

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

Volume 13: 2002

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

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Cover photo: Nest on the tundra, Cape Krusenstern. 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 W115
 Clear - fog PM

24 of low W-NW to 18 53 of high

~~up to~~ If one expected some thing different from May in 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 Buckland 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 detonsa* crop this year if ~~the~~ early warm melt water is a criterion 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.

Brannt 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.

Sample page from Bob's original journal. The handwritten journals are NPS museum accession CAKR-00041.

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 6° F, High 18° F
N-NE wind to 18. Cloudy, snow.

A new year with new snow and several of our extended family in for a visit and overnighing, with only one extra bed for guests. The floor got nearly covered at bedtime and probably pretty hard by wake up time. Didn't hear any complaints though.

The folks came in on five sno-gos¹ and some of the young fellows buzzed around the dark woods till near bedtime. The other creatures of our spruce patch no doubt had the most noisy and headlight flashing night of their lives. The peaceful aspect of our mini-wilderness may return after a few days. It's also possible that some left for areas quieter and less disturbed by engines and lights. We did enjoy visiting with town family and the break in routine.

Since we have so recently gotten settled a lot of things haven't gotten done but I expect that in time we will catch up with those necessary chores.

The pile of firewood we left last spring will last for a while and the wide crack in the ice lake I found the first day out will save time for those necessary household chores of gathering that are time-consuming camp chores in the cold dark days of December.

We are gaining sun time of a new season. There will be 5 minutes of gain today over yesterday. We need it.

January 2 Low 8° F, High 15° F
NW-NE wind to 15. Clouds, clearing.

Unusual to awake to a floor covered by sleeping people and the ground outside covered as well with new snow to 1 inch. Everything white again. Looks fine in the trees.

Guests left for town before noon and I went over the straight town trail with Aachauq² and got stuck in a creek crossing in a very deep soft snowbank with my heavy new Arctic Cat³.

The dog and I also broke the trail up the ridge south of us. From the top I was able to see many caribou scattered here and there north of us up the Hatchery trail. There were none in sight to the south (towards Sisualik).

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

² One of the Uhl's dogs

³ Brand of snowmobile/snowmachine

Flu and visitor stress getting to me by this time. Will hope for speedy recovery so we can slip in a Christmas Bird Count on time.

January 3 Low -7° F, High 4°
NW-N wind to 30. Clear, few clouds.

Went to Sisualik to pick up a few more things and rather heavy N drifting snow there with close-range visibility impaired - trail was hard to keep track of on the lagoon but tablelands okay.

Kivalina north have had 50-knot N winds all week.

Didn't see any animals today but there were a few fresh tracks. Sno-go presence out in the country is picking up and caribou getting more shy and jumpy.

We did decide on a "last chance" CBC⁴ for Saturday, January 5. We will need some good luck to pull it off. Haven't seen much sign of feathered friends up this way yet. Two gray jays and a single chickadee is all so far around camp. However when a crew of birders gets out they often turn up some surprises.

Spruce cones seem scarce locally and red squirrel.

Have not seen a hare track yet which is another disappointment. We expected more than last year but no hint of that locally – or close by.

I probably need to make a town trip tomorrow. My flu seems better and we need a few things again.

We have had an unusually long stretch of N winds which will change some animal range use characteristics.

January 4 Low -20° F, High -8° F
N-NE wind to 15. Clear.

Town trip solo for grocery needs. Also my 75th birthday! Never expected to live that long let alone chopping firewood for daily needs and to be traveling solo 20 miles for supplies.

The trip was smooth. Went over by straight "short cut" trail and back through Sisualik to pick up some things for possible CBC tomorrow.

Sisualik-Kotzebue trail stakes in fine shape this year. Large, dark and easy to see willows routed to miss habitual overflow zones.

⁴ Audubon Christmas Bird Count

January 5 Low -34° F, High 0° F
N-NE wind to 30, late. Clear, few clouds.

We did our CBC today! The last possible date and in spite of my feelings last night that it would be too cold to have a crew from town come over. Our friends and participants in Kotzebue suggested a hold on the decision till 7-8 a.m. We did, and lo and behold, by 7 a.m. our temp was up to -8° F from -34° F at 10 p.m. last night. Eight below is a reasonable temperature for a Christmas Bird Count, -34° F is a little too much!

Five participants found 6 species. A rather meager tally but predictable due to a poor white spruce cone year and a low in prey species for overwintering raptors.

It was a brave crew that came out of Kotzebue and they did have some blowing snow to trifle with to get home but they made it fine and we thank them much for coming.

It is not a good feeling to miss a CBC and we nearly did this one! The rapid warming continued through the day with increasing winds. It was 0° F by 8 p.m.

January 6 Low -8° F, High 0° F
N wind to 30. Clear.

A restful day after the hyperactivity of the last week! Getting settled in our winter camp two months late and the time conflict with Christmas/New Year activities combined with some extended family frustrations, not to mention a flu attack on both of us, has been a little trying. We hope things are leveling off now and they seem to be – even the flu.

The radio report of a 7 minute gain in sun time for the day helps our optimism.

Loosed the dogs and picked up my shovel and got a few chunks of ice to keep on top of household water needs.

Saw a few caribou and a Noatak family member on a flight home from Kotzebue reported to us a lot of caribou just north of us. I may soon have time to treat us to some good fresh meat.

We of course still have abundant meat on hand but there is always a special attraction for the special body parts that are best from a fresh kill: tongue, heart, liver, brisket ribs, and marrow bones.

We will have reasonably long daylight again by the last week of this month.

January 7 Low -26° F, High -4° F
N wind to 20. Clear, few clouds.

An early trip to Sisualik for odd items. Emergency need for distilled water to keep our battery-using communication system in order (VHF and telephone). We charge them up often as our generator is going nearly all day this time of year but I hadn't checked their water level lately and erratic behavior of charger prompted a check and they were real low. There was a gallon of distilled water in Sisualik.

Another item, a butter knife, seemed trivial but a week without one makes you appreciate things trivial. A six-cup muffin tin and a second frying pan for use when the other is full of pot-roasted moose meat. For what you say? Making hotcakes! So goes life in the bush!

On the way home from our high ridge near and above our spruce patch was another sight from the bush – hundreds of caribou bearing down on us from the north. It was truly a startling and magnificent sight. Very unusual this time of year.

We had heard they were coming and we have had caribou in sight in small numbers this year for a change (since September) but I was somewhat overwhelmed by this sight in the short days of early January. It was a very special belated 75th birthday “natural” present.

January 8 Low -20° F, High 0° F
Very light winds. Cloudy, few snowflakes.

With all those caribou in our valley, I spent all of today’s daylight trying to get close enough to shoot a couple to rebuild our meat supply and have some fresh meat-kill delicacies. I didn’t fire a shot! I was pretty choosy, wanting a calfless female. There was no wind to hide snowshoe noise on lightly crusted snow. When I did get to a good position to shoot from and had taken off one snowshoe to use as a gun rest the whole nearby herd took off running. I never found out why!

Could have been a snowmachine that I didn’t see or hear but the caribou did. Anyway that did it. My last and best chance gone and a long way to walk home.

I must take Carrie to town tomorrow for some medical and family attention so it will be a while before I’ll be on snowshoes again in caribou land.

Found another old wolf kill again on the way home. An adult cow within thick creek willows less than ¼ mile from home.

Hope our town trip goes well tomorrow. We are getting a little old for midwinter town trips.

January 9 Low 8° F, High 20° F
NE-E wind to 20. Cloudy, snowdrift.

A late trip to get Carrie into town for some of her family needs and maybe to get some medical help for her numerous arthritis problems. A couple of family boys came out with sno-gos to help us into town.

We made it fine but needed the good sturdy stakes of the Sisualik trail to get us in when snow and drift closed down visibility. After getting snowfall to start now, as we thought, we may not be able to get it stopped. The fall is continuing into the night. I was going to make a return trip but weather seemed too much. Overnighing with town family will be good for a change.

Dogs will be lonesome and new snow may give them some trouble but they will manage well enough again.

Temps have turned quite mild. Nice soft windy weather for hunting all right, not like yesterday. I need to get my life better synchronized to take advantage of weather rather than fight against it. Haven't had much choice lately.

Sunrays are supposed to enter our small windows for the first time in the new year today – but they won't due to heavy cloud cover.

January 10 Low 0° F, High 12° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow. Some clearing.

Home to the dogs and frozen house early today. Got here around noon and got the fire going. Inside the house was just beginning to freeze. Onions, milk and mayonnaise were safe yet.

Heavy snowfall last night – four inches or more and yesterday's trails obscured. In fact our main trail from flats into the tablelands was hard to keep track of, making zigzags necessary. The new sno-go got a workout today. It performed well.

No new sign of animals on the way home. Gray jays were working around outside of the cabin but everything well snow covered. Ran the dogs a short lap to pep them up a bit. They enjoyed that and cleaned up their fur coats well in all the fluffy snow to roll in.

Found the propane bottle empty on arrival and had to put on the 20-pounder to get the stove back to making hot water and cooking supper.

More snow coming down this evening and still no sunrays in through the window.

January 11 Low -26° F, High 0° F
N-NE wind to 10. Clear, few clouds.

Sun rays in the house today! The first of the year 2002. In other years this has happened as early as the 7th and more regularly on the 9th but cloud cover prevented it both of those days and the days in between. The sun is coming back again and before long we will have 24 hours of its light and warmth again.

With the clearing of the sky late last night and early today our temps dropped dramatically again as one would expect this time of year.

Many caribou to the north of us yet. They have much more snow to shovel for feeding now but they are still feeding inside of willow and tree patches to an extent that I haven't seen before at this time of year. Hope that it is not a sign of their running out of lichen in the more open range that they will later be restricted to. Blowing snow makes willow and tree patches off limits for caribou.

Stalked a group of caribou near our spruce patch. Reached a point where I was going to shoot and found my rifle wouldn't chamber a cartridge. It had been standing in our old "next door" shed during our latest warm spell and a few drops of water must have settled in the bolt-locking recess.

January 12 Low -28° F, High -4° F
NE wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, snow.

Finally got the couple of caribou we've wanted for fresh meat. The female with a large calf has fine looking meat which indicates generally good food availability. We were wondering about local lichen supplies, quality, etc., since there have been so many caribou around for so long.

The male, an animal with short bushy antlers which led me to believe that it was a female, has some fat around the kidneys indicating good marrow conditions but lacked the good show of fat on the mesentery web that the female exhibited. The female had a surprisingly large fetus. From these two samples one gets hints that general range conditions are still pretty good.

It is time to try for a large antlerless bull for marrow bone quality. As these larger animals regain the body energy used up during the rut their bones and meat quality gets very good. Leg bone thickness becomes thinner and marrow size increases. Bone marrow of caribou is probably the most choice portion of the animal followed closely by tongue and brisket.

A friend from Kotzebue came along as I was gutting the animals and hauled me and them into camp where we shared a pot of black beans.

January 13 Low -16° F, High 2° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow.

Well! More snow coming up and wind too. Winter must be really here. With all the light fluffy snow around we will have a mighty blizzard when it does blow.

Took the sno-go into the woods a ways today and cut some firewood. We have finished the cut wood we left over summer here at the house so now our warmth will come from newly cut material.

Ran the dogs down to our ice lake and got a few pieces to stay ahead of water needs. Everything is a little harder/slower to get done when there is no one at the house to keep the fire going, swat flies, and monitor the VHF and telephone. Carrie is having a mid-winter vacation and says she is getting hooked on TV!

Lots of caribou continue to be in our area – perhaps the most this century at this season. Even Aachauq the Super Dog is beginning to treat them as just a regular part of the landscape and nothing to get excited about. The caribou on the other hand are coming to see a brightly head-lighted sno-go as part of their world and now only run in panic when the vehicle follows them. Otherwise they hold for a while and if they are not being targeted they just stand around for a while and then resume feeding.

January 14 Low 2° F, High 30° F
NE-E wind to 40. Cloudy, snow. Blizzard!

A first full-sized blizzard for 2002 with wind, snow, blowing snow and possibly rain this evening. It was not a day that much could be accomplished outdoors – even in the spruce patch. Getting the day's wood, ice and food for

people and dogs was about the size of it. Did snowshoe down the exit trail and found that the entrance will need some snowshoe and shovel work when the storm winds down.

We will also get to see where the near shore open water lead will be off Krusenstern shores this winter. In years past many local dog team owners would be readying kayak, sleds, and sea ice camping gear for the first winter seal-hunting sortie. One's feeling of anticipation would rise to great heights considering that fat fresh seal kill that would provide a rich and welcome change of diet for both dogs and their people. This special mid-winter adventure has pretty much passed from the local Kotzebue Sound scene.

Our two chained dogs indicated some kind of close "other animal" presence this afternoon by nostril air-sampling and excited demeanor - probably a nearby caribou, moose or wolf in the storm.

We will have a much different looking landscape tomorrow when daylight comes.

January 15 Low 24° F, High 34° F
NE-E-SE wind to 30. Cloudy, rain, snow.

All the flying drifting snow of yesterday was anchored this morning by a period of genuine rain! For a couple of hours, rain made the trees weep yellow and things non-covered wet. After a couple of hours of just dry warm wind snowfall began again for an hour.

Shoveled out our exit trails, packed them down with snowshoes, and ran over them with the sno-go. Very soft for sno-go traveling in the country! Need to make a town trip – maybe tomorrow.

There are many, many caribou just north of us, moving NW. Our area as winter range for caribou may be coming overgrazed.

Two odd phone calls from California Saturday and Monday from a retired geologist that ran across a report on our Sisualik ice mud and the way we thought it formed. Eric Reimitz, USGS⁵, talked to me for several hours about a different possible cause than P.G. Connors and I had submitted in a 1970 OCS⁶ report. He convinced me that what he calls "the formation of anchor ice" could be a primary cause of this phenomenon. Need to know more!

Our valley is loaded with much very soft snow in drifts today. Some caribou feeding areas active during the rain may ice over.

January 16 Low 12° F, High 32° F
E-SE wind to 35. Cloudy, some breaks.

Mild, windy, no precipitation but lots of overflow at Kotzebue bar and other shallows between Sisualik and Kotzebue. No town trip for me for a while.

Snowshoed around a bit as it is good hunting weather. Thought I might get a couple of good caribou to skin while

⁵ United States Geological Survey

⁶ Outer Continental Shelf

the weather is mild. There were hundred – thousands? – of caribou in sight from our lookout point. Their movement seemed west and south this morning with a few early shots from our east neighbors.

During the past two weeks there seems too many caribou in our valley. They may be damaging the range.

Didn't intend to hunt moose today but ran across two fresh tracks and decided to tag along to see if I could see them. Their tracks led me right back to the house and near the house I let them go from their beds, catching a glimpse through tree openings once in a while. I finally got a good look at one's head. It seemed to be a cow but couldn't get a rear view to confirm (white or light under tail area). Finally decided that both must be cows and readied my rifle. Light was getting rather poor – when I moved, they moved – close range now – one gave a clear head-neck-chest view for a moment and I fired. Both took off running. What happened? I couldn't miss at that range. Followed tracks 50 yards to a dying male moose!

January 17 Low 27° F, High 35° F
SE-S wind to 35. Cloudy, snow, clearing.

Continued mild – wet and sticky new snow, soft for snowshoeing.

Many more caribou right around our spruce patch. Can't help feeling that they are in process of finishing up all of their available local food. They certainly are turning over all the snow in just about all places. Hope we can get through this mild spell without icing of caribou grazing lands.

Worked on the moose today since I only managed to get the innards out last evening. Got the head and brisket off, the big heart with much fat around it off, and the skin loose from the abdomen. It will take another day to get the skin completely off and cut into moveable pieces. These slow steps with getting the skin off are in part purposely. The longer one can keep his moose meat from freezing, the more tender it will be when cooked. If I do complete the skinning tomorrow the large quarters will be buried together in/under snow for a while before the final cut up to small pieces to put in plastic bags for freezing.

Much overflow between here and Kotzebue. Some travelers may be getting through from Noatak and camps.

January 18 Low 22° F, High 28° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow.

Another day of mild temps and continual snow with less than 1 inch accumulation, just enough to keep you wet if you have outside work and of course I did.

I got the skin off of the moose and got him cut up into large but moveable pieces which are piled together and covered with skin and snow to prevent freezing for a few days, at which time they will be cut into small pieces for final storage. This is a meat "seasoning" process that is worth doing when possible with moose - more tender, more tasty.

Ran the snowmachine and dogs a short ways past Mills Valley. Saw several groups of caribou and a whole lot of trails and feeding craters.

I may try to make a trip to town tomorrow if I can get some trail info. It has been quite a long spell of mild soft weather with south winds and overflow.

We may have more than two gray jays soon with all the food around. Saw several strangers today and even a flock of 10-12 pine grosbeaks.

January as a month that doesn't know whether to stay warm or cold is certainly exhibiting those characteristics this year.

January 19 Low 16° F, High 24° F
W wind to 15, late. Cloudy, snow showers. Light winds.

Nosebleed late last night – not much rest or sleep so cancelled the hassle of town trip with no trail.

Three town family rigs came across this afternoon through Jones' Camp and now I have a trail. If I'm feeling well enough tomorrow I will use it and go in for a visit, shopping and propane.

Boys mentioned lots of caribou and tracks and diggings. Their numbers and ambition has made it difficult to find any level snow surface around.

A new rumor out of Kotzebue today somewhat obscuring our caribou situation. There is said to be a group of four or five hundred mixed caribou behind Kotzebue and Cape Blossom and no overflow to get there. One report of someone who has been there is that some individuals are too fat. Don't think I've ever seen that!

Well, caribou in our area are tearing up the land. I suppose inevitably that means they won't be back for a while. Can't help wondering what's in store for caribou and us in the next ten years. This year has been quite spectacular from early September till now.

January 20 Low -2° F, High 18° F
NW wind to 18. Cloudy, snow of sun. Light snow.

Stiff NW winds with some drifting through the night nearly hid the good dry (no overflow) trail the boys made for me yesterday. I did head in around noon and was nearly blinded by sun in eyes right down Jones' Trail stakes near town. This is the first demonstration to me this year that the sun is coming back – with power – and in glory! Looks great. We will be appreciating the light and warmth again as time moves ahead.

Strangely enough I didn't see any caribou on the way in where there were lots yesterday.

January 21 Low -36° F, High -8° F
N-NW wind to 15. Light snow, fog. Clouds, clearing.

Home again to thaw out the house and cheer up the dogs.

A couple of friends dropped in almost right behind me. I had the fire going but not very warm in the old house. It

did warm up quickly while we talked and visited.

Meanwhile, outdoors, the mist, fog and clouds cleared and temps dropped rapidly.

Lots of large bunches of caribou have moved east overnight and some large bunches were down on the ice and the flats making a very late migration movement crossing the Noatak Delta headed for Kobuk River.

I'm not feeling too well to cope with the apparent encroaching super cold spell. Maybe it'll be short. There's frost on inside hinges and windows tonight.

January 22 Low -44° F, High -32° F
No wind. Clear, few clouds.

A cold day in Sanningaruq,⁷ but the sunrays entered the house for a good length of time between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. and for the first time I caught the beautiful rainbows on the wall, the work of prism and bright sunrays. Such an uplifting sight in a somber house at -40° F!

Didn't get much done today, only what I had to since it is not much fun playing out. I got enough wood in for a day or two, by hand drawn coaster. Didn't even try to start the sno-go.

I'm not feeling in top conditions, so frequent naps, which seem to help, are usually the option chosen rather than climbing the lookout hill to see how the caribou scene is developing.

No visitors today and no sound of a sno-go. There were a few planes flying – maybe to coastal villages as temps inland are probably too cold for normal flights.

At this point in an extreme cold spell one always hopes for a quick break. It came quickly – overnight – at bird count time. We could wish for that again. Both the dogs and I don't appreciate cold below a minus twenty much. Just as soon do without. Twenty below is cold enough and most things still function as they are supposed to at that temp – there's no such assurance at -20 to -50° F.

January 23 Low -45° F (?), High -32° F
Calm. Clear, misty.

Well, the cold weather monster is really here. My thermometer bottoms out at -40° F. The mercury passed that by considerable interval last night. The temp must be between -45° F and -50° F.

We didn't have any wind. Kotzebue has had 20 mph NW winds all day which gave them some very low chill factor temps with their -30° F air temps.

Our spruce patch gave off its characteristic ground fog, or more properly, "air mist," similar to that of open water patches on a large river bed when the cold weather monster descends.

⁷ Uhl's inland winter camp, located amid the spruce trees. Lit. "the place of corners."

Gray jays were active for a bit but not for long and not very enthusiastically.

One always wonders how the outdoor animals cope with extended extreme cold. Predators have it easier it would seem, with holes, caves and soft snow shelters to curl up in. Mink, otter and muskrat have unfrozen water to benefit from as concerns temps but moose and caribou which must keep the paunch near full would seem to have some tough sledding!

How long will it last?

January 24 Low -51° F, High -38° F
Calm. Clear.

Another day in the clutches of the Extreme Cold Monster. The air outside today seemed too cold to breathe - our cold calm air, that is. Kotzebue continued to have NW wind enough to drift snow and give very low chill factor temps. Their wind driven -25° F temps always seem mild compared to our -40° F calm on these rather rare occasions where a few miles make a great difference in actual weather conditions. In the present case one would probably not prefer to be in either place if there were other possibilities.

Terry, the old dog, is enjoying his time in the warm house (night time) while Aachauq, the young dog, toughs it out outdoors all the time. He gets off the chain for a walk each day and today he saw and heard a small group of caribou running away from the noise of our footsteps. I thought he would be anxious to chase them but he didn't - just looked at them.

Beside the caribou and the dogs I shared the super cold air of our spruce patch with a spruce grouse flying from his ground snow house to the lower limbs of a spruce tree. The two gray jays were around briefly not looking happy with the hard frozen world.

January 25 Low -50° + F, High -40° F
Calm. Clear, few clouds late.

Found another thermometer last night that reads to -50° F instead of the -40° F of my regular one. Around 11:30 p.m. it registered a bit lower than -50° F, thusly yesterday's low is pretty accurate - and that's cold! Propane is reluctant to climb out of the bottle!

Finally! A rabbit track in Sanningaruq. A single snowshoe hare almost walked up to the chained Aachauq last night. This is the first track I've seen this winter. However the only spruce patch I've been through is our home patch here. It was a disappointment to not find tracks here when we moved up as there were building numbers here thru last winter and when we left in April. We have no explanation for the continued blockage to hare population build up in our local area.

Another surprise today on Aachauq's walk out our other exit which I haven't been over since the last snow. Even though the beginning of the area is only a stone's throw from Aachauq's chain place and there is nearly three feet of snow inside the stunted trees it is all dug up by lichen-seeking caribou!

Oh how these creatures have pressed their search for food in our home area this January 2002!

January 26 Low -40° F, High -6° F
NE-E wind to 30. Cloudy, light snow.

Well the Extreme Cold Monster left us for a while and that is great. The snowmachine started easily with the -10°F temps and Aachauq and I went to get ice for our special lake with a wide crack. Ground storm was kind of fierce and the older, wiser dog didn't follow though he was loose.

Another surprise – after finding our lake and the special crack we had marked – we found the crack full of wet, wet unfrozen yellow water! Imagine that! And right on the heels of the Intense Cold Monster! Bum luck – that nice wide crack in crystal clear ice was a great and easy place to get household ice, spoiled now, as the ice fracture went so deep it reached the unfrozen water at the bottom of the lake. The yellow bottom lake water rose, filling the crack which will freeze, but no more wide crack and good easy ice from that system. I did get some large ice chunks from a normal crack in another lake.

We saw only four caribou on our trail. We will sometimes hear where they all went from here. Weather conditions over a long period have obscured that knowledge.

January 27 Low -16° F, High -8° F
Light winds. Cloudy, light snow.

Town in a complete whiteout again by Jones' Trail. Met a lone traveler coming in headed for our camp from Sisualik. He was somewhat off course due to white out. He is an old friend and both of us sorry we were going in opposite directions.

Town trail is good and dry but a little lumpy made worse by whiteout and unexpectedness of lumps. I was not feeling well and was glad when the journey was over.

January 28 Low -40° F, High -18° F
Light N wind. Clear, sunshine.

I made it home from town and the Extreme Cold Monster is back! He wasn't gone long! Thought I might get my sickness checked out but I felt better today and there never seems a good time for a clinic check.

Things were pretty well froze up in the house as cold had come quickly with clearing. Dogs were okay but lonesome.

Found my woodpile much enhanced by the friend met on the trail - a very pleasant and valuable surprise with the Monster back so soon. Good friends are a great treasure.

January 29 Low -40° F, High -6° F
Light NW wind. Cloudy, clearing late.

Had a pretty light day. Chose not to go get Carrie due to overnight cold but temps came up to minus twenty by 10-11 a.m. and before long the sun – quite bright – came out from under the clouds.

I started the sno-go without much trouble and took both dogs down the Sisualik trail for a run. They both went, even the old white Terry.

On turning back from the edge of tidelands the whole panorama of landscape to the north under the bright beacon of the late January sun reflected the torn up snow surface of the past two weeks of feeding activities of thousands of caribou! I have never seen a sight of such magnitude. In so far as large herd animals go, the picture is burned into my mind as the sight of a lifetime in the Arctic. It seemed that every inch of snowy ground had been turned over in the creatures' search for lichens. The conditions stretch as far as the eye can see with the great torch of sun focused from the south toward the north. This was certainly an unexpected episode of grandeur not possible to put into meaningful words! An unsurpassed vision of life in the Arctic.

January 30 Low -38° F, High -18° F
NW-W wind to 18. Ice fog (Kotzebue). Few clouds, sun.

Town trip to pick up Carrie. Not exactly the best day for that kind of trip for two ailing 75+ year people. We did make it in good shape, but combined bumps and cold temps may exact a toll tomorrow or the next day. Anyway, the head of the house is home and we are glad to have her back.

New caribou news today. Some very fat animals taken not far from our house by neighbors while we were in town. The fat quality may attract the attention of other hunters.

The news is somewhat of a surprise as we have not seen caribou for several days near those few routes we've traveled.

A second report from extended family camp on the NW corner of Kobuk Lake⁸ reports a line of marching caribou from their camp on the beach of Kobuk Lake clear across the lake to the Noorvik side of the lake. Four of these were taken and reported in good eating condition which means at least some body fat.

This late winter movement of large numbers of caribou over long distances is an alteration of normal patterns and one finds it difficult to know what they are about. One gets the impression from their actions here a week ago that they are feeding up for a long extended journey. To where?

⁸ Local name for Hotham Inlet

January 31 Low -40° F, High -16° F
Light N wind. Clear.

Another cool day spent mostly in the house keeping warm and both of us not feeling well. The sun was bright enough and the rainbows on the wall from the prisms were an indoor delight.

The last week of January has come and gone and given us the fact of a day with a reasonable amount of daylight.

February is, some years, a month of good moderate weather with good lengthy daylight and reasonable night. We will hope for that this year as January has been a bit of a trial in a number of ways.

No travelers by our way – that dropped in anyway. Kotzebue has been -34/ -35°F all day so it has not been an inviting day for casual travelers.

Our neighbors to the east may have gotten a wolf or two around camp this week.

The weatherman is promising us some wind in the next few days so we will probably have milder temperatures soon. That will be good! Probably local groundhogs and squirrels will think so too!

FEBRUARY

February 1 Low -43° F, High 5° F
N-NE-E wind to 18. [general conditions not recorded]

It apparently pays to change months sometimes. Our very low temps of late last night and early this morning, of which we are very tired went up to +5°F by sundown this evening. That is quite a quick and dramatic change and welcomed much by all warm-blooded creatures in the Arctic. Maybe even our groups of musk ox enjoy the break. There is no doubt that they notice the temp change though one might wonder, under all that hair!

Had trouble pulling the sno-go engine over about 2 p.m. when the temp was still near -30°F. Could have waited an hour and the job would have been easier as temp warmed to -20°F or so. I needed to get some clear ice for the house as the last I got from the big lake was less than clear due to small particles of silt and soil throughout. Aachauq, the dog, and I did get some crystal clear ice from the Beaver Lake that our town trail crosses.

Aachauq spotted a large dark moose at the second creek crossing and had to chase it for a while for more exercise. He had given up on caribou and just thought a moose would be easier to catch. His trouble is if he does catch up and the moose stops and turns he always gets scared. He does show some sense but he's not a dog that exhibits much intelligence.

February 2 Low -6° F, High 7° F
NE-E wind to 35. Clear, some clouds.

Groundhog Day 2002. Word is that the most famous Outside⁹ marmot saw his shadow so we are due for six weeks more winter. Our local camp red squirrel is not showing much sign of life at all. With few spruce cones and so many spells of -40°F temps in January he must be existing on camp bones and dried mushrooms from last summer. He is around but one must look closely to find evidence of him.

We must have finally run out of caribou. Took dogs for a short run today and glassed the surrounding country from a couple of high points and didn't see any at all.

It will be interesting to see/hear where they have gone and what the effect of their presence will be for the rest of the winter.

Numerous reports of wolves being taken have come in this last week. There would probably have been more with our present good snow cover if there hadn't been such long periods of super cold.

We now have pretty mild conditions which may hold for some time.

Did not see any evidence of where there might be an open lead off our Krusenstern beaches today while on a high ridge. That is a little puzzling with such strong off shore winds in Kotzebue Sound.

February 3 Low -4° F, High 14° F
E wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

Mild temps and E winds continue with winds much stronger on the Kotzebue side as is often the case with many E wind generating situations. The mild dry air is so appreciated after the mean January weather scene.

Finally got into my nearby wood trail to pick up some of the wood there. Several storms with new and drifting snow caused the need to remake the trail some. It went pretty well without serious hang-ups for which I am thankful. Haven't really gained my strength back since an extended period of flu and other stresses.

Carrie is getting around inside the house but has days of ups and downs as various joints give pain, changing often from one joint to the other and back again.

We are no longer the ever sturdy couple we once were – instead, we are spending more and more time taking care of each other.

Our east neighbors are talking about caribou running all around their place today. Seems strange as I took my dogs down to tidelands today and didn't see any. The report is still out and valid – female caribou in our area are good and fat.

⁹ With capital "O", an Alaskan term used to refer to the Lower 48

Got word today that one of my twin brothers three years younger than I died in Fremont California yesterday.

February 4 Low 12° F, High 20° F
E wind to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

Such fine mild weather for February! The pity is that due to physical problems neither of us can make full use of the good weather and longer daylight hours.

Carrie's feet have swollen making it hard to get around the house. My chronic side/abdominal ache was mean today. We do have hope for a better tomorrow. That is the usual pattern with our problems.

I did get a couple of good loads (sled loads) of wood today so we have firewood ahead for a change. One load was of a single tree cut into stove length blocks. My 16" chainsaw couldn't quite make it through the butt and length was probably 60'. It was porcupine killed, dead only a year but dry enough for good firewood. I stand in awe every time I cut one of these arctic giants – in awe of the many years it took to reach giant status and the amount of nourishment it required from sun and earth to attain the mass we will appreciate in our stove for several days warming.

And what is to be said for the porcupine? Well, it too is a remarkable form of life in this region and no doubt has a keen feeling of appreciation for the old-timer tree that furnished him and maybe many generations of porcupines with food, safe shelter, and a loftier look at the world.

The red squirrel that has a ground hole at the base of the old tree will no doubt miss it most!

February 5 Low 16° F, High 22° F
E wind to 18. Cloudy, dust of snow.

A pleasant "outdoor" day around camp but we didn't get out much. Carrie's feet and ankles still swollen and though better than yesterday don't permit her to get around much.

I haven't felt well enough to climb the lookout point so we don't know much today of what is going on around us.

We do have a couple of visiting gray jays and the four together chasing and fighting made a lot of ruckus around our quiet camp that was further enhanced by four ravens doing "loop the loops" and upside down flying on the warm gusting winds. Temp and wind-wise one cannot help but think of spring when bright and surprisingly high sun breaks through the clouds for a while. The birds were no doubt reflecting those feelings. Even the long-suffering camp red squirrel was making tracks but I didn't hear him give voice –that will come later if he survives.

We need gas and a few things from town so if weather and Carrie's condition permit I will make a quick solo town trip tomorrow.

Two black wolves were taken by an extended family member in Noatak yesterday. A rather heavy take of wolves can be expected in the region this month.

February 6 Low 12° F, High 22° F
E wind to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

No town trip for me today. Picked up a nosebleed when I stooped over to start the generator about 9 a.m. Didn't seem reasonable to start off on an extended bumpy sno-go trip with additional handicap. We called Kotz family folks and told them our problem. A couple of them said they would get us a drum of gas and deliver it with a couple other items we're short (milk, powdered soup, and our mail). They did that, bless their hearts, and it took them a while with extreme whiteout conditions and limited knowledge of trail landmarks.

We are very grateful to our family members who always seem willing to help out when we ask even in trying conditions like today. We now have what we need for the moment and can relax for a while trying to get our strength/health back. It is always difficult to ask for family help requiring travel as one never quite knows what risk you may be laying on them with sudden weather changes and/or mechanical breakdowns.

They saw several good bunches of caribou around again and there seems a scattering of caribou from Sealing Point to Little Noatak on the Krusenstern side. Numbers are hard to come by. Few in some places but apparently many in others.

February 7 Low 6° F, High 14° F
Light winds. Cloudy, fog, snow.

Finally made it to Sisualik today and got our barrel of seal oil and black meat. I just caught it in time – the snowbank building over the top. One more east storm and it would have been difficult to find until spring thaw. Snowbanks have gotten big down there again.

Both dogs made it all the way down and back. I was surprised that old Terry was up to it. He did fine and came home hungry. We didn't see any caribou or fresh sign.

After a lunch of good oil and dried uguruq meat, I went up to the nearby wood haul trail and got a few small dry pieces to keep the bigger slower burning chunks going.

Carrie no better today – she is pretty much stuck to her bed. Our hope is that she will soon be able to get around better in the house. Joint swelling is the problem.

Mild but dull weather continues. We kept the generator going all day today even though we are getting 7-8 hours of sun up by now. We didn't see it at all today.

February 8 Low -18° F, High 8° F
SW-W-N wind to 10. Cloudy, snowflakes. Glimpses of sun.

Another day just "keeping the home." Carrie had a bit of improvement and I worked up another nosebleed starting the generator so we took another Sabbath Day. Good health is terribly important to "subsistence living." We are finding the truth in that!

Weather gradually cooling again with promise of some severe chill factor temps into the weekend.

Gray jays have kept the camp clearing lively during this spell of mild temps. Their work, like some of us, is never done. As long as there is foodstuff to haul they will work at it.

There seems a scarcity of other camp food scroungers at the present time. The two weasel species, shrews, voles, and squirrels have so far not given much hint of their presence. Maybe later on.

This has been the year of the caribou in and around our Spruce Patch. No other living creature has been so numerous in our many years here. Their continual presence, continual feeding activity (cratering) just has not been equaled by other cyclic creatures in their particular years of high density. Even snowshoe hares and willow ptarmigan in their years of super highs have not equaled the January caribou mass and activity.

February 9 Low -15° F High -3° F
NW-N wind to 30. Clouds, fog, sun.

Clouds cleared out this morning but left fog sundogs and soon after noon a cold NW wind to blow the snow off willows and wires. Late afternoon rather miserable on this side.

The dogs and I went down to get ice from the big lake on the Kotzebue trail. Even Terry made it there before we finished loading ice. We have not located a good crack there so it is difficult to get large chunks. It is nice clear ice all right.

There were only a few stray fresh caribou tracks, groups of two to three. We didn't see any animals.

Fox tracks do seem to be increasing and extended family who spent a couple of days at the house down at Sealing Point report lots of common seals on the ice, caribou on the flats, and four musk ox still on the flats.

Carrie's legs have not allowed her to be away from bedside all week. We may need to be in Kotzebue Monday and if we can make the trip I'm not sure how we can get her into her travel box. We may ask for some help.

Right now the weather forecast doesn't look like it will allow much travel at all.

February 10 Low -25° F, High 1° F
NW-N wind to 18. Clouds, sun.

Weatherman kind of spoiled everybody's weekend by forecasting some horrendous winds and chill factors that didn't happen.

We did have a pair of visitors today that hadn't listened to the radio. We enjoyed their visit as we've had a pretty dry visitor time with the various sicknesses and a lot of adverse weather.

Walked the dogs separately on their off chain time today so I got about as much exercise as they did except that Aachauq cut three moose tracks that had crossed the trail after our guests had left. He followed them a while but

didn't report whether he caught up to them or not. His legs are getting short for our "in tree snow depth" but moose have no problem – yet.

Our visitors didn't report seeing any caribou or new tracks so we assume the animals have moved off our section for the time being anyway.

Shee¹⁰ hooking time is here all right but we haven't heard of anyone having success or even trying yet.

Carrie had her best sheefishing day ever many years ago around Valentine's Day taking some 400 from one hole in one day. One must pull fish pretty steadily all day to make that kind of a catch on a mid-February day.

February 11 Low -8° F, High 3° F
NW-N wind to 15. Clear, lots of sun.

Town trip for court session concerning grandson. Rather depressing. It was however a good day to travel – mild and bright like mid-February should be. Was able to go straight in for a change with only one hour travel time each way.

Our east neighbors got 14-16 good-sized sheefish today at the mouth of the Noatak on hooks. This is the first catch that we know of for this fishing season.

Many caribou reported again on the west portion of the Noatak Delta proper.

Since Carrie is nearly bed-ridden I worried through the solo town trip but she survived it well.

February 12 Low 3° F, High 10° F, Low 3°
Cloudy, no sun, snow. NW-N wind to 18.

Another day at home with a short run with the dogs down to Beaver Lake. Visibility very poor with air full of snow and fog. Nothing to see and no fresh tracks except moose. There may have been several recently in the willow patch southwest of us.

Carrie is somewhat improved but still can't get away from her bed.

February 13 Low 0° F, High 6° F
NW-N wind to 25. Cloudy, a little snow.

It seems too bad to have daylight from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and still have to run the generator all day! Maybe someday soon we will see the sun again. We have had a lot of cloud cover January through February.

Finally got the new light up and going today. A lot more light in the house now when the generator is on.

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

Took dogs for a short run but drifting snow was not much fun for them or me especially after turning around and coming back into the N wind drift.

The Jays and Ravens the only living things seen today besides ourselves and the dogs. Lucky we have VHF radio and telephone to keep Carrie in touch with the world on these kind of days.

Nursing duties keeping me pretty close to camp. Carrie is some better but still pretty much stuck to her bed or near it.

