

**DAILY OBSERVATIONS FROM SISUALIK,
CAPE KRUSENSTERN NATIONAL MONUMENT,
NORTHWEST ALASKA**

Volume 11: 2000

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

Volume 5: 1994

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.
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Cover Photo: Caribou grazing near the Cape Krusenstern coast. Photo by Shelby Anderson.



Acknowledgements

The NPS wishes to thank Bob and Carrie Uhl for their lifelong connection and commitment to the lands, resources and people that make up Cape Krusenstern National Monument and for taking in so many of our staff, volunteers and researchers over the decades, offering refuge, meals and good conversation. Bob and Carrie generously shared knowledge and stories about the geography, natural history and cultural places and practices that make this land such a magnificent and unique place.

We are also indebted to Lois Dalle-Molle, formerly of Western Arctic National Parklands, for her work with Bob in 1990s which led to this journal being made available to all. Many thanks to Kimi Ross for typing every page of Bob Uhl's handwritten journals into computer ready formats. Her tireless efforts make it possible to share the journals in a searchable format. Thanks also to Rachel Mason for application of her proofreading skills.

Thanks are also due to Seth Kantner and Shelby Anderson for providing several wonderful images for these volumes. Their photographs contain copyright notations and should not be used without permission.

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 led 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 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 lived in rural camps. Summertime 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 Monument, its visitors and staff. They and others have openly shared meals, stories, wisdom, and insights with those interested in learning about their lifestyles and homelands. 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 continue to maintain summer camps on the Krusenstern beach, but almost all reside in Kotzebue or nearby villages, taking advantage of educational, employment and other opportunities. Carrie and Bob represented the last family maintaining their historical year round lifestyle within what is now Cape Krusenstern National Monument. Bob and Carrie moved to Kotzebue in 2004. Sadly, Carrie passed away on July 23, 2009. In 2012, both Carrie and Bob were presented with a Meritorious Service Award by the University of Alaska Fairbanks for the journals and their many contributions to the community and the education of generations.

Original Journal Sample

June 1, 2001 W15
 Clear-fog PM

24 °F low W-NW to 18 53 °F high

~~at~~ If one expected some thing different from May on this first day of June, disappointment was in the air. Mostly in the form of fog and cold nights.

Our heavy snow cover huge snow drifts and lingering coolness have become a bit tiresome. Tomorrow will begin our annual period of 24 hr. sun. It may take the full month and a half of total sun to free us of this burden of snow.

Water is coming down in back places. Jones' Camp locally, Kobuk Village and Bucklund are under flood watch this evening.

We've had several town travelers drop by today so another week end of traveling bird hunters can be expected.

We may see a very poor *Gentianopsis detoursa* crop this year if ~~the~~ early warm melt water is a criteria for seed germination. None of the locations that usually produce plants have any "melt water" yet to be warmed by the sun. In past years best crops seem to have come when warm melt water is abundant in late May.

Brant seem plentiful in back area flood zone this week.

Water is finally beginning to cross our lagoon and will probably move quite rapidly as the lagoon is super filled with ice to a high level due late winter storm surge high water-overflow conditions.

Location



Map of the area with points representing some of the places mentioned in the text. See Appendices for detailed maps and information. The boot shaped green outline in the above map indicates the boundaries of Cape Krusenstern National Monument.



Left: Epic annual shoveling task at Sisualik camp. Right: Inside the cabin at Sisualik. Photos courtesy Seth Kantner.

Terminology

Inupiaq Eskimo names for places are still in wide use but determining the appropriate spellings for Inupiaq place names is a challenge. Even fluent speakers struggle to come to agreement on the spelling of a word. Bob Uhl's spellings for place names may differ from those found in other works and may also vary from page to page. Every attempt has been made to retain his orthography. See Appendix 1 for detailed information about places and place names mentioned in the text. In some instances, his spellings will vary between the journal text and the place names compilation. Alternate spellings are provided when possible. Place name maps are included in Appendix 3.

Researchers attempting to scan the journals for specific references should note that Bob's uses the term "uguruk" when referring to bearded seal, rather than the more commonly accepted "ugruk." The editors have retained "uguruk" throughout the document.

Alaskans employ a number of unique terms, some of which may be lesser known than others. In anticipation of reader questions and confusion the editors have attempted to clarify such terms in footnotes. In addition, several footnotes elaborate upon Bob's cryptic references. We hope this helps the reader better understand and appreciate the original narrative.

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JANUARY

January 1 Low -31° F, High -6° F
N wind to 15. Clear.

Winds dropping this evening and so have the temperatures.

Some excitement at nearest neighbors. One with injured leg. They were getting wood and got stuck trying to turn around. The old man can't walk much and when wife got back to camp she alerted us, us being the closest help. With little snow and mean cut banks I had to go long ways around but got there in time to give the old man a ride home. They seemed in good shape and some of their family was coming out to overnight with them.

Heading down the trail on the emergency call, was surprised to see a large bull moose, antlers still intact, standing close to the trail right on top of the ridge far from any trees of willows. He looked as big as an army tank and about as invincible!

We are seeing a great deal of sun in these times of short days – day after day of clear skies. Normally we have clouds, snow or other distant vision obscuring conditions this time of year. We could use a little of those mild temperature snowy days to get caught up with our new location needs.

This long stretch of northerly winds has taken away most snow on south facing slopes.

January 2 Low -40° F, High -36° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds to west.

A cold day with only time to get in some firewood – by hand.

Turned the dogs loose to exercise and warm up and they both came in with porcupine quills. Terry had 2 dozen on the tip of his chin and Achauq had them on his lip. We are lucky that the porky has a tough den. We still have a chance to lose both dogs if we don't eat the porcupine.

Too cold to start the sno-go¹. It starts easy enough between twenty and thirty below, but is pretty hard to turn over at -30 to -40°F.

Firewood seeking from camp with the kids' coaster is tedious. Our snow cover is still pretty slight to go anywhere for wood.

¹ Snowmobile (in Alaska the terms 'sno-go' and 'snowmachine' are typically used in place of 'snowmobile')

Our first visitor yesterday was a real surprise! We have appreciated his gifts much. Our next target is to make a trip to town since the cold weather has cancelled any hope for a last minute CBC². Sorry we have to miss their centennial year. Still no gray jay here nor any other bird except an occasional raven overflight.

January 3 Low -44° F, High -36° F
Calm. Clear.

Intense cold continues. We are just hanging in there, keeping ourselves warm and fed and the two dogs fed and sometimes warm. We are overdue for a town trip but at these temperatures my Arctic Cat is so stiff I can't turn the engine on with the starter rope. At -30°F it becomes startable again. We could pre-heat the engine with a tarp and primus stove but we are not that desperate – yet!

Saw a possible reason for the lack of gray jays here at camp this year. I was watching a lone raven do a “fly by” directly over camp when it speeded up some as a second bird caught up, or nearly so, from behind. The second bird was a hawk owl apparently trying to catch up to the raven. For what purpose I couldn't say. Gray jays are of course on the food list of a hawk owl.

While scratching around for enough firewood to keep us warm I saw a lot of hoof tracks – both moose and caribou – within the spruces of Sanningaruq³. There is 6-7 inches of snow inside the spruce patch. Snowshoes are not needed and of course caribou can walk and feed easily with a little pawing.

Hope it warms even to a -20°F. Cold weather and short daylight are not fun when they come together.

January 4 Low -43° F, High -32° F
Calm winds. Clear, few passing clouds.

Got the Arctic Cat⁴ started today and got a few chunks of ice for household water. Strange how the sno-go engine will turn over in the -30°F's but not in the -40°F's.

Broke the creek crossing trail today, thinking its lower elevation might have collected more snow than our upper ridge crossing. It didn't. Very, very rough snowless trail. It was good to get back on our Sisualik trail that has the snow packed down so that it couldn't blow away.

Lots of moose tracks along the creek of various sizes and shapes. Also an unusual number of marten tracks. They have apparently come to stay. No gray jays around camp yet. Most unusual. I blame the hawk owl! He hasn't much else to eat. Spruce cone crop very poor and no sign of a rabbit track yet.

I did see a nice flock of willow ptarmigan today. Just standing watching me pass in good shotgun range. I didn't have the shotgun of course and it probably wouldn't shoot anyway since I haven't “winterized” it (washed out the oil with a solvent).

² Audubon Christmas Bird Count

³ Uhl's inland winter camp, located amid the spruce trees. Lit. “the place of corners.”

⁴ Snowmobile

Our temperature's back up near -40° F again and we've lost our few morning clouds.

January 5 Low -44° F, High -34° F
Calm. Clear.

No town trip again. That -44°F is intimidating. We continue to hold things together by prayer and hope. Our little 1400-watt generator has given remarkable service through the first half of the “short day” season.

We are allowing our two dogs “in house” time each cold day – one at a time. Too much calm cold weather mats hair and reduces insulation potential.

New moose and marten tracks continue to turn up around the house and we can't get out yet to really see what is on the land. We know there are some caribou and moose, for they have made tracks very close to the cabin.

Carrie remarked today that she never thought she would ever mourn the absence of gray jays – she didn't like their treatment of chickadees around the camp. Now she too would welcome a pair around the camp with open arms. We have never felt so birdless in this place. Things may look better if it ever warms up a bit.

There are travelers between villages but none cross country – in this area. It is hard to believe that in only three days the sun will be back into our cabin window if clear weather continues.

Oh! We have so much to do if the temperatures moderate some!

January 6 Low -44° F, High -36° F
Calm. Clear, few pink clouds.

No town again. The minus 40° F temperatures held till noon and the sno-go engine couldn't be turned over. Kotzebue temperatures warmed to -20° F by this afternoon and we warmed some.

Walked around Sanningaruq with the dogs for a while but saw no birds (not even a raven). There are moose and marten tracks and a few red squirrels. We have word of a warming trend probably with N winds. Hope we get to complete a town run; gas is getting short too.

The sun made our day today. Its rays almost entered our window. The earliest we've seen that in the past has been on the 8th. Trees and snowbanks were lit up for some time. We are up to nearly 2½ hours of sun now and with clear but cold skies we get to see all of it. Some caribou talk is going on again – small numbers in widely scattered places. Hope we get a chance to look for some soon – and a moose.

January 7 Low -40° F, High 1° F
N to 18. Clear.

Quite a temperature rise, and just in time for our long delayed town trip.

We got started around 10:00 a.m. with dawn in the sky and got into town before noon. From Sisualik Point to

Kotzebue the trail is very lumpy – rough! We are both bone tired after our return around 5:00 p.m. with twilight still in the sky (no New Moon yet though).

We did a good deal of shopping in town, having gotten quite low on store staples. Gasoline too is an ever present need this time of year with generator. There has been very little traffic on the main coastal trail. Small wonder with the cold temperatures and rough cut trail.

Ravens seem the only wildlife other than human on the trail today. The dogs were sad to see us leave and happy to see us return. The new moon is close but we didn't see it this evening. We will appreciate its light again this month as the length of our days becomes reasonable again towards the end of January.

We feel very thankful this evening to have been able to complete a "store" trip in the midst of such long running cold weather.

January 8 Low -4° F, High 2° F
NW-N to 30. Clear, few clouds.

A trip to Sisualik for me and the dogs makes us appreciate more our little cabin in the spruce patch. It was blowing and drifting hard down there, piling up old crystallized snow and leaves stolen from the meager snow supply on the land to the NW. Sisualik was no place for man or beast today. We quickly picked up a caribou carcass and a few other things and were glad to head for the spruces over the now nearly snow free ground.

The only strong winds we've had through fall and early winter have been N, and that means light snowfall and very low marine waters, which also has a drain effect on fresh watersheds. All this is a very unusual pattern for this region, having wide ranging effects on living creatures that must cope.

Still no gray jay in camp and very few red squirrels. No other birds except ravens. This has the makings of an extreme birdless winter!

January 9 Low 0° F, High 4° F
N to 20. Clear, some clouds.

The Hunter returns – to his usual winter range. It was good to don snowshoes again and walk the familiar trails of Sanningaruq, even if it was nearly 3 months late. I finally found time to walk a bit today and was rewarded by seeing a good group of 15-20 caribou 4-5 miles north of here. Too far to make a stalk today but maybe tomorrow if they are still around.

Usually I get to make a walk on the trails I followed today by late October. Now October, November, December and nearly half of January are gone and my first snowshoe walk is today! It is almost unbelievable. All, most all of the delay is due to lack of snowfall.

We are certainly glad for this mild temperature spell. It is helping us get settled and ready for whatever comes in the next few months.

These very constant and strong north winds are taking away what little snow cover we have out in the open. Maybe one must go through a year of little snow like this to really appreciate the value to the land and its creatures brought by the white stuff.

Still no birds but ravens. Sun was supposed to be in house window for a while today but there were a few clouds between.

January 10 Low -4° F, High 4° F
NW-N-NE to 18. Clear.

Our caribou herd increased to 150 this morning on the east side of the creek. Spent the day trying to get one and finally got two. We rejoice to have fresh meat and high quality meat at that. Both were females, one older and larger and fatter. She is quite a good piece of meat maybe with some back fat. There was much inside intestinal fat and a fairly large fetus.

It was good to see numbers of caribou again. They are having easy feeding and freedom from sno-go chase, but wolves may be taking a toll. There were fresh wolf tracks mingled with many moose tracks. There seem to be four wolves, two very large tracks and two smaller.

I was able to bring in the two dead caribou but the cross-country trail on the east side of the creek is monstrous. We do need snow! There can be no wood hauling or moose hunting north of us (toward the Hatchery) till snow cover is increased. There will be no machine chasing either. It is walk, snowshoe or ski. Old-fashioned methods but they are still effective.

Again, we are quite happy with our good fresh meat and especially the quality of it. We were down to our last fall carcass.

January 11 Low -30° F, High -2° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds.

A Sisualik trip today for gas and a few other things left behind. Much of our snow that was up here is piled up in very hard drifts down there. The south side of the tent has a heavy load again.

Saw a few caribou tracks on the way down and more on the way back. Am not sure yet what sort of a movement of caribou this is. The snow and ground north of us shows steady long use this fall-winter by caribou. Today is the first time there have been fresh tracks between here and Sisualik for a long time.

Skinned the largest female taken yesterday this afternoon and found a beautiful piece of fat meat - even a half-inch or so of back fat. If there are others like this in the caribou herd they are certainly having a fine winter. With little snow and no inland ATV traffic it is expected that young females with a fetus would be in very good condition.

The hawk owl perched over the house clearing today. He no doubt is the reason for absent gray jays. Carrie says shoot him with a shotgun! I say then we will have no birds.

Weatherman promises snow Thursday. Oh boy! My bones and no doubt the sno-go parts can hardly wait. It has been rough, tough hard going!

January 12 Low -36° F, High -28° F
Calm. Clear, few clouds.

Well we still live in a bit of a wilderness – for a time, at least. This morning, a very quiet, cold dark morning just before 9:00 a.m. (no sign of dawn in the sky yet) when I went out to start the generator there was the clear exciting howl of a single wolf not far off to the north.

What a cherished sound. Like gale force winds or heavy pounding surf it reminds us that there are forces out there yet that are not controlled by men.

Since “chasing snow machines” cannot operate inland here yet due to insufficient snow cover we have a “ring side” seat to a natural scene undisturbed by ground mechanization. There are numbers of moose and caribou both on our creek and valley.

Our first major blizzard is forecast for tonight and tomorrow. Presumably that means snow and drifting snow, which will benefit cross-country snow machine travel. We too will rejoice when trails improve but that happening and longer daylight hours will signal the loss of our temporary wilderness – and wolf howls.

Saw a very tiny bird today by Terry’s leftover food scraps. It can hardly be anything but a young boreal chickadee but I didn’t see it well enough to prove that. The resident hawk owl is no doubt the reason for gray jay absence. Rabbit trail noted today by our nearest neighbor.

January 13 Low -28° F, High -4° F
E-SE to 40. Blizzard, snow.

Well we finally got our snow and are still getting it. This is the first major storm since freeze up and we may have all the trimmings, including extensive overflow. At 9:00 p.m. our SE winds had dropped and may switch to south soon.

There is lots of snow with the wind and the face of the land may look very different when it clears. The snow cover will bring snow machines into the country and our visitor numbers will increase as our wilderness fades into the distance.

Walked around inside the spruce patch today for a bit, in case there was a suitable moose taking shelter, but didn’t turn up anything. Temperatures have moderated well and will presumably go above zero tonight and early tomorrow.

Will be anxious to look around the country when it clears, as this will be our best chance to get a few nearby caribou. With promise of other adult females being as fit as the one we got the other day it would be good to have a couple more.

Sunlight is approaching 4 hours and we will have sunrise before noon – where it belongs – in a couple of days. Also the sun will be back in Barrow in another week or so.

January 14 Low -16° F, High 3° F
SW-W to 10. Clearing, some clouds, fog.

A fine clearing day after the blizzard that left us kind of buried under 6” of new snow. The strong winds carried more than our share of the new 6” into our spruce patch.

We did get “in” and “out” trails shoveled. The trail was re-broken and packed down and the dogs had a lot of exercise during the new trail breaking of the soft trail.

Expected to see caribou and moose today but the only creatures beside ourselves and dogs were a lone lost storm disorientated willow ptarmigan and later in the day a raven. Don’t know what became of the abundant animals around before the storm. We do recall the wolf howl – whether that has any bearing we don’t know. It is not unusual for animals to move during heavy storm conditions. We will see what develops in the next few days.

Overflow conditions have developed on Kotzebue Sound from the storm but we don’t know how extensive yet. Travelers did make it to town and back today through a Noatak Delta route.

We lost one of our two neighbor families this week when they moved to Noatak for an indefinite stay. A nearly half-moon in the sky tonight. Very bright with the new snow surface.

January 15 Low -31°F, High -4° F
NE-E to 18. Cloudy, snow p.m.

Wind and snow again this evening after a rather quiet dull day of low mist and fog. We were going to make a trip to Sisualik this morning but when I checked out the creek trail I found a single moose had passed through during the night. Thinking it might be a female and might have settled nearby we decided to check the animal out and hold on the Sisualik trip. Spent half the daylight finding that the moose was passing through with no stops.

After lunch I loosed the dogs and went down the Sisualik trail to get ice. The young dog followed, the old dog stayed behind and was let in the house to warm and dry up. We didn’t see anything but new sno-go tracks, at least two. No doubt hunters were out even in the marginal weather. They didn’t turn into our trail.

Overflow conditions must not be too extensive the way folks are traveling this weekend. Our search and rescue effort was successful in the Buckland area this morning, with the overdue traveler located quickly by aircraft.

Saw shrew tracks on the surface of the light fluffy snow in camp. It must be a pretty light shrew!
Snow continues this evening. Someone may have overdone it with a “snow dance.”

January 16 Low -16° F, High 6° F
Light winds. Clearing.

We were left with another 5-6 inches of snow yesterday evening and night, clearing this morning. We now have a lot of loose snow around. Light fluffy stuff ready to fly – near 10 inches in some places. I had to work all our exit and entrance trails again as I did after the blizzard.

Had some un-needed excitement this morning. I had Terry loose while I was snowshoe breaking the trails. Thought he would enjoy the walk, as he would have trouble running with the sno-go in the abundant new snow. Aachauq would go with the sno-go since he is younger and longer legged.

Terry kept smelling the north breeze, making me think there were moose or caribou in that direction. As we got closer to home he finally did take off through the deep snow traveling like a wolverine or an otter by jumps, and he soon started barking, which he only does to porcupine or moose. This was only a few hundred yards from the cabin. I suspected the worst and quickly re-donned snowshoes, picked up rifle and headed for the barking. Terry had a large female porcupine at bay on the side of a high cut bank with no trees around. As I scolded and got closer I saw him try to nip at the quilled creature, no doubt acting brave because of my presence. He got 8 or so quills before I got him on a short leash and headed home. I pulled all the quills but one and we cooked the fat porcupine for supper.

Three gray jays passed through camp today.

January 17 Low -18° F, High 6° F
NE to 15. Cloudy.

A fine day but not very bright. Hurray!! Our gray jays came back! They didn't say from where and they didn't scold us for being two months late, they just started eating everything in sight!

We put out the crumbled stale bread Carrie saved for them late last fall and the three of them spent all afternoon hauling away huge quantities. We never thought we would be so glad to see gray jays! Every time one sailed in for a new load we would find ourselves smiling!

Finally made a sno-go trail to a wood supply today and cut two very long dry trees. Wood for a while! Much easier than the hand haul I've been doing. Things are slowly coming together. We are days behind on a trip to town but we will be ready for that now when weather permits.

It is good to have milder weather for a change. We have enough snow and then some, but there may be more coming! Two sno-go's went through camp today with only a wave. Unusual! We have no idea who. Sno-go trails are turning up everywhere now as predicted. Overland travel has become good with the new snowfall.

January 18 Low 6° F, High 16° F
N-NE to 15. Cloudy, snow.

A day of off and on snow and fog with no sun. Now that the sun is getting higher in the sky it is hard to get to see it due to cloud cover. We have not even seen the rays in the house yet and it is “prism time.” The hawk owl – villain of the year – joined the gray jays at the house clearing today spoiling everybody’s fun. A day above 0°F. Nice and warm for a change.

A large bull moose was feeding at the mouth of our trail into the spruce patch this morning both large antlers still firmly attached. He didn’t move off much when I walked by and was still there when I returned. When I left the scene he walked over to a small spruce and tore it apart with his large antlers.

Later I noticed a second moose track crossed the house trail, so after hauling in another load of wood I put on snowshoes to track the two moose. I came on one feeding and had an exciting 15 minutes with a chambered cartridge waiting to see the other moose. The ready rifle was in case the second animal was an adult female. It finally showed – and also had antlers though smaller than the first. No more excitement. Both animals were only 50 yards away and looked huge and black with the white new snow background.

Neighbor reported large group of caribou behind us today. He got two.

January 19 Low -8° F, High 19° F
W-NW to 18. Cloudy, snow.

Unsettled weather yet – from the cooler western quadrant. Snowshoed up to the “look out” knoll this morning in time to hear neighbor shooting but not in sight. Soon two small groups of caribou came in sight but too far for me to intercept them on foot. Neighbor went up early this morning to where the large bunch of caribou ran from him yesterday. He got a few again but later said he shouldn’t have gone up so early as the big bunch of caribou were coming down this way again. They would be much closer. There is a very lot of soft light snow in the country right now.

After lunch I fired up the sno-go and went down the Sisualik trail. There was ground drift and whiteout conditions. Couldn’t follow the old trail in some places. I turned back again from the edge of the tablelands, seeing the ground drift and whiteout conditions on the lagoon.

The three gray jays were around today but so was the hawk owl so they didn’t relax much.

We need to make it to town for gas and some other stuff. Hope we can pull it off. Our new snow build up and potential overflow are intimidating.

January 20 Low -22° F, High -4° F
SW to 10, NE to 18. Clear early a.m., clouding.

Aborted town trip today. Many folks planning to hunt or travel today were deeply disappointed in the weather.

After a clear night of near full moon we suddenly clouded over from the west (wind switched to NE from SW with fog and light snow). Whiteout conditions developed and ground drift began. Miserable traveling conditions. All this happened after we left here and were pulling into Sisualik. We could have made it into town but chances for a successful round trip looked dim. We decided to load some things we needed from Sisualik and return home, hoping to get to the phone before we were deemed overdue by Kotzebue family (they knew we were en route).

We made it home all right but some family from Kotzebue had taken off five minutes earlier to meet us on the way. He went all the way to Sisualik before turning back. Too bad. Wasted time and gas. Anyway everyone got home okay.

In the meantime our neighbor got some more good caribou from north of us. We are missing a good opportunity to get more good caribou by running back and forth in the opposite direction.

Three gray jays and their overseer the hawk owl were in camp most of the day – keeping eyes on each other.

January 21 Low -12° F, High 18° F
E-SE to 18. Cloudy, snow.

Snow, snow, snow! We don't need any more! The warm temperatures are nice but even they contribute to the feeling of being smothered!

We are doing all right in this extended period of unsettled weather and aborted town trips but we are now hunting for gasoline. Our generator lights depend on it and our supply point is a long, long distance away in this weather and snow accumulation. We will ration and see how far we get.

We have waited long for sunlight return and now it has, but we haven't seen the sun for many days. Sunrays were expected in the house on the 8th or 9th of January. It has not yet been free of cloud blockage since that date. We know it is high now for daylight lingers till 6:00 p.m.

We saw last night's moon eclipse through broken clouds, but not clearly.

Fat caribou are not far off but weather again inhibits successful hunting. It would be an opportune time to see a female moose too, but that hasn't happened.

The small group (3) of gray jay comes daily now and the hawk owl continues to "oversee" them for a time each day. We do have birds!

No marten track since new snow began pile up. Only one human visitor since the move. Trails difficult to keep open. Snowshoe time necessary nearly every day inside the trees.

January 22 Low -6° F, High 20° F
SW to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

We almost saw the sun today. Some broken clouds let some orange color through but no glimpse of the sun. It has been many days of cloud cover. The days have gotten quite long and the sun must be quite high on the horizon – but we haven't seen it. We have snow cover now though – in fact we are nearly smothered!

A friend brought us gasoline today – just in time with another blizzard forecast hanging over us.

I broke trail down to Sisualik this morning and there was lots of soft snow. Our two dogs followed and were pretty tired by the time they got home. It was pretty soft for dogs!

Our three gray jays and their “overseer” the northern hawk owl our regular visitors each day now. Caribou and moose are finding their world different too now. Going from almost no snow to more than enough in a short time will make feeding and moving about more difficult for these creatures too.

Sisualik is developing some large snow banks again. Our new house will increase our Sisualik snow bank farm considerably.

One does appreciate the ancient invention of “snowshoes” when conditions get the way they are now. Trails in some places now require packing down before a snow machine can operate.

January 23 Low -4° F, High 28° F
SE-S to 18. Cloudy, snow showers.

Warm today but still no sun. There were even broken clouds but not in the direction of the sun. The air continues to hold some kind of snow, fog ice crystals or freezing rain. Some crusting of open country snow has occurred so drift potential is less.

We've seen more birds today than any day since we moved up: the three gray jays, their shadow the hawk owl and several redpolls (5?) and numerous ravens.

Because of abundant fresh snow and mild temperatures snowshoeing is hard work and slow but I did make it up to our near “look out” point in time to see a good bunch (20) of caribou moving up the trail toward the pass. These were passing through the area just north of us toward the Hatchery, where we have seen groups of caribou more or less regularly since we moved up. It is a characteristic of caribou in winter to establish a localized range for feeding and successful flight corridors. They seem to honor their own boundaries and don't violate them unless catastrophe occurs.

All this new snow wind and mild weather is building – forming ideal cross country sno-go travel conditions. When the weather clears and cools snowmachiners will again control the country – a current fact of life with complex reactions from other creatures on the land.

January 24 Low -3° F, High 18° F
Light S winds. Cloudy, snow showers.

We got ready to start off for town this morning but snowfall got heavier and fog more dense so we didn't leave. Whiteout conditions with as much fresh snow as we have lying around makes distance travel difficult for old tired eyes and body.

We have not seen the sun for many days.

If they were lucky at Barrow they saw the sun for the first time since November yesterday and today. It is there for them now but they may have cloud cover like us, as it has been cloud cover that has kept the sun from us.

We were saddened late yesterday when we were told our neighbors at Jones' Camp (temporarily living in Noatak) had a bad in-family gun accident. Two of their grandchildren were playing with guns and one was accidentally killed. He was a lively young fellow with numerous talents and lots of promise. He was being raised by Lena and Charlie and will be greatly missed.

Well, maybe we will brave the fog and snow showers tomorrow and make it into town for mail and many needed items. It would be good to see the sun, stars and morning moon, which is still quite big.

January 25 Low -2° F, High 12° F
Light SW. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Finally made the town trip. Snowfall and fog both ways, visibility nil! Trail stakes and trail good from Sisualik Point to town. From here to that point very soft and tough going in "whiteout" conditions with no trail showing. We did make the round trip all in daylight, including intensive shopping, so conditions couldn't be too bad. I do hope they don't get worse though and I wouldn't want to do the run again tomorrow in the same conditions.

Our nearest neighbor seeing rabbit tracks. The one good thing about this extended spell of snow is the mild temperature. It sure beats the -30°F - -40°F temperatures of early January. We would, however, like to see the sun for a change. By the time we do we may also be able to feel it!

It is good to have the things we've been out of for a while. We are in pretty good shape for whatever comes next.

January 26 Low 0° F, High 20° F
NE-E to 18. Cloudy, snow.

Many days of snow this month and we gained more today and still no glimpse of the sun, though the remaining half moon was bright and clear before dawn.

Made a trip with the dogs (on the sno-go) down to Sisualik to pick up a sack of whitefish (150 lbs). The trail we used yesterday to go to town was wiped out. The wind picked up and wiped out our town trail. With all the new and light snow around, a 20-mile wind from any direction will wipe out existing trails.

Moose tracks at lower creek crossing but didn't have time to check on the track maker. No time to check the north caribou country either. Family from Point Lay report many caribou very near Wainwright and unusually fat.

Our gray jay group certainly adds atmosphere to our camp clearing. Their varied calls, some of them rather beautiful, replace for a time the silence of a birdless winter. Raven voice, unexpected at any time of day, is the only other silence breaker.

Our warm temperatures will be settling and shrinking our fresh snow some and wind direction may level surface bumps.

January 27 Low 0° F, High 20° F
NW to 15 late. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Still no sight of the sun, though the waning moon was visible in broken clouds this early morning.

Managed to find ice in a large lake under a lot of snow. We needed household water and a chore that has been easy all winter is now difficult because of mild temperatures and deep snow. "Ice getting" is easiest when lake ice is snow free and temperatures are cold enough to make deep cracks down through the ice that can be chipped with a sharp pick that will release a large 15 to 20 lb chunk to put in the sled.

My trail made to Sisualik yesterday had disappeared again in drifting, rolling snow. Ice getting went well and after lunch I got a good load of firewood.

There was a grave digging in Sisualik today for the young fellow accidentally killed by his playmate this week. It was not real good weather for that with snow in the air and some ground drift.

There were numerous fresh moose tracks made near the house while I was chainsawing a short ways up the creek. I didn't see the animals and am curious about gender. May check them out tomorrow, now that I'm caught up on wood and water for a while.

January 28 Low -16° F, High -3° F
SW to 15. Cloudy, fog, snow showers.

Still no sight of sun! This is getting serious. We may not have seen the sun since January 14th.

The moon is often in sight through broken clouds before dawn as it is higher in the sky than the sun. By the time the sun rises, clouds have invariably covered the portion of the sky that it should be in. Daylight comes and lasts till 6:00 p.m. but never a glimpse of sun. We eagerly await the first "rainbows" through our couple of prisms. Haven't yet seen them.

Saw a large group of caribou just north of us today, but with no wind and crusty snow I decided not to disturb them. "Whiteout" conditions also make sno-go hunting questionable. We'll see what develops. We would like to take a few more while they are close and in good condition.

Three moose have made tracks in the spruce patch in the past few days but I have been unable to see them – partly due to difficult snowshoeing in the soft, soft, deep, deep snow.

The gray jays have made the dull, dull days ever so much brighter.

Ran the dogs down the “out” trail to tidelands again today. Again all previous trails were obscured. We have “broken trail” down that way nearly 10 times in the past two weeks.

Burial tomorrow in Sisualik of the young neighbor boy accidentally shot this past week.

January 29 Low -36° F, High -16° F
Light winds. Clear, sun!!

A whole day of bright sun with “rainbows” all over the inside of the house from our prisms (5½ - 6 hours). What a beautiful return of the sun to Sanningaruq - very dramatic and only a month late! The only problem is the rapid drop of temperatures to -36°F.

Walked up to the “look out” this morning and saw nothing of the large group of caribou noted yesterday. Gray jays are right at home again and we haven’t seen the hawk owl for some time. The constant snowfall may have done him in – prey pretty scarce and he may have starved or moved to a better hunting ground – if there is one that he might find. No fresh moose tracks on the creek. Have not seen willow ptarmigan tracks for ages. Snow to roost in may have been scarce through the cold spell in early January.

Hope we aren’t going in to another intense cold spell.

January 30 Low -46 °F, High -36° F
Calm. Clear, sun.

A cold bright Sunday. Few travelers by surface or air today due to low temperatures.

The weather bureau promises a warm up soon and another blizzard Tuesday night. We seem caught in a web of days either too cold or too stormy to do anything. The increasing daylight and bright sun is however helping us to cope!

Gray jays around today but not very active. Ravens acting with a little more show of life.

Too cold to start the sno-go so had the dogs loose and in the house for a while today to thaw out, dry out and be prepared for another cold night out.

The sun will soon have strength enough to warm the middle of the day a bit. February can in some years be a very pleasant month. Hope that is true this year. We need a break from too many extremes!

January 31 Low -45° F, High -6° F
NW to 20. Clear, few clouds.

A great and wonderful surprise this morning. Turning in with a dead calm and -45° F last night one does not expect to wake up a few hours later with frost gone from door hinge and window edge. Our temperatures had risen to -10° F by 6:00 a.m. with NW winds gently swaying the spruces.

Our “outside” sleeping dogs and we appreciated the change very much. I made a solo quick trip to town for gas and a few things to get us through another blizzard forecast for tomorrow night and Wednesday.

Made good time over and back. The trail is lumpy, but rounded lumps with few sharp ones. One-way time was a bit more than 1 hour, which is good time for the “long” trail through Sisualik. Didn’t see any other travelers though there were many tracks to Sisualik from the burial there yesterday. Here, under the mountains, there was ground drift all day. Sisualik had a bit of drift from the west (NW up here) and Kotzebue was calm all day.

Ravens and our three gray jays only birds noted today, though there were a few willow ptarmigan tracks in the trail. This abundant loose snow and blow with periods of extreme low temperatures may be difficult for some other creatures besides us.

FEBRUARY

February 1 Low -30° F, High -6° F
Calm. Clear.

Lost our warming wind this early morning and temperatures dropping all day. Blizzard forecast for late tonight so temperatures will be back up soon.

Took off this morning with sno-go and dogs to finally break our “straight to town” trail. Very soft trail for dogs and sno-go. We made it to the very edge, but the ‘climb up’ looked too tough. The downhill would go all right but climbing back up before it firms up seemed a way to get stuck with this heavy old 440 and I didn’t want to do that!

The dogs made the round trip and that was heavy exercise even though it is not a long run. Very, very soft.

After loosing the dogs on the way out this morning, I started out the trail and nearly ran down a very large bull moose still carrying antlers. Aachauq, right behind me, didn’t see that one but did focus on a second bull that had been feeding on the edge of the creek. I thought Aachauq wouldn’t come back but he did after a short run. Lots of meat in our spruce patch!

These bulls are holding their antlers pretty late in the year.

Our neighbor chased the caribou group around again today and caught several calves.

Our blizzard for Groundhog Day is slow or late coming. -100° F chill factors are forecast.

February 2 Low -32° F, High 6° F
N to 20, W to 18. Cloudy, snow.

It was indeed a day for groundhogs! Ours, if they did step out of their burrows in response to the 6° F warm temperatures, did not see their shadow – the same as reported by two from different locations Outside⁵.

I did, however, see two “wild” creatures today of considerably greater body mass than groundhogs.

I snowshoed up to the “look out” site and not seeing any caribou I decided to follow the creek back down to the house. As I approached the edge of the creek willows I saw an antlerless moose walking toward me. I got the binoculars on it just as it went out of sight in the willows. Coming along behind it then was a large antlered bull moose, which also turned out of sight in the opposite direction. These moose at this point were in shooting range and as yet unaware of my presence. What to do? We want a moose now but not a male. I had not been able to tell the sex of the antlerless animal in the short look with the binoculars. I moved a bit to a higher location and closer shooting range and waited and looked and waited for ages, getting very chilly. Finally the animal moved to a clearing where I could see it clearly – both front and rear. The antler disks on the head were visible – the rear view was solid dark color – no light or white indication that would mean a female. Both these bulls had antlers 10 days ago when I saw them last. Now I recognized them and headed home. No moose for us yet. It is good to see large animals at close range in all that whiteness.

February 3 Low -8° F, High 22° F
E-SE to 25. Broken clouds.

Lots of excitement and exercise today, but no pay. Temperatures and wind increasing all day.

Taking a short walk from the house down the trail without gun or binoculars I surprised a moose eating willows. Surprised me too! I could see it was antlerless but without binoculars or gun could not see much else. Went back to the house for gun, binoculars and snowshoes. No moose when I went back. I spent the whole morning and more trying to see moose on their fresh tracks right around the house. One stood and fed 50 feet from the running generator while I was somewhere else on his fresh tracks.

The two bulls from up creek yesterday chose this time to pass through and further complicate the fresh track situation. Saw many fresh tracks but nary a moose!

Gave up and since I was close to our “look out” I decided to scan the country before heading home for lunch. Saw 5 caribou from there a distant walk up the creek. With little wind and noisy crusted snow I didn’t have much hope of approaching close enough for a shot. One never knows though and they were busily feeding. Just before reaching a point of long range shot possibility they noticed me and walked off. I returned home to a late lunch and a disturbed wife. Maybe better luck next time. Snowshoeing still tough but getting better – snow compacting.

⁵ With capital “O”, an Alaskan term used to refer to the Lower 48

February 4 Low 10° F, High 26° F
SW to 18. Broken clouds, some sun.

A rather beautiful morning with very bright sun in a narrow clear strip on the horizon as the sun came up. There was off and on sun all day as clouds moved about. Checked the country round about from “look out”. Nothing to see.

Re-broke the trail – straight town trail – down to lagoon edge and snowshoed the climb up but haven’t yet put the sno-go over it – maybe tomorrow.

While feeding one dog the other barked rapidly – staccato. Looking toward him we saw a large black moose looking down on him from about 50 feet.

Carrie came out of the house to see what the barking was about then hollered OH! And dashed back inside for her binoculars. She said that the animal had no antlers. She brought my binoculars too while the moose stood and watched. With binoculars I could see the antler discs, which cancelled the need for a gun. We are still holding out for a female.

The moose eventually tired of staring at us and took off. I went ahead with plans to drag in some half dry wood. The moose didn’t come back after his 10-15 minute examination of our dogs and camp. It is apparently the same smaller bull seen a couple of times earlier in the week. I hope he doesn’t get any braver or we may have to eat our way through another male moose.

February 5 Low 18° F, High 26° F
NE-E-SE to 20. Cloud, occasional snow.

Wood cutting, hauling and then ice to get for house. A friend got in toward evening with three fresh caribou in his sled. It was getting dark, snowing and blowing in Kotzebue with some chance of new overflow. We talked him into overnighting and had a great visit for a change. He is an old friend.

He had run into the two wolf carcasses left by the hunter yesterday and then continued west and got into numbers of caribou in the foothills of the Naugauraq area. He saw a couple of other caribou hunters and he was able, by walking some, to get into a good position to shoot.

The two wolves taken on the Hatchery trail were said to be quite fat.

Our overnighter friend gave us a whole caribou! A young male that does have good meat and bone marrow. We are in need of additional meat and this turned out fine. Will be able to concentrate on a few other things as yet still unfinished. This spell of nice mild weather helps to get caught up.

I did finally get our end of the “straight trail” to town run over and packed down so we can use it this coming week. It shortens our town distance considerably.

February 6 Low 24° F, High 28° F
E-SE to 18 diminishing. Cloud, snow, broken clouds.

A quiet, warm, moderate but not bright Sunday. Winds are down, snow stopped, broken clouds, but only short periods of sun shining through.

I ran over the “short cut” trail I completed yesterday before noon so our visitor could find it to go home on. Wind and more snow during the night had again obscured it most of the way. He made it to town with only a bit of overflow showing outside of the Jones’ trail.

No new tracks around camp but our three gray jays were ecstatic over having three freshly killed caribou in camp and especially over the leftovers of the one I skinned. The hawk owl even attended – watching the jays more than the butchering. I sometimes wonder how often he eats. There is little sign of anything that might be caught by him except the single fresh rabbit (varying hare) track I saw this morning at the second creek crossing. This is the first rabbit track I have seen this winter! There were tracks being made around our nearest neighbor’s camp (5 miles) east of us earlier last month.

Hope there are more coming. Spruce timbered areas in NW Alaska are very lonesome without gray jays and snowshoe hares.

February 7 Low 4° F, High 26° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, some sun north.

Town trip today – a straight one! We were finally able to go down our “straight to town” trail for the first time this year.

I even put a foot in salt-water overflow for the first time in ages. I’m glad it was only a foot! We came to the edge of overflow on Jones’ staked trail. I stopped and walked over near the edge – too near- to check if it was old frozen overflow, since traveler’s trails before us went right into it, or if it was new and wet and not the stuff to get into with a sno-go. Before getting to the edge of the surface visible overflow, the crusted snow broke and I was standing in water an eighth of an inch from the top of my super-insulated cold weather traveling boots. I quickly got out of it. Had I filled the boot with salt water the abundant insulation would never be the same – even when they were thoroughly dried. Salt water does that to some kind of winter clothes. I lucked out and we turned off and simply skirted the wet area. There were no other problems. On the way back the area of overflow seemed to have increased in size.

The sky was clearing this afternoon and rapidly cooling. Now that more solid clouds are back temperatures are up again and our blessed mild weather continues. The classic hare tracks at the second creek crossing look wonderful and clear on the day old snow.

February 8 Low 20° F, High 26° F
NE-E to 18. Cloudy, some breaks.

Nice mild temperatures continue. Would like more sun but at least it is not snowing!

Finally made a new trail to Sisualik to pick up a few things and saw the age old sign that has stirred arctic ice hunters from the very beginning of human habitation of the arctic – the dark reflection of a new open water lead towards the sea at the mouth of Kotzebue Sound. By this time each year, most of the Chukchi Sea and Kotzebue Sound are ice covered. When currents and offshore winds work together long and strong enough, a fracture line develops offshore and on the snow and ice covered vastness a very dark black open ocean water lead gets wider and wider – from a few hundred yards wide to, maybe later, many miles wide. This contrast between black ice-free seawater and white snow covered ice is reflected in detail from low-lying clouds. This is the kisuq – eagerly awaited by knowledgeable ice hunters. It is the concentration point in the winter ice covered sea of all air breathing marine mammals and consequently the winter gathering place of those that would prey on the fat, hair or maktak⁶ covered creatures that live there. Blubber and fat content are at a yearly peak in January, February and March.

The reflection in the sky today will tell you how far out and where you will have to go to partake. It stirs the blood and the spirit.

February 9 Low 16° F, High 22° F
E-SE to 20. Cloudy, snow.

Another couple of inches of snow – very sticky snow at these temperatures.

Grave digging in Sisualik completed in spite of drifting and falling snow. Lots of grave digging this winter. Funeral will be tomorrow. Another of the Williams clan.

Had to shovel and break our trail exits again this afternoon. Saw a few caribou walking slowly toward the west across the creek and north of camp. I did not disturb them. With our gift caribou we are in pretty good shape to wait for a good chance at a larger group that is usually in better condition than smaller groups of stray animals.

Sanningaruq finally has a rabbit trail again! Apparently the snowshoe hare that made tracks down creek a couple of days ago has reached our spruce patch and has run back and forth over the same track a few times, making a real trail. This seems habitual with hares. It makes a maze that is difficult for a predator to follow. A lone hare making a single trail is extremely vulnerable to any predator that runs across the track. In this case there is already a very lightweight fox checking out any trail left in the spruces. Also the daily presence of the hawk owl is a real threat. Unless there are a few more wandering rabbits this one may not last long.

Finally saw the new moon through broken clouds this evening. So far it has been a rare event to see either sun or moon through February cloud cover.

⁶ Whale skin with blubber

February 10 Low 16° F, High 24° F
E-SE to 30. Cloudy, brief sun. Snow late.

There was to be a family funeral and burial today. The funeral was done in Kotzebue. Ground drift was too much for Sisualik burial. We headed down for Sisualik around 1:00 p.m. but turned back from about halfway as wind and ground drift increased.

Each day this week we seem to get a little closer to freezing rain or thawing temperatures. We may make it yet. Our huge load of light fluffy snow has shrunk and firmed up so that snowshoeing is a reasonable way to travel again and not just hard work.

Took a look from our “lookout point” this morning for the small bunch of caribou seen late yesterday. I didn’t locate them. They must have walked on through – moving west toward real caribou land – somewhere between here and Red Dog mine site.

No fresh moose sign around Sanningarug but the snowshoe hare that arrived here is making lots of tracks – exploring every nook and cranny, no doubt disappointed for not finding another rabbit here. The lightweight fox is shadowing his tracks and I’m sure the hawk owl would like to catch him unaware. The flight speed of the hawk owl when in pursuit through the trees is remarkable. The narrow pointed wings are very falcon like.

We appreciate the mild temperature spell but do wish travel conditions would improve. A small weasel finally made tracks around camp. The first since we came back.

February 11 Low 22° F, High 28° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy, snow, some sun.

Finally made it down to Sisualik for the few things Carrie needs for her Anchorage trip next week. Drifting had stopped up here but continues down there.

There is a monster snow bank now from all this new snow and easterly winds. The location of the new house is the cause and it may do some harm eventually to the tent or the dome or both. Our temperature has gotten nearer to thawing tonight. We may yet go above freezing before this mild spell closes down.

Have seen a few willow ptarmigan this week - one flock of near 100. No new tracks last night from our snowshoe hare – only the light fox tracks near camp. Hope the fox hasn’t got the lone rabbit already.

May finally get to make a trip up towards the Hatchery tomorrow. Rumors from Noatak hunters have many caribou near the Hatchery, or at least were near last week.

With the mild temperatures and constant winds the snow is compacting well which helps both snow machine and snowshoe travel. Our sun and moon are getting quite high in the sky, but we seldom get to see either of them. Only short glimpses.

February 12 Low 22° F, High 30° F
E-SE to 20. Cloudy, some sun breaks.

Two boreal chickadees have joined our camp community. We're looking pretty lively in the spruce patch now with three regular gray jays, the hawk owl and now the chickadees and two ravens that really work at "hijacking" the gray jay operation.

A friend came by this evening with a friend and a couple of caribou. We met a new friend and they left us a whole caribou. The same friend left us a caribou last week. I may not get to do much hunting this winter.

More snow in the forecast! Hate to hear that! Enough is enough!

We have a large wide-open lead in the ocean at the mouth of the Kotzebue Sound. There may even be some seal hunters out if winds drop to moderate levels.

A pregnant common ringed seal taken at this date is a precious catch. The size and skin of the unborn pup is very beautiful and large and the adult seal is exceedingly fat, lots of oil in one animal. There are however few seal hunters left.

The caribou hunters saw a cow moose with calf today. Haven't had many moose sighting reports lately.

People are getting out in the country again with the mild weather, abundant snow and long daylight.

February 13 Low 24° F, High 26° F
E-N to 10. Broken clouds, some sun.

Lots of snowshoe hare tracks this morning between the house and the creek. There were none yesterday. If there is only one it must have been racing back and forth all night making tracks. Hopefully there is more than one.

There were also tracks of a large flock of willow ptarmigan in the creek. This is one of those 100 strong flocks. This is the first time this winter a flock that size has been on the creek.

When I took the dogs out for a run we cut a small group of caribou tracks again headed west from the east. As we circled over to Napaqtuuraq we saw the 5-6 caribou running west at top speed.

Chickadees were back – eating around when gray jays didn't interfere.

Also the sun melted outside snow on our dark wooden doorstep today. A first for this February. We had family visitors with three sno-gos this afternoon.

Our visitor occurrence is climbing with improving weather and sno-go trails. Very good out in the country whether on snowshoes or with machine. Most larger creatures can be rather easily caught now because of improved overland trail surface.

Moon is over half already and we can see it plain for a change. Town trip tomorrow. Weather permitting.

February 14 Low 15° F, High 27° F
NE to 15. Cloudy.

Town trip today. Used the real shortcut trail both ways but ice-snow piles are small so there is no major threat to life and limb in not being able to see the floor while traveling.

The trip was short – a little more than 2 hours and mostly without incident.

Mahlon, our son, is in Anchorage for possible surgery. Carrie long ago had an air flight ticket to Anchorage on the 17th, at reduced cost, to attend the Native New Life Musicale. Her sister's husband died last night in Noatak. We are having a lumpy busy time but so far are coping with it. Carrie will be going to Anchorage on the 17th.

Rabbit and willow ptarmigan have made more tracks on or next to our trail. There have been no new larger animal tracks today.

We didn't see any other travelers today, which is strange with so much good trail, mild weather and long daylight hours.

February 15 Low 10° F, High 26° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, snow.

No sun again today and some more snow but the temperatures are great!

Cut more firewood today. We owe our close good firewood this winter to industrious and hungry porcupines. They have killed a number of tall good trees in our (and their) grove of white spruce. Once the tree has died, usually from multi-year feedings, the porcupine no longer has a use for it, but as firewood it is great.

We have a lot of snowshoe hare tracks in the spruce patch now. Too many to be made by one rabbit so I guess we are finally being invaded. It is about time! We feel especially blessed this week with gray jays, chickadees, snowshoe hares, red squirrels and ravens every day.

The mild weather has gotten a few red squirrels out working and they are hard up for cones. They are eating and dropping tip buds from spruce branches. Have noticed this activity in past years when cones are scarce. Don't know how nutritional values compare.

Carrie goes to town tomorrow to begin her Anchorage trip the next morning with a jet flight. Her annual trip at Rony⁷ time to take in the Native Musicale presentation is a good vacation and break in winter routine.

⁷ Fur Rendezvous, commonly known as Fur Rony, is an annual winter carnival held in Anchorage

February 16 Low 8° F, High 18° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, some broken.

Town trip today to get Carrie off to Anchorage and to bring home a drum of gasoline. The trail was good for that and though there was still some “whiteout” the trip went well. The joy is the moderate temperatures. The first half of February has sure been enjoyably mild.

The snow around the country has firmed up well and there is enough of it so that cross country travel is great. Wolves, wolverine and caribou especially near villages will get little rest.

The wide open lead west – offshore of Krusenstern – remains imprinted on the sky and we have not yet heard of any seal hunters venturing out. Man, those seals are fat now with a huge very delicious liver! Makes an old man think of defying the Marine Mammal Act!

Our resident lightweight fox (probably a white one) was right in camp all night scratching up and licking blood from where we skinned the last two gift caribou. This fox has been around for a couple of weeks and is able to operate inside the trees in remarkably soft snow. He/she naturally found the very first rabbit track and apparently worked very hard tracking it without success.

Funeral today in Noatak for Chester Burns Sr., our brother-in-law married to Carrie’s sister Martha. He was well known and well loved after a lifetime of helping people out when boating or engine problems developed during their travels. He will be greatly missed.

February 17 Low 18° F, High 22° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow.

Cut and hauled in some firewood today.

Ran the dogs to the west but saw no sign of live creatures. We had a 2-inch snowfall while cutting wood. The snowfall quit and visibility improved – thought there might be something to see.

Carrie did make it to Anchorage after some flight delay. Alaska Airlines is having some pains. She is due back next Wednesday – a good vacation.

Our camp fox is getting braver and maybe has invited his friends in. Lots of tracks last night and the scraps and lungs of recently butchered caribou left out for gray jays are all gone.

Conditions could not be better for cross-country creature chase. Though this activity is technically illegal, it is widely used in the region for taking fox, caribou, wolf and wolverine, and for spring bear hunting.

Tried again today to see where land is closest to open water on the Krusenstern beach but could not see the edge of the lead from the mountains – fog and light conditions were not good enough. The reflection remains on the clouds but the lead may be several miles off Sealing Point.

We have not yet heard of anyone venturing out there. The weather has been too unpredictable to have a go at long distance hunting or fishing trips.

February 18 Low 19° F, High 23° F
NE to 20. Cloudy, no sun.

Finally got time to look around our side of the mountains. Climbed Miluraq peak and went up the Noatak Pass trail. Didn't see any live thing except a couple of ravens. My points of "look out" covered a lot of country – all the little watersheds of small streams flowing into the lower Noatak on the east slopes of our coastal mountains.

The only caribou we know of now are on the west slopes of these mountains towards Kivalina and the Red Dog road and mine.

There was only one rabbit track and one small marten track at Milluraq. There was one week-old moose track there.

The heavy snow cover has done a lot to move larger animals out of this area – caribou to the west where the land is more windswept and moose to the main stem of the Noatak River where making a living in deep snow is easier.

The cross country surface is fine for travel but caution is still needed around some of the larger steeper draws.

Spruce grouse and red squirrels are noticeably scarce, as are any cones of this year's growth.

Saw only one week-old sno-go trail up the Noatak Pass trail.

Visibility, though not perfect due to lack of sun, was distantly good. It was a disappointing trip to some of my favorite country.

February 19 Low 17° F, High 20° F
N-NE to 18. Cloudy, light snow.

A trip to Sisualik and back with the dogs today to get washing machine and auger. Time to try fishing at lower Noatak Canyon.

Foxes taking over our camp at night. Lots of tracks and leftover dog scraps gone. Have not yet seen them even with a nearly full moon.

No travelers this way today. Nice mild weather but no bright sun. Whiteout conditions prevail and sno-go hunting in the mountains difficult with these continuing conditions.

