some time. Very unlike late September of last year, when continued mild temperatures brought out flowers of many species – probably some of which didn't bloom in July when they should have because of the very dry season. This year, so far, seems much closer to the norm. We may be getting ice and snow this week.

Anigaaq is closed. Don't know for how long with this continued rain. It will be interesting to see if any fish have remained in the Anigaaq system at this late closing date.

September 26

High 44º F
Low 34º F
Cloudy, rain showers
NW wind to 20

We had a great surprise at daylight this morning. Our back marsh and lagoon area was flooded to a level higher than it has been all year. This seemed like a contradiction of local predictions. We had only variable winds yesterday after high winds the two days before. Storm surge floodwaters had dropped and water levels seemed headed for a drop, even to below normal. What happened then? Where did all that water come from? This was an unusual anomaly.

Wind is usually considered almost the sole driving force in determining water level in our part of Kotzebue Sound. Freshwater flood can influence the level, as can abnormal tides. Normal tides have so little effect on local water levels that it is really a waste of time to include them in the daily weather report on KOTZ radio. What happened then?

Well, it seems likely that our super high water level this morning was due to the relative positions of high and low pressure centers within our region. This may be a classic example of the effect that barometric pressures can have in regions of relatively shallow water. If one could check out high and low pressure systems in our vicinity from 6 p.m. yesterday to 6 a.m. this morning, it would probably answer the question of "where did all the water come from?"

Saw a few Snow Buntings today.

There are some weekend waterfowl hunters in Sisualik. They haven't had much chance with water so high. There are still considerable numbers of waterfowl around.

A neighbor at the Point made another trip to the Hatchery today and got not only a boat load of salmon, but a good caribou from a bunch them met trying to cross the river.

September 27

High 44º F
Low 36º F
Cloudy, some sun
NW wind to 20

Dry air and white mountains today, with some very welcome sun thrown in. As visibility improved during mid morning, we found most mountains over 1000 ft. were real white. The snow level elevation dropped as the mountain range extends inland. The mountains near Kiana, in sight from here, are white way down. Freeze up seems not far off.

Lots of people were in Sisualik this week for various reasons. Most of them are headed back to town this evening.

ATV's went as far as Rabbit Creek and back today without seeing any animals. Time is running out for fat caribou in our zone. October 10 is beginning of the rut season for caribou in some years.

We are fortunate to have meat in the freezer thru this period. We will keep expecting them to show up here, but that may not happen until rutting activities spark rapid movement. Barren cows will then be the best meat.

We still have waterfowl. There is no freshwater ice yet, but that is about to change. Ice-making will begin tonight as wind drops and clouds dissipate.

Anigaaq outlet is closed since yesterday. The first ATV travelers from here went that way today. Our ATV range has been extended to at least the Rabbit Creek outlet.

No one has put a net in yet to see if there are any available fish. It is assumed that most have run out, but it is likely that non-breeders and immature of some species may yet be impounded. We shall see.

The low flat swells this afternoon were bringing some kind of fish ashore for gulls – maybe Saffron Cod, Arctic Cod, Capelin, or Herring.

September 28

High 42º F
Low 27º F
Clear, few clouds
N-NW wind to 15

A beautiful cool bright and dry day, with frost and ice on small lakes, some of which didn't melt all day. Temperatures dropped below freezing after sun down this evening. Freeze up is in process.

Waterfowl and shorebirds fewer in number, but still not hard to see. Saw 200 Wigeon in one flock and 18 Dunlin. More small flocks of Snow Buntings are passing through.

Tundra Swans here seem to have dwindled to a few family groups. There are probably large staging groups yet somewhere on the Noatak and Kobuk deltas.

Carrie saw a first fall yearling ugruk swimming by today. It is time and there may be lots between now and mid October. They have very find meat and tasty blubber. Our lone neighbor over at the Point is said to have taken two seals this week – a medium-sized Spotted Seal and a short yearling Common Ringed Seal. Fall seal hunting by boat takes place now through October. There is still some participation by a few local people, but nothing like 10-15 years ago.

Willow Ptarmigan are not yet making much of a show down here. There seems to be more flocks of young birds this summer, indicating an increase in a population that has been low for several years. IN years past there have been many hundred back here on the blackberry grounds when the first light snows come. They are a very tasty bird at this season and are much in demand by local people.

Got a load of wood and set the Saffron Cod net. It got a good load of cod, one dwarf red salmon, on giant fat flounder, and considerable dirt. We had a big bowl of tiŋgulik from the cod livers this evening. That dish will be ending pretty quickly as it doesn't work well with frozen berries.

September 29

High 44º F
Low 25º F
Cloudy, some clear
SW-NW wind to 10

More ice this morning, and frost, but the coolest part of the night was the early part, as clouds moved in and warmed the early morning hours.

Three beachcombing bears made tracks as far as the westernmost Sisualik camps last night. That is not so good as we still have that smelly bull walrus a few hundred yards from our camp.

Waterfowl still around but there are less every day.

Two caribou made tracks on the beach just west of us yesterday – a small cow with a small calf. We heard the rumor that they were both taken by a young fellow at one of our camps.

Terry caught another squirrel today. He will be sorry to see the ground freeze this fall. He has become quite an expert at digging squirrels out. It seems his mission in life.

Two of us Sisualik fishermen got fooled today. I decided to try my short herring net, to check for kinds and numbers of smaller fish in the water. After it had been set for 3-4 hours, I noticed that all the floats were sunk. Oh-oh, I thought, I have left it out too long. I went down with two empty buckets and pulled the net up. There was nothing but dirt! Not one fish for my two buckets! I went up and told Carrie that I was glad I hadn't taken three buckets down. The camp gull flock all had terribly long faces.

A neighbor to the east put out his small mesh net and then went to town. When he came back all his corks were sunk and he though of calling his neighbor who has dogs to feed to help him take the cod out of the net. He decided to pull it first and then call the neighbor. He found one flounder and one tomcod.

September 30

High 47º F
Low 26º F
Clear, misty, clouding
SW-W-NW wind to 15

September is gone! All those beautiful fall colors have faded somewhat and drabness threatens as the outside world waits for the snow, the insulating blanket.

Checked the back waterfowl areas today. The lagoon is almost empty of water this morning, and birds that are left have lots of feeding places and warm mudflats to help them through the frost nights.

Saw probably 100 Tundra Swans and 300 ducks. The swans were mostly family groups, with one to four gray awkward youngsters. The ducks are mostly Wigeon, with a sprinkling of Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and a few Red-breasted Mergansers. Didn't see any shorebirds today. Mud that was not covered by water last night was frozen this morning. Several of the medium-sized lakes had ice all over their surfaces, with some small areas thawing under a warm sun. It is surprising how much ice can be made with not very cold temperatures. Large portions of the lagoon had ice – solid but thin ice that began drifting around as water level and wind picked up.

Set 3" mesh for a couple of hours today and got only a few scraps: a deep colored, spawned-out female trout. These are the trout that are so lean at this date that one wonders how they can survive – without eating – over the winter to next spring.

Nephew went west up the coast today to the area of the old Army Base NW of Sealing Point. We had heard that some caribou were crossing the Red Dog haul road in this direction. He did not see any, but did make it home, which is good enough.

He said the "three bear group" that made tracks on the beach a few miles from here two days ago, had made tracks near the ocean edge down that way too.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

OCTOBER

October 1

High 42º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, little sun
SW-S-SE wind to 18

Rain this morning, and south winds today. We lost our ice and frozen ground. Mountains were white from about the 800-foot level up after the clouds lifted, but warm wind and sun soon ate that up.

Hauled more firewood today and set the herring net for a while. I caught one herring-sized Saffron Cod and nothing else.

Things getting pretty tight around here – few fish in the ocean, only stray caribou in the hills, no sign of ptarmigan, and few whitefish. There are still some waterfowl around, but they too are becoming fewer.

Only a little more than a week now for caribou bulls, and we don't have a hint of where they might come from. Some have been reported crossing the haul road this way, but there is no mention of numbers.

If we are lucky it will be only a couple of weeks until we can get to our nice warm cabin in the trees. That looks nice again at this point in time. We will need ice and snow.

Seals (mostly Spotted Seals) are reportedly thick in Kotzebue Channel. A couple of young ugruk have been seen in Sisualik, but none taken yet.

Our gull flock gets smaller daily, but Jonathan, his mate Lucinda, and one of their big youngsters will probably hang on until we move out. Most white adult Glaucous Gulls move out in early October. Some young of the year hang around until the end of the month, sometimes with disastrous results (starving, freezing).

Most of the white adults are getting abundant freckles on their heads now. This is a characteristic winter plumage change for Glaucous Gulls. They will be immaculately white when they come back in April.

October 2

High 43º F
Low 34º F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S-SW wind to 20

A cold wet day – almost with snow. There was snow at the 1500 ft. level. We are promised some tomorrow.

Things are looking up to the west. The folks down there (three of them) report finding a baleen whale carcass just this side of Sealing Point (species uncertain). Best of all, they reported a group of 20 or so caribou just west of Sealing Point (5-6 miles). Some bulls are reported in the group. This is the first report of a good bunch of caribou, which might be the forerunners of fall migration possibly headed towards us. The two boys that saw them did not disturb them.

We had some large swells in from the open ocean today and I was able to roll the long-dead walrus twice so the waves could pick it up. It only moved five or six hundred yards before beaching again, but it is at least twice as far from us than it was. Bears may have to walk past us now to get to it.

Needless to say, all our ice is gone again (the rain), so freeze-up must start over again. In many years we are able to cross the lagoon to tablelands (on foot) by October 4th or 5th. It looks like it will be later this year.

Another upcoming deadline is rut time for bull caribou. October 10-14 is an arbitrary date that can vary ten days from year to year – generally determined by early or late freeze-up. The importance of this date is the palatability of bull caribou. Prior to the rut they are the fattest and best meat in the herd. They are of course easy to recognize. After rut, or into rut, they are not useable. One must then single out cows unaccompanied by calves (barren cows) to have good fat meat.

Things are looking more promising than yesterday. We shall see.

October 3

High 40º F
Low 28º F
Clear, some clouds
N wind to 35

Lots of wigeon and Tundra Swans on the marsh today. Even saw one shorebird, probably a Dunlin.

Very strong N winds tonight, very dry, no rain or snow. Our marine waters are at rock-mud bottom. We also have a large visible moon tonight.

Caribou news is mixed. One person went down that way kind of early. From Battle Rock he reported seeing lots of caribou, but back in the mountains, none of them near the beach. Several other ATV's went down that way and we haven't heard their report. We do hope their actions don't turn the movement off in other directions.

Few Snow Buntings wandering around. Haven't seen Willow Ptarmigan for ages; thought they were making a comeback.

We have seen a number of flushed-out Noatak spawning chum, due to high river waters last week. A late flood in the rivers can be tough on salmon reproduction.

All of our adult gulls have freckled heads now, a sign of change to winter plumage. White gulls will be moving south soon, and only gray birds will hang on into late October.

A shortage of blackberries has caused Canada Geese to move out early this year. Haven't seen any for a week now.

There is a search on for the son of a neighbor. They left Buckland for Kotzebue on Thursday and haven't been seen since. They hadn't notified any family in Kotzebue, so they weren't missed until today. Rumor has it that jacket and gas cans were found on the beach by ATV's searching out of Kotzebue this evening. It doesn't look good as we had some rough seas those days. We hope for the best. This boy's brother was lost and never found several years ago. His mother died of cancer this last winter and his dad, our good friend and neighbor, has had enough hardship.

October 4

High 40º F
Low 24º F
Clear, few clouds
N wind to 25
Calm p.m.

A most beautiful fall afternoon and evening. We have extreme low marine waters, in response to region-wide north winds. The temperatures also reflect the wind direction and clear sky.

Small lakes and much of the lagoon area that has water are iced up. Temperature will drop lower tonight as the wind is down. Freeze-up is underway, but will be slowed by low water level. As water level returns to normal or light flood, most ice formed last night and tonight will be broken up and redistributed.

Swans, quite a few (150), kept some feeding areas open last night by their activity. Today they are gathered along the slough margins where there is moving water. These late families have large broods. Five and six dark birds per pair of white adults are common. Some are pretty small. Some Tundra Swan families always seem to need a little more time to fatten up and strengthen young wing muscles for the stresses of migration. Wonder how many young will survive to return next spring.

Missing boat and crew have not yet been found, though some items have. Our neighbor was able to identify a jacket as belonging to his son (the boat's owner and captain).

Our gulls had a good day – the extreme low waters have trapped many small fish in the mudflats, and for the first time this fall all of our camp gull flock has been foraging elsewhere. Jonathan was not gone long, but came home without an appetite.

Caribou are inching slowly closer. Some were seen today at Clam Creek behind Sealing Point. None have been taken yet, that we know of.

October 5

High 37º F
Low 20º F
Clear a.m.
Cloudy p.m., snow
N-NE-E wind to 15

Cold night, warmer day, and our first snowfall this evening.

Tundra Swan families still around (100), as well as a mixed flock of Wigeon, Mallard, and Green-winged Teal. A lone Canada Goose was with some swans this afternoon.

Marine waters still at extreme low. Several boats are high and dry in the harbor at Sisualik Point.

Saw six Dunlin today on mud near some running water. Our ice has gotten quite thick.

Our nephew went down to Sealing Point yesterday and came back today. He and the one person at Sealing Point went down to Battle Rock to see some caribou. They did see some, but apparently none were taken. The other group that went that way didn't come home with any either. Though a few caribou are coming slowly this way, they don't seem to be in any hurry and are not too numerous either.

Set the 3” mesh net in the ocean for a couple of hours after our first morning slush passed. Ice running by on the ocean is a true sign of freeze-up coming. The net caught two large-toothed male chums (wash outs from Noatak high water), ten large Saffron Cod, and a few small flounders.

Most small lakes are frozen over and the lagoon has large ice patches. I’m surprised at how fast it has gotten thick. Will soon have a way to cross to the inland cabin.

We did a large washing today and we are both pretty worn.

Hope tomorrow goes better.

October 6

High 38º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, some sun
NE-E wind to 15

Another fine dry day with continued extremely low marine waters.

We still have two Dunlin by a little running trickle, twenty Mallards, mixed with a few Wigeon in one place, and Wigeon, N. Pintail, Green-winged Teal and a lone Canada Goose. The goose can fly all right, but not very far; on landings he runs for cover in willows. As always, this is the time when those that live on the marshes (like us) have to watch the oncoming and unforgiving frost acting as mercy killer for waterfowl wounded through the spring and summer, that survived but are unable to fly well enough to migrate. We once saw tracks of a Canada Goose in light snow, heading south by walking. We don’t know if he made it or not, but he was giving it a good try. We know that he covered the distance from west of Sealing Point to Sisualik.

Set the 3” net in the ocean early this morning as we felt the need to have more tiŋulik. Pulled it a couple of hours late and found a beautiful ripe female Silver Salmon – very bright silver with “pepper spots” along the back, above the lateral line. This is a rare good catch, especially at this date. We have only a light show of silvers here, being a little north of their normal range. There were also two plastic buckets full of very large Saffron Cod.

No news on the caribou scene. An air taxi confirms that some caribou were seen passing east on Clam Creek. This confirms ground observation by some of our family that were at Sealing Point. Clam Creek is the last big creek to the west on Sealing Point lagoon shore.

All of last night’s snow melted here today.

October 7

High 38º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy
Snow & rain showers
NE-E wind to 18

Ocean running slush this evening as marine waters rise and the thin snow-covered ice in shallow water is lifted. The winds and current take the resulting slush where it will. This is what seals and young ugruk are looking for. There can be "ice pans" of various sizes within the slush that will support the weight of a seal, even for a very short time. Lots of slush, but didn't see any seals.