For the last few years she has made an annual trip to Anchorage about this time for the Native New Life Musicale¹¹ held at the time of Fur Rondy¹². She is sure missing that ability of getting around like she has been used to. We're still hoping for much improvement.

February 14 Low 0° F, High 11° F
N-NW wind to 20. Cloudy, snow.

Dull but mild days continue. Kind of a waste of a lot of sun. Got a load of wood – not high grade, but they will burn. Ran the dogs a short ways in the ground drift.

A search on tonight for a young Kotzebue lady who left Kotz at 4 a.m. this morning for Noatak but didn't arrive there. It is an ugly night for a search with rather heavy snow and fog. There is not much wind and temps are above 0°F.

February 15 Low -4° F, High 14° F
NE-NW wind to 15. Cloudy, snow, clearing.

Several hours of very bright sun late this afternoon, and I could actually feel it on the skin of my face! That is one of the small thrills of living where we do. After so many days of dull, cloudy, foggy, snowy weather, the sun on the virgin white new five inches of snow we have over everything was breathtaking. Both dogs and I ran down the trail to tidelands on the Kotzebue Trail. The dogs ran, I was on the sno-go and Carrie is still housebound but feeling much better. The sun did also get into the house and into the rainbow prisms. We count this a good day.

The young lady who left Kotzebue on a sno-go for Noatak at 4:30 a.m. yesterday morning was found walking toward Noatak, ten miles from the village, around noon today. Visibility was very poor with rather heavy snow early today. The CAP¹³ rescue plane spotted her on their return flight towards Kotzebue. Both Noatak and Kotzebue had search crews out. She was reported in good condition. We are grateful to the searchers and for the mildness of temps during her ordeal.

Only sign of other creatures on our trail breaking outing were three-four caribou tracks in the beaver lake made after the last snow and before the wind stopped.

¹¹ An annual Christian music gathering

¹² Fur Rendezvous, commonly known as Fur Rondy, is an annual winter carnival held in Anchorage

¹³ Civil Air Patrol

February 16 Low -20° F, High 14° F
Light N winds. Clear, early morning fog.

A lot of sun today and it could be felt!

Finally got the three moose legs into camp. These were very unusual circumstances. Due to extreme cold and health problems the roughly cut up moose portions remained under skin and snow all this time and quite remarkably remained untouched by the usual under snow denizens – shrews, voles and weasels. The kill was only a few hundred yards from the cabin and the large pieces were piled in soft snow and covered with the two halves of skin purposely to keep the meat from freezing as long as possible. Normally the pile would be uncovered in a few days while still unfrozen and cut into small meal or freezer size pieces. This ages and tenderizes moose meat and makes it much more of a joy to cook. This time, some -50°F temps and some health problems interrupted the process. It will take a good deal of sawing to reduce the large portions to small packages but it is now number one quality season moose meat and no harm is done though a good deal more work and time is involved than normally would be.

Saw a few more stray fresh caribou tracks today at dog run time.

Extended family returned from Sealing Point camp today reporting lots of caribou down there yet and lots of wind ruing the last week of gales.

February 17 Low -28° F, High -4° F
Light S-SW-W wind. Clear early morn. High thick fog all day.

As far as sun goes it was a very disappointing day. Sky was clear after daylight before sunup. Then fog – high fog rolled over us and we got no glimpse of the sun all day.

Carrie doing pretty well but still tied to her bed. With such long daylight hours now she is getting pretty restless. My stomach pains are on and off so we are still a pretty inactive pair.

I snowshoed up our lookout hill to get a small dry tree for our morning kindling and saw four-five caribou lying down and feeding in and near our exit trail. I may see how close I can get in the morning. We could use fresh meat again.

Didn't run the dogs today – partly for that reason. Our temps warmed to a comfortable outdoor working level with the coming of the fog cover. We developed our usual indoor frost on hinges and windows during the night's low, with clear skies.

Our "near house" red squirrel was out making tracks today after we warmed. I suppose he would like to see the warm sun too!

Fox tracks, probably red, are increasing again in the open country around us. Their annual mating journeys are not far off.

February 18 Low -28° F, High -2° F
W-NW wind to 18. Cloudy, high fog. Snow dust.

Snowshoed out to where the little groups of caribou were last evening but they were not there this morning and didn't see any others. Distant visibility was poor again all day.

Ten minutes before the sun went down it did break through a crack in the clouds.

Took the dogs down to get some ice from Beaver Lake. Terry didn't follow but Achauq had a good run and was able to follow the old trail with bottom to it that I couldn't see because of whiteout conditions. I slowed and followed him!

Very few travelers out our way this month mostly due to continued unsettled weather and more interesting things to do in other places.

Right now there is much excitement in Noatak as lots of small size trout are being taken on hooks right at the village site.

New and rather deep snow makes wolverine and wolf hunting attractive in the Noatak area.

We have many ptarmigan tracks in our area right now that weren't here earlier. They appear to be the small rock ptarmigan rather than willow ptarmigan which is unusual. Whiteout conditions have prevailed for so long that they may have lost track of their more normal habitat in mountains and rocks.

February 19 Low -32° F, High -14° F
Light winds. Clear, some high haze.

A good deal of sun today and it warmed our air from its overnight chill soon after noon.

A couple of our grandchildren brought a nice big load of dry firewood from way up at their camp on the NW shore of Kobuk Lake. We have not had a lot of wood from that far away before. It is certainly welcome as I was wondering where to replenish my depleted woodpile from today. Having to stay so close to Carrie and the house some of the usual routine chores become hard to keep up with.

After the boys dropped their load of wood and had lunch they took off for a ride that ended, without our knowledge, in Noatak. We worried some about their getting stuck somewhere as the sun got low. We finally called town base and they told us the boys were going to overnight up there.

One of the chronic problems of today's youth in our country is failure to update plans and inform those that might be concerned with their welfare. It's not just our family but kind of across the board.

Ran the dogs a short ways as we warmed to a temp that made sno-go starting not too hard. We made a check on our boys' exit tracks. Not many tracks on our two-three day surface and a few fox (may be white) and a few small wandering caribou groups.

February 20 Low -36° F, High -12° F
Light winds. Clear, fog. Upper air haze.

Our woodcutting grandchildren returned from their overnight stay in Noatak with lots of news of their travels through the mountains and up the river. They report some caribou to the west and a good group of musk ox in the mountains west of the Hatchery. Maybe 14-18 animals. They also reported many wolf tracks and some rabbit tracks near spruce patches.

Our red squirrels are showing a little more sign of life as the sun warms their spots at midday. Life must be tough for northern red squirrels when white spruce cones are scarce or absent. Wonder if they remember those years when the surface of the snow was colored with the burnished brown of fallen individual winged seeds out of white spruce cones in February.

We are enjoying our freedom from firewood worries. I sawed the load up to stove lengths this morning and the boys chopped them all up after they had a lunch. The load is sure first grade firewood.

We are cooking our moose nose today. That means all day. It is the most choice portion of any moose for most people including us. It is cooked in one piece with the hair on until very soft, in a big roaster. It contains much gelatin and oil (fat) and is best sliced after it cools with mustard!

February 21 Low -24° F, High 1° F
NE wind to 18. Clear, clouding over.

Made a Sisualik trip today under a bright sun with a little ground drift. Found a lot of fox tracks there. White foxes have again come in off of ocean ice.

There are also a lot of new snowbanks from the period of NW and N winds a while back.

Another mystery has also developed. There is some sort of a creature in the dome¹⁴ where there shouldn't be any. The vent on the tip top of the roof is open and the snowbank build up has made it rather simple for fox or weasel to get on the dome roof. We normally try not to keep edibles in there – meat or dried fish. However, partly due to our late move to winter quarters here some things have gotten left where they shouldn't be. We had a couple of boxes of dried whitefish in the dome and now they have been nibbled. The droppings and other sign look different than the usual weasel problem. I half suspect that one of the ground squirrels that live under the dome accidentally or purposely made a tunnel to the one small place of ground that would give access to the inside of the dome. He may have woken up during the mild spell we had some time ago and took advantage of his good fortune. We will hear more of this mystery I expect.

¹⁴ A structure located at the Uhl's summer camp on the coast

February 22 Low 0° F, High 16° F
E-SE wind to 35. Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

A stormy day outside the spruce patch. Not bad inside the spruce patch even outside the house – mild temps and very limber trees shaking themselves free of old clinging snow. All are pretty dark green again this evening ready for rain or a new coating of fresh snow.

Big sno-go race to Kiana and back may be postponed. It was scheduled for tomorrow.

Late yesterday evening Aachauq (the dog) was staring intently past the house down the exit trail. This dog's stare replaces the voice/bark that most dogs use when seeing something unusual. I figured it was probably a moose but when I looked I didn't see anything. This morning I walked down the trail to check for tracks. Yes, a fine large moose track was in the trail where it stood looking at the house and the dog. There may be some advantage to having a silent watchdog – only if one wanted to shoot another moose I guess.

Carrie feeling pretty good today but still hasn't moved from bedside. We are still holding to hope that use of feet and legs will improve as it has done before.

The mild temps are a blessing to both of us since it makes living and necessary chores easier.

February 23 Low 16° F, High 22° F
E-SE wind to 30. Cloudy, light snow.

Off and on blizzard conditions continue causing Kotzebue-Kiana sno-go race to postpone till tomorrow. There hasn't been much new snow so it has been only a moderate blizzard and travel has resumed after holding most of yesterday (air and surface).

Had one of those special thrilling moments today that come occasionally simply because we live where we do.

Haven't been able to walk around much with Carrie down but we are in need of fresh caribou meat again so I climbed our near lookout point to see if some caribou might be nearby. Got a glimpse of moose going behind a tree right as I passed our slop dump. Climbed to lookout and didn't see any caribou around. Visibility was not good due to drifting snow in the open. I thought to go back along the creek bluff and maybe cut the morning fresh moose track and see it a little closer. Yep! There was a moose feeding up creek across a short thick willow swampy area. A short but troublesome walk (through brushy swamp) to see it closer. Got within 100 yards of where I had last seen the moose when again the telltale flash of moose coat color indicated an alerted moose. Then it walked out into the open, a handsome adult female. While watching it move slowly away from me at an angle my corner eye caught movement – five other moose filed out into the short willow swamp, all less than 100 yards away!

February 24 Low 18° F, High 28° F
E-SE wind to 35. Cloudy, blizzard.

It was a pretty good morning with continuing winds but mild temps had cut drifting snow way down. Things fell apart again around midday with increasing winds and the air full of fresh snow and flying snow. Races postponed

yesterday were cancelled today.

Late afternoon the sky cleared – clouds broke up and though warm winds continued the blizzard conditions were gone.

Did a few chores around camp and had some good food prepared early as we really expected visitors after some phone conversations yesterday. Weather came down hard on those expectations.

It was a good day for our three (now) gray jays. Things like blood, fat and ice cream softened and became easy work for the ambitious birds.

Red squirrel activity has increased and the disappointment involved in the lack of snowshoe hare tracks continues. Can't really understand the reason why their population has fallen back again after apparently making a pretty good start on a comeback last year.

Some extended family members at Sealing Point ran into trouble today and had to call Search and Rescue to get things back together. They did get things back together and except for inconvenience of both rescuers and the folks down there no harm came about.

February 25 Low 19° F, High 33° F
E-SE wind to 25. Broken clouds, warm sun.

A very fine warm windy day. A bit after noon the sun melted the snow on the wooden step of the entrance to the house.

Caribou are coming back from the east!

The dogs and I went down the town trail to tidelands and saw only one small group of caribou tracks crossing the trail. Turned around there and came back up to the Beaver Lake and stopped to chip off a few blocks of ice. Loaded them up and headed up the trail towards home, the dogs dropping behind. When I came to the high point overlooking the little valley where the small group of fresh caribou tracks was there was a long line of caribou – several hundred moving west. It was good to see numbers of caribou again even if they were running from the snowmachine noise.

During the day there were reports on the VHF of caribou on Kobuk Lake, Little Noatak, and Jones' Camp.

Finally got the rest of the moose meat into camp. The couple of days of warm winds made it possible to work the skin cover off the rib cage and get it sawed into manageable small pieces. The meat is in perfect condition. Well-seasoned for cooking. The total absence of microtines¹⁵ and weasels over such a long period is quite remarkable, even a little frightening, as is any incident of lack of creatures where they are normally found.

February 26 Low 18° F, High 30° F

¹⁵ Rodents belonging to the subfamily Microtinae such as voles, lemmings, and muskrat

E-SE wind to 18. Some clouds, much sun.

Town trip didn't go. Called Carrie's doctor at 9 a.m. to get okay to pharmacist for blood pressure control pills. He said he would check her records and call us back. He did at 3 p.m. and ok'ed the refill and family took them over here this early evening. In the meantime I got impatient waiting for the phone on such a fine day and snowshoed out after an early lunch to check out the caribou movement.

I went the wrong way. Should have gone south of here instead of north. I did see a good bunch (40) of caribou following the same trail east to west that they were on yesterday. It seemed a long way to snowshoe but they were the only animals in the world. I've spent many hours of my life on snowshoes and used to be in good physical condition because of those hours. I am no longer in good shape but thought I'd give it a try. I eventually got to the trail the caribou had used and they were feeding and lying down! I inadvertently spooked them and they all took off. I hung around the used trail for a while but there were no further groups using it. Had a long, lonesome walk home to a long-suffering wife with no catch to report. The mild dry warm weather of the day made up for the lack of hunting success.

February 27 Low 12° F, High 26° F
SE wind to 30. Clear and cloudy.

Mild temps and wind continue without any fresh snow. There has been ground drift in open country all day.

Snowshoed up to our near lookout point but there was nothing to see. We hear of caribou to the east of us and west of us but apparently nothing around us. When they left here, they left for good. Most of our nearby feeding areas have been scratched up already and what lichen is left may be crusted over from prior feeding activity.

Current weather has sure brought out the red squirrels. Lots of tracks now – large and small – and some from considerable distance. One even made it into our old log storehouse next door today and edible things (for a squirrel) will need to be put in squirrel-proof containers. With such a poor white spruce seed year all living red squirrels are survivors using alternate food sources. Tender new growth of white spruce, dried mushrooms and dried bones are some of the alternate foods we know of.

East neighbors made a good sheefish strike yesterday all by themselves way up near the east side shoreline of Kobuk Lake. They got 30-40 nice large fat fish. They deserve them after a long lumpy sno-go trip with lumpy snow piles and ice at the hooking place (Assailavik) thicker than the length of the auger shaft. One must use the old fashioned arm propelled ice chisel after going as deep as the auger shaft allows.

Our camp Gray Jays busy from dawn to dusk today – more than nine hours.

February 28 Low 18° F, High 26° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, snow.

Town trip today – a very mean one. The new east-west sculpted snow bumps are mean and angled and the prevailing whiteout conditions due to snow and fog made for a miserable 16 mile trip in. It was the same coming back – very tough on old bones and new sno-go parts. I had hoped for periods of bright sun with a few snow

flurries from today's forecast. No way. The whole trip was much like traveling in a plastic bag. It would have been impossible without good trail stakes. Anyway, we now have gas and some household treats for a while and my lumps will heal. I haven't found any broken sno-go parts.

A great surprise at dawn this morning – opened the house door and there was a splendid tough-looking spruce grouse standing on the chopped wood pile! Almost immediately a second flying bird made a pass over the head of the first with a roar of wings that startled both me in the doorway and the bird on the wood pile. Both birds flew to the tree overlooking our slop throw pile. There seems few spruce grouse in the country this year and we feel privileged to have at least two in our spruce patch. That was a pleasant early morning surprise.

Saw many old friends on the streets and in the stores of Kotzebue. Lots of brief handshakes and hellos.

Well February goes out nice and warm for which we are glad. Next we will see how west winds of March treat us. One thing for sure, the daylight hours will be long and the sun will have time to warm the middle of the day.

One hunter has been down to the open lead in the ocean twice this week and has yet to get a seal due to weather.

MARCH

March 1 Low 16° F, High 20° F
E-SE wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, snow.

What a shame! The sun was up for nearly nine hours and we didn't see it at all today!

We did gain a couple of inches of fresh fluffy snow again. Our last loose snow is long gone with the strong east winds of last week which also opened a large off shore lead in the ocean not far from shore at Sealing Point. At least one ice hunter has made an attempt to hunt the lead but weather and his luck have not been good to this point. If he keeps at it he may yet do well. Fresh killed winter common ringed seals have become quite valuable in the region.

Caribou still dominate as the most plentiful, most hunted and most appreciated mammal in our local region. Numbers of animals wintering close by to Kotzebue have exceeded any recent historical happening. Fat, good-conditioned animals are being taken every day from several different locations.

Walking down our exit trail today thru willows and trees with the recent new 2 inches of snow the mind wanders to past years when this same willow – spruce – cottonwood creek side snow would be covered with tracks of snowshoe hare, willow ptarmigan and moose. Today the only mark in the new snow was made by a couple of red squirrels – wearing snowshoes?

March 2 Low 16° F, High 25° F
 S-SWW wind to 10. Fog, showers, sun.

We did get to see and feel the sun and glory in the brightness of it on the new snow surface. Here was however periods of whiteout and visibility reduced to a few hundred yards.

Took the dogs and made trail tracks in the new snow cover to the edge of tidelands thinking that we might have visitors from out of town. It wasn't long before we did have three special friends out of town on three snowmachines. I had started an early pot of caribou soup to go with the leftover moose roast of yesterday and we had a good lunch with a lot of fine conversation covering or partially covering many topics. We appreciated much their visit and willingness to brave changeable weather conditions.

The only noted fresh tracks were those of two moose on their way up creek towards the house.

Later, after visitors left, I ran down to Sisualik for some needed small items and berries. Saw new tracks of two small groups of caribou. Didn't see the animals though they probably weren't far off. Small groups of caribou locally are now spooking to sno-go sight and noise. They are often off and running before they come into sight.

Fox tracks have become much more common than earlier in the winter –some of them white.

March 3 Low 16° F, High 20° F
 S-SW wind to 10. Cloudy, snow.

A quiet somber March Sunday without sun. One young friend came by looking for a firewood cutting trail. His visit was brief.

Walked both dogs instead of sno-go. I get more exercise than they when I do that since I walk them separately.

Our camp gray jay flock is the happiest in the country. This long mild spell with almost unlimited access to stored meat and scraps has made the three joyfully happy. They are working steadily from nearly dawn to dusk which is more than 10 hours now.

Red squirrels are showing similar ambition, visiting distant trees and places and relatives that they have only been able to dream about for several months.

The temps feel spring-like – all we need is some sun.

March 4 Low -2° F, High 16° F
 E-SE wind to 10. Cloudy. Breaks with sun, late.

Climbed our lookout knoll this morning and though whiteout conditions still prevail distant visibility was pretty good since the air was clear of snow and fog conditions.

I did see caribou this time, four on the mountain NW of camp walking the other way and a good group of 30-40

more distant, but also to the NW, feeding and taking it easy in a soft snow open plot between tree patches. Had the wind been from a different direction these would have been stalkable on snowshoes. May check them out tomorrow if they are near the same place.

Loosed the dogs and went down to the Beaver Lake for ice. Lucked out in finding a multiple deep crack in the ice and was able to quickly get some very large pieces. The new snow surface is pretty clean down that way. The only new tracks seem to be fox, red and/or white.

In the trees the only track makers are red squirrels. Where are all those snowshoe hares and willow ptarmigan? In the past late February and early March were the times to hunt these white creatures as the sun (when it's out) makes them easy to see. The mystery of the slow return of our hares is certainly outstanding.

March 5 Low -9° F, High 12° F
 E-SE wind to 10. Clear, sun all day.

A super bright cool day and the sun could be felt in sheltered places.

Worked in a few pieces of half dry wood from the wood trail near camp this morning and this late afternoon our grandson-in-law brought us a huge load of fine dry wood from Fish Creek, our son's camp on Kobuk Lake. It is a long way to haul wood but they are high quality and certainly welcome. He went from here to his mother in Noatak. He is doing a lot of traveling and giving a lot of help since he repaired the broken shaft and bearing on our old Arctic Cat.

We apparently had a wolf visitor last night. Saw the tracks when I went to get wood around the scent posts our dogs use when they run. The feet (paws) are big but its gait seems unusual – possibly tired, sick, wounded? There is a report of many wolves around Kobuk Delta. The take of wolves by snowmachine may be considerable this month.

The large group of caribou I saw NW of us yesterday was not in that same place today which I guess is not surprising but I had hopes of getting up near them if and when a little wind develops. Snowmachine noise carried for miles on this still day and caribou are now very spooky to the sound.

March 6 Low -11° F, High 14° F
 Light N-NE wind. Clear.

Finally made it up to our highest lookout point at Miluraq. It is a limestone rocky knoll 3-4 miles north of us that overlooks the lower big bend of the Noatak River. In years past it has been an ideal place to climb when in search of game animals (moose, caribou).

In a normal year (when we get moved to winter quarters in mid-October) I have a well beaten trail to there and spend much time there. This odd year when we couldn't get to winter quarters till after Christmas we have been behind in everything and never will catch up I guess.

Anyway it was good to see old sites of important past events – a tree chewed up by a wolverine in a trap, another

site of a first wolverine taken in a snare, a very first moose kill when moose first entered the region.

The marten that survived last winter there is still there this winter! He may even have a family. It is the first track I have seen this winter and have not heard others talk of sighting marten tracks. I had thought their range extension had collapsed.

Saw only one snowshoe hare track in the spruce patch under the rocky pinnacles where we used to catch hares by the dozens in March.

Lots of caribou tracks a week old in an east to west movement. Saw no animals there today.

March 7 Low -8° F, High 16° F
 Light winds. Clear skies.

Another surprise this morning. Walked down our exit trail to the creek and saw hundreds of freshly made willow ptarmigan tracks! Now up until this morning all the willow ptarmigan tracks we've seen all winter on our exit trail could be counted with the fingers on two hands, that is some less than ten. These new tracks were made since I came home through there with the dogs late yesterday. The flock must number near a hundred birds to make that wide a swath of tracks. We neither heard nor saw them so we don't know at what time they were here. They can be pretty noisy at this season when in large flocks.

At least as surprising, among the many ptarmigan tracks was one fresh snowshoe hare track. He was moving up creek, the ptarmigans down.

We did see one hare track a month ago, but it didn't come back or hang around. This may be the same one that found a good location down creek and is just now coming back. It seems strange that these spruce patches that used to have hundreds of rabbits each year (20 years ago) now have only one each!

A crew from the senior center was here today to offer some helps when we need them. We appreciate their concern. Carrie is doing better and this is the third day she has been able to get around in a limited way inside the house.

March 8 Low -2° F, High 26° F
 E wind to 18. Clear.

Town trip today for drum of gas. We have been using more gas than usual for the generator due to so many sunless days in January and February but less in the snowmachine since being somewhat tied down due to health and age. A 53 gallon drum doesn't last as long as it used to! The clear and long sunlight this past week was wonderful and saved on gas use but it also makes one feel the need to use more in the sno-go! The Saudis win either way.

Very heavy wolf take reported this week by Noatak hunters. Hunting conditions have been ideal and wolves are reportedly numerous. So numerous, it is said that the caribou near that village are skinny.

No sign of new caribou tracks on Kotzebue trail, only many fox tracks.

Our lone snowshoe hare visited the house last night. Must be difficult for him to locate another hare anywhere and the sound of other living creatures may be attractive in the void.

Saw the first porcupine tracks of the year on the Kotzebue trail – out of normal habitat – at the edge of tidelands. Sure don't understand the scarcity of hares and porcupines in our area.

March 9 Low 8° F, High 30° F
 NE-E wind to 15. Clear, warm sun.

An absolutely beautiful day today. A quite mild soft wind and a warm sun. The snow overlapping the front of the house was melting and dripping all afternoon – quite a nice change of outdoor conditions.

This spruce patch where we stay is known for its early sun warmed days as we have a kind of natural solar collecting dish on our north side. An old creek made bluff collects snow drift all winter and by March it is usually like it is now – a raised to the sun reflective pure white disk that reflects sunlight down into the dark green spruce that no doubt retain and maybe even add to the warmth of the reflected rays.

We had the largest of our gift seals in the house overnight and it was thawed enough to open and take the body (meat) out of the blubber and skin. I did that outside working in the sun and then cooked a large roaster of fresh winter-killed seal meat. We haven't eaten winter killed seal meat for a number of years. While we had our dog team – before the era of snowmachines – fresh killed common ringed seal was often a part of our diet as well as our dog's diet.

It was very good for a change boiled long and eaten hot. It was very fat and the fresh oil is a great tonic for both man and beast.

March 10 Low -2° F, High 28° F
 N-NE wind to 15. Clear, sun!

A quiet beautiful warm bright Sunday.

A good friend paid an afternoon visit and we had a great uninterrupted conversation. Had a great time and a great lunch of moose nose, frozen seal liver, cooked seal meat, frozen Noatak trout, dried whitefish, frozen whitefish, and a pot of black beans, not to mention warmed over caribou soup from yesterday. Lots of variety today. Good to share it with friends.

A disturbing report today of some starved caribou maybe on the upper Squirrel River or headwaters of Hugo Creek. Will try to get more information on location and numbers. Deep snow is reported in that area though overall our snow cover is light for this date.

We don't seem to have any more caribou traveling through our area – not even stragglers. There are still reports of many caribou in several areas near Kotzebue and reports of a very few in the upper Kobuk.

With such good weather the lack of sno-go traffic in our area only means that there was a lot of weekend traffic in those areas with caribou, wolves, sheefish, or trout. It is great weather and a good time for those attractive activities.

March 11 Low -2° F, High 26° F
NE-E wind to 18. Clear.

Took a first trip west on the high ridge leading to our biggest local mountain. All the newest made caribou tracks head in that direction so though it worthwhile to follow along and see what I could see.

All I saw was a wide expanse of country with seemingly nothing alive in it. Only tracks.

There were some actual snowshoe hare trails (the multi-used ones that a snare can be set on) in the willows around the farthest west patch of spruce trees.

The open lead in the ocean off Krusenstern could be seen plainly from the high ridge. It is several miles off shore at Anigaq and then closer toward Sealing Point. That is where our gift seal came from that we cut up Saturday.

After lunch I took the dogs up the north trail for the first time. They enjoyed the change and expected to see caribou with all the tracks and feeding places around but they were disappointed too when there were none to be seen.

There were wolf tracks though and many fox tracks.

March 12 Low -8° F, High 20° F
Light winds. Clear.

Another of those impossibly good March days with lots of sun demonstrating its potential by warming everything in sight, especially those things dark against the whiteness of winter snow accumulation.

Our trouble is one of health. This is weather to be doing ice fishing, rabbit hunting, seal hunting, ptarmigan snaring, caribou hunting, or a number of other activities which one looks forward to all winter when weather conditions and sunlight hours permit. Although our health problems are slowly improving we feel more limited in what we can try to do than we ever have before. That may be a rather common complaint couples have as they pass the 75 years of age milestone.

We are yet able to take care of our immediate needs but this kind of weather tempts you to take part in those timely activities like we always have.

A traveling friend dropped by today and reported caribou all over everywhere except within ten miles of us. We have none near and we did want another fresh one or two for March/April/May soup pot. It appears that so many caribou overused our area during the cold weather of January that they now seek relatively unused feeding areas.

He also saw a few scattered musk ox unlike the more compact groups that wintered in that area last year.

March 13 Low -8° F, High 21° F
NE-E wind to 15. Clear.

Another of those beautiful days though there may be change shortly - wind, clouds, and warmer temps according to the weatherman.

Carrie continues to improve and my complaints seem to have stabilized so things continue to look up.

Made a trip down to Sisualik to pick up shotgun and a couple of other items. I took both dogs and even old Terry got down to the house faster than I thought possible. All this sun and good weather seems to have touched them too. Maybe too much so. I chained Aachauq when we first got down there and just before I was ready to start back Terry arrived all pleased that he had us at the house and we had not caught him the trail halfway down like we usually do.

Now Terry has long time business when he is free of his chain in Sisualik – visiting neighboring camps that may have had dogs in other past years.

When I loosed Aachauq, expecting him to follow me up the home trail, he decided to follow Terry instead who went east instead of home. I was already a couple of miles up the home trail thinking the dogs were following. After waiting too long for them to catch up I had to go back down to the house and search them out in case they had gotten into traps or other trouble.

Found them running as fast as they could toward me from Sisualik Point where there may be a few chained dogs. The dogs apologized for running away and we all went home.

March 14 Low 6° F, High 22° F
NE-E wind to 25. Clouds, sun, clouds.

A trip to the mountains today – rocks, wind and caribou droppings!

Went up our creek through the pass behind Mt. Noak to Noatak River. All our hundreds/thousands of caribou tracks are pointed that way and I thought I might find some and have a to get a couple as we're a little tired of "old" meat.

Lots of wind and no snow up in the pass. I saw only a couple of caribou far down on the Noatak side. Growing winds and a forecast blizzard for tonight dampened my enthusiasm for going down the other side.

About halfway home I came on two young male caribou in the trail that weren't there when I went up. They were gutted and while I stood looking at them, wondering where they came from, a sno-go pulled up and the young man said, "I got them for you and Carrie. They are males – not much fat, but good meat."

He was right about that – good tender meat with fine firm marrow in the bones. This all was a pleasant surprise

especially since I hadn't seen any caribou on this side of the mountains. The young fellow said there was a large herd in a valley down toward the ocean (south of us). The young hunter was from our nearest neighbor's camp to the east.

March 15 Low 20° F, High 30° F
 E wind to 35. Cloudy.

Worked on the caribou carcasses this morning and ran the dogs a ways in the strong winds with some ground drift.

We are under a blizzard watch again today and tomorrow. So far only wind and warm temps have developed. The warm winds have removed/displaced all the light snow and grasses, tussocks, old caribou diggings, and their droppings are all over on the surface again.

No visitors or travelers this way today which is no surprise with the blizzard threat.

Last night we enjoyed tongue and heart flour soup from our new fresh meat windfall. Tonight the pot roasted marrow bones from the same source were wonderful. A good supply of good fresh meat makes such a difference in day to day living.

Carrie is doing much better getting around the house, often without the cane now. She may be able to travel this coming week.

Many local people are in Buckland this week for mid-year conference of NANA¹⁶ region Friends Church. It is always one of the biggest long distance get togethers of the year. The meetings for business and worship will end on Sunday and the annual meeting of NANA shareholders will happen on Monday at the same village – NANA Day.

Our VHF radio and phone are much quieter this week. We miss being a part of the fine meetings.

March 16 Low 24° F, High 28° F
 E-SE wind to 40. Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

Snow beginning early with already strong winds made a full day of blizzard. There was some breaking of clouds and snow ceased in early evening.

Walked the dogs one by one around camp in the trees and surprised a moose that was quietly passing camp on his way up the creek. His was the only fresh track of any kind on/in the new snow.

Caribou may move around again. They often do during or just after a major storm. No chance to look around on this side today – all open country outside the spruce patch had heavy drift all day.

Buckland conference will wind down tomorrow and folks there will be heading home though most will stay over

¹⁶ NANA is the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Native Regional Corporation for the area

for NANA day Monday.

The open ocean lead off shore of Krusenstern is now very, very wide.

There has been a number of family boys down at the Williams Cabin at Sealing Point all this last week. They may be making a sled or two where there is no interruption by children or family.

We hope the weather improves – there will be a lot of travel these next few days. Even the late Iditarod racers are held up for time.

Air temps have gotten pretty high for mid-March.

March 17 Low 28° F, High 32° F
NE-E-SE wind to 30. Cloudy, snow, rain.

A very windy, snowy, warm, wet day today. Anyone looking for a weekend of good weather to be out in the country was disappointed. On top of that the forecast is as bad for tomorrow and Tuesday. The people gathered in Buckland and those to go there for NANA Day on Monday may have travel difficulties.

Snowshoed our entrance and exit trails a bit today and leveled bad drifts with a shovel. Didn't fire up the sno-go – weather seemed too wet and sticky.

Falling snow was sticking to things it touched this afternoon. A traveler would be glad to have raincoat on.

Sawed up the two body/rib sections of the two gift animals from a couple of days ago. We have quite a bit of meat on hand now. Maybe enough to see us through into spring.

Carrie continues to improve and may soon be able to travel.

Our camp gray jays are overwhelmed with such good scrap pickings. Ground creatures, on the other hand, are remarkably scarce. Shrews and voles seem pretty nearly nonexistent around camp. That seems strange at this date.

Our trees which were all black after the strong winds yesterday are all white again today with fresh sticky white snow in the air.

March 18 Low 24° F, High 31° F
E-SE wind to 30. Clear, clouding late.

Winds and mild temps continue. The difference today was sun! Very nice within the spruce patch or on a sheltered hillside. Ground drift continued all day in the open country. Snowshoed, shoveled and then broke in and out trails and ran over them with the snowmachine.

Took the dogs (they haven't had a sno-go run for a couple of days) and went down to Beaver Lake for a load of ice.

We are lucky to have a good deep crack down there and large chunks come off easily, even in mild weather.

After getting home with dogs and ice I took a run alone west on our high ridge but didn't see any living thing. Ground drift prevented a better, more thorough search for nearby caribou.

Weatherman tells us more weather coming. Wind, snow, and continued warmth, and half of our 24-hour day has sun above the horizon. I even saw a small flock of redpolls today – the first all winter. April approaches and can't help but think of Jonathan Livingston Seagull¹⁷ occasionally. Hope he has wintered well. Life for distant migrants always seems so hazardous. He must be getting old for a glaucous gull and his migration probably isn't too distant – probably even within the state.

March 19 Low 20° F, High 34° F
NE-E wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

A beautiful early spring day today and even a moon tonight. Temps have continued high for so long that I needed to get my recent meat better packaged. Did that and worked over the two moose front legs into bag size pieces.

Ran the dogs down to tidewater and then had a couple of interesting visitors about supper time. Enjoyed their visit very much – good conversation.

The travelers saw a few caribou but no musk ox. Locating musk ox seems to have been easier last year for these visitors. Don't know where the larger groups of musk ox are this winter.

Found the trail a little less bumpy after our last fresh snow. Hope that is true for the ice crossing to Kotzebue. I may make that trip tomorrow to pay telephone bill, pick up mail, and do a little shopping. Carrie is not quite ready to travel yet though she continues to improve.

People had remarkably good weather to get back to families from Midyear Conference and NANA meetings, either by air or snowmachine. The daytime temps have been wonderful.

March 20 Low 16° F, High 34° F
E-SE wind to 15. [general conditions not recorded]

The first day of spring! On the calendar and in the air. The last ten days have been spring-like and very pleasant in the spruce patch.

Made the town trip as planned and though it seemed likely to cloud up and make miserable "whiteout" conditions for traveling again the sun won out and made a quite bright fore view of the trail. The sharper bumps could be circumvented or at least could not catch one unprepared.

Met a lot of old out of town friends. People we have known before that moved away and are now back for temporary purposes. Good to see them and talk a bit.

¹⁷ A glaucous gull that returns to the Uhl's summer camp each year

Saw one lone fresh caribou track today coming up from Sisualik. Haven't seen fresh tracks near camp for some time.

March 21 Low 20° F, High 34° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow, sun.

A very spring-like day all right. Large snowflakes filtering down nearly all day with less than 1" accumulation. Periods of broken clouds and warm, warm bright sun. Snow on dark things changing back to water quickly. It was a very fine day to be outdoors.

Didn't do a lot today – spring fever maybe.

Took the dogs down to Beaver Lake and got a few good chunks of ice. Skinned a fresh caribou head for cooking all day. It looks pretty good. Caribou on good range put down fat in their bones in late March and April. The marrow in leg bones enlarge as bones thin, and gets very oily with a fine flavor. Other bones, including the head, exude this fine tasty oil when cooked long. A caribou head – a fat one – is a special treat any time. The meat on the head when long cooked gets soft and has a number of different textures and appearances. Most of it is very unlike cooked meat from the body. Thereby it is one of its attractions. It is different. The broth from it is also a treat, offering much nutrition per bowl.

The weather was so fine and mild today that one looks to the air, trees and grasses expecting to see a bird. We did see one willow ptarmigan while running the dogs but that was it except for gray jays and ravens.

March 22 Low 16° F, High 34° F
Light winds. Clear.

This has been maybe the best of many beautiful days – warm sun and windless. Finally got a load of wood for myself. Most of our firewood for the past month has been hauled here for us by grandchildren from far away. It has been a great help thru this time of both of us having less than our normal health. The "rest period" seems to have allowed me to come back together pretty well too.

Today a nephew brought us a nice fat caribou recently killed NW of Sealing Point. There are said to be a real lot between Sealing Point and Port Site. Most of them are apparently in good shape.

I went nearly halfway up to the pass to cut wood and from there and saw at a great distance on the high mountains overlooking the pass proper seven animals that I first though were caribou. Watching them for a while I decided that they most likely were musk ox. The need to finish woodcutting and get some wood home kept me from moving closer for positive ID on the animals. We are not getting much report on our nearest musk ox group this winter. Their normal winter places are really wind scoured now, mostly rocks and caribou droppings.

Our lone snowshoe hare continues to make tracks in our spruce patch but numerous fox also are turning up inside the trees.

March 23 Low 14° F, High 32° F
E-SE wind to 18. Clear.

Another day of long bright sunlight and warm midday temps. We had some extended family visitors from town around midday and had some good conversations.

I sawed up our gift caribou of yesterday. It was taken within the last two weeks, NW of Sealing Point. It is a large adult female with considerable back fat. It is a good piece of meat and the amount of fat is unusual for this season, an indication that some caribou are doing well this season.

Sno-go and dog races this weekend and looks like weather will permit.

Carrie continues to slowly improve, getting around pretty well inside the house, sometimes without the walker.

We are getting considerable thawing at midday on dark colors. Creatures of the land are enjoying snoozing in the sun in sheltered places. Musk ox must absorb a lot of sun at this season.

March 24 Low 18° F, High 34° F
NE wind to 18. Clear, clouds building.

Ran the dogs up toward the pass to reroute the wood haul trail. Ran into three caribou feeding almost in the trail. I was surprised that they paid little attention to the sno-go noise. Aachauq did see them though and took off towards them which moved them towards the tree line. Five more joined them in flight and then all stopped at the timber edge looking back. That was too much for the dog – he must have felt outnumbered. Perhaps he hadn't noticed the reinforcements right away either. He came quickly back to the sno-go just as Terry (Aachauq's reinforcements) reached the sno-go.

We all just stood around for a while (including the caribou) and then we continued up the trail. The caribou seemed disappointed – may have wanted to run a bit more. They seemed more curious than scared and appeared to be sub adult animals (two to three years).