Two boreal chickadees around Terry's plot today after foxes exposed his food caches and scattered crumbs of fat and meat about.

One wonders on a day like this what “life” is ongoing at the edge of the huge lead running offshore of Cape Krusenstern.

Rabbit tracks seem to disappear as fox tracks increase. Only natural I guess. February is turning out remarkably mild.

February 20 Low 8° F, High 14° F
N-NE to 18 [general conditions not recorded]

Another 2 inches of snow already rolling into piles that will make bumps again when they firm up. Our trails have been quite level and smooth for a while.

Got some ice and had one interesting visitor today. Spent most of the afternoon and evening in conversation.

February 21 Low -7° F, High 10° F
Light winds. Cloudy, some late sun, snow.

Some more snow and a little sun but long daylight. No generator today till 7:00 p.m.

Another aircraft accident in Kotzebue today. The pilot sustained some injuries but passengers none. There have been numerous aircraft mishaps in the past 10 days.

Our temperatures finally dipped below zero again for a change. We haven't seen that since February 3. A rather remarkable long stretch of midwinter above zero temperatures north of the Arctic Circle. We've enjoyed the reprieve from intense cold but we would like to see a little more sun.

An interesting visitor today – an old friend out of Anchorage. We had lots to talk about.

Noticed the first new moose tracks on our creek in a long time at the second creek crossing when I ran the dogs down the trail to mark it for our visitor. No chance to check the animal out today – maybe tomorrow. It's kind of late in the year but we could use the meat. We are still holding for a female though.

No new rabbit tracks from last night. Willow ptarmigan tracks are becoming more common. Glad to see they are coming back from wherever they have been.

Foxes weren't around last night either – chasing our rabbits? Chickadees around again.

February 22 Low -6° F, High 4° F
N-NW to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

Kind of a frustrating day.

I noticed a fresh moose track at second creek crossing yesterday while marking trail for visitor. No time to check

the track out to see what kind of moose due to the visitor. This morning I thought to run over the trail (half of it) to lower Noatak Canyon with the dogs, as we might use it to go fishing if Carrie gets home. After that I would check out the moose track – long days now. I did that, though whiteout and snow in the air continues. The dogs enjoyed running a different direction. There were no fresh tracks of any kind.

After returning home I tied the dogs and went to check the moose tracks. There were two now. One more had come up the creek during last night. Neither had passed our camp not far up creek. I checked here and there but was unable to find where either animal had gone. Open areas were drifted over.

Saw only one fresh rabbit track today in the new snow. At least there is one left after the fox influx.

No sign of human travelers today. When will we get to see that sun? And not suffer whiteout travel conditions.

Carrie is due into Kotzebue tomorrow. Hope the aircraft hold together.

February 23 Low -10° F, High 8° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, some sun, snow.

Town trip today to pick up Carrie. She made it in with visibility very, very limited. Then we made it home OK but with very limited visibility at ground level too. A day of long trips she says. I think she thought those long days of travel were over when we got rid of our dog team. Good to have the communications officer home again.

Wouldn't you know it – the moose that gave me frustrations yesterday walked up the creek past us today while I was in town! If they haven't left the creek I may see them yet – tomorrow.

The number of days that we have recorded snow this month is quite remarkable. I guess the good thing is the amounts are usually in inches and not feet. We sure could have used some of it in November and December.

Received some great help on the gentian project in town today. We may yet see our beautiful little lost or forgotten gentian glorified in the pages of a good nature magazine.

February 24 Low -5° F, High 12° F
NE to 10. Cloudy.

A long period of light winds. No sun and no snow today.

Checked out the moose tracks made while we were gone yesterday. They had come down the creek and were probably a cow and calf, traced them for a while and found that they were just traveling – no feeding.

No travelers today. A quiet, mild, not so bright day.

Saw one rabbit track from overnight. Reports are that tracks are turning up in more and more places of proper habitation within the region. Maybe they really are coming back.

February 25 Low -4° F, High 14° F
NE to 15. Cloudy.

Another town trip for a second drum of gas while the trail is smooth. With all the loose snow in the country, when we do get winds we may come up with a much more “lumpy” snow surface due to wind sculpting than we have now. The surface is remarkably level right now for this time of the year.

The trip went smoothly. No problems.

From the appearance of trail that passes just east of our spruce patch, spring firewood cutting has begun. The trails do originate in Sisualik and the makers of the trail know its proper route. We will soon be using it too to get some spring and summer wood down to Sisualik. With the new house and store we will probably only use ¼ of the amount of wood we would use living in the tent.

Rabbits are making the news not far to the east of us. Some short drives have produced 10 or 20 animals. Our town family is headed up that way this weekend. Spring snowshoe drives in the past were a regular early spring activity. Nearly everyone would take part. Rabbit numbers have been so low for the past twenty years that activity has nearly died out.

Recent caribou sightings have been few. Not sure where they have moved to avoid snow machine harassment. On the other hand snow machines have taken many wolves in the last month. This means a lot less pressure on caribou from the wolf predator.

February 26 Low 0° F, High 10° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, clearing, clear.

Finally a few hours of real sunlight this late afternoon and it was wonderful! Temperatures haven't dropped much with the clearing, which is also great.

Lots of visitors today – a near houseful for a change. At late lunch we had 9 people counting ourselves. A record number for this year.

Enjoyed the various conversations and points of view on favorite subjects.

It was a great day to be out in the country and it was a great day to share with visitors.

After the visitors left I took the dogs for a run on the lower canyon fishing trail and made it to the half way point. Dogs were willing to go farther but the second half begins with a mile of soft unbroken trail into and out of the Noatak River proper.

No tracks of anything but foxes up that way (and sno-go's).

Some of our visitors did go west and saw lots of caribou tracks and a few animals. They also saw the location of the

just begun firewood cut location.

Two boreal chickadees were around camp again today. They are very dark colored, indicating birds of the year.

February 27 Low 0° F, High 10° F
NE-N to 18. Clear.

A very beautiful, bright Sunday day with lots of sun and relatively warm temperatures for such clear weather.

After the many visitors yesterday we expected more today but as often happens there were none. The weather is so fine that there are many other places to go and things to do.

Ice fishing, seal and caribou hunting, rabbit and ptarmigan hunting, wolf and wolverine and fox hunting are all possible weekend outdoor activities right now.

February has turned out to be very mild with little wind and not much sun. It was a good relief from what had come before. Now we wonder what to expect of March.

Following the kind of February we have had, one might expect a lot of wind and sun and maybe some extended periods of cold temperatures. We shall see. One thing is sure and that is the sun will have increasing power to deal with high and low daily temperatures.

We had a very busy group of three chickadees today. Did some meat sawing and “sawdust” composed of meat, bone and fat is always attractive to both gray jays and chickadees.

Heard a few shots in the distance today that sounded like ptarmigan hunters.

February 28 Low -6° F, High 8° F
N-NE to 15. Clear early, clouding late.

Well clouds and “whiteout” traveling conditions are back. Didn’t expect them so soon. Seeing the sun and its brightness in a white world was good.

Replenished the firewood pile today still from close at hand. Haven’t yet checked out the new spring woodcutter’s trail.

Made a Sisualik trip with the dogs this afternoon and saw several single willow ptarmigans right in the trail. With the “whiteout” conditions one doesn’t see the ptarmigan till it flies. Then the dark black feathers of the “fanned” tail show plainly in contrast to all the white.

Fresh land otter tracks on our creek today, the first since our late move up here. It was trying very hard to find a way into the creek bed and the springs there in its constant search for food. He was not having much success as late fall overflow after a low summer water table has pretty well sealed off the springs.

We are gaining a small flock of three boreal chickadees as a part of our camp area community. Three gray jays, three chickadees, two ravens and a hawk owl we haven't seen for a week. He may have starved to death.

Rabbit tracks are increasing.

February 29 Low 8° F, High 20° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy, snow.

Wind and snow and dullness of day are back again. We hope this is outgoing with February and the coming of March will bring something better like sun and brightness.

Went down to get some ice with the two dogs in the middle of a heavy snow shower and lost the trail twice on the way home. The dogs, showing great patience, quickly got me back on the trail. Talk about "whiteout" conditions, wow!

Earlier in the day our nearest neighbor made a trip up to the mountains and got back with a load of caribou. He made it just in time. Later this afternoon would have been miserable and dangerous in the mountains.

We will now have a chance to better estimate the number of snowshoe hares in our spruce patch. With enough new snow it will be interesting to see how long it takes them to track it up again. There does now appear to be enough to set a snare or walk around a bit to catch a couple for pot-roasting. They are apparently drifting in from the east quite rapidly.

Farewell February. Temperature-wise you were great!

MARCH

March 1 Low 18° F, High 24° F
E-SE to 15. Cloudy.

This first day of March seems much like all of February.

Tried to find a source of water to use our washing machine today but didn't make it.

Each winter we use water from springs in the creek. This water is heavily saturated with lime-calcium from our limestone bedrock – not useable for other household needs but does all right for clothes washing. This year a heavy overflow situation after extreme cold before snow cover seems to have sealed off this source of winter liquid.

This frustrates us, and the land otter depends on such springs for sustenance.

I tried making a hole in two different nearby high-banked lakes with the auger today. Both holes have a full thickness of ice (4 ft) but no water – only soft lake bottom. This was a surprise and is no doubt related to the intense cold before Christmas with no snow cover. Muskrats and beaver must be having a tough winter, as well as otters.

The snow on top of the metal drums melted to water today a little after midday. The wooden doorstep also became wet with melted fresh snow. This the first thaw of the year.

March 2 Low 0° F, High 26° F
 N to 18. Clear.

A sunny day from morning till night. It is wonderful to see the full-blown sun on the mostly white world. It was terribly bright in all directions.

Finally found water in the creek for our washing machine. I did what I should have done in the first place. I went a short ways up the creek to where the land otter was also looking for water and access to it a few days ago. He must have been able to hear the sound of running water. I shoveled down through several feet of snow and was able to break through some shell ice into running water 6 to 8 inches deep. It will not be hard to dip all the water we will need and haul it in 2¼ mile on my wood haul road.

Later this afternoon I loosed the dogs and ran up the trail to the lower Noatak Canyon. Broke the trail right down into the Noatak River. There is always a mile or two of sheltered very soft snow just before getting into the river. The dogs had a slow time there but once our track of today freezes we will have a good trail to go fishing.

The dogs enjoyed their long trek into a different area.

We saw tracks of three moose trying to make it into the main river from Jones' Camp side.

March 3 Low 4° F, High 18° F
 N to 18. Clear.

Town trip today. Some ground drift on the way over, none on return. The trail windblown and a little lumpy but small lumps – a pretty fast trail and lots of sun in the eyes on the way over.

Plans for our time next week were made more complex by today's visit to town. Everything seems to be happening at once. There is planned a visit by NPS⁸ on Wednesday, the same day a symposium on global warming is to be drawn up. Then there is Mid-Year Conference⁹ among Friends at Noorvik, to begin on, you guessed it, Wednesday March 8. We will have to do some adjusting.

A few fox and willow ptarmigan tracks along our trail but nothing larger.

⁸ National Park Service

⁹ Friends Church

Chickadees and gray jays still busy at camp when we returned. Nephew headed into town.

Phone call report this morning of a good catch of shee¹⁰ near east shore of Kobuk Lake.¹¹ One hole produced 70 and others some less. Some fish were of good size. Time to go fishing all right! One's allotted time each day gets more filled as daylight time increases. Soon there will be no time to sleep!

March 4 Low -4° F, High 6° F
 NE to 15. Clear, few clouds.

A recovery day from the town trip yesterday – mostly mental fatigue not physical!

Ran the dogs up toward Noatak River again keeping the river trail packed down for the day we do load up tuq, hooks and auger for an ice-fishing trip.

Just around suppertime a snow machine drove in with a friend who had been on a camping trip on the Noatak. They had a mean story of dropping one machine through the ice on Eli River, steep edges but not much water. Difficult to get the machine out if the driver was alone. Appears to be a case of unusual shell ice due maybe to dammed overflow water.

We had some long conversation of various subjects of mutual interest – mostly on the theme of authorship.

We are hungry for willow ptarmigan again and though I've seen numerous fresh tracks I can't run into live birds.

Most travelers today were probably on Kobuk Lake at the shee fishing sites.

March 5 Low 4° F, High 33° F
 E-SE to 25. Cloud. Some glimpses of sun.

Our first day of above freezing temperatures for this new century. We had a pleasant soft wind with no precipitation. Very nice but sticky snow if you were to drop something on the snow surface.

Our white spruce were shedding those heavy winter branch snow piles this afternoon with the warm dry wind shaking the now limber tree trunks in an early spring dance display.

A wandering flock of redpolls joined in with the dancing trees in an early pre-spring rejoicing for surviving the winter. Hope their rejoicing is not too early. March is famous for its strong westerlies that bring extreme cold conditions out of Siberia.

We had a couple of late afternoon visitors to share Sunday with. Some fine sharing of conversation.

We were just alerted by a couple of sharp barks by our dog that never barks. Opened the door with a flashlight

¹⁰ Sheefish (*Stenodus leucichthys*, or *inconnu*)

¹¹ Local name for Hotham Inlet

ready, expecting moose, polar bear or an early rising brown bear, but saw instead a frightened cross fox streaking out of camp. We have had fox tracks in camp each night for a couple of weeks but this is a first sighting. Red fox mating season is well under way and it is the season for sick and rabid foxes to be more common than in any other time period during the year.

Got water from the creek for our washing machine tomorrow.

March 6 Low 26° F, High 30° F
E-SE to 35. Some clouds, some sun.

Very strong, very warm winds for the date.

We did our first washing machine wash of the winter today. The combination of warm wind, mild temperatures and the location of a creek water source (unfrozen) prompted us to fire up the washer.

In our spruce patch it was a beautiful day. Outside the ground drift of very coarse sand-like snow was pretty miserable.

Word has come that good catches of sheefish are being made on hooks at the mouth of the Noatak River. This is kind of an earlier repeat of the huge catch made last year made along the delta of the Noatak last year – for the first time in history. Something is going on with sheefish life pattern dynamics.

Cut a very old large gnarled and convoluted tree yesterday. It had died but only within the last year and I stand in awe of its longevity in relation to other living life forms around the area. Its old and much lumped limbs and trunk give testimony to a long but hard life – many and hard interruptions to the growing and living process. The will to live must have been very strong in this tree several hundred years ago and throughout. The heart was completely hollow to a height of 8 feet on the trunk. Have never seen anything quite like it in old trees. The wood surrounding the hollow heart is very dry, firm and resinous – very good and precious firewood.

March 7 Low 16° F, High 28° F
E-SE to 25. Clouds and sun.

A first fishing trip today to the mouth of Noatak River. No luck. Two days too late. From the looks of blood and head and gut piles enough fish were taken from that location. A friend who was there too today did get a few fish and gave us the biggest to take home and cook.

There was steady ground drift, which makes ice fishing kind of miserable – when there aren't any fish biting.

I didn't wear sunglasses, though I know better, it is almost mid-March. I always hate to start the inconvenience of wearing sunglasses. I hope I haven't overdone it today. Haven't been "snow blind" for years and I really don't want to go through that again.

The fish we cooked for supper had both herring and saffron cod in the stomach.

The long steady mild east winds have taken away a lot of our snow. Old trails are beginning to stand up in high relief and ground and tussocks are showing again.

We are having visitor conflicts again. Haven't had that problem for a while. Two different groups want to come tomorrow. We had it planned well enough with one tomorrow and one Thursday. Both groups have folks from out of the region.

March 8 Low 5° F, High 22° F
E-SE to 18. Clear, few clouds.

We will long remember March 8th 2000 as the day the New Yorkers came. We enjoyed a rather full day with an NBC TV crew, all four from New York City. It was an adventure for both us and them I expect.

Our three chickadees, three gray jays and two dogs performed well but the two ravens were no-shows.

It was a rather perfect March day with warm sun in our sheltered spot. The more so because of the contrast to the wind and ground drift between here and Kotzebue.

One can imagine that a visit to our humble spruce patch is quite a contrast to the daily lives these folks live "back home."

It was interesting to share with them for a time the contrasts and to see our place in the world through the eyes of others.

It was a fine day today. The early spring break in routine may have been good for both of us.

March 9 Low 10° F, High 19° F
E-SE to 30. Mixed clouds and sun.

Weather cancelled another group coming out of Kotzebue for a visit here; east winds to 40 in Kotzebue made it too difficult for the crew to make a try. Drifting snow that has been constant but low to the ground had lifted higher with increased winds and made travel hazardous.

I ran down the trail with the dogs to the tidelands and found drifting snow all the way up from the base of our tablelands to Kotzebue but none from there up to our place and on into the mountains.

Milder temperatures on the uplands these last few days have cemented our ground cover snow down, whereas that on the ice and tidelands has been rolling along continually.

Friends Mid-Year Conference is ongoing in Noorvik since yesterday and will continue through Sunday. Many people will be there from our region and throughout the state. It is usually the biggest yearly event in the villages. Often the population of the village is doubled during the time of the meetings.

NANA Day¹² will happen on Monday to take advantage of the many visiting shareholders and assure a quorum for purposes of NANA business activities.

Carrie will be flying up tomorrow and home on Tuesday if all goes well.

March 10 Low 8° F, High 16° F
E to 30. Clear, ground drift.

Took Carrie to town today for her trip to Noorvik Friends Conference and NANA Day.

Pretty heavy ground drift this morning when we crossed to town. It was better than yesterday, and drifting was slacking by mid-afternoon in time for trip home. The trail on the ice crossing has gotten pretty rough with hard sculpted snow. Three miles of our straight town trail from tablelands to Sisualik staked trail out in front of Nuvuruq (Sisualik Point) is especially bad – rough on machine and driver. The well-used main staked trail is not bad and up here on the tablelands remain good.

The population of Noorvik may triple for the next three days with both Friends Mid-Year Conference and NANA Day on Monday.

Lots of people, lots of fun, lots of good messages and business taken care of. Lots of food will be eaten and houses will be crowded, but the folks of Noorvik will be proud and glad to be able to take care of so many for a while.

I may make a solo trip to the Noatak Lower Canyon tomorrow with the two dogs to visit the stone images of Eskimo and Indian there. I will take the ice auger and check on the burbot too.

March 11 Low 4° F, High 22° F
Light winds. Clear.

A very fine sunny day today with both Northern Lights and moon tonight.

Made a trip to the Noatak River Lower Canyon today with my two dogs – and are they tired tonight! Some parts of the river were soft going for them.

There were more moose tracks in the lower river than usual. Saw one snowshoe hare crossing the river east to west.

Very few willow ptarmigan tracks.

The ice was not too thick. Made two holes with the auger at usual fishing location in front of John Goodman's house – one over shallow water at river's edge, the other farther off the edge in two fathoms of water. Had hook moving in the holes for several hours with no sign of anything alive in the water. Wonder what has happened to this ancient fishing place. It has been unproductive for several years now.

¹² NANA is the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Native Regional Corporation for the area

There was about 36 inches of ice. It was very warm from the sun under the dark riverbank. The dogs enjoyed a blissful rest in the sun.

The Ancient Indian with bow was still there as was the Eskimo woman with baby on her back. Amaktut – a terrifying scene frozen in stone.

March 12 Low 7° F, High 27° F
E to 18. Clouds and sun.

East winds and mild temperatures continue and our land surface is getting that “long continued mild wind” look. That means dark east facing mountainsides that used to be white, and even dark exposed tussock patches that used to be a continuous white plain on the tablelands.

Found out today that we are being invaded again by the smallest of all northern mammals. This happens periodically and considerable damage to choice stored food can be done before it is noticed that the invasion has occurred.

The surface all over the country is now ideal for distance travel of shrews, those small barefooted meat and fish eaters that require huge quantities of food to keep their body heat high enough for survival in the cold of the arctic. There have been a few around this winter but now those edible things we have been careless with are being eaten. Our system for dealing with them is to store meat or fish in empty fuel drums. We had a sack of frozen fat whitefish lying out unprotected because we were eating lunch from the frozen fish each day. Today I found several fish on the underside (against the ground-snow) with only skin and bones intact – a “hollow” fish. This is normal shrew behavior – eat the flesh away from inside, and fat flesh is soft enough at the temperatures we have been having.

March 13 Low 6° F, High 24° F
Light winds. Cloudy a.m., clearing.

A trip into the mountains – caribou country. Caribou country seemed more like sheep country today. I saw a good number of caribou (200) but all up in the dark black rocks.

Went through Igglauyak pass that one takes from here to hit the Noatak River at the big bend at Nauyarak. Saw only one small group of seven caribou down in the Noatak white country, all the rest were on the large black mountain (no snow) called Qaksugrauyak.

There being no wind, every caribou on the mountain knew when I arrived by sno-go.

Spent the day walking and climbing in the snow free rocks, hoping for a good chance to shoot a couple of caribou. The good chance never came. Twice I could have tried long shots but thought I might have a better opportunity. Never did, so I turned homeward without shooting.

I did pick up some firewood and located a good place to cut firewood for Sisualik.

There was a mile or so of very rough wind sculpted snow right in the pass. Very, very rough sno-go trail. Both lower sides of the pass were pretty smooth.

NANA Day in Noorvik today. A big time for Carrie. She may make it home tomorrow.

March 14 Low 12° F, High 28° F
NE to 15. Some clouds, lots of sun.

Made a trip to Sisualik with the dogs this morning and had a chance to admire the huge snowdrift that has developed in the lee of the new house. It is a monster but so far has left both the tent and dome clear. There will be a lot of snow to melt this spring. Lots of water for washer and dish water.

Carrie thought she wouldn't make it home till tomorrow morning but a phone call around 5:30 p.m. alerted me that she would make it in to Kotzebue in an hour or so.

I started in around 7:00 p.m. to pick her up and found the roughest trail yet into Kotzebue. I saw this nice straight old track made by two sno-gos headed straight into Kotzebue from our beach marker, rather than going down to the Sisualik staked trail like we usually do. I thought o-boy, that should be quicker – a direct straight line. I followed them. Man! Talk about rough snow lumps. Absolutely the worst trail I have seen all winter. Shorter? Yes, but one must slow to half speed to even survive. It took me twice as long to get to town as it would have had I followed the longer route.

After picking up Carrie we returned by the longer route and the contrast was remarkable. The staked trail is like a groomed trail because of the steady usage it gets every day during snowdrift making weather. All the bad sharp lumps are rounded off. So I learn again that the shortest distance between two points is seldom the best trail.

March 15 Low 16° F, High 27° F
N-NE to 15. Clear.

Too fine weather to stay home all right, but we did to rest up and sober up after our various adventures of the last few days. With caribou in the mountains, sheefish at Noatak and a trail to dry firewood it is hard to stay home for any reason.

Our bird community is showing a lot of increased activity this week. Gray jays are chasing each other for fighting or loving (both). A pair of ravens are making many un-raven like noises, staying closer together in both flying and perching than they probably should. Even the three boreal chickadees seem hyperactive. None of us creatures under the sun really want to believe that spring is that close at hand and be disappointed, but the mild spell has lasted so long that these early nesting birds maybe cannot help but believe. Someone may be fortunate enough to see an early arriving golden eagle or rough-legged hawk.

Willow ptarmigan seem to be filtering back into our country after near absence earlier in 2000 AD.

We ate ptarmigan tonight. Gift birds and were they good! The broth from boiled (long boiled) willow ptarmigan is

one of the best ever foods of the north. It is not only deliciously tasty but seems therapeutic, no doubt on the same line as the famous chicken soup remedy touted today by many grandmothers.

Mid-Year Conference is over. This is March 15 and spring is just around the corner. The birds may have it right!

March 16 Low 12° F, High 20° F
N-NE to 20. Clear, clouding over.

Got off for sheefishing this morning at about 9:30 a.m. We should have gotten off about 6:30 as the fish catcher early birds were already pulling many fish by the time we got at the mouth of the river around 10:30.

We did get 8 fish this time after making a couple of new holes in the 3½-foot ice. Two of them were good fish, over 36 inches and 15 lbs.

Our Sisualik friend and neighbor with his boy got 80 – a real good sled load. This catch was made on the edge of the bar on the west side of the Noatak mouth channel a mile and a half out from the delta proper. Some very good fish were taken – 15-20 lbs. Their stomachs were mostly quite full, always with a mix of saffron cod and herring. There was an interesting pattern in the stomach contents of the 8 that we took. All had a mix of cod and herring. None had all herring or all cod. This seems to indicate that the sheefish have abundant prey to choose from and may account for the unusual abrupt stopping of feeding around 12:30 along the line of fishers.

There was rather heavy ground drift from our trail at tideland's edge to nearly the mouth of the river but none at the fishing location.

There were a lot of late afternoon snow machine fishers out of Kotzebue, but hardly any catch. This was a day for early birds.

March 17 Low 19° F, High 24° F
N-NE to 15. Cloudy, snow.

A cloudy day of light snow all day with only 1½ inches accumulation.

We made a whiteout trip to Sisualik with the dogs to get some oil and do a few chores. Pretty monstrous sculptured snow banks down there. Very icy – hard texture too. I did manage to get into the old oil storage cache.

We heard of a Kotzebue hunter taking a lynx today but no hint of where he took it. It has been a long time since we have heard of a lynx catch.

Our snowshoe hare tracks continue to slowly increase. I have not seen a live rabbit yet but haven't spent time looking for one. I'm just glad to see fresh tracks in the fresh snow.

No exciting fish catch reports today. We did hear from some that went up to try but came home with negative results.

March is slipping by fast with these mild temperatures. Would like to have a couple of more caribou since I have given up for a suitable moose for the year. Our late move inland cancelled out our usual female moose hunt opportunity and we didn't want a male again.

March 18 Low 4° F, High 25° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds.

A fine clear day to be out fishing or something but must do chores sometime. Did many of them today.

Was surprised to see the hawk owl perched on my upstanding snowshoes when I opened the door this afternoon. Haven't seen him for a couple of weeks. We thought he had starved out. Don't know what he was doing on the snowshoes. The gray jays were giving him trouble. He was later sitting in his usual perch in the top of a tree watching the three chickadees and three gray jays.

No travelers or visitors this way today. Sheefishing and caribou hunting have attracted most folks that can travel this weekend.

Got my chainsaw cleaned, a broken bolt on the sled changed and my income tax papers completed.

Red squirrels have not had much to be happy about this winter and they are not showing much activity around the house. There are a couple of larger colonies north and south of us on the creek and tracks show more activity around there than the one or two individuals we have near the house.

It will be good to see a different bird again. Our winter species have been pretty limited this year (raven, willow ptarmigan, gray jay, redpoll, hawk owl and snowy owl).

Moon is nearing full but nights are short (10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.).

March 19 Low -6° F, High 20° F
Light N-NE. Clear.

A very bright Sunday and warm sun in front of the cabin door. Our temperatures did drop below zero last night for only the second time this month. That adds up to a very mild March – to date. Tomorrow is the first day of spring. Since we have already had spring in March one looks forward to the next month with some hesitation. What next? A return to winter? A continued moderate falling into a very early spring? The gut feeling is we may have some cold, rough weather yet. The specter of strong west winds is ever present at this season.

No visitors this weekend. The trails on the ice to our place are pretty rough and trails to other places that are more interesting are better. One may go fishing (sheefish) or hunting (caribou) with much better trails than our town crossing.

The hawk owl was back today and some extra gray jays. Camp birds are pretty lively. Each species seeking to avoid the other but all hoping to find a little human generated food in this land of snow, ice and trees.

Heard that a couple of fishermen had a good day on the east shore of Kobuk Lake. That spot will have many fishers tomorrow – a stampede!

We will make a town trip tomorrow.

March 20 Low 0° F, High 20° F
Light N winds. Clear.

Stomach flu struck me hard late last night and early this morning, canceling our planned town trip. Haven't been sick for so long that I don't quite know how to handle it. The condition regularly occurs during and after conferences when lots of folks from different places transport organisms that are new or that our immune system cannot handle.

Since our woodpile is down I had to get in a few sticks to see us through. Kept me moving and probably moving is better than not, since muscle and bone ache is a part of the package.

It is a pain to be out of traveling condition during this fine weather with many early spring things to do: firewood cut, caribou hunt, sheefishing and seal hunting.

We did hear that for the first time that we know of, three hunters from Kotzebue went down to open water edge off Krusenstern. They did not stay long and didn't report seeing anything in the water.

There is also some rumor about that some king crab traps are being set off Krusenstern. This is a new activity and is showing some surprising results, as we were thought to be too far north for any numbers of king crab.

March 21 Low -8° F, High 18° F
N to 15. Clear.

Town trip today. Two – three miles of trail very lumpy, still – the rest is tolerable.

There has been the usual increase in travel over major trails that early spring brings. For some time now, weather has been ideal for distant travel – long sun warmed daylight hours and a “growing to full” moon if the traveler runs out of daylight hours.

Not a lot of news of doings around town right now as those that make news are out doing it somewhere and word of it hasn't yet got around – sheefishing, trout fishing, seal hunting, caribou hunting.

My physical problems yesterday, which were intense, were gone this morning after a long peaceful sleep. I am very grateful for this quick healing trend and dread the day when the body won't respond so quickly to ailments. So far so good.

Our plans for coming days include some more sheefishing, summer-spring firewood cut and haul and a check for some backcountry species (caribou).

March 22 Low -16° F, High 12° F
N-NE to 18. Clear.

An early trip into the mountains today that stretched into a very long day.

I went up through the main pass into the Noatak River (Iglauyak) where I located a good pocket of dry wood for spring-summer last week. Using snowshoes I packed a haul trail down for use when it firms up. This is necessary “old time” procedure for making a wood haul trail into a timber patch. The real sno-go jocks do it with hard riding machines.

After finishing this chore in the last spruce patch this side of the pass I went back up to the sno-go and found fresh moose tracks that weren't there when I left the machine. He could have stolen it – if he knew how to drive!

Decided to go on up into the pass to check for caribou. Did that and right in the middle of the pass where the other side came into view I stopped to check with binoculars.

The first thing I saw was a group of 11 bull caribou moving off already from my intrusion into their domain. They were moving in an unhurried manner but looking over their shoulders in my direction – a sure indicator that my engine noise had been heard. The caribou in these mountains are real spooky to sno-go engine noise at this season, having been much chased through the winter.

These traveled on for a while, and realizing that they weren't being chased climbed to some rocks and began feeding – soon to relax in the hillside – I hoped. I donned snowshoes and started a very long stalk, as there was little wind and noisy snow to walk on. I did manage to get down into the creek below them where soft snow made quiet walking and then up behind a rock on snow free rocky ground. Very silent walking. When I got to where I thought they might be in shooting range, if they were still there, I peeked around the side of a rocky hump. They were still there! Lying down. The range was long but reasonable and getting closer was too risky. One stood up and turned sideways. He was a pretty good target. I fired and he was hit but still standing. The others were up and off but only a few steps – several still in sight up the hill. I fired again and another was hit but still up. The group was moving off rapidly and I fired a couple of more shots with no evident results. Everything out of sight. I had to reload my rifle, put snowshoes back on and climb up to see what had happened. When I got higher I could see one animal standing not far from where he had been hit and another lying flat out. As I watched, the standing animal laid down, never to rise again. I walked to the animals close together and finished the still alive one and then further to see where the rest had gone. They were just over the hill still in rifle range. I had enough – at least until I had checked meat quality. One of the killed animals had good mesentery fat, the other not much. They both will be useable meat, one better than the other.

March 23 Low -24° F, High 10° F
N-NW to 18. Clear.

Back to winter temperatures but lots of warm sun out of the wind.

Carrie down with post conference flu. Two or three days after she recovers I'll be down – it's a kind of health

hazard.

Had to shoot a red fox in camp with the shotgun, with dogs barking and daylight coming. Was surprised how quickly the steel shot killed at 40 yards. He was eating from the caribou taken home yesterday where we had skinned and taken off a hind leg for family late yesterday, he and maybe others had almost finished the rump and most of the other hind leg. Foxes, like bears, become problems around camp when they become overly tame.

Finished skinning out the caribou today and meat put away.

We had very tasty soup tonight. One hind leg “patik” bone and half the brisket made a wonderful broth. Bulls in March and April are like that when they have wintered well. Bones become thin and soft with new growth of antlers beginning. Very little fat shows on the outside and the animals look ugly with moth eaten hair, ribs and hipbones showing, and enlarged botfly grubs under the skin. Underneath all of that the changing bones (brisket and marrow bones) are just loaded with nourishing oil and juices. The broth-soup from these animals at this season is some of the best food of the north.

Got both ice and wood today, as both were in short supply.

There is not much hint of global warming in our forecast for the next few days.

March 24 Low -7° F, High 11° F
 N-NW to 18. Clear, clouding over late.

Another very fine day in sheltered places.

Made a town trip alone as Carrie is just coming out of a bout with the flu. She is winning and is almost back together this evening.

I got a drum of gas (\$110.98 now) and picked up Carrie’s shipment of huge rainbow smelt from Pt. Lay. We have family there and around this time of year they can get large quantities of extra large smelt on hooks. The females have large roe sacks and will spawn in their lagoon system streams early this spring. We have the same species in Kotzebue Sound, but these from Pt. Lay run almost twice the size in some years. This is the wonder fish that makes its own antifreeze that allows it to be active in super cooled waters of high salinity - the “glycol” fish.

We had all we could eat tonight and they are a good fried treat.

The weather bureau suggests that we have some weather coming – including clouds and snow with probably westerly winds. We may yet have a cold spell before spring gets underway.

Shrew and vole tracks are becoming quite common on the snow surface in various places, even in the rocky mountains west of us where caribou are still wintering.

March 25 Low -19° F, High 6° F
Light winds. Cloudy, some sun.

Cool and dull today after so many mild and bright days.

Got a little firewood, a little ice with dogs running loose.

Didn't see or hear any travelers today. There is a basketball tournament on in town and sno-go race in Kiana and probably some sheefishing in between.

The report is that Buckland has many and fat caribou close at hand. Local hunters have all they meat they want and are not hunting. Our bulls to the northwest – up in the rocks – are not as spectacular but are certainly good meat with fine bones for soup and pot roast.

We have two moose back in our creek again in between the two trail crossings. By tracks they look to be a large cow and calf. The hunting season for bulls and cows without calf is still open (till March 31). Hope these make it through the danger period.

Our spruce patch feels more like home again after seeing snowshoe hare tracks right by the generator shed. These are the first tracks made close to the house, though we have gained a small population in the better habitat along the creek in the last two months.

Chickadees and gray jays spend many hours each day picking at blood and meat sawdust in front of our door where the sun warms each midday.

March 26 Low -25° F, High 0° F
N to 15. Cloudy, some sun.

A quiet Sunday with Carrie down again with joint problems – ankles and wrist.

Late this afternoon I started the sno-go, loosed the dogs and started down the town trail. Got just outside our spruce patch and met a friend with his little girl coming for a visit. No time to have two wild dogs just off their chains running loose. I told him to go on in to Carrie and I would be back shortly.

We had a good visit and a supper of good bull caribou bones from the latest catch – a favorite dish.

Dogs had a short run and were disappointed but there will be another day and the visit with other folks was very special time.

March 27 Low 0° F, High 6° F
W-NW to 15. Cloudy, snow.

Not much change in Carrie's condition – ankles and wrist. Hard for her to get around. If it is true that it is a replay

of last spring's problem she will be showing some improvement by tomorrow. I'm pretty well tied to the house till she is able to get around better.

The 1½ inches of new snow has changed the looks of things again. That "April sun thawing" look is temporarily gone and clouds have inhibited the sun's ability to warm/thaw at midday.

Maybe it will be back in power again soon and get on with dealing with our snow cover.

Chickadees and gray jays not happy with new snow covering tidbits of food on the old snow surface.

A search is on again in the Buckland area for overdue travelers. Flying weather very poor today.

March 28 Low -14° F, High 8° F
NE-E to 18. Cloudy, snow, clearing.

The search was reported successful this morning with missing travelers on their way to Buckland.

Carrie is better today but a long way to go yet.

We have nearly three inches of new snow around and it changes the face of things again. When the air and sky cleared this afternoon it was wonderfully bright and white. Took the dogs up towards the mountains and they had a good run and great new snow to roll and roll in every time we stopped for a while. There were no fresh tracks, the last of the snow coming too late in the morning to be tracked up by nocturnal creature activities.

Made some meat sawdust and hung some new caribou fat for our camp birds since old scraps are, for a while, hidden by new snow.

The sun warmed enough late afternoon to melt new flakes around dark things.

An extended family messenger delivered some medicine for Carrie this afternoon using a near new racing machine. He made a quick crossing.

The moose cow and calf finally passed here on their way up creek.

March 29 Low -15° F, High 20° F
N to 18. Clear, clouding p.m.

A very beautiful and warm day in spruce patches on south facing slopes. The night was cold but a mid-morning wind brought temperatures above 0° F fast.

Carrie is some better today. This very slow recovery from the worst down day is very typical of her condition.

I got wood for a couple of more days from close by. I would like to be at woodcutting for spring and summer camp

but Carrie can't manage alone for long at the house yet.

Friends/family dropped by on their way home to Noatak after attending a funeral in Buckland this week. They had quite a load of people for their sled and sno-go. They did make it to Noatak after several hours.

April is getting close. When I went out to shut down the generator last night at 11:30 p.m. there was still daylight in the sky to the far NW. April is our first month with night around daylight in the sky. Different birds will be not far behind.

More snow forecast tonight. We expected strong winds and cold temperatures in March. That didn't happen so now we fear an April with unseasonable wind and cold or an early spring.

March 30 Low 10° F, High 30° F
Light winds. Clear, clouding late.

Lots of visitors on this beautiful day. A party of friends from NPS came and brought treats and gifts and to introduce a new friend and worker. Everyone enjoyed the trip, the fresh air, the warm sun and the conversation. The visit was good for Carrie and she may be near getting round the house on her own.

Ran the dogs late and short. Terry didn't even go – staying home to loot Achauq's food caches.

Another friend called in the afternoon asking if we wanted rabbits. He had gotten some on the lower Kobuk Delta and would deliver some. We told him of the NPS group coming mid-afternoon and he said he would come in the evening but he didn't make it. Hope we see him tomorrow. He may be running the big sno-go race on Saturday.

That race will pass just east of us and may have a record high entrance fee of \$610. It is an annual event.

March 31 Low 4° F, High 14° F
Light SW-W winds. Cloudy, snow.

Can't believe we are that close to April! Where has the winter gone? And it was a strange one – too good. The two month delay getting here to winter quarters has made a world of difference, especially since "winter coldness" happened mostly in those two months just before Christmas in which we were delayed due to lack of snow.

Carrie is slowly better. She may be able to get around the cabin tomorrow enough so that I can make a trip to town for some needed things.

We are a week or so behind in our things to do before moving back down to the sea beach for spring and summer. That more usually occurs around May 1st while we were in a tent there. With the warm little new house with a big window we may consider an earlier move.

Only 30 days now till Jonathan Livingston Seagull's return. Wonder how his winter has gone. There were some strange movements on his part last October.

In some years of light snow willow ptarmigan are beginning to show dark feathers on their heads by now, the last week of March. I have not seen ptarmigan this week. There are some around but not many. Our snow cover is rather light for this date.

Moose and caribou have wintered pretty well in our area, not being confined to overused feeding areas by heavy snow cover.

Even though winter has been mild, spring will be much welcomed with its warming and life-growth giving sun.

APRIL

April 1 Low -12° F, High 14° F
Light winds. A.M. snow, fog. P.M. clear.

We have about 3 inches of very light fluffy new snow on our surface, all over equal – there being no wind. When the snowing stopped and fog cleared the world was super-white.

Made an early trip into town for some groceries and medicine. Visibility near zero both ways.

Just after noon everything cleared and the big sno-go race was on after a two-hour postponement.

After returning from town and lunch I ran the dogs up the trail to mountains and the pass. The country and mountains were bright and big – lots of sun on new snow surface.

Since it was so nice I let the dogs go right up into this side of the pass.

I was surprised to see 15-20 caribou running just the other side of the pass. I turned back quickly hoping the dogs would too before they saw or smelled the animals. Aachauq did but Terry had gotten a hint of what was ahead. We went back down the trail towards home and stopped for twenty minutes waiting for Terry. Was glad to see him coming back down the trail.

He apparently didn't want to go into all that country with animals alone. He wanted help all right.

These caribou were right on the boundary they have established for themselves this winter. It is almost like an electric fence. They will not come east of that mountain and the pass. This is a strange characteristic of wintering caribou groups.

April 2 Low -7° F, High 22° F
Light winds. Clear.

Saw a flock of 15 willow ptarmigan today. Didn't see any black heads. Some males in some years of light snow

cover begin showing dark feathers on the head the last week of March. By late April most males are dark headed. Display activities commence with this color change.

Carrie is still unable to walk but feeling much better and thinks she will be up and around again this week. We hope so – we must get at things that April demands – being the last solid surface month in our part of the north.

No travelers/visitors today. With the 2-3 inches of new snow still not windblown it is terribly white/bright out away from the spruce patch.

A single day out without eye protection of some sort right now can mean painful snow blindness.

Gray jays, chickadees and the two ravens liven the world around the cabin. One wonders what goes on within a white spruce tree at this time of year. Much bright sunlight and fairly high midday temperatures against trunk, cambium layer, and green needles must trigger some life and living processes and the insect community there must get some early spring charging.

Hopefully I'll be able to get at some firewood cut and hauled this week.

April 3 Low -12° F, High 26° F
 NE to 15. Clear.

Began spring firewood cut today at the nice little patch of porcupine-killed white spruce right at the head of this creek we live on. The location is on the E-SE facing edge of Iglauyak Pass.

There were four caribou in sight right in the pass.

The top layer of new snow had drifted at higher elevation. It has not moved yet at all at lower elevation sites.

I managed to make it over the trail snowshoed out last week into the trees where the dry wood is. It went so well that I only went over it once before I started cutting wood. My intent was to load lightly going out, as trail is not well packed yet.

I cut wood for several hours, cutting each tree to stove length "rounds" intending a new haul system this year. We normally haul 7 to 8 foot sections and saw to stove length during the summer.

As it came time to go home to Carrie for lunch – she is still "bed bound" but feeling pretty good – I started up the soft trail with light load but, wouldn't you know it, the track began to spin without making forward progress – stuck with a load – the worst possible scenario. I did get the sno-go up on surface again and moved the sled up to it on firmer trail. Made it out of the woods – this time – and home for lunch. There was some tiring strain getting unstuck on the uphill haul, but after lunch I felt good enough to go up and do some more cutting before competition turns up. Did that and got home the second time at 6:00 p.m. Long day but beautifully seasoned dry wood and lots of it. It is a real great privilege to work in that kind of dry firewood.

April 4 Low 6° F, High 28° F
NE to 18. Clear, few clouds a.m.

Another fine day. More icicles and soft snow around dark things in sheltered places at midday.

Routine broken last night – not much sleep. Dogs barked (fox in the yard). Carrie accidentally kicked her own sore ankle and later woke with bad case of diarrhea. Made coffee at 5:00 a.m. as more sleep seemed unlikely. Had hopes of cutting wood all day but the fractured night got in the way. Did get up to the wood cut area for a few hours and got the best ones down but a lot of sawing and hauling to go yet.

Carrie continues to get slowly better but still can't stand on her ankle, which means household chores are still a big part of my day. She is in much better spirits which means she'll be back on line soon.

Saw a lone boreal chickadee up at the wood cut today and signs indicate that there is a woodpecker around. So much habitat this time of year and so few birds. Quite a contrast to what it will be when migrants pour in next month.

Saw the over wintering hawk owl this evening again which means he managed to survive the whole winter on The Lord only knows what. Now there is a hardy bird!

Saw the tracks of another survivor yesterday. A land otter arrived overland on our creek and hopefully found a way into water and food. These amazing creatures can get into winter trouble too as they require special habitat to feed themselves and keep things together during long extreme cold spells. The nature of our freeze-up and cold weather without snow before Christmas may have been hard on them, though the weather after Christmas has been mild.

April 5 Low 6° F, High 25° F
NE to 18. Clear.

A most beautiful day today from mountaintop to ocean beach and those are the places I have been today – in person!

Went up to the wood cut area right at the head of the pass on our creek. I sawed into stove length blocks some of the trees felled earlier this week and loaded the largest into the sled and just barely made the climb out to the downhill trail. Stopped here for lunch, loaded a few more blocks, and took them down to the Sisualik camp on the sea beach. Both the mountains and the beach were warmed by the super bright sun. The outdoor world will not get brighter than it was today. Away from the spruces the "Barren Lands" are unbroken white – no thawed dark spots yet to break the glare. Sunrays are reflected back up, down and crossways. Eye and skin protection are a must!

There are many fox tracks between here and the beach, some of them probably white fox.

The sun-thawed dirt/gravel on top of our underground storage cache in Sisualik has many, many bird tracks – most

likely returning or over wintering snow buntings.

Willow ptarmigan tracks cover much of the flat “tableland” area between here and Sisualik. This is new and usually happens around this time of year just before the large flocks break up into displaying pairs. Strangely enough I did not see any birds, only tracks.

The summer woodpile in Sisualik is started.

My Squirrel Dog looks for ground squirrels all right but there are none out yet. It won't be long now, Terry. Squirrels and bears are watching the weather – from inside.

April 6 Low -6° F, High 24° F
NE to 15. Clear.

A long, long day today! It is true that they are all long now (and daylight is still growing longer) but this day was especially long because of current events.

An early trip to the wood cut area at the head of our creek for a load to drop off at summer camp on the way to town, where we needed to get more chainsaw oil, moose meat and mail. This was to be a solo trip again as Carrie is better, but still not able to travel. Made the trip to get the load of wood, stopped here to have lunch with Carrie before going on into town. Halfway through lunch an aircraft circled and landed (the first we've had this year). I went out of the spruce patch with the snow machine to see what was up and found not an old friend (that was expected) but a new acquaintance that became a new friend before he became airborne again. We may get to know him better soon. We got caught up on mutual friends in the same kinds of career that became friends in the past and moved out to other stations.

It was still early enough to continue our originally made plans, so I was off with the wood to Sisualik and on to town. In the course of pursuing business there, other friends turned up with thought provoking ideas to roll around and further exercise the brain, and in the process make the already long day longer. Made it home to Carrie in time to get something on for supper that could cook while I gave the ever-anxious dogs a short run. Then after supper there were those daily chores around the house and camp that had been gently set aside for a more opportune time. Some days are like that!

April 7 Low -11° F, High 30° F
NE to 10. Clear.

Our beautiful weather continues and a very subtle change is occurring in our avian world. Down toward the beach every little seed head of *Elymus* or *Artemisia* above the snow surface has the neat little prints of one or more snow buntings around it, and on the tableland expanse of white, every little dark spot of a willow twig above snow surface has the bigger footprints of a willow ptarmigan to it. Both of these markings on the snow “newspaper” are new this week. A bit further inland – in the white spruce patches a few birds bigger than the winter boreal chickadees are showing – redpolls.

These birds don't have the high profile impact that geese, cranes and gulls will have at the end of the month but they and their actions are no less the harbingers of spring in the north lands.

Got another large load of white spruce "rounds" down to the beach from up in the pass today and may do the same tomorrow. We are getting a respectable pile down there now.

Each day as I make the trip I think of our neighbor (some years deceased) as I go flying by his home site at 30 miles an hour with a full load of firewood on my 440 Arctic Cat on a very smooth level trail. He was a longtime friend with the same firewood needs through dog team years and would not believe the ease and speed with which I am getting a season's firewood out with machine and chain saw – at age 73 too!

April 8 Low -6° F, High 26° F
Light winds. Clear.

Another bright April day with the typical April characteristics of cool to cold nights and near thawing at midday.

Hauled down another load of firewood today. Our pile at Sisualik is looking respectable for the different stove and small house we have now.

Some camps are being re-peopled down on the beach. A couple of the boys have moved back into the Sealing Point house and two camps in Sisualik are peopled now and a third is being made ready.

Redpolls and snow buntings are being reported from many coastal stations. The era of avian building population is on again, probably peaking in late May and early June.

Anchorage already has geese and gulls and in two to three weeks we will too. It is that close to "Jonathan time" again (our ever-returning camp "watch gull").

Today the world is still very white under the strong rays of the sun, but today for the first time shadowy dark places are showing beneath places of thin snow cover. These are tussock tops that absorb sunrays through snow cover and actually trigger new growth in the tundra plants and lichens even while still snow covered. They might be described as small natural "greenhouses."

Spring is definitely on the way. Last midnight there was a wide crescent of new moon to the south, faint but deep-colored northern lights to the north, and "daylight sky" to the west – a pretty neat April night sky.

April 9 Low -12° F, High 20° F
NE to 15. Clear.

Another perfect April day.

A nice houseful of visitors this late afternoon. New friends from Kotzebue with lots of food treats and good conversation. We were reminded again of how small the world has gotten as we share with others from different

places.

One of the visitors reported seeing a large bird landing in a nearby tree while she was out that very likely was a golden eagle. One can expect to see golden eagles, rough-legged hawks, snowy owls, northern goshawks or gyrfalcons anywhere anytime now. From mid to late March is the beginning time for birds of these species that have wintered farther south to return to nesting locations in the north.

Our visitors allowed us to sample new crop year delicacies from the sea down south – herring eggs on tree branches and small shrimp. Quite the treat as our ocean is pretty well iced up yet.

There were few other travelers in our area this weekend.

April 10 Low -6° F, High 33° F
 NE-E to 18. Clear.

Cool night but a warmer sun today with a softer afternoon wind.

Took the wrong gun along up to the wood cut site this morning. I usually take one gun as most distant travelers do, for you never know when some kind of desired game will turn up. Shotgun for ptarmigan or early goose or crane, 30/06 for caribou, bear etc.

This morning I took the shotgun as I have been seeing new tracks and sometimes the track makers and we haven't eaten ptarmigan for a while. I didn't see any ptarmigan but on reaching the highest point in the pass just before dropping into the trees to the cut site, I saw a good group of caribou (8-10) feeding near the edge of the pass, almost right under me, and they hadn't heard my engine due to a stiff wind through the pass. A perfect set up to snowshoe sneak and take one or two for the last caribou meat of the season – but not with a shotgun! I thought of going home for the rifle but wood working time is short. Since this is on one of the main route trails to Noatak another traveler could turn up at any time and quickly spook these animals. I went down into the trees and started the chainsaw to finish cutting into blocks trees I had felled last week. During a quiet time when saw needed fueling, I heard close sno-go noise and after a while a couple of distant shots – not from a shotgun either!

April 11 Low 16° F, High 34° F
 E-SE to 18. Some clouds.

Got all of the sawed wood out of the cut site today, though one sled load remains at the top of the “climb out,” With the mild winds trails inside timbered areas are softening much by midday.

Was surprised to see again a group of 11 caribou right in the pass just above the area where there were some yesterday when I had a shotgun only. They were not in a good place to sneak in on today and getting my wood out held a higher priority for today. There is a chance, if there have been no travelers through there today, that these animals will be there again and possibly in a good stalking location. We would like one or two good quality caribou if we could get them, as this may be a last chance until next fall. We shall see how the weather and whims of caribou work out. We don't often have access to caribou here this late in the season. Bull antlers are beginning to

show again.

We had two late afternoon visitor parties today. Unusual for us and we had a very interesting time of visiting.

We heard an unusual story from our neighbor visitors today. One of their sons crossed lynx tracks near their camp lately and followed them. When the lynx climbed a tree he left it and rode home telling his mother that he didn't want to kill it but wanted it to make more for another year - an interesting comment for one of the hard-hunting Jones boys. That is the second lynx we have heard of this winter (the other was killed). They must be coming back with the rabbits. Lynx have been exceedingly rare in this region for 20 years.

April 12 Low 26° F, High 34° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy.

A fine mild day up here but dull because of all the bright clear sun we've had lately. Cloud cover warms us but does block out sunrays. Some whiteout conditions developed on the mostly drifted over trail.

Just got a call from Point Hope from a friend who had someone from here take his sno-go up there from here today. He wanted us to report caribou are dying again around Cape Thompson. We did report that and found local management already knowledgeable. There are more caribou over wintering there this year than when the last winter starvation happened. One collared animal had died and some bones recovered. The hope is that the die off won't be as extreme as before. We are surprised at this development as our mild weather locally seemed ideal for moose, caribou and sheep. Caribou taken locally since January have been in good shape. Range condition and severe meteorological conditions in that area may act as a winter death trap for caribou.

I was up in our pass this morning hoping to shoot a caribou or two if there were some in a place that could be sneaked on. Saw one small bunch but there seemed no way to get at them so I didn't disturb them – just brought my last load of firewood down.

Snow surface softened some for the first time today with the warm wind and clouds. It is freezing again tonight though, good April weather – as long as it doesn't rain.

April 13 Low 24° F, High 42° F
Light NE-N. Clear, clouding late.

A warm day in Sanningaruq today – surface snow soft, dark areas melting away.

Sisualik was warm too, especially in the dome, but the couple of days of drifting snow there this week have changed the face of things.

All the wood I hauled down is snowdrift covered and the south half of the lagoon has lumps and bumps from wind sculpted snow. Drift at warm temperatures makes hard lumps quickly. Hauled two loads of odds and ends today in preparation for moving.