Nephew went down to Sealing Point and behind today and found the twenty or so caribou still there, much in the same place (too far back). Nothing else to see on the way down or the way back.

The lack of whitefish and caribou are making Sisualik have a rather poor early freeze time. Hope things turn better.

We did get a pilot report of several hundred caribou in the corner where the Aggie meets the Noatak, just east of the Hatchery.

Our population down again as our far west Sisualik neighbor has been whisked off to Anchorage hospital. We do still have eight.

Weather changing again. Wind, rain, snow, and rising marine waters.

The searchers for the missing three boys are not having a lot of luck. Some clothing and loose stuff has been picked up and identified between Cape Blossom and Riley's Wreck. They have divers and draggers in the area and have hooked on to some heavy stuff they can't yet identify.

Daylight is coming late in the morning and fading early in the evening. We are working rapidly into the Christmas/shortest day period again.

Few swans and ducks around yet. Ice on small backyard lake supported my weight this afternoon.

October 8

High 36º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, light showers
E-SE wind to 25

Gusty easterly winds through the night and today, but much drier than forecast – just a few snow showers.

Marine waters have risen to sod level throughout the lagoon and salt marsh zone. This has, of course, floated all the ½ to ¾ inch ice that formed during the time of very low marine water a few days back. The wind then has piled up much of the ice on prominent points. Freeze-up is set back a few days. So far no ice has melted; it's just been rearranged.

Sisualik right now is a rather poor place to be at fall harvest time. Our situation/circumstances are unusual. We have no Willow Ptarmigan (usually there are lots), no whitefish at Anigaaq or Akulaaq, no local caribou and little sign of seals. All this is unusual for October, when usually all these activities are in full swing. Things can change quickly and we hope they do – for the better.

Meanwhile, we are looking forward to some freezing weather and snow so we can move up to our winter quarters. Last year we made it on the 18th.

Swan families and a few ducks are still around. Our camp gull flock contains more white-plumaged adults than are usually around by this date. They are all pretty heavily freckled on their white heads now.

Ravens have thinned out. Both ravens and gulls have shown some food and numbers problems with the closing of the Kotzebue open dump.

They still have not located any of the three bodies or the boat in the Kotzebue-Buckland boat wreck of last week. It is a sad time for family and friends of the trio.

Got another load of second grade firewood today to help get us through till moving time. There is a lot of competition for remaining driftwood near Sisualik.

October 9

High 36º F
Low 29º F
Clear, few clouds
E-SE wind to 30

Windy but dry and cool and bright. A surprising lot of slush ice with a few pans coming out all day from the shallow mudflat-basin area between Sisualik Point and

Kotzebue and up through the Noatak delta. Surprising also is the lack of seals with the ice. Normally they seek it out and can't wait to find a "pan" strong enough to hold their weight. There are said to be many gulls and seals in Kotzebue channel right in front of town. That is where the feed is – herring, tomcod, and smelt.

Carrie made a quick trip to town by plane today. She reported a lot of slush ice blocking access to Sisualik Point.

Nephew brought in five Wigeon today. Although there is much ice-covered water, there are also many feeding areas not iced over. Always there are some late-hatched waterfowl, from Green-winged teal to Tundra Swan. Nearly all adult birds heavy with fat have already left. There are probably eighty Tundra Swans, a hundred Wigeon, thirty Mallards, and a few Green-winged Teal and Greater Scaup.

Several boats still stuck on this side at Sisualik Point due to ice and wind.

Search crews still have not found bodies or boat of last week's accident. There are many unanswered questions and sorrowing families and parents of the young men.

Tomorrow will mark the time years ago when a first ice-crossing was made from Kotzebue to Sisualik. This is the record early date of crossing by any means, and was done by a crazy young fellow on a bicycle! Dog team and sno-go record early dates are the 12th and 14th.

October 10

High 36º F
Low 29º F
Cloudy, snow
E-SE wind to 30

Some blowing and drifting snow – first of the season. Not much accumulation, though the ground is white.

Terry the dog dug out maybe his last squirrel of the season.

Not much of a day to play out, with poor visibility and steady high winds. Our back area pretty much a mess with piled and broken up thin ice, with many large and small areas of black open water contrasting with larger areas of white snow on ice.

Ducks and Tundra Swan families still around. Snow Buntings and Glaucous Gulls our most numerous birds right now.

We have very dark-colored muddy water on our ocean beach this evening, with chunks of peat and mud in it. Rather unusual for this season.

From the date today it looks like we will not see caribou here while large bulls are useable. Our next hope is that good numbers will come by sometime between now and Thanksgiving. Cows without calves will be good meat through this period.

Bull moose are also well into rut and females without calves will not be legal til November 1st.

Very large flocks of Willow Ptarmigan are being reported west of us, in the area of Salluq and Anigaaq. They have been coming down on the flats early and late evening. Hope some of them move this way. We are lucky to have waterfowl, but we don't have much else right now. Our gulls and ravens are also on short rations.

The new snow does show a few vole and shrew tracks around camps, so maybe microtine numbers will build again.

The benefits of snow and ice cover are about to catch our attention again. Snow is a newspaper that records every happening

October 11

High 40º F
Low 32º F
Cloudy, snow, rain, fog
E-SE wind to 30

An unusual variety of weather today. Early this morning we had falling snow, drifting snow, and fog. Wet sticky snow was next, which plastered the drifting snow down as well as the flopping tent. Then some more showers of rain and snow, all with 30 knot winds till 4 p.m., when winds dropped to 10 k and only noisy swells in the ocean continued. Temperatures rose to near record highs for the date; by sundown, most of our good snowfall was gone.

This evening we have a little wind. However, ocean swells are piling a wall of slush halfway up the beach, constructing it from a belt of slush that has moved down this way from Nuvuruk (Sisualik Point).

For the last two days we have had some of the dirtiest water we have seen in the ocean. It seems a mixture of peat, clay, and chocolate-colored mud. It must be from stuff deposited during summer storms and now redistributed by wave and current action.

Reports continue of multitudes of Willow Ptarmigan in the Anigaaq-Salluq area. One traveler today reported a large flock just a couple of miles west of us on the beach gravel. Maybe they are moving this way.

Saw swans today but no ducks. I expect that there are still some in the usual back feeding areas.

No new caribou news. We expect some after this spell of bad weather loosens up.

An old friend and neighbor went west today, but came back sooner than planned when he found large bear tracks in the snow near an old walrus carcass.

October 12

High 40º F
Low 30º F
Cloudy, rain, snow, sun
SE-W-NW-SW wind to 15

A wet and warm night and an ugly wet foggy morning. When the wind switched to west, however, it cleared, dried, and brightened a lot by late afternoon. The sun set into a shiny Kotzebue Sound at 7:30 p.m. Our sun up time is getting remarkably short.

The warm nigh and heavy rain ate up all our low level snow, though higher elevations remained real white. Only ice piles (from shifting lagoon ice) and snowdrifts remain. This is enough to make distant caribou come nearby. Ptarmigan and Snowy Owls are hard to see. We are near caribou mating time and Snowy Owl migration time, but we have not seen either one yet.

Nephew just got in from a long trip NW of Sealing Point, with nothing to report except good weather. We have come to expect caribou from that direction all right – in spite of the Red Dog haul road.

Our fall fishing story continues to be a sad one. Both Anigaaq and Akulaaq are closed, but neither of them seems to have any fish inside. This is highly unusual, though we feel that it is due to the dates and way that the two outlets closed. Whitefish are our real mainstay for winter fish and to make adjustments to do without this fall and winter is not going to be easy. We also depend heavily on caribou. With neither available we will be scratching around for replacements.

Our gull flock has thinned out a lot this week. Today, the only white freckled gulls were Jonathan and Lucinda. We are glad to see this and hope that these last two adults will be able to care for themselves thru the winter without our handouts. Jonathan seems to know what to do though he may not want to.

October 13

High 34º F
Low 25º F
Cloudy, fog, snow, rain
NE-E wind to 15

Snow again and melt again too. We are having trouble holding our snow this year – ice is building, but late. In past years we have had dog teams, skaters, and snow machine travelers from Kotzebue on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of October. There were several boats through that path today and there is no ice at all.

Went back on the lagoon shore this morning, through the trail we use in the fall up to our winter cabin. The crossing we must make on the ice to reach the tablelands is iced over and nice and white. It is not useable yet (too thin) but if the air and skies ever clear, a night or two of freezing weather will give us a safe crossing to our warm and sheltered house. It will be great again after October in the beach tent.

Set the 3" net in the ocean this morning and caught five Saffron Cod and one lightly colored female chum.

Nephew saw a large flock of Willow Ptarmigan today near westernmost Sisualik camp. He didn't get any but it is good to know there are some around.

A two man seal hunting crew is hunting from the Point. They got one Common Ringed Seal yesterday. We haven't heard yet their catch for today. They should do well as they don't have much competition.

There doesn't seem to be many yearling ugruk this season. They should be showing by now if there were going to be lots.

No caribou news! Where oh where are you caribou?

To date, this is one of the most unproductive September-October periods we have ever had in Sisualik. Weather has been one factor and absent species we usually get a lot of is another. Whitefish, caribou, and ptarmigan are the missing species.

October 14

High 36º F
Low 28º F
Clouds, sun
E-SE wind to 30

A nice day but wind increasing toward evening. Marine waters were quite high but rapidly dropping by late afternoon. Temperatures are coming down too as clearing develops.

Got a couple of loads of junky driftwood today and glassed the countryside to the west. Did not see anything but countryside.

Ran into a large flock of Willow Ptarmigan (100) in the trail but didn't get a chance to shoot as they were quite wild and flew far in a bad direction. This is the first good flock we've seen all fall and we would dearly like to eat ptarmigan for a change.

Just as I arrived home, by chance I saw five ptarmigan flying the same direction I was going. They landed a couple of hundred yards from our tent. I unhooked the loaded trailer and went towards them. They were quite tame and I got all five. They were Rock Ptarmigan, out of their normal habitat, which explains their tameness. We were glad to eat ptarmigan tonight after all.

The best news of all came as we were eating the ptarmigan. A CB call from Salluq reported that caribou had turned up behind their camp. They were on the hills and moving down close to the beach, Anigaaq, and our way (Sisualik). This was a surprised and really what we have been waiting for. About an hour later our friend called back, reporting that he was hauling the caribou he had shot at Anigaaq. That officially opens the fall caribou season for all the folks on this side. We will probably have hunters from other places too. There is not much hint yet of what numbers are involved, but most able-bodied local folk will be down that way in the morning. Things sound pretty good today.

October 15

High 36º F
Low 29º F
Cloudy, fog, snow showers
NE-E wind to 25

Our winds calmed late today, and now, a bit after sundown, the ocean is getting so quiet – just a whisper – that we may soon forget it is there. That doesn't happen often this time of year.

The big caribou news of yesterday didn't pan out to be much. One fellow took sno-go and sled and got well back inland. He saw a couple of bunches and got several (probably four). He did get one bull and reported it lean and a bit smelly. The females were good meat with some inside fat. Another neighbor took home one from behind Sealing Point. All the rest of us haven't even seen a caribou yet this fall. Today we do have reports of caribou both east and west of us.

I still have been unable to cross the ice to tablelands. The main ice crossing is thick enough, but recent high marine water level has kept a thin moat around the thicker

center ice. Our rather constant mild temperatures and wind has held back a swift freeze-up.

Was surprised to see many flocks of small passerines today. They were Snow Buntings and probably the large pale redpolls from farther north.

Snow showers and fog made for poor visibility most of today. Perhaps the caribou season will improve if the air clears up.

We received word today that our most westerly Sisualik neighbor died in Anchorage yesterday. Sisualik may be losing its last year round residents – with no replacements.

October 16

High 34º F
Low 22º F
Cloudy, clear
Light winds

A very fine fall day. It was dry, bright, and the sun still has some warmth.

We still haven't seen a caribou, but there are scattered bunches around from west of Sealing Point to Jones Camp on the west side of the Noatak Delta.

Our nephew finally got one young bull today with good meat. A neighbor who got several yesterday, and had to go up to haul what he left yesterday, shot one bull and sprained his ankle. He did make it home okay. We now know that most large bulls are strong smelling, so that means cows without calves are the best meat.

One Salluq person and one Sealing point person hunted together with sno-go's. They went west of Sealing Point and reported a number of caribou there. They each got one female. Another neighbor from the Point (who got one yesterday) took two home today. Sisualik people are slowly getting their fall caribou.

A large group of caribou (100+) was on the salmonberry grounds behind Salluq all afternoon, but the people there can't yet cross the thin ice to get to them. The animals finally went back the way they came.

More caribou seem to be entering our area each day. We may still have opportunity to choose some barren cows.

I walked on the ice of our back crossing on our trail up to the house today. The ice is pretty thin yet for any machine, but good enough for walking with a nail tipped walking stick. I crossed halfway and turned back. One or two cold nights will make

crossing much more comfortable. The crossing place has ice in place all the way. It just needs thickening.

Maybe tomorrow we will see caribou.

October 17

High 31º F
Low 25º F
Cloudy, some sun
N-NE wind to 10

A fine quiet day on the ocean today. There were many seal hunting boats out today, especially on the Kotzebue Channel side. There was lots of banging.

The net left out overnight in the hopes of getting more herring for salting was a bust. Nothing but dirt – no fish of any kind.

About sun up this morning (10 a.m.) I went to the high lookout a few miles west of us. I climbed up and looked around the landscape and couldn't see anything again. I glassed around some more and just before I was about to give up I saw movement in the distance. Focusing on the spot I soon saw the whole caribou. It was quite far away but the movement and coloration made it a caribou, the first I've seen this fall. I could see by its movements and color pattern that it was likely a bull, walking toward me. I confirmed by glassing and waiting. I really did not want to shoot any large bulls, but couldn't see anything else. I decided that if it kept coming, I would take a chance and shoot it. It did, and I did. It was a small herd bull with swollen neck and empty stomach, but no smell or taste. It was fat enough internally, though probably without back fat. It will be good meat. We really lucked out since it walked from far away directly towards my station. I shot it from where I sat.

Several other caribou were taken west of Sealing Point and one bull at Sealing Point.

The caribou story seems to be: scattered small groups over a wide area, from Port Site to the west Noatak Delta (Jones Camp).

There was a boat or two from Kotzebue to Sisualik, for there is no more ice out in the deeper Sound water.

October 18

High 33º F
Low 20º F
Clear, few a.m. clouds
N wind to 18

A very bright, clear, cool day. It looks like a real freeze tonight with a rather perfectly clear sky.

The only caribou action today was at Salluq, where they have seen caribou nearly every day but have not been able to get to them due to thin ice and sloughs. The caribou crossed those sloughs and went down to the ocean beach today. All other areas speak of a few isolated animals – usually wandering bulls.

Seal hunting boats were out again, with lots of firing. Results unknown at this time. Weather has been near perfect for a couple of days for fall sealing. We have not seen or heard much about young ugruk thus far this fall. They are the choice catch in the fall as well as spring.

I made the two main ice crossing on the inland cabin trail today. I made them walking with a "pike pole," testing the ice as I walked along. There is a pretty uniform 1 ½ to 2 inches under the lighter colored ice. The several large and numerous darker colored areas were the last open holes and they are quite thin yet – less than one inch. After our nice clear night tonight I will be able to cross with the 4-wheeler tomorrow and go a ways up the trail to the cabin. It is only 6 miles up to the cabin, but there is little snow on the tussocks.