Friends that have a camp at the last spruce patch at the head of the creek reported six musk ox near where I saw the group from a far distance a few days ago. They were on the same snowbank just under the top of the highest mountain.

Our continued warmth is having an early effect on windswept areas of rock and caribou feeding areas that are also rich in black droppings. Early thawing!

March 25 Low 20° F, High 37° F
Light winds. Cloudy, clearing.

Early spring midday thaw continues. A very nice day outdoors again. I spent a lot of it in catching up with some correspondence chores.

Took the dogs down to tidelands on the Sisualik Trail. They enjoyed the long run but saw only one ptarmigan and numerous fox tracks.

The countryside looks just right for the arrival of the first cranes even if it is more than three weeks from that earliest crane arrival date of April 14.

There are lots of tussocks and grass clumps exposed to the warm midday sun. The warmed snow gets that sticky spring quality and melts on the edges. Meltwater in mid-March? Well yes, this year. We'll need to see what comes next weather wise. Most of us older folks will expect a chilling trend and maybe even a return of winter-like temps and weather for a while before spring really gets underway.

Carrie is getting around so well that she is thinking of making a town trip this week. It will be the first for a long time. We are feeling great about her recovery of leg use.

March 26 Low 10° F, High 34° F
N-NE wind to 15. Thin clouds.

Another quiet day in Sanningaruq. February and March this year have been a kind of enforced rest time for us but the rest period seems to be working. We have not been able to take part in many activities that we normally would at this season but staying home and resting lots and eating well has helped our health problems and we seem more ready to get out and more active now.

I did finally get a single ptarmigan today, the first all winter. There was a good flock but getting untangled from my shotgun and trying to get two to line up with dogs bearing down on us was too much. They took off before two could line up on the ground. I shot one as they took off. Maybe I'll get another to make a pot of soup tomorrow or the next day. Ptarmigan have been very scarce here this winter. These today were eating blueberries on the large thawing tussocks on a hillside facing the thawing sun. We may be seeing more soon.

Got word from a local biologist today that caribou are moving north already. Guess the mild weather has been working on their thoughts too. They have really worked over our range this winter. Wonder how the future will be as a result of that.

March 27 Low 8° F, High 27° F
NE-N-NW wind to 15. Thin clouds, clearing.

Our early spring weather cooling down. We may have some winter cold before real spring sets in.

We ate our lone ptarmigan as soup tonight and amazingly there is still some meat left in the pot. We usually don't cook one bird but wait till we have two on hand but ptarmigan have been so scarce this winter we thought we should eat it while we had the chance. It was a female rock ptarmigan, the smallest of all ptarmigan, but it was so good for a change from caribou and moose which we have had regularly for some time.

Carrie thinks she has recovered the use of her legs enough that we can make a trip to town tomorrow to check in at the clinic and do some shopping. She is getting around the house again pretty well and we are so glad for that.

We can hardly believe that we are coming down on April already. We have had kind of a “fractured” winter – getting to our spruce patch two months late and then a couple of months of physical problems. Things do seem to be coming back together again and perhaps April and May with their long sunny days will be just what we need!

Our one friendly snowshoe hare continues to evade the increasing foxes. We would let him stay safely under the house if we could get him to understand!

March 28 Low -6° F, High 16° F
N-NW wind to 18. Clear, few clouds, haze.

Town trip today! Both of us. Carrie’s first trip in more than a month. She is walking more and better every day and the hope is that this trip won’t set her back. She got to the doctor, clinic and two stores.

Many good friends were glad to see her up, around and traveling again. It was a good day and we are both a little worn tonight.

There were two, maybe three, fresh moose tracks at the lower creek crossing. They were coming up creek towards the house, but haven’t reached here yet.

Fox tracks are plentiful between here and Kotzebue.

Haven’t got the details on “caribou moving out” report yet. The assumption is that the movement is north but we don’t know if that means just caribou that have wintered here locally or the whole WACH¹⁸ which may have been as far south as Unalakleet.

We may hear more of overwintering musk ox groups shortly too.

It has been nearly half a month since our temps dropped below zero. It has been nice to have that mid- March warm period.

March 29 Low -18° F, High 10° F
N-NE wind to 15. Clear, few clouds late.

Cold today compared to the last week but the sun was warm in sheltered places like our doorstep.

Carrie is a little stiff from yesterday’s travel but still seems coming along fine in regaining the use of her legs. She’s talking about hooking next week.

Ran the dogs a short run this late afternoon and saw that the two moose coming up the creek yesterday are between here and there yet. At this season moose move around often but also stay in a place with good feed and sun for several days.

¹⁸ Western Arctic Caribou Herd

It will be good to see a different kind of bird again. Gray jays and ravens have their good points but a little more variety will be welcome.

Don't know why our white spruce failed to produce cones again this year. It is their fault that our winter birds are so limited.

Our small colony of red squirrels are very active now but our one rabbit still doesn't have any company. The long absence of hares is puzzling. 1981 or 82 may have been the last year of any abundance.

Fairbanks is reported to be all white again. No geese or cranes for a while.

March 30 Low -4° F, High 14° F
NE wind to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

Some whiteout travel conditions today but not too bad as sun was showing through the clouds some and the worst bumps could be avoided.

One dog and I made the trip to Sisualik with a load of meat for the freezer. Midday sun here getting a little warm for outside storage in our metal drum.

Later in the afternoon we had three interesting visitors that we enjoyed much. Good stories and conversations.

Carrie is still somewhat stiff from travel day but her recovery continues.

Visitors saw a rather large group of caribou down on the edge of tidelands, apparently moving NW. Don't know how many remain south of us on the Baldwin Peninsula but we have heard that a north movement has begun. No large groups have made tracks through here for some time.

The hint of a gull sighting was reported but maybe offshore by hunters or travelers in the very wide open water lead that has developed off Krusenstern.

Snow buntings and redpolls the only other recently reported "different" birds. Golden eagles and rough-legged hawks are due any time.

March 31 Low 4° F, High 18° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, snow.

The last day of March and Easter Sunday. It is hard to believe we will be into April this week. We may even see Jonathan Livingston Seagull by the end of the month or shortly after. It is too bad that we can't learn gull language. I'm sure he has interesting winter adventures.

We expected a few visitors today but whiteout conditions didn't encourage distance travel and the forecast of increasing winds and more snow was not encouraging.

We stayed in camp and had some fine fat caribou meat roasted with some very special cucumber kimchi brought by yesterday's visitors. One wonders what the poor folks of Anchorage eat with their abundant supply of cucumber kimchi sauce since most probably don't have access to fat caribou or moose meat.

Made a batch a cranberry (lingonberry) sauce also from our last August picking so we had abundant side dishes with our Easter feast.

Our world is turning white again from the new snow. The warm sun, wind and mild temps of the last couple of weeks had given us a lot of snow-free ground, rocks and grasses. Now the landscape, including mountains, will take on their winter look again for a while.

APRIL

April 1 Low 16° F, High 23° F
E-SE wind to 18. Cloudy, heavy snow.

Snow today! Enough to cover up the spring like thawing of last week. We may have 4-5 inches by now and if it continues through the night there will be considerably more than that. The sad part is that it is pretty light stuff and will blow around easily and make ground storm weather sometime.

I did take the dogs down the trail to tidelands and they got good exercise in the soft trail. We didn't see anything except a couple of very black raven figures in the very dark tunnel of heavily falling snow thru which we were traveling. Many people had to travel home from spending Easter in Kivalina and whether by plane or sno-go it might have been an exciting trip.

This fresh and abundant snow will set back hopes for an early spring. If a west wind follows it will be more so. One could see this new snow as a kind of natural April Fool joke. We will need to see what follows.

It is hard to believe we are into April already and all that that means – birds, bears out, dark headed ptarmigan, departing caribou and lots and lots of sun when the clouds move off.

April 2 Low 18° F, High 28° F
Light winds. Cloudy.

No sun today but no snow either so I guess we are ahead. It has been a dull, dull mild day with high thick fog not allowing the sun to shine thru. Our four inches of new snow from yesterday is very, very sticky. Snowshoeing is tough and anything dropped to the ground comes up covered with the sticky new snow.

I did snowshoe our exit trails and climbed the lookout knoll but didn't see anything from there though I crossed very fresh moose tracks near the house, moving up creek. Also saw a nice flock of ptarmigan that was easy enough to see while in the air with a background of willows or trees but disappeared when they touched the ground. Their

camouflage is complete on this day of “whiteout.”

The moose, ptarmigan, a spruce hen and a few red squirrels are so far the only tracks in the new snow. No sign yet that our lonesome hare has survived the hunting foxes.

Saw a good flock of 8 or so mixed boreal chickadees and Redpolls checking out nooks and crannies of each white spruce for something edible. Couldn't tell how successful they were but they were busy.

It is reported that caribou are back down on Sealing Point flats. A white caribou was taken by boys living on and off down there.

April 3 Low 8° F, High 25° F
 N-NE wind to 10. Clouds, fog, sun!

Heavy fog till near noon then clearing all over with warm sun. Very bright and beautiful with the surface cover of 3 to 4 inches of fresh snow from yesterday.

An old friend called early and asked if we could stand a visitor today and we assured him we could and that I would run down to the tideland tree marker so he would have a fresh trail to follow up if he could find the tree. I ran the dogs down and picked up a few pieces of ice from Beaver Lake and our town visitor almost caught us from behind. He did get here before the two dogs got home. He tried to give the old dog Terry a ride but the dog would have none of it. Pride, you know!

We had a great day of talk over a long lunch and we both enjoyed touching base again.

Very few tracks yet in our new snow cover blanket. A few ptarmigan, fox, and red squirrel but no larger animals south of us anyway.

Carrie a little stiff again today. If she doesn't worsen I may make a solo town trip tomorrow for gasoline and mail.

Trails in the country in pretty good shape with the cushion of fresh snow.

April 4 Low 4° F, High 30° F
 SE wind to 15. Clear, few clouds.

Town trip for gas, etc. It was very beautiful – a perfect day to travel and it went smoothly. Our new top layer of 4” of soft snow has made smoother and near “shockless” traveling. The trip across took less than an hour; the trip home, with the full drum of gas took a little longer but not much.

Lots of fresh fox tracks in the new snow on the crossing – both white and red. Still no rabbit track in our spruce patch on the fresh snow. Our one resident rabbit may have lost it to foxes or bird of prey (a wandering horned owl?).

Lots of quick “hellos” in town again and hard to break off with short conversations.

Carrie had a difficult time tending stove while I was gone due to one knee failing again. It is better this evening and we hope that continues.

April 5 Low -4° F, High 33° F
 NW-N wind to 25. Clear.

Several visitors today with time for lunch and a short nap in between groups. Lots of good talk.

Our fine level 4 inches of new snow got moved this afternoon when winds upped to 25 and rolled all that levelness into large soft pillows all along our side under the coastal mountain range. These pillows are soft now but will harden and make a rough trail ride for a while.

Ran the dogs a short ways after visitors had left and found that the under surface has changed all over in a very short time. Also our big (100 birds) flock of willow ptarmigan is back and making tracks but didn't see the birds.

There was a lone rabbit track in the fresh snow down at the second creek crossing - it is leaving our spruce patch. The reason may be lonesomeness. Hard to find another rabbit around our spruce patch and of course our rabbits are gregarious creatures liking to have other rabbits around – especially in spring time!

We are scheduled to have some “important” visitors Sunday around 2 p.m. Hope the weather turns out well for them as they are due to take an extended overland trip after they leave here.

April 6 Low 6° F, High 35° F
 N-NW wind to 18. Clear, high clouds.

Visitor season seems in full swing. Mostly the good weather and the season I guess. Easter weekend can be like that.

Our neighboring camp people in Sisualik (spending the winter in town) came by with small kids and goodies for elders. We enjoyed their visit and the warm sun, trees and gray jays made a great afternoon for them.

There was an interesting report before noon today of four or five hundred caribou coming to shore off the ocean ice. Someone suggested that a large group was traveling on Kotzebue Sound ice from the Deering area. We are wondering if these could be the same animals and if their first ground landing off sea ice was here in Sisualik. That seems a long haul without feeding. We will hear more about this soon.

The near shore open lead widened and opened up this afternoon down toward Sealing Point with many seals reported in it.

Many snowmachines took part in a big race just east of us today. Times and values have changed a lot amongst our people. There were only two or three machines involved in sealing or caribou hunting today while the races attracted hundreds of machines.

April 7 Low 2° F, High 28° F
E wind to 15. Sun, clouding late.

A quiet Sunday with some very interesting visitors. They had lunch and heard some/many old stories on everything from “soup to nuts.” Both Carrie and I enjoyed meeting new people and hearing from them of old agency friends that have moved on over the years. They are off on a several day journey up the Noatak.

Our first day on daylight savings time today and we seem to have lost instead of gained. It was still dark in the house at 6 a.m. and the sun didn’t come in till after 8 a.m. Under standard time, the inside of the house was quite bright by 6 and sun was in the window before 8. And of course the sky will still hold too much daylight at 12 midnight to think of going to bed. And of course this brings us back again to the fact of being three hours off natural sun time. We still feel that it is unfair for politics and government to later something as natural and pure as sun time.

A lone moose passed us headed down creek last night. Our lone rabbit may have come back from down creek.

Only a week to go till our earliest ever arrival of waterfowl related migrants. Two sandhill cranes were taken on April 14 above Noatak village many years ago.

April 8 Low 8° F, High 26° F
N-NW wind to 30. Cloudy, snow, clear.

Ground drift most of the day but warm sun in the spruce patch with dancing trees in the stronger winds at higher levels.

Checked around for a place to cut firewood this morning but gave it up before finding a place when wind and drift got stronger.

Ran the dogs down to tidelands but only one went. The older dog Terry has more sense and stayed home in the spruce patch and enjoyed his freedom off chain while we were gone.

A good group of visitors this late afternoon that came purposely to make us a Korean kimchi soup! Made a couple of new friends and enjoyed the old one.

They saw a snowy owl on the way in – the first we have heard of in this area. There can be overwintering owls if there is a food source but otherwise they begin to trickle north by this time for nesting.

There are now multiple rabbit tracks in a small thick willow spot near our exit trail right on the creek. It is a good thing to see. Thick willow spots without rabbit tracks are not normal!

April 9 Low 2° F, High 23° F
N-NW wind to 15. Clear, high thin clouds.

Town trip to pick up box from Point Lay and other mail, pay phone bill and meet more old friends. Good trip over

and back. New trail lumps were better than expected.

A report of the taking of a bull caribou today that was good and fat on the back – a rare thing for this date in this region. It is also a very good indication of the good health of the herd that has wintered in our general area.

Our east neighbors got 30 sheefish again from the east shore of Kobuk Lake. They reported no wind all day up there and then a cold trip home when they hit our cold winds of yesterday about half way to their home.

Carrie doing much better today. She gets around the house well, and was able to do dishes.

No new birds in yet – but it won't be long!

Weatherman continues to promise cold weather, so Sisualik will delay some more yet.

Finally brought a couple of loads of firewood down there today. One was a load of white spruce logs, the other was sawed up hardwood pallets.

April 10 Low 4° F, High 19° F
 N-NW wind to 25. Some clouds, some sun.

A fine day in sheltered areas like our spruce patch. Cold and maybe some drifting in open places.

Our resident moose came down the creek late yesterday and then went back up passing near the house during the night or early this morning.

Some or most years moose never leave our area and concentrate on large river stems when snow buildup is heavy. This year our snow cover is relatively light, and traveling between feeding areas with their long legs is not difficult.

There are good indications that both caribou and moose have done well this winter in spite of both human and animal predators.

Put a new chain on and cleaned out the chainsaw today, and will need to start hauling some things out of here and down to the beach house. Our move is usually made between April 15 and May 1.

It is still hard to believe our time here in the trees is almost up. Our stay was shortened by two months this year, due to lack of early snow. It has made a lot of difference. We never seemed to really catch up on things needing to be done, and now it is time to move out again.

We will soon be seeing more variety in birds again, including Jonathan, and that will be great.

April 11 Low 2° F, High 24° F
 NW-NE wind to 10. Clear, misty, light snow.

A cool bright beautiful day with minute grains of snow in the clear sky and air, the kind of cold weather snow that

makes steel runners on sleds squeak and causes the sled to be hard to drag for both dogs and snowmachines.

The Kobuk 440 dog race got underway today at noon with nine well known mushers. Two locals, the rest from other places in the state. They go up the Kobuk to Kobuk from Kotzebue, turn around, come back down to Ambler, across to Selawik, then to Noorvik and back to Kotzebue – quite a long run. All nine racers will share in the prize money which is considerable.

Hauled a load of heavy things – moose meat, two seals with blubber, spare generator, and some odds and ends. By mid-April each year we begin getting what things need to be down to Sisualik moved while trail is still firm. Each year we hope to remain here in our sheltering spruce patch till May 1st but with a sudden warm spell things can fall apart any time after mid-April. Ideally we delay moving to the wide-open coast till the surface snow stops drifting, having been cemented together by the warmth of the sun.

A couple of camps have been re-occupied in Sisualik after a winter – a first winter? – of no residence.

April 12 Low 10° F, High 33° F
E-SE-S-SW wind to 25. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Well, if you are not running the Kobuk 440 or practicing to run the Arctic Circle Championship sprint races it was a good day to stay inside.

We got 4” of light fluffy snow today and expect more tonight. Temps warmed, so that as snow fell it melted on clothes or dark surfaces. It was a particularly bad day for travel with no distant visibility and complete whiteout most of the time.

The 440 racers made Ambler this afternoon and move on to the turnaround point at Kobuk. The big Arctic Circle sprint race was delayed till noon tomorrow.

It also was not a good day for air travel. A niece and her husband returned from a funeral at Point Hope to their home in Point Lay and did a scary landing in snowy whiteout conditions.

I didn't get away from our camp clearing for normal daily chores of chopping wood, getting ice to water bucket, and spilling the slop bucket.

Our faithful gray jays, passing by ravens, and a few redpolls, kept us in touch with birds and reminded us that many other species are on their way. Next month the air will be filling again as many, many species move north. Oh boy! And Jonathan in his majestic, immaculate spring sport coat will assume his picturesque stance on the small swallow box and none other will attempt to move him off. Sedate is a word that fits that bird!

April 13 Low 14° F, High 38° F
N-NW wind to 15. Cloudy, clearing, sun!

The snowing stopped, finally, leaving nearly 6” in our area. Our scene out the window this morning was winter again. Everything was draped with new snow. Everything silent.

The sun went to work though when it finally broke free of the clouds. By this evening the trees were nearly free of snow again. Dark places thawed a bit again but temps returned to freezing early this evening.

Took the dogs and broke trail down to tidelands early as an early caller thought he might visit today. The new snow is enough to hide all trails inland.

I ended up making the trail the wrong way though. I assumed the visitor would be coming in our straight town trail but that one didn't come. Another friend did try to come (a daughter of a Sisualik neighbor) through our Sisualik trail into the tablelands. There was, of course, no discernable trail there with all the new snow and she (not knowing I had made a trail several miles east of where she went up) turned back to town. Too bad! A lapse in communication.

No fresh tracks yet on the new snow when I went out. Even the red squirrels have to look up their snowshoes again in order to get around.

April 14 Low 0° F, High 18° F
NE-E wind to 15. Clear, some clouds.

Our countryside no longer looks ready for cranes although 40 years ago two were taken above Noatak for the birthday soup pot of our nephew. Our heavy snow three days ago has made all the mountains white again and there is no thawed ground or grasses showing. It may take a couple of weeks more to get things in shape for migratory birds and early waterfowl.

Ran over the trail to Sisualik today and found it rather well hidden by the new snow and SW drift. Sisualik itself, around buildings, is a mass of new soft large snowbanks due to the SW drift off the flat ocean ice. Our tent frame may not survive this time.

Our wood hauling grandson-in-law brought us a fine big load of wood again from Fish Creek country. We have sure appreciated the willingness of this young fellow to keep us in firewood this late winter while both Carrie and I recuperate from advanced age problems.

New snow pretty much free of new creature track. Weasel and fox tracks around stuff left in Sisualik and a few fox tracks on the trails but no ptarmigan, moose, or caribou tracks yet. The low number of ptarmigan tracks at this season is a puzzle. Males, some anyway, should have black heads now.

April 15 Low -7° F, High 13° F
W-NW wind to 30. Clear, few clouds.

A day of bright sun and cold air typical of early spring during a west wind. There was a good deal of ground drift out in the open today, contributing to the building of snow pillows that will soon be hard bumps on the trails – a characteristic of west wind drift while there is loose snow on the surface.

Our one snowshoe hare survives. Finally saw the tracks today. Fresh tracks on the new snow of several days ago

are few. Our rabbit will need to be careful though. There were a very small fox's tracks around the rabbit tracks and he didn't break through the snow crust any more than the rabbit did. Must be a very light fox.

Our grandson-in-law brought another load of wood today from way up at Fish Creek.

Everybody complaining about the cold west wind. The last day of Arctic Circle Championship was run today, and the last late musher from the Kobuk 440 also got in this evening.

I've not seen a single willow ptarmigan track in the new snow yet. That is remarkable. We still don't have a reason for the multi-year scarcity of willow ptarmigan and snowshoe hares. Porcupine also seem scarce. All these animals depend on willow buds or cambium. Could there be something wrong there?

April 16 Low -24° F, High 9° F
NE wind to 18. Clear, clouding over late.

Another blizzard coming down on us the weatherman says, tonight and tomorrow. We are gaining a lot of snow about the time we are expecting it to start melting.

Ran the dog down to the ice lake this afternoon to stock up a bit before the storm. We have a good supply of wood, good shelter, a warm house, and lots of meat, so one or two late storms shouldn't hurt. It is time for spring weather though and we would like to get moved and settled for the summer by the ocean.

No mention of caribou on VHF for a week now. Their movement north may have begun in earnest.

Carrie's knee is getting better and as storms pass we may be ready for the wide open spaces of Sisualik. Springtime birds and open spaces sound pretty good with spring right round the corner.

Did see tracks of a large flock of willow ptarmigan today. Didn't see the birds though. The males may all have dark heads by now – it is time.

Many changes in creatures will be in progress by now. We heard first belugas were taken in Point Hope this week and at least a couple of bear tracks have been seen.

Gray jays may be making nests and gyrfalcons should be on nest sites.

April 17 Low 2° F, High 30° F
Variable winds to 40. Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

A day of storm and much snow, maybe 10 inches. It is the most we have had all winter in one shot. Didn't get far from the front door step today. The temps mild and up but air remained full of snow all day.

Our nearest east neighbor saw caribou this morning even though visibility was very limited – they must have been close to his camp. We heard later that he had gotten some. We didn't hear what quality they were or how many. There have not been many near us here for some time and we had heard they have been moving north.

After snow and winds from E this morning winds had switched to west by late afternoon and got even stronger while heavy snow filled the air. This may be our most intense storm of the winter season.

Gray jays were busy around the dogs but soft snow got too deep for red squirrels to play out.

If the fox didn't catch our lone snowshoe hare last night he won't know for a while. The rabbit with his big snowshoe feet will make much better running time than the fox ever could.

One traveler from down south became overdue today and Search and Rescue had to get out to look for him in the blizzard. He was located in good shape. Search and Rescue volunteers are a tough bunch. Good show!

April 18 Low -10° F, High 16° F
NW wind to 15. Clear.

Very, very bright out today on the new snow piles. Piles is correct! All our new snow from the blizzard yesterday is laid out in east-west lines, right across most of our trails out of here to town or Sisualik. Traveling now is very tough on back or gut or both. We have a very lumpy trail and I must make a town trip tomorrow!

Several good bunches of caribou on Sealing Point flats yet as reported by travelers from there today.

Very cold air down that way. The sun warmed our spruce patch early today, and it stayed very pleasant through the day, much unlike yesterday when the air was full of snow from drift or falling snow or both. We have not had a strong west wind after a new snow for a long time and there are drifts and piles in unusual places now.

Broke our trail down to tidelands again with sno-go and one dog. The older and wiser dog stayed home and walked around in the trees and warm sun.

Things seem to be shaping up for a delayed and maybe a late spring. May is not far off now and the April moon is growing fast.

It is supposed to be the time of lots of willow ptarmigan noise but I saw only one lone track on the way down the trail today.

April 19 Low -11° F, High 24° F
NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Town trip and a rough one! Couldn't see Nuvuruq from tableland tree, but made a blind try to hit Sisualik staked trail. I hit dog racers staked trail and followed it into the Kotzebue stakes. Roundabout way all right but visibility very poor. An already sore back was not made better by the cruel bumps of the NW blizzard a few days ago. Eventually made it to town and got business done and headed back. Found a Kivalina bound traveler towing a sno-go on a sled – stuck in the middle of the trail. His sled was heavily loaded with both gas and snowmachine and had sunk in a drift below the runner height. Took my sled off and together we pulled his out and got him on his way, but Kivalina is a long way with lots of other deep snow banks. Still had to make another new trail from Sisualik

stakes to tree maker on tableland trail. Finally made it home but back muscles may give some trouble tomorrow.

Though Carrie's knee has improved she has a swollen wrist. Hope we can get things together for our move to Sisualik.

Finally saw a good bunch of ptarmigan inside the trees close to the cabin. Didn't see them but their tracks only. Still haven't heard or seen a black headed spring ptarmigan yet!

We gained snow again today that we don't need and more may be coming over the weekend.

April 20 Low 2° F, High 32° F
 N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, clearing.

Made a trail again to Sisualik. The lagoon is somewhat bumpy but not bad.

A large flock of willow ptarmigan again made tracks on our exit trail. Didn't see them or hear them again so no chance to shoot a few. We would like to eat ptarmigan again!

Our east neighbor called on the phone after he and his wife had spent the day up the big trees of Akulisaq cutting firewood. He wanted to report hearing a very loud and active woodpecker. They didn't see the birds but assumed a much larger bird than our small three-toed woodpecker which is the most common. On closer questioning they figured it was a bigger bird because of the greater sound. I mentioned that sound of a woodpecker varies much depending on what he is working on. A hollow dry tree with an external layer of solid firm spruce without bark is almost like a drum or tom-tom and a small bird with a hard beak can make quite a big noise.

On the other hand, we have had northern flickers in the area usually a little later in the year and not every year. Maybe some fortunate woodcutter will see the bird and tell us more.

I have not even seen an arctic three-toed woodpecker this winter. We usually do, sometimes right around the house.

April 21 Low 8° F, High 26° F
 N-NW wind to 30. Cloudy, clearing late.

A rather long but bright Sunday with cool air and ground drift most of the day.

No visitors due to drift conditions in Kotzebue.

Walked the dogs separately on snowshoes for a change. That way I get twice as much exercise as they do. Packed the shotgun around as I thought we might see ptarmigan but we didn't.

Our lone rabbit hasn't made tracks on the last new snow. Maybe the fox got him. There have been no near caribou tracks reported for some time, though animals were still reported from Sealing Point a few days ago. We are kind of marking time till drifting stops so we can move down to Sisualik.

Carrie has been doing better but today seems a step backward again, with a couple of other joints developing swelling and pain. We hope she gets better and the weather warms at the same time so we can make the move to summer camp.

April 22 Low -18° F, High 14° F
Light winds. Clear, clouding over.

Lots of sun today. It was warm on the front doorstep but pretty cool elsewhere. Loosed the dogs and got ice from the Beaver Lake to be a little ahead if we get down to Sisualik house to clean a bit before moving in.

Our lone snowshoe hare finally made tracks in the new snow. The fox didn't get him like we thought when we didn't see new tracks for several days.

No travelers our way again though people are on the move with the generally fine, though cold, weather.

No sign of larger animals over the area covered today. There seems very little mention of bears out though there are certainly some out by this time. There should also be sightings of golden eagles and rough legged hawks by this date, especially in our nearby nest sites.

There seems little news out of Point Hope too even though we heard they had taken beluga earlier. Bowhead whales are due.

Our April moon continues to grow and almost straight up in the sky. One hardly notices the moon from this time on since the night sky stays bright through the short night. The sun has pretty well put the moon out of business. It certainly has lost the prominence it held in December and January!

April 23 Low 5° F, High 22° F
SE-S wind to 15. Cloudy, snow, fog, sun late.

Some beautiful snow showers today with huge big and sometimes double flakes. They are so light they made an inch in a short while and with the fog and whiteout it was impossible to see day-old trails. I went down to Sisualik to do some cleaning up but didn't do much. With the absolute whiteness down there it was even dangerous to walk around the buildings - very tall snowbanks with steep icy sides. With the flat light one could end up in a crevasse in one's own front yard.

Snowbank buildup down there greater than last year. Tent is pretty well covered.

The only fresh tracks were that of a large moose moving back into the creek from the west side spruce patches. No ptarmigan, rabbit or even fox tracks from overnight.

The clouds and snow particles in the air all cleared off this evening and we had a beautiful bright and warm sunny evening. Makes one think of birds. Our three gray jays were there but no others. Geese and cranes reported in Fairbanks even with their new snow.

April 24 Low 8° F, High 25° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, snow, clear.

We continue to wait, marking time for weather and our health to get better so that we can make the move to Sisualik. There is a heavy winter storm forecast for tomorrow and Friday. Carrie is getting around the house better again so maybe things will work out well for the last week of April.

Our rendezvous with Jonathan Livingston Seagull is on the line. It wouldn't do for him to get in down there before we do.

A second rabbit has turned up so our spruce patch is looking up again. Tried twice today to see or hear ptarmigan down in the creek willows but now chance. It is remarkable in this country how there can be such an amazing abundance one year and nearly nothing another year.

Same birds, same trees, same landscape today! What change will tomorrow bring?

Someday soon there will be a dramatic change. Noise in the air (birds and insects), soft snow, water and greens on the ground. And not long after that the very first flowers.

Our building storm is coming from Siberia and may be a rough one – we shall see!

April 25 Low 18° F, High 32° F
SE-S-SW wind to 35. Cloudy, snow, blizzard.

Well, our promised blizzard arrived and will probably carry on thru tomorrow. Temps are just barely freezing and snowfall is heavy. We may have some rain though the forecast winds from the SW may keep temps below freezing. It is not a good day or night to be out.

Our day got off to a sad start. We shut down our phone and VHF around 11 p.m. – a half earlier than usual last night. Our nephew and close extended family member died around that time at the hospital where he had been admitted. It was not thought by us and apparently not by the attending doctor that his problem was life threatening or serious. We did not hear till 9 a.m. this morning. It is very hard to believe he is gone. Carrie had talked to him from the hospital only an hour or so before we signed off.

Since this kind of stress has caused a flare-up of Carrie's arthritis before we are hoping for the best this time since she has shown steady improvement this past week. We shall see.

This present late winter storm is unusual in that it is coming to us from the SW straight out of Siberia. Most of our storms come up from the Aleutians. Some of our worst high marine water storms have come from this direction. This seems to be a major one as far as wind and snowfall are concerned. We shall see a little later about a possible marine water storm surge.

April 26 Low 32° F, High 36° F
SW wind to 40. Cloudy, rain, some clearing.

This was 24 hrs of weather all right. Snow after midnight, turning to a period of heavy rain at 5 a.m. that killed the blizzard conditions when drifting snow ceased with the rain. Wind from the SW continued very strong through the day but no more rain or snow for which we were glad. We gained 6" of new snow yesterday and early this morning. That was more than we got from any previous storm this winter.

And wouldn't you know it – with all this weather a first glaucous gull was seen in Kotzebue. Wonder if it was Jonathan?

The rain and large amount of new snow was just right for making snowballs or a snowman. It made for a difficult day for snowshoes and snowmachines due to the "balling up" nature of the snow.

Didn't fire up the snowmachine but did pack down our two exit trail with snowshoes with dogs loose doing their part to help.

The only new track of any kind today was a moose that was delayed for several days just creek. It is possible that this animal was partner to the one killed here by the cabin in January. Most years moose leave our small creek in mid-winter. Not this year probably due to our small accumulation of winter snow. Fresh moose tracks have been more common than rabbits in our spruce patch this winter.

April 27 Low 32° F, High 37° F
SW-W wind to 20. Cloudy.

Weather pretty nice today with warm periods of sun and mild west wind.

It was grave digging time again in Sisualik today. A close extended family nephew passed on unexpectedly. Weather, including extensive overflow conditions, has complicated the scene but many, many workers turned up on site and the grave was completed quickly in the old gravel beach ridge ground of Sisualik.

Two events down there were pretty neat and timely. Four geese were seen, the first reported this spring, and two ground squirrels were out during a warm sunny period, also the first sighting of the season. A gull was also reported in Kotzebue again – the first was yesterday. All these are timely of course since we are well into the last week of April. The large amount of new snow and then rain immediately on top changed the landscape much.

We are ready to move down there but are still holding off, trying to miss the last storms. Now due to the short but heavy rain period all old snow is fastened down but the forecast tonight indicates that some more may be coming.

The funeral is set for Monday with burial in Sisualik.

Spring is here! The birds show it even if the weather doesn't. Oh yes and the dear little squirrels! Terry the squirrel dog will act young again.

April 28 Low 31° F, High 38° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, snow.

A nice morning with surface snow on broken trails well frozen supporting walking without snowshoes till sun thru clouds warmed the surface by mid-afternoon. Then clouds thickened and snow began to fall melting on contact with dark things. It became a miserable “whiteout” wet late afternoon and evening.

The new snowy weather was a bum surprise as we have two episodes on line for the next few days. We have the funeral and burial of a nephew tomorrow and we must move to summer camp. Both ordeals cannot be postponed for long. Spring birds have been seen and a few ground squirrels have been out. Usually the spring move is made before May 1st and sometimes a week or so earlier in order to take advantage of still frozen trails.

We sometimes delay almost too long trying to miss the last of drifting snowstorms. The rainy period last week fastened down all the old snow but now we are forecast to gain another 4” or so.

The funeral will go on at 1 p.m. tomorrow in Kotzebue, regardless of weather, but burial in Sisualik may be postponed if weather or trail is too much. We won’t make the funeral but Carrie will want to go down to burial site if she can make it.

April 29 Low 32° F, High 38° F
Light winds. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Funeral and burial today of our long loved nephew.

We decided to move down to Sisualik to overnight at least but probably once I get Carrie down there she will not return to spruce patch till next fall. The trail is getting pretty soft up here because there has only been slight freezing for two nights. We will do well to get moved while things are yet firm.

We did get into Sisualik for lunch and while eating and looking out the window lo and behold! There was Cedric the ground squirrel standing straight up and looking tall! He is the first hibernator that we have seen out from his long winter rest.

Funeral was scheduled for 1 p.m. in Kotzebue. Burial party got over here around 5 p.m. Carrie was a little sore from our trip down so I went over to the gravesite to be with the family. There were a lot of folks from Kotzebue and everything went well. After finishing touches everyone returned to Kotzebue for a Friends Church potluck funeral feast.

April 30 Low 31° F, High 38° F
N-NE-E wind to 20. Cloudy, fog, rain.

Jonathan made it in! He came in about 10 a.m. while I was up at the spruce patch getting a load. Carrie said there was a lot of hollering and circling – Jonathan likes to make a big thing of his coming. Carrie told him I was not home but would be soon. He did the fly by again when I got back and even brought apparently his mate.

It takes a while and some patience to be sure of camp gull personalities. Not sure that Jonathan's mate this year is Lucinda from last year – she was the only gull in the flock that later took food from my hand on the wind. She is also the bird that several years ago brought her newly flying squabs to my feet as protection from other pirating gulls while she regurgitated their daily food ration on the ground. Lucinda is not at all like Jonathan but is quite sophisticated for a glaucous gull and rather small as her species goes. I hope she is here. It is a special thrill to hold a piece of fish in your hand, twelve inches from your ear, and have Lucinda swoop out of a flock of swirling gulls and clip the fish from your fingers. She can misjudge a bit sometimes which means a bloody scratch on a finger but the thrill is worth the possible scratch.

We had rain all day today and a second squirrel joined the first. Spring is here!

MAY

May 1 Low 22° F, High 33° F
SE wind to 20. Cloudy, few breaks.

Freezing temps began late in the night/early this morning but continued to cool thru the morning and stayed below freezing all day. This gave us our hoped for concrete hard snow surface all over the rain soaked snow zone around Kotzebue and Sisualik.

I made an easy trip up to the spruce patch and came out with a good load. Could have made a second but had a couple of male willow ptarmigan to pluck for our supper. We have gotten rather tired of our constant caribou-moose meat diet, even though it is good quality meat. We have longed for small game (ptarmigan, rabbit, or fresh fish). Today we have a couple of ptarmigan and a Sisualik neighbor brought us a huge egg-laden sheefish take last September on the upper Kobuk just as freezing temps began. These fish get pretty smelly, pretty tasty and are a special treat for people of Kobuk and Shungnak who know how to care for them. One is quite lucky to be given a treat of this kind and we ate nearly half of it for lunch.

Lots of gulls and more squirrels have shown up but we have not yet seen other birds. Others have seen geese, cranes and swans. We soon will know that we are into May. Oh boy, a great month coming up.

Lots of coastal travelers tonight as trail has firmed up.

May 2 Low 24° F, High 32° F
E-SE wind to 20. Cloudy.

Caribou news today – unusual for our area to have news of caribou at this date.

I saw two good bunches a mile apart, moving west on our trail to Sanningaruq. They were bunches of 30 to 40 animals, mostly young and small animals, some retaining antlers and apparently no bulls whose new sprouting antlers should be showing plainly now. Their coats are much faded now – sun bleached.

Achauq the dog followed one group for a while but found out that they easily out-distance him.

The dogs and I made it up to the house to bring out the generator and propane tank. The trail was firmly frozen all the way but warming.

A friend went from his camp down to Sealing Point to check ocean ice for seal hunting. He reported lots of rough ice and no near shore lead in that area though tonight's reflection of open lead on the clouds indicates an open lead from Espenberg to Sealing Point with an arc into Kotzebue Sound.

He also reported caribou in hundreds and even thousands in the hills but not the flats of Cape Krusenstern. Neighbor boys saw a bear up our nearest creek today.

We have a camp flock of 5-6 glaucous gulls now and a mew gull reported from Noatak flats. There are probably geese, cranes and swans flying around but we haven't seen or heard any. Few reports have come in of other birds.

May 3 Low 24° F, High 34° F
 NE-E wind to 18. Clear! Lots of sun.

Town trip today for gas and spring supplies. Found the trail well frozen and good traveling before noon but getting a little soft with a load by 3 p.m.

The most recent overflow showed a rather different pattern than usual. In most places the water ran back down the holes it came up through and those places are now dry. In other places the water ran into basins while it was high, then found no way out when marine water level dropped. These basins with water depth to 3' have not yet frozen over enough to travel over and probably won't. One must go around them.

