

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

Volume 10: 1999
& Appendices



Beach pea

by
William R. Uhl

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

Volume 1: 1990

Volume 2: 1991

Volume 3: 1992

Volume 4: 1993

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Volume 6: 1995

Volume 7: 1996

Volume 8: 1997

Volume 9: 1998

Volume 10: 1999 & Appendices

Volume 11: 2000

Volume 12: 2001

Volume 13: 2002

Volume 14: 2003 (with 2004 summary)

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

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 of resource observations made by a keen `naturalist` who has spent 54 years observing and documenting the natural processes of the monument and the subsistence practices of the resident Inupiaq people.

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

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

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

**CAPE KRUSENSTERN
NATIONAL MONUMENT**

RESOURCE REPORTS

1999

WILLIAM R. UHL

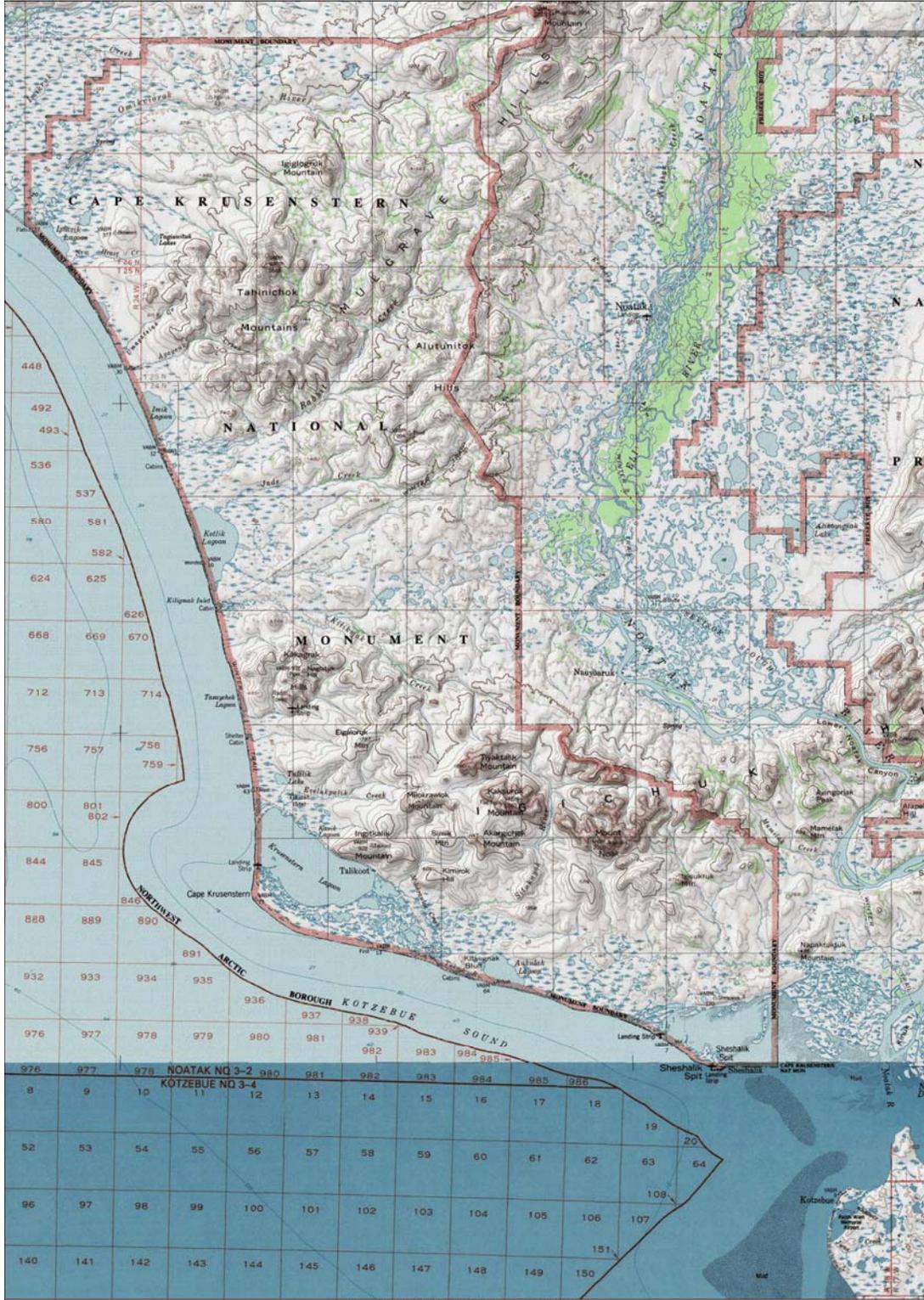


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CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JANUARY

January 1

High 16° F
Low -8° F
Clear, few clouds
NE-E wind to 15

Well we made it! Our first 18-mile moonlight journey home in the early hours of the new 1999. The contrast was certainly there! During the day we visited friends and family that had TV constantly showing car chases, wrecks, crashes and various kinds of crime; food ordered from prepared food delivery places at astronomical prices; a wonderful time of church fellowship with singing and testimony; a monotonous round and round a track sno-go race; and a few fireworks. We missed the main fireworks display because we couldn't be both in the church and at the sno-go racetrack.

We left the artificial world of streetlights, roaring sno-go's and fireworks at about 1:30 a.m. and melted quickly into a real world of silent, breathtaking splendor. What a natural contrast to the usual perceived "darkness" of deep winter in the Arctic. Light was everywhere, the soft but complete light of moon glow.

We were glad there was not a big black moose or two standing in our trail as we turned into the willows and trees of our house trail. There were fresh tracks.

We didn't get to bed until after 3 a.m. and I think I brought home some flu – but it was a spectacular beginning for 1999.

Terry was also overjoyed since he didn't expect us home in the middle of the night.

January 2

High 10° F
Low -1° F
Cloudy, snow
E-SE-S wind to 15

We have a new scene on the weather side. No clear sky, no sun, air full of snow particles, and 3/4" of new snow on the ground this morning.

My flu was somewhat better, but still there this morning. Took a short snowshoe walk up thru our spruce patch but there were no new moose tracks. Distant visibility

January

was poor. There were several groups of small birds in the trees – redpolls and crossbills.

A friend reported moose and fresh wolf tracks north of us yesterday. The wolves had made tracks in snowshoe tracks of CBC people. There were at least, maybe more – one large track, one small. One of the moose was a pretty good-looking cow. They saw only one group of caribou near the head of our creek. They also reported seven Rock Ptarmigan that we may include in our count week.

Some early “fresh meat” hunters out of Kotzebue are having good hunting in the Wolf Creek area (NE Kobuk Lake). The meat is reportedly quite fat. One former reindeer herder reports taking some on glare ice without shooting. He killed them with a knife when they couldn’t handle the slippery ice.

We have word of a tragic New Year’s killing in Kivalina – also with a knife.

The New Year is underway with good and bad reports early on. Our weather change seems ominous after having such a long spell of good and unseasonably warm weather – especially with so much bad weather reported in the lower 48 states.

January 3

High 2° F
Low -20° F
Thin clouds, snow, clear
N-NE wind to 15

Clearing and temp drop late afternoon. We may be getting back to our more normal mid winter temperatures for clear weather. We have certainly had it fine for the full holiday season. The lack of storms and moderate clear sky temps have been wonderful. Taikuu!

We had an inch and a half of new, cold weather snow on the ground this morning, the squeaky hard dragging kind.

Went down to get ice and run Terry early. Flu still has a grip on me, so as the temps dropped outside work became uncomfortable.

The only new tracks were a single fox track down past the Beaver Lake and Willow Ptarmigan tracks in two places. Now that we’re free of the holiday and ready for a moose, they seem to have left our spruce patch. We shall see. A friend did report a good looking female north of us a few days ago.

Fish Creek camp gang (town family) came home from the long New Year's weekend with glowing reports of rabbit tracks and caribou in the trees up that way. Good news! The Snowshoe Hares do really seem to be coming back.

In one week now the sun will be high enough to come in our SE facing windows and activate our "rainbow prisms." We are gaining at the rate of 5 to 7 minutes a day and already have more than 2 ½ hours, up from the 1 hr., 43 min. we had on the 20th and 21st of December.

A sno-go went roaring through camp today without stopping. We thought we had a Sunday visitor.

January 4

High -20° F
Low -27° F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

Cold weather is back, and the flu with it is not a good combination – especially on your birthday. Yes, it is here again. There is a certain thrill that comes on your birthday after you have passed the 70th. It comes from a long belief that one would never live that long!

The New Year flu is not too hard to live with at this point – able to do necessary chores, but voice problems made telephone "thank you-s" for birthday wishes difficult. Voice comes out something like a frog-parrot sound.

Our tree patch has gotten pretty quiet. The moose are gone (I don't know where) and only our friendly weasel and numerous shrews have made new tracks. The inch of new snow has presented the shrews with some problems, at least those that have in mind to travel any distance. The snow lacks substance, so they can't surface travel and it is not deep enough to hide their tunneling. The results are a strange tunneling that shows a raised tunnel with the roof falling in at regular intervals. It almost looks like a "new" animal track. There is little sign of voles, probably because our friendly weasel has pretty much finished them off around camp.

We heard a few planes today, but now snow machines. A nice quiet birthday without stress.

January

January 5

High -6° F
Low -23° F
Clear, few orange clouds
Light winds

The flu is passing. Voice is good today. May even think of a run to town tomorrow if weather moderates a bit, for mail and business chores.

Neighbor friend reports seeing caribou and moose up the Hatchery trail today. Maybe I'll soon be in shape for a little hunting. It has been a while since I took off on a serious hunting sortie. We have three hours of sun now and those long antlerless bull caribou must be in fine shape now, and the cow moose may be waiting just over the hill.

Our camp Gray Jays and two ravens our only visitors today. The jays are having a "high on the hog" winter. We have lots of scraps and only two birds. Ravens are not doing as well expect the two around camp that have learned to hijack the jay's caches.

A single Willow Ptarmigan went barreling through the trees this evening, near the house. He appeared to have just shaken a Gyr or Goshawk off his tail and was taking no chances on getting caught unaware again.

Maintaining life around here is not easy for any of God's creatures.

Spruce cones are still being worked by the small birds and their scraps are helping to support ground-fast Red-backed and Tundra Voles, which keeping looking back over their shoulders for Short-tailed and Least Weasels.

Terry the Dog getting tired of waiting for a sno-go run. I haven't fired up the sno-go for several cold days.

January 6

High -14° F
Low -24° F
Clear
Light N-NE wind

Made the town trip and got back just at sun down. Got over there before sun up. With our continued time skew (2 hrs. off sun time) the sun is still rising in the afternoon – where it never should. It should be back before noon, in the morning, in a week or ten days. The sun will be back in our house in two or three days, hopefully activating our rainbow prisms.

The trail on the ice was much better with the inch and a half of new snow. One small section between mainland and island (2 miles) was bumpy with blown snow. The rest was a super highway – fast as you want to go without hazard.

Moose nearly took over the camp while we were gone. There have been none making tracks here since the fresh snow. On our way home – by the same trail – we crossed three large moose trails headed for our house tree patch, from down creek. They have been all around, back and front of the house. We didn't see them and they didn't bother the dog. Maybe tomorrow I'll try to get a look at them.

In the meantime, we brought nearly a sled load of meat and fish home from town – from friends. Some nice fat moose meat too!

We did miss Carrie's anniversary-birthday present in the mail though. After we got home they called and told us it came in the late afternoon mail. Disappointment!

The sun rays touched many things again today – trees, mountains, two-story buildings, oil storage tanks, and most elevated things. It is coming back – for sure – again!

January 7

High 8° F
Low -23° F
Clear
N-NW wind to 18

Carrie's day of flu today. She woke up almost without a voice this morning. This particular strain of flu seems tough on the voice box. After hot coffee, hot water, and hot chicken soup broth, she was able to do her radio and phone contacts. She is better yet this evening and we hope both of us are now on the upside of this particular episode. The congestion and phlegm continue on for a few days, but is tolerable. That first smash at the lower throat and voice box is rough.

Nephew got in this afternoon for a short hunt with a borrowed machine. He hasn't been over for a month as the machine he had ran out of steam.

Terry the Dog and I worked up a sled load of firewood, working down at Napaaqtuuraq in the sun. Napaaqtuuraq is a spruce grove on the side of a south facing ridge. The early sun just pours in there all day. It is a neat timbered place on the edge of barren lands. It therefore bears the brunt of destruction, from man, beast, insect, wind and lightning. Still, the grove carries on, with many young seedlings amongst the ancients of three, four or five hundred years.

January

There are many moose tracks there right now, and oddly, many shrew tracks on the surface snow moving from location to another. This is a great concentration of our largest and smallest mammal. There were no moose tracks earlier this fall. There is also a good concentration of Red Squirrels and Spruce Grouse, this being the last suitable habitat for these species. The tracks of one Snowshoe Hare were there last week; twenty years ago, Carrie and I shot 150 hares there on one February day.

January 8

High 8° F
Low -22° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 15

Well this is the January day that we once had the sunrays enter our front window. But though we watched closely today between 1 and 2 p.m., we did not catch it in. Nearby trees and snowbank north of us was touched. Prior to that one time we had considered the 9th of January to be the date in most years. It is forecast to be clear again tomorrow so maybe we shall catch sunrays in our house!

Nephew saw a group of 25 bull caribou north of us today and got one that was in fine shape - fat traces throughout and good bone marrow.

At the same time, our other camp family on Fish Creek got a female from a group near the trees in their zone of north Kobuk Lake.

We have suspected for some time that there are numbers of caribou wintering through that tree edge zone from Noorvik to and a little beyond the Hatchery. We are located on the west end of this zone and there have been bulls here throughout the winter. Their feed is good and they have been much undisturbed through this "short day" period. Now the attraction of good fresh meat will provoke a good deal of cruising and hunting by Kotzebue and outlying camp people. These caribou will use tree patches to escape sno-go chase.

The taking of a few wolves will further encourage hunters to be out.

Polar bears were reported to be in the area around Sealing Point yesterday. Some of the boys that have a house and dog there went down yesterday. They have not yet seen tracks of the reported bears.

January 9

High -4° F
Low -20° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

A remarkable long spell of clear weather for the coming back of the sun. And it is back! At 1:30 p.m. the orange rays of the sun came into one of the small southeasterly facing windows in our house. What this means is that every day now in 1999, till late November, when the sky is cloud free the rays of the sun will enter our house – a great milestone is passed. It is a welcome one after an absence of a month and a half.

The flu still holding us down but there is improvement each day.

By VHF report we heard of a few sheefish taken by hook on the Kobuk Delta. This is an early date for that annual event linked to the light of the sun.

There were no travelers this way today – a little surprising in lieu of the fact that good caribou meat is to be found in our direction. With some hunters, antlerless bulls are not preferred, even when the meat is fat. The greatest stampede of hunters at this point in time will be toward range where there are known to be overwintering cows. It is not unusual for bulls to separate themselves from cows on winter range. It is also not unusual for these groups of bulls to forage in or close to spruce forest. They quickly learn to slip into the trees when snow machine noise comes into their area.

Hope things improve a bit here around camp so I can do some traveling and hunting.

The solar panel that charges our telephone battery pack is finally climbing out of the red. We overused it last fall and it has been slow to recover through short days.

January 10

High -10° F
Low -20° F
Clear
Light winds

Another bright and clear day with a bit of sun in the house. Not enough to produce rainbows through the prisms, but it won't be long now. We have 3 ½ hours of sun now, and good “daylight” from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

It was a quiet Sunday, but we did have two visitors that we enjoyed hearing news from.

Earlier I ran the dog down to Beaver Lake, where we saw a variety of new tracks and a small flock of Willow Ptarmigan.

January

The new tracks were a single moose coming down into our creek from Napaaqtuuraq and two caribou moving the same way from the west. These are the first caribou tracks we've seen close around our spruce patch for ages. It is probably the result of snow machine pursuit north of us.

The moose track was quite large and blunt, probably a bull. My trail made a loop and I didn't notice either track outside the loop, so both caribou and moose may still be in or near our spruce patch.

Both of us seem to be coming out of our flu symptoms, but slowly. Carrie with medicine, me without. I see medicines as a last resort. Carrie has more faith in them. We come to that mentality quite naturally.

Our temperatures seem warmest in the early morning and coldest in the afternoon.

January 11

High -18° F
Low -26° F
Clear
Light winds

Fine clear weather again and bright, but a little too cold to enjoy the outside world for recent flu victims.

It is interesting that a near 80-year-old friend and Sisualik neighbor brought us five fresh sheefish today! He has had remarkably good fishing with his under ice net at the mouth of the Noatak this year; his good luck has almost made a new man of him.

Things are kind of quiet around the country, due mostly to the continued -20° F temperatures and quiet air. It is possible hunting and traveling weather, but without wind to deal with noise, and temperatures that test your clothing and ability to cope, it is more work than fun. It is a good time to do only the outdoor chores you need to and catch up on those things that can be done inside.

There was quite a lot of "orange light" around our small world today. As the sun "comes back" at the rate of 7 or 8 minutes a day, its rays carry a deep orange coloration to everything it touches – tress, snowbanks, mountains, houses and even the snow or ice underfoot. This, no doubt, is caused by its travel path low on the horizon. Even though you many to wish to think of the cold sun this month, you will find that during the short time it is up, it is all around, "all over" and you cannot ignore it when the sky is cloudless.

There has been no sign of new moose tracks around Sanningaruq the past couple of days.

Even our Gray Jays and camp weasels are relatively inactive in their “land of plenty” (over-abundant scraps).

Terry the Superdog is enjoying his extended house time of the past few weeks.

January 12

High 8° F
Low -26° F
Cloudy, snow

Finally a change in weather and surface of the country. Don't know when we will see the sun again. Clouds were thick enough already this morning, so we could not see the waning moon. The first snowflakes were not far behind.

Inside frost (on hinges and windows) melted soon after the fire got going. It is great to have temps above zero again.

Terry and I went down to Napaaqtuuraq for firewood and enjoyed the outdoor freedom of action that warmer temperatures permit.

We did run across the day-old tracks of a small group of caribou. One was dripping a few drops of blood. They headed directly into the trees at our woodcutting place in the tree patch. They probably had been run from up north of us by snow machines.

Both fog and snow settled down, so there was no opportunity for scanning the surrounding country.

Kotzebue had a nearly one-hour long power outage this evening. Because the phones still worked, all of us camp people on our own generators were teasing various friends and family with stories of how bright we are. There was even a circling jet in the snow and fog. Light is a wonderful thing. During most of the year we even take the light of the sun for granted – until it is almost gone. Then we appreciate it!

Sheefish netters continue to have great catches. It has been a good season for them – which means we will probably have a good she hooking season from February on.

I'm feeling good enough to try hunting a bit again.

January

January 13

High 16° F
Low 10° F
Cloudy, snow, fog
N-NW wind to 15

Five inches of very light new snow around the country now. It is the kind that flies at the least excuse. A lot flies over the sno-go hood as you travel along. It will flow much with the first 20 k wind.

Traveled up to Milluraq lookout area this morning but didn't see a track of any kind. Was able to see some distance from the lookout before it started to snow again, but didn't locate either moose or caribou. I returned home, had lunch, and picked up the dog and went west to look around, but that didn't go either, as it soon started to snow again. We have lots of snow now but no tracks in it yet around here.

There was a big flock of small passerines on the hillside at Milluraq. Two hundred or more and they seemed to be mostly redpolls, but also some White-winged Crossbills.

Both people and animals will be alert to increasing winds with all this loose snow around. Visibility will be extremely limited.

The flu has relaxed its grip on us now and I am ready to hunt if I can find fresh tracks somewhere.

Tomorrow our sun will rise two minutes before 12 noon. Hurray! The sun was never meant to rise in the afternoon and of course wouldn't if our clocks were not manipulated two hours out of sync with the sun.

Barrow will see the sun again in only ten days now. I bet that they are ready for it, and I hope they have a clear sky on the 23rd.

January 14

High 16° F
Low -12° F
Cloudy, snow, clearing
SW-W wind to 18

Changing weather today – cooling winds with snow-fog diminishing. Visibility poor most of the daylight hours, and there was four hours of sun today, though we didn't see it.

Couldn't decide what to do today – that is, which method to use. I felt well enough to hunt, but poor visibility made snow machining not too attractive. I decided to

snowshoe around the spruce patch, but didn't have a lot of hope since we haven't seen fresh tracks of any kind since the new snow.

The wind was wrong for the up creek willow patch that the high creek bank overlooks and I didn't see anything there. I continued up creek on a path that led through a camp site used by a friend several years ago. Thinking of the friend as I moved through, I went past a large tree trunk, and there across the creek, framed by willows white with new snow and frost, was a large antlerless black/dark moose. It was less than 100 yards and looking directly at me. I moved my hand in a futile beginning to getting my binocs in hand. The moose took off, leaving me with nothing to look at and my rifle still on my shoulder. I suspect that it was a large female, but I wouldn't shoot without more confirmation of that. I followed the animal nearly all the rest of the daylight hours without getting another glimpse of it. Very unusual. It was really spooked. It must have scented me before I saw it. Tough snowshoeing with our 5-6 inches of new fluff. Tough day with little reward.

I saw a hunting Gyrfalcon just after daylight. A mink and Willow Ptarmigan were the only other track-makers out besides the one moose.

January 15

High -12°
Low -34°
Clear, few clouds
N wind to 10

A cold bright day with lots of sun but little warmth.

Our rapid drop in temperatures last night and abundant layer of soft fluffy snow about killed enthusiasm here for hunting. I did get the sno-go started after a long pulling session and ran over our near camp trails. The dog wouldn't go with me due to cold feet and soft snow. Old trails not visible – had to make new ones. Found our lower creek crossing overflowed and couldn't cross part of it. The exposed water was frozen good enough, but the snow-covered portion remains unfrozen but hidden – a trap for the unwary.

No fresh tracks but a weasel and a few ptarmigan.

Dog and sno-go races this weekend if winds remain moderate.

It is good to have our sunrise in the morning again instead of the afternoon. It seems more right even if we are still two hours off sun time and still have an artificially short morning (and an overly long afternoon for the season).

We have passed four hours of sun time, working on five. Next month we'll feel it.

January

January 16

High -6° F
Low -25° F
Cloudy, sun, snow
E-SE wind to 20

Dog races cancelled due to high chill factor temperatures.

Took a snowshoe walk up creek after lunch and ran into a moose browsing down this way. I thought I had spotted him-her this time before my presence was known, but I was wrong. The wind was good this time but he must have picked up the squeak, squeak of my snowshoes on the cold air snow. When I first spotted the moose it was standing – staring in my direction, a tip-off that it had been alerted. It started feeding again but turned around and with a head jerking gesture moved off at a fairly rapid rate and was lost in the trees. It had been about 300 yards off and seemed light colored on the lower part of the hind legs. I could not make out for sure the light-colored vulva area that is clear sign of sex. It had no antlers and I could not make out any circular antler bases, but light was not too good.

I didn't directly follow the tracks this time, but cut over the hill where I knew I could oversee a large stretch of creek willows. I didn't see it. I cut the tracks and found that it had turned back up the creek. I again made a shortcut, hoping to intercept, but that didn't work either. I didn't find his tracks up creek, so he may have left the creek to the east. It seems likely that it is the same moose I followed without seeing a couple of days ago. Have an idea that I will see more of that animal yet.

Noticed three caribou on the knoll above a patch of trees to our west. These are the first seen from our spruce patch for a long time.

I'm not having a lot of luck catching up with our mid winter fresh meat.

January 17

High -8° F
Low -38° F
Clouds, clearing, snow
E-NE wind to 15

Rather odd weather today. Real clouds and not too cold early, then upper clouds clearing, temps rapidly dropping, but the air continuing to be filled with tiny snow particles continuing for hours. Cold weather snow very creaky when you walk, and very hard dragging with iron-shod runners.

Snowshoed up the creek to check for moose and the three caribou seen yesterday. Didn't see either. Couldn't see up to the knoll the caribou were on yesterday due to fog-like snow particles in the air. No new sign of moose.

The sun got quite high on the horizon.

I came back to the house early to get the sno-go started so I could check the overflow on the lower creek crossing that was bad yesterday. It is still bad. Not useable as the center is still now covered and unfrozen – deep too!

I turned around and came back toward camp. As I crossed the creek into the trees there were two moose standing staring at me! One had antlers, the other – a bit smaller – had none. I had little time to make a decision, for both were about to bolt. I thought the antlerless animal was sure to be a female. Got the rifle off shoulder, lens cover off, and tried a head shot because they were close. The rifle made a weak, dismal, “click!” Snow dust in the action from snow fly on sno-go. Worked in another cartridge, tried the head shot again – just as the animal lowered his head to browse! A miss! They both bolted, in different directions. The antlerless animal stopped after a few jumps. I tried again and this time the animal flopped. It also was a male! Good quality meat though, with considerable fat.

January 18

High –32° F
Low –44° F
Clear, hazy clouds
Light winds

Cold! Not exactly the weather one would choose to work on an unskinned moose, but sometimes one does not have a choice. Leaving it another day would be good for the cook-ability of the meat, but would probably result in large areas of skin frozen to the meat which would necessitate cutting-chopping it up skin and all, to be skinned in large chunks after thawing in house. Not an attractive way to go.

I did get it skinned and quartered in three hours or so. It was a tough job single-handed. Nearby trees made it possible to move or turn necessary parts to complete the skinning. We now have a lot of good fresh meat – fat too. It has more fat than any winter male we have previously seen. We certainly lucked out in that way. The whole idea of seeking out a female without a calf from October on is fat condition. Antlerless males are a gamble – this one we won!

It is a large animal and I have trouble lifting any of the large pieces it is cut up into – even the head. It is now cut into seven pieces I can drag. There is the head, four complete leg-shoulder, leg-ham sections, the pelvis-butt portion, and the rib cage-neck that I can saw up frozen tomorrow. The leg portions, buried in snow for further aging, may be soft enough to cut in smaller portions later.

There is a lot of work in working up a winter moose for the table. There are a lot of good meals in it for us, family, and friends.

January

January 19

High -28° F
Low -40° F
Clear, hazy thin clouds
Calm

Well we are at the mercy of the Intense Cold Monster. Not really the best time to process the annual moose. One sure thing, we are not bothered by blowflies! And there is no spoilage due to sun heat. Actually things have gone pretty well. The moose is skinned and cut into pieces small enough to handle, the thick meat portions (legs, pelvis) are under snow partially unfrozen yet, aging well for better cooking quality; the rib cage and back bone froze solid last night and ready for sawing today; and the head, still in one piece that will have to be thawed inside for several days. The night of the kill there were too many other things to do in the near darkness so I didn't get the nose and tongue separated from the head. The nose, of course, is our favorite treat from a moose kill.

People still traveling though weather is extreme.

A young man hunter out of Pt. Hope was found frozen yesterday, after an all week search. He was caught in a storm quite far from the village. Sno-go had gas but must have quit. He had a caribou on the sled. No sled cover, and had no gloves or mitts when found. Temps were much milder when this tragedy was happening, but wind and storm are just as unforgiving.

Our well-to-do camp robbers (Gray Jays) are only mildly active – they are well fed. The ravens weren't able to get at the moose unfrozen so they haven't done well – at least around our camp and activities.

We are nearly out of gasoline for generator, and hate to think of starting sno-go and traveling at these temperatures, but we will have to do something soon.

January 20

High -38° F
Low -42° F
Clear, cold weather haze
Calm

Things in our near future aren't looking too good this evening. Due to flu and then extreme cold weather, we are much overdue for a town trip. Our gasoline supply is down to one more generator night and enough in the sno-go tank to make it into town. Tonight we got the news from the Weather Bureau that we are going to warm up – great! But gales, blizzards and clouds are what will bring the warm up! We will see what develops. Maybe town family will be able to help out.

The moose meat is secure and protected by will require house thawing of large pieces to cut into packaging size. That is always a bother, but constant forty below temps left no other option.

The Weather Bureau warnings are the roughest they have given all winter.

Our trail conditions have deteriorated since the last east blow, after the 5-6 inches of fresh snow. Lots of lumps on our formerly flat surface. All sorts of circumstances piling up, as they sometimes do.

Gray Jays sitting around with fluffed feathers, making them look twice their normal size. Spruce Grouse are dropping from considerable height into fluffy snow, to spend active hours better insulated. Many creatures use many methods to deal with temp extremes. Can you imagine adult blowflies and mosquitoes living through these air temperatures and -70 to -80° F chill factors? They do, they do!

You may note from our high-low temps that there was not much relief from cold this day. We expect better tomorrow.

This was the first day our prisms lit up rainbows on the walls.

January 21

High 0° F
Low -40° F
Cloudy, blizzard
E-SE wind to 40

A lot of weather in one day. Calm and clear. Intense cold at 12 midnight. Cloudy, snow, blizzard by 8 a.m., wind and clouds breaking by 2 p.m., calm and 0° F by 6 p.m.

It didn't take long to lose our 40° F of intense cold and we now have gas – light and unlimited sno-go use due to town family and a couple of willing and brave boys. They brought us gas, broke trail, and made it home in good shape. We have a more intense storm hanging over our head for tomorrow and Saturday, but we won't have to worry about gas. It makes one very thankful to have family.

Twenty minutes before the gas crew drove in, the lonesome antlered bull that was with the antlerless one I shot the other day, walked up to the edge of our house clearing, 50 yards from the front door, and stood staring at us. In the world of large mammals there are associations and attachments made that we humans little understand. These two bulls, no doubt traveled and lived much with each other. In this huge and mostly silent world of moose orbit, companionship must have considerable value. My taking the life of the antlerless bull has left, for a time, a void

January

in the antlered bull's life. This makes me sad too, but it is the way of nature. We needed the meat and in a way, the antlerless bull presented himself for our use. We also enjoy observing at close had this huge, cark (against the snow laden trees and willows) ponderous looking creature with the huge nose and large expressive ears. Why he retains his antlers is a mystery to us. His former traveling companion probably knows the answer but we will never hear it.

January 22

High 18° F
Low 0° F
Cloudy, snow, blizzard
E-SE wind to 50

A real storm today. Most people and creatures stayed home – but there were exceptions. A flock of thirty White-winged Crossbills were defying the swaying tress and 50 knot gusts to pluck at the cones on several spruces around the house. One can imagine the difficulty of finding and holding the tiny winged seeds in the tall trees long enough to swallow.

Hauled in by had a few coaster loads of firewood and ice from the creek, which we usually don't use. We have gas now for the sno-go, but drifting snow has made in and out exits difficult to handle.

The antlered bull moose, no doubt the partner of the one killed a few days ago, visited the kill site and checked out the skin covered pile of meat there today. Those two moose had evidently been together for some time.

My Superdog walked down to the creek with me just at dawn this morning and a lone ptarmigan exploded from inside the snow by the trail. Both the dog and me jumped – startled. Then my dog, who is sometimes unbelievably smart, started digging into the snow, grasses and ground just as he would a ground squirrel! The ptarmigan would chuckle to himself if he knew!

Our trees are being shaken so violently that they are losing their load of snow. It is good that temps have moderated so that they are limber enough to sway with the gusts instead of breaking.

The sun will be back in Barrow tomorrow and it will be quite high here when – and if – we see it again.

January 23

High 26° F
Low 2° F
Cloudy, snow
SE wind to 35, calm
SW-W wind to 35

This one of those bad storms that blows hard from east, warms, snows, then switches to SW-W and cools immediately, with the air and ground full of flying snow from both directions. Overflow, maybe lots, is inevitable. On top of that, a polar bear has been reported seen in Kotzebue this evening. The sighting is so far unconfirmed, but is quite possible with storm and ocean lead conditions.

I managed to get out with the sno-go after snowshoeing and shoveling the bad portions of the trail. This kind of strong drifting snow makes a mess of the exits into sheltered places, creek crossings, and draws. We needed lake ice for our household water. The storm after the intense cold spell caught us short of several important things – gasoline, ice for water, and firewood. We make do with ice from the creek and wood from nearby, but these nearby sources are of poor quality.

I walked out our trail this morning on snowshoes to shovel and pack down soft spots. There were no fresh tracks. Had a bit of lunch and went out the trail again with a real shovel to fix a bad spot. Moose had been walking and feeding along my first tracks. I passed that spot and went out and across the creek to pack down the trail entrance. I worked 10 min. there and headed back into the house. Halfway there, there were two brand new moose tracks crossing the trail. Lots of moose traffic on our short trail to the house. Most surprising – I didn't see any of the track makers! As big and black as moose are, and as white and snow as our trees and willows are, that seems amazing!

January 24

High 12° F
Low -16° F
Thin clouds, clearing
W-NW wind to 25

The storm wound down today but left the country in kind of a mess. There is a lot of overflow again; all the soft new snow is either in the ocean or in cracks, draws, willows, trees, or other low places. The ground and tussocks are showing in many places and there is hard “washboard” sculpted snow in many places. The trail to town is tough no matter which way one goes. It is possible, as travelers did make it today by way of the Noatak mouth.

Our small clearing by the house, where we park sno-go's, sleds, and traveling gear, became a moose playground to a greater degree than ever before sometime during the night, probably toward early morning. We missed it by sleeping and/or not looking out the window.

January

Several (probably three or four) tracked up the whole clearing and investigated everything in sight. They went right up to and no doubt touched with nose everything on the snow surface: sno-go, sled, ice chisel (tuq), nail-tipped walking stick, Carrie's sled box (what she rides in), extra belt, oil bottle, etc. They did absolutely no damage, though they well could have. A nose touch seems to have satisfied. They could have reduced sled to kindling, sno-go to a pile of junk, and destroyed other breakables with hooves or antlers. Two wind right inside of Terry's chain by his house (he was sleeping in "our" house).

There have been one or two in the clearing before but never so much loitering and such curiosity. All of the clearing is within 50 yards of the front door.

There has been no confirmation of the polar bear sighting in town last night.

Weather is turning cold quickly again, and we have yet to make our town trip.

Both moon and sun are much higher today than when we last saw them.

January 25

High -10° F
Low -42° F
Clear, few thin clouds
Calm

Coldness is back before we are ready for it. A few days to prepare would have been convenient.

We need, badly, to make a town run and it promises to be a rough one. The report is that the storm winds left some bad lumps of snow on the ice crossings.

The moose seem to have wandered off before they did any damage – except for the holes in our hard-packed trail into the house.

Firewood has been and continues to be a daily problem. We haven't made a trail into a good wood source and have been scrounging for local stuff, the quality of which is not so hot.

Some flocks of 30-40 White-winged Crossbills have returned and it is good to have them. The strong winds cleaned some of the sticky snow off the upper portions of spruces and the birds are glad for that. There are great droppings of little winged seeds on the snow of the leeward side of the great clusters of cones they are working.

Our snow inside the spruce patch is lightly crusted now due to temps and trade winds. It is not a desired condition. Moose will have more trouble getting around and the next strong wind will find the next fresh snow easier to drift along, which robs some of our storm shelter protection.

Hope conditions ease up on us a bit. The sun is nice and high now with 5 ½ hours up and lots of rainbows from the prisms. They and the sunlight are beautiful – a little warmth would help.

January 26

High –16° F
Low –36° F
Clear, sunny!
N-NW wind to 15

We finally made the town trip and keeping warm was no problem. The trail was the problem. We were able to use the straight trail and the long stretches of newest overflow were good traveling. But where there was old ice and snow it was horribly sculpted and hard – rough and slow traveling. On the way in, uneven drifted snowbanks on our steep “climb up” from tidelands to tablelands gave scary problems for a sled tip, even at slowest possible speed. The sled didn’t tip, but on the way home, with a little load, the sno-go track broke through the thin crust on the banks and about ¾ of the way up we were stuck. It was tough getting out of it. We had to unhook the sled, manhandle the sno-go to a solid surface so it could climb, and then use our long heavy tie down rope to pull the sled up to a firm surface. It was hard work, but it did work and after a while we were on our way home again. We were thankful this morning that wind in the hills had brought our near –40° F temps up to –18° F, so that starting the sno-go was easier and the air kind of pleasant around 12:30 when we left.

Had to look almost directly into the sun for the two-hour trip over. That was pleasant, but made it a little hard to see. My eyes feel the strain tonight, but one can hardly complain about too much sun at this stage of things. We do have over 5 ½ hours now.

It is good to be and refurbished with gas and stuff.

January 27

High –11° F
Low –38° F
Clear, thin clouds
N-NW wind to 18

Our low was not long after midnight. Air movement and wind picked up and our temps rose in response, so that by daylight our air was quite moderate.

January

The sno-go started fairly easily and Terry and I got a load of ice and then a few pieces of firewood.

The weather service is promising a coming intense cold period, not equaled in the past ten years. Hope it doesn't last too long.

There was a good flock of crossbills in our trees around the house today and we had quite a lot of sun color on the trees and snowbanks.

Our daylight time has increased dramatically. We are will into dawn by 9:30 a.m. and still have twilight after 6 p.m. The sun itself is up 5 ½ hours now and quite in the sky. The moon is rapidly approaching full again. We have two full moons this month.

At least one moose continues checking the house every day. The group of three or four troublemakers is down creek yet.

In consideration of the cold warning I'm not sure what action needs to be taken. If tomorrow is not too bad I should make a run for gasoline, propane, and a new chainsaw. We shall see.

January 28

High -20° F
Low -36° F
Clear, thin clouds
Light NW and N wind

Our sun is coming back on strong. This last week of January is the time often referred to by the people of the land as the time you can really notice the return of the sun. In some years, and in some microhabitats, you can actually feel the warmth at midday (that is 2 p.m. clock time under our present dumb system). It is also the time, historically and maybe now, when we can hit our lowest temperatures of the year. Our temps are reaching for the minus forties again and maybe lower this time around, with no hint yet of how long the extreme lows might last.

The early part of the day was somewhat frustrating. Our chainsaw has a stubborn streak – especially when it is most needed. With the warnings of a deep cold spell coming on, we need to be assured that we will have fuel for the fire. Starting the sno-go at temperatures below -20° F is hard on both the person and the rig.

I prospected around our spruce patch to see where we could spare a few old and dying trees to get us thru to warmer times when we might make a trail to better firewood cutting zones. I found several trees to cut and took the chainsaw out to them to make a beginning. Yes, that's right – it wouldn't start! After a couple of

hours of making tools to use on it (it came new without even a sparkplug wrench) and making a lucky find of a new spark plug, I did think I had it started off with one pull and cut through a full tank of gas, putting us in with a good wood supply for a while. (In the first years of our marriage we spent several winters in a tent with only an axe to supply the stove. We were able to move to a good firewood location when we had finished the nearby stuff. Those days are gone forever!)

January 29

High -18° F
Low -38° F
Sun and clouds
W-NW-N wind to 35

A day of extreme weather in the Kotzebue area and much of the sate. Kotzebue has a chill factor temp of -104° F this evening. Our winds don't seem quite as strong as town, but our temps may be a little lower.

We don't recall the mention of -100° F temps in Kotzebue before, but then the reporting of chill factor temperatures is a relatively new thing. Also, we have had a number of mild winters with very little ocean ice. It could be expected that trend would be interrupted sometime. This is the ice-making season on our ocean and this spell with low temps and onshore winds may give us a different May and June scene.

In the meantime, one wonders how and if some of the other creatures on the land handle these extremes – like he eiders and Black Guillemot in the ocean. Our flock of 30-40 crossbills here around the house looked pretty vulnerable today with the air full of frost and tiny snow grains everywhere. Gleaning enough tiny seeds to survive the still, long cold nights seems a near impossible chore. They must roost in a bundle for warmth.

The “rowdy” moose group visited close to the house again last night, but except for poking deep holes in our smooth trails, they as yet have done no real harm, even though they have touched about everything with their noses.

I'm glad Terry has become a “house dog” for the duration. Don't know how they would treat him if he were chained out every night.

January 30

High -32° F
Low -38° F
Clear, few clouds
NW-N wind to 20

As January fades out we seem to have lots of a number of things: moonlight, sun, cold, snow, moose, and now caribou!

January

A couple of caribou fed inside of our spruce patch trees late last night or early this morning this morning. We did not see them. They were within rifle range of the house. In other years this would not have seemed unusual, but this winter caribou have not been close, though there are known to be some good groups of bulls just north of us. Since the first of the year we haven't gotten around much due to flu, storm, and too cold air. Neither have we had visitors or any sno-go traffic in our area, so wild things have not been much disturbed.

We have nightly visits by two or three moose, a couple of Short-tailed Weasels, a fox and now caribou. With all the snow and frost hanging on to our willows and trees we do indeed look like some of those Christmas cards that have a group of wild animals standing around a cabin.

Looked for sign of crossbill flock today, since the cold winds and weather yesterday were severe. Found a couple of trees with recently dropped cones, but hardly enough sign for the large group seen active yesterday. Hopefully they have just moved off and will be back. Weather like we've had this week can be a trial for many creatures that have to make living from the outdoors and keep up their body temps at the same time.

Full moon tomorrow night – a blue moon – the second full moon in January.

January 31

High –34° F
Low –41° F
Clear
N wind to 18

Cold weather continues but winds dropping off some and people getting more used to it and traveling more. Out of necessity, one is usually required to adapt to traveling in conditions that you would rather not.

This is a usual reaction to extended periods of cold weather. The large amount of sun we have now helps, and soon, in February, it will bring midday temps up a bit on its strength.

We were surprised to have a visitor today. The last remaining Sisualik winter resident dropped by to warm his hands. He is still keeping dogs in Sisualik and this week has been tough on dogs and people.

He marveled at the number of moose tracks, we have in our short trail into the house. It is indeed something to marvel at. Fifty years ago, when our visitor was in our prime, moose were unknown on this creek. Their clan wintered on this same creek a few miles downstream many years ago. Snowshoe hares, Willow Ptarmigan, and

herded reindeer and seals were their mainstay in that era. There were no moose, caribou or other large animals to sustain them inland, though they did, as we do now, harvest many spring and summer resources in Sisualik. Porcupines were a prize catch in those days.

We hardly know what we have in the country right now. We have gotten out so little in January that I'm sure there will be some surprises. With moose and caribou turning up right around the house and bright daylight hours steadily growing, one can look forward with anticipation for a time of milder temps.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

FEBRUARY

February 1

High -25° F
Low -45° F
Cloudy, some sun
Light N winds

Strangely enough, this first day of February has the coldest low of this cold spell and also the warmest high of the frigid time. The low happened not long after midnight and the high developed as high clouds moved into the area.

We had visitors today! Unexpected and delightful.

We are glad also to report that at least most of our White-winged Crossbill flock survived the cold and wind and were dropping cones on my head this evening from two tall spruces near the house. Their method of gleaning food always seems so wasteful. It does allow for much seed dispersal though, and benefits other users like squirrels, voles, chickadees and redpolls.

Our visitors report much caribou sign just north of us. They saw both antlered bull caribou and antlered bull moose. Both the moose and the caribou disappeared into the trees.

Our temps are falling back down again tonight again, so it is hard to tell whether we are into a warming trend or just a brief relaxing.

We need to make another trip into town. Maybe we should have gone today! We hand temps between -20 and -30° F all right, but between -30 and -40° F it seems a bit too much.

We sure have wonderful long daylight now. With a bit milder temps life will become quite exciting again. Too cold of weather becomes a burden.

Ice-making at sea continues and we may have a very different ocean this May and June.

February

February 2

High -29° F
Low -38° F
Light cold weather snow
Clearing, p.m.
Light N-NW winds

The cold continues and was complicated this morning by poor visibility and whiteout conditions, so we didn't do the town trip. Did get the sno-go started and checked out the trail, but with such a rough sculpted snow surface, travel is tough enough when you can see the surface. When you can't, it is better to stay home if you can afford it.

Since a fox or two have shown up at the moose kill site, I decided it was time to get the quarters into camp. Due to the extended cold spell, the meat has been pretty well sealed from the surface. The day of the skinning I placed the quarters on clean snow (they were thawed then) and covered them carefully with the two halves of the starting to freeze skin. This made good protection for the meat (from the top – ravens and foxes) and allowed the large thick portions of meat to season and relax a bit before finally freezing clear thru. This is of much benefit when it comes to cooking time. I did get the pile broken up today and all but a couple of pieces into the storehouse, and one hind quarter into the house to thaw for cutting into smaller pieces for friends and family, if we ever do get into town.

We hosted a huge flock of White-winged Crossbills in the trees around the house. They were pretty lively in the bright afternoon sun. Didn't get to estimate numbers very well, but there were surely over fifty. They have let lots of cones drop to the ground to be lost to them for future gleaning.

It being Groundhog Day, our resident Red Squirrel had to come out and look for his shadow. If he was out before noon he didn't see it, just like the Ohio groundhog, and we look forward to an early spring – anytime now!

February 3

High -31° F
Low -40° F
Clear, thin clouds
Light winds

Well we made it – the town trip that is – in spite of breaking our self-imposed rule of no distant sno-go travel when temps are stuck between thirty and forty below. Kotzebue temps did creep into the minus twenties for a bit, but our home thermometer didn't get out of the minus thirties.

We didn't have trouble keeping warm. We have pretty good clothes. But mechanical breakdowns or accidental happenings are always a threat at such low temps, and we have trail conditions that are worse than at any time in the last few years. We do have

sore muscles and some touchy skin patches, not to mention sore eyes from what of all things? Staring into the sun all day, seeking the smoothest trail! There was lots of sun today piercing the mist and ice. We had full sun going both ways. Our travel time was a little less than two hours each way. (This is the trip we were making in less than one hour earlier.)

We are in a bit better shape now to weather more cold. We have more gas, propane, a new axe and frame saw, and household things we were short of.

The real thrill of the day was seeing on our home grounds between Sisualik and the spruce patch one of the largest flocks of Willow Ptarmigan we have ever seen – and they were tame! Don't know why they are gathered in such a large flock. Perhaps Gyrfalcons have herded them up.

We will have a good night's sleep and a renewed hope for milder weather.

February 4

High –10° F
Low –42° F
Clear, few clouds
N wind to 18

We had an interesting break in our intense cold today. Twice the thermometer jumped up to –10° F when gusty down slope north winds happened. The odd thing was that when calm air returned, the temps went almost immediately back to the –30° F bracket. This must be higher, sun-warmed air forced down slope with the wind. Whatever the cause, it is a very pleasant change.

We now have all the moose meat into the storehouse – and there is a lot of it!

Crossbills, Gray Jays and two ravens were around today and at least a couple of our Red Squirrels were making tracks. Part of this renewal of activity is the break in the constant cold.

There is no doubt a lot of rejoicing tonight among creatures on our slopes. That thirty degree warming is holding, as is the wind. Get out of the wind and you will be as snug as a bug in a rug throughout the night! This warming is not a general happening, only a local blessing. It may give me a chance for a look around the country tomorrow though.

I wonder how toasty warm those little crossbills are tonight! Huddling together at –42° F last night must be a little different than tonight's –10° F. Red Squirrels may be playing out in the moonlight after midnight, when it comes up.

February

February 5

High -8° F
Low -33° F
Thin clouds, sun
N-NW wind to 18

Caribou day today. Got a load of ice this morning and enjoyed relatively moderate temperatures. After coming home with the ice I unhooked the sled and ran up the hill to check the land with binocs. Haven't done that for nearly two weeks – since the onset of the cold.

Saw caribou right away. All the area north of our creek – toward the Hatchery – had signs of caribou feeding craters and there were several groups of 8 to 10 caribou in sight. One group was not far from our timbered knoll. Since there was a good breeze and pretty good temps, I returned home for a quick lunch, intending to snowshoe up for a chance for fresh caribou meat. We have moose and old caribou meat, but as always, the opportunity to have fresh caribou meat soup is very compelling.

The group I went after were all bulls and they were out in the open. They became aware of me at long range, and when I saw I wasn't going to get any closer I fired two shots. The first didn't touch anything, but the second disabled the hind leg of one very dark-colored animal. The rest of the group kept running away from the wounded animal and he finally gave up trying to follow them. I knew I wouldn't catch up to him on snowshoes, so I headed back to camp at a swift gait, hoping to get the snow machine. There was still plenty of daylight – we have seven hours now. In time, I did that. It was quite a long walk home. The wounded bull hadn't moved far, and I had to chase him a bit farther to finish what I had started. We now have good fresh caribou meat with very good marrow bones.

February 6

High -12° F
Low -26° F
Clear, thin clouds
N-NW wind to 28

Cold and strong winds today, with ground drift. These west and north winds on top of an already cold spell are mean. Yesterday was a fair day to be out and about the country. Today was a day to be inside, though the temperatures don't reflect that. I guess wind makes the difference at low temps. Kotzebue had a chill factor temperature warning all day, to -80° F approaching -100° F. That is twice in the last week. Outside activities (dog races, sno-go races) cancelled again for the weekend, though village basketball tourney goes on.

We have a remarkable lot of game around our local area right now. For a place that has had starvation times in the past, there is a lot of food from the land available right now.

This is partly due to cold weather and bad travel trails. All this means county nearly undisturbed by snow machines – we are back to a bit of wilderness again.

Yesterday while stalking a small group of caribou near the edge of a thick but short willow patch, my presence caused a large antlerless bull moose (black in the white snow-covered willows) to stand up suddenly, startling both me and the feeding caribou. All were within 100 yards. I didn't want the moose and the caribou took off running, so I didn't shoot. There was even a small flock of flushed Willow Ptarmigan in the scene.

Moose, caribou, ptarmigan, and fox are numerous around our spruce patch (and in it) during this midwinter cold spell. We appreciate the company.

February 7

High –26° F
Low –45-50° F
Clear, thin clouds
Ice fog
Calm

As mentioned before, our thermometer is only calibrated to –40° F. The tube with mercury continues another inch, but is unmarked in degrees. Last night the mercury moved about as far past –40° F as the distance that lies between –40 and –30° F. Therefore our low for the day is recorded as above. Both Noatak and Selawik recorded lose a few degrees lower than –50° F. This has been our coldest night. We have had enough! And look forward to a time at least between –20° F and –30° F. With all that sun out there (more than 7 hrs. now) that time should not be far off. February is sometimes a very moderate month. So far this year is hasn't demonstrated anything like that in Western and Interior Alaska.

We are having caribou brisket soup tonight from the animal taken a couple of days ago. It is a special treat and more so at this season when the bones of male caribou are going thru seasonal change that will soon show outwardly in antler growth for the new season. The nutrients and fat within the brisket bones are especially tasty.

Everything has been cancelled again this weekend due to cold temps (dog races, sno-go races, hunting-fishing trips, and unnecessary travel between villages).

Haven't seen our crossbills today, but they may be at higher elevations where it will be much warmer than here in this calm cold air. These are the conditions where "smoke" (steam, water vapor, fog) rises from tree patches, groups of animals, overflow on creeks and vehicles. Ice fog! A cold, cold natural phenomenon.

February

February 8

High -36° F
Low -50+° F
Clear, thin clouds
Ice fog
Calm

This is our coldest day to date, and due to the limitations of our thermometer we don't know minus fifty what. Our propane did decide to stay in the bottle at midmorning, but it did make coffee at 7 a.m.

Have not gotten far out of camp again today. I would like to look around, especially at the local caribou scene, but most of the day goes to woodcutting and hauling, since I'm doing it without the help of sno-go, which is too hard to start at these temps.

The interest in the caribou follows after working the one bull we got a few days ago. It is very fine winter meat and one wonders just what their situation is. There seems a lot more sign locally than was made by those few bunches living in the trees through December and January. Are these recruits from elsewhere? Or did the last storm with snow drive them out from feeding in the trees? The country covered the one day last week that I was out on snowshoes showed lots of cratering by animals seeking feed – a lot of it thru lightly crusted snow and sometimes deep drifted snow. There didn't seem much lichen scraps left behind, which sometimes means lichen scarcity. This could mean a rapid drop in the physical condition of the bulls. On the other hand, if the overwintering bulls are still feeding inside the trees, there may be some exceptionally good bull meat and time may make it better yet. Surface trail conditions are not going to permit much hard running of caribou by snow machine, which is good for both the caribou and us snowshoe hunters.