We have had a sudden influx of foxes in Sisualik in the past couple of days. Ease of travel o n new ice, and probable lack of food from wherever they came probably caused the movement. We also have an amazing lot of vole tracks around camp and in the country. Population has been way down this past year and a half.

Had a small mesh herring net out overnight last night for herring. It filled up – not with herring but with small size tomcod, lots of them. It also caught Rainbow Smelt, Arctic Cod (the first we've seen this fall), bullheads, and even two very small trout. Quite an ocean catch for this late date.

A first real display of Northern Lights this early evening.

October 19

High 29º F
Low 18º F
Clear, clouding over p.m.
N-NE wind to 18

A good day out in the country. Took the 4-wheeler across the lagoon ice, the basin ice, and two small inland lakes. The freshwater lakes have 2" of ice, the salt lagoon a little less. This is on the best of the ice and one must know where you are and what you are traveling over. Shallow water is best. Where you must cross channels or moving water, walk it and test it first. I did that in several places yesterday and today

was able to follow the marked trail with confidence. I made it to Mills Valley on our trail to the cabin; that is a little more than halfway. There is only a thin trace of snow on the trail. Not enough for the sno-go; the tussocks are might big.

I saw six caribou up that way and made a half-hearted stalk on two of them. They were walking away though, and I didn't have a chance to shoot at close enough range to suit me, so I didn't shoot. One, a calfless cow, looked pretty good, but it was way back there.

A grave digging crew came over today in shallow water, waves and ice. One boat made it and three turned back. With a small crew we got the grave down three feet and into permafrost. Hopefully we will finish it tomorrow.. The funeral is not till Wednesday. The grave is for Frank Sheldon, our westernmost Sisualik neighbor.

We did see six more caribou from the gravesite. We still seem to have a few widely scattered caribou from Port Site to the main Noatak River, which they can't cross yet due to thin and running ice. There seems to be no large number of caribou nearby that we know of.

Saw several quite large flocks of Willow Ptarmigan, lots of vole tracks, and fox tracks.

October 20

High 26º F
Low 20º F
Cloudy
NE-N wind to 15

We have sure gained a lot of Tundra Voles! Our population at snow melt time last spring was down to rock bottom – nil. Now, after our first snow, there are tracks and workings all over the Spit. It is hard to believe that the increase has been from local breeding. It appears that numbers must have moved in from somewhere. It is not too positive that they <u>are</u> Tundra Voles. Few have been seen and some tracks are pretty large for voles. I'm not confident in separating vole tracks from lemming tracks. It is going to be difficult to story anything unprotected outdoors this winter in Sisualik, and probably up at the house too. One might know that shrews are meat eaters, but voles are usually considered (wrongly) vegetarians. They just love frozen fish and caribou meat with the vegetables. There are also increasing shrew and fox tracks.

None of our gulls have been around today, for the first time this fall. Even Jonathan. It is kind of lonesome without him (and Lucinda his mate). Since marine water levels are so extremely low, there are probably lots of stranded fish (Saffron Cod and Arctic Cod) in the basin mudflats between Sisualik Point and Kotzebue. Something like this happened last year in October and Jonathan didn't show here for several

days. It is a relief to see that he can get along on his own. It is the time when most mature Glaucous Gulls, with their freckled heads, move at least somewhat south.

Missed a great opportunity on Willow Ptarmigan today. Left my shotgun home when they were tame and easy to see.

There are seals in the water west of us now, travelers reported today. We still have ugly brown water, while it is reported to have cleared where the seals are.

October 21

High 26º F
Low 22º F
Cloudy, light snow
N-NE wind to 18

We are getting our much need snow little by little. I made another trip up to Mills Valley (over halfway to the house). There is still very little snow on the trail. I used the 4-wheeler as we are still very short of snow. There is not very much snow inland.

Except for one flock of Willow Ptarmigan, there was nothing to see inland this time. With snow and fog, distant spotting of anything was not possible.

I did cut two blocks of ice from the first inland lake. It is nearly 4” think. We have finally finished our summer rainwater and will now depend on inland lake ice for household water.

After lunch I took the dog with the ATV and shotgun and went west to where willows and cut bank begin. There are often Willow Ptarmigan there in the early morning or late afternoon.

We met a bull caribou in the trail, walking into Sisualik from the west. My Superdog thought that since we hadn’t found any squirrels out it would be great sport to run the caribou. I had trouble convincing him that a squirrel was better game for him.

We soon did run into a large flock of Willow Ptarmigan, and we got three. At the sound of the shotgun, the dog exhibited again is bad case of gun shyness. He was excited to find the dead ptarmigan though.

Mice, mice, mice! Microtines everywhere in numbers. We have been invaded! That, and that alone can explain the large number of tracks <u>and</u> animals we have seen today. Tundra Vole population was at rock bottom last spring’s snow melt, and no increase was noted through the summer.

No sign of Jonathan or any other gulls today. This is the second day they are missing.

October 22

High 28º F
Low 18º F
Cloudy, late clearing
N-NE wind to 18

Marine waters continue at very low ebb. The light snow showers all day yesterday and into the night did not leave us much. There is still less than one inch on the ground.

didn't do much today except ready for our move inland to the house. Finally uncovered the sno-go and fired it up. It seems to be in pretty good shape after a summer's rest. It will be in for a rough time of use if we don't get more snow soon. We won't delay our move to our winter cabin for very long now – snow or not.

No gulls again today. We don't know if they have found a bonanza of stranded small fish in the mudflats or just decided it was time to move south. It is good they are gone and won't linger here when we go.

Last week we lost our westernmost Sisualik neighbor. This week we may lose his neighbor from the second most westerly camp. These are old folks that have had a full life and are more or less tired, and ready for the peace of death. We will miss them – Sisualik will miss them.

We have had an unusual lot of family and close friends passing on this year, and the trend continues.

A few wandering bull caribou continue to show up near or in camps. There is still no news of larger groups of caribou near our location.

Terry tried digging out a last squirrel on his run this afternoon, but didn't make it. The frozen ground and gravel were too much for him and he had to give up.

The evening weather gives some hints of wind and snow early in the weekend. We are considered making a quick move to the house tomorrow to weather out the storm.

October 23

High 30º F
Low 16º F
Cloudy, a little sun at sunset
N-NE wind to 20

A real lot of orange-purple in this evening's sunset. Very beautiful widespread coloration.

We thought of trying to get up to the house today, but gave up the idea when the weather bureau got out a forecast. (They were late coming up with one.) They have promised us a couple of days of snow and wind. Our trail from the flat lands up to the house has only a light trace of snow and is very tough on both driver and machine. A couple of inches of new snow will make a whole lot of difference, so we are on hold with an early chance for improving trail conditions. We are short of firewood and are not anxious to spend the time of the first blizzard in the tent, but that seems the best course at this point in time.

In the last two years we have made our move on the 18th, but we had lots of snow then.

We just heard yesterday, when Carrie's brother flew into town from Sealing Point, that there is no ice bridge across Kotzebue Channel. It is open water from town to Pipe Spit.

Early October crossing of the Sound usually depends on the jamming of freshwater ice clear across that wide channel. It usually does that just above Arctic Lighterage or the Tech Center. If that doesn't happen, then surface travel to Kotzebue from Sisualik and Kobuk Lake is much delayed. This is because the channel has salty water and strong currents.

Jonathan is three days gone now. Last year he was still around a few days after we had moved. His intuition must have alerted him to the later date. We miss him already.

Our friend from west Sisualik has passed on. We will miss him.

No caribou news today, but lots of mice, and tonight we have a Short-tailed Weasel singing his song under the generator shed.

October 24

High 36º F
Low 24º F
Cloudy, snow
N-NE-E wind to 20

We had an inch and a half of new snow on the ground this morning, but warming midday temperatures shrunk it some with no additional accumulation during the day. We are promised more tonight and hope it comes. Every little bit helps before we

start using our trail to the cabin. Oh boy! It will be great to get into our small cabin again – if the bears have been kind to us again.

We do have one boat hunting seals out of Sisualik this week. They got two yesterday and five today – all Common Ringed Seals apparently. They brought one to us today and we cut it up and ate seal meat for a change. It was very good.

Reports of caribou are diminishing. Don't know why. We have a very poor handle on location of concentrations of caribou these last two weeks. We are glad to have a few through here, but we are missing the run of large numbers thru here that we have had for a few years. Perhaps they will yet show up as snow cover builds. Some have suggested in the past that sharp grasses on frozen ground hurt caribou feet, and often they delay long migration marches till there is sufficient snow to prevent this problem (there is tender skin between hard hoof material on a caribou foot).

It is difficult to see a gull in Sisualik these days. There has been a resident loon in Sisualik all week, swimming and flying back and forth. It is either a young Red-throated or Pacific Loon

We have not seen a Snowy Owl this fall. We usually set pole traps around the middle of this month, but have not done that this year.

There were squirrel and vole tracks in the new snow by noon.

Another long time friend and elder passed on this morning.

October 25

High 35º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 25

We didn't have snow overnight, but we got both snow and wind starting in early afternoon and continuing into evening. Water is also rising, which means there will be some overflow on our trail to our winter cabin. However, this period of snow will make the full length of our trail over tableland tussocks one hundred percent better than if we had started our move yesterday. Wear and tear on snow machine will be much diminished with the several inches of snow cushion. Our hope now is that the marine waters don't come up too high (overflow) and that it doesn't rain. We are now one week later in our move from to house than the last two years. We will be glad to get into our spruce patch winter shelter.

Will there be rabbit tracks? Spruce cones and winter birds? Moose tracks? Have the bears treated us kindly? Marten tracks? Mink tracks? Otter tracks? And how about

that cheery little Three-toed Woodpecker or chickadee? We shall shortly have answers to all these questions.

Marine waters came up today to a higher level than they have been since freeze-up. This lifts the ice that has formed in the basin and mudflats between Sisualik Point and Kotzebue, and the wind has pushed the mass into the shore at the Point. There are a lot of seals laying on it this evening.

There are two occupied camps there and one of the boys got two seals from the beach today.

We had a very fine supper tonight of a couple of Willow Ptarmigan taken by nephew yesterday. They are especially tasty at this season, after eating blueberries for a couple of months.

October 26

High 36º F
Low 24º F
Cloudy, snow showers, sun
E-SE wind to 20

A day something like yesterday in Sisualik, with some differences. We do have enough snow now to get up to the house, but wouldn't you know it, when I went to check the lagoon crossings early this morning I found that marine waters had come up to grass line levels. Since freeze-up occurred at rock bottom levels, there was an edge of unfrozen water to cross at all sites. One could make it well enough with just the sno-go, but with a loaded sled it would be worrisome. It is also possible that flood level could go higher; we need to make several trips to get our essentials up there. We will wait some more, though the firewood is getting scarce and each morning is more of a trail to get out of a warm bed in a cold tent to get the fire started.

We finally had a big belt of slush ice moving out along the beach, all late morning and afternoon. This was early ice that formed in the mud flats of the Noatak Delta, and as water level rose, the wind moved it out and the ocean waves ground it up.

There were many ptarmigan tracks in the fresh snow on the blackberry flats. I never got to see them, but they made fresh tracks.

Lena Jones saw three caribou near their home today, but didn't get any. She is unused to telescopic scopes and Charlie is pretty well crippled up.

We had one of our favorite meals tonight: pot-roasted marrow bones from the first two leg bones above the hoof. These were from the bull caribou I got a week or so

ago. They were very oily and good though the bull was not overly fat. We had for dessert some of the sourdock mixture (sourdock, blueberries, blackberries and walrus quaq) that we have kept from freezing to protect the goodness of the blackberries.

October 27

High 36º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, fog, rain
E-SE wind to 18

Well! Here we are almost into November and we are still in a tent in Sisualik, listening to the ocean waves with light rain all day. It is good that the rain is light, for we have lost only about half of our hard-earned snow.

Tried, but couldn't cross the two edges on the back lagoon basin without getting too wet (shoe pacs, sno-go), due to continuing high marine water.

The two camps at Sisualik Point (Nuvuruq) have a "ringside seat" to a lot of seal action. They reported over a hundred seals hauled out on the ice of the basin area between the Point and Kotzebue. Some of the thickest early ice that formed up in the delta mudflats floated when marine waters rose, but stuck on the last bar on the ocean side.

One young fellow lucked out today when he shot a large seal with a shotgun from the beach at the tip of the Point. The seal, badly wounded, swam inward to the iced over lagoon, climbed out, and started going around in circles. The boy managed to get out to it with a small boat over thin ice, and finished it off with a .22 shot. Somewhere along the line he found that the seal was unusually marked. He is now the proud owner of a rare (in these waters) Ribbon Seal. They have very beautifully patterned hair coloration. They are rare but regular in Kotzebue Sound. Their peak of population abundance is in the Siberian Sea of Okhotsk. In size they are much like our yearling ugruk, which are also around now.

We did not need this rain and hope that temperatures cool off soon. We would like to get into our house.

October 28

High 33º F
Low 29º F
Some sun, some clouds
E wind to 25

Tonight we are in our warm 16x20 cabin in the middle of a white spruce patch, far from the sound of ocean waves and flapping tent.

Two Gray Jays, a flock of White-winged Crossbills, and a Raven welcomed us home. We have traded ocean swells for a babbling brook. We think it is a good trade.

There were two moose tracks made yesterday. One bull caribou crossed our trail, heading east, in between the two trips I made today.

There are cones on the spruces and red squirrels working them. This is a new scene. A live growing tree north of the Arctic Circle is a truly marvelous thing.

We have about 4" of crusted snow up here. We need another 4" to make the trail good. The tussocks are still high and hard.

There are lots of fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks where we entered the tablelands.

The summer bears have treated us well again. They have been around, but the only damage noted so far is a broken clothesline. They may have tried to hang something too heavy on it.

We are quite thankful to complete this part of our move without any mechanical problems. It is always worrisome for 70 year olds to get moving done. We are now so dependent on mechanization of various sorts and we don't have a lot of faith that engines will forever operate as they were designed to do. We made it again. Taikuu!

October 29

High 34º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, sun for a bit
S-SW-W wind to 18

Woke up to another 3" of snow this morning and heard that Sisualik had a blizzardy night. It sure improved our trail. I went down for a full load of essentials and found the trail great on the tablelands. The tidewater crossings were unchanged, but overflow did seem to be beginning again. The sun broke through and Sisualik make quite a colorful and beautiful picture. Looking toward the sun, rather low over the Sound, there was the very bright sun, the very dark water with huge white-capped swells, then a pure white belt of white snowy slush nearly ¼ a mile wide all the way into the beach. Though the swells were huge in the slush-free outer water, they were totally subdued by the time they go into the beach. Every five minutes or so there would be a bear-like growl as a super big roller remnant did reach the dark gravel of the beach. The contrasts of color and the animation were delightful, but I was not sorry to quickly load up the sled and head back for the quieter, more secure spruce patch. We have seen enough of the raw power of the ocean for this year.

Was surprised to see numerous small groups of caribou north of us this morning when I climbed out on the ridge trail to Sisualik. I didn't look long for I had to make the haul trip to Sisualik.

We haven't heard the whereabouts of caribou for some time, and we sure need some, having gotten only one bull this fall. Tomorrow I will see the world from a pair of snowshoes again.

These are wonderful first nights in the house!

October 30

High 30º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy, snow, fog
NE wind to 15

Most of the day on snowshoes, in rather constant fog and snow-filled air. It has been a long time, and legs tonight reflect that. It was a good day with caribou, the reason for the exercise.