Jonathan finally perched on his swallow box top today.

We still haven't seen or heard other birds though from inland areas we heard that one hunter had gotten four geese.

Lots of travelers on the trail this evening – some hauling to camp sites but mostly young men with shotguns checking early thaw spots. A grandson hauled our full drum of gas over this evening. Glad for the help.

Big sheefish derby tomorrow. Some will take a \$500 prize! Carrie won one year in the past and would love to take part tomorrow but is not up to the distance travel necessary to enter contest.

May 4 Low 26° F, High 33° F
 E wind to 35. Clear.

Windy but clear today. Trails stayed firm all day.

We have a pretty aggressive camp gull flock already, probably including both Jonathan and Lucinda. We have not seen other birds yet though. There have been sporadic sightings of geese by others.

Made a next to last trip back to winter camp this morning and again saw two small groups of westward moving caribou on tablelands just on the edge of tidelands.

Some distant west neighbors (Katyaaraq) dropped off a hind leg of a caribou for us taken behind their place today. Unusual for caribou to pass by us on their spring migration.

The sheefish derby seems to have come off well today, with many to be given away free at the Lion's Club this evening. A 54" fish may have taken first place. An unexpected number of fish were taken close to Kotzebue at Pipe Spit. It is the first time this spring that fish have been take there. It is usually a high producing place in late spring and appears to be so again.

There are going to be a number of people camping west of us for the spring and summer. Probably nearly the same number as last year. They are moving stuff down now and settling in next week.

May 5 Low 28° F, High 33° F
NE-E wind to 40. Cloudy, snow, rain, fog.

Strong winds today with building clouds, snow, rain, fog and drifting snow this evening.

Seven caribou walking across our backyard this morning as I made coffee. There were many more west of us on tablelands when I took dogs for a run.

Some travelers yesterday reported a large herd of 100 or so on the ocean ice moving towards Krusenstern when people were going from Shishmaref to Kotzebue by snowmachine.

All this caribou movement through Krusenstern at this season is unprecedented in this century. It is unusual, to say the least, and a special treat to be on the scene. Calving time is not far off – some reindeer already have calves.

People moving into camps on Krusenstern. The offshore lead has gotten very, very wide with all this off shore wind.

Point Hope whalers haven't had good weather for hunting for some time. Bird sightings pretty slow again because of weather. A first robin was reported at a camp site today and a few white-fronted geese have been seen. Our gull flock has grown to 18.

May 6 Low 28° F, High 34° F
E-SE-S wind to 18. Cloudy, breaks with sun.

A much more liveable day than yesterday. The wind, rain and snow yesterday must have been tough on creatures without shelter.

The air was quite still this morning at 6 a.m. After the 40 or so knot winds yesterday the quiet was a treat. The wet and sticky snow that clung to everything outdoors yesterday and last night soon dropped off under the heat of the

sun.

Didn't do much today except entertain visitors and pluck a couple of ptarmigan. After considerable overnight or early morning rain it seemed it might be too soft up at the house to make a final trip up that way. If it freezes tonight we may go up there early tomorrow.

Our seven caribou still in sight back there. They are just far enough off the main trail to be undisturbed by passing snowmachines.

More people report passing geese today but we have still not heard or seen geese or cranes.

Our camp gull flock has grown to 20+ now. Rumor has spread amongst the gulls that we are the only camp in the country with a gull food attraction.

May 7 Low 29° F, High 35° F
SE-E wind to 20. Cloudy, rain, snow.

A second Siberian low passing through and leaving us more clouds, snow, and rain than we need at this point. Traveling conditions are deteriorating rapidly.

Carrie made it back up to the spruce patch today to help clean out and board up the house. We found it warmer up there and a less frozen surface. Trail and snow around the house pretty soft. We did get all the stuff out that we think we will need and put up the "bear door" and noisemakers. We may not see the place again till next fall.

We saw two good bunches of caribou on the way up and it again seems so unusual. We are used to seeing caribou in October when we move up but never in May.

Both creek crossings had water under the snow but shallow yet. It won't be long till crossing with snowmachine will be impossible.

Still no birds for us to see except our camp gulls. Cranes and geese held up somewhere.

After we got our sled load home I found that I had left my shovel out of sight behind the house and since I have much shoveling to do in Sisualik I had to make another trip up to retrieve it.

May 8 Low 32° F, High 35° F
E-SE-S wind to 18. Cloudy, snow, rain.

Our 54th wedding anniversary today. Lots of well wishers through VHF and telephone. We appreciate much those who remembered us. Taiku!¹⁹

Our only birds are still our camp glaucous gull flock and Sisualik is still very white as we gain a bit more snow each day as well as period of rain that just settle it down but don't really melt it. In many years of the past we have

¹⁹ Iñupiaq Eskimo form of "thank you"

eaten our first goose on this date and no doubt someone not too far off is doing that tonight.

Since our snow hardly froze last night and we had some periods of rain it seemed too soft to even fire up the sno-go. It is even too soft to exercise the dogs, though they are due. Maybe it will clear one of these nights and freeze so the surface will again support the people, dogs and sno-gos.

So far we know of only one active seal hunter and in spite of difficult weather he brought home a couple. This is the best time for common ringed seal hunting and the lack of active hunters is a sign of the times and the changed economy.

We have about eight ground squirrels out around camp. Too many for such a small plot. It is neat to watch their activities out of the large windows in the house.

May 9 Low 32° F, High 38° F
Light winds. Fog, cloudy. Rain, snow flurries.

Finally got to exercise the dogs in the fog while the snow surface was lightly frozen. Both dogs made it to our western lookout site, Terry about 20 minutes late. They both enjoyed the long and rather tough run. It was tough due to some long stretches of soft rather deep snow.

We didn't see anything in the fog. No birds, no caribou, and no travelers.

The tracks of one small group of caribou went out on the sea ice just west of our west neighbor's place.

A couple of friends came across and went down to look for musk ox but didn't find any in the fog. They did report a goose sighting and many caribou back in the hills yet.

They also reported lots of willow ptarmigan in display mode in our western coastal hills. This is good news since ptarmigan in our immediate area has been extremely scarce. It is good to know there are lots not far off.

I did note today sprouting flower stalks of *Eriophorum vaginatus* (a cottongrass) common and early on tussock tundra. It is said by old reindeer herders that once this new growth is out caribou are not likely to move much for a while. There is great competition among individual animals over these succulent new sprouts.

May 10 Low 31° F, High 34° F
W-SW wind to 15. Cloudy.

Surface frozen this morning but snow pretty soft again soon after noon. Water on top of ice getting pretty deep in front of town but there was lots of traffic from there today. Word is that the trail is still pretty good once you cross the quarter mile in front of Kotzebue.

Caribou seen at Akulak by the first traveler from the west today.

Another camp resident moved across today. There are now five occupied camps west of the Ranger Station at

Anigaq and five in Sisualik. Not a lot different than last year at this time but there are two or three. Some travelers are from Kivalina, some are weekend goose hunters, and some are resident campers “getting things together.” We had even one traveler from as far as Buckland today even though we heard their river is bank full.

Folks are wondering where are all the birds? The delay most take as a hint that it might stay cold for a while yet.

Another surprising fact is that our highest mountains remain pretty white yet after days of thawing temps – a hint that the last period of snowfall hit the higher elevations pretty hard.

Stayed home all day doing camp chores.

May 11 Low 28° F, High 35° F
 SW-W to 15. Cloudy, some sun, fog.

Went west to the near lookout point and picked up some firewood from the thawed beach gravel over there.

Didn't see any caribou but there is probably some around yet. Ground fog on higher ground prevented distant views.

The small green flower stalks of cotton grass (*Eriophorum sp.*) are out and caribou/reindeer are crazy for them (as well as geese, cranes, and ptarmigan).

Did see a large musk ox track headed our way but didn't see the animal.

Stopped at our west neighbors to talk a bit and while we were doing that a V shaped flock of 14 cranes flew directly over us coming from Espenberg straight across the Sound. They were a bit too high for the shotgun on my back but their voices sounded very, very good! These were the first I have seen this spring.

After getting home with my load of wood a longtime neighbor boy now living in Kotzebue stopped by and gave Carrie a white-fronted goose for her Mother's Day dinner tomorrow. Spring really is here after all. This bird has very little fat reserve reflecting, maybe, a tough trip north this year. It will be a much welcome change in diet.

May 12 Low 27° F, High 33° F
 SE wind to 15. Cloudy, sun thru clouds.

Mother's Day, and a first pot of goose soup.

A solid day of Mother's Day messages over the local radio station and a rather busy day of telephone calls for Carrie from Point Lay to Montana and Utah. We had a number of local visitors too on a mild but not too bright a day.

The weather bureau has promised a heavy snowfall tonight and tomorrow – seems unbelievable!

Heard crane calls from our backyard area today so the silence of winter air is a thing of the past for a few months.

Traffic is still pretty heavy in and out of Kotzebue though there is considerable water to go through in front of Kotzebue on the channel ice.

The same neighbor that left the goose yesterday also left a large fat female ringed seal taken while laying on the Sound ice west of us. Ringed seals, some of them, during the winter get frozen in from the last open lead and then spend the winter in a restricted area containing three or four breathing holes that they maintain until ice break up. As the sun warms they enlarge one of their holes and climb out and bask in the sun. There are several methods of taking these non-traveling seals.

May 13 Low 26° F, High 33° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Cloudy, clearing p.m.

Lots of sun this p.m. when clouds moved out but air is cool with west wind. Travel continues from Kotzebue with water on ice sinking some and trail across town channel a bit drier.

Went west with both dogs to lookout point and picked up another load of firewood.

More ground and water showing around the edge of lakes and along stream edges but birds still scarce. Cranes, gulls and a few distant goose calls are all we have seen to date.

Crossing of the creek our winter camp is on, at its mouth near Jones' Camp, is nearly impossible now. This is one of the trails to Noatak village. Someone did make the crossing today but had to look hard for a place to do that.

I may go west to Salluq tomorrow to check our boat and shovel the snow out. We left it too close to the edge and rainwater rose and caused it to freeze down – stuck – so we couldn't drag it farther up as we usually do. Water in that system will be rising soon to a pretty high level as it is still dammed at the outlet.

Seth K. passed today headed for a small group of musk ox with three calves he would like to photograph. He may overnight in mountains.

May 14 Low 18° F, High 33° F
 W-NW-N wind to 18. Fog, clearing, some clouds.

Quite foggy and cold this morning but turned into a mild pleasant and very bright evening.

We enjoyed a very good flavored and quite fat Canada goose pot roasted this evening.

Birds are still very scarce no doubt due to continuing cool temps and effect of late heavy snowfall. Our higher coastal mountain range which were pretty much snow free in late March are still quite white from April heavy wet snowfall.

Our friend the musk ox photographer came by after a night with the musk ox. He found a good-sized group (20?) with a good number of new calves. Light was not too good but he did get some good shots.

He reports caribou in numbers still around in the hills. No sign of bear which is not good news as the hunter pressure has been pretty heavy on bears in spring this close to Kotzebue. He also reports plenty of both rock and willow ptarmigan. His report is interesting because few people are getting into the Krusenstern high country now. Most hunters/travelers are at lower elevations hunting seal, geese or sheefish.

We are into mid-May and the lack of birds is remarkable. The camp mew gull, Pipsqueak, got in today. The first mew gull we've seen.

May 15 Low 16° F, High 30° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Clear.

Snow surface remained firm all day today. Fine for travel.

Went to Katyaaraq this morning to shovel snow out of our little boat. We left it too near the water's edge last fall and were unable to move it to higher ground later. Now the water level inside the slough system may rise over our boat and engine before it can float free of the bottom (frozen down). We will see what develops. The trail down that way is still good and dry and will be for a while.

We had a bright and lively Northern Wheatear out our door and around camp this morning. This bird is an insect eater newly arrived from some Asian point and no doubt waiting for the sun to arm some of the abundant flies around the snow free portions of our camp. This is a very active bird, smaller than a robin, with much body bobbing and tail pumping. It's not real colorful but a bird of contrast with black and white eye line, black and white rump and tail, and a nice buffy wash on the upper portions of a white breast. The only time we see the bird at sea level is in migration. It summers at higher elevations and passes thru in May and August when it is locally known as the Trout Bird as its fall appearance coincides with the beginning of the trout run.

May 16 Low 22° F, High 40° F
 E-SE wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

A cool morning after a long freezing spell that left any area snow covered as hard as cement and exceptionally good for traveling. Even the Kotzebue crossing was dry and frozen if you didn't have too heavy a load.

I went west to bail water out of the boat and pick up more firewood. Carrie saw a single crane from the house window today. A traveler from Kotzebue reported caribou moving out over ice from Cape Blossom toward Kotzebue and Sisualik.

We have ten ground squirrels out around camp now. Haven't seen any squirrel hunters or trappers this spring.

Snow melting a little faster. Our distant highest mountains that have been pretty much white all this time since the big SW blow with sticky snow are showing enlarging dark blotches today. Melting and consequently high water are on the way!

Birds still scarce but Pipsqueak's mate made it in today and both are sitting on the old tent frame next door.

Jonathan and Lucinda were both standing on the swallow box landing pad this afternoon. First time I've seen that – didn't think there was room. Don't know what the swallows will think about that.

May 17 Low 26° F, High 34° F
 W-NW wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, snow.

A Short Eared Owl came by last night and frightened our covey of ground squirrels in camp. The owl did a “double take” and came back over the group but didn't try for a big meal. Scared them though!

We hardly expected more snow but there it was this evening – fine big sticky flakes but no depth!

A small group of caribou got down to the beach just this side of Kenworthy's place today. A friend traveling back in the mountains to musk ox again reported small groups of caribou here and there.

Sisualik occupied camps now total six with six on down to the west as far as Sealing Point. That makes a total of twelve between Sisualik Point and Port Site. That's a pretty good number considering the local trend of several years for there to be fewer and fewer people living rurally. Several of these camps have only one parent with more family to join as school closes and winter jobs end.

Trail to town still in pretty fair shape and it had a good deal of use today.

May 18 Low 28° F, High 40° F
 E-SE wind to 25. Cloudy, some sun.

Birds, birds, birds! Today was bird day in Sisualik. After seeing so few till today, the abundance seems overwhelming. Large and small, waterfowl and passerines, shorebirds and raptors. All coming from the west and moving east into a fairly stiff warm dry wind.

There are flock after flock of pintails, shorebirds (small western sandpipers, dunlin, large whimbrel and bar-tailed godwit) passerines, savannah sparrows, redpolls, white-crowned sparrows, robins and maybe some Lapland longspurs.

The long awaited arrive of birds has finally come all at once. Bird sound and sighting will be continual from now till they begin to fade again in September. They do have a late start this year and today's flight direction is not unusual. Many migrants seem to make landfall by following the big off shore open lead – its contrasting blackness leads them right to the coastal mountains of Cape Krusenstern and they then move east to fill in the Noatak, Kobuk and Selawik valleys.

Also noticed today the yellow blooms of cottongrass (*Eriophorum* sp.), the major tussock plant that many creatures feast on as an early available new growth. (Caribou, reindeer, cranes, ptarmigan and geese and snow geese).

We've waited long for this day this year!

May 19 Low 32° F, High 54° F
SE wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

A record high in Kotzebue today 58°F. The old record was 57°F.

One tree swallow – our tree swallow – came in today. It checked out the box, noted the aggressive gulls (Jonathan and Lucinda) and settled in for the night. He looks a little lean and worn – maybe a tough trip to get here. A couple of geese we've had reflect that tough migration time this year.

Three seal hunters out tonight with winds dead calm.

Water on top of ice has come up rapidly today in the back lagoon areas. We may see some high floodwaters this spring due to late snow and delayed thawing.

The influx of birds continued today with most still traveling east but many numbers and species settling in locally.

A few travelers in and out of Kotzebue today even some from NW Kobuk Lake camps but snowmachine crossings are getting tedious and will soon cease. First boats out will be close behind the last sno-gos.

There is report of near or in Kotzebue shee hooking.

Did finally get away, walking, from the house/camp snowbanks today. Good to walk on snow free ground for a change.

May 20 Low 33° F, High 58° F
NE-E wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

Another record or tied high for Kotzebue. Very warm for the date in Sisualik and some higher *Gentianopsis detonsa* sites are under a few inches of melt water and the high temps are probably germinating long dormant seeds.

Back lagoon ice is covered with melt water up to flood level and a phone call from Carrie's sister in Noatak reported that their ice was moving out.

We are only one and three days off from record early egg finds in past years. Crane on the 21st and glaucous gull on the 23rd.

Not many waterfowl locally. Water covers all mud bars and most grasses leaving waterfowl places without food producing waterfowl places. As water drops mud, feed and aquatic plants are available. Channel areas have bottom ice beginning to float which raises edibles for many species of birds.

Saw our first arctic terns today – many! Also many western sandpipers and some red-necked phalaropes.

A small falcon just flew past the house window. It had the looks of a sparrow hawk (American kestrel) which are possible here but rare. I didn't get a good enough look for a positive ID.

The outlet at Anigaq opened to the ocean today also. Summer is on the way! All at once.

May 21 Low 34° F, High 60° F
 NE-E wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

Our heat wave continues, one of the most intense that we remember for the early date. This should mean a bumper crop of *G. detonsa*.

Snow is quickly disappearing all over the region and rivers and streams are running high. As yet there is no report of flood damage.

Sheefishing reported good at north end of Kotzebue town. Netting good for a camper downriver from Noatak, a few miles at Eli River, for trout and whitefish (even though the main river is running ice bad).

Our tree swallows have settled into the box and one at least is working 'round the clock constructing inside nest. The bird is very choosy when it picks dried grasses from around our doorstep. Their box nest is pretty elaborate, especially when it is finished. It has a canopy of waterfowl feathers that literally wrap around the nestlings. One wonders if this is only done by tree swallow in a box on the arctic coast where there is no trees and west winds sometimes drop below freezing during nesting time. Finding enough bugs to feed hungry nestlings can be hard during those cool west wind times before the 4th of July.

May 22 Low 34° F, High 58° F
 NE-E wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

Our heat wave continues. Snow mostly gone on the flat and remains in drifts around buildings and other places of winter pile up.

Local runoff seems to have peaked and water dropped a bit but still level full (above grass line). Some lagoon and lake ice has floated. On the ocean side water remains deep on ice as it is all flat on our front and water from melted snow is slow to run through.

First boating around at Jones' Camp – a canoe with small engine. They took geese and a caribou. Caribou still around!

The last crossing from town was made two days ago as far as we know. Boats will soon be out and into Noatak River though that river was still running white with ice from bank to bank at the village site. Lots of work around camp today trying to save what's good and toss what is spoiling with the snow going so fast.

Many incoming Jaegers (long tailed) today and a first large flock of Brant from the same direction (towards Cape Espenberg).

New growth already showing on ground so quickly freed from its burden of snow.

Waterfowl continue to be scarce locally as water remains high with no mud bars and feeding places open.

May 23 Low 33° F, High 50° F
 NE wind to 18. W-NW wind to 18. v

A warm morning. Afternoon cooled quickly when wind changed briskly to the west off the ice. Probably made the swallows shiver. They seem to be in the egg laying mode and glaucous gulls are into it this coming week.

First mosquitos seen at Sealing Point and Jones' Camp yesterday.

A first uguruq seen on the ice in front of Salluq today but the young hunter didn't quite make it. Old time hunters say there is no valid excuse for not taking an ice bedded uguruq.

Our sea ice is all ready to move. Beach cracks are wide and there are no tall deep iceberg nails to the SW to hold it back. It will be good to set a net and have fresh fish when it does move.

Our back yard was noisy this morning with no wind. Very loud crane clatter and tundra swan hooting.

An airboat passed to the west today. About a week ago it first passed going east. No one locally seems to know whose. It is a very loud monster. Hope their numbers don't grow. Those and air cushion vehicles are the loudest mechanical monsters we have heard on arctic air.

May 24 Low 35° F, High 61° F
 W-NW-N wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

Another very warm day – record breaker in Kotzebue again.

Our water remains pretty high in the lagoon. No crossing to back egg and duck hunt areas with 4-wheeler yet. There is no report of egg take yet but it is well known that glaucous gull egg laying begins the last week of May.

Waterfowl are very scarce in Sisualik to date. There are few swans and cranes but other species are somewhere else, even our most important northern pintail.

Noatak River reported ice free from village to mouth. Kotzebue Channel about to open and when it does boats will be out in a few hours.

Beach ice moved off west of us at Salluq and Katyaurlaq. It is quite early for that to happen. Our beach crack has widened and no large icebergs off shore so it may move at any time and we will be able to set net.

This warm spell is very timely and intense for germination of *G. detonsa* seeds. Should be a good year for that species. Green growth is showing on the ground, grasses, etc. Bumblebees and pussy willow blooms are out.

We have lost most of our snow very rapidly. Insects and plants nearly ready to take over our world again.

May 25 Low 34° F, High 55° F
W-NW wind to 15. Clear, few clouds. Light a.m. wind.

A first check of backyard glaucous gull nests this morning. Found two eggs in one nest and one in another. There are quite a number of nests. Egg laying has apparently just begun and that is why we expect to find eggs during the last week of May. So far as we know these are the first glaucous gull eggs taken this year.

Other big news today – a first uguruq was taken by a boat crew out of Katyauraq. Their ice just moved off the beach this morning. A large section from Sealing Point Tower to Akulak Lagoon moved out. This happens in some years. Usually our Sisualik ice moves off first and then later Katyauraq to Sealing Point, then on down to Port Site.

The Noatak Delta ice still holding and Kotzebue Channel ice is not open yet though it is nearer and nearer to doing that each day. This opening west of us is already extending toward the mouth of Kotzebue Channel. Kotzebue ice hunters will be out right away when the channel ice moves.

Some boats will also head up the Noatak for duck hunting, egg picking and fishing. Our first air taxi landing in Sisualik today bringing a neighbor's wife. There is much show of greening plants around the house and in the marshlands now.

May 26 Low 36° F, High 72° F
NE wind to 10. NW wind to 15. Clear, few clouds.

A very warm mid-day. Another record high for Kotzebue. Sisualik Spit nearly snow free except around buildings and some beach sections.

The channel at Sisualik Point opened this evening. Kotzebue Channel was open to mouth of the Noatak this morning and boats have been up to Jones' already, picking a few gull eggs.

The outlet at Akulak was found to be open yesterday. That lagoon hasn't opened for two to three years now. It too acts as a whitefish collection site once it opens now and closes in August. We will now have two lagoons workable for whitefish come mid-September.

Brant are making a pretty good showing right now on the Noatak Delta. We have seen a few small flocks leaving our lagoons for movement north by sea.

Both shrub willows and prostrate willows are leafing out and many perennial and biennial herbs are showing green as leaf clusters form – green in the midst of last year's brown gray dead stems and leaves.

Our salt marsh will be showing color soon with *Primula* and *Androsace*. There may already be *Pedicularis* flowers on beach ridges and tundra spots.

Carrie killed a large blood filled mosquito in the house this evening.

May 27 Low 34° F, High 58° F
NE-E wind to 20. Clear, some clouds.

Our beach crack opened wide enough today to set 10 or 12 feet of net. We ate some fine fresh whitefish for supper. They were the usual early season mix of very lean fish with four out of ten showing a trace of abdominal fat. Those are the four we cooked. They have firm flaky flesh. The lean ones are soft and mushy, not good for cooking fresh but half dried and boiled they are good with seal oil.

Many greens are making a good and early show. Flowers will not be far behind – in May??

Another milestone today with the setting of the net in the ocean. We eat a lot of fish and on almost any day from now till the ocean runs slush ice in October one can set a net and soon have fresh fish of a number of species.

Bird noise in the air increased today with a few more flying around. It has been a quiet spring here this year. Birds we usually see but haven't yet this year – yellow wagtail, Lapland longspur, red necked grebe, yellow billed loon, black legged kittiwake, and whimbrel. We must add willow ptarmigan strange as it seems. We have not heard the loud voice of a male willow ptarmigan this whole spring. Very odd!!

May 28 Low 34° F, High 54° F
N wind to 25 p.m. Clear, few clouds. Light winds a.m.

Our beach crack was a little wider this morning so I set the whitefish net again. When I pulled it in it held two buckets of bright Alaska whitefish. Enough to make two or three poles of half-dried and full dried whitefish. We also cooked a big platter again for supper. The fish were larger and in better physical condition than the few taken yesterday.

A big surprise between 9 and 10 p.m. I went through our back marsh area after chores were done to check gull nests for a few eggs. There were many gulls and nests but I found only two eggs and one eggshell freshly eaten (by jaeger probably). When I got home our narrow little beach crack had become nearly a mile wide! This was a very rapid ice movement, in part due to sudden strong N winds. We've been expecting it to open for several days but it is always a surprise when it happens. We are now into summer – waves, belugas, salmon, boat uguruq hunting and flowers soon.

The sound of waves big and small will again be near continual background noise in Sisualik. The question now is who will see or hear the first belugas?

The first boats out of Kotzebue into the sea ice will probably be tomorrow, if not tonight.

Many red-necked phalaropes into the marsh today and some loud-mouthed godwits on the ice mud.

May 29 Low 28° F, High 40° F
S-SW-SE wind to 18. Clear, clouds coming.

Cold day today compared to what we have been having. Had to cut fish in icy cold air and wash them in slushy cold

water. My hands look like seagull feet tonight!

Driftwood landing this afternoon here and uguruq being landed at Katyauraq. They brought in three today.

Our first boat made it to Sisualik Point from Kotzebue this late evening. There will soon be hunters out from Kotzebue and people moving down from Noatak for marine mammal hunting.

Saw a first red phalarope today and lots of incoming red-necked phalaropes. Our back marsh/lagoon area very low water now due to strong northerlies on the outer capes.

In Kotzebue out- moving large ice floe nearly bumped a residence after climbing the beach berm. Our ice is more than a mile out, all day.

No belugas seen or heard yet. In years past they would turn up right as the beach opened up, causing our place name "Sisualik" to be what it is.

Didn't set net today. Cut two poles from yesterday's catch. We will only set net now when we want to cook fresh fish or check to see if trout are here. Fresh cooked fat trout will be our next treat.

May 30 Low 26° F, High 35° F
 SW-W-NW wind to 35. Cloudy, fog, snow.

A strange day today. Cold winds, snow and fog and the largest waves and swells on the ocean that we have ever seen in May.

Spent a long arduous day moving my new driftwood out of wave reach – three different times!

Usually this soon after ice out, ice in the outer Sound ice pack belt acts as a breakwater and even strong on shore winds don't bring large waves and ground swells. The big waves normally don't show till that pack ice belt is gone, usually around the 4th of July or later. Today the wind and waves kept advancing toward the upper beach sod line. Unheard of at this date.

The spruce tree driftwood I picked out of the water yesterday and this morning I piled 20 feet above water level. As the wind picked up and waves and swells began to grow I had to go back and move the piles another 20 feet up. Some had already been swept away. After a couple of hours the waves and wind increased and some were lost again before I got it all moved another 20 feet up. What a day! Lots of wood! Lots of work! Unexpected ocean! All this may mean little ice left in the Sound for marine mammal hunters.

Saw a single Surfbird today. They are a rare bird here and it's always a thrill to see one. No chance for prolonged observation.

May 31 Low 22° F, High 36° F
 W-NW wind to 25. Fog, snow, sleet, clearing.

The sun came through enough to make it a bright day but a cool one.

No sign of the swallows since yesterday. One wonders how they and the many green tender leaves many plants have put out cope with these below freezing temps. Surely some damage will be done. Both prostrate willows and shrub willows have leaves as well as “pussy willows” out, and most perennial herbs have leaves and stems out. Those that have “hairs” to protect them from the cold need them now.

We do have ice back in sight on the ocean after it seemed completely gone after the strong on shore winds yesterday. As stated yesterday, winds like that are supposed to bring ice near shore again. There must have been a terribly large hole free of ice in outer Kotzebue Sound. It may have filled now with ice from somewhere and that will make pack ice marine mammal hunters happy. The full month of June is usually used for that often lucrative activity.

So far a total of five uguruq (Bearded Seal) have been taken by spring campers on Krusenstern beaches. Kotzebue hunters have yet to get out.

The only beluga report is of some heard in the fog in the early morning a couple of days ago.

JUNE

June 1 Low 24° F, High 36° F
 NW wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

It is hard to believe that we are into June with low temps and snow yesterday.

Kotzebue and Sisualik boats out today but apparently with limited success. As expected, ice for hunting is hard to find. A new report in today indicates that Kivalina is ice-free which means the only sea ice near is around the Sealing Point area. This will mean a short and maybe frustrating marine mammal hunt.

Poor ice conditions have already canceled out a bowhead whale catch for both Kivalina and Point Hope.

Some uguruq are being taken out of here right now. Seal oil may be short this winter!

One more burning and trash around camp will be cleaned up before grasses grow tall.

Set 4 ½” mesh net for a while this morning and got twin medium-sized sheefish from our ocean! Cooked them for lunch today but they weren’t top quality. Fresh but not too fat.

Except for fat whitefish our next fish treat will be Kivalina trout. The wait shouldn’t be long with all this west wind

which causes special currents that may get them here early.

Finally saw a male Lapland longspur. He even did his display flight on cue. This species, formerly abundant here, has become very, very scarce. Reasons are unknown.

This day was a good start for June, especially the sighting of the longspur.

June 2 Low 28° F, High 36° F
 NW wind to 25. Clear, few clouds.

Coolness and lack of ice on the ocean continues and probably will until this NW wind has run its course. We hear now that there is still an abundance of “grounded” ice in the inner Sound down towards Deering and over towards Shishmaref. With a wind and current change much of that ice may come our way. Between Sealing Point and Point Hope there is none.

We ate our first uguruq of the season this evening. Very good rib meat, intestine and hot boiled blubber chunks – a favorite meal for NW Arctic beach camp dwellers.

Two of our neighbors, one east, one west, joined forces and went out into the ice pack (what little there is near Sealing Point) and brought back two uguruq which they cut up today. They announced thru VHF that uguruq meat for cooking was available at their place for anyone that wanted some. It is customary amongst coastal camps at this season. We enjoyed ours very, very much.

Swallows were back today but absent again on this cool evening. Wonder if their eggs can stand interrupted incubation?

No net out today.

Quite a few birds around of mixed species. Red necked phalaropes may be the most numerous with much variety in other shorebird species.

No icepack hunters out today, it being Sunday and windy.

June 3 Low 29° F, High 40° F
 W-NW wind to 25. Clear, fog p.m.

We began our 24 hour sun period yesterday, to continue till sunset on July 10. That is a lot of sun, some of which we longed for last December. Our temps, however, are still below freezing every night.

Just how our various plants that have stems and leaves above ground now cope with the frosty nights we don't know. I was surprised to see the scarlet stems and young leaves of *Epilobium angustifolium* showing against the drab gray-brown of the past year's foliage.

Our extended warm spell of late May that melted all the snow got this year's growth started a little too early.

There may be some problems with some species in this late period of nightly frosts.

Put the 4 ½" mesh net out for a bit this morning to check for possible trout. No trout but lots of huge whitefish (an overfilled bucket's worth) of the species we normally use our 3" mesh net for. There were also some small shee, several huge saffron cod and some flounders.

Carrie was able to cut the blubber from our large seal and make a bucket of blubber for our seal oil which was getting low. She mopped the floor after that so she has put in a full day of work reflecting her improved health?

No sign of beluga in Sisualik waters yet.

June 4 Low 32° F, High 41° F
W-NW to 18. Fog, clearing late.

Several boats caught in Kotzebue channel ice today. It was raining ice pretty heavy and due to low marine waters Noatak boats must go through Kotzebue to get to their camps in Sisualik. Very unusual conditions. All the boats we know of did eventually make it in. The channel is running ice from Kobuk Lake/Pipe Spit area.

Complicating the lives of travelers we had very heavy fog all night and through today till late afternoon. It was not a good day for pack ice hunters or travelers in or out of Kotzebue.

Spring growth of vegetation continues in spite of frosty nights, cold days and freezing fog. We heard and saw our first black legged kittiwake of the year yesterday.

No beluga have been seen yet to our knowledge in all of Kotzebue Sound. The lack of beluga return in the past 10-15 years is a sad tragedy that no one has a good answer for.

Since there is no ice locally many things seem altered this year. We heard folks west of us had started to get a few fat Kivalina trout. We got two nice ones this morning in a two hour set. We had one of our favorite dishes tonight – curry flavored trout flour soup. Very good!

Usually we don't get fat trout till after the lean and skinny Noatak trout come out into the ocean. Why things are different this year may have to do with lack of sea ice and constant west wind and constant current from the west.

June 5 Low 31° F, High 40° F
NW wind to 18. Clear. Calm early.

A quiet shiny morning –beautiful in Sisualik – but no sounds of sisuaq (beluga). It is not good for a place to lose the species for which it was named. We seem to be headed in that direction.

Set the short net for a short while this morn and got another couple of fine Kivalina trout along with 8 small shee, several bullheads, flounders and one whitefish. Cooked the fine big whitefish for lunch.

Kotzebue channel plugged again with very thick ice. A few boats did get in and out but not very many and none for

hunting.

We worked the blubber off a small seal this morning and finished filling our single bucket for this fall and winter's seal oil. We did another "clothes wash" this afternoon. It has been a long day and we will have a good sleep tonight.

Insects turned up at mid-day but are not real active. Swallows hunted for a while with good lunch since insects pretty slow moving in the coolness.

Insects and plants are ready to take over the earth again but cool temps are slowing the progress of both.

June 6 Low 33° F, High 42° F
 S-SW-W wind to 18. Clear, passing clouds.

Well, well! We woke to something different this morning. In 54 years and maybe more we have not had ground swells this early in the season. This morning the tops of quite large ground swells were roaring into our beach and were nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up to sod line. It seemed like an August morning rather than a June morning.

This condition is expected each year as the ice pack barrier clears from the mouth of Kotzebue Sound usually at the very end of June or early in July. This pretty much kills the hopes of ice pack hunters, at least near Krusenstern. There remains grounded ice in the Choris Peninsula/Deering area. The marine water level also rose several feet and if this ice in the "belly" of Kotzebue Sound floats free it could work its way out of Kotzebue, along Krusenstern beaches and give uguruq hunters a last chance for this year. We shall see. Seal oil and black meat in oil may be in short supply this winter, as it may be at Point Hope, as they didn't get a whale this spring, and it is too late now.

It has been a real different year this year on Alaska's northwest coast.

The land continues to green at a rather remarkable rate considering temps.

Have not seen a real flower yet but there may be *Pedicularis* or *Primula* in choice places.

June 7 Low 34° F, High 42° F
 SW wind to 15. Clear, clouding p.m.

Air still pretty cool and ocean still pretty rough but I did see the first flowering of *Primula borealis* in our "backyard." In the salt marsh this is our first real flower. On the back beach ridges there is bound to be *Pedicularis Kanei* (wooly lousewort), a larger and at least as colorful early flowering arctic plant. The domination of our local world by plants and insects is getting underway.

Conditions are improving for ice hunters. There is ice toward Choris and Deering and winds are getting more reasonable.

Our family boat (Kotzebue based) is out this evening for the first time. Also a neighbor who often gives us his catch is out.

Carrie has improved much these last ten days and may now be able to work an uguruq or two.

We have a lot of flocked non-breeding tundra swans in our back marsh now and a smattering of other waterfowl species – more than earlier are also pleasant.

One “small bird” was found in the storm shed of a neighbor this morning. Unusual. I will see if they still have it and check it out if they do.

Glaucous gull eggging is pretty good this week. We were given about 20 by one good neighbor family – very, very good eggs. They are very much like chicken eggs in taste but twice the size.

June 8 Low 34° F, High 55° F
Light winds. Clear, thunderclouds.

Shiny water and a very warm late afternoon.

Carrie’s sister and family got into Nuvuruq today from Noatak and Carrie felt spry enough to ride over and welcome them back. It is the first ride on the 4-wheeler that Carrie has taken this spring. It is a great sign of improvement of her condition.

Was very surprised to see a flowering poppy in the trail close to the Point community. The bright yellow certainly stood out on the background of brown and green on the land. Would expect to see the purple of *Primula* or the creamy white of *Androsace* but the bright yellow was unexpected.

A short net set this morning indicated that the out migration of lean Noatak trout is on. There were two fat Kivalina fish that we kept but released all the sheefish and lean trout.

A few uguruq are being brought in from distant ice at Choris and Espenberg. Today was super good for ice pack hunting and there were many boats out. Even a few beluga were seen yesterday and today.

Lots of people in Sisualik now and lots of boat, 4-wheeler, and netting activity.

The dead bird found in neighbor’s storm shed was the locally common savannah sparrow.

June 9 Low 38° F, High 56° F
W winds to 15, p.m. Sun, few rain showers. Light winds.

Family boat is to bring in two uguruq today. Carrie will have a good deal of help. Some town family women as well as the family of our nephew that passed on this spring who are here as neighbors and will lend a hand. Anore Jones who is in Kotzebue is also knowledgeable about marine mammal work and may be on hand.

The gang and the uguruq got here late due to some needed rest for the hunters. The hunt was near Cape Espenberg – farther and in a direction not familiar to our hunters. They did see many uguruq, most of them inside very large ice floes and not approachable by boat.

After several hours rest the really loaded boat arrived with most of the family people, dogs and vehicles.

We had a wild afternoon and evening and did get the uguruq butchered, meat, blubber and skin separated so spoilage won't happen. They were adult medium sized animals, one in a state of hair molt and the other with all bright new hair.

Family had to wait a bit for ice in Kotzebue Channel. They did head back to town around 11:30 – all of us worn down!

There is enough oil in these two uguruq for our whole winter need – even with borrowers who may have less along the way. It has been a good day.

June 10 Low 40° F, High 60° F
 SW-W-NW wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

A cool off the water afternoon breeze saved the hard working people the annoyance of mosquitoes and blowflies were the only insect hazard.

It has been a day of hard work as a day after multiple uguruq takes always are. The butchering yesterday is relatively easy. The next day meat in specified pieces must be hung in the shade to start the drying process leading to the preparation of black meat in oil – a staple for millennia for our group of people. Blubber must be removed from skin and cut into very small strips for beginning the process of oil rendering.

Carrie did one skin and a neighbor did the other for a share. Carrie surprised us both by being able to finish one after a long period of relatively hard work for arms and wrists. Hope she is able to move around tomorrow. At any rate we are glad to have a winter edible oil supply.

Ground is really greening up now and the marsh as well as the tablelands are now dominantly green replacing the brownish gray of the prior days. The sun and non-freezing night have worked their magic.