Saw only two crossbills today. Warmer temps would be found a higher elevation spruce in this calm cold.

February 9

High -34° F
Low -50° F
Clear
Calm

At least as cold as yesterday and maybe a little more so. Our propane made coffee at 7 a.m. but quit for the day until coming on about 6 p.m. when temps began a slow climb.

The sun was very bright without thin clouds this time. Planes are still not going into villages and last weekend basketball tourney teams are still in Noorvik.

Gray Jays, a few crossbills, and ravens are still surviving, though one wonders what their nighttime roosts are like. Any warm-blooded creature that must face such constant cold air must find it difficult over such long periods without break.

One of our camp Red Squirrels got very vocal this morning just at sunrise. Haven't heard one since the cold set in. Don't know what brought on the scolding, but it was a welcome outdoor sound not heard for a while. February is the month in which they "return to activity" and to find such a cold sun near mid February may be sufficient reason to scold the world in general. I know the feeling. This has been a trying long mid winter cold spell. The Intense Cold Monster has brought many creatures to their knees!

We do have a break on the horizon. Winds and clouds increasing tonight and tomorrow temperatures forecast for up to -5° F by the next day. A blizzard and fresh snow have also been mentioned. We will have change!

A group of bull caribou came nearly into the house on the sno-go trail yesterday sometime, and went right back out on the same firm trail. Didn't see the tracks till today.

February 10

High -8° F
Low -34° F
Cloudy, snow, blizzard
E-SE wind to 35

This is becoming quite a trying winter – extreme cold to blizzard to overflow to extreme cold back to extreme blizzard and may to overflow again. We are under blizzard conditions for today and tomorrow and it is great to be back in the realm of reasonable temps. We lost the last of our indoor frosts (hinges, window corners) this afternoon and will probably continue to warm through tomorrow.

It was not good enough to look around even a little ways today (for caribou). We have a good deal of meat, but it would be great to have a couple more of these good bull "timber" caribou while they are close and relatively tame. As trail and weather get better, snow machine hunters out of Kotzebue and Noatak may change our pastoral scene here rather quickly.

Part of the family is down at the Sealing Point cabin this week, just in time for the bad weather. They have hopes of finishing the sled building they started earlier.

One camp person has kept dogs all winter in Sisualik and overnights there off and on. These two camps that are occupied off and on are the only two being used this winter between Kotzebue and Port Site.

February

During long spells of enforced restricted outdoor activity like this, one marvels at the travails that old time Eskimo people met and survived with their equipment.

One also tends to have a sharp eye out for signs of hope: the sun coming back (over 7 hrs. now); other signs of surviving life, such as the scolding squirrel yesterday; the flock of 30 crossbills circling around my head nearly all the hours I was gathering firewood. They were gathering fuel too, to maintain their hot little bodies. But they seem to delight in being near and acting with another creature.

February 11

High 2° F
Low -8° F
Blizzard
E-SE wind to 45

A full day of blowing snow, falling snow, and wind. The temps are nice but there is not much to be done outside with the air quite full of snow in one form or another.

Our snow cover is building and all of it into the creeks, draws, willows, trees, and depressions. Moose will begin feeling the pinch soon.

Terry found a Spruce Grouse hidden way inside of a spruce tree's lower branches that were covered by snow. It was quite an impressive find and as always, discouraging to him to find that he still can't fly or climb trees. There were Red Squirrels out.

Hope the crossbills managed to get through the day. Didn't see any or newly dropped cones.

Our two local ravens snuck into the slop pile today. I would gladly feed them real scraps, but our Common Ravens are remarkably suspicious of the intentions of man – any and all men – very unlike some of our Sisualik gulls.

I also saw a Boreal Chickadee today – the first of the winter. I don't know why this species has come to be so rare around our winter place. In past years they were quite common.

The weather has brought on many cancellations again and some basketball teams have spent all week waiting to go home. Even scheduled jets have missed several days.

Most people of the region have had to alter or revise plans because of various sour weather conditions.

February 12

High 6° F
Low 3° F
Cloudy, snow, fog
E-SE-SW wind to 15

Weather calmed and cleared enough to look around a bit.

We have a good number of caribou around our area. Mostly small groups of bulls, but one group of 20-30 that may have females.

I shot three bulls from a group of eight. They seem all about the same – good meat, good bone marrow, and some inside fat. Their outside hair still had yesterday's snow drift on it.

It is always an odd feeling of respect and camaraderie to hunt and take a creature that shows signs of having to cope with the same bad and intense weather conditions that the hunter has just gone through. It puts predator and prey on common ground. Each must face and survive whatever intense weather or environmental conditions are given. It makes predator and prey compadres on one level and for a time.

In noting some of the places that caribou have been eating, I see that they are not leaving any lichen pieces behind. This can be a sign that range is deteriorating. When lichen growth is profuse, many scraps are pulled out but not consumed, and these leftover pieces can be seen.

We now have a good deal of meat on hand. We may not take any more caribou this winter. Our next challenge may be sheefish – if we ever get ahead on firewood and gasoline.

February 13

High 8° F
Low -5° F
Clouds a.m.
Clearing p.m.
Light winds

The weather finally really broke today with mild air and a bright midday to late afternoon sun. It was greatly enhanced inside by large, large prism rainbows.

Outside there was quite a lot of action. Briefly, the sno-go's came and the caribou are gone.

Nothing unusual has happened, at least by today's standards. Ever since mechanization overwhelmed the northern country, that is the way it goes. I hate to see the caribou go, but it was expected.

February

An announcement on the radio this evening reported the tracks of a polar bear sow and cub headed across Kobuk Lake, from Kotzebue toward Iviq. An unusual and rare happening. Stay tuned: our extreme weather and storms are likely responsible for erratic behavior in both humans and other creatures.

White-winged Crossbills have not shown around the house today. As usual, our spruces are wearing a heavy burden of snow today from the heavy wind and drift of a few days ago. These storm conditions are tough on spruces, sometimes causing saplings to bend over nearly to the ground.

Temps are cooling tonight and the stove feels good again.

We still have a layer of quite light snow on the surface, which makes for good tracking but will also make storm again at the first 20k wind.

Some family brought us very welcome gasoline today. We asked for the help because we thought we might have trouble making it in and back. We much appreciate the help of the young folks.

February 14

High 20° F
Low -2° F
Cloudy, some sun
E-SE wind to 25

Kotzebue winds stayed between 30 and 40 all day. We were much better with only a few gusty periods. The mild temps are wonderful.

Got both firewood and ice today and feel a little head of things for a change. That spell of intense cold and then the intense storms were a bit hard to live with. Things seem so much easier now.

We did have a few hours of worry this evening. A nephew from Sealing Point came by hunting for caribou. He hadn't gotten any: the semi-whiteout conditions prevented chasing and like many others of the "mechanized" age, he didn't seek other options.

We loaded him up out of our abundance and he left for home (Sealing Pt.) about 5 p.m. He hadn't arrived by 7 – trouble free traveling time is about 1 ½ hours. By 8 his dad notified Search and Rescue and the boss there started looking for four able-bodied men to go out in the semi-storm to look for him. My age and eyesight don't allow me much night-searching nowadays. Around 8:30, Sealing Point called that he had made it in. The timing of the call was just right. We were able to contact Search and Rescue and cancel the search. Had he been a half hour later getting in, Search and Rescue would

have been on the way for nothing. He got stuck in soft snow, and then lost for a time due to poor visibility.

There was a lot of shooting north of us today as hunters and caribou got together again. Most of the animals north of us are being pushed west by hunting activity.

It was a rather active Valentine's Day.

February 15

High 28° F
Low 18° F
Cloudy, snow showers
E-SE wind to 20

Our warming continues, and though Kotzebue has had kind of drifting snow all day, our tree patch and surrounding area has been pretty pleasant.

Ran down the town trail today to fix it up a bit and check out some possibly bad places from so much drifting snow. After that, the dog and I ran over our other "out" trail to break and establish it again, and to look at the world from a higher perch.

The open water lead on the ocean is very wide and only a few miles off shore of mid Sisualik. Then the edge runs through the mouth of Kotzebue channel. After the weather we have had I'm surprised that the lead edge is still so close to Sisualik and Kotzebue.

There will be a good chance for winter seal hunting – the first chance of this year – if winds moderate enough.

Our snow cover in sheltered places has sure increased with the last couple of storms. The winds have been so strong and steady that the open tundra is almost snow free again.

I checked for caribou north of us with binocs and didn't see any at all. Three days of sno-go's and gunshots have been enough to move them off, probably to the west. Hope they are able to find good feeding areas not too far away. Generally speaking, they are in find physical condition for this late into winter.

There are a few birds around today and lots of falling spruce seeds as the cone scales open to the warm air.

February

February 16

High 26° F
Low 16° F
Cloudy
E-SE wind to 15

A nice warm town trip. No trail all the way. There are less rough snow bumps than our last trip in, but some are bad for the sno-go driver yet if one can't see them. As usual, the sled passenger has it worse. Carrie will overnight in town and be off to Anchorage tomorrow evening. I will take some of her needed stuff over tomorrow and return with a drum of gas – weather and equipment permitting.

Our odd indoor winter plant (a first for us) is taking off like Jack's beanstalk. We have kept it thru the winter in our absence by putting it in the oven, which has a pilot light to keep it from freezing. Now it is too tall for the oven!

We have very large open water off shore in Kotzebue. All our hard-earned ocean ice seems to again have blown off to somewhere else. It is nearing time for birthing of Common Ringed Seal and they will need old, snow-covered ice for success. Hope they find it.

Sheefish hooking has been good around the east shore of Kobuk Lake since it warmed.

The bear (polar?) with cub that last made tracks just west of the fishing location has not yet been seen. It is unclear from reports whether it has made more tracks or not.

February 17

High 22° F
Low 0° F
Clear
Light winds

Town trip again – bumps are still there but with brilliant sun they look better.

Carrie off to Anchorage, and I returned with drum of gas to a lonesome Superdog.

Really wonderful weather today, with roofs in Kotzebue dripping from sunlight. A very far cry from the -50° F temperatures not many days ago.

At least a couple of seal hunters went out today from Kotzebue. We have a very side open water lead.

Heard today that the polar bear and cub had actually been seen, so ID is sure. It is not clear whether they have been active around Iviq or just made the one passage through.

Whatever creatures survived our midwinter cold and storm are surely rejoicing in the warmth of the sun today – the brightness too!

Saw the huge flock of ptarmigan again on the way home today. There appears to be more than a thousand in this gathering. They are quite a sight in the bright sun. The quantity of willow leaf and flower buds they consume in one day must be impressive. Wonder how long those plants can sustain that use. *Salix pulchra* growth sustains several species – moose, ptarmigan, hare. Their distribution is broad and their growth must be prolific to meet the needs of those species when populations are high.

No new large animal tracks noted on the trail to Kotzebue.

February 18

High 10° F
Low -6° F
Clear, cloudy, fog
Light winds

Rabbits have come back to Sanningaruq! What a surprise this morning to see a single fresh Snowshoe Hare (Varying Hare) track crossing the sno-go trail not far from the house. The snow surface is light fluff, so the track showed plainly. It was not there yesterday when I came in the trail from town.

Several hours later I walked down the trail to look at the tracks closely. What a surprise! There were a number of different tracks and a couple of “trails” (tracks used more than once). Now I may have overlooked some of this on the way out this morning (and on the way in, in bright sunlight) but I have a feeling that these new tracks were made in the two or three hours while I was having lunch.

At this point my conclusion is that a group of hares has reached our spruce patch after the very cold and very storm first half of the month. We had one pass through lasts November and I saw one track down at Napaaqtuuraq in late December. These were the only two tracks seen in our area before today.

It is possible that one hare has made all these tracks, but it doesn't seem likely right now. Time will tell.

We have always noted a “westerly drift” from more interior locations of white spruce forest of creatures, and it is not surprising that “groups” should come rather than individuals. Neither is it surprising that strong winds and weather should help that process along. We are so glad to have them back. It has been more than a decade of waiting.

February

February 19

High 5° F
Low -4° F
Cloudy, freezing fog
Light snow
Light winds

The diversity of life continues to expand in our spruce patch. Yesterday it was Snowshoe Hares; today it is Pine Grosbeak; last week it was a Boreal Chickadee. No, it is not spring and these birds and creatures are normal winter inhabitants of northern spruce forests. It is just that they have not been here in our spruce patch this year till now.

The grosbeaks look so colorful in the binocs, compared to the similar in size Gray Jays.

Went up the trail toward Noatak River today for a look around and a load of firewood. Since there was some fog and light snow, it wasn't much of a look around. I haven't been up that way since the caribou were chased out.

I found that there are apparently some good groups of caribou bulls still fading into the trees when snow machines appear. This is a bit of a surprise since the snow is quite deep now for caribou. Apparently, with strong, long-legged bulls to break trail the groups can handle it and of course the sno-go's cannot. Thus an escape strategy is formed. Animals from these groups may be considerably fatter than the open tundra animals. Given opportunity we may test this theory.

Our trees and willows and grasses, which were losing their frosty look with mild wind and sun, are now frosty again with the freezing fog of the day.

February 20

High 18° F
Low 2° F
Cloudy, some sun
NE-E wind to 20

Carrie home from Anchorage Fur Rondy. We lucked out with the weather on evening pick up from this side. Forecast was for bad weather late this evening (snow and blowing snow). Since we are traveling without stakes this year, visibility is all important. I had a great trip over in bright late afternoon sun (between 4 and 6 p.m.). Jet was due in at 6:10. By 7, snow and drifting snow had limited visibility, though I could still faintly see landmarks on our side. We decided to try it. By the time we had loaded the things from Anchorage and got into traveling clothes, the snow in the air and on the ground cleared a lot and we had a find, though worrisome trip across. Carrie covered a lot of miles today. Our trip was worrisome because if snow started again we would have trouble keeping oriented. It was great to reach our inland trail at tableland again.

There were six caribou in our trail this morning when I took the dog for a run. He chased them for a while but soon came back to the sno-go trail to follow me.

Didn't have time to check for fresh rabbit tracks today – but we do have a genuine rabbit trail in Sanningaruq by now.

The sun has gotten pretty high, topping some of the tree on our southeast facing house front.

It was a good but long day. The temps are wonderful!

February 21

High 24° F
Low 12° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 15

Well February 1999 is showing true February characteristics. It can produce the most severe weather of the year, and it can, and often does, produce some of the most pleasant days of winter.

Today was one of the most pleasant. It is the first time in 1999 that the sun rays have gotten warm enough to melt snow on dark outside objects, and one could feel the warmth of sun on cheek and bare arm.

Other creatures besides ourselves were showing appreciation for the conditions. Crossbills, Gray Jays, and Red Squirrels were very active – even excited around the camp clearing, and one could easily picture in the mind's eye moose, caribou, and sheep lying on a hillside, facing the warmth of a midday sun, the first real promise that the earth will warm again and not stay cold forever. It seems that all of us need this “hands on” assurance at times – head knowledge alone (that the sun's power will return) is often not enough. It is up more than 9 hours now.

There were no new rabbit tracks made yesterday or today. Too bad. Maybe all tracks three days ago were made by one rabbit.

We did have a couple of interesting visitors to share part of the good day with us.

Kotzebue weather was not quite so good, with some wind and light ground drift all day, but at mild temperatures.

We will be hoping to make an ice-fishing trip sometime soon.

February

February 22

High 16° F
Low -4° F
Clear
NE wind to 15

Another fine February day. February weather contrasts are hard to believe. Terry (the dog) made a trip alone this morning, apparently to check on the ground squirrels, to see if any had come out yet since the sun was so warm up here yesterday.

I started down that way later with a load of frozen caribou and met him just returning home. He went all the way back down with me and returned. The incident affirms his title as Superdog.

Our spruce patch birds – Gray Jay, White-winged Crossbills, Common Raven, and Spruce Grouse – are living high in the warm sun of midday.

There were no fresh rabbit tracks again today. Our hopes for a quick growth of rabbit population is dashed again.

No icicles yet, but snow on dark objects again turned wet today.

A new report of caribou moving from Noatak toward Sisualik today. Wonder what will develop from that? Such a movement is unusual at this season.

Have been noticing more shrew tracks on the snow surface this week, and that prompted the movement of several caribou carcasses to the dome storage place in Sisualik. These smallest of mammals in numbers can spoil ground-stored meat or fish in time. It is a great disappointment to dig out a snow-covered cache of meat or fish and find all the softer parts – fat, etc. – eaten out, and the rest soiled with droppings and hair. These are amazing little creatures, but they can be destructive under certain conditions.

There are two very bright early evening stars in the southern sky. Others noticed them last night and reported them closer together tonight. Don't have an explanation for the sighting.

February 23

High 10° F
Low -12° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 10

Another beautiful February day, a bit cooler than the last couple of days, but with lots of bright sun.

We made the town trip in good shape and came home in better shape with a new Arctic Cat. It is much the same as the one we had, with a bit more pulling power and of course, new, which will give us a little more confidence when we are alone and traveling little-used trails.

Shee hooking and firewood hauling may go a little smoother these next couple of months.

Boy! We sure have lots of daylight now – over eight hours, working toward nine. The 24 hrs. of sun we will begin in June seems so close now.

We have found two trails to Kotzebue that are not quite so rough as going straight across. One is more inside, toward the Noatak mouth. The other, more out toward the ocean, where old frozen overflow ice is flat. Neither one is staked so distant vision still necessary for travel.

We heard a strange report in town – mentioned by every person we talked to. “There are lots of caribou across, around Uhl’s place.”

We did not see any fresh tracks. We think now that word of last week, when we did have lots of caribou around before they were chased away, must be just now getting around.

They are catching sheefish near shore on the east side of Kobuk Lake.

One seal hunter or crab pot tender saw a Polar Bear on the ice off Krusenstern, but he figured his gun was of too small of caliber.

February 24

High –3° F
Low –24° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 15

A little cooler but just as bright – lots of sun.

Went up, with the dog, to get a little firewood. Didn’t see any caribou, but there were two groups of fresh tracks followed by snow machine tracks. One group was quite large – maybe more than fifty.

Neighbors did get four caribou today near the mountains north of the Ranger Station at Anigaaq. From there, the animals went towards the big bend of the Noatak at Nauyauraq. He thinks there are probably still caribou at that site.

February

Distribution of caribou locally is a little different than usual, but snow machine activity may account for the current pattern.

A young W. Ptarmigan hunter gave us some of his catch today. Oh boy, we will have ptarmigan for supper again tomorrow night.

There has been an exodus again of microtines in timbered areas around the base of trees and large shrubs. This seems to happen from time to time. Don't understand quite why, but after long periods of time in under snow tunnels, the tracks seem to surface where a tree trunk comes through the snow. They then travel various distances and return to under surface at the base of another large tree or shrub.

Pot-roasted bull caribou marrow bones tonight – one of our most favorite dishes from late winter caribou.

February 25

High 8° F
Low -20° F
Cloudy, light dust, snow
Light winds

We missed the sun today. Cloud cover was pretty complete with very small snow grains in the air all day, with little accumulation.

Fresh Snowshoe Hare tracks every day now. At least one seems to have settled in to make its home here.

A family member went up to the willows behind Kotzebue to look for a hand for his sheefish hooking jig and was surprised to see rabbit tracks all over the place. This is an interesting report as the Baldwin Peninsula's willow covered areas have been home to both hare species in numbers in the past. Both Arctic Hare and the smaller Snowshoe Hare find the habitat there to their liking. There can be very heavy hunting pressure (from Kotzebue) when word gets around that rabbits have returned, but also, after a long absence of the creatures, they can become pretty plentiful again before anyone notices.

Sheefishing with hooks seems to be building real well. Those places in shallow water near shore are producing well since the weather improved the last half of this month. It is a long run up there from here for a round trip, but we will probably be making a try some good day. We also have the option of overnighting and Fish Creek camp.

Very little traffic over this way now since caribou have moved on and cloud cover is back, with its sometimes whiteout conditions.

Have not seen moose tracks now for a week. Those that were here for some time have resettled somewhere. Snow depth has built enough to somewhat slow their travel.

February 26

High 2° F
Low -4° F
Cloudy, thin, light snow
Fog
W-NW wind to 15

We have gained 3-4 inches of very light fluffy snow again, most of which fell from a windless sky. Everything above the surface is white again.

The only fresh mark on the new surface between here and the tidelands was a lone fox.

In wolf or wolverine country, sno-go hunters would have a great day if there were no whiteout conditions. If or when those two species decline and indicate low population, a closure of season before the month of March would seem in order. Length of day, usual heavy snow cover (ideal overland travel conditions) and diminishing fur quality all add up to hunter advantage and reason not to hunt these species through March and April.

Nephew returned with our old Arctic Cat today to help around with woodcutting and hauling.

Both sheefish and caribou (fat ones) are reported in the NE Kobuk Lake section. It is a good place to be through the coming new month.

We still have a few small birds around working the spruce cones.

Carrie received her gift wolverine skin today from a friend and family member in Pt. Lay. It is his first catch of wolverine and he is following the local custom for first catches of major species. Carrie is very glad to have a new fur for her parka ruff. We sued to catch our own near home. There are none here – this close to Kotzebue – any more.

February

February 27

High -4° F
Low -18° F
Thin clouds, snow
Fog patches
W-NW wind to 15

This has been an unusual deep winter in many respects. One has been in the coming and going of large animals. We have gained 3-4 inches of fresh fluffy surface snow that has been in place for three days now. It remains clean of large animal tracks in at least a circle of 10-mile diameter around our camp. This, after a January and February period of caribou by hundreds and moose by tens. Boom and bust – the indelible pattern of the north!

Ran the dog 5-6 miles up towards the pass. There were many fresh ptarmigan tracks and several fox tracks, but nothing else. Almost every inch of the route was over old cratering activities of feeding caribou, made since January 1st.

Even our resident Snowshoe Hare didn't make tracks (where we could see them) last night.

It seems that sheefish hooking through the ice may occupy the time of most people of the land through March – fish and weather permitting.

Even the Sealing Point family cabin will be vacated, so their active members can concentrate their time and efforts on the fishing grounds of Kobuk Lake. It promises to be a productive fishing season, based on good net harvests in the months before Christmas.

Another great March happening will be the large annual gathering of NANA region people in Shungnak this year for midyear Conference of Friends. There may be complications this year – more than usual – because of frozen water and sewer lines in the village because of early February deep freeze.

February 28

High 0° F
Low -31° F
Clear
NW-N wind

The last day of the month without a full moon. This somehow seems more tragic than two full moons in two months of the same calendar year. It is said that all of this won't happen again until another century rolls around. 1999 is unusual in other aspects besides have so many 9's in one daily date writing.

A cold night temp but downslope winds and the full bright sun warmed our tree patch to a fine tolerable coolness.

We had two groups of traveling visitors today, and at different times, so it was a very pleasant visiting day.

Both parties reported seeing caribou or fresh sign not far from our place. This is interesting since we haven't seen animals or fresh sign for some time. At this point, we don't know if these are strays or the beginning of another movement. It may be the result of snow machine activity from Kivalina and/or Noatak.

Our fluffy top snow is turning into the short trail bumps characteristic of N or NW winds. They will keep one from falling asleep while driving a sno-go over distant trails.

One group of visitors brought us a piece of musk ox meat, legally taken on the Seward Peninsula. It is a welcome gift, for we have never tasted musk ox flesh, that ancient animal that no doubt played an important part in the survival of the human species as they made their way across the Bering Land Bridge – if that's the way it happened.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

MARCH

March 1

High -6° F
Low -32° F
Clear
N-NW wind to 15

Town trip and a good one - sunshine all the way to and from. We finally tried the staked trail (Sisualik trail) going in and then wished we hadn't. A couple of miles of it just out of Kotzebue has some terribly sharp sculptured snow piles. We came home on our much smoother but a little longer old trail.

We saw that huge flock of Willow Ptarmigan again that we always see when we don't have shotgun. It is a multi-hundred flock - a lot of birds and this time they were on "our" creek at the first crossing (from town) and all walking towards our house site.

Town ravens seem awfully boisterous. I suppose the long-lasting and faint warmth of sun has reminded them too that spring is on the way. We had 10 hours, 5 minutes of sun today.

No fresh rabbit tracks for several days now.

A moose did come by the house again while we were in town. This is the first "new" track for some time.

They have opened search efforts again at the Riley Wreck site for the sunken boat and three missing boys from last fall. A diver has volunteered his services and may have additional sonar equipment.

With the long days and bright sun, more town sno-go's are getting out in the country. One of the two visitor groups we had yesterday was looking for a place to set up a spring camp site. Others are taking advantage of the fluffy snow and long days to look for wolverine and wolf tracks.

March

March 2

High -14° F
Low -34° F
Clear
NE wind to 15

Sharp nighttime cold again, but it warmed enough by afternoon to make outdoor work pleasant.

Went down to Sisualik and shoveled out our oil storage shelter and brought home four buckets of seal oil, some to send with nephew to Shungnak next week for Friends Midyear Conference. Inland villagers are very fond of our coastal oil products, and when we have extra we like to send some up.

Both Carrie and nephew will try to make it up there, nephew by sno-go, Carrie by air.

No rabbit tracks again, but moose tracks at the lower creek crossing. Nephew saw three small fresh caribou tracks on the straight to town trail today.

I carried my shotgun today on the trip to Sisualik. I didn't see any ptarmigan, but lots of tracks.

Having a new sno-go and hearing of shee catches on the east shore of Kobuk Lake makes one pretty restless, but it is still pretty cold.

Gray Jays are beginning to show more interest in each other than in food, which I guess is another subtle sign of spring in the air.

Our moon is full tonight – the full moon that February didn't quite have enough days to qualify for. We will have our second month this year with two full moons.

March 3

High -6° F
Low -24° F
Clear, thin clouds late
Light winds

Another fine long but cool day.

The rabbit made tracks again! We are depending on that rabbit – to stay alive!

Went up to get a little firewood with sno-go and the Superdog. Two bull caribou were feeding in the trail and took off before we got within sight. There were traveling back – NE – right on the tracks of a last large group that went by a few days ago.

Not much sign of life in the country today. There were no new sno-go tracks or moose tracks.

Fresh track maker award goes to some very small light foxes, possibly white some white fox from the sea, searching for caribou guts and lost kills.

There were a few Willow Ptarmigan tracks (fresh) but no birds.

We want to do another wash day before next week, when Carrie plans to go to Shungnak for the Friends Conference. Now there is some hint that long frozen water and sewer pipes there may cause a delay or cancellation of the planned conference. The conference rotates from village to village each year. Shungnak won't want to miss their turn. It will be a disappointment to many.

March 4

High 4° F
Low -15° F
Clear, few thin clouds
Light winds

A very beautiful day – the best yet for this early spring.

Ran the dog down to tidelands across the Beaver Lake and back. There were otter tracks near the beaver lodge, but it didn't disturb the vent. The beaver is evidently surviving, as the vent remains open and active looking and is always frost-covered.

There was a group of four fresh caribou tracks – probably females that came from the east (Jones Camp), circled, and returned in the same direction.

There seems to be a few scattered bunches of caribou all over. It is likely that there are some larger groups not far off.

Willow Ptarmigan tracks are also “all over” but we didn't see any birds – maybe because I had the shotgun along.

We did have an interesting discussion last night about a favorite food treat we used to eat all the time but no longer do. It is made by keeping the stomach contents (lichens, etc.) unfrozen till it sours. Strips of liver or tenderloin strips are added and become “cooked” or rather pickled by the acid (natural vinegar) in the stomach contents. They are eaten with sugar and seal oil. The Eskimo name of the dish is kungalik.

Why we don't eat it anymore requires a longer explanation. It was a great treat this time of year when stored berries begin to run low.

March

We've had great bright moonlight the last three nights, all night and nearly bright as day.

March 5

High 2° F
Low -24° F
Clear
Light winds

Another day of the same kind – such great weather. Cool and bright with a warming midday sun.

Another day of heavy clothes washing. Didn't know we had so many dirty clothes. We are able to use unfrozen creek water from under snowbanks. It is too mineralized (limestone) for general household use and it doesn't make good soapsuds, but it does produce cleaner clothes without melting ice. The winter source of this water is underground springs along the normal summer creek bed. They are a sustaining environment for otter and mink.

Made a short trip with the dog on the trail north to the lower Noatak canyon, to test trail conditions. It is pretty lumpy with drifted over caribou feeding craters.

There were several fresh caribou trails of small groups of three to five moving from the west towards the east, but usually circling back.

There are lots of fox tracks – probably both red and white. They have lots of feed from gut piles and lost dead and wounded caribou. The caribou harvest seems to have been pretty heavy up in that area as bad weather cleared out in mid February.

Snow cover is moderate – adequate for cross country sno-go travel and wolf and wolverine hunt by mechanical means.

March 6

High 4° F
Low -22° F
Clear, thin clouds late
Calm

The lack of wind for so many days is rather remarkable. “In like a lamb, out like a lion?”

Not a lot of excitement in this part of the country today. Dog races in town, sheefishing on Kobuk Lake, and caribou in other places may account for lack of traffic in this direction. It is rather frightening to see the number of snow machines in

Kotzebue. Should they all take off at once in the same direction it would be quite an astounding mechanized force!

Took the dog down to get a load of ice this morning. It was pretty chilly, calm and nothing to see but a multitude of fox tracks. Red Fox mating time is on and double tracks are quite common. Mid February gut piles and lost caribou carcasses have brought many foxes into this immediate area.

Saw a few redpolls around the house early this morning. In good light their black chins separate them from crossbills quite easily.

Weasels of both species are getting too numerous around the cabin and in the storehouse. We have both caribou and moose in there – safe from Gray Jays and ravens, but easily accessed by the weasels. They keep shrews and voles down, but their appetites are large for little fat traces on frozen meat. Skinned and worked on the caribou meat today and will soon try to get the moose in smaller packages to put away safely. Hate to trap off the weasels, which the other options.

Lots of spruce seeds falling on the snow yet and cones enough still left for lingering crossbills.

March 7

High 1° F
Low -18° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NW wind to 30

A fine bright but windy Sunday, with lots of visitors. They got here rather late but with the long daylight now there was time for a good visit. We enjoyed the time very much.

The rabbit walked around again, but it is clear now that there is only one. Can you imagine how it might be to be the first rabbit pioneer into an area that has been without rabbits for 20 years? How long will this rabbit have to wait to see another rabbit? With all the un-utilized food around, where to start eating? Anything that moves within sight must be suspect to a single rabbit – it might be a hawk, owl, fox, lynx or wolf. Being “on guard” all the time must be very trying. We hope the little creature will stick with it till a mate turns up, though we can offer little help in telling how long that might be.

We had low ground drift all day and we were glad that there was little light snow around. The drift stayed low to the ground, not rising into the air, so distant visibility remained good for travelers.

March

The Iditarod is off and running. We have two entrants from our region this time. We hope they do well.

Very little game in the country according to our traveling visitors today. Many people are making short trips to enjoy the out-of-doors and warm sun in sheltered places.

April is not far off – and Jonathan!

March 8

High 0° F
Low -16° F
Clear
N wind to 20

Town trip. The two days of drifting snow from NW and N did not improve our town trail. It made the smooth stretches (frozen overflow) also lumpy, and cross-lumped some sections that were already lumped.

There were hundreds of fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks around the perimeter of our spruce patch when we got home. There were just lots of little feathered footprints. Didn't see a bird though.

Town ravens are having to work rather hard at making a living it seems.

We got news of a fair sheefish strike near Augie Nelson's on the near shore area of western Kobuk Lake (near to us, that is). Some good-sized fish were taken on Sunday. We would probably go if Carrie were not going to Shungnak Wednesday for mid year Conference.

More very white redpolls are turning up daily now. Most are probably the larger Hoary Redpoll.

Our afternoon home trip was beautiful as the wind died and let the strong sun have its way.

Visitors reportedly saw a very large and all white Snowy Owl yesterday. This would be an adult "few spotted" male. Not many have been seen locally this winter. Most pass through in October-November migration south.

March 9

High -6° F
Low -32° F
Clear, bright sun
NE-N wind to 15

Chilly night but nice sun today.

Went north with the dog to get a sled load of firewood. Forgot the plaster coaster I have been using to drag stove length pieces to the sled parked out in firm snow a ways from the soft snow inside the trees. I haven't yet broken a trail into the trees for the sno-go, so this is an interesting time.

Two marten have been into my woodcutting place together lately. These are the first sign I have seen since around Christmas.

On the way up I saw no large animal tracks since drifting snow stopped yesterday. But coming back there were fresh tracks of a group of 10-15 caribou running as a group crossing our morning sno-go trail. They were traveling from the NE to the SW. The tracks showed a mixture of sizes.

On our way out this morning we ran into a flock of more than 50 Willow Ptarmigan. After two misfires of my shotgun, we got it to go off, which scared my used to be gun shy hunting dog. We got five with a couple of shots, and the dog did well by capturing two that could still run. He looked disappointed when I decided not to shoot the third time we came up on them.

We seem to have been invaded by many very light-colored redpolls - probably Hoary Redpolls descending on loose spruce seeds. There have been a few strays all winter, but now they seem to be forming substantial flocks.

Carrie will be off for Shungnak tomorrow.

March 10

High -22° F
Low -35° F
Clear, cold weather mist
N-NE wind to 10

A cold town trip to get Carrie off to Shungnak for Conference. It is probably even colder up there, but may be warmer at midday.

We traveled right through a huge flock of ptarmigan at the lower creek crossing this morning. They were quite tame and numbered several hundred. The though occurred to me that the number of willow leaf and blossom buds it takes to feed this flock every day is tremendous. Then I recalled the huge mass of material in the stomach of

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the moose we killed last month. One wonders just how much load our willow growth could tolerate if there were simultaneous high populations of hares, ptarmigan, and moose, not to mention musk ox and caribou that also utilize the same plant to some degree.

Carrie made it safely to Shungnak, reported first by Hageland pilot over VHF and then by phone just a bit ago. Even nephew made it over with our old Arctic Cat. He left yesterday and overnights in Selawik. He had a rough trail today. That's a long sno-go trip even when the trail is good.

Another family member – grandson-in-law – made it up the ice road with his truck and got some nice burbot and shee from a slough-camp on the Kobuk delta. The region's resources are increasingly being tapped by a much wider ranging user group. Many good fishing and hunting spots were formerly tapped only by locals.

It has been a long bright cold day – still, snow dust was melting around the valve portion of the 100-lb propane bottle I brought home from town.

March 11

High -6° F
Low -40° F
Clear
NW-N wind to 18

I hope this will be the last time this winter that we will record the bottom of our thermometer (-40° F). There is a certain beauty and fascination when air temps get between -40 and -50° F, but it is a kind of sterile beauty – not for living. All warm-blooded creatures find living between those temps hard work.

Our temps did come up rapidly with wind beginning and sun rising higher.

I worked up and packaged up some moose meat this morning. We are having to keep the large quarters of moose in the house for 3 or 4 days to get the meat soft enough to cut up into package sized pieces. This is tedious, but it works well enough when it has to be done.

Terry the Dog and I took a sno-go ride west on top of our near ridge. Very hard rough icy snow up there. We could see far over a lot of white tundra turned orange by the sun, but did not see anything alive.

Numbers of caribou have passed thru the corridor just west of us in the last two weeks. They seem to be mostly bulls and are probably not too far away – behind Akulaaq and Sealing Point. Though some snow is hard and crusted, there is no icing and caribou should have no trouble feeding.

Many people gathered in Shungnak for Friends Midyear Conference and NANA annual meeting on Monday.

March 12

High -6° F
Low -29° F
Clear
W-NW wind to 15

An interesting pattering of winds all day today. Kotzebue, less than 18 miles from here, had NW winds and drifting snow all day, with winds in the 20-30 knot range and temps -20° F and lower, giving a very low chill factor temp. Here, we were mostly calm under a warming sun. Winds did pick up a little from the west for a couple of short periods. Kotzebue seems so terribly cold while we enjoyed the bright warming sun.

Made a trip for firewood this afternoon. There were no fresh tracks in that direction. Both moose and caribou seem to have left our little creek valley under the mountains.

Our one rabbit and red squirrels did make tracks, and there were marten tracks again up at the wood cut site.

Ice road (to Kobuk) closed down again when drifted in. There has been a good deal of hauling to Noorvik and Kiana over it this week. This now annual happening would have been considered impossible ten years ago.

There is not much hunting or fishing news this week with the combination of cold weather and various regional meetings on or upcoming this weekend.

Trails and snow surface pretty hard and lumpy around the country. It is getting difficult to see new and recent tracks.

March 13

High -12° F
Low -38° F
Clear
Light winds

Another great clear day where the sun can be felt but the coldness of the air on skin through the daylight is getting a bit tiresome. It is time for some above zero temps – and they may be coming. We are promised some snow for tomorrow.

Ran the dog and got a little ice this afternoon and found a good group of caribou tracks on our lower creek crossing. They were probably made yesterday. They were coming up this way from the tidewater side. These may have been the same group

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that came down from the north a few days ago that I got a glimpse of.

This rather regular appearance of small groups of caribou near our cabin is unusual. At this time of year, when caribou are overwintering here and are chased away by hunter pressure, they usually stay gone. They relocate to another quieter feeding ground. Wandering small groups are not usually a part of the scene.

A bit of a surprise on the Iditarod trail today. A prominent musher scratched when her dogs refused to run anymore – still on the Yukon River. It may be that the leaders of the race have set too face a pace for conditions. We will see. Some back runners may yet have a chance.

Our very white redpolls look so neat and big in our bright sun and dark green trees. They are finding much fallen spruce seed for forage. Crossbills seem scarce around our spruce patch now.

No moose tracks for nearly two weeks now.

March 14

High 24° F
Low -23° F
Cloudy, snow
Light winds

A complete new page of white fluffy ground cover this morning. Quite a surprise since last night was clear as ever. We have had light snow with rising temps all day, with some fog and very poor visibility.

A very quite day here with the only outdoor noise being raven made.

The only new tracks today were made by our camp squirrel. Even the weasels haven't been out yet.

Today is the last day of Shungnak conference and tomorrow will be the annual NANA meeting there. Tuesday, people (including Carrie) will be heading home.

This has not been a good weekend for travelers again. The warm temps are fine and the new snow will soften the trail bumps until wind makes more.

Any wind to 20k will make a great ground storm again. We have about 4 inches of light fluffy new snow.

Finished packaging thawed moose rump meat and did income tax today. Have only one moose shoulder to thaw inside now. Cleaning up and packaging our moose has taken a lot of time and work this year. We are thankful for a good winter of meat this

year again. Memory goes back to winters when there were no caribou or moose.

March 15

High 10° F
Low 0° F
Cloudy, fog, light snow
W wind to 12

Fog all day! With the white sky, white air and white ground it was not a day to travel.

Don't know how the annual meeting at Shungnak turned out. There was no flying today. The NANA board and officers may have got there yesterday. KOTZ was scheduled to broadcast the proceedings but equipment and stuff stayed on the ground in Kotzebue all day. Kotzebue fog may have cleared some this late evening and the jet may have gotten in.

Terry and I broke trail down to tidelands. Terry acted as "seeing eye dog" to keep us on track of the old trail. He is good at this and ground squirrel hunting and he knows it. He also knows that it justifies his existence. About the only other thing he is good at is showing appreciation while being petted.

A single fox, a red squirrel and a few ptarmigan are the only track makers down that way.

Carrie is scheduled to be home tomorrow afternoon and we will get back to routine and try to do some fishing or woodcutting. Our time inland is getting short again. April is just around the corner. I do hope April trails stay firmer this year than last.

Wonder if Jonathan is counting the days till return? I hope he made it through the winter. There may be some question this year since our CBC folks saw one G. Gull hanging as a "scarecrow" warning down at the Point. Jonathan seemed to have left a few days early last October.

March 16

High 8° F
Low -13° F
Cloudy, fog, snow
W wind to 15

Another nice mild day, but for travelers – air or snow machine – it was touch and go. With some good luck Carrie made it home from Shungnak to Kotzebue, and with some more good luck I was able to find Kotzebue and get her home here by 8 p.m. It has been a long day for both of us.

She brought a long, smelly egg-laden sheefish home for me from Shungnak friends. This is their "specialty" food, probably the main reason that Shungnak exists where it

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does. They have access to shee spawning grounds and these fish can be taken just before eggs are deposited and just when frost is beginning in late September. They get smelly and tasty before they freeze and are a special treat. Shungnak and Kobuk have exclusive (by nature and time) access.

Another upriver friend sent smaller whitefish of the same quality and all this is very good for us since our fishery failed last September.

Our nephew took four buckets of our seal oil up, which of course makes new friends and additional benefits down the line.

When the sun comes out again, our “dark world” of this week will look different again.

We are at or near the 12 hour mark on sun up time.

Carrie has a good report from Shungnak – good meetings, lots of singing and many old friends from many places.

March 17

High -4° F
Low -35° F
Cloudy, snow showers
Light winds

A cold night but good help from the sun at midday.

Went up for some firewood after lunch. A very clean snow surface up that way. There were no large animal tracks and only a few fox and ptarmigan tracks – no sno-go tracks either.

Had a great fish feed today. Cooked a large fat burbot for lunch caught by a grandson-in-law on the Kobuk delta. Then for supper we had a large chunk cut from the famous smelly roe-laden shee that Carrie brought me from Shungnak. What a treat! It is another food that one must eat with lots of seal oil. One would think the fish flesh too strong for the stomach, as the smell indicates, but like with many other fine fermented foods, the stomach has no trouble.

Our second full moon for the month is just about to begin. The new moon phase begins today.

Many people just getting planes out of Shungnak today and getting back to their homes and jobs.

We are looking for some warmer weather soon. Fishing is high on our list of things to do. Spring firewood cut and ice fishing are the order of the day now.

March 18

High 10° F
Low -24° F
Clear
N-NW wind to 15

A find day in the shelter of the spruce patch today. The thin snow melted on our board step into the house for the first time in this new year. The breeze got strong enough to shake some of the fluffy new snow from trees and willows, but not enough to roll it up in piles – yet.

Folks finally getting settled back into their own villages and homes after conference and NANA annual meeting. Poor flying conditions for a few days has slowed up the process, but clearing and long bright sun (we have passed the 12 hr sun milestone, heading for 24) have allowed catching up.

Ran the dog down to Beaver Lake to check out the lodge vent. The other day I couldn't tell if it was still being used or not. A closer inspection today seems to indicate that the vent is still being used. This must have been a long lonesome winter for this beaver. Wonder how his food has held out?

There have been no fresh large animal tracks for several days, and neither have there been fresh tracks from our single rabbit.

Our small passerines have not been around much this week either. Don't know the reasons for these absences, but it could simply be that things are better for them in other places.

One Gray Jay was working especially hard to unravel a bright yellow thread on a piece of heavy twine at the outside clothesline today. I don't know what use he/she might have for the pretty twine unless it is for nest construction or mate attraction.

March 19

High 21° F
Low -7° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Lots of warm sun today, a little ground drift, and trees and willows shed their fluffy light snow from last week.

Went up for some firewood and found many passerines there. A little higher elevation and a south-facing slope made a great place for redpolls and White-winged Crossbills and firewood cutters.

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Three sno-go's in a group went up through the pass to Nauyaurak. There was one fresh sno-go track ahead of me. Don't know if they might be caribou hunters or Noatak River trout fishermen. Ice-fishing for trout should be good with this weather and there may yet be caribou over that way, though there is none on this side of the pass.

The flu that Carrie brought from conference is still holding her down from traveling, but she is improving.

Our New Moon is quite high in the sky. We can see it plainly tonight, but couldn't last night or the night before when the calendar indicated that it was time. This seems a regular thing for our location on earth. I don't know why, locally, our New Moon is always two days late.

Not much news on the sheefishing front. Brother-in-law found only one other fisher today on Kobuk Lake, and he caught only four sub-adult shee. We hope to make the next strike – if we are healthy.

Iditarod race has wound down. Their banquet is this weekend. A couple of local mushers did well. Our 440 dog race is this coming week and Kiana has a big sno-go race tomorrow.

March 20

High 28° F
Low 5° F
Clear
N wind to 15

The most beautiful day yet! We heard of a new shee strike near the Portage Trail. Someone got a sled load yesterday evening. The shee fishers that stampeded to that location for today certainly had lovely weather whether they got fish or not.

Our doorstep sure melted off today. Our sunlight is 12+ hours now and a new moon is growing. April is less than two weeks off. We are hoping Carrie's flu will leave her and we can get out on the lake. Two locations are producing fish today – the NW shore of Kobuk Lake and also near the south shore (Portage Trail side).

Ran the dog and got some ice. Fox tracks have increased again and many tracks are double yet, which means breeding continues.

With the warm temps and dry air a lot of spruce seeds have dropped from the trees, with cones around the house. This slow dispersal of seeds from white spruce (from October till April at least) is probably what sustains populations of White-winged Crossbills. Apparently cones close and open their scales and release or expose the hidden seeds at each warm and dry spell. Birds and microtines benefit much from this.

Outdoor temps and weather are getting that “spring feel” and begin to release one from the need to protect skin bared to the elements. It is a great freedom to be able to do little things without benefit of gloves, face mask, sno-go suit, etc.

March 21

High 18° F
Low -7° F
Clear
N wind to 15

The first day of spring! Indeed it is, both by calendar and by actual conditions. We had outdoor dripping, icicles, and thawing dark spots today. One of our little “house clearing” Red Squirrels was sitting in the warm afternoon sun, in a tree, chewing on a handheld silvery something that was probably the collarbone of one of the fine smoked King Salmon that we have enjoyed all winter from friends in SE Alaska. Even the bones are very oily with tasty oil. We would chew them too if we had his teeth. He and we have been living pretty high on the hog. I’m sure he appreciates his good fortune too!

Carrie still healing, but slowly. No travel yet.

Checked the beaver lodge again and found the vent still containing frost. Two mink traveling together have visited lately, which makes one wonder how well the beaver tolerates all these visitors that seek access to unfrozen lake bottom through the beaver’s doorway. Both mink and otter have visited in the last month.

We apparently do have caribou yet, not far west of us. One hunter was over to the headwaters of the creek that the Ranger Station is at the mouth of and took some caribou a few days ago. That area does provide caribou with an escape from snow machines – the top of rocky mountains. They soon establish a predictable routine – as soon as a snow machine engine is heard the entire group heads straight up. They can’t stay there, for there is no feed, but will come down to feed when the all clear sounds. This system works well enough if interruptions aren’t too frequent.

March 21

High 37° F
Low 16° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Search on today for two young fellows from Noatak headed for Kotzebue yesterday on one sno-go. They never made it and searchers staring last night and continuing all day have not found any trace. At least two aircraft and many snow machines from several villages have had a near perfect day for a search – without turning up anything. This seems an odd one at this point. There may have been some wind and

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drifting snow under the mountains, but mostly the weather has been just great both yesterday and today.

Just now a late update – they have found two sets of footprints, one recognized by one of the boy's Dad who was on the search. The tracks were found in big mountains to the east of Noatak – not toward Kotzebue, which is south of Noatak. The mystery deepens and some questions will be answered. The weather and temps have been very mild so they should be in good shape but hungry.

We had a visiting friend today, which we enjoyed. He may be able to get us a longer VHF cable, which we need to raise our aerial antennae some.

Carrie's flu is better, but swollen knee joint is bothering now.

A niece had a good catch of shee in the Kotzebue portage area today. As soon as Carrie is able, we will be looking for shee fishers and sheefish too.

A good deal of thawing and dripping around here today. A real fine early spring day.

March 23

High 36° F
Low 14° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

Town trip today for sno-go check, gasoline, and a chainsaw. Made the trip alone for a change as Carrie is still ailing but getting better.

The trip went well and fast as the trail is fair again. The machine check out went well too, and quick, so warranty procedures are followed. The return home was good. All this in the warm sunshine of the day made the trip rather pleasant.

There were three groups of fresh caribou tracks just below the cabin here. The larger group must have been twenty or so, the smaller about four animals. Their tracks would have been made last night or yesterday afternoon. These are the first for over a week. They were moving from east to west and mostly bulls.

Willow Ptarmigan in very large flocks have been tracking up the flatlands and tablelands away from willow patches, the way they often do at this early spring season. The individuals check out each little twig or grass stem sticking out of the snow to check, no doubt, its possible use for food. A few will find a winter-cured berry here and there.

Some family were up the ice road to the Kobuk Delta over the weekend and shot a few Snowshoe Hares. They sent us two, so tomorrow we will have pot-roasted

rabbit, the first in a long while.

If they were alive we would probably turn them loose in our tree patch. Our lone live one hasn't made tracks for more than a week now, so maybe something got him/her.

March 24

High 31° F
Low 20° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 18

Another fine day with winds up a bit in the p.m. and some ground drift.

Got the last of the thawed moose meat cut up and packaged. Took a while to finish that job this year due to extreme cold soon after the animal was killed.

We had a great and rare supper tonight, pt-roasted Snowshoe Hare! These were the first we've had in a long, long while. I have not forgotten how to skin them, nor how to cook them. They turned out just right, soft and not too dry. In earlier years, we, our dog team, and many of our friends and town people lived off our prowess as rabbit hunters. We got a dollar a piece for dressed rabbits and often took nearly a sled load into Kotzebue for sale. Caribou and moose were scarce in those years and rabbits very plentiful. We recall one special day when Carrie and I both on snowshoes took 150 hares in one day from the small timber patch at Napaaqtuuraq just southwest of us. Carrie received a scolding because she had dropped a full box of .22 shells and we had to quit hunting for lack of ammo! Those were different days "on the land" – before anyone ever dreamed of a sno-go!

The rabbits we ate tonight came from the Kobuk delta. Our one rabbit here at Sanningaruq has not made new tracks from more than a week now.

Had a bad fall this morning outside the house with slippers on. Landed on my right arm and shoulder in a cramped position and thought for a bit I had broken something, but maybe just a sprained ligament or whatever muscle system that allows one to lift an arm above shoulder level.

March 25

High 32° F
Low 22° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 20

A frustrating day today, or maybe better said as a day of frustrations. There was nothing wrong with the day – mild, breezy and bright.

There was a little drift on the ground in open areas but no problem to visibility.

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A couple of friends were going to try to visit us that have not been here before. Trails now being so well established, we thought we could give instructions well enough for them to make it. About an hour after they left I went down the trail all the way to the staked Sisualik trail without locating them. I turned around into the wind and returned home fast, knowing that things hadn't worked out well. With the headwind and bumps, my sled tarp (and old oily thing) managed to jump out of its ropes. I didn't find that out till I got home and found by telephone that our friends had gotten to Jones Camp but didn't get instructions enough to get them to our trail up from tidelands. They did learn how to get across to this side, but not yet to our place. Missing my tarp, I loosed the Superdog and went back down the trail, hoping that I had dropped it on the tablelands. No chance! It is no doubt down on the lagoon ice, probably near the staked trail. I didn't want to go that far with the dog loose.

Both Carrie and I continue to improve slowly from our separate physical maladies.

No sign of people or new animal tracks with all that traveling. Nice warm dry air, that's all. It was a fine day for traveling.

March 26

High 22° F
Low 6° F
Clear, clouding, light snow
NE wind to 20

Lots of life up at the woodcut site. The dog and I went up early because of our need for firewood. There were large fresh marten tracks and hundreds of small bird tracks on the snow. There has been a great shower of spruce seeds on the snow and the midday warm sun has made crust enough to support the weight of a redpoll. There are hundreds of tracks, probably both redpolls and White-winged Crossbills. There were only a few redpolls around while we were woodcutting.

A large marten made new tracks thru the area since we were up there last. This is the only area we have touched this winter that marten visit weekly. It needs to be said that have not really been around much to outlying locations.

There is a little new snow on the wind this evening – something we haven't seen for a while.