When I climbed the knoll to look around, saw a good group of 20-30 caribou scattered over a ridge north of us. They were on the other side of our creek and I didn't know if I could find a way to cross the creek because of our mild freeze-up conditions.

It became snow (with very small grains filling the air) and foggy, so I was lucky to have located them before these conditions set in. I did find a place to cross the creek, where several caribou had done so yesterday.

The caribou were scattered on an open ridge top with absolutely no way to sneak up on them. There was no way but to walk directly up to them, trying to look like a caribou. That didn't work well and they all moved off without panic. I cut a corner on them, slipped out of sight for a bit, and then went back over the ridge. One small group of six was coming back towards me, startled from something else, real or imagined. I let them come as close as they were going to get. I fired once with no result. They ran a ways and stopped, and I fired again at what looked like (i.e., had antlers like) a female without a calf. It dropped and the others didn't stop again until out of sight of my location. The animal turned out to be a two-year-old male with very good meat. We lucked out!

Seal hunters at Sisualik Point and one boat from Kotzebue did well today. One of our extended family boys got a good ugruk from the beach. The boats got both Spotted and Ringed Seals, less than ten between the two boats.

October 31

High 28º F
Low 24º F
Sun, some clouds
Light winds

Fine weather today, but not much else went well.

Saw nine caribou on the edge of a dry lake bed. There were light breezes, but not steady. Managed to get quite close, approaching through willows where walking was more quiet. The changeable breeze brought my scent to them however, and they took off with no chance for me to shoot.

Saw two other bunches not far off, lying down in the sun with no way for me to approach. When they began to move out I though I might get ahead of them and have a chance and they filed by. That didn't work either. Several large-antlered bulls filed by in easy range, but females took another pathway that was too distant for sure shooting. Finally they all passed except one that was dark-colored and had an odd-shaped antler. I thought it might be a reindeer steer. I shot it, and then wished I hadn't. It was a diseased male in very bad conditions: no hair on knees and other spots, and lumps inside – swollen lymph nodes. Will save the carcass for investigation, but we will not eat from it.

Found fresh large wolf tracks in my morning's snowshoe tracks. Then I recalled seeing two startled caribou earlier, not far from the one I had killed yesterday. When I got back to base I decided to have a cup-a-soup and try to get the sno-go and sled across the creek to pick up the good meat I had shot yesterday. I had tested the ice, but needed to chop trail through willow approaches. Wanting to save the head for cooking, I had cut it off and placed it in the body cavity to keep the ravens from the eyes. After some trouble with the creek crossing, I reached the caribou. Ravens had been busy, and yes, the wolf had packed the head off. That's a Sanningaruq Halloween story – we may even hear the wolf howl tonight.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

NOVEMBER

November 1

High 30º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy, clearing, sun
SE wind to 20

We saw a lot of sun this first day of November. We again had reason to be glad we were up here in our spruce patch, as wind and drifting snow were bad again during the night down on the tidelands.

The big news today is rather sad. After being absent for several days, the young fellow from Sealing Point returned to camp. As he approached the camp, he though there was a loose dog. (They have a couple of dogs on chains at the camp.) The "loose dog" was a small, skinny brown bear with a malformed or injured jaw. The animal was right by the door of the cabin. It was killed.

The moose season opened for us today (females unaccompanied by calves). I haven't had time to check around for possibilities for this winter yet. There were two fresh moose tracks near the cabin when we came up, and they are the only tracks seen to date.

Spruce cone crop is better than last year, with quite a load on some trees. Haven't seen any White-winged Crossbills, but there has been distant sightings of flocks of small birds. They may be redpolls or mixed flocks of crossbills and redpolls. We started off with two Gray Jays. Today there were three. They are benefiting greatly from the current war between Carrie and the overwintering blowflies. They first started coming out yesterday and she has swatted nearly a thousand so far. These are flies that settled into cracks and crannies in the house to overwinter and come alive in the first warm days of spring. They chose the wrong place – summer came quickly when we built the fire. The heat and dryness brings them back to an active state, Carrie swats, and the Gray Jays relish the unseasonable treat. The war will last about a week, then no more.

November 2

High 30º F
Low 22º F
Cloudy, snowflakes, sun
Light east wind

We made a trip back to the ocean this morning and a beautiful ocean it was – flat. Saw two Glaucous Gulls, first year birds. There were two boats in sight and the sound of a shot once in a while indicated that there were seals around. Common Ringed Seals seem plentiful this fall, and fall ugruk scarce in comparison to past years.

We brought another sled load of winter clothes and house things. We still have at least one more to go – we are missing our rocking chair and there wasn't room today. I did get my good snowshoes though. The old pair of worn ones gave me a gad time the couple of days I had to use them. There is snow enough in the tussocks to make distant walking without snowshoes impossible. We do need to get a moose and more caribou this month if possible.

We returned early in the afternoon – the trail is now in smooth shape after the snow and drift of the last few days.

There were fifty or more White-winged Crossbills around the house clearing while we were unloading the sled. It is a November treat to have so many birds in the air and on the trees. Remember, these are the birds that were the original Christmas tree decorations. The bright red-breasted males with bold white wing stripes are as colorful as any artificially made ornament and the bright yellow on females and young of the year add diversity. Their hyperactivity as they work the spruce cones adds to the scene. They don't seem to do anything slowly.

The only fresh tracks in the new snow this morning were the very large wolf tracks a quarter mile from the cabin – the wolf that stole our little caribou head Saturday. We do still have a bit of wilderness this month before the multitude of sno-go's come from town.

November 3

High 34º F
Low 15º F
Cloudy
N-NE wind to 18

Managed to cross the creek and get up to Milluraq for a look around. This is the twin-peaked mountain north of us, halfway to the Hatchery. It has been, over the years, a better place to look for moose and of course caribou. It overlooks all of the

country east of our highest coastal mountains, as well as the first big bend in the Noatak River.

Because of the elevation, there is twice as much snow there as there is down here. There is about 16".

I didn't see much. There was only one small band (8-9) of caribou. There were however, the usual moose tracks, which means we will have a chance for a late fall moose.

After leaving the sno-go and climbing through the trees to the peaks, I was feeling disappointed that there were no fresh tracks. I went around the tree and there were the fore parts of a large moose, lying down, no antlers shower, 30 yards away. The animal was as surprised as I and was off in an instant. My rifle was still wrapped around my neck, with lens covers on and an empty chamber. My brief glimpse of the animals seemed to indicate a mature female, alone, which is our target at this season. I followed the tracks a short distance, but didn't see it again. I didn't persist, as my real purpose for being there was to glass a large but of country. Our chance for a good moose looks favorable. Caribou on the other hand don't look promising. The fall migration seems to have missed us this year.

Lots of seals reported in Sisualik today.

We have word that a couple of brave people have walked across Kotzebue Channel to the bar. Sno-go travel to town will soon be possible.

November 4

High 34º F
Low 29º F
Cloudy, more sun
Light winds

The reality of "global warming" gets more real day by day. Our ice crossing from Kotzebue is going to be a full month late! Someone crossed the channel in Kotzebue today with a sno-go, but found too much overflow and water on the bar to continue towards Sisualik.

It was a fine warm spring-like day today. I made a trip down to Sisualik for the rocking chair, telephone battery pack with solar panel, and gasoline. It was a fine uneventful trip, with no new large animal tracks. There were about a million fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks, but I didn't see a bird! I did take the shotgun all right, but as the saying goes, "Tracks make very thin soup."

Seal hunters did well today, taking five ringed seals.

Cut a piece of ice for home use today, from the small but deep lake our trail crosses. Was surprised to find a full 9" of ice. With the mild (but freezing) temperatures we've had, and the thin ice down in saltwater areas, this was a surprise.

No sign of caribou today.

They got their first show of Saffron Cod by hook at Jones Camp today.

All of us folks west of the Noatak River have had less than good harvests this fall. One or two caribou a piece, no whitefish, and slow freeze-up preventing access to sheefish netting area or caribou herds in other areas.

Our spruce cone crop is a great one. Birds and squirrels will be happy.

We also have a great showing of ground-dwelling microtines. Species not clear yet, but logs of sign on each new snow. Probably both Tundra Voles and Red-backed Voles are many. No leaving things to eat on the ground this winter

November 5

High 30º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy, fog, mist
Light NE wind

A dull day, more so in the mountains where fog and mist held sway.

I went west to check for moose or caribou this morning, but didn't see either. There are a few three-day old tracks. The country looks pretty poor up that way.

We don't seem to have rabbits again. Have not crossed either hare or marten tracks yet. Most of the moose activity seems farther north – from Milluraq towards the Hatchery. I will have to concentrate on that area with time allocated to hunting. Since Carrie is home alone, my hunting time is not entirely free.

There still has been no possible surface travel from Kotzebue to Sisualik or for the campers in sheefish land on north Kobuk Lake. There have been a couple of sno-go crossings to the mouth of the Noatak. What is unusual this year is that our first ice-making weather came with extremely low water. That ice is good, and is what we have been traveling on. Then marine waters came back and filled up the edges to normal, That water over shallow areas has never frozen because of fresh snow and long-lasting mild weather. In most years that "edge water" is the first to freeze and safest to travel on, being shallow. Circumstances with ice formation this year is the

reverse of normal freeze-up progression. It may result in the latest Kotzebue crossing in history.

Coastal seal hunters had another good day today with hauled out seals on ice pans as far west as Sealing Point.

November 6

High 32º F
Low 26º F
Cloudy
SE wind to 20

A warm day for the first week of November. We are going to freeze up this winter, aren't we?

We did hear that one of the Jones boys made it into town on the ice yesterday, and back to where they are staying, several miles up river from the mouth. If this is true, it will be the first fall '98 crossing.

Looked for moose today, but didn't see any. I did see two small groups of caribou. One had about twenty individuals, the other five or six. Not being able to locate a moose, I dropped down from the Milluraq lookout, walked down to the sno-go, and decided to see what the larger group looked like at closer range. It was getting late and I did need to get back to camp.

I relocated the larger group and they seemed not too far off. I cautiously approached with the sno-go, till I worried that they would hear the engine. I stopped a half-mile off and put on snowshoes. By the time I got close enough to see that I might get to shoot, I could see that most were bulls, even those without antlers. I thought it might be early for antler-dropping, but apparently not. I was able to get within long shooting range and by the that time knew they were all bulls. Unsure whether we would have other better chances for meat, I decided to play it safe and shoot a couple of the smaller antlerless animals. I did that, so we now have lots of hamburger meat. Once bulls have shed their antlers they are no longer strong smelling, but are lean.

I was late getting home, and wouldn't you know it – the starting rope on the generator broke! That kind of a day – no fat moose, only two lean caribou.

November 7

High 34º
Low 21º F
Clear, some clouds
Light winds

A beautiful sunny late afternoon, with the low orange-rayed sun glorifying the huge patch of "red" willows on either side of the Napaaqtuuraq hillside spruce patch. This was seen in the full force of the sun, coming up our Sisualik trail, where I had gone down to a small lake that has the clearest of ice for our household water. The ice is still 7 to 9 inches thick, depending on amount of snow cover. Thickness has not changed much this week.

Early this morning I made a rather strenuous trip to retrieve the two antlerless bull caribou I shot yesterday. It was strenuous because of the creeks and draw north of us (a couple of them) required special work to get across and up the steep banks. Had to unload and do one at a time. Bull caribou in one piece are not easy to load and unload after you pass 70.

One of the bulls (the smaller, younger one) turned out to be pretty good table meat, with a show of fat around kidneys and mesentery web. Normally bulls are not used for human food from October 14th until the antlers are shed. When one has a choice, females are usually taken until late January, when bulls have built up their energy reserves (fat) again. This large group of bulls yesterday was unusual. Only a quarter of the group still had their antlers. Early shedding of antlers probably reflects an early rut.

Lots, lots of Willow Ptarmigan seem to be passing through, west to east.

WE also have some huge flocks of White-winged Crossbills (hundreds) and the cones to feed them.

Saw one Red Fox today. Tracks are common here now, and Sealing Point reports lots too.

Otter on the creek crossing today. Northern Lights tonight.

November 8

High 36º F
Low 26º F
Broken clouds
NE-E wind to 25

A quiet mild Sunday in Sanningaruq, with a lot of birds in the air. White-winged Crossbills are making a great show this fall, and cone quantity may see them thru the winter. Right now the Red Squirrels are reaping a harvest from the ground. They appear to be piling up and storing away many of the cones the birds are knocking off the trees.

There is a good show of fur at this early date for this location. I've seen mink, marten, otter, fox, and wolf tracks this week. There are never too many, but it is good to see that diversity continues. Wolverine and lynx remain rare creatures where they were common 25 years ago. Both Short-tailed and Least Weasels are present, and there is an abundance of voles and shrews.

I made a quick trip to Sisualik for an old generator and a few odds and ends. The long-lasting and mild winds are eating up our snow and the trail is a bit lumpy again. We are fortunate that it did not rain. Marine waters have been up to the brim since I was down last, even up to the willow line. This is the highest it has been since freeze-up.

There were no large animal tracks between here and Sisualik.

I did see one large flock of Willow Ptarmigan. It is a bit hard to read what is happening with ptarmigan. There was little sign a week ago; now every patch of willows has a multitude of tracks, though the birds themselves are rarely seen.

Dog food is extremely short for the several team owners on the coast. Two of them hope to make a trip up to the Hatchery tomorrow, as there are reportedly many salmon there yet.

Ground squirrels are still out in several locations.

November 9

High 35º F
Low 29º F
Clouds, sun
E-SE wind to 20

Another day of the same kind. Beautiful weather for just living. It is not making much ice for water surface travelers, nor is the outdoor weather much for making firm lunch food out of such delicacies as tomcod and fat trout.

Each day, word comes that a few more brave – or foolhardy – folks have made the crossing from the north side to Kotzebue.

We ate pot-roasted leg bone marrow this evening from the smaller bull taken the other day. This is a kind of "first" for us. Given more opportunity for choice, which we have most years, we do not consider taking antlerless bulls till January. Healthy animals, by that time, are well on their way to recovering full physical vigor, which means firm, oily marrow and a bit of fat along the bones. We lucked out on this animal. It is good caribou table meat, even though it very recently shed its antlers.

We had our first visitors today. They came by sno-go but are large dog team holders from Sisualik and Salluq, on their way to try to take chum still milling around at the Hatchery. All natural dog food sources have failed them this fall on our side, and though they will soon be able to join the shee netters on Kobuk Lake, thin or no ice has prevented that to this point in time.

If this year had been like "old times," when every family had many dogs to feed, it would have been a tough starvation time. Lack of whitefish at the two lagoon outlets and failure of a major caribou migration thru this area are the problems. There can be so many of both in most years that I guess we needed to be reminded that any natural resource can and indeed may fail in any given year.

Saw two Spruce Grouse today.

November 10

High 30º F
Low 14º F
Some clouds, some sun
NE-E wind to 25

Went to Sisualik today to clean up and close up the camp for winter. It was pretty windy and cold down there, so we ended up just loading some odds and ends of stuff we will need up here, and rushing home to our spruce patch.

The first ice crossing from Sisualik was made today by Herbert Foster. He more often than not is the first one from this side to make the crossing. He reported that the trail was good. It is interesting that the earliest crossing that we know of was on October 10 several years back (nearly 20 years). That makes our trail freeze-up exactly one month late!

Our huge crossbill flock is busy around the cabin every afternoon till after sundown now, knocking great numbers of cones and seeds to the ground. The seeds are making our now old snow cover a different shade of brownish-gray.