No fishing again today. Dogs had a good run and Kotzebue Channel has continued to be a hazard for town traveling people due to ice running from Kobuk Lake.

June 11 Low 35° F, High 55° F
 S-SW-W-NW wind to 25. Clear, few clouds.

A fine warm dry day with p.m. winds brisk enough to keep the bugs down and they are increasing.

Needed water from inland lake for washing and dishes. Made a first trip to the lake and as it is on salmonberry ground I was surprised to see many flowering salmonberry plants. Hadn't realized that they were blooming yet. There were also many flowering *Pedicularis lanatum* plants too.

A little later I needed to make a trip to the Point for a package and found many new (for this year) flowers where

the single poppy flower was a couple of day ago. Beside the many poppies now there were dandelions, forget-me-nots, rock jasmine, chickweed, and many *Primula borealis*.

Around 8:30 this morning, when I looked out over our waterfront I saw a familiar sight though one we hadn't seen yet this year. A large number of large all white beluga were cavorting around a quarter mile off shore. It was a beautiful sight! One felt like shouting hurray! The belugas (sisuaq) have come back to Sisualik!!! This place was named for the great abundance of that species found here in the past. These were the first we have seen this year. There were many – maybe as many as 100 – and all were adult white animals. Two were said to have bumped nets that are set for them but none were taken.

June 12 Low 34° F, High 48° F
 SW-W-NW wind to 20. Sunny, clouds.

A cooler day with some insect activity but pleasantly cool with on shore winds.

A boat finally got into Deering today from Kotzebue. Prior to this Deering had been iced in. Now they can get out to hunt and the ice from Riley's Wreck through Choris to Kiwalik should be free of shore and loosening up, so hunters from Sisualik, Kotzebue and Buckland can get into uguruq land. This appears to be the only ice left in the Sound.

Waves got fairly large again this afternoon so there was little action on this side again. Marine water level is low again and we didn't set a net again.

Shoveled sand and gravel out of our "cool cellar" that our ground squirrel colony had redistributed to fit their needs. They are probably re-working it tonight but we'll both come to a point of tolerance so we can both use the same ground for our different needs.

Our backyard marsh is pretty well populated with waterfowl again. Tundra Swan flock of non-breeders (several hundred) and flocked pre-molt wigeon (near 1000) are dominant.

A large moose spent a leisurely morning around Joe Harris Camp near Jones' Camp.

No uguruq landed in Sisualik today. Latecomers from Noatak have not made catches yet.

June 13 Low 38° F, High 48° F
 SW-W-NW wind to 25. Cloudy, rain, fog.

A rather steady needed rain all day today, breaking off and wind dropping in late evening.

Vegetation growth and development will accelerate when the sun comes out again. Many species are flowering or near to it.

Today's weather interrupted marine mammal hunting activity but there are still many ready to go as weather permits.

A most unusual happening for Sisualik today – a group of 12-14 caribou came marching down the trail from the east and turned up the lagoon edge and continued their march west. There were no new calves in the group that seemed to be mostly young two or three year old males. A couple had somewhat larger new antlers that probably were older males. This may be the first group of caribou of this size seen in Sisualik at this date in this century (the 1900's). We're unsure from whence they came. Probably from our back tablelands as no tracks were reported on the beach.

With the roiled water and large waves of today one would expect a beluga or two to be taken in some of the many nets out but we have not heard of that yet.

We did have an unusual treat this evening – freshly killed walrus skin and meat from Point Hope.

June 14 Low 36° F, High 54° F
 S-SW wind to 15. Clear, some clouds.

Visitors from California today. Anore Jones and her daughter Willow made it here for a few days. Anore is the wife of my former commercial fishing partner. They wintered in Ambler many years and camped here with us thru the summer for commercial fishing, berry picking, etc. We had an interesting day.

During the middle of visiting a neighbor knocked on the door and came in with a large square of grayish beluga maktak.²⁰ They had just finished butchering a young beluga caught in their net in front of their house west of us. This is the first net caught beluga we have heard of this spring. Indeed, so far as we know, it is the only beluga taken so far in Kotzebue Sound this year.

There is a great show of *Primula borealis* around the edge of our nearest big lake. It presents a solid mass of color.

A fine calm evening for ocean hunters finally. Uguruq will be brought in in the morning and maybe beluga.

June 15 Low 38° F, High 60° F
 W winds to 15. Clear, few clouds. Light winds a.m.

First flowering of *Potentilla fragiformis*, the mysterious *Potentilla* found by C. Parker during a stay here last summer doing plant inventory work on Krusenstern for NPS.²¹ The plant has been overlooked or misidentified over a long period of time by several botanists. There may be enough material now at the University of Alaska herbarium. It is an interesting find of the species in Sisualik and its history in the annals of arctic botany. There will be a "write up" available sometime.

The bright yellow new flowers were a surprise today as I have been over that trail nearly every day this past week.

Mosquitoes were terrible last night and today after the rain and the warm sun coming on after the rain. The conditions also gave the greening and flowering land a boost.

²⁰ Whale skin with blubber

²¹ National Park Service

Salmonberry flowers are out in numbers heading for an early peak. We are into the critical time of beginning berry formation for current year crop. Our hope is for no frosts and light winds through the next ten days.

A good flock of brants seen in the ocean this evening.

Set net today for a short while hopeful for a fresh trout for our lunch. The only catch was two small sheefish and many flounders.

June 16 Low 37° F, High 64° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Clear.

First flowering Beach Pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*) and (*Mertensia paniculata*) Bluebells.

Very buggy day, especially in the morning. Dogs were pitiful and there was no way to help but seal oil around nose and eyes.

A first chum salmon taken at Sealing Point today – an egg laden female that may break our record for early chum salmon dates. Hard to believe that our salmon run can begin in mid-June.

The ice pack hunters didn't have a lot of luck this last hunt. A few uguruq may have been brought in but we only heard of a couple. Numerous floating walrus – some with heads – were found and a few live animals were encountered. When inner Kotzebue Sound has walrus and walrus hunters we often find many headless walrus which sometimes have usable "coke"²² and cookable flippers.

June 17 Low 45° F, High 68° F
 W winds to 18. Clear, clouding late. Light winds.

A very warm day quite full of mosquitoes. Dogs had a difficult time again. Two very bad days.

The first salmon of the year came our way while out table net was set for a half an hour this morning. It was a very small female chum salmon and was caught in our 4 ½" mesh trout net. There was also several shee, one over ten pounds, and a single lean trout. We had a good fish feed for a short net set. Lots of fish in the water.

It seems from VHF traffic that some uguruq catches have been made during this day of good boating weather.

The whole land is coloring up with new species of wildflowers coming on daily. Though no iris have flowered yet the large leaves are halfway up.

No additional beluga sightings or net catches reported.

Our guests from California are still here and glad to help us eat our first salmon.

²² Walrus skin, also known as "Kauq"

Insects have taken over the world again. Many kinds and many activities. Dragonflies, wasps, and butterflies were seen today.

Put our barrel of black meat and oil away today. Jones' packed up some oil and meat for their trip home soon.

June 18 Low 38° F, High 50° F
 W-NW wind to 30. Cloudy, rain, clearing.

Ground got a good soaking and we gained a bucket of good water. After the heavy shower, fog and clouds cleared and sun took over for the rest of the day with quite strong winds, waves and currents.

Some boats brought in uguruq this morning but strong afternoon winds cancelled any additional hunting effort. Beluga nets are getting moved around due to waves and strong currents. There has been no sign of belugas.

A few salmon continue to be taken at Sealing Point, an indication that an early run is underway.

Freedom from the hordes of mosquitoes this afternoon was great most especially for the sake of the dogs.

The very heavy but short rain this morning was timely and did a world of good to growing and flowering plants. It may ensure a berry crop of some or maybe all species.

No fishing for us today, but we ate the large sheefish taken yesterday – baked – for supper tonight.

Our guests and I hope to get to town tomorrow. They are to leave to homelands, me to do some long overdue shopping.

June 19 Low 36° F, High 48° F
 W-NW wind to 38. Cloudy.

Well we made the trip to town with neighbors' big boat with no problems but winds picked up an hour after we got there and any hopes of getting back with same boat and by same route were dashed. The boat was taken to a safe harbor.

After a hectic time of shopping, business and people (the norm for a day in town after not being there for a while), about 11:30p.m. winds dropped some and we thought they might continue to drop so we loaded the boat in safe harbor and took off for home but winds picked up again dramatically and we didn't get far out of sheltered waters till we had enough of the deep choppy waves and turned back to shelter. Winds only continued to increase so we settled down for the night.

Had a lot of interesting conversations and contacts through the day – a good deal of homework when I get home.

Our visitors from California made it in good time to clean up a bit and jet out on the early flight in the morning. They had a good time in the land they had come to love but moved away from some ten years or so ago.

Passed a small baby common seal laying on the beach amongst the driftwood this morning – alive.

June 20 Low 33° F, High 40° F
SW-W-NW-N wind to 30. Some clouds.

Winds still up to 20 knots in Kotzebue this morning and though Carrie was doing all right at home with high winds and big waves I gave up on waiting for winds and the boat and sought out a pilot friend that thought the downwind runway would be fine for his big plane.

I went home, then, the easy way, about 10 a.m. It was a good flight and Sisualik looked great in the sun, flowers and water nearly without whitecaps.

Winds continued to drop for a couple of hours but soon after noon they picked up to 30 from the SW again, makings lots of whitecaps on both ocean and lagoon. Glad I took the easy way home, as was Carrie, who is not used to nor much able to manage the camp alone.

The neighbor and his boat got home by 10 p.m. when winds dropped again.

North of us at Point Hope and Point Lay it has been snowing for a couple of days.

Local beluga nets got moved around by strong inward currents generated by the strong westerly winds. No report of additional catches of beluga in Kotzebue Sound. The one small sub-adult beluga is still the only catch that we know of.

June 21 Low 33° F, High 42° F
SW-W-NW wind to 25. Cloudy, fog, sun.

A cool day again – need face mask and gloves to travel in comfort.

Belugas seen at Salluq today and many nets still out in Sisualik but no word of Beluga catch.

Ocean has calmed this evening and boats will be out for various reasons. The past three days have been difficult for boaters to go anywhere. Now with the weekend on and maybe some ice yet down Choris way there will be boats out for a last chance at uguruq and beluga.

Found the first flowering salmonberry plants in bad shape when I went to get lake water today. The near freezing temps and strong winds of the last several days has caused the flower petals to drop off – maybe in some cases premature. Before pollination can take place therefore no berry formation for those female plants. There are, however, many flowers yet intact so only time will tell of ultimate berry formation.

In some places blackberry formation on plants has occurred. There, too, it is too early to speculate on the condition of this year's crop.

Brant passing thru various points on Krusenstern today. These would be pre-molters headed for molting at or toward Tesuqpaq Lake²³ area a bit east of Barrow.

June 22 Low 34° F, High 42° F
SW-W-NW wind to 20. Cloudy, fog, rain.

A day of very cool wet air. Very chilly for June and many folks commented today that it seems more like August than June. It didn't snow but came close to it.

Large ground swells today and very high marine water level last night and this morning. Water level was higher in the back lagoon than during spring flush out.

The spring ice pack hunt may be over. A few uguruq were brought in the last of this week but wind and fog made for tough times for those out in boats.

Some still hope for beluga but with ice pretty much gone effective Beluga hunting requires very calm weather and we are not seeing much of it.

No fishing again today due to heavy swells. We would like to get salmon net out but will have to wait for quieter seas. We are looking to a fresh catch of some kind now as we have been eating from the freezer for some time.

It is time or nearly time to look on inland lakes for molting northern pintail. They get nice and fat as their flight feathers drop off and new ones grow. This begins the last week of June and may last three weeks or so. The birds make good and a much welcomed soup at this time but they are not easily come by even though flightless.

June 23 Low 33° F, High 45° F
W-NW wind to 30. Rain, snow, fog, sun.

This unusual year continues to unfold. It appears our swallow egg or eggs hatched today in a snow storm! This of course requires the adults to bring in food! Live insects in a June snow storm!

Late afternoon/evening is providing more sun, less wind and no more snow.

Our early salmonberry flowers got hit pretty hard. Most flower petals are on the ground and though there are many whole flowers yet we will pay a price for this early wind and cold.

Water rose to above flood stage in the lagoon last night and then dropped out rapidly through the day. Gulls had their problems back there. Those that have unhatched eggs must move there to higher ground and those with hatched chicks have to watch them closely as there are a pair of Parasitic Jaegers patrolling the marsh.

Ice hunting period seems over. We had very high swells today. Not quite to the sod line but above the driftwood line of the first ground swells we had more than a week ago.

²³ Also known as Teshekpuk Lake

No chance to fish again today so we are again eating from the freezer. Still hope for a fresh salmon whenever wind and water permit.

A moose visited the Point this afternoon.

June 24 Low 30° F, High 48° F
 W-NW wind to 25. Clouds and sun.

Ice this morning! No frost but water collected on a cardboard box against the ground was frozen. That is not good for remaining open petal salmonberry plants. There is some yellowing of glossy green vegetation of many species due to freezing temps and cool winds.

Set the 4 ½" mesh table net this morning in hope of fresh fish to eat. Pulled it up after an hour and had two fresh run humpback salmon and a whitefish. I got the 6" mesh salmon net off the rack and set it in the rather large swells. The anchor sack held and I went up to eat lunch. Taking a leisurely lunch I hadn't realized the swells had gotten higher and wind stronger. When I finally went down and looked, the full length of the net was up on the beach with several fish the gulls – including Jonathan – were eating on the eyes. The waves had pushed the net up. There were several medium shee fish, a small king salmon (8 lbs), a tiny live helmet crab and a large jellyfish. The king salmon was a surprise and welcome since we haven't had fresh fish for nearly a week. This was a stunted male called a jack salmon farther south. The two of us ate more than half for our supper tonight.

I ran the dogs late and while Terry was with us we spooked three caribou that were resting by Frank Sheldon's old boat. Later three turned up by Green's house next to us.

June 25 Low 34° F, High 50° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

A fine day, cool enough to keep the bugs down but warm enough for vegetation and berry production.

Set the 6" mesh salmon net this morning and left it all day. There were three nice bright chums and a pile of flounders in it this evening.

Ice is now officially gone and Noatak people are already moving back to their village after a poor uguruq season and a worse beluga season. Most people scraped up enough oil for winter with seals and uguruq and the catch sharing with those that had a bit better catch.

Things don't look too good at this point for berry crop as frosts and cold winds at flower and pollination time are critical. It is yet too early to speculate on which species may do all right and which are a failure. We are close to early sourdock²⁴ picking time. It is good to make one trip around the 4th of July but their leaf growth is slowed this year by cool weather.

²⁴ *Rumex ssp.*

Many beluga nets remain set but we have still heard of only the one small beluga taken by all methods in Kotzebue Sound.

The outlets at Akulak and Anigaq remain open. Whitefish have not begun their return run yet. Closure by mid-July will result in a great September/October catch for those folks on hand.

June 26 Low 34° F, High 54° F
 W-NW wind to 20. Clear, some clouds.

Once again the chum salmon run and the seed heads (spears) on the *Elymus* beach grasses happen near the same date. I noticed the first today but in some places they may have appeared several days ago.

We did get two fine chums in the net today with one humpy and a yard long fat sheefish far out of normal habitat. There were several other smaller shee and a bucket of flounders.

Ran both dogs over as far as the dead musk ox of last fall. They enjoyed the long run, Terry pretty much keeping up with Aachauq which was a great surprise.

There were fresh small groups of caribou tracks on the beach in two places.

Also saw first blooms of *Epilobium palustre* and *Oxytropis Maydelliana*. Blueberry bush leaves have an odd reddish tinge over that way instead of the bright green they should have at this advanced flower time. Cold and frost is probably the reason and that don't leave much hope for a blueberry crop this year. We shall see. Blackberries are set on the vines now – size of BB shot in some places.

Many Pacific Loons in water today – even flocks. There is gull activity over very large areas – maybe herring present.

Belugas seen at Elephant Point yesterday. No catch.

June 27 Low 48° F, High 52° F
 W-NW wind to 30. Cloudy, fog, rain.

Cool and wet with no mosquitoes. Dogs are happy and all warm blooded creatures glad for an interruption to insect activity.

Friends from Salluq brought their oil over to their cool storage camp next to our east side. Good to see them again and they shared a meal with us before heading home. The water was pretty rough even for their big boat.

An evening phone call from family in Point Lay sounds exciting. They are seeing a group of 1000 belugas at and around their lagoon outlet and at 7 a.m. they will seek to drive them into shallow lagoon waters and harvest as many as they want.

The situation is pretty unique in NW Alaska waters now. All of Kotzebue Sound is envious since only once small

beluga was taken here this spring.

Flowers and greens continue to expand in Sisualik: *Primula borealis* are past peak, forget-me-nots and bluebells are at peak, and dandelions and rock jasmine and chives are near peak.

The snow-like seeds of *Eriophorum* sp. are showing in the hills (tablelands) now. These are amongst the first to have yellowish flowers in spring and now the cotton-like tops have just formed and look much like snow on the tablelands again. It is said that lots of cotton means lots of salmonberries. One wonders about that this year.

June 28 Low 38° F, High 54° F
W-NW-N wind to 25. Clear, some clouds.

Swells this morning with off shore winds! Seems like a contradiction but ground swells are often present here on the open Sound even when wind is calm or from some different direction. It is the most awesome way you can know that you are on the seashore and not inland on a lake or stream somewhere where only local winds make waves.

Swells too much to set beach net today.

Some friends came by hoping to make it into Anigaq to visit friends there for a while and stop by here on the way home. The wind and waves picked up and they had to turn back. We got their boat into sheltered lagoon and enjoyed a good long visit over lunch.

They brought a big container from another friend that held cucumber kimchi. Mmmm, a special treat with our half-dried and boiled red salmon.

Ran the dogs and finished up the big washing Carrie started this morning. We've had a busy but fun day and are a bit worn this evening.

Saw first blooms of *Pedicularis sudetica*, the marsh peppermint swirls. *Potentilla egedii* is also in flower in the same wet habitat brightening the marsh as the *Primula borealis* fade past peak condition. Our "backyard" salt marsh is much ahead of Kotzebue for flowering wild plants this year. Usually the reverse is true.

June 29 Low 34° F, High 51° F
W-NW wind to 35. Clear, some clouds.

Cool, cold! Windy day, no bugs. Dogs shivering after hair shed.

No net again due to rough ocean.

Rode the wheeler over to the outlet at Akulak. That is as far as one can go now with a wheeler. My first time there this summer and it hasn't opened for several years. Now with all the water out it is a pretty sterile looking lagoon. A 50-60 foot border around the lagoon current water level line to lagoon rim former high water mark has no vegetation at all, aquatic or otherwise. It looks strange. No birds, ducks or sandpipers due to lack of forage.

Nothing to see in the hills though the sea beach shows tracks of small caribou groups. I took both shotgun and rifle as we could use fresh meat for the pot. We do have enough fish but variation in diet from day to day is always attractive.

One could find flightless male northern pintail this last week of June in and around inland lakes and that would be a most welcome diet change but that takes some strenuous doing. I may make a combined sourdock and “iisa” (molting duck) trip soon. That is a 4th of July time camp activity. The birds, if one can find some, are deliciously fat.

June 30 Low 40° F, High 54° F
S-SW-W wind to 18. Cloudy, rain late, sun.

June is gone and the weatherman is still talking snow for July. It has sure been a mixed bag for weather this June. Some of our vegetation has been frost-touched but continues to grow and may be able to overcome any cold weather setbacks. The same with insects. They have had “high” days and some full days of weather too cold for flying at all.

Plant flowering has gone well with an early start and some more recent setbacks. The first salmonberry flowers were early and enough days of warm windlessness were good for pollination. Then frost or near frost occurred and second stage flower petals just fell to the ground. No berry forming there. Now as a third group of flowers come on there seems again a chance of good berry production. There is no telling how good or bad this year’s production will be. Ripening will certainly be in two waves.

Blueberry green leaves turned a reddish hue while flowers continued to bloom. No telling there – I’ve never seen that happen before.

Blackberry plants have good-sized green berries set on the plants. Time will tell with them too.

Have not located *G. detonsa* plants yet but haven’t tried hard and can’t get up to the best plot at Barger’s without a bridge.

Sisualik spring campers are nearly all moved back home already – Noatak Village –some to Kotzebue.

JULY

July 1 Low 38° F, High 48° F
SE wind to 18. NW wind to 35. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Quite a day to start off July. Moderate winds and swells till mid-afternoon when wind switched abruptly rain began and some fog set in. It was a dangerous switch for boaters and our hope is that everyone found shelter in time.

There were bugs beginning to fly before the wind switch. Now we have snow in the forecast for tonight and

tomorrow.

Took a trip west this morning but nothing of importance to report.

Beluga nets still out. They should have been picked up by this time. Talked to one person that has a net out today. He said at last check they had taken out three common seals and a harbor porpoise. They tried eating a bit of porpoise but the taste is not good.

I put out our 4 ½" mesh late and left it out an hour. It got 10 big fat whitefish. These are fish moving east coming out of Anigaq and Akulak after fattening on eggs, larvae and other aquatic insect life in the lagoon and slough systems.

These fish made a delicious supper tonight. They are the best quality of this species and are a special treat simply boiled and eaten with seal oil, mayonnaise and kimchi. Very firm-fleshed and sweet. The broth they are cooked in is especially good with onions and garlic.

July 2 Low 35° F, High 42° F
 NW wind to 18. S wind to 15. Cloudy, rain, snow!

An inch of heavy wet snow this evening and it is still snowing. Very unusual in July.

All the new plant flowers and leaves look chilled or worse. It is painful to think of the open last salmonberry flowers. Have not found a *G. detonsa* for this season yet. Have not searched much but did check some of last year's hot spots.

Took Carrie for a ride to the outlet at Akulak this afternoon. The dogs went too. The outlet is still wide open.

A call from Pt. Lay today reported a lot of beluga between Krusenstern and Pt. Hope. That causes the hunters at Pt. Lay to remain hopeful. None of the nets here have been taken off and none were checked today.

No animal tracks on the clean beach today. The tops of the swells last night were up to the sod line. I had to move my driftwood up over the bank at 11 p.m. last night. Some say the people at Elephant Point had to be moved up to Buckland due to high water.

My two loose dogs got in a fight over a squirrel Terry had dug out – his first this year. I had to break up the fight with a coil of rope for a club. Aachauq, being the biggest, heaviest and most aggressive got most of the beating. Now he is acting as though we don't love him anymore. His first fight and beating.

July 3 Low 33° F, High 46° F
 NW wind to 25. Broken clouds, sun.

We had several hours late last night of heavy wet snow. This morning there was about an inch and a half blanket all over the lowlands and the mountains were very white. Green was pretty effectively blocked out for a while. We don't believe we have seen this much overall snow before in July.

Most of it on the lowlands was gone by early afternoon but mountains still showed new snow this evening.

This untimely fall of snow must have been tough on nestling birds and flowering plants. Temps were low enough thru the night to leave the snow crunchy. Again not good for growing plants, flowers and nestlings. Two swallows were active at the nest box this morning but rather absent this afternoon.

One can't even speculate on condition of forming berry crop. All species are still in flower mode. Some ahead of others. The first flowers may have been pollinated already and berry formation has begun. They should withstand the snow all right but those in bloom the last ten days have had tough conditions.

It is difficult to know how our local plants can handle low temps and snow at this stage of growth. It surely will have some effect to be read later. No *G. detonsa* plants to date. This late snow may be good reason not to sprout early for some species.

July 4 Low 44° F, High 50° F
 S-SW wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, showers.

Independence Day – and it didn't snow! Some of yesterday's snow did remain thru this day at the high elevations.

Had the net out most of the day and got one chum salmon, one humpback salmon and two sheefish.

With the rock bottom low water this morning I did finally get up to the Barger plot of *G. detonsa*. The small creek/outlet that drains one large body of water between here and the Barger plot has been a problem of crossing. It had a bridge once but that is gone as well as the one who made it. The outlet has cut a much deeper channel this year and at even moderate high water in the lagoon it becomes impossible to cross with a 4-wheeler.

It was worth the trouble of crossing. I found the first *G. detonsa* plants of the year. At this point they don't seem to be plentiful. The larger plant (3 in. tall) has a well formed bud on the stalk, 3 in. above the rosette. On the smaller, the bud rests on the rosette ready to "spring up." The plants seem healthy in spite of the snow cover yesterday but seem late getting started. These plants are difficult to locate at this stage and the Barger plot is usually a week or so ahead of plants nearer the sea beach.

First bear tracks around a camp near Jones' today. Bears notably absent on Krusenstern this spring/summer.

July 5 Low 42° F, High 58° F
 S-SW-S wind to 15. Cloudy, some sun.

Well, well! A beluga (sisuaq) story from Sisualik! Several weeks ago a young fellow and his buddy came over and set their beluga net in front of us. We are next door neighbors here all the time. Their family is tied up in town and only get to camp on occasion. They would try to check the net every couple of days.

We've had long periods of wind weather on the ocean. Today was good and our neighbor jumped in his boat much unprepared to work on anything or butcher. They just planned to pull the empty net out and put it away till next

year. Well they ran into a problem. When they got to the outside end of the net they found a large mature dead beluga!

They had last checked the net 3 or 4 days ago and it is set right in front of us purposely so that we could contact them in town if we saw a beluga in the net. We didn't!

They towed the whale and net to the beach in front of their place and I came home to get knives, ropes and tarps together and dashed back to the work site. By that time there was another boat there – Nootakers that know well how to quickly butcher a beluga. It didn't take long to strip the blubber and maktak off the animal and tow the remains out to sea. We all got a fair share and were glad to get it! George was glad for the extra hands to help.

Six husky salmon in our net today.

July 6 Low 40° F, High 50° F
 NW wind to 25 late. Cloudy, rain, fog, sun.

Very wet but windless morning. Ocean as calm as a lake. Ground pretty well soaked with fine soft rain – healing for snow damaged plants.

Set the 4 ½" mesh net today and got a mixed bag. Flounders of course three humpies, two chums, one Alaska whitefish and a huge fat Bering cisco.

Boats traveled far and wide this morning on placid water but not much excitement.

Three tree swallows continue to hang around but it is hard to understand what is going on in the box. They don't seem to be feeding there. Don't know if one of the three is this year's hatchling or not.

Anigaq and Akulak outlets remain open. The flow of fish outward and passing here seems to have diminished.

The absence of microtines²⁵ in Sisualik this summer is remarkable. No cut grasses, no holes and none to be seen. Consequently short eared owls and northern harriers are absent.

Hope for berries and sourdock building again with rain and less frost threat.

July 7 Low 38° F, High 48° F
 [no conditions reported]

New crop of squirrels out two days ago – ¼ to ½ size.

First flowering of our campsite – white petaled *Epilobium latifolium*. Not too robust/healthy. Four plants now in colony from two when first located 15 years or so ago.

²⁵ Rodents belonging to the subfamily Microtinae such as voles, lemmings, and muskrat

Growth of some plants (tall fireweed, *Artemisia*) rather phenomenal the 3 or 4 days after snowfall.

We lucked out on king crabs yesterday and again today. We got a shore from the Senior Center ready cooked yesterday. Today a crabber friend stopped by and gave us two live ones from his not too far away pot. We are grateful to these kind people that share their good catches with us.

Startled a seal resting on the beach while running the dogs today. It was a small seal but older than one year. It is unusual for adult common seals to haul out on land. Spotted seals do so regularly on large river islands.

I think our box swallows have had it. The three have been around for a while the last two days but no feed carrying to the box. It appears one early hatchling survived to fly but if there were siblings they must have perished during the snowy period. After a few days of non-appearance I will fish the nest out of the box and check for remains. It was a tough year for swallows.

July 8 Low 40° F, High 50° F
SE-S-SW-W wind to 20. Cloudy, rain, fog, sun.

A changeable day. Our swallows seem really gone. We think they may have salvaged one youngster but he had to grow fast and be tough. He evidently was and it kind of proves the case that tree swallows should stick to trees and tree cavities for nesting, rather than isolated boxes on the treeless north shore of Kotzebue Sound.

Tried to locate *G. detonsa* plants on old sites here on the beach. Did not find any for sure. They are always a week behind the Barger plot plants but they should be several inches tall by now and I didn't find anything like that today. The other Gentians – *Lomatogonium*, *G. propinqua* and *G. prostrate* – are not obvious either. All these plants are hard to see in the marsh till they show some flower color. They are late or it may be a poor year for them. *Saussurea* sp. not showing flowers yet either.

Went over to the Point today. Even though our white petaled *Epilobium* are flowering the large colony at the end of the air field seem gone! Our colony is growing.

A distant neighbor boy caught up with us from behind on the way home and gave us a front leg and shoulder of a small caribou they killed today some distance up our nearest creek with a boat. It will be good to have fresh meat soup again.

Many belugas taken in a one day hunt yesterday at Pt. Lay.

July 9 Low 38° F, High 65° F
S-SW wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, clearing.

Some very big ocean swells this evening on shiny water after sky cleared and wind quit. Very warm sun too – with bugs!

Spend the day getting ready for a town day tomorrow and running the dogs. They had a good run but are bothered much by mosquitoes this evening. The last week has been pretty mosquito free.

We have numerous flocks of black legged kittiwakes along our ocean shore now. They were few last spring. These are non or failed breeders and tend to flock up where food is available.

Jones' Camp people saw a large bear yesterday when they went from their place down to their net by boat. It first turned up a week ago at their neighbor's camp at night but apparently didn't do any damage. Hope it moves on before getting into more trouble. These two camps are at the mouth of a large creek that runs up into our coastal mountains. Bears quite naturally follow stream courses to and from their beloved mountains.

Extensive beluga catch at Pt. Lay will give those folks much work yet. Hope it doesn't turn hot on them too soon.

One swallow returned today but didn't stay long.

July 10 Low 40° F, High 55° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Clouds, fog, clearing.

Air trip to town. Carrie felt up to a first summer trip to town. She hasn't been in since ice went out and aircraft travel is easier than boat.

We had a great time shopping and meeting old friends and were fortunate to catch some friends who were in town only briefly.

It fogged up badly after we got in and stayed that way for 4-5 hours. Plane trip home was set for 6 p.m., and we thought we might be stuck overnight but our hard-working pilot only postponed till 8:00 and got us home then. Our sun sets tonight for the first time since June 2. We will, however, continue our midnight sun for some time as we continue our 3 hour deviation from sun time.

As usual the town interlude was fun but always somewhat stressful. We did relax when we got home and were gladder for its great healthy looking colors and relatively few people.

We will have a good night's sleep with pleasant memories of new meetings with old friends.

July 11 Low 37° F, High 58° F
 Light on shore winds. Cloudy, some sun.

Set net this morning and had a great catch of 11 big husky chum salmon and a huge trout in our short little net. The trout was unusual. It was a semi-fat male with well-developed gonads – no doubt an early fall spawner.

The chums must be moving in. They are big healthy very fat fish. There seems to be no buyer coming this year to handle Kotzebue Sound chums commercially. It will be the first time in maybe 25-30 years since there was "no buyer." This means a hardship for Kotzebue Sound permit holders.

Saw first flowering of *Gentiana prostrata* and *Senecio lugens*. The little *G. prostrata* "arc lights" were beautiful. Such a deep bright blue. Even the blood tipped flowers of the *Senecio* were remarkably bright and fresh.

Outstanding in the mass of glossy green of other vegetation.

Flowers yet to see are getting to be few. Iris, grass-of-parnassus, *G. propinqua*, *Lomatogonium*, and tall fireweed. Getting close to trying a walk trip for sourdock.

We were given two more king crabs today by a passing crabber. He had a pretty good load – probably not too far from 100!

July 12 Low 40° F, High 54° F
 S-SW-W wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Variable weather and water today. Warm, cold, wet, dry, windy, calm – all in one day.

Six inch mesh net got only three chums today but one was a whopper male nearly 20 lbs. Butchered him quickly to cool him in freezer for sliced frying. We don't often eat fried salmon but once in a while with a king or outsized chum like this it is a very good treat.

Seems like a few northern pintails are trickling back with new flight feathers.

We have a single-legged glaucous gull in our camp flock now. He seems to get around well enough and looks healthy though in a squabble over food he is at a disadvantage. He handles himself so well that he may have hatched with only one leg though he is in adult plumage now.

Still no commercial salmon buyer on the horizon. This is a sad loss to the economy of the region. The species remains in good harvestable shape and there have been buyers each year for nearly 30 years. For many of those years the chum harvest was the only viable industry in Kotzebue, with some 180 permit holders. It is a credit to ADF&G²⁶ management that the fish – the stock – are still here. The breakdown in the fishery is in marketing and world demand for salmon. We have few other resources in the region suitable for exploitation.

July 13 Low 40° F, High 68° F
 Light winds. Cloudy, clearing.

Moisture, warmth and sun made this a great day for flowering. The first iris around camp unfurled today – so large and beautiful among arctic flowers – and hundreds of tiny deep blue “arc lights” (*Gentiana prostrata*). This small ground hugging gentian may have the deepest blue of all arctic flowers. The yellow of *Senecio lugens* is also very prominent now. These three species have just this week come into flower here and are quickly heading into peak flowering time with the warm moist days.

The day, as good as it was, was not without disappointment. In a short walk through plots where *G. detonsa* have been in other years not a one was found. The only plants located so far is back at the Barger plot. With these other species coming into flower *G. detonsa* should be easy enough to spot though no bloom color would be expected. This may be a year of few *G. detonsa* plants.

²⁶ Alaska Department of Fish and Game

There are many little white buds of grass-of-parnassus showing but no blossoms yet. Some *Saussurea* blue is showing and this is a cue to expect *G. detonsa* but no such luck. Hopefully more will show a little later when color of blossom is a more distant give away of presence.

Very few new young birds of any species in our area.

No net set today though water is fine for it. We have enough salmon on hand.

July 14 Low 42° F, High 70° F
 NW wind to 18, p.m. Clear, few clouds. Light winds.

A rather sad tale to tell today. Got around to hooking the nest material out of the swallow box. There were the remains of at least two hatched birds starting to grow feathers but still pretty naked. The long period of too cool weather culminating in the snowfall and freezing night of July 3 was too much. The last swallows here were two obvious adults but the third could have been an early flying bird of this year. This kind of tragedy has not occurred before. Swallows are insectivores for the most part, and finding enough bugs to feed young through that cool spell was too difficult and then the night and whole day of wet heavy snow was too much.

Checked the place on the airfield at the Point when we went over to visit this evening and did not find any white petaled *Epilobium* where there were two colonies of forty plants two years ago. There were many less last year and now there are none. Have no explanation for this. Our pair of plants near the camp for 20 years have now become a colony of five. They remained at two plants for many, many years. No explanation either.

Have not yet found a single *G. detonsa* plant in our backyard area. There are some on the Barge Plot a mile back from the ocean beach.

FWS²⁷ friends dropped by (aircraft) after 12 midnight last night. Visited for a couple of hours.

July 15 Low 48° F, High 79° F
 Light winds. Clear.

A real red letter day! And hot!

A friend from Galena spent half the day with us and shared this great day of sun, flowers, insects and the quietest ocean maybe have ever had. Our beach resembled any beach on Kobuk Lake when there is a long windless period. Our ocean usually has some lumps during local windless times from waves generated long distances away.

A lone musk ox today walking past us to spend the hot day at the end of the Point.

Our plant life responded remarkably well to all the sun and heat after being held back because of early July weather.

²⁷ US Fish and Wildlife Service

With the help of another pair of sharper eyes we located all the local gentian species and even a bloomer or two of each species except *Lomatogonium*.

We found first flowering *Gentianopsis detonsa*, *Gentiana tenella*, *Gentiana propinqua* and multitudes (first bloomers a few days ago) of the arc light gentian (*Gentiana prostrate*).

In one day the Iris first few seen yesterday were blooming all over the place. Such a beautiful day with a friend to share the exuberance and glory over the flowering arctic land. Even small butterfly and moths crowded the air but sadly our camp swallows were not there to share. It would have been a great day for them to introduce their fledglings to the world. A sad thought to end a great day.

July 16 Low 54° F, High 70° F
 W-NW wind to 15 [general conditions not recorded]

Nearly as warm as yesterday but with a constant light wind off of the water.

Set net rather early in the rather large swells but when pulled in this evening the total catch was one very fat medium sized sheefish, one flounder and half a dozen red starfish. A poor catch for Sisualik for the date.

Didn't check backyard flowers today but there would be many more iris and gentians as they are all headed toward peak.

Only two major species have not come into flower – *Epilobium angustifolium* and *Lomatogonium rotatum*.

Saw a few gulls on the ground behind us today. That usually means a few blueberries are turning blue. Can't hardly believe it but will check it out soon.

Carrie saw a squirrel packing nest material yesterday. Maybe preparations for a second litter.

Hope to make a try for the sourdock late tomorrow. Their leaves should be in great shape by now. We have an unusual situation this year. We still have in the freezer some salmonberries and sourdock from last year's crop.

July 17 Low 54° F, High 84° F
 W-NW wind to 15. Clear.

Another very warm morning with welcomed cooling in the afternoon with wind off the water.

The morning was too warm and windless to consider the hike inland to the sourdock lake.

Set the 4 ½" mesh net for a change and that is what we got – change. Twenty large fat whitefish moving past from west to east. These fish are from Anigaq – the Krusenstern waterway system – heading back to the Noatak and Kobuk watersheds for winter. They would be trapped down here for our winter use if the outlet at Anigaq would close. They are extremely fat with developing ovaries and are good fresh cooked or half dried and cooked. They

are too fat for a good dried product.

The musk ox is still over at the point or somewhere between here and there. These wandering bull musk ox seem to search out the presence of other life forms, possibly since they may not be allowed to associate with other musk ox groups due to dominating bulls in each one.

We hope this one makes it back west in better shape than the poor old fellow we found dead last fall 4 or 5 miles west of here. They are very interesting creatures and we are quite fortunate to have this ancient animal living again on our land.

Our *Elymus* – beach rye – heads opened to spread pollen three days ago and vary profusely these hot days.

July 18 Low 50° F, High 79° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Clear.

A six mile hike inland today. It is a little too hot for a sourdock picking trip but couldn't wait forever. Wasn't sure I could make it all the way but it turned out not too bad. The warm dry air actually made insects tolerable. I didn't use mosquito dope all day.

The *Rumex arctica* leaves were scarce for some reason. Large enough, but not numerous. That makes picking pretty slow. I left around 10 a.m. and got home at 10 p.m. – a long day in the bush with mosquitoes, gnats, horseflies, and deerflies. Came home tired, wet with sweat, and somewhat lumpy – with 35 lbs of sourdock leaves, enough for about a 5 gal. bucket of cooked mix.