Brother-in-law had a pretty good fish catch today at the Portage site. We are still wanting to go but neither of us can get quite health enough to make the trip. It is quite a long round trip run from here. We should have a month or so yet to make a few ice fishing trips. My shoulder and Carrie's flu and swollen joints seem to be getting slowly better.

There were also numbers of microtine tracks on the surface snow where the bird tracks were. These are probably Red-backed Voles, but there are a couple of other possibilities.

Both weasel species continue to track up the snow around camp and cross country.

We also still have Spruce Grouse in Sanningaruq.

March 27

High 10° F
Low -1° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 25

A windy day but nice inside our spruce patch. Kotzebue had winds to near 40 again this morning.

We have had drift only out in open country, and then only on the ground. The sun has been quite warm.

A visitor came up from Sisualik and met me and the dog getting ice halfway down the Sisualik trail. He is our neighbor and friend in Sisualik and I sent him on up to the house to Carrie while I finished my ice cutting.

We enjoyed a good visit, catching up on his family news and other happenings in the region. He brought the bad news that strong NE winds with ground drift has roughened up the trails again, just when they were getting good and level.

Our visitor was looking for a moose and said he had watched a couple of snow machiners kill a large bull in the Little Noatak area last week – hospital workers.

One continues to wonder if we can continue such late and extended seasons on some species thru this long month, with long daylight and sometimes mild temps. The long daylight and ease of locating and approaching large animals gives the hunter, especially the casual hunter, some very great advantage. Anyone that wants to kill a moose should be able to this month. It seems too sure a thing for the sake of the moose, especially in the hands of the local casual hunter that wants a moose mostly to validate his/her moose tag acquired early in the hunting year but not used till now.

March 28

High 11° F
Low -8° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

A quiet Sunday here with a cooling trend continuing with lots of sun and moon in the

March

clear sky.

We are seeing lots of small bird tracks on the snow under trees, picking up individuals seeds that have fallen free of the cones. They are probably redpolls and maybe some Boreal Chickadees, but the mystery is that we never see the birds on the ground!

Our number of redpolls has increased dramatically through March.

McKay's and Snow Buntings have moved into Kotzebue town. Birds have become more of a common sight in town these last ten days. It is good to see something there besides ravens.

A friend reported seeing a pair of Goshawks up the Aggie River last week. This is an interesting report because some other sightings of birds of prey (Gyr Falcon, Snowy Owl) indicate that they seem to be coming back right on the heels of increasing Willow Ptarmigan and spreading return of rabbit numbers. We may see an increase in our overwintering birds of prey soon. We have missed the Gyrs, Goshawk, Hawk Owls, Horned Owls and winter Snowy Owls. They have been nearly absent for many years as both rabbit and Willow Ptarmigan populations have been down.

There are also microtine tracks down on the snow surface, gathering the same windrowed spruce seeds.

Kobuk 440 was won today by a Nenana musher with a close second by a local musher friend. They had some very difficult trail conditions and wind.

March 29

High 16° F
Low 4° F
Clear
N wind to 15

Another beautiful day here. Winds have been continuous but light, keeping the temperature moderate.

The dog and I saw a good group of caribou running away from us the morning on our way up for firewood. There were 10-12 and ready to run. The dog thought we should chase them, but when he found out I wasn't going to, he decided he didn't want to go alone and he kept after me instead of them. It is unusual for small groups to be consistently around our location at this date. We may yet take one more for fresh meat through April if opportunity offers. We have some on hand yet which we will dry up in April.

Cooler weather has calmed the Red Squirrels down a bit. They got pretty wild last

week when midday temperatures were above freezing for a while. They were chasing each other up and down trees and across the snow and remarkable speeds – hard for the eye to follow. They are unbelievably agile, knowing how far they can jump from the top of one tree to another.

There are also numerous foxes around, following their ancient mating patterns.

Both Carrie and I are feeling better, slowly, and may be ready to travel soon. Sheefishing news is not good from the weekend and trails have gotten terribly rough and bumpy again.

April is a great month for sheefish ice fishing. Hope at least a part of it fits our needs.

March 30

High 16° F
Low -11° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Nephew returned today – brought mail and VHF cable. Reports the main trail to Sisualik is not so bad. Trails in the country have worsened after the strong N and NE winds last week. In some places in the hills, the hard drifts are cut in the deepest places to the rocks and ground. Traveling, even slow, is tough in places. Hard on machines too.

The dog and I traveled the high ridge to the south of us this afternoon to get a high altitude look at the country. The air is very clear and sun very bright – distance vision spectacular. There was no sign of open water leads in the ocean, but there appears to be a lot of rough ice in Kotzebue Sound that was not there in February. March may have been our sea ice making month – not from cold but from wind and current action on the ice that did from in our earlier cold weather. Shore fast ice area (distance to first open lead and shelf ice) builds more by wind-current combinations than by cold air. Piling pack ice jams in against other ice, making huge bergs that reach to the bottom of our shallow seas. These function like nails that fasten pack ice down, making and extending the ice shelf many miles after each on shore wind. The new lead doesn't usually materialize until a strong off shore wind develops. The next lead that develops in April will probably remain in place, constant, opening and closing by tide action clear through till June.

There has been no spring seal hunting yet and almost no winter sealing off Krusenstern shores. A continued downward trend in this formerly active hunting time.

March

March 31

High 20° F
Low 6° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

March is a contradiction this year. It is come in like a lamb and it goes out the same way, “once in a blue moon,” which we also have tonight. Two full moons this month – again!

Carrie’s father’s brother died yesterday – a very old “old timer” with a long active life.

Worked on our VHF antenna today. Our changeover is complete now from CB to marine VHF. Everyone in the region has done that so there is no longer use for expensive CB components old or new – discard them!

After that effort I took a ride up towards the pass with the dog. I wanted to make a new trail to a woodcutting place for our spring and summer wood, but the dog wanted to follow the nice firm trail up toward the pass. I didn’t have the heart to force him off into a soft unbroken trail. His is too fat and the midday sun was too warm. We went his way and will do the trail breaking another day.

Didn’t see anything new up there but the bright clear air, sun, trees, and mountains together in a super broad mosaic was a scene to remember, before the warm days of April darken the high mountains first and then the lowlands. The contrasts of dark and white right now made by snow cover and dark trees and willows above snow surface will fade as snow gradually disappears.

There has been no obvious increase in living things in this week of warm sun. It won’t be long though. I can imagine Jonathan showing signs of restlessness and then remembering the blizzard he arrived in last year. He may hold till May this year!

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

APRIL

April 1

High 16° F
Low 0° F
Cloudy, snow
N wind to 20

A little duller weather today – we missed the bright sun we've gotten used to but it was good to see snowflakes again, fresh snowflakes.

We had visitors from Kotzebue IRA today about the possibility of a house in Sisualik. Our situation makes for more complex decisions by those that administer housing funding. Most folks have a single “primary residence” situation. We of course have two of nearly equal residency time, six months in Sisualik, six months in Sanningaruq. It confuses the system of allocation.

The visitors were a little late, not having been here before, but they did locate our trail at the tree on tidelands and reported a huge flock of Willow Ptarmigan in the willows on the bank down there. It is the flock that numbers many hundreds.

Finally saw a very small bird on the ground under a tree today. There have been lots of tracks of very small birds on the lightly crusted snow, but we very seldom see the birds there. They are picking up the loose and scattered white spruce seeds that have dropped or been knocked out of cones by feeding White-winged Crossbills. The assumption is that the tracks were made mostly by redpolls, but the bird today seemed smaller and darker, which means Boreal Chickadee. Anything else would be a surprise and rare. I didn't get a good look at the bird before it was gone.

We will have a new slate, a new floor to start the new month with – it is snowing heavily this evening, the first in quite a while.

April 2

High 16° F
Low 2° F
Cloudy, snow, fog
SW wind to 12

A little light snow all day and last night with 3 inches accumulation. Lots of light fluffy stuff again, even on trees and willows.

April

Went with the dog up to Milluraq today to snowshoe a trail to a woodcutting area. We found a very rough sno-go trail with huge sculpted snow piles.

I was going to tie the dog at the sled and sno-go while I snowshoed, then I decided to let him follow me, if he could, up through the trees. He did follow and kept up, but I felt sorry for him. He had two methods of making forward progress – jumping forward like an otter or a wolverine and “swimming” in the soft places as if the snow were water. He would not be able to keep up that pace long.

We got to the section of larger trees where I thought there might be enough dry ones for cutting. There were not and the haul trail was also poor, so we still have to look for a better place.

The dog made it home all right but pretty tired. He may not follow me again with the snow that deep.

Nephew went into town this evening. They may use that sno-go to haul gas for the big sno-go race tomorrow. There will be three laps to Hatchery and back. Lots of racers and high stakes as the entrance fee is over \$600.

There were lots of redpolls and crossbills at Milluraq. The elevation is high there and cones are plentiful. There were no recent moose tracks. Visibility was very poor with fog and snow while up there, so there was no chance to glass the country.

April 3

High 16° F
Low -8° F
Fog, snow, clear, snow
NE wind to 20

A lot of changeable weather today. Dog and I got lost for a bit in fog and snow on the way up to cut some firewood. Then, while cutting wood, the wind picked up, fog and snow disappeared and the sun came out fully with just a little ground drift – in time for the great sno-go race.

We were surprised by visiting friends late in the afternoon. Had a good visit. It was a first time out on a sno-go for one young lady. I think she enjoyed the adventure but I'm sure it was pretty bumpy. The brought us some Easter goodies.

Got a load of ice after they left for home and got to see the clouds close in over the sun again as snow began and stormy weather took over again.

Didn't see any large animal tracks today, though there were very fresh small fox tracks at woodcutting site. It was probably a white fox. It is a very lightweight fox, as it moves through the soft snow inside the timber without trouble.

Carrie has developed a very sore wrist, though her other problems have improved.

Tonight we separate ourselves another hour from the sun. Tomorrow we will be three hours off of sun time again. This is a pet peeve of mine. There really is no justification for having to live three hours off sun time – there are certain life rhythms that are disrupted and disturbed.

We will enjoy a quiet Easter at home tomorrow since our ability to travel is still limited.

April 4

High 27° F
Low 18° F
Cloudy, blizzard
E-SE wind to 35

A stormy Easter Sunday with travel plans of some disrupted. Airlines shut down altogether today and any hopes for visitors here was stormed out!

Carrie's newest problem – a swollen, sensitive wrist – has been pretty intense today. Her flu and other joint problems have faded. We do have painkillers and she will get to clinic this week as weather permits. Good health at times of bad weather is always a blessing most appreciated when you don't have it.

The weatherman has given us another blizzard watch for tonight and early tomorrow. Looks like we're getting our snow late this year.

There will also be an active lead established in the sea ice from this weather spell that will probably remain constant through the spring break up time. Both beluga and bowheads will soon be seen at Point Hope and Kivalina.

Some early sea birds may be seen soon also with that promise of sustained open water.

We have a lot of work to do this month, not having done any of it yet – firewood haul and cut for Sisualik, movement of things and us out of here to the spring tent camp, and all the little things that have to be done when you live in two different places each year. We may not be able to keep up – physically – with this pattern for too many more years.

April

April 5

High 31° F
Low 26° F
Cloudy, snow, fog
E-SE wind to 35

Blizzard cancelled early but the non-blizzard seemed worse than the blizzard. Carrie had a quiet night with her wrist ache, but the early morning gave an intense pain time until another pain tablet could take control. Once it did, she relaxed again and we got things rigged and creek crossing trails broken through the snowbanks and waited for weather to clear a bit. It did for a bit as the sun came in sight thru the clouds. About 2 p.m., just when we thought we might start off, it began to snow and got worse and worse, with wind and snow both picking up. We talked it over and with the feeling that we had some control over pain spasms with the pills, we decide to hold for a better day. In order to have stakes on the sound crossing we would need to go through Sisualik. This seems a time of some tough decisions. Weather forecast is better for tomorrow, but with a switch to W winds. We have continued heavy snowfall through this early evening.

Aircraft are shut down too, so travelers to Kivalina for Easter celebration are stuck too.

There was a good bunch of Willow Ptarmigan right in the trail on the first creek crossing. The Superdog looked back, expecting the shotgun blast. But it didn't come because I didn't have it! I'm not sure whether he was glad or disappointed. He's hard to read sometimes. He hates a shotgun blast – gun shy – but likes to catch wounded ptarmigan.

Outside roof dripping all afternoon.

This spell of bad weather is wasting good and seasonal time for outside projects!

April 6

High 30° F
Low 2° F
Ground mist, fog
SW-W wind to 15

We finally got Carrie in to a doctor after a long trip on trail-less ground and ice. Distant visibility was poor, but the weather mild and windless. We chose the long route through Sisualik summer camp to make use of the Sisualik crossing trail stakes. The idea worked well, even though whiteout conditions prevailed and distant vision never improved. The trail is softer with the new snow, but still has some lumpy stretches that were tough on the sled-riding cripple.

April

I returned home alone to keep the house warm, as the doctor wanted Carrie in town till 2 p.m. tomorrow for test results.

I was able to see the shortcut trail home as visibility had improved. That is, distant visibility did – whiteout conditions prevailed for the snow surface immediately in front of sno-go. One rather long stretch was very lumpy.

Hard to see creatures other than humans today, except ravens. The black and white contrast was extreme today and one was forced by it to notice ravens.

We are moving through April too rapidly. Hope things, including weather, settle down so we can get at the important things.

A return to town is on for tomorrow to finish the business begun today.

April 7

High 10° F
Low -20° F
Clear, some clouds
NE wind to 15

Town trip and business there and a return with Carrie and nephew.

The trail over was much better than yesterday because of the bright sun – lack of whiteout – that permits one to see the worst bumps and miss them. It makes a “wavy trail” but is so much smoother.

There were a lot of sno-go trails today – unlike the complete absence yesterday. Returning Kivalina Easter travelers and other with coastal business (camps, hunting or freight hauling).

No more signs of birds or spruce seeds since the new snowfall. Wonder how far they moved?

A grandson-in-law on a trip to Noatak for Easter saw a wolf and chased it a while, but then remembered he had no gun! The wolf seemed slow and he thought it might have just eaten heavily. He will remember the incident for a long while!

Two hours after we got home this evening a friend called to check if we were home, as he wanted to bring us a couple of rabbits. He showed up in 20 minutes (racer with a racing machine). He brought in a large plastic bag looking like more than a couple of Snowshoe Hares. He opened it and hauled out a huge male Arctic Hare! What a surprise! We haven't seen one for years.

April

He had gone down the Baldwin Peninsula to Callahan, caught two Arctic Hares and several Snowshoe Hares. A little late for Easter but we have lots of rabbit to eat now. The jackrabbit (Arctic Hare) will make especially fine flour soup!

April 8

High 20° F
Low -6° F
Clear, floating clouds
NE wind to 18

Visitors early, seeking a spring camp site. Old friends back in the region again.

Went up after a little wood after lunch. It was a very fine day, but small bird sign is missing since the last fresh snow. No more seeds on surface and surface too fluffy-light to support redpoll or crossbill landing.

Carrie's condition continues to slowly improve. The doctor hasn't yet come up with a diagnosis.

Word comes of a good shee catch at the Portage again.

Lots of Willow Ptarmigan tracks and noise today around Sanningaruq. Some may be beginning to snow dark feathers on the head. In years past, dark feathers have been noted the last week of March.

There has not been much improvement in snow surface trails after the last drifting snow. Some places (ridge tops) are worse; lower lying country, especially close to willow and tree patch edges, are better.

No fresh sign of caribou between here and the pass.

The Arctic Hare flour soup that we had for supper was very good!

April 9

High 28° F
Low 10° F
Clear, light clouds
NE wind to 20

A beautiful day in the spruce patch – ground drift in the open but mild temps. Some surface thawing in sheltered places.

Carrie continues slow improvement. We are coming to find that doing what we need to do to continue our present lifestyle depends on both of us being capable of doing our chores. It is quite difficult for one to do all chores.

April

Ran the dog and got some ice before lunch and did around the camp chores for the afternoon.

There were several hundred ptarmigan around the cabin and up to the first creek crossing this morning. Lots of noise and lots of tracks. Some males have dark feathers showing on the heads. I didn't shoot any as we have numerous things to eat and I didn't want to take time for plucking. A few hours later a young neighbor friend came by and left us four.

A large otter passed on his way down the creek last night. Haven't seen snow surface otter tracks for a while. They are pretty vulnerable this time of year, with few places in streams, rivers and lakes where they can get into the water to feed.

People starting to shovel out their spring-summer camps – another sure sign of April, like the dark ptarmigan heads.

Almost daily visitors is also a sign. We are expecting two groups tomorrow – at least.

No news yet of bears out, but it won't be long.

A few redpolls showing again but no new spruce seeds on the snow surface yet.

April 10

High 31° F
Low 18° F
Clear, few clouds

A beautiful day, a beautiful visitor day! Old friends from Anchorage and Kotzebue, three in all, came early and we enjoyed visiting and conversation through and after lunch. One needed to catch a 6 p.m. plane so they left in time to do that.

Very little local news this weekend. No new fish strikes, no seal hunters out, few local caribou and fewer hunters. There may be trout fishing news from Noatak – good weather for that – and sheefishers should be out with this good weather. We may get success reports later.

We have not heard of any yet, but early out bears could be reported at any time. We have only moderate snow cover this year and that might be reflected in early dark-headed ptarmigan and early out bears.

The swelling is going down on Carrie's arm and wrist and we may soon be able to get at traveling (fishing) and preparations for move to spring camp.

April

A few redpolls are back and Gray Jay activity pretty secretive, probably indicating mate choosing has been accomplished.

April 11

High 24° F
Low 8° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 18

Another day of sun and moderate temps.

Ran the dog and got a few sticks of firewood.

Our dear friend and long time neighbor in Sisualik passed on this morning. We are glad that he has gone home, for his suffering these past few months has been a great burden on his family and friends. He is an outdoor person (hunting-fishing), and could no longer be active at those pursuits. There was little else he could do so quality of life had declined greatly. We will miss his friendly encouragement that has gone on for years.

We had visitors from Jones Camp today and everybody enjoyed the talk and late afternoon sun.

Long boiled Willow Ptarmigan gave us a great supper. The broth, thickened with a little flour, is always a great treat, quite unlike anything else.

Spruce seeds are falling to the snow surface again and small birds are picking them up again.

Our visitors report a few hare tracks on a timbered knoll just east of us on the Noatak River delta.

Another neighbor searched all day far out on the ocean for his wife's half grown white dog. He did find the dog and brought him home. The dog had never been anywhere before except under the house in Kotzebue.

The Weather Bureau has promised us snow for the last three days that has not come.

We are hoping for a cool April so we can get our wood hauling and moving done.

Relatively few wolves and wolverines taken this year by the Jones hunting family.

April 12

High 26° F
Low 3° F
Cloudy, light snow, fog
N-NE wind to 15

Went far back to the mountain called Akulisak this morning, looking for a place to cut spring firewood. Found a spruce patch under the mountain that is a beautiful high elevation place right in the mountain and facing the sun all day. It was full of birds today, with lots of cones still on the tree. The birds were Boreal Chickadee, redpolls, White-winged Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, a Three-toed Woodpecker, Spruce Grouse, and Willow Ptarmigan.

Foxes – a pack, from the looks of the tracks – finally came right in to the cabin clearing last night to feed on a multitude of the table scraps that Terry felt were inedible. These foxes are pretty light, not breaking through the snow when moving through the trees. Terry can only stay up on used sno-go or snowshoe tracks. Foxes are safe and Terry is frustrated again and looks forward to ground squirrels out again at the end of this month.

Got a little ice and ran the dog this late afternoon and ran into a big flock of ptarmigan at second creek crossing – no shotgun!

Grave digging tomorrow in Sisualik for our good friend and neighbor.

Porcupines seem scarce again this year. This seems a trend that is continuing. Haven't a hint of a possible reason.

I'm now ready for a full day of chainsaw cutting before running over the snowshoe packed trail I made today. This procedure works well. If one finishes the trail before cutting, some lucky wood seeker may come along and get a share before it is his turn – from my hard won trail.

April 13

High 20° F
Low 3° F
Cloudy, lt snow, clear
Light winds

Steady light snow for a while, but less than two inches accumulation over the land.

Took the dog and headed for the new wood cut site.

Whiteout all the way, but lots of ptarmigan in the trail. Some adult males have much developed dark heads – it is later than you think! Last year we had moved down to Sisualik by this time.

April

Cut one gas tank (chainsaw) load and the new saw blade jammed. Had to go home to work on it, though I tried for a while to fix the problem outdoors, but fingers got cold.

No tracks but ptarmigan and fox. Ravens in the new wood cut patch probably have a nest. Didn't see it, but they act as if they have one.

Radio report of a robin in Kotzebue yesterday. No confirmation yet.

Some new spring happenings will be dropping out in the next few weeks – first goose, first bear out, first bowhead, first beluga sighting, first ugruk. We are already at mid April!

Grave digging went well in Sisualik today we heard. We didn't go down as we knew there would be many young adults for a fast dig in the dry gravelly beach ridge ground. Funeral will be on Thursday. Many will attend as this family is an old Sisualik clan family with many friends and a lot of family.

April 14

High 27° F
Low -4° F
Cloudy, light snow
NE wind to 15

A strange day. Planned to cut firewood. Had a call yesterday from visitors asking if I would be home. Said I would and the visit would be short so I could run up to the wood cut mountain. Today dawned cloudy with bright edges, but visibility decreased as snowfall (light) began. Our visitors made it across but no trail stopped them at "first" creek crossing. We were alerted by FM and phone. Went down and brought them home just in time to hear of a plane crash on Kobuk Lake near the Portage. Pilot killed – no passengers. Whiteout may have been a factor and vertigo. It was a return freight trip to Noorvik.

We enjoyed our visitors – making a new friend with several mutual friends around Alaska. Then they had to run for Kotzebue with compass and GPS. They did make it okay – a better day for surface travel than for air, no doubt.

Whiteout conditions still prevailed with both fog and falling snow, so cancelled my afternoon wood cut in the mountains. I would not be able to see my trail, and wood work in stick new snow is not fun. Hopefully we'll be able to get enough while cool weather lingers. Our old move dates in May are especially attractive this years since we are late with our wood working.

April

First geese into Fairbanks today. It is the 14th again, when a nephew once celebrated his birthday with two cranes in the pot!

Funeral and burial for our dear friend and neighbor Amos Greene tomorrow.

April 15

High 28° F
Low 0° F
Cloudy, snow, clearing
SE-S wind to 15

Funeral today, but burial postponed because of weather. Morning and evening were good, but visibility was nil throughout the afternoon.

We had surprise evening visitors. Friends headed for their camp set up last week under the mountains in the spruce patch where my spring woodcut is ongoing. They were luck enough to catch the clearing weather into a fine bright evening.

Terry and I went down the Sisualik trail this morning to leave tracks that might be followed by family visitors after the burial. We picked up a few pieces of ice and didn't see any new tracks – not even ptarmigan. We have nearly 3" of new snow again.

We do have a live in weasel now in our old storage cabin next door. He has made a den in the dirt of the floor and that explains the lack of microtines in the same shed. It is a good trade because our choice "human foods" are kept in tight containers and there is nothing he can really hurt.

Carrie continues to get slowly better and my shoulder is useable. We must be able to get moving this coming week - to get summer firewood out and ready to move household from here to Sisualik, when spring thaw does set in. Those two things have priority now – fishing will have to wait.

We hope weather stays this firm till May this year for a change.

April 16

High 33° F
Low -4° F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 18

An early start to woodcut this morning, but orders to be back here by 2 p.m. as some town family might come up after the burial.

April

Carrie's arm/wrist still not useable, so she has not wanted to travel with it yet. It continues to slowly improve, though we have no hint of why the swelling began other than possible stress factors.

When I did get back – on time – Carrie had a house full of Amos and Flora Greene's kids and grandkids. After the burial they came up to visit Carrie for a bit before they returned to town. We have been very close to the Greene family over the years. We were glad they came. It was good for us, and them too, now that their dad's body is put away and he is at rest.

Saw a Gray Jay hassling a Spruce Grouse in a camp tree today. The jay must have though the hen was after something he cached in the tree.

Cut some very large dry trees on the southwest end of Akulisak Mountain today. Sawed the butts into stove length blocks for easier handling and hauling. I still have the problem of getting the sno-go and sled in to the wood. Packed the trail down with snowshoes again today. There is a pretty steep climb out with a load. May have to re-route. It is a thrill to see such fine trees and dry wood after the scrubby stuff we have burned all winter.

No new creature tracks except fox and ptarmigan.

Checked beaver lodge – vent is still active.

April 17

High 36° F
Low 20° F
Cloudy, snow, rain, fog
NE-SE wind to 20
NW-W wind to 25

A full day of weather today – just about anything one could think of – except sunshine. The spruce trees spent all forenoon and middy shaking the old snow off, then the rain (very heavy yellow drip from the branches – a kind of spring washing I guess). A wind switch – strong – to SW and W brought freezing temps and a snow crust quickly. It has left rather a mess outdoors. It was not a day to be out traveling, but the drop in temps is good for us and our wood hauling and spring move to the beach.

Goose call was heard yesterday at the Noatak mouth and a lot of shee were taken there by hook yesterday and the day before. It is a short run for us but Carrie's right wrist is not up to handling a fishing outfit yet.

Made a birthday call to a friend in Sitka today and found them having fine sunny weather there and expecting a first King Salmon feast.

April

Two interesting bird reports – a Spruce Grouse at Wrench Creek (Noatak River, maybe the farthest north Spruce Grouse on the continent) and a pair of Goshawks near or at Thompson Camp on the Noatak, also a northern extreme for that species.

It is also reported that there are a good number of caribou on Krusenstern just west of us - probably the overwintering group that was moved out of here just after the February cold snap. It is reported that there are a high ratio of young bulls still carrying antlers.

Late evening weather is looking better with wind and snow and clouds diminishing – colder.

April 18

High 33° F
Low 18° F
Cloudy, fog, whiteout
NW-N wind to 15

Ladies sno-go race cancelled due to danger of whiteout conditions. Aircraft covering the race would have trouble keeping track of racers.

We have a nice soft riding trail now – three to four inches of new snow held in place from drifting by rain crust. Very comfortable riding.

Broke trail down to tidelands, then rode up to woodcut site to pack down with snowshoes the trail we hope to use to get our firewood out. This is the portion of trail inside the spruce patch there that is short but is through deep soft snow. Have not yet been over any of that with sno-go, only snowshoes. We will be able to haul heavy loads of firewood out over that trail once it is packed down and sets overnight (with freezing temps). If real spring warming will hold off a few days we will be in good shape to start our slow move down to summer camp. A few loads of firewood first will allow shoveling and cleaning out of the tent.

Lots of spruce cones and passerines at woodcut site – redpolls, crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, and Boreal Chickadees. The only animal tracks were those of a Red Squirrel and fox. There is said to be a few thousand caribou only a few miles farther west, thru the pass.

Must make a run to town tomorrow for a drum of gas. Will hope to make it early as Carrie will stay home.

April

April 19

High 36° F
Low 24° F
Cloudy, some sun
W-NW wind to 20

Town trip for gas. Drifting on that side and snow piling in bumpy drifts again. A thin crust over the fresh snow on this side has so far kept the drifting from beginning. Kotzebue winds and temps were different than here today – the temps colder, the winds stronger.

We now have gas enough for wood hauling and moving – if that becomes necessary. Nephew came home with me to give a hand with wood work. We hope freezing continues for a few days. I have snowshoe packed the haul trail into dry timber, but we have yet to go over it with sno-go. We'll hope to do that tomorrow, as well as some more cutting.

They are having record warm temps inland a ways – the Koyukuk, upper Kobuk and Interior zones. Hope that our westerlies keep the thawing temps back in there.

Bowheads and belugas reported into Pt. Hope. No hunter take yet.

Beaver lodge vent still shows signs of occupancy.

Two camps in Sisualik have been re-occupied. This is probably the first winter in this century that Sisualik has gone for such an extended time without a peopled camp. There has been no steadily occupied camp for several months, and the one or two camps used intermittently earlier were pretty much vacant for the past two months. More people will be coming back now – including us.

April 20

High 30° F
Low 10° F
Few clouds, clearing
NW wind to 20

A find day for us today. Warm sun, light winds, and no drifting, while just on the other side of the long ridge to the south of us and through Sisualik and Kotzebue, W and NW winds blew drifting snow and cold air all day.

Nephew and I worked the woodcut sit just under the mountains and finally completed the haul trail to the now cut wood. Nephew went over the trail several times with sno-go (no sled). It will “set up” tonight and be ready for hauling tomorrow – finally!

April

Finally saw a fresh porcupine track today – a very small one in the firewood cut site area. Porcupine numbers seem very low.

There are lots of spruce seeds on the snow up that way and the light crust will support small birds (redpolls, chickadees, and crossbills). Both Willow Ptarmigan and Rock Ptarmigan have dark-colored heads now.

We have a very light fox in Sanningaruq now. It travels over the light snow crust, breaking through less than a walking ptarmigan. It must be a very lightweight white fox.

They are still taking sheefish at Noatak River mouth. Some are good fat, but short fish. Stomachs are filled with Rainbow Smelt and small herring.

Carrie continues to improve slowly, getting back to some of her chores. Maybe fishing is not far off. My shoulder use is still impaired but I can handle my chores, including woodcutting and hauling, pretty well. We may finish this year out yet!

Geese seen at Ambler today.

April 21

High 20° F
Low 0°
Clear
NW wind to 18

A fine bright cool day. Good for hauling wood and that's what I did. Made two good loads of sawed blocks over our new trail. These are the first of many trips with out spring-summer firewood. Thanks to the cool weather that makes the haul trail good and firm.

I spent some time limbing and getting all ready to load and haul the trees already cut. Some are nice big trees – dry wood.

Bird flocks (redpolls) were much around with the abundant spruce seeds in the air and on the ground.

Saw a large flock of Willow Ptarmigan on the way up to woodcut site and since, for once, I had the shotgun, I fired once, killing three. They will make a good meal tomorrow if I get the feathers off. Most of this flock lacked dark heads – all female?

Peter Rob, former fish hatchery manager, paid us a nice visit this evening. He and Kate have been good friends for many years before their move to Nome.

April

The annual Lions Club Sheefish Derby happens on Saturday. Carrie says we will take part – even with her crippled wrist. She won a \$500 first prize once and will not let the opportunity pass. Hope we can make it. Hope she winds first prize again!

Our dog chasing that “light fox” again this morning. Terry breaks through the snow crust clear to the bottom. Seems that he won’t catch the fox, not in soft snow anyway.

April 22

High 31° F
Low 0° F
Cloudy, some sun
NW wind to 15

Our weather continues to hold cool, for which we are glad. We are getting good wood out now with good heavy loads before noon.

Nephew got two large loads into the camp at Sisualik and I got two loads of sawed blocks into the cabin here this morning, and two yesterday. The wood is from find large dry spruce. They are about the best one could expect to find. They are much unlike the scrubby wood we have been using all winter.

We did get the first sled load stuck this morning, making too sharp a corner. We found the snow more than waist deep – very granular snow. It pays to stay on a firm, well-broken trail.

There may be some bear hunters out looking for early bears. There were a couple of red sno-go’s cruising the mountains this evening.

We had a backyard full of Willow Ptarmigan all day today. Lots of noise and lots of meat. We ate the three taken yesterday. Didn’t shoot any today – don’t seem to have time for plucking.

Sheefish Derby is on for Saturday. Carrie is thinking of making a try. She won the \$500 prize once and always expects to win again. Her wrist is feeling stronger. Wonder if it is strong enough for a prize winning fish?

It is great to have a firewood trail finally useable, and that great amount of wood now open for our use. We will probably haul for a couple more days and then concentrate on getting moved to the beach. Jonathan is coming!!

April 23

High 23° F
Low 8° F
Cloudy, fog, sun
W-NW wind to 25

Real west wind most of today, with the typical moist air and vapor with sometimes tiny snowflakes. The warm sun could not penetrate today except in sheltered high elevation zones, like our woodcut area. We got the last of our good cut firewood out from there today, with most of it into Sisualik. Nephew did a good work yesterday and today in hauling most of our wood down with a large freight sled.

Sounds as though Kivalina got beluga today (overheard VHF).

Weekenders went up to their tent camp this evening. They saw caribou, musk ox, and a Golden Eagle last weekend.

Shee Derby tomorrow. We will try if weather lets us. Carrie says she can hold a hooking stick.

April 24

High 14° F
Low 2° F
Cloudy, some sun, fog
SW-NW wind to 15

Well, weather did permit us to enter the Derby, but except for the many people we got to visit thru the day, we would have done better to stay home.

Whiteout conditions on the early trip over caused us to lose the trail once before we got to tidelands, and then to pass over the Sisualik-Kotzebue staked trail without seeing it. It took us a half hour longer to get to town than it should have.

We did sign in and went up to the Noatak mouth – place of great shee catches last week. We saw many people with many hooks in the water, but not one fish. We went on to Pipe Spit – same story. People, hooks in water, no fish. We went back to Noatak mouth, made one hole thru very thick ice (4 ½ to 5 feet), put our hooks in the water but felt no fish! We did not see anyone with even one fish! That's out of between 50 and 100 people with hooks in the water. It was a truly a remarkable show of either non-feeding fish or very low numbers of shee in the covered areas.

We have heard late this evening that a few fish were taken, with a fish less than 36" taking the \$500 prize. It usually takes a 45" to 50" fish to win.

April

We had a long day, saw lots of friends we hadn't seen for years, and Carrie was able to move her fish jigging rig in the ice hole. We did not find out if she could handle a fish if one grabbed the hook.

April 25

High 20° F
Low -1° F
Cloudy, snow
Clearing late
NE-E-SE-S-W wind to 15

A quiet Sunday of mostly obscured skies; air full of small snow grains and flakes. After yesterday's trials and tribulations we really took a day of rest today.

We did have several interesting phone calls from distant places.

Our "all day" snow has not accumulated much. It will slow thawing when the warm sun does come through.

Had visibility been a little better we probably would have had some visitors.

A few geese into Galena this week, with a few juncos and a robin. No other migrants. Lots of Snowshoe Hares in Galena – just beginning to change color. Lots of insects and a few greens on thawed areas. They are a bit ahead of us.

Checked Beaver Lake today. His vent is still open so he does seem to survive.

A 36" shee won the \$500 prize yesterday. It usually takes a fish of 45" or so. Top in total weight class was 320 lbs or so.

Temps remain cool. May cut a little more wood tomorrow. We will be hauling for moving soon. Sooner if the temps warm. It will be good to get out in the air and tent again. Very bright with birds calling. It is that great time of year again. Less than one week till Jonathan is due back. Hope he shows up – both on time and in fact.

Springs may be here and if Jonathan comes on time, that will be remarkable!

April 26

High 23° F
Low 6° F
Clear
N wind to 15

A perfectly clear day! Lots and lots of sunshine – reflected off the immaculate white inch and a half of white snow. It is a time to watch out for snow blindness. Some eye protection is essential.

April

Another day of firewood cut and haul. The sun warmed and thawed around the rocks up on the mountains today.

Brother-in-law hauled a second load of firewood to his camp at Sisualik Point from Noatak today. Now that is long distance hauling! We have also heard that firewood is being hauled to Kivalina from Noatak.

Saturday all the sheefish were gone from waters of the Sound. Today all the Willow Ptarmigan that were on our trail up to woodcut site are gone. Don't know where either species has gone.

Caribou were seen today by travelers coming to our place from Noatak. The area inland from Sealing Point towards Rabbit Creek is said to have good numbers of caribou. No report on meat quality.

Several fresh mink and marten tracks were in the new snow on the way up the creek to the woodcut site. These furbearers are into the mating season and it is always good to see some sign around after the year's trapping season is passed.

We have seen a single very small porcupine in our woodcut site. There were also many winter birds in that spruce patch again. No rabbit tracks, only red squirrel and marten tracks.

April 27

High 31° F
Low -8° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 10

A very bright beautiful day in the country, with a warm midday sun. It was especially beautiful at timberline where our woodcut site is. Mountain rocks and sod warming, and birds are busy on the spruce cones. I brought down maybe a last load of wood after getting ice early.

Found another colony of *Heracleum lanatum* five miles west of the original location discovered years ago. This is quite a long distant range extension of this species, and it seems rather remarkable for the plant to be located within Cape Krusenstern Monument. There is no telling whether these colonies are long established or more recent. The locations are similar – south-facing slope right at timberline. Seeds are probably carried from interior on strong channeled easterly storm winds.

There were new marten tracks amongst the umbels of *Heracleum*, two species probably relatively new to Krusenstern.

April

We had a late welcome visitor that we haven't seen for a while. Good conversation over a good soup pot.

Our last night temp was somewhat lower than we have seen for a while. Now the weatherman is talking strong winds and rain-snow for Thursday. We may yet have to move before May 1 - hope not.

Heard and saw several Three-toed Woodpeckers today. Willow Ptarmigan are back making tracks after a couple days absence.

April 28

High 34° F
Low 16° F
Clear
NE-E wind to 20

Ground squirrels out today! (At dome in Sisualik.) Two different holes.

I went down to Sisualik camp with a first sled load of things we will need down there.

The Weather Bureau has promised us rain and winds for tomorrow, so we need to be thinking of moving to the summer site. I found a great weight on the south side of our tent. Very hard, heavy snow from a NW drift some time ago. It was terribly hard to break up with a shovel. I thinned it up some but couldn't clean it down to canvas for fear of making shovel holes in the tent. I did shovel most of the weight off, and it was a hard job with the hardness of the snow.

Just after arriving home and shutting off the sno-go I heard on loud call of a Canada Goose passing over our creek, traveling toward the west. First squirrels out, first goose noise! A good day and still April.

Multitudes of caribou moving north across the Kobuk River between Kiana and Ambler. It seems rather early but river crossing will be easier for them while ice is still in place.

Spring and break up is on the way, and the most wonderful time is on its way – moving birds and animals, running water, insects, and green growth.

Willow Ptarmigan are still in flocks but not for long.

A big catch of shee today farther inside Noatak River than ever before in the history of shee hooking.

April 29

High 33° F
Low 26° F
Clear, clouding
Snow, blizzard
E-SE wind to 40

The worst possible weather today – for those creatures caught out in it, including people, of which there were several.

The wind was up but skies clear up until almost noon. Clouds came in quickly, winds further increased, and wet heavy snow began to fall. There were very large, double-size snowflakes sticking to everything they touched. Trees, willows, clothing – everything dark turned wet after a short time. There was an ongoing search for someone overdue into Noorvik in the morning. He walked in but several searchers were caught out when heavy snow obliterated everything. Some fisherfolks and other travelers were caught out and could not orient themselves. It was a bad afternoon with drifting snow, falling snow, wet snow. It was not cold – barely freezing.

No bird reports today, but yesterday there was at least one goose, one crane and one Glaucous Gull. Jonathan may be near.

There will be much open water on the ocean after this strong offshore wind, and marine mammal hunters will have opportunity for a first spring seal hunt.

Some campers moving into coastal camps again for spring activities. Two at Sisualik Pt, two in Sisualik proper, and two in Salluq.

Our plans, like everyone's, are now on hold.

We have wood down in Sisualik and are ready to move there – a little at a time or all at once, depending on this monstrous weather.

April 30

High 34° F
Low 28° F
Cloudy, snow
SE-S wind to 18

April out like a lion! Today much better than the full blizzard yesterday, but continued snow showers and general whiteout conditions made travel not relaxed. Trees, willows, and anything above surface remained iced up today from the heavy wet snowfall of yesterday that stuck to things when it fell and was further cemented by freezing temps last night.

April

Three Dark-eyed Juncos in camp all day. Noted at least one yesterday without chance for binoc look. Today confirmed the species and probably “Slate-colored Junco” race.

Report today of a large group of Glaucous Gulls on Kotzebue sandbar. No sign of Jonathan yet.

The blizzard yesterday left lots of snow in many places – around our tent in Sisualik and anywhere drifting snow can do damage.

We had new friends trying to find their way here today even though ground conditions were not great (whiteout – sometimes distant vision poor). They did make it in good shape and we enjoyed a good visit. They enjoyed the spruce trees after living in Kotzebue all winter.

The tent in Sisualik, which we need to shovel out, looked impossible this morning, with still drifting snow and more snow in the air. Maybe another day – hopefully a warm one so the snow can be easily shoveled.

A young woman still lost on a trip from Kotzebue to Noorvik since last night about midnight. Warm but wet last night.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

MAY

May 1

High 30° F
Low 20° F
Sun, snow showers
E-SE wind to 18

Weather remains cool with a little thawing at midday. We have a great level snow surface now after the short rain showers of the last blizzard. The crust prevented snow piles from building and has made soft, pleasant riding around the country. Conditions are ideal for bear hunters.

Three Slate-colored Juncos have joined our camp community of creatures these last three days. It is good to see and watch the actions of a different bird species. Their white bills contrast markedly with their near black heads.

The greatest note for the day was that I finally got the heavy weight of snow completely off the south side of our tent. It was a heavy job and very heavy hard snow. I didn't yet shovel out the door, so we don't know yet how the frame survived. There are no tears or other damage to the canvas. Also got our caribou carcass out of dome and buried it in the snow. More shoveling. I am "shoveled out" tonight.

Good numbers of caribou in the Battle Rock area and an open lead in the ocean off shore of that point. Some friends may go down into that area tomorrow.

Trees and things remain "iced up" from the last blizzard. The air has not yet warmed enough to clear that off.

This early May is looking more normal than the last few years. The land is very white yet with no dark thawed portions showing.

There was no show of ground squirrels or migratory birds today. Ground drifting snow most of the day.

May

May 2

High 39° F
Low 7° F
Clear, clouding, snow
N-NW wind to 18

A fine warm sun at midday after a hard overnight freeze. Good weather for early May travelers. It is also good weather for folks living in the trees that yet need to move to the coast.

We enjoyed the luxury of not doing much of anything for this fine first Sunday in May. A friend visited from town and we had a good bit of conversation before she returned.

We need to make a trip to town; Carrie has a check up at the clinic tomorrow.

Some friends took caribou today from west of Sealing Point. The report is not good. The animals are scattered and the ones taken were pretty lean. Don't know how bad the situation is. The animals often scatter when range is overgrazed. We will hear more of this. There were said to be a couple of thousand caribou in the area a week or so ago.

Our Junco trio is still here but nothing new. There were cranes, geese, and Northern Harrier, and a robin reported last week. At least one goose has been eaten in Ambler.

The hole in our swallow box had an ice seal on it yesterday. Hope they don't turn up till it melts or we get it thawed. I think we've had Tree Swallows as early as May 2 in years past.

There were a lot of flies outside the cabin today in the warm sun. Both the Gray Jays and the Juncos appreciate that.

We have more snow forecast for tomorrow.

May 3

High 37° F
Low 18° F
Fog, clear
W-NW wind to 15

Town trip today and a good one. Fine level trail, no bumps. It is the best we have had all winter. We went straight in using our visitor's trail of yesterday. It was a good thing it was there because there was 10 miles of dense fog from our edge of tidelands to Kotzebue. We simply had a track to follow like a railroad track right into Kotzebue.

On the way home we went through Sisualik camp and found that Jonathan has been looking for us. His web-footed prints have been made on the snow around the tent and even go up to the door, where he squatted in the snow, sitting in the sun for a time. This happened while we were in Kotzebue today. We read the tracks of the web-footed traveler. He was not there while we were, but the single gull tracks on the ground around our tent spell Jonathan. Hopefully we will see and feed him tomorrow.

The two ground squirrels at the dome in Sisualik were out again this morning.

There are flocks of Willow Ptarmigan around, but few territorial birds yet.

Last evening there was a beautiful Rough-legged Hawk in a tree in camp. It had a very light-colored head and broad dark band across his breast. A very different colored bird and one we seldom see perched in a tree. That bird was quite a surprise!

There were lots of gulls in Kotzebue today, doing what ravens have been doing all winter. Scrounging in Kotzebue is tough for ravens and gulls now. Wish I could have left something for Jonathan but ravens would get it first. Maybe he will show up tomorrow when we shovel out and put fire in the tent.

May 4

High 34° F

Low 14° F

Clear

Light winds

Another beautiful May day!

Got the tent door shoveled out and found the inside in good shape, with only one side support nearly but not quite broken. The stovepipe and safety needed some work, but was able to handle that. Built the fire in the stove and went back to pick up Carrie. We spent several hours warming and cleaning the inside of the tent.

Seeing gull tracks in the snow around the tent again, I took some thawed meat chunks down and spread them on a clean snow surface. When I went back down with Carrie they were all gone, and to each spot where meat had lain were the web-footed tracks of Jonathan Livingston Seagull. And there he was – sitting on an iceberg top.

There is little doubt that this is indeed Jonathan, but as usual after a winter somewhere else, he is meek and subdued when he first comes back. It is not likely that any other gull would camp around our tent for a couple of days. We have not heard him make a sound! This is unusual for him. But then, who knows what has

May

befallen him since last October? Am still working on learning the language; gulls as a species must have wonderful stories.

There are only a few W. Ptarmigan around since that great easterly blow. They may or may not come back for display time.

Our Slate-colored Juncos are not around any more either. Maybe moved back and will be around as weather warms.

Dark places on the mountains are finally growing, so break-up conditions may be not far off.

May 5

High 30° F

Low 19° F

Clear, clouding, snow

Light winds

Took another load down to the tent and thought over the idea of spending the night. Carrie jumped at the chance and that was decided without further thought. Clouds were building and it soon started to snow, and fog developed. It seemed to me that we should go home to the spruce patch but that idea didn't fly. I expected wind to howl and snow to fly all night, but it didn't happen. Just steady, steady snowfall to nearly three inches – windless.

So good to have a camp watch gull again. As usual, Jonathan is shy, having wintered where people may be something else. He is not now very vocal either, but those things will change in a few days. His attachment to the camp is unmistakable.

A full meal of thawed meat makes him pretty sleepy.

Bear tracks were seen in the hills NW of Sealing Point.

There are still good numbers of caribou in that area. Carrie's brother and some of the family are down there again and will probably soon take a few, so we will hear of physical condition.

Two other camps are occupied down there now, and a fourth will probably be occupied soon. Some activity has taken place in Sisualik too. It is unclear yet how many camps will be occupied before break-up here this year.

Hope the sun can cement this new snow together before winds come along and makes unseasonable blizzard.

Terry stayed home alone this night.

May 6

High 35° F
Low 25° F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

Sky to the east was very bright this morning – no more snow or fog, only sun that later spread all over. Very nice.

The camp gull was on watch to protect us from that thieving fox that has dug into our buried meat supply two nights in a row. He didn't last night.

Made two trips up to the house and have only a few things left now.

Today is crane day. Most all camps reported at least one. I had just come out of the house when very loud crane voice hit me hard in the face. The noise was very loud due to the total lack of wind. It is always good in the spring to hear that first-remembered voice of all species. We now have one goose, one crane, and of course the Glaucous Gulls.

Two caribou were taken from Sealing Point. One had a little inside show of fat, the other not much. The hunter said they were edible.

Squirrels out. Lots of sno-go travelers too. This was probably the best spring day we have had yet.

We have all our communications in order now – VHF and telephone and also CB, which we don't use any more.

Terry very lonesome and glad to be back with his family, even if he has to leave his little house.

May 7

High 22° F
Low 12° F
Cloudy
W-NW wind to 18

Today very dull and cold after the bright warm sun of yesterday.

Made the clean up of winter quarters today and now have only one last load before putting the bear door up and leaving the place to the bears till next October.

We moved out on the best hauling trail we have had all winter - nearly level all the way with no "snow bumps" all the way. Town trail is the same. Generally all over

May

our whole region we are fortunate to have such good trails. They will probably stay that way now till water form underneath from melting surface.

Spruce Grouse pair around the cabin displaying and making their queer little noises. They are mostly silent until display time.

We again observed them in the strange process of eating only the outer half of white spruce needles.

Several otter tracks in odd places these last few days. They seem to be checking out the small high-banked muskrat lakes. For what purpose I couldn't say.

May 8

High 27° F
Low 8° F
Cloudy, clearing
Light W wind

Anniversary day again – 51 years. A great privilege!

Made a trip up to the house for gas drum and odds and ends. Will have only one more trip to finish up and put up the bear protection.

Lost of visitors came by today. One was a crabber that left us his only catch for the day, a small red king. It was fresh and very lively. We have an overnight visitor and she and Carrie and I had a great visit and shared the crab as well as boiled burbot and sheefish – a great fish feast.

The afternoon turned out great with clear warm sun and good visitors.

Our overnighter has a dog with her, which makes Terry especially happy.

Heard cranes again today.

May 9

High 30° F
Low 16° F
Cloudy, sun break
SE wind to 15

A day of visitors and lots of trail traffic. It was Mother's Day and there were many KOTZ messages and greetings. Our visitors were not family, but agency people, some old friends, and one new person out to meet us and hear of some of our views on wilderness and wilderness land use. Everyone brought goodies and we had some fine and intense discussions.

May

A western neighbor dropped a first young muskrat off for Carrie – the first seen/taken this spring.

Vocalizing cranes were heard several times and in many places this day. We also have a first goose waiting for us in Kotzebue, taken by a young friend yesterday.

Shee and burbot continue to be taken inside the lower Noatak.

Ground Squirrels out this afternoon and we saw better numbers of displaying Willow Ptarmigan on a quick trip up to winter camp for a last few things (propane, generator, and rocking chair). Snow getting soft up there.

The spring lead is open now and is not far offshore from Doug Sheldon's camp at Salluq. Two seals were taken yesterday by hunters out from here. It is not nearly so far out to sea as we thought earlier.

VHF report just not reports a hunter from Noatak took home first ugruk. That village has a chance to hunt the sea while snow stays frozen.

Waterfowl hunts beginning in earnest in some inland locations. Migrants scarce yet on the coast. There was a lost Junco around the tent this morning and several up at the cabin in the trees this afternoon.

Many thawed black spots on the tundra now that weren't there the day before yesterday.

May 10

High 48° F
Low 6° F
Cloudy, snow, rain, sun
NE-SE-S wind to 15

Town trip today for a drum of gasoline and spring provisions. Trail was firm and good on the way over but after several hours of light rain in town, it had gotten pretty sticky, though still good and white. It is a fine trail and this evening we have the most of our spring hauling done and can relax and enjoy the bird migration and the rebirth of things in the soil.

Geese and swans were seen at various locations by others yesterday. A number of geese were taken last night and today.

Lots of ground squirrel activity today. Tracks are all over the tent yard now, made while we were gone.

May

Lots of travelers in all directions today. There will be more tonight as word gets around about the movement of birds.

Hope the rain doesn't last forever, but then we are ready for break-up now and the sooner it begins, the sooner it will be here.

The season is late this year, though not as late as in some days of the past. When thawing does begin (like today) water may begin to form everywhere and overflow in streams.

The surface will probably freeze again tonight, but tomorrow warmth and rain will peak and bring thawing on all the faster.

Birds, birds, birds! That is the next big thing in the future. It will be so good to have them back – one and all!

We probably will not get up into town again this year with the sno-go (into the streets that is) because of water.

Seal hunters had a good day.

May 11

High 44° F
Low 30° F
Cloudy, rain showers
NE wind to 15
Light winds

A day of very soft, warm air. Two rain showers fell between 6 and 7 a.m., after a night of light freeze. Our higher mountains getting very dark, and snow over tussocks has gotten very soft. The top one foot of snow over the tidelands has also softened today. There will be no more drifting snow this spring, unless new snow falls. The old snow is now anchored.

With such a day, one expects birds and there were. Around our place there were cranes and gulls passing. Back at the tableland edge there were Tundra Swans, geese moving west, and the still air was full of Willow Ptarmigan display noise and distant crane calls. They have broken our winter air silence. From this day forward one does not have to wait long for bird song in the air.