Our visitors of yesterday did make it to the Hatchery last night and home today. They caught some burbot last night, but did not see many salmon. They got caribou on the way home today. They had hoped for some salmon to help them through with dog feed. Now that there is an ice trail to Kotzebue, they will soon have shee nets set.

There will be a lot of travel on the trail to Kotzebue if it continues in good shape. Lots of folks are short of lots of things.

We will also need to give it a try soon. Nine miles of maybe some slippery ice – ugh!

Our temperatures have finally dropped in to the teens by 9 p.m. Maybe we are finally going to freeze up!

November 11

High 14º F
Low –2º F
Clear, clouding late
Light winds

We've finally had our first sub zero temperatures and it makes a difference. Last evening our creek crossing of flowing water was wide open – no ice. Tonight, just before dark, I was able to walk across it! However, my Superdog wouldn't follow. He sat on the bank and awaited my return.

We both stayed home today and caught up on "put off" chores, including doing overdue Journal material. Also cut a little spare firewood, for we have a couple of busy days and a dilemma coming up. Since sno-go crossing is now possible, possible grave digging and burial of our west Sisualik old timer is scheduled for tomorrow, which is also the birthday of our son in town. They may expect us in town; we can't do both in one short day.

We do have a new caribou rumor to give us hope today. There are said to be numbers at Rabbit Creek, this side of the Red Dog haul road. One wonders if they will winter there or move thru here on their way south. Southern movement often ceases as bulls shed their horns. We shall soon see. Rabbit Creek is not far from here, though behind our coastal hills.

Saw Spruce Grouse in our spruce patch today. The Red Squirrel population is really up, as is the Red-backed Vole population. They will both benefit greatly from the abundance of spruce cones.

Shoveled snow around the skirt of our house this morning. That is a chore every fall as temperatures drop below zero. It makes a lot of difference in house insulation.

Clouds have quickly covered the sky this evening. Don't know what that will mean for our travel decisions tomorrow.

November 12

High 15º F
Low 0º F
Cloudy, fog, clearing
NE-E wind to 15

Grave dig and burial for our west Sisualik friend and neighbor today. A "jack hammer" grave in permafrost. Would be tough going without power tools.

This is the second older Sisualik person that has passed on this fall. There were lots of helping hands.

One person who started from Kotzebue this way to help did not turn up at the gravesite in Sisualik. He is still missing this evening at dusk. The safe ice trail that 20 people used today is not straight. After crossing Kotzebue channel it follows a curve of shallow water all the way to lagoons behind Sisualik Point. The saltwater channel at Sisualik Point is thin or open yet, and is never used at this early stage of freeze up. It does, however, lie on a straight line from Kotzebue to Sisualik. That is a dangerous place at this stage of freeze-up, and is avoided widely by those travelers that are knowledgeable. We hope his troubles are in some other direction, but at this point, things don't look good.

We need to try to get to town tomorrow, weather permitting. In the right location, the trail is said to be very good.

We saw a lot of folks today that we haven't seen for ages. The fact is, we haven't seen many other people for a month!

A few Snowy Owls are showing at Sealing Point now, but the one who has a few traps set there is losing them almost immediately to foxes. When the foxes get the idea of a free meal, they watch the pole traps pretty closely.

November 13

High 14º F
Low 10º F
Cloudy, snow, fog
E-SE wind to 20

Kind of a mean day today. Our plans for a first town trip for re-supply and long-delayed business went by the by before sun up this morning. Visibility was down to two miles, with snow, fog and increasing winds.

We are into that time of year again when we must have nearly 12 mile visibility to feel secure on a trip to town. There are no stakes yet of course, and in order to stay oriented, one needs to have vision or a readily visible old trail to follow. There would be neither today. On top of that, we like to make a round trip, and with only 5 ½ hours of sun now, that requires us to hustle along.

I will long remember this day in November, 1998. I saw, walked on, and examined something I would never believe in a hundred years to see!

I fixed our lower (better) trail, which crosses the creek that was open water a few days ago. I loosed the dog, planning to break our "straight to town" trail for the first time this fall. It was slow going and rough, but there was snow and ice enough to complete it. This we did, down to tidewater. Terry had tough going in the soft snow and large tussocks. Turning back, I stopped on the edge of Heart Lake and walked to a willow point where I thought a couple of ptarmigan had landed. One flew and caused my attention to focus on something that didn't look right. It seemed a high mound or cut back. In memory, I know there is no cut bank or mound on the south edge of this lake. Our town trail crosses it and it is a favorite clear water lake that I often get our winter household ice from.

I walked over to inspect it. Well! Bless my soul, if it wasn't a large beaver lodge! Maybe the first ever within the boundaries of Cape Krusenstern National Monument. What a lovely, totally unexpected find and what a poor place for a beaver to hope to survive a long winter. (This last comment from a human perspective, not knowing the mind of a beaver.) Talk about your pioneering spirit.

Search began today for the person who left Kotzebue yesterday to help at the burial site in Sisualik but never arrived. New snow and wind complicated that search, and it now looks like the ocean may have claimed another victim. No trace of the person has been found. When there is ice enough later, the trail from Kotzebue to Sisualik is a straight line. In early fall (now) a curved course is used which follows shallow water and gets into Sisualik from the back lagoon/tidelands area. The deep salty area around the tip of the Point is slow to freeze. This unfortunate fellow may not have known that. He was supposed to be with a group of twenty or so people that made the trip back and forth safely yesterday.

November 14

High 16º F
Low 12º F
Cloudy, snow, fog
Clearing late
E-SE wind to 20

Our town trip postponed again due to weather, visibility and trail.

We did have good news today. Search and Rescue will stake the curved trail from town to Barger's house in the lagoon directly behind our summer camp. That has never been done before, but has been a need for early winter (pre-Thanksgiving) travelers for a long time. It comes too late for one traveler. The fellow who was going to help with the grave digging the other day has not turned up. Today aircraft spotted and hopefully marked where he and his machine went through the ice off Sisualik Point.

We got a couple of inches more snow last night, which will improve our trail and traveling conditions in general.

Snowshoed around our spruce patch a bit today. Heard eight or ten rifle shots, some with bullets landing solid, north of us, towards where the group of bulls were that I ran across last week. We have a new neighbor between us and Jones'. He moved up from Sisualik Point the day before yesterday. He has sled dogs and needs caribou badly, as he has had to wear a cast on one leg for several weeks.

We, and many others, could use more caribou since we have not had a good passage of animals through here this fall.

Distant visibility was not good today due to intermittent fog and snow in the air. We are hoping for caribou from Rabbit Creek, so we are keeping alert. We are limited until we get to town for gas and other store stuff.

November 15

High 16º F
Low 7º F
Cloudy
Light winds

For many years, November 15 was the official opening of the fur trapping season, both in Territorial days and after Statehood. It seemed a late date when cold weather came early in the fall. Now the current opening of November 1 seems too early in a year like this, when cold weather delays making an appearance. Some furs are not prime, and travel is dangerous because of thin ice is many places.

Thinking of years passed, I can hardly become reconciled to the fact that we now have moose, marten, and beaver as creatures in our animal community. Musk ox need also be included in that list, as all were unknown in the location through the generations of Carrie's father and his grandfather. But where are the rabbits?

We didn't make our town trip Friday and Saturday due to weather, so we are now planning to try that tomorrow, though again we have rather high winds forecast. We shall see. We are getting very low on gas and both the generator and snow machine don't run without it.

We spent an easy quiet Sunday today. I did climb up to the lookout knoll and saw four caribou across the creek feeding, and then lying down. Had I seen them yesterday I would have made a try, as they are less than two miles off. They are out in the open and there is no wind today, so getting within shooting range might be

difficult. Decided to leave them for another day. We are still in need of both caribou and moose and Thanksgiving is nearly on us again.

There were a lot of aircraft circling over the area where the lost person when through the ice. There was supposed to be an airboat on the scene today, but we have not heard the results of today's search yet.

November 16

High 20º F
Low 17º F
Cloudy
E wind to 25

Finally a town trip! We made it! Over and back in daylight! (Only 5 ½ hours now.) What a relief. The storm with blowing snow didn't happen (Weather Bureau said it would); the sno-go didn't break down (I thought it might), and we found good solid ice all the way, though not the stakes we thought were promised. We did find Kotzebue and that is what is was all about. We are now refurbished for a while, but will need to get a full drum of gas soon, a hundred pound propane bottle, a moose, some more caribou, and go tomcod hooking at Jones Camp.

We did hear something new today. It was reported that there were tomcod fishers at Jones Camp and Norton's. Heretofore, only the folks that live over here have done fall hooking on this side. They have not been doing well for Saffron Cod in Kotzebue this fall, and recently this side has produced great catches after a slow beginning. It is now only a 20-minute ride over a well-marked, smooth trail from Kotzebue. The people of the region have not lost their drive to seek the resources they want or need, regardless of the cost or hazards or sacrifices that must be made to gain them.

There still has been no recovery of anything from the Sisualik traveler that disappeared last week. The staked trail we used today was made a few days too late to save his life, but could stand as a monument to his loss.

Lots of ravens in town yet, or maybe they have moved back to town after summering in Sisualik.

We are thankful for a good ending to an annually traumatic day. Taikuu!

November 17

High 16º F
Low –7º F
Clear
N wind to 15

A trip to Sisualik today and a midday visitor.

The clear air brought dry and cool feelings to those doing outdoor work today. Even our Superdog, who is beginning to show his age, almost beat me to Sisualik this morning. He did get behind me on the way home, but he is still a very fast dog.

In spite of the bright sunny day today I still did not see any creatures but raven, gray Glaucous Gulls, crossbills, and jays. There were ptarmigan tracks, but the birds were elsewhere.

Small mammals are tracking up our last snowfall. There are lots of shrew and vole tracks and tunnel exits.

Sealing Point folks finally got a few caribou yesterday from a group of eight bulls.

Our colder temperatures are noticed in the house too. It needs a little weatherproofing by this time, as some cracks around the door are showing daylight. Frost will form on those and make more coolness.

We have been enjoying a treat from Sitka again. Friends there (charter boat operators) sent us smoked King Salmon collars gain. They are so good and oily. The friends are good too. Very, very good.

There has be no finds on the lost person that is presumed to have gone off the ice and into the water on grave digging day last week. They are still asking for more search people, but the incident seems pretty clear and most everything will be covered by slush and thin ice now. That is a tragedy that never should have happened.

November 18

High 16º F
Low 0º F
Cloudy, light snow
N-NE wind to 15

Took a run up to the Milluraq “lookout: mountain this morning. It was a pretty dull day, with mist and snow, so it wasn’t a good day to see far and clearly.

I found a lot of moose tracks over my snowshoe trails from the last time I was up there, a week or so ago. I couldn’t locate where they might be today. I did see one medium-large bull whose antlers were still the tan color of October (they tend to get dull gray when they are ready to be shed). I watched carefully for half and hour while the bull fed on willow growth and moved farther along the timberline. I had hoped he might know where other moose are located. I didn’t see others and we don’t want a bull.

Speaking of bulls that we don't want, while on the lookout peak, I saw a group of eight caribou bulls lying down to the south and nine to the north. All bulls, three-quarters of them without antlers. When I got back to the sno-go, the group to the south had gotten to their feet and started to feed, moving straight towards the sno-go.

We are particular right now. We would rather have females of both caribou and moose. We may be sorry later if we can't find females of either species. Caribou bulls will be very good again after Christmas.

It was reported on the radio today that Barrow will not see the sun again till January 23. That is a long time to be sun-less.

New marten tracks at Milluraq and fresh otter tracks leaving our creek. Lots of game in the country, but not what we want right now.

Only one resident family in Sisualik now and one at Sealing Point. That's total coastal residents now, from Kotzebue to Port Site. A record low population for November.

November 19

High 26º F
Low 14º F
Cloudy, snow late
N-NE wind to 18

Town trip today for a big load: drum of gasoline and a 100-lb. propane bottle. Some folks in town though it not a good idea to be hauling such heavy loads with the current travel warnings of thin ice, but the trail we have we knew to be in good shape. The only deep water to cross is the town channel right at Arctic Lighterage dock. Actually, the trail turned out to be smooth and fine.

The best event of the day was seeing a single Snowshoe Hare (rabbit) track in our Sanningaruq spruce patch. This species has been absent here for 15 years, after being so numerous that they destroyed 75% of our white spruce saplings. It is always a very lonesome thing to not have rabbit tracks in northern spruce forests. Something does really seem "missing." Spruce and willow patches are supposed to have hares. We are so glad to have at least one back, though he probably won't last long without company. Rabbits and caribou require others, others of their own species, to be happy. We will welcome them back; they certainly have enough food now to support a large population for a few years.

Numbers of snow machines are still searching for the person lost on the day of the burial. It is not likely that anything will be found till early next summer.

Our days are getting pretty short, only a little over five hours now and so many days with cloud cover keeps us warm, but pretty dull and dim. Still, we think of Barrow and feel thankful for a glimpse of the sun occasionally.

November 20

High 26º F
Low 13º F
Cloudy, sun thru breaks
N-NE wind to 18

This was a brighter day than we have had in some time. Still, there were clouds enough to obscure its full brightness. It got surprisingly high in the sky. We are now in the 4 hour plus bracket and losing sizeable chunks of daylight daily. December draws close.

Went up to Milluraq lookout peak again today, but could find no moose or fresh tracks. Drove right through seven of the tamest bull caribou I have ever seen. As long as there was no shooting and no chasing, they seemed willing to tolerate a snow machine, even with the headlight full on. On had just dropped on side of his large antlers. He looked rather silly and lop-sided. Most were already free of their head weight.

From the peak I saw a larger group (20-25) of caribou moving into our area from the NW mountains. On the way home I was startled to see another bunch of eight clean-headed bulls standing in the trail only a half mile away from home.

Why there should be so many bulls, only bulls, is a bit of a mystery at this point. Hopefully they were with females last month. Where the females are right now we don't know. Some bulls are fair table meat now, but generally lack fat. We are still hoping for something better.

There is an unusual rumor of three Arctic Hares taken on the coast west of us this week. Numbers of that species have been depressed in our region for many years.

It was a great privilege today to see many caribou again. We may take a couple more good looking animals while they are around.

A group from NPS came through today, breaking in new machines.

November 21

High 19º F
Low 0º F
Cloudy, a little sun
NE wind to 15

A new adventure in an old place today. We took a run to what is now called Norton's place. It's older Eskimo place name is Kaugalaktak, and it is on the uppermost west Noatak slough, where a rather large lake empties into the slough. Many Nine-spined Sticklebacks trickle out of this "creek" into the large brackish slough. This attracts several species of larger fish that welcome the food source and ten to concentrate and wait there. That in turn attracts a whole culture of human fishermen as it is a kind of everlastingly consistent place. One is sure to find some species of larger fish there as soon as ice forms in October, until December when ice becomes too thick.

Today we got about 40 pounds of mixed species: Saffron Cod (most abundant), Arctic Cod (1), Humpback Whitefish (5), Least Cisco (1) and a multitude of bullheads. Tomcods were the best payload, but surprisingly enough, the bullheads were the greatest treat of the day. We are now stuffed to our "gills" with the rich livers and large eggs of the lowly sculpin (bullhead). They are at their annual peak of quality. Two large roe sacks, a full firm liver – there is little body meat, but it too is tasty. Even the bullhead has its time of glory!

We got four Willow Ptarmigan on the way home, which will make a great Sunday dinner. They are terribly hard to see in our weak daylight now, especially with our old weak eyes. There are some huge flocks in the country right now.

Carrie got to see the beaver lodge and the rabbit track today. She hasn't traveled much this fall.