Both bears and willow ptarmigan are late doing their spring thing this year. No feather color change seen or reported for the birds and only one bear skin in for sealing and few reported out of hibernation. No squirrels out yet either.

Ravens are well into spring madness though.

A bowhead whale seen this last winter in Point Hope but no beluga or whales there yet this April – it is time though. Our friend who came from there earlier today said he saw a large flock of common eider before he took off this way. These big gaudy sea ducks look good this time of year and are usually nice and fat with an orange colored fat from deep feeding dives.

Sno-go track throwing slush this afternoon so will have to rig some shield to keep from getting a sled full of slush.

Spring seems very close this evening though date is pretty early.

April 14 Low 24° F, High 38° F
 N-NW to 30. Few clouds.

Another unseasonably warm day but we are reminded again that April 14 is the very earliest date that waterfowl has appeared in a camp soup pot. It is the birth date of an extended family person who some 30 years ago celebrated his birthday with two cranes in a big pot taken many miles up the Noatak River.

Two interesting visitors this evening. Lots of good conversation – and a short evening even though we talked past midnight.

One of the visitors brought us a ptarmigan and we had already cooked two of the three I shot today. It is good to have ptarmigan again and a special treat to have in hand both species (rock and willow).

There was drifting snow (on the ground) all the way to Sisualik today while sun burned hot inside the trees and softened snow there. Our temperatures are supposed to drop tonight and trails may stay good for a while longer.

We may move down to Sisualik house tomorrow.

April 15 Low 21° F, High 36° F
 Light winds. Clear.

Dogs barked at daylight, which broke up night's sleep pattern after late retiring due to overnight visitor conversation.

The early morning disturbance was the fault of a neighboring moose passing through, maybe to say goodbye since we plan to move to Sisualik camp today.

The late retiring hour was my fault for talking too much – as usual!

We did make the move to Sisualik and will spend the first night here. We can now count the days till Jonathan returns – our official camp-watching gull. Hope he wintered well.

Early bird sightings are building – rumors of geese by Noatak and Buckland. Heavy flight of snow buntings north since mid-March. Head color change on rock ptarmigan and “comb” growth on rock ptarmigan this week. Several dark birds “larger than gray jays” seen in Fish Creek area and golden eagles – one by one reported since late March.

No ground squirrels out yet and few bears reported. Report of beluga or bowhead out of Kivalina late last night.

Several camps between Sisualik Point and Kivalina being re-occupied.

High but short snow banks around Sisualik camp – reflecting moderate to low total annual snowfall. Very late coming and only moderate total.

We will overnight in Sisualik – an early move.

April 16 Low 18° F, High 36° F
 N to 30. Clear.

Strong N winds afternoon and night. Dogs had a taste of ground drift that they have missed all winter by being in spruce patch shelter.

A friend came along and gave us a hand in moving some of the heavier things out of Sanningaruq camp (generator, propane tank and meat). His help loading, unloading and hooking things up down here lightened my load considerably – appreciate it.

We are getting settled in Sisualik in our new little house completed last fall and left two months late – just after Christmas. It wintered well, creating a new pattern of huge snow banks here at Sisualik camp. Our camp ground squirrels and Jonathan the camp gull will no doubt be surprised by the different pattern. The gull is due in 10 days now if he wintered successfully. If not, some of his past years’ progeny may substitute. It will be good to see gulls and swallows around camp again.

There seem some hints of whale hunting activity at the open lead edge at Point Hope and Kivalina. No true word yet of what is happening, but they no doubt have established lead edge whale watch camps (beluga and bowhead).

April 17 Low 0° F, High 26° F
 N to 25 a.m. Clear.

Strong winds night and early morning dropping off around 10:00 a.m. Some ground drift. Dogs didn’t like it much after being in the protection of a spruce patch all winter.

Went up and got a small load of stuff from the winter house. Not much left up there now.

It is reported that Point Hope got a first bowhead whale today. We heard they got belugas yesterday. They got an early start this year. It is reported that they have good ice conditions and lead situation this year.

Lots of traffic here on the main beach trail north. Many snow machines without sleds and a few with sleds loaded – some for Kivalina or Point Hope probably.

Two travelers from Kobuk stopped around 9:00 p.m. last night wanting to know where to go sheefishing. We had to tell them to turn back to Kotzebue, as the sheefish activity is east of Kotzebue, not west where we are on the shore of the sea.

A cool day but a warm bright sun that made it special.

April 18 Low -4° F, High 17° F
Light winds. Clear, thin clouds, trace snow.

Ice cut and home chores today.

A search and rescue operation began early today when a traveler to Kivalina from Kotzebue didn't reach his destination. He was located by aircraft NW of Sealing Point walking on maybe thin ocean ice. The report is an interesting and rather frightening one. He was said to be suffering from "snow blindness" and could not tell where he was going so he stopped by some large icebergs. "Snow blindness" is a condition that can easily develop - and quickly – by travelers this time of year when eye protection from glare of sun on ice or snow is not constantly provided by effective sunglasses. The condition is rare nowadays when most folk are aware and have suitable glasses. Most kids in the past have had the painful experience as well as many adults. One must have eye protection from March 1st till snow is gone from the ground in May-June on land and to mid-July if one is active on sea ice. The condition is not permanent but is very painful for two or three days.

Clouds moved in and some new snow had fallen as the sun dropped below the horizon at five minutes to 11:00 p.m. More sun than the unprotected eye can stand now occurs between 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.

There were 50 knot winds in Kivalina today.

April 19 Low -6° F, High 24° F
N-NE to 20 a.m. then light. a.m. cloudy, ground drift. p.m. clear and nice.

Our two dogs have no shelter from ground drift this a.m., so loosed them and let them run up to the spruce patch, fed them and left them in their wintering place. They must have enjoyed a pleasant warm afternoon there for it cleared, wind and drift stopped shortly by afternoon. Now they will have a lonesome night but I will bring them back down tomorrow.

Ground drift is mean here in Sisualik this time of year. The old snow cover is level and hard frozen. A little, even a little, new snow on top drifts and flies easily with stronger winds.

The large snowflakes that fell last evening are the kind said to fall after a bowhead whale is killed. A first one was killed day before yesterday. Accumulation was less than an inch but when N winds increased during the night and continued this morning several hours of bad ground drift developed. Everything cleared and we had a fine afternoon and evening.

No ground squirrels or birds yet though. There are rumors of birds on upper Kobuk and Buckland. There have been a few travelers late today as folks haul stuff to camps expected to be occupied soon.

Not much sheefishing news though a few continue to be taken around Kobuk Lake.

Carrie is getting around well in house and may soon be able to travel.

April 20 Low 13° F, High 26° F
 NW-N to 20. a.m. clouds, snow drift. p.m. clearing.

Rather ugly ground conditions this a.m. with clouds, falling and drifting snow. Conditions gradually improved until the afternoon became quite beautiful.

Another film crew paid us a visit doing some footage for or on volunteer weather observers. Another fun time with a lot of conversation. Crew was out of Anchorage for the most part.

Retrieved my dogs from winter cabin as drifting snow had subsided. They were obviously lonesome but enjoying the warm sun free of ground drifting snow. Loosed them to run home and, wouldn't you know, wind picked up and drift began again. It did later become intermittent so the dogs can handle it. Someday soon either the sun will get hot enough to melt snow or it will rain. Either will terminate the drifting of snow for the season.

There was very little traffic today besides the filming crew. Tomorrow and Saturday may be a different story as traffic to Kivalina for the Easter weekend begins. Many folks of the region like the good songfest and feast time provided to all who come on this important religious date. Some of the early taken bowhead whale at Point Hope will probably make it to the feast.

April 21 Low 5° F, High 25° F
 W to 25. Clear, ground drift.

Cold air today with steady ground drift. Tough on the dogs again. I let them run up to winter camp this late evening and tied them there in their sheltered winter plots. It's like a different world there right now even though it is only six-seven miles inland. No drifting snow, sun-warmed air with just a sighing of breeze in the trees. There is a water puddle in front of the cabin door indicating a warm midday.

This N and W wind system has as usual thrown a hold on the spring thaw. Inland trails are still solid and firm all day

long. One could be still cutting and hauling wood or caribou hunting. If it were not for the warm house here in Sisualik – if we were depending yet on the tent we would still be in Sanningaruq with the dogs.

We may be within a week of Jonathan's arrival now. Have not heard much news of early bird sightings yet. That part of early spring will pick up as this west wind spell fades.

No ground squirrels yet either but there should be this coming week.

Our nephew from Sealing Point passed on his way to town this evening. He reported the musk ox that have been down on the beach at Sealing Point all winter have moved back up on the bluff where they usually winter.

April 22 Low -1° F, High 8° F
 Light W. Clear, clouding p.m.

A better day than yesterday, but colder temperatures. What makes the day better is less wind and no drifting snow.

A large flock (50?) of snow buntings paid us a visit today looking for *Elymus* and *Angelica* seeds. They also perched around on poles and fish racks. The males look pretty sharp in their black and white color contrasts of mating plumage.

Numbers of travelers today. Some to Kivalina and some to camps for hauling things or cleaning up in preparation for moving in.

A second bowhead whale taking at Point Hope was reported today. Their ice and lead condition seems good this year and they are doing well early.

Cold weather holds back chances for early bird sightings. We may have some as weather moderates again and some thaw begins, countdown for Jonathan's arrival continues. He usually holds till the last day or two of April.

Brought the dogs down again from their tree shelter this afternoon.

With no dogs in camp last night, foxes got pretty brave – eating some buried meat and making tracks all around - even under the house.

Fox numbers have climbed these last two months on Krusenstern – both white and red.

April 23 Low 4° F, High 22° F
 Light S-SW winds. Cloudy, light snow.

A quiet Easter here in Sisualik. The only other family in Sisualik right now was over for a visit and supper.

A couple of bear hunters – looking for tracks in the new snow – stopped by on their way out.

This kind of snow – large flakes without wind – is said to come after the killing of bowhead whales. Two were taken at Point Hope this week.

This is a bad time to be a bear, near Kotzebue. The fresh snow without wind in the mountains adds up to perfect bear hunting conditions. The late date in April assures that most bears will be out of winter dens.

Snow buntings were around camp for a while again this morning.

Carrie is much improved and getting around the house well now. Hopefully we will be able to get winter camp cleaned up and closed up this week and get our spring – summer supplies out of Kotzebue and be ready to welcome in May and June here on the ocean beach. Oh boy! Birds and plants - fish and maybe even belugas!

It is unclear yet how many camps will be occupied between here and Port Site but it is likely that there will be around 10.

A sno-go mishap caused the need for an air med-evac at Jones' Camp this afternoon. The old man taking a small grandson for a ride may have hit a tree when the youngster's hand unexpectedly grasped the throttle.

April 24 Low 10° F, High 18° F
 Light SW-W breezes. Cloudy.

A first ground squirrel reported "out" today on Krusenstern beaches.

We went up to Sanningaruq to pick up and clean up a bit. No thawing up that way today. Lots of fox tracks in the fresh snow and every edible thing scratched and dug around. We wonder if our beginning snowshoe hare population will survive the concentration.

Carrie was able to travel today for the first time since we moved down here to Sisualik. She's hoping to go to town tomorrow for shopping. Her wrist and ankle are getting useable again.

Charlie Jones, the sno-go accident victim yesterday, seems not doing well in the hospital from a report by his sister.

No real bird reports yet. Only rumors though there will surely be first sightings this week of glaucous gulls, cranes or white fronted geese – maybe even a swan. These early migrants usually make a showing during the last week of April somewhere in the region, if not on the coast.

Several travelers back from Easter at Kivalina today by snow machine. Many others by aircraft.

April 25 Low -1° F, High 6° F
 W-NW to 15. Cloudy, fog.

Town trip for spring supplies. Town quite free of snow – looks like spring but everything hard frozen, rocks, gravel,

puddles and dirty snow banks. Ravens acting oddly. Strange noises.

Lots of automobiles in Kotzebue – with no big snow banks to hide them, every house seems to have two-three in their yard.

Whiteout conditions made travel uncomfortable but possible. Sun was nearly out for return trip and it went much smoother.

Didn't see any travelers today though there must have been some as the trail is pounded down some.

Cold air/wind is typical late April weather when westerly winds dominate. We are glad that there is as yet no drifting, though lots of loose snow is as yet lying around.

Carrie's first travel for many days. Hope no setbacks.

April 26 Low 2° F, High 18° F
 Light south. Cloudy, clearing late.

The sun finally made a dramatic appearance about 5:00 p.m. Warm and bright! What a sight after a long period of gray skies and cold air.

Made a trip up to Sanningaruq with the dogs to get our long generator extension line.

A red fox came into camp after the sun began to cool. He seemed alert and healthy enough but hungry. I fired a shot to warn him off and a flock of 30 snow buntings (heretofore unseen) flew high into the air.

Nephew went back down to Sealing Point this evening. The rest of the family is due back from Anchorage and into camp this coming week.

No bird reports yet but a little more of that sun and there will be.

The Lion's Club sheefish contest will be held this coming Saturday. Carrie would like to win that \$500 for the longest fish again. We may try if she feels up to the travel.

April 27 Low -13° F, High 22° F
 NE-W to 10. Clear, sun!

A beautiful full day of sun, not a cloud anywhere and warm after an unseasonably cold below zero night.

Two promising happenings today – I saw two ground squirrels in Sisualik and one glaucous gull was seen on the Noatak flats.

Made a trip to town for two drums of gasoline. Boys helped out with loading, unloading and hauling. I didn't do

much except pay for the gas.

Powerful bright sun today and dark things in and on the snow did some changing.

Ran the dogs up and along the edge of tablelands after town and saw hundreds of willow ptarmigan tracks and a few birds. They have been working the thawed blackberry grounds away from the willows. They are still in flocks with no individual display yet.

Lots of fox tracks in the country.

Numerous back and forth travelers today. Some traveling to Kivalina and Point Hope while it remains cold since those villages have whale and beluga catches they might share.

The moderate to low snowfall we've had this winter is beginning to show now. We haven't really had a warm day and already there is considerable ground, grass and mud showing.

Our back lagoon area will look different this year as melting begins. There was no overflow over that area this winter where there has been much in recent previous years. That will assure much shorebird habitat in time for migration and warm water temperatures for herring spawn.

April 28 Low -5° F, High 18° F
 Light winds. Clear.

A near perfect day but cool. Saw one more squirrel and gulls were seen in Kotzebue and one at Sisualik Point. It apparently wasn't Jonathan for he didn't show up here.

Tomorrow is the great sheefish size contest. There doesn't seem to be much chance for a heavy catch as fish have been scarce this week.

Carrie seems strong enough to make a gentle try so we will probably head up to Kobuk Lake tomorrow. The time for fishing is kind of short as one must pick up a form at 9:00 a.m. and be back in with your fish at 6:00 p.m.

Bird reports are pretty slow coming in. That is not a surprise with nighttime temperatures still dropping below zero.

Redpolls and snow buntings continue to work over grass and forb seed heads above the surface of the snow. *Elymus* and *Poa* seeds seem choice with lots of attention given to *Artemisia* and *Angelica*.

First squirrels out seem to be those that have the poorest den locations.

The two seen out near our place here in Sisualik have dens near the edge of the lagoon. They could only have shallow dens and probably would have flooded out had we had storm flood surges that we often do in winter but didn't this year.

April 29 Low -8° F, High 25° F
Light winds. Clear.

We did make our way to the near sheefishing grounds but didn't make a catch of anything on our hooks – but a young lady who had more luck, not skill, gave us her catch of an 8 lb burbot which we took home and cooked. It was caught, cooked and eaten before the time expired on the large sheefish contest. It was a beautiful early spring day with sun warmth that could be felt.

We saw several ground squirrels out on the way home and found tracks around our yard of one of our camp squirrels. Its exit hole from over wintering den was inside the chain length of where we had Aachauq tied last fall till we moved a few days after Christmas. The dog was not tied there today. Had he been there it would have been a surprised squirrel and a surprised dog. Imagine waking from a winters sleep to face that large blue-eyed dog with teeth and a mouth like an alligator!

Folks at Little Noatak report seeing a crane today.

No sign of Jonathan. He is due now! He probably wouldn't appreciate our below zero temperatures last night.

Other travelers reported seeing a goose and caribou behind Sealing Point.

Looks like there will be two families at Sealing Point and at least three in the Salluq area. It is not clear yet how many camps here in Sisualik will be peopled.

April 30 Low -9° F, High 18° F
Clear, fog moving late.

Double unusual news this quiet Sunday, the last of April for this year.

Numbers of caribou are said to be moving in the Baldwin Peninsula toward Kotzebue from the Deering side. We at Sisualik lie north of Kotzebue on that same pathway. We have never had (in this century) a spring movement of caribou through Kotzebue and Sisualik.

A number of beluga are trapped in the ice offshore of Kivalina the last couple of days. This is a rare but regular happening with beluga and allows a heavy harvest when the edge of the water they are restricted to is accessible. We heard they took 5-6 yesterday. They may yet get many more. There is said to be no open water at Point Hope. Bowhead whales were also seen in the Kivalina open water.

Closer to home we have a steady W wind today, keeping the sun from getting too warm, but not yet drifting snow. Fog is moving in off of the ice as it often does this time of year with an onshore wind. The camp squirrel was out again this morning and another very small one near the dome was out for the first time. Their day out in the sun was short due to the cold steady wind.

No new bird reports today and no Jonathan yet. This west weather system controls both.

MAY

May 1 Low 14° F, High 26° F
Light S-SW winds. Cloudy, fog, few snowflakes.

A poor start for a good month. A small plane reported down off lagoon edge a few miles NW of Sealing Point. No passengers – the pilot dead. Small plane, probably a local person. Poor visibility today – lots of “whiteout”.

Unusual caribou report – north moving from the Deering area across the ice of southern Kotzebue Sound to near Cape Blossom. This is the most westerly path caribou have been known to take during spring migration – in this century at least.

A friend made a round trip to Kivalina today and left us a nice big piece of beluga maktak¹³. The animal was killed last night. The entrapment continues offshore of Kivalina. No good harvest estimate yet. It may go pretty high depending on number of animals trapped and the length of time before ice moves to free the surviving animals. This is a great “windfall” for people of the region and people of Kivalina in particular.

New bird sightings few due to continued cold. No Jonathan yet. Willow ptarmigan still flocked, also reflecting the continued cool trend.

The crashed plane turned out to be Gordon Ito, a well know local pilot, with a heavy load of beluga maktak bound for Kotzebue.

May 2 Low 15° F, High 23° F
Light W winds. Cloudy, fog, snowflakes.

A dull May day without sun and without birds. There were however lots of snow machines. Family and friends went down as a large group to dismantle the plane that crashed behind Sealing Point. They passed Sisualik about 9:00 p.m. going toward Kotzebue with entire plane on several sleds.

A couple of visitors from NPS office this evening checking out the trail and the place for a larger group due to come by at 5:00 p.m. tomorrow.

There is always a rush of travel visitors about this time of year while trails are still firm and dry before surface water begins to form. Traveling is good, days are long and people tend to feel more friendly under a warm May or June sun. Surface travel will become difficult for a while as snow softens and ice melts – travel potential much limited.

¹³ Whale skin with blubber

This coming week and weekend may be a high time for visitors if weather is good and trails remain firm.

May 3 Low 14° F, High 18° F
W-NW to 15. Clear, lots of sun.

A bright, bright white surprise morning. When we retired last night at 11:30 p.m. there was no fresh snow. On waking at 6:00 p.m. everything was white again. The black tar paper of the dome roof was all white. A new blanket, 1½ inch thick of fine pure white snow covered the world; even the back black rock mountains were all white.

Ran with the dogs up to Sanningaruq and back before lunch and then prepared for visitors that came at 6:00 p.m. We had a good time of sharing with old friends and new. We touched lots of mind expanding issues.

Earlier we had a visitor who was recently from Point Hope. He said beluga take there was greater than 10. Number taken at Kivalina unknown.

Our friend reports lots of glaucous gulls at Point Hope and maybe more at Kivalina on recent beluga killing site.

No new bird reports today. We had numerous redpolls around camp this morning looking for some dry ground and seeds.

Squirrels had a short day out of their holes today because of cool west winds and new snow.

May 4 Low 2° F, High 15° F
W-SW to 15. Fog early, clearing. Clouds late.

Town trip today – some shopping then waiting for Carrie’s brother coming in with family from Anchorage en route to Sealing Point. He/they made it in and on down to Sealing Point before midnight. A long trip for the young girls. They were glad to get home though.

Lots of glaucous gulls in town and numerous cranes reported from Noatak flats. Still no sign of Jonathan. He may be checking out some places of more early interest to gulls, like the beluga whale harvest at Kivalina or the bowhead take at Wales, Point Hope or Barrow.

We are definitely into late spring thaw – global warming notwithstanding.

On this pattern from previous “late spring years” most species that are expected to make a showing late April – early May won’t arrive till mid-May (May 15 or so).

Our coast range mountains that became all white again the morning after a new snowfall a few days ago, are all black again as of yesterday afternoon on our way home from town.

Campers are returning to camps on Krusenstern at a good rate. The people count looks like it will be similar to last

May and early June.

May 5 Low 8° F, High 24° F
SE to 18. a.m. cloudy, p.m. clear

A wind change today that will probably promote a warming trend and trigger sea ice movement that will dictate marine mammal hunter activities.

Two cranes and numerous glaucous gulls were seen in Sealing Point today by Carrie's recently arrived brother and family.

Camp travelers are moving heavy stuff like boats and seasonal supplies each day now while trails remain frozen, as everybody knows they won't be frozen long.

Another traveler stopped by this evening, leaving us a piece of beluga maktak from the Kivalina harvest. We have been grateful to the two travelers that have taken the trouble to stop and share with us their catch. We are doing well considering we haven't yet ventured out on the ice.

Squirrels were out for a short time at midday.

Our landscape in Sisualik remains nearly pure white. The only dark things are human made structures. On the tablelands there are thawed ground areas where winter "windswept ground" is located. The upper non-vegetated rocky areas of coastal mountains are again black after being snow covered last week.

No Jonathan yet and no word of a first waterfowl take.

May 6 Low 10° F, High 27° F
SE-S-SW to 18. Cloudy, fog, drizzle.

Looks a little more like spring today. No sun but snow surface is softening this evening and we have had a group of 15 glaucous gulls on the ice in front of camp all day. One is very vocal with much circling around and lifting off whenever metal bangs against metal. There has been no attempt yet to land on the swallow box but the hint is there that maybe Jonathan has come home – maybe with some family clan. Going on past performance it takes Jonathan a few days to remember how he is supposed to act around here as opposed to his actions where he overwintered.

We went up to Sanningaruq this afternoon to put the "bear door" in place and the last finishing touches, probably not to see the house again till next October/November. It now belongs to the bears for 6 months.

We heard our first crane of the season while up there and heard a report today that there were many pintails (ducks) on the Noatak flats (below the village).

There was also a report today that a narrow lead had developed running away from Espenberg towards Sealing

Point. The change in winds and currents will have brought this on and will likely end the beluga entrapment at Kivalina and give Point Hope open water again to hunt in.

Willow ptarmigan are into full display activity now.

Funeral for Gordon Ito was held today.

A very early arctic tern reported from Eli River.

May 7 Low 17° F, High 27° F
 N to 20, NW to 15. Clear, ground drift a.m.

Light ground drift all morning – new snowdrifts. Drifting quit p.m. when wind switched to west. Midday was warm with gulls and squirrels enjoying the warm sun – before another cold night. Gulls and cranes with their bare legs would seem to be uncomfortable in the sharp low temperatures we've had this week. Last night's temperatures were milder but the ground drift would give higher/more severe chill factors.

Jonathan and his mate seem to be here but there are six other gulls that join them off and on through the day and no gull has yet landed on the swallow box pad. We depend on Jonathan to identify himself by doing two un-gull like things: landing on the swallow box and swooping from there to take a tossed tidbit. In past years it has taken him several days to get back into that routine after arrival. The vocal-ness and attention to camp movement activities are sharp hints that the pair constantly waiting on the ice near at hand are Jonathan and Lucinda.

Little house full of visitors today for a while. Lots of good conversation and a first snow machine trip for Elias, a less than year old traveler.

Cool for birds yet. Nothing much new on the coast but in inland sheltered places there probably are new small migrants (juncos – warblers).

We too are tired of waiting for warmer weather even though it will mean deteriorating traveling conditions.

Our 52nd wedding anniversary tomorrow.

May 8 Low 4° F, High 20° F
 W-NW to 15. a.m. clear, p.m. clouding and fog.

Our 52nd anniversary today and we were given a great gift – three white fronted geese and two king eiders! The birds were quite a surprise since we had not heard that any geese had been taken yet with all the cold weather and late spring. These birds were taken on the Noatak flats, a place that is known as an early spring migrant favorite.

The pair of king eiders came from Point Hope.

It is interesting that king eiders seldom touch leads of Krusenstern in their early migration but instead hit Point Hope and sometimes Kivalina real hard nearly every year.

We had a great soup pot tonight. All birds were in good fat condition but very small gut contents.

Carrie passed a goose and one eider on to her brother Sam and his gang of young girls now moved from Anchorage to their home grounds at Sealing Point. They are glad to be home. Myrtle, Sam's wife, passed on last fall and they are making their first year without her presence.

Caribou are reported still numerous near the Red Dog haul road.

No sheefishing or bird news out of Kotzebue this day. We would still like to go sheefishing while trails remain hard and travel is easy.

Another remarkable happening this evening was Jonathan's actions. He landed on his pad – the swallow box roof and voice begged for a hand out. I was feeding dogs and had a couple of small pieces of thawed caribou meat handy. I walked over toward the box/bird and from the usual spot tossed one tidbit – a typical Jonathan swoop! And he had it from the surface without touching down. He returned to the box and did the same with the second but didn't return to the box.

Now these actions are the mark by which we recognize Jonathan Livingston Seagull. It is the first time he has done it this spring. No other gull out of the group that has been around for several days has attempted the act. We now know that Jonathan weathered the winter and has returned!

May 9 Low 10° F, High 42° F
 S-SW, calm. a.m. cloudy, snow. p.m. clearing

A dark ugly morning of snow and fog and then a brilliant clearing with very warm sun at midday and late afternoon. New snow and old softened under 40°F temperatures. Later in the evening the loud clarion call of the first crane we have seen in Sisualik reverberated over the beach ridges to the west on the calm air. Beautiful! Beautiful! Spring has come to Sisualik though the land is still pure white with no features – no dark thawed spots – just a plain of white.

A ground squirrel here and there; and man-made structures are still the only dark marks on the white plain.

Jonathan didn't repeat today much to my surprise. Carrie says don't mention this but I feel compelled to! Do you think Jonathan is aware of the date of our 52nd wedding anniversary? His act yesterday was to celebrate that? Oh my! That is too much. Who has a better explanation of Jonathan Livingston Seagull's actions? Remember the story? He is a "one of a kind" gull!

At any rate he is back and the saga will continue into the year 2000. He, Lucinda (his mate) and the tenants of the swallow box this year will both try to increase the numbers of their species. We wish them good luck and will help them along as we can. This does not mean we will not eat their first clutch of eggs. We did last year but they

successfully hatched their second laying and raised them well but later. The tree swallows managed to fly at least two new birds under trying conditions.

May 10 Low 24° F, High 32° F
 S-SW to 15. Cloudy, fog, wet snow.

Lots of squirrels out and around camp. They are finally meeting each other after wintering apart.

Made a round trip to town for a package from Point Lay (smelt) and another from Point Hope (white and black maktak and whale meat). Many friends have been very generous with their good catches this early spring.

Got the generator running in its shed for the first time and hooked up to both our freezer and battery charger. Looks like the freezer is functioning again after a winter's rest.

Visitors this evening. ADF&G¹⁴ family with kids. Lots of good conversation.

Lots of glaucous gulls in Kotzebue and on our front ice. I fed ours all the beluga blubber this morning off of the gift maktak that we cooked today. There is little more one can do with beluga blubber and meat – most of it goes for dog feed or to sustain gull and raven populations.

The snow surface is really turning soft and slushy today for the first time. Spring thaw may be really under way.

A robin song was heard today at our inland neighbors NE of us.

May 11 Low 24° F, High 31° F
 W-NW to 18. Cloudy, clearing.

Fresh king crab – Kotzebue Sound king crab for a late supper this evening. A friend with crab pots out stopped by this late afternoon and left us two rather small but adequate king crabs. What a treat! They were quite lively crabs. This is a brand new kind of subsistence food for Krusenstern people. It was quite a surprise to find even limited numbers of king crab in our waters.

An improved catch of shee was made at the Noatak mouth today. Some neighbors did pretty good. We will probably give it a try tomorrow.

Made a trip up the Sanningaruq trail today to get some ice, exercise the dogs and cut some spruce boughs for a try at herring spawn when the time comes.

A baby seal was taken by Sealing Point gang today. That is their first marine mammal catch since they came home. This seal was lying on the ice and still retains some long "birthing hair."

Crane calls are common inland now and except for the abundant glaucous gulls there is little sign of other birds

¹⁴ Alaska Department of Fish and Game

yet. Snow cover remains 100% over Sisualik tidelands. Inland there are many - and more in the making - thawed tundra and hillside sites.

Lots of belligerent male willow ptarmigan are guarding their ground.

May 12 Low 14° F. High 34° F
 W-NW-N to 15. Cloudy a.m., clear p.m.

Pip-Squeek the mew gull back tonight, sitting quietly on the old tent frame. She looks pretty immaculate - very bright colors and rather quiet. I'm sure she'll get her screaming voice back soon.

We went hooking to the mouth of Noatak River today and didn't catch a sheefish for the second time this spring in that "inside the river mouth fishery."

We did however go home with 15 shee to cut for drying. These were gifts of some friends that were fishing at that site. I will cut them tomorrow. It is time to cut a few fish for drying and to be eaten half dried and cooked.

Birds are pretty slow coming in, lots of gulls, a few cranes and not much else yet here on the coast where the landscape is still real white. Haven't even heard a goose yet though we've eaten one and have another ready to cook - gifts from those that travel a little more widely than we do now.

Lots of ground squirrels out running around.

The midday sun is making a different world outside, slow but sure. Dark and black things are absorbing a lot of sun through midday and though temperatures haven't been high, thawing is beginning.

One could have delayed moving out of the timber till this date at least and it will freeze hard again tonight. Remember, our arbitrary date for moving out is May 1st.

This is indeed a late spring.

May 13 Low 14° F, High 34° F
 NE-E to 18. Clear, lots of sun.

Snow pretty solid this morning - good trail in most places yet. It did warm early today and midday was very pleasant.

Lots of travelers today - bird hunters are out and a couple of sled loads of material for the new tower at Sealing Point went by.

Weather wise this was one of the best so far this year.

Squirrels had a great day and there are lots around camp.

We have still not heard a goose yet though we were given two again today – one Canada, one white fronted.

Checked with Eli River today and found that the “tern” reportedly seen there nearly two weeks ago was probably an early Bonaparte’s gull. This dainty little gull has a very “tern like” flight pattern and the one that saw the bird said it had a black head and wing tips. The date and location seemed too early for an arctic tern and the black head and wing tips suggest that it was an early Bonaparte’s gull, as that species is at home in spruce forests. It is not common here but birds appear each year at migration time.

Cut the sheefish that we took home yesterday and made a hole in the ocean ice with the auger to get water to wash the cut fish: three and a half feet thick.

The sheefish had empty stomachs and are pretty lean but good for dried fish.

May 14 Low 20° F, High 35° F
 NE-E to 18. Clear.

A very nice warm day after a cool night, which refroze all surface water/snow.

The wind has finally gotten out of the west and immediately gives more warmth from inland.

Birds are one benefit of the wind change. I saw a pair of dancing cranes and Carrie saw a large flock of geese make landfall off the ice from Espenberg between our camp and east neighbors.

Short-eared owls were seen at both Sisualik Point and Sealing Point (twenty miles apart). Tree swallows were reported from Kotzebue and from Jones’ Camp (twelve miles apart). More species will be reported in the next few days as real spring weather and habitat produce their annual magic.

Some belugas taken again at Kivalina.

Mother’s Day greetings were abundant on both KOTZ AM and VHF communications.

Many – maybe all the ground squirrels out of hibernation, even the one under the 10-foot deep snowdrift caused by the new house site. That poor squirrel had a lot of tunnel to make.

The main trail got heavy use today and the portion on land got soft before refreeze began. It is time to move the main trail down on the sea ice where it holds shape longer.

May 15 Low 16° F, High 37° F
 N-NE to 18. Clear.

Town trip – maybe the last till boat time. Water on top of ice on Kotzebue Front Street. Lots of glaucous gulls happy in the Kotzebue water. Trail still good but getting soft in late afternoon.

A number of caribou crossed from Cape Blossom to the Sisualik staked trail then to Tony Jones' house site on the edge of our lagoon. Jones boys got some but meat condition of cows was said to be lean.

Ran back to the tablelands with the dogs after town trip and found a little mud, grass and water showing at protected spots.

We saw one ptarmigan (willow) guarding his one willow stake out on the ice. It was a mile or two closer to Sisualik Point on our return from town – still protective of the one willow frond that is a trail marker.

Gulls and ptarmigan control our outdoor world right now.

Snow geese were reported yesterday near the Ranger Station site but inland against the dark snow free areas on slopes this time of year.

Very warm on the south slopes of our coastal plain with hot sun directly down on the slopes. It makes a great stopover place for migrants to take a break.

May 16 Low 22° F, High 49° F
 Light winds. Clear.

A very perfect May day today; it was all sun with lots of insects out.

We expected swallows but they didn't show here yet.

Carrie saw a lone tundra swan through the house window and a friend saw a long tailed jaeger at the Point today.

Much travel over the ground trail yet though it gets pretty soft after midday through early evening. Travel would be better longer over ocean ice for "up the coast" travelers.

Bird hunters doing well this week – especially on the Noatak flats. White fronted geese and Canada geese are the most often taken. A few cranes and swans and pintail ducks when they are seen. White fronted geese are usually the most fat with pintail and Canada geese next in the quality group.

There will not be any goose hunt for me this spring. Friends and extended family have given us all we can handle. We have a good deal of plucking to do.

Not much news from the ocean. A few more beluga were taken at Kivalina early in the week but only a few. There has been no mention of additional bowhead taken, so that leaves Point Hope with only two and Wales (by rumor) one.

No small birds to eat the abundant blowflies and smaller fruit flies today. Those birds that are insectivorous would have had a good day. Maybe tomorrow our swallows and sparrows will come.

May 17 Low 17° F, High 40° F
 West 10. Clear.

Troublesome day today. Snow machine making an ugly rattle. Had to send for one of our extended family boy mechanics to check it out. Seemed like a bearing going out. The boys were going to take it to town and started off but came back after noticing track seemed loose. They tightened it up but rattle was still heard. They decided again to take it in. They came back soon. This time one of the two machines they came out with had broken a shaft and they had to tow it in.

In the meantime our grandson-in-law called on remote VHF that he needed parts to get home from Noatak flats. Some of the rigs and boys that were helping me out had to take off on the new and more important rescue – leaving my snow machine in town to be worked on.

A friend and neighbor came by today leaving us a fine big female common ringed seal. They had three or four on their small sled. They were hunting seals lying on the ice west of us. There have not been many seal hunters out in this part of the Sound since the disappearance of the two hunters around this time last year.

Few beluga taken again a few miles from Port Site.

Squirrels had a ball again today.

Weatherman says a cooler trend is on the way.

May 18 Low 12° F, High 38° F
 Light winds. Fog a.m., clearing p.m..

Very thick spring fog much of today but fine warm sun mid-afternoon.

A traveler in the fog earlier today ran into a group of 200 caribou maybe just in off the ocean ice at Akulak. These may be some that have come up from Deering on the sea ice.

A very small willow ptarmigan seems to have run into the house in the fog and killed himself. A free bird I guess one could say.

There have been a few travelers today and one new camper moved into their house at Salluq.

We are only 3 days off our earliest records for crane and glaucous gull eggs. We have not seen our tree swallows yet. There is probably a savannah sparrow around the house today.

Numbers of jaegers (long tailed?) passed to the north through Salluq yesterday.

A fox visited us shortly after midnight. He seems healthy enough and neither of our dogs barked at, though they

kept track of him step by step, which makes one think he probably comes by every night to pick up a scrap of food. This is a sly red fox.

May 19 Low 20° F, High 32° F
 W to 20. Fog, clearing p.m.

Fog again for half the day then the west wind picked up and air cooled rapidly. It will freeze pretty hard again tonight.

A late spring continues to build with another delay in the thaw.

A large group of caribou again near Katyaaraq in the fog this morning. A neighbor chased them and got one.

Another neighbor left us four pintail after a day's hunt west of us. People have been very generous towards us this spring. One of the harder things for Carrie to do is refuse when offered something – even when you have enough.

Our camp gull flock has grown too big and they seem especially anxious tonight as it promises to be cold and food for gulls is pretty scarce yet in our mostly frozen world.

They apparently arrive with considerable fat reserve that carries them into egg laying time but the month before water flush out can be a time of food shortage for gulls as they don't have the ability of ravens to chip away at frozen food.

We have a savannah sparrow around the snow free buildings this evening. He will feel the cold night. No swallow returns yet at camp site. Jonathan is atop their box again tonight crouched on his feet and legs – to warm them no doubt.

Another camper moved into her camp last evening at Salluq. There are 6 occupied camps now between us and Port Site.

May 20 Low 10° F, High 34° F
 Light winds. Clear, fog inland not here.

A very cold night for the date but sun warmed late in the day to soften the surface a bit.

Our crippled sno-go made it back today with new bearings. Took the dogs for a run right away and they were pretty happy about that. They haven't run for several days and with the hot midday sun for a few days and the soft snow they thought their exercise time was gone till 4-wheeler time.

Geese, pintails and snow geese and cranes are being taken regularly now but there is still very little melt water or mud down here on the coastal strip. Good bird hunting inland.

We may be in a period of some stress for glaucous gulls. Melt water/flooding means food to them just prior to egg

laying and the delta country is all still pretty dry. Our camp gull flock has grown in numbers and aggressiveness so that it is hard to get a bite to Jonathan, Lucinda or Pip-Squeek. Gulls and ravens both have had trouble adjusting for early food source since Kotzebue shut down their open city dump.

Common eiders have been seen off Sealing Point flying around young ice searching for open water. Apparently there is little open water to be found as Point Hope has had a long spell of no land ice movement, which means no whale hunting for a long time. Kivalina may have a small bit of open lead yet but water on the ocean has been real scarce this spring. All seals taken from Krusenstern have been lying on the ice, none from open leads.

May 21 Low 14° F, High 28° F
 SW-W to 15. High thin clouds, clearing.

Surface snow firm all day. Late travelers are lucking out – trails near the coast holding up well.

Our camp gull flock sustaining themselves with tundra berries – mostly black *Empetrum nigrum*. These berries ripen late, winter well and act as an early sustaining food for many bird species. The gull droppings stain the snow bluish-black rapidly.

My attempt to hand feed Jonathan and Lucinda and the two Pip-Squeeks is not always successful. Too much competition and all are getting tamer and tamer.

Few other birds are showing here on the sea beach. We have not seen a tree swallow yet. Redpolls and a few savannah sparrows are about all.

We continue to be given waterfowl by successful hunters on their way home. White fronted geese dominate in these gift birds with a show of Canada, northern pintail and cranes.

Lots of fast travelers this weekend. Trail good into and out of town and some hunters take only a packsack and shotgun.

Squirrels still running madly about on the frozen snow, chasing, fighting and generally showing off.

Even our lakes are not yet outlined in Sisualik – only a white, flat plain with a few lumps of dark willows or bare tundra.

May 22 Low 14° F, High 32° F
 SW-W to 15. Cloudy.

A cool day today – even midday.

In spite of that fact a first egg was found near Sealing Point by kids going home to there from Kotzebue today. It was a sandhill crane egg. Our past year early record for crane and glaucous gull eggs has been the 21st and 23rd of May. A bird with long bare legs that can lay and incubate eggs at these temperatures is indeed a hardy bird.

Flatland country still white, few birds coastwise. Most small birds still holding in warmer climes – inland at least. No tree swallows yet and no shorebirds.

Ground squirrels having a great time with apparently no avian predators around. The all day frozen snow surface gives them a good playing field.

Also heard that moose calving has begun with moose survey folks seeing four new calves yesterday. Seems early.

Rabies alarm given over KOTZ radio today. One rabid white fox killed in or near Kotzebue and a second possible seen but not killed.

No more caribou reports.

Travel still good in most directions out of Kotzebue but inland on the various rivers direction of travel is limited due to water and snow melt.

May 23 Low 6° F, High 28° F
 SW-W to 15. Clear, some clouding p.m..

Another cold night and cool day but the sun warmed more than yesterday. Water is finally coming down on top of the ice from local creeks. The creek our winter house is on has spilled water in front of Joe Harris and Jones' Camp at Napaatuktuk.

There is still only a wee bit of water under the bank behind us. There were three pintail and two gulls on it today. First time I've seen birds there. That place is usually the first close place to flood out on the flats.

Sealing Point hunter (Carrie's brother) saw an uguruq lying on the ice this morning – the first. The seal saw him while he was sneaking and went down before he could shoot. That is not supposed to happen with uguruq but one cannot help it when it does. The only thing worse is to shoot and miss or shoot and wound. Maybe better luck next time Sam!

A few small birds showing in grasses and bare ground, no IDs.

Still no sign of tree swallows. Jonathan may have the swallow box all to himself this summer. It is good the swallows have not come, as insects have been pretty rare these last 10 days. The swallows will come – they always have.

Our local gulls feeding almost exclusively on over wintering blackberries.

A bit more ground showing every day even though the temperatures have hardly reached thawing.

May 24 Low 24° F, High 35° F
SE to 20. Cloudy, a little snow/rain.

A little precipitation today for a change. A change of wind too almost made for another period of grave concern. Sam Williams and one of his boys (Carrie's brother) at Sealing Point out on the sea ice again looking for uguruq when a crack in the ice developed between them and the shore. They thought they might have to travel towards Kivalina to get across the crack but found a way to cross not far from in front of their house. They were lucky. With a wind change they could have been "out" for a while. That is probably what caused the disappearance of the two hunters down that way last year around this time. They reported seeing lots of seals but no uguruq. It is said that uguruq don't like to smell the land. Thus an offshore (east) wind is not a time to look for uguruq but is a time when you might "drift out."

I saw a first flock of brant today and another small flock was seen at Sealing Point.

North traveling long-tailed jaegers were also in the air today.

A surprise and miserable late afternoon snow/rain shower obliterated everything for about an hour. Gave a few aircraft some minor visibility problems.

My youngest dog called Aachauq made his first known kill today. He somehow caught an adult willow ptarmigan! Don't know how but it still had some life in it when he brought it in. It may have been a crippled bird. We celebrated his catch with a good howl! Aachauq, Terry and I.

May 25 Low 27° F, High 37° F
SE-S to 20. Cloudy, snow, clearing.

Several rather heavy snow showers today before clearing this evening when the sun broke through and warmed the snow surface deeper than it has before to date.

I had to make a trip into town with nephew who needs some medical attention.

The trail was in better shape than expected so the trip was easy and I was able to get some delayed business matters taken care of.

There were lots of birds and some right on the trail this morning. Many northern pintail on the mud at Nuvuruq and some shorebirds – turnstones and semi-palmated sandpipers and probably some westerns.

Soon after I returned home, I heard the distant call of a red-throated loon while outdoors – a first for us this spring. We saw a short-eared owl right in the trail this morning looking tired, so maybe as the ages old story goes the owl again won the race to nesting grounds. One must be very perceptive and know both birds well to understand how the sloppy, seemingly slow flying owl can consistently win the ages old race north to nesting grounds.

A large group of caribou were at Salluq again this morning. We haven't heard yet whether anyone got some. Bulls

would have tasty bones at this date.

The ocean in the Sealing Point area is reported to have a new lead system. As it closes again seal and uguruq hunters will have a good hunting ground.

May 26 Low 28° F, High 36° F
 SE to 15. Cloudy, snow, rain showers.

A rather dull colored wet day but more real signs of breakup.

Our small draw from the tablelands behind us was finally starting to run water out into the lagoon, and numerous birds – ducks, geese, shorebirds – were around the water.

One tree swallow came by finally, today, went into the house and out and left again. Surprisingly a first tree swallow visited Sealing Point today 25-30 miles away from Sisualik and at approximately the same time. How can one explain these marvels of homing instinct in many small living creatures? They accomplish so many feats beyond human body/senses capability.

A few brant flocks are incoming and a northern harrier and merlin “coasted” by as usual. Sam Williams found three glaucous gull eggs today – the first for that species. The last week of May is traditionally the beginning of egg laying for this species. The air is finally beginning to fill with bird noise again. It has been a long time in coming.

Travel is still good into Kotzebue but rain and hardly freezing nights are making water on ice and softening snow surface on the main trail.

May 27 Low 25° F, High 39° F
 SE to 15. Cloudy, snow, sun p.m.

The 1½ inches of heavy wet snow overnight must have been tough on early egg layers (crane and gull) and birthing moose. It did all melt by evening around here.

Someone visited Jones’ Camp by canoe today from the mouth of the most westerly Noatak River slough. This is the first local boating we have heard of.

Several very large (?) flocks of brant were reported incoming from the same location.

We ate a very fat gift bird for supper tonight. It was a female snow goose taken a week ago near Battle Rock. It carried a leg band with the number 4007-43747 Washington D.C. Will pass this on to USF&WS Kotzebue.

Noatak River ice still holding at village site. People still fishing through it. Sheefish finally taken at Pipe Spit this week. Too late for us.

In most recent years boats have been able to get out from Kotzebue by this date. We are having a late spring.

Some birds though, are laying eggs by calendar. Both crane and glaucous gull eggs were found this week on Krusenstern.

Carrie's game leg has her down again today. Hope she recovers quickly so we can make the trek to Sealing Point that she wanted.

Our local gull flocks continue their food shortage problem though things are probably improving with floodwaters beginning. Thawing ground with available over winter blackberries have sustained them.

Three swallows at the box 10:30 p.m.

May 28 Low 30° F, High 40° F
 No wind! Cloudy, no sun!

A very dull colored day. The sound of birds in the air gave it some life.

The crew at Sealing Point sunk two uguruq last night and finally recovered one large one this afternoon with a sinking hook line. They may recover the other also in time. They hooked both soon after shooting but due to faulty hooks they rolled off before reaching the surface. A Point Hope type sinking hook is usually more efficient. It has only two prongs at offset angles. When it makes contact with the animal's body one hook prong penetrates deeply and if it rolls due to current, the point of the prong simply makes a second hole in the skin making a sure first hold instead of coming free.

There is a report of lots of life and noise down at the newly opened lead. Lots of murre, eiders, ahalik (oldsquaw) and loons in flocks.

This is a late opening of a near shore lead and the activity there is a sight to behold. The silent sea ice becomes a panorama of various species of arctic life – a newly born world of activity.

The taking of a first uguruq is always a great event for those camped at or near Sealing Point.

The snow has hardly frozen the last two nights so has become quite soft and slushy without a show of sun. Traveling inland has become very poor or impossible but the coast, even to Kotzebue, is still fairly good.

There may be two northern flickers at Joe Harris' camp. ID not sure yet. This species is known here but rare.

May 29 Low 33° F, High 39° F
 Light SE. Cloudy, some drizzle.

A lot of thawing today over land. The outlines of our lakes are finally starting to show and some water is coming down on top of ice on our western neighbor's slough.

A little water is showing on top of sea ice.

There are still travelers/hunters from town. The trail is still usable though water near town is getting deeper.

There has been a pretty heavy take of larger waterfowl this May. White fronts, Canada, cranes and these last few days, incoming brant. The slow thaw has limited exposed water, mud and grasses and caused concentrations of birds on the few good resting and feeding plots.

The ice in Noatak River at village site is said to be moving out.

We are approaching a time of warm melt water that may be the early key to bring about germination of *Gentianopsis detonsa* seeds across the salt marsh. It will be a late happening this year as we still have about 80% ground surface snow covered here on the spit.

There are not as many Memorial Weekend travelers out as expected. Wet dull weather and rapidly deteriorating trails may be the reason. Then too many folks have all the birds they want by now.

Late sheefishing at Noatak mouth and Pipe Spit may also be an attractant for the braver travelers. Those folks living at Little Noatak mouth report heavy catches of sheefish last night.

May 30 Low 30° F, High 39° F
 Light, NW to 10. Cloudy, rain.

First measurable rain of the season and it sure brought our snow down. Outlines of our lakes are showing and water rising rapidly along the Noatak River from village to the mouth.

Our ground only 60% snow covered now. Several species of ducks down and around the edges of lakes where there are thaw puddles.

Melt water is reaching some areas of *G. detonsa* production in past years but the hidden sun is not yet making any “warm water bath.”

Sno-gos still traveling Sealing Point to town and back. There will not be many more days for that adventure. Boat time is not far off.

A few aggressive male willow ptarmigan still cruising around Sisualik looking for a fight.

Speaking of fights, my two dogs finally got into it today at the end of their “free” run. Both naturally vie for my attention and have developed a natural jealousy. Aachauq, not quite a year old, is nearly twice as big as Terry but has always been subservient to him without testing. I knew the testing would come as always when Aachauq came “of age.” I wasn’t looking forward to the testing, as I like old Terry (the former Super Dog) very much and I feared the damage the heavier younger dog could do with his alligator teeth. I was close and able to break them up before real damage was done. Terry a spot of blood on one ear and top of head – Aachauq limping from a

shoulder. I wish this settled the matter but probably hasn't.

May 31 Low 26° F, High 37° F
E-SE to 18. Cloudy, fog, rain.

Trip west to Katyaarak to drain water out of aluminum boat and pull it to higher ground out of flood's reach hopefully.

Water coming up at all stations with a late breakup threatened in all directions.

Lots of birds in the Krusenstern Beach Ridge complex and overflowing slough and creek systems.

Many brant and shorebirds moving west to east through that region. Birds often make landfall at our coastal mountains and bluffs at Sealing Point then move east to populate Noatak and Kobuk River valleys.

Saw a few fresh and many old caribou tracks on the ice down that way; these are the deer that came straight up from Deering on the sea ice. The fresh ones are strays trying to catch up with the first larger groups.

People still traveling on and fishing through ice for shee on the Lockhardt, Pipe Spit and Little Noatak trails. Snow surface well frozen again this morning. Trail west good with only a little water forming on the ice.

Our beach crack was open for the first time this morning but there are as yet no outward trending cracks showing on today's eastward travel. We don't know of any travelers from Kotzebue today. This last day of May in this late breakup year of 2000 is dully wet and cool but water is running.

JUNE

June 1 Low 34° F, High 41° F
SE-S to 10. Cloudy, rain, fog.

A very dull wet day for June without sun, even though tomorrow begins our period of 24-hour sun above the horizon.

Small lean tomcod (saffron cod) have come up to Sisualik waters. Each year they turn up at about this stage of breakup – just when the beach crack opens wide enough to hook through. I have had an auger hole down on the ice and have tried fishing every once in a while through May without any sign of fish till today. Now there are lots, but all small and lean.

This is the second day that there have been no travelers from Kotzebue.

There was very little activity in Sisualik today with the constant drizzle and fog. Temperatures were mild.

Bar-tailed and Hudsonian godwits and red knots reported into Kotzebue; also turnstones and western sandpipers.

River water in Noatak reported changed to “muddy” from clear – a sign that breakup is underway in earnest.

A couple of tree swallows around again today but Jonathan has been pretty constant on the box roof. I put up the old fish rod today to discourage his use of the box.

Our snow on land has gone pretty rapidly these last three days with the help of the sometimes warm rain and lack of nighttime freezing.

June 2 Low 33° F, High 42° F
 Light westerlies. Some clouds, some clear.

This is the magic day when you must begin the long wait to see the sun set. It won't set until July 10th. That should mean a lot of sun to see through the next month and a half.

It is also the time that warm melt water can settle over *Gentianopsis detonsa* seed deposited sometime in the past. I have theorized that sun heated melt water over deposited seed may be a requirement for germination of multi-year seed in our salt marsh. A few very warm days this week may mean a good crop of this beautiful marsh flower again this year.

It is hard to believe that these gentian plants in another month will be approaching their short time of glory in our arctic salt marsh. Hope there are lots and I hope a botanist of more expertise than I makes it here while the plants are showing off.

We have melt water all over now and lots of bird activity. The lagoon is filled with brown run off water but no ice-rafted bottom sediments yet. Birds of many species use this peculiar habitat when available through their spring migration time. The aquatic plants and roots and associated worms provide a “smorgasbord” for many shorebirds and waterfowl.

Went out to a location where we usually find a glaucous gull egg or two. There was only one set of three eggs and, surprise of surprises, they were well along toward bird development.

This is a very early date for that happening.

June 3 Low 30° F, High 39° F
 W-NW to 10. Clear.

A very fine bright day that seemed warmer than temperatures indicate.

Noatak River free of ice as far as Nauyauraq, the bend above the Hatchery. Lots of wood passing Eli River.

Sisualik seal hunters out today and not home yet.

Sam Williams at Sealing Point got one more uguruq today. The lead location and ice conditions are ideal for hunters camped at Sealing Point.