Record numbers (for this year) of ground squirrels were out in the sun today. Probably all hibernating ground squirrels have now come out at least once.

We had a first goose in the pot tonight, courtesy of a distant neighbor. We have been given two whitefronts this week.

A few seal hunters have been working the closest lead this week. The lead edge is not far out from the Doug Sheldon cabin – several miles. Two hunters found an ugruk lying on the ice, but could not make a stalk due to very thin ice.

She catches are continuing inside the mouth of the Noatak with several large ones taken.

May 12

High 50° F
Low 35° F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

A most beautiful spring day! One to go into the competition for the most beautiful of the year. A very hot sun and so much whiteness yet from snow cover one can hardly describe in words the intensity of brightness and warmth. It was the day that most ground squirrels live for. They were really running about the camp this afternoon and evening, concerned mostly with each with hardly a glance to the sky where Snowy Owls and Gyrfalcons lurk.

Made a last trip to Sanningaruq for things forgotten and left behind. Nailed the bear door on and committed the whole camp to the care of the bears for the summer. Trust that they will clean it up – the edibles at least.

We had a large handsome Mew Gull standing on an old tent frame today after feeding with Glaucous Gulls of the camp flock. It is large and brightly feathered for a Mew Gull and is probably of the Siberian race. It is the first Mew Gull we have seen this year.

A Short-eared Owl and a large flock of Pintail ducks were seen at Sealing Point today (firsts).

There are five occupied camps now west of Sisualik, and three in Sisualik.

There was a traffic death reported in Kotzebue today. A young child.

One sow with three large yearling cubs seen north of us. Another female with one small cub seen in the Krusenstern mountains.

Lots of sno-go travel today: seal hunters, camp haulers, crab pot setters, bird hunters and plain adventure-called people.

May

May 13

High 45° F
Low 26° F
Clear, few clouds
Variable light winds

Another beautiful day of warm sun after a night of frozen snow surface. Ideal for travelers, and there are a lot.

Some bird news today. A “large” flock of Snow Geese seen just west of Sealing Point yesterday, and two taken by a hunter inland from Akulaaq. A Tree Swallow was at the Sealing Point house yesterday. We have not seen one yet. An American Tree Sparrow in Kotzebue and a real rare bird around the buildings appears to be a female Mountain Bluebird. The bird was well observed and may have been seen by more than one observer. The bird is rare in Alaska, but there are breeding records from the central portion of the state. Pipsqueak the Mew Gull turned up yesterday and her mate today. Bird arrivals so far are: Glaucous Gull, Sandhill Crane, American Robin, Northern Harrier, Tundra Swan, Slate-colored Junco, White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Tree Sparrow, Tree Swallow, Northern Pintail, Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, and Mew Gull.

Several seal hunters out today but small catches. Two or three Common Ringed Seals taken from water or lying on the ice. Carrie’s brother Sam got a female seal yesterday that was cooked up for his houseful of kids immediately. They saw one ugruk, but it was lying on old ice surrounded by young ice.

Several ugruk have been seen, but the only one taken went in to Noatak with a seal hunter from there traveling down to the ocean on snowbanks.

A sheefish strike was made at a new location yesterday – Pipe Spit attracted “diehard fishermen.” We haven’t heard the magnitude of the strike.

No surface water has formed near our location yet, but Kotzebue streets have a lot and are no longer fit for sno-go traffic.

May 14

High 47° F
Low 22° F
Clear
SW-NW wind to 10

Another fine warm day when the overcast faded out this morning.

Swallows arrived today – together – and took a look at things (six squirrels running around, eight huge gulls sitting on the snowbank). After sitting on high points for a while, they left. The didn’t go into their aging house. Jonathan (later) landed on the

May

swallow box pad for the first time this year, and made his famous food snatch from thrown pieces of soft caribou meat. Pipsqueak the Mew Gull was there too to pick up the crumbs. Pipsqueak is making a bolder and earlier presence this year.

Lois visited today and brought Carrie a great folding “birdwatcher” seat (folding chair).

Constant Sandhill Crane voices on the calm air from the back beach ridges. We also ate a very tasty crane in the soup pot tonight. It was a gift bird from town family, taken last week in the Wolf Creek area. It was a small female with one surprisingly large developed egg in the ovaries. The earliest we have found laid crane eggs is the 21st of May. Glaucous Gulls lay near the same time, so we are getting close to fresh egg time again.

We still have 99% snow cover on the spit. Though there is water and snow free ground inland on the tablelands, there are no other small birds here yet, though there would be many inland.

A report from Sealing Point indicates that some Kivalina bird hunters came down to Rabbit Creek when they heard Snow Geese had been seen. It is another sigh that with increased affluence and technology, effort towards taking choice species in extended over ranges not historically used.

May 15

High 50° F
Low 22° F
Clear
W-NW wind to 10

Town trip today, maybe the last by snow machine. Trail is fine yet but much water is being pumped out onto the ice from in town, which makes bad trail conditions – deep water on ice. Water is slowly beginning to show as snow shrinks and water collects deeper and deeper, till the ice floats. And after that, the ice itself will melt and break up.

It is hard to get around on Kotzebue streets now without a ride in a vehicle.

No new birds today, though it was a beautiful warm day. Sisualik still has 90% snow cover. Incoming “new” birds will, right now, be up in the tablelands where there is lots of ground and some water on lake margins.

We are slowly getting things under control here and are about ready for the next season. October will come rapidly again and moving will be different.

May

A few seal hunters out on the ocean have not had much luck. Some seals have already been sinking, which at this early date would mean thin blubber and low physical tone. These are strange occurrences. Some seals are lying on the ice in the Sealing Point location.

Our pair of Tree Swallows is toughing it out – in the house. We will have freezing fog from late tonight till sun burns it off before noon tomorrow.

May 16

High 42° F

Low 24° F

Foggy

SW-W wind

A whole day of fog! Most of it freezing and sticking to things above surface. There was, however, some long periods of “hot feeling” sun through the fog, when thinner areas of fog passed. There is apparently no real cloud cover.

Ran the dog up to the outlet this morning and found some numbers of small birds – the first we’ve seen on the beach ridges. Lapland Longspurs, redpolls, and maybe American Tree Sparrows and Savannah Sparrows.

Cranes and Glaucous Gulls and Mew Gulls the only noisemakers besides displaying Willow Ptarmigan.

A little meltwater showing just under the tablelands, but the surface was frozen after the cool temperatures of last night. There were no waterfowl and no mud. Those birds are where there is mud. Mud, which absorbs sun heat, is the real savior of early migrating waterfowl when cold sets in.

Lots of ground squirrels around the camp again, though they are spreading out now that there is more exposed ground.

Nephew brought a medium-sized Ringed Seal to us from Sealing Point. He and Carrie’s brother got a couple yesterday but didn’t see much else. Two or three seals sunk after being shot in the water, which is a bad sign at this time. Salinity in the ocean hasn’t changed yet from winter levels, which means if a seal sinks, it is short of blubber, which means lack of feed or disease.

Travel light today due to fog. It was a quiet Sunday.

Water on ice in front of town getting bad, but crossing by Tech Center is still dry.

May 17

High 46° F
Low 20° F
Clear
Light winds

Another perfect day on the beach of the ice-covered Sound. A cold night but a hot afternoon sun.

A few more birds drifting in. Tree Swallows slowly nest building – when Jonathan is not sitting on their box.

Melt water coming out onto the lagoon now and the upper Kobuk is flooding. Noatak River is running ice at the village site.

Ground squirrels and Glaucous Gulls our most numerous creatures around camp right now.

There is a lot of sno-go traffic today. Since water is showing around, bird hunters are out in force. Kotzebue trail is fine yet except for Front Street edge where Kotzebue street water is being pumped.

Visited the beaver lodge today, probably for the last time. Most snow is melted on that route. There are at least three used doorways on land that look like where the beaver would haul out and sun himself. However, there are fresh and old land otter tracks around and into the doorways. My feeling is that the beaver is still there and the otter occasionally uses the holes to gain access to the lake bottom. I can't prove this from observation. There are only otter tracks to and from. If the beaver is alive and well, he does not leave the lodge. There have been otter and mink tracks into the lodge vents off and on all winter. There was one time blood on the snow (a small amount) with fox and otter tracks, but no clear hint of its origin. The doorways seem to me to be maintained by the beaver, though I have no proof and I wonder at the beaver's tolerance of otter and mink, I don't know the history of beaver-otter relationships.

May 18

High 40° F
Low 32° F
Clear
NE-E wind to 20

Two bowheads taken at Point Hope yesterday.

Four ugruk seen by hunter from Salluq yesterday. One wounded, but escaped. No catch.

May

A pair of Savannah Sparrows have joined the Tree Swallows and the two gull species as official camp birds. These are the first Savannah Sparrows we've seen, though I saw Lapland Longspurs back on the beach ridges the last couple of day.

We were given another small King Crab by a crabber taking off his crab pots today. We are having some special foods this spring. We have been given an unusual number of geese this spring so I haven't hunted at all. They have all been White-fronts.

The wind and warmth has really eaten up snow today. Our Spit snow cover is 60% and going fast. Shallow water is showing on the top of sea ice where the snow is thin. Town travel continues, but increasing surface water makes today's travelers say "It won't be long now!"

Terry the Superdog rolled on blackberry ground yesterday on his run and now looks rather odd in purple polka dots.

The crabbers left us three Neptune's Snails. These are the sea creatures that some elders have suffered "crosseyedness" from in the distant past and therefore named them Nakunaks (gross eye makers). The eating of our blackberries (*Empetrum nigrum*) is said to cure the condition. The Japanese are said to have a great like for this species. We have eaten a few, but much prefer the crab.

May 19

High 49° F
Low 35° F
Clear
NE-E wind to 15

A very unusual report this morning. At about 2 a.m., the small dog that the folks at Sealing Point have tied out, barked loud enough to wake the older man living there. He looked out to see what the fuss was about and was surprised to see an adult Polar Bear eating a gift burbot he had buried in a snowbank. He killed the bear. It later measured 6'4", not big as Polar Bears go, but Polar Bears of any size are rare at Sealing Point. There are five small kids in the household all under ten years of age.

It is very rarely that Polar Bears come to shore at Sealing Point, and rather unheard of in this century for that to happen in May. Other sightings in the past 50 years have been in midwinter or March.

The bear was fat and in good health.

Polar Bear populations may have increased considerably in the last 10-20 years, due to restrictive hunting of this marine mammal. There have been more than usual sightings this winter in Pt. Hope and Kivalina.

Saw a pair of Black Turnstones today. Snow free tundra-beach ridge zones have both longspurs and Savannah Sparrows.

A flock of mixed Greater Scaup and Canvasback (25) were seen today. The lake at Qulitgiin has filled with water and is just beginning to run out into the lagoon from several draws and drainages.

Ducks of various species are making more of a showing. Snow free ground and lake outlines are beginning to take shape.

Travel to town is still ongoing, but water on ice is getting deeper and travel by surface will terminate for a while.

May 20

High 60° F
Low 36° F
Clear
N wind to 18
Variable light winds

A very nice day with a very warm sun again. We are losing snow cover fast and gaining water. The lagoon is nearly covered with brown runoff meltwater this evening. The slough west of us, or largest local creek that drains all of the south side of Mt. Noak, is full and spilling into the lagoon.

There may have been a group of three “brave boy” snow machiners that made the crossing from Kotzebue today, but no others. Water on ice is getting pretty deep and the last day of snow machine crossing is near.

Egg laying is also near. The 21st is an early date for found crane eggs and the 23rd is early date for first Glaucous Gull egg find.

Our lakes are taking form and snow cover is down to 50% here on the Spit. There was a Black Turnstone on our front today, seeking meat scraps. First peeps were passing, probably Semi-palmated Sandpipers, though Westerns are usually a few days earlier.

A White-crowned Sparrow was also checking out the camp today.

Folks at Sealing Point report new Polar Bear tracks and are seeing “something white” back on the rock bluff across the lagoon. The seal hunters are reporting few seals. The bears may have got wind of dead caribou, as a good bunch wintered in the near ocean section between Sealing Point and Port Site. There may have been some mortality since their late winter condition was very poor.

May

Two hunters are out at the lead late tonight. Our marine waters have risen rapidly this afternoon. Hope the hunters have not drifted out.

Real lots of blowflies and a single bumblebee around camp today. The flies are overwintering adults.

May 21

High 52° F
Low 37° F
Clear
Light winds

Another bright and warm day. Our snow changing to flood. Our “straight thru” thaw is making high water conditions in some places. The village of Buckland flooded yesterday and today and the upper Kobuk a few days ago.

Our sea ice has much water on it now and the back lagoon area is underwater, ice and all. That ice in both places will soon float and the surface will be nice and dry for a while.

Two of our seal hunters may be in trouble. They didn't return last night from a hunt out to the lead and both have dogs to care for at home. This will be the first “drift out” happening we've had for years if that is the problem. Our long period of windless days can cause a surprise opening of a long dormant crack by current action. Both adult men are experienced ice hunters and it is likely that they will turn up in good shape. There are a couple of planes out looking for them this evening.

We made a short run west on the ice today, but found too much water to suit so we came back to camp. This water will be sinking soon and the trail will be better for a while.

Three sno-gos again made the crossing from Kotzebue this evening. One is a neighbor with a couple of helpers and they have continued on west for seal hunting.

We are not seeing many birds of any kind – only a few of each kind. Don't know any special reason except that we still have more snow cover than most areas around us. Water, mud, and snow-free ground attract birds at this season – snow is mostly something to avoid.

Our nephew brought us a nice round seal today. It will make a good deal of oil.

May 22

High 42° F
Low 33° F
Clear, sea fog off and on
W wind to 15

Search for two seal hunters on in earnest today, but fog over the ice developed almost as the planes got on site. They were contacted by means of clicks on their handheld battery-dead VHF under the fog off shore at lead site south of their house. They did indicate that they were broke down, but visual contact had not been made at 9 p.m. It was unclear if they were also drifted out as well as mechanically broken down. We think that is probably the case. A helicopter may be required to get them home once they are located. It is a very frustrating situation for both the searchers and the overdue hunters.

We had another fine day on the land today, but cooler due to the light but steady wind off the ice.

Our flood waters seem to have already reached a peak and may be dropping off (local creek drainages).

Birds are still slow – scarce – probably due to continued snow cover and cool on shore winds.

This is not developing into a very good spring for our few Krusenstern beach people. Weather has been great and timely but neighbors are few and becoming fewer.

There seems little sign of under snow microtines again in Sisualik. Last fall their numbers seemed on a building trend that must not have continued into and through the winter.

Hope things look better by tomorrow.

May 23

High 42° F
Low 30° F
Few clouds, fog
W-NW wind to 18

Things not much better today. Fog cleared out here in late morning, but remained to the west over ice in the search area. It later moved back in and even closed Kotzebue down. Search planes did get out and again made a VHF click contact, 9-15 miles out of Sealing Point. There was a tense time when they did note objects on ice – these turned out not to be people or snow machines. Fog layer thickened about this time and search planes had to return to a fog free airport.

May

Terry caught his first ground squirrel of the season on a run west this morning while snow was still fairly firm. Squirrel was dozing under a stump in the sun and didn't have a chance. Terry was quite proud and it kind of changed his whole dour winter attitude.

It is a terrible time for our two "drifted out" hunters and their family and friends. This is a third day and there were little prepared for an extended day. The hints yesterday and today indicate that they may still have a handheld VHF functioning. The hint from today's search puts them 9 miles west of Sealing Point.

The worse news is that the thick fog this evening is not likely to dissipate till 4 pm tomorrow. There are many planes ready to search, but not much any can do in the fog.

"Drift out" situations are not new with seal hunters, but in the past, with dog teams, you were always better prepared with camp gear and stuff. There have been many remarkable long period survival. We do still have hope for these folks.

May 24

High 30° F
Low 28° F
Clear, fog
W-NW wind to 20

A real tragedy is developing here. The two local hunters "drifted out" on sea ice for five days have not been found. Fog has continued to hamper search efforts today. There has not been a fog free day since aircraft were on the scene to search. Fog has cleared over land off and on, but it tends to hang over sea ice forever.

"Drifting out" is the specter that rides on every ocean sea ice hunter that ventures out, and anyone who spends much time off shore in these waters will eventually get caught. Winds and current that make ice conditions happen are readable with practice and experience, but never perfectly, and one is more likely than not to get caught eventually if one persists in seal hunting.

What happens after you drift out is where we are now in this case. Lucky ones are able to get back to shorefast ice by circling around the moving crack. Others may be able to scramble off as a newly moving ice floe scrapes landfast shelf ice. When you can't make these chances you are on your way to joining pack ice. At that point, your position will be ever changing as winds and current move you about. A strong on shore wind can put you pack on land fast ice and you can then make your way home, as many have – especially in long past dog team hunting times.

May

Our day has been windy and cold-bright here on fog free ground (land). There are very few birds around: waterfowl, sandpipers or passerines. This cold west wind is probably the reason.

Rumor has it that a beaver was taken over at the Point. Maybe our overwintering lake beaver. His lake is only a few miles north of the Point.

May 25

High 31° F
Low 28° F
Cloudy, clearing, fog
W-NW wind to 20

Well the search continues and so does the fog. This is a very trying time for family and friends of these two long time hunters. Today's effort by many planes may have been the best opportunity yet, but the lack of clear visibility is still a big hindrance.

Hope continues, but the cold damp weather adds to the long-term survival problem. If both are uninjured and even one snow machine is useable, they may work their own way home yet or as visibility improves, some sign of the whereabouts may come in. They of course have drinking water aplenty and probably marine mammal food that can be eaten without cooking.

Another great problem is that they may be far or close to where they were when their ordeal began.

We had fresh snow this morning and continued freezing through most of the day. This west wind period has really delayed our break-up progress. Most fresh meltwater, where migrating birds would be, is frozen, and again mud is their saving grace. There is not much mud though, due to continued high outflow water from melting snow. So birds are hurting somewhere, but not here, because they are nearly absent here. There are lots of snow-free and thawed places inland, and running water habitat is refuge form most birds, even those that are not particularly attracted to water at other times.

Our Tree Swallows (nest box) have been absent for two days now.

The camp Savannah Sparrows and of course Jonathan continue on. Distant crane noise continues. Some have eggs by now, as do some swans, White-fronted Geese, and Glaucous Gulls.

A few whitefish taken at Jones Camp yesterday.

Kotzebue channel still holding.

May

May 26

High 34° F
Low 29° F
Fog, clearing, few clouds
W-NW wind to 25

This is probably the clearest, least fog day we have had since the search began. Still no results. There has been lots of aircraft of many different kinds, including helicopter. Many, many hours of flying over the ice with many observers.

This has not been a good week. We may have lost two older, active seal hunters of which there are very few left. Our pioneering Krusenstern beaver, after spending a hard winter in a tough place, may have been killed not far from his wintering lake by a hunter that didn't have a real need for a beaver. This is, of course, speculation, as there could be other wandering or overwintering beaver out from the winter confinement. It is not really expected that the hunter would purposely pass up opportunity to take a fur animal rare to the area.

We are sure experiencing a shortage of birds for the date. The steady cold west winds interrupting the flow of break-up have left our skies and ground almost as free of bird life as mid winter. Gulls and ravens are our most numerous species right now. The pair of ravens in Walter Kenworthy's tower nest have produced young again.

We do have an unusually large flock of mostly male Canvasbacks in running slough-creek water west of us. This species continues to increase locally. It was not known historically in this area – no Eskimo name. It's range extension has been moderately successful.

Box tree swallows have been gone for two days.

A ragged looked Short-eared Owl went by, pumping into the wind right on the edge of the sea this morning. One must admire the tenacity of northern migrants in the face of adversity.

May 27

High 32° F
Low 29° F
Cloudy, fog, rain, snow
W-SW wind to 20

Search planes grounded today due to fog and freezing rain. It has been about as miserable a day as one could expect in May. Wet, cold and dark – with us nearing 24 hours of sunlight!

Hope is fading for the two lost hunters. Yesterday was a long day of fairly good visibility and many hours of flying by many aircraft, and nothing was found. It is a

May

very sad situation and searchers are pretty frustrated, having no new leads to follow. Friends and family and neighbors are heartbroken. We have not lost an ice hunter to “drift out” conditions in this century in Kotzebue Sound. Many have drifted out, but all have eventually safely returned.

Other creatures are hurting this day too, with wet and cold. Tree Swallows have not returned, ground squirrels have not been out, and all bird species are scarce and subdued/inactive.

Kotzebue channel may have moving ice today and will soon be ice-free. First boats will be in the water with egg hunting and fishing on the Noatak River delta and up the Noatak River, which is the only place they will be able to go for a while.

Have not heard of an egg take yet, but they are bound to be there. The last week of May is historically Glaucous Gull egg-laying time, as well as Sandhill Crane and some Northern Pintail. They seem to tend to go by the calendar rather than season conditions.

We have had the poorest spring bird migration ever. Hopefully June will make up for it.

May 28

High 36° F
Low 30° F
Cloudy, snow showers
Clearing
S-SE wind to 15

This is the best day we have had for some time.

A one inch snowfall overnight has turned our world white again. It is the more so because the water on the surface of the sea has sunk through. This is the time seals (of all species) have been looking forward to. They can now lay all day on a soft snowy surface by their hole in the ice. This is the stage of saltwater ice deterioration, a stage not shared with freshwater ice. All higher surface levels of sea ice develop a soft snowy surface – just right to haul out on. Freshwater ice surface dries by is hard and needle sharp with long crystals.

Kotzebue channel ice started moving yesterday and may be ready for boating by Kotzebue people tonight. We have heard one boat testing VHF.

The best and clearest day since the search began, and still nothing has turned up. Many planes of various sizes flew many search hours.

Terry caught his second squirrel of the season today while running free.

May

Birds are still very scarce in Sisualik, though a few ducks can be seen this evening in unfrozen water on the lagoon side: Pintail, Wigeon, Greater Scaup and Canvasback.

Our swallows have not returned. There is no passerine or shorebird noise in Sisualik evening air.

Sheefish are being caught on Front Street in Kotzebue this evening.

A pretty male Northern Harrier just passed by, hunting east.

May 29

High 50° F
Low 34° F
Thin clouds, sun
Light E winds

Birds finally coming in – from the west. Passerines, waterfowl, and shorebirds large and small. It seems late, but in some years our migrants seem to make landfall west and north of us and then spread over Noatak and Kobuk deltas by moving through here from the west. There were sure a lot of species following that pattern today.

The first Arctic Terns were in today, and first large flocks of non-breeding cranes.

We ate our first Glaucous Gull eggs today. Nephew brought us four from the Sealing Point area. Only a few have been found so far from the Noatak delta to Sealing Pt. One nest of Tundra Swan was found in the Salluq area.

Some fresh moose meat has been reported from some camps. That is very unusual for this date.

The search for our two missing hunters continues with no results. The speculation now is, after two days of fair weather with lots of planes in the air, that they may have broken through bad ice traveling together and were unable to recover. That is difficult to believe as these were knowledgeable and seasoned ice hunters.

While crawling on the ground today to secure a duck for the pot, it was easy to note the first greening plants in the dry dead foliage of last summer, though many places are still snow covered. (Our snow cover is still 30% here on the Spit.)

Boats from Kotzebue went up to Hatchery and maybe to Noatak village today, also to Jones Camp. Some may try to get here through our lagoon edge for Memorial Day. They may not make it as the water has dropped and ice in the lagoon hasn't floated.

May 30

High 40° F
Low 31° F
Clear, clouding over
W-NW wind to 18

Tree Swallows came back and were here through the night and morning, and now this evening are gone again because our west winds are back, with fog and rapidly dropping temps.

Our snow continues to diminish with the wind and temps just above freezing.

The search for the missing seal hunters continues, but without a lot of enthusiasm. Since most of the inner and outer Sound has been pretty thoroughly covered without any significant finds, the speculation now is that they ran into bad ice, maybe traveling close together, and couldn't recover. With the amount of air search time put in through the areas they could have been in, it is remarkable that no sign of two people, two sno-gos, two sleds, and a small kayak have been found. Small aircraft, helicopter, and large sophisticated search craft have been used.

Many folks with relatives buried in this area like to visit their graves during the weekend, but no trails here for boats have developed yet due to unusually low water levels. Lagoon ice seems to be just resting on the mud, with not enough melt water to float the melting ice. The few places where organic mud has been ice rafted up are bird filled right now. This kind of "floor" of the shallow watered lagoon is filled with *Potamogeton* corms, worms, and other shallow water benthic fauna that is high-class forage for shorebirds, waterfowl and even the tern-gull group. There has been little of it showing yet. Brant, which are just beginning to show up, are major spring users of this rich mud.

May 31

High 46° F
Low 27° F
Cloudy, sun
Light S winds

Well the month ends and the search for the missing hunters is also officially suspended today. There will be local planes continuing some searching. This will remain the biggest mystery of the century.

From oral history, it seems that there has never been a seal hunter lost in Kotzebue Sound, never to return, in this century. Many have drifted out but always made their way home. Some have died in gun accidents or drowned in kayak accidents, but none have just disappeared. Time may give a few answers, but the true story of what happened to the two experienced elder hunters on their own "turn" may never be known. Unusual or deceptive or hidden rotten ice on their trail that they both hit at

May

once? A “drift out” situation while out in ugruk country (always out beyond the first crack), and unable to get to a large safe floe to wait out a chance to return to land fast ice? The extended period of fog early on in the search may have sealed their fate. We will still hope they manage to make their way into the beach some time. If one is dry and healthy, there is abundant food and water on a large firm ice floe.

There is hardly anyone left on Krusenstern beaches to go seal hunting now before boating time. Those that are left may not want to venture out. June begins the time when ugruk can be taken when hauled out on shorefast ice. Boating hunt will not begin till all shorefast ice has moved out.

Another Polar Bear seen today coming off the mountains to the beach between Sealing Point and Rabbit Creek.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JUNE

June 1

High 44° F
Low 32° F
Cloudy, snow shower
Fog, sun
S-SW-W wind to 15

All kinds of weather to start June off. Tomorrow we begin our full 24-hrs of sun. This is what we looked forward to around Christmas last winter. Just imagine – 24 full hours of sun! It is hard to believe that ever happens – in December.

Set the whitefish net in a crack perpendicular to the beach half mile west of us yesterday afternoon. A few hours later we had two large whitefish and a flounder. Reset it and this morning it had three large whitefish. That made enough to cook for lunch, which we did. They were good because they were fresh and different. They were not top quality, having very little body fat after a long winter. They will be putting on fat soon. This is the first catch from the ocean off Sisualik this year.

A beaver passed through Sisualik today heading west in the tidal beach crack. This makes at least two this spring. Beaver – pioneering beaver – surely are moving W and N. I wish them luck. There is not much good beaver habitat W and NO of Sisualik.

Announcement was made today that search for the missing hunters has been suspended – by most at least. That is a very very sad story with few if any hints of what happened. Both men have very large families and are well known for their lifelong exploits.

Found a full clutch of three eggs in Jonathan's nest place today and two in what is probably Pipsqueak's nest (the Mew Gull). Took these first clutches home for Carrie. Will probably not bother their second try. They are quite forgiving and seem to expect some hassle over their eggs from people, foxes or jaegers.

Have still not seen a vole or a shrew in Sisualik.

Our snow cover is down to about 10% and most of that is around camps and buildings.

June

June 2

High 38° F
Low 31° F
Cloudy, light snow
Fog, sun
W wind to 18

Lots of air taxi trips to Sisualik today. No trail for boat yet due to ice and low water level. Oldsters with first of the month checks and young extended kids making use of backhaul space.

Arrangements are being made for the caretaking of the dogs of Raymond Brown and Doug Sheldon. They both had large dog kennels that will need care while it is decided what shall become of them. This sure is a rough one and so very unexpected.

Dog ran loose today and he sure caught squirrels! Two from one hole. He even swam out a ways to pick up a dead duck. The first he has retrieved in his life. I was quite proud of him as he brought it up, but he didn't give it to me. He went off down the beach a ¼ of a mile and buried it, like he does all his squirrels. I had to search an hour to find my scaup. I did finally notice freshly disturbed dirt and found my bird.

Overnight whitefish catch was good – nearly a full plastic bucket, and some of them fairly fat. Much better than yesterday's catch. We cooked some for supper. They were very good.

Our beach crack is getting more active – closing and opening. We may soon hear waves again.

Most species of birds have been noted now but in low numbers. Tree Swallows have not returned.

Black-legged Kittiwakes and Yellow Wagtails have yet to come and have not seen any species of scoter yet.

Carl Snyder got six seals at the outlet of Anigaaq.

Weather seems to be getting colder! We are having unusually cold weather and it is certainly delaying greening and egg laying. We may be warm enough sometime in June.

June 3

High 37° F
Low 31° F
Cloudy, some sun
NW-W wind to 30

A cold day for June and 24 hrs of sun. We do expect some warm sun days sometime this month. This cold west wind makes all creatures yearn for warmth again, except, maybe, the caribou and moose who can probably remember the painful and worrisome insect pests that come with hot sun and long daylight. Right now those animals are happy with lots of snowbanks and cold freezing night and winds to run into.

Didn't cut yesterday's fish – too cold! They are scaled and “on ice” so there is no hurry. No blowflies either.

An aircraft reported a large walrus hauled out on the ice not far offshore between Sealing Point and Salluq inside some large ice piles. Some adult hunters from that area are in town so there may be no one to go out after that one. Also, there is some beach crack movement reported down that way and no one may look for the animal.

It is very unusual for a large walrus to be in that area at this time. When there are some they don't usually haul out close to the beach. These loners may be old herd “outcasts” and can turn up anywhere, but rarely.

Sealing Point hunters have been saying all spring that seals (Common Ringed) are so scarce that there must be an avik (walrus) around. It is believed, and with good reason, that small seals are afraid of these large creatures and usually leave waters regularly inhabited by walrus.

Our ocean ice is getting restless. All shorefast ice will soon be pack ice – probably in a matter of days.

I also heard a single kittiwake call last evening. This bird usually doesn't show here until shore ice breaks up.

June 4

High 40° F
Low 20° F
Cloudy, sun, snow
SE-S wind to 15

Pretty hard freeze of freshwater and snow surface last night, and snowflakes now this evening from solid cloud cover. We have lost the strong cold winds off the ice and may soon warm up. Things are waiting to grow and reproduce, but temps are a smothering effect.

June

Our Tree Swallows have not returned and though some “mud ice” is lifting up and a few birds are gathering, the silence of a windless afternoon gives testimony to our lack of birds. Those great loudmouths, the Bar-tailed Godwits, are not here. Other species are so few it does not really seem like Sisualik in June. Cold temps and retarded break up are probably the reason. We do hope the birds are someplace, if not here. The other possibility is not a good thought.

Our snow cover is less than 10%, mostly around camps and gravel beach. Ocean ice cover is still 100% and lagoon areas are still 80% ice covered, with very low water level. The low water level is preventing much travel (boat) out of Kotzebue. Only cannels and moving deep water are useable by boat. Gull egg harvesters are somewhat limited by conditions.

Hung the first cut whitefish today from the catch of two days ago. Haven't reset the net as ocean tide cracks are a little hard to cross and we can't cut many fish of the quality present right now. We did hear that neighbors to the east took a large shee with whitefish in their net in a beach crack there. Seems early for shee on the ocean side.

There are only three occupied camps in Sisualik to this point in time. The fewest ever. One more resident returned today, making four. There will soon be many more when the ocean ice moves and trails open.

June 5

High 47° F
Low 30° F
Light NE-S wind

Sisualik bird noise in the air picking up. It has been a day of light and mild winds. Lagoon “mud ice” is lifting up. There is even a small lean Common Ringed Seal hauled out in front of camp.

Some good flocks of Brant are adding their part to the lagoon symphony of Pintail, Wigeon, loon, Oldsquaw, gull and shorebirds. It does finally sound like migration time. If the ocean finally breaks up, new and closer noises will develop and ocean side birds at to the symphony (loons, grebes, kittiwake and maybe some sea ducks).

Our noisy flock of non-breeding Tundra Swans is beginning to build. The flock has grown to 500 or more in the past couple of years. These are two to four year old birds not yet actively nesting that follow the newly greening sedges about the salt marsh zone. These panels green up at different times and are most tender and nutritious in the first few days they begin to grow.

June

Saw a first Tundra Vole yesterday. There is very little sign of winter survivors in Sisualik again, after they seemed numerous at last fall freeze-up time.

ATV's are rapidly replacing sno-go use these last three days. A first run from here to Anigaaq was made by nephew today. Some camp snowdrifts are tough to get around yet, but the beach has a snow free line to travel all the way. Anigaaq channel outlet is running into the ocean, so that limits the distance ATV's can go. Akulaaq is still closed, but maybe not for long as it is now plumb full. That will further limit ATV distance travel.

We have fresh bear tracks on the beach just west of us. Pilot report polar bear too, but the tracks seen indicate brown bear.

June 6

High 62° F

Low 35° F

Cloudy, sun, hot!

NE-E wind to 15

Finally a warm day and do we have birds! It really sounds like spring behind Sisualik today. Two hundred Tundra Swans, 20-30 cranes, many ducks and shorebirds and loons have moved in as considerable "mud ice" (highly "organic") has finally risen to the surface. These birds for the most part are non-breeders and gather in pre-molt flocks.

Even our ocean ice that has been real white since the water went through is showing shady and darker spots, which indicates at this season that it is showing a last thinness before breaking up and rotting. Everyone eagerly awaits a breaking up of shore sea ice so boat marine mammal hunting can get underway. Boating out of Kotzebue is still limited to Noatak River travel and the edge of Kobuk Lake ice till that ice begins to shift with the wind.

Some new growth in plants is pushing up through last year's brown leaves. Swans are zeroing in on sprouting sedges wherever they first appear. What a noisy bunch! These are said to be the teenagers of the Tundra Swan clan since most don't breed till their 4th or 5th year. They use this spring pre-molt time for forming pair bonds. Swans of this group are often of the best quality for eating.

We have heard both Noatak and Kotzebue people talking about mosquitoes today, so I guess mosquito time is not far off, though we have seen none here yet. I did see spiders and beetles today, and blowflies, houseflies and fruit flies were out in force. A multitude of Tree Swallows were far from trees and enjoying great hunting and keeping nest box individuals company (with some fighting).

June

June 7

High 54° F
Low 34° F
Rain, fog, sun
SW-W-NW wind to 18

Well our coldness is back after a few hours of rain. The rain is timely as most berry ground is snow free and was drying rapidly. This moisture will assure a good flowering. The west wind and fog began in the early evening and cooled air rapidly.

Birds seem much fewer with the colder day. Most Tundra Swans still here but other birds, including swallow box pair, have gone off to warmer habitat again.

Our beach cracks continue to open and close but no real ice movement yet. Kotzebue channel has not run the Kobuk Lake ice yet.

Mosquitoes reported at Jones Camp and Kotzebue town yesterday.

No fishing here yet. The place where we first set net is hard to get to now with tide cracks so wide. We did eat half-dried cooked whitefish for lunch today. Our first for the year.

Our ATV finally free of ice and snow and after pumping up a couple of tires I took Terry for his first summer ATV run. He dug at a couple of squirrel holes, but no catch for the day.

People are anxious to get traveling but ice conditions still holding pretty tight. No sea hunting yet.

No trace of the missing two neighbors that left on a seal hunt and have not been seen since. It is very sad for their families. Both had dog teams that are being taken care of.

We are in a for a freezing cool night again.

June 8

High 35° F
Low 28° F
Light rain, fog, sun
S-SW wind to 10

Snow around the camp finally melting so we can get around without wading through snowbanks.

It was a pleasant day in spite of a freezing night and periods of fog and rain throughout the day.

Finished filling our water storage drums and containers with snow from the beach. The only snow left in Sisualik now is around camps and on our ocean beach. Ice, both in the lagoon and on the ocean, is holding fast. May have heard another kittiwake today – that is usually a sign that ocean ice will move soon.

Swan flock of non-breeders continues to grow. They are still working the lagoon bottom for *Potamogeton* corms. The flock is probably growing – there are at least 500 now. Their constant muttering and louder hollering was pretty loud on the early morning still air, with low temps that froze the surface of non-moving water.

Some fishing with net continues, but still hard to find an easy place to set a net due to continued ice cover.

Several very lean seals were taken at Sealing Point today. They have not seen ugruk hauled out yet on shorefast ice. They often do by the first of June as ice surface dries and holes melt out on some of the surface.

There is not a lot of excitement on Krusenstern beaches right now. There should or could be and there would have been a few years back. Our campers are now few and still grieve the loss to the sea ice of two of our hunters. A few planes still take a look at the offshore ice pack once in a while.

June 9

High 52° F
Low 34° F
Fog a.m., sun p.m.
E-SE wind to 18

The second half of today was quite beautiful!

We were going to start a clothes washing but cancelled when fog and drizzle seemed to be developing.

June, the month of greening north of the Arctic Circle. And it is, in spite of continuing cold temps. I saw the pale yellow-greenish cream small globes of the black bearberries today on the ancient beach ridges. Also saw the 4 inch long spike of “Siberian Asparagus” (*Petasites* sp.) with white showing on the floral buds. Iris “blades” and *Elymus* blades are 3-4 inches up. Most perennials or biennials are showing green new growth inside last year’s dried leaf material. Both wild celeries are greening, as well as onions. All will be pickable in a couple of days.

No movement of ocean ice yet, though water is sparkling in the distance under the sun after today’s east winds. No Kobuk ice yet either in Kotzebue channel.

June

Some interesting news from Noatak village today. Some up river traveler report that caribou have not gone north, that is, have not left the Noatak valley. No mention of numbers.

Our huge gathering of Tundra Swan non-breeders continues their loud presence. There are some long periods of quiet rest, but mostly there is a continuous cacophony of feeding and display noise – night and day. There are at least a thousand now (estimate), two, three, and four year olds. Pair bonding and mate choosing accounts for much of the noise. After all, if you are going to pair up for life, the choices being made are something holler about.

Insects happy and out again with afternoon sun. Swallows are back, still packing in nest material.

June 10

High 56° F
Low 42° F
Cloudy, fog, rain
Clearing
NE-E-S wind to 15

A day similar to yesterday with varying winds and weather. The light rain for short periods is doing a great service to growing vegetation. More and more species are showing leaf development.

Near shore ice remains unchanged, but large open water areas far off shore seem to be growing in size. Off shore of Sealing Point the old lead is opening wide.

A new bear story from Sealing Point. A brown bear is moving straight toward the house from large icebergs several miles off shore. That western outpost with a pile of small kids sure attracts bears. It is an inherent risk when one chooses to live far from other camps.

We still have no easy place to set a net.

Word comes of a large catch of Long-nosed Suckers at Jones Camp. They usually catch a few early on but never very many. This fish is pretty much restricted to large river systems – it is rather rare.

Our big swan flock remains around but more scattered as sedges on the edge of lagoon banks green up. These fellows love their newly greened sprouts.

Old snow is getting scarce in Sisualik. Only those sites that had large drifts remain snow covered (around camps and buildings, lee zones of beach or creek banks).

We have drawn a blank this year on both Lapland Longspurs and Bar-tailed Godwits and Snow Geese. These three species come from three different wintering areas. No known reason for absence here.

Plant growth accelerated by rain showers and frequent warm sunny spells.

June 11

High 62° F
Low 44° F
Clouds and sun
NE-E wind to 18

The world is turning green again. A couple of days with non-freezing nights, moisture and a warm sun does things quickly and completely. One more day like today and we will not have a trace of snow around camp.

Ocean ice is still holding, but very loosely. Kobuk ice is running out in Kotzebue channel – finally. Several boats stuck up at Lockhardt Point this evening.

There is word of boats out of Kotzebue into the sea ice, but no word of any hunt success yet, or even if they can get far enough into the ice to find seals or ugruk.

Our swan flock is moving farther back and dispersing somewhat.

Had need to pot hunt a bit today and took on Greater Scaup and three Surf Scoters. These species have a reputation of carrying good fat later than most and it was true again with these birds. The four birds will make us two days of main meal soup pots. Brant and Tundra Swan were other good fat options, but Brant are scarce and plucking a Tundra Swan takes a lot of prime time.

We have two more species that seem absent or few this spring. Long-billed Dowitcher and Whimbrel join Bar-tailed Godwit and Lapland Longspurs as normally plentiful species most years but seldom seen this year. No known reason except these species tend to be opportunistic during migration and stop for short or long stages at good feeding spots in any given year.

June 12

High 62° F
Low 38° F
Cloudy, rain, clearing
SE-S-SW wind to 15

Beach crack is moving around a bit but still no outward movement and no ocean hunting. Boats may be able to get to Sisualik Point now, though there hasn't been any boat to test it yet.

June

We had a good rain through late morning and it is again timely, soaking berry plants and keeping them in shape.

Stuck a short net in the beach crack this afternoon. It is only three fathoms long (the net) and got only three whitefish.

Swans have moved back into Qulitkiin Lake.

More voles have survived the winter in Sisualik than seemed obvious earlier. They are quite numerous in chosen places – probably where food was more available in greater amounts.

The water on our front has turned a tan brown instead of the reddish brown it has been all this time. This usually indicates that Noatak River water has arrived.

More birds and species are showing now. Maybe we'll be honored with our full measure of migratory birds yet. Still only low numbers of most species.

Only four occupied camps in Sisualik yet, but that will change quickly this week when trails clear of ice and a few people from Noatak and other places move in for a while. Counting other coastal beach dwellers (west of Sisualik), there are eight camps currently holding people on Krusenstern beaches.

June 13

High 46° F
Low 36° F
Cloudy
W-NW wind to 18

Our cool west wind is back this Sunday and mosquitoes and flies will have to wait for another weekend to begin their active summer in Sisualik. They are around all right, but the coolness keeps them in a lazy torpor.

Some ice over toward the Point on the beach has moved out, prompting our neighbor in that direction to give an early phone call to report the fact. It is expected that the whole beach, from the Point to Akulaaq, would go at the same time. Thus, Carrie was disappointed when only a small piece in front of the neighbor's took off.

Kept the net out in the crack most of the day and caught exactly nothing. We did get 8 or 10 slim whitefish yesterday evening.

Swallows are finally into the egg-laying mode. Seems like their young will be late flying this year.

Jonathan has not landed on the swallow box top for 4 days now and only stays a short while when he is here – just long enough for a bit, and then back to the marsh where he apparently has new egg duties.

Swans are still around. Ice is gone from nearly half the lagoon and Sisualik has snow only around buildings. The whole Spit is now snow-free on the land, and greening, though slowly with today's cool winds.

Birds are also rather quiet. Warm sun will spark things up again when it happens.

There has still been no boat to Sisualik Point. Noatak people are getting impatient to move there.

We ate of our first new wild celery today (*Ligusticum scoticum*).

Our ocean ice is looking more like it is breaking up this evening. Maybe we will soon hear waves again!

June 14

High 38° F
Low 34° F
Some clouds, some sun
W-NW wind to 18

Continued constant west winds off the ice are keeping our temps down again.

Our beach ice has moved and broken up – become pack ice moved about by wind and current. There is no longer any shorefast ice along this eastern portion of Krusenstern sea beach, that is east of a couple of miles from Sealing Point. Sealing Point and west there is still an ice shelf fastened to the beach.

Even though our beach ice is broken up, there is still no boat trail as the steady wind is keeping the ice fast against the shore.

There are, however, places to set a net, which we did. We got the first char-trout of the season: three long but very lean “spawned out” fish. There were also fair quality whitefish and a huge saltwater bullhead. We had fresh boiled fish again and they were good.

With the breaking up of our sea ice, our constant air noise has changed direction and nature, from Tundra Swan to Black-legged Kittiwakes of the sea. The change is timely and welcome.

A first boat got to Sisualik Point from Kotzebue today. There will soon be camps re-opened there by Noatak and Kotzebue people.

June

We have heard of only one ugruk taken by a boat out of Kotzebue. There will soon be much more activity in that line as the late spring boat hunting season for ugruk gets underway. It is a very choice animal and most people depend on the June-July catches of this animal to supply their annual seal oil needs.

Several plants are in flower now, in spite of cool temps: *Pedicularis*, *Carex* mat species, bearberry, and *Petasites*.

June 15

High 44° F
Low 34° F
Cloudy, some sun
Dense clouds late
W-NW wind to 20

Our coolness continues with the constant westerlies, but today was nice and dry and pretty much without insects – to the swallows' dismay.

Jonathan has completely quit using the swallow box as landing pad since swallows got serious about egg-laying. Don't know if this is their own arrangement or if "baiting" him off the box with large food supply he had to guard did it. He-she apparently has heavy time load of nest duties right now too. Anyway, it is a good situation right now that we will have to try to continue as swallow young hatch and feeding begins.

Carrie made a round trip to town with a nice big aircraft to check with clinic and re-supply us. It was a good trip and we are in find shape for another month or so. She will need to see a visiting specialist for her hand/wrist in July.

She brought home a new family member named Fluffy – an odd-looking blue-eyed male puppy less than two months old. Terry the Superdog doesn't think much of the idea and may treat the odd puppy as he does squirrels, if he gets a chance.

Continued west winds are keeping broken ice pans solid on the beach from our place, east to the Point. West of us, to past Salluq, seems ice free. Wave noise and kittiwake cries filled our chilly Sisualik air today.

Marine mammal hunting is on hold for better weather and ice conditions, but several new caps opened up at the Point today. Two families came from Noatak and at least one from Kotzebue. Our population increases again.

Our several hundred Tundra Swan group still dominates the back salt marsh zone. They are hitting the new green sprouts hard.

June 16

High 36° F
Low 32° F
Cloudy, fog late
W-NW wind to 35

A very cold wind day. Tough on Tree Swallows with eggs and tough on some first flowering plants. Temps are likely to dip below freezing tonight.

Our several mile wide off shore ice that was our “breakwater” moved E as W winds became stronger. Now we have waves that are big and noisy that really sound like Sisualik. Kittiwake noise accents the crash of waves and makes one wonder how those birds can sound so happy and lively in the face of such ugly weather. Early this morning, when winds were nearly calm, kittiwake voices came loud and clear, obscuring all other bird noise except an occasional high yodeling crane or a distant Tundra Swan.

Cut a few leftover whitefish and trout. There was no chance to put a net out today, first due to ice, then due to big waves.

Several boats of camper families got into the Point last night and again today. Our population is growing again.

No word of more hunter success due to bad weather (fog, strong winds). Birds, except kittiwake, have become pretty quiet.

Gull egg-taking has nearly come to a halt, but there will be some eggging by latecomers. Some of the eggs taken will be pretty far along in check development. Eating “hairy” eggs is not much fun for anyone, so the season comes to a gradual close for “natural” reasons.

No word of belugas sighted or heard yet. They could be in by now. They have trail.

June 17

High 34° F
Low 32° F
Fog, partial clear, fog
W-NW wind to 35

Another day of that cold west wind air with fog constant over water and ice, but sunny over our north-Sound land mass.

Saw our first beluga early this day. It is great to see them again, though waves were quite large and they were moving in with the waves, which makes them harder to see. Wind was too strong to hear their characteristic “blowing” (breathing) noise. It was a small group, but probably a few more than the two we actually saw. The two

June

we saw were large adults, white and rusty. Hope we see and hear many more between now and the tenth of July.

A report of first “real flowers” at Salluq today. A friend there saw one poppy and one forget-me-not. Have not seen either of those here yet, but would expect to find a few if one searched them out, as well as our beautiful little *Primula borealis*. It’s time, though it froze last night!

It is fortunate that salmonberry plants are not blooming yet. Frosting of their blossoms makes a poor berry season.

We are sure hoping for some good weather and hopefully not too hot for the next two weeks of boat marine mammal hunting.

Carrie’s sister and family got into the Point from Noatak this evening. There is quite a village over at the Point now. There are nearly ten families.

Our beluga sighting this morning is probably the first for the year in all of Kotzebue Sound.

June 18

High 37° F
Low 30° F
Clear, fog off and on
W-NW wind to 30

Frost last night – some green growth and early blossoms nipped. Good thing not many salmonberry flowers are open. I did see two salmonberry flowers today – the first, as well as one Forget-me-not and a couple of yellow *Potentilla*. The time of flowers has come again and with a little warmer weather and rain, our drab world will turn green and colorful for a month or so. First fragrant Rock Jasmine flowers noted also today.

Tundra Swans continue to be our most plentiful waterfowl. Numbers of Arctic Terns foraging in the ocean make it the bird with the highest numbers presently. There are lots and they are busy!

Even a few Bar-tailed Godwits have made a showing. They and Long-billed Dowitchers have been scarce locally this spring.

Our salt marsh is holding fewer birds all the time now, with migrants passing on to better marshes.

Traveled west to the high pile up of ice at Ikpigagaruq. It is quite spectacular. The piles were formed in late winter when strong winds and high water forced large solid pieces onto the tip of the land.

The ice that went in and up yesterday came back down rapidly today – against the wind. So we still have no place to set our net.

June 19

High 42° F
Low 34° F
Clear, few clouds
S-W-NW wind to 15

Beluga day in Sisualik, or rather, sisauq day in Sisualik. We live up to our name for a change. Sisualik means place of white whales and between eight and ten this morning we had in sight several hundred belugas. None came closer to the beach than five or six hundred yards, but there was a great milling of the creatures between ¼ and ½ mile off shore. The water was dark-colored with a near still surface and those belugas that were light or white stood out bold against the dark water when they surfaced. They surfaced much as beluga do when they are undisturbed and feel secure. It really seemed like “old times” in Sisualik. There were several hundred of mixed ages. We have not seen this large a group for many years.

A baleen whale was said to have been seen in Kotzebue channel last night and followed by one hunter boat.

Several ugruk hunting boats were successful today.

We were finally able to set our net today as ice chunks moved away from shore. Lots of lean char and whitefish. We only set the net once, not wanting too many of this kind of fish. Lean trout are being taken all the way from Sisualik Point to Salluq these last three days. Kivalina trout are out, but none have made it into the east Krusenstern waters yet.

Swallows still copulating. Extended cold weather has been hard on these insect-eating birds.

Local *Primula* buds showing purple, but no open corollas yet.

June

June 20

High 75° F
Low 38° F
Sunny, some clouds
NW-W wind to 18
N wind to 25

Quite a dramatic temp change this afternoon about 3 p.m. A switch of wind from off the ice pack, where it has been for many days, to N where it comes off heated rocks and tundra. The temp popped from 40° F to 75° F in a short while. Bumblebees and mosquitoes came with it.

Family visited today – Father’s Day – and their first visit of the summer. The parents made a belated Memorial Day visit to their daughter’s grave here behind us. They had a heartbreaking engine breakdown a few miles out of town on their way home. It was a newly remodeled engine and with marine mammal hunting just getting underway it is not good news.

Cut the fish leftover from yesterday this morning, just in time to catch this super drying afternoon.

There have been many lean trout and whitefish running, but the fellow that set a net this afternoon got all immature sheefish – a species not sought after at this season.

Many boats took home from one to three ugruk yesterday – that’s both Kotzebue boats and Sisualik/Salluq boats.

Only snow left in Sisualik is a bit in lee of tallest buildings that formed the largest drifts. Tablelands and hills are the same – only where exceptional winter drifts formed.

A *Primula borealis* that we took into the tent yesterday as flower buds bloomed today. Tomorrow or the next day, lake margins and old salt burns will be highly decorate by this beautiful pink-purple salt marsh flower. In number, it may be the most prolific flower we have.

June 21

High 69° F
Low 47° F
Cloudy
NE-E wind to 25

Oh my! Can it be that time again already? Today – our longest day – which mean tomorrow will be shorter – and we start losing sun? Yes, it is hard to believe that we are beginning our long march down the daylight hours to those short days of

December. We won't notice any of this of course until July 10, when our 24-hr sun first sets again.

A very shiny ocean early this morning with the ice pack moving back into the north Sound beach.

A young neighbor friend and his crew gave us a fine ugruk today. That fresh meat will be good for a change.