There were several Kotzebue fishermen and women at the site today, a place where Kotzebue folks never used to go.

November 22

High 4º F
Low –14º F
Mostly clear
N-NE wind to 15

Well, our old friend in Sisualik, the only one left living there now, struck it rich one more time. He put a shee net at the mouth of the Noatak night before last. This is as close as you can get from Sisualik and hope to get sheefish. When he checked it yesterday morning (one night in the water), he had 130 sheefish! Now people have been setting nets in "sheefish land" since the ice became thick enough long ago, but first night catches have run 8-10 or 15. The nets of all have been way up on the NW or N shore of Kobuk Lake. Our friend has been short of fish and dog feed all fall, and as he is somewhat handicapped he hesitates to go very far from home. Now he is deliciously happy about his good luck and invited us down to pick some eating fish. We did that and got in just in time for lunch, so we had a good visit and shared talk

of sheefish, dog teams, and the many years we have shared the country together. There is nothing like a great unexpected catch of something valuable to lift the spirits of those that live close to the land.

There are actually two occupied camps at Sisualik now. One at the Point, and the one occupied at mid Sisualik by our net setting friend. The one at the Point has just his dogs. His family is living in town.

There are three occupied camps now on Krusenstern's shore, counting the family at Sealing Point. This is probably the lowest population ever for the month of November.

There are some heavy concentrations of foxes building this week in various places we have touched that have food available. This is the season that foxes often leave their den location areas to seek food wherever it may be found. These shifts to winter range are common to many species and reasons are diverse.

November 23

High 4º F
Low –6º F
Clear skies!
N wind to 15

Weather getting cold and days short. We can't really afford the eight minutes we lose today.

Went up to Milluraq lookout today again. Lots of caribou tracks but saw only two bulls. There were no fresh moose tracks. Disappointment! Where can all those moose be that made tracks last week? I snowshoed a bit toward the two bulls and they heard me from a long distance. I gave up and turned back toward the sno-go, thinking to get a few sticks of firewood. Fifty yards from the sno-go there were large narrow, fresh moose tracks, in my outgoing snowshoe tracks! I followed the tracks for a while to see if it was really spooked. It was, so I had to give up and go look for wood. Narrowness of track often indicates a cow – size of track indicates size-age of animal.

I must have spooked this moose further down the creek without seeing it when I came up the draw. It then passed on up the draw behind me, after scenting me. Eyes in the back of my head might have helped.

Carrie is always more disappointed than I when hunting events don't go just right. She wouldn't last long as the family hunter. One cannot hope to be always successful, but one can learn something from each episode and be very grateful when

things come together properly so that the desired quarry is taken. There will be another day.

The single marten is still at Milluraq. Both squirrels and crossbills seem scarce there.

November 24

High –4º F
Low –21º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 10

Clear skies gain and cold temperatures. Sun and growing moon bright and clean. The sun was not up long though. We are down to four hours and some minutes now.

Got a good load of beautifully clear ice today from the little "Antler Lake" on our Sisualik trail. Was surprised to find wide open deep cracks on a small piece of lake ice that was snow free. These interesting cracks in the nearly 18" of ice make it possible to "pick out" good-sized chunks with a sharp pointed pick.

The everlasting mystery continues. The lake water is pee yellow but surface ice is crystal clear.

We have not had snow now for several days and there is just a multitude of small creatures on the ground. A few years ago we left an unskinned by gutted caribou on the ground and it was untouched or eaten on by any creature through the whole winter. Now, anything left on the ground will be eaten up in a short while by Red-backed Voles, Tundra Voles, Yellow-cheeked Voles, Arctic Shrews, Least Weasels or Short-tailed Weasels. There may also be some lemmings of a couple of species and of course the Red Squirrels that like a chuck of meat or hair for nest building. The ground is alive with creatures this fall, and fox population will benefit, as will marten, mink, weasels, and birds of prey. Right now, many of the little creatures are eating dropped spruce cone seeds on the shallow snow, as there are lots.

A few seals are being taken from Sealing Point. A traveler west from there saw nine musk ox and ten caribou yesterday.

Two camps remain occupied at Sisualik, one at Sealing Point. Inland and eastward there are us and Jones' and on of the two camps that were at Sisualik Point. The one camp left at Sisualik Point will soon move to Jones Camp.

November 25

High –2º F
Low –22º F
Clear, scattered clouds
N wind to 15

Weather forecast seems so good I thought we might travel and celebrate Thanksgiving on the same day and limit our house freeze to one night instead of two. It is always a bit of a pain this time of year to leave the house without heat for much more than 24 hours. Takes a while to re-heat and dry out. Also, since Terry has become a winter housedog, he doesn't appreciate more than one night sleeping out on his chain.

Spent the rather cold day getting firewood and readying things for the absence.

Not much traveling public out our way today. Due to recent cold weather, most ice trails have become very good. Inland and tableland snow cover is still pretty sparse.

Our crossbills are not showing as regularly as they were earlier, though there are still lots of cones. They have rather unlimited places to forage this winter.

Willow Ptarmigan continue to make tracks, though they are pretty hard to see with low and brief daylight.

We have a lot of small mammals around our house site now competing for scraps or hidden things they shouldn't be into. Snow surface is really marked up with tracks and tunnels, very different than most recent years.

Birds of prey are not yet making much of a show. Saw a Gyrfalcon twice, no hawk or horned owls. Though there have been Snowy Owls around Sealing Point, we have seen none.

"Red willows" are really red this year, retaining most of their dried red leaves yet. When the orange rays of the sun hit the orange leaves, the effect is great. *Salix pulchra* or Diamond-leaf Willow are the other names.

November 26

High –4º F
Low –20º F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

Cold night and an early easy run into town. The good flat trail I hauled a drum of gas on last week was still visible, and we got in before 11 a.m. – before sun up.

We had a good Thanksgiving feast at the church and another feast a few hours later with family – a kind of double whammy that has become customary in recent years amongst those that can afford it, or think they can. It would be more appreciated if we could have a spare stomach for the day.

It was a different and most enjoyable day. Lots of old friends, new faces, and lots of kids.

The night was different too. Our cabin is pretty quiet through the night after lights out. We get used to that. In town there are trucks, sno-go's on the road, a monitor oil heater, a refrigerator, a freezer, a newly chained dog with chain around a house piling, all at different times and with different volumes break the town night silence. The first night is rough – one tends to get used to it after several.

Town ravens having a pretty good Thanksgiving in spite of garbage compactors. They have figured some new angles.

Quite a large crown at the church feast – probably three to four hundred. This local tradition at the Friends Church seems to continue to flourish. It requires enthusiastic participants – workers and feasters. Traditional foods are a big attraction – frozen fish, maktak and caribou soup.

November 27

High 0º F
Low –18º F
Clouds, fog, snow, clearing
E wind to 18

Home again over the same trail with 1" of new cold weather, gritty snow and ground drift. Very bright orange sun behind though.

Terry very glad to see us home – and with turkey scraps. You would think we had been gone a week. He is a real people dog and doesn't care much for being alone in the world.

We will probably have a good long uninterrupted sleep tonight with the only outstanding sounds those of two people and a dog snoring.

It took a while to get the inside of the house thawed, though only a skin of ice had formed on the water buckets. Carrie's houseplant, which we put in the oven with the pilot light on, escaped freezing this time.

There was a couple of large animal tracks down in Mill's Valley that weren't there yesterday. Moose or caribou – didn't stop to check them.

November 28

High 20º F
Low –12º F
Cloudy, snow, clear

N-NE wind to 15

It is hard to believe that we have run through November already. The short hours of sunlight confirm it though – and we are now on the brink of December, which provides both despair as daylight hours shrink, and hope as sun time begins to increase again, a little bit at a time, as this next month grows old.

Mostly recovering today from yesterday's return trip from Thanksgiving in town. Our temperatures have warmed and the ice cream we took home from feast day, that had to be chipped off with a knife, tonight can be brought in from outside and easily spooned into your waiting bowl. This is a great way to recognize how temperature change affects your life and the things you need to do each day. There are, of course, many other things that come to be as temperatures rise out of the –20º F range to above zero. Generator can be started without inside warming, sno-go engine kicks over with two or three pulls, and the chainsaw is most willing to start. One chunk firewood lasts twice as long, or more.

Took Terry for a belated run after listening to Prairie Home Companion. We have two inches of new snow with no new tracks yet. It is improving our "land: trails, but will soon lead to roughter trails over the ice, as the wind sculpts the snow into lumps and bumps.

The tracks noticed on our home going trail yesterday were made by a "cross-country" moose. May be moving or seeking a better wintering location. As snow increases, there may be more tracks out of normal moose habitat.

Word of the drowning of another local person who now lives at Pt. Lay has come to us. He is the son of a local old-timer. His brother was killed in the village (Pt. Lay) a few years ago by a polar bear. This recent accident occurred near Wainwright, on a Thanksgiving trip by sno-go.

November 29

High 16º F
Low 10º F
Cloudy, light snow
Light winds

Mild weather and light snow continue.

Made a trip to Sisualik for some things for Carrie's birthday tomorrow. We will hope to get to town and family for a birthday dinner. Visibility may be a problem.

Saw two or three fresh caribou tracks between here and Sisualik – the first on that side for a long time.

The Sisualik ocean is icing up. There is shore or bottom-fast ice around the Point, to about halfway to our campsite. There is open water in front of our place, but I didn't see seals or birds (there could be Glaucous Gulls or eiders).

It has been good soft and quiet weather for moose or caribou hunting, but each year this time period is used up for Thanksgiving, closely followed by Carrie's birthday. She likes to be in town with family for both occasions and we try to make it when weather permits.

Saw only one Willow Ptarmigan today. There have been some huge flocks around, but they are somewhere else now.

Our daylight into the 3-hr. bracket now. That isn't a lot of time for necessary outdoor chores, let alone time for hunting. Hopefully on return from birthday we'll have a few days to devote to the hunt.

November 30

High 12º F
Low 2º F
Cloudy, broken
Light winds

Made a fairly early start for town (10 a.m.) to celebrate Carrie's 76th birthday with town family.

Had a good trouble-free trip, though high marine waters were beginning to run out onto the Jones' staked trail we have been using. We were able to dodge around thru dry areas, as it was just coming up. Later, after arriving in town, the Front Street shore developed a belt of yellow water a foot deep. We worry about getting home tomorrow, as this is the first major overflow since ice bridge formed. Since there is no wind (locally at least) driving it, it may not stay high long. We shall see. There are a number of routes to use for home-going, depending on the magnitude of the marine water surge.

We had a good birthday dinner with Carrie's family and a few old friends.

Wonder how long 70 year olds can continue to make these sometimes strenuous Thanksgiving, birthday and Christmas trips. It is still fun trying and real good to get home again.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

DECEMBER

December 1

High 6º F
Low –6º F
Cloudy, broken
Light winds

We are having a wonderful run of moderate temperatures and light winds. There is now a 4-5 inch accumulation of loose snow on the Kotzebue side, and 2-3 inches around Sanningaruq side. This will make a fine ground storm and new snowdrifts when it does blow.

We waited till full daylight to see the overflow situation clearly. There was no water on Kotzebue bar and the level had gone down on Front Street beach. We decided to go straight to the Point by summer boat trail course. This track doesn't cross any shoal waters and is less likely to overflow as the ice rises with the water level.

It was a good decision – we had a fine, fast dry trail all the way. Using this trail, we go through our summer camp and come up that hard-packed fall trail. It is a longer trip, but a dry one all the way for today. We even saw a bit of sun; the trip took just under two hours. The ocean waters are still open to gravel edge from about half the length of Sisualik Spit west. One could expect to see seals, sea ducks, and late yearling Glaucous Gulls. We did not stop to look for anything.

After we got home, a friend called from Point Hope to tell us a 7-foot long shark had been found dead on a Point Hope beach! Can you imagine that? Will try to check to see if it has been accurately identified – nothing in the stomach, a layer of "fat" under the skin. It is probably a salmon shark that stayed north too long.

December 2

High 6º F
Low –12º F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

A cool day with mist or vapor in the air cutting down the brightness of the short time of sun even further than the low angle of its rays now. It was above the horizon less than 4 hrs.

I cut, with respect and reverence, a rather majestic white spruce tree today for our firewood. It must have started its life about the time George Washington did, and its 18-inch diameter and 50-60 foot length made it a large tree for north of the Arctic Circle. It still had a few green needles, but most left on the tree had turned reddish and our busy neighbor, the Three-toed Woodpecker, has removed moved most of the bark on the north side of the tree, indicated that spruce bark beetles and old age numbered the years of this giants life. Its inner wood is solid and quite dry, which means ideal December firewood and a good number of days of fire at that. We cut only dead and near dead spruce on Carrie's allotment within this spruce grove.

With our new supply of firewood, I will be able to spend a few days hunting for the fresh meat we feel that we need. Christmas and other activities related to it will soon occupy a good deal of our time.

Christmas Bird Count papers came yesterday, so we'll see if we can find a small group of brave people not quite in their right mind to look for birds in our 15-mile circle on some date between December 18 and January 3. We appreciate each year those folks that will make the sacrifice.

December 3

High 12º F
Low 0º F
Cloudy, snow, blizzard
E wind to 30

A first but moderate and maybe short-lived blizzard. As usual, chill factor temperatures are pretty low at the beginning, but rising steadily. More new snow promised.

Hauled in (by hand coaster drag) some of the good wood cut yesterday. It was a hot day for hunting, with too much snow and ice particles in the air, cutting visibility down. It would be a good day for moose hunting in thick cover if one knew where there was a moose. This year, moose are scarce locally, and locating one from a high lookout point is probably the best approach. Once located, getting close enough to judge sex and general condition is a next step before actual stalking to shoot.

Distant visibility is likewise needful, when caribou are in scattered groups like now.

We have diminished winds and snow forecast for the next couple of days. This, with mild temperatures, may give some hunting hope with our 3-hr. sun.

Gray Jays and ravens active around the spruce patch today. One very small passerine followed me out the trail when I took an exercise walk. It was probably a redpoll. Our flocks of crossbills haven't been around for a while, nor have local Willow

Ptarmigan. I did see working sign today of a Three-toed Woodpecker. It doesn't look like we'll break any records this year if we do a Christmas Bird Count.

This is a rather pleasant blizzard, as we are pretty snug with no burning needs to travel. As usual, our world will have a new face when the storm is over.

December 4

High 18º F
Low 12º F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 25

Went up to Milluraq lookout with snowshoes on the sno-go. Could not see any moose or fresh tracks, so when snow obscured vision, the moose hunt became a caribou hunt.

There were three different small groups of caribou just north of the lookout. I fact, one group of antlerless bulls noticed me walking on their skyline before I realized they were there. They were alerted, but not spooked.

I tried for a middle group of nine that had a couple of animals with small horns – probably young males – but they noticed me walking on a distant snowbank, there being no other approach, and moved off. All that was left was a group of undisturbed antlerless bulls. I had some cover this time and got into easy rifle range of where they were the last time I saw them, but they had moved on. I followed and got within long range, so if I was going to shoot I had to! Last chance! I did get one with the first shot and wasted a couple of more shots without results. The one I got has some kidney fat and a show on the mesentery. It will have good bone marrow and indicates that bulls are rebuilding their fat reserves. Some will be in fine shape in January-February. Females without calves are still choice meat, but I can't locate any!

Saw a very pale Gyrfalcon near dusk, while snowshoeing back to the sno-go. It is the first I've seen this winter and it was hunting hard.

There were several flocks of large light-colored redpolls around Milluraq trees and willows.