The hike inland was great, as always – lots of flowers and greens, a swan family with nearly half grown cygnets, two adult cranes with a single youngster and tracks of bear, moose, musk ox and caribou.

Polemonium sp. is having a super year. As I first came on to the dry lake bed where the sourdock is I thought the outlet had plugged again as there seemed to be blue water covering all of the lower areas of the lake bed. It was a real mirage – a mirage of pale blue *Polemonium* petals. For nearly five minutes, until I focused the binocs, I thought the pale blue petals were water covering the land! Hard to awake to reality!

July 19 Low 52° F, High 80° F
 W-NW wind to 20. Clear.

A dry warm breezy day. A rather calm morning with whitecaps in late afternoon and evening.

Some fires developing in NW part of state from thundershowers.

Set the 4 ½" mesh net today for a few hours but probably shouldn't have. Lots of fish in the water and in the net. We already had enough work to take care of today and I've been pretty slow moving to get it done.

The completion of the sourdock trip yesterday however is an interesting milestone. Since I did make it and got home with significant poundage I am still young and able enough for our living style!

My, the inland vegetation was a thrill again. So many species of flowers not seen on the coast. Monkshood, nagoonberry, shooting stars, and the first flowering tall fireweed, beds of solid pale blue Jacob's ladder and brilliant yellow mustard family plants of the low marsh. So colorful and different than our salt marsh and beach ridge flora.

There was about as much variety in our net catch today – big Alaska whitefish (many), fresh run humpies, a few small sheefish and a large watermarked Noatak salmon.

We will need to make room in the freezer for the big fat whitefish. We don't usually do that at this season but they are too fat to cut for drying in this hot weather.

July 20 Low 50° F, High 68° F
S-SW-W wind to 18. Early clouds, clearing.

Another warm summer day for Sisualik with not too many bugs but lots of butterflies and flowers! Iris and *Senecio lugens*, *Potentilla Egedii* and *Epilobium latifolium* at peak bloom.

Our neighbors, the Greene family, came over today to put flowers on Amos' grave. We shared their outdoor barbecue with them. Amos and Flora and family have been our friends and good neighbors for many years.

Old dog Terry caught a squirrel on his run today. Only his second catch this summer. He's getting old too and would say that it is too hot to dig squirrels out, even small ones like this one was.

Since I'm getting old too it took us three days to finish the sourdock sortie for the year (maybe the only one this year). We did the chopping up and cooking today. One day to gather, one day to rest up from that, and now one whole day for chopping and cooking. Yield – one full 5-gallon bucket which will make two if we get black and blueberries to mix – our Sisualik favorite.

Haven't checked *G. detonsa* habitat since we found one in flower three days back. They will be easy to see now and the assessment of their productivity will be fun. Maybe tomorrow if we have some sun.

Rumor of a couple of belugas taken south of Kotzebue, and another taken by extended family in Pt. Lay.

July 21 Low 56° F, High 66° F
NW wind to 15. Cloudy, rain, clearing. Light winds.

First bloom of tall fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) in backyard. Also some very beautiful top quality *G. detonsa* in Greene Plot where earlier it seemed a poor year for the species. As usual, this species seems always to present surprises. There are now many plants, some in full bloom, and they will peak this week. Such a tall graceful beauty in a windy land! The deep purple petals at first flowering seem luminescent. Again, it makes one glad to be alive if for no other reason than to be able to observe this flowers in its early blooming stage.

Some grass-of-parnassus buds also finally spreading wide and rapidly maturing plants of *Lomatogonium rotatum*

have finally made an appearance.

The heavy rain this morning and hot sun on clearing have made for a wonderful flower time.

On a visit to the Point this evening we even found the missing colony of *Epilobium latifolium* with white petals. There are at least 20 plants. That species is at peak flowering right now which made relocating the “lost” colony possible. All flowering plants easy to see today.

Musk ox came by on the inland wheeler trail again today. It must have passed going east in the night and came back this afternoon. There may be two bulls from the group of four that were in the Sealing Point area all summer.

July 22 Low 50° F, High 68° F
SW-W-NW wind to 15. Cloudy a.m., clear p.m.

Everyone from Sisualik Point, Kotzebue, to Noatak and all areas in between had very heavy rain this morning for more than an hour from a big black cloud that we were on the outside edge of. Not a drop of rain fell here!

Set the 4 ½” mesh net this morning for a while and it filled up again with number one eating fish. Whitefish, trout, fresh run humpy. Didn’t want that much fish – just something good for lunch. We cooked two medium-sized trout and gave the rest to Carrie’s sister at the Point. It is early to get fall trout but these fish have eggs more than half developed and are in fine fat condition. They will spawn this fall and are no doubt making their natal homing run to Noatak River from somewhere west of here. Fall trout that show after August 10 will have ovaries at low and unformed eggs. They will be super fat and will enter rivers to overwinter.

Many blooms of *Lomatogonium rotatum* and Tall Fireweed today. Also open buds of grass-of-parnassus. Maybe peak for *G. detonsa* bloom today. They kind of sneaked up on us again. There is a good number in most old producing locations. Plant size seems generally small but there are some larger plants. They all seem ready to flower on almost the same day again and will all fade at the same time again, sooner than later if hot dry days continue. It is a good *G. detonsa* year with somewhat early flowering.

There are three dead harbor porpoise on the beach now. Killed in late set beluga nets.

July 23 Low 48° F, High 80° F
W-NW wind to 20. Clear, thunderheads.

Checked our near berry grounds today and had two good surprises. Salmonberries in one plot look exceedingly good. Large size, all red and near to picking time. There are no soft ripe ones yet but within a week they will be ready! This is kind of unexpected as it seemed not an easy spring for our berries.

In addition some blueberries, green and blue, are showing where we found none last year. Even blackberries are showing promise in secluded places. The berry year is looking better all the time. Some picking will begin within the week.

Iris peak fading – tall fireweed still building and *G. detonsa* within their peak. We are at that milestone of summer

where all local species have come into flower. *Lomatogonium rotatum* was last of all.

Didn't get up to Barger Plot today due to continued high water level. Need to bridge that outlet between here and there before berry picking time.

Ocean a little rough this evening. Some campers from Sealing Point way are waiting for weather so they can move back down to their camps for berry time. There has been only one person in camp between us and Port Site for the past two weeks.

July 24 Low 70° F, High 48° F
W-NW wind to 20. Cloudy, clearing.

Flag lilies (Iris) past peak but still many late bloomers. Tall fireweed still coming on with many solid banks of color now throughout the Spit. *Epilobium latifolium* still strong but peak and petals fading.

G. detonsa, grass-of-parnassus, and other gentians still at peak and *Lomatogonium rotatum*, star gentian still moving toward peak.

Very little sign of newly feathered N. pintail back yet, though there are a few. No geese or swans yet.

Set 4 ½" mesh a few hours and got big fat Alaska whitefish and bright humpies again. Cooked pot of our favorite whitefish for lunch.

Planned to make a small creek crossing 4-wheeler bridge to Barger Plot but after hauling two planks and a sheet of plywood found that marine waters were rapidly rising to flood level and my planks were about to float off. Had to cancel project till another day.

Carrie's brother and some family headed for Sealing Point but waves and wind stopped them at the Point. They will overnight with friends and hope for safe passage tomorrow. They have a 4-wheeler in the rather small boat.

Several beluga nets still in the water west of us. They seem responsible for several harbor porpoise and seal drownings. Normally nets are pulled at the beginning of commercial salmon season.

July 25 Low 52° F, High 78° F
NW-N wind to 35. Clear.

Very strong off shore winds beginning late morning. Unusual system with water rising to near flood level last night and this morning. Off shore winds usually mean low marine water levels instead of high. This condition sometime occurs and may be the result of relative positions of nearby low and high pressure systems.

Looked out the window soon after making coffee this morning and saw Aachauq pointing/staring at something intently. Thought it was a mouse or young squirrel. Then a very large porcupine left the vegetation between the dogs and headed across open ground for the vehicle junk pile. Moving faster than I thought I could, I was out the door, grabbed a shovel and went after the poor creature. My aim was to catch him before he got into the junk pile.

I did catch up (who can't run faster than a porcupine?) and clubbed him with the shovel. There was no hope of simply enjoying the presence of another living creature in this big world. Both my dogs have old wounds from porky encounters in other years and there is no treat quite like a summer porcupine potroasted in its abundant body fat, especially after a month of mostly fish diet. This was a very fat, very large female porcupine far from the white spruce forest that gives it better winter protection. We count this incident as good fortune.

The musk ox came by on the same trail a few hours later but didn't suffer the same fate.

July 26 Low 44° F, High 62° F
 N-NE-E-S-NW wind to 18. Cloudy, clearing.

Dry warm breezy day. A few bugs yet and our continued hot dry weather is giving us a short floral season. Once most of our plants come into flower continued dryness brings short life to flower petals. Day after day rain gives a long floral period.

Iris and *G. detonsa* going down quickly. Seed formation under way. The beautiful blues and purples fading quickly.

Built a 4-wheeler bridge over the troublesome slough between here and Barger Plot. Haven't been up there in a while and now the *G. detonsa* in the plot are pretty much faded. The plants are all medium to small and numbers much less than last year. I'm somewhat disappointed. Our plants down here on the Greene Plot are in better shape and as usual a week behind in development from those inland.

Tall fireweed (Epilobium angustifolium) and *Lomatogonium rotatum* (Star Gentian) are still building and already the most prominent flower on the Spit right now.

Saw two red knots today. Have seen them on lagoon edge before at about this date. Not sure whether juveniles or adults. The appearance of a few regularly around this date may mean some local nesting in local alpine areas.

Also saw a brood of very small oldsquaw chicks today. The only duck brood seen so far.

July 27 Low 44° F, High 68° F
 W-NW wind to 20. Clear, few clouds.

Another fine day with enough cool wind to keep the bugs down but drying out the land and vegetation, further limiting the longevity of our now beautiful floral display.

Cut yesterday's salmon catch this morning and though I might get Carrie over to our nearby salmonberry patch but before that could happen a couple of young lady neighbors from way down the Point got into the patch first and we didn't want to compete for the few ripe berries.

Another neighbor from over that way sent her kids over with a loaf of fresh made bread.

Yet another nearer neighbor that we haven't seen for ages brought us a couple of rib steaks! Quite a day for thoughtful visiting neighbors.

We woke up to extreme low water in the lagoon and ocean, the result no doubt of strong N winds on the outer capes. Several boats were traveling back and forth on the ocean today, one going clear to Kivalina. The others were on shorter trips. Crabbers out and curious berry pickers made round trips.

July 28 Low 39° F, High 62° F
S-SW-W-NW wind to 18. Clear, clouds, high fog.

Did a Greene Plot *G. detonsa* survey today and Barger Plot yesterday. Barger plot past peak – most flower heads faded and on the way to becoming seed pods. Many less plants than last year and smaller less robust plants. Greene plot still has many fresh flowers with throats open when sun is hot. However, there are some faded on the way to seed which means we are a little past peak here too. Dryness of the ground – long lack of rain – hastens this plant's change from flower to seed. Greene Plot has more and larger plants than last year and this year it is a much richer producer than Barger Plot. Last year it was vice versa! The date is early for past peaking of *G. detonsa*.

Ran dogs west today towards new Kenworthy house one at a time. Was surprised to see two large bull musk ox just across the slough. These are larger than the first two through here this summer and apparently together the four that were in the Sealing Point/Salluq area all early summer.

I took Carrie over to see them and the new house as I also ran Terry.

A bit further west we checked out a once good blueberry patch that produced well several years ago but failed last year. Was surprised that it looks good this year and near ready to pick.

We ate a first bowl of new crop salmonberries yesterday.

July 29 Low 40° F, High 72° F
SW-W-NW wind to 18. Clear, fog, clear.

Well! We tried the blueberry patch that looked promising yesterday. It didn't turn out. Small berries and few, so later in the day we checked in the opposite direction toward Sisualik Point and found much more potential. We will give it a go tomorrow. We are looking for blueberries to cook to mix in with our sourdock. It doesn't matter whether they are fully ripe or not and more than ¼ of blueberries are not ripe yet.

We are quickly coming up on the true berry month. August deserves that title as usually there are berries to pick from the first to the last day of that month.

The roof went up on the new house today but the musk ox were not there to see it. We didn't see them today and don't know where they've gone.

People are beginning to feel around for places to pick berries. Both salmonberries and blueberries are coming into ripeness and competition will be great in the best locations.

No net set today. The good catch a few days ago continues to feed us in various forms. Half-dried boiled backbone

pieces kept in freezer but not frozen make good meals until we get hungry for fresh fish again.

We will cook the other half of the porcupine tomorrow.

July 30 Low 46° F, High 60° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Cloudy, high fog, clearing.

A dull morning without sun but a clearing and fine cool afternoon/evening.

We put in our first half day of berry picking. We located yesterday evening an area between here and Sisualik Point in the beach ridge zone behind Sisualik houses a fine lot of blueberries on short very sparse blueberry plants. Picking them was much like picking blackberries which grow on the top of a mat-like plant. Blueberries usually have a much more shrub like plant.

There are an impressive lot of berries but only a little more than half are blue. The rest are greenish white in their un-ripeness.

We started picking early even though it looked like rain. We want these early ripe berries mixed with unripe for cooking to put in our cooked sourdock bucket. We did fill our small bucket and went home for lunch around 1 p.m. when it rained a few sprinkles.

We picked at one spot that had more berries per square foot of ground than I have seen before. When they all get blue and big we may have some of the best blueberry picking we've ever had in Sisualik. And that after such an odd spring with snow in July while the plants were still in flower.

July 31 Low 42° F, High 62° F
 W-NW wind to 18. Clear.

Hard to believe that July is gone already. Berry month is here and amazingly enough there are some even with the odd spring weather we had. Blueberries especially offer much hope for even a bumper crop this year in some places. We started on them yesterday and again today even though a little less than half are ripe.

Didn't set net today as swells were a bit high this morning.

A lot of new caribou tracks reported today between Salluq and Sealing Point. Carrie's brother, Sam Williams, and some of his family are again down there for berry picking and whatever. Hope they get some caribou. Fresh meat would be good for a change especially with the slow trend in waterfowl return this July.

The new house west of us is coming up fast.

Vegetation is showing yellow and drying and flowers are rapidly turning to seed. Bear sign on the beach is increasing with a few dead seals and uguruq washing shore recently.

There is currently a rush of local people to the Selawik area for salmonberries. Reports are good from there but it

is a long ways from Sisualik.

As affluence continues to build in the region people's arms for harvest of favorite foods get longer and longer.

AUGUST

August 1 Low 45° F, High 76° F
S-SW-W wind to 15. Clear.

A warm and beautiful day to start August with. Some of it was almost too hot again. Our land is drying up! Vegetation beginning to wilt in drier places. Rain is overdue.

Berries ripening fast. We picked blueberries for four hours this afternoon. Carrie made a pie this evening and we have another pot to cook to put into our sourdock. Tomorrow we'll pick a few akpiks²⁸ from local spots that I checked today while running the dogs. There are not too many but they are big and ripe and they look beautiful!

Saw flying brand new mew gulls today and new flying arctic terns yesterday.

One lucky camp at the Point has new flying tree swallows. Our new birds perished in the early July snow and cold. It is a late date for swallows to be learning to fly.

Saw two groups of duck families this afternoon with quite small young. Green-winged teal and wigeon were the species and there were a half dozen Pintail with new flight feathers. Ducks very scarce yet in our area – all species.

Set the 4 ½" mesh net early this morning and after a couple of hours it had fat whitefish (our lunch), an egg-laden trout (our supper), three sheefish, 4 humpies and a few flounders.

Our marine waters are extremely low and freshwater sources are the same. We do have report that Akulak may be closed. We hope that Anigaq will also and trap some fish for our fall fishing.

August 2 Low 45° F, High 78° F
W-NW wind to 15. Clear.

A very warm and sunny day again. The kind of day that is a little too warm for us and one looks forward to the usual afternoon sea breezes. They did come but they were hardly adequate.

We picked local akpiks (salmonberries) today and felt pretty good about the 25 lbs we got in the hot sun. The stampede is on for akpiks as they have ripened a bit early. Selawik is having a bumper crop and in spite of the long distance from Kotzebue many have gone from here knowing that our local akpik hot spots are a bit lean this year. There is competition building though for what there is available locally. We feel fortunate to have any at all with

²⁸ Also "aqpik"

the odd spring we had. We are now assured of having sourdock and cooked blueberries mixed, some akpiks and maybe later frozen fresh blueberries and blackberries to mix with our sourdock-blueberry mix. Oh boy! We will have winter berries again.

Set the net for less than an hour this morning and got the usual quick daily need and tomorrow needs too. Three good trout, six fat whitefish and one huge flounder.

There were tracks of a running bear on our back lagoon edge this morning. This is the first bear tracks close to here this summer. We would have seen the animal from here had we been looking in that direction.

August 3 Low 46° F, High 78° F
 W-NW wind to 15. Clear.

Another remarkable good day of sun. The ground is crying for water though.

Visitors from Galena today by aircraft – old friends that claim the bugs and biting flies in Galena are second to none! They are enjoying the relative freedom from bugs we are having here with all this fine dry weather.

I found two small plots of salmonberries that we would have picked this afternoon but will postpone till Monday. We continue to have many, many small passerines. Redpolls, longspurs, and savannah sparrows. Tall fireweed in its period of glory. Very impressive this year in Sisualik.

Also found, for the first time this early fall, some large groups of northern pintail and wigeon. Maybe three or four hundred mixed. These are returned molters with brand new flight feathers.

Have not heard or seen returning geese or swans yet. We continue to have multitudes of small passerines around.

August 4 Low 52° F, High 78° F
 W-NW-N wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

Fine weather continues, land continues to dry, berries continue to ripen.

Enjoyed our in camp visitors today and they got into their home flight from Kotzebue to Galena (2 ½-3 hrs) between 8 and 9 p.m. Since their location is inland on the mighty Yukon River they enjoyed a short time on the ocean beach relatively free of biting bugs and the special sound of ocean swells which are never heard inland. Wind waves, yes, but never ocean swells without wind – a very special sound.

We will resume our quest for local akpik patches tomorrow and then probably switch again to blueberries till we can find some decent blackberries to go with our sourdock blueberry mix.

Our coming weather trend is cooler and may indicate the coming of our rainy season. The land needs it and we are down to our last 50 gal. barrel of snow melt water.

We enjoyed very much the fruits of our visitors' gardening. Broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, strawberries and

raspberries.

A few caribou seen west of Sealing Point again. So far only one small animal has been taken from this group this month.

August 5 Low 54° F, High 66° F
N-NW wind to 25. Clear, some clouds.

We picked akpik this afternoon in great berry picking weather – dry, windy and bug-less. We picked several small local patches and came away with a couple of gallons.

Ran the dogs after berry picking and found lots of bear sign. Two dead drifted in porpoise carcasses were dragged from ocean edge and up into grasses and willow. Not much was eaten off of either carcass. This was west of us near the new house. East of us was surprised to see what were probably the same bear's tracks on the lagoon beach moving down to our neighbor's house. This is a small bear, probably two to three years old and probably the worst kind for getting into mischief. We will probably hear/see more of this fellow. Hope he doesn't get himself shot.

Drying of the ground is getting extreme – many yellow leaves and yellow sedges around.

Rumor has it that a moose was taken last week by the Ranger Station, probably inland from there.

Berry picking time is on and there will be people around. School is also gearing up and most folks would like to go spend a few days on berry grounds camping out for a few days. Weather will determine how many and how long the temporary camps will last.

Tall fireweed is just past peak flowering time.

August 6 Low 40° F, High 62° F
NW-N-NE wind to 25. Clear, some clouds.

Looked for a duck today tame enough to shoot. We haven't had meat for a while and have run out of different ways to prepare available kinds of fish. Couldn't find any tame ducks though there are many adults with new flight feathers at this time when they are always quite suspicious of human intentions.

Did run across two seals in the lagoon that has almost no water due to long extended north winds. Both were resting, hauled out in the sun a ¼ mile apart. I made no attempt to take them having only a shotgun.

Three hours later a distant neighbor and his couple of sons going berry picking ran across one of them and the boys managed to shoot it when it came back to them, apparently not knowing where to go in such shallow water. The young fellow quickly dropped his pants and ran out thru the shallow water to grab his seal and was surprised to find that it was a short yearling bearded seal (uguruq). This was a great treat since yearling uguruq or uguruchak are very good tender meat. After cutting it up they brought us a good piece. Seals show up in the lagoon only rarely.

Our 4 ½” mesh net got only one Noatak colored chum and flounders. The fresh uguruq meat will be a great treat tomorrow.

August 7 Low 38° F, High 60° F
 N-NW wind to 20. Clear, some clouds.

Cooked fresh uguruq meat this morning and after a good lunch we went over to our closest salmonberry patch to pick a few I had seen leftover by our freshwater haul lake. After picking them we checked around a bit a found quite a lot of berries that must have been unripe when people went through. We picked all afternoon and filled a couple of small buckets. We didn’t expect such a good plot of berries.

I later ran the dogs west and found a dead porcupine and two live musk ox. The porcupine was by the trail and probably killed by a four-wheeler traveler. The dog I was running got pretty excited but didn’t get any quills.

The two musk ox were laying in the exact spot where two very large bulls were last week. These seemed to be somewhat smaller.

No net set today. Maybe tomorrow.

Quite a few boats and people down in the Salluq area for salmonberries now.

Carrie helped get some boats turned back to Kotzebue that were on the way to Espenberg when Espenberg warned that winds and waves were high and beach sands were drifting. The VHF was busy with excitement for a while but everything turned out well.

August 8 Low 40° F, High 58° F
 NW-N wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

We picked our local akpik patch again and surprised ourselves by getting another two small buckets as all berries are ripe now. We didn’t expect that many were left but found a few spots untouched by earlier pickers.

A friend from town came in to overnight and help us eat our first real fall trout which we got in a short net set this morning. They are the char (trout) that went out with the ice in late June very lean and snaky and now come back to overwinter in freshwater rivers fat and round after a month and a half in the ocean. This segment of the trout population can be readily distinguished from other segments following different patterns by the status of their ovaries/gonads. They are at an extreme low level of development – at the bottom rung of development for a new egg-laying cycle. They have put on enough fat to see them through the winter without regular additional feeding. They are the highest quality eating/table fish that we have. The very peak of physical condition and fatness. They normally make an appearance in Sisualik waters around the 10th of August en route to Noatak and Kobuk River systems.

August 9 Low 42° F, High 60° F
W-NW wind to 15. Cloudy, clearing.

Town trip by air leaving Sisualik at 8:30 a.m. A busy day in town. Lots of old friends to meet and catch up with and of course business and shopping to do.

Kotzebue is showing a remarkable display of squirrel-tail grass, the reddish tinged limber seed heads waving in the wind. This seems strictly an urban plant in our area normally not found far away from streets and walkways. It is quite beautiful and attractive at this stage of growth with bright lively green topped by the reddish “tails” waving in the wind.

Lots of work going on in Kotzebue – construction, water/sewer pipes, airport, street repair and improvement, not to mention private home remodeling. A time to get more ready for the inevitable coming of winter.

Stores are well stocked and with lots of fresh produce. Lots of people passing through for hunting, river floating and general exploring.

Carrie did well in getting around without her cane and greeting old friends not seen for a while.

We made it home about 7 p.m. with the plane well loaded. It was good to get home and relax in our little more “laid back” locale – less dust, noise and general exuberance.

August 10 Low 39° F, High 58° F
W-NW wind to 20. Clear, some clouds. Rain showers.

A first rain shower for a long, long time.

Set the net this morning in hopes of a fresh fish for our guest to take home. It caught only a single whitefish and a few flounders but the large fat whitefish will feed her for one good meal. She picked a reasonably good number of akpiks yesterday while we were in town. We appreciate her coming and had numerous good fast-moving conversations. She is a good friend of many years standing.

She returned home on the plane that brought us two drums of gasoline.

Another small caribou was taken at Sealing Point yesterday. The couple that have been taken there lately are described as fawns but we think they are probably yearlings. No mature animals have been taken yet in our or their area.

Some juvenile herring turning up on the beach.

Lots of people and boats down in the Salluq area for akpiks this weekend, no doubt the high point of Krusenstern visitors for the summer. With the outlet still open it is easy to go in with a boat to access great berry picking areas.

Our hope is always that the outlet will have closed by this time, trapping fish inside and giving us 4-wheeler access

to our little boat that resides down there. No luck this year but we will still have berries!

August 11 Low 42° F, High 62° F
NW-N wind to 20. Clear, few clouds.

Quiet Sunday in Sisualik. Most action this weekend is down at Salluq on the salmonberry grounds.

Our backyard salt marsh country has turned yellow from green – not because of frost this time but at this very early date from drought – a lack of rain for a long time. The various sedges near the water's edge (*Carex sp.*) are the first to yellow.

At the same time our groundwater table sinks deeper and deeper, causing small potholes and “duck lakes” to go dry.

Ducks still scarce in Sisualik and geese not seen or heard here yet though geese are reported back down in the Sealing Point area.

Glaucous gulls feeding heavily on blueberries now. Saw a lone musk ox today moving west back on the very edge of the tablelands. Marine waters remain very low in response to continual N and NW winds.

Our Sisualik small bear continues to be around. It drug the porpoise carcass it put up in the grasses from beach line last week farther inland, a little closer to the new house building operation west of us. It appears to have eaten some and then buried the leftovers more deeply with grasses. It is a small young bear, 2-3 years old.

August 12 Low 44° F, High 60° F
N-NW wind to 25. Clear, some clouds.

Set 4 ½” mesh table net for a couple of hours this morning and got quite a rich haul. Fat fall trout are moving through. The net caught eight so round and fat the oil is almost leaking out of their skin. One can hardly believe the amount of fat our dolly varden can stash in their tissues in this fall run group. They are about right on time as August 10 to 15 is recognized as normal beginning of run.

And of course Carrie saw the inevitable trout bird (northern wheatear) on the beach as we returned home from blueberry picking.

Most salmonberry picking boats west of us are returning to Kotzebue a day late for work. Rough ocean water gave them an extra weekend day.

Our net also caught a very high quality male silver salmon (coho). We catch them only rarely here – as rare as kings. This was a first for the year and was a fine big fish – quite fat.

We picked blueberries east of us and toward Sisualik Point from here. There are lots but pretty small. We filled a 15 lb. bucket.

A red fox was seeking to have a gull squab supper tonight but I think with Jonathan's help he was discouraged. Winds calmed early this evening. Country continues to dry out excessively.

August 13 Low 44° F, High 50° F
W-NW-N wind to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

A very cool day – seems like fall.

Didn't set the net today and we went blueberry picking east of us shortly after noon and didn't come home till after six p.m. Pretty good berries and not far from home.

We are trying a new freezing process for blueberries. We spread them out on a cookie sheet and freeze them overnight before bagging in ziplocks. Carrie is not satisfied with the old method of just putting them in ziplocks and freeze. They tend to mash together and freezing is delayed, even starting to sour. They taste less than fresh picked and we thought freezing them individually before bagging might help. We will see.

People still working to get home from long berry picking weekend on Krusenstern. Salmonberries just past peak quality and blueberries right at peak picking stage. Blackberries and cranberries not ripe yet.

We have started seeing small whimbrel flocks since yesterday. Geese have turned up plentiful in the Sealing Point/Salluq area. We have not heard or seen any here yet.

Our marine water level has come up. Forecast is for southerly winds and rain so maybe our summer rainy season is about to begin. We shall see. Rain will improve the blackberry crop.

August 14 Low 46° F, High 57° F
SE-S-SW wind to 35. Cloudy, smoke, sun.

Our land is in drought! Very dry. Small lakes are dry, water table (ground) very low, Noatak River is so low that boats can't reach the village site. Though we have not had frost vegetation has taken on fall colors.

We have high wind warning for SW winds tonight that likely will bring waves to sod edge and hopefully will close Anigaq and Akulak. Akulak has been reported closed for a week but was open again today.

A neighbor to the west has returned home and already got one caribou and given us some good fresh meat. We feel pretty rich again with gifts of moose and caribou meat.

Saw five Canada geese on our back marsh today, the first seen or heard by us here in Sisualik. Ducks still very scarce. Whimbrel numbers continue to grow as they find blueberries on the Spit ready for them. These are family groups that come to stage here before migration south.

Ocean waves nearly up to beach sod line this evening. Hope it don't go over. Our biggest waves over the bank happened in August several years ago.

August 15 Low 54° F, High 56° F
SW-W-NW wind to 30. Cloudy, rain.

Lots of wind and waves this morning dropping off some this evening. No rain till this evening.

Waves did get up to sod line but didn't go over the bank. Woke several times during the night to check height of waves.

Carrie's brother at Salluq reported waves reached within three feet of their house during the night.

Our back marsh areas reached flood height but only to minor degree. With no freshwater input from river systems we had only marine levels to cope with.

Driftwood on the beach got moved around and re-deposited.

No report yet of beached marine mammal carcasses and no hint that Anigaq or Akulak channels closed. Beach could not be traveled with 4-wheeler till this evening when swells dropped down and left 20-30 feet of beach immediately below sod line.

The wet windy weather kept most people near home today.

We put our lights on this evening for the first time this fall. It does seem to be fall now with the colored and withered vegetation and violent seas. Even fresh caribou in the pot instead of fish or duck makes it seem more so.

August 16 Low 44° F, High 53° F
NW wind to 18. Cloudy, steady light rain.

First clams today! Surf was down this morning and our wide beach was littered with red starfish and blue mussels. There are a real lot of mussels – some full, some empty. Over in the shadow of the bar several hundred yards off shore of Sisualik Point the white empty and full shells of the white *Mya* clams were mixed with the dark mussels several feet above present water/wave level. There were also 100 glaucous gulls doing the same thing I was there for but they had been there since dawn. They are able to open the shells quite easily after the clam dies and even while the clam lives with a little more work. They had left me my share – about 100 – but mostly of small size. Large adult *Mya* clams are 5 or 6 inches long. Most that I took home were 4 to 5 inches.

Needless to say the two of us had a feast tonight and more for tomorrow. We cook them all at once as they don't keep well.

The high surf yesterday (to and a little over the sod line) benefited us very much in a second way. Both the outlets at Anigaq and Akulak are now closed giving us trail to our boat at Salluq and trapping at least some fish in the lagoon systems behind that we will get in September and October.

Our big duck lake in the backyard was finally filled with birds today. Wigeon and northern pintail. There have been none up to this point in time.

It was a good world today, even though wet. Many changes have been wrought!

August 17 Low 40° F, High 50° F
NW wind to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

Finally made it west today to our little old boat and engine! Continued on to Carrie's brother Sam's place at Salluq. We crossed the two outlets on dry gravel and saw lots and lots of sea shells from the time of big swells. The swells must have swept the bottom thoroughly. There were many blue mussels, razor clams and cockles. Red (orange) starfish were plentiful.

Bear tracks plowed through nearly the whole length of newly swept beach. There are at least two different sizes, one large, one small, and maybe additional sizes. They must have been seeking drifted in sea mammal carcasses but don't seem to have found any.

Two groups of small (young) caribou were seen on Sealing Point flats, five in one group and three near Sam's house. These are all immature animals. They are not choice animals for this season and carry little fat. They are good and soft meat but lack the good fat meat of a mature bull. These must be stray animals that lost their way and separated from the main herd last spring. Some may be reindeer.

Many geese down that way and ducks in our backyard continue to increase.

August 18 Low 38° F, High 50° F
N-NW wind to 18. Cloudy, sun, showers.

A quiet Sunday in Sisualik. Few people around with school starting this week.

Marine waters have dropped and lagoon pretty dry again. Ducks moved from our near lakes back to exposed lagoon feeding areas. Ducks, geese and cranes moving in from north and west. Have not seen any swans yet.

Blackberries near ready to eat and pick. We will probably have "tingulik"²⁹ this week (cooked trout livers mixed with blackberries – our special Sisualik treat).

No net set today. A disappointment for Jonathan who took off somewhere where feed is more available. With lagoon waters low again gulls will do well with stranded fish.

Most berry pickers will be focusing on blackberries this coming week though akpik and blueberries are still pickable where numbers are good.

There are a few flowers about yet but for the most part flower season is gone. Its time was shortened this year by very dry conditions.

²⁹ Also "tijulik"

August 19 Low 38° F, High 48° F
N-NW wind to 30. Clear, few clouds.

A first blackberry pick today and the results pretty disappointing. *Empetrum nigrum*, the blackberry, is Sisualik's most prominent berry. One usually faces the problem of where to find the largest berries. This year is different in that the problem is going to be where to find any blackberries at all.

We did pick a small three gallon bucket but found most of our usual favorite picking spots didn't produce this year and that alternate spots were few and late, with pretty small berries.

There seems no easy explanation for this except the unusual warm spell in May that may have had an effect on berry formation at time of flowering. Additional early dryness may have been caused by heavy winter use of the area by caribou. Heavy feeding activity thru the winter causes snow surface disturbance and debris throughout the snow cover which leads to early snow melt and unusually quick drying of surface soil.

No net again. Quite low marine waters with swells in response to continued N and NW winds. A small group of caribou seen west of us today.

August 20 Low 36° F, High 50° F
N-NE wind to 30. Clear.

Gusty winds and extreme low marine waters. Set the table net for a while this morning and got two fine trout and two large smelt. Now the smelt were unusual as the table net is 4 ½" mesh. The smelt were caught by mesh in an open mouth, not by being gilled. This caused me to dig out a short herring net and set it out as we would sure like to have a mess of fried smelt. It stayed out for a couple of hours and when pulled in had a dozen small saffron cod and a single least cisco – no smelt!

Noatak River water has come up a bit from last week. Boats can now reach the village but our marine waters are at a lower ebb today making pretty poor fishing. We do have an extremely wide firm sea beach now.

The few remaining flowers now are special again. A few of each species can be found with a few exceptions like *G. detonsa* and *Pedicularis sudetica*.

Gulls are doing well at a critical time for them with young just learning to fly. They are doing well because there are many trapped fish on the mudflats due to extremely low marine waters.

August 21 Low 42° F, High 60° F
N-NE wind to 30. Clear, some haze, smoke?

Very gusty winds today with some periods of calm or near calm.

We put off our trip to the boat (at Katyaurlaq) again because of strong winds.

We looked around Sisualik for blackberries but are not having a lot of luck. We check one by one those places that have produced well in past years but are finding very few scattered berries or some groups of numerous berries of very small size.

We have not yet located a good spot to spend a day picking. Very unusual for Sisualik. Quite a few people are looking for better spots.

Geese and cranes are flying around but ducks still very scarce. Geese and cranes are still on blueberries up in the tablelands and have not yet come down for blackberries.

Saw a merlin around camp yesterday and today. It is quite tame and quite a superb flier. We do see a few each year around this time when passerines and shorebirds are into southern movement.

The extreme low marine waters and long lack of rain make our area look pretty desolate. Fall colors induced by dehydration rather than frost is not a neat happening. Don't remember conditions so intense before. That is, dryness and low marine waters.

August 22 Low 33° F, High 54° F
SW-W-NW wind to 15. Clear.

Light frost this morning – the first this fall. Light yellow tinge on distant tableland cottonwood copse. Fall time is here – another milestone.

Two things that are usually very plentiful at this point in time in Sisualik are in short supply this year and we are hurting. Blackberries are normally all over the place and ripe for picking at this time. This year for reasons not understood the crop is extremely sparse. There are some, and some big ones for which we are thankful, but for Sisualik it is a crop failure this year.

The other missing element are ducks. Northern pintail, our “bread and butter” bird in Sisualik, are very scarce, as are wigeon, our second most numerous bird.

We don't recall a year in the last 50 when these two items were as scarce as they are now. There may be some changes as we go into deep fall – that is, some alternate species to fill our normal needs that these two won't this year. We do have other berries picked and rather steady fat trout available from the sea. We shall see what comes next.

August 23 Low 34° F, High 49° F
W-NW wind to 15. Sun and clouds.

A fine day for berry pickers after a cool damp morning.

Set the table net for an hour before we went berry picking. The only catch was a few flounders.

Several people have set whitefish nets inside of Anigaq and are catching fish so it looks like we will have some

whitefish again this winter. It remains to be seen how much. It is ideal when Anigaq closes in late July or Early August. Fish start moving out and back to the river systems (Noatak and Kobuk) after they have fattened and eggs and gonads have matured. The closure was late this year and water levels are extremely low inside the Anigaq system so it is expected that lots have fish. We thought maybe all had moved out before it closed. Those adult fish that are egg layers are the first to move out and the most choice for September fishing. Sub-adult and late developing spawners are the last to go out. It is possible that there are a few in the system that would overwinter even if they could go out. We will find out in September what mass of fish remains trapped.

We picked a small bucket of blackberries this afternoon. Not much more than a gallon. Blackberries are scarce!

August 24 Low 38° F, High 57° F
SE-S wind to 15. Fog, sun, clearing.

Heavy fog this morning clearing just before noon. Very warm, sunny afternoon.

Some berry pickers back on Krusenstern this weekend. Blackberries are the main attraction and most will return to town as school is underway.

We picked blackberries this afternoon, filling our small bucket with some fine large high quality berries that we found. Quality is fine but numbers are low!

Ducks still very scarce here. Our locally hunting merlin was around today again. He has been around all week when there were many passerines moving through. Now there seems to be an unusual number of Baird's sandpipers moving in and through and he was giving them some trouble.

Left the net in overnight and it was full of flounders and jellyfish this morning with only one small trout and a watermarked chum.

Net setters are doing better down at Anigaq taking a number of species besides whitefish that have been trapped in the system.

Arctic tern and mew gull seem totally gone now. The first of the larger birds to leave.

August 25 Low 40° F, High 53° F, Low 40° F
SW-S-SW wind to 20. Cloudy, smoky, sun.

A not so quiet Sunday in Sisualik. We finally had a Sunday School session. The first this summer. Our near east neighbors who came across for berry picking came over at 2 p.m. for Sunday School, feast and visit. These are older women that like to have a meeting on Sunday after the fashion of local Friends Church folks. We share with them the value of this kind of a gathering for worship and learning. We have missed the regular Sunday gatherings this year. The relatively few people in Sisualik is the reason for the change this year which in the past has been regular Sisualik routine.

Ran the dogs without incident after Sunday School and visited Carrie's sister and her family at the Point after that.

The trail over there has the most beautiful floral display of all local trails during peak flowering of summer. I didn't see even one flower of any species today. The combined forces of drought and cool near frosting nights have brought fall on early here.