Set the net for an hour this morning and got a number of small shee and one long lean trout. Released all the live shee and the large char male. We are looking for fat Kivalina trout now and just today good catches were reported from Sealing Point and Salluq. Perhaps they will begin to show here as early as tomorrow.

Boats continue to take in a few ugruk but no beluga catch yet. Some were seen and chased this morning but they managed to evade the hunters and nets.

A few more Noatak people have moved in to the Point. There is quite a little village over there again this year.

Saw a large brightly colored swallowtail butterfly today.

The beds of *Potentilla villosa* are blooming already at the Point and the *Primula borealis* taken indoors yesterday are blooming now.

June 22

High 63° F
Low 43° F
Fog, clearing
E-S-W-N wind to 15

Family day today. Town family came across after fog lifted to help work and eat our gift ugruk of yesterday. Kind of a family tradition.

Fat char have reached Sisualik. We took two in a short set this morning and family youngster got one real whopper when we set net for 15 min for his adventure. These are out-moving fish from overwintering springs in the Kivalina and Wulik Rivers. They will be spawners, probably in the Noatak River system.

An extended family member shot a large beluga from the icebergs (giant size) west of us today. They thought it had died and sent for a boat, but before the boat got there (but after more than 20 min), it rose to the surface to breath again. The had been dragging hooks but they weren't able to recover the beluga, much to everyone's disappointment.

June

There has not been a beluga taken yet this year in Kotzebue Sound.

An old friend, the wife of my commercial fishing partner, arrived today for a visit of several days.

We had a good meal today with boiled, tender fresh ugruk meat and kaik, the external layer of skin on a long main gut of an ugruk. It is a favorite Eskimo recipe and very nutritious. It is usually eaten the same day the ugruk is killed.

June 23

High 60° F
Low 42° F
Cloudy, fog, rain
W-S-SW wind

Off and on rain today. Just right for vegetation and especially for flower development of berry species.

Saw first flowering poppies today and near camp *Potentilla villosa*.

Mostly talk and visiting this rainy day. No talk about ugruk, beluga or fat trout today. All these are expected at any time, but there can be long periods of inactivity.

Anore worked our lone seal today and we now have a bucket and a half of seal blubber for the coming year. The ugruk may produce two buckets more. We are doing fine with collecting oil. At this rate, we'll soon have enough, with Anore's help and other around that are fine sharer's of their catches.

We did not put a net out today even though we know large trout are moving past. We are still eating off of the two we cooked yesterday.

June 24

High 54° F
Low 40° F
Fog, clearing early
NW wind to 18

A very calm foggy morning with clearing warm sun and later an increasing sea breeze off the ice that saved us from the mosquitoes. A very fine day and good for working the blubber off of the ugruk and seal skin for oil making. We now have a barrel and a half of good oil for the coming year.

We had our push pole 6" mesh salmon net set all day for the first time, in hopes of large trout or early salmon. We got a single sheefish, which we cooked for supper.

Though it wasn't a bad afternoon for hunting and many boats went out, we haven't heard of much success. There are, rather, complaints of tightly packed and large unbroken floes, with ugruk being beyond reach.

There were many beluga nets out, but none taken by any means yet. Wonder where all those we saw one day have gone.

A six a.m. this morning our one outside dog barked. Knowing that something was up, I got up quickly and a young, good-looking moose was just taking off, headed for Sisualik Point. It was a very nice looking animal with all new hair and very dark colored. With the world spreading green, this animal may be quite happy. He may be running from abundant bugs.

Tomorrow the meat from the ugruk may be cut in strips to dry. People are not taking many ugruk due to tightly closed ice pack.

June 25

High 58° F
Low 40° F
Cloudy, some sun
W-SW wind to 15

A cool wind today and it continued through the day. It was a good day for fishing. Set our 6" mesh at 8:30 a.m. and pulled it out in an hour with four huge fat trout. We didn't put it back out again. That amount of trout will keep us for a while.

The large beluga shot two days ago was recovered by a boat on the way home from the ice pack. Nearly all Sisualik camps had some maktak today. The divided it ½ between the find and the shooters family. It was large and was floating when found. It is in good shape for eating.

Boats bringing in ugruk slow but sure. They are coming one or two at a time.

Some large ice floes have been moving inward all day.

A few new species of flowers out today and looks like a peak time of salmonberry flowering. Blackberries already set on vines, size of no. 4 shot. Blueberries and cranberries just blooming. Bluebells, Labrador Tea, Beach Peas and lots of *Primula* now. And a green world! Salt marsh, tablelands, hills – all green!

Birds scarce on the salt marsh. The swans and pintails are gone and so are the kittiwakes from the ocean. Air noise now from birds is a few ocean loons. Resident cranes pipe in occasionally from their long, long windpipes.

The beach ridge tundra is so alive with life today. Lots of blossoms and pollinators.

June

Saw the life close to tundra while crawling toward a supper duck this morning. Took a couple for tomorrow's soup pot: one Greater Scaup and one Black Scoter.

June 26

High 46° F
Low 38° F
Clear, few clouds
S-SW-W wind to 15

Fine weather with only distant fog over ocean ice.

Ugruk hunters doing a little better, but pack ice is still pretty tight.

Vegetation and flowers really shooting up. There may have been light frost this morning in some areas, but there was no real water freeze and hopefully the salmonberry blossoms for the most part will not be affected. Moisture and sun have been good.

We have still heard of only one beluga taken so far in Kotzebue Sounds. There seems to be lots of ice in Kotzebue Sound yet. Kobuk Lake is said to be free of ice now.

Katrina set net (6" mesh) for half hour. One shee and flounders the only catch.

Family over for the weekend. There are lots of people in Sisualik now again. Boat and ATV sound quite common night and day.

A diver continues to do some work off shore of the sites where two tragic loss of people occurred this last year.

June 27

High 70° F
Low 40° F
Clear, few clouds
SW-W wind to 15
N wind to 25

That rapid wind switch again from off the ice pack to off the pre-heated land rock mass to the north. Temps jumped rapidly and insects of all sorts rejoiced much.

Color has come to the salt marsh! The soft pinkish-purple (rose colored?) *Primula borealis* is everywhere old or new salt burns might have happened and around the lower margins of ponds. It is just a super delight to stroll through these areas were glossy green new growth, dry growth of last fall, and the color bearers make a great contrasting quilt. The time of flowers is here! *Primula borealis* may be at peak.

Salmonberries may also be at peak bloom. The few in a depression here on camp site are all in firm flower covered with pollinators. Lots of insects this evening

Birds scarce, but we have had a probably Slaty-backed Gull yearling in the camp gull flock.

Had net out both yesterday and today (6" mesh). No more trout and no salmon yet. There are a few shee.

Marine mammal hunting on going with slow to moderate success rate.

Report from Point Lay today indicates large numbers of beluga have gathered at the outlets of their lagoons. This may be bad news from Kotzebue Sound hunters as belugas seem to have already passed. Also, they seem to have arrived there a week to ten days early.

Our box swallows seem in trouble this year and Jonathan hasn't had much to do with it, as he has been busy incubating his own eggs. Too much cold, insectless weather may be cause. They may have a chance yet – we will see!

June 28

High 75° F
Low 50° F
Sunny, few clouds
N-NE wind to 18
W wind to 10

Our warm (hot! Today) temps are bringing out all the salt marsh and beach ridge flowers at once. Saw *Pedicularis sudetica* today and *Potentilla Egedii*, Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium*), *Castilleja caudata*, *Primula borealis*, and *Androsace*. Salmonberry are at peak and poppies and beach peas are coming up to peak. Haven't found any sign of *Gentianopsis detonsa* yet. *Senecio* and the gentians are yet to come.

A few more ugruk are coming in – on or two to a boat.

Only two beluga have been taken so far in Kotzebue Sound this season.

A traveler reported fresh caribou tracks on the beach just west of the first Sisualik cabins today. Someone will be luck to have fresh land animal meat.

This being the last week of June, most of our Northern Pintail are near or into molt. They will be hidden away and flightless for a couple of weeks – fat and tasty too! Very little hunting of them in this flightless state continues – it used to be more important.

June

The life or living things on an acre of marshland or the drier beach ridge ground in late June is nothing short of amazing. The diversity demonstrated by insects, plants, birds and mammals is amazing. The competition for every inch of soil is extreme. There seems never quite enough earth space for every species that wants and needs room.

Saw a pair of Dunlin still in bright (some faded) breeding plumage.

Got a cart load of “summer wood” today. This is poor quality multi-year driftwood, good for slow fires of summer.

June 29

High 71° F
Low 57° F
Clear, some clouds, smoke
N-NE calm
NW wind to 18

Another hot one but late afternoon and evening sea breeze made both mosquitoes and heat beat a retreat.

Flowers continue to break out all over and in wondrous numbers. On trail to “water lake,” used for the first time today, there are lots of salmonberry flowers. A quarter have lost their petals already, but a good percentage have closed up their sepals and given a little rain, they will form berries. The blossoms of course, being half male, will at most produce only half as many berries as blossoms. But there are lots of blossoms. Right now is a critical time for berry development. We hope for ideal conditions, which includes some moisture early on.

Smoke from lightning fires in Noatak valley is reaching us this evening. We had a local fire at Jones Camp today at a time when wind was down. They lost one building and three sno-gos. If fire had wind to move it, our winter camp would be at risk. The risk of fire is great right now.

A large bull musk ox was up near the Jones Camp fire.

A caribou was at Sealing Point camp this morning, but person couldn't find a gun soon enough. Later, the animal was seen out on the ocean, up on an ice floe!

This heat makes us all goofy!

Ugruk hunting is improving, but beluga are not making a show here. Point Lay reports a beluga pod five miles long.

Terry the Superdog has had two very trying days and nights. He has a hole in the ground, but mosquitoes have little pity and there are millions.

June 30

High 66° F
Low 56° F
Clear, few clouds
Calm, NW wind to 15

Looks like no salmon for Kotzebue Sound in June this year. The run sometimes begins in the last ten days of June. The central seed heads for *Elymus* grasses – the first – were noted two days ago. This is a traditional time sign for the arrival of chum salmon in Sisualik. Timing is apparently off this year or our net is too short.

Warm again today, but afternoon sea breezes helped bring temps and mosquitoes down.

We put away our ugruk meat today. The dried strips, cut in short pieces, were packed in a bucket and covered with oil from the blubber that had turned to oil already.

Lots of boat traffic today. Ice is only a few miles out and may be coming closer.

We do need some rain. Our flowers and potential berry crop are at risk, getting too dry under too much sun.

Travelers have made it through the ice from Kotzebue to Deering and to Kivalina, so pack ice is thin enough to allow coastal traveling throughout the region now. Summer is indeed here.

Forget-me-nots and *Primula borealis* at high peak. Beach peas and *Castilleja caudata* (paintbrush) coming on. Marsh grasses light and deep green – no yellow. *Salix* sp. deep glossy green. Cottonwoods light green, no yellow.

June has been pretty dry, but moisture came at good intervals. July must come up and quickly with some rainy periods.

July

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

JULY

July 1

High 76° F
Low 58° F
Clear, some clouds
Calm
NW wind to 15

I hope this is the hottest day of July. Hard for us to handle temps above seventy.

Saw a ground squirrel today on the floor of our oil storage shed, only $\frac{1}{4}$ as big as an adult. It had a very large head (for its size) and was quite tame, much like a bird in a nest. The next generation of squirrels will soon be on their own. Summer is passing. It seems remarkable for a brand new squirrel to be on the land when it was only two months ago that the land was covered with snowdrifts!

From this day forward we will anxiously wait for rain. There was little rain in both May and June. Though the ground held enough moisture for vegetation growth and flowering, for fruit and seed development we will need moisture.

Good catch of beluga reported at Point Lay yesterday and maybe today. Numbers reported to be 36.

Our white camp *Epilobium latifolium* will bloom soon, but only one plant. The other seems to have no buds. The plants are less than robust this year. Will soon check the larger colony at Nuvruq.

It may be that some *Gentianopsis detonsa* have sprouted, but I haven't seen any yet. These hot days and dry soil may cause an early development of this species. Usually it does not bloom till the last week of July.

Still no chum salmon. Only two beluga caught in Kotzebue Sound.

My Superdog Terry is looking sad. The weather has been so hot and mosquitoes so miserable. I had to oil his head with seal oil to protect his eyelids and nose. His new pure white hair is now all oiled with dust. He looks terrible and he doesn't like any kind of dirt on his new hair, so he is sad, but it has given some peach from bugs.

July 2

High 66° F
Low 46° F
Clear, few clouds
W-NW wind to 20

Found orchids in the backyard this morning – a number of plants (*Platanthera obtusata*).

The tablelands area has an almost snow-like quality the last ten days because of cottongrass flowering (*Eriophorum* sp.). This is said to indicate a good year for salmonberries.

Find cool air today. Mosquito and blowflies not a problem! A great relief from the last few days of heat and bugs for both me and my Superdog.

Had a great catch of shee in the 6” mesh net today. This is a growing marvel in Sisualik. Kobuk Lake and Noatak delta are supposed to be the western boundary of shee activity. Each year now, more and more shee follow the freshwater break up flow out into the ocean and then try to return, as salt tolerant they aren't. The run today was moving back into proper boundaries. Was able to release all but one alive. We kept a big fat one to bake for supper. It is unseasonable to eat shee now, but this fat one was unseasonably fat. It was very good. Shee dynamics are going through some strong changes that should be documented, but are not.

We also had a pot of fat trout soup for lunch from the only trout in the net. We are well fed on fish today. Two of the country's best, and both in superb condition. Fresh too!

No word of salmon taken in Kotzebue Sound yet.

Did a small gentian search today but didn't find any. Can't figure what kind of a gentian year we have. Our cold, cold May and June, except for a few days, may not be good for gentians. It is early yet for that species.

We heard a pair of Aleutian Terns today for the first time.

July 3

High 54° F
Low 40° F
Fog, smoke, haze
Clearing p.m.
SW-W wind to 10

Fourth of July celebration in town. Pretty quiet in Sisualik – few people, calm ocean, ice still in sight on a shiny sea.

July

Saw two remarkable and beautiful plots of wildflowers today. Both *Primula borealis* and *Pedicularis sudetica* are at peak bloom (*Primula* a little past peak). The two plots are on trails used by 4-wheelers at other seasons. The plots are solid colored sections within a background of glossy green. The “peppermint pinwheels” of the *Pedicularis* are a solid color mass of extensive colony plants and are near perfect examples of the plant – all new growth and no frosted or dried blossoms or leaves. They won’t stay that way for long, but for today they were there.

The *Primula* were in an isolated corner of the old salt burn - a 20x20 solid rose-pink, with a mass of near white.

A change in water level of a nearby long lake, that can be traced to an outlet-inlet that has been altered by ATV crossing became visible today. It is probably going to cause the lake to become dry grassland. Right now, bottom food has attracted a mass of Northern Pintail and American Wigeon that have not yet got into molt.

There was a monster load of flounders in our push-pole net (salmon 6”). There were three species, one of which is rare here. No word of salmon catch in Kotzebue Sound yet. Too much ice.

Akulaaq Lagoon (one of our fall fishing places) has not opened an outlet to the ocean yet.

July 4

High 56° F
Low 42° F
Clear, little fog
SW-W wind to 15

A really fine day spoiled by word of a drowning of an extended family member in Selawik.

The cool on shore winds (off the ice yet) and occasional fog patches in the a.m. kept bug activity to a minimum. The warm sun was delightful. The fog and heavy overnight dew was almost as good as a rain for the vegetation and berries.

In the line of berries things look pretty hopeful. Flowering for salmonberries has passed, and many have closed sepals, promising a berry. The blackberries (*Empetrum nigrum*) were the first to indicate a good crop set on the vines. Rather large already. Cranberries are in full bloom right now (the latest species) and blueberries are as yet unsurveyed. All these sings and predictions depend on steady moisture through the next 10 to 20 days.

Had 6” mesh net in for an hour this morning and got a large fat male trout and a huge shee (over 20 lbs). Large shee on our ocean front now are new and a puzzle. These,

this week, are at least going in the right direction (east) They are at risk in this area if they move west at this season, since their capacity for saltwater tolerance is limited.

Made visit to the Point this evening. It was a disappointment as far as floral display goes. Ground too dry and *Epilobium latifolium* just beginning to bloom. Beach Peas, *Potentilla*, and *Saxifrage* dominate, with some poppy and dandelion.

Folks have a little ugruk meat hanging, but no maktak.

July 5

High 54° F
Low 46° F
Clear, smoke, fog
W-NW wind to 18

Windy and cool – no real problem with mosquitoes today, even for Terry the Dog, who caught another squirrel today. This dog, single-pawed, is making ground squirrels scarce in our portion of Sisualik.

Set the 6” mesh net twice today. Caught a large fat male trout and a lean small sheefish for Jonathan. The second net caught a second large male trout and a new 1999 baby Ringed Seal. The trout was heavier than the seal.

We did eat trout for supper. Like usual, in the midst of high quality eating fish, we are tired of fish now and would prefer a pot of duck soup or a meal of caribou meat.

The fat char/trout are stretching out over a long time window again (as last year). These are the segment of the population that come out of winter quarters quite fat and feed some more opportunistically in saltwater on their trek to fall spawning locations. These will probably be the first fall '99 spawners.

The baby seal that drowned in the net was small, probably orphaned, and having a tough time learning to make a living. Their skins in the past were used for a fine small shoulder hunting bag or one side leg of a dandy pair of waterproof-windproof sealskin pants.

Still a little ice in sight here. Lots on beach at Sealing Point and many boats out yet. One of our extended family boats is out with them.

Saw a large family of very small Northern Pintail today – the first. Our box swallows may also be feeding extra mouths now.

July

July 6

High 56° F
Low 42° F
Clear, some clouds
Smoke, fog
Calm
W wind to 10 late p.m.

Great day today! After an intensive search – sometimes on hands and knees – today I found two plots that have had in other years, numbers of *Gentianopsis detonsa* plants. One is the “near tent” plot that has produced well the past two years; the other is the “Keith Boat plot” that didn’t produce last year but did well the two years before that.

There were only two plants in the near tent plot, but the boat plot looks very promising. The plants are barely two inches long at this point, making them difficult to ID except up close. They will not mature (flower) for ten days. It appears that we may have a much better year for this beautiful flower than we have had the last two years. It is always trying at this date to locate plants in the marsh jungle of green. When their bright purple-blue flower petals appear toward the end of the month, they will be visible, standing out from a long distance. No hands and knees then!

Today’s search makes me very happy for I may be able to get enough pictures to finish up a project on this unusual and beautiful arctic plant.

Saw another “midget” squirrel outside by the dome today. The new generation squirrels are on their way, finding that it is a tough world to make a living in.

Ice is still close. Our town family boat finally got their big engine fixed – again – and are on their way out into the ice pack. We will be pleased if they get back home in one piece – regardless catch.

Some higher levels in the salt marsh are showing signs of heat stress again. Morning fog and night dew has been helping things along, but a little rain is long overdue.

A crippled cow caribou with calf was seen behind Salluq yesterday and a moose cow with two calves also.

July 7

High 50° F
Low 44° F
Cloudy

Town family boat crew having motor trouble again.

First salmon in Sisualik today. Nephew had a passing boat put out his net last evening. When he pulled it in this morning he had two bright chum salmon and 10-

July

15 sheefish. These two are the first we have heard of in the entire Kotzebue Sound. This is a very late date for first catch. They have been as early as June 23.

Ice floes right on the beach this morning. Tangled at least one beluga net.

These late ugruk hunters are reporting few ugruk to be seen. There is some good ice and lots of smaller seals, but few ugruk.

Town family boat made it home okay.

Flowers yet to be seen: Tall Fireweed, gentians, Grass-of-Parnassus, *Lomatogonium*, Arctic Daisy, Iris. There is a peak of blue right now in Sisualik. Some huge patches of mixed species, but the common blue continues – bluebells (high and low bush), Forget-me-nots, some *Astragalus alpinus* and the darker beach pea.

Commercial fisher folks had a chance today or tomorrow that won't come again this year. Local fish buyer offered \$100 for ten chum salmon after getting word that salmon had been taken in Sisualik. What wasn't mentioned was that to catch two salmon, 15-20 sheefish must be killed, and wasted. This is a bummer and is an increasing situation. As shee wider their range into commercial fishing waters, this waste of shee will be great. Commercial fishery has a first opening time this coming Monday.

July 8

High 55° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, some sun
SW-W wind to 10

Checked the white petaled *Epilobium latifolium* today for open buds. Found only one open, but surprise, surprise! There is a third plant! These two plants are close to the camp and we found them more than ten years ago. They are isolated plants; the nearest colony is half a mile away. They bloom at least every other year and make abundant seeds, but till now we have not found close by other white petaled flowers. There is a colony four miles away at the Point.

Also found numerous other 1" to 2" *Gentianopsis detonsa* plants in another plot that had many in previous years, but had only one last year. It looks like there may be an abundance of *G. detonsa* flowers this year and I may get pictures enough to finish up my project on this species. My love affair with this arctic beauty, though, will never end.

Though we have quiet seas and ice still in sight from shore, there does not seem to be a lot of marine mammal hunting. Some boats are out all right, but catches have stayed at one or two ugruk.

July

The ground is at near peak floral display, with most *Primula borealis* gone, as well as salmonberry flowers. Saw one large bud, but not quite blooming, of Iris today. The other gentians are also sprouting, but haven't located *G. tenella* or *G. prostrata*.

Have moved three 1" *G. detonsa* into glass inside tent to watch their growth pattern for a few days. With this plant, the stages from first sprout to mature flowering are usually not seen by human eye. We are fortunate this year to have an early handle on the plant.

July 9

High 50° F
Low 46° F
Clear, some clouds
W-NW wind to 20

Wind prevented town trip today.

It was another day of discovery though. More 2-3" *G. detonsa* located in large plot by Barger's house. There were none last year, but many two years ago.

These early indications are that we will have lots of *G. detonsa* where there were few for the last two years. That should allow all the photos one could want to fill out the project.

A bear incident at neighbor's between 5 and 6 a.m. I heard a number of shots and later heard the story. The boys were working on a net on the beach when they glanced toward the house 200 ft. away. There was a bear between them and the house just as startled as they were. They scrambled for a gun and fired several shots to scare it off. It ran almost out of sight, but then turned and started back towards the house. This time their intentions were to kill it, but it turned off and went back toward the tablelands. The lady of the house had been blaming several kids they have around the day before for spilling the seal oil can, and pulling a net but not taking the flounders out. All these and probably other things were likely done during a prior visit the day before. It is a small bear that has made tracks on the beach earlier. With so many kids about, the bear will probably be killed if it comes around again.

Ugruk hunting continues with some success and we still have ice in sight. Spotted Seals have been taken and seen, so we are not far from an ice free ocean.

First commercial opening to be this Monday. The possible large shee by-catch may be a problem the first week of commercial opening.

The sun will set tomorrow for the first time since June 2.

July 10

High 52° F
Low 40° F
Clear, some clouds, fog
NW-W wind to 20

Made the town trip and it was hectic as usual. Crossing was a little bumpy both ways but good enough.

We are very glad to have our heavy but necessary items – drum of gas and 100 lb propane bottle. We had to charter Carrie’s sister’s boat to make the trip as our town family’s boat engine is down.

We had visitors while absent but they knew what to do.

Not much news in town. Lots of construction and dirt and gravel moving. Stores very busy.

Everywhere pretty dry – including town. We do need rain. Kotzebue vegetation looks good but not robust – dry.

No ice in sight from Sisualik today, for the first time. Ocean waves – swells – a little larger than local winds warrant, a sign that ground swells that signal in the ice free season on the ocean, are near.

It will soon be time for a hike inland for sourdock. Always an adventure to look forward to.

July 11

High 47° F
Low 39° F
Clear, some clouds, smoke
W-NW wind to 20

Cold windy day with some rapid but still small waves. No ground swells yet.

Some walrus hunting by a few local boats. No report of catch yet.

Checked the Barger *G. detonsa* patch today while running the dog. Plants growing fast. They are abundant and healthy looking in that plot.

Pole net was washed up on the beach by waves this morning, full of flounders and one fresh female chum in the last portion of the net, near the end stick. It is our first catch of salmon and lucky it was, in the very deep end of the net. Had it been elsewhere, the gulls would have it.

July

Word of salmon catches scattered around the Sound will sound good. The first commercial opening will be tomorrow from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Took several samples for comparison of *G. detonsa* and *Lomatogonium* today from Barger plot. There are near the same age and 3 and 4" long. Have pressed them for study. There is a turnip-like ridge where root joins stem that might show some last year rosette leaves, making the "biennial" character of this plant possible.

Some of the same plants were located in Kotzebue today and maybe photographed. The plant comes to flower a week earlier in Kotzebue than here.

The bumper crop this year may extend through the whole of the plant's range here in Kotzebue Sound. It will be a good year to learn more of its limited range.

Young new squirrels and new birds around in the grasses.

July 12

High 41° F
Low 38° F
Fog, clearing, sun
W-NW wind to 20

A real cool night and day for July. Some spoke of frost last night, but we didn't see any. Things out were real wet till late this morning. The fog and dew may save our berry crop. Very dry May and June and now no rain yet in July. Upper levels of the marsh are drying up.

A distant neighbor got salmon this morning – maybe more than 30. He had trouble pulling the net with the weight of flounders and salmon, so called for help. That is the first real catch of salmon so far and today was the first 12-hr. commercial opening. No commercial netter showed up on this side. There probably will be fore tomorrow's opening. Salmon are late.

There is still ice on the beach at Sealing Point but we have had none in sight for several days.

Since the last hunting bots went in yesterday there hasn't been others headed out. Ice is getting far out and those trying for walrus haven't done any good, though there were swimmers reported at Kivalina yesterday.

Checked the salmonberries at the water lake today and found them looking good. Special pockets (lower places) look especially good. The formed berry is beginning to show a bit of red on top of the closed sepals, so they are getting easier to see.

Carrie needs to see specialist in Kotzebue tomorrow, weather permitting. Our foggy and windy weather lately have made travel by both air and boat difficult.

There is report of a small bear killed in the storm shed of a Salluq camp. This may be the same bear that was here around our neighbor's house a few days ago. It was a small unafraid animal in search of seal oil.

July 13

High 51° F
Low 36° F
Clear, clouds, fog
Light winds

Salmon day today! Was surprised to find 20 chum salmon in our little push pole, 7 fathom net this morning. That may be a record number for this short net. It holds 10-12 easily.

Commercial fishery was open today but we still didn't see any commercial boats on this side of the Sound.

Our outside dog barked about 5 a.m. this morning while it was very foggy (ground fog). I had to get up and check for bear, but didn't see anything. My dog only barks at other dogs, porcupines, bears, or moose. He barks the same way to all, so one never knows what to expect. Usually you can be quite sure it is not a person. This time remains a mystery.

Such good weather today. We haven't seen that for some time. Calm seas, warm sun, and even clear air. No smoke.

Ground swells reported far out from Sealing Point by walrus hunters. We also have two large barges anchored out from our place this afternoon. The ocean is taking on its noisy summer form. We will hear, see and feel the heavy surf again!

We will have some good half-dried salmon, a favorite dish, in a few days.

It is drawing close to a time of a first inland trip for sourdock. Maybe this week.

Lots of boat traffic with the calm seas. The search goes on at the site west of us where two were lost, and across the Sound at Riley's Wreck, where three were lost.

July

July 14

High 72° F
Low 50° F
Cloudy, rain, clearing
Light winds

First rain for ages. It wet the ground down pretty good in a few hours then cleared to a very hot sun without wind. This period of moisture is timely. It will save our berry crop and improve quality and size.

A small caribou taken by west neighbor early this morning at the base of Sisualik peninsula.

A pair of cranes and a friend seem to have young in our backyard again. The three have been feeding each evening across our near salt marsh.

Most “puddle ducks” are flightless now – pintails, wigeon, mallard and teal.

We didn't set salmon net today after the numbers we got yesterday.

There has been little participation in the commercial fishing effort -one boat in the first opening and maybe a few more in the second. We did hear one period catch of 250, which is a good first period catch.

Saw first *Gentiana prostrata* open today.

Most geese must also be down growing new flight feathers. The noise in the salt marsh is mostly mew gull and crane now, with an occasional loon call to add some kind of balance.

Beluga take for Kotzebue Sound remains, to our knowledge, at tow. Point Lay again has the only large late spring catch.

Our ugruk catch has been moderate.

Our three white petaled *Epilobium latifolium* are near full bloom now. Many iris flowers are out. I saw a few yellow-flowered *Oxytropis Maydelliana* today. Also first *Senecio lugens*.

July 15

High 65° F
Low 52° F
Rain, cloudy, sun, fog
S wind to 25, calm
SW wind to 15

Strong south winds this morning with fog and rain, the heaviest rain so far this summer.

After weather cleared I went west to Akulaaq for beachcombing. Found one good spruce log but nothing else. Saw some quite large blueberries, while some plants still in blossom. Salmonberries showing a little red at top of sepals – we may have a fair crop.

Iris working towards a peak. Many flowers showing today – some patches of solid color. Both *Senecio pseudo-Arnica* and *Senecio lugens* are on their way too, and I saw the first flowers of *Saussurea* today. The only gentian flower seen so far is one *G. prostrata*. *G. detonsa* seem slow to develop and small of stature. I think the 18th is the earliest flowering we have had here, though Kotzebue plants are earlier.

A group of six kayakers passing through this evening – first of the season.

Search efforts out of Sheldon Camp continue.

Commercial fishery continues, but not much participation. Buyer's price is 16 cents per pound.

Our little net out this morning for a few hours caught only one, but a choice fat male. Only a few flounders today.

We ate the head from our neighbor's caribou tonight. It made a very good pot of soup. There is nothing quite like fresh meat after not having any for a while.

Mosquitoes bad after the moisture.

Lots of new flying passerines on the beach today.

Two hunters from the Point got two walrus last night out from Sealing Point. One of them brought us a large piece this afternoon.

July

July 16

High 58° F
Low 52° F
Cloudy, rain, sun
S-SE wind to 18

Large ice floe off Sisualik broke up along the Sisualik beach through the day. There was quite a lot of ice and my net was caught while I took Carrie to the Point for a trip to town. There was one large male chum in the net when I recovered it from the ice.

Checked the Point for *G. detonsa* while I was over there and found a number of plants, but most have the weak stressed look of those on our plots here. There were several robust plants however, and our rain showers are making all growth on the ground look better. No plants were blooming or close to it.

The *Epilobium latifolium* over there are at peak and with the rain of past few days they are looking good. Iris are also coming on strong.

There are lots of Black-legged Kittiwakes with the last ice floe break up. Lots of small passerines in the grasses. Some are newly fledged redpolls and Savannah Sparrows.

Our population rapidly growing. Several camp families that haven't made it earlier are getting in this weekend for kids camp fun while waiting for first berries to ripen.

Summer conference at Friends Church is on-going, starting Wednesday and winding down on Sunday. There are many village people in town this week.

There are not many bugs today, though moist air brings them out.

Our 20 lb. Propane bottle went dry today. That means we got 16 days of cooking stove use from 20 lbs.

July 17

High 60° F
Low 54° F
Cloudy, showers, sun
S-SW wind to 20

Lots of wave noise today. Onshore winds with no more ice in sight. Wind speed has been up and down, causing coastal travelers to be cautious in travel between Kotzebue and Sheldon Camp, where considerable search effort continues for lost hunters.

Did a little gentian searching today and was rewarded with a great find of *G. prostrata*. These appear to be new growing plants with only one flower or two

showing. They are near tent site on bare muddy ground with little other vegetation. I think it is a plot I went through earlier without little gentian sign. The rains may have made the difference.

In several plots where I have located *G. detonsa*, growth seems very slow and plants seem small and not robust. This is a disappointment, but maybe the result of too much hot dry weather. With the coming of moisture, rate of growth may increase. This plant is certainly full of surprises. In many years, flowering does not occur till the last week of July or first of August. Plants still have time for growing if they will hold off till then. Have not seen any large or small showing any color yet.

Some things are drifting in with these steady on shore winds. A friend found a rather new looking L.L. Bean shoe, size 9-10, and a few pieces of driftwood. There has also been some Eel Grass, the result, no doubt, of several days of south and southwest winds. There have also been several deteriorated common seals that the bears will like.

Ground swells were beginning last evening and Sealing Point and are reported again this evening from there. That is a sure sign of the end of the ice season on the sea.

July 18

High 58° F
Low 52° F
Cloudy, light showers
S-SE-E wind to 20

Very noisy surf before noon, with wind from the south. Wind moved to east and dropped off by 5 p.m. By 7 p.m. it was good enough to set push pole net.

One headless walrus found the other side of Frank Sheldon cabin. Said to be too old for flipper or quaq salvage. It will become bear feast – lots of meat.

Gentians seem real slow in developing. The three plants taken inside the tent are even slower.

Iris flowering near peak, *Saussurea* on strong, *Epilobium* with white petals had good flowers, and *Epilobium angustifolium* has no flowers yet. Grass-of-Parnassus, Star Gentian, and *G. propinqua* have no flowers yet. These will be the last to bloom.

This is the last day of summer conference. The afternoon memorial service is often a difficult time for those with recently deceased family members.

Many young squirrels, sandpipers, and passerines out. Terry has abundant pretty on his short daily run.

July

No more ice hunting for Kotzebue Sound this year. Ugruk hunting was moderately good, beluga a shame. Only two animals taken in all Kotzebue Sound.

Search effort for human bodies continues.

Swallows fast feeding now, so they have managed to lay and preserve an egg or two.

Carrie should be home tomorrow. That will be great. Lone camp care with all communications we have is rough.

Located another gentian plot today – west side of Point. Small to medium plants with no color yet.

July 19

High 58° F

Low 49° F

Cloudy, showers, rain

Calm waters with light swells. Carrie made it home with town family's "little bug" boat and was able to land on our ocean beach.

Had 6" mesh net out all day. The only catch was a sheefish and a few flounders.

Checked a few *G. detonsa* in K. Boat plot. They are coming along with the new moisture – growing rapidly taller and more robust. There may be some good for photos in another week.

Lots of boat traffic west today and aircraft too as the air cleared and people needed to return to homes from conference time.

Took a beachcombing trip west to Akulaaq. There were five or six small dead common seals, a small headless walrus, a large ugruk with the blubber stripped off. The blubber salvage from drifted in dead animals is a sign that some folks didn't get their yearly seal oil quota. The blubber from these early drifted in mammals is still good and firm and makes very good oil.

It is too bad that that little beachcombing bear of a couple of weeks ago didn't have the food-rich beach that we now have after many days of on shore wind. He wouldn't have had to get into someone's storm shed and get killed.

Lots of young squirrels running around. Terry sure looks forward to his daily run.

Steady heavy rains began this evening. No telling when it will stop.

There is a report of dead sea birds west of Sealing Point: Black-legged Kittiwakes, murrens, Mew Gulls, and some young Glaucous Gulls.

Four musk ox reported at Napaaqtuuraq.

July 20

High 57° F
Low 49° F
Cloudy, rain, sun p.m.
SE-NE wind to 20

Heavy rain thru the night - .6 inches – the heaviest we’ve had in either June or July. Vegetation really exploding. Sourdock must be getting large leaves. The rain is really timely.

We had really changeable weather today – just about any kind you could think of.

Cut up a few pieces of heavy new spruce driftwood and hauled them home today. We finally got a few tree-sized driftwood pieces in on the last south winds. We would like to see more all right.

When conditions are right it is time for an inland trip for sourdock. A cool dry wind is idea. In damp not weather, mosquitoes and flies can drive a warm-blooded creature mad. Five miles of tussocks with 35-40 lbs of sourdock can be tedious. The finished product is worth it though.

Salmon fishing started off late but good, but it hasn’t stayed good. It may pick up some as Noatak River fish begin to work in.

We were given three nice big King Crabs yesterday by a boat that had just taken off their crab pots. We have been fortunate in the last couple of years to have, several times, fresh Kotzebue Sound King Crabs from old friends. Not much is or was known about King Crab stocks in Kotzebue Sound. Actually it came as a surprise to know that they are here at all.

It will not be long now till the salmonberries at inland locations will be ready for picking. At this point, out berry year looks promising, but here on the coast nothing much ripens till August.

Our *Elymus* grain heads are into pollen release. They look pretty robust and healthy.

Caribou taken at Salluq – others seen.

July

July 21

High 54° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, rain, drying
W-NW wind to 35

Real waves today, just like Sisualik. The ground swells began coming in early, several hours before the wind. This evening the swells are a little more than halfway up the beach. They look mighty tall before they break on the beach.

Made a beachcombing trip west this morning and found a dead ugruk in very good shape. Good for oil for anyone that wants to work it. Also found a heavy built little sled used by boat hunters to help drag ugruk to the boat. Very heavy, made with expensive bolts and plastic runners. The wood crosspieces are broken.

Disappointment at Sheldon search camp yesterday. The draggers hooked something and the diver checked it and found a piece of waterlogged tree. There remain very few clues as to what became of those two seasoned hunters. It may remain a mystery.

Terry and I ran across a pile of baby ducks on his run today. There were on land and he really wanted to catch them. I am glad his leash held. He has little concern for creatures smaller than himself except as food or something to chase.

A few more driftwood logs are showing up each day. None of them are very good but they will burn eventually.

Our vegetation growth is really something to see – all that shimmering glossy verdant green with color: yellow of dandelion and *Senecio* and the purple blue of iris and beach pea. Rich coloration for a usually drab Sisualik.

July 22

High 50° F
Low 42° F
Cloudy, some sun, showers
W-NW wind to 20

1999 *Gentianopsis detonsa* day! First blooming today. One plant even had a slightly opened corolla. There are considerable numbers in various plots. The tendency seems to be for small plants where I've located plots, but there are a number of medium-sized many-branched plants and they are beautiful!

Also some ducks (American Wigeon) are back from molt. There was a flock of twenty new-feathered wigeon in a favorite lake north of our backyard.

Hauled in some new drifted in heavy wood today. They will not take long to dry and they are good solid spruce.

Swells that were more than halfway up the beach yesterday are down today, but they cut deeply into our beach, leaving a sharp drop off difficult to navigate.

Our old neighbor in the next camp west is in Sisualik again. Fannie was raised here, one of the original Sisualik clans, and is 90+ years old. She was over for supper tonight.

We have lots of half-size squirrels around camp now. No flies or mosquitoes today – too cool.

No net out either. We did get a first large Humpback Salmon a couple of days ago. It was a fresh run chum-sized male.

Lots of occupied camps in Sisualik now. Most long established camps have people now.

Tomorrow may be good for the inland journey to sourdock lake.

It is such a thrill to see the beautiful deep purple-blue of the gentians today. There is a lot of purple-blue in the marsh right now: iris, *Saussurea*, and *G. detonsa*.

July 23

High 54° F
Low 39° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE –E-S wind to 15

Sourdock day today. Made the long walk in with pleasant N wind in the face and the long walk out with backpack with a pleasant cool wind in the face to keep the mosquitoes behind. That is what you call good weather luck.

I did have a good day picking and filled my sack with some nice large leaves – weighed about 35-40 lbs. It will make maybe a bucket and a half of cooked product. Grasses have had a better year of growth than the sourdock. The dock is there but inside the grasses, which makes picking harder. The growth of the dock is good since the rains came.

Also saw more salmonberries on the walk up that I have ever seen on that trail. The abundant cottongrass this spring is supposed to indicate an abundant crop of salmonberries – it looks to be true for this area. There were no ripe berries yet, but it won't be long.

July

Dominant inland flowers: Shooting Stars, Valerian, and Nagoonberry blossoms are all looking good. We never see these species in the salt marsh or the beach strands or the beach ridges.

The only duck broods seen were Green-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler.

The water in Akulaaq Lagoon remains high since the outlet didn't open this spring. Muskrats are plentiful and one wonders what fish might have survived the winter in that shallow lake.

July 24

High 59° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, some sun
NE-E wind to 25

Lots of people in Sisualik today. We had a memorial service for our old friend and neighbor Amos Greene, with potluck and lots of friends. We certainly miss him in Sisualik.

Our Tree Swallows managed to produce two new youngsters this year under very trying circumstances (freezing and frosty nights and a huge Glaucous Gull standing on the roof of their house). There were long stretches of west wind and cold when insects must have been hard to find. Pretty hardy birds who will be glad to see trees again, where Glaucous Gulls will be seen only at a distance.

Much yellow now with background of green as the tall *Senecio lugens* peaks in the higher levels of the Spit. They are having a splendid year. The fresh bright purple blue of *Iris setosa* are adding their solid color to the mosaic of the land. The paler blue of bluebells still has enough strength of color to add to the scene. It has been a good floral year and there is more yet to come. Grasses have done well too, but some of the marsh is already yellowing.

Flowers yet to peak: gentians, Grass-of-Parnassus, and Tall Fireweed. *Gentianopsis detonsa* is heading for a peak this week.

Net was out all day and got only one chum salmon and a pile of flounders. Salmon are reported to be on the Kotzebue side in numbers.

Saw a first small group of Arctic Tern parents and young out on the sea beach yesterday. These birds are extremely vulnerable to a pair of jaegers at this stage of their development.

July 25

High 56° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, rain, fog
NE-E wind to 30

Today was supposed to be gentian photo day, but instead we got wind and rain all day with no sun. In the tent near the stove was the only place to be – all day. There was even some drip in there.

Berries are still building on the moisture, so I guess we are still gaining, but a whole day of rain and fog at this point seems a little much. Our rainy season must be beginning, and if that's so, only one day of rain won't seem so tedious – we'll get used to it.

Tall Fireweed is one of the plants here on the beach that has not bloomed yet, though it is at peak bloom now five miles inland, where I picked sourdock. The ten-day difference in blooming times of similar species is apparently related to distance from the July ocean ice pack. It is very noticeable inland from Krusenstern beaches and east. Even the Kotzebue area shares the early flowering states of inland Krusenstern. It appears that we will have heavy blocks of color when the Tall Fireweed blooms – they are having a good year. Each year when the fireweed blooms we recall the summer in the 60's that due to continual west winds our Tall Fireweed did not bloom (though Kotzebue plants did). There were no mosquitoes, no blowflies, and caribou came early.

This unusual happening of winds “getting stuck” in a directional quadrant over long periods of time could be responsible for geographic form changes or alteration of creature migration patterns. They could cause such things as Krusenstern Beach Ridge complex and the disappearance of Bowhead Whale activity off Krusenstern shores.

July 26

High 54° F
Low 49° F
Cloudy, light rain, fog
S-SE wind to 18

A much drier day than yesterday, but still wet grasses and ground. Bugs are still many in the grasses.

First berry pickers out in Sisualik today. Neighbors picking hard unripe salmonberries for cooking.

First few Tall Fireweed blooming in Sisualik. We are going to have some solid banks of color this coming week.

July

Had the net out for an hour or so this morning, till building waves brought it in. Not even a flounder. The next time the waves are down we may try the 3" mesh to see if there are some fat whitefish. They should be on their way back to the river systems after fattening in the lagoons. The lagoon outlet at Anigaaq is very shallow but still open, letting fish out into the ocean. We hope that it will close soon now. When it closes in July there will be many fish for us this fall. We missed them last winter.

There continues to be changing numbers of people at Sheldon Camp in an effort to find some trace of the two missing hunters. It has been tough on family and friends.

People will soon increase down there again for a different purpose. Salmonberries will be ripening as August comes on. The place (Salluq) is famous far and wide for the abundant lot of salmonberries it can produce in August.

We miss our friendly swallows but Jonathan couldn't be happier. His landing pad is again his – free and uncontested, no more harassment by dive-bombing Tree Swallows.

July 27

High 56° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, clearing, fog
W-NW wind to 20

Sisualik '99 *Gentianopsis detonsa* at peak bloom and there are some wonderful patches of many hundreds of plants. Visited the Barger house plot today after several days and very lot of plants in pretty much full bloom, with many flowers in the open state and a few re-closed and fading. It is a beautiful sight, a most beautiful sight. The only other vegetation is the hair-like grass usually found with *G. detonsa*, supporting and sheltering the now top-heavy plants. This was the plot checked early in the month and marked after finding a few 2-3" high plants. There was really no hint of the multitude easily visible from a distance this day. Some colonies are thick enough to show a soled purple-blue against a background, much like the present thick patches of iris.

The rather unexpected abundance brought the usual surprised gasp and breathlessness that usually happens with this plant on sudden discover. The sun was breaking through the clouds to further dramatize the whole scene. Today was worth surviving the whole bleak winter!

A second bountiful happening came today when I put the 3" mesh net out instead of the 6" salmon net. We got lots of fat, egg-laden whitefish that were en route from Anigaaq to the region's large river systems. They are superb for cooking and half-dried and boiled.

Tall Fireweed starting their bloom. No blossom of Grass-of-Parnassus or *Lomatogonium*, though I did see a few *Gentiana propinqua* today.

Also ate three ripe salmonberries today – the first!

July 28

High 52° F
Low 44° F
Fog, off and on sun
NW-W-S wind to 15

After fish cutting this morning (yesterday's whitefish) I got in some gentian work – survey and photo. Now that all are in color, survey conditions are good and as usual, there were surprises. There were two large colonies, unnoticed before, 25 yds off the trail I've been walking all summer – 100 or so plants. Many plants turned up where not expected, but that is the usual pattern. It has turned out to be a fine year for *G. detonsa* and we are at peak time. There are few faded yet and many with open corollas today during sunny periods. Some in plots located early did not develop well, no doubt suffering heat stress and dryness before the rains came. Ground is now pretty well saturated and all vegetation that wasn't really hurt early is doing great. The gentians will have a long window of glory this year. I am not satisfied with my photos. Will hope for a better photographer any time this week.

Saw first flowers Star Gentians (*Lomatogonium rotatum*) today, a couple with colonies of *G. detonsa*. There were also some full flowered *G. propinqua*. Have still not located any *G. tenella*.

Well, the peak glory of summer 1999 came for me yesterday and today. To catch the anticipated bloom of *G. detonsa* is a goal I dream of all winter and now a good season, with plentiful plants, has come to be, and lots of seed will go into the "soil bank" to become plants sometime in the century 2000.

A young caribou bull taken at Sealing Point today, as well as a few flightless Northern Pintail.

Berry picking reports beginning to pick up. The Noatak delta is producing.

Many large whitefish and salmon in Sisualik waters today.

July

July 29

High 56° F
Low 51° F
Cloudy, rain
E-SE wind to 30

Heavy rain and wind for a while, but both dropping off in early evening.

A large catch of chum salmon in the commercial fishery today on the Kotzebue side. There was one fisher on our side and they didn't get much. We had hopes of Anigaag closing with wind and waves, but there wasn't enough. We hate to see all our fish heading out into the ocean again, like last year. We had hoped the closure would come before the end of July. When it does, there are normally abundant fish trapped inside.

The cool and wet weather is slowing the ripening of berries, but probably increasing their size.

August will truly be berry month this year. They were early last year and many folks were well into to berry picking before July ended.

Our vegetation growth is great, especially grasses, yet the short marsh *Carex* sp. are already yellowing on the tops. This is apparently related to the sinking underground water table at this season, as frost level goes deeper.

Salt marsh is not showing much life yet. There are a few waterfowl back with new feathers and the return movement of some sandpipers is underway.

Berry picking fever is beginning to run high as the time approaches. Last year weather was a real tough factor; hopefully this year will be a little more moderate. There looks to be a fair crop of salmonberries and blackberries. It is not clear yet what blue- and cranberries will be like.

July 30

High 56° F
Low 49° F
Cloudy
S-SE wind to 20

First fresh berries on the table. Took Carrie on the 4-wheeler to closest salmonberry patch to check the ripeness. There are some good-looking berries, but less than ¼ of them are ripe. We picked a small dipper full and went home and ate them! When 90% are ripe it will be good picking.

Ocean was rough thru most of the day so did not set net.

Made a beachcombing trip west to Akulaaq. Took home one large log that I had put up earlier to make the trip worthwhile. Nothing new to be found from today's on shore winds. The many "lost at sea" people in Kotzebue sound make beachcombing nearly a duty, rather than a "spare time" activity.

Kotzebue commercial fishers continue to do well.

The *Gentianopsis detonsa* crop continues to yield surprises. Now that all have bright coloration, one can easily locate new colonies. Found an unknown group very close to the tent while allowing the squirrel hunting dog to follow a hot trail. This has turned out to be a rather super year for these gentians in Sisualik. Star Gentians have started to show their pale blue faces since yesterday; there will be lots of those too. *Gentiana tenella* remains the only gentian not yet seen this year.

This fine rainy weather is extending the flowering time window of these late flowering plants. They are a joy to see and the *G. detonsa* are so live and robust looking. In many places, Arctic Daisy and *Saussurea* are sharing the soil with *G. detonsa*.

July 31

High 53° F
Low 50° F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S wind to 30-35

July ending with a real rough day. On shore winds with strong gusts and heavy rain showers have given a day that outdoor chores or work is not pleasant – only necessary. Hope there aren't too many of these in the berry picking month of August.

Our back marsh area is flooding but not to gentian level yet. If it continues to rise it will catch the gentians at open bloom fertilization time. What this does to forming and maturing seed I don't know. A few years ago a super crop of *G. detonsa* all go deep flooded at about this same state of development. It is not known how much seed matured, but the very next year we had a second "bumper" crop. It is difficult to believe that the first year seeded the second. We theorized that both years were seeded from the "soil bank" and the bumper crops came from ideal early spring germination conditions. We don't know these things as facts though. Since these plants grow on old storm surge sites, they are at risk during times of storm surge floods.

This is our first summer flood, with surf reaching for the sod. Noise of waves and winds pretty much in the tent again.

July

Life in the salt marsh picking up, with more waterfowl back from molt every day, as well as south-moving sandpipers of several species moving through. Large numbers of geese back in the berry grounds at Salluq and Sealing Point.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

AUGUST

August 1

High 51° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy
SE-S wind to 25

It looks like the waves up to the sod line late last night and early this morning have closed Anigaaq. Oh boy! We will have whitefish for this winter and 4-wheeler trail access to the great salmonberry picking grounds at Salluq and Sealing Point.

Lomatogonium rotatum (Star Gentian) blooming all over, heading for a peak next week. *G. detonsa* at peak this week and fading fast. Took last Polaroid pictures today. I'm not satisfied. Color is disappointing. The day was not bright and it is not the camera for the work.

Huge flock of waterfowl on Greene's Lake today – 100 or so.

Saw first open Grass-of-Parnassus today. There will soon be many as that is our last marsh plant to come to flower.

There were 10-15 Pectoral Sandpipers near the same lake. Haven't seen any of that species for a long time. They look good and lively.

Our first summer flood last night just reached the sod line on the front and not to the gentian line on the back marsh.

August, the berry month, is on us and they are there. Salmonberries and blueberries on first and later blackberries, and still later, cranberries.

Last year was difficult with windy, wet weather and opening and closing western outlets. With Anigaaq now closes and Akulaaq never having opened, this year may be different.

August 2

High 54° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, light showers
SE-S wind to 18

Bear in camp last night. It tipped over some old wooden barrels – some plastic bags

August

with old (multi-year) blubber in them was his target. They are pretty strong medicine. Perhaps it was good medicine for him after eating too many unripe blueberries. He investigated three camps without people home besides ours. The neighbor to the west had considerable half dried salmon hanging. Many are now on the ground and presumably the bear's stomach is full – for a while.

On shore winds continue with a few pieces of firewood turning up.

We picked a couple of quart bags of salmonberries this afternoon. There are lots of berries but few are ripe. Unripe salmonberries are hard to pick and can only be used for cooking. These are close to home and if we are lucky and pick them alone, there are lots. Usually there will be other pickers with camps nearby.

There are reports of many fish-eating birds starving west of us. Mew Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes, murrelets and some Glaucous Gull young of the year.