There are a lot of very small tomcod under Sisualik ice again today.

Picked up another two gull eggs behind camp today. Good fresh ones this time. Saw numerous shorebirds on the marsh – black turnstones, long-billed dowitchers, western and semi-palmated sandpipers.

Lagoon water level still rising but slowly. Noatak River still rising at Jones' Camp.

Anigaq mouth ran out on sea ice today.

First 4-wheeler broke the trail from the Point to here and beyond. The days of snow machine travel are numbered now.

The two boys that did make it here from town yesterday made the crossing back today. They may be the last till boating time. Their mission was simply to be able to say that they made the crossing from Kotzebue by sno-go in June!

June 4 Low 30° F, High 47° F
 Light westerlies. Clear.

A beautiful warm day and timely. If there are *G. detonsa* seeds in place at spots of past years' occurrences, the thaw and melt water scene right now should be warm enough to stir/bring on germination for this year's crop.

Some greening of plants is beginning and *Empetrum nigrum*, our blackberries, are probably blooming.

Our snow cover is down to about 15%.

Kotzebue radio is giving a brown bear alert this evening. That's new for the Baldwin Peninsula.

A large male walrus, probably a so-called "rogue walrus" was killed this morning out on the lead out from the tower at Sealing Point. These are bull walrus, (usually) old, that live solitary lives away from herds and often begin to take common seals for food instead of clams. This is a rare but regular happening. This animal did have seal in the stomach.

With our snow near gone and ground puddles everywhere, we are finally seeing birds of all kinds everywhere.

Another northern flicker reported this evening in the Fish Creek area (Ed and Ruth Iten).

Lots of insects out today and the swallows are working overtime. They got a late start.

One uguruq was brought home to Sisualik Point last evening and I went over today to get meat for cooking. There have been four taken by our Krusenstern people so far. There are reported to be lots seen by hunters who have been out.

June 5 Low 37° F, High 62° F
 NE-N to 18, SW to 15. Clear, clouding late.

A very warm day in Sisualik – hot!

If *G. detonsa* theorizing is correct this day will provide melt water at high enough temperatures to crack any seed husk! Melt water levels are right for some but not all places.

Boating happening from Hatchery to Noatak.

First net fishing at Jones' Camp. Mixed catch of whitefish, northern sucker, great northern pike. It is often difficult to find a good "cooking fish" in first catches. Winter takes a toll and the first fish out are very low in stored energy (fat).

Some strange birds on the coast this week (out of normal habitat). We've had a northern hawk owl in camp all day. He seems to like our company, poles for perching and high camp vole population. He has been dived on by both glaucous gulls and a passing merlin.

We are not seeing any Lapland longspurs again. There are camp savannah sparrows but apparently no longspurs on the Spit – again!

It is sad to hear of a second large winter die off of caribou in the Cape Thompson area. It seems similar to the die off 4 or 5 years ago and probably exceeds that, as more caribou wintered there than at the last episode. Various tests will be made, but last time around everything but starvation was pretty much ruled out.

Interestingly enough, musk ox in the same area haven't shown any stress and may be having a good calving year.

Some green growth is showing down in the brown of last year's leaves.

June 6 Low 31° F, High 52° F
 W-NW. Cloudy and sun.

The hawk owl seems to have moved into camp. He is very tame with somewhat bedraggled feathers with dull/pale coloration – probably molting. We watched him catch several large voles. We had some fears for the swallows but they seem to tolerate each other well.

We have had three other birds of prey come by and each acknowledge the hawk owl with a dip or dive – no real harassment. Pip-Squeek the mew gull and mate do harass, but mostly voice and wing swoop. The merlin, northern

harrier and short-eared owl just gave a salute.

Noatak River may be open nearly to the mouth now but Kotzebue Channel is still holding.

Little Noatak campers have water up to doorsill.

A good neighbor gave us a whole bucket of glaucous gull eggs today. They are good fresh-laid eggs, each as big as two or three chicken eggs. It is good and traditional to have all the fresh boiled eggs you can eat a couple of times during the first week of June. It is also good to have active, knowledgeable young people as neighbors when you get old too!

Another uguruq was taken by the boys at Salluq today. Net fishing on the delta (Jones' Camp) continues.

The only snow left now is in large drifts around camps, with a few patches on the flats. It didn't take long to free the land of snow with rain, wind and high temperatures.

Moose calving probably nearly through and caribou probably well under way.

Water in oceanfront getting tea colored.

Twelve common seals lying on ice in front of camp today.

June 7 Low 34° F, High 56° F
 NE-E-S to 18. Cloudy and sun.

Hawk owl is gone – after feeding up on our camp voles. He took quite a few in a couple of days.

Very high marine water today. Our ocean ice floating pretty high. We have no large ice piles to our west on the Sound this year so our beach ice may move early.

We may have a chance to put a net out soon. It will be good to have fresh fish again. We are having fish every day at lunchtime from the last sack of whitefish from Anigaaq put up last September. These are thawed now, buried in the snow. We take four out each noon, scrape the scales off, wash them and cut bite size pieces off to eat with oil. They are very tasty and a very well liked traditional "breakup time" food for the folks on Krusenstern beaches.

Nearly 20 seals in sight again today when the sun came out. Most of them are lying along an old refrozen crack in the sea ice. These are not "hunnable" at the moment, as the area around them is too flat and there is still too much water on the ice surface. That will change shortly when ice surface dries and gets snowy/soft again. It will then be quiet for sneaking. It is the hard way to get seals at this season. Lots of time consuming sneaking, but it can be done.

Not much ice rafted mud in our lagoon section this year, yet, so we are not seeing many birds.

June 8 Low 31° F, High 50° F
W to 20. Cloudy, fog.

Fog and cold. West wind all day with temperatures going steadily down. The 50° F high was during the very early morning.

Every living thing suffering – temporarily – from this cooling wind. New greens, insects, birds and birds with eggs to incubate.

Good fish catches at Jones' Camp now.

Kotzebue channel opened in a couple of places in front of town last night, and today the whole channel opened with much driftwood from the Noatak going out. There will be boats back and forth from Kotzebue to Noatak now. The wood, trees, etc. will go out Kotzebue channel till it meets sea ice and will stay there until wind and ice distribute it along the beaches of Kotzebue Sound. Hopefully a lot of it will land within our reach. We will need more this fall and there will be whole big trees and lots of smaller stuff.

We are noticing again an almost complete lack of Lapland longspurs on the Spit. This is a dearly loved species by camp dwelling people and has grown exceedingly rare here in the past ten years. It nest on the ground around camp sites where it hunts fly worms – maggots – all summer. It is a handsome bird and benefits coastal marine mammal and fish camps by feeding heavily on blowfly eggs and larvae. Its Eskimo name denotes its habit of poking around on the ground seeking out worms of various sorts. We are worried that something has happened to the species, either locally or on winter habitat.

June 9 Low 31° F, High 32° F
W-NW to 25. Fog, some clouds, sun.

Strange temperatures today. A strong steady wind off of the sea ice kept our air at a steady cool nearly all night and day. It is unusual for our temperatures to vary so little in 24 hours.

Much green growth has started and it is likely to get frost nipped tonight.

A small bear seen at Sealing Point today. Both the bear and the kids were looking for eggs.

The strong west winds have caused a lot of driftwood to pile up on Kotzebue Front Street.

Lagoon and ocean water has dropped dramatically in response to wind. Some movement in ocean beach cracks has been noted between Sisualik and Sealing Point.

Sea water in front of camp now much discolored as outflow of local drainages and Noatak River water begin to reach our ocean beach.

It is time to get a net in the water but we don't have a "right angle" (to the beach) crack this year like last. We will

have to wait for a while.

Common seals and uguruq fall back from this outflow of fresh colored water but soon get used to it and re-enter areas of ice. Today the report from Sealing Point is that lots and lots of seals are basking on the ice NW of Sealing Point where there is an area of late-formed ice near the beach now getting quite rotten.

Migrations and things of that nature are pretty much on hold till temperatures come up.

Kotzebue and Noatak boats out now but limited as to where they can go.

June 10 Low 29° F, High 33° F
 W-NW to 18. Fog, clearing p.m. Some clouds.

Today similar to yesterday but less fog p.m. – cool temperatures with little variation.

Ice running at both Kotzebue and Nuvuruq, not much boating or netting yet.

Went up to Kuliitkiin with Aachauq this morning. The flocked non-breeding tundra swans have increased. There must be nearly 1,000 back there today. They pretty much obscure all other waterfowl right now, though there are also many northern pintail and greater scaup.

Ground is greening but temperatures yesterday and today not helping that growth much.

There is still water over many of the places of past *G. detonsa* occurrence, in particular the plot at Barger's where there were many plants last July. It is now the 10th of June and one wonders about the possible length of interval between seed germination and above ground appearance of plant.

Lapland longspurs are becoming one of the rarest birds on the Spit. It is a shame since they used to be so plentiful.

Many planes and passengers were trapped in interior villages, not being able to get back into Kotzebue because of fog yesterday and today. Most were able to get in this late afternoon and evening.

The west winds continue to stretch our late spring later. Kotzebue Front Street has had a windfall of driftwood due to timely west winds.

June 11 Low 29° F, High 40° F
 Light SW-W. Cloudy and sun.

There may be a boat trail through the Noatak mouth to Sisualik Point but no one has used it yet.

Left an old net in a beach crack and was surprised to see 9 whitefish in it this morning. It is a pretty weak net set due to ice, but there are apparently lots of whitefish in the water.

As usual with the first passing fish, only a few are good for fresh cooking. The others are good for drying and half dried cooked. Three of these were good boiled for lunch.

A real lot of male northern pintail in our area now. These birds will just loaf around till wing feather molt time (last week of June into July).

Today was a pretty fine day with warm periods of sun and a few light showers.

Our most numerous birds are northern pintail and tundra swans.

There is snow only around buildings; all the flats are snow free except cut banks where remnants of large snow banks remain.

Ocean front ice is still shore fast.

Have not seen or heard black-legged kittiwakes, Aleutian terns or yellow wagtails. These are usually our latest migrants.

June 12 Low 28° F, High 47° F
 W-NW to 18. Clear.

Carrie went to town and back today by plane. A long day for her but she responds well to adventure.

I cut a nice long pole of whitefish from yesterday's catch in the crack. We lucked out on that little net set and have the first "new season" fish hanging in Sisualik. That honor usually goes to those living at the Point as it opens to the beach there first. Running ice and dirt in the water have slowed them up there.

The beach has finally cleared of snow enough for 4-wheeler traffic all the way to the outlet at Anigaq. Akulak outlet has not yet opened. Last summer it never did and consequently was barren of fish.

The color of our world has changed from white to brown and now the brown is taking on a hint of green. It will, in a few days, be pretty much all green and then the season's floral display will begin. We began to see bumblebees yesterday.

A boat made it to Kotzebue and back today for the first time. That is from Sisualik Point to Kotzebue and that will open the door for families from Noatak and Kotzebue to come to their late spring hunting/fishing camps and later berry picking. There will be a lot more people out on the land this week. There is still no way for Kotzebue Sound boats to get out and hunt the ice for marine mammals. Kotzebue Sound is as yet all land fast ice. The first open water lead is just west of the mouth of the Sound.

June 13 Low 32° F, High 40° F
 W-NW to 25. Clear, late fog over ice.

Steady moderate winds out of the west, off the ice, keep us cool.

In spite of the coolness, two definitely summertime things happened today. I heard water wave noise, which I have not heard since last fall, and I saw two species of beach ridge tundra plants in flower! A short check of tundra back from the edge of our lagoon produced two *Pedicularis lanatum* with flower stalks half flowered – a very beautiful rose-pink on the greening but yet dull ground. The most abundant current flower though is the bearberry (*Arctostaphylos alpinus*) whose greenish cream-colored perfect globe flower no one ever seems to notice or mention. They are very early, abundant and flower before the leaves grow. *Empetrum nigrum*, our blackberry, flowers at the same time but is difficult to see without magnification.

Snow is gone from all the flatlands now and a good berry year will depend on additional moisture before things dry out too much. Fog, rain showers or genuine rain will do the trick.

Marine waters have dropped again and beach crack continues working back and forth, but the entire beach line from Sisualik Point to Port Site still has beach fast shelf ice. It is expected to develop outward cracks any day now; that is cracks at right angles to the beach cracks and all ice becomes “pack ice.” Boat marine mammal hunting remains on hold till this happens.

Lots and lots of waterfowl back against the tablelands from our place. There has been hunting for more than a week.

June 14 Low 29° F, High 36° F
 W-NW to 25. Clear, some fog early.

The V of open water a half mile off shore has moved its western point several miles west during this day. That means in front of camp here we have only ½ mile of land fast shelf ice. We thought that half-mile would break up and move off, leaving us a place to set net. It hasn't yet.

A beluga whale was shot at twice a few miles NW of Sealing Point last night. Both shots missed the target. The shooter says his sights had been jiggled out of alignment.

A first Noatak family made it down to the Point late last night. There will soon be more to follow for spring hunting and fishing.

An unusual “fat trout” catch was reported today, several were taken in a crack just west of Sealing Point – a couple more were taken 8-10 miles east in a beach crack and an unknown number were taken at Augie Nelson camp on west side of Kobuk Lake. The only fat trout normally expected at this time are those out of Kivalina and Wulik Rivers, where they've overwintered. Most of those out of Noatak River at this early date are “slinks” – very lean, spawned out, overwintering fish.

The continual west wind syndrome we have been in triggers a strong westerly ocean current and this would rapidly bring trout out of Wulik and Kivalina rivers to Sealing Point and Salluq and eventually us. The ones on Kobuk Lake likely come from a different source.

What is unusual is that these “western” trout do not usually get out into the sea until all shelf (shore fast) ice is gone and “pack ice” prevails.

June 15 Low 32° F, High 63° F
 S-NE-E to 10. Clear, some clouds p.m.

A warm day today and trout! We had a fine supper this evening with a fine 8 lb fat trout from a very short net set in beach water on top of iced bottom. It was a surprise catch and a welcome one. Some fat and some lean trout are being taken all along the beach from Sealing Point to Sisualik Point. It is unusual because of the ratio of fat to lean at this stage of traditional fish movement.

Our beach did not open as expected but the lead a mile offshore did and expanded itself westward, where we saw our first boats in the ocean. The boats are still pretty limited as the only open water zone is east of a line from Sisualik to Cape Blossom.

There is a report of a beluga seen in the zone by an air taxi on the way from Kotzebue to Salluq.

Our constant west winds let up today and ice movement and current will work over our seawater scene quickly. A first boat also made it through the back lagoon system to Kenworthy’s camp. One Noatak family has made it to Sisualik Point camp and others will soon follow. The open water influx of people to Sisualik is on. Boat marine mammal hunting has begun.

June 16 Low 35° F, High 50° F
 SW-W-NW to 18. Clear, clouding late.

Great day today! Ice left the beach. Fish and wood came in heavy!

Got a tube full of mixed fish in a 20-minute set – Alaska whitefish, Bering cisco, Noatak char and sheefish.

Alaska whitefish were most abundant and choice. We have a lot of cutting to do tomorrow. Took the scales off today. Several other fisher folk from the Point came over to set their nets. The Point has been poor fishing – too much current and dirt.

We fished some real fine firewood out from between ice floes today. Some fine golden colored white spruce, green trees but de-barked and limbed by ice so they will dry out fast. Real solid wood. A real lot of small driftwood landed. These also will be good fuel after they dry out.

All our driftwood we feel is “free” wood since little gas is required to gather.

Lots of fish taken in Sisualik today.

Our town family boat got in late today on a “camp out” weekend. They had to leave boat at the Point due to late wind and ice conditions. Six of them got on two 4-wheelers (one mine) with trailers and took off for trout fishing and camping at Anigaq.

Our brown water on beachfront today was just full of fish – many making telltale signs on the surface. One must watch his net closely when it is like this so he doesn’t get more than he needs or wants. A few minutes can be long enough.

June 17 Low 32° F, High 5° F
SW-W-NW to 18. Cloudy, a little sun.

Forgot to mention the first show of pautnaq spikes yesterday morning. These are the edible first shoots, almost scarlet-colored, of tall fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*). The bright redness stands out in brown and slowly greening background.

The continued cool nights and days are slowing the growth of vegetation and development of insects.

We cut our tub of whitefish this morning with Carrie helping. It went pretty fast with extra help. It makes a couple of long poles.

Carrie said not to put the net out today.

Noatak people continue to arrive at their camps at the Point. There are now five or six families.

Sisualik waters continue to be full of fish of several species but most fishers are targeting either fat trout or whitefish, the fat trout for cooking or freezer and the whitefish for dried fish.

In the middle of our first day of driftwood landings yesterday our extended family got their boat out and came across for a visit and to check out the new engine. They wanted to get on down to Anigaq when trout fishing can be good with rod and reel. They brought one 4-wheeler and borrowed mine as ice blocked boat traffic. They had 6 fishermen to move. They had good overnight fishing, taking many fat trout just inside the mouth at Anigaq. It is hard to get them to take a lure in the sea but they seem to strike readily once inside the outlet.

No beluga yet!

June 18 Low 30° F, High 54° F
Light SW-S-NW. Clear, frost.

A near perfect day for people – not quite for insects and vegetation. The rather heavy early morning frost saps the enthusiasm of those living things. Their day is coming – with warmth and moisture.

We have the season's first kayak traveler today. Tent and kayak were on the beach between us and west neighbors this morning. After noon he made an attempt to continue west but had to return to beach after a few hundred yards due to ice packing in against shore.

Several boats traveling through the ocean today but very little hunting success due to relatively little water and lots of ice. We have heard of only one boat (out of Kotzebue) taking one uguruq.

There have been no sightings of beluga in the inner Sound yet.

We've had lots of ice on the beach all day. It is moving west and opening some this evening.

We have not seen or heard black-legged kittiwake yet this spring, nor Aleutian terns.

We do have a lot of voles and short-eared owls for a change.

Flocked non-breeding tundra swans still noisily around but some disturbance coming their way now with more people around.

We had our first dirt bike today. Brrrrrp-brrrrrp-brrrrrp! Not only the swans are disturbed.

We have had lots of small aircraft, boats in ice-free waters and beach ATVs.

June 19 Low 42° F, High 56° F
Calm a.m., NW to 18 p.m. Clouds – broken, sun.

Saw a first "real" flower on the marsh today. The beautiful little perennial *Primula borealis*, our earliest salt marsh flower and maybe in most years the most abundant flower on the marsh. It blooms early and is pretty much gone by the time the gentians come into flower.

Chives and our favorite wild celery, called tukaiyuq in Eskimo and *Ligusticum scoticum* in Latin, are now large enough to pick and put in seal oil.

The mat willows and dwarf birch of the tundra have their shiny new green leaves – the birch out-glossing every other plant showing green.

Tableland red willows have not greened enough yet to provide the distant green contrast of a week from now. Our greening is late today.

More people coming into the old camps every day this week.

Our unknown kayak person that was off yesterday for Espenberg or Shishmaref is back on shore in Sisualik, wanting to know when the ice will loosen up enough for him to make the crossing. Our answer was that that is the question all the local hunters would like to know. It is a matter of wind-current directions and the whims of developing weather systems. I suggested that it seemed a very hazardous trip in a small kayak. His reply – “It’s only a forty mile trip isn’t it?”

There is a world of difference in making a 40-mile trip along a shore or down a river but the mouth of an ice filled Sound is another matter.

June 20 Low 32° F, High 56° F
 S-SW-E to 15. Fog, clearing, clear.

Nights are still hanging at near freezing and still our vegetation continues to develop. I saw a few salmonberry flowers today – the very first of the season. They didn’t look very robust.

Also saw more *Primula borealis* and some first *Potentilla villosa*. The floral season is on and timely since our longest day of the year is tomorrow.

One beluga was taken yesterday by Noatak hunters. Others were seen or heard by people along the Spit. That is great. Now there is hope again for sisauq in Sisualik!

Our water still full of fish. Pushed the net out this morning and fish almost ran away with it. They are all the same kind though – lean Noatak trout. None very good for cooking or freezing. There sure are lots this June and they will be back in August real round and fat.

The only other two species were a few starry flounders and a single Bering cisco. I released all the trout alive (nearly 20 of them).

Fog and onshore ice kept boats home till late afternoon. Uguruq hunters having a slow start due to heavy ice conditions, light winds and long spells of fog.

Waterfowl are thinning out – moving on to quiet molting areas.

A large bull caribou was standing across the slough from C. Wilson’s boat in the fog at Katyaaraq this morning.

More boat/beluga talk on VHF right now (10:30 p.m.).

June 21 Low 33° F, High 57° F
 SE-S to 18. Clouds and sun.

A nice day with onshore winds (off the ice) and high level marine waters.

Set the 3½” mesh net twice today then got wise and put out the 6” salmon net.

The small mesh caught a pile of lean “out moving” trout in 15 minutes, all of which I released. The second 20-minute set got four whitefish and a couple of small but decently fat trout, which we cooked for supper.

Set the 6” salmon net and left out for several hours. No salmon but several larger than salmon trout, two of which are fat enough. We will have baked giant trout tomorrow.

There was also one salmon size sheefish in the net that was stuffed with small saffron cod. The shee can apparently see well enough in the turbid water to catch one of their favorite foods.

With onshore winds our beach has been closed to travel west around Anigaq to Sealing Point. The west side of Sealing Point near shore is ice-free.

Upland willow patches are greening fast and more flowers are out daily. Even saw a large yellow swallowtail butterfly yesterday.

All this with night time temperatures still freezing or near it.

What I haven’t seen yet is a mosquito, though they have been reported at various VHF points.

Belugas seen by hunters in boats through the last 24 hours. We have not heard of any more catches beside the one noted the other day.

June 22 Low 41° F, High 54° F
 SE-S to 18. Clear, some cloudy.

Ice pretty well off shore today here and Kotzebue channel running Kobuk Lake ice.

Country greening rapidly now with warmer nights. Both flats and tablelands taking on more than a “green tinge” now.

Hunting going pretty slow as abundant ice makes access slow and more difficult. No word yet on additional beluga take – still only one, though word may be slow to get around.

There may be a net or two out towards Kotzebue channel.

Mosquitoes seem slow to put in appearance. With nights as warm as last they can’t be far off.

We didn’t set net today as we baked the large trout taken last evening and don’t have need for fresh fish right now. We heard that neighbors that did set net were getting lots of fat Kivalina trout. We may set net again tomorrow.

More Noatak folks down nearly every day. Carrie’s sister is on the way tonight after the burial of a well-loved

village matriarch in Noatak.

Two birds that we normally have in Sisualik by this date are still absent. Lapland longspurs and black-legged kittiwake have not crossed our path yet this spring.

Our large group of flocked non-breeding tundra swans is getting closer to camp this evening, indicating that they are following the patchwork quilt of tender greening marsh sedges. There may be near 1,000 this year, though usually in several groups.

June 23 Low 45° F, High 59° F
 SE-S to 25. A few clouds.

A fine dry breezy day in Sisualik. With night temperatures in the 40's both insects and plants are getting a lease on life.

Got water from our nearest freshwater lake for doing our washing today and found more salmonberry blossoms but still relatively few. The latest bloomers look good and healthy.

Blackberries are already set on the vines in places again.

A large group of maybe 400 tundra swans was in our backyard yesterday. Today they are clipping off both sedge new growth and underwater *Potamogeton* corms that are just sprouting.

We didn't set a net today since we are still eating on the large trout taken a couple of days ago.

Belugas have made a show several times today in Salluq. They seem to be passing this way.

There are now at least three beluga nets set in Sisualik since the pack ice has stayed off the beach for a couple of days.

There are a good many campers at the Point now. Carrie's sister from Noatak, whose husband passed on this winter, made it in last night. She is glad to be here, as daytime temperatures are getting unbearably warm for her in Noatak now. She, like Carrie, was raised on the coast.

A few uguruq are being brought in one or two at a time.

June 24 Low 44° F, High 54° F
 SE to 15, NW to 20 late. Cloudy, rain showers.

Calm most of the day; wind up late from NW.

Lots of beluga nets set now that ice has moved farther out, but no catch yet. A few were seen again today but we haven't heard of any taken by boats lately. Two have been taken so far and maybe one sunk and lost.

Many *Primula borealis* flowers in the marsh now and some yellow *Potentilla villosa* and rock jasmine. The marsh is taking on color again and with an ever more greening background. Iris leaves also on the way up.

For a few nights now we have had 40°F temperatures with no frost and now mosquitoes and floral development are the result. Some good and bad? No – mosquitoes are not really bad – just annoying. They are needed as pollinators, food for our fish and ducklings and maybe even “spore spreaders” for lichens to fatten our caribou. They will be bothersome though to all warm-blooded creatures – maybe even fatal to some.

Lots of boats on the ocean today coming and going – some hunting, some fishing, some just boating. Kotzebue channel still running Kobuk ice but usually crossable by knowledgeable boaters.

Many dark and streaked redpolls feeding in the piled beach driftwoods. Some small seeds or insect eggs washed out from the rivers.

Tundra swan group seems to be dispersing, the great numbers now in flocks of 10 to 30. Maybe temporarily. Molt time is not far off for them.

We are already into early molt time for northern pintail. The last week of June is the historical time for that event. Flightless fat ducks.

June 25 Low 41° F, High 55° F
 SE-S-SW light NW to 18. Cloudy, sun later, warm evening.

A windfall of driftwood just west of Sisualik today. We saw some large trees moving in to shore from direction of pack ice (no ice in sight from shore for two days now). We took (Carrie too!) a ride and found a lot of first class spruce wood on the beach ready to pick up and put up to dry and out of reach of waves. Nearly all the drift is spruce – very little willow and cottonwood – ideal beachcombing.

I put up the bigger logs till I tired of it with a small mark of ownership – not to save them from the general public but for my own need to recognize the ones I put up after other later beachcombers put up their choices. I will have much chainsaw work and hauling this coming week. The wood is 4-5 miles west of us.

Salmonberry flowering moving to peak shortly, blueberries blooming and blackberries set on vines as big as number 4 lead shot.

Neighbors found two flowering poppies today, the first – as were the clump of forget-me-nots beside our toilet. Bluebell flowers are near opening and marsh *Pedicularis sudetica* about to show their “peppermint swirl.”

Mosquitoes making a slow but sure come on, mowing the tender sedges of the salt marsh.

Search for an overdue boat maybe in the ice pack. Hope they locate them.

A few uguruq being brought in daily.

June 26 Low 40° F, High 52° F
SE-S-SW to 25, W to 18. Cloud, some rain.

Another cool day without insects and without freezing. It is a critical time for the salmonberry crop – flowers are trending toward a peak time. Frost would be catastrophic.

Wood, wood, wood! Sawing, piling, hauling. We have a good driftwood year and yesterday and today have been devoted to that. There is much more to work. The coming large ground swells (at ice out) can sweep all those left on the open beach into the water again to be deposited elsewhere – out of reach maybe. There are lots of long branchless, “skinless” white spruce trees. We are very fortunate.

Lots of flowers blooming west, of us behind where we are working wood. This is an undercut bank sheltered place and is a week early with general floral development. There were poppies, *Astragalus alpinus*, forget-me-nots, wallflowers, bumblebee plant and maybe a few others. There was a big doily of *Mertensia maritima* in full blue bloom on bare sand – a great and glorious surprise on a colorless sea beach. Have not seen a fully developed flower on its close relative *Mertensia paniculata* (bluebells). They are very close to blooming too. *Primula borealis* may be nearing peak bloom.

The world would be a sorry place without flowers!

Very high marine waters today in response to several days of southerly winds.

Haven't set a net for a couple of days. Probably will tomorrow. We could get a salmon any time now.

June 27 Low 36° F, High 42° F
Light a.m., NW 25 p.m. Cloudy, rain, clearing, sun.

A real good rain during the night and early morning. Very timely for blooming salmon- and blueberries.

A fine noisy group of 200 tundra swans in our back yard working the tender green growth of the salt marsh.

The marsh still has a topping of gray-brown over the green, but the tablelands are now pretty solid green with white “snow banks” of cottongrass heads.

Had the 6” salmon net out most of the day but caught only wood and flounders.

Wood is still moving through the Sound trying to find a final resting place. We have put up a lot and the wood is there for all who want to work it.

A first salmon will be the next major event with not many days left till the 4th of July.

Marine mammal hunting is kind of on hold till weather settles. Fog, winds and ice pack distribution has caused several search and rescue efforts – all successful so far.

We have not heard anything of the young kayak person hoping to cross from this side to Espenberg or Shishmaref.

Very low marine waters today after very high level yesterday.

All of our greens for putting in seal oil are ready for picking – sutra, tukaiyuq, iikusuq. We seldom pick these any more or only a few when we do.

We have still not seen black-legged kittiwake or Lapland longspur or Aleutian tern.

June 28 Low 33° F, High 44° F
 SW-W-NW to 20. Fog, clearing.

Another cool day but not quite a killing frost.

Salmonberry flowers nearing peak and looked fine and fresh at 9:00 a.m. this morning.

A large bear seen back on the tablelands at Akulak last night by extended family folks traveling that way. They have not made tracks on the beach yet, even though there are a number of dead drifted in seals around. A sure thing - they soon will track up the beach if they stay in the general area.

Swans still around.

A new event – a robin – a pair of robins have a nest, with eggs, at barren Sealing Point! Haven't yet heard where the nest is since there is hardly a willow high enough to support a robin's nest in that area. Robins are common in sheltered places (usually where there are trees) through the region, but have not heard of a nesting at Sealing Point before.

Weather, wind and fog, continues to slow uguruq hunters but some are being brought in.

Beluga sightings extremely rare. No catches in the many nets out this week that we have heard of.

Our town family boat hasn't been out yet but they are going to make a try this evening. Winds are fairly strong but ice, much ice, is reported at Sealing Point.

June 29 Low 35° F, High 45° F
 W-NW to 18. Clear, few clouds.

Big day today! Town family boat got in from an overnight hunt NW of Sealing Point with two very large uguruq in the boat for Carrie.

With some help from nearby relatives we managed to get the two animals butchered and the meat hung. Our drying racks look like a real marine mammal hunting camp again.

Both animals were large – one much fatter (thicker blubber) than the other. The fat one alone will make a full barrel of oil and if Carrie can manage to separate the blubber from skin we will be set for oil for another winter.

Word came this afternoon that a first chum salmon was caught in their net with a trout. The first salmon is late this year and surprisingly or not I saw the first seed head of *Elymus arenarius* (*mollis*?) this morning. It is a tradition here that chum salmon and these grain heads appear each summer at the same time.

The Sealing Point robin has a nest in (on) a saw table. Two eggs yesterday, four today! One finds it difficult to understand what would make Sealing Point attractive to a pair of robins! Talk about living on the edge!

Carrie is quite tired tonight but mentally in fine shape having proved to herself that she can still handle a large uguruq and make her own supply of seal oil.

June 30 [Low and High temps not recorded]
SW-W-NW to 15. Clear, few clouds.

West winds continue and our first salmon came while it was still June. The push pole 6" mesh salmon net had one small but bright chum salmon, two trout - one large fat male with a spoon hook in the thick of his back, a large red and white spoon with treble hooks with barbs. I removed the hook and released the very lively old warrior – we have had enough fat trout for a while and this fellow has had a tough time getting to where he would like to go. Someone must have thought he had the king of all trout on his monofilament line with this foul-hooked fish. We thank him for this good spoon, useable for shee next spring with the barbs flattened.

Our neighbors to the east caught one chum today too. That makes three we have heard of this June – and almost the same day the first *Elymus mollis* seed head stalks were noted.

I also think I found several *Gentianopsis detonsa* plants 1 inch out in the Barger house plot.

As noted in other years, ID is a bit difficult when the plant is very young.

Beluga have been real scarce in Kotzebue Sound this month and they are due at the Point Lay station next week.

Saw the first fresh tracks of a bull caribou on the beach just west of the most west Sisualik cabins. It was traveling east but we did not see it in Sisualik.

JULY

July 1 Low 46° F, High 52° F
SE-S-W to 18. Some sun, clouds, light rain.

A day of family. Most of our town extended family group, grandkids and great-grandkids and some dogs, over for what is becoming an annual July weekend. Lots of noise and excitement around our usually quiet camp. It is a good and timely break in routine. The family boat brought in the two large uguruq yesterday and came to celebrate the fruits of that hunt. We now have a year's supply of seal oil.

We caught another small but bright chum salmon today and a few more were taken at other camps along the line, so July opens with salmon in the water.

Two moose ran through Sisualik yesterday evening.

Five caribou ran through the Salluq camp area today. No animals were taken from these happenings so far as we know. Bear, caribou and moose were seen by Krusenstern people this week. This is somewhat unusual for the date.

July 2 Low 36° F, High 50° F
S-SW-NW to 18. Fog, cloudy, rain, clearing.

Waves nearly halfway up the beach last night but very quiet and low seas in the thick fog this morning. We suspect ice pretty close yet, the way the waves dropped when the wind quit.

Family left in a rush this early afternoon after some trouble developed in Kotzebue. We had an enjoyable, if crowded, time with them.

Our son-in-law's boss wanted a large fat trout to take south with him as he goes on sick leave. We set the 6" mesh net and the ocean obliged by providing one extra large and fat trout and one smaller. It was a timely lucky catch as fat trout, especially large ones, have been scarce this week.

Marine waters rose quite high during the night.

Tentatively found a couple of *G. detonsa* plants in near tent plot.

It seems a good year for *Mertensia maritima*. Some early and large size doilies along the beach.

Achauq, our younger dog, attracted our attention just before bedtime by standing up and looking behind the house – no bark, but both ears straight up and staring intently (usually one ear lays flat). Went out to look and there was a moose in fine very dark new summer hair. He was coming down to ocean beach from tablelands but was spooked by a lone empty gas drum standing on the edge of shore.

July 3 Low 35° F, High 50° F
SE-S-SW to 18. Rain, cloudy, fog, clearing.

We heard the rumble of thunder several times today – distantly – the first for this summer. Late smoke rolled in quite thickly on easterly (inland) winds. We don't think the smoke comes from nearby fires but from inland. At this time of year, when our westerlies fade, interior fire season smoke often overwhelms us. We have missed it for a couple of years now.

Another lone chum salmon in the net today with a lot of driftwood.

We have sure lucked out on a lot of driftwood this year. We haven't had much wood out for several years but this year it lines the beaches all through Cape Krusenstern and beyond. Most of it is white spruce and well scraped of both branches and bark – nice bright firm wood that will dry quickly. We have gathered a pile nearly as big as our little house and there is still much, much more. There is no longer competition amongst wood gatherers on Krusenstern beaches. There is enough for all.

Waterfowl are fading from the salt marshes as wing feather molt time gets into full swing – northern pintail, wigeon, white fronted geese, tundra swans and lastly greater scaup.

Some new good but heavy spruce wood landing today with south wind. The Noatak River people report that their river has been swept pretty clean of driftwood – thus the source of most of our good fortune.

A dead gray whale reported found in the ice NW of Sealing Point by returning ice pack hunters.

July 4 Low 39° F, High 50° F
S-SW-W to 25. Cloudy, rain, some sun.

A few chunks of ice broke upon Sisualik beach today and there is much ice in sight to the SW.

Spotted seals, a dead floating headless walrus and a dead floating gray whale found floating this way are indications that the ice belt across the outer Kotzebue Sound is getting thin.

We split our large boneless meat from the uguruq. This will make the “prized by all” black meat in oil.

Marine waters are at a very high level today and low lying gull nests are flooded. Some chicks may be hatched and will do fine; unhatched eggs probably can be moved by the parents.

Early flooding by marine waters doesn't seem to cause any particular big problems. The seawater is still diluted, partly fresh, from break up flood time.

Many camp people in town to celebrate the 4th. Weather turned sour (wind, rain and cold) and kept people from

traveling.

July 5 Low 34° F, High 42° F
SW-W-NW to 18. Fog, rain, clearing, sun.

A real cool day today till evening. Temperatures were in the 30's most of the day. No flies or mosquitoes.

Set the 6" salmon net about 9:00 a.m. and pulled it at 10:00 when wind and waves were building and some outside corks seemed low. There were 5 large male chums in the net and one sheefish. The salmon were a pleasant surprise. They were large, very bright, good-looking fish.

Ice moved on the beach soon after and all afternoon pack ice has been moving in toward Nuvuruq and Kotzebue. Ice has been out of sight from Sisualik for a week or more. This is a normal and expected happening. As the pack ice belt across the mouth of Kotzebue Sound gets thinner, the ground swells on the now outer ice free sea tend to push the last remaining pack ice up into the inner reaches of the Sound – us! There are always many common seals, spotted seals, uguruq and sometimes walrus on this last ice and often dead and sometimes headless walrus with this last ice.

This afternoon after skies cleared and a little warming began I saw our dog Achauq sitting down, ears up (even the lazy one), looking back across the marsh. I thought something was up so I went out to look (no window on rear of the house).

There was a cow moose with a very small young calf. The calf's legs even seemed "wobbly." When the dogs barked and the cow took off back the way they had come the calf had trouble keeping up but had to, even in the rather long swim across the arm of lagoon.

July 6 Low 42° F, High 56° F
SE-S-W to 10. Clear skies.

A very bright and shiny warm evening in Sisualik. Heavy ice still in sight and some on shore but net setting good again.

The rather heavy near-shore ice yesterday and last night wiped out the three beluga nets in sight from our front. Carrie gave an ice alert on VHF but response was tardy.

Hauled another load of wood from west beach while running Achauq. We found a large dead uguruq in good shape for oil saving but no one will work it I guess. These are animals lost while being shot in the water or wounded on ice. They float after gas builds in the body. The blubber is good for oil though the meat cannot be used for humans, though it is good for dog feed.

Lack of wind, warm moist air and rapid growth of leafy plants and shrubs are giving us a strong dose of overzealous mosquitoes tonight. I had to oil up the two dogs around the eyes and muzzle. Seal oil on the hair makes it sticky and mosquitoes are thwarted – for a while.

Salmonberry flowers are still blooming but are probably past peak. Frost in some locations at peak flower time might have hurt the coming crop.

There is, however, a great show of cotton on *Eriophorum* sp. plants. This was true last year too and the old adage that this means a great salmonberry crop came true last year, so we will continue to hope. We are still eating from last year's crop from the freezer.

July 7 Low 47° F, High 58° F
NE calm a.m., p.m. NW to 20. Cloudy, light shower.

Good catch in 3-hour set of 6" mesh. Six big chum, one big trout and one shee. Released shee and trout. That's nearly a full net for our little push pole net. First commercial chum opening may be Monday the 10th.

Mosquitoes bad last night and this morning. Dogs pretty sad and they especially enjoyed their short afternoon run. It is great to be able to run faster than the mosquitoes – for a while.

Geese are gone, swans are gone and northern pintail are gone from the salt marsh. All are in large inland lakes for the critical wing/flight feather molt.

Flowering increases each day – even salmonberry late flowering is pretty strong. We may have a better late salmonberry crop than an early one.

Sisualik and Nuvuruq people are picking greens for their yearly oil. Tukaiyuk is the target; they are large glossy and pungent right now (*Ligusticum scoticum*).

Our little tree swallows are, after all the cold weather and glaucous gull hazards, going to add to the general tree swallow numbers again. They are getting much help and encouragement from visiting swallow these last couple of warm days. There is now lots of food!

Ice still in sight and uguruq still being brought in.

Two caribou taken at Sealing Point, 20 in group.

July 8 Low 46° F, High 52° F
NW to 25. Cloudy, some sun. Fog over the ice.

Strong winds made it seem cooler than the temperatures today. Both the dogs and I had an insect free day that was much appreciated.

New ½ size squirrels are out – a new generation.

Ice is still in sight but this continued strong NW wind initiates a counter clockwise current in the Sound that may

wipe away quickly our pack ice. It is about time. This may be a short summer.

There will be four commercial fishing periods next week starting on the 10th. They will be 12-hour openings.

Some uguruq are still being brought in when weather permits.

A first drifted in walrus found yesterday at Salluq, the head intact but one tusk missing. The kauq (skin and blubber) is good for cooking all the way around (for human use). There may be more soon.

Bears have still not turned up on the beaches. There are 10 or so dead seals between here and Anigaq untouched.

It is nearing time again to make an inland trip for sourdock. The leaves may be pretty small yet due to the too cool season we have had. Sometime next week I may have a look. There is even a chance to see caribou or flightless geese or pintails on that trip.

People finally starting to haul wood from west of us. Some with oil stoves have moved in a wood stove after seeing our driftwood bounty.

July 9 Low 37° F, High 57° F
 W-NW to 30. Fog, cloudy, some sun.

Fog all day except for brief clearing over land around noon. A very cool wind for the date. Temperature down to 37° F at 8:00 p.m. A frost tonight will be disastrous to our berry crop. There are still many flowers with some early plants having formed berries.

Everything pretty wet this morning from fog and maybe showers. Fine for the ground if we don't frost.

Everything at a standstill today – kind of an enforced Sabbath – no aircraft or boats due to fog, no fishing due to waves and no working of dried meat due to wetness of the air.

I did give the dogs each a good run – in different directions – and checked the Barger plot of *G. detonsa*. There are some there two to three inches tall now. This plot is the earliest location for this plant that we've found. Have found plants in near tent plot and "dog run trail" so there will be some beautiful flowers to see again near month's end. Difficult to tell yet magnitude of this year's crop.

Our two white-petaled fireweed plants have finally spawned several more, though one of the older plants seems to be fading away with age. There are going to be flowers on the plants (some years there aren't) but they will be late – no 4th of July flowers this year on these *Epilobium latifolium*.

Marsh pretty empty of waterfowl. Did see a few pintail today – don't know if they are late molters or some early molters already returned.

July 10 Low 32° F, High 36° F
 NW to 25. Fog.

We have had a long spell of too cool windy weather. Boat and aircraft travel much restricted.

No net again. Waves are too much. Commercial chum season scheduled to open today, didn't. Buyers and ice machine not ready. Still lots of ice in the Sound.

Swallows having a time finding insects to feed their chicks. They are working at it though we can't know how successfully. This kind of long cold spell at this date must be tough on tree swallows, especially those that choose to use a nest box on the arctic coast far from any trees. One wonders about their choices.

Though we can't see far we continue to get "ice in sight" reports from Salluq and Sealing Point. Ground swells have not come in yet and the coolness of the air all give proof of pack ice not far off shore yet.

Our front yard is kind of full of ¼ to ½ grown squirrels. They tend to "play out" as a group and are pretty cute. Carrie thinks they mean trouble and tries to not appreciate their presence. The shrill call of alarm from the elders when danger seems near can be startling - something like a rattlesnake's buzz.

Small birds, passerines and shorebirds, are scarce in Sisualik and we have still not seen black-legged kittiwake and Aleutian terns.

July 11 Low 35° F, High 38° F
 NW to 25. Fog.

Another day of wet fog and NW wind. It's getting to be a little much – until one remembers the bugs. A bug free week in early -- mid-July is actually something to be very thankful for.

We have much pity for our swallows but they may be doing better than we think. They insulate their nestlings really well with an upright feather canopy or bowery with feathers from larger birds and they seem to know where to find comatose bugs which are probably easy to catch when air temperatures are too cold to fly. The bugs do hide from cold air and that is where our pity is focused. They have several mouths to feed on some kind of a schedule and they seem to spend the whole weary day trading back and forth from salt marsh to nest box.

Fog has been off and on today on the land side – distant mountains in site for a while. The fog has been constant over ocean water and ice. We still have not had ground swells and Sealing Point and Salluq report ice near their beach when fog lifts a bit.

The sound of aircraft has been rare this week on the coast.

Still too choppy to set push pole net. Marine water levels remain quite low.

Lots of spotted seals feeding in Anigaq outlet today. It is the time of last ice – spotted seals, walrus, ribbon seals

and gray whales.

July 12 Low 34° F, High 53° F
 SW-W-NW to 10. Fog a.m., clear p.m.

We are finally free of the fog. Clearing and warm sun with light winds and finally a change of winds to NE in late evening.

Ground swells were noted at Sealing Point this morning. They have not reached here yet but it won't be long.

We do have a few high icebergs in sight and there is no doubt considerable ice yet in the Sound. But the belt of pack ice across the mouth of the Sound has gotten real thin and the open ocean will soon have its way with nothing to interfere with wind generated waves, swells and future storm systems.

Noticed first arctic daisies today and marsh is yellowing with several species of *Potentilla*. Have not seen any iris flowers yet but their wide blades of leaves are coming up fast.

A great day for chum salmon in Sisualik today. Put our short net out with the pole early and after an hour central corks were sunk. Pulled it in to see what was going on. Found 11 large chums stuck in it. That is a great catch for this short net. I think the all time record is 12. We sent 5 to Carrie's sister at the Point and as word got around many nets were set and all in Sisualik now have salmon – for the moment anyway.

A first commercial opening gets underway tomorrow.

July 13 Low 46° F, High 64° F
 NE-E to 35. Clear, clouding, warm.

Very windy with warm dry air. Wind dropping late and thicker clouds building. First day of warm air for a while. Mosquitoes were kept down by wind but tonight may be a bad one for dogs.

Saw a musk ox on our winter house trail yesterday when I ran the dogs. It was on the salt marsh edge but headed into the tablelands at the mouth of our inland trail. They always seem such a long animal compared to moose, caribou and bear.

Three caribou taken at Sealing Point yesterday and four reported seen around Tony Jones' camp (same area as the musk ox).

Today an open commercial fishery period but no boats in Sisualik.

Didn't set net today – still had yesterday's fish to cut and our uguruq meat strips to cut and clean and put down in oil. Our oil has rendered nicely – the uguruq blubber.

We now have one full ten-gallon barrel of oil, a 6 gallon plastic bucket of meat and oil and a half 15-gallon barrel of

uguruq oil. We still have some meat strips to work, which will partially fill another bucket. We are well oiled for the winter. It is still a necessary need for us to fill each year by this date.

Our tree swallows are coping well again with their obstacles – some of them unnatural. Cold weather and fog last week, Jonathan, and today strong east winds into the mouth of their house.

July 14 Low 46° F, High 64° F
 NE-E to 35. Clouding over, rain late.

A very windy day – kept losing my hat all day.

An open commercial chum fishery today, but again no nets in Sisualik.

I put our net out with pole early to get a couple of fish for the weekend. Forty-five minutes later I pulled it in and found with surprise 16 fine large fresh chums – quite a crowded net. Probably a record catch for our short net. Very choice looking fish.

No marine water hunters for a while now due to fog and wind.

Water in the mud flats and trail to Kotzebue is very low but is slowly beginning to rise. Boat traffic between Kotzebue and Sisualik much restricted the last few days and a family funeral in Noatak took and kept folks busy while Mid-Year Friends Conference goes on in Kotzebue.

Perhaps there will be more commercial fishers next week.

Two caribou came near camp yesterday, maybe during the night, and left unseen.

Our salmonberry crop looks pretty poor. Not many berries on plants and flowers nearly gone.

Blackberries looking very good and forecast coming rain will be timely.

July 15 Low 50° F, High 58° F
 NE-E-SE to 35. Cloudy, rain.

Strong winds and rain today both quieting some about 8:00 p.m.

Finally got my large catch of fish from yesterday cut and hung when the winds dropped this evening.

The commercial chum fishery got off to a slow start this week – very few fishers for various reasons.

Total beluga harvest in Kotzebue Sound is pretty dismal and there probably won't be more taken this year. One was taken in the Buckland River and two were taken between Kotzebue and Sisualik. We, for the first time, didn't see any at all. They have not shown up at Point Lay to date either. There were many beluga nets set but we did not

hear of any take at all. The beluga scene in Kotzebue Sound is becoming, already is, a tragedy.

Caribou seen again in the Salluq area. Report of a wasted moose 6 miles out of Kivalina.

BLM survey crews working allotments our area this summer.

Did not see ice in the ocean today for the first time since it came back in sight a week ago. This current weather system may issue in the ice-free season. Ground swells and ocean vessels will be the proof. A tug with a barge in tow was seen off Sealing Point last evening headed for the Red Dog Port site and there was a large vibrating engine noise out of Kotzebue last night. Maybe a dredge of some sort.

July 16 Low 50° F, High 62° F
 NE-E-S to 18. Rain, fog, clouds, clearing p.m.

A mosquito afternoon after fog, rain and wind gave in to a very warm sun.

Town family boat came over to pick up their 4-wheeler that nephew has been using. They came on a very calm sea.

Ran the dogs west, separately, this morning in the fog. Found a good group (6?) of caribou tracks coming toward Sisualik. They turned back up into the tablelands when they got to the old boat on the beach at Frank Sheldon's cabin. I didn't take a rifle on the first trip but did on the second. The fog was clearing out and I thought I might locate the animals somewhere but didn't. It was a mixed group – a small this year's calf to a large footed bull.

The dogs and I also found a long dead baby walrus and a couple of newly dead seals. Beachcombing bears have not yet reached this batch of drifted in marine mammals near Sisualik. They are due to find them anytime now.

Plant growth doing well with warm temperatures and rain. Even saw a *Boletus* mushroom today.

Our white *Epilobium latifolium* still has only buds even though the same species near Nuvuruq started blooming last week.

Today is the last day of the Friends Midsummer Conference in Kotzebue. Many camp people attended and will be getting home tonight and tomorrow.

July 17 Low 42° F, High 56° F
 W-NW to 18. Fog, rain, clearing, sun.

Ice back in sight and even on the beach. Some large floes threatened our west neighbor who had commercial chum nets out.

The fisherman did get his nets up in time and it took two boats to haul them. They got a real lot of salmon.

I put our 3½" mesh net out so we could have something different from salmon for lunch. I made a record catch of

bullheads! Several hundred along with small “smooth” flounders. Several hundred of the flounders too!

The net did get two whitefish and three fresh run humpies. They made a pot full of very good, very fresh fish.

Saw a first flowering *Gentiana prostrata* today when the sun broke through. These are the little “electric arc” like flowers of the better-drained zones of the salt marsh. They are the first gentian to come to flower.

A nice flock of 18 whimbrel settled in the back yard today. Have not seen many of this species this year.

We sure have a monstrous lot of blackberries set on vines at this time and they are getting quite large with all this rain. I expect the sourdock leaves are growing fleshy this week. I hope to make a trip back to the lakes this week.

Wonder where all the bullheads and flounders are headed? What a chore – clearing the net of these thorny creatures.

July 18 Low 44° F, High 56° F
 Light westerlies. Fog, cloudy, clearing, sun.

Ice floes close but room enough for three shackles of commercial nets through Sisualik but probably not farther west. Ocean quite calm today with a possible hint of very tiny rhythmic ground swells.

Commercial chum catch real heavy in Sisualik yesterday and today. Our neighbor to the west needed a second boat to help haul his 12-hour catch.

Saw a number of *G. prostrata* today when the sun broke through hit. These deep blue little “arc lights” must certainly attract pollinating insects from great distance. They are such a striking point of color on an all green or straw background.

Iris buds are prominent! First local blooms will be tomorrow or the next day. There probably are already flowers a mile inland.

There is still whimbrel noise in the air – some early molt pintails are back on the marsh and a few hatched ducks (pintail, green-winged teal) are around.

One small uguruq was taken yesterday by a boat out in the pack ice.

Our timely rains are easing fire danger and ensuring a super good blackberry crop.

We hope to make a town trip tomorrow and then time will be right for a walk trip inland for sourdock greens.

July 19 Low 49° F, High 67° F
Light breezes. Clear, hot.

The warmest day so far and with mosquitoes. A very good day for boating with fairly high marine waters and just a faint hint of ground swells. Still ice in sight on the ocean.

We made the long delayed shopping trip to Kotzebue with calm seas in both ways. The trip over in a neighbor's Lund and the return speedy trip in the town family "superbug" jet boat. I teased the driver (our grandson-in-law) that there seemed to be no one on the water to race with after passing several boats with conventional prop outboards. He is a boat and sno-go racer. His response was that there are a few others in the country that could make up a race.

Our tree swallow family waited till we got home and after a couple of hours left as a family group of two adults and three brand new bug catchers. Even Jonathan looked quite proud, for as camp watch gull he sat around near the nest box if not on top. His presence intimidates jaegers and wondering red squirrels, which would normally be a threat to new nestlings, especially on first flights.

We have a brave little mother in that family that can raise a family with a huge robust gull like Jonathan standing only the thickness of a piece of ¼" plywood over her head!

July 20 Low 45° F, High 67° F
Calm a.m., W-NW to 15. Clear, a few clouds.

Another warm day with lots of insects and no swallows. We sure miss the tree swallows the first few days after they leave. Once they arrive in May they seem constantly around hunting insects for themselves and later their hatchlings. The first days after departure with their young (usually the same day or the next) there seems something amiss – something wrong around camp.

They were here when we got home from town yesterday and for the first time all three new birds were out of the box with their parents. Two of the new birds, apparently showing off their brand new capability of flight, landed together on an upright pole in camp on a small circle of platform just barely wide enough for the two side by side. It really seemed that they were purposefully "showing off." It was a final performance. Today we did not see a swallow of any kind.

Brought home to Carrie the first flowering iris today from a half mile inland. Those plants near around the camp have not quite opened yet. This large purple-blue flower is our largest "wildflower."