December 5

High 18º F
Low 6º F
Cloudy, snow
E-SE wind to 20

Morning visibility poor, with snow and blowing snow. The afternoon better, with

some spells of broken clouds.

That reminds me – things are more complex now. Due to our dumb situation with time (2 hrs off sun time), our sun now rises and sets in the "afternoon." It is only up 3 hrs now too, and 7-8 minutes less tomorrow.

I went up to get my caribou and break trail a bit. There are a couple more inches of fresh snow up there than here. Didn't see any fresh tracks and the dead caribou was completely drifted over. A raven was sitting nearby. Six more passed as I loaded the carcass. The meat and bones look pretty good. Probably the best we have seen from an antlerless bull in early December.

Before daylight this morning Terry (the dog) and I went down to shovel and level our creek climb out. Lo and behold! There was a fresh moose track! The first we have seen since the day we moved up from Sisualik, when there were two trails.

I told Carrie I would go up and get the caribou as quickly as possible, and come back and see what kind of a moose we have in Sanningaruq.

A mile from home I saw tracks in my morning trail, right where the trail comes up out of a dry lake bed – yes, it was the moose leaving Sanningaruq for points north. It had been coming toward me as I was coming home, but I didn't see it. I tried following the track through the open tundra, but could not, due to falling and blowing snow. We will never know if it was a barren female, which we want, or a bull, which we don't want. The tracks look blunt, which indicate a male. Had my timing been better, we would have met on the trail.

December 6

High 12º F
Low 10º F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 18

We can't shake this rather continual cloud cover and light snow. We're not getting much accumulation – 3" or so – but the air seems misty and dull. With less than 3 hours of sun, our days are pretty somber.

Ran over the town trail with Terry as seeing-eye dog. He is great for running ahead on the old firm trail that is hardly discernable to these old eyes because of new and drifted snow. He can't stand to get off it because he will sink and stumble. He is quite fast for four or five miles – about as fast as you want to go on your cross-country snow machine. He gets a great kick out of leading instead of following.

We visited the beaver house on Heart Lake and it does show air hole sign of being

occupied. Terry shows an interest too, which would be scent related.

There is also an abundant show of muskrat "push ups" on the ice of the lake – as usual. I wonder if they are thrilled to have a beaver for a winter neighbor.

The meat from the small antlerless bull caribou taken a few days ago is turning out even better than it looked. Fat in and around the bones makes the different in the soup pot. These small groups of bulls are probably overwintering here and are relatively undisturbed. They may be extra good in January and February.

Took the shotgun along today but didn't see any Willow Ptarmigan. Came home and put a new belt on the machine while it was hot. Ran a short ways without the shotgun to test the belt, and there they were! Two very tame Willow Ptarmigan, big as life!

December 7

High 10º F
Low 4º F
Cloudy
NW wind to 18

Town trip on a short day. The trail is shorter too. We were able to use our shortcut trail for the first time this year, taking us straight into Kotzebue, as the raven flies! It took us only a little more than an hour. We could have gone faster, as the ice, for the most part, is flat with little snow. There are a few isolated ice blocks standing up that require caution, but only a few. No sign of stakes yet. It would be great to have some through these short days and sometimes night travel.

Not much sign of other life on the 16-18 mile trail – not even humans. There are very few snow machine tracks. One might think that there are few sno-go's in Kotzebue. The truth is, there are few that want to go W or NW since the disappearance of one traveler headed that way nearly a month ago.

Town ravens are active. Since caribou migration was locally sparse, some that spent the summer out in the country may now have moved back to town.

Saw many old friends again, even some from other camps that happened to be in town on this good traveling day. Most of them are getting older – just like us!

We must decide what to do about the CBC this year. Should we take it on again? What date?

December 8

High 6º F
Low –3º F
Cloudy, light snow

W-NW wind to 15

Not much of a day again today, but December is like that. We are down in the two hour plus sun time again, and a cloudy day holds the "daylight" hours down further.

Ran Terry and got a load of ice today and dragged some wood in by hand. Also skinned out the legs of the last antlerless bull we got the other day and made our favorite dish of pot-roasted marrow bones. Man!! Were they good! Bulls have the largest bones, of course, and enlarging marrow after they drop their antlers. February and March are a kind of peak time for this phenomena and this is the first time we have had such good bones so early in the winter.

Aside from our Gray Jays and a few ravens, I did not see much other sign of life today. Terry indicated he smelled something on the wind, towards our hillside tree patch to the west, but he wouldn't (couldn't) tell us whether it was a ptarmigan, porcupine, fox, or moose. I stopped and glassed in that direction, but couldn't see anything.

Weather is continuing mild, which makes the firewood last longer and all mechanical equipment easier to start. That is always a blessing in December.

Still hoping for a good moose. May take a run up north again tomorrow for another look around.

There is not much hunting or traveling out of Kotzebue in our direction so far this winter. The quietness and lack of snow machine tracks is welcome.

December 9

High –2º F
Low –18º F
Thin clouds, misty
NW wind to 10

Our temperatures dropping through the day. Our mild spell coming to an end for a while. Colder weather will take some getting used to again.

Hauled in some firewood by hand and did inside paperwork most of the day.

Very few travelers in this part of the country. There is apparently, maybe for the first time, no occupied camp in Sisualik. There is one camp with dogs, but the owners may be tending them from town. That leaves only one occupied camp at Sealing Point. This means that on the coast trail between Kotzebue and Kivalina there is only one camp with a warm fire and hot water. There is the facility at Port Site that can hardly be counted as a camp site, although one might warm up and get help or a hot

drink there.

Sheefish netters continue to do well, but are having to work a little harder for their fish as temperatures make net checking more difficult. A neighbor who hadn't checked his net for several days got 50 fish today.

Have not seen crossbills for a week now. There are still many cones but may be better feeding zones somewhere else. Hope we can stir some up for the CBC.

December 10

High –12º F
Low –35º F
Clear, thin clouds, mist
W-NW wind to 15

Our first winter cold today. We made a trip to Sisualik for some needed things and nearly had an accident there. I misjudged the firmness of some slanted snowbanks by the tent, and found out too late when one side gave way and caused the sled to flop over, nearly on the tent stakes. This was at very slow speed, moving from a stopped position to another planned stop thirty yards away. Had she landed directly on a stake, serious injury could have occurred. It is often these small unexpected happenings that are most dangerous. We feel very thankful that she landed safely!

Temperature was around –18º F when we left and –30º F when we returned in a couple of hours. That's December all right. We are down to a little more than two hours of sun now. We saw it color the mountains and the clouds, but didn't see the sun itself.

Sisualik is iced up but no telling at this point whether the ice will stay or not. We always hope it will reopen for CBC day, to offer chance for eider or guillemot sightings. There were two sizes of passerine tracks on our storehouse top down there, probably Snow Bunting and redpoll. I have seen more redpolls around since the crossbills moved. They are large and light-colored redpolls, probably Hoary Redpolls.

There are some fresh ptarmigan tracks around, but didn't see any birds.

Things are not looking too bright for a big CBC count.

There wave been no large animals tracks lately down that trail.

My Superdog made a superb run down and back today. Fast as a sno-go! He hasn't looked that good all fall.

December 11

High –28º F
Low –38º F
Clear, thin clouds, haze
Light winds

Well! An early unexpected visit from the Intense Cold Monster. A high of –28º F makes you know you are in the north. The two hours of sun confirms. We have only 2 degrees left on our –40º F thermometer tonight. We sometimes do have a pre-Christmas cold spell, and this looks like it. As always, we hope it doesn't last too long.

All of our gasoline burning engines are hard to start and air movement, either wind or travel induced, brings on horrendous chill factor temperatures.

Cut and hauled in by hand some good firewood today. One appreciates good firewood at these temperatures.

Even Kotzebue is cooling off with a predicted –28º F low for tonight. We always marvel at the difference in our temperatures during windless cold spells. We are only separated by 18 miles, but our temperatures are pretty consistently ten degrees or more colder when calm winds prevail. We have temperatures similar to Noatak village under these circumstances. The least bit of wind from any direction will warm us almost immediately. We'll be looking for it. Our propane cook stove begins to act up as we approach –50º F.

Most wildlife is like us – we kind of hibernate for the first few days of it and, again like us, will have to get up and out into it to do what has to be done towards eating, drinking and keeping warm.

Our wise local raven spent the day stealing camp food hauled away and stored by Gray Jays. This raven has made a real business of hijacking from Gray Jays.

December 12

High –23º F
Low –40º F
Clear
Light winds

We have survived a couple of nights under the hand of the Intense Cold Monster and this late afternoon and evening have come up to more reasonable temperatures. This is probably due to air mass movement around us. We have had no more than light breezes, but there was ground drift up at the shee net set sites on Kobuk Lake. Kotzebue had moderate W and NW winds. It is too soon to hope this cold spell has broken.

When I got outside, ready to go drag in some more firewood, I heard an unusual clacking-echoing sound that I didn't expect to hear again this year. There! Again! Antler crashing against antler! They could only be moose since most caribou are already antlerless.

The noise was close so I picked up gun and binocs and went cautiously down our out-going snow machine trail. My foot steps were loud due to cold weather snow on an already packed trail. Only a few hundred yards from the house there was a larger bull pushing a smaller bull down hill. I moved a little closer and all moose noise stopped. They had heard my steps and were standing silent, as moose can suddenly do when alerted. The larger animal was in plain sight, the other only the real half was showing. We all stood waiting and I chambered a cartridge in case there turned out to be a cow in the group. No one wanted to make a first move. I was rather lightly clothed for such weather to play a waiting game, so after getting a side view of the bull in sight to confirm antlers, I moved a bit closer (the two were only 50 yards off already). My movement triggered theirs – the two closes took off and one very large antlered bull, till now unseen, took off at a run following the other two. Lots of moose meat! But no sign of a female, our rigid requirement.

I inspected the tracks and decided there were only three moose in the group, though they made lots of tracks.

It is interesting that all antlers seemed pretty well fastened on yet, while most caribou bulls have shed long ago.

It would be difficult to properly take care of the meat had there been a cow with them. The near –40º F temperatures would make it hard to keep the meat thawed a couple of days after killing and gutting.

Moose do seem to be moving around, so we may have a good chance in milder weather.

There was a small group of seven or eight crossbills feeding the spruces above the waiting, silent moose.

December 13

High –20º F
Low –32º F
Clear
N-NW wind to 15

A little moving air around the country brought our temperatures up a bit, but it is still cold.

We had an afternoon visitor that was great. An old friend with similar interests that gets around for a good visit once a year or so. We enjoyed his timely visit today with no interruptions! One has to be a good friend to visit 18 miles away at these temperatures.

He saw a small group of caribou just north of us.

He will also be helping out with the upcoming CBC.

We have had few visitors since our move up here and that will probably not change much till late January, when daylight has increased some.

Noatak is holding the Intense Cold Monster captive up there. Village temperatures have been –45 to –50º F for several days now.

This is ice-making time on the ocean. Ocean ice has been relatively weak for several years; maybe change is on the horizon. We benefit in June and July from solid ice formed in December and January.

December 14

High –24º F
Low –45º F
Clear
Calm

Well! This is a cold spell! And an inconvenient one at that. Maybe they are always inconvenient. We have some traveling to do and these temperatures are a little much. Getting the sno-go started is one hurdle, keeping it running is another, and then you get to test your clothes! All very interesting, but inconvenient.

Our whole region is under a cold high pressure system, just the thing to make us forget the warm sloppy fall we have had. We know we live in the arctic this day, which had two hours and one minute of sun (we saw it!). To remind us further, our propane stove became a little erratic this evening (just the pilot light). Outside propane bottles tend – the propane in the bottle that is – to want to stay inside the bottle somewhere between forty and fifty below.

The “roughneck” moose gang was back on our trail into the house again last night after our visitor had gone home. They tore up a couple of more small spruces and willow clumps. Both bull moose and bears seem to have a particular dislike for spruce trees, as they spend a lot of time and energy destroying saplings. No, they don’t eat any of the material, just vandalize – break off the branches and sometimes the leftover stem.

The group passed on down the creek this time. They turned back from here yesterday but now they have passed thru.

Our two Gray Jays, one Red Squirrel and several raves showed around camp today, evidence that other creatures are active in the deep freeze.

Willow tips must be something like crunchy cornflakes to feeding moose at these temperatures.

December 15

High –16º F
Low –45º F
Clear
Light winds

Well we worked one of those quirks of local weather to our advantage today and got away with it.

We needed to go to town this week for gas and business but we don't figure we can handle a minus 30 or more. Last night when we turned in the temperature was –45º F. At 7 a.m. it was –20º F. No wind, no clouds. Kotzebue was reporting –23º F, Noatak, -45º F. Whatever air mass movement brought our temperature up 25º F
We are thankful for. We made a break for town, making it in an hour of travel time and home in about the same. Very good straight trail. We got our gas and mail, etc. The sun was up less than 2 hrs. today but we left after daylight and got home in daylight without getting chilly! The snow machine, our biggest worry, functioned fine both ways and was not even too hard to start.

Our spruce patch is surrounded and permeated thru with moose tracks. It seems like an invasion. There must be several groups wandering around, I have only seen the three bulls and didn't know there were more since we haven't been out anywhere since the super cold weather settled in. Wonder what we will find when we have molder weather and time. We still want a fine fat cow. I actually saw more moose tracks today than I have seen since we moved up. We'll see how it goes. It really takes better eyes than I have no to quickly separate cows from antlerless bulls.

The snow is pretty well tracked up gain with ptarmigan, fox, weasel and moose tracks. There are reported to be lots of caribou tracks north of us. Short days, cold weather and the slowness of age are causing us to miss some advantageous times.

December 16

High –22º F
Low –38º F
Clear

Light winds

Today we are given hope – by the Weather Bureau – that we will be warming after some sixty and seventy below chill factor temperatures. Starting tonight. E winds to 35 knots or so will bring our temperatures above zero again. It may also bring us drifting snow, fresh snow, and overflow, not to mention snow "bumps" roughing up our smooth trails.

All this sounds pretty good for moose or caribou hunting and not so hot for Christmas week traveling needs. We shall see, but it will be great to go outdoors without holding your breath again. Temperatures from –20º F to –40º F for too many days in a row becomes oppressive.

We have a lot of moose tracks around our spruce patch now, with new ones every day. With cold and still air, there has not been opportunity to snowshoe or travel about to find out what is going on. After a month and half of no tracks thru here, something is up. This movement around the time bulls are dropping their antlers has been noted in other years, and may be a seeking out of better browsing range for the rest of the winter, before snow depth builds. There seems to be all sizes of tracks – except calves. There should be one that fits our criteria of need.

There are signs of a few redpolls and crossbills still around. Hope that some can be found for CBC day. We haven't chosen that day yet – several people are on alert so we can designate a day on short notice. Our crew must come out of Kotzebue, so a good travel day is necessary. Less than two hours of sun up time further complicates the count day.

December 17

High 6º F
Low –22º F
Clear, clouding late
E-SE wind to 45

A blow today and very sharp chill factor temperatures while the temps were below zero. Something like –60 to –70º F.

An old friend from Noorvik spent most of the day in the middle of Kobuk Lake when he became disoriented. Search and Rescue did locate him this late evening. It must have been a cold day for him.

After had hauling in some firewood, I snowshoed around inside the trees in our spruce patch. Was surprised by the number of moose tracks. They spent some time here during that extreme cold calm spell. Did not see any today, but it is good to know they are around. One of these days, things will come together and we will have moose

meat – hopefully fat moose meat.