Anigaaq is finally closed – for sure. Yesterday we heard it was closed in the morning and then in the evening we heard it was still open. Today, a first traveler by ATV came through to here, so it is really closed. If it will stay that way we will have whitefish this winter, which we didn't last.

No net out yet. Waves are down but water is very, very dirty with all kinds of net-choking dirt from high water and waves.

Waterfowl, sandpipers, and passerines continue to fill in the formerly near lifeless salt marsh.

August 3

High 65° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, some late sun
NE-E wind to 20

Warm weather returned this afternoon with the easterly winds. The sun was very hot for a few hours.

We ate a first of the season Northern Pintail drake today. As usual by this time (a short while after return with new flight feathers), the bird was quite lean, but had enough body fat to be good soup. By September first the old birds will be nearly too fat for soup. This bird's gut was filled with new growth green algae. This is a food seldom used by Pintail. Wigeon practically live on it. Pintail are more *Potamogeton* oriented. Right now, though, *Potamogeton* is low quality, with new growth using up the stored energy of the starchy corms. This high energy starch will soon start to be replenished for next year's growth in the small potato-like corms that will be the chief fattening food of Northern Pintail and many other waterfowl.

We picked salmonberries for a couple of hours in our back marshlands today. There is a good crop of large berries, but only half are ripe enough to pick right now. The lack of ripeness makes tedious picking. It does, however, add early on to the supply of picked berries. They go immediately into the freezer.

A huge catch of chum salmon at last commercial opening caused a glut – a breakdown in transport and handling with probably some waste. There was closure today but a re-opening tomorrow. This is one of the worst tragedies of a commercial fishery.

About half of the *G. detonsa* flowers have faded, though many retain their awesome beauty. *Lomatogonium* are peaking and Grass-of-Parnassus have begun blooming. Iris are fading. All of our species have now bloomed.

August 4

High 66° F
Low 58° F
Cloudy
NE-E-SE wind to 25

A fine windy warm dry day and the gentian photographer got here, just in the nick of time while there are still fresh looking flowers. About half are now on the color fade mode. The sun almost came out while photo taking was in progress and the extended flowering window brought on by ground soaking rains allowed this nearly too late photo work. Hope for a completion of the *G. detonsa* project grows ever stronger.

Near beach “dirty” water still inhibits net setting. There are probably fish in the water. Salmon catchers have flooded the buyers this week at probably peak of run.

The bear hasn't returned, at least not to here. There were many gulls at western neighbor's camp early today. That is were the animal filled his stomach last pass around. There is food there and no one around. This bear may become a problem, though it is not a young inexperienced creature.

We scouted for berries today but turned up mostly unripe ones. The report from down west that the warmed air and occasional hot sun is making the berries ripen faster, and there are a lot of berries!

Blueberries are just beginning to turn blue.

People are beginning to plan and come to berry picking areas for the big harvest. There will be much action on berry grounds this full month, and then back to school for many and on with fall fishing.

August

August 5

High 64° F
Low 58° F
Clear, few clouds
E-SE wind to 20

A fine warm dry day with breezes till early evening, when things got calm. Bugs are back in the grasses.

We hit it rich today. The local salmonberry patch we have been trying to pick nearly all week got ripe over the past two warm days and today we got most them, completely without competition, which is unusual for this area close to camps. There were some very fine big berries in a few thick patches. We have a good start now on our winter berry supply.

Lots of passerines still moving through. Redpolls, Savannah Sparrows, Yellow Wagtails and maybe some Lapland Longspurs.

Heard goose noise in the air today, for the first time in Sisualik, though some have been back from molt for a week or so down on Sealing Point flats.

Our one close “duck lake” was just covered with pintail and wigeon today. This shallow lake had an unusually heavy green algae bloom in July and both species seem to be working on it, which is unusual for Pintail. The birds usually come back from molt very lean and seek high energy food. I’ve found them loaded with crane flies and other water insects. Later, the Pintails will switch almost exclusively to *Potamogeton* and berries – black and blue. The green algae is typically used heavily by wigeon and Brant.

Finally set 6” mesh net this evening. Saw at least one real fish before it loaded heavily with lagoon “grass” (*Potamogeton* leaves). Jonathan can’t wait till I pull it in. He’s been on short rations.

August 6

High 66° F
Low 56° F
Clear, few clouds
E-SE-S wind to 15

The long delayed town trip happened today. Fine weather both ways, hardly a little wind chop, and we rode in style in Mahlon’s big enclosed cabin boat. He was able to deliver us two full drums of gas. We are ready for berries and/or fish now. We waited long for a good day weatherwise, and we sure had it.

Salmon catch must have been heavy again today on this last opening for the week.

Lots and lots of ATV traffic on the beach today. Word is out and around that

salmonberries are ripe and thick west of us. The closing of Anigaaq makes ATV travel great from Sisualik Point to Kivalina. Land travelers have now been able to extend their reach by a long distance for whatever – berries, fish, caribou, geese and walrus – dead or alive!

Some kind of a whale reported in Noatak River and Kobuk Lake.

A few flocks of Whimbrels are showing around now. These long-nosed blueberry eaters used to be a favorite Sisualik bird (for the pot). They have become rather rare in some years, though somewhat plentiful in others. Old, retired whitefish netting used to be used for catching them in the blueberry areas.

We got in another three hours of berry picking today in late afternoon. Got some fine big ripe berries near home.

A fine flock of whitefronts flew directly over the tent this afternoon.

Lots of passerines passing through or milling around Sisualik: Savannah Sparrows, Redpolls, Yellow Wagtails, and some Lapland Longspurs.

August 7

High 60° F
Low 56° F
Warm sun, some clouds
Light winds

Picked berries in late afternoon in nearby plots that we picked a few days ago. Many, but not quite all, have ripened and were good to pick. These were fine large berries and worth the effort of returning after a few days for those that ripened. This nearby patch has very high quality berries this year. We have gotten more than our usual share.

Blueberries are finally making more of a show as they turn blue. Gulls are beginning to seek them out.

A bear was killed amongst the salmonberry pickers today on the west Noatak delta near Jones Camp, nearer to Norton Camp, which is a long standing historic salmonberry producing area. This bear's actions were very unusual – all in the middle of the day – and approaching people. It was said to be medium-sized, similar to the one that came by here a few nights ago. It could very well be the same one.

An extended family crew went up the creek looking for salmonberries and saw three musk ox and a bull caribou, but no salmonberries. They also reported lots of waterfowl (Pintails, Wigeon) on the mud flats.

August

A large beluga was seen in the boat trail from Sisualik to Kotzebue. The boat that saw it had no gun aboard. They returned to Sisualik for a gun but then couldn't relocate the beluga.

August 8

High 58° F
Low 43° F
Cloudy, fog, some sun
NW wind to 20

A cool Sunday after a warm week. The westerly wind – steady and fairly stiff – brought in some patchy fog and cool air.

A small group shared Sunday school lessons with us and a meal of fresh caught fat whitefish was enjoyed by all.

We caught one salmon and a large trout yesterday in the 6" mesh net and made good flour soup. We haven't had trout for a while so it tasted pretty good.

Decided to put 3" mesh out for a while this morning for possible good fat whitefish – didn't want to cook salmon again. There were five big fat whitefish – just right for a bigger roaster, and many, many small smoothed-skin flounders. Enough feed for my camp gull flock. There were many – ten? – small shee, very lean, trying to make their way back home to Kobuk Lake. The changing scene with sheefish in Sisualik is an interesting one and causes one to wonder what it is all about. It is a change from historical norms.

We will be hoping to get to the Salluq area this week for some super salmonberry picking. A lot depends on weather and sea. We know by now that there are many berries.

August 9

High 60° F
Low 51° F
Cloudy, fog
Clearing afternoon
NW wind to 10, calm

Oh what a day! We got our little Smokercraft down into the Anigaaq-Salluq-Sealing Point waterway and up the waterway into the fog, which the hot sun soon burned off. We went directly to a favorite island inhabited only by Glaucous Gulls and their young, which is a favorite berry producing spot for us. There were there again! The dominant plant on this island is the salmonberry plant and the quantity of fruit that can be produced in a good year on this small island is unbelievable. In fact, salmonberry production on this whole Krusenstern Beach Ridge complex is really beyond comprehension if you have not seen it. Many, many pickers have been out

and will be out this coming week, and all are going to get about all the salmonberries they want for the coming winter, and there will be enough left over for all other creatures that live there, and there will still be berries left to seed and even to waste and re-fertilize the land.

It is a rare unforgettable treat to gaze on this tundra land turned a bright red, even from a distance, with a patchwork coloring of pure salmonberry colonies. It is of course a favorite, a lifelong favorite place for anyone privileged enough to see it, and pick and eat berries from it.

We got to the grounds late in the day, having to drag the boat over the closed outlet sand to get into the waterway. Still, three of us filled a large 5-6 gallon bucket, weighing over 50 lbs, with the sweet colorful red-orange fruit.

Lots of people on Krusenstern flats right now and more to come this week.

A good day on the land. Taikuu!

August 10

High 62° F
Low 50° F
Cloudy, showers
Some sun
NE-E-SE wind to 25

Wind and showers today – too much for us to get down to the boat and the great berry grounds. There is a great chunk of permafrost mud right in the trail, where the trail goes along the beach. It will be impossible to pass when waves reach a certain point, as there is no way to go around.

Spent most of the day looking for a duck for the soup pot. We haven't had fresh meat for some time and fish again doesn't seem attractive.

I did eventually get two male mallards with beautiful new wing feathers. There were in good shape – a little fat and very tasty. We ate one tonight and will have the other in a day or two. It was a very great treat – change of diet.

Lots of travelers on the beach to and from the salmonberry grounds.

Some *G. detonsa* pods are already dehiscing while some fresh flowers still have open corollas. Have never seen that before. The time of wetting and warmth must have been ideal to give such a long flowering season for this plant this year.

Tall Fireweed and Grass-of-Parnassus at peak; Iris and *G. detonsa* past peak, and Star Gentian approaching peak.

August

Salmonberries near peak of ripeness but there are still many “hard” ones. By next week there will be fading, and all for this year will have ripened.

Star Gentian has a much tougher, larger and deeper root system than *G. detonsa*. It is said to be an annual.

August 11

High 56° F
Low 50° F
Cloudy, rain
SE-S-SW wind to 20

Wet and rough seas this morning so we didn't get to go to our boat at Salluq. The air was dry in the afternoon so we re-visited some local salmonberry patches that we picked earlier when many berries were not yet ripe. It paid off. We picked a small buck of fine big “now ripe” berries.

We saw lots of birds eating berries back on the beach ridges. Was surprised to see how big and black the berries have gotten. There are large berries in many places and if we don't frost between now and September 1, we will have all the blackberries we want as well as lots of salmonberries.

Marine waters are high and aquatic plants are not yet very nutritious and hard to get. Wet blackberries and blueberries are a favorite food of N. Pintail, Mallard, and geese.

We surprised a small flock of geese, probably a family, almost right under the 4-wheeler. Some of them even looked “downy” yet.

Today is discovery day for the already large blackberries. We are hoping for a good dry calm day for another boating day down on the famous salmonberry grounds.

We shall see. Our freezer is already looking break peach-colored with salmonberry Ziplocs.

August 12

High 52° F
Low 49° F
Cloudy, clearing
W-NW wind to 18

A full day of salmonberry picking. We left here shortly after nine and got down to the boat in an hour or so, and got on the unpicked site twenty minutes later. We picked there most of the day and overfilled our biggest white bucket – 50 lbs of choice salmonberries.

One cannot adequately describe the salmonberry grounds at Salluq with words alone. The sheer overwhelming sight of the ground being colored red-orange by the thousands of berries on plants 4 or 5 inches tall, which each plant bearing a colorful berry just above the leaves – all berries are above the leaves, which is the reason the patches of thick berries make the ground red. The patches contain all big berries, all small berries, or a mix of large and small. The trick is to locate all big ones if possible – your dipper will fill so much quicker!!

One returns home from these long sorties seeing nothing by bright red berries every time the eyes are closed, and it is common to dream of berries and even salmonberry nightmares occur. August on the Salluq berry grounds is something to remember forever. How so many tons of good food can be produced on those plots of soil is a mystery.

Ducks and geese by the thousands are turning up in the same area.

Our Krusenstern human population is probably at an annual high right now. Lots of berries are moving out and we surely have been blessed with a good many salmonberries this summer season. Great berries will be eaten throughout the winter and into spring.

August 13

High 50° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, rain
S-SW wind to 25

Heavy surf today and wet showers. That means a day off from berry picking, and we probably need it.

Those berry pickers that overnighted west of us on the berry grounds cannot come this way till the surf drops. We are glad we made it home in time. Today was pretty wet and windy and probably pretty long for berry pickers inside the house.

Fall trout should begin their run this week. Blackberries will be sweet enough for our special Sisualik treat, tijulik (cooked char livers and blackberries).

We probably have enough salmonberries now and should switch to blueberries, but that may be difficult.

There is hope that all this south wind will throw up something from the sea where so many have been lost without a trace.

Moose and caribou season are open, but we have not seen either for some time. Fresh

August

meat would be good.

We have another bear, a very small fellow by the looks of his tracks. Two have been killed recently in our orbit. Don't know the reason for the bear problem. There are only a few dead marine mammals on the beach and berries are just getting ripe.

Maybe tomorrow will be a better day. We enjoyed our rest today and the dry warm heat around the wood stove, consoling ourselves with thoughts like this: "The continual showers will make the blackberries larger."

August 14

High 52° F
Low 48° F
Clear, some clouds
S-SW wind to 20

Large swells with wind early, but wind easing off and just residual waves by 6 p.m.

Campers and travelers able to get back towards Kotzebue past the large chunk of Pleistocene mud at the bluff site this late afternoon. That has been impassable for the past two days (since the evening we came home from berry picking).

Swells didn't reach the sod line yesterday (last night) but they were $\frac{3}{4}$ ways up the beach, high enough to make trouble for Carrie's youngest brother's boat at Salluq halfway up the beach. We have not heard how much damage.

Two musk ox reported behind us on our winter camp trail today. A moose was seen at the same place the day before by the same boater, a neighbor.

We went west for a couple of hours this afternoon to pick blueberries in a place where we found lots last year. There are very few this year. We got just enough for Carrie to make a pie. We need three or four gallons for our sourdock mix. We will need to find a better place to pick. We do have some hints.

There are still lots of unpicked salmonberries, but we think we have enough. If the weather is good next week we may pick some more to mix with blackberries. A mixture of salmonberries and blackberries, half and half, kept unfrozen for a couple of weeks before freezing, is especially good. Salmonberries alone are best packaged in quart Ziplocs and frozen immediately. All of ours so far are so packaged.

Some late gentians (*G. detonsa*) are bright-colored and have open corollas. This is the year of longest "bloom window" that we know of. Most have faded and some dehisced already.

August 15

High 52° F
Low 45° F
Cloudy, fog, mist
W-NW wind to 15

Seems like everywhere around us had some sunshine today, but a dense cloud hung over us and we could only see it on the edges. Cool too – almost felt like snow coming.

Not much activity today in Sisualik. We had a couple for Sunday school and they had a service at the Point since there is a pastor there.

I set the 6” mesh net this morning for a short while – till I was sure it had a fish for our Sunday School lunch. Was surprised to find a fine large male Red Salmon (Sockeye) and an egg-laden chum. We baked them both and had a great 2 o’clock lunch.

Ground swells have not let up for several days but are flattening out this evening. The fall trout run is due and blackberries are ripening fast. The two will again make our unique favorite dish – cooked trout livers and blackberries. There is a commercial salmon opening tomorrow – they will probably get the first show of the fall trout.

Pipsqueak the Mew Gull has not been around for two days. When their young can fly well enough to make it down to the sea beach, the Mew Gulls seem to be the first to depart. Arctic Terns leave about the same time, and that time is close.

Happened by one of the most *G. detonsa* colonies of the summer. They are no longer to be seen! They have completely faded, dropped their seeds, and blended in to their surroundings. It is hard to believe the exceedingly beautiful colors were ever there. Talk about a seasonal moment of glory!

August 16

High 60° F
Low 43° F
Cloudy, clearing
Showers
E-NE wind to 18

Another salmonberry day. We got a late start and had a couple of interruptions on the way, but had a few hours on the berry grounds. We took Carrie’s brother and his wife and boy along, so we had a boat load. Carrie and I did fill our large bucket (50 lbs), which made the trip worthwhile. We really have a pile of aqpiks now. This bucket will stay unfrozen until we pick blackberries and mix them. After standing for a week or so they can be frozen, a very good change from other berry types.

August

Krusenstern flats and beaches have a lot of high quality salmonberries. There are not enough creatures around to eat or pick them all. There will still be many when the snow flies. What a crop of salmonberries this year!

So good to hear the loons and cranes of that country.

Ground swells began while we were inland on the berry grounds. We are lucky to be home tonight. The trail under the mud bank at Anigaaq was passable.

There were two musk ox at our west neighbor's camp this morning. She ran them back into the hills with her 4-wheeler, as they have a lot of small kids around their camp.

August 17

High 62° F
Low 46° F
Fog, clouds
Clearing, warm sun
E-SE-S-SW wind to 18

A very warm sun this late afternoon and bright. I took advantage of conditions to do three more photos, one of a plant with apical flower faded and dehisced, but with two lower branch flowers brand new. Took one photo of medium-sized plant with single flower corolla open in fresh flower color. This plant would match those seen July 22. What a remarkably long flowering period for this plant this year. Often one week is all there is.

There was another happening today. Carrie witnessed the killing of one adult Glaucous Gull by another adult Glaucous Gull. The killer was probably Jonathan! I recovered the slain gull and will necropsy. The action was in the water; neither bird was airborne. Death may have been by drowning or a beak head blow that caused unconsciousness and drowning. Carrie now calls Jonathan a "murderer." Killer, yes, but not murder. He was, after all, put in charge of this camp and net and was to address any encroachments. He may have been made enough at this other gull because of an eye eaten from a big char in the net.

Two chum salmon and one real fall trout in 6" mesh net today. Lots of ugly dirt in water, old sacks, mosquito net, etc.

Top layer of marsh *Carex* species yellowing fast. Cottonwood copse on elevated ground not showing color change at all yet. No frost.

August 18

High 56° F
Low 49° F
Cloudy, rain
NE-E wind to 30

A few hours of blueberry picking at Sisualik. Not much of a blueberry crop this year at that location. That is two busts on blueberry locations that have produced in past years. We have a third, better location we found while picking aqpiks. Maybe we will get enough there. We need some blueberries each year for our sourdock mix.

Didn't put net out today as water is rough and dirty.

Noatak Village Search and Rescue people are down here to help with the continuing search for R. Brown and D. Sheldon.

Salmonberry pickers still going strong with no end to berries. Some folks are starting on blackberries and others after blueberries. One rather strange coincidence is that there are still some unripe berries of each species – even at this late date.

Waterfowl of all species increasing daily on the marsh. Saw two flying Tundra Swans today, the first seen with new flight feathers.

Our local Northern Pintail are feeding mostly on berries right now. Both blue- and blackberries, and maybe even aqpiks. They will soon switch to *Potamogeton* corms, as those starchy looking roots begin to swell.

The Wigeon, on the other hand, never seem to seek out berries at all, being satisfied with green algae through all seasons, though they too get into the *Potamogeton* later, especially on residue from feeding Tundra Swans or Northern Pintails.

Found a few edible puffballs today – the first.

Didn't skin the fight-killed gull today. Maybe tomorrow.

August 19

High 55° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, rain, clearing
SE-S wind to 40

Rain during the night, heavy, but the day was mostly dry and very windy.

Skinned and checked out the gull reportedly killed by Jonathan. There was internal bleeding and bruises around the neck where it joins the skull; the lungs were full of water. The neck was not broken but seemed out of joint. Two of the primary feathers

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on one side of the wing were broken nearly halfway down. He could probably fly all right, but would have been unbalanced and at a disadvantage in a fight. Jonathan Livingston Sea Gull is a tough customer and to be feared by other gulls. He is building quite a reputation for himself. Having pity for creatures weaker than himself is not one of his attributes.

Had a couple of young Northern Pintails for supper/soup tonight, which probably puts us somewhat on the same level as Jonathan.

No net out again today with rough ocean and high water.

Wind is dropping tonight, so the weather may be more gentle tomorrow. Hope it is not wet so we can get at either blue- or blackberries.

Some work was done on Sealing Point tower yesterday but was not finished. Local help was in short supply in part because of weather, trail, and unfinished berry picking in a bumper crop year.

Three musk ox got between a husband and wife berry picking team behind Akulaaq today. The lady got quite frightened and tired before joining her husband. A week or so ago she had been on the scene at the bear scare and killing (of the bear) on the berry grounds at west Noatak delta. These musk ox came in sight unexpectedly and here first though, quite naturally, was that they were bears and she was done for!

August 20

High 58° F
Low 52° F
Cloudy, clearing, showers
E-SE wind to 20

A better day, but showers interrupted the afternoon berry pick. We did do our first blackberry pick – less than half a bucket, but a start to mix with salmonberries. The blacks are just barely ripe, not yet fully sweet but not bitter either, so they mix well with other berries and sweeten as they age.

Ocean has calmed so we may have net set yet tonight. Fall trout are overdue.

Young ducks are showing in the marsh, more every day. Whimbrel flocks are dropping in.

Yellowing of the summer green marsh is underway - first the higher *Carex* and now the leaves of iris. Our sure sign of fall colors, the tableland cottonwood copse, remains its light solid green yet, with no touch of yellowing. But it may not be many days from now that we will see the growing canary yellow. There is a kind of “frost watch” on from now till berries are either all picked or become unpickable because

of frost spoilage. So far this August we have not had an early frost, which is great, and frequent wetting has helped. The early yellowing is due to the higher and drier levels and natural maturing of iris and *Carex*.

Mew Gulls and broods, if any, are gone; Arctic Terns becoming rare. Birds signs of early fall.

August 21

High 62° F
Low 52° F
Few clouds, clearing
Light westerlies

Blackberry picking today – some quite large and good picking. It is a little slow since one must choose the biggest. Later, when some patches are all big, picking will be faster if no frost softening occurs. Sisualik September blackberries are probably the sweetest in the world.

One caribou taken in Sealing Point today and one taken at Akulaaq. Maybe we will have early caribou this year – that would be fun.

Lots, lots of travelers today, both ATV's and boats - searchers, berry pickers, fishers, caribou hunters, and some people just taking a ride.

A recent bear sighting at Sealing Point keeps them busy and awake there.

Some good whitefish are being taken now from landlocked Anigaaq – good big whitefishes.

Had 6" mesh net out overnight. Caught lots of grass, two large fall trout, and a watermarked chum, as well as a lot of that net-clogging wigeon food, the green algae that comes out of the lagoons and into the ocean with the high water.

Some large flocks of rather silent Whimbrel have been coming in and passing. Saw several flocks of Tundra Swans today, back from molt. These were the first flocks seen, though the pair that uses our backyard has been back for several days.

Flounders are getting thick enough to eat but are scarce now.

Beautiful sunset tonight, still over western hills and land. By September it will be over water again. Fall is approaching.

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August 22

High 64° F
Low 47° F
Cloudy, drizzle, clear
Calm a.m.
W wind to 8, p.m.

A fine day with a pile of visitors by boat after Sunday School. It was good to meet new people and visit with old friends.

They set net and got a few salmon but no trout. (Where are those trout?)

Lots of active gnats in the area yesterday and today. Several different species of biters, and all crawl under and into clothing to do their thing.

Arctic Terns and Mew Gulls have all but disappeared. Small birds are also getting scarce.

Lots of *Boletus* mushrooms out now, but few puffballs.

Finally located a number of *Gentiana tenella* plants the other day and forgot to put them in the report. The plants found were around the shore of our nearest almost-freshwater lake, behind the tent. This is a very small gentian and easily overlooked. I checked this lake shore many times through the summer without success. They must have been late in appearing, like some other species. There seems to be some every year on this lake shore, but rarely see them anywhere else. They, like most of our gentians, are relatively easy to see under bright warm sunlight when their pale blue corollas are open.

August 23

High 48° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, fog, drizzle
W-NW wind to 20

About 11:45 p.m. last night the puppy and I went out to throw Jonathan a light snack. When we got to a point on our path where we could see down to the water's edge, there was a small bear (looking like a big dog) walking along the edge of the water. The puppy made a small "woof!" and then bear looked up and saw us, but did not pay any attention, resuming his fast walk for a short ways where he turned up straight towards the old barrel of seal oil that had been tipped over by a visiting bear weeks ago. He had obviously been here before since the wind was from his back. I didn't like the way this situation was developing so I quickly got my rifle from the dome doorway, just in time to see the bear stand up on hind legs as he cleared the back of the underground oil and berry storage, where wind-scent came down on him from the cap dogs and running generator, tent, stove and people. He dropped to all

fours again, coming in closer to the things he was smelling. Having pretty good light yet I made the decision to shoot the bear. Things looked clear enough through the scope. I fired while he was moving slowly toward the back of the dome. He ran 75 yards rapidly and dropped. The bullet had gone through both shoulder blades, passing just under the backbone vertebrae but not touching it. The bear died from loss of blood – this the 75 yd run after bullet impact.

The bear was small, probably a 2-3 year old male. No physical defects were observed; he was in good fat conditions. The stomach was filled with berries and on the top was a small mass of recently eaten salmon, probably from our western neighbor's fish rack.

Proper authorities were notified this morning. Another bear story – with a sad ending for the bear.

August 24

High 52° F
Low 34° F
Cloudy, fog, sun
W-NW wind to 25

Frost on the ground this morning – the first this summer. I had thought we would get through August without a frost this year, for the sake of our good blackberry crop. They do color the hands of pickers a little today, but will firm up again if it doesn't frost again tonight.

A young hunter brought us his first goose today, after Eskimo custom. It is a nice dark White-fronted Goose, a fat bird of the year.

We were going to town today, but no early ride was available and there was too much wind by afternoon.

Ground was pretty wet this morning and took a while to dry out before we could think of picking berries.

Commercial fishing periods are frequent now, with good catches of both salmon and trout. We have not put a net out for several days – seas too rough and beach too dirty for push pole set.

Have not seen a new bloom of *Gentianopsis detonsa* yesterday or today. Bloom window finally closed. The flower season is coming to a close. There are still a few of many species – Tall Fireweed, Iris, and *Senecio*.

Whimbrels are around in fair numbers and young flying Northern Pintail continue to make a fair showing in small lakes, not yet joining the large flocks on the mud bar

August

staging areas.

Search groups are going home. Very little was found this summer of the many folks still lost at sea.

August 25

High 58° F
Low 36° F
Some clouds, sun
N-NE, W-NW wind to 18

Town trip for new ATV, turning in bear hide and skull, and mail. It was a long day!

Trip over was late but fast in the small jet boat – 20 min into town at extreme low water conditions. We passed over Kotzebue Bar where there were short grooves of mud exposed with a little water in between.

The trip back home with the 4-wheeler turned out to be rough, as there was a heavy NW chop on the ocean side of the bar where we had to go to find enough water to float the large enclosed-cabin boat.

We made it into the Point, where we unloaded the new and on loaded the old 4-wheeler to be taken in and repaired. Then there were two round trips to make with the Honda to get people and stuff back home.

We have extremely low north wind water conditions, good dry berry-picking air, and just a wee bit of frost early this morning. We were fortunate to be able to get our new machine over here with these conditions.

Travelers reported new bear tracks west of us on the beach.

Berry pickers are switching to blackberries and blueberries, though there are a lot of unpicked salmonberries yet.

More geese and swans are coming into our area, a staging area for pre-migration fattening.

August 26

High 54° F
Low 38° F
Clear
W-NW wind to 18

A special day today. This was a “material hauling day” for Carrie’s new house in Sisualik. We never thought we would live to see a real house of our own in Sisualik. We have been tent dwellers in Sisualik for 52 years. A Native corporation housing

project has made a dream of Carrie's possible – at least a beginning has been made.

For a number of years, when we were younger, we lived in a tent summer and winter. We made an Eskimo sod house where we lived for a number of years. Then a log house for several years was home – nice and warm. Next, there was a winter frame house in a patch of trees made by friends, and now a house in Sisualik. Those tough and sometimes fearful days of late April and mid-September (when you are old) may be a thing of the past. We shall see.

Tomorrow will be the last day of the commercial chum season. They have not taken many trout this year. We have had a very weak trout run this fall.

Lots of sandpipers on our extensive mudflats at this time of low marine waters. Lots of Dunlin and a few Sanderlings are showing.

A person at Salluq reports a Northern Hawk Owl around his camp. That is a strange bird for that location.

Flowers are fading. Passerines - Savannah Sparrows, Longspurs, Redpolls - still making a good showing around.

August 27

High 54° F
Low 38° F
Clear
NW wind to 18

Kind of a waste of a good day. We waited all afternoon for the folks building a house for us. They need to know exactly where Carrie wants it. Choppy water in the late afternoon probably held them up. It has been great berry picking weather but the frost or near frost for the last three nights has taken a toll. All Sisualik people that are picking blackberries have purple hands.

Trout are finally running strong. The run is real late. August 10-15 is the usual early run date. Neighbors got 70 last night and 400 were taken in commercial fishery yesterday; probably more today.

We have a lot of Whimbrel and Dunlin around now. It is especially good to see the Whimbrels. They have been scarce in recent years and they seem to know more than other birds how to celebrate the ripening of blue- and blackberries. They seem so happy, and tame, over the berry grounds.

Our water is slowly coming back. Marine waters have been extremely low for the past several days.

August

Not much news of early fall caribou movement yet. Often they are on the Kobuk and Noatak by Labor Day (next weekend).

Passerines are common again, maybe coming from up north where snowflakes were reported today.

Terry caught a squirrel again today. He hasn't had much success lately as he has about finished the dumb and young. Those left have deep holes and sense enough to be cautious when he is around!

August 28

High 55° F
Low 39° F
Ground fog, a.m.
Sunny p.m.
Light variable winds

A very fine PM day. The AM was dark with thick fog in the upper air, though the ground level on this side lacked fog. Kotzebue was fogged in till afternoon.

We have a flock of nearly 100 Whimbrel in the backyard this evening. They look fine and are sharing this berry patch with us.

We set the 6" mesh net last this morning, and late this evening there were four very large trout and a lot of grass. These are fall run trout, very heavy and fat. They are much heavier than salmon of the same length.

All Sisualik berry pickers are crying. The recent light frosts and hot sun together have softened the yet unsweetened blackberries. Berry picking now means very purple hands and clothes. This is too bad as it spoils a lot of our great blackberry crop. We always hope to get through August without a heavy frost, but in recent years we have usually had one. They may firm up again in time if there are not more frosts, and a little rain instead.

Lots of people in Sisualik this evening. This weekend and next will be our peak of people this summer and fall. School has started, so this weekend and next will be a kind of "a last time out in camp" as fall weather sets in.

Lots of shore birds and passerines around. A Merlin has moved in to take advantage of the great food source.

House builders have beams down and squared for floor work tomorrow.

August 29

High 52° F
Low 39° F
High fog a.m.
Clear p.m.
Light winds

Weather-wise a beautiful Sunday of sun, from late morning till early evening.

House builders worked today, taking an hour and a half off so as not to interfere with Sunday School. They are working 12 hr days under orders to get the project done as soon as possible. They have the floor down and will have a showing of walls tomorrow.

Report from Sealing Point today indicates lots of trout on the way here. The run is late but apparently strong. We had good tiñulik (cooked trout livers and blackberries) for our after Sunday School feast, along with caribou soup from the fresh meat given us this last week.

Report from Noatak is that they are getting caribou. That is good news and there will be many travelers up both Kobuk and Noatak Rivers next Labor Day weekend. We may soon hear of caribou closer to us. Large bulls must be pretty fat right now.

There is still a fine lot of shorebirds around. There are Whimbrels, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitchers, Golden Plovers, Black-bellied Plovers, and probably by this date, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers from Siberian nest sites.

We need more blackberries but don't know yet how or where we might have best picking of the best berries. We will work at it this week.

August 30

High 60° F
Low 45° F
Few clouds a.m.
Sun p.m.
NE-E wind to 10

Quite a summer day today, with late warm sun and shiny water.

The walls of Carrie's house went up today. Can't imagine living in a warm house in Sisualik after the tent all these years. We used to take some pride in being "tent dwellers." It was good – for a time. You feel so very close to nature – year hear each raindrop, each heavy wind gust, and each wave crash against the beach.

Our 6" mesh net caught one Red (Sockeye) Salmon, a hundred flounders, and six tons of grass today. The grass is the leaves of the aquatic plant *Potamogeton* sp.

August

While looking for better blackberries today I found all the Wigeon on the Delta in one spot, probably 1000+. A lot of ducks in a portion of lake 300 yards wide and 200 yards long.

We ate a young Canada Goose today, a gift from neighbor boys. It was quite tender, having been an egg two months ago.

The yellows and reds of marsh and beach ridge continue to become intense in color, but our real indicator of fall, the cottonwood copse on the tablelands, has not turned yellow yet. This is a bit surprising since our couple of frosts have been enough to soften our biggest blackberries.

This has been a super day for insects and they have rejoiced in it. Several hours of 60° F temps with dry sunny air was good for all kinds.

I did locate a little better berry patch today and maybe we will pick it tomorrow. We have rain and wind in our forecast for tomorrow night – sorry to hear that.

August 31

High 62° F
Low 39° F
Clear
NE-E wind to 15

Our timely seasonal indicator, the tableland cottonwood copse, is yellow today! It is nearly the canary yellow it gets before fading and shedding of leaves. Fall is here!

Geese have zeroed in on our blackberries, finding them at least beginning to sweeten. Both ducks and geese are plentiful in Sisualik this last day of August, and of course tomorrow is the legal opening day of the '99 waterfowl season.

Lots of small fish flipping under the sun on the ocean water. They may be sub adult herring, capelin, or Least Cisco. There must be lots as the activity is over a very wide area of sea.

There is a report of 6 or 7 caribou just behind the Ranger Station at Anigaaq. We've heard that our town family got several from Kiana last weekend. It is indeed the time of growing caribou rumors.

We didn't set a net today. We will probably be fishing at Anigaaq soon. We hear that there is a good show of fish there now in the evening as the fish come down to the outlet to try to get out. It would be good to some for that purpose.

August

September

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER

September 1

High 58° F
Low 47° F
Clouding, rain
NE-E wind to 30

First day of waterfowl season today and the only shot I heard was my own. Ducks are scarce because of low water conditions, but I did manage to get a couple of very large adult whitefronts. They were in good medium-fat condition – very tasty! Our house building crew enjoyed a bowl of the broth.

Flowers are getting so scarce one notices them all. Saw Tall Fireweed blossoms, a very lonesome Star Gentian, and some numbers of Arctic Daisies.

Our new dog/puppy, Aachauq, is getting too big and too bothersome – he provokes laughs though and even looks like a clown. He tends to act like one too!

Jones Camp took a single female caribou yesterday or today. We still haven't been able to verify the sighting of a group of 5-7 behind the Ranger Station.

Set the trout net today (4 ½") and got two small trout, a sheefish, a ton of dirt and flounders. The trout were scrappy.

Labor Day weekend is coming up and after it is over people will be scarce. There are only two camps of Noatak people left at the Point now. All the rest have gone back to Noatak.

Wave noise picking up tonight.

September 2

High 58° F
Low 50° F
Cloudy, showers
SE-E-NE wind to 18

Chores around camp today: garbage pit, net repairs, and other odds and ends. The rather heavy intermittent showers were not good for bird hunting or berry picking. The showers will probably firm up the berries though.

House building continues, rain or shine. They have the roof on and are hauling more materials today.

Didn't set net again today because of waves and dirt. Things look better tonight – may set for overnight.

Ducks continue to be scarce on our marsh. With water level just right in the Sealing Point-Anigaaq water systems, most south-moving birds stop and stage there for fattening, bypassing the Noatak delta.

A few sporadic flower blooms again, maybe in response to showers – bluebells, chickweed, arctic daisy, iris, grass-of-parnassus, and *Potentilla Egedii*.

Fall coloring, of course, is now by far outdoing floral coloration. The bearberry red, dwarf birch yellow-orange, and willow/cottonwood canary yellow, with the remaining bright green of some late growth leaves and stems blend into quite a fall symphony of color. It is said that some living creatures are color blind. Well, maybe, but all this color I'm sure is for a reason, and those creatures that can see it, I'm sure appreciate it. The colors of fall, so bright when the change first begins.

Lots of insects out again today with the high temps and spells of moist warm sunlight. Many will be seeking out places of hibernation soon.

September 3

High 51° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, rain all day
NW wind to 18

Very wet day – just steady light winds and light rain – dull weather.

Hunted waterfowl today but didn't do much good. Couldn't see my front sight.

There were several hundred Greater Scaup back in the basin called Kuliitqin this morning. Haven't seen many of this species for a while. That basin used to be one of their favorite resting and feeding locations, as it is a basin. At times of extreme low marine waters it holds enough for these diving ducks to retrieve their *Potamogeton* feed.

The ground wetting rain is curing our blackberry picking problem. They are firming up and sweetening.

Had a net out overnight and got a ton of flounders and two fresh trout, which we had for supper as flour soup. Very good broth with curry.

September

Saw a new *Castilleja caudata* today to add to the list of late flowering strays.

If and when we see the sun set again it will be into the waters of Kotzebue Sound, after setting into the land mass of Cape Krusenstern since July.

Lots of insects again today – mosquitoes, flies, gnats and small moths.

Lots of boats on the two big rivers this Labor Day weekend. Caribou and moose are the target. The latest report is that caribou are again closer to Noatak than earlier reports indicated. We do hope they make it near us sometime this month.

September 4

High 52° F
Low 48° F
Cloudy, rain
N-NW-N-SW-W winds

A lot of wind change today and wet air till late afternoon when there was some drying. Blackberries have firmed up well and with no further frost we may yet get a good batch. They may even get sweet, like Sisualik blackberries should.

Good numbers of young Pintail families have turned up from somewhere to join the staging older birds. They are tame, inexperienced, and already putting on migration fat – good for soup.

Carrie's house is coming along. Three workers have put in some long hours this week. The roof is on and some insulation work was done today. There is a good deal of inside work to do and big storm shed is promised.

Put the 6" mesh net out in the swells today and it stayed out most of the day without catching anything but flounders. Summer seems gone with no more salmon or large trout. Tomcod (Saffron Cod) will be our next ocean target, with 3" mesh. We will soon set that size mesh inside Anigaaq for our shore of winter whitefish. Those fish taken before September 15 will need to be cut for drying. After the 15th, they can be sacked.

Blackberries and cranberries are still on our need list, as well as some waterfowl for the freezer.

Caribou are reported around Noorvik and not far from Noatak village. They, of course, take priority over all else if they come close this month. Bulls will be good and fat this year.

Both rivers will have lots of traffic this Labor Day, with folks looking for caribou and moose.

September 5

High 52° F
Low 36° F
Clear, clouding late
SW-W wind to 15

Frost again! Too bad for berry pickers, though all is not yet lost. Actual freezing time was probably less than an hour, just after daylight. We may try picking tomorrow.

It was a dry and sunny day with the world and things in it drying rapidly.

Gulls and geese enjoying the frost-nipped blackberries. Gulls don't seem to be working fish much lately. The luck ones are down at the closed outlet at Anigaaq, where many species of fish fry are available every morning. Stickleback and herring fry can be abundant, as well as the larger Least Cisco and Alaska Whitefish. In some years, young sculpin are extremely numerous.

The frozen mudfall just east of the Anigaaq outlet is giving some travel-trail problems. This Pleistocene bluff is right on the beach, where high waves and water work the face of the permafrost bluff. One huge chunk hangs right over the trail we must pass through to get to the outlet from Sisualik. There is no way around it. If it happens to fall while you are under it, you are crushed. If it comes down while you are on either side, it will block the trail. That will be our "gray hair maker" for people fishing there this month. Passage is easiest when marine water waves and levels are low. If it's not one thing, it is another. Hope the whitefish are plentiful.

Waterfowl plentiful, both geese and ducks. No real movement of cranes yet; Tundra Swans are somewhere else. Very light waterfowl harvest so far this fall.

September 6

High 50° F
Low 43° F
Cloudy, a little sun
SW-W-NW wind to 18

Blackberries have firmed up good enough again with rain and warmth. They still color the hands a bit, but it is the rare berry that breaks now, and we filled our 5-gal bucket today in about six hours, which is not bad for two pickers – two old pickers. Their taste is also sweeter this week. A bucket is going for \$150 in Kotzebue right now. Most pickers from town gave up for the most part immediately after the hard frost – most not knowing that rain and time would heal the problem. Until the next frost, picking will be good and the greatest competition will come from geese.

September

Lots of waterfowl hunters out in Sisualik this Labor Day weekend. Lots of shotgun fire. There has been very little waterfowl hunting here to date.

There are many Wigeon and Greater Scaup, and lesser numbers of Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal. Both Whitefronted and Canada Geese are working heavily on blackberries and are wary, as usual. They are targeted pretty heavily locally, especially by young adults.

Many young Pintail and Wigeon are very tame yet and are just beginning to put on migratory fat.

Have not seen any Tundra Swan families out in the staging areas yet. In fact, even the flocked non-breeders have not been in our area since returning from molt.

Some small movement of crane flocks began yesterday, but less than ten small groups have passed.

We just heard today that there is a beached whale near or at Sealing Point. It has been there for a while but we were late in hearing about it. It does account for increased bear activity in that area.

One Silver Salmon in 6" net.

September 7

High 54° F
Low 47° F
Cloudy, fog
SW-W wind to 10

A very dark day today, not wet or windy, but dark, due to thick cloud cover.

Set the 6" mesh net and got only flounders. Some were nice and thick so we cooked several for supper. They were good!

We picked blackberries for a few hours and now have some ahead for tiñulik if and when we have some fish livers – probably Saffron Cod livers whenever we put out the 3" mesh net.

The house is coming along fine, with door and stovepipe on today. Our good friends from Sitka, coming Friday, may be the first to sleep in it – on the floor. It looks like the new house will be quite warm.

Caribou news, closer now. A group of several hundred seen at the Lower Noatak Canyon, not far from our winter camp. Some were taken crossing the river yesterday.

There has been no report from the coast side yet, which is where our caribou usually come from.

The cool late August and early September reminds of years ago when caribou first came in September while they were very fat. That was good and the hopes are that they will come in reach again during this month.

Though Whimbrel had passed through but saw a large flock (50-60) settle in our backyard again today. Crane movement continues slowly. Some flocks of 25-40 passed today.

Marine waters have remained high for some time.

The beached whale at the tower near Sealing Point is drawing bears from distant places.

September 8

High 50° F
Low 45° F
Clouds, clearing
NE-W wind to 15

A good and needed town trip. Good weather both ways and good water level.

House coming up just fine. Storm shed nearly done; outside work mostly done.

Blackberries good again, but looks like frost again. Hope not.

Fish in the ocean pretty scarce, except flounders.

No new caribou news. There will be soon – news or rumors of news.

Waterfowl and whitefish are our next target after friends visit this weekend.

Fall is coming down. Snow machine time only a couple of weeks away. Summer is done and fall colors prevail – colors will give way to black and white as snow takes over.

Only two occupied camps west of Sisualik now. Another family moved back to Sisualik and town.

Geese and bears and musk ox will have most of the land to themselves, without human competition.

September

September 9

High 47° F
Low 31° F
Cloudy, fog, sun
SW-W-NW wind to 18

Set 6” mesh net this morning and was surprised to see two bright cum salmon at noon when I pulled it in to see if there was anything for lunch. We had plain boiled fresh salmon for lunch and it was good.

After a quick supper of fried caribou meat and rice, I went back in the marsh to see if I could get a goose for our friends’ first meal, if they make it in tomorrow. I tried sneaking to one bunch feeding on blackberries but didn’t make it.

Some time later a large flock made a bad mistake and flew over me. They were high but directly overhead. I got a fine large fat Canada Goose with the first shot, but didn’t make the second. The goose is a fine big birds with a very prominent white ring around the neck. This is the medium sized race of Canada Goose – Taverner’s – that sometimes has this ring about the neck, right below the black stripe. This is a large bird and may take long to cook. It is quite heavy and should be good enough for roasting. Our friends will be pleased and so will we!

The frost last night – quite heavy – didn’t spoil the berries. They are a bit soft but don’t break.

Caribou at Hugo Mountain!

A good seal was seen inland at Kuliitqiin today. Unusual, but that is the same place a large beluga was found in August a few years ago.

September 10

High 46° F
Low 42° F
Cloudy
Light winds

A rich catch in the 6” mesh net today. Besides the usual load of flounders for Jonathan and crew, there was one large fat slightly rosy-colored trout and large, equally long but lighter, very bright silver colored Silver Salmon.

It is after 7 p.m. and our Sitka visitors haven’t yet arrived. Hope they make it. We are looking forward to their visit.

A dark day again with no sun, but no rain or wind either. The ocean has been flat all day.

A couple of caribou meat gift givers again today. The closer caribou get, the more meat we have given to us. It is very good meat, with even the smaller animals quite fat.

Terry caught a squirrel again today. He has thinned the local ones out this summer, but populations are still high in areas out of his reach.

Relatively few ducks in Sisualik this fall, but lots of geese. The water level within the Krusenstern waterway is low and offers Pintail and Wigeon plenty of feed, so they don't come here to stage.

Our visitors from Sitka did arrive at about 9:30 p.m. One or two of their bags/boxes got lost for a time (the goodies for us) but they were found and got here later – by boat.

Lots, lots of conversation this night, and they had the privilege of being the first to sleep in Carrie's new house, under our wonderfully covered 50th Anniversary quilt. They said they slept well.

September 11

High 48° F
Low 40° F
Cloudy, fog, heavy p.m. rain
SE-S wind to 35

Lots of talk today – old times, new times, and future times. A very great time was had by all, with abundant eating of diverse foods. We had caribou roast and soup, a roast goose, walrus quaq, and berries. They brought halibut, raspberries, pastry, and many King Salmon collars. The sad news is that they must catch the Alaska Airlines jet back to Sitka at 8 a.m. tomorrow morning. A short visit after coming that far to do that, and weather is looking ugly this evening.

Many boats on the lower Noatak, waiting for caribou to come within shooting range of river's edge. That's the lower Noatak River between the mouth and the junction with the Aggie.

Heavy afternoon and overnight rain would have been hard on some of these hunters with meat handling to do. Some will wait out the worst rain in shelter.

Whimbrels and cranes still around – a few more swans, but still no families with young. We have waterfowl hunting yet to do and this coming week may mark the beginning of whitefish fishing for us. The rains beginning today may also freshen up the berries again, black and cran.

September

September 12

High 52° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, rain
S-SW wind

Our Sitka visitors had a pick up plane ordered for 8 a.m. Kotzebue weather was giving rain-fog. Our weather was not too bad. He did show up only 15 min late and our weather got better. They made it in in time to catch the jet south. Hope finally they are home in Sitka this evening. We did have a good visit. It is lonesome now without them.

Caribou hunters are getting a few mostly small animals along the Noatak.

Mid September is here. We can begin fishing whitefish, gathering waterfowl, and looking for wood for the stove.

We had a real lot of rain through the night and very loud waves as the wind got to the south and southwest. It was a very dark, noisy, wet night and winding down slowly took nearly all day. Water level and waves got high, but only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to sod and not quite to grass level in the lagoon.

Hope weather settles down again for a while. The trail blockage at the mud bluffs has gotten worse again. Maybe some more of the overhanging mud-ice has fallen. Travelers did make it back through when large swells ceased.

Another good flock of Whimbrel was around the new house this morning. Cranes and Whimbrels will soon be gone till next year.

September 13

High 54° F
Low 45° F
Clear, clouding p.m.
Light winds

A perfect September day today, with a flat ocean and a warm sun.

We both took a trip west to let rainwater out of the boat and check out fishing possibilities. With the flat ocean the trail over was great. The ice mud bluff was no problem with low waves and water level. The heavy rain has had no effect yet on water level at Anigaaq or Akulaaq, which is good. Local creeks are high.

Felt very luck to find my net push pole from two years ago still in place and useable. We set the net we took with in no time, and within ten minutes saw fish jerking the corks. We went on over to the boat and worked around it awhile, then turned back to

the net. When we got there and chased the gulls off, we watched numbers of fish hit. We pulled it up shortly afterwards and had half of a small sack (40 lbs). This will be enough to cut for drying at this time. The fish look in good condition, with a number of egg-laden females. We may have enough whitefish this winter, where we had none last year.

Many waterfowl on that side of all species. Water level right for them at present, but if it rises a little, most birds will move over here to Noatak Delta.

Several young Northern Harriers have been seen this week, slowly making their way south.

Caribou seem to be closing in on us again – at least in rumor if not in fact. Some are crossing Noatak River near our winter camp. Also a new report that they are crossing Red Dog Road and headed our way. Hope they make it here before October!

September 14

High 50° F
Low 44° F
Cloudy, rain
Light E wind

A wet day. We had time to cut our whitefish before the drizzle started, but once it started it didn't stop till 7 p.m.

Berry picking, whitefishing, and waterfowl hunting on hold for a better day.

Several people did work on the Anigaaq outlet with net, seine, and shoveling a first kadigisak (whitefish gravel trap). They report that the first were really “anxious” to come out into the old style trap. Least Cisco and Alaska (Humpback) Whitefish are the two species of abundance. Both have egg-laden females right now and are just right for eating. It is still too early to sack them up. They must be cut for drying or put in artificial refrigeration.

It is now known that a number of caribou crossed Noatak River to our side up near our winter cabin this week. Today, one was seen from Jones Camp area, which can be seen from here. Another person saw one on the far western side of us at Battle Rock. Where will the first animals in numbers show up? And when?

A very shiny ocean tonight after a day of very light winds.

There are duck and cranes scattered around and many Canada Geese. We still have no birds in the freezer and it is almost full of other things.

Carrie's house is getting near finished. Getting moved in will be a trial.

September

September 15

High 54° F
Low 45° F
Cloudy, clearing
Light winds

A very fine sunny warm afternoon.

Set the 3” mesh net this morning and got two large fat trout and five Saffron Cod. Thought that there might be more trout, so reset with 4 ½” mesh. Left it all day and was disappointed to find only four spawned out trout and three lean snaky sheefish.

We picked blackberries for several hours and filled our little bucket. Those berries are really firm now – no more purple hands for a while.

Lots of insects today – small moths, a few butterflies, and a warm sun.

No new caribou news. We still wait.

Lots of whitefish taken at Anigaaq today.

House builders are about through. If things go as planned Carrie’s new house will be completed by tomorrow. The stove is not in yet, and of course our “life support” things will take some time to get moved and set up – VHF, telephone, propane stove, solar panel. In time we’ll have the transfers made.

September 16

High 55° F
Low 45° F
Clear
Light E-NE winds

A beautiful dry and warm day today in Sisualik. Our whitefish, cut three days ago, didn’t do much drying yesterday even though there was no rain. Today, with steady E breeze and warm sun, much drying of all things occurred.

Not much fishing at Anigaaq today. We didn’t set a net in Sisualik either. No particular reason except other things to do.

We went to our first blackberry picking spot that we gave up on when two nights of frost made them too soft to pick. Now they are firm and big and sweet! Time and a little rain can make right what a little frost damage did. The Canada Geese have noted this also and now it is likely that they won’t leave till snow flies in October.

They do love sweet blackberries and never seem to worry about leaving too late from Sisualik. With the fat they put on, they won't have to eat at all on their journey south.

The house builders have finished the house, though there may be some of the crew back to make a final check. Then we will need to think of getting it together to live in. It will be a treat for this coming month or so, to switch from tent to house with the current state of firewood scarcity in Sisualik. It may also be a treat to not have to listen to the flapping tent under storm conditions.

This date, once, many years ago, Noatak River ran ice so heavily that boats could no longer travel from Kotzebue to Noatak. That was a year of early freeze-up. We, of course, have not seen ice or even on a lake this September.