Saw a number of fairly well developed *G. detonsa* today but none near showing color. There apparently is going to be a fair showing of this species and its close relative *Lomatogonium rotatum*.

Still ice in sight on the sea.

July 21 Low 41° F, High 65° F
Calm, NW to 15. Clear, few clouds.

Good to have an old friend in from Galena this evening to overnight.

Accidentally ran across a first flowering *Gentianopsis detonsa* today. A small but very beautiful specimen and totally unexpected. It was in the Barger plot and I was checking for additional plants in the location that had many last year and where I had located a few three or four inch plants last week. This plot is a mile inland from here on the lagoon and is usually nearly a week earlier in flowering than here on the outer beach.

The sun was very warm today and the apical flower on this plant was open. The purple-blue was as usual a distant eye-catcher. What a great feeling to see again the exquisite color and shape of this flower! There will be more coming soon.

A great commercial catch of chum salmon in Sisualik today. At least two beluga were seen last evening off Sisualik. A call from Point Lay today reports the “no belugas yet” message again.

July 22 Low 36° F, High 60° F
SE-SW-NW to 30. Clouds and sun.

Real summer ground swells finally in today – a real surf $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the beach with a marine water level surge up to low flood stage (lagoon above grass edge).

There may be a chance that Anigaq outlet will close. Some movement of driftwood has begun.

Our Galena friend’s whole family made it in and will stay a couple of days.

Mike and I couldn’t find any *G. detonsa* locally and I couldn’t get him up to Barger plot. There will be some here in a few days.

The sound of surf certainly gives a change of “atmosphere” to Sisualik. We know we’re on the ocean edge again.

There are still numerous “ice berg” like floes near and on the beach.

Put 6” mesh out for a half hour in beginning surf – no catch.

Mike put in some shelves for Carrie and reports a continued decline in NW Alaska white-front stocks. This will be an issue as a legal spring waterfowl harvest is implemented.

July 23 Low 34° F, High 47° F
SW to NW, 30 diminishing. Clouds, clearing.

Snow on mountain tops this morning and a lone tundra swan walking about in the backyard.

Strong surf and high water level most of the night but both winding down towards morning.

Our guests enjoyed a peaceful night's sleep lulled by surf noise, tent flaps, rain, raindrops.

The surf built to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the beach – moved only a few woods. It did not close the Anigaq outlet as we had hoped. Maybe next time.

No open commercial fishing period Monday due to transport scheduling difficulties (hauling iced fish to process – by air).

No net for us today due to surf, but an early morning set may be possible in the morning. We would like to feed our guests fresh fish and offer some to take home to Galena.

No mosquitoes today and tonight due to low temperatures and good breeze. Rainfall – 0.10 of an inch, good for berries. Potential frost tonight not good.

July 24 Low 34° F, High 48° F
 S-SE-SW-W to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

Our visitors home to Galena in good shape by 10:00 a.m. We had a great visit and their two Peruvian kids are sure growing.

Managed to get four chums today with push pole net – the ocean was just quiet enough. We had one for lunch and three went to Galena.

Local iris are blooming but the edges of the flower petals seem nipped a bit by light frost last night.

Gentiana prostrata, the “arc lights,” were extra bright today during episodes of hot bright sun. Regular moisture is treating the ground well, similar to last year.

Forget-me-nots are still at peak and patches are very beautiful. *Senecio lugens*, the bloody falls flower, are blooming now and their near kin *Senecio pseudo-Arnica*, our largest yellow “sunflower,” is also coming on.

Grass-of-parnassus buds are all over but none are open yet. There are only a few species left to show their glory and most are gentians.

Saussurea sp. flowers were noted a couple of days ago and our camp white-petaled *Epilobium latifolium* plant has only one flower, which is now open. There were several other buds but squirrels or birds ate them.

July 25 Low 35° F, High 48° F
 W-NW to 25. Cloud, fog, rain.

A very cold and some wet day for the date.

Hard to do chores outdoors without gloves.

Got water from the lake today and was saddened by the looks of the salmonberry crop. It was so good and special last year and now it is very difficult to see the few stunted berries that will eventually be this year's crop. There will be some and maybe other locations will be better.

On the other hand, blackberries seem to be doing great.

A fishing period today, but too rough on our ocean side for boats and nets.

The temperatures and wind would be great for a trip inland for sourdock but the rain and too cold temperatures makes a postponement reasonable.

One summer maybe 20 years ago we had a similar summer with cold days through this date and our camp tall firewood did not come to flower, though plants grew tall and robust. Insect activity was nil.

July 26 Low 36° F, High 40° F
 S-SW-W-NW to 30. Fog, cloudy, rain.

A very wet, cold day for July! There is snow forecast for tonight. There have been very high swells/surf today to a full $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to sod line. We have hopes that Anigaq outlet will close.

Record high temperatures for the dates this week are in the 70's and 80's. Our 30's and 40's make one shiver but at least we don't have to look at ice on the sea. It appears to be finally gone.

High surf has not taken any driftwood away, just pushed it higher on the beach.

The surf has cancelled out commercial fishing in Sisualik for the past two days though other parts of the fishery have been somewhat workable.

One big surprise is a lack of drifted in dead marine mammals. No headless walrus and uguruq since floating ice has disappeared. The cold air temperatures may slow down the gas formation in the innards of killed and lost animals.

In the marsh, *Saussurea* sp. has burst into bloom, effectively hiding any early flowering *G. detonsa*. Have still found only the one flowering plant in the Barger plot and haven't been able to get back there again for two-three days due to high marine waters.

July 27 Low 28° F, High 42° F
 NW to 18. Cloud, snow, fog.

Look at our low temperature! A sad day for some vegetation. Unfurled iris flower petals shriveled. The furled near flowering buds survived. Some whole flower heads just completely fell off! We have never quite seen this in July.

There was ice in buckets and outdoor pans at 7:00 a.m. The temperatures were probably not below freezing for very long but considerable damage to flowers and forming berries could be harmed. The extraordinary blackberry crop may not have been harmed and the yet greenish berries are whitish and all over Sisualik.

The lack of frost with the low temperatures is unusual. We had an hour of large snowflakes between two and four today.

High surf yet this morning but has been dropping all day. It is near calm in other waters this evening though remnants of wide-spaced swells remain on the sea.

We did have very good news from west of us last night. The channel at Anigaq is closed – sealed high with gravel from the great swells of yesterday. Oh boy! That means lots of trapped whitefish, ATV access to our boat down there and a greatly extended reach for us for hunting, fishing and general travel.

No commercial fishing in Sisualik today.

July 28 Low 33° F, High 52° F
 Light variable. Cloudy, sun.

Maybe the mid-summer cold is over.

Flowers that were fully open (the petals) were frost damaged the night before and maybe, in some places, last night. Iris that are just beginning to bloom even dropped whole flowers to the ground, as did some nearby dwarf *Gentianopsis detonsa*. Both species with furled buds seemed minimally damaged.

Set 3" mesh this morning and caught variety for lunch – Bering cisco, humpback salmon and several large saffron cod. They were good for a change. Put the 6" mesh out for the rest of the day and found one giant trout and a medium sized female – both fat with enlarged ovaries and milt sack. Early spawners en route to natal stream. They will make a good weekend meal or two. There were also three bright chums.

This was a good catch for our little push pole net competing with the long commercial nets.

Salmonberries are late and few. Have not seen any good ones yet. Last year by this date there were already many locations of ripe berries.

Surf finally dropped today. We've had a very cool/cold last week of July.

July 29 Low 38° F, High 60° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds.

The long awaited day of the year 2000. I saw a large colony of *G. detonsa* many of them wide open – and beautiful! This was in the Barger plot, always a few days earlier than our plants down here on the ocean edge.

A yearling caribou came by the house late last night. Our dogs alerted us and I shot it from the steps of the house. It was in good condition (that age group is never very fat but good soft meat). We are very glad to have fresh meat for a change.

The animal had old winter hair on the lower belly. The rest of the body had new hair – very dark and short. The hair stage in a larger animal is ideal for a “hair inside parky.” Summer skins were much needed in the past.

The freezing temperatures of the 27th did considerable damage to some vegetation. Some *G. detonsa* seem fading before they really “bloom” (open their corolla). Some salmonberry plant leaves look old and taking on fall colors. The berries very slow in developing and there may not be many of picking quality.

Some dwarf *G. detonsa* in near tent plot were open in the sun yesterday but no normal size plants.

Have not seen flowering star gentian, *G. tenella*, *G. propinqua* or grass-of-Parnassus.

July 30 Low 43° F, High 62° F
Light easterlies. Thunderstorm, clearing.

Heavy rain, thunder and lightning during dark part of night (2:00 to 3:00 a.m.). It seemed a very odd time for that.

Checked Nuvuruq for *G. detonsa* this afternoon and found a small colony of 8 and one isolated plant. They seem scarce in that location – actually all gentians seem scarce there. Saw only a few *G. prostrata* and no *G. tenella*, *G. propinqua* or *Lomatogonium*.

Also was unable to locate any of the white petaled *Epilobium latifolium* of which there was a large colony two and three years ago. Our icy nights last week dulled the usually bright colors of that species over there. They are at a dull peak bloom and we are getting into the peak of *G. detonsa*, which was also touched by the 28° F temperatures that night. Those species that were just coming into flower were hurt most, including iris.

Berries and sourdock are also affected but it is not clear to what degree yet. So far it seems a real moderate year for *G. detonsa*. They are now working toward a peak but most plants seem small.

Not much is known yet of whitefish catch at the closed Anigaq fish trap. Doc has had a net there but we haven't run into him lately. We expect fishing to be good since it closed in July.

July 31 Low 48° F, High 58° F
NE-E-SE to 18. Cloudy, sun, showers.

It seems too soon for July to have passed already. Maybe it was the lingering ice on the ocean or the continuing absence of mosquitoes that made it seem short this year. Anyway the ducks are back with new flight feathers, both northern pintail and wigeon, in fairly large numbers. They look good in their new suits of clothes but it is a deception. If one were to take a couple at this date he would find a kind of “skin and bones” under the fluffy new feathers. The wigeon tend to fatten a little sooner than the pintail. All their fat reserves have gone growing new flight feathers.

Found a good number of robust looking *G. detonsa* on the “Greene outer plot” where we took pictures last year. There seems not as many as last year but still a good show. Some were open to the warm sun and I actually saw an insect inside of one open corolla, so the pollinators do get to them. This insect was a flying midge a bit bigger than a mosquito.

Still wonder about seed produced by pollination from without.

It seems not a bad year for *G. detonsa* in Sisualik since I’ve located plants in most areas of past occurrence. It is not a big year and plants on the average seem small. The freezing last week has touched some plants but not others.

AUGUST

August 1 Low 45° F, High 54° F
E-SE-S to 40. Cloudy, rain, wind, clearing.

Well, August started off with a bang, or rather a blow. A new roof – unfinished – blew off early this morning. Our new little house shook and roared but held together. Winds may have been stronger than indicated above since we don’t have a wind velocity monitor.

Today was the first commercial fishery opening of the week but no fisher from this side could set net.

The musk ox group of 18-20 was back down on the beach of Cape Krusenstern (Sealing Point) this week. They spent most of the winter there then moved back to the bluffs in early April.

Survey crew that came from west of Sealing Point today reports a lot of bear tracks between Sealing Point and Port Site. There are several old drifted in headless walrus in that section of the beach.

There are a lot of juvenile savannah sparrows moving through Sisualik this week. Many N. pintails and wigeon coming back into the salt marsh from wing feather molt. We may have a first pot of new duck soup before long.

We might have had that already as a change from fish diet had not the yearling caribou come by last week.

August 2 Low 52° F, High 60° F
NE-E-SE to 18. Cloudy, rain, fog.

A wet evening with warm air. The day was drier and windy.

A lot of salmon were taken in Sisualik today by commercial chum fishery. Most were slow to set down here because of the threat of high winds later today. The winds didn't come before 6:00 p.m. – haul out time for fishers. One boat had to call for help with loaded nets. He did get his nets out in time, loading three boats full with his catch.

We got three large salmon, some bad dirt and many discarded plastic bags in our push pole net.

Lots of pintail and wigeon in the lagoon today. The easterly winds bring much green algae to lagoon beach and both species feeding on it until *Potamogeton* ripens.

Lots of passerines continue passing through this week. Most are savannah sparrows.

The robins that had a nest at Sealing Point house site left the nest early last week as the two new birds learned to fly. That seems like the most unlikely place for robins to nest in NW Alaska. It has not happened before.

Noticed a lot of new *G. detonsa* plants today. No peak yet.

August 3 Low 50° F, High 56° F
NE-E-SE to 25. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Wet windy day. Fishermen had excitement with gusting and changing winds but all got nets out in time except one that was 10 minutes late. Quite a few fish taken again.

Weather has not been too good for playing out. Our ground is getting a lot of water. The state of berries is still largely unknown but it doesn't look good. Blackberries remain the most likely to provide a winter source of berries this year. Salmon- and blueberries seem scarce.

A fledged mew gull passed by yesterday evening. Pip-Squeek, our camp mew gull, seemed to have forced him to keep moving. None of her squabs have ventured down to the beach yet.

Can't seem to get off on a sourdock trip. If it's not too much rain it is too many mosquitoes. Reports of quality from lowland coastal areas is not good. Tough and red, hard to cook. Inland lakes usually have a better quality. It is getting late in the season but coolness and dryness are not good for sourdock growth.

Lots of waterfowl back on the marsh and *G. detonsa* coming to a fair showing.

Saw first *G. propinqua* today.

August 4 Low 43° F, High 56° F
SE-S-SW to 35. Cloud, fog, drizzle.

Back water (lagoon) up to flood stage twice today. Once in early morning, then dropped, and up again by 5:00 p.m. Now it is slowly dropping again. Waves took in the full beach earlier today when switch from SE to SW occurred while wind was up to 35 knots or more. That dropped off early this evening and waves dropped down to mid beach. This kind of storm is always a threat in Sisualik during the ice-free season because of our low elevation. It's always an anxious time till one sees signs of winding down - lower surf and flooded land rising in the lagoon.

No fishing in Sisualik today due to wind and waves.

Took time to have a close look at "tent gentian plot." More surprises! All in the plot appear as "dwarfs". That is, replicas of large plants but extremely small. Some flowers are large but stem and leaves tiny. There may be nearly 100 in the plot. Many, many more than were seen in mid-July, yet they all seem to be blooming at the same time. I searched this plot thoroughly when I located the first few plants in early July. This magic "springing up" and blooming in unison seems a characteristic of this plant. In past years this had a high percentage of normal size plants. This year is different!

First open grass-of-Parnassus buds today.

August 5 Low 42° F, High 51° F
SW-W to 25. Cloudy, fog, some sun.

Ocean surf and moderate high water continue with occasional showers.

Thousands of dead *Telmessus* (helmet) crabs washed ashore on the tops of the large swells that were gradually subsiding last night.

The legs and bodies, mostly separated, indicate the creatures died some time before being thrown out on the beach – tissue slightly deteriorated. This has happened before (8-10 years?), but the last time the creatures were just dead and dying. It was after a period of long low marine water – caused by an extended period of north winds with a lot of outpouring freshwater flood from a long period of much rain. We figured the freshwater shock in a normally high salinity habitat was the cause of the die off. Last night's happening may be of similar cause. There were thousands on six miles of beach and probably many more beyond where we turned back from.

A small group of caribou seen across the slough from Katyaurak. None taken so far as we know.

Berries very late and apparently few and as yet unripe. Last year at this date there was much berry picking activity.

August 6 Low 46° F, High 50° F
Light S winds. Cloudy, light showers.

Waters calming down in both waves and level. Back to normal.

The *Telmessus* crab die off is extensive. A traveler today reports wave line carcasses continue past Sealing Point to at least Altiligaurak and possibly clear to Port Site.

A new friend made today has involved us in a plant-gathering project. It is kind of a late in the season effort but we'll give it a try.

We may run out of time doing what we will want to do the rest of this berry-picking month.

An extended family person and neighbor got another young male caribou near Sealing Point today so we got a hind leg to replace the one we gave to him when we got one last week.

No fishing tomorrow and weather sounds good so we may try a town trip for propane and gasoline.

People traveling in all directions looking for ripe berries and not finding any. Long plant discussions today – feel worn tonight. Tall fireweed and star gentian bloomed today for first time and open grass-of-parnassus common.

August 7 Low 46° F, High 50° F
SW to 15. Cloudy, drizzle.

Continued SW winds light enough so swells haven't developed but water level has remained high, weather cool – no insects.

Fireweed (tall) continues slowly to blossom and star gentian is going to have a great year. Their flowers are just opening. All species here now come to flower for the season and the only one I haven't seen is *G. tenella*. May yet find a few if the sun ever comes out again. We have not seen much of the sun lately but as with last year it will extend the window of flowering for some species like *Gentianopsis detonsa*, which is having a reasonably good year. Located some in a bit of different area near lagoon edge at old snowy owl trap site. Have not found any in "closest to Greene house" site. That is a bit puzzling. We may be at *G. detonsa* peak in Sisualik for year 2000.

Set the 6" mesh net late, around 8:00 p.m. – took a look from the beach in about 20 minutes and what I saw prompted me to pull it out right away! There were 16 large chums and one very large female trout with moderate ovary development. It was a beautiful fish among other beautiful fish. The chums were large and bright silvery.

Gulls seem very aggressively hungry for the date - lack of berries?

August 8 Low 44° F, High 52° F
S-SW to 18. Cloudy, fog, rain.

Cut yesterday's great catch of chums this morning and the gull flock was delirious with delight. There is no other camp cutting fish, just the commercial netters that don't cut. Their long nets, which provide a few eyes for the gull flock, were not set on the ocean this period due to rough water.

Made a start today on the plant-drying project with a fish line and all our camp clothespins. The starting species was our most common and widely used medicinal plant *Artemisia Tilesii*. It is going to take a lot of leaves to make the required 1 lb sack.

It was pretty cool and damp again today. We keep thinking we'll have a late summer but it is already looking like an early fall.

Tall fireweed are rapidly opening their beautiful deep pink flowers and the "baby blue eyes" of a mighty crop of star gentian will be bright in the next day of sun (if and when).

Fishermen should have had a good catch this period with moderate high water even though they couldn't set nets in the ocean proper.

August 9 Low 46° F, High 48° F
S-SW to 25. Cloudy, rain, fog.

A real wet p.m. - .18 inches of rain.

This long onshore S-SW wind has brought eelgrass again and a few dead sea birds: One each of horned puffin, common murre and short tailed shearwater.

A reported lot of fish around the outlet at Anigaq. Gulls and ravens doing well with "nature made" traps. The rains are causing higher water on the inside of the gravel dam and marine waters are at a low level. This causes much more water to filter through the coarse gravel and the fish inside can feel/sense the outward current. If it doesn't stop raining soon the inside will overflow the dam and all fish will be free again and we will be very sad.

Some who have taken some whitefish say that they are exceedingly fat. We will have fine fish this fall if it stops raining in time.

Another porcupine reported coming our way last evening from farther east. He hasn't shown up yet.

Three bears eating our drifted in marine mammal at Sealing Point. Only one person there now.

August 10 Low 42° F, High 48° F
SW-W-NW to 30. Cloudy, fog, rain.

Wet weather, rough seas, high water (both fresh and salt) and an absent sun continue. Things did dry a bit this evening and blue sky was visible to the north but no sun.

Finally found flowering *Gentiana tenella* today around the usual near camp fresh lake. The buds are still closed due to clouds and lack of sun. These plants also seem so late starting to grow, with rapid growth once started.

Some blackberries finally turning black. Any sign of ripening salmonberries continues to elude us, either by rumor or personal sight. Continued high water prevents my going back to check on near camp salmonberry grounds.

Things are looking bleak for our winter berry harvest. It is salmon- and blueberry picking time and there seems little activity anywhere.

Five bears were seen on the beach between here and Sealing Point by late night travelers last night - one sow with two year-old cubs, and the other two together may be siblings of three years or so. They were all feeding on marine mammals. We may have tracks closer soon as they finish up those carcasses west of us.

August 11 Low 38° F, High 50° F
NE-E to 20. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Lots of rain today – on top of already too much. There was 0.40 inches today.

Rainwater is probably going to open Anigaq outlet and let all our winter supply of whitefish free. Two outlets west of Sealing Point have already opened.

Another young caribou taken at Sealing Point. A piece was brought to us by a traveler.

Lots of ducks on the marsh and a flock of white-fronted geese already on the unripe blackberries.

It really appears that we are going to have an extremely poor berry season. Even the blackberries that seemed a sure thing have run into maturing problems. It is mid-August and berry picking should be underway but no one seems to find a place to start. The few good salmonberries I saw today behind our place where there were lots last year are few and unripe yet.

Checked the Barger *G. detonsa* plot today. There are lots but not robust looking. Many flowers seem frost harmed and seedpods on many seem flat – pod unformed.

The excessive rains after unseasonable cold and frost have had negative effects on vegetation.

August 12 Low 42° F, High 47° F
SW-W to 18. Cloudy, rain, some clearing.

Lots of rain the last two days - 0.67 inches last night and today. Hope Anigaq is holding. No one could get there today due to high waves against the bluff. We have had ¾ high surf all day.

Human-bear meetings increasing. Two boys on 4-wheeler last night ran into one at Akulak and today the Salluq camper – trying to start the fire under his dog feed pot looked up and there was a large bear looking at him at close range. No doubt the bear was as willing to eat the uncooked food. The man backed away until he felt free to turn and run for his tent and gun. When he got to tent door and looked back the bear was running even faster in the other direction.

The wheeler incidents and the daylight intrusion of camp are not much for worry, but with longer nights coming and an apparent shortage of bear food in the country, there will be more bear scrounging around camps where there are smells of food.

We are having a good long window of *G. detonsa* activity again this year. There were many flowering plants ready to open, if the sun would come out, in the Barger plot yesterday.

August 13 Low 44° F, High 46° F
W-NW to 20. Cloudy, some breaks.

Some hours today without rain and a peek of sun. Cool wind and no insects.

Anigaaq dam still holding. If it can hold another day or so our winter fish supply will be safe.

We had a nearly orang- breasted northern wheatear on the clothesline yesterday evening, no doubt looking for the few insects that were out and about.

More gulls eating in the hills finally. They must be finding some patches of finally ripening blueberries.

Terry caught three squirrels on his run today. A record for the year – so far.

I saw three dark creatures moving around on the tablelands today from our lookout point west of us. The distance was too great to tell exactly what species. They were probably caribou, which are still very dark colored at this date – especially young animals. They could have been bears.

Berry pickers are still waiting for their cue to get out and see what's left of the 2000 berry crop. It doesn't look good – some vegetation is already showing the yellowing of fall.

Did see late fledged arctic terns on the beach today.

August 14 Low 41° F, High 56° F
N-NE to 18. Cloudy early, sun all day.

Well I think I missed it today! We finally made the long delayed trip to town and back for needed supplies. The crossing was a bit lumpy in brother-in-law's boat that is old and small. We came home in style with our town family enclosed cabin boat. Was even able to unload on the beach. Propane bottle got left behind as ballast for the boat

we went over with and then the driver couldn't make the trip back so we still wait for propane renewal.

What I missed was probably the most spectacular gentian day of the year 2000. We had a long day of warm sunshine after a long, long spell of totally wet sunless days. All gentians would have to respond to this by displaying their utmost glory – there will then be a quick fading – till next year. There are good numbers of *G. detonsa*, great numbers of star gentians, a few *G. tenella*, more *G. propinqua* and many *G. prostrata*.

There are some unusual *G. detonsa* plants this year involving “clusters” of blossoms. Today they would be at their peak of glory and beauty. Maybe tomorrow I will have time to see what is left.

We do what we must with our allotted time and we sometimes resent factors that limit our free use of our time.

August 15 Low 38° F, High 56° F
NE-E to 20. Some clouds and sun.

Another nice dry breezy day.

It is a strange year for vegetation. Some *Elymus* heads just now shedding pollen and *Artemisia* is in a strong pollen-tossing mode. Salmonberry leaves have taken on fall colors, as have some marsh sedges. Practically no crop.

Star gentian and grass-of-Parnassus are at peak floral display, *G. detonsa* are past peak but many still freshly flowered. The clusters of flowers in the Barger plot are completely new to this observer. It has become evident after so many years of observation that this plant can vary as much in its individual form from place to place as it can vary in numbers.

Anigaaq still holds and a few people are taking fish there.

A sow and cub bear at Jones' Camp early today and a large bull musk ox this afternoon.

The last camper between Sisualik and Port Site maybe moving out because of frequent bear visits.

Our marine waters at a very low ebb yesterday and today. This is good so the floodwaters from long rains can be dispersed before marine waters return to a high level.

August 16 Low 47° F, High 53° F
E-SE-S-SW to 25. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Clouds and rain are back. We had a measured half inch from noon till now (9:00 p.m.).

We've had puffballs two evenings in a row now. That is one good result of heavy rains in August. This is interesting because this is a modern day food (for us) that was not utilized ever by the Eskimo culture. There are not many edible natural foods in the region that have not been used. Good firm puffballs sliced and fried in butter are a favorite August treat for me, and now my Eskimo wife also!

The continued rain remains a threat to our winter whitefish source at Anigaq. The dam has held the inflow runoff to this point in time, but there is a limit. Once even a trickle over the top of the gravel dam begins, all is lost.

A few arctic terns still around and flying mew gull young are gaining strength each day. Both these species and their young of the year are mostly gone by September 1st.

The musk ox is still around Jones' Camp and bears continue to feed on beached walrus near, very near, the Sallug camp.

August 17 Low 41° F, High 50° F
SW-W to 18. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Another day of rain all day but much lighter rain - still wet though!

No net, ocean still too rough.

Northern pintail feeding on the ground in the wet grasses. I wondered what they were eating since blackberries are still pretty unpalatable. Checked it closer where a group of birds "took off" from and found a high ground sedge with a large drooping seed cluster, not mature yet but pretty fully developed and probably nice and sweet and tender. I haven't yet keyed out the sedge, but it is an interesting alternative food source before berries ripen and when usual aquatic foods are not available due to high water or cold-induced slow maturing (*Potamogeton* corms slow to build their starchiness in this kind of a cool summer).

Several fishermen working the whitefish at Anigaq outlet. It has not been good weather for drying/cutting fish, but if one has freezer space they are a preferred species for eating aged/frozen. Mid-September is normal outdoor storage time for winter use. If rain ever lets up they do make a good dried fish at this season. One does need two or three dry days after cutting.

August 18 Low 37° F, High 52° F
W-NW-N to 20. Cloudy, fog, drizzle, some sun.

A little less rain today and some sun and drying wind – cool.

Anigaq dam continues to hold and fishers there are getting a little more active. We were given a couple of dozen nice whitefish from there today. We scaled them this evening and will cut them tomorrow. Hope they will dry enough to be eaten half dried and cooked.

Found an amazing carpet of dwarf *Gentianopsis detonsa* in the "near tent" plot today. This year, like last, has produced surprising and unexpected forms. There seem hundreds, even thousands, in a small half-acre plot on nearly bare mud. Some are very tiny. Most are 4 or 5 cm tall with rosette leaves, a stem (no stem leaves) and a too large (in proportion) flower bud. Have not seen this before and this plot is right under our noses!

Other vegetation is showing various effects of our odd summer weather – very cool, very wet – we still don't know what berries will be harvestable.

A few stray caribou continue to be seen around but no word yet of any numbers on our three large rivers.

It seems certain now that the salmonberry crop for this year is a bust.

No net in the ocean again. The swells are too much. Fall trout should be running by now.

August 19 Low 42° F, High 52° F
SW-W-NW-N to 20. a.m. clouds, fog, drizzle, p.m. sun late.

Lots of clear sky and sun late afternoon and evening. Beautiful, warm sun and dry!

No net in ocean again due to surf.

We cut a few gift whitefish and had some boiled for lunch. Very fat and very good.

A young fellow gave us two wigeon. We will have our first “new duck soup” of the season tomorrow. One has little fat, the other a fair amount. Ducks tend to lack fat for some time after flight feather molt and too much water in the wetlands delays fattening for fall migration.

We should be well into our fall trout run but haven't been able to set a net in the ocean for ages.

Insects back with the sun and Carrie even saw a dragonfly this evening. Our northern wheatear (trout bird) was around again this afternoon. He will have insects again.

There are a few ripening blueberries now and a very few salmonberries.

A group of three new birds of the year were down on the beach today. These are the first flying glaucous gulls of the year seen so far.

Took pictures of dwarf *G. detonsa* today. These have come to be since August 8.

August 20 Low 34° F, High 47° F
NW to 20. Cloudy, light shower or two.

A very cool day without sun again.

A few of our camp tall fireweed have bloomed but not many. It seems the cool temperatures, even with a lot of rain, inhibit some vegetation growth, development and flower/seed development.

A young fellow brought us six ducks this afternoon. The adult pintails are showing good fat development. The wigeon less. This year's young of both species for the most part have not joined staging flocks on the mudflats.

We do have a lot of mudflats today. Northerly winds around the country have brought marine waters way down, allowing waterfowl access to aquatics (*Potamogeton*).

Bear problems seem up coming. A single traveler west today reported fresh tracks from last night to the most westerly unoccupied Sisualik cabin. These are beachcombing bears – a sow with two two-year old youngsters and behind them a large, probably, male. As they clean up the few drifted in dead marine mammals they will likely get closer to camps, which may provoke incidents.

A plane also reported a bear on the beach south of Kotzebue.

August 21 Low 37° F, High 52° F
 NW to 18. Sun, some clouds.

What a beautiful dry day with some warm periods of sun. We even saw butterflies, dragonflies, gnats and mosquitoes. It is still summertime after all!

An interesting mix-up with old Terry today. After his run we thought he had lost his mind and followed other ATVs to or past Sealing Point.

We went to look for him and check out the fishing at Anigaq. When we got there someone had seen him around Doc Harris's tent. We checked there but didn't find him. We went to Katyaurak – not there – and on to Salluq where there are still chained sled dogs. He was not there either and we talked to Sealing Point by VHF and he was not there either. We came home nearly crying for letting the old dog stray off, not knowing how he would survive a night of bears down there. When we arrived home in a sad state I hollered in a loud voice at our other dog (Aachauq), "Now you are our only dog!" At the sound of my voice, out from under the house came my old favorite dog. He had somehow beaten us home!

Tomorrow we will go fishing!

August 22 Low 34° F, High 49° F
 NW-N to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

Swans came back yesterday. First I've seen with new flight feathers. There were more than 100.

We went fishing for the first time this fall at Anigaq today. There are lots of whitefish over there and lots of bear tracks.

We set our net and checked it a few hours later. It had a good half a sack of fine fat Alaska whitefish.

A friend left his net set overnight and today he had his rather large aluminum canoe filled with fish. He has a

problem! Gulls by day, bears by night. To save them he will have to move them out of there to his camp at Sisualik Point.

A lot of water is backed up down there. It is difficult to see normal slough or creek channels. It is nearly like one big lake. We are lucky the dam continues to hold. The water does seem to be dropping now, but there are a few places where it is eating out the gravel underneath at both Anigaq and Akulak. With marine waters rising again and dam water dropping, the difference in level will ease the running under gravel water and save the day. We sure hope it does. There are a lot of fish at stake.

August 23 Low 32° F, High 43° F
Light N winds. Cloudy, no sun.

A long cool sunless day but there was no rain so we are ahead on that.

Yesterday's fish cut today and dog running. We had an aircraft visit today. A couple of old friends landed right on the beach and had a good visit.

Our ocean has been good yesterday and today. We set the 6" mesh net both days for a couple of hours. We got 6 fine fat trout and a chum yesterday and three large fat trout this afternoon. The fall trout run is on and as usual they are very fat and large. These are the very lean, snaky fish that came down the river and out to the ocean a month and a half ago to fatten up. They really did and are now returning to overwinter. At this season they are our finest fish.

A pair of northern wheatear (the trout bird) are still here.

Tomorrow will be the last day of the commercial chum fishery. The closing is timely – it will save a lot of fine trout for other, maybe better purposes.

Some large jellyfish in the net today – the finest this summer.

August 24 Low 36° F, High 48° F
NW to 18. Cloudy, sun.

A very fine day with a calm ocean a.m. but some wind chop from the NW p.m., then calming again late.

The 6" mesh got 5 fat trout and a colored red salmon.

Our camp gull flock is pretty big, tough and hungry! Jonathan chased a raven off a fish so his family (this year's young) could eat. Usually gulls give way before determined ravens but of course we know Jonathan is something else!

Pip-Squeek the camp mew gull is still with us. Most mew gulls and terns are gone. With the aggressive gull group it has been hard to feed Jonathan and Pip-Squeek only. We have worked out a system. Little Lucinda was around for

a while today to take a hand offered bite. Her size (very small for a glaucous gull) and willingness to accept a hand offered tidbit identifies her. We think she is Jonathan's mate, but that is not positive. Her timidity toward other gulls makes her a little hard to keep track of. This is the third year of her known presence by this date.

Word that Point Lay has got fat caribou near at hand has come through today and Kiana caribou crossing is in the news locally.

August 25 Low 30° F, High 46° F
NW to 15. Clear.

Our country was all white this morning at sun up. We had a very heavy frost – something we didn't want to see at this date especially this year. What berries there might be are less possible now. We may still have a few blackberries and cranberries, as there was not a long time of actual freezing.

Saw a few still lively *G. detonsa* today. Most of the beautiful blue petals have faded to straw color. Many *Lomatogonium rotatum* are just blooming and the few tall fireweed that came to blossom are still brightly colored. Even saw one freshly opened iris flower today.

We went to Anigaq for fishing today and set our net twice but didn't get a lot – maybe a pole and a half after cutting.

The largest bear made tracks nearly to our nearest neighbor's camp last night. The small group of beachcombing bears has been slowly moving this way as they clean up the few beached marine mammals that have accumulated over the summer.

The water is backed up so high in the Krusenstern flats (waterway system) that most dabbling ducks will move here to the Noatak delta for fattening and staging. It always increases our local duck population when this happens.

August 26 Low 30° F, High 50° F
NE-E to 18. Clear, some clouds.

Another hard frost this morning. A sad day for vegetation that is blooming or had hoped to this season. Don't yet know the effect on black- and cranberry crop – our last hope for berries this year.

Visitors from Fairbanks today. They missed us last year. Very good to see them again.

Carrie cut the whitefish we got yesterday this morning and the rest of the day taken up with visitors. We had some great quality trout to feed them and give them. Lots of good conversation.

A caribou taken by neighbors to Jones' Camp. Jones' Camp people were upriver and the animal was killed almost in their front yard! That's the way it goes!

Musk ox on the beach in the Sealing Point area again – 10 to 20 or so.

Our pair of wheatears continues to hang around and hunt insects around the house. The firewood pile and the sheltered side of the house provide needed warmth for insects in these rather cold air periods. They and ravens are our only passerines now.

A hornet came into the house with our clean washed clothes today, and gnats with a few mosquitoes were out, and a butterfly or two shared the good weather with us. It is still summer we remind ourselves.

August 27 Low 38° F, High 50° F
NE-E to 40. Cloudy, fog, rain.

Kind of a miserable day weather wise with very strong winds and fog with fine rain developing. The contrast to the past several days of shiny weather with sun makes it worse I guess. Started the generator at 7:30 this evening. First time such an early need for light with our big windows.

Caribou stampeding right through Noatak village today around “church out” time. The VHF line resounded with excited comments about numbers, fatness etc.

Noatak will have a lot of boat visitors tomorrow if the weather improves a bit or maybe even if it doesn’t.

The last time we had a very cold summer we had early September caribou in our backlands. It is good when we have caribou on our local grounds in September when animals are fat and in especially good condition. As someone commented from Noatak via VHF, “Looks like we won’t have to use lots of gasoline this time!” At \$120 a drum that will make a difference.

Lots of birds of prey in the air today – moving south early maybe – merlin, gyrfalcon, northern hawk owl, northern harrier and even a peregrine falcon. Passerines scarce, shorebird numbers better at this time.

August 28 Low 40° F, High 54° F
NE-E to 25. Clouds and sun, showers.

A windy, little warmer day with only a few showers.

Some neighbors and extended family headed up to Noatak village for caribou hunting. They got two bulls, in the water, several miles below the village, a couple of hours after they left here by boat. The report is that there are lots of caribou in the village right now.

Carrie and I went to Akulak gravesite to gather coltsfoot leaves and plants for the NANA plant investigation. This is a new and interesting project we have become involved with. Drying up the leaves to make a pound is quite tedious.

Our fall colors are coming on fast and our cottonwood copse has taken on the yellow tinge of fall. On the ground bearberry leaves are deep red and dwarf birch have turned their bright yellow. There are still flowers: grass-of-

Parnassus, tall fireweed, poppies and even a few *G. detonsa* are still at flower open stage. What a long window of flowering that species has had this year. Really a plant – beautiful plant, full of surprises.

Set the 6" mesh net for a couple of hours and got two large trout and a pile of very lively green *Potamogeton*.

August 29 Low 46° F, High 54° F
NE-E to 40. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Very windy a.m., dropping off some p.m. and more yet in the evening.

Ran the dogs and looked the backcountry over with binoculars. No sign of caribou here yet, though there seems hint of some south of Noatak village now.

Some waterfowl and shorebirds moving through even with the strong headwinds.

Some local ladies have purple-black hands as of today. The two nights of frost a couple of days ago softened some of the berries that were getting a bit ripe. With warm weather, rain and time, there may yet be some worth picking.

Anigaq dam continues to hold and fishing good for those that are at it. Most of us that have cut whitefish drying aren't anxious to cut more till another dry period comes along.

Our fall colors continue to magnify. The small copse of cottonwood up out the tablelands is showing a little more yellowish to their summer pale green. They will become canary yellow later this week.

Did not see even one *G. detonsa* that was not faded today in the green plot when I ran the dogs. Perhaps our month long window of flowering has finally come to an end. This is an amazing variable plant!!

August 30 Low 44° F, High 50° F
SE-S to 25. Cloudy, showers, broken clouds.

Another windy and showery day with good breaks late in the day as wind switched toward SW. Large swells and high marine water level developed late.

Two caribou seen and taken at Jones' Camp last night, and this evening three were seen at the bluffs just west of us. Two were taken.

These are apparently the first to reach the coast here from the heavy and rapid movement down Noatak River this week.

We had fresh meat tonight from more distant neighbors that brought down six in their boat from Noatak River last night.

This is a very early date for this kind of a caribou movement into our area. It is of course welcome, but a bit of a puzzle. The cool/cold summer is probably the reason as well as the high level of caribou numbers.

No net out today. Our gulls eating more blackberries now that they have softened and sweetened. They do seem short of fish to catch on their own. We have not seen the usual large number of 9-spined sticklebacks that are around by this time.

Our cottonwood copse is really yellow in the occasional sun break today.

August 31 Low 40° F, High 46° F
E to 40. Cloudy, rain showers.

Another day of high wet winds, stronger in the evening.

Carrie rode with me as we ran Aachauq to the lookout point on the bluffs west of us. After the caribou reports of yesterday we expected to see some but didn't. We only saw traveling cranes, geese and shorebirds against the wind!

Later when I ran Terry, I saw two animals close to willows disappearing in them. They were quite far but probably they were caribou rather than bear or moose.

A small bear has been into Jones' Camp and the other family camp in the same area.

Boat travel has been hazardous the last few days with strong winds, then light winds, then strong again.

A neighbor and his friend brought home a load of skinned fat caribou from the Noatak River just above the Hatchery – maybe 7 nice bulls. They gave Carrie the one a new hunter, 12 years old, shot. Another family here in Sisualik that got three near here yesterday also gave us 30-40 lbs of fat meat.

It took me most of the morning to clean up the freezer, cut up and package the meat. We are in good shape for meat now without firing a shot.

SEPTEMBER

September 1 Low 43° F, High 47° F
SE-S-SW to 35. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Strong winds a.m. switching p.m. at diminishing force.

We have been privileged the past two days and nights to have 180 tundra swans on our small near camp "duck lake." It has been quite windy so the cacophony of sound from them was quite diminished but was still there.

There are also 100 wigeon with them, picking up remnants of what the larger birds dredge up. That is a lot of waterfowl on this lake favored by waterfowl only 300 yards from the house.

These tundra swans are flocked non-breeders; we have not seen any flying young yet.

Last evening, while making a visiting trip to extended family camp a bit east of us, we found a couple of shorebirds flying ahead of us in the ATV trail through the grasses. After flying and landing several times in the track they tired and one had to take care not to run over them. The light was not good – cloudy and twilight – but as we got close I recognized a difference from the shorebirds we have been seeing lately. The back feather pattern and light colored legs caught my attention. I never got to look through binoculars at them but finally realized that they were sharp tailed sandpipers from across the strait. Juveniles and it is time! First we've seen this year.

Pip-Squeek finally brought her two squabs to the house!

September 2 Low 41° F, High 47° F
SW-S-SE to 18. Cloudy, rain, some sun p.m.

Kind of a restless night – flood marine waters and heavy surf. Everything quieted at about daylight (6:00 a.m.) and no harm was done. The surf and high marine water level brought on by 20-30K winds late afternoon and evening yesterday.

Anigaq outlet stayed closed and the report today is that there are a lot of fish there to be harvested. Only two weeks more and we will be able to sack them and leave them lay till solidly frozen. This is one of our favorite winter foods.

Caribou reported in sight from Akulak in the hills today. We didn't see any from the nearest lookout point west of Sisualik. We did see many swans and cranes feeding on the ground. Swans are too white and cranes too dark to look like caribou, but in poor light at long distances one can be fooled.

The ocean has calmed enough this evening to set the 6 inch mesh net but we won't. There are probably some fine big fat trout and even a few salmon still passing.

Didn't see Pip-Squeek the mew gull and her two youngsters today. Mew gulls are one of the earliest birds to leave. Usually as soon as young can fly.

September 3 Low 44° F, High 48° F
E-SE to 18. Cloudy, some breaks with sun!.

A pretty nice day with some sun p.m.

After lunch we traveled west on the great new "highway" of the beach (wiped clean and leveled by the heavy surf a couple of nights ago).

We went as far as mid Akulak intending to pick more coltsfoot leaves for our new project.

There were two nice bull caribou on the hill across the water at mid Akulak. One can safely cross this narrow water point when Akulak water is low. Akulak water is high after being closed two years and with much rain this August. We could only look at the two fat large bulls.

There were several small bunches of caribou in the tablelands behind Akulak. There are none yet east (our way) of Akulak. We did not see lots of caribou – maybe 4-5 bunches of 6-8 animals widely scattered. There may be more coming, as these are probably the multitudes that crossed the Noatak below the village last week. They look good! Some large bulls still in velvet, which makes their antlers look even larger. The velvet will soon be cleaned off and as the bone hardens they will be polished by their owners and made ready for fighting with potential rivals.

Pip-Squeek and young are gone! How quickly.

September 4 Low 44° F, High 48° F
SE to 30. Cloudy, rain.

Rain all day from 9:00 a.m. - 35 hundredths of an inch. Rode west early hoping to see the caribou bull we saw yesterday in a place I might reach with the wheeler.

I saw a group of 8 caribou well back on the trail to sourdock gathering place. Distance and rain in the air prevented me from being able to know if there was a large enough bull in the group, so nothing to do but walk and get closer.

Did that and found it was quite a long walk. When I did get where I'd seen them last I couldn't locate them right away. Circled around some and finally found them, but no bull large enough to justify hauling to beach. Large bulls with their load of fat are top priority right now.

Found a new plant today! One I have never seen before. Have not identified it yet. Will work on it.

Wind and rain kept most people that weren't already out at home today, and those that were out spent the day trying to get back home for work or school tomorrow. Pretty rough waters around Kotzebue all day but winding down this evening.

Ocean very rough again today - water at a high level but dropping below flood stage this evening.

Lots of birds around – waterfowl and shorebirds.

September 5 Low 44° F, High 48° F
SE-S to 18

More than half a day of warm sunshine! It was rather unforecast so we enjoyed it all the more.

Saw a group of 14 caribou today from the Pole Grave Site. They were coming down to the beach but at that point

in Akulak there is a long arm of water that one cannot cross on foot or with ATV.

Caribou were also reported seen in the hills behind Sealing Point. It is still unclear how much of an early fall movement of caribou is happening.

Still no chance to set net in the ocean. Swells are down but lots of dirt; there should be trout yet and a few late salmon. Flounder should be fat enough to eat by now too.

Because of all the rain it has been hard to dry our fat whitefish. We will start fishing whitefish again soon. We may start sacking some soon after the 10th of this month.

Caribou are still being taken in Noatak River above and below the village. Also on the Kobuk River in the Kiana area.

Kotzebue region is having an extremely poor berry season but seems compensated for by abundant caribou at their month of prime quality.

September 6 Low 40° F, High 46° F
E-NE-W-NW to 15. Cloudy, breaks and sun.

A better day than forecast but the periods of warm sun had to end in rather heavy showers that wet down everything again.

Marine waters still rather high but ocean water fairly smooth. Did get the 6" mesh net out for the first time in ages. It filled with flounders but some were good thick flounders of the fall for supper. They were firm fleshed and good, as is usual for the better September flounders. There were no salmon or trout. There should still be a few in the water but we didn't get any.

A few caribou were seen by travelers along the coast today but none taken.

There is reported a lot of fish at the outlet at Anigaq. It is still too early for open-air storage and with so long a period of rain most folks don't want to risk cutting fish that won't dry.

Air temperatures may be right for sacking whitefish as early as September 15.

There are still a few flowers – monkshood, poppies, star gentian, tall fireweed and wild chamomile. One must look over a lot of ground to find a single flower – the floral season is about gone unless we have an Indian summer.

September 7 Low 37° F, High 46° F
NW to 20. Cloudy, some sun.

A very cool windy day but only a few showers.

The amount of time tundra swans are spending on the ground is unprecedented. The big question is why? It is a terrible year for berries of all kinds and, while there is grass and probably new shoots of some grasses, one wonders if their normal feeding areas in the higher ground are lacking something or if the higher ground is producing something more tasty and nutritious.

Brant are also moving through in greater numbers than they usually do in fall migration. Normally they bypass Kotzebue Sound in the fall to the west, touching Espenberg.

Local caribou news slowing down. I saw a couple of small animals north of the Pole Grave at Akulak and walked up to check them out. There were no others and these were sub-adult males. They were too far inland for the kind of meat they would produce so no shots were fired.

Musk ox at Sealing Point were down close to the tower today.

Nice and dry today for a change and our leaves and whitefish in the tent are drying fast with the fire in the stove to help.

September 8 Low 30° F, High 47° F
NW to 25. Clear.

Another frost, and ice in Terry's water pot this morning. This just about assures that the year 2000 berry crop will be the poorest in at least 52 years.

We are still observing displaced tundra swans, that is "out of habitat" normally used at this season. This too may be related to lack of normal vegetation development due cool summer temperatures.

Some larger shorebirds moving through and a merlin or two with them.

We put our "on hand" dried whitefish in oil today and went to Anigaq and set a net for a few hours to start another batch. We got a few good fish but the cold strong wind and high water inside the Anigaq system made net setting difficult so we settled for what we had. We cooked several for supper and they were quite firm and flaky – very good cooked fish.

Not much to report on the caribou scene though three animals were walking toward Sealing Point camp and family at Fish Creek family camp got at least one good one today. We didn't see any on our trip west today. Lots of geese, swans and cranes trying to fatten up with the few berries.

September 9 Low 26° F, High 44° F
Light NE, calm. Clear, clouding p.m.

Ice and frost again but a beautiful nearly calm day.

There were a few berry pickers (blackberries) in our rear section today and a neighbor's young hunter gave us a

Canada goose. We have a lot of waterfowl in our rear marsh areas now. Tundra swans may outnumber all other species and they are still hitting the berry grounds and tableland rolling hill country – not normal habitat for that bird here.

Marine waters dropped to a real low level last night and this morning. It is up some again this evening.

We have more people in Sisualik this evening than we have had for a long time. Late hopeful berry picks and duck hunters.

The caribou news is kind of quiet though a few continue to be taken. Noatak River is reported to be full of boats this weekend.

Our weather has improved and forecasts too. We may be able to get to town this coming week for fall re-supply.

We got word this morning that we have a new great-grandson. Mother and baby are doing well.

September 10 Low 36° F, High 47° F
N calm, S to 15. Cloudy, showers, some sun.

A rather odd “lack of steady wind” day. For the first ¾ of it the ocean was totally silent. That doesn’t often happen during the Sisualik ice-free season. A little wave noise developed late this evening when wind (light) swung around to south.

Some waterfowl hunters around this weekend but not a lot of shooting. We have lots – lots of tundra swans and geese. The swans are still using habitat not usually used by them – hillsides and berry grounds.

Caribou reported crossing again right at Noatak village site.

A remarkably beautiful sunset in this past half hour – very red clouds, a very bright sun and a rainbow! I think it made many people’s day, as it did mine.

There were a few more people around Sisualik today but not for long. It appears our freeze up and winter population trend continues downwards.

A golden eagle was reported eating “something” on the beach yesterday at Sealing Point. Adult eagles don’t often turn up on the beach in this area. They usually find better hunting conditions in the hills/mountains.

September 11 Low 31° F, High 44° F
N-S-SW to 10. Clear, clouding p.m.

A very pleasant day weather wise with insects again and the warmth of the sun. The day was otherwise rather frustrating. Carrie unable to get around much – even in the house – and we had planned a town trip. But the help we would need from family there was not readily available due to everybody off doing something else. Maybe will

make it later in the week.

Carrie being down again holds both of us close to home at a time and with weather suitable for doing lots of early fall things – fishing, duck hunting, caribou hunting etc.

I did set the net in the ocean (6" mesh) and got one watermarked female chum salmon and lots of flounders, mixed fat and lean.

Those that did go to Anigaq for whitefish today got some but not a lot they said because of high water in the back waterway system.

We wonder if this too early cold trend will give us an early or late freeze up. Often in the past early freezing has meant a change to warming when it's time to freeze.

September 12 Low 28° F, High 46° F
 N-SW-W to 10. Clear.

A beautiful day of sun after a pretty hard freeze.

It was a very good day to look around with binoculars – but no large animals to see between here and Anigaq. There were a few caribou down at Sealing Point and the boys there got at least two good bulls.

I set our net at Anigaq for several hours but got only 4 whitefish so I didn't re-set. It is not good news this early in the season that whitefish are not plentiful. It may be that the floodwaters on the Sealing Point flats have had the effect of keeping the fish occupied in places other than the outlet.

The ocean has been remarkably placid for the last couple of days. Hope we can make our town trip while the boating weather holds.

Flowers and small birds continue to diminish. Swan numbers are increasing as a few new swans, young of the year, join the flocked non-breeders on the feeding/staging grounds.

Both passerines and shorebirds are getting scarce. There are a few sanderlings, dunlins and long-billed dowitchers around with an occasional plover and whimbrel.

September 13 Low 33° F, High 42° F
 NE-E to 20, calm. Some sun, clouding late.

The unusual distribution, locally, of tundra swans throughout habitat not normally used is a most outstanding fact of this September.

One can suggest several possible reasons but the true facts are not clear. The situation has not developed here to this magnitude in at least 50 years. The very cool summer and its effect on vegetation, both surface and aquatics,

probably has much to do with feeding behavior change. We have yet to see much sign of reproductive success this year. Very few cygnets have joined the staging area swan flocks.

We have a plane flight into town scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Carrie's leg has gotten a bit better so she may be able to make it to the airport and into the plane.

No netting today though the ocean looked good for it. Gulls were working some small fish, probably herring.

We are holding off taking quantities of anything till this town trip is out of the way.

Mid-September is on us and air temperatures are cool enough to begin fish and meat taking for winter use.

September 14 Low 28° F, High 42° F
NW to 18. Clear but shower clouds.

Town trip finally – air charter – expensive but easy, easier than boat even with glassy water. Carrie was able to make the shopping trip that we thought she wouldn't be able to earlier in the week. Don't know how she'll be tomorrow after the ordeal.

Air travel over the region always fascinates me – the bird's eye view gives the actual land a "map-like look" – a real lifelike picture of the terrain.

The ethno botany project seems to be going well. We got the rest of what we have gathered in today and our promised reward for the first batch got to us today.

It has been a long day for us, as always on a town trip day. This one started off with snow above 1,000 feet on our back mountains and a rain shower around the house falling on frozen ground and boards and immediately turning to ice – slippery!

September 15 Low 28° F, High 39° F
NE-E to N. Frost, rain later, wet.

Our world was white at sunrise this morning. Not with snow but heavy frost, though snow is also in the forecast.

Went to Anigaq net set site early and set our 3" mesh net with the idea of going back this evening to tend it. Now I have run out of daylight and steam for this day and will tend the net in the morning. Hopefully the bear will not locate it.

On the way back from Anigaq I saw one large dark animal across the lagoon. It was feeding in an open place and was probably a lone caribou rather than a berry-eating bear – the great distance prevented telling which. Due to high rain potential and general flooding of dammed fresh waters we cannot get to the back of Akulak with ATV till some ice forms.

Neighbors that went down after me saw caribou behind D. Sheldon's cabin and got some using a canoe to cross the swollen slough.

Hunters from here also got caribou just west of Sealing Point.

It appears that scattered bunches of caribou may be making their way this way again.