Ravens and jays, those hardy northern birds, were the only creatures wearing feathers that were seen today. We do have word though of numbers of Common Eiders at Sealing Point. Can you imagine these big dark birds bobbing around in the saltwater waves with air temperature chill factors down to seventy below? The creatures and the niches they fill in this old world are pretty remarkable.

Last week, with low temperatures of forty below, one stands in awe of all those "outdoor" creatures we share our world with, doing what they must do day by day to continue to exist. Those kinds of temps are hard on warm-blooded organisms.

There were successful human travelers today. Some from Noatak to Kotzebue, some from Noorvik to Kotzebue.

KOTZ Radio is off the air today – very frustrating with the Gulf War on, impeachment proceedings, and local Search and Rescue efforts on-going, not to mention the need for weather updates. Hope they are able to get back on soon.

December 18

High 20º F
Low 7º F
Cloudy, snow
SE wind to 40

A very dull day. With wind, snow, and heavy cloud cover we didn't even see much help from the 1 hr, 56 min of sun. The moon is at its lowest point.

The increasing temperatures however are fine.

Fired up the sno-go (first time in several days) and got a load of needed ice.

Hand dragged some more wood in. Terry the dog enjoyed the two exercise trips, as well as the mild temperatures. The short trip to the ice lake in the blizzard was fun – for him. As I read his mind I could hear him wondering where the rest of the world had gone. Visibility was less than ¼ mile in all directions.

Camp Gray Jays and several ravens were the only other living creatures noted today.

After two days of high winds with very little new snow, there is lots of ground, tussock and glare ice showing. There may also be some low but frequent bumps on the trail from wind-sculpted snow mounds.

Well, by the end of next week our daylight hours will have begun to increase instead

of decrease. That is a happy thought and indicates that we are about halfway through the short days for this winter.

December 19

High 34º F
Low 20º F
Cloudy, snow early
SE wind to 30
S wind to 15

A record breaking daily high for Kotzebue. We did not think last week, when we were have forty below temperatures, that we would see thawing temps so soon again. Tonight our ice cream has melted!

We have a strange moose story today. This afternoon, when blizzard conditions lifted and the air cleared of snow, our sky turned orange with a very, very low sun. It was a remarkable display of sun on the next to shortest day of the year (tomorrow).

I started up the sno-go, and took Terry out the back way to break down our trails (3" of new snow and drifts on exits and entrances to sheltered portions of the trail). We made the loop up the hill and down to the second creek crossing – there was what I though was a single moose track in the new snow, headed up towards our house. Checked the creek for a ways, then headed home on the trail with the thought of looking for the moose (on snowshoes) while there was daylight. When we got to the creek crossing near the house, there were moose tracks. Looked this way and that, then drove on into camp – there were two moose tracks right in front of the house window, up to the sled I had just turned over before taking off! Carrie was home but didn't look out the window in time! I put on snowshoes and followed the tracks around till dark, but the moose were spooked much by this time and didn't let me see them, though their tracks led me around the house one more time. We do want a female moose, and these may be both bulls. But I wanted to see them to make sure. Both tracks seem blunt and their curiosity about sleds and stuff seems bull-like.

Overflow may be building with strong south winds on outer coast.

December 20

High 33º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, some clearing
E-SE wind to 18

The daylight seemed longer and brighter today, probably because of lighter cloud cover. The good thing is that daylight time won't get any shorter now. We'll probably have a minute or so gain by Tuesday.

Today was a lively moose day in our spruce patch. On snowshoes, I followed up on the one I ran out of time on yesterday. As I reached the hight bank on the creek, I saw a moose lying down under some trees on the other side of the creek. It was within shooting range and I didn't see any antlers. It soon stood up and began to move off. I didn't have long to look at the rear end, but it seemed uniformly brown (cows usually show a light patch) and I thought I could make out antler disks on the head. All this added up to no shot. I was ready, but unsure of the sex. Spent much of the day following that one animal around to try to get a closer look. Never did, though I saw it from a distance several times. Saw two more moose from a distance too far to tell sex, then two more bulls with antlers on the way home. Carrie disappointed with only stories and no meat. She would be more disappointed if I shot one that turned out to be skinny!

Several flocks of birds around today – crossbills and redpolls. Willow Ptarmigan able to search around for blueberry stains on the snow again after strong winds and mild temperatures.

The ocean is free of ice again, from near Sisualik Point all the way west. There is no "shelf ice." We have a chance for Eiders and Black Guillemot on our Christmas Bird Count if and when we get around to doing it. There is currently a lot of fresh overflow.

December 21

High 28º F
Low 28º F
Cloudy, fog
Light winds

Well, we have made it again! One hour, 44 min of sun yesterday and today. Maybe there will be a little gain tomorrow. Soon we will have more sun time than we can really use.

Went down to Sisualik today to check the trail for overflow and travel conditions so we can get to town family for Christmas. The trail was good, with only a short detour around some water.

There is a big black ocean down there again, and the music of waves continues. Our camp and things are still there, but the top section of stovepipe is gone! Strong winds! And ice hard snowbanks.

All of the shore fast ice is said to be gone from Sisualik to Pt. Hope. We will have a chance to see sea beards on our CBC if we get it done.

There is lots of grass and ground showing on the tablelands and tide flats now, after

the gales of last week.

Very little sign of people traveling down that way. There is no resident person now from Port Site to Kotzebue-Sisualik. There are dogs at Doc Harris Camp but no people. Family travels from town to feed them.

Moose tracks on the trails around again, but little time to check out the makers of the trails.

Part of our upper creek crossing dropped its ice to creek bed. No problem yet as it is to one side of the trail. So far the ice bridge is intact.

Had a report from a traveler yesterday that there are lots of caribou and wolf tracks around the Aggie, east of the Hatchery.

December 22

High 28º F
Low 7º F
Cloudy, fog, clearing
Light winds

What a delightful town trip! We decided to round trip today for shopping and take a chance on travel conditions for Thursday morning. We were much worried about trail conditions, considering all the search and rescue efforts the last couple of days. Also, the prospect of traveling in fog for the crossing, without stakes, was awesome.

We left at daylight (11 a.m.) in very thick fog. Just as we got down to the edge of the tablelands, a golden-orange veil appeared on the southern horizon, and then suddenly the fog and veil were gone, leaving a clear sky and surface air with a very orange horizon, caused by the near-rising sun over an ice-free, glassy Sisualik ocean. It was quite a startling and beautifully unexpected sight, probably never seen before at solstice time with a temperature of 28º F.

The entire sky soon cleared and gave us a good look at fourteen miles of ice trail – without a drop of overflow water. We had a perfect trip in and home, without problems. Taikuu!

With the clearing sky came cooling temperatures and our 7º F low came at 11 p.m. this evening.

There was a fine flock of Willow Ptarmigan right in our trail at the entrance to tablelands. In the dim light background and our bright sno-go light, they looked as big as white, black-tailed turkeys.

We checked for sea birds at a single location near our Sisualik tent, but didn't see anything in the water – without binocs.

This has been a great day and we may have one more minute of sun tomorrow than we had today.

December 23

High 16º F
Low 2º F
Clear
Light winds

Our moon growing rapidly – again – and we gained two minutes of sun time today. Outdoor lighting is improving!

Worked things around the camp today to get ready for our two-day absence. Carrie wrapping presents and doing a little baking for the town gang.

All of our vegetation and other things above ground level have a Christmas frosting from the freezing fog we have had a couple of times in the past few days. It will only stay till the first real wind picks up, but it has held for two days now. It makes our spruce patch really look like a Christmas card. We have before claimed that we live in a winter Christmas card.

Moose continue to follow my new tracks around after I make them. We have no time now to check out the animals. That will come later – if they are still around.

The relatively mild and clear air and sky are a real treat after a long spell of clouds and snow particles.

Red Squirrels very busy and noisy today, busy shucking the scales from spruce cones.

Squirrels, moose and Short-tailed Weasels are the track makers in Sanningaruq now.

We plan to be in town tomorrow night and the next, so Terry alone will be the camp caretaker. My, will he get lonely!

December 24

High 12º F
Low –4º F
Clear
Light winds

A very good early trip in for Christmas Eve. We got into town thru the Sisualik trail with a good look at newly forming ice on the open sea. We did not see seals or birds,

but spending more time looking we might have seen both. The old shore ice begins near the cluster of buildings a mile or so short of the Point.

The ice trail is good, direct and flat, with a few stakes where it begins at the Point but heads off into the overflow area. Our present trail is “dog leg” shaped, but that is where it should be staked in order to survive winter overflow zones.

Most of the overflow from the last session is now frozen enough to travel on. But we are still avoiding it.

Town ravens will benefit from holiday activities.

Lots of people in the church for the Christmas Eve program. Haven’t been in such a crowd for a while. It was a pleasant time with lots of kids, old friends, and families.

December 25

High 6º F
Low –8º F
Clear
Light winds

We overnighted well and enjoyed leisure time with family.

After more visiting, but before feast time, we made a change in plans and decided to head home and catch the house before more inside freezing occurred.

We had a good trip home – beautiful with new sun too. Terry was mighty glad to see us back.

Country ravens were gathered at Doc Harris Camp, where dogs are still tied and are probably feasting on stored dog feed that they are not supposed to be at.

First big dog races tomorrow – a spring and a long distance to Noatak and back. Good weather for it.

December 26

High 13º F
Low –12º F
Clear
Light N-NE wind

The good weather is holding so we thought we might call the CBC tomorrow. That may not have been such a good plan because on checking possible helpers, several had prior commitments or a preference for some other day of the week.

Our temperatures are warming again this evening and it would be great to make the count on a cloudless warm day. Our potential crew is small, but it might be best to make use of conditions while they are so good. We shall see how things look in the morning.

Moose have really pounded down our back approach trail! Have not seen such a mass of tracks before. There was antler banging quite close to the house this morning. I didn't take time to investigate. Maybe after Christmas week and New Year's there will be time for other things – like moose and caribou.

Ed Iten making a good start in the dog-racing season. He is into Noatak first. They have made the Baker 120 into a two-day race. It was in the past a "tough on dogs" one day race. They have gotten school kids into helping with overnight dog care. It seems a good change.

Numerous spruce cones on the ground indicate some flocks of crossbills are yet around. Hope they make a good showing tomorrow.

Our willows in low places are still carrying a heavy load of frost from our times of freezing frost.

December 27

High 14º F
Low –18º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

Miracle of miracles! We did the CBC today with the good help of Kotzebue friends. Will give our results on the next page.

Things went real well with only one injured sno-go that was able to limp home. A small but enthusiastic group of birders was here, and some birds.

There were no surprises with the birds, but the weather was near perfect, which is somewhat of a surprise. Bright clear skies, nearly two hours of full sun, and temperatures jumping up and down from – to + and back. It was a very nice late-December day.

Almost as many animals as birds were seen, with both moose and caribou seen by field crews.

Willow Ptarmigan and ravens – white and black – were the most plentiful birds, with a few of other species to make a reasonable overall count. We were hoping for some birds of prey and maybe some sea birds, but young ice already covers the portion of

ocean we have within our count circle. Gyrs or goshawks, Hawk Owls, and Snowy Owls just didn't turn up.

Temps dropped late in the day with most of the day's activity taking place between –8º F and +8º F. The thermometer was pretty jumpy today.

I snowshoed for 3 hrs. around our spruce patch and flushed three adult antlered bull moose and one antlerless animal. Also a couple of Spruce Grouse and a Three-toed Woodpecker. A couple of redpolls, three raven, and eight White-winged Crossbills completed my tally.

December 28

High 6º F
Low –18º F
Clear
N wind to 18

Another moderate clear bright day with over 2 hrs. of sun, and a gain of 5 minutes tomorrow.

Recovering from visitors and CBC yesterday. We had six people and six sno-go's – a real lively bird-seeking crew.

The found eight species, and numbers as follows:

Common Raven – 28
Willow Ptarmigan – 263
White-winged Crossbill – 18
Spruce Grouse – 2
Redpoll – 16
Gray Jay – 4
Three-toed Woodpecker – 1
Snow Bunting – 10

Total birds – 342

They came out on Jones Camp trail, which has a lot of frozen overflow that is safe enough but rough and slippery. One snow machine suffered damage but made it home in one piece. They returned to town by the Sisualik trail, which is, once you get to it, much smoother, with snow on the ice for the full 9-mile crossing.

We had great weather for the count and enjoyed the visitors. We're glad they were brave enough to come.

Had to spend most of today on firewood. The chainsaw was cranky and chopping wood with an axe is pretty slow. The saw did recover after most of the work was done. Break downs certainly make you appreciate time and energy saving devices.

Moose are still around, with antler banging heard often in the still air around the house. May have time soon to resume our search for a suitable winter moose.

December 29

High 6º F
Low –22º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 10

Town trip today. Kind of a cool one, but the five more minutes of sun we gained today was noticeable, and we were able to use our "straight in" trail. It is much shorter, and the overflow is all well frozen, though those frozen overflow stretches are rough and some slippery glare ice places are not fun. Fortunately they are relatively short, mostly on both sides of Egg Island (Kikiktaichak). Nine miles of the trail are super fine, high speed, snow covered ice. The tableland portion is the lumpiest for anyone riding in a sled. These are snow lumps – "washboarding" caused by the last sideways snowdrift.

Ravens quite active in town. They seem more often in the air than local aircraft, which is saying a lot.

We saw a couple of other traveling sno-go's, but there is not much "out of town" traffic yet. There are a lot of in town snow machines!

Our cold seems to be deepening again. Today's low has come late this evening and it may still be dropping. We feel very thankful for the moderate weather we have had during this holiday season. It has been great.

December 30

High 16º F
Low –24º F
Clear
N wind to 18

Our temperatures began to rise last night when some high clouds turned up. We were surprised to find it well above zero this morning, and it has continued there all day – a very pleasant day with almost 2 ½ hours of sun now!

Worked up a pretty good sled load of firewood today down at Napaaqtuuraq. Also, surprise of surprises, there is a rabbit track! Is it the same one that passed thru here more than a month ago? There are also many squirrels and many trees with Spruce

Grouse droppings beneath them.

Another town trip tomorrow to take in some of the New Year's events. We hope to make it home by moonlight. There is a lot of it now and the weather may permit this kind of adventure again.

Hopefully I will be able to get back to hunting for fresh meat after this last festivity.

Oh boy! Days are getting longer rapidly – by five minutes a day now.

December 31

High 8º F
Low –18º F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

Off to town again to celebrate the beginning of the new year. My – so many nines – 1999. Next year it will be so many zeroes. Maybe it will take longer than usual to get used to the annual change in check and letterhead routine.

Our near perfect mid winter weather and trail conditions continue. Our "short cut" to town trail has two weak links. The tableland portion (6 miles) is hard, but bumpy with the last-formed crosswind little drifts. The tree frozen overflow crossings (2 miles) have jumbled and glare ice. These places are on the shoals on both sides of Egg Island. The other 10 miles is super fast smooth trail with snow-covered ice.

We had a beautiful run in, with the temps holding around zero and a clear bright sky showing a very strong orange coloration from the near rising sun. We were in town before it climbed above the horizon, still after 12 noon. We are gaining 5 to 7 minutes each day now, and the rising sun will soon be in the morning again – where it should always be. We are still two hours off sun time – a crime!

Since we have a near full moon and good weather and trail. We hope to make an after midnight run home. That will make today a very long day for us, but that's kind of fun once in a while.

It is a good New Year's exercise to contrast the holiday evening and night in the "hubbub" of man's celebration with the quiet splendor of snow and ice-covered sea, mountains and trees bathed in celestial moonlight.