September 17

High 58° F
Low 41° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 18

Due to weather forecast we did not go to the wedding. With falling water level and increasing winds we didn't think there was much chance of getting home after the feast. The forecasted strong winds didn't happen, and water started rising again! We missed it! So did the weatherman. We probably wouldn't have gotten home either, though, as the boat we counted on didn't come home.

I picked fine big blackberries from 2 to 6 p.m. Carrie wanted dearly to go but not alone. She had opportunity to go but spent the afternoon cleaning out the Dome and looking for her lost ring.

Set the 3" mesh net late this morning and found Bering Cisco and Saffron Cod running pretty good. It is time for those two species. The cisco are exceedingly fat and make a great salt fish.

A fair and late movement of cranes passing through today. Geese continue working on the berries. There are a few goose hunters around now, both here and down at Salluq.

Terry and Aachauq, our new dog, worked together to catch a large squirrel today. The new puppy thought he helped anyway. The "old master" is showing the ropes and the art of squirrel catching.

Flat ocean all day today with off shore winds.

Carrie's brother Sam reports lots and lots of fish at Anigaaq. Our catch from last week is drying up fine. We can handle some more now if we choose and work at it.

September

Two recently spawned out trout were in the net today (four yesterday). These are fish that went up river instead of ocean-ward.

September 18

High 50° F
Low 46° F
Cloudy, some sun, rain
N-NE wind to 15

The early wetness discouraged berry picking and waterfowl hunting. Put fire in the new house today. The small little stove is new to us but looks adequate for the small insulated house.

Since marine water is quite low, we have lots of waterfowl yet and considerable numbers of shorebirds (Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitchers, and some Golden Plover).

We are getting several spawned out, deep-colored Dolly Varden every time we set the 3" mesh net. These must be the fish that moved up river to spawn at ice out in June. That means they must overwinter in the low physical state they are in now.

No new caribou news – a quite time before they make a new show somewhere. Only three weeks left now till bulls go sour.

We will be sacking some whitefish this coming week in case air temps drop.

Only six Saffron Cod in net all day, a couple of Bering Cisco and one large, red-nosed, super fat trout. The color is rich, indicating a limited sojourn in freshwater. This fish would have taken part in spawning this late fall. It was a male and exceptionally fat. The found red end of the nose looks like Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer.

Heavy rain showers this late evening may cause some bird and animal species to move.

September 19

High 49° F
Low 47° F
Cloudy
N-SE-S-SW wind to 15

A rather cool day of steady temp, with the first swells in the ocean for a long time. Local winds did not generate the swells.

People getting scarce in Sisualik. The last Noatak person will leave tomorrow, and that will leave us, Doc and Elizabeth Harris, and Claude and Dora Wilson. Three occupied camps in Sisualik, and two west of the Ranger Station. A couple more of these drop off before too long. There also may be a few from clan families coming back for whitefish or caribou.

We had a visiting stranger today. A Hawk-owl used our several standing poles to look for something to eat. Earlier this summer one was reported at Salluq. This spruce forest dweller is common some years around our winter camp. They have been scarce even there for several years. This bird may do all right if he has mastered shorebird catching. There are some huge flocks of Dunlin around, even on the ocean shore

NW winds are forecast for the next few generates that may give us a taste of freeze-up and get us into the new house. It is finished now except for a visit by electrician for some finishing wiring.

We had a fire in it yesterday evening and it was still warm this morning.

As soon as we get our telephone and VHF moved over there we will be in business.

September 20

High 45° F
Low 44° F
Cloudy, fog, drizzle
Calm winds

Had fire in the new house all day today and we will sleep there for the first time tonight. We managed to get the huge bed and rocking chair over there, but we are stuck on moving the telephone and VHF and putting up real light till next week when the electrician can come over.

It has been a very unusual day with thick cloudiness, dark and drizzly. Waters have been shiny all day, but light swells have continued through the day.

We have lots and lots of waterfowl in our backyard. Canada Goose are following the blackberry bushes nearly up to the doorstep of the new house.

Perhaps we'll get around to hunting a bit. Not much we can do with the house till next week and we need to get at both fishing and hunting while they are both available.

We are getting deep into September without a serious freeze. When it does, it may close things of summer down in a hurry. Bugs were flying and I saw a few small white chickweed flowers today. It is difficult to find a flower again.

September

Did not set an ocean net today, much to the disappointment of the gull flock and Jonathan. He thinks there should always be a net out.

We rarely see passerines any more, except raven and redpolls, though shorebirds are seen each day, mostly Dunlin and Long-billed Dowitchers.

There seems to be voles around, but only a few.

Glaucous Gulls are pretty much the only birds seen on the sea locally now. Most seabirds, if there are some in Kotzebue Sound at this season, are far off shore.

September 21

High 56° F
Low 38° F
Some clouds, mostly clear
E wind to 10

A very fine day today. Just the opposite of yesterday, with a warm sun and mild east wind.

We went to Anigaaq and set our net and drained the water out of the boat. Someone forgot to close the ditch trap last night and when we got there around 11 a.m. there were still four or five whitefish uneaten by several hundred Glaucous gulls. One can imagine how many whitefish went to hungry gulls between daylight and 11 a.m. Forgetfulness can be costly. In this case, how costly tends to depend on how large the total mass of fish is that are trapped in the system. There may be plenty for all – or they may be limited, in which case it would be better if the gulls were fed with sticklebacks, herring fry or other scrap fishes of which there is an abundance.

We did get half a small sack of good whitefish after a couple of hours.

There was a large Gyrfalcon around the mud bluffs when we went by. Gyrs seem to enjoy testing the air currents around these bluffs.

We did see a huge group of Willow Ptarmigan at the Akulaaq gravesite. There were 60-70 birds in two flocks. They are pretty white already. They will be more than ready for the first snow. Gyrs can really hassle them since they are so easy to see on ground or in willows. No place to hide.

No caribou news!

September 22

Clear, few clouds
NW-N wind to 25

Looks like freeze-up soon. With a clear sky and north wind it won't take too long.

Picked a last small bucket of blackberries today. They are large and sweet, but may freeze and soften for picking. We think we have enough now and will pick a few cranberries if we can find some, and call it good enough for 1999.

We had a good year for salmonberries and blackberries, a poor year for blueberries, and cranberries seem quite small.

Spent a few hours waterfowl hunting this afternoon but didn't get to shoot. There are lots of berry-eating geese around and large numbers of Tundra Swans with cygnets have moved in.

Had to leave the 3" mesh net out overnight when I got short of time. When pulled it this morning it yielded a full bucket of Saffron Cod, a male Silver Salmon, a half dozen Bering Cisco, and two spent and colored Dolly Varden. There were many small flounders, both smooth and rough back.

September 23

High 44° F
Low 35° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NW wind to 30

No ice last night or even frost, just a cold wind.

The view of sun and moon rises from our new house, through the large east side window, are nothing less than spectacular. The sunrise this morning out of Kobuk Lake, with a few clouds but mostly clear, was superb. The near full moon rose this evening out of the sea, towards Kotzebue, and was also quite beautiful.

After cutting the bucket full of Saffron Cod left from yesterday, we had lunch and then went to pick cranberries at Frank Glover's berry patch. The old man has been dead for a few years, but he was a friend and his old log and sod house is circled by real thick mats of cranberry plants. Most years we get a winter's supply of cranberries in a few hours. They were thick again this year and some pockets had bigger berries than last year.

Didn't set any net today.

There seems to be no new caribou news. Several places where they were available are not producing any more. We are nearing October again before we've had any

September

chance for bulls from here. Don't know what has become of the ones on the coast that were said to be crossing the Red Dog road and coming this way.

September 24

High 38° F
Low 28° F
N-NW wind

A first dip into the 20's for some time. Some small freshwater lakes had ice clear across this a.m. and the first snow of the season fell – a few showers that melted quickly.

We tried to go to Anigaaq for fishing but turned back from the mud cliff where high marine water with large swells made passage difficult.

I went back out waterfowl hunting after lunch and got three adult Wigeon that are very heavy. There are lots of Canada Geese and Tundra Swans, but didn't have a chance at the larger birds.

Our two dogs got a short run but no squirrel.

The new house is great these cool nights. A little wood goes a long ways with an airtight house and an airtight stove.

We are starting to see a few Willow Ptarmigan. There were even some on our back flats.

With “frost on the pumpkin” we need to be getting some whitefish into sacks. That Pleistocene mud bank down there is going to be a pain in the neck.

Good caribou report from the Wolf Creek area on the NE portion of Kobuk Lake. No news from our coastal section, except that a cow and calf were seen moving toward Jones Camp from the Noatak Delta.

Many Tundra Swan family groups are staging behind our camp now. The adults push the young into flying at regular intervals to strengthen their wing muscles.

September 25

Snow, rain, fog
S-SW wind to 25

A rather miserable day weather-wise. Ground was white in places this morning but soon disappeared under continuous all day rain. Waves have gradually increased and marine waters are gradually rising. At 8 p.m. there was still room between tops of waves and sod line to travel the beach with ATV.

New house uses remarkably little wood to maintain warmth. We are having trouble getting our communication system going. VHF and telephone are still in the tent while we are overnighing in the house. The electrician may be here to fix us up this coming week. It is real treat to be in a house instead of the tent this period from mid September through October. It does remove one from close contact with wind, rain, and waves, but age changes that to a benefit. We are no longer tent dwellers.

Bad weather has hit weekenders and others. Caribou hunters were able to get where they wanted but weather has made the outdoors unpleasant.

Some folks that came our way to set whitefish nets got them set, but can't reach them now and gulls are helping themselves. Bears may help out too!

We have quite a lot of swan families staging behind us. They will appreciate this storm as it brings milder temps and allows more time for birds of the year to strengthen wing muscles.

Hope tomorrow is better than today. Snow and west winds are forecast.

September 26

High 41° F

Low 34° F

Cloudy, squalls, rain, snow, flood

SW-W-NW wind to 35-40

A day of flood in Sisualik – haven't had one of those for a while.

Marine waters came in strong and waves built rapidly after 6 a.m. By 12:30 our whole back marshland was flooded and the wave tops on the beach were hitting sod and a few were slopping over. A half hour later we noticed the first signs of water dropping.

This rather rapid rise of floodwaters from both waves and lagoon and marsh is characteristic of Sisualik and is always rather frightening and worrisome on the rise, for at that stage, one has no hint as to how high the rising waves and back water levels will go – and we are in the middle. It is always great and relaxing when a sure sign of water receding is noticed. It can happen two or three times or more during the ice-free season and means death to some marsh dwellers and life to others (death to squirrels and voles, life to gentians of several varieties).

The ocean swells rising high above the land while they are off shore (before they break) are frightening to human beach dwellers as they have the potential to overrun the whole of Sisualik Spit given the right conditions and circumstances.

September

Ducks and other birds are displaced for a time, and gulls and other predators benefit from the displaced fish that can be trapped by receding waters.

We people benefit by gathering the various creatures tossed up by the waves. We had our first large white clam feast this evening.

September 27

High 35° F
Low 26° F
Clear, few clouds
Light N winds

A beautiful day of sun, cool sun.

Our duck lake near the tent had surface ice all through the day; ¼ of the lagoon has slush ice.

The ocean beach is a mess after the giant swells. Large pieces of “ground” originating from the Anigaaq mud bluffs are scattered all along the beach from Anigaaq to Sisualik. There is also the largest of mass of 6” to 8” “blue” starfish we have ever seen. They are a bluish-purple on top and a light orange color underneath. They are everywhere on the beach from Nuvuruq to Anigaaq. The swells yesterday that brought them onto the beach are the largest swells that we have had for a couple of years. One still wonders why so many dislodged at once. There are tens of thousands and many tons. One also wonders at their worth since we don’t know of any creature that utilizes them. I have heard that the products of their reproductive efforts enrich the sea floor.

We got nearly a full burlap sack of fish today from nets set at Anigaaq for several hours. Several people from Sisualik are also fishing there and everyone is getting fish. There are enough to go around. They are in good condition and will make fine quaq.

A large flock of Willow Ptarmigan on the beach gravel made us wish we had the shotgun instead of the 30-.06 today. They are pretty white now.

The small “bob-tailed” gull that joined the camp flock a week or so ago has dark wing tips and dark tail feathers. It may be a 2nd year Slaty-backed Gull. It is considerable smaller than the Glaucous and has a straighter bill and more sloped forehead. It appears “bob-tailed” on the ground, which may be caused by short primary wing feathers.

September 28

High 32° F
Low 20° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

First day of all day freezing temps. It is a pretty early date for that.

Ice on the duck lake in place for two days now. Ice was ¼” at our net set site at Anigaaq. We set the net with a pole under the ice and got another half sack of fish. Several people from Sisualik fishing there today but no one got too much.

A new ditch trap was started (the old one washed away with Sunday’s storm). As soon as the water started running in the ditch hundreds of Nine-spined Sticklebacks started down the stream. In checking out the some of these multitudes of fry sized fish, we found five or six Three-spine Stickebacks. These fish are rare in this area and most residents have neither heard of them nor seen them. It has no Eskimo name. It is likely that they are recent migrants to this area from southern climes.

No sign of bear tracks on the beach since the storm, as far west as Battle Rock. This is quite remarkable considering the number of tracks on the beach in that stretch this summer.

There were a hundred or so Canada Geese in open water behind Anigaaq. Willow Ptarmigan too. There were two hundred or more geese and a hundred swans behind our Sisualik house this evening.

Our 2nd year Slaty-backed Gull is getting tamer with person feeding. Jonathan tends to tolerate him more than his own kind. A stranger in camp?

Caribou seen this evening in hills behind Sealing Point.

September 29

High 34° F
Low 18° F
Clear
N-NE-E wind

A cold windy but bright day.

Set tomcod net for a couple of hours and it did well. We had good tiñulik for supper from the couple of dozen tomcod.

We have hundreds of Canada Geese in our back berry picking ground. Tried for a goose this p.m. but didn’t make it. Had a couple of chances but birds were traveling with the wind and hard to lead properly.

September

Fishing at Anigaaq kind of on hold while is too thick to break and still too thin to walk on.

Saw two small peeps today. Looked like Western Sandpiper – very late travelers.

The ice has gotten thick enough on small lakes to support a person's weight. The lagoon is at very low water level due to widespread northerly winds. This leaves lots of mudflats with numerous channels and currents. These are feeding and resting places for late waterfowl. I saw Pintail, Wigeon, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan and Greater Scaup.

Caribou are reported to have reached the NW section of Kobuk Lake today, from Iviq to Little Noatak. One of the six seen late at Sealing Point yesterday was taken.

We are staying in the new house evenings and night, and the tent during the day time since telephone and VHF are still in the tent. Workers are supposed to come tomorrow to finish up the electrical work and hopefully total move to the house is on the horizon.

September 30

High 32° F
Low 25° F
Clear a.m., cloudy p.m.
NE-E wind to 40

A windy cold day from the beginning, but temps on the rise again. Ice has gotten pretty thick on small lakes and the lagoon is half ice-covered. With warmer temps and rising marine waters, most ice will disappear again.

Tried for waterfowl again but no luck. There are lots of geese and swans yet, but opportunities to shoot are few. Also, my eyes are giving out. My shotgun sight is hard to see, as well as the target. I guess I'm about done as a waterfowl hunter.

No new caribou news except that they have gotten to Fish Creek and Nelson Camp in numbers. Seems like they won't make it here again while bulls are good. October 14 is a date when most bulls in most years are strong. The condition can be ten days early or late, probably depending on September temps. This September has been cool, so we may be into run early.

Saw a single lost peep today. It was short billed and probably was a Semi-palmated Sandpiper.

September

Snow and rain are forecast for tomorrow. That will be a good start for October, the month of freeze-up.

Gulls didn't get fed today because there was no net out with extremely low marine waters. We did pick up a small bucket of white clams on our beach this morning. That is unusual, as we usually must go to the Point for that species. There were also many blue mussels.

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CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

OCTOBER

October 1

High 34° F
Low 31° F
Cloudy, snow showers
NE-E wind to 35

A windy day again with a few snow showers and warming temps. Winds were too strong early in the day to do much, but they began dropping off towards evening.

Only one person went west to Anigaaq today and reported no fish and no water. Low water at the outlet is caused by strong east winds, and the lack of fish near the outlet probably reflects the same strong winds.

Great caribou news today. A Sisualik family staying near Jones Camp reported caribou in numbers coming down the west side of Noatak River. He got a couple and later saw many more. Where he saw “many more” is just east of our winter cabin at Sanningaruq. This is all less than ten miles north of us and renews hope that we might soon have fresh meat. Half-formed ice crossings to the tablelands in one of our problems; the other is that caribou may turn east, following the smell from caribou we already know are on the east side of the Noatak Delta. This would leave the tablelands north of us barren – the way they have been all of September. We shall see. Warmer than freezing weather may continue for sometime, or freeze-up may continue to build.

We may be able to put a net under the ice now with no more threat from bear or gulls.

We had another mess of clams tonight from those gathered yesterday morning.

It appears that caribou may be going into rut early, due to early freeze. We shall soon see.

Snow covers higher mountain tops.

October 2

High 37° F
Low 33° F
Cloudy, snow, rain
NE-E wind to 18

Everything melted today, the snow as it fell and the ice on large water bodies.

We went to Anigaaq to set net under ice but found no ice! Set the net then with the long push pole and did not see any fish hit for ten minutes or so. Not like the first couple of times we set net, when fish hit almost immediately.

There has been little sign of fish since the strong east winds began a few days ago. Folks are beginning to worry that fish trapped in the Anigaaq system may be limited. We will see how things are going. Fish backtrack on eastern winds.

Five-six caribou were seen today a bit west of Sisualik. The one that saw them shot one time but did not hit any. This may leave scent trail for other behind. We hope so. Tomorrow may give us more of a hint for the future. These animals seen to have come from the NW, not from the Hatchery side, where the animals at Jones Camp were said to have come from.

Got a few tomcod in ocean net and curiously, we got four whitefish as well, one an egg-laden giant-size fish.

We had half dried tomcod for lunch and cod liver tiñulik for supper.

We are seeing more Willow Ptarmigan back on the tablelands every day. We haven't eaten any yet since we can't get back to the tablelands yet.

Jonathan the faithful watch gull stood by while I took fish out of the beach net at the fully dark hour of 10 p.m. No other gulls play out that late. I rewarded him with one of the whitefish.

October 3

High 36° F
Low 33° F
Cloudy
NE-E wind to 18

Quite a full day today!

I started off early (9:30 a.m.) for the net we set yesterday at Anigaaq. Just after passing the westernmost Sisualik house (unoccupied), I saw several light-colored smudges against the background of willows. For a while I couldn't make out what I was seeing (I was still traveling). Then, as I was slowing, the "smudges" turned and

October

began running down the ATV trail on the edge of the willows. I did know what I was seeing at that point – four bull caribou with large antlers. I un-shouldered my gun and followed along, waiting for a chance to shoot. When they got to a trail through the willows to the top of the cut bank (where we always climb up to look around the country), I was ready to shoot by the time the last two reached the top of the trail. When one bull stopped just short of going out of sight I fired the 30-.06 and he flopped. Oh boy, no more meat problems for a while. He had large antlers.

I climbed the trail up after him to check his deadness and passed him to see where the others had gone. They were just over the hill and still in range. I shot one more, gutted both, and continued on over to the net feeling very rich.

When I got to the net it was loaded! Full! It took a long while to clear the net and I had a heavy load of fish going home, nearly two sacks. What a rich day. We were low on both meat and fish.

October 4

High 36° F
Low 33° F
Cloudy
NE-E wind to 18

A pretty dry and windy day. Lots of work to catch up on.

Retrieved the one caribou leftover from yesterday, sacked the Sunday catch of fish, and skinned out the front half of the biggest bull. It had nearly soured as a lot of blood and stomach contents had collected in the body cavity. We did cook the brisket this evening and it was good and fat.

Took a run to Kulitkiin with the dogs and was surprised to see a flock of twenty Canvasbacks and as many Greater Scaup. Carrie reported a Short-eared Owl around camp today. Many species of waterfowl are still around.

Tried for waterfowl near sundown but without luck. My eyes are gone for waterfowl hunting.

Weather turned real nice late evening, but soon clouded over again.

We will be expecting visit from telephone crew tomorrow so we can get phone and VHF in the house. Living in both the tent and house has been trying. We will be glad to get back to a one place stand.

October 5

High 37° F
Low 25° F
Cloudy, some sun
NE-N wind to 15

A day of very fine weather in Sisualik. Lighter winds and more sun than recent days; wind direction moved from NE to N, which gave us a real flat ocean.

Since the ocean was flat and we had to wait for the telephone man to move the phone and VHF, I put the 3" mesh net out and didn't get a chance to pull it till after sundown. There were nearly two buckets of fine large Saffron Cod. We will have tijuik again and some favorite lunches with half-dried cooked tomcod.

The telephone man was worth waiting for. He fixed everything and without a hitch! This evening we have all communications in place and the tent will soon be shut down. We do still have need for the electrician yet for a lighting system, but that is about our last real need for the new house. This house in Sisualik is probably the nearest thing to a miracle that we will ever see in this life. It could only happen thru the efforts of many people, some known and some unknown. We are extremely thankful and grateful to those that have had a part.

Lots of geese and Tundra Swans yet in the backyard. The juicy, sweet, and abundant blackberries are holding the geese. The Tundra Swans are holding as they ready the youngsters for the long migration flight. All will be gone at the next clear cold snap.

New caribou sightings today at Sealing Point and Akulaaq, few in number.

October 6

High 34° F
Low 31° F
Cloudy, some broken
NE-E wind to 18

Made a trip west this early afternoon to set our net again and haul some of nephew's fish. We saw four caribou nearby, getting near the beach not far from where we ran into the four bulls last Sunday. Having enough meat and too much fish work right now, we did not bother these. Several other local folks were fishing but not getting much. There are lots of gulls over there and they tend to keep the fish in deep waters.

There are some large Willow Ptarmigan flocks down that way and they look pretty white and huge with no snow on the ground.

We have, more or less, ice building at different locations on the lagoon.

October

Geese and swans still plentiful, but ducks and adult swans without families are disappearing.

There have been no new bear tracks on the beach since the last big storm.

The telephone repair person came yesterday and moved our phone and VHF to the house. Today, the IRA electrician came and finished up our wiring, so we are now closer to abandoning the tent altogether. The propane stove is the next hurdle. With it moved we will be "as snug as bugs in a rug!"

Days getting short again. Not enough time to get all done that should be done.

Saw a Short-eared Owl today, a bird of the year. They have been scarce this fall.

October 7

High 34° F
Low 29° F
Cloudy
N-NE wind to 15

The net set at Anigaaq yesterday produced a lot of whitefish this morning, probably a bit more than 200 lbs.

We saw four caribou back in the hills, moving west. A few hours later neighbors saw ten bulls just on the other side of the Ranger Station moving east. This seems to add up to small groups of caribou moving this way and no major movement. There was a report yesterday from a neighbor to the east that he had taken a bull that was slightly smelly. It is that time of year again. After October 14 all bulls are likely to be too rank for human use.

Lots of waterfowl (Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Wigeon, Mallard, a few N. Pintail). There is still ice on small ponds and on the west side of lagoons and large lakes. Marine waters have been very low for a week now and that leaves good channels of moving water through the mud flats, where *Potamogeton* beds throughout provide food.

Still no bear tracks on ocean beaches.

We have not seen kinu on the ocean yet. Kinu is an Eskimo tern for slush ice on the sea.

There are signs of a few voles around.

Willow Ptarmigan flocks seen in the distance are becoming more common.

Jonathan, and Tailor, the Slaty-backed Gull, are still around every day. Tailor has put on weight and ambition after a few feeds.

Some young ugruk and Spotted Seals are being taken.

October 8

High 34° F
Low 28° F
Cloudy, some breaks
E-SE wind to 15

Great late fall weather. We continue to move things from tent to house and get used to our new systems. Our last major hurdle is moving the propane stove and getting it set up.

Also, finally got caribou fore-quarters bagged and into freezer. Temperature-wise it has been a great time for meat – no fly activity and just right temps for aging/seasoning meat.

Several caribou were killed today by visitors to Sisualik. We saw several bunches behind Akulaaq. This has been the biggest caribou day to day for Sisualik, yet still there were probably less than fifty seen altogether, and not more than six taken.

We went over and set the net and looked at caribou on the way home. It was a beautiful afternoon.

We have a real neighbor tonight. Our friend in Greene Camp has come across for a few days vacation. He has come at a great time. The ocean was quite calm and shiny as the sun went down this evening.

Tomorrow will be net check again, and possibly more caribou. We could use a couple more while they are near. One never knows how long they will be around.

There are still numbers of waterfowl around.

One friend from Kotzebue took two ugurichaiq, one yesterday and another today. Good weather for boat hunting.

October 9

High 37° F
Low 30° F
Cloudy, some sun
Light winds

October

Another pleasant fall day, with lots to see and do. Scattered caribou in the hills apparently, throughout the whole coastal border of the Monument. Really scattered though – no real concentration. A neighbor traveled as far as Rabbit Creek today and said he saw about a hundred all told, scattered along the way (some 20 miles of beach).

We saw twelve from Akpaiyu, with the two rear animals moving closer to gunshot range, but we had our net set overnight and wanted to be clear of that before seeking new caribou. Our net catch was good – nearly a full sack, but less than the last time we set overnight, when we had a sack and a half. There are still good fish and many are carrying large egg skeins.

Several crews fishing again. Some are seining, some are netting and some are working the ditch trap. All are getting fish, but not too many this day.

Willow Ptarmigan, Tundra Swan, Canada Geese, and some ducks remain.

The ocean like glass today, but no net set. One can't do everything.

A friend came by in a boat this afternoon and gave us an update on seal hunting. He is the one who has taken two ugurichak to date.

We had one beautifully heavy snow shower this evening. It melted quickly, leaving us still dark and somber.

October 10

High 38° F
Low 26° F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

Such a beautiful day! The sun warmed enough that a few blowflies were flying. The ocean has been shiny and flat. We could hear the shots of a few seal hunters far out on the sea, ptarmigan hunters a few miles west, and caribou hunters inland a good ways.

Caribou began showing in good numbers due north (towards our winter camp) of us today. With binocs they are easily seen from the new house. Quite a thrill to see the great herd animals again and coming this way. The great white chest and many of the large bulls show for many miles in the bright sunlight as they move this way and that. They remain undisturbed back there today because there is unfrozen water to cross. Marine waters are at extreme low levels for boats on the mud flats.

Fishing was good in the ditch trap today, for the one that was working it (at Anigaaq).

Most of the Tundra Swans left yesterday, as well as many of the geese. There are still some of both around though.

Some, if not most, of the large caribou bulls will be strong smelling now.

Jonathan and this year's squab are still here, though adult Glaucous Gulls are thinning out. Tailor the Slaty-backed Gull is also here and getting very attached to the camp.

October 11

High 30° F
Low 26° F
Cloudy
Light winds

A drum of gasoline delivered by plane, and Carrie into town for shopping. Modern conveniences!

We are having quite an unusual spell of calm cloudy weather. Freeze-up is delayed. We have not seen much sun, but with lots of whitefish available and caribou on the near tablelands, no one is complaining about the weather and delayed freeze-up. Even the few boat seal hunters are doing well without ice because the water has been so calm.

Tomorrow is the earliest date for dog team or snow machine ice crossing from Kotzebue to Sisualik. Right now there is no ice at all on the route usually used by early travelers.

We still have caribou in sight on the tablelands. Access to them from here requires a means of crossing the one small slough between us and the tablelands. It can be done in a number of ways, and if we didn't have meat we would already be back there. Our time has been filled with fish working and caring for the meat we already have. Now we are about caught up and have provisions and gas, so we will see what is next.

October 12

High 28° F
Low 20° F
Cloudy
N-NE wind to 15

A cold day with thirty minutes of sun just before it went down.

October

There was a great catch of fish made today in the old time ditch trap (kadigsak) at Anigaaq. All the people of Sisualik benefited. Just pick the fish up off the gravel and put them in your sack. There will be a lot of frozen whitefish eaten this winter.

We got a couple of caribou on the way home. One is good, the other, a female, is pretty lean but edible. There were four. There are still caribou scattered in small bunches through the tablelands.

Our geese and swans have pretty much left in the face of cold winds and clear skies. The gulls are thinning too. Jonathan has been squatting on his feet these last two nights.

It is clearing this evening with winds from the north. We may walk on ice tomorrow.

Took the shotgun for Willow Ptarmigan on our trip west this morning. We didn't see any.

There are a few Snow Buntings around, and yesterday, a lonesome Boreal Chickadee. The skyways are becoming free of birds, except gulls and ravens. There were already 25 ravens on the caribou guts when I went back to pick up the carcasses.

October 13

High 26° F
Low 14° F
Cloudy, clearing late
Light N-NE wind

Our temps in the teens, and there was no welcome call from the marsh this morning from geese or swans. They are gone – till next May! We will miss their cheery voices that always seem so enthusiastic and hopeful for the future.

Went up to test the ice crossing on our trail to Sanningaruq. Saw three ducks in a tiny bit of unfrozen moving water. They started off running on the surrounding ice. They seemed to be juvenile birds – probably Mallards – and were obviously unable to fly, either crippled or a late batch of eggs. They may not know it yet, but their chances of survival are very limited. Each fall at freeze-up time there are these sights for one who lives in place. A wing broken in summer or fall does not have time to heal and the oncoming cold and freezing of freshwater habitat is relentless. Inability to migrate means perishing sooner or later – foxes will rejoice. These are the sad facts of life in the salt marsh.

A short half mile from the ducks, just across the ice I went up to test, there were three caribou acting out their survival routine. A fourth animal, a young male, tried

to join the group after traveling many miles alone. He was met by the antlers of the large bull in the group and had to run to survive. These are mid October scenes and those that survive the change from liquid water to ice will have a much easier time getting from here to there by surface travel.

October 14

High 24° F
Low 14° F
Broken clouds, snow showers
NE wind to 15

Many years ago on the 14th of October we had a first dog team from Kotzebue. This is an all time early record for that 12-mile ice crossing.

We did hear that ice has stopped running in Kotzebue, which means it has jammed up somewhere between Arctic Lighterage and Lockhardt Point. That jam forms the bridge for surface travel from Kotzebue, north and west. I walked across the ice to the tablelands today. This is our sign that freeze-up is here!

Saw squirrels out today. There are still many many white Glaucous Gulls. There are no more waterfowl except lame and crippled birds.

There are still scattered caribou through the hills, though I saw only two today.

We are having snow showers today, but little sign of it on the ground – only on the ice. Willow Ptarmigan will be happy for the snow as they are now all white and can be seen for miles against the dark ground. It is a good time for hawks and falcons.

No fishing at Anigaaq yesterday and today. There may be nets set under the ice tomorrow.

We had a good deal of sun today, which we saw has good, not having much the last few days.

October 15

High 23° F
Low 16° F
Cloudy, sun, snow showers
NE-E wind to 18

A cool freezing day – making ice, making trail, sealing up lakes, streams and rivers. We sometimes forget that snow and ice are protective coverings that spread over the land and country before the really harsh times of winter come along.

October

Worked around the house today, ran the two dogs, and had a great supper of pot-roasted marrow bones (patak) with salmonberry and blackberry mix for dessert. It was a good day and a good meal, shared with next-door neighbor.

Our first slush on the ocean was pushed up in a narrow berm at wave height on the beach.

We are seeing a few voles around now that we have stored fish and meat. When the population of these creatures (voles and shrews) is high, keeping ones goodies from them can be tough. We will see what we can do.

Gulls are coming on hard times. Frozen things are hard to handle for them, and young of the year, with their inexperience are especially vulnerable to freeze-up circumstances.

Some ground squirrels around camp are still out foraging in the middle of the day. These may be the ones that have burrows near the new house and were kept from putting on fat by humans working on the house.

October 16

High 18° F
Low 12° F
Clear
N-NE-E wind to 15

Clear and cold! Put a net under the ice at Anigaaq. The ice is a good 4” thick. Our distant neighbor D. Harris put his out yesterday. The first caught fish came within five minutes of setting, which is an indication of many fish yet in the system.

Head count in Sisualik is about as low as it has ever been. There is Claude and Dora Wilson, Doc and Elizabeth Harris, and Carrie and I. There are single middle-aged men at two different locations. That’s a total of eight humans. There are still family members at one building in Sealing Point. That is all the people between Kotzebue and Port Site. With lots of fish still at Anigaaq for the taking, and caribou scattered through the hills, it is incredible that our population has dropped so low. It is truly a sign of the times and verification of a trend which began not too far back.

Two caribou watched us put out the net from the high bank on the north side of the channel. There were others on the north side of Akulaaq Lagoon.

We met a good deal of slush ice coming out in the ocean on our way home. There were no ice pans, so no seals hauling out yet. But it won’t be long.

Willow Ptarmigan anxiously await snowfall, as seals wait for ice pans heavy enough to haul out on. Both may not have to wait long now.

October 17

High 16° F
Low 10° F
Cloudy, snow showers
NE-E wind to 20

Cold wind today. Tough taking fish out from under ice net. Was surprised to find hundreds of flounders in the net, along with some roe-laden Alaska Whitefish, a giant Bering Cisco – super fat – and small but fat sheefish, and the more ordinary Anigaaq whitefish. The mesh is 3 ¼”; our best whitefish catching mesh size is 3”, so today’s catch are bigger fish and the catch not overwhelming.

Saw a number of caribou today. There were twenty or so right on the tablelands near the beach at Ikpigaqaruq Point (only a few miles from Sisualik). There were a few scattered through the back hills, with several huge flocks of very white Willow Ptarmigan. There was a cow and bull right at Anigaaq outlet watching me take fish out of the net. Didn’t try for any. The cow watching the net operation looked pretty, but she may have a calf around somewhere. Targeted animals are now cows that don’t have this year’s calves. Large bulls are in rut and strong smelling. Some young bulls are good and fat, but not all of them. Normally, barren cows are consistently fat.

No slush on the ocean today.

It is snowing tonight. We may have white ground sometime.

Carrie saw a small hawk today. Peregrine or Merlin? It is late for either.

We have not seen Snowy Owls yet, though it is time to set pole traps for them.

October 18

High 20° F
Low 6° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 18

Quite a bright day today but cold early. Had to put on mitts to travel west this morning.

There were no caribou where there was a group last evening. There were a few here and there farther down, mostly isolated bulls attending females hidden in the willows. Haven’t seen this aspect of mating behavior before. It seems quite reasonable.

October

Saw stray passerines again today. Have seen several this week. They seem to be very late longspurs.

Two nets are being maintained now at Anigaaq. Ours would make three, but we opted not to put one under ice.

A first caribou made tracks on the edge of our lagoon today.

Kotzebue ice has quite run. Ocean is very calm this evening.

October 19

High 20° F
Low 6° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 18

Another fine bright day. They seem all the same this October.

Made it across the lagoon and up to the Sanningaruq trail about a third of the way. Lots of big tussocks up that and no snow at all.

I saw only one caribou up that way, a young male of good size with unswollen neck. I shot it and found it to be good meat, but nothing exceptional.

Had a surprise when I tried to chop out a block of ice for camp water. I chopped and chopped and still no water. I had expected about 4" at the most. There was a full 8-10 inches. The freshwater lakes with no snow cover make ice fast.

Word today that they put shee nets in Kobuk Lake two days ago. They also hooked a few tomcod at Jones Camp yesterday, but none today. We will go up that way for Saffron Cod when they show in greater numbers.

Carrie saw a few caribou toward the west from the house today. One was very large and white, another very large and black. The sun was full on.

Took the shogun for ptarmigan this morning and while I was gutting the caribou, four landed on the 4-wheeler. The shotgun was with the 4-wheeler.

Camp squirrel still out eating as he was frustrated earlier by house crew.

October 20

High 18° F
Low 4° F
Clear AM, cloudy PM
N-NE wind to 15

Another day of nearly the same kind. Thick clouds developed by moon rise time though, so maybe snow is possible. The country is ready for it.

Went up the Sanningaruq trail with the two loose dogs. Aachauq has never run on the ice before so he learned a new thing. Most of the ice is real slippery due to lack of snow. When we left the ice behind, Terry hit a fresh trail and took off on it (probably a fox). Aachauq and I continued up the trail to the knoll, where I decided to stop and look around with the binocs. On climbing the knoll I saw the top of an antler right under the knoll. Then four caribou walked out from under the knoll at less than 100 yards. One animal was immediately unusual. There were two females, a fawn, and a neck swelled bull. The large female without the calf, with “bushy” antlers and completely dark posterior was the odd one, obviously a reindeer and with a very broad back and rump. Fat, fat, fat! The shotgun on my shoulder felt horribly useless. I was loaded for ptarmigan and the animals by now had seen the black and white Aachauq, and the game was up. We have been looking for a really fat animal and this was it, but the rifle was back at the house! No ptarmigan either! Some days are like that!

October 21

High 20° F
Low 8° F
Clear
NE-N wind to 25

Another bright and windy day.

Went west this morning looking for the foursome seen yesterday. Since Carrie saw four caribou moving west late yesterday, we thought they might have spooked and gone that way.

I found a number of male caribou over that way, but no foursome. Had several chances for young males with a good look about them, but we are holding now for some back fat.

Finally got one Willow Ptarmigan on the way home, the first for us this fall.

After lunch I went back up to the knoll to see if the group was around there somewhere. They weren't. Started home with nothing to see except a small two-year-old male by the trail. I got most of the way across the ice when I stopped to check with the binocs if the young male was still by the trail. It was, but in the

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distance behind it were four animals climbing an open hillside – a large bull, a light-colored cow and calf, and a dark bushy-antlered animal. The foursome? Yep, looked like it. I turned back, traveled for a while towards the group and then walked for a stalk. I finally made it and got the dark colored bushy horned animal. But it was a young male, not a female, and the flat back was thick hair, not fat. It is good meat however.

October 22

High 18° F
Low 8° F
Clear
Light N-NE wind

No sign of Jonathan today. Don't know if he actually left or if the extreme low marine water has provided a gull feast again between here and Kotzebue. We do have extremely low marine waters, and Jonathan moved out last year on that kind of a deal. It is very lonesome in fish camp without a watch gull.

Picked up yesterday's caribou and also gutted and brought home a dead animal found yesterday for dog food. I did find a small bullet hole in the upper gut area. The gut area looked healthy, with fat around kidneys and mesentery. It was a female reindeer with notched left ear. It was still lactating but there was no indication that the calf was anywhere around.

The earth, the land around here, is ready for snow. That white protective blanket is already overdue for some species.

A distant neighbor set a net in Anigaaq today; one Sisualik person is still tending his net. There are only two nets out now, and all that great mass of fish is standing in line to get out. Some of the egg-laden Alaska Whitefish are dripping eggs now.

We did not see any caribou today for the first time in a long while. We still don't know if we will see a major movement through here. If there is to be one, it will need to be soon.

October 23

High 14° F
Low 4° F
Some clouds, sun
N-NE wind to 15

What a beautiful and bountiful fall we have had! And it continues. We have harvested all the fish we want, and all the caribou we want, and all the berries we want. The weather has been good – winds moderate, and no threatening flood situation to date.

Today a distant neighbor came down to check the net he set yesterday. He got not only a sack of whitefish, but an uguruchaik and a common seal from the ocean. He was quite pleased with his day.

We still have extremely low marine waters, and today a very flat ocean with some slush and a few seals in sight far out, where some thicker ice pans are floating. The pans are thick enough to support the weight of a seal and they haul out on them. Sometimes there are lots.

Groups of caribou are said to be coming our way, both from east of us and west of us.

Though we have enough meat, we would try for a couple more if we found a good fat animal.

We have had not traveler yet from Kotzebue, though some ATV's have crossed from Kotzebue to mouth of the Noatak, and on up to Nelson Camp for shee net setting.

October 24

High 17° F
Low 5° F
Cloudy, clearing p.m.
N-NE wind to 10

A quiet Sunday in Sisualik, both the outdoors and the people. There really are not many people – three old couples and two single fellows here at Sisualik, and two boys at Sealing Point camp.

There was a first ATV crossing to Jones Camp today, and travelers between Jones Camp and Sisualik, so the surface vehicle travelways are open. A total lack of snow makes for pretty slippery ATV ice travel, but they are more stable than a snow machine.

A few breeding caribou still in sight and very white ptarmigan. Fishing at Anigaaq continues for a couple of netters.

Great weather for boating seal hunters, but there are none. Marine waters still very low.

Jonathan, Lucinda and four or five squabs are still around, but no sign of camp squirrels for a couple of days now.

It has been a long time since we have had such remarkably good weather, nearly the whole month of October. Also, the lack of snow to this date is unusual.

October

The work of Tundra Voles is becoming more prominent around the country and the camp.

There are also several Red Foxes around the camps of Sisualik and Anigaaq and are quite tame.

October 25

High 16° F
Low 6° F
Mostly clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 10

Got some ice for household water today from a small tableland lake. Was able to do it easily with a pick along a deep crack. This is unusual in October. Usually the ice is too thin to have deep cracks and one must chop a block out with an axe to total ice thickness. This is hard work and sloppy because at the bottom of the cut, water comes up and flies with each chop of the axe. The ice is now more than 12 inches thick, and a nice heavy block chips off with a few whacks of the pick. Nice and dry too. Very clear ice, making good quality water. The surface ice of a lake of brown-yellowish water is usually nice and clear due to the mechanics of how a lake freezes. All the sediments and discoloring dirt particles stay nearer to the lake's bottom.

Took the two dogs along and lucked out in getting two Willow Ptarmigan and was able to keep the dogs from running off with them. We had a good pot of ptarmigan soup tonight, which was very good for a change. The ptarmigan are not carrying much fat, maybe due to stress from lack of snow for camouflage and/or lack of blueberries.

Charlie Jones, from Jones Camp, made a round trip to town today, so ATV ice crossings will become commonplace. A little snow dust on the ice would alleviate some of the slipperiness.

October 26

High 14° F
Low 4° F
Clear
N-NW wind to 35

Much wind today and all from the north. Marine water level has come up a bit, but not enough to make much difference anywhere yet.

Didn't do much today except rustle up wood and run the dogs.

A report from Sealing Point indicates caribou are increasing just west of there. It's probably a kind of gathering or staging before moving off at a steady rate to wintering grounds.

Time wise, we still have a chance for some numbers to move through here. We have had an unusual caribou season here this October. Instead of the fast rush through with mating taking place on the run, there has been a slow drifting in of a few females and many males. Usually there are groups of three stopped near some thick willow patch into which they retire off and on. The three are a mature bull, a cow coming into estrus, and her this year's calf.

I guess this is characteristic of caribou in small bands early or through the early rut season, maybe culminating in a more characteristic dash south to join the larger numbers. The fact that bulls far outnumber cows in this group may account for unusual local action.

The lack of snow – none at all – makes hunting difficult and one does not have much chance to choose barren cows, the only animals with back fat at this date.

October 27

High 8° F
Low 2° F
Clear, some clouds
N-NE wind to 15

After some discussion on where to go today, we got a late start for the Norton House-Paul Slough area famous for its early fall ice fishing. During dog team days it was one of the first fall overnight camping trips we used to make. There are a variety of possible fish to catch, and numbers vary much over the years. Today was one of the worse we have ever had, but Carrie caught one species we have never taken there before. The reason for today's low catch could be low, low marine waters all through freeze up, and the hundreds of thousands of whitefish trapped in Anigaaq.

This slough is the one furthest west of the mouth of the Noatak. In some years we have taken sled loads of both Saffron Cod and Alaska Whitefish, but not in the same year. There is a small creek that drizzles into the slough at this hooking place that usually attracts huge masses of whitefish and tomcod. The cod must come from the ocean at Sisualik or Kotzebue. Sea water has been so low that they are absent this year. Carrie got one Saffron Cod, one whitefish, one sculpin, and one Great Northern Pike, a species we have not taken here before. I caught one whitefish and one sculpin. That was our total catch. In past years we have taken near sled loads of both species in three to four hours of hooking time. We at least did not get skunked and had some good ice traveling. Maybe the cod will be in after marine waters rise.

October

October 28

High 10° F
Low -3° F
Clouds and sun
N-NE wind to 15

Our first trip below zero for this season.

Found a bonanza of firewood today back on the delta. Made two trips loaded to the gills with all spruce wood.

Some travelers are crossing from Kotzebue each day now. Ice is thick all over except where strong currents might thin it out. It is snow that we lack now. Ice travel is pretty slippery when there is no snow on it. Still, some are crossing with snow machines too. ATV/\$-wheeler travel is much better than sno-go and sled right now.

We have had small swells on the ocean both yesterday and today.

Jonathan and Lucinda and several squabs continue to grace our beach and swallow box. Pickings are getting pretty thin for them. Hope they don't overstay their allotted time in the North.

Last year we moved to our house in trees on this date, with fine snow-covered trail. Hope the snow does come and so do the Willow Ptarmigan. They have been without camouflage all month.

October 29

High 10° F
Low 0° F
Cloudy, few snowflakes
NE-E wind to 15

Went west to pick up our net at Anigaaq and then up and into the tablelands to pick up a few pieces of ice. From the knoll on the Sanningaruq trail I saw two magnificent bull caribou following our sno-go trail, coming down to Sisualik. One fumbles for words when trying to describe the appearance of either bull moose or caribou at the height of their glory in the fall mating season. Moose are massive, invincible, proud, dominant. Caribou are more elegant, proud and regal but more king-like, kingly. These two were all of that, one following the other with a stiff measured fast walk, very purposeful. At this date, their purpose is obviously to find females that may not have mated yet and are late coming into estrus.

A small van has been making trips to Sisualik the last couple of days. Travelers to and from town with either ATV or sno-go are common now, despite the lack of snow.

The flurries we had today did make the ice surface white, but didn't do much for the dark ground.

Gulls, even adult birds, are still hanging on, including Jonathan and Lucinda and their huge squabs.

Our low marine water level continues. When the water does come back, we are going to have a lot of overflow and trails on and over ice will be different.

October 30

High 12° F
Low 3° F
Cloudy, snow
NE-E wind to 10

Our first snowfall today. There were very small flakes during the day, but size of flakes and frequency of fall increased after dark. Our dry dark ground is finally turning white and one can see the tracks again of whatever might be walking around.

Jonathan and Lucinda didn't make an appearance today, the two squabs remain. One is very large and aggressive, the other is shy and easily intimidated. Don't know how we will get them to move on.

The ice is real white now as there has been no drifting yet.

Marine waters are probably rising finally. Tide is strong inward at Kotzebue and ice on the lagoon edges is bowed upward. If normal to high water does come about, there will lots of overflow in many areas. Freeze-up came at low water levels and northerly winds have kept the air cold and water low since.

Neither of us saw caribou today, maybe for the first time since the first showing late in September.

The new snow will give us more of an idea what animals are moving through.

Moose season well open again, day after tomorrow. We will be looking for a fat cow when we do get enough snow.

October

October 31

High 8° F
Low 0° F
Clouds, some sun
N-NE wind to 10

We continue a long spell of near stagnant air. Cold, misty, with continual open ocean saltwater. Some continued cold air snow grains dropping to the ground, making ice and bare ground more white, but getting lost in vegetated areas.

Only one gull of the year around today. It must be a long cold night for those birds.

Ran the dogs west for a chance and saw a few Willow Ptarmigan but no chance to shoot.

There has been some ice jamming along the Point over there. The beach edge looks like real seal habitat now, but did not see any seals, only water and ice.

It has been an extremely quiet day in Sisualik. There were no travelers at all, maybe due to the appearances of overflow patches in various places. Marine water levels are coming up to more normal height, and that will cause some overflow, as freeze up has been from the beginning at extremely flow levels

No sign of caribou today. The only track makers in the new snow were gulls, voles, ptarmigan and a fox.

We have not seen any Snowy Owls this fall. Don't know what, but their numbers fluctuate much from year to year.

Country ravens are a lively lot. They are causing most of the noises in the air today.

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

NOVEMBER

November 1

High 6° F
Low -6° F
Clear, few clouds
NNW-N-NNE wind to 15

A cool bright day, but the days are getting noticeably short. Not enough time to do everything you had planned.

Made a wood haul trip to the delta proper today. It is a perfect rail for wood hauling by ATV and cart. Our half-inch of snow has stuck pretty well to the new glare ice.

Water did come up some, with a little overflow showing in a few places, but no trail problems yet. WE don't know if it brought any fish into the sloughs or not.

Saw a couple of caribou tracks in the snow on the tableland trail when I took the dogs to get ice. These are the first tracks of animals other than fox or voles.

There were town travelers today. The trail is getting shorter and better. We need to make the town trip some day this week hopefully.

Willow Ptarmigan are in better shape now. With a little snow all over, the eyes of the falcon are dimmed for a while.

A flock of eighteen dark ducks landed in our ocean just before sundown. They looked very dark and smaller than the large eiders. They may be Steller's Eiders.

November 2

High 0° F
Low -10° F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds
NE wind to 15 late

A first town trip. We intended to go by ATV, but it wouldn't start this morning (first trouble we've had with it). We switched to snow machine and made a round trip run between 12 noon and 4:30 p.m. The trail is excellent, with enough snow ($\frac{3}{4}$ "") and no glare ice. We made the trip in less than an hour; it is very flat and smooth.

November

Lots of folks out on Kotzebue bar fishing Saffron Cod (tomcod) with some good catches.

Our one gull of the year coming by twice a day to fill his tank. Pretty long nights for him I guess, with this windy cold weather. Seems like nobody told him where he was supposed to go – before November. He may be one of the squabs of Jonathan and Lucinda. They seemed to favor one huge darker colored juvenile, which they probably took with them.

Someone we met today said that he wished the trail between Sisualik and Kotzebue would remain the way it is now all winter. There is little chance of that, but it would be good!

November 3

High 2° F
Low -4° F
Clear, few clouds
NE wind to 35

Very low chill factor temps today and this evening with flying snow and dust/mud from the Noatak Delta.

Our good town trail of yesterday is already spoiled. There will be wide stretches of glare ice and strips of very hard dragging dust/mud over ice. It probably will not be very good for snow machine travel till we get new snow. We made our town trip in time.

Our overwintering gull still here and feeding on scraps (thawed) twice a day. We do still have open water on the ocean beach and I assume the unfrozen but slushy salt water feels warm to his feet compared to -30 to -40 chill factor temps of the air. A remarkable display of hardiness in these gulls and the flock of dark sea ducks (probably Steller's Eiders) that we have in the slushy sea on our front beach.

The last few years we have been able to move inland to our sheltering spruce patch before November. So far there is not a drop of snow on that inland tableland trail. We are so very fortunate to have a warm new house to enjoy this late seaside sojourn. It would be tough in the flapping tent. One wonders how we could make it in the past with the tent and sometimes little firewood.

November 4

High 4° F
Low 1° F
Clear, some clouds
NE-E wind to 35

Wind finally dropped to nothing about 8 p.m. Quite a relief.

Our good town trail and other ice areas spoiled now for sno-go travel. There has been strong blowing of soil from exposed “low water” sandbars. Everything is glare ice and mud.

We had a first distance traveler today, just snow machine – maybe new – to Kivalina. He made it, but it must have been rough going with so little snow.

Went up to ice lake on tablelands with sno-go and dogs this afternoon and had to detour to avoid sand and glare ice. We haven’t seen this much blown sandbar dirt for ages.

There were two fresh wolf tracks going east at the base of the tablelands. I am again impressed by the size of wolf tracks in comparison to most dog tracks.

With our 4-wheeler down, our travel will be restricted either till it snow or the 4-wheeler goes.

Our last Glaucous Gull, lately named Rascal, is still here eating three meals a day of thawed scraps. He must be sweating this evening with wind dead and temps at 0° F. One wonders how he got left behind and how most adults knew when and where to go as where builds here.