September 16 Low 24° F, High 38° F
N to 30. Clear, few clouds.

A cold night and day! Ice on small lakes and some snow dusted higher mountains. Early freeze up? It looks like it right now!

And wouldn't you know it – saw our first south moving snow buntings today. Only three but that is a timely beginning.

Saw a group of 6-8 caribou north of Ikpigagaruq today. They were on the opposite side of the creek and well inland but not far from where we used to pick sour dock. They were slowly moving down toward us and the sea beach but probably won't make it until tomorrow.

The whitefish (3" mesh) net set overnight in Anigaq slough gave us a great catch this morning. I went over early, before 9:00 a.m., and took whitefish and flounders out of our short net for more than two hours. We now have 250-300 lbs of prime Alaska whitefish. We will sew them into a sack tomorrow and they will be our first try of the early fall at outdoor specialties. If all goes well and cooling trend continues we will have a lot of slightly smelly kauk¹⁵ for winter. Rain and a long warm spell would make them get too strong, but with luck the cool trend will continue and they will be fine.

September 17 Low 20° F, High 40° F
Calm a.m. S to 18. a.m. clear, sun. p.m. cloudy, rain.

Quite a lot of ice on still water this morning. Lots of waterfowl concentrated in ice-free areas.

There was a rather sudden end to our clear cold weather today. Clouds, wind, rain and snow mix moved in quickly from the west and wet everything down again.

Some travelers reported numbers of caribou just west of Sealing Point but none near the beach.

Time for harvesting fat bulls is growing short again. With cool temperatures some bulls will come into rut by October 1.

I have not hunted waterfowl this fall yet. There are still fair numbers around so I may do a bit of that if time

¹⁵ Raw frozen meat (or fish), also "quaq"

permits.

It is that time of year again when one never quite has time to do all those things that can be done.

This early freeze becomes somewhat of a hardship on larger migratory birds that may have had late-hatched young (swans and gulls in particular).

A few tundra swan birds of the year are turning up but reproduction looks poor this year in this area.

September 18 Low 27° F, High 39° F
W-NW to 15. Sun and squall cloud, snow.

A white world at daylight this morning. The ground had a light dusting of snow all over, less than ¼" here but more on the mountains and east of here.

Sacked our fish from last week today. One full sewed up sack (200 lbs?) and a small box (40 lbs). That's quite a lot of whitefish for one old, rather short, net. We will take a chance on these fish. It is a little early to depend on air temperatures to keep green fish from getting too strong before they actually freeze. They do ferment and that is the main reason for sacking them now. Fish are somewhat like cheese; they need proper aging to be at their best when eaten frozen.

We re-set the net this evening and will hope for another good catch in the morning if the bear doesn't check the net first.

We saw two small groups of caribou on the hill just behind the Ranger Station and another group of 10 behind Akulak lagoon.

The caribou report today is that there are many more to the west of us in small groups. They appear to be moving our way.

September 19 Low 26° F, High 38° F
NE-E to 18. Cloudy.

Kind of a cool dull day with a bit of sun.

The large lump of Pleistocene frozen mud that has overhung our mud bluff trail just this side of Anigaq finally came down last night and doesn't leave much room between surf top and mud bank. Waves will wear it away, but it won't take much rough water to make it impassable for a while and there is no optional way around it.

The net we set down there last evening was pretty well loaded. It will make us a second sack of winter "kauk" if it freezes in time.

There was a cow and calf caribou in shooting range of the Anigaq outlet this morning. A few others were in sight

on the hills north of Akulak lagoon.

There were four sheefish, one grayling and one spawned out female trout mixed with the whitefish in our net this morning. One shee was medium size and quite fat – an unusual catch for that system. We cooked it and wondered about winter survival of shee in that closed system.

September 20 Low 35° F, High 42° F
NE-E to 25. Cloudy.

Windy but no rain today. Real cool air though. Makes one know that tomorrow is the first day of fall. We missed summer somehow!

Two days ago we got a call from some folks at the Point (Sisualik Point – Nuvuruq). They reported seeing two eel-like creatures as they pulled into the gravel beach in front of their place. The “eels” were on the gravel but jumped into the water as their boat grounded. They wanted to know what they were. Couldn’t help them much though we will check around. Arctic lampreys are the only similar creatures we know of locally and my thought was that they spend all their time in the water sometimes attaching to fish (salmon, trout and starry flounders bear their disc-like scars).

Our local tundra swans still pose another mystery. Many family groups have now joined the local flocks and all spend a lot of feeding time on the ground rather than in the water, which is their normal feeding habitat at this season. The odd blackberry crop we have this year is one source of food but they also seem to be finding some kind of late greens.

Saw the small bear on the way west today and it is small! Beach tracks almost reached us.

September 21 Low 40° F, High 44° F
NE-E to 35. Cloudy, rain.

Lots of rain – 0.52 inches – for the first day of autumn.

We had a beautiful warm sun and wind break in mid-afternoon. The wind calmed and swung lightly to S-SW.

Ran the dogs today, Aachauq in the heavy rain and wind a.m. and Terry p.m. in the sun where he was able to catch a squirrel. The old dog always appears so happy and contented after catching a squirrel and so dissatisfied and frustrated when he has to end his run without catching one.

Tundra swans still walking all over everywhere. Cygnets quite common now so production seems to have been good.

Berries (black) and short greens on land are their targeted land forage. They do return to water and *Potamogeton* sp. after a while. Wonder if cool summer and water slowed or inhibited *Potamogeton* corm development and becomes the reason for widespread altered tundra swan foraging habits.

A group of caribou reported crossing slough at Jones' Camp and a little later a bear with two cubs.

September 22

Low 31° F, High 42° F

Calm a.m., NW to 25 p.m. a.m. fog, rain, clouds. p.m. sun, clear.

Changeable weather today and a clear cold night coming on.

Saw caribou from both lookout points today but neither group was near access routes. There were two behind Akulak lagoon and 12 on the east side of the creek west of here.

Rather large swells on the ocean made passage by the shoreline mud bluffs at Anigaq tricky.

We have good numbers of swans, geese and ducks yet, with a few shorebirds. Saw a flock of snow buntings (6) today.

A memorial service was held today in Kotzebue for Doug Sheldon and Raymond Brown, the two hunters lost at sea a year ago this May.

Our sun is dropping into the sea off Anigaq right now at 9:00 p.m. and daylight is still weak at 8:00 a.m. Fall time is on us.

They have a real dilemma at a camp near Jones' Camp. A sow bear with two very small cubs spent last night eating and sleeping under their meat/fish racks, right in their tent camp. The elder couple is reluctant to shoot the family, but they might not go completely away as long as there is food handy.

September 23

Low 20° F, High 33° F

N-NE-E to 15. Clear, clouding late.

A very beautiful cool day with a lot of sun and very little thawing. Some ground and small lakes didn't thaw today.

Marine waters got very low in response to strong N winds on outer capes yesterday and we ate a first lot of large white clams from over at the Point when high surf tossed a few out.

We went over to Anigaq and set a net for a while but didn't get much. It seems one must leave the set overnight to get much now.

We saw a couple of good bunches of caribou behind Akulak lagoon – still no way to get to them there.

Had a terrible forgetful accident with my old gun today. I leaned it on the front of the wheeler for safe keeping while we set the net out. After setting the net we decided to go see how some of the other fishers were doing. Didn't think of the gun and it wasn't in sight from the driver's seat, as we slowly moved forward I heard the noise and snap of breaking wood. The stock split in half lengthwise. Oh, woe is me!

I think I can tape it together and make it useable. We'll see.

September 24 Low 25° F, High 36° F
E-SE to 18. Cloudy, frost, snow, rain.

A cold wet day today. Not much fun to play out.

Spent most of the day trying to make my poor old gun useable. I didn't succeed! It shoots all right but can't get the scope to line up with where the bullet lands. Very frustrating. Removed the scope to try to make do with iron sights – I can't see the front sight well. I must get a new gun, but how and when I don't know. I have a very lonesome feeling. I've never been without a working large caliber rifle in my 52 years here. In a very strong sense we have lived by the gun.

The bear dilemma at Napaaktatuq camp is resolved. The sow was killed yesterday, the two cubs today. It is a regrettable situation but there was no other resolution. Bears being bears and people being people, conflicts over resources and range (land) are usually resolved only by the demise of the bear or bears. One must rejoice in the privilege of seeing a wild bear track even in this early date of the future.

Real snow today. Large flakes that quickly whitened the ground, but the rain, which followed soon, melted it.

Whitefish and caribou are main agenda items in Sisualik this coming last week of September. The whitefish I can manage, but for caribou I'll need a gun.

September 25 Low 30° F, High 38° F
NW to 18. Cloudy, sun breaks.

Ran both the dogs in different directions. Saw several flocks of geese and swans in both directions. There seems very few ducks left.

We did see a first willow ptarmigan at Ikpigagaruq. It was pretty white already. They are sure scarce again this fall and will have trouble hiding from gyrfalcons from now till first snowfall. They no doubt looked at the snow-laden squalls passing today with some hopes of snow but it didn't happen here.

Late this afternoon Carrie and I went west to set our nets for an overnight try. We saw a good group of caribou again behind Akulak near where they were a couple of days ago. No access back that way yet.

Swans still working the berry grounds but more time feeding in the water now.

Not a lot of activity in Sisualik today though there were some boats coming and going. There are only 4 active camps now in Sisualik and one at Sealing Point.

Was not feeling too well today. Hope it passes and is better tonight.

Couldn't fix the rifle. Have made arrangements for a replacement but haven't got it yet.

September 26 Low 26° F, High 39° F
N-NW to 18. a.m. cloudy. p.m. clear, sun!

The ground was a bit white this morning with frozen rain on top of snowflakes, kind of backward, and it looked strange but everything turned to slush under a warm sun and the land was pretty well dried up by sundown.

We took off early (Carrie is getting around pretty well again) for our couple of nets set at Anigaq yesterday afternoon. We knew we might not be able to get there due to high marine water level and surf more than half way up the beach. Our winds were light and northerly but rather strong winds on the outer capes and offshore zone were NW and strong enough to build a surf. We weren't able to get by the high mud bluff just east of the outlet site and had to return home.

Surf and water level started dropping fast after lunch so after a nap around 4:00 p.m. we went down again and made it by the bluff without trouble.

Our net was full with good fat, some egg laden, whitefish and 6 sheefish – not a normal catch at this location – the shee.

We saw several scattered caribou behind Akulak again.

September 27 Low 22° F, High 36° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds.

A beautiful day with lots of sun. Frost and ice building but the sun was warm.

Sacked our fish catch of yesterday and ran the two dogs then we went to Anigaq and set our net again, all under a warm bright sun.

There were even a few insects out at midday.

I also set our other 3" mesh net in the ocean for the first time this fall. It got a full bucket of very large saffron cod and one Bering cisco. Not having any blackberries this fall our fishing routine has been altered. One of our most liked Sisualik foods is a mixture of trout or saffron cod livers, cooked, with blackberries. This is the first fall in 52 years that we have not enjoyed that treat. The half dried and cooked bodies of the saffron cod are also a favorite, but the livers of the cod were the main target – the bodies a by-product. Now the gulls will get those rich delicious livers!

Sisualik without blackberries and belugas is a major disappointment after enjoying an abundance of both in the past.

A very tame red fox visited us this morning.

September 28 Low 20° F, High 33° F
Light winds. Cloudy, some sun, snow.

A smooth ocean all day.

After cutting my bucket of large saffron cod we went west to check our net. We had a good catch – not quite as good as last time, but well worth the trip. Lots more people seriously fishing. Ice is forming on the slough and in the lagoons wherever fresh and still water prevail. Movement of fish in the net keeps the net from “freezing in.”

There were several sheefish again. One medium sized one was very fat and we baked it to eat with our mallard soup this evening. We are sure eating pretty well.

Our town family brought us two bull caribou carcasses taken yesterday from the Fish Creek camp. The steering mechanism on their boat broke just as they got here and they had to leave the boat on this side at the Point in the harbor. They caught a plane home and will come back tomorrow to fix their steering.

Several caribou were taken just west of us today and we saw several on the other side of the water again.

September 29 Low 29° F, High 33° F
N-NW to 18. Clear, some clouds.

Had a good net catch this morning. Fine big whitefish – many with delicious eggs. We have filled and sewed up 4 large gunnysacks, each weighing more than 100 lbs. We are so very fortunate to have these good fish that will take on a good smelly taste by the time we eat some. They are a “region famous” quality frozen fish.

Many snow buntings on the beach trail today. They are moving through in numbers now.

There are swans and geese yet and a few ducks and shorebirds. Ice is forming each night on lakes and lagoons and some of it not melting during the day. Freeze up not far off!

Caribou in numbers have come down in the tablelands behind Sisualik. Tomorrow may be a big day for Sisualik people.

We saw a group of 15, from the Pole grave when we came home from net tending, moving rapidly towards Anigaq. After we got home many were seen north of Sisualik moving west rapidly on same general heading as the first 15. We'll see what tomorrow brings.

Lots of beautiful aurora tonight way down in the middle of the sky.

September 30 Low 24° F, High 35° F
NW-N to 20. Clear, snow squalls.

A big disappointment for Carrie this morning. The numbers of caribou seen from here did not turn up on the beach west of us this morning. We saw a few but they were well back from the beach.

We came home quickly so I could work on the caribou left for us by town family. I did get the largest bull skinned, cut up and into the freezer.

Had a little time so ran out the saffron cod net and got a half bucket of very large cod. These make a great half dried cooked fish that is one of our Sisualik fall favorites. Now with catches two-three days apart we will extend the times we can have a good lunch. The fish needs to dry three or four days to be at its best.

Another free caribou walked in the door about 10:00 this evening. A young neighbor friend over here for the weekend dropped in and wanted to know if we wanted the caribou he had just killed. Carrie and I also find it hard to refuse these good offers so now I have two caribou to skin and cut up tomorrow. I may not get to hunt myself this fall with all this generosity around.

We love our neighbors – the more so because they are few.

OCTOBER

October 1 Low 20° F, High 36° F
NW-N to 15. Clear, few clouds.

A fine sunny day today. Clouds rather thick early but becoming more and more clear.

Lots of travelers today but not a lot of news. The travelers are a few folk going home from here after a short weekend of fishing/caribou hunting, and people that are staying here making use of the good weather to run into town.

Ice is slowly forming in lagoons, lakes and freshwater creeks and rivers.

The snow showers in the evening cool top water quickly and skim ice builds. The trail we cross to our winter camp already has an ice bridge. It only has to thicken now. In some years – most years – we can walk across that ice bridge by the 3rd or 4th of October. We may make that this year. It gives us access to caribou and moose grounds as well as the winter house grove of spruce trees.

The caribou given to us last night is a fine piece of meat. I got it skinned and cut up and into the freezer today. Our freezer is quite full of top quality caribou now but not much else. We are fortunate to have quantity and quality in our fish and meat this early freeze up time. We will miss berries and waterfowl but there will be another year.

October 2 Low 14° F, High 34° F
NE to SE – 10. Clear morning, cloudy later.

We did a big washing today with the washer inside the tent with a hot fire going. It went pretty well. Carrie is getting around much better these last couple of weeks.

Now she has a large common seal to work into fresh oil. A nephew and neighbor boy have started seal hunting. The first boat hunters were out a couple of days ago and this afternoon our oceanfront had slush and broken freshwater ice chunks. This early freshwater ice out into the Sound is the bait that attracts several seal species into the Sound.

Numbers of caribou are reported just inland from the Ranger station at Anigaaq. There are none on the beach and inland access is limited right now with ice too thin to cross deep water and too thick and sharp to boat any distance.

We have enough meat and fish at this point so we'll sit and watch for some activity to be active at if that will benefit us and others.

We are close to being able to put a net under ice and make trail to winter house. October 4 is an early date for crossing ice to tablelands. October 10 is a historic date of first ice crossing of Sound from Sisualik to Kotzebue.

October 3 Low 28° F, High 33° F
SE-S to 15. Cloudy, clearing late.

Camp homework today – Carrie cut up her seal that the boys got yesterday and I skinned and cut up the last caribou given us last week.

Well I didn't hear a swan today for the first time, but I did see a mallard. I would guess that there probably are a few tundra swans around in small, unfrozen water holes where feed is plentiful. Was surprised to see a large flock (30) of dunlin yesterday on thawed mud.

Slush running on the ocean beach again this afternoon.

I walked on our nearest lake today but I wouldn't go too far from shore. We would like to put a whitefish net under ice as soon as possible but it seems too thin yet.

Caribou continue to be in the hills in numbers, staying away from the beach. We have not heard of any bulls being strong yet, but it won't be long.

Snow buntings are common along the beaches now.

We had an unusual incident in Sisualik yesterday morning. A neighbor saw what he thought was a stray dog

coming down the beach. When it got very close he determined it to be a large wolf. When it ran away he chased it toward the lagoon and the animal didn't want to go on the too thin ice. He could have killed it but did not. It finally crossed to hills on shallows.

October 4 Low 20° F, High 37° F
NW-N to 15. Some clouds, some sun..

A good day today and we saw a lot of things but didn't get much.

We are thankful that Carrie is doing well enough to travel around with me on the wheeler for our trips west for net tending and scouting for caribou.

We did go west today to try and set our net under ice. We tried but didn't make it. Found the ice too thin to walk on and too thick to break easily. We tried to set with the push pole but gave that up when two tries ended in net tangle on the pole due to constrictions of ice cover. We will wait a couple of days and then try again.

After aborted net set, we went farther west to Katyaaraq to see what the caribou scene looked like. Caribou have been reported there for a week but not on the flats – only back on the foothills. The flats down there are a mess due to flooding.

There were several hundred caribou trying their best to come down to the beach (where we were) or move east (where we live) but thin ice and thick slippery ice blocked them on every side. They keep trying and may make it tomorrow.

We saw late birds today – a mallard, a red throated loon, a lone and a lonely sanderling.

There was a family of 8 brant in our backyard when we got home – eating blackberries!

October 5 Low 14° F, High 30° F
NW-N to 18. Clear.

Our first day of all below freezing temperatures. It is also caribou day in Sisualik. A lot (several thousand) of caribou hit the beach just west of us today from the north and started to move towards Sisualik and the Noatak River delta.

The great herd animals looked great in the bright sun with some bulls in a sparring mood.

I watched the line of them passing and became so reluctant to break up the pastoral scene that I didn't shoot. The trail the animals were following was about 150 yards from my position. There were a number of large bulls but some are probably getting a strong smell by now.

The herd remained pretty much undisturbed so we may get to watch them again tomorrow and maybe shoot a couple of good-looking ones.

Lots of snow buntings on the beach and a tundra swan took off from the mud bank and flew out over the ocean. It is probably a wounded bird that still has hope of making it south in time.

White foxes (some not very white) are turning up as water surfaces freeze enough to support them. A movement of foxes did occur several years ago at about this same time.

October 6 Low 14° F, High 28° F
NW-N to 20. Clear, few clouds.

Cool, cool bright weather and lots of caribou west and just north (in sight) of us. There are lots and easy to see with the long white hairs on the bulls' neck and chest in the bright sunshine.

The bulls are getting feisty with some fighting, but a couple taken today were still good. That is large "herd bulls." We took a couple of younger animals today and they look pretty good with fat enough to make them tasty. The best catch we heard of today was a neighbor who shot a very large female without calf. Lots of fat. This is the best target animal from now on as more and more bulls get into rut.

There seems no more freshwater fowl in the country but some sea ducks yet.

Snow buntings and redpolls fairly common, snow buntings more so.

Jonathan and his whole family have not been around since yesterday – their first day of absence since arrival last May. The same thing happened last year in early October. We think it may have something to do with very low marine waters and stranded fish on mud bars between here and Kotzebue. How the word gets around to the birds we don't know. Their ability to communicate things of importance among themselves must be greater than we can understand.

October 7 Low 12° F, High 23° F
N-NW to 20. Clear, few clouds.

Well! We are into fall time. No more squirrels on the front porch, no more yard full of young glaucous gulls – even Jonathan gone for two days. No more backyard full of swans and their loud callings. They have been replaced this evening by another white creature – white fox are moving in in numbers. Every 10-15 years or so this heavy movement of white fox develops a numbers-food related problem. It looks like we may be in for an early freeze up.

Kotzebue channel is still running ice but it is due to stop anytime and we will have an ice bridge to travel to town on.

Some caribou and fish were taken today again by the now few residents of Sisualik. I worked on skinning our two caribou from yesterday and got the meat bagged up.

Marine waters still at very low ebb.

There are still caribou in sight on our winter camp trail.

October 8 Low 6° F, High 30° F
NE to 15, S-SW-W to 20. Clear, clouding, squalls, snow.

Some surprising unforecast weather this afternoon and evening. We had a sudden wind shift to SW and a series of very heavy snow showers gave us quickly between 3 and 4 inches. Temperatures rose too but the snow may be here a while since temperatures have remained below freezing and ground is pretty well frozen.

Marine waters have risen rapidly from near rock bottom and some overflow is beginning in the ice-covered lagoon.

With the rising water all the gulls came back including Jonathan. Some young of the year have died this last week due to malnutrition.

The white fox movement continues. Both they and willow ptarmigan will rejoice mightily in our possibly lasting snowfall today. They are so conspicuous in their white coloring in the absence of snow.

Ran the dogs west on the beach and saw that we still have numbers of caribou but they are two or three miles inland. There may be enough on our trail to winter quarters.

A few sub-adult black-legged kittiwakes are turning up with our afternoon SW winds. They are probably hatchlings from Cape Thompson.

Strangely enough, our big run of caribou this week has not (yet) reached Jones' Camp near the main Noatak River. They were moving east through here and it's only 6-8 miles to there. They may have swung north to cross the "big river" near the lower canyons.

October 9 Low 15° F, High 32° F
NE-SE-SW to 15. Cloudy, some sun.

A pretty good day weather wise, rather mild with light changeable winds. Several seal hunting boats were out of Kotzebue into the slush and new ice. Kotzebue channel stopped running ice yesterday and surface (ice) crossing may be possible at the end of the week.

The seal hunters reported lots of spotted seals but few uguruq.

Got some ice and water for household use today from our nearest freshwater lake. Was rather surprised to find the ice 5" thick.

A first traveler down from Jones' Camp today with ATV. That means the tablelands – caribou lands – are now easily accessible from Sisualik and, as soon as ice bridge from Kotzebue is useable, many hunters may be out this way.

Meanwhile many caribou have been in sight all day from our front porch.

All the gulls are back – in force. Looks like there will be heavy starvation of young of the year. Too many birds, not enough feed. They are kind of “mobbing” the camp where a bite to eat is sometimes available. But it’s useless and unless the ocean comes up with something, it seems inevitable.

The building plague of white foxes may well take care of the gull misfortune.

October 10 Low 20° F, High 32° F
 SW-S-SE to 18. Cloudy, snow showers, breaks.

We started for Anigaaq this morning to put net under ice. We had slush on the ocean here and it was pretty flat. As we got a few miles west the slush ended and fairly large swells were piling in. The wind switched to SW from NE and began to pick up. We cancelled our net put and looked around for caribou.

There were a lot right in the creek bed just north of Walter Kenworthy’s camp. Went around the mud bank and came upon them at a distance. Wind direction was exactly wrong. We could not get closer without spooking the whole group.

I took Carrie home and we had lunch, after which I went back hoping to approach from a better direction. We have a good deal of good caribou meat but we would like to get a couple of good fat animals to skin right after shooting.

Picking the right animal now is imperative and somewhat difficult. Bulls locally are in full rut. Sub-adult males and females without fawns are best now and for fat, the young males are a gamble. Locating cows without fawns is difficult in a group at rest where bulls have cut out females near estrus. The bull even chases fawns away from their chosen mothers though they usually stay close around. Spent several hours in long distance shooting without making a choice. Didn’t shoot!

October 11 Low 20° F, High 28° F
 E-SE to 20. Cloudy, snow showers, some sun.

Lots of slush in the ocean going out from the shallows between Sisualik and Kotzebue. There are no seals lying on the ice, which is unusual. There are usually many on the first chunks thick enough to support their weight. Maybe there are no ice floes yet thick enough here, and there are some thick enough in other places.

Many belugas seen from Front Street in Kotzebue today! They have been through Kotzebue several times this fall. Unusual.

We are having a problem with young glaucous gulls (birds of the year) – too many for available food.

Most adults are usually gone by this time but many are still here this year, including Jonathan. They were all gone for a couple of days last week when low water prevailed. We later heard that many gulls were seen east of Sisualik Point in the mudflats, probably feeding heavily on stranded fish – saffron cod, herring. When marine water came

rushing in, the area flooded and gulls returned here. One wonders how word gets around when there is a great find like stranded fish. Wish I understood gull language.

Our adult gulls are all freckle headed now – their winter plumage.

Aachauq the dog found two small flocks of willow ptarmigans on his run today. These are the first seen on our beachfront.

October 12 Low 20° F, High 28° F
E-SE to 35. Clear, some clouds.

A pretty windy day but bright.

Crossed the ice to the tablelands today but not with the wheeler. The strong winds have swept the ice clean and it is very slippery. Too slippery for the wheeler so I walked across to check ice thickness. It is good, so if we get some more snow we will get to see our spruce patch and winter cabin again.

This afternoon we rode west with the shotgun as willow ptarmigan have started making tracks on shoreline willows. We lucked out and got seven nice birds. Some were fully white; most retain some summer brown feathers on the back.

Jones' Camp boys report taking a very fat bull caribou but having some smell. They will hang the meat outside hoping for the smell to go away. It will, but maybe not till March!

The number of young gulls around camp is a sad scene. Since we're not fishing any more the only outside scraps are when we feed the two dogs. The dogs are doing well but it doesn't leave much left for the birds, but they keep hanging on hoping things will get better. Some will starve. Jonathan is complaining too about the lack of food this week. It was a problem last fall too, but there are many more "squabs" (birds of the year) this year.

October 13 Low 14° F, High 28° F
NE-E to 18. Sunny, clouding.

We went to Anigaaq this morning to put the net under ice. We have been talking about this for more than a week now but weather or some other problem comes up. Our ocean water level was high here but waves not large. The farther west we went the larger the swells got. At the critical Pleistocene Bluff point we had to stop and wait for a smaller wave to break so we could pass without wetting ourselves or the 4-wheeler.

We made it and then had to chop several holes through 6 inches of ice to get our net length line threaded through. Worked up a sweat doing that and then Carrie was able to help when we pulled the net into the hole. I managed to cut my thumb on a nail while using the long pole to get the line under and had to try to stop the bleeding. We finally managed to get the net in the water and I handed the net rope to Carrie to hold for a minute while I found a piece of pole to hold the rope. After a few minutes I heard her yell. She could feel fish jerking the net. A quick catch! We look forward to checking the net tomorrow morning.

Ran the dogs late and saw several nice flocks of willow ptarmigan right where we got some yesterday.

We didn't see any caribou today – for the first time in a long while.

We did see more white foxes.

October 14 Low 16° F, High 32° F
N-NE to 18. Clear, some clouds.

A beautiful night last night with unlimited moonlight and northern lights. Both were still on in earnest at daylight this morning.

The day was at least as good as the night.

We took off early, anxious to check our net under ice. There was a good number of Alaska whitefish and a surprisingly large number of sheefish. Normally sheefish are rare in that closed system.

There are few glaucous gulls left at Anigaq. We have more around camp and the number seems to be growing. Some are coming to be malnourished with die off inevitable.

I also set the ocean net this afternoon and got a variety of different species. Bullheads, herring, saffron cod and a first arctic cod of the season. These small but rich late running fish make the ocean alive again.

Ground squirrels around camp were out again today.

There were two caribou standing in back of our east side neighbor's house when we came home from Anigaq. A young bull and a cow. That neighbor is not in camp but the next camp down the line shot them both.

Another friend dropped off an emperor goose today. The first we have ever had in hand. It is quite fat and looks good.

October 15 Low 16° F, High 35° F
N-NE to 10. Clear, some clouds.

What a beautiful day in Sisualik and Anigaq! The snow was melting on dark spots at midday.

We "borrowed" a Sunday to tend our under ice net at Anigaq. It is inconvenient to take it out for Sunday and inconvenient to leave it two days without checking.

Our catch was good again with six shee and over 50 lbs of whitefish – most egg laden. Our shee catch yesterday was near 20 – unheard of for net fishing at that location.

Whitefish eggs are very loose in the fish – running out if the fish is squeezed. This means that the use they are put to is more limited. Now they are best baked whole, in their skins. Earlier, while the roe was tight/firm, they are best aged to a little smelly and then eaten frozen with seal oil. We have enough of that kind too! We are very fortunate this fall to have so much top quality caribou meat and top quality whitefish.

We saw several stray bull caribou today, apparently searching out females in estrus.

The main herd, which was around here earlier, is still not far we heard today. They are still on the west side of Noatak River not far from our winter cabin.

Large bulls are no longer useable for human food. The best meat now are females without this year calves.

We continue to see white fox and willow ptarmigan on our trail west.

October 16 Low 16° F, High 30° F
Light winds. Cloudy, little sun.

This is coming to be the year of the white fox and glaucous gull in Sisualik. We have both in such numbers that they are actually getting “underfoot.” A high percentage of both are birds/animals of the year. That is, they came into being in the year 2000, and therefore are inexperienced and not particularly wise, smart or wary towards humans. Those that live another year will then demonstrate a bit more wariness and basic intelligence common to their species. Both are facing food scarcity and emaciated gulls are already feeding nearly emaciated white foxes, but not adding much nutrient toward the well being of foxes.

This evening, a couple of hours before sundown, virtually all the spotted seals, common seals and yearling uguruq are gathered a bit offshore to Sisualik laying on ice pans that are able to support them. These first “thick enough” pans to support a 2 to 3 hundred pound seal come from the Noatak River delta and drift seaward. As they reach deeper seawater every seal in the ocean wants to climb aboard and snooze on the slight swells. These conditions may last only a few hours or several days. Sooner or later the ice floes will be driven ashore by wind and surf and will break up and disappear. But right now our front door landscape has hundreds of seals lying on ice chunks going up and down with light ocean swells. A rare but regular Sisualik October sight.

October 17 Low 22° F, High 27° F
NE-E to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

No sun today and not much snow – a rather dull colored day but temperatures are fine unless you want to travel and are looking for thicker ice or snow.

We didn't put the net back in yesterday so we didn't go that way and (wouldn't you know it) someone who did reported the whole hill behind Anigaq and the Ranger Station was covered with caribou!

Did “put away” chores today, starting to ready things for move to winter cabin whenever it snows.

The slush with hauled out seals had moved west during the night but was still this side of Anigaq today. Only one boat is hunting seals out of Sisualik and we haven't yet heard their catch so far for the month.

We are glad to hear of caribou still around and we may look them up tomorrow and try to single out a fat cow.

More and more willow ptarmigan in our travel area again.

There has been only one fisherman tending nets at Anigaq¹⁶ this week. We are getting a bit of snow tonight. Will have to do a check to see how much.

October 18 Low 22° F, High 29° F
Light winds. Clear, some clouds, light snow.

Another beautiful day and quite full of wild creatures. It is amazing how sometimes in these "barren lands" living creatures can be so numerous that they actually get in each other's way!

We made a trek west even though we didn't set the net the other day, because we heard that yesterday the hill behind our net set place was covered with caribou.

It was not this morning, but there were some behind Akulak moving towards Sisualik. While looking at the caribou across the white lagoon surface we began to see white and red foxes. Probably as many as twenty scattered over the ice of the lagoon between us and the caribou. Most were immature white foxes, less than white in their early fall pelage. At the same time, in the shiny slush covered sea to our left, there were seals in groups of two to three feeding on some small fish, probably arctic cod.

As we continued west past the netting area we saw more caribou moving toward Sisualik and several close enough to shoot. We didn't, having enough for a while unless we see large females without fawns.

There were also many tame ptarmigan at this same site and we presently have enough of them too! What a land of plenty – today!

October 19 Low 6° F, High 26° F
Light N-NE. Clear.

A very bright and cool day pretty much without wind. Fall slush on the ocean gets thicker and moves in and out from the beach.

The one seal hunting boat is having pretty great weather and are reported doing fine, especially with common ringed seals. They gave Carrie a large one yesterday. She also is making a bucket of "fresh" oil from one given earlier.

Went west this morning to check on caribou whereabouts. Saw only two bulls with a single female. No hint where

¹⁶ Alternate spelling is Anigaq

the large group that we saw around Anigaaq yesterday went. We thought they were coming this way.

Ran the dogs across the lagoon today for the first time. The ice is fine/safe, marine waters low and freezing temperatures all night and day. Surface travel to town is not far off. Moving to spruce patch will depend on snow.

Saw many willow ptarmigan today at tableland edge where they are eating blackberries on midday sun thaw spots.

We may try tomcod hooking tomorrow up Jones' Camp way. Travel seems safe enough that way now with 4-wheeler.

A tough night for our yearling gulls tonight, with slush closed in and stomachs not full.

October 20 Low 6° F, High 20° F
NE-E to 15. Cloudy, fog, no sun.

A good break in routine today. The only way it could have been better was for there to be a little sun.

We went to a traditional fall ice-fishing site on a west slough of the Noatak mouth not far from Jones' Camp.

No one has been there yet and it is always exciting to be the first to try an old site for, there is always a lot of variation between years in species, numbers and of course the fishes' relative willingness to bite.

The ice on freshwater lakes and sloughs is a good 5-6 inches thick so there were no travel difficulties. And we got fish right away – large saffron cod, Alaska whitefish and bullheads.

We had a mix of fish after 2-3 hours that weighed more than 100 lbs. Large saffron cod (tomcod) were our main target fish from that area. They are a good kauk when weather is cold and these will freeze well now.

Three caribou ran across our trail and beside us on the way home.

We had large heavy ice pans on the marine waters this morning but they were gone this afternoon.

Two Jones boys made the crossing to Kotzebue today. That means October 20, 2000 is ice-crossing date.

We also saw willow ptarmigan, red fox and white fox today. All these creatures will thin some as the mass of people get out of Kotzebue with ATV and snow machine.

October 21 Low 10° F, High 20° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, a bit of sun.

Got a fairly early start and spent this day hooking for saffron cod and whitefish on the Noatak delta slough that we were at yesterday. We got a bit more than yesterday, both whitefish and cod. Carrie even got one very beautiful colored grayling – rare at this site.

We have been the only fishers at this well know historic fall fishing site so far. We have more than our share already.

We saw one bull caribou up that way and numerous white and red foxes.

There was a medium sized spawned out king salmon on our porch when we got home yesterday. A nephew caught it in his net at Anigaq.

More travel to and from town on the ice. A little snow would keep us on old trails when traveling thin ice.

One camp squirrel was out today chewing on things and acting saucy.

Also our camp gulls are still waiting by the dogs at feeding time. They don't understand why we feed the dogs and not them. Most adult glaucous gulls have left, though Jonathan and Lucinda remain here.

We have enough fish and fishing for a while now. We'll try something else this coming week.

October 22 Low 3° F, High 18° F
N-NE to 10. Clear, some clouds.

A sharp cold night with remnant moon and northern lights. Woke up chilly in the house.

Saw two caribou when I ran Aachauq (the dog) west this morning. This afternoon the other dog got on the trail of a white fox he couldn't catch. The fox really gave him some exercise on the ice of the lagoon – round and round. The dog became more exhausted than I have ever seen him.

A friend and neighbor made the first round trip to Sisualik from Kotzebue today. He says the trail is good – from Tech. Center to Egg Island and then on over to here.

Our marine waters are extremely low due strong north winds far offshore.

A few sea ducks are turning up – eiders of a couple of species and first year-old skuas.

A first snowy owl was seen at Sealing Point today. We will not put traps on our poles this fall. With the very plentiful white and red fox seen locally, a trapped owl will not survive the night.

October 23 Low 4° F, High 21° F
Light winds. Clear, some clouds.

A pleasant late fall day today with sun warming at midday again.

We spent most of it getting things put away, checking stored foods and doing odd jobs that have been waiting to

be done, like starting sno-go and checking it out, smoothing up sled runners.

Found a shrew – world’s smallest mammal – had broken our security protection for frozen sacked whitefish. Don’t yet understand how he got in there but only a couple of fish were hollowed out. Tried to rearrange things to outwit this small predator but it’s a tough go. We have three major threats to any stored food this fall and it is a constant battle compounded by the fact that we have abundant stored food.

Short yearling gulls, short yearling white fox, and of course the most ingenious – the shrew.

A rather odd situation has developed in Sisualik tonight. There are only four human beings between Kotzebue and Port Site along the north shore of Kotzebue Sound tonight – Doc Harris and Carrie and I in Sisualik and Eli Williams at Sealing Point.

With dividends in and a surface trail to town there aren’t many that find camp more attractive.

I had 6 young glaucous gulls and a white fox following me around camp today as I did chores, not to mention the “late out” ground squirrel that surveyed the scene from his lofty perch on the stove house.

October 24 Low 6° F, High 22° F
N-NE to 40. Cloudy, a little sun, snow late.

Well, we didn’t start off for town. The weatherman spoke of high winds for the afternoon/evening. The morning was fine but soon after noon the winds picked up to 35-40 from the NE. Temperatures remained quite cool – below 0° F chill factors.

Discovered another problem early – our cart full of frozen sacked whitefish I rearranged yesterday because of a shrew finding his way in had the top shoved aside and a large amount of our oldest and best sacked frozen fish had been eaten.

A white fox, or probably several, had worked out a way to get at them. I knew I had to do something about it or lose most of our hard earned, well-seasoned whitefish. It is difficult to protect stored green fish when populations of white fox and shrew dominate the country.

My solution (hopefully) to this is to open the tops of four 55 gallon drums (old but sturdy). I put a full sack in each and some other odds and ends of fish and replaced the tops as tight as possible with weight on top. This should keep them safe till snow builds up the sides. We shall see. Shrews probably can climb the rusty sides of an old gas drum if they put their mind and claws to it, but we’ll trust that not too many will. Even one will be too many to get into the drum.

One wonders how fish were protected before the age of drums (gas/oil drums).

October 25 Low 20° F, High 32° F
E-SE to 40 early. Cloudy, snow, drizzle.

A night and day of snow and snow showers, growing milder after drifting snow. We have got a start finally on our drifting snow and potential inland sno-go travel.

I did run a bit with the snow machine today – over the trail halfway to our winter cabin in the spruce grove. There was one fresh caribou track in the snow.

Ran the dogs on the beach with wheeler in very sticky falling snow.

Haven't seen an adult glaucous gull today; hopefully Jonathan and Lucinda have headed south. We still have five birds of the year waiting in the dog yard to gain a scrap of food. Most of these are probably not going to survive. They have focused on the camp as a food source and that is going to fail. We don't know how to remedy the situation since it involves their basic instincts.

The drum storage worked last night but the white fox did get a bite from a nearby drum with a tub with some scrap fish that had a soft cover. This ability of the small animals to leap high and work out access is characteristic.

Marine waters came up to near flood level this late afternoon. Don't know yet what that will mean to our hopes of making a town trip.

This day of snow is going to help our trail potential inland. It will be good to get away from the ocean again for a while.

October 26 Low 27° F, High 32° F
E-SE to 20. Cloudy, snow.

Wind is down but snow depth and marine water levels are up.

We have had nearly steady snow all day. There is 4-5 inches on the ground now.

I would have liked to run up to our spruce patch cabin today, for there is enough snow to do that now, but marine water levels made that a little hard to accomplish. Ocean level came up rapidly last evening so it was no surprise when at daylight this morning overflow conditions were obvious in the lagoon, and crossing to the "tablelands" would be difficult if possible.

I made a "half-hearted" try but crossings looked too difficult so gave it up till a better time. Ran the dogs west in the fog, snow and drizzle.

Our camp squirrels were out in the depth of fresh snow around camp today and our 5 young gulls are still trying to keep from starving around camp.

A group of 6 ivory gulls were seen at Sealing Point yesterday and lots of gulls were seen there today. Lots of gulls gathered there feeding on small fish, (probably) arctic cod. Wish we could deport our collection of young glaucous gulls to there. They are becoming more of a burden each day. They are a burden because one doesn't know how to treat them. If we feed to help their starvation condition they tend to get more and more tied to us as food providers.

October 27 Low 20° F, High 31° F
NE-E to 18. Cloudy, snow, fog.

We have lots of snow now and even more up at the winter cabin. I did make it up there today for the first time this fall. Much earlier than last fall, but still later than the two years before that.

We have 5-6 inches of snow here but 12-14 inches up at the cabin.

Everything is in good shape up there – just as we left it – surprisingly with all the bear talk this summer. Usually things outside are battered around up there by summer bears and though no real damage has ever been done, they certainly make their summer presence known. For the first time there seems no obvious signs of summer bear activity – strange!

Our high marine water level that interrupted travel in the tideland areas did not stay high long, so most trails are back to normal already except for some shallow water on ice on the edge portion between land mass and dry lake or lagoon ice.

Did not see any large animal tracks in the uplands. The heavy snow all at once with no old snow under does not allow for old tracks at this time. There were fresh red squirrel tracks and they have been dropping cone scales, so maybe there is a better cone crop than last year. Hope there are enough to support some winter birds.

October 28 Low 17° F, High 27° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy, some clearing.

We are under a blizzard watch tonight but seems some delayed. We do have a lot of loose snow around so forecast winds of 35-40 could give us blizzard conditions. Hopefully it won't last long. Our pending first town trip for business has been long delayed due to thin ice and weather.

Our trail to Sanningaruq (winter camp) is getting good quickly. Loosed both dogs at the same time for a change and let them run free up to camp house and back. It took Terry, the elder, quite a while but he made it in good shape and the two didn't get in each other's way.

I was glad to see that we do have game up that way. I saw a large dark female moose in the snow whitened willows on Napaaqtuuraq hillside and a group of 8-10 caribou on the hillside across the creek from the house. We will be moving up there again if we get our town trip made this coming week. It will be good to be out of the drifting snow for a while and safe in the shelter of the spruces.

Our move will probably mean the end of four or five yearling glaucous gulls that seemed to depend on camp generated scraps. A sad but inevitable situation.

We go back one hour in time tonight. It should be three to put us back on sun time.

October 29 Low 18° F, High 30° F
E-SE to 40, dropping mid-morning. Blizzard, clearing late.

The blizzard got here but broke up a few hours later – mid-morning. Some more snow and a lot of drift, as strongest winds were from a long distance over land with much snow on it. We have a good start on long Sisualik snow banks.

Moved the dogs into shelter behind old tent last evening so they would miss the worst drift. They did all right. A little wet though. Moved them back to normal location when drift quit.

Our short yearling gull situation worsens. There were 12 at dog feed time this evening.

No travelers on this side today. Only people here are us, Harris' camp, Morris W. at Nuvuruq and Eli Williams at Sealing Point.

Wind switched to S this early evening, ruining again our hopes of no risky marine waters on trail. Now more overflow problems complicate our long delayed town trip.

We are fortunate to have considerable staples on hand for this interrupted travel problem season.

We can now move to spruce shelter location having lots of snow, but feel we must wait till we get to town for propane, gas and odds and ends of groceries. It will be good to get away from drifting snow, high water and ocean swell reach.

October 30 Low 18° F, High 29° F
S-SE to 15. Cloudy, snow showers, fog.

A fine, mild day but not very bright and not good for traveling - thin ice between Sisualik and Kotzebue.

I did run over the trail between ere and Sanningaruq. Found lots more snow up there from the night of blizzard.

Saw one small group of caribou north of the house and the tracks of one little larger group moving west not too far into the tablelands.

Saw a single snow bunting on the way back down on the lagoon shore. Have not seen any of these hardy birds for a long while.

Our propane bottle went dry today and the cupboard is getting pretty bare. We are two weeks late getting into

town but are otherwise in pretty good shape with good supply of most necessities. There is no trail yet after the beginning of snow and mild weather and only three campers left in Sisualik.

We still have ground squirrels out around camp every day and the probable starvation of 10-12 short yearling glaucous gulls continues. The constant walking around camp and “peeping” for a handout is not pleasant. There is the constant dilemma of to feed or not to feed. The problem has never before reached the magnitude it has this October.

October 31 Low 18° F, High 22° F
E-NE to 18. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Didn't expect to have all of winter's snow in October but it is piling up as the month bows out. We can only remember last year when it was nearly Christmas before we could ride the tussock country.

This year we are short on ice. The overflow from a period of high marine waters can't freeze with the continual covering of fresh snow not allowing the salty water to freeze.

We were fortunate to get our neighbors partial propane bottle today after giving out a call. Ours ran out yesterday and going without for a bit certainly makes one appreciate the convenience of quick cooking and boiling of water. We usually have a reserve 20-lb bottle but overlooked having it filled early this fall.

Our pathetic gull problem continues. The slush on the ocean moved offshore today leaving fine warm looking water that should provide some arctic cod or herring for hard working gulls.

Well November, a real winter month, will begin tomorrow. Hope we can complete our move to the spruces soon and enjoy a different, more gentle, habitat for a while. If our spruces produced cones for bird feed and if snowshoe hares have really come back, it will be a more pleasant winter than otherwise.

NOVEMBER

November 1 Low 5° F, High 28° F
NW-N to 15. Cloudy, snow, clearing late.

Light snow and fog till late afternoon when some breaking up of clouds and rapid cooling. Marine waters still high and most overflow remains unfrozen. That overflow not covered with new snow will freeze quickly. We may yet get to Kotzebue this week.

The wind change to NW last night to 18-20 was a surprise and with considerable fresh snow. Dog houses kind of filled in being faced the wrong direction but due mild temperatures there wasn't much complaint.

It has been snowing pretty steadily for several days, not heavy, but it is adding up to 4 to 6 inches now. Snowshoes

are a must now for walking any distance.

The snow of course is not yet compacted and though cross country travel is smooth enough; one must take care for holes, gullies and hidden drop offs.

Some eiders and oldsquaw ducks are showing in the open water of the ocean and our gull problem continues but today after a lot of hollering and calling by the two white adults we still have (Jonathan and Lucinda?) all but three of the gray-brown birds have gone – somewhere! We wonder about these birds and their late stay this fall. It is always rather heart-rending to witness the harshness of nature – the actual working out of the “survival of the fittest”. It is a tough and rather unforgiving world out there!

November 2 Low 2° F, High 15° F
N-NE to 15. Some sun, cloudy.

A day rather full of events and more sun than we have seen in ages.

No gulls today! After a long, long extended clarion call from Jonathan, he and Lucinda the only two adult white gulls remaining in the camp flock left apparently with most of the short yearlings. This was yesterday evening. There were three gray birds around at dog feed time but today only one on the beachfront for a while.

Also (what relationship to the gulls leaving?), after not seeing any snowy owls all fall, there were three passed today – one roosting for an hour on an old tent frame 200 yards from the house.

A friend from Jones' camp reported a lot of caribou passing their place yesterday, moving from north to southeast.

I went up our trail to the house to check it out and found lots of tracks from yesterday and many large groups moving through today from the north to Lockhardt Point just east of Kotzebue on the Baldwin Peninsula.

Two of our younger camp boys, tired of waiting for someone in Kotzebue to make trail, took off for town and made it by following caribou tracks moving from this side to Lockhardt Point.

Their report of trail not too good. Lots of water on top of ice under snow. Don't know yet if we will try it.

November 3 Low 14° F, High 22° F
Light winds. Cloudy, a little sun.

Well! We didn't go to town, but moved to our winter camp in the white spruce patch called Sanningaruq. It is good to be in our sheltering spruce patch and away from that monstrous ocean and such wide open spaces.

Due to our early heavy snow cover, when one looks down towards Sisualik with our cloudy conditions the black ocean and cloud above it in contrast to our very white land and cloud above it, the ocean does indeed look monstrous.

Jonathan and Lucinda (glaucous gull adults) left Sisualik two days ago. There were still two young of the year birds around camp when we left today.

We have a lot of loose snow and a weekend forecast of winds up to 30-40K. The town trail is very wet (saltwater ice with fresh snow when the ice is thin make such a mess) and somewhat dangerous yet. Thus our decision today seems reasonable.

We are three days late. Many thousands of caribou passed through our creek and house site unknown to us three days ago. The sight would have been thrilling again. The tracks they left are impressive enough. There may be some stragglers. I saw only four animals today.

Made three round trips to Sisualik to complete our move. The old house is big and bright and warm tonight! Dogs are happy too!

November 4 Low -5° F, High 16° F
NW-NE to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

Our second day in Sanningaruq did produce some birds. Carrie noticed a group of small birds “mobbing” a little larger bird. Turned out to be a northern hawk owl being mobbed by either redpolls or white-winged crossbills. It would be interesting to know which. Her binoculars were still down in the beach house. We hope we see crossbills this winter. There were no cones last winter, so no birds. There are at least some cones this year.

Made a trip to Sisualik this afternoon for propane tank and rocking chair.

Achauq went along and we saw four caribou racing us along our trail. The dog found out that he was no match in a race with the longer legged creatures.

There were still two young gulls down at the house waiting for activity that generates edible scraps. Their ocean is still wide open and I hope they are foraging there at least part time. There are no more scraps around our place.

It is reported that sno-gos were chasing caribou in front of Kotzebue on the ice today. It is said that some returned to our side.

Wet spots in the trail were frozen over today. Maybe we will make it to town this next week.

November 5 Low 4° F, High 18° F
NE-E to 20. Cloudy, sun.

A fine day in the shelter of the trees. Out in the open there was ground drift nearly all day. We, including the dogs, are fortunate to be in our sheltered location.

I made a trip down to Sisualik to get some things we need. One yearling gull was waiting there – waiting for someone to bring him thawed food. Sad situation. The ocean is wide open and low water due strong north wind on

outer capes.

Travelers are few yet to our area though several made the crossing yesterday.

We hear that they crossed nearly straight from Kotzebue to Nuuvurak.

Made our trail down through the two creek crossings and across the big lake today. Our trails are all drifted over again but can follow them to bring them home.

Didn't see any animals today though there were very fresh moose tracks at the second creek crossing.

Red squirrel very active around camp now and the hawk owl watches.

Saw strange microtine¹⁷ track pattern out in the open this morning. Four trails side by side. Looks like long range planning.

Maybe town tomorrow, weather and trail permitting.

November 6 Low -4° F, High 14° F
E-SE to 25. Few clouds, more sun.

Town trip today! And it was a long way around! We could have made it shorter – safely maybe – but one gets some comfort by following another's trail when thin ice is a hazard.

The trail all the way is well drifted over and surface frozen over. We went through Sisualik Spit to the tip of the Point and from there to Egg Island and straight to Arctic Lighterage Dock from there. The "dog leg" in the trail from Sisualik Point to Egg Island is probably not necessary any longer. With loose snow blown away freezing has been pretty rapid in the relatively dead water of the basin, which is the "straight trail" into Kotzebue. There are some early snow piles – bumps – that are unusual this early on that trail, caused by the earlier heavy snowfall and then east winds.

We see now that the trail we use during the winter, straight into Kotzebue from the house site here, would be ideal and short right now. The tableland portion of it is as yet unbroken but we will soon do that to haul some gasoline and propane. We got small containers of those things today but will need more soon.

We didn't see a fresh caribou track anywhere today.

There was no gull around the house on the beach when we went by this morning and evening.

¹⁷ Rodents belonging to the subfamily Microtinae such as voles, lemmings, and muskrat.

November 7 Low -11° F, High 0° F
Light N-NE winds. Clear, sunshine all day!

A very fine fall day with sun bright on the abundant snow and a warm feeling yet at midday.

Spent the good day on chores and trail making. Ran over our straight town trail over Beaver Lake with the two dogs following behind. That trail is a rough one in years with little early snow, but there is enough this year so that it went pretty well.

After lunch I made a haul run to Sisualik for sacked fish and other odds and ends.

Several thousand caribou went through the area of that town trail in two-three days last week. It was a very quick move catching us unaware due impaired distant visibility with snowy foggy weather. The abundant tracks and trails remain pretty impressive though we had much drifting snow after the passage. I did witness the third and last day of the movement as I came up the trail to the spruce patch.

There were three stray caribou tracks today between here and Sisualik and a small group of five just north of us feeding on the edge of the creek.

We do have some weather coming so I may get a chance to walk around a bit tomorrow. We still need a couple of caribou and a moose. We didn't take a moose last year being too choosy when opportunity came. That may happen again but we are here earlier than last year and November is an easier time to select cows.

November 8 Low -3° F, High 20° F
NE-E to 20. Clear early, clouding and snow late.

A snowshoe trip and hunt today but just around our immediate area.

Our immediate area was full of lots of living creatures – twenty caribou (mostly bulls with shed antlers), three bull moose (one small antlers, one medium and one real buster) – all in shooting range. Saw two small flocks white-winged crossbills and lots of willow ptarmigan. Passed through an area of thick small shrubby willows with lots of rabbit tracks (snowshoe hares). They are back! It has been a long absence.

We want a moose this month but hope for a fat cow without a calf.

Made a long round about stalk on the caribou and took two antlerless bulls from a long distance shooting position. Would prefer something besides antlerless bulls at this date but didn't have much choice. One seems in pretty good shape with a little inside fat and probably good marrow bones.

Weatherman is promising us another blizzard tomorrow or next day with more snow. Glad we have bottoms in on all our in and out trails now. They will be easier to open up after storms.