The cottonwood copse on distant tablelands is now canary yellow again – our sure sign of the advent of fall in our zone. The bright yellow in contrast to the yet deep green of surrounding *Salix* willows is quite attractive.

The competition for blackberries is quite intense this year and will peak this coming week, weather permitting.

August 26 Low 50° F, High 52° F
S-SW wind to 18. Cloudy, smoky, shower.

Waves. Surf got pretty high again last night but some short of the sod line. Wind and water dropped slowly through the day.

Carrie a little stiff today and the clouds and smoke made one think rain would begin any time so we didn't pick berries.

I wandered around hoping to get a duck but that didn't happen. Ducks are still extremely scarce, as are geese, and we haven't seen a flock of swans yet. It certainly is a different August.

There was a group of seven caribou between Salluq and Sealing Point today. The boys down there killed one and they were reported to be all young animals, probably less than two years old. Their meat is edible but not very choice, for they tend to be pretty lean. No fat reserve for that age group. They seem also to be strays that got left behind when the main herds moved north last spring.

No net set today as ocean remains unruly.

A couple of travelers from Kivalina reported a beached whale this side of Rabbit Creek a couple of days ago. They reported a heavily used bear trail to the carcass. That explains why our beach has been free of bear tracks for the past week.

August 27 Low 50° F, High 52° F
S-SW wind to 20. Cloudy, rain.

Fairly steady light rain all day. Marine waters have remained high but below flood stage due to southerly winds. Ocean still too rough to put net out and there was no opportunity to catch a duck for the soup pot.

We have pretty much used up our food reserves and need to be catching or shooting something to replenish our freezer stores that are pretty much limited to berries now.

We hear caribou (the main north herd) are getting closer and are into the mountains between Noatak and Kobuk Rivers. Some local over summering animals are around but hard to find and generally of poor eating quality.

Ducks and other waterfowl are more scarce August than in any other year of the past 50. Don't have a clue as to reason though general drought through our region may be a factor.

Our three neighbor women picked berries in the rain for a couple of hours this afternoon. Carrie and I tend to wait for a drier day and of course, living here, we have that option whereas visitors must return home after a limited time.

Our nearby big Duck Lake that our big window overlooks had a new show today. Twenty camp gulls were in the middle of it – standing on the bottom! The water in this lake is always deeper than a gull's leg.

August 28 Low 46° F, High 52° F
W-NW wind to 25. Cloudy, some sun.

Dry and cool today.

A great flock (40) of cranes landed for a few minutes in the backyard today. They looked like a herd of caribou on the ground. They were soon in the air again making their way south with much noise and circling and maybe encouraging the young with yet weak muscles to keep up. A NW wind in the last week of August and first week of September is a local time for sandhill cranes to pass through.

Was surprised to find a flock of several hundred greater scaup in our far back lagoon where they often concentrate over *Potamogeton sp.* beds to feed in spring and fall. They have been absent for a couple of years. It is good to see them back. These are mostly adult males that have probably gone through molting together on some large inland lake.

There was more waterfowl in our area today than we have seen all summer/fall. Hope they keep coming and they may do that as this is, after all, a major fall staging and fattening area for a number of species.

Have yet to see a flock of tundra swans since return from molt.

August 29 Low 42° F, High 50° F
SW wind to 20. Cloudy.

Berry picking Prince Point again. Got a pretty good pick of fine big sweet blackberries, the kind that Sisualik is famous for but which are scarce this year. People are getting their needs met but it takes a good deal longer to meet those goals. Our several gallons today went into the half bucket of akpiks that our east side neighbor gave us when they moved to town from the Salluq salmonberry camp. Blackberries and salmonberries, when mixed about half and half and aged for a week or so before freezing, are a favorite treat. The flavor of the mix is much better (and different) than either alone. The mixing also prevents the souring of the akpiks when stored alone. When souring or fermenting occurs the berries break down to juice, seeds and skins into a kind of sour mash that is edible but much less desirable than when berries, skins, juice and seeds are firm and intact.

Put net out but the only catch was a couple of flounders and lots of ugly grass roots and other debris making net

cleaning difficult.

Saw the fancy flying merlin again today. Also finally saw a single flock of tundra swans.

August 30 Low 40° F, High 54° F
S-SW wind. Sunny, some clouds.

Another short berry pick day as we are both not feeling too well. Stomach trouble.

Tomorrow will be a grave dig day for our old friend and neighbor of many years. She is more than 90 years old and will be buried on her land next to ours on our west side.

Our ocean slowly calming this evening for the first time in a while. The long lasting S-SW winds have again brought eel grass to our shores. It is still not clear just how far they have come. As far as we know the nearest beds are south of the Bering Straits.

Saw two large black animals coming our way from the west when I ran Aachauq this evening. They are probably musk ox but were quite far from my poor eyesight and could be bears.

Still no fish from the ocean and no waterfowl from the salt marsh. Resource wise we are having the poorest of all this early fall. Things can only get better!

August 31 Low 37° F, High 56° F
Calm, NW wind to 10. Mostly clear. One shower.

Grave dig today for our very old and good neighbor. Lots of boats and strong workers in the good weather and sufficient water level. It actually took only a half hour of digging in the fine sand of the beach ridge gravesite. There were lots of helping hands and lunch material. It was a good time with good weather and good people. Burial will be Monday afternoon, weather permitting.

Set the 3" whitefish net in the ocean this morning in very clean water. It caught a dozen nice big saffron cod and two small trout that became (quickly) lunch and supper for today. These were our first fall saffron cod and they were very tasty!

Whitefish netters are having up and down catches at Anigaaq. Things may pick up when nights get a little colder. We still have that hope though we know a real lot of fish went out before it closed.

Caribou seem to be coming closer rather rapidly and local stray young animals continue to be seen, if not taken. The south moving herd – some have reached Onion Portage on the Kobuk and some have been seen above Noatak village.

Many moose and caribou hunters are out as usual this Labor Day weekend.

SEPTEMBER

September 1 Low 40° F, High 56° F
Calm, NW wind to 10. Cloudy, some sun.

A not so quiet Sunday in Sisualik!

Two sets of visitors – the first a party of three, two from Fairbanks we just met with an old friend of past years now working in Washington, D.C. She is able to give us some feeling for conditions under which she and other big city dwellers live in contrast to our Sisualik situation.

The second group came thru the lagoon in very shallow water to visit and somewhat prepare themselves for tomorrow's funeral and burial. There were many of the Burge family and friends of our old matriarch and friend whom we must bury tomorrow. It is good that they came to the old woman's house and land prior to activities tomorrow to shed some of the emotional pressure that has built up. They have had to come with the body all the way from Fairbanks.

A great bit of good fortune today. Our friend and neighbor on the east side who came across for the weekend took a four-wheeler run down the beach yesterday and got a large bull caribou on the other side of Sealing Point. We didn't know that till today when he brought a whole front leg including the shoulder blade over for us!

September 2 Low 50° F, High 54° F
S-SW wind to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

We helped bury our dear friend and neighbor this afternoon. Her grave is on the first beach ridge inland from her little house in Sisualik. She was our next door neighbor for many years. She lived ninety-four years pretty much off the land and many of us gained our knowledge of Eskimo foods and ways from her patient explanations. She seemed a second mother to Carrie when her own mother died years ago.

Even the weather cooperated in the burial efforts. With lots of eager helping hands the chore was completed quickly. Southerly winds last night and this morning brought water levels up and made access to the burial site easy and though it was cloudy all day there was no rain and winds dropped off too.

Another caribou taken today west of us. A boat report from the lower Noatak Canyon indicated a group of animals had crossed to our west side from the east.

We and some of our town family who came across for the burial enjoyed a pot of fresh caribou soup made from the meat our neighbor on the east side gave us yesterday.

Many people will rest well tonight knowing the burial was completed in good time.

September 3 Low 51° F, High 54° F
SE-S wind to 15. Cloudy, light rain.

After a good restful night things look better but our rainy season may be starting. Usually August is our season of rain, but this year we have been hurting because of the dryness of August. The weatherman is now giving several days at the week's end over to rain. We and the land need it.

Caribou seem to be coming closer. Some were seen crossing the river to our side at Hugo's around the lower canyon.

Visitors came again in the afternoon, one from Kotzebue and one from Anigaaq Ranger Station. We enjoyed very much the animated conversations.

A good deal of eel grass – broken leaves – has washed up on our beach as S and SW winds continue. We are still unsure where this material originates. The nearest known beds in Hulten's Alaska Flora³⁰ are near Tin City and across the Bering Straits in Siberia.

One visitor will overnight, the other left for home after sundown.

No net out again due to rough and dirty water.

September 4 Low 50° F, High 54° F
SE-S wind to 25. Cloudy, rain, fog.

Some heavy rain overnight – lighter thru morning but very heavy again this afternoon and evening. We are quickly catching up on our drinking water supply.

Caribou taken again yesterday by neighbors west of us. Though a couple of large bulls have been taken there is no report of much back fat. The lack of rain may have slowed the usual building of back fat on mature bulls. There is still a month before rut to build on that with the coming of rain.

A double flock of Canada geese in our backyard this morning. Total number 40 or so.

Two medium-sized uguruq landed on the beach from the surf yesterday. They are near the same size, probably killed and sunk in late June and only floated recently. Head, front hands and flippers have rotted away but body, including intestines, still intact.

There are curious circular patches of skin missing on both animals as if the skin alone had been nibbled away by a large shrew or something. Don't recall seeing such abrasions before and how they occurred remains a mystery.

No net again today due to rough water.

³⁰ *Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories: A Manual of the Vascular Plants*, by Eric Hulten

September 5 Low 54° F, High 54° F
S-SE wind to 25. Cloudy, rain, some breaks.

A wet windy day with a glimpse of sun between 8 and 9 this evening.

No net again due to rough and dirty water.

A few ducks (pintail and green-winged teal) but little chance to get any with high marine water level and difficult wind direction.

More reports of caribou crossing the Noatak below the village to our coastal area. That sounds good and we may in a few days see some. They do of course have the option of turning north or south when they reach the coast. The rut is still a month off so this is not a fall south movement for winter range but likely a random movement in search for better food. This means we cannot assume a straight south move as does occur each fall at a later date.

Very few people in Sisualik this week after funeral and burial. Only four camps are occupied.

Blackberries are now big and sweet and firm since we have had no major frost yet.

Two dead walrus, one with tusks, were found NW of Sealing Point today. Another result of this long period of S and SW winds – the same as the drifted in eel grass.

A day of little temperature change. High and low same!

September 6 Low 52° F, High 54° F
SE-S-SW wind to 20. Cloudy, rain, little sun.

A few bunches of caribou reached the ocean beach west of us today. The on shore wind gave problems for stalking. I spent most of the day trying to get within gunshot range but never did make it. A distant neighbor had better luck and got two small animals, one of which he gave to us.

The warm temps and rain have given us another floral display. So new flowers of cranberry, paint brush (*Cardamine sp.*) and *Andromeda sp.*

There is a report that many caribou have come to the beach out of the mountains at Katyauraq (just west of the Ranger Station) this evening.

We have very high marine water levels tonight but light winds. No chance to put net again today.

Saw tundra swans here and there in strange places today. Seems like their young are late learning to fly this year. We have not seen the large flocks of non-breeders in our area yet this fall. Waterfowl is still scarce.

Caribou still very dark colored with very little white showing. Skins probably good yet for clothing. Parka, pants, socks, etc. Most still have hair on antlers.

September 7 Low – not recorded, High – not recorded
W-NW wind to 35. Cloudy, rain, clearing.

Our water level dropped much thru the day and a good thing it did. Rather giant swells developed with strong NW winds but they didn't reach the sod line and people have been traveling back and forth to Anigaaq all day.

Caribou reported between Anigaaq and Sisualik in fair numbers. No reported take today. Half the day was very wet.

A large flock of cranes did a circling pass over Sisualik rejoicing in the strong NW winds carrying them south with little effort on their part.

We enjoyed a late afternoon and supper with NPS folks from Anigaaq. Lots of good conversation.

Passerines and shorebirds getting scarce though there are still some, including dunlin, sanderling and long-billed dowitchers. Berry picking has been at a standstill thru this last week due to rain and general wetness. Blackberries still in good shape, as are cranberries.

Hopefully we will be able to get a few caribou this coming week and make a fall grocery/business trip this coming week.

September 8 Low 33° F, High 52° F
W-NW wind to 25. Snow, sun, cloudy, rain.

First snow in the mountains (since July 3!). Coastal range above 1500 feet elevation had a dusting of snow after sunup this morning. Our boards and stuff on the ground had icing – not frost but ice from falling rain.

Went west to the two nearest lookout points this morning leaving Carrie home. Wanted to check the caribou situation.

Didn't see many but did walk up toward the sourdock lake after seeing a small group that seemed to have a decent bull in it. Didn't find them and saw only some scattered females with calves which I didn't want to shoot.

Saw large flock of cranes again making their way south on the continuing NW winds. There are a couple of good flocks of Canada geese cleaning up the blackberries in our backyard today.

Most of the day was dry but heavy showers came on late afternoon.

Bear tracks on the beach again to a beached uguruq several hundred yards from the second camp to our west. He didn't eat from the bearded seal. He may have been disturbed by our visitor last night who traveled west to Anigaaq late yesterday evening.

September 9

Low 34° F, High 46° F

W-NW wind to 25. Cloudy, rain showers, sun.

Snow clear down to tableland mountains, white most of the day.

Wouldn't you know it! Saw our first snow bird today (snow bunting). They will be passing thru pretty regular from now into October. There are also dunlin and sanderlings about too.

Shot a first caribou of the season today. It had the largest antlers of about 40 mostly female and fawn combos. It was a 3 or 4-year-old bull. The best target at this season for fat, skins and meat are mature herd bulls but they are scarce in the animals we have on hand. This is not unusual. Cows and calves are often still segregated now before joining up again early next month.

Some large flocks of tundra swans and Canada geese are showing around. Ducks are still scarce though there was a large flock of mixed greater scaup and black scoters on the slough today.

Passerines scarce now too, only a few redpolls and an occasional savannah sparrow.

Cranes are winding down too but their loud clarion call can still be heard.

No net out yet.

September 10

Low 35° F, High 44° F

SW-W-N wind to 18. Cloudy, light rain.

Wind finally winding down and rain tapering off. Wet today, but things may get better.

Finally got net in the water today and found not many fish but wide variety. One chum, one humpy, three trout at three stages of sexual development, one Bering cisco and five saffron cod which is what we were after. We did have a fresh fish supper and the first tingulik of the fall with saffron cod livers and some gift blackberries.

Got the caribou from yesterday skinned, cut up and in the freezer. It had a little more fat than the gift female but far short of what one would expect from a mature bull at this date.

We continue to have on large group of tundra swans – flocked non-breeders – and one huge flock (200) of greater scaup.

There are still a few shorebirds and passerines but not many. I am seeing a few more willow ptarmigan than last year. Hopefully they are coming back.

We need to make a town trip this week. Maybe Thursday or Friday. We have meat for a while now and still need blackberries and cranberries and whitefish sometime this month.

September 11 Low 30° F, High 42° F
W-NW wind to 25. Cloudy, rain, some clearing.

Guest from California got in today. Anore Jones, wife of my old commercial fishing captain, came for a working visit on a project concerning fish in this region. She is of course an old friend and we will enjoy her visit much.

This morning, no doubt for the benefit of our friend from California, we had quite a hard frost with ice in outdoor rainwater buckets. That may do in our hope for more blackberry picking. It will be good for early caribou hunting and whitefish fishing.

The cool and wet air may be a change for our guest from central California. Some waterfowl and passerines and shorebirds are still around.

Caribou continue to be in the local news on a wide front from Sealing Point thru the Noatak Delta to the mouth of the Kobuk River. There seems no real concentration but scattered small groups throughout. Fat conditions seem good but on the low side compared to other years. This reflects the very dry August conditions throughout our NW region.

Caribou brisket soup tonight for our guest!

September 12 Low 31° F, High 44° F
N wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, fog, some breaks.

Town trip. 180 in and a 206³¹ loaded coming home with quite a low ceiling.

We frightened a large gyrfalcon near our east neighbor's house. I'm sure he is not used to seeing us flying in a large three-wheeled aircraft.

There was not a bit of dust in Kotzebue this trip. All mud and water puddles.

Very good to see old friends again. Two of them were real old friends that we haven't seen for 20 years.

Lots of hustle and bustle as usual with numerous pickup trucks with large antlers and fat meat in the back. This reflects the availability of caribou not far out of Kotzebue.

Weather seemed to worsen as time for return flight approached with wind and fog but around 5 p.m. we got off the ground and out of Kotzebue and soon on the ground in Sisualik. A day in town is always something special and always good to be home again.

Somehow the ravens of Kotzebue seem the residents least affected by the hustle/bustle syndrome – they seem so deliberate and unflustered in their actions.

³¹ Referring to models of Cessna airplanes

September 13 Low 34° F, High 48° F
N-NE-SW-SE wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, rain, bit of sun.

Some breaks in the wetness today but seems like it can't quite once the rain starts.

Our guest went back to town today. We enjoyed her couple of day stay. We ate well and conversed well on many subjects but always back to fish. A subject she is much interested in at this point.

Our west neighbor had opportunity to shoot a couple of caribou near his house today. These are the first to be taken right in Sisualik this fall. He chose one young bull and a female. The scarcity of large bulls continues amongst caribou in our area.

Fishing in Anigaq has also improved according to those with nets there.

Now that we have town trip and guest out of the way we may find time to set a net there and look for a large bull caribou.

Marine waters came up quite rapidly today as north wind system faded off. Set the 3" mesh net in the ocean for an hour this morning and it got two buckets of prime saffron cod!

September 14 Low 40° F, High 46° F
S-SW-W-NW wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, rain.

A day of variety! Some warm dry, then shower, then fog, and then sun again.

We took a ride west hoping to find blackberries of size and firmness to permit a short time of picking. Between showers we found berries, but most too small and larger ones in the midst of thick tiny ones.

We traveled on west to Akulak and as the sun came back out after a period of fog we saw several caribou along the back edge of the lagoon. The two closest to us were good bulls but were moving off west. There were more west behind the Ranger Station.

With light winds today it was not a good time for stalking caribou and we have a couple of weeks yet to seek out a good bull or two. It is good to see caribou still hanging around in our area and of course their movement at present is rather aimless, here and there, but will become direct and intent south around the end of the month.

Weather permitting, our emphasis next week will be on bull caribou hunting and Anigaq whitefish. Dry and cool weather would please us much.

Sun down into the water at 9:15 p.m.

September 15 Low 38° F, High 46° F
W-NW wind to 15. Broken clouds, showers.

A quiet Sunday in Sisualik. Some of the few neighbors left went to town and those left are not much for visiting.

The weather wasn't as wet as the past three weeks but it didn't dry much either. Snow remains on some of the hilltops.

Caribou still scattered throughout the region. Lots of weekend hunters out and many "out of region" hunters in fly-in camps.

A few flowers hanging on – arctic daisy and chamomile plant. Very few passerines and shorebirds left though there are some.

We seem to be having an early fall pre-freeze season but it has been a summer of surprises – we shall see. Our camp squirrels have gotten pretty fat and don't play out until the sun pops thru the clouds for a while.

We are seeing a few more willow ptarmigan this early fall than the last few years. We hope they are coming back – we've missed them.

September 16 Low 35° F, High 48° F
NW wind to 18. Broken clouds, showers.

A busy day today. We went west to put a whitefish net in Anigaq and found lots of caribou back through the hills from Akulak to Salluq with many behind the Ranger Station. We probably saw nearly 1000 animals. Cows and calves predominate but there were some good bulls which are showing much white on the neck and most with newly cleaned antlers, white or stained a bit bloody as velvet is being removed.

There was not an easy way to take one as most were quite far back from the beach and we had other things to do to get the net in and drop by Carrie's brother at Salluq. We do hope to get a couple of bulls before the end of the month but for now we have meat on hand.

There are many tundra swans and Canada geese down that way and some northern pintail and wigeon. Because of the continuing low water in the system down there, there is lots of *Potamogeton sp.* available to waterfowl for staging and fattening.

We were given a large helmet crab and a small tanner crab by Carrie's brother's boy. No pot – washed ashore by heavy surf last week.

The lone Akulak musk ox was out walking the shoreline again when we went by.

September 17 Low 36° F, High 46° F
NW-N wind to 18. Broken clouds, showers.

A very busy day!

Went west to check our net at Anigaq and saw many caribou behind Akulak lagoon. They seemed to be moving slowly east but none had yet crossed the arm of the lagoon behind the pole grave at Akpaiyuq.

We continued west to take fish from the net and hoped to be back after some caribou had crossed to where we could get at them. There were a number of bulls with these animals with all velvet gone from antlers and very white necks. There seemed no swollen necks yet and large bulls still formed groups. Some young bulls were sparring, maybe practicing and exercising.

We had a small but fair catch of whitefish in the net, some with eggs.

When we got back to the grave site some caribou had crossed and were moving towards us. When two bulls got close enough I tried to shoot both but in the confusion and willows only one was hit. I finally finished him off and after gutting I had trouble loading the large body whole into the cart.

The animal is sleek and fat with not too large antlers. An of age herd bull but still on the young side with smaller antlers and body than some.

Saw two harbor porpoises and maybe a young walrus on the way home.

September 18 Low 33° F, High 46° F
N-NW wind to 30. Cloudy, clear, clouding again.

Strong cold wind today but quite a lot of sun. Clouding over tonight with some rain-snow mix.

Saw a number of caribou again today but no close opportunity to shoot a bull.

Checked the net at Anigaq and got about the same as yesterday but smaller fish. Put them into our only gunnysack today to keep for smelly kuak³². There are about half a sack. Two more night catches at that rate and we could sew up the sack.

Skinned and cut up the bull we got yesterday. Expected more fat on the back but it is good quality meat. We have room for one more that size in the freezer.

There are still good numbers of caribou just west of Sealing Point. They saw four musk ox and one bull moose at Salluq today.

Many swans, some geese and a few ducks down that way.

³² Raw frozen meat (or fish), also "quaq"

A number of different wheelers on the beach today which moves the caribou back inland further. Ocean rough today. First chance, we will put net out again for saffron cod.

A few migrant snow buntings are showing around. Other passerines and shorebirds are getting rare.

September 19 Low 31° F, High 46° F
W-NW wind to 20. Cloudy, light snow.

The large bull moose at Salluq yesterday was walking down the wheeler trail and past our silent dogs 50 feet behind the house at breaking dawn this morning. It continued on over to the Point, visiting every standing building. It was a very large bull with quite a wide spread of polished antlers.

It is fairly common to see moose in late July and early August down here on the open flats but quite unusual this time of year. Don't know what this tall fellow had in mind.

Our ground had a light coloring of snow this morning and some of the mountains were quite white again. We do seem to be having an early show of freeze-up.

All this cool weather will tend to bring on caribou rut activities ten days earlier than the more normal first week of October.

Large bulls have a lot of white showing now on neck and rear and most have well-polished antlers.

September 20 Low 33° F, High 50° F
S-SW wind to 15. Clear, some clouds.

Reset the net at Anigaaq and went on down to Salluq to visit with Carrie's brother Sam.

Only one group of 20-30 caribou in sight today behind Akulak. This is much less than we have been used to seeing on that run.

There was a small group of musk ox across the slough from Salluq cabins.

Lots of tundra swans and Canada geese in the country yet and a few ducks.

Only a couple of netters still active at Anigaaq. The small catch of fish, compared to other years, is not encouraging to distant fishers.

Was surprised to see two boreal chickadees on the pole grave at Akulak. Snow buntings in small numbers are seen every day now. They are into their southward move, but only a few.

No other passerines or shorebirds showing any more.

September 21 Low 34° F, High 48° F
NE-E wind to 20. Broken clouds, sun.

Checked net at Anigaq that we reset yesterday. Got less than 20 again but some good ones. May be sewing up our single sack of fish tomorrow. These should be very good “smelly kuak.”

There were five grayling in the net this morning. That is a record number in one net check for all our years fishing at Anigaq. Rarely we get one or two. Apparently the very low level of water in the system at the times when the outlet closed, augmented by heavy rains a couple of weeks ago, has lowered the salinity at the outlet and made more grayling in the water than usual. Their eggs are well developed, much like current Alaska whitefish eggs.

Didn't see even one caribou today on the way down, stopping and looking from all vantage points as usual. This is the first day we have not had caribou in sight on that trip since they first turned up early this month. There are some NW of Sealing Point yet. Salluq musk ox group has grown to seven.

September 22 Low 28° F, High 50° F
NE-E wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

A very quiet Sunday in Sisualik with rather unbelievably few people. Some that would normally be here went into town yesterday and last night and now, due to extremely low marine water, travel to Sisualik is difficult.

It is a very beautiful late afternoon and evening in Sisualik – warm, calm and bright. Even a few insects flying again. Canada Geese in the backyard and swans back against the hill.

Plucked a gift goose this afternoon and it was white all the way around with fat. Anigaq is not producing much fish though we finally filled a sack and sewed it up. Carrie's brother and crew at Salluq hauled a net down to Killikmaiq Lagoon and set it yesterday. They got a pretty good catch so there may be more netting at that site. The lagoons down that way closed earlier than Anigaq and likely have more fish trapped inside.

A first yearling uguruq was shot down that way today but sank. It may yet be recovered as they often are when waves roll them onto the beach.

Caribou and musk ox are in sight today from Salluq camp. We have only geese and swans.

September 23 Low 32° F, High 48° F
NE-E wind to 18. Clear, clouding late.

Another fine day today. Set the 3” mesh net in the ocean for several hours this morning and had a good catch of 30 or so fine large saffron cod, stomachs full and egg sacs quite robust. We enjoyed fresh boiled cod and several bullheads for supper. The bullheads were a special treat as they were the first we've had this fall. They have large egg sacs and a fine firm liver at this season.

When one has eaten moose and caribou meat many days in a row fresh fish of a different kind goes real well. The rest of the cod will be cut tomorrow for our favorite fall half dried cod dish.

Many reports of caribou moving through the country but our area remains, for the moment, caribou free.

The weatherman tells us we have some rain coming – again. That will delay our freezing process and may give us a later freeze than it looked last week when frost and snow were key words.

Several nets now being fished at Killiakmaiq and the first person down there has had his catch drop off. Fishing may still be better than at Anigaq.

September 24 Low 38° F, High 48° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, rain off and on.

Not a bad day but wet off and on and dull when the sun was hidden. Very little travel today by the few people that are in Sisualik.

Caribou seem locally absent. After such a long period of caribou in sight every day the country now looks pretty lonesome, just when bull caribou are sporting shiny antlers and great white necks.

Cut the tomcods from yesterday and sharpened the chainsaw. We had a roast goose for a change and our west side neighbor over to help eat it. Daylight hours are getting noticeably shorter, especially when there is cloud cover.

Many tundra swans and Canada geese on Krusenstern. Most of the swans are in the Anigaq system and many are family groups joining the fall stagers. Bird species are becoming few again. Glaucous gull and raven are the most common. Anything else pretty much attracts instant attention.

September 25 Low 39° F, High 51° F
NE-E wind to 18. Broken clouds, some sun.

A busy day around camp with a good deal of gift meat to work on. Our freezer is now full to the top and still needed as air temps remain a bit high.

Caribou have really left us though some may remain NW of Sealing Point.

Did set the 3" mesh net in the ocean this morning and got a bucket of large saffron cod. There were also many sculpin which are difficult to remove from the net but have some great roe and a fine liver.

Ran the dogs this afternoon to nearest west lookout point. Did not see anything from there except swans. Seems strange to not see caribou regularly any more. We had gotten used to them.

Both swans and gulls have all their gray flying young out into the world now and, as usual, some seem late and if we have early freezing temps some will have a rough time.

There are a good many colored salmon (chums) wandering around in the ocean. Some have spawned, some not,

but all have various degrees of fungus growth making them rather hideous looking. It is assumed that they are washed out of the rivers when rains come and cause river to rise.

September 26 Low 46° F, High 50° F
NE-E wind to 30. Broken clouds, showers.

A wet windy sunny day! Lots of variety. We are looking forward to some freezing temps soon. It is time – our freezer cannot hold another item. It is full!

News from the fishing group at Killiakmai. There are caribou around there and fishing has been good for the two parties that have been fishing there and one from Salluq and one from Katyauraq.

No one has been fishing at Anigaaq these past few days. We will go back and reset our net soon.

Marine waters were quite high today but have started to drop again now.

Hunting effort on the rivers and on the land has become much less intense with most people's freezer capacity much like ours with no more room. Things will pick up again when freezing sets in and freezing of freshwater systems develops.

It seemed that we were heading for an early freeze-up this year but that trend changed. In the past, Noatak River has begun running ice as early as September 16. The few nights of freezing temps have only put an ice skin on the smallest of lakes.

September 27 Low 44° F, High 50° F
NE-E wind to 25. Broken clouds, showers.

Our marine waters are finally dropping after several days at moderate flood level. Winds remained off shore so no surf developed.

Ran the dogs west after chores around camp and saw no sign of caribou again. They certainly have left us. There are some still reported in the Rabbit Creek/Killikmai area where good whitefish taking continues by folks from around here.

We may get around to net setting tomorrow if weather is decent. Our one sewed up sack of whitefish may get too strong due to delayed freezing.

Waterfowl dominated by tundra swans. Canada geese continue in the area and will be here till ice drives them south.

We have not seen a boat on the ocean for many days. Kind of typical of this season if there is no drawing reason like caribou or good whitefish activity.

Still a few rare flowers hanging on – arctic daisy and chamomile.

Difficult to see a squirrel out though some do make a showing when warm sun is out for a bit. Will be surprised again next April/May when so many first come out of snowbanks.

September 28 Low 42° F, High 50° F
Light winds. Cloudy, showers, drizzle.

A day of almost non-existent winds. Unusual for this place and time.

Visitors from Kotzebue for some interviews and getting acquainted for a project of theirs relating to web of life/environment and people on Kotzebue Sound. Sounds interesting and reminds of interviews long ago relating to the Project Chariot episode (*The Firecracker Boys*³³).

West travelers today report no sighting of caribou this side of Battle Rock.

Many Canada geese reported down that way yet too and a single short eared owl which we haven't seen for ages. The lack of rodents in the Sisualik area explains the absence of northern harriers and short eared owls.

Two boats made a run to Kivalina today. First boats we've seen on the ocean side for a while. It was a perfect day for them with a very flat ocean.

September is ending without a show of ice! A late freeze-up? Maybe! Remember, early travel on ice to Kotzebue from Sisualik is October 12, only two weeks off!

We shall see what time brings.

September 29 Low 42° F, High 54° F
NE-E wind to 20. Cloudy, fog, rain.

A pretty wet and somber Sunday in Sisualik with some early thick fog and some late clearing. Not much excitement on the hunting/fishing scene and few people into it.

A few chunks of driftwood landing on the beach as wind and waves got a bit onto the beach. These woods were probably floated back in the delta from very high marine water levels this past week.

We are anxious for freezing temps now as summer is over and lingering wet cold fall rains can be miserable. Freezing and snow means drying out and good food preservation.

We will need to make one more town trip this coming week to be well prepared for the freeze-up period.

Bird species continue to dwindle but numbers of those remaining are encouraging. Tundra swan, Canada geese and snow buntings dominate, with a few redpolls.

³³ *The Firecracker Boys*, by Dan O'Neill

September 30 Low 40° F, High 46° F
SW-W wind to 15. Fog, cloudy, rain.

Pretty miserable weather today from beginning to end. Fog, drizzle and an occasional break. Not much for outside activities except with full rain gear.

Some boat travel to the Point from Kotzebue by various people for various reasons. Since winds were light and marine waters remain rather high, the only risk was getting lost in the fog, and those conditions weren't continuous.

Saw a few sandpipers again today, which was a surprise. Four that were close enough to ID were sanderlings, and a couple of larger groups may have been dunlins.

It is a very poor fall for drying anything up. Fish or meat just doesn't have a chance to season well with the air so often wet. It is the time for drying Noatak salmon or whitefish but, if useable, they will be very poor quality human food. Even the few strings of saffron cod we hang from time to time are not making good half-dried and boiled product we like so well at this season.

Maybe drier and colder weather will come with October.

OCTOBER

October 1 Low 39° F, High 40° F
Light winds. Cloudy, foggy, drizzle.

A day similar to many we have had lately. Dull, wet, little temp change and a glimpse of sun occasionally.

A number of living creatures seen today without much traveling. G. gulls, ravens, snow bunting, greater scaup (ducks), Canada geese, tundra swans, red-breasted merganser, wigeon, northern pintail, Pacific loon, common redpoll, ground squirrel, red fox and two friendly harbor porpoises traveling in tandem near shore.

Achauq (the dog) was running with me on the four-wheeler when we came down wind of the porpoises. The dog obviously smelled them as they made their short blowhole breath above the surface. He happened to be looking right at one as its back with fin broke the surface of the shiny water. He seemed so excited I thought he would jump in the water. He seemed carried away with the idea of playing/romping thru the sea with a pair of porpoises! Sorry Achauq, your big ugly feet are NOT flippers.

I was quite surprised at the awareness the two creatures had of each other. The porpoises broke their straight line of travel to circle in towards the dog. Very unexpected behavior. The dog was noting the strange scent and exhale/inhale noise in the air.

October 2 Low 38° F, High 45° F
Light winds. Cloudy, showers, clearing.

Our afternoon and evening show some promise of drying up and freezing. It is, after all October and time.

Had four boreal chickadees around camp for a while today. They seemed to check out everything that rises in the air – the dome, the antenna, clothesline and anything that looks like a tree I guess.

We did a washing today and it was a fine day for it. Sun came out warm for a while in the afternoon.

Set the saffron cod net for a while and got a big bucket of large saffron cod. We boiled some for supper.

Sweated most of the day over my inability to patch my wheeler tire. After several tries it looks like I might have made it. Hope so!

Fishing and hunting kind of on a temporary hold. Too much rain is a threat to both fish and meat preservation.

We are past the date of nightly freezing temps and we hope those cooler temps are right around the corner. A few more tundra swans just got in this afternoon from the direction of Espenberg. Swans at this date remain our most numerous bird species, maybe even outnumber glaucous gulls.

October 3 Low 34° F, High 44° F
S-SW-W wind to 15. Cloudy, showers, some sun.

Mountain tops and upper foothills have snow dusting, lower elevations rain showers.

Finally saw caribou again today. Six large looking animals coming from the west, just reaching the creek a mile or so behind our first lookout out. I traveled west to the next lookout at the pole grave, but saw nothing from there. This small group may have come down from the Noatak side through the large canyon, through the hills behind the Ranger Station. They may be strays or they could be the forerunners of another movement through here. We don't know where the ones went that were through here during September but none have been seen for the past ten days from our lookout points. It is good to see them again. It is lonesome without them as part of landscape.

Also saw a flock of 50 Snow Buntings today, and a flock of nearly as many willow ptarmigan that looked pretty white on the snowless ground. They are still "speckled" on the back but a lot of white makes them easy to see for their predators.

Also saw a small seal and several flocks of Canada geese so there are living creatures around.

October 4 Low 33° F, High 42° F
NE-E-S wind to 15. Cloudy, some sun.

Went west to Anigaq and Salluq this morning to set our whitefish net, pull our aluminum boat higher for the winter and bring home the full gas tank as our gasoline supply is getting a little low.

Saw seventeen caribou where there were six yesterday but no way to approach them. Didn't see any behind on the way further west. Returned for lunch, then went west again to nearest lookout to check on the caribou. They had gotten rather far west toward Akulak but while I was up there two quite large groups came in sight from towards northern mountains which were snow covered from last night. The animals, forty in one group, thirty in the other, were lined out and moving fast toward the beach where I was. One group was on my side of the creek, the other opposite. I needed to get in front of them and out of the wind. I was too late on the first bunch and the second group, which I was now in good position for if they kept coming, drew in close together and all bedded down. A reasonable sneak was not possible so I turned home without firing a shot.

It is however good to see caribou back in our country.

October 5 Low 32° F, High 43° F
Light NE-E, S-SW wind. Cloudy, fog, clearing.

Heavy fog most of the morning after light freezing during the night. Our steps and boards very slippery this morning.

Went west to check our net in the fog. It had cleared some on the way home and one could look around some, which I did, but didn't see anything. A little later when I checked from our nearest lookout I did see a small group of caribou coming down from the north on the same trail as those that came down the last three days. Didn't see any others and didn't wait for those coming down. The good group of 30 or so I left yesterday evening bedded down behind Frank Sheldon's place were nowhere to be seen today.

Had a very poor catch in the net. A good number of species but very low numbers. Maybe the lowest overnight catch ever since we started putting a net in Anigaaq. There were lots of flounders and only two or three of everything else. Grayling, tomcod, Bering cisco, Alaska whitefish and one very deep colored spawning male trout. I did not put the net back in.

Our neighbor put net in Akulak for the first time today and report is that he got a few good fish. Everyone has shied away from setting net there because of very low water.

October 6 Low 27° F, High 36° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, fog, clearing some late.

A few more people in Sisualik this weekend. Mostly extended families from established camps. Some late goose hunting, caribou hunting, whitefishing and early seal hunting.

Our ground and water buckets were frozen this morning and didn't thaw till late afternoon. Freeze-up is finally beginning – a little late, but inevitable.

A huge fog bank moved in during late morning and remained for several hours. We are scheduled to go into town and back tomorrow by aircraft.

Our neighbor who set a net in Akulak yesterday had a pretty good catch of good looking fish today. This is a good surprise. Akulak hasn't opened for several years and closed this year with so very little water in the lagoon that no one had much hope for netting. Since Anigaq catches are now so low those that are interested in whitefish have shifted effort to Killiakmaik Lagoon with some success but it is a very long ride from Sisualik to there. Akulak will soon have more nets. Including ours.

Fall seal hunting by boat should be getting under way and will intensify as some slush gets out into the Sound from freshwater rivers and creeks. This hunt can be very productive depending on weather and numbers of seals.

October 7 Low 30° F, High 35° F
N-NW wind to 20. Cloudy, clearing.

A good and timely town trip by aircraft. We scheduled Sunday evening and were dismayed to hear this morning's weather forecast. A real buster low out of Wrangel Island supposed to produce gales and snow by late this evening. We thought of canceling but then decided to try to beat it since we are long overdue for a town supply and business trip.

Our good pilot friend got here around 9:30 a.m. and we asked if he were free maybe he could bring us back around 4 p.m. We usually make the trip back around 7 or 8.

Clouds and fog developed but then sun broke thru and the rather strong N wind moved a bit west which cured our worry over crosswinds.