November 5

High 6° F
Low -2° F
Clouding from W, snow
N-NE wind to 10

A fine snow shower late this afternoon turned the beach white again (all snow was blown away by the strong easterly winds of yesterday and the day before).

Though it is hard to find snow, the dogs and I went by snow machine west to the cut bank west of us to exercise (the dogs) and to check the willows for ptarmigan.

We did get three and I managed to get them in hand from my enthusiastic retrievers – after a while. There may be a few more broken bones than caused by the shotgun.

November

Our beach ice moved out off shore this afternoon. The gull Rascal now has big ocean water again. I hope he heads south this time. We haven't seen any other gulls this week.

I glassed the tableland country from the high point west but did not see anything. The snow shower began as we headed home, helping to ease the rough trail.

People pretty scarce in Sisualik again. There are only three elder couples, counting ourselves.

The flock of 12 dark ducks on the ocean was there all day today. They are probably Steller's Eiders, that rare North Pacific bird.

November 6

High 6° F
Low -8° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 10

The half-inch of new snow covered drifted delta mud and ice and looked good this morning for sno-go travel. There looks to be much more back on the mountains.

Rascal (the juvenile Glaucous Gull) is still with us, three meals a day. He's looking fat and healthy but still doesn't seem to know where the other gulls went.

Some eiders in the ocean and Willow Ptarmigan on the ground when I ran the dogs west this afternoon.

No sign of caribou.

We are the only residents of Sisualik tonight. Doc Harris and crew went to town to celebrate his 80th birthday.

The fall-winter population of Sisualik is getting pretty thin. If we ever get enough snow to move to our spruce patch it will be thinner yet.

Ice is building on the ocean. There are some bergs and pretty thick pans now, but the restless swells are still there. It is all moving ice or water yet between here and the Point. The ice travel trail to town is still through the lagoon and north of the Point.

November 7

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

Well! A very interesting day today in Sisualik. Jonathan Livingston Seagull is back! (Back from where?) We haven't seen him for three weeks and had assumed that he was gone till April. Not only that, from Rascal's reaction it appears that he is the squab that got left behind and is now glad to have at least one of his parents back. Hopefully they will soon move off together and allow freeze-up to continue without endangering their existence.

There was a real movement of small groups of gulls west from east through here today. Most were birds of the year, but there were a number of white adults like Jonathan. We have no real hint as to why this unusual movement at this season has occurred. We have had gusty north winds today that have left our beach wide slush-free open water – no ice. It is possible that wherever these birds were maintaining themselves iced over, and their movement to find open water led them toward our fine warm-looking ice-free ocean water. What develops from here on we don't know. We thought our Rascal was the last Glaucous Gull in Kotzebue Sound. Now there are many again.

November 8

High 8° F
Low -7° F
Clear
Light N-NE wind

Town trip today. Very bright clear traveling weather and not a bad trail. We went across with snow machine and our grandson-in-law came back with us and changed the dead battery on the 4-wheeler. Now for a while we have a choice again. The 4-wheeler burns less gas and handles mud-covered snow much better than the snow machine.

Town trail has gotten a bit shorter as safe ice comes more in line with a direct line of travel.

Saw a number of old friends during our short visit to town. We loaded two bottles of propane (100# and 20#) and some gasoline.

Saffron Cod hooking ongoing in Kotzebue and lots of playing on the ice with 4-wheeler or snow machine.

Family members sent two small Ringed Seals over from Sealing Point.

November

No gull this morning before we left. One gull near sundown when we came home, and he was hungry!

There were a few other travelers today on the Sisualik trail. There is not much reason to travel to this side right now. Most of the traffic is up to Kobuk Lake for shee netting or visiting, with snow machines, 4-wheelers and even trucks. Lots of light trucks are being put into ice travel while snow is scarce.

November 9

High 13° F
Low -4° F
Cloudy, light snow
NE-E wind to 15

Got a fine load of wood today with the 4-wheeler and cart back in service.

We've had light snow all day, but less than an inch on the ground. It is a start though and will help snow machine traveling.

Our ocean opened along the beach again this evening after ice pushing in against shore and piling up this morning. Still no seals, but Rascal was here for a couple of meals. There has been no sign of Jonathan or other gulls again.

We may be able to start getting a trail up to winter shelter soon if the snow continues. We can't wait to check for rabbit tracks, moose tracks, spruce cone production for winter bird food, and of course any surprises that may be waiting – like a bear under the house (or in the house!).

I let both dogs follow me today and it was quite a long trip for the new dog as the lagoon has a lot of glare ice, lightly covered with fresh snow. They both made it fine, though, and are quite tired this evening.

We didn't see tracks or people up that way today. With new snow coming the country and its residents will be easier to read toward the end of this week.

November 10

High 6° F
Low 4° F
Cloudy
NE-E wind to 25

Moderately strong winds today and this evening and clouds, but no snow.

Took the dogs and ran a ways up the Sanningaruq trail in the tablelands. The inch of new snow from yesterday has made the trail good for snow machine slide rails, but

hasn't done anything for the hard frozen tussocks. Didn't see any fresh tracks either, except fox.

Rascal is still here and had two meals today, but the raven twins (bad actors) don't give him much chance to enjoy a leisurely meal. Don't know what the future holds for Rascal.

There's lots of fox sign around Sisualik and the west delta. Vole tracks are common too but most other creatures in the country are scarce.

We saw only one traveler today and couldn't identify him. Possible another new snow machine going home to Kivalina.

Caribou seem to have completely disappeared. No one even talks about them on the VHF anymore. One wonders if there will be any available locally when we do get snow. It is growing past time to expect any major fall movement through here.

The scarcity of seals in our local Sisualik waters this fall and to date is quite remarkable and only partially explainable.

November 11

High 6° F
Low -4° F
Cloudy, clearing PM
E-NE-N wind to 18

Quite a beautiful late afternoon and evening on the seashore at Sisualik. Very shiny open water under the bright yellow setting sun. There were twenty or so eiders in the water and Rascal standing on ice at the edge.

The dogs and I went west to check the ptarmigan at the bluffs and look from the lookout point for caribou. We did see two large flocks of Willow Ptarmigan and from the same lookout point, I saw a good band of 20 or so caribou a mile or two inland. We have not heard of or seen caribou for a while, so this was a neat surprise.

Our nephew reported quite a few Common Ringed Seals at Sealing Point today. He got one and said that most were too far off shore.

Very little travel this way this week. There is considerable glare ice on the trail and too little snow on the tablelands for caribou hunters from town to be out. Most out of town traffic is now towards Kobuk Lake, where sheefish net setting and tending are going on.

Trail staking is underway and we may soon have stakes to follow to and from town, though Sisualik will probably be the last to be staked.

November

November 12

High 12° F
Low -6° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 30 late

A beautiful bright day with some warmth from the sun, maybe the last warmth from the sun till late January.

Checked on the caribou seen yesterday with ATV. They were still there, but fickle winds and squeaky snow didn't add up to fresh meat. Tried twice for a group of cows and calves and later for a group of three. Never got a chance to shoot. Two bulls walked by within 50 yards, one with antlers and one that had already shed his antlers. Seems early for that.

Saw four small groups of caribou today. Their movement undisturbed seems from west to east. We have heard that there is a good group of several hundred at Rabbit Creek. They may move this way eventually.

Not much sign of other game except foxes.

Good looking open water for seals but there has been none.

Rascal ate his morning ration but has not been seen since. Hope he's gone till next April.

We may be the only humans in Sisualik tonight. Our neighbors are in town to celebrate clan birthdays.

November 13

High 14° F
Low 10° F
Clear
N wind to 25, diminishing

Another breezy bright dry November day. October and so far November have been remarkable for the lack of clouds, precipitation, and low marine water level. These occasional long periods of wind/weather systems stuck in one mode are characteristic of the region and have been responsible for establishing certain long term topographical changes (beach ridges, delta channels) and probably certain wildlife use alterations. We will see some dynamic changes in snow, marine waters and temps. There is likely to be long and extensive overflow conditions, a quick build up of snow cover, and of course, winds with drifting snow.

There was a surprise this morning when I went up to check out our Sanningaruq trail. Apparently lack of snow and continued low temps has caused deep freezing and damming of underground water seepage. The lake, small creek where I have been getting bright clear ice for household water was covered with several inches of dark tea/coffee colored ground water. It is unusual for that to happen, as it is right in the middle of our heavily used haul trail between Sisualik and Sanningaruq.

Rascal has not appeared today. We hope he finally went towards where Glaucous Gulls go to overwinter.

November 14

High 10° F
Low -2° F
Clear
Light winds

A day of many visitors – the most so far. Had they all come at once, there would have been standing room only. As it turned out, the first comers had chance for a bite of lunch and were pretty much through before the second group arrived. We thank everyone for coming – it made a pleasant and interesting change from routine.

One group came by snow machine, the other with two trucks loaded with scrap lumber and pallets for firewood.

Temps began to drop this evening after a windless day with clear skies.

Quite a few travelers besides our friends and family today – trucks, snow machines, and four-wheelers. The flat country – tidelands – is fairly good traveling for all. However, none can easily travel the tablelands nor get to mountainous areas. Caribou and ptarmigan and moose are the sought after creatures right now and they are not often on the flats, but into the tablelands.

Our nephew at Sealing Point got another large fat ringed seal today. The seals have good meat and lots of good oil at this season. They also have a high trade or barter value.

No sign of gulls yesterday and today. Eider ducks were seen yesterday, but our area iced over last night so none today.

November

November 15

High 4° F
Low -6° F
Clear
NE wind to 15

A town trip – by pickup truck! It is a first for us and quite different than riding a sno-go, a 4-wheeler, a boat, an aircraft or a dog team. The sheltered warm cab and the load moving capacity is impressive, as is the rapid transit. We were able to bring a drum of gasoline home with other “bought” stuff, as well as two extra passengers (driver, Carrie, me, a grandson, and a granddaughter – 5 adults). Travel time was about 30 minutes one way.

The unusually long extended time of low water levels, lack of snowfall, and cold temps has allowed unprecedented use of light pickup trucks to travel around the country to camps and for hunting and net setting and checking. When snow and overflow come, as it surely will, truck owners will be sad; snow machiners will be glad. Most truck owners however are also snow machine owners - no great hardships. There will, however, no doubt be increased pressure to push roads through the NANA region. There are now many, many car owners in the region and just driving around town and the village is not adventure enough.

No more gulls or ducks on our waterfront. There is no more nearby open water. Our local ocean surface has a two-night covering of newly formed ice, sikulaik.

November 16

High 0° F
Low -9° F
Clear, clouding late
N-NE wind to 15

Ran the two dogs to west bluffs and higher lookout point. They enjoyed the run with a couple of large ptarmigan flocks to chase.

When I climbed the lookout hill I saw a rather long thin line of caribou moving from W to E a couple of miles inland. I had taken only a shotgun and the dogs were running loose. I turned the dogs homeward and followed to pick up my rifle.

From what I had seen (less than twenty animals) this was no big thing, but the way the animals were strung out indicated that they were moving rapidly, like they do in a distance migration. I thought that this might be the front line of a larger movement.

Got the dogs home and tied up and picked up my rifle and returned where the caribou should have been crossing the large creek behind the coastal bluffs. I saw two walking toward me. I waited for some time, but they finally turned off and when

back from where they had come, leaving me no option. When I had first come in sight of the two there had been a group of ten moving north. These and the two I had hopes of catching had moved on out of sight.

Walked a bit to higher ground but could not see other caribou. Had to return home without fresh meat for the second time in the past week.

November 17

High 12° F
Low -3° F
Cloudy, light snow
NE-E wind to 18

We are into a warming trend and rising marine waters. Our front beach is wide-open water again after being covered with various thicknesses of young ice.

Our ocean birds (gulls, eiders, Oldsquaw) are happy now with much water to play around and feed in without the burden of surface ice. We have not seen any birds in the “new” water yet and our last two gulls have been absent for a while.

The ocean looked like “seal country” today, with a mixture of open water, ice floes, and slush, but we didn’t see any seals. There have been seals down at Sealing Point regularly this month, but none here. At this season a food abundance is necessary to draw seals in. Herring at the mouth of Kotzebue Channel is one source and Arctic Cod at Sealing Point might be another food source. There is much ocean area that is pretty void of food for marine mammals at this season, and areas of high concentration draw and hold marine mammals.

Ran the dogs up our Sanningaruq trail again to get more ice for household use. The little creek there has gone berserk! Ugly dark brown overflow is all over the place – side banks and flat lands. Were there enough snow to use the trail up to the house we would be forced to make a detour around our usual trail course. This for the first time in 50 years.

November 18

High 22° F
Low 6° F
Cloudy, clearing late
E-NE wind to 35

Today’s temps are warmer than any day in November so far. Also, the sound of waves is again part of the Sisualik scene. Our shore ice moved out yesterday afternoon, but only as far west as our neighboring camp. It (the ice) came back in again during the night, and then out again this morning. This afternoon, all of Sisualik ocean ice went out and the sound of waves again filled the air. Then rising marine waters and the wind took our ice off toward Siberia. This is not unusual; land

November

fast ice that remains in place through the winter does not for time December in Sisualik. Now solid ice will remain from Sisualik Point down through Kotzebue Channel. Everything east of that line will be freshwater frozen. All western points will be wet open salt water till temps re-freeze it.

Eider ducks and seals will be rejoicing and we may see that tomorrow at daylight.

There is no indication that any Glaucous Gulls have returned to the abundant open water, but I suppose that could happen.

Myrtle Williams, the wife of Carrie's favorite brother, died today in Anchorage hospital after a long illness. She is now at peace, no more pain. She will be missed much.

November 19

High 22° F
Low 8° F
Some clouds, mostly clear
Light NE-E wind

Very fine weather today.

Went back on the delta and hauled a load of wood for the coming grave digging and Sisualik burial.

We have expected overflow through the tide flats, but it hasn't happened yet.

Various trail are in the process of being staked earlier this year, hopefully by Thanksgiving this time.

It is interesting to note that two years ago we moved to Sanningaruq on October 18. We are now a month beyond that and still don't have enough snow to check out our spruce patch wintering place.

Many things are on hold because of the lack of snow: caribou hunting, moose hunting, trapping, dog training and racing, and snow machine racing.

The trails on ice in many places are good, with light snow stuck to the surface. There are some large areas of glare ice and few rough spots of drifted snow. Most of the tidelands are travelable with sno-go or ATV. All the tablelands and uplands are snow free, with little chance to travel with anything except by walking. Walking is good with ground frozen well.

Carrie saw three eiders in the ocean today, but no other sea birds.

November 20

High 20° F
Low 0° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind

Big open water on the ocean today with lots of sun and twenty large Common Eiders. These hardy birds sometimes manage to overwinter in Kotzebue Sound, but it takes some doing. Their constant need is open water where they can dive and feed and presumably keep warm. Unfrozen saltwater has to be warmer than air temps and chill factor temps at -50° F.

Our back mudflat shallow water areas did not develop overflow conditions like we expected this past week. Marine waters were high for a while, but maybe not for long enough. The channels where incoming water must flow may be so sealed with low water and cold temps that they are acting as a dam.

Anyway, trucks, ATV's and snow machines are traveling widely daily. We have not seen a dog team yet.

Ran the dogs up to the ice lake today and found the seeping creek all frozen and dry. The trail to Sanningaruq is again useable, if only there was some snow!

Thanksgiving and a family funeral/burial coming up next week. Perhaps we will gain some snow during that and get moved to our winter sheltering spruce grove before Christmas.

Great to see eiders in their winter habitat, but causes one to wonder about quality of life in those conditions.

November 21

High 6° F
Low -5° F
Clouds, thick fog
Light snow
Light N-NE winds

Heavy fog today, unusual at this season. We were good this morning and points north of our local mountains (Noatak) had sunshine all day.

Our ocean opened up again this afternoon. It had become covered with young ice and slush. Didn't see any ducks or seals, just a good-looking narrow lead, very black.

Took the dogs for a run to the western lookout point. Didn't see anything but a couple of ravens, not even ptarmigan.

November

There were two travelers today, one bound for Kivalina.

Our camp and the Doc Harris camp a couple of miles east are the only occupied camps in Sisualik again. Nephew is off and on at their camp. The lack of snow and people in Sisualik is setting some records this late fall.

This coming week will be a busy one with a family funeral and burial and Thanksgiving Day feasting. Tolerable weather will make a great difference in how smoothly things will go.

Sisualik burials have a history of being complicated – this one will not be different.

November 22

High 5° F
Low -2° F
Cloudy, fog, light snow
Light N-NE winds

Town trip to prepare for grave digging tomorrow, funeral and burial Wednesday, and then Thanksgiving on Friday.

We went to town straight from the Point – no more detours. Ice is thick and mud on the surface is covered with a half inch of snow and frost that has built up these past two days.

There are a few willow stakes a mile or so towards Kotzebue from the Point. We hated to leave them with fog all around this morning, but we had an old trail track to follow that kept us oriented to travel towards Kotzebue.

We have snow now – temporarily – on the flats and ice. Not nearly enough to do any good at all inland.

There is another report of machines through the ice on the Kobuk Delta. There were no lives lost. Some dangerous traps have developed along rivers systems and deltas in particular. Very low freshwater systems (lack of rain) and extremely low marine systems due to nearly constant N-NE winds have had a strong effect on local waterways. If and when waters come back in flood – storm surge – we could have a mess before it re-freezes.

We made the trip to town with 4-wheeler and cart. Light snow-cover on drifted sand and mud over ice make wear and tear on snow machine pretty extensive.

November 23

High 5° F
Low -2° F
Cloudy, fog, snow
N-NE wind to 10

A whole inch of snow this morning. At this rate of snow accumulation we might get up to our spruce patch shelter by Christmas!

Grave digging today. Lots of help, the chore was done quickly. Beach ridge gravesites are a blessing compared to higher ground.

Our ocean ice moving around today, opening and closing some good seal hunting ponds, but there are no seals.

One small pickup truck made it over from Kotzebue for grave digging. The rest of the many people came by snow machine or ATV.

November 24

High 4° F
Low -6° F
Clouds, fog, snow
NE wind to 10

Funeral and burial in Sisualik went well. We went into town for the potluck feast and back home afterward. I had enough 4-wheeler travel for the day. Carrie went in with the pickup.

Many friends and family came to put Myrtle away. The dry gravel of Sisualik beach ridges and the many people made the job easy. With jackhammer and no permafrost, the proper depth was reached quickly.

Sisualik ocean ice is still moving and there are still no seals.

Sheefishing (net) is going strong. Smelt and tomcod catches are good in Kotzebue.

There is a bit of overflow showing around shallow points in the lagoon, but it is not yet a threat to travel anywhere.

If conditions are still good tomorrow, we will try to go to Kotzebue again for Thanksgiving Feast at the Friends Church. It is an annual event we try not to miss.

November

November 25

High 3° F
Low -10° F
Cloudy, clearing PM
Light winds

Thanksgiving Day. We have much to be thankful for this year.

We went into town with the 4-wheeler around noon and joined the feast at 4 p.m. There were nearly 300 people and lots of food. The Friends Church in the NANA region continues a long tradition of Thanksgiving and Christmas Feasts. That tradition seems alive and well. Lots of people at well and visited a lot.

There were more than 20 Common Eiders at the corner of a new open lead at the Greene campsite just east of us this morning. Pretty hardy birds, always needing to look for open water from late fall through winter.

No signs of gulls.

We returned home about 7 p.m. and missed the trail into the Point but came in through the lagoon. It turned out to be much smoother than going by Sisualik beach route.

November 26

High -2° F
Low -16° F
Cloudy, clear
Light NW-N-NE wind

Our first day this late fall-winter with both high and low temps below zero.

All the eider ducks' open water seems frosted over today. Hope they have managed to find a place of shelter.

Several travelers today. Maybe some setting traps for red and white foxes. A couple of travelers west looking for caribou, but didn't find any.

Cold air this afternoon when I ran the dogs back to the edge of tablelands east.

A few fox tracks, voles and shrews, but nothing else.

A group of 16-18 musk ox still on the beach ridges near the tower at Sealing Point. With so little snow they apparently have seen no need to move to ridge tops.

This long delayed snow has much delayed human take of caribou, moose, wolves, and wolverine, not to mention marten, mink and others.

Tundra voles and shrews are common track makers over the region and will be getting noticed when they locate stored fish or meat.

There was a single fresh squirrel track in the snow following the gravel beach this morning. At this point I'm reading it as a ground squirrel that was disappointed with the winter burrow he chose or made and he must be searching for something better.

November 27

High 2° F
Low -14° F
Clear
N-NW wind to 15

Another cool dry bright day, but short. A little wind for a change from the NW, with some ground drift in the lagoon.

Took the dogs up to the delta to get another load of wood (with the 4-wheeler). Found a good load and returned with a few new "snow bumps" in the lagoon.

While we were eating lunch Carrie noticed seven or eight ravens very excited just east of us, near the carcass of an old beached whale. After doing chores I rode over to check on a couple of things. I found a raven in a newly set fox trap. His lower leg was frozen and in pretty bad shape, but when I released him he flew off.

This trap was set only a few hundred yards from our camp, and with two dogs running loose sometimes I'm not to happy about it. It was set for fox. Usually one does not set traps that close to an occupied camp – especially without notifying the campers if it is known that there are dogs at the camp. Ravens have been using this long dead whale as a food source and there was little chance that a fox would find the trap before a raven did. The trapper doesn't seem to have thought things out very well. The raven was quite pitiful in the trap, as any creature is. The leg-hold type of trap is probably the most inhuman invention man has ever come up with.

November 28

High -2° F
Low -17° F
Clear
N-NE wind to 15

November is drawing to a close and we still lack snow. There is an inch or so down here on the flats and lagoon ice, but the tablelands, with tussocks are provisioned with no snow for softening the impact of having springs, wheels, etc., pound on the concrete-like frozen mud.

November

We have not yet been able to reach our winter house in the spruce patch to see what shape the bears have left it in. Perhaps they are even using it!

The trappers came by today, dropping in to hear what happened to their trap – the one that I released the raven from. Turns out that they are not the people we thought. They are instead a couple of young adult “gung-ho” fellows carrying on some old Eskimo traditions.

We exchanged some trapping stories but didn't quite touch on the inhumane qualities of leg-hold traps. They did catch a semi-wild dog from around their uncle's camp east of us. It pulled up the trap but they tracked it down and killed it. That dog has been a nuisance all summer and fall, so some apparent good has come of the Sisualik trapping effort. They have taken a couple of foxes.

There has been no sign of open water on the ocean near Sisualik for two full cold days now. Our twenty eiders have had to move farther off shore or west, where stronger currents may provoke ice movement that will make water for them. These kind of cold calm spells can cause eider mortality.

November 29

High 0° F
Low -13° F
Clear
NE-E wind to 25

Wind picking up after sundown. Drifting snow and frost, though there is not a lot to drift.

The edges of the tablelands were quite dark this morning before sunrise, by moonlight, as E winds back there last night let much of the snow and frost fall to ground. It has been whitened by freezing fog and light snow for a long time.

Three snow machines went west early this morning, presumably to check for caribou reported in the Rabbit Creek area. They reported to Kotzebue speedily and looking light. Caribou snow machine hunting is somewhat on hold as most inland locations can't be reached and animals must be hunted on foot.

Carrie's 77th birthday tomorrow and we have hopes of going into town to celebrate with family. We will have to see how the weather is tomorrow.

There may have been one Kivalina traveler today. He had a loaded sled and didn't stop by.

We may see open water again soon with the stronger E winds.

November 30

High 6° F
Low -5° F
Clear
E wind to 30

Carrie's 77th birthday and we did make it to town and family in spite of strong winds, drifting mud, and odd, very large and unexpected snow pillows and patches with glare ice on either side. We were busting through the pillows when we hit one too wide, too soft and too deep. We were stuck fast with little trailer hooked on 4-wheeler, wheels spinning on glare ice. It took a while to get rolling again. When we did we were spooked toward any new snow piles, finding them to be too soft to support the 4-wheeler. That meant zig-zagging back and forth to miss the piles and stay with the stakes. We did eventually make it into town before non and the granddaughter prepared a turkey birthday feast. We had a great evening with old friends and family.

We had hoped to travel home late, but trail conditions made us consider overnighing, even though we knew our plants would freeze and our puppy dog might tangle in his new chain.

We did have a warm pleasant evening with family and TV with 30 knot winds roaring outside. We will find out the cost when we get home tomorrow.

We feel pretty good about our trip. Most 70+ year old couples don't usually travel twenty miles into 30 knot winds - with a 4-wheeler without a windshield!

December

CAPE KRUSENSTERN JOURNAL

DECEMBER

December 1

High -5° F
Low -16° F
Clear
Light NE-E winds

The last month of this century!

We made it home before noon under clear skies and a much improved trail. Most of the difficulties of yesterday were gone, either blown completely away or frozen firmly solid, so the 4-wheeler rode easily over them without breaking through.

As expected, the two plants were frosted, the leaves anyway, and we don't know yet if they have a chance to recover.

The puppy dog was okay, but tangled chain was keeping him from lying on his protective mattress. No harm done, only inconvenience.

Weather has turned colder since wind has dropped.

There is no sign of open water in the ocean after the strong blow – unusual. Maybe our ocean is getting choked with ice early this year.

Three caribou hunters that went up the coast toward Sealing Point did get caribou, even some with a little fat, it was reported. We don't know how far toward Port Site that they actually went or how many caribou were taken.

There is a lot of glare ice around the country again after the blow.

The dogs and I went nearly halfway up to Sanningaruq today, and saw a few caribou tracks and a lot of Willow Ptarmigan tracks, but no birds.

December 2

High -6° F
Low -16° F
Clear, some late clouds
N-NE wind to 10

Ah yes! The short days of December are upon us. Hardly any daylight time to complete necessary chores. Dawn does begin to show around 9:00 a.m., but the sun wasn't up today until two minutes after noon. It was never meant to be! Sunrise in the afternoon? No way! If it were not for political manipulation, keeping us two hours off sun time would not happen.

Took the dogs and got a trailer load of firewood from back on the delta. After our last east blow a few days ago, the country is still best traveled with a 4-wheeler or a truck. Lack of snow and abundant dirt, gravel and mud make snow machine travel hard on driver and machine, not to mention sled runners.

We still cannot enter the tableland tussock areas and can only wonder what our spruce patch and house look like. By this time our camp jays may have given up on our coming home and moved on to greener pastures, or starved. If we ever do get up there it will be our latest move ever.

We wonder about birds, spruce cone crop, rabbit tracks, moose and caribou.

We did have visitors from Kotzebue traveling in an enclosed car today – it is a nice warm way to travel!

December 3

High -1° F
Low -6° F
Cloudy, light snow
N-NE wind to 10

Another 4-wheeler trip to tow, using the newly completed stakes, as visibility was limited. We made the round trip without complications except for hand warmth problems. The snow machine has both windshield and heated throttle and handgrips; the 4-wheeler has neither.

Age-induced circulation problems make it more difficult to keep digits (fingers and toes) warm. With constant pressure, like using throttle or steering, freezing can occur, with tissue damage occurring almost without warning. Once damage is incurred, the condition happens easier when low temps and tension occur. I have two toes and three fingers that are chronic easy-freezers. Today's trip gave those "old wounds" some trouble.

It is good to travel with stakes on the trail again. No visibility worries.

December

Home dogs behaved well. The new but large pup is just getting used to being chained for long periods of time. He is learning well, but chain tangles and other possibilities when there is no one in camp are worrisome.

Our snowfall is continuing through the night. Maybe snow machining will soon be more of a reality and we can get into things the lack of snow has prevented – like moving to winter cabin, moose and caribou hunting, and Christmas Bird Count. We shall see. The present weather forecast doesn't offer a lot of hope.

December 4

High 2° F
Low -5° F
Cloudy, snow, fog
Light winds

Well we continue to get snow, but slowly.

Did fire up the sno-go and ran up the Sanningaruq trail a ways, and picked up some ice for the household here.

Saw a small flock of Willow Ptarmigan on the way home, but Aachauq thought he would catch them. There were no other fresh tracks.

Our world is pretty white again. The freezing fog and light snow without wind sticks to everything. The ocean remains solid white – no sign of open water or moving ice.

Weatherman is promising us three inches of snow overnight. We may get to Sanningaruq yet. Wonder what tracks in the snow await us there.

Another death in the family reported today. The son of Carrie's brother passed. This is the same brother whose wife we buried here in Sisualik last week. Now, beside her, we will bury their son. It is a tough time for this family and their large clan.

December 5

High 6° F
Low 2° F
Cloudy, snow
W-NW wind to 15

Our ground is finally getting white, even the upland tussock zones. We have gained 3-4 inches overnight and it looks good. Went up the Sanningaruq trail with the dogs this afternoon and went as far as the big lake in Mills Valley. That is more than halfway, so we will probably see the cabin this week.

No ice movement in Sisualik anymore. This ice may be our final ice that will be here till late June.

Only birds to be seen in Sisualik now are ravens. There should be some Snow or McKay's Buntings around, but we haven't seen any yet.

There were three sno-go's on the trail through Sisualik today. One was a neighbor, the other two may have been Kivalina bound, since they had some load.

We did see two fresh caribou tracks in the new snow yesterday's trail. There must continue to be small groups around our mountain country.

A late evening (10:30 p.m.) 4-wheeler came from the west. He didn't stop and fresh snow is making ATV travel arduous, to say the least. There were ATV tracks on the beach early in the day. Perhaps the late passage was this same person. If so, he spent a long day doing something.

December 6

High 2° F
Low -5° F
Cloudy, flurries
W-NW wind to 18

Town trip, with sno-go and sled for a change. It was a luxury traveling with handgrip warmers and a windshield. The open 4-wheeler may go into its winter rest time now.

There were the characteristic west wind snow piles on the staked trail today. As the new snow piles firm up and freeze it will be a bumpy trail.

Our traveling time is less than an hour now with good stakes on the 9-mile ice crossing from the Point. The 3-4 miles from here to the point is lumpy yet, but getting better with new snow and some low drifting today.

Ran the dogs up the Sanningaruq trail after we got home. Was surprised and disappointed to see that all the "weather" was down here on the flats. No wind drift and little fresh snow up that way since yesterday.

There were fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks, but we didn't see any birds.

We will have another grave digging here in a day or two. Tough time for the Williams family.

Short sun time now – three hours or less.

December

December 7

High 7° F
Low -1° F
Cloudy, snowflakes
NE wind to 10

Well, well! Finally made it to Sanningaruq – our spruce patch. Not only that, but got to see live caribou again. It has been a while! I also found the clearing by the house a jungle of huge tall fireweed stalks! There have always been some, but never as many and as tall. There are three species of plants that had an especially good summer: *Eriophorum* sp. (cottongrass), inland fireweed, and of course our neat little *Gentianopsis detonsa*.

Terry and Aachauq went with me. When I stopped halfway up Napaaqtuuraq to look around with binocs, I saw four caribou looking down at us several hundred yards farther up the ridge. The dogs smelled them and took off. I didn't expect to see the dogs for a while, but after less than ¼ mile chase they returned to me – without caribou.

Aachauq has not seen or chased caribou before in his life. Terry is an old hand and was no doubt going to show the puppy how. But the ankle on the leg he put into a wolf trap once and aged worked against him, and he gave up quickly when he found these four animals were too fast for him.

Across the creek from the cabin there was a group of 12-14 caribou undisturbed. They looked pretty good. Had I the time I would have tried a stalk, as we would welcome fresh meat right now.

May be a grave digging tomorrow.

December 8

High 1° F
Low -14° F
Cloudy, snow flurries
NE wind to 15

Grave digging today. Rather small crew and kind of aged, but the job got done thanks to friends and neighbors.

Weather has been pretty good, but the rather constant fine snow grains that have been in the air and cause the “squeak-squeak” when you walk is monotonous, and doesn't add much to trail building requirements.

No travelers today except grave diggers. No birds but ravens. No tracks in the new snow except fox.

Our sun up time is down to a little over two hours. Even with the long periods of dawn and dusk there is not much “day” on a cloudy day.

It has not been announced, but funeral for Sam Williams’ son may be tomorrow. Burial will be here in Sisualik.

December 9

High -4° F
Low -13° F
Cloudy, clearing
Some snow dust
NE-N wind to 10

Sisualik burial today - the son of Samuel Williams Sr., Carrie’s brother. Sam his buried his wife and now a son in the past two weeks. It has been a tough late fall for that family.

Ran the dogs a ways up the Sanningaruq trail this evening after the burial. There has been little change in trail conditions up that way. It is much different than down here on the flats, where winds have moved the snow around and made good sno-go trails.

A neighbor getting some ice west of us today reported seeing fresh caribou tracks. There seems to be a few scattered bunches of caribou through Krusenstern. We may have fresh meat again soon. It will be welcome. We do have a good supply of meat yet, but as usual, one gets hungry for fresh meat.

Variety of meat is also important. We will hope to have moose meat again, but that will depend on locating a suitable animal, and that won’t happen until we get into moose habitat. We may have opportunity to look around a bit more between now and Christmas.

Have been wondering why we haven’t see a few Snow Buntings around. The crop of beach grasses (*Elymus* sp.) is good, but no birds.

December 10

High -7° F
Low -26° F
Clouds, clearing p.m.
NE-NW wind to 10

A town trip for Christmas shopping. Good trail, but cold air. No problems with Carrie in her cold weather box and me with heated handgrips and a windshield.

Two friends topped by just as we were starting. They were on their way down the coast to look for caribou. One the way home we met one person with caribou in his

December

sled.

Daylight is pretty short but long enough to make sorties out of Kotzebue. Some folks are hungry for fresh meat.

Ran the dogs up past the knoll on the Sanningaruq trail. No change in snow conditions or animal tracks.

The bird scene, with approaching CBC, is pretty grim. The only birds noted this week are Common Ravens, just like the Prudhoe Bay CBC. We can't yet get inland to see what might be in the spruce habitat, and the ocean is all iced over. This is the poorest November for birds that we remember.

December 11

High -16° F
Low -23° F
Clear
NW wind to 25

Very low chill factor temps today with some light ground drift.

A traveler went west early morning and came back with an empty sled. Tough day to travel due to low temps.

In this kind of weather we would prefer to be in our spruce patch, where wind and drifting snow seldom penetrate. My old Superdog Terry really does miss his tree shelter and sno-go cover house at the base of it.

This wind may roll some snow into our track to Sanningaruq. I may check it out tomorrow.

We got our first look and the new December moon tonight. The constellation Orion will be in our big east-facing window at bedtime.

There are few vole and shrew tracks around camp, but not a lot.

December 12

High -20° F
Low -32° F
Clear
NE-E wind to 10

Cold in Sisualik today and last night. Wind is down and switched direction.

Ran the dogs up the Sanningaruq trail today to see how the drift yesterday helped fill

in the bumps and holes. It did do a good deal of good in places. We went to the top of the ridge above the house and returned home. The dogs had good exercise and some cold feet. It doesn't take long to cool off in these temps.

We saw one caribou on the knoll above the cabin. There may have been a few others with it. It is hard to see distant objects today with mist and cold weather fog in low pockets.

There were lots of fresh Willow Ptarmigan tracks, but didn't see any birds.

Yesterday's wind made some bumps and glare ice on the lowland ice of lagoons and lakes. It filled in some of the worst spots on the trail inland. We may yet have a reasonable trail into our winter camp.

A few caribou seen at Little Noatak and Auggie Nelson's place. It is good to hear of some around at this date, for it means that there could be at least a few around for fresh meat through the short days.

One trapper pulled out his traps today.

December 13

High -8° F
Low -36° F
Clear, few clouds
Light winds

A surprise and welcomed warming this evening, without wind and a few "floating" clouds. Hope it holds. Temps below minus twenty are a drag. Everything is harder to do.

Took the dogs a short run west. Terry's feet and wrist are bothering him. After we kept him in the house through last winter's cold spells, I don't feel good about this winter when we can't get to spruce patch shelter or the house. Our new house in Sisualik is too small for two dogs, and Aachauq is currently the priority pup. Terry may do better if we ever do get moved to Sanningaruq.

It is getting difficult to see even a raven in Sisualik. Two young fellows have been running fox traps on the west beach and may have taken a toll. Ravens are not having a good winter, with few caribou and caribou hunters and the Kotzebue dump closure.

The lack of Snow Bunting may have something to do with the lack of mature seed in *Elymus* stalks. There seem to be only empty husks on the dried seed heads.

Heard some ice movement noise this morning. Our outer beach crack opened to nearly three feet wide. Except for the noise of falling ice blocks, the nature of the

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movement is unknown.

December 14

High 1° F
Low -16° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 35

Town trip today, after the strong winds of the night dropped a bit. The trail has gotten quite lumpy since last week. Strong N-NW winds tend to leave abrupt snow piles in the trail.

Daylight down to 2 hrs, 1 min today. We did see the full form above the horizon. Only a week now till the shortest day of all.

Moon is coming on fast.

Town ravens seem the most common bird in areas that we have been in the last two weeks.

After the warmer weather and strong night winds yesterday, our country again looks starved for snow. I may try the Sanningaruq trail again tomorrow. These winds may have helped our bad trail condition – hope so.

Christmas is now the name of the game in town. Lots of happy expectant people making the rounds of stores in town.

December 15

High -2° F
Low -12° F
Clear, clouding p.m.
N-NE wind to 15

The dogs and I made a trip to Sanningaruq today and have a good report. Took the “bear” door off and went into the house to find everything in good shape. All it needs is a good hot fire.

Saw several bunches of fresh caribou tracks in the trail on the way up but didn't see the animals. I did see three from the trail ridge near willows not far from the house. I thought of making a try for fresh meat, but the day seemed too short. It is good to know there are some around for when there is time.

Had a real surprise when the dogs and I headed home. As we neared the edge of our spruce patch there were two moose, about 150 yards away. The dogs hadn't noticed them. I checked with the binocs and saw that one was a young male with some

antler, and the other was a cow without calf. Here was a great chance for our winter moose, but again, timing was off. It takes a while to work a moose after shooting and I felt I might have a later chance – after we get moved. The chance was soon gone. I may regret the decision.

Our spruce patch seems right country right now.

The spruce cone crop looks poor. I didn't see rabbit tracks, but that moose looked awfully good!

December 16

High -4° F
Low -28° F
Clear, few clouds
N-NE wind to 15

Town trip. A double one, as a matter of fact. I took Carrie, an empty drum and empty propane bottle in. Dropped Carrie for shopping, filled the fuel containers and brought them home here to Sisualik. I then went back to town to pick up Carrie and her purchases. Today was a double town trip, you might say.

One of the several ravens that daily follows the staked trail between Sisualik and Kotzebue was lucky today. Probably couldn't believe his eyes. Someone dropped a black trash bag on the trail and the raven had opened it, and there was a very large round hotcake smiling out at the world. It appeared to be hotcake mix style, not sourdough.

The town trail is pretty bumpy. Not at all a pleasure to ride, but the rather cold bright air, the 1 hr and 56 min of sun, and the good distant visibility made it fun as well as worthwhile. We do have gas and propane now for a while – hopefully to move to our spruce patch.

December 17

High -26° F
Low -30° F
Clear
Calm

We haven't had a pre-Christmas cold spell for a while. We seem to be into it now!

Did start the snow machine to give the dogs a little warm up run. Was surprised to find two sno-gos back against the tablelands, maybe hunting ptarmigan. Aachauq took off for the lights! A friendly gesture, the way he always greet strangers. From the other end, one might feel a huge, ungainly, big-toothed mouth, white and black juggernaut of a dog was attacking him. When I hollered at him in a very mean voice he broke off his charge and came back to our trail. I'm afraid I'm gaining the

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reputation of “The guy with the two monster white dogs running loose that are to be avoided at all costs!”

This is a frustrating time! Caribou and moose in the hills, a house and sheltering trees there, an upcoming CBC, and all just out of reach due to lack of snow cover.

Well, we are fortunate to have a good dwelling to keep warm in, a good supply of wood, fish and meat, and the lengthening of daylight coming within this week!

I find my thoughts and mind’s eye straying to the beautiful little gentian that grows here where we are stuck. For it, the Dec. 22 beginning of the lifting of the sun out of the sea will culminate in mid-July, when a luminescent purple-blue flower opens to the sunny sky for fertilization.

December 18

High -27° F
Low -33° F
Clear
Calm

The sun was full above the horizon for a bit more than an hour today, at it has only two more days to decline. Oh joy, when it begins to climb again! From our different location and different house we get to see all that occurs in these shortest days. The rising and setting of the sun is into the ocean. On a clear day like this, it is amazing how many hours the sun’s effect is visible in the sky. Though official sun up time is only 1 hr, 45 min, orange in the sky (dawn and twilight) is on from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Cold for my older dog Terry. Last year we started keeping him in the house nearly every night, and especially during cold spells. We have our “new” dog in in the evening, but out at night. Space in the new house is very limited and the old dog must survive till we can get to our spruce patch.

Took them both for a run when I got ice this afternoon. Running free tends to dry out matted hair and generally improves an animal’s insulating pelt during cold weather spells.

Ravens seem the only other living creatures we can see in Sisualik during these short days.

There are only two occupied camps in Sisualik now, us and Doc Harris. He spends alternate nights in town, but has dogs over here to care for.

December 19

High 4° F
Low -28° F
Cloudy, snow
NE-N wind to 18

Well snow has finally come and we are having trouble handling it! The main trouble is the generator shelter. The new house is too far from our old generator shed and we haven't made a new one. Maybe we can work out something tomorrow.

We have had full cloud cover today, the first for some time, and it makes for a pretty dark day.

Snowfall and wind have come on this evening, and though we are enjoying the above zero temps, the air full of snow is something else.

We will now have access to our spruce patch shelter, and though we had planned to hold off till after Christmas for the move, we may want to readjust that decision.

December 20

High 8° F
Low -20° F
Clouds, snow, drift
Clear p.m.
SE-S-SW wind to 25

Ground and air storm through the night, dropping off around noon. It was a messy night for our "outside" dog. Terry did survive though and followed when I took a run up to Mills Valley (halfway to Sanningaruq). Lots of snow in the trail now! We can move to the shelter of our spruce patch. We will probably hold till Christmas is out of the way.

It is such a delight to cruise over what were continuous hard bumps the day before yesterday. Hardly touched any ground in the new trail today.

The milder temps yesterday and today were great, but they didn't last long enough. We hit a minus twenty again by 8 p.m. this evening, with a bright clear sky and a near full moon.

We have a trip to town on for tomorrow. I hope it doesn't get too cold.

No travelers this way today, but at least two machines made it to Doc Harris Camp in Sisualik today.

The S and SW winds left great soft pillows of snow all over the tidelands. The Kotzebue trail may have its share. It is strange how wind directions each have their

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characteristic type and shape of snowdrift.

December 21

High -22° F
Low -37° F
Clear
Light winds

An untimely town trip. Very cold, very bumpy, and very bright. Ice fog in Kotzebue. We and two other machines made our own ice fog at Sisualik Point.

The S-SW snow piles left behind by the wind made the Sisualik staked trail very rough. It is no longer a fast trail.

There were other travelers today. A couple of boys fired up the oil stove in their folks' camp, planning to hunt from there. Since our tablelands and other inland areas have snow now, caribou and moose hunting is more possible and some may have a chance at wolves.

We will have a chance to move to our sheltered spruce patch whenever time and temps permit. It will be great to be in that sheltered area again.

We have reached the end of losing sunlight time and will be headed back up to 24 hours of it. It will be great again to notice the increasing time and height of the sun's progress in the sky.

December 22

High 4° F
Low -28° F
Cloudy, snow, fog
N-NE wind to 18

A quick warm up thru the night and this morning and some steady but light snowfall through the day. Wind was fairly strong early morning (4 – 6 a.m.) but diminished and stayed light through the day.

Made a trip up to the spruce patch with the dogs and found the trail very good – especially the lower part that I had already been over once since the snow. It was great to just sit down and move with east, as there were no bumps in most of it.

There were very fresh caribou tracks right in the spruce patch (a couple of animals) and very fresh marten tracks around the cabin – maybe a couple.

There are still no Gray Jays. That is a surprise. It may be that the marten got them.

It looks like a very poor year for spruce cones, so our bird sightings will be further limited.

Tried the little “remote” VHF from the house to Carrie here in Sisualik. It worked just fine!

The Sanningaruq house looks just fine. All it needs is a fire and some light. We will surely be there soon after Christmas has passed.

December 23

High -2° F
Low -20° F
Cloudy, fog mist
Clearing PM
W-NW wind to 18

Three minutes more sun coming up tomorrow. We are over the hump and coming up. By late January we will have reasonable daylight hours again.

We have a great moon right now and for a few coming nights; then it will fade away again. It is great to know the sun is coming back again. About this time every year, one wonders if it will.

Today went mostly for getting ready for tomorrow. For many years we have spent Christmas Eve and Christmas Feast time with the gang at the Friends Church in Kotzebue. There have been as many as 350-400 in the “gang.” It has been a great way to celebrate the season. We will try for that again tomorrow.

We have not before been as “displaced” as we are this year. Normally we are well settled in winter quarters by this date, not still in the wide-open spaces of summer camp. I don’t like to leave our dogs chained, at the mercy of the changing direction of drifting snow. One is too old, the other too young. If they can survive this period, we will soon get moved into a more sheltered camp site now that we have enough snow for a good trail.

Travelers have increased yesterday and today, and no doubt will continue to do so as snowfall has opened up the country for vehicle use.

December 24

High -20° F
Low -32° F
Some clouds
NE-E wind to 30

An early start for a town trip in order to be at Christmas Eve church program. Rather cold traveling with wind and drifting increasing.

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We had hoped to return to Sisualik after the program but wind and drift increased all day and evening. By midnight, when the program ended, we were tired and weather was cold, so we overnighted at town family house.

I worried much about the welfare of our two dogs that we left chained. Such cold temps and snowdrift can be hazardous to old and young dogs, and that is what ours are. I needn't have worried. It didn't blow or drift nearly as bad or as hard in Sisualik as it did in town. When I got to them about 9 a.m. they were fine, but vehicles had given them troubles. They were lonesome.

We had a great time at the church program. It started at 6 p.m. and ended at 12 midnight. That was a long time to sit still. It was a great program, though, with many fine parts.

December 25

High -6° F
Low -32° F

A real warm up today, and just in time for Christmas. The temp warmed from -32 to -6° F during the early morning.

It was a great day for the Christmas Feast and the night travel home. The moon has passed the full stage by several days and didn't rise tonight till after we were already home.

We had a good 1999 Christmas, mostly due to town family and friends. It was a very enjoyable time and I shouldn't even have worried over the dogs.

December 26

High -6° F
Low -28° F
Some clouds, clearing
N-NW-NE wind to 25

A "smoky" cold night and morning, but gusty winds brought our temps up quickly and unexpectedly. We appreciate quick changes like that.

Ran the dogs halfway up to Sanningaruq and back. Terry was pretty lively this time and dried up well with the milder temps.

Saw only a single raven today.

Several snow machines went by, traveling up the coast for reasons unknown to us. There were around five machines and they all came back this way after dark. None

of them stopped by.

If the weather is good I may take a load up to the cabin tomorrow. We need to get re-located up there, away from these rapidly changing winds and closer to fresh meat.

The trail has filled in well and travel is easier up there now than down here in the tidewater lands, which is all full of bumps and lumps. It will be great to be in the shelter of the trees.

December 27

High -6° F
Low -30° F
Clear
Light winds

We moved! It is by far the latest date ever, and cold, but we are back in the security and safety of our white spruce patch.

There were no birds to greet us! The usual ubiquitous Gray Jays are absent for the first time ever.

I went up with the dogs and some stuff in the sled and built a hot fire with wood left for the purpose last spring. I then went back to Sisualik and picked up Carrie and a real load.

The house was moderately warm when we got there and we fired up more to warm and dry things up to cope with the unexpected thirty below overnight temps. By sleeping time the house was warm, but as usual had cooled by 6 a.m. That is normal for first nights in frozen houses.

There had been a rather good bunch of caribou feeding right on our trail, where it comes into the spruce patch. Didn't see them, but the tracks were so fresh they must have run from our noise and headlights.

The biggest puzzle of the week is where are the camp Gray Jays? Could the large marten, whose fresh tracks were around the cabin a few days ago, have caught them?

December 28

High -1° F
Low -28° F
Clear
NW winds to 18

Winds picking up here behind the mountains during the night brought the temps up in a hurry as usual. It was pleasant out of the wind.

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Made another trip to Sisualik for a sled load of odds and ends: the long generator line, meat, fish, and berries.

We still have the VHF equipment and propane stove components to get up here.

The Kobuk 220 took off today with 4 participants and a modified trail. There is no trail from Kiana to Selawik due to lack of snow. They will go to Kiana and back to Kotzebue. They have moderately cold weather, but otherwise good going.

Don't know yet what we will do with the rest of the week. We are ready for temps to moderate all right, and ready for wind too! Finally!

December 29

High -16° F

Low -40° F

Clear

Light winds

Our warming breezes left us this afternoon and evening, and our temps dropped to the bottom – literally!

Had to scramble for firewood today. Decided to not use the sno-go, which meant we had to sacrifice another tree from our spruce patch. I chose a large, half dead one.

I had come to the house to pick up the chainsaw after locating the one I was going to cut. I had a cup of coffee and a warm up and then stepped out the door. I noticed Terry standing up and jerking on his chain, looking intently at something. I looked that direction too in time to see a very large bull moose turning to run away down the trail. Having the door of the house still open, I hollered to Carrie to look out the window. She did, but assumed I had seen a Gray Jay and was looking in the trees. The bull was just disappearing around a bend in the trail.

It was a large bull, still retaining its large and now dark old antlers. He was unexpected, to say the least.

The marten has been around again – a smaller animal this time.

Due to such cold temps, we may not have a Sanningaruq CBC this year. Too bad too, as it is the 100th CBC.

December 30

High -12° F
Low -44° F
Clear, a few pink clouds
NW-N wind to 25

A very cold calm night replaced by gusty winds after daylight, with an almost immediate rise of thirty degrees in temperature, an unusually rapid rise in temps.

We actually saw the sun thru the base of the trees today and it lit up the circular cut bank behind the house for 20 minutes. I don't think we have caught it coming in here that early before. It doesn't usually come into the high windows of the house until the eighth or ninth of January.

The dog Aachauq was the first to see a Gray Jay, not in camp, but walking with me up the creek a ways. They apparently haven't found out yet that we've come back.

Carrie has started chasing houseflies today. The first overwintering adults have been warmed by our three days of heat in the house. There will be more.

Lots of moose tracks on the frozen overflow of the creek, where they are browsing Felt-leaf Willow. There are several sizes of tracks.

Had the dogs loose while I cut wood yesterday. When Terry barked, something treed. I had to check it out. When I reached them, Terry was trying to dig out a large porcupine from his spruce root home so Aachauq could grab him. I hauled Terry away to prevent catastrophe!

December 31

High -6° F
Low -14° F
Clear
N-NW wind to 25

Well, the last day of the year and of the century. We spent in continuing to get things together in our winter camp at Sanningaruq. It is so good to be in the shelter of our spruce patch again – a full two months late!

Made a trip to Sisualik for odds and ends, including the VHF. Carrie has missed its squawky voice for a few days. I couldn't make it with the base station antenna, but the small "whip" antenna covers the Kotz area pretty well.

We chose to stay home this New Year's Eve due to weather, travel conditions, and growing older. It is so warm and comfortable here and we daily come in contact with other creatures that live here: bull moose, porcupine, caribou, a lone Gray Jay, and a marten so far. There will be more encounters I'm sure.

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An interesting Snow Bunting report from neighbors. They were down at their summer camp on the tidelands yesterday and saw two “large” flocks of Snow Buntings coming from the direction of Kotzebue. We have not seen any Snow Buntings yet this winter in Sisualik and have wondered why, since there are usually mixed flocks of McKay’s and Snow Buntings by CBC time.

The sun came through the base of the spruce again today, light pink our rear snow bank.