We will soon need to search out a wood cutting place. We have nearly finished what we cut and left here last

spring.

There is only one occupied camp now left in Sisualik and a couple of boys at Sealing Point. Total – two occupied camps between Kotzebue and Port Site. Inland there is just us and Jones' west of the Noatak River.

November 9 Low 22° F, High 30° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy, sun breaks. Overnight light snow.

Forgot to mention yesterday that along with all the other creatures there was one saucy looking gray jay. We have not seen one yet around the cabin. This year is similar to last year in that it is surprising not to have two or three gray jays to meet you the first day in. Maybe, like last year, they will turn up after a week or so.

Didn't do much today – recovering from yesterday's stint on snowshoes. It has been a while and the snow was pretty soft.

I did skin and cut up the best of the two bulls and we enjoyed the treat of fresh meat in the form of brisket soup – one of our favorites.

The tracks of the three bull moose seen yesterday were around camp this morning but didn't see them.

We are under another blizzard watch tonight and are promised even some freezing rain that will hold down blizzard drift.

We have yet to have our first visitor of the year. As mentioned in other years this is our time each year of return to wilderness – just us and creatures before the snow machines come.

We may yet hear wolves howl and moose antlers crash.

Carrie's getting the upper hand on the annual war on house flies. She will persist until the last one is done in. It is good exercise and keeps her moving.

November 10 Low 26° F, High 31° F
E-SE to 35. Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

A day of warm wind and rather constant small snow grains in the air – 2-3 inch accumulation.

Drift and new snow was enough to require heavy shoveling of our trail entrance.

An interesting interplay of raven and hawk owl out our window today. The hawk owl, though smaller, has a favorite perch right where Carrie can see him in the tree looking out of our window. A pair of ravens dropped by and one of them chose that perch. Immediately, out of nowhere, the hawk owl launched an attack. The two ravens fled. The hawk owl occupied the disputed perch and took on his watchful vigil of the cabin clearing. This fellow knows our every move and may be the reason that we have as yet no camp scrap eating gray jays. One wonders if

hawk owls have any friends other than other hawk owls.

Dogs restless today but no run due wet weather and messed up trails.

Carrie has been busy with house flies and hawk owl watching, not to mention normal house chores.

November 11 Low 26° F, High 30° F
E-SE to 20. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Very dull and wet weather today. Falling snow melting on contact and a few icicles formed from roof by the window.

A special treat today in our period of undisturbed wilderness. I heard antlers clashing from up creek while I was starting morning chores. Since it was soft and noiseless snowshoeing, I thought I should check them out to see if there was not by chance a female near the sparring bulls.

As I walked up the creek on a high overlooking cut bank I couldn't locate a dark moose form against the new snow-white background. I turned back, crossed the creek and entered the tall willows bordering the creek to look for fresh tracks. I reached a well known (from past years) rotten tree stub that has holes/hollows that contain bird nests or overnighting shelter for chickadee groups. From corner of my eye a slight movement caught my eye. I looked up, and I do mean up, into the face of what looked at that moment to be the tallest bull moose I have ever seen! The animal was only 20 yards away. He had apparently been lying down till I came on scene waking him up. We stared at each other – his nose and huge antlers held so erect they seemed to fill the window formed by tall felt-leaved willows. I took my rifle off shoulder and chambered a cartridge just in case. After a few minutes he backed off another 20 yards and we relaxed as I sought hint or sight of a second or third animal. None to be seen. I backed down my trail crossing the creek and climbed back up where I had just been on the high bank to overlook the willow patch again. The bull I had just met was now in sight and as I watched a curious tumbling of loose snow caught my eye as a second bull stood and shook himself. Two bulls of near same large size – the source of earlier antler clashing. Any more moose around? Didn't see any. Had to return to cabin.

Later I found tracks of two smaller moose, where they had been standing looking at the cabin – from both front and back.

November 12 Low 16° F, High 28° F
Light W-NW. Cloudy, some breaks.

Chores around camp and a short snowshoe to lookout knoll. Didn't see anything in the "larger country" but out the back trail, ¼ mile from the cabin, three large bull moose were laying in a line 50 foot apart, almost on our Sisualik trail. Lots of meat and antlers. All were large adult bulls.

Things not unfolding too well for us. We're down to a little over 10 gallons gas, chainsaw giving trouble, sno-go making odd noises and many of the tools I need are still in Sisualik, and another blizzard is forecast for tonight and tomorrow.

We are enjoying the mild temperatures but distance travel is a pain.

Saw two gray jays down at the second creek crossing today. We have yet to see one around camp. We miss them, and voles and shrews are eating the camp scraps that should go to the birds.

Red squirrels seem rather numerous this early winter. Maybe marten have fallen back to their more historic range. Have not seen tracks yet.

A rabbit made a first fresh track near camp last night. We may look for some snare wire soon. There seems enough in the spruce patch to pot roast a few this winter.

Have not seen caribou since the day of taking two bulls. We may be more fortunate than we thought to take a couple close to camp before they all moved on.

November 13 Low 24° F, High 28° F
 Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

A day of snow, almost rain and drifting snow. It was wet to be out working but there was no choice. Our little firewood from last year is gone and that necessitates scratching around in our spruce patch for wood to keep us going. It is one advantage of living in a spruce patch. One can always scratch up something to warm the house.

After one trip in with wood (snowshoe and coaster) Carrie called me over to the doorstep saying that dark patch over there between the trees looks like moose skin. It was! Standing 50 yards from the doorstep, hidden in tree branches, was a very large bull moose, staring at the camp clear quite like he was made of stone – no movement. In case there were more animals with him I got the binoculars and rifle and walked away from him to a better vantage point. There were two large bulls out of the same glossy dark mold in all that white. Saw a third animal moving shyly off but never got more than a glimpse. Thought it might be the female we seek by its actions, so followed its tracks around for a bit but never got a look at it. Pretty soft going with the wet sticky soft snow, with snowshoes. Had to get back to the wood work, looking over my shoulder often as the two known bulls hadn't moved off much. Man, they are large powerful beasts when seen at close range in a snowstorm!

November 14 Low 29° F, High 32° F
 E-SE-S to 30. Cloudy, snow, rain.

Warm weather and snow continue and trails remain a problem. Both neighbors to the east and the last remaining winter resident made it home from Kotzebue today between snow showers.

We still haven't found a way to replenish our gasoline supply but there is hope since two different trails were successfully used today.

A nephew in Barrow is reported missing on a hunt out of that village.

Two large bull moose are making their home here in the spruce patch, closer and closer to the house. They have gotten quite tame and seem to pretty much accept us as neighbors. This may lead to trouble. They are such huge deliberate moving animals and their curiosity and rather slow reactions to changing circumstances can make them a threat. Coming on to one or both standing in the trail you are traveling an exciting experience. They have so far been unwilling to tell us where there might be some female moose, especially fat ones without calves.

Strangely we have still not had gray jays in camp. We have seen them up creek and down creek but not here.

Red squirrels very active in this mild weather and they do have spruce cones to work on this winter where they were exceedingly scarce last year.

November 15 Low 24° F, High 30° F
Light winds. Cloudy, clearing late.

A nice mild day for the season with light winds and no falling snow or rain.

The wind switch to south last evening when it was still blowing 35-40K gave us high marine water levels that has slowed or terminated travel in areas of tide water – overflow! Lots of it and still high.

A friend was going to bring us much needed gas out of Kotzebue but he didn't get far before going into water. He recovered everything and returned to town. He told us to use the 15 gallons in his tent at Sisualik Point but we can't get there from here today. Maybe we'll try tomorrow if the water is down. We have enough for generator tonight and tomorrow.

The sky is very clear tonight – lots of stars. Once it does refreeze we will have fine trails all over until it snows again. The strong winds left a pretty level land all around.

Saw fresh land otter tracks in the creek yesterday.

Hawk owl was around today but not yesterday. Still no gray jays or chickadees.

Rabbit and moose tracks common in the spruce patch. All the moose seem to be bulls.

Went down to the edge of tidelands this morning to break our straight town trail after the storm and get a look at the overflow. There was a deep cut caribou trail freshly made. Probably several hundred animals, and the big surprise – they were moving west! Headed towards Anigaq!

Hope we have a local herd nearby for the winter.

November 16 Low 18° F, High 27° F
NE-E to 20. Cloudy, some breaks.

Another fine mild day for living, but frustration continues in not being able to get things together as we would like

due flooding and “over mildness” for the season.

Tried to get to Sisualik today but the trail in tidelands looked too tough. Gasoline is still our greatest need and getting to Sisualik would help that need as well as some of the other things we need from the summer house. Maybe tomorrow. Marine water level is down, but it takes a while to drain out of the back lands when a major storm surge flood, as this was, occurs.

One moose went as close as 50 feet to Aachauq (the dog) last night. We didn’t hear him bark or holler, but looking up at that tall mighty creature almost standing over you must have been quite a shock. Having moose for neighbors and sometimes right in camp may be a great thing but it can be a bit disruptive of normal routine. These several large bulls are a rowdy lot coming out of the mating season with fighting weapons (antlers) still in dangerous top quality. They continue sparring and shredding small trees and shrubs, possibly helping shed those heavy old things till they need them again next October.

Well, hopefully tomorrow is “gasoline day” one way or another. We shall see.

It is hard to believe Thanksgiving is but a week away with all these warm weather and unfrozen water problems.

November 17 Low 18° F, High 28° F
NE-E to 20. Much clear, some clouds.

A great day today! Including the continued mild but freezing temperatures.

We had a very needed delivery with our last drop in the generator and sno-go tank! Two very good friends landed a super cub on our nearest suitable surfaced big lake on wheels with 20 gallons of gasoline and our mail. What a grateful feeling to have such willing to help friends!

Having abundant gas allowed me a late afternoon try at getting to our house and stuff needed in Sisualik. With a freezing night and another day of marine water drain, made the crossing easy today that I couldn’t make yesterday. Both dogs made the trip with me and were glad to have the long run. Our family, all of us, are in good spirits tonight. Carrie has abundant generator light, our piled up back mail and some choice caribou meat from the Sisualik freezer.

Other folks that have been held up by bad trails and water were also able to move today. Neighbors on the east made it into town and the one resident left in Sisualik may have also been able to get in, though we haven’t heard that for sure yet.

It had started to drift snow again before I left Sisualik and both me and the dogs were glad we had the snug spruce patch to go home to.

It has been a good day and with renewed feeling of thankfulness for good friends.

November 18 Low 23° F, High 28° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy, some sun and moon.

Mild temperatures continue. Trails slow freezing.

A little drifting snow here today outside of the tree patch.

Sharpened the old chainsaw chain today and then got a little firewood close at hand.

Saw a lone boreal chickadee today but it did not come by the house. Still no gray jays in camp.

The hawk owl was around yesterday but not today.

There have been no fresh moose tracks in Sanningaruq (around the house) for two days now. The bulls have moved on but will probably be back.

Travelers are slowly getting around to go where they need to go, but travel in untried trails is still worrisome.

Travel overland away from watercourses is wonderful. The wind and snow have leveled off the surface right at the tops of the tussocks.

A loud report on the VHF made our day today. Russell Williams Jr., lost for three or four days out of Barrow, was reported found and doing all right with the possibility of losing some toes. This person is the son of one of Carrie's brothers and there seemed little hope after long hours of search. Donations to pay for gas for helicopter and plane searches were sent to the North Slope Borough.

We say "Praise the Lord" for this successful search effort. We talked to Russell on the 'phone tonight.

November 19 Low 26° F, High 30° F
NE to 15. Cloudy, little snow.

An interesting day today with a lot of creatures in a small area where it is sometimes hard to find even a single track in mid-winter.

I took the dogs along down to the Beaver Lake on the straight town trail to get some ice for household water, since I found my pick and we are tired of both creek and melted snow water. ½ of that lake is fine crystal clear ice from the top. Most lakes here now have a coffee/tea colored top ice from ground water seepage.

Was surprised to find many deep cut fresh caribou trails through the Beaver Lake and on down to the edge of tidewater. I didn't see any caribou, but later in the day Jones' camp folks saw long lines on the ice headed for Lockhardt Point just east of Kotzebue. It is hard to estimate numbers from tracks alone, but there could be more than a thousand animals. Interesting enough, I had been down the Sisualik trail day before yesterday and there was no caribou sign in that area. Yesterday I was home all day sharpening saw chain and getting wood. That is the

day they all passed.

A very fresh moose track right outside our tree line. A flock of several hundred willow ptarmigan at tidewater edge.

Later, cutting firewood, a clean white snowshoe hare ran out of its hole nearly under my snowshoe! The first I've seen alive for many years.

November 20 Low 17° F, High 28° F
 N-NE to 15. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Another dull white day with another inch of sticky new snow, everything above ground frosted white.

Patched the sled this morning and took a snowshoe look around during the short afternoon.

Saw the group of caribou (8-10) up under Milluraq, they seem to have been there all week – maybe getting fat. As I looked back toward camp I noticed a very round dark patch deep in a string of willows that runs west of us up the hill. It changed shape and disappeared. I knew I had seen a part of a moose and not far from camp either. Had no hint of what kind. We are still not interested in a male moose and that is the only kind we have seen since the move up. Actually, we have seen quite a few bull moose and most of them more than once.

Since it was still pretty bright I snowshoed rapidly toward the sighting, not seeing anything further until I was in rifle range of a single small tree in the willow patch that was my marker of location. Then as I stopped in a clearing, a side view of a moose rear end came into sight. My rifle at the ready, I waited impatiently to see the head or straight on view of the rear. Either would indicate sex of the animal. Slowly a head materialized, out of obscuring willow growth the palm of one large antler with new fallen snow on it came into sight, and after a long wait no other animal appeared. It was a lone bull – rejected again!

November 21 Low 8° F, High 22° F
 NW-N-NE to 20. Clear, sun!

What a fine bright clear day! The world seemed so large after all the limited visibility days we've had. The colder temperatures are a blessing too for travelers that have had tough going with water and soft trails with thin ice all over.

Made good use of the opportunity and made a solo trip to town for propane and gasoline. The trail turned out fine, flat and firm though there was ground drift all the way in. The bright sun in the eyes made following an old trail trace difficult, but the home run with the wind and drift gone and the bright sun behind was a dream.

We feel rich now with gas and propane for a while. We do have a busy upcoming time – burial of a dear friend in Sisualik tomorrow, Thanksgiving the next day, and Carrie's annual birthday celebration next week on the 30th. All those mean distant travel and with heavy generator use gasoline don't last long.

There were fair numbers of fresh caribou sign in Mills Valley again. Quite a lot of animals have passed through this past week, most on a late catch up run with the earlier migrators.

Saw “outsider” snow machine tracks from town up towards the mountains. The first noted so far. We have not had a “sign in” visitor yet since our move up here.

The gravediggers were into Sisualik from town today.

November 22 Low 7° F, High 20° F
Light NE winds. Cloudy, snowflakes – a few.

Burial in Sisualik today. A well known neighbor’s girl of the Greene clan, mother and grandmother, and wife of another Sisualik clan person. Her death was sudden and unexpected from natural causes. A very large number of family, friends and neighbors came from Kotzebue for the burial.

The weather was good but dull with heavy overcast and an occasional snowflake.

Sisualik, that has only one resident person now and that has not had even a single trail from Kotzebue, now has a well paved and pounded, though still unstaked, trail to help us in to Kotzebue to share with others in a Thanksgiving feast at the Kotzebue Friends Church tomorrow. Hope the good weather holds. We will overnight and it will be our first night away from home for a long time. Our dogs won’t appreciate it but will manage and will be extra glad to see us come home.

Kotzebue Sound still wide open at Sisualik, but we did not see any eiders or glaucous gulls.

A lot of caribou have passed through our Sisualik trail right at the edge of tablelands and none were seen by us, the only people living in this section now. Their passage went unnoticed during snowy and foggy weather last week. Their trails indicate steady travel with little feed and rest. They seem in a hurry to catch up with those gone ahead.

November 23 Low 14° F, High 20° F
Light winds. Cloudy.

Town for Thanksgiving with family and church.

A good day for travel. We made it straight in with good time. Partial “whiteout” made surface hard to see but trail pretty flat and white.

Carrie saw a small group of caribou between our Sisualik and town trail.

Saw lots of old friends at the church dinner. Lots of missing old timers from back through the years.

Lots to eat. Good time with family after and some more food.

November 24 Low 10° F, High 20° F
N-NE to 15. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Homeward trek began about noon with snow and fog obscuring north side of Sound.

We lucked out in having a group from NPS, one with GPS equipment and useable coordinates for inland trail beginning at tidewater level.

I was much impressed with the system and the operator and the accuracy. We hit the inland trail mark tree right on. It was a very impressive test of modern technology.

No fresh overnight tracks.

There were sno-go tracks in the vicinity and around the house after we left yesterday.

They apparently chased the small group of caribou Carrie had seen.

It is good to be home again. One feels so out of touch with the world round about when absent.

Probably doubly so after several hours of TV at different family homes in town last night. Talk about unworldly violence! We witnessed three hangings at close range, hundreds of people shot down or tortured by cigarette or cigar smoking heroes. Some of our town family are stuck on the 24-hour Clint Eastwood channel.

Home sweet home with only radio, VHF and telephone abstractions!

November 25 Low 2° F, High 12° F
N-NE to 15. Cloud, light snow.

A first time ever situation today! I hauled a load of firewood from Sisualik. The haul situation has always been the other way. After all, we live in the forest here at Sanningaruq. The unprecedented amount of good driftwood in Sisualik all along the coast makes a lot available there, and here I must go to a distant spruce patch and make a trail deep inside to get a load of wood. Being still behind in things I need to do each day it seemed quicker and easier to load up from down there.

Ocean still wide open down there with lots of fresh fox tracks.

There is still water under the snow and atop the ice through all the lagoon areas. Fresh snow on thin salt water ice causes this condition and it results in super saturated salt liquid that in cold weather can cause dog footpads to freeze – a dangerous condition.

Moose came close to invading camp again last night. Must be our gang of bulls as they pawed the snow and thrashed trees and willows at the entrance to house clearing. The day was too short for me to check around to find out what kind of moose in the group. We still would like to have a female.

Didn't see any fresh caribou tracks today but lots of sno-go tracks.

We have a short hunting day now – 11:00 a.m. till 4:30 p.m.

November 26 Low 0° F, High 5° F
NW-N-NE to 10. Cloudy, fog, snow.

Got a load of ice this morning as we were out of water. Found good clear first class ice in the Beaver Lake and with the cooler temperatures new cracks allowed large 10-20lb chunks to be broken off with the pick.

Snowshoed around a bit after lunch but didn't find any new moose tracks. Lots of two day old ones. With fog and snow there was no opportunity to binocular distant locations.

There are many more snowshoe hare tracks showing. That is characteristic; as snow and snowdrift levels build the hares in outlying areas tend to move into tree patches. It is great to have rabbit tracks and runways around again.

Heard a report today that we have a few muskox at the head of our creek. Last summer there were a number in this area – maybe a few are settling in for the winter.

We are seeing stars tonight for the first time for ages and it is cooling off. We may have winter yet!

The Thanksgiving weekend brought sno-go tracks in fair numbers into our area but not much beyond yet. Daylight hours are getting short and caribou are more numerous in other areas.

November 27 Low -8° F, High 2° F
NW to 20. Partial clearing. Sun today!

It was so good to see some clear sky and some sun today. This of course means cooler temperatures and one finds he can no longer work outdoors with wet and tattered gloves or damp ragged footgear. It is time we shaped up again and meet the sub-zero temperatures where we must.

Made a trip to Sisualik accompanied by the dogs and picked up some driftwood and oil stored food put away last spring/summer.

My brother-in-law got a great laugh out of my hauling firewood from Sisualik to Sanningaruq. It is always the other way around. We live in the trees!

This was a matter of convenience. We have yet to break a firewood hauling trail up here and Sisualik was blessed with abundant drift trees this spring.

Our next major chore is locating a firewood cut area.

We had ground drift from the NW all the way down and back, though both locations were not drifting.

There were ice pans in the ocean and a lead of open water was rapidly widening between gravel shore and “small pan” ice pack. Time to look for nice fat seals all right.

A report from Kivalina yesterday indicated a great abundance of arctic cod near shore and many beluga whales and seals were attracted to the abundant rich little fish. Unusual.

November 28 Low -14° F, High -8° F
 N-NW to 20. Clear.

Cold weather! Temperatures and wind together gave clothes a test – the first “cold day” of the winter.

Went to the top of our east-west running ridge to watch the sun come up and look the country over for moose or caribou, and after I had the intention of checking for a firewood cutting place and possibly running a rail into it so it could firm up and be useable soon.

There was some ground drift out in the open and the higher “look out” areas were too cold to look for long. I didn’t locate anything but saw lots of moose tracks and a few caribou feeding areas. I soon switched from hunting to trail maker and firewood prospector. It was much nicer on the sheltered side hill spruce patch in the full sunshine, and to make the day a small flock of 8-10 white-winged crossbills moved through the trees working cones.

There seemed enough wood on a trail I had several years ago. It is rather easily broken by going downhill and around back to camp. No uphill hauling. I ran over it after checking wood quantity.

There were lots of different sized moose tracks in the patch but no fresh ones.

There are also lots of red squirrels. Cones on the spruces seem in fair abundance so squirrels and crossbills should have a good winter.

November 29 Low -15° F, High -10° F
 N to 18. Clear.

A windy, cold, bright day with a few hours of golden, golden sun – very close to the horizon. Its rays did come into the house for a few moments. There were no rainbows through our prisms though and it is likely that the sunrays will not enter our house windows again till January 8 or 9.

Got a good small load of wood today from the trail made yesterday. It will keep us going through this coming week activities.

Tomorrow we head for town again to celebrate Carrie’s birthday with family.

DECEMBER

December 1 Low -28° F, High -8° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds.

Got started home around noon with colder temperatures but no wind and a bright orange sun behind. We were glad the 18 mile trip wasn't any longer. At a near minus 30°F the coolness when increased by 20-25 mile forward speed penetrates the best of clothing in time. That is what chill factor temperatures are all about!

Certainly a bright trip today in golden sunlight. There were even a few rays of sun in the house through the window at 2:00 p.m.

Our dogs were delirious with joy on our return and after firing up the stove to warm the house I ran them 10 miles to warm them up and stretch the muscles. They liked that!

Saw a fresh caribou track or two on the trail near the house.

Carrie saw the hawk owl drop in to welcome us home. We would probably prefer the usual two or three gray jays that used to welcome us into camp. No sign of them yet. No chickadees either.

There seem some new moose tracks around but they didn't bother the dogs.

We all will have a good sleep tonight and look forward to the bit milder weather the weatherman has promised for the weekend.

December 2 Low -36° F, High -8° F
NE to 15. Clear.

One of those real good rapid temperature changes today in a short time frame.

Our overnight low of -36°F held through till late afternoon when in a few hours we were up to a minus 8°F. Now in this country everyone really appreciates this kind of a rapid warming. That includes all living creatures here I expect. Though both temperatures are below zero there is a world of difference in living/making a living on either side of a -20°F median. It is not only reflected in warm-blooded creatures but also in mechanical creations, especially internal combustion engines.

At this season of the year we can have long spells when temperatures hang between -20°F and -40°F, never warming out of that through each 24 hours of the day. One does, after a while, "get used to it" but everything you do outdoors takes more effort and of course extremities and exposed skin take extra attention.

It is great to experience a quick few hour drop out of the -20°F to -40°F extremes.

We belatedly found out that there was a heavy run of arctic cod in Sisualik/Anigaq waters during the Thanksgiving Day period, not long after the report we gave of Kivalina waters.

A couple of local hunters took several common ringed seals from the beach – very round and fat with thick blubber.

This is the only large run of fish that can occur in near shore waters of Krusenstern after the passage of saffron cod in early October.

December 3 Low -10° F, High 12° F
NE-E to 35. Cloudy, snow.

Blizzard conditions all day in Kotzebue but we were in better shape! Light snow and winds up and down with air full of small snow grains. Inside the spruce patch was not bad. Open areas outside were something else. The milder temperatures are appreciated and snowfall less than ½”.

Stayed home except for a short exercise run for the dogs.

It will be good to look for fresh tracks tomorrow and we are supposed to warm even more. Our land surface may have a different look after the blow.

On a cloudy day like this our “daylight hours” are pretty short. The sun is still up for three hours and won’t improve much till January.

Our spruce patch this year is pretty well tracked up with moose, rabbits and red squirrels. It will be neat to see how long it takes these species to re-mark a new snow surface.

Less frequent travelers through the patch are weasels, least weasels, mink, land otter, red-backed voles, shrews and willow ptarmigan. Both wolves and caribou have made tracks on the edges this past month and we probably have a porcupine or two in residence, though I haven’t yet run across their locations.

Our rarest bird so far this late fall is a gray jay! A camp in the spruces without a gray jay is unthinkable!

December 4 Low 10° F, High 20° F
E-SE to 25. Cloudy, snow.

Pleasant temperatures inside the spruce patch. Off and on blizzard outside the patch and in the Kotzebue area.

Looked around a bit on snowshoes this morning but had to use the old broken down ones when I found the bindings broken on my better ones that have been riding around on the sled.

I didn’t see moose or fresh sign but did see 6 caribou feeding a few miles up creek. Went home intending to go back if I could fix up my snowshoes quickly. I knew I had new harness somewhere. Took long to find them then

noticed our propane stove fire was out under the simmering corned beef we were to have for supper. There went our short daylight with caribou undisturbed – had to change to large propane bottle to keep our cook stove going – maybe another day.

We have had only an inch of new snow so far in this spell of wind and warming and no hint of overflow. The one Sisualik man made it into town today.

The growing moon was shining through briefly this evening.

Some search and rescue efforts were ongoing between villages last night. They were successful.

Brave people to be out in blizzards searching.

December 5 Low 10° F, High 22° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow showers.

Decided to make a gas run today while the weather seemed good enough. The weather and trail were indeed good enough though some fog and snow showers complicated things a bit.

The worst happening today was to lose our telephone. It was working well this morning when Carrie took a local call and one from Fairbanks and then no dial tone for the rest of the day.

I reported the breakdown when I paid the 'phone bill and later they said they would send someone over to look at the system to see what might be done – on Saturday. It is a long time till Saturday. I will go down to Sisualik and get the 'phone from there tomorrow to see if it will work on our system here.

Carrie uses the 'phone a lot and being without is a real hardship on her. We have been pretty trouble free to this point in time.

We are continuing to have problems with this and that. If it's not snowshoes, it's the telephone or dwindling gas supply.

Can't believe the price of gas has climbed to \$130 a drum! Well, we do have gas now for a while and maybe snowshoe repair can happen tomorrow and then firewood again to keep ahead of the coolness.

Mild traveling weather today. Quite pleasant for December.

December 6 Low 13° F, High 18° F
S-SE-NE to 15. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Repaired snowshoes before daylight (11:00 a.m.) and then walked on them up to the lookout place where I had seen the 6 caribou on the 4th. When I got there with binoculars out I could see 36 caribou scattered around where the 6 had been several days ago.

I walked up to be nearer and got quite close to some but no good position to shoot from. I could see nothing but bulls, all antlerless but one younger animal was still carrying his antlers. I would have shot that animal if I could get in a decent position. From past experience when there are a few animals with antlers they tend to be in the best of physical condition as they get choice feeding spots since the older antlerless animals cannot argue with even the smaller antlered males at this point in time.

The breeze swapped directions and all the animals took off when they caught my smell. No chance to shoot.

I was going to return home but noticed a small group of animals behind a knoll where the wind was right. It was a bit farther away from home but thought I might give a try. When I came up from behind the knoll they were there and I shot two. One has a little inside fat and will have good bone marrow. The other will make dried meat.

Darkness almost caught me before I got home. Had a long short day on snowshoes.

December 7 Low 16° F, High 22° F
NE-E to 20. Cloudy, snow, a bit of sun.

Pearl Harbor Day. My, that was a long time ago! I remember being a teenager hunting ducks in the marshes of the Bay Area in California on that terrible day.

Through breaks in the clouds I saw a whole half of a red sun on the horizon after 12:00 noon today. Our two hours of sun time continues to be a pain in the heart. The sun is never supposed to rise in the afternoon!

Hauled the caribou in this morning and gathered some scrappy firewood in the afternoon. Short daylight today and though the rising moon helps, clouds obscure that too.

Ravens are on duty. There were six on the caribou kill site at daylight this morning. No damage on the meat except for two missing eyeballs – the upturned side of each animal.

Didn't see any live animals and didn't look very hard. After seeing only bulls in more than 30 animals yesterday one can assume the only over wintering animals in our zone are going to be bulls and we have enough of them for now. Females without calves would still be more choice table meat but one can't have the best of everything all the time. We are glad to have opportunity for a fresh kill from time to time through the winter.

A wolf made tracks in the trees near the house last night.

Short days and bad weather have kept hunting snow machines out of our area so the larger animals remain rather close.

December 8 Low 10° F, High 26° F
Light winds N-NE. Cloudy, clearing afternoon.

The sun not only made it out of the clouds this afternoon but rose clear of the horizon for a short time. The sky cleared more after sunset and the moon finally has full control of the amount of light in the sky. Good to see those large bright faces again. Our cloud cover has been so consistent and so complete we had become used to not having either. They are both fine and bright today.

Spent the morning skinning and cutting up the best of the two caribou. Trimmed the other (legs and head off) and will let it freeze up whole to keep clean and safe inside its natural package.

Ran the dogs down through the wood trail at Napaakturat without a sled to re-establish the trail after the new and drifting snow.

Saw a pretty large world with sun on it but no animals to see after checking with binoculars.

Was able to follow the first trace of trail all the way so we now have a chance to go get another load of firewood. There was one moose track – not made today. No now machine tracks in the country.

There is some overflow again between here and Kotzebue. Don't know yet how it might affect trail conditions, as we have had no report.

We still hope for trail stakes sometime this winter. Distance travel is made easier and safer through these short day months.

December 9 Low -4° F, High 18° F
NW-N-NE to 18. Clear.

A day of sun, moon, all kinds of brightness without clouds. The sun managed to climb above the horizon again but not for long. The near full moon was up not long after the sun went down. Our period of bright dawn sky and evening twilight are long, even though actual sun up time is limited. Dawn by 9:00 a.m., twilight till 6:00 p.m.

However, it still seemed a short day. I got a fine load of firewood by 1:30 p.m. – lunch – and then ran the dog (Aachauq) over the trail to edge of tidelands. Loosed both dogs but the older fellow, Terry, sometimes don't go – depends on his weak ankle and how it feels I guess. The ankle injury is from a wolf trap experience many years ago.

A lone caribou had been feeding in the wood trail Aachauq and I made yesterday afternoon. There seems a few caribou scattered through these east portions of Krusenstern Mountains and foothills. These are mostly antlerless bulls and no doubt will over winter unless harassed too much.

A great bird day today! There was a flock of 4 boreal chickadees eating meat sawdust around camp all day and a large flock (12+) of pine crossbeaks passed me by while I was cutting firewood in the sun on the sun-facing Naapakturat hillside. This is the most passerines we have seen since moving up. Still no gray jays!

December 10 Low 0° F, High 18° F
NE-E to 40. Clear, clouding, blizzard late.

A strange day for visitors but we had 'em! The weather forecasts since early morning have warned of high wind and difficult traveling conditions.

Early afternoon two friends from town surprised us and after some good conversation left a care package and headed for home while they might have a chance to find it – with or without GPS. They made it! I then loosed a dog for late afternoon run, stopped to look back (see if he was coming) and the trail in front of me filled up with snow machines! Another friend and his companion (now another friend) with a Christmas tree on sled pulled in. Tied up the dog and visited – with talk – some more. Precious times can certainly turn up unexpectedly.

All this made for a great Sunday afternoon, though visits were short due reported 40 mile winds in Kotzebue.

Ran the dogs after last visitors left and marveled at the weather they were willing to brave just for a visit.

Set up a cut tree in front yard to hang caribou fat chunks on for Carrie's new clearing bird group. They turned up yesterday – four boreal chickadees, probably a this year group of siblings. They are quite dark colored and hang pretty close together with a lot of chasing and activity around feeding site. Meat or fish "sawdust" and Ritz crackers crumbled are their food besides the caribou fat chunks.

Good to have birds around again.

December 11 Low 17° F, High 24° F
E-SE to 40. Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

Wind gusts stronger than yesterday. Maybe sometimes to 50. There was not much fresh snow and what there was is quickly whipped away.

There were some broken clouds colored by sun and distant visibility would be better for a while, but in a heavy snowy shower visibility was nil. A snow squall happened just as I loosed the dogs for a run. We couldn't make it to the second creek crossing! Had to turn back while I could see the shadow of the trees on our entrance trail. Went back through camp and climbed the hill on exit trail but ground drift was too heavy to make even a short run through open tundra without getting disoriented.

Our telephone chose today to quit working. Had some trouble last week but it cleared up without help on this side, but now the repair people may have to make a trip out here to fix it.

Gray jays today! Finally two gray jays were feeding around camp with 4 boreal chickadees. Surprisingly they didn't stay long. There are lots of scraps for them to eat. They will be back unless intimidated by the hawk owl.

No travelers this way today but there were on between village trails, which are staked now. Stakes are nearly

complete on neighbor Jones' trail. That will help us for Christmas town travel.

December 12 Low 25° F, High 30° F
E-SE to 30. Snow, cloudy, clearing.

Snow and strong winds overnight slowly winding down till moonrise at 7:30 p.m. There was ground drift all day between here and Kotzebue but distant visibility improved in the afternoon. There is a second weather front moving our way but we hope to make it into town and back tomorrow.

The new snow and strong winds late last night changed the face of our local land again. Creek crossings and trail entrance to sheltered areas developed big drifts that have to be steered around. Some of these require snowshoes or shovel to renew their trail status.

We didn't see any travelers today and there was still too much wind for our town trip.

After a bad day yesterday our telephone cleared up and acted like new this late afternoon. Don't know why but we sure miss it when it is down, even though we have functioning Marine VHF.

No sign of animals today – not even rabbit tracks. Our house clearing chickadee flock grew from 4 to 5 but the two gray jays of yesterday surprisingly didn't return.

No sign of the hawk owl or the Christmas bird count forms.

December 13 Low 22° F, High 34° F
SE-E to 40. Mostly clear, some clouds.

Well! A successful trip, round trip, to town – in winds to 40K! Pretty good for a couple of 70 year olds!

Normally there would be too much drifting snow to make the 12 mile bay crossing without stakes, but the warm temperatures and lack of clouds containing snow showers cut the drift to near surface not mid-air in most places. We knew this before starting and though there is a chance that snow shower laden clouds may suddenly show – as long as they didn't distant landmark vision remained good. It seemed to take a long time to get to Kotzebue when about half way across wind and sand-like particles of snow obscured both Kotzebue and the hills we had come from. We did have a rising sun color in the sky to use as a course bearing point when earthly landmarks did disappear. It is still a good feeling to meet and overcome navigational challenges.

The return trip was much less of a challenge and our "over" trail and distant landmarks were both showing all the way over.

Kotzebue high temperatures today tied the long-standing record high for the date. This evening, with wind down, the air has a soft spring feel to it and near house red squirrel clan had a ball out today under a tree where I had spilled some leftover cooked black beans. There must have been considerable euphoria over the size of the beans compared to white spruce cone nuts.

December 14 Low 12° F, High 27° F
E-SE to 25. Clear.

Winds are down but still some ground drift in exposed places, and from this long period of high easterly winds much of the snow has been eaten away from tussocks and old sno-go trails are strand high – like elevated train tracks. In other places wind has sculpted “washboards” across old trails, and creeks and gullies have filled in – sometimes with sharp drop offs where the fill in wasn’t quite completed. These can be hazardous in foothills and mountains.

Not many new tracks are appearing after the blow. No more moose or caribou tracks and only a very few rabbit, weasel and ptarmigan tracks in willow timbered areas.

Ice on the Sound broke off up to the mouth of the channel at Nuvuraq (Sisualik Point). That is unusual at this late date. It also sets a miserable trap for anyone traveling the soon to be staked trail from Kotzebue to Sisualik Point and on up the coast. One must not stray west of the stakes!

Last year the global warming concept seemed ridiculous as most all of our winter cold came in an extended cooling spell before Christmas. This year with near record high temperatures through the pre-Christmas season – global warming does seem a potential contributing factor.

December 15 Low -2° F, High 15° F
NE-E to 15. Clear.

Clear mild weather continues. It is almost a contradiction. Clear weather in December is seldom mild. The less than 2 hours of sun now does not make for a very long day – even if it is mild. We still do have daylight in the sky from 9:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m.

Made a run to Sisualik today. Haven’t been down there for a while. There are very high very hard snow banks and a wide, wide ice-free ocean. Very shiny and bright in today’s sun as it was above the horizon while I was there. I didn’t see any seals or birds but it did look inviting to boat around.

We heard today that they are still seeing beluga in Kivalina. The abundance of arctic cod will hold the whales and seals in that area. There will probably even be some spotted seals, which normally go south by this time.

The arctic cod is the one species of fish in far northern waters that exceeds all others in biomass. They are, however, not all over but concentrated in great schools in various variable areas. Thus their concentrations attract all northern over wintering marine mammal species, and hold them.

Our long period of strong east winds has left much very clear glare ice with fine cracks for ice block cutting in our “beaver lake”. Got household ice there today.

December 16 Low -10° F, High 12° F
E-NE to 15. Clear.

Great weather and good trails continue.

Value-House announced a final sale so we had to check it out – considering the above.

We didn't leave till noon and got over there in less than an hour. The trail on the ice is flat. The tablelands are lumpy.

Lots of Christmas activity in Kotzebue. Ravens also continue to make a good show. Value House items very cheap but not a lot left.

Rabbit, ptarmigan and fox tracks on the trail today. Nothing larger.

Stakes completed on Harris-Jones trail and workers busy on the Sisualik trail. We will have a good chance of making it over for Christmas, rain or shine.

Saw our latest great-grandchild today. He is sure growing and smiling!

The sun was on the verge of coming up – but never did – all the way to town. It did get above the horizon while we were in town.

We made it back here around 4:00 p.m. and then let the dogs follow me around this training track. The daylight ended in the sky around 6:00 p.m. and I guess we used it down to the last drop today.

Carrie's favorite brother may be in for surgery Monday.

December 17 Low -13° F, High 12° F
N-NE to 15. Clear.

The sun hardly made it up today. Distant clouds on the horizon didn't allow the coloring of orange on our mountains and tree tops like it has done in the past few days of this week. We are down to an hour and 48 minutes now and before this week ends we will be on the way up again. Again referring to sun time, it will reach 24 hours again on June 2. It is good to remember those things at this time!

The last period of weather (storms, wind, snow etc.) has made deep, hard to navigate snow banks on most lower creeks. This may have had the effect of moving local wintering moose into large river drainages where willow browse is available and getting around is easier – no breakthrough crust and deep drifts.

Our boreal chickadee flock of five has become regular – here feeding most of the day. No return of gray jays or the hawk owl.

Rabbits maintaining their trails. There are four trailways between here and our spruce grove entrance. Almost like old times. The country certainly seems desolate when there are no rabbit trails and seems populated when the trails line creek banks and special creek crossing sites. We may soon even have horned owls back as part of the winter bird community.

December 18 Low -7° F, High 16° F
NE to 20. Cloudy, clearing, clouds.

Town trip – Christmas shopping.

Kotzebue winds much stronger than here. Gusts probably more than 35K.

There is hardly any snow left to drift so we were able to make it in and back on our same straight trail we made last week. We now have regular staked trails on either side of our Sound crossing. Jones' trail to the east was finished a couple of days ago and the Sisualik trail to the west was finished yesterday. Either of those routes we can use with confidence when visibility is a problem, and they are not too much out of the way. We are more likely to be able to make it in for Christmas activities.

A moose passed by close to the cabin and dogs last night. Didn't have time with our 1 hour 45 minute day to check out direction and sex. Maybe tomorrow in the blizzard?

It is always surprising how little time one seems to have at this time of year living what has come to be called a subsistence life pattern. One never quite catches up with chores. February will be a different story – maybe.

We were given a fine big freshly caught sheefish today by friends that live at Little Noatak. Their camp is right at one of the best fall-winter shee netting sites and they have had a good season. The fish is big, fat and fresh – a wonderful gift.

December 19 Low 18° F, High 28° F
E-SE to 35. Cloudy, snow, blizzard early.

We were better off than Kotzebue this time. We had two inches of new snow but it didn't blow around in the spruce patch, just outside of it. Temperatures warmed and are still in that mode, maybe passing 30° F before morning. The new snow this evening is very soft and sticky – right for snowballs and snowmen – unusual for snow in late December in our region.

Willow ptarmigan are increasing in our area. Have seen numerous flocks in the last three days where sightings have been few all winter.

A 'phone call today from a friend reported many bull caribou in the hatchery area and that they were in good shape – the meat that is. We evidently sampled a couple last week that were near here.

1 hour 43 minute day today – maybe the same tomorrow and then a minute gain on the 21st.

Oh boy! The sun will be coming back.

The temperatures have gotten quite warm this late evening and new snow may stick down and quit drifting.

The moose that went through night before last did just that – went through with no loitering. Checked the tracks today but couldn't tell much with 2" of new snow.

Several chickadees around today but not all five – at least at the same time.

December 20 Low 27° F, High 36° F
E-NE to 15. Cloudy.

Near record mild temperatures for the date and this may be the shortest daylight day of the year though there is not much difference between yesterday and today and tomorrow. We should have some measurable gain by the following day and then the sunrays will be back in our little house window by January 8th or 9th.

Got a big load of firewood today – all from one fine big dead tree. It is good and solid – a fine lot of wood for one white spruce tree.

After the wood haul the dogs had a good run down to tidelands and back. Even the old one got more than half way before we met him coming back. He hasn't tried to follow me and Aachauq the last week or so. Today he seemed pretty spry.

Saw willow ptarmigans, three of our 5 boreal chickadees and a couple of ravens.

There was a lot of sno-go noise as some of the boys fix up a neighbor's little cabin a couple of miles down creek. The cabin is small without windows and hasn't been lived in much. The boys want a camp place to warm up and escape to on occasion.

During the time of many reindeer in this country, there were many families wintering along this creek. There were no moose or caribou at that time. One tends to see the natural world around rather ageless – unchanging over great periods of time. Not so! Change, sometimes dramatic change, is going on all the time.

December 21 Low 22° F, High 36° F
E-SE to 20. Some sun, cloudy. Snow late.

Town trip – Christmas shop again – had fun dodging overflow conditions.

Actually we weren't sure we would make it. Kotzebue Bar can be a difficult barrier to get across from this side when overflow is extreme.

We lucked out this morning when we saw two sno-go lights out of Kotzebue just getting into Sisualik. We saw

them just as we left the tablelands and headed down into tidelands. It was a simple matter of backtracking the sno-gos since they would have known from the Kotzebue side where they could cross the overflow barrier.

Their trail led us toward Lockhardt Point till it hit Jones' camp staked trail – crossed it and was able to get around the point of overflow another mile east. Our side was dry all the way. Kotzebue Bar was the only problem and though it was a little extra travel time the trail was good and flat and dry.

We used the extra minute of gained daylight today to make the round trip both ways during the light of day!

Found my last year's Christmas bird count forms that we didn't use and finally had the idea to use them this year since they didn't send a packet this year.

Think we'll give it a try during Christmas/New Year's week if we can get a small crew out.

December 22 Low 22° F, High 30° F
NW-N. Broken clouds, fog, clearing

A day of rest and getting ready for the big Christmas 2000 week. The Friend's Church will have their Christmas program and gift exchange the evening of the 23rd and the Christmas Dinner Feast on Monday the 25th. This makes too many nights to be away from home and dogs on chains all right, but we will see how it goes. May take a run back over here on Sunday.

We have a big wide ice-free ocean down at Sisualik after all the wind and mild weather. I even thought I could hear the sound of surf when night wind was still and sound could carry long distances. I have in times past heard Sisualik surf noise from as far away as Milluraq rocky knolls, another five or so miles north of home.

A large pack of snow machines without sleds running around towards the pass and the hatchery today. Our annual period of returned wilderness has come to an end.

We are eating a roast goose tonight, a present from friends in Sitka.

We have had a great choice of foods this week thanks to our many friends made over the years.

Some will come to join in our Christmas bird count.

December 23 Low 12° F, High 24° F
E-SE to 25. Clear, some clouds.

An early start to town to overnight, as the Friends Church Christmas program usually held on Christmas Eve will be celebrated this year tonight, December 23, as Christmas Eve will be Sunday – a day dedicated to worship and rest and not properly used for celebrations, even the celebration of the birth of Christ. This usual Christmas Eve activity has been, from the very beginning of the NANA region Friends Churches, the one celebration attracting more local participants than any other. The church building is always a bit too small, even when a new larger church building

is constructed!

The length of the service is always long. It begins at 6:00 p.m. and is not usually over till 12:00 midnight. All the different ages of church Sunday school classes prepare songs, skits or act out stories relating to Christ's birth. After all age groups have given their production and special singing groups have given their best, a sack of mixed popcorn, nuts, fruit and candy is given out to every man, woman and child attending and as many home family folks as have a family member to take a bag home to them. There were more than 1000 sacks made up this year from donations of church members and local business folks.

It took us a little extra time to make the crossing as we sweated out some almost, but not quite, frozen overflow on Kotzebue Bar. We did make it around the bad spot and into town dry, in 1½ hours.

After the candy bags are given out the hundreds of presents that people have brought to church for others are given out by a hard working crew of young adults.

This is a long time to sit in one spot, even if the seat were soft, which they aren't! However, I have not seen in my lifetime, 73 years of it, a more fulfilling way to spend Christmas Eve! It is a way to experience the true heartfelt meaning of "community". Something that seems more and more scarce in our modern world of technology, affluence and competitiveness.

December 24 Low 1° F, High 18° F
E-SE to 30. Some clouds, clear.

Well, the Christmas Eve Friends Church program closed at two minutes before twelve, after which the church had to be cleaned for Sunday school this morning.

It was as always a great time of sharing, even if it was on the 23rd. Folks had trouble deciding when to open the presents they had received. It is the custom here, as in other parts of the world, for family choice to determine whether you open your gifts on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. What then about the 23rd?

Some families had no problem. Just open them when they come into your hand. Other adults laid down the law to their kids – no open till at least today (the 24th). But I don't know of any holdouts till Monday morning the 25th. Unthinkable!

Christmas dinner will be held Monday at 4:00 p.m. however.

We came home this evening to care for dogs, heat up the house and have a good night's sleep after a fractured one last night.

Overflow well frozen now, only an hour to get home on a good trail.

We plan to go back across tomorrow to help with the Christmas dinner at 4:00 p.m. with hopes to return after dinner. We will see.

Weather s holding remarkably mild for the season.

December 25 Low -3° F, High 19° F
NE to 15. Clear.

Another town trip – round trip to take part in the Friends Church Christmas dinner activities.

We had a gain of 4 minutes sun time but we completely ran out of daylight before we got home at 6:30 p.m. There was no moon, no northern lights only starlight, and distant vision was nil. We couldn't see any landmarks with sno-go lights on. We managed to get home by zeroing in on what we thought and hoped were our morning tracks where we hit the Jones' camp staked trail. We both heaved a great sigh of relief when our lights picked up reflection tape on our tree trail marker at the end of tidelands.

There was lots to eat, lots of old friends and kids at the dinner. There was even some cooked bowhead whale tongue to go with shee "kauk" and caribou and turkey/chicken soup. The near total lack of berries is the most outstanding characteristic of Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner of this year of 2000. We hope the scarcity is not repeated again in this century!

There were new sno-go tracks around the area made while we were gone today so some folks are taking advantage of holiday time to be out in the country even during the shortest days. It is no wonder since the weather is so good and mild for the date.

December 26 Low -15° F, High 12° F
N-NE to 15. Clear.

A day to wind down and we did! Temperatures got down too but jumped back up above 0° F when N wind began to sigh in the treetops (it does that here under the mountains).

I ran the dogs and got a load of ice around noon when the temperatures were still well below 0 F. It was wonderfully easy to chip pit great blocks of crystal clear ice with deep cracks wide open in response to the cold temperatures. Lake ice contracts/shrinks when temperatures drop, and expands when temperatures warm. The ice is quite brittle when temperatures are below 0° F and fissure cracks are deep.

Our grandson-in-law brought Carrie's new bottle of blood pressure control pills over today and it didn't take him long. He is a mechanic and old time snow machine racer. With trails flat like now, a few miles like between here and Kotzebue melt away in a hurry.

Large animal tracks have disappeared from roundabout nearby since snow machine tracks have increased.

Only birds around camp were two boreal chickadees today, but Aachauq (the dog) found a good flock of willow ptarmigan off the trail.

We have another weasel around camp and also a least weasel they keep the camp red squirrels alert. Those little fellows (the squirrels) are finding and peeling the scales off of our white spruce cones this year.

December 27 Low 0° F, High 14° F
NE to 18. Cloudy, clearing, ½" snow.

A light half-inch of snow overnight then completely clearing before sun up. The sun was up and out all its nearly two hours time. It made the mountains orange and the cut bank directly behind our spruce patch and bright into the window in Sisualik house. The two dogs and I were in sunlight all the way down to Sisualik and back. Lots of orange sun today, and so good to know that it is on its way back again.

Sisualik oceanfront is wide open with only new slush forming. I didn't see any birds or seals but there may be some wherever some arctic cod are moving through.

We had three boreal chickadees eating in camp today and I saw one gray jay flying high over the spruces of Sanningaruq headed down creek, we are still wondering why they have become so shy of our house and patch of trees.

There were travelers around today and one stopped to visit a while.

There were said to be a real lot of sno-gos on the Jones' trail today. That trail has become the most used route to Noatak Village and there are intra-village basketball tournaments ongoing in Kotzebue this week.

We tentatively set our CBC for Saturday this week. We may have a small crew as most known local birders are off somewhere for holiday visiting.

December 28 Low -2° F, High 16° F
NE to 15. Clear.

Lots of sun today. More than 2 hours now, and gaining 5 minutes a day.

Went to Napaakturat today for a load of dry wood. It went well and was good to work in the sun. There were even two noisy very vocal gray jays and a small group of white-winged crossbills.

Some trees have good number of golden cones when the sun shines on them.

If our CBC comes off on Saturday we may get a hint of how some other places look for birds.

There were moose tracks again at Napaakturat, they were a couple of days old but they are the first seen for some time.

It is not known right now where, near us, there might be caribou. More than a week ago many bulls were reported around the hatchery. Today some neighbors were up that way making holed in the river ice with a new "Christmas

power drill". They didn't get any fish nor did they see any caribou sign. They did find a skinned moose leg on the trail apparently dropped from someone's sled.

The ice in Noatak River is reported very thin by the fisherman with the new ice drill. That is no surprise and our long, long uncharacteristic mild spell through the first half of the short day period is not changing that. Going by past historical weather happenings, one cringes at the prospect of long super cold periods likely to be oncoming in early 2001.

December 29 Low -8° F, High 16° F
NE to 20. Clear, clouds in the east.

Town trip for gas. A real quick one! Fine trail an hour each way.

CBC scheduled tomorrow. Final check 8:00 a.m.

A beautiful sunset this afternoon. Our returning sun is outdoing itself this week with so little time gained. The sun will soon rise before noon again, where it should always be except for our dumb two hour divergence from sun time.

Lots of activities in town and villages. Basketball tourneys, sno-go/dog team races, Eskimo games, sno-go races and sno-go races.

Fox, snowshoe hare and ptarmigan tracks are increasing. Larger animals scarce locally.

Hope the weather is good for our small CBC group count tomorrow. We missed the count last year, their centennial year, due circumstances we couldn't handle.

We do have more cones and maybe more cone eating birds than last winter.

December 30 Low 12° F, High 25° F
NE-E to 35. Cloudy, snow.

No bird count. Near blizzard conditions in Kotzebue cancelled us out at 8:00 a.m.

Weather here was not too bad but it got much worse with snow and wind later and we were glad we held off. Will try again this next week from Tuesday on. With all the good weather we've had recently today was a disappointment.

The Kobuk 220 dog racers were held at Selawik till noon because of weather. John Baker and Russell Lane are just now getting into Kotzebue (10:00 p.m.). John Baker is the number one finisher in this short but long test of dogs and drivers.

Our lower creek crossing is pretty wet again with the mild temperatures and new snow.

Carrie wants to go into town tomorrow for New Year's Eve activities, weather permitting. We will probably have to use our back trail where we don't need to cross the creek.

Three boreal chickadees were feeding here today – the only birds except one willow ptarmigan when I ran the dogs. It was a very dark, dull day with very poor lighting. No day for a CBC!

December 31 Low 5° F, High 25° F
E-NE to 15. Clear, some clouds.

Late town trip to take part in ushering in the New Year at the church. It was a good day for travel – mild and bright. The many friends at the church made the fellowship there precious to these two old camp people. A new year is indeed a new beginning and time spent with others of a like mind and similar hopes and plans is always very rewarding.

We were surprised to see fresh moose tracks a hundred yards from camp when we headed out the trail to town. They haven't been around for some time. I had noticed earlier, while doing chores, that Aachauq (the dog) was looking alertly in that direction.

Our trail to town was shortened some when we went straight in and hit the Sisualik stake trail a mile or two out of town. It is a fast trail – quite smooth but a little hard dragging on sled runners due the salty surface.

Our three chickadees were busy around camp all day. CBC may happen on the 2nd, weather permitting.

We will overnight in Kotzebue and return home tomorrow morning, the 1st day of 2001!

Appendix 1: Place Names and Descriptions

When Bob and Carrie moved to town in 2004 NPS staff inquired if Bob would be interested in annotating topographic maps with places that he frequented, knew about, or simply found interesting. The following are a result of that effort. Map points have been digitized in GIS by NPS staff in Anchorage.

Additional place names, trails, boating routes, maps and related information are available in Appendix 3 of *Tagiumsinaaqmiit: Ocean Beach Dwellers of the Cape Krusenstern Area: Subsistence Patterns*, by William R. and Carrie K. Uhl, 1977.

Descriptions for 01 through 81 were written by Bob Uhl in 2004

01 Sisualik Spit (Map 1)

Place of white or beluga whales. Sisuaq is the Eskimo term for beluga whale. Sisualik would indicate a location where the white whales consistently frequent in season. In this case, their reason for being here in relatively shallow sound water is to molt, feed and for birthing.

It was only recently learned that beluga whales go through annual shedding of an outer layer of maktak, epidermis. This process proceeds much faster and presumably with less itching at warmer temperatures. Thus, Beluga come into shallow river delta areas soon after ice out while the sea is yet full of pack ice but while water temps in the spring run-off are quite high from sun warming of inland land areas. Contrast in temperatures between water outflow at river deltas and pure salt water in the outer Sound is extreme. A warm bath when the creatures need it most.

Catching beluga in shallow water is very much easier than in deep. Thus, several groups of people, two in our area, made the harvest of beluga a central focus of their annual subsistence harvest conditions.

The two groups in Kotzebue Sound were-are Noatak people seasonably relocated to Sisualik Point and Buckland people relocated to Elephant Point. These two relocation points are right overlooking two shallow water areas where, historically at least, Beluga spent much time in the months of June and early July.

The tip of Sisualik Point, called Nuvuuraq, is the historic site for Noatak and Kotzebue hunters. The site, hand numbered by Bob Uhl as "1a," is just off to the east of our current map - it actually appears on the Kotzebue D-2 quadrangle.

The rest of Sisualik is/was occupied by several families of the group that my wife's family is part of (that is, the family of Carrie Uhl). They often join Noatak and Kotzebue hunters when out for beluga hunting but their main area of interest was in pack ice bearded seal hunting and the two camp location sites are too far from each other to effectively do both hunts.

Noatak spring hunters return to their village in August and September. Sealing Point hunting families move to Sisualik Spit after pack ice is gone for the summer and salmon fishing and berry picking occupy them through late July and August.

01a Nuvuuraq (Map 1)

The tip of Sisualik Point, called Nuvuuraq, is the historic site for Noatak and Kotzebue hunters.

02 Kangainauraq (Map 1)

This is a place where one can get to within a stone's throw of the ocean after traveling the shallow waters of the lagoon behind Sisualik Spit from the Noatak River mouth. It is a safe small boat anchorage and is near good berry picking grounds.

03 Ahaliksuq (Map 1)

This is the center of the largest ancient beach ridge complex at the base of Sisualik Peninsula. It is known far and wide as a great place for blackberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) picking and, consequently, goose and duck hunting.

04 Kulitqiin (Map 1)

This is the outlet of all the drainage streams east of Akulak and west of Tulaghait [#8]. It is a great site for blackberry picking and waterfowl hunting. It offers small boat passage up through site #39 and a ways into the mountains.

05 Killichaik (Map 1)

This is the name of the edge of the tablelands cut bank that runs in nearly a straight line from Katyauraq [#9] to Killitmuminaq [#39] a long ways. It is cut by the large creek at Killitmuminaq [#39] and then becomes Ikpigagaruq [#38]. This was probably an ancient ocean beach line when sea levels were higher.

06 Tutliliq (Map 1)

This is a large high banked, very clear water lake that sometime in the past had a nesting yellow-billed loon - a Tutliq. It seems not to be used by that bird in recent years but one never knows. The lake northwest of Sealing Point at Tutliliq [site #36] bears the same name for the same reason, and it is known to have had a nesting pair more recently.

07 Qiqiqtaichak (Map 1)

This is a large sturdy island surrounded by shallow lagoon waters and having a large population in June of nesting glaucous gulls. It nowadays is better known as Egg Island and is much used for egg taking in season. It has also been used by a large colony of Aleutian terns (200 pairs) and a lesser number of arctic terns.

The east facing edge of the island is an elongated basin of a little deeper water than the rest of the Noatak mud flat delta which causes a concentration of incoming chum salmon during the commercial season for that species in July and August. It is, at times, a high producing net set site and much vied for by commercial fisher boats.

08 Tulaghait (Map 1)

When one follows the small boat channel from Sisualik Point up to the most westerly Noatak River slough mouth, this is where you reach the tableland cutbank Killichaik [#5] through Katyauraq [#9]. It is the cutbank directly behind the slough mouth outlet.

09 Katyauraq (Map 1)

Katyauraq is a place name commonly used where two major sloughs meet. This is, as are most sites of this name, a camping and fishing site.

10 Napaaqtuqtuq (Map 1)

A large outstanding timbered knoll right on the edge of the west Noatak Delta flats. The white spruce timber is quite dense on the knoll and its elevation makes it a perfect landmark, or navigation point, from miles away. It was the site of a 1920s era fox farm and is now the site of a couple of local family home sites and native allotments.

11 Siituqiyuq (Map 1)

Siituqiyuq is the large mountain creek that drains the east facing side of our coast range mountains. The mouth where the creek runs into the Noatak River slough is directly in front of (due south of) Napaaqtuqtuq [#10].

This fine mountain stream is a good example of a different way of naming a long mountain stream. The place name Siituqiyuq is related to the human ear. Five miles of the lower part of this creek has high cutbanks on the south side and when viewed from a higher elevation these have the appearance of the lobes and contours of the human ear when viewed from the side.

Some five or six miles up the same creek where the creek which was running due east makes a sharp angled jog and comes from due north. The place name of the creek-zone then becomes Sanningaruq - our home patch of white spruce sheltering our cabin.

Another four miles into the mountains the creek is flowing easterly again and passes at the base of a cone shaped mountain called Igaichaik. It is now called Igaichaik Creek. Another five miles into and through the coastal range it becomes Iglauyaq Creek. This is the pass through the mountains into the Noatak Flats area just below the village.

12 Sanningaruq (Map 1)

As mentioned in the account for Siituqiyuq [#11], this is the name of our winter home site is located in a grove of white spruce where the creek makes a sharp jog to the north from the east. The place name means "the place of corners." In this case, the creek corners, as well as two long extended low ridges that also "corner" here.

13 Napaaktuchauraq (Map 1)

The narrow slough coming from the Noatak River that swings in against the tablelands to pick up the outflow of a major creek that flows from inland here. It is an early fall fishing site, much like Qaugalauktakpaq (or "Norton's Place") [#14], but smaller and with less fish.

14 Qaugalauktakpaq (or Norton's Place) (Map 1)

This place on the main west running slough of the Noatak Delta is not only a well-known salmonberry picking place (one of the earliest) but, in the early fall as soon as one can travel on the ice, it is our best known place to fish with small hooks. Whitefish and saffron cod can be taken in very high numbers in late October and early November.

There are several cabins on the main slough nowadays and the small feeder stream from lakes attract the fish that are out moving sticklebacks.

15 Qaugalauptauraq (Map 1)

This place is a couple of miles down the main slough from Qaugalauktakpaq [#14] and is also part of the early salmonberry grounds. Having a small stream running into the main slough, it is a fall ice fishing spot. Certain families up from Sisualik used to camp here for early salmonberry picking in late July.

16 Qitiqliqaugaq (Map 1)

The second slough entrance downstream from Qipisunniq [#16a] to the western delta complex.

16a Qipisunniq (Map 1)

The first west slough entrance below Ikpigruaq on the main Noatak River west bank. See Ikpigruaq [#69] and Qipisunniq [#70].

17 Saliqaugaiq (Map 1)

The third slough entrance downstream of Qitiqliqaugaq and Qipisunniq [#16 and #16a].

18 Nauyalig (Map 1)

A large island and area on the west lower Noatak Delta closest to the salt water portion of the sound. The name means place of heavy glaucous gull nesting. It is a good early eggging place for this species and everyone loves fresh gull eggs!

19 Igaichaiq Mountain (Map 2)

This neat cone shaped spruce-timbered mountain is mislabeled on the USGS topographic map as "Igisukruk Mountain." It should be Igaichaiq Mountain. This name means "small" or, more likely, "new" mountain, and rises right out of the creek just under the east facing coastal mountain range. When seen from the crest of the range, its location makes it look in mind's eye like a growing or sprouting new, young mountain just growing up to be like the more massive mountains of the Igaichaq Hills complex.

For me, this name, location and appearance has always been an insight into the minds of ancient Eskimo people and how they perceived the world around them.

Our longtime neighbor and mentor to the west in Sisualik had his winter log house in the center of the thick trees on the side of the mountain facing southeast - the rising sun - a most perfect place to live from late November until early April.

20 Nasiqsaugaviq (Map 2)

Lookout Mountain. This cone shaped mountain and its location harkens back to an earlier time when a high, clear vantage point enabled people to keep track of game, enemies, and the broader world. This site overlooks all the land to the east - this site and the other side of the Noatak River at its first big bend just below its lower canyon.

20a (Heracleum lanatum patch) (Map 2)

Just on the upper edge of the fine spruce timber patch on the SW side of Nasiqsaugaviq is a huge patch of the more rare plants found within Krusenstern National Monument. It is two and a half acres of large healthy *Heracleum lanatum* ("cow parsnip"). This is a range extension for a plant more common south of the Seward Peninsula. I do not know of another site where it is found within the boundaries of the Monument.

21 Miluraq (Map 2)

This is a mountain under, but not far from Nasiqsaugaviq (or "lookout mountain") [#20]. When seen from the south it looks like a reclining woman's breasts, thus the place name. Two rocky pinnacles above the timberline give the appearance. This is also a good modern lookout point for modern day hunters, as a snowmachine can be driven to the top.

22 Akulisaq (Map 2)

This is a fine big mountain - "the one (of a series) on the rear or behind" - which is what the Eskimo term indicates. There is a fine and extensive grove of white spruce on the SE facing side of Akulisaq. Deep inside of this grove are found the very largest white spruce timber west of the Noatak River. There are some fine surprisingly large trees. This is a favorite place of lynx, wolverine, varying hares and local firewood cutters.

23 Iglauyaq (Map 2)

This is, historically, the most used pass through the coastal mountain range for people of Sisualik and Kotzebue traveling to the Noatak River flats and village. The old dog team trail follows the north side of the creek up from Napaaqtuqtuq [#10] through this pass and down to Noatak River at the sharp angled bend at Nauyauvaq. The place name means "pass".

24 Igiqpaq (Map 2)

The name literally means "big hill." This is the next to the last of a string of coastal mountains that are then cut through by the mighty Noatak River.

25 Avingaurayug (Map 2)

This is the last of the chain of coastal mountains on the west that are cut through by ancient action of the Noatak River. The name may allude to the smallest of adult bears.

26 Napaakturaq (Map 1)

This patch of white spruce well up on the side of the hill is a well-known landmark and navigation aid because of the winter contrast of dark spruce against white snow. It, along with the next smaller patch of trees to the west also on the hillside of the same ridge, are the most westerly white spruce groves on the Monument and possibly on the North American continent.

White spruce timber is sporadic to the east from here continuous into interior Alaska and beyond. It is special habitat and the creatures, birds and animals that live in it tend to be cyclic in population numbers and nomadic. Thus we can have great, unbelievable numbers of showshoe hares and lynx and white winged crossbills and Boreal Chickadees on this edge of their habitat and we can also go through long periods of near absence.

27 Unniguun (Map 1)

The most far west spruce patch, its Inupiaq name could be translated as "warm place" due to it being sheltered from most directions of wind and on a hillside facing directly into the nearly all day sun of March and April.

In one year, many years back, at the peak of an extreme snowshoe hare high we had an over wintering golden eagle that used this area regularly as a hunting ground. Normally golden eagles do not overwinter here.

One year, the wife and I hunting with .22s on snowshoes, took 150 snowshoe hares in one day, a lifetime record for us!

28 Nuilyat (Map 2)

This is the outlet of the huge Krusenstern Lagoon into the complex slough and lake zone to the east and north of the beach ridge flats west of the outlet to the sea at Anigaq [#46].

It is a great eggging and waterfowl hunting place and was rather heavily used in those years when there is a bumper crop of salmonberries. During the berry harvest time in August and early September boats may pass through to reach many good producing grounds anywhere in the beach ridge portion or beyond.

29 Tailuqt (Map 2)

We can only see the mouth of Tailuqt Creek on this map (Noatak A-2). Going back to map Noatak A-3 we can see the more elevated area for which the place was named. Ridged, rocky outcrops give a hint of an arm connected to a reclining body. There is often a rough-legged hawk nest here.

30 Ingitkaliq (Map 2)

The rocky bluff and the rising ridge behind it on the north shore of Krusenstern lagoon. There are few rocky cliffs at sea level in this area. This one has served as a nest site for peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, and raven though not all in the same year. It is also the site of a rare plant on Krusenstern - Alaska Boykinia.

31 Napaaksaq (Map 2)

The tower at the tip of the cape at Cape Krusenstern. There have been at least two towers built on this site by local people and the present one was started, but not yet finished, with the help of Park Service.

In the past, the towers were used by seal hunters for locating open water and by reindeer herders and hunters to locate animals or game on the flat lands of the beach ridge complex. Aircraft may orient their position in relation to Napaaksaq in times of poor visibility.

31a Alaagat (Map 2)

A central area of beach ridges where there is a complete chronological sequence of all beach ridges from present ocean beach to lagoon edge. This was the site of one seal hunting family through the era 1900 to 1960 when many Sisualik, Noatak and Kotzebue families maintained spring (April, May, June) seal hunting camps. Archeologists Giddings and Anderson also used this area as a camp and investigative site.

32 Iptigvik (Map 2)

Sealing Point community camp site. A much used spring (April, May, June) marine mammal ice pack hunting site from before the turn of the century until the 1960s. As many as 10 to 30 families regularly used this area. All wintered at other locations but returned here for the very important and productive marine mammal harvest. A good season here meant that a family would have a backlog (bank account) of preserved dried meat and oil and winter foot gear material (bottoms and tops) for the full coming year and likely a large amount beyond personal needs that could be sold to inland village people. In that era and beyond, seal oil and skins were a regional staple. The original campsite of Louis Giddings and crew who made the Beach Ridge archeological discoveries that led to the establishing of Krusenstern National Monument is about halfway between here and the previous site of the tower Napaaksaq [#31].

33 Ivilyuqpalik (Map 2)

"Big Clam" creek. This is an interesting and mysterious place name. The creek obviously gets its name from the large white clam shells that can be found at the site. The mystery is, are they from fresh water clams that may live upstream or are they from saltwater clams washed in and piled in the lee of a spit when the beach ridge complex was just beginning to form, and then buried under gravel and sod until later erosion from the large lagoon waves laid them bare to be seen?

For many years after my arrival on the scene (in 1948), there were no shells to be seen on the large lagoon beaches anywhere. Then, one year, the outlet of the lagoon system [Anigaq, #46] was plugged with driftwood and detritus from the summer before and water levels stayed unusually high in the whole beach ridge slough and lake system. Large wave erosion while water was at an unusual level caused two odd events. After the east winds dropped, a small gravel island behind Iptigvik [#32] was more than half gone and, as if by magic, there were large white clam shells all around the outlet of Ivilyuqpalik (Clam Creek). No question of how more ancient peoples came up with the place name! But where were the clams while they were alive?

We do have a hint - there was an OCS¹⁸ crew doing a three year shorebird study camped nearly on the Giddings camp site of years before. We were again camped at Iptigvik [#32] and got the sandpiper crew to send some of the clam shells in to Stanford University in California. They reported the shell material was the same as recent shell samples found on the outside of present ocean beaches!

To complicate this we have at least one adult local person that claims to have seen, when he was a young boy, live, in place, large freshwater clams in the upper Clam Creek (Ivilyuqpalik). It needs to be said at this point the origin of the live clams that give the creek its more or less ancient name is not established.

34 Ayagutauraq (Map 2)

Where tablelands meet the ocean beach on the west side of Sealing Point flats on the south and east sides. It seems obvious from this site that when ocean waters were at a higher level before the formation of the beach ridge complex, the sea edge would be a near straight line from here to Anigaq [#46] and then a tableland line all the way to Napaaktuqtuq [#10].

35 Aitiligauraq (Map 2)

This is all tableland country and here, at the site, is the mouth of a small creek and an old Road Commission Shelter cabin. This whole tableland section from here back to Ayagutauraq [#34] is fine salmonberry and gull nesting land.

36 Tutlilik (Map 2)

This large lake, a nesting place sometimes for yellow-billed loon, bears the same place name as #6 behind Sisualik for the same reason. When an unnamed lake in the past was found to have a nesting yellow-billed loon on it - even

¹⁸ Outer Continental Shelf

once - it was such a rare thing in this area that the lake would forever after be called by the name used for this elegant bird - tutliq - the bird name. Tutliliq is the lake.

37 Nasitchviq (Map 1)

This is a relatively high knoll used by Sisualik people to look for game (moose, caribou, bear, etc.). It is usually the first stop when traveling west on the beach out of Sisualik. It is the highest point on the ocean shore cut bank Ikpigagaruq [#38] bordering the beach for several miles east and west of this point. It is always a good place to look for willow ptarmigan in fall and winter as willows line the base of the high bank. Geese and cranes often feed on the berries of the high ground and may be stalked by a hunter out of sight along the edge of willows. Even a rare walrus can “haul out” on this beach in fall by this cut bank.

38 Ikpigagaruq (Map 1)

A cutbank running along the ocean beach for several miles from the base of Sisualik Spit to the pole grave [#38a] at the beginning of Akulak Lagoon.

38a Pole Grave (Map 1)

[Noted on map by Bob Uhl but no narrative provided]

39 Killitmuminaq (Map 1)

The largest creek that drains the south face country of Igaisigruq [Mount Noak - #40]. It offers today and in the past a good summer walking trail into the high country where caribou for clothing skins might be found in late July and August. It is little used for that purpose nowadays, but it's well drained banks running nearly due north puts one in the dry well drained mountain country quickly compared to any other route which means soft swampy country with mean tussocks all the way.

It has a small summer population of fish and even had a king salmon on at least one occasion. It, like all mid-sized streams, acts as a summer pathway for bears and moose moving from Noatak country to ocean beach.

It is used also by mink, otter and wolverine. Traps for those animals were often set in the past.

The lower portion for Killitmuminaq [#39] to Kulitqiin [#4] is prime waterfowl habitat hosting many northern pintail, widgeon, greater scaup, tundra swans, geese and cranes in August and September. Some nesting of the same species occurs in June.

40 Igaisigruq (Mt. Noak) (Map 2)

This is the tallest of our near coast range mountains and bears a tragic crown of a fairly recent life-taking aircraft crash, no doubt in part due to its tallness. It has served as the site of a repeater station for search and rescue efforts. Except as a convenient orienting landmark that often stands out above ground drift and fog conditions, there is no local use of the site except as a possible challenge for local climbers. The south and west faces are steep. Access to the top is not difficult from the North and Northeast side.

41 Tuqsruq (Map 2)

A few miles west of Igaisigruq is the entrance to the very steep sided canyon called Tuqsruq. This is the proper name for both the canyon and the largest major creek on this drainage. The name is valid down to the 'Y' in the lowland beach ridge flats area where all the south drainage streams join in the common outlet to the sea, called Anigaq, in the vicinity of the NPS Ranger Station.

The word and place name “Tuqsruq” comes from the purposely very narrow hallway entrance to an Eskimo sod house. Its narrowness was a security measure from more war like times to allow only one person or wild animal at a time to pass through toward the inhabitants of the house, the thought being that with spear or knife introduced intruders could be better handled one at a time.

This very narrow canyon that penetrates through the coast range mountains to the Noatak Flats does really, from the south, resemble the narrow passage of an Eskimo sod house (iglu).

The water from this creek is known far and wide as the best clear, tasty drinking water.

42 Igavaun (Map 2)

This place is the last place where Tuqsruq Creek (river) cuts into the bedrock of a ramp of the mountain rocks leading off to the west. There are a number of interesting things in and around this location where the creek settles into the lowlands and becomes a slough.

Boating is possible from the ocean side only to this point where there are upwelling springs, beginnings of shallow riffles and a large outstanding grove of cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*).

The place name comes from an era when most cooking was done by dropping fire heated rocks into containers of water. Good rocks for this purpose are known to come from this place.

It is also one of the few places we have seen active spawning of whitefish in the Krusenstern waterway system. In addition, with the upwelling springs and continuous “open water” conditions throughout the winter, in some years large numbers of whitefish have been forced to overwinter in the system. This creates a sort of concentration zone in March and April for fish seeking oxygen, as that necessary element has become scarce in the ice covered sloughs and lakes of the lower elevation water systems.

With the continual open water and springs the location often has river (land) otters and mink. Raven and northern goshawk can nest in the cottonwood grove. There is not another cottonwood grove of comparable size in all of Krusenstern National Monument.

43 Qaunagauyaq (Map 2)

The Lower Canyon. The name 'Situkuyok' on the USGS map is a misnomer.

This lower canyon is known as a good late fall place to hook for grayling. There is a small population of dolly varden trout along the mountain portion of this Tuqsruq Creek. It is not an especially good winter trail into the Noatak flats as it has much and rather continual overflow conditions.

44 Miluqsrauluq (Map 2)

This creek gets its name from the milky appearance of its water, often in contrast to the crystal clear water of Tuqsruq where the two meet as sloughs before continuing down to the outlet of Anigaq.

45 Katyauraq (Map 1)

A name denoting a junction of sloughs.

46 Anigaq (Map 1)

Place of “going-out-to-sea.” This is the outlet of the rather huge Krusenstern waterway system draining the entire beach ridge complex for which the Monument was created.

It is the most famous of all Fall fishing places on the north shore of Kotzebue Sound. The “place of going out” most likely derives from Fall whitefish activity, though it is, of course, a place of people, water, fish and other water organisms going out to open sea from a landlocked situation.

The “outlet” is a very dynamic and complex place used probably from the time when humans first walked or boated the regions.

Outflow of spring melt waters always opens the 50 to 150 foot wide channel through coarse beach gravel, allowing dammed run off melt waters to run out to sea. At this time, all Kozebue Sound watersheds are doing the same; Noatak, Kobuk and Selawik.

Nomadic whitefish of several species are a part of this big annual “toilet flush out.” So are insect eggs larvae and adults as well as a lot of other edible (by fish) of other organic matter from six months of freezing, preserving temperatures on land and ice surface areas. The fish mostly move with the current while water is murky colored and fast flowing. As this great mass of whitefish and other species gets out into sea and lagoons and with a tendency to follow beach edges they come to many small out flowing outlets like Anigaq and head up into the wide reaching Krusenstern waterway. This will seem a kind of paradise to them coming out of a long winter sometimes near starving and now into rapidly warming waters where a multitude of water insects are beginning to stir and grow. Whitefish pile into the Krusenstern water way complex and many other smaller coastal lagoons with open outlets. Timing here is late June through mid-July. Ice pack on the ocean at this time keeps large waves and especially ground swells down. Then, as sea ice melts and moves north out of the Sound and summer weather systems begin to build huge waves clear up and often over the sod line on the beaches and gravel migration along the beaches soon seals up the lagoon outlets and Anigaq trapping tons and tons of fish inside. In a short while fish have fattened and ovaries have grown to fine ripe eggs and the instinct of the fish is to get back up the large river systems for fall egg laying and over wintering. This is where and when Anigaq comes into its glory and everything trapped inside is wanting to get out - Ani!

Even a small ditch dug in the coarse gravel of the sealed outlet will cause large fat egg laden whitefish to try to follow the outgoing current even though the water stream is sinking in the coarse gravel and the fish soon flops on its side due to lack of water current to support it. What a windfall for early Eskimos and a continuing one to the present day! The huge amount of fish will remain trapped until air temps start to freeze in mid-September and major harvest for winter activities can begin.

A great lot of August rain can spoil the scene and cause the coarse gravel dam to break out if back up water starts to run over the top. That only happens rarely, thank goodness. Many complete families used to move there for fall fishing as many tons may be available to be taken with nets or ditch traps.

This is the richest resource site within the Krusenstern complex with the possible exception in the old days of the two months spent marine mammal hunting from Itiptigvik (#32).

47 Kangainauraq (Map 1)

A good place for a whitefish net on the west end of Akulak Lagoon. This spot can be a hinderance to one hoping to walk or snowmachine travel around the back beach ridge of Akulak. It is a narrow, but deep, late freezing channel.

48 Akulak (Map 1)

In the past a food Fall whitefishing place similar to Anigaq but on a much smaller scale. In recent years Akulak has become erratic in its opening and closing cycles. For this lagoon-water way fishing situation to function outlets must open and close in a timely fashion. Akulak is a shallow lagoon with only a small water shed/drainage area behind. For a couple of years in a row, it has not opened at spring run-off time. Since it is pretty much shallow, overwinter survival of fish is not possible. No spring opening, no build-up of fish for fall harvest. This is a recent development for Akulak. Historically, it's open and closure sequences followed Anigaq.

48a Amiiliuq (Bob did not mark on map)

This is the very narrow connection between the two sometimes connected bodies of water making up what is called Akulak Lagoon. In recent years, the huge storm sea swells have thrown gravel over this area that used to be a narrow deep channel and made Akulak Lagoon two bodies of water instead of one.

When Akulak is one body of water, this narrow channel here gets quite deep because of wind and/or temperature differences between the two bodies of waters on either side of the lagoon. This current, which shifts directions according to wind direction, rather quickly cuts a deep channel.

Many years ago, an extended family tough old woman was drowned here when thin fall ice gave way and she became tangled in dog harnesses and tow rope.

49 Unnamed Lake (Map 1)

This lake with no name went dry the year of the very destructive Anchorage earthquake [1964]. It is now all grass and sourdock. I have used it many years now for July sourdock harvest. Missed the opportunity to create a new place name - Earthquake Lake?

50 Kimikpaq (Map 2)

This round top foothill serves as a navigation marker for summer boat travelers coming out of Kotzebue channel and hoping to land in Sisualik through the ocean deep water route when marine waters are extremely low. If one runs a bearing lining up this flat top foothill with Tuqsruq Canyon in the background you will land at our place in Sisualik with deep water all the way.

51 Salluq (Map 1)

“Salluq” refers to where I have placed the marker dot on this map, as well as to the location where there are several camps, and also the whole broad area of beach ridge, lakes and sloughs between the ocean and bluffs to the north. This is the Salluq Flats - the southern/southeastern portion of what generally is called the Sealing Point or Cape Krusenstern lake and beach ridge flats complex. It was in this location that much of the archeological work justifying creation of the Cape Krusenstern National Monument took place.

It is probably also the most productive bit of land in the whole region with respect to salmonberries (*Rubus chamaemorus*). Each August, many tons of sweet orange colored salmonberries ripen here and are enthusiastically harvested by people, geese, cranes, ptarmigan and other smaller creatures. Just the sight of these low-laying flat lands under a bumper crop of ripe salmonberries is surely one of the two greatest wonders of the far north. Vegetation just above marsh level is dominated by lichens, moss and salmonberry plants. The moss and lichens are low story and the salmonberry plants with a large orange colored juicy berry on top are above all and outstanding. The surface of the ground is colored by the bright reddish orange sight to people, geese, cranes, and smaller birds who cannot be seen, at least to this magnitude, in many other places. Local folks now and historically see this value of their land to be much greater than any underground evidence of the past use of this area by their ancestors.

52 Kaqsigrauq (Map 2)

“Flat topped” mountain. A distant landmark.

53 Tigaiqtauliq (Map 2)

One of the prominent higher mountains that gets its name from the consistent over-the-years shape of the melting snow banks in June on the side facing Sealing Point, [#32, Itiptigviq], where there used to be twenty to thirty families camped in May and June for sea ice marine mammal hunting. The melting snowbank on this prominent peak takes on the shape of a weasel called Tigaiq in the Eskimo language.

54 Tasuqpaq (Lagoon), Tasuqgagaruq (Place) (Map 2)

This is a favorite place for both early migrating waterfowl (snow geese, whitefronts, and Canada geese) and early waterfowl hunters. Being right under the coastal mountains where strong winter winds sweep off all the snow, leaving grass, rocks and snow-free ground exposed directly to the rapidly warming early May long day of sun - melt water runs downhill and builds up rapidly making an early inviting location for waterfowl that have traveled over long distances of white snow and still white iced up lakes and sloughs. It is a favorite place of early arriving snow geese on their way to Wrangel Island in Siberia.

There is a former US Army site airstrip and tower (maybe a White Alice Site) on the hill tops directly behind this small lake/lagoon that has a drainage outlet to the sea, but which soon dries up or closes after spring runoff.

54a Qaqagaruk (Bob did not mark on map)

A tight cluster of coastal hills that is very wind swept by easterly winds. It is the probable location of a 50s White Alice Site with radio tower and mountain top small aircraft landing site. It is also the site of a number of interesting and rare plants.

55 Auqsruaq (Map 2)

This place is named for an unusual under-surface bedrock sheet that wave action has exposed but can't break up. From the sea ice straight on or even looking from the side, this cream colored bedrock, which stretches a quarter of a mile along the beach, looks very much like a side view of a bearded seal skin or a whale where, when cut through the upper dark hair or maktak into the thick blubber beneath, one gets the same impression in similar color contrasts with dark upper tundra layering over the blubber covered smooth slippery wet glistening rock which accounts for the term Auqsruaq, meaning "blubber."

55a Battle Rock (Map 2)

Site of a hard fought battle in ancient days. Named by Louis Giddings during his investigations of Krusenstern archeology sites in the 1950s and 60s.

56 Killikmaiq (Map 2)

This was a camp site for Noatak village residents that might want to spend the marine mammal harvest season in the pack ice zone instead of following their usual option of going downriver to Sisualik Point for beluga. The harvest from here would be of common ringed seal and uguruk, as opposed to beluga whale from Sisualik.

Several families would use this camp site and area, and a few others would join friends or family at Sealing Point [#32].

57 Qurtliq Lagoon (Map 2)

Qurtliq Lagoon and area gains its name from a grave site here said to be the graves of two Siberian hunters who drifted out from their homeland and were killed here. There was little tolerance of strangers in the warlike times of the distant past.

57a Issingaq (Jade Creek) (Map 2)

Because of the Eskimo name of this creek and it being a second but smaller drainage of the bedrock transition zone [see notes on Ukalliqsuq, #58] it is quite possible that it too has high quality stone (cherts, jade and flint nodules) similar to the lower reaches of Ukalliqsuq [#58]. I have not personally been on this creek during the snow-free season but it does sound inviting!

58 Ukalliqsuq (Map 2)

Rabbit Creek gets its name from arctic hares, not the small more common snowshoe hares of the spruce timbered areas of the Noatak valley. The upper creek area and the File Mountains [#59] have a good arctic hare population.

This long and productive creek has some interesting attributes generally not well known these days. It has many springs and cuts through a coastal transition zone where igneous bedrock meets coastal hill limestone bedrock. The many springs makes it attractive as a spawning stream for dolly varden trout and occasional limited spawning activity of both red and silver salmon.

In the creek bed one can also find fist sized chunks of chert/flint of the same color/shade and general appearance of tool assemblages from Krusenstern Lagoon archeology sites.

59 Agagrauq (Map 2)

From a good distance, this group of coastal mountains where Ukalliqsuq (Rabbit Creek) [#58] heads are tall with many sharp, jagged peaks giving the likeness of a monster file - thus, its Eskimo place name is Agaiq, meaning "file."

60 Qithagaviq (Map 2)

This is a good winter camping place for caribou hunters on the upper Killikmai Creek. There is a big patch of willows for fuel and shelter. There are few such decent camping spots in this near coast zone, so when the area does have caribou and one wishes to hunt in this area that is dangerous in winter, knowledge of a good camping site can be of life saving importance. This was true more so in the past with dog team transport. Now, distance is covered so rapidly so that, barring a breakdown, one usually can get to well-marked trails that lead to home when a bad storm is developing.

The place name comes from the rocky spires that make fine nesting sites for gyrfalcon. The site name is the Eskimo term for gyrfalcon.

61 Nauyauraq (Map 2)

The site of the old lumber Road Commission Shelter cabin when the trail between Kotzebue and Noatak is routed either up the main river or through the mountains and the pass site [#23].

This site is where the main Noatak River makes a sharp right angle to the east after running due south from the village. It again makes its way on a south course at the mouth of the Iggisisauq River.

62 Sivisuq (Map 2)

This is the mouth of Sivisuq Slough - a major drainage and outlet to Noatak Flats (Natiqnaq).

Numerous camps have been established there over the years and the spot is known as a good fishing place for large broad whitefish, large northern pike and burbot. Chum salmon and trout, of course, pass there and can be taken.

One can boat through the slough and up into Aliktunniq - the lake reported to have such large northern pike that one must use a piece of uguruq rope for a line to handle them!

Waterfowl, moose and caribou can often be found in this area.

63 Aliktunniq (Map 2)

The most famous lake of great siiliq (northern pike).

64 Iggisisauq (Map 2)

A major river formerly used as a summer pathway into high mountain country for clothing skin material. Both caribou and sheep skins are best for making into winter clothing when taken in late July and August. In the old days, small groups of men from Sisualik or Kotzebue would come up as far as they could get with kayaks and skin boats and then walk into the interior until they found skins, fat and meat to partially dry before packing out. Walking conditions are wonderful through the length of this river that takes you into the head of the Squirrel and Eli Rivers. It's a great and beautiful country and, of course, is no longer used for that purpose. The lucky ones lived a generation or two back!

One of the most satisfying extended trips in the old life patterns was the successful completion of this hike inland, sometimes with a couple of dogs for packing.

Mosquito activity drops off around August 10th, a good time for the trek to start, and mid or early September would be time to return to home base. This was primarily an activity of healthy men and late teenage boys that

might become men during the course of the trip - especially if a bear was encountered. Women and children were left home to care for the fishing, dog care and berry picking.

65 Akuvlaq (Map 2)

The site of one of the three fox farms active in the mid-1930s. This was the Frank Knapp site. The other two were downriver; Hugo Ekhardt site [#65a] and Paul Davidovic's site [#10].

These endeavors were short lived, as the price of long haired furs on the world fur market dropped dramatically.

65a Reindeer Corral (Map 2)

[Noted on map by Bob Uhl but no narrative provided]

66 Amaktut (Map 2)

The head of the Lower Noatak Canyon. The place name "Amaktut" comes from a vertical rock slab a little more than half way up the sheer canyon wall that appears, to the mind's eye, to be a woman with a baby on her back. On the opposite side of the river near river water level there seems to be a crouched form that looks to be an Indian with a drawn bow!!

These stone forms have been there for a long while.

The canyon has rock walls on both sides - the higher ones being on the south side. Most people agree that the Eskimo lady with the baby is safe enough for the moment, at least, as the Noatak River at this point is too wide for accurate arrow shooting with the best of primitive bows.

This canyon is locally famous for another interesting reason. One can expect to get a few or many tiqtaalq (burbot) every year from February until April. This is more important than it first appears. Any group that truly lives off the resources of the land will find times of shortage - starvation at bottom line. Therefore, any place that promises to have something to catch - something to eat - over the years - is a very valuable place and knowledge of its location is a real treasure. The calendar period March through early April is, every year, the most likely time that starvation conditions can build. Stored foods from the past harvest seasons are usually used up and knowing a place you can go - to be sheltered - have fuel and catch a fish when you get a hole made through the thick ice - can be a life saver for you and your family.

Amaktut is that kind of a place. The tiqtaalq (burbot), a fresh water cod and a favorite food fish with a huge oily liver, is pretty consistent from year to year at this site.

67 Igiichauraq (Map 1)

This creek name has given the whole range of coastal mountains on the aeronautical maps the name Igiichuk Hills through a curious set of circumstances that probably only the original map makers know.

68 Tingmaiapat (Map 2)

This place name would make the site Eagle Mountain. There are a few golden eagle nest sites in the region and an interesting consideration on this one is that at the turn of the century, Grinnell, here with the Kobuk gold seekers, reported numerous bald eagles in evidence on the lower Noatak River which is certainly not so in the second half of the century.

There are rare sightings of bald eagles during spring waterfowl migration but not every year and no recent evidence of nesting activity in or near Krusenstern. However, early NPS personel (Bob Belous) did report to me that he had seen two active bald eagle nests in the far upper Noatak River in large cottonwoods.

69 Ikpigraug (Map 1)

This is a first high cutbank on the west side of the Noatak River after entering the mouth.

70 Qipisunniq (Map 1)

This is the entrance to the main west flowing slough outlet of the Noatak River delta. This is the one to enter if you wish to go to Nuvuraq or Sisualik instead of Kotzebue. There are two other entrance sloughs below this but they tend to wander and are more shallow. This entrance is far better and is used by Noatak families moving to their spring beluga hunting camps at Nuvuraq (Sisualik).

If you choose not to take any of these turn offs you will be required to go all the way to Kotzebue as there is nothing but mudflats to the west after you pass out of the main river mouth.

71 Kipmiiq (Map 1)

A high and dry location for a camp site (there is one there).

72 Kimiqpaq (Map 1)

A roundish little hill - high ground in an otherwise wetland area of lakes and sloughs.

73 Siiliqagaliq (Map 1)

This is another of those rare places that might sustain you with fresh food in time of need or a life-long remembered day of fishing should you hit it right.

Northern pike (siiliq) are said to be the cleanest of all our fish flesh when internal parasites are considered. It certainly seems that way after one cuts and handles enough fish through a lifetime. Anyway, they are good food cooked for humans or dogs.

It is claimed that pike all over the shallow marshlands can gather for winter in one deep choice lake and become dormant for long periods of time, not feeding or hunting feed, just living on stored fat and waiting for spring thaw to spread all over the shallow marsh to mate, lay eggs, and eat up anything small enough that moves.

The place name for this site indicates that it is a siiliq concentrating place. Learning this, I and a few others (during the dog team years) tried making a hole or two in the thick ice of this small lake. Our catch usually was nothing to get worked up about. Usually one or two fish from each new hole made. This was also before the time of gas powered augers. Fishing holes were made with a steel tipped pole, a "tuuq." With four or five feet of ice to penetrate it is a good way to keep warm in the cold weather.

One fine warm day, after an inch or two of fresh snow and the sun about to come out (about late March or early April) I fished here. A number of people had passed through in the previous week and mild temps and new snow were present, so there were a number of holes to open. I dropped my handheld hook in without needing to make a new hole. I started to get fish one after the other! When they stopped coming in one hole, just move to another and get four or five in a hurry. These were mostly nice big adult fish 6 to 10 pounds with some to near twenty. Northern pike are a rough fish on a hand held line.

What an exciting, really unbelievable day and no other fishermen showed up. The sun came out bright and warm and I had nearly a sled load of large Northern pike and a nice fishing day to remember for life. We had sled dogs to feed and the usual extended family mouths and no one had been able to locate good schools of sheefish on Kobuk Lake so this was indeed a superb catch on a little inland trough of a lake. Northern pike were the only species and it again proved that an Eskimo place name is not given without reason and with a little faith and patience, good fortune may come to one who is aware of the name and its meaning.

The next day a number of friends seeing the load I took to Kotzebue and, of course, some extended family followed me back up to the lake but less than half a dozen fish were taken by the whole group.

74 Siglauq (Map 1)

This is the largest drainage stream into the Little Noatak Slough which is in turn the only east “through” slough on the Noatak outflow delta into the lower end edge of Kobuk Lake (a.k.a. Hotham Inlet).

75 Amichuq (Map 1)

Outlet into Kobuk Lake (Hotham Inlet) from Little Noatak marshes.

76 Napaaktauchaiq (Map 1)

A longtime home site of a sheefish netting family. This general portion of Kobuk Lake (Hotham Inlet) is kind of the center of winter sheefishing and sometimes for hooking, March through April.

77 Aupqugagaruq (Map 1)

This is the mouth of Little Noatak River. Offshore, into Kobuk Lake, is a prime sheefish netting or hooking area.

78 Imagaruq (Map 1)

Kobuk Lake (a.k.a. Hotham Inlet). Most famous for its large, overwintering population of sheefish and its short, dangerous, chopping waves during the boating season.

79 Agagrauq Creek (Map 2)

This neat short steep creek with rocky cliffs not far from the sea had an annually active golden eagle nest in the 1970s (prior to Red Dog Mine). I don’t know if the site continues to be used by these birds or not. Its location is not far from Port Site.

80 Umigaichaiq Creek (Map 2)

This odd little short steep fall creek had an unusual treasure for me one early Fall.

A neighbor and I had boated down this way from Sisualik on hearing that there were caribou in the area. There were and we had a good camp but ocean waters prevented our return home for a long time. Time to explore!

At the upper end of this creek I found a long mammoth tusk neatly bridging the narrow creek - right on the surface - nothing covering the upper surface! Quite a marvelous find! My place name for that creek would forever be Mammoth Tusk Creek!

81 Tagiaqnichuq Mountains (Map 2)

For spring marine mammal hunters at either Itpitigvik [#32] or Killikmaiqs [#56] these near shore, sudden rising mountains are indicators for approaching weather.

Wind direction is of primary importance to spring ice pack hunters. When one is far out in the ice pack with individual kayak or skin boat, an on-shore wind (SW, W, NW) is safe and is a help in getting you and your catch back to shore. Off-shore winds (N, NE, E) are a threat. They hinder getting your catch home to the beach and can lead to causing a “drift out” situation where wide, open water can allow large waves to build that will prevent your return to the beach until the winds calm down.

From a distance, the appearance of these mountains, and fog cloud build up around them, give an indication of near future wind direction and the general expected weather conditions. This is a very valuable help to off-shore travelers and to those that are planning to hunt and/or travel.

The following are points mentioned in the journals but not described by Bob in the 2004 place name project:

82 Riley Wreck (Map 1)

A site on the southwest coast of the Baldwin Peninsula.

83 Cape Blossom (Map 1)

Located on the western coastline of the Baldwin Peninsula.

84 Sadie Creek (Map 1)

A creek on the western coastline of the Baldwin Peninsula.

85 Fish Creek (Map 1)

A creek which empties into the north side of Hotham Inlet east of Little Noatak Slough.

86 Hatchery (Map 2)

Fish hatchery located on the lower section of the Noatak River, approximately six miles upriver from the mouth of the Agashashok River.

87 Port Site (Map 2)

An industrial port site at the terminus of the Red Dog Mine Road from which ore is transported.

88 Pipe Spit (Map 1)

A point of land on the top end of the Baldwin Peninsula, east of Kotzebue. One of the nearest points of land to the Noatak Delta, it is used by boaters and snowmachiners as a point of embarkation for travel to points north.

89 Elephant Point (not shown on map, located due south of Kotzebue)

90 Tech Center (Map 1)

91 Little Noatak Slough (Map 1)

A slough on the east side of the Noatak River, connecting the main channel of the Noatak to Hotham Inlet at Aupqugagaruq [#77].

92 Uhl Summer Camp (Map 1)

Location of the Uhl's summer camp at Sisualik.

93 Harris Camp (Map 1)

94 Jones Camp (Map 1)

95 Coppock Camp (Map 1)

96 Schaeffer Camp (Map 1)

97 Wilson Camp (Map 1)

**Appendix 2:
Alphabetical Place Name Listing**

Bob Uhl Place Name	Number	On Map #	Alternate Spelling(s)/Name(s)
Agagrauq	59	2	
Agagrauq Creek	79	2	Agagrak Creek (USGS)
Ahaliksuq	3	1	
Aitiligauraq	35	2	
Akulak	48	1	Akulak Lagoon (USGS), Akulaaq Lagoon
Akulisaq	22	2	
Akuvlaq	65	2	
Alaagat	31a	2	
Aliktunniq	63	2	Aliktongnak Lake (USGS)
Amaktut	66	2	
Amichuq	75	1	
Amiiliuq	48a	(not on map)	
Anigaq	46	1	Anigaaq
Aupqugagaruq	77	1	
Auqsruraq	55	2	
Avingaurayuuq	25	2	Avingoriak Peak (USGS)
Ayagutauraq	34	2	
Battle Rock	55a	2	
Cape Blossom	83	1	
Coppock Camp	95	1	
Elephant Point	89	(not on map)	
Fish Creek	85	1	
Harris Camp	93	1	
Hatchery	86	2	
Herculaneium lanatum patch	20a	2	
Igaichaiq Mountain	19	2	Igisukruk Mountain (USGS) – Bob notes this is incorrect
Igaisigruq	40	2	Mount Noak (USGS)
Igavaun	42	2	
Iggisisauq	64	2	Agashashok River (USGS)
Igiichauraq	67	1	Hugo Creek (USGS)
Igiqpaq	24	2	
Iglauyaq	23	2	Iglauyak
Ikpigagaruq	38	1	
Ikpigrauq	69	1	
Imagaruq	78	1	Hotham Inlet (USGS), Kobuk Lake
Ingitkaliq	30	2	
Issingaq	57a	2	Jade Creek (USGS)
Itiptigvik	32	2	
Ivilyuqpalik	33	2	Evelakpalik River (USGS)
Jones Camp	94	1	Kaksurok Mountain (USGS)
Kaqsigrauq	52	2	
Kangainauraq	2 & 47	1	
Katyaauraq	9 & 45	1	
Killichaik	5	1	
Killikmai	56	2	Killiakmai, Killiakmaik

Bob Uhl Place Name	Number	On Map #	Alternate Spelling(s)/Name(s)
Killitmuminaq	39	1	
Kimikpaq	50	2	
Kimiqaq	72	1	
Kipmiiq	71	1	
Kulitqiin	4	1	
Little Noatak	91	1	Little Noatak Slough (USGS)
Miluqsraulug	44	2	Milokrawlok Creek (USGS)
Miluraq	21	2	
Napaaksaq	31	2	
Napaaktauchaig	76	1	
Napaaktucharuaq	13	1	
Napaakturaq	26	1	
Napaaqtuqtuq	10	1	
Nasiqsaugaviq	20	2	
Nasitchviq	37	1	
Nauyaliq	18	1	
Nauyauraq	61	2	Nauyoaruk (USGS), Nauyarak
Nuilyat	28	2	
Nuvuuraq	1a	1	
Pipe Spit	88	2	
Pole Grave	38a	1	
Port Site	87	2	
Qaqagaruk	54a	(not on map)	
Qaugalauktakpaq (Norton's Place)	14	1	
Qaugalauptauraq	15	1	
Qaunagauyaq	43	2	
Qipisunniq	16a	1	
Qipisunniq	70	1	
Qiqiqtaichak	7	1	
Qithagaviq	60	2	
Qitiqliaugaq	16	1	
Qurtliq Lagoon	57	2	Kotlik Lagoon (USGS)
Reindeer Corral	65a	2	Reindeer Corral (USGS)
Riley Wreck	82	1	
Sadie Creek	84	1	
Saliquagaiq	17	1	
Salluq	51	1 & 2	
Sanningaruq	12	1	
Schaeffer Camp	96	1	
Siglauq	74	1	Shiliak Creek (USGS)
Siiliqagaliq	73	1	
Siituqiyuq	11	1	
Sisualik Spit	1	1	Sheshalik Spit (USGS), Sisualiq
Sivisuq	62	2	Sevisok Slough (USGS)
Tagiaqnichuq Mountains	81	2	Tahinichok Mountains (USGS)
Tailuqt	29	2	Talikoot (USGS)
Tasuqgagaruq (place)	54	2	
Tasuqpaq (lagoon)	54	2	Tasaychek Lagoon (USGS)

Bob Uhl Place Name	Number	On Map #	Alternate Spelling(s)
Tech Center	90	1	
Tigaiqtauliq	53	2	Tiyaktalik Mountain (USGS)
Tingmaiqpat	68	2	
Tulaghait	8	1	
Tuqsruq	41	2	
Tutlilik	36	2	Tulilik Lake (USGS)
Tutliliq	6	1	
Ukalliqsuq	58	2	Rabbit Creek (USGS)
Umigaichaiq Creek	80	2	Umagatsiak Creek (USGS), Ummagaatchiam kuugaurana (NANA Place Names)
Unnamed Lake	49	1	
Unniguun	27	1	
Wilson Camp	97	1	

Appendix 3: Maps



Legend

- Place Names Recorded by Bob Uhl
- - - Trails Recorded by Bob Uhl
- - - Linear Features Recorded by Bob Uhl

KOTZEBUE SOUND

Kotzebue▲

HOTHAM INLET
(KOBUK LAKE)

BALDWIN PENINSULA

Kobuk River Delta

Cape Espenberg

ARCTIC CIRCLE



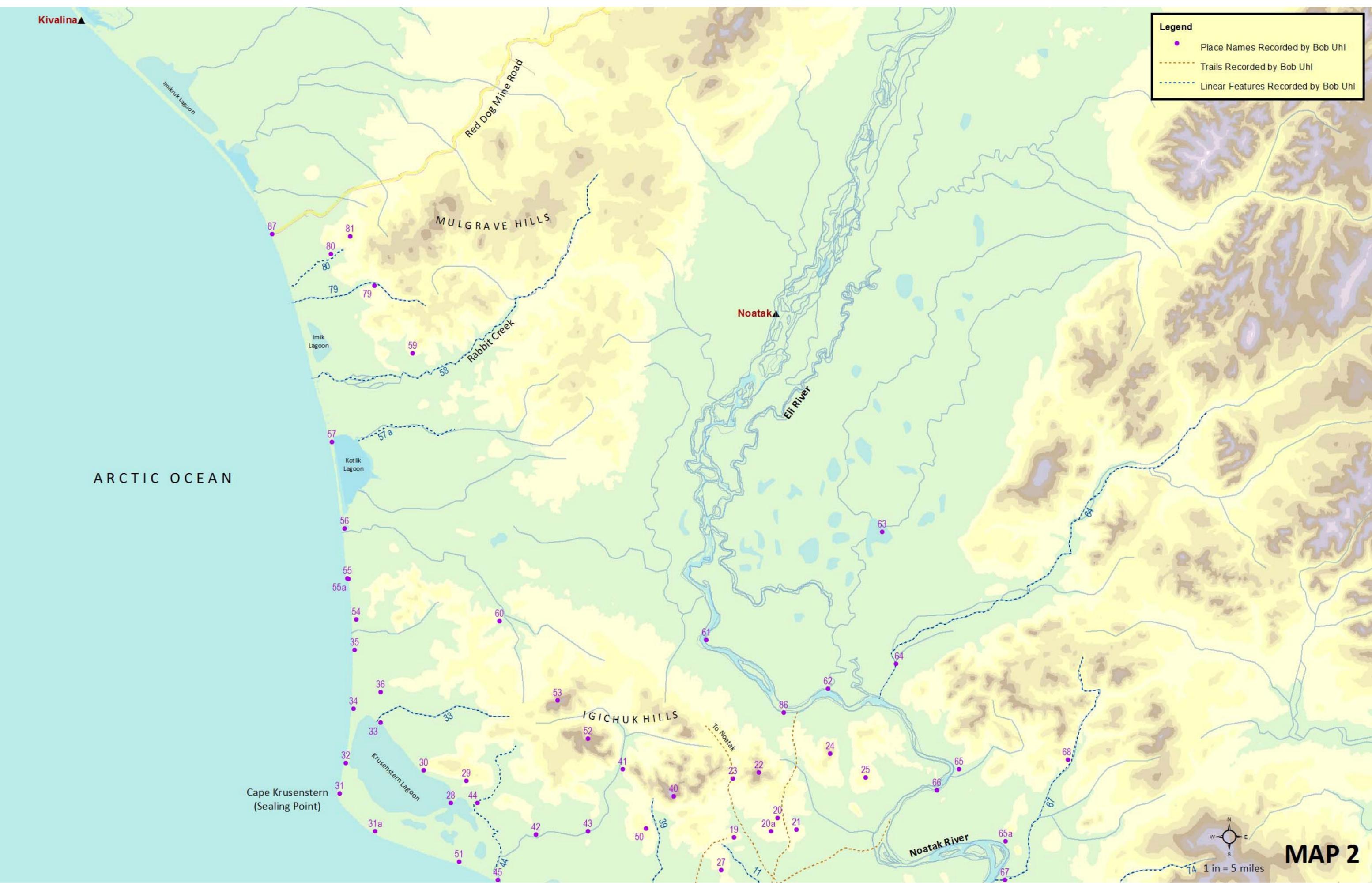
1 in = 4 miles

MAP 1

Kivalina▲

Legend

- Place Names Recorded by Bob Uhl
- Trails Recorded by Bob Uhl
- - - Linear Features Recorded by Bob Uhl



ARCTIC OCEAN

Cape Krusenstern
(Sealing Point)



1 in = 5 miles

MAP 2