Pilot called about 3:30 saying if we were ready we could go now – if not, maybe after 8 p.m. We were ready and glad to get home early. The storm never broke during the evening but looks bad for tomorrow. At least we got our necessary town trip out of the way.

Our neighbor got two good bull caribou today and fish from his net at Akulak. We were glad to hear that bulls are still good.

October 8 Low 31° F, High 38° F
NW wind to 50. Cloudy, rain, snow, flood.

Wind very strong at wake up time this morning and waves and water level came up rapidly till around 11 a.m. Waves were slopping their tops over the bank sending water down the side we are on. I had to quickly move all our wood piles and other summer things of value up from the edge.

Kotzebue Front Street took quite a beating about this time. A good deal of erosion developed, both there and here. Kotzebue got it worse as the NW wind is right straight into Front Street and the waves were at quite an angle into our beach.

Things began to back off slowly around two or three o'clock and real flood out may not happen on this one in Sisualik. As always though, the huge great waves breaking against shore and running up over the top of the bank while lagoon-marsh water rises quickly from the back is very frightening. As usual, the quick rise stopped just in

time before doing any major damage. We always hope it will but know sometimes it won't.

Now at 9 p.m., water level and waves have dropped and we hope that trend continues through the night. This was so far the biggest storm of 2002.

October 9 Low 33° F, High 40° F
SW-W-NW-N wind to 18. Cloud, snow & rain showers.

Benefits of yesterday's frightening storm were received not long after daylight this morning. Wild surf and water levels dropped through the night and our expectations were forthcoming when I made the early trip over to Sisualik Point. There is an off shore shoal there – the only one between here and Siberia to the west – and sea creatures ripped up and carried by the great storm surf get deposited on the real beach in the lee-shadow of this bar. I picked up a 5-gallon bucket of live, but high and dry, large *Mya* clams and half a bucket of live *Telmessus* (helmet) crabs. There were many more clams and bushels of blue mussels mixed with a few small razor clams.

We had a real seafood feast tonight built around a Sitka halibut chowder pot prepared for the occasion. Fresh boiled crab, steamed clams and a bowl of sourdock-blackberry-blueberry mix to top it off. There is more than one good reason to survive the horrific fall storms.

There was considerable beach erosion and two hundred feet of our sod edge is altered in several ways. All driftwood that was on the sandy beaches below sod line between here and Sealing Point is now up in the grasses above sod line.

October 10 Low 34° F, High 35° F
NE-E wind to 35. Cloudy, some sun.

Wind is up again. By evening it was almost as strong as the NW blow of the other day. One major difference is that marine water level is down and will likely not come up too high again unless the wind hauls around to south which it is not forecast to do. We are a little tired of strong winds though.

Went west today to move the Anigaq whitefish net to Akulak's northwest end where, in other years, we have had good fishing.

The caribou are back and in numbers. There were some to see from each lookout point and quite a mass directly across the slough from the Ranger Station.

Picked up the net and push pole and made it back to the little connecting slough between Akulak main lagoon and a smaller inland lake. Set the net with many caribou watching from the inland side (where I cannot get across dry).

For the trip home the air had cleared and the sun was some out. In that sun a mass of caribou showed up behind Akulak Lagoon. Not on the edge of the flats but on the first foothill side. Many, many white necks glistening in the sun, all moving east into the strong winds. No shot today. Maybe later.

Large flock (200) of snow buntings passed today, moving south.

October 11 Low 32° F, High 33° F
NE-E wind to 40. Cloud, rain, icing, snow.

A rather miserable day outdoors. Everything wet and slippery and cold. Strong winds with everything in it – ice particles, rain, snow and sometimes sand – made the outdoors tough and prevented my checking net set yesterday and maybe air transport of a nephew from Sealing Point into town for medical attention. He has an old injury acting up and wind velocity and icing later as wind calmed some prevented aircraft from getting in. He got moved to nearest camp and was feeling better this evening with hope to get into clinic tomorrow.

We have some white on the ground now and a little slush ice on ponds but are way behind in freeze-up timing.

There is no longer sign of geese and swans and adult gulls are getting restless and fewer.

The big NW storm left a lot of shellfish stranded and now the below normal water level provides more access to food but only temporarily. Freezing will soon eliminate that.

Caribou are making a big showing at Jones' Camp today, moving east from our direction but through the hills-tablelands, not the salt marsh flats and beach ridges at our level. They may cross the Noatak and be on their way south to the Kobuk.

October 12 Low 34° F, High 36° F
NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, broken clouds.

Caribou Day in Sisualik this day! We have had near caribou for all of September and October but today they are moving east rapidly and steadily. They are moving through on the edge of the tableland just north of Sisualik salt marsh and beach ridges. There are none yet on the flats.

With improvement in weather I went west this morning rather early to collect the net at Akulak. Met numbers of caribou at the Kenworthy Camp and shot one large bull though I worried over that since some large bulls are now getting smelly from rut and one gambles a bit if he makes that choice. Some bulls taken this week were still good and large antlers still the easiest way to tell fat animals. The other option now and the only option after this week for back fat are large females with no calf following. That choice is sure for quality but takes special conditions at shooting point to tell which calf belongs to which female.

Lucked out on the bull taken today – good fat, no smell, swollen neck, near empty stomach. Both the latter are signs of impending rut and oncoming of distasteful smell.

Several black capped chickadees today and some large flocks of snow buntings.

There are still many adult glaucous gulls around but they will soon be leaving, and only young will remain.

October 13 Low 30° F, High 38° F
NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, clearing.

Krusenstern beach population down to three families. Some may be back but probably not for long. We too would like to be moving up to winter camp by the end of this month but delayed freezing and snow – the lack of it – may again influence our plans.

There were a lot of moving caribou thru our tablelands (1 ½ miles inland) today. We had a couple friends stop by in aircraft today and they report these fast moving caribou are crossing Noatak River and on up towards liviq on the []. No idea yet of how many are yet to come.

The large bull we took yesterday and skinned today turned out good with back fat and no bull smell. Jones' Camp, which is right in the path of these rapidly moving animals, reported taking one large bull today that was strong. It was fat and very strong so no more bulls for us. Only good animals carrying back fat now will be dry females. Cows without this year's calves.

Some traveling passerines today – black capped chickadees, redpolls, and snow buntings. Have not seen swans or Canada geese for several days now. Some squirrels out again today. Late date for them.

October 14 Low 34° F, High 38° F
NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, broken, sun.

A nice dry day and mild for the date with enough sun to see distant things like white caribou necks and willow ptarmigan which are getting more what than brown now.

We were given two ptarmigan by local boys in camp for few days. These will be the first we've eaten this fall. We recall a time many years ago when another neighbor (an aging man) took 150 willow ptarmigan on Sisualik blackberry grounds at about this date.

This date is also remembered as an early date record for dog team crossing from Kotzebue to Sisualik on new ice. This year at this date even our smallest lakes are showing only a bit of ice in patches.

There are apparently still many thousand caribou between here and Sealing Point but apparently none W or NW of there.

Only did chores and camp work today except for running the dogs. Aachauq (the dog) got more than his usual exercise when we ran into a hundred caribou. He lost his mind for a while but did come back within 20 minutes, which surprised me.

We had thought the caribou movement thru here had wound down since we couldn't see any from here earlier. I don't usually run the dogs when caribou are likely near the trail.

October 15 Low 28° F, High 42° F
NE-N wind to 15. Cloudy, broken, sun.

A beautiful October day today in Sisualik and we are freezing up finally. We did have flying insects and sun warm enough to melt frost and snow on dark things at midday but large portions of lagoon and larger lakes now have ice sheets and slush and with the sky clearing tonight ice formation will be rapid, especially with the light winds.

Jones' Camp people make it to town and back by boat but that may be the end of boating for their small slough area. The main Noatak River will soon be running ice.

It is, after all, past time for freeze-up. In years past, dog team and snowmachine crossing from Kotzebue have been possible. It will be a while yet this year before than can happen.

Set 3" net in ocean today and got half a bucket of very large saffron cod and three giant herring. It is time to make salt herring if one has the time and inclination. This last moment before slush running in the ocean is fall herring fishing time and is the last major species to run past Sisualik except for in shore appearance of arctic cod in those years when that happens.

No caribou in sight today! We wish them well on their way to winter grounds.

October 16 Low 17° F , High 32° F
N-NE wind to 10. Clear.

A very beautiful day of sun in Sisualik and light wind. Ice – thin ice – is all over now.

First day of slush – “kinuu” – in the ocean. At Point Hope they have a day of celebration when slush first shows in the ocean – the beginning of a new “ice year.”

Small lakes, some larger lakes and parts of the lagoon are now ice covered.

Put the short herring net out this morning in the ocean and got a new species – several arctic cod along with a dozen herring. We had roasted herring for lunch.

Also cut the half bucket of very large saffron cod taken late yesterday afternoon so the ocean is still providing fish, even on the first day of “kinuu.”

Noatak River running ice, both at village site and the mouth.

A lone musk ox came along the trail today from the west. Made an attempt to turn it back the way it came with the wheeler lights on. Surprisingly, it did turn back and ran a short ways, then kept going back to where it came from.

Caribou are still passing thru the tablelands. They will have a tough time crossing Noatak River now and may swing north.

October 17 Low 16° F, High 28° F
N-NE wind to 15. Clear.

Ice running heavy at Noatak village and some, but lighter, in Kotzebue channel.

The grave digging crew made it over and the digging was completed in half an hour with the soft fine gravel, almost sand, at the beach ridge site.

I went west to our closest lookout site to pick up a few pieces of driftwood and check on the caribou. There are lots of caribou yet – their travel plans interrupted by partially frozen creeks and ice running in larger rivers. There was a long continuous single file line of caribou out of the mountains toward the large canyon of Tuqsruq Creek behind the Ranger Station at Anigaq. The line comes right down to the beach at or near our lookout point. Quite a thrilling sight in the bright October sun.

The time for shooting large antlered bulls is gone. Now the animals with back fat will be healthy females not accompanied by a calf – dry cows. Sub adult males – 2, 3, and 4-year-olds – have good meat but rarely carry back fat.

Fishing our short herring net since before daylight this morning. Got half a bucket and will try leaving the net out overnight tonight, hoping to salt down a full bucket of this oily fish.

Walked on the ice of a local small freshwater lake today and cut some ice for camp water. The ice is between 3 and 4 inches thick already, good enough to set a net out at Anigaq, which may do tomorrow or Saturday, depending on burial tomorrow.

October 18 Low 16° F, High 24° F
Light N-NE winds. Clear, some clouds.

Burial in Sisualik of a distant extended family young fellow. Heavy running ice between Kotzebue and Sisualik made the use of aircraft necessary to bring the body and close family folks to the burial. Things went smoothly. There were maybe 5-6 flights with a 206.

Visited for a while with old friends originating in Sisualik but now living in many other places.

Got a few more herring in the little net and now have half a 5-gal. bucket of salted herring that will be a real treat pickled sometime during the winter.

Made a morning run to west lookout point to see how the caribou scene looked and found the lone traveling musk ox having a morning lunch right in the spot where I usually leave the wheeler to climb the hill. I was in a bit of a hurry but the musk ox wasn't and I had to wait 15 minutes for him to move off. He did move west and kept moving so I didn't hesitate to park the wheeler and leave it.

There were caribou as usual moving own from the north and on to the east. They have not been willing to try and

cross the thin ice at Jones' Camp yet.

October 19 Low 10° F, High 28° F
NW-N wind to 18. Clear.

Went west to Anigaq and set 3 ¼" net under the ice. The ice was thicker than expected – 4 to 5 inches.

Found one net already set there from yesterday but didn't learn catch results.

Saw a fine flock of willow ptarmigan, only the second flock seen this fall on that trail. The ptarmigan are quite white now and need a little snow to hide them.

Lots of caribou to be seen again along the whole route from Anigaq to Sisualik. Saw only one active hunter. Our day was nice and bright and caribou looked beautiful in their winter skins with a lot of white now, almost like the ptarmigan.

A wheeler made it from Sisualik to Jones' Camp today and back on the lagoon ice. Kotzebue channel ice jammed and stopped running today. Tomcod hookers have gotten into business and in a couple of days wheelers will make it to Sisualik on the ice from Kotzebue.

Caribou behind Sisualik were moving west today while those from Anigaq and Akulak were moving east.

October 20 Low 12° F, High 24° F
N-NW wind to 25. Clear.

Lots of sun today – and caribou and continued N wind with resultant low marine water level and continuing freeze-up development.

Carrie's brother and a couple of his boys are back in Sealing Point house. One of their houses at Salluq this side of the Point nearly went into the ocean in the recent big NW blow. They will move all stuff there back down to Sealing Point.

More caribou today between Akulak and Sisualik than we have seen before this fall. Slippery glare ice and thin ice seems to have interrupted their move farther south to wintering grounds and behind and around Akulak some have been and are moving west while others continue to move east. Few, if any, have passed Jones' Camp which is directly on the delta and not far from the difficult large river crossing.

Got only five fish from new net set at Anigaq but they were big top quality fish. There were lots of flounders. This is the lowest overnight catch we have ever had at Anigaq with first night of net under ice.

October 21 Low 15° F, High 26° F
N-NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, some sun.

Went west to check Anigaq net and caribou.

The net got lots of flounders and only three other fish – one medium size sheefish and two large Alaska whitefish, along with a lot of both rough and smooth skinned flounders. Very poor fishing for Anigaaq!

Went back to the extreme west end of Akulak to pick up net left there last week and try to find a deep enough place to set it under ice. I tried several locations but found only shallow water. May try that again tomorrow and then give up netting for the year.

Lots of caribou seen today – thousands. Highest concentration is behind the Pole Grave Site at Akulak.

Mating activities ongoing. There may be a shortage of mature herd bulls though there are some. Males with lesser antlers are wandering off from main concentrations following receptive females.

No hunting of caribou today by local hunters of which there are only a few.

One hunter and his son went boat hunting from Sisualik for seals and got one yearling uguruq and two common ringed seals, one of which he gave us.

October 22 Low 16° F, High 40° F
N-NE wind to 25. Cloudy, snow showers.

Went west early to try to set net in Akulak (trying to find a place deep enough).

There was a large group of caribou just across the slough at Delbert's House. Didn't bother them and they were still there on homeward run. Not much local hunt of caribou this week. Locals pretty much have enough meat for a while.

Witnessed a sad sight at Akulak. A cow and two calf caribou could not climb out of the edge of the lagoon due to an inclined rim. The animals continued to slip in place, making a short ways and then flop sprawled legged. A lot of vocalizing by calf that drew several adult caribou to the very edge which stood and looked for five minutes but could offer no help. When the animals did get within touching distance together vocalizing stopped and there were no longer attempts to stand up. Their energy seemed spent. A raven stopped by to check out possibilities but soon left. They were still in the same place when I returned from net setting. It is hard to believe that caribou hooves and inclined glare ice can be such a threat.

Did get net set but water less than one fathom and can only leave till temps cool again. Will see tomorrow whether the effort was worth it all.

October 23 Low 33° F, High 44° F
N-NE-E wind to 20. Cloudy, rain, clear.

A wet morning! Back to rain gear and rubber boots again. Went west after early lunch – daylight slow coming on now with cloud cover – not till 10 or 10:30.

The overnight net in Akulak a real disappointment. One large tomcod and lots of bullheads with no whitefish of any kind. Took many of the larger bullheads and had an egg and liver feast. These rather ugly and troublesome (in nets) fish have choice egg skeins and liver at this season. Quite a treat!

The Anigaq net after two nights had four real fish – three Alaska whitefish and one Bering cisco. Put that net back and took Akulak net home. Very poor late fall fishing for us. By contrast, a good catch of good whitefish was made by neighbors at Katyauraq that set net way down at Killiakmaik Lagoon.

Shot two small caribou on the way home. Neither of them very choice. There were not many caribou to be seen today. They are really thinning out. The two trapped on glare ice at Akulak are still alive but seem hopeless. A real wilderness tragedy.

October 24 Low 30° F, High 38° F
NE-E wind to 20. Cloudy, some breaks.

Went west to pick up caribou shot yesterday and found a lone bull with a bright looking cow. Made some effort to take her since there seemed no calf involved. Target animal now for back fat is of course the dry cow.

However, things did not turn out well. I finally killed the female and was quite surprised to find it in poor condition. It was an adult dry cow and should have had an inch or two of back fat. Instead, it had hardly any show of fat, even on the mesentery web. There is no obvious reason for her poor condition but there must be some physical defect as one expects dry cows to be in fat condition at this time of the season.

Took a while to get the three caribou home as they had to be dragged from a bit inland before getting loaded into the cart.

Most gray glaucous gulls have disappeared. This is unusual since it is usually these birds of the year that are the last to leave – sometimes starving and freezing. Jonathan and numerous other adults are still around and are apparently doing well on near shore herring and arctic cod schools.

October 25 Low 31° F, High 42° F
N-NE wind to 18. Cloudy.

Ice continues to melt and break up. Where are those mid-October freezing temps? Broken ice piled right into Kotzebue Front Street this morning.

We had many broken pieces of ice and slush on our ocean beach this morning and farther off shore where there were some larger pans there were 30 or so seals hauled out on the pans enjoying a rest from swimming. They were probably mostly spotted seals and yearling uguruq.

No boats around but on the Kotzebue side there were many out as it is ideal fall seal hunting weather.

We are not seeing caribou around here anymore though the boys at Sealing Point did get a couple today and report some coming back into their area. They have nets at Killikmaik Lagoon and were down that way today. They

are getting a few fish – better than us at Anigaq but not lots.

Our warm and thawing weather continues, making the recently freezing areas dangerous to walk or travel on. Our ground is free of snow again and even the ground is thawing again.

Jonathan is still around but apparently worrying about whether he should leave or not. One wonders what goes on inside a gull's head.

October 26 Low 32° F, High 40° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, snow.

Carrie took a ride west today for a change of scene and got wet from rain all the way home!

We went to Anigaq to check our net that has been out for three nights. The ice is getting thin from rain and thawing temps. We had over 100 flounders and only two adult whitefish in the net. We called it quits! Have never had such poor fishing at Anigaq. We took the net home and probably will not use a net again till next spring break up time.

The Sealing Point boys are getting some whitefish at Killiakmaik though catch numbers are up and down. Some days much better than others.

No slush on the ocean today but a few large ice pans.

No caribou seen today even by netters at Sealing Point. No caribou from Sisualik to Killiakmaik for the first time since late August. The caribou stuck on the ice by glare ice – extremely slippery – are dead now and the ravens are cleaning. I may check out the site maybe tomorrow to see if there is anything further to learn from this unfortunate wilderness tragedy.

Willow ptarmigan are pure white now and very easy to see by their predators. I got six this evening – our first catch for this fall.

October 27 Low 32° F, High 38° F
NE-E-SE wind to 18. Rain, snow, fog.

A very mean and somber Sunday in Sisualik. Alternate showers of rain and snow with periods of freezing air and thawing air. Marine waters quite high, most progress towards freeze-up gone with ice broken up on larger waters and widespread thawing air temps have reduced land, trails, roads and paths to dangerously slippery. Outdoor stored meat and fish have pretty much thawed out but not spoiled yet.

This very late mild weather is unusual but has happened in the past. It is never much fun because though mild temps are fine, deteriorated travel conditions are a pain. Sno-gos put away, boats out again but ice – thin and broken – a hazard to getting around. Even aircraft transport in trouble today with icing, fog and who knows what else.

Those with nets under ice having problems. Some may lose gear and dangerous conditions for net checking have developed.

A few caribou seen again at Jones' Camp. None reported by travelers thru Krusenstern beaches.

It is getting to be a late date for Jonathan's departure (our boss camp glaucous gull). Camp squirrel out yesterday too.

October 28 Low 30° F, High 38° F
N-NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, some sun.

Freeze-up still on hold. Wind warning on tonight but off shore with low water. New ice formation on hold and old ice is broken and weakened. Some sheltered lakes, sloughs and lagoons do retain ice. Net tending under ice is dangerous.

Went west to pick up some freshwater ice for household water and to finally check the sight of caribou tragedy of October 22.

There were three calf carcasses, meat mostly eaten by ravens now but still in place on the ice where I witnessed their downfall. They apparently were following the small group of five adults that I saw come back to ice in response to distress call. Their mothers were no doubt part of the group. The group trail they were following came off the glare ice and mud of the lagoon at the mouth of a small inflowing creek with liquid water seepage over extreme slippery inclined ice lagoon edge. All four hooves of animals flew askew and bodies landed hard on ice surface with hind legs spread. On examination some hip joints seem to have been pulled out of joint. They could not regain their upright posture. They could move a bit by use of forefeet. They drew together, quit vocalizing when adults left them and died in two/three days!

October 29 Low 34° F, High 38° F
N-NE wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, some breaks.

Saw small group of caribou yesterday coming down from mountains to beach at Akulak. The first we've seen for a while. There is also a report of many north of Jones' Camp.

Took Carrie for a ride over to Sisualiq Point (Nuvuruq). We haven't been that way since the day of high water and waves. Driftwood and other flotsam at a pretty high level. Didn't notice any real damage but it wouldn't have been fun sitting out the storm there. There were no people in any of the many camps during the storm.

There is a lot of driftwood on our beach now, piled high on the crown of the beach up in the grasses from Anigaq through Akulak and up to Nuvuruq. It will be fine dry firewood if another greater storm doesn't come along.

Many adult glaucous gulls around yet and a few snow buntings flying around. Very few other birds around now except ravens and an occasional gyrfalcon. Have not seen a snowy owl yet even though it is the time of their usual southward migration.

Willow ptarmigan are pure white now and are extremely vulnerable to their predators. There is nowhere to hide in their white coats. The natural world can be quite cruel, at times very unforgiving.

October 30 Low 36° F, High 42° F
NE-E-SE wind to 20. Cloudy, rain, a few breaks.

Rain, sometimes heavy, all night. Weatherman expects record-breaking highs today.

Got a cartload of dry wood today from Akulak and glassed over the inland areas from our two regular west lookout points. Saw no living creatures but glaucous gulls and ravens – an abundance of each.

We are pretty much the sole residents of Sisualik now. There is another family east of us a couple of miles but they are in and out of town much.

The only other people between here and Port Site are at Claude Wilson's camp – at Katyauraq – and some of Carrie's family at Sealing Point. Krusenstern fall/winter campers continue to diminish.

A good deal of ice noise on the air today from ice broken up by mild temps and a rapid rise in marine waters.

Those at Jones' Camp report loud distant noise, probably from the mouth of the Noatak.

Record high temps have caused the loss of nets on west Kobuk Lake and probably in other places. This long thaw and heavy rain is very unusual for this late in October.

Saw a yearling uguruq today close to the beach west of us. Many have been taken out of Kotzebue by boats this month.

October 31 Low 35° F, High 39° F
SE-E-NE wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, some breaks.

A second day of record breaking high temps according to the weather folks. Much of the 4 or 5 inch ice in the country has cracked up and moved around and piled up in places on the beach. It is certainly odd late October weather.

Some nets in sheefish country (Kobuk Lake) have been lost and probably in other places too. Cross country travel by surface is interrupted and on hold till temps get back to normal.

A yearling walrus taken this evening a couple of miles west of us by a nephew. There are often a few strays on Krusenstern beaches this month even though we are off normal migration channels. It will add a little more variety to our already quite diverse diet this fall.

Since we have no ice and no slush on our ocean and no net out anywhere I stuck one out this afternoon. After several hours I pulled it up and got what I expected – absolutely nothing! All species have passed Sisualik and are where they are supposed to be at this season in spite of abnormal temps and lack of expected ice build-up.

Very few people in Sisualik this Halloween. No dance and no tricks or treating. That does it for October. Maybe winter will come in November.

NOVEMBER

November 1 Low 34° F, High 39° F
N-NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, light showers.

Another dark non-freezing unseasonable day.

We butchered the yearling walrus Albert shot in the water near shore last evening a couple of miles west of us. I hauled the unhandsome little animal (200 lbs.) to our camp where we worked it up. We have something fresh and different to eat. The flippers are very soft and easy to cook and choice. The whole skin with two thin layers of blubber – called “kauq” in Eskimo – can be cut in small oblong pieces and cooked any time during the winter. The meat, tender and soft when cooked, is much like the meat of other marine mammals with just enough subtle difference to distinguish it from young uguruq or Common Ringed Seal.

This young walrus was a female with tips of tusks just beginning to show white below the dark lip.

After Albert and I completed the task I went west to get some freshwater ice chunks for camp water and to look over Akulak to see if after all this thawing weather there might be a productive place to set net. I did find the inlet channel at the head of the lagoon ice free and easily set the net across the channel with my push pole and hoped to see a fish hit. I didn't but went home with hope.

I saw the lone wandering musk ox bull again today at Akulak moving toward Sisualik.

November 2 Low 30° F, High 35° F
N-NE wind to 18. Cloudy, showers.

Anxious to check the net set yesterday at Akulak lagoon head.

Did not see any caribou again from our three lookout points on that trail. After seeing caribou every day through September and October it seems quite lonesome when there are none at all to be seen. It looks like hungry country again but there was a flock of very tame willow ptarmigan not far from the net site. I have seen this flock (20 or so) several times in the same place. I have not yet taken a shotgun along and they are getting pretty used to me and the 4-wheeler. They hang around the same place because it is relatively safe from avian predators. Thick willows in a shaded area that retains a bit of snow and frost patches that makes them stand out less prominently than they do in most places of brown ground and reddish willow leaves.

The net had a fair but odd catch for the location. One yard (36”) long big-headed very slim sheefish and one small shee. There were twelve medium-sized Bering cisco, three Alaska whitefish and a single tomcod. Akulak is not

normally known for large shee or medium Bering cisco. It has been “land-locked,” that is, it hasn’t opened to the sea for 3-4 consecutive years up to this year. I reset the net.

November 3 Low 22° F, High 32° F
Light N-NE winds. Cloudy, clearing, drizzle.

A very flat ocean today and a very clear dry day compared to what we’ve had for a while and it is rapidly cooling. I thought the net might be frozen in but it was not and there were another twelve Bering cisco. No more shee.

The Bering cisco is one of our rarest whitefish. It is regular but always in small numbers. It is known to be the whitefish with the highest oil content of all and feeds on small krill-like creatures that other whitefish can’t see or consider too small. Very little is known of this fish by the scientific world and it has a very limited range, from Bering Straits to Barrow. East of Barrow, through the Colville Delta, a similar fish but different species called arctic cisco is found.

The abundance of medium to small sized Bering cisco in Akulak Lagoon is an interesting anomaly and begs for reasonable explanation.

Still no caribou but the lone musk ox bull was standing where I usually park the wheeler to climb the nearest lookout point. Didn’t want to leave the wheeler in his care so didn’t look the country over from that point today.

Took the net home as that open water set is freezing over.

November 4 Low 28° F, High 34° F
N-NE wind to 30. Broken clouds, snow.

Our world changed this late afternoon and evening – snow! Two inches came out of the very thick clouds and fog and then near midnight clouds cleared out and left a very bright – under northern lights – white ground to replace the tawny brown and gray landscape we’ve had since summer green faded in September.

Put things around camp away and ran the dogs a good long dry run. They get terribly dry – thirsty – with no water puddles, no snow, no frost and the only available liquid water the salt one of the ocean. I try to give them water before they go but they don’t want it then. They load up when they get home. Our snow cover late this day will solve all that and also allow us to fire up the sno-go and see if it will run after its long summer rest.

Ice conditions are bad. Old ice that didn’t move from place will support a good weight. The new ice only recently formed will not. Yesterday it was easy to tell the difference by color. Now with snow cover that don’t work. Ice travel with vehicles will be delayed for a while yet. Jonathan gone for about a week now.

November 5 Low 30° F, High 36° F
NE-E wind to 30, early. Cloudy.

Strong winds through the night but dropping off in early morning. No additional snow. There are 1½ inches of snow on our ground now – all before midnight. Our world looks different with even a few drifts around the house.

For nearly a week now we have been the only residents of Sisualik. All other camps are unoccupied though some dogs are left behind.

Crossed the lagoon again today with the 4-wheeler. Walked it first, testing every step. The old ice that remains unbroken is quite sturdy. Where it has cracked or moved about the newly formed ice over water is yet very thin. Over shallow water and old ice the trail is fine for wheeler but watch your step!

Marine waters very low yesterday and this morning but rising again now. Lots of seal hunting near Kotzebue yesterday.

Word has come through that there is no longer a bridge of ice between Lockhardt Point and Kotzebue. That means no surface travel from Sisualik to Kotzebue for some long time. Maybe record lateness for that event this year.

Didn't fire up the sno-go today though I thought about it and there is adequate snow on the ground. Sno-go uses much more gas than 4-wheeler.

November 6 Low 30° F, High 36° F, Low 30° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy with breaks.

A mild rather beautiful day with a bit of snowmelt again on dark things.

Made an early aircraft trip to town for shopping and business. We were home by 5 p.m. with the 206 pretty well loaded with our purchases, including a 100-lb. propane bottle.

It was a good trip and, as usual, saw lots of friends and many brief conversations.

Ravens again stole the show and attention focused on them.

Kotzebue Channel open clear through to Pipe Spit but there is chance of ice jamming again around Tech Center or Arctic Lighterage. We would be much pleased if the ice did jam there again and remain to be a crossing trail for snowmachine when freeze-up gets under way again.

A couple of clan people came back to their camp in Sisualik today and hopefully got their dogs fed again and completed other chores to spruce up their camp after considerable absence. We'll probably hear more about that later on. Will need a good rest to recover from the town trip.

November 7 Low 20° F, High 34° F
NE-E wind to 15. Cloudy, sunny.

Well! Had a good night rest and recovered well from town trip but managed to break through the lagoon ice with the wheeler in 3 ½ to 4 feet of water. As luck would have it one of our extended family boys was here from Sealing Point and with his rig and help we got it out without damage.

There has been enough warnings out to stay off the ice because of its weak condition. You'd think elders would take heed but as usual some of us are stubborn!

My excuse? I ran over the trail I made yesterday first thing and had no trouble though getting on and off the old ice on the edges was wet and looked thin. I ran Terry the old dog west till we ran into the old lone musk ox. Terry, being old and wise, simply stands off a safe distance and barks. He did get excited though and wanted to be sure that I knew there was a big hairy, horned animal hiding in the willows.

When we got back home I needed to run the other large and more active dog who has a good deal less experience and intelligence I thought it would be wise to run up and over the lagoon ice that was clear of musk ox. You already know the results of that decision!

November 8 Low 8° F, High 28° F
N-NE wind to 15. Clear, some clouds.

Finally we have indications of a cooling trend that will take some getting used to!

Marine water level came up pretty high last night. Our back salt marsh was pretty flooded.

We have had this week a crew of two hunting marine mammals by boat. They have done pretty well with the good weather and water level. They left us a small Common Ringed Seal as they passed by this evening.

We have glaucous gulls, both young and adult, and snow buntings but little sign of other bird life. We have not yet seen either snowy owl or gyrfalcon this fall. We normally do by this date but delayed snowfall as ground cover may somehow affect their fall movement.

Have noted only a few sea ducks from where. Didn't see a squirrel out today but the near ones have been out for a short while all week.

Our microtine population has picked up this fall from almost nothing in late spring and summer. Shrews are probably most numerous right now with tundra voles coming up rather fast. We have lots of red fox working the marsh areas.

November 9 Low 2° F, High 12° F
N-NE wind to 20. Clear, some clouds.

Winds up and temps down this evening. We are finally freezing up. Crossed our lagoon this afternoon where my wheeler went through the ice a couple of days ago. No trouble this time though things are pretty slippery and I didn't make it back to the tablelands on our winter house trail.

Went west with both dogs this afternoon, one at a time, and they both had different reactions to the lone musk ox bull that has taken up residency there. Terry just stared and didn't even bark this time. Achauq took a closer look and got charged. He thought that was fun so he provoked another. He seemed willing to take the musk ox home as a more permanent play partner.

There was a good willow ptarmigan group almost under the musk ox's feet. Several groups of snow buntings following the beach east and south this afternoon.

No caribou to be seen again and a single boat out for seals in this chilly weather.

A few people back into their camps yesterday and today.

November 10 Low -2° F, High 10° F
NE-E wind to 18. Clear, some clouds.

Our first drop below 0°F this fall I guess. We are making ice now!

Seth Kantner, testing by walk and axe, was the first out of Kotzebue to cross the deep channel with his snowmachine today but rough surface ice kept him from coming for a visit. We soon will have travelers from Kotzebue.

Crossed the lagoon with wheeler and almost got up the winter camp trail but very slippery edges back there kept me from getting up the trail a ways. The ice thickness was good – no more thin places except where strong currents prevail.

Did see willow ptarmigan tracks on the blackberry grounds for the first time. The little snow cover we have has been good for that species since they are all white now. Successful hiding from predators is much easier.

Snow buntings in small numbers are still passing and a few glaucous gulls remain but not Jonathan. Very little sign of sea ducks this fall. In some years, eiders and oldsquaws are plentiful this late. Have not seen even one snowy owl yet.

Our microtine population continues to grow.

November 11 Low -1° F, High 10° F
NE wind to 15. Clear.

Freeze-up continues!

Aachauq (the dog) and I made it up and into the tablelands today on the Sanningaruq trail. Very slippery on the ice and very lumpy on the ground. Didn't go far up the trail but made a start and if the forecast snow happens things will be less slippery and softer riding.

Saw only one old caribou track in the snow.

I called Carrie back on the VHF to let her know the crossing had gone well and she said, "Come back down here there is a musk ox walking towards the house from the west." Well we hurried back down but the animal had reversed directions again and followed his own tracks back west.

A pair of friends called Carrie on the VHF and told her that they were about halfway from town, coming to visit. Their transmission was not clear and we wondered for a while what had become of them when they hadn't turned up here. No one has made the crossing yet so one tends to worry some. They eventually called on the phone reporting that they had turned back to town due to weak looking ice.

November 12 Low 2° F, High 22° F
N-NE-S wind to 18. Cloudy, snow.

Snow – mostly all day but less than 2 inches. Very poor visibility till early evening when wind suddenly switched to south and sky began to clear.

Stayed close to home putting things away for winter which I think has now finally come.

One traveler today from Katyaaraq. We are currently the only occupied camp in Sisualik. There are three occupied camps on Krusenstern beaches now. There is us in Sisualik, the Wilson family at Katyaaraq, and some of Sam Williams' family at Sealing Point.

Still no travelers from Kotzebue. We expect a first wheeler or sno-go tomorrow if weather clears.

Snow continued till sun went down.

Our evening wind switch has given us wave sound again. Sisualik has been pretty quiet with a long N-NE wind spell and so very few beach travelers.

Tomcod hooking has gotten pretty good up in the Jones' Camp area since our last spell of high marine waters. We will probably try our luck as weather and trail permits. It is good to have a few for kauk³⁴ through the winter.

Bear tracks have been reported up that way this week.

November 13 Low 8° F, High 24° F
NW-N wind to 18. Clear, few clouds.

Three ice surface travelers today from Kotzebue. Two with snowmachines and one who made a round trip with his 4-wheeler. We enjoyed the visitors and especially the news of a useable trail between here and Kotz – a whole month late! October 13 and 14 are normal or usual dates for completion of that trail.

Our couple of inches of snow yesterday has done much to make our traveling easier, less slippery and easy to note trails of those that have gone before.

Ice fishing (hooking) for saffron cod has been very good for these last two days up at Jones' Camp. We may go up and give it a try tomorrow, weather permitting.

³⁴ Raw frozen meat (or fish), also "quaq"

Both dogs went west today (not together) to greet our lone musk ox. Terry the “old timer” ignored him. Aachauq, the rambunctious one, wanted to play. To him a dead serious charge by a bull musk ox is fun – an invitation to interact. Aachauq is a little short on wisdom. I wonder if he has considered what the musk ox’s low-slung horns are for. He obviously enjoys the interaction and the musk ox seems to enjoy the break in routine.

November 14 Low 8° F, High 22° F
NW-N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

A day of action! We decided to go up to the slough fishing area at Norton Camp on the west delta of Noatak River. It is kind of a traditional place for us. We have been going there every fall for many, many years – before there were any houses. A small creek empties a lake into the main slough there and saffron cod and Alaska whitefish tend to concentrate in the area to feed on 9-spined Stickleback and other small creatures that come out of the lake into the main stream. It has a long traditional history as a fall hooking place.

Took us a while to get ready – we were to go by snowmachine and we haven’t fired it up yet this year. It did run well and we finally started off just a little before noon. Then we had to find a way around the still wet overflow in the lagoon. We did find a route and finally completed the 8-10 mile trip to fishing grounds. We got there just as a couple of friends and neighbors were thinking of going home. They had good catches – maybe 100 all told.

We made holes and soon had a few also. It was good to travel and good to fish with hooks again. Carrie got two whitefish among the cod.

November 15 Low 6° F, High 20° F
NE wind to 18. Cloud, more sun, snow late.

Went back up to Norton’s – the hooking place – and got an earlier start and got a few more fish though catching was rather slow they were of good size. There was even a little more variety. Several whitefish and at least two arctic cod were taken with the regular saffron cod.

Some other fishers were our distant neighbors from Jones’ Camp and Joe and Lydia Harris Camp. As always, everyone got fish though some less than others.

We saw a fox and couple of willow ptarmigan on the 8-10 mile trip. No more sign of caribou in our country. Our trail of the day before was good and overflow crossings had surface frozen.

We will have nearly a gunnysack of individually frozen saffron cod now. Nearly enough for use. They are frozen spread out overnight and then sacked for future eating as frozen with oil. This is different than whitefish that are sacked all together and become a frozen mass from which individual fish are chipped out and off as needed for kauk.

November 16 Low 0° F, High 16° F
Light winds. More sun, some clouds.

A real flat ocean today. There have been swells the last couple of days. There is lots of ice-free water yet but some ice chunks and slush patches throughout. Seals are scarce here this fall and today is the first day we have not seen a glaucous gull, either a bird of the year or an adult. There have been a few gray birds around each day but most adults left with Jonathan two weeks ago.

There are no other marine birds near shore now. Ravens and snow buntings are the only regular land birds now except for the two ptarmigan species.

We took the day off from fishing to get some wood and ice for our household water.

I went with the sno-go up to our winter camp trail about halfway to the cabin. The two inches or so of snow up there is enough for traveling but it is pretty lumpy yet. Tough on snowmachine and driver. After running over it a little some drift and more snow will make it a good quickly and we will have a chance to move into winter quarters – inside the trees with a little shelter from wind and snow drift. Both us and the dogs are looking forward to that move. In some years we have made it by October 18.

November 17 Low 0° F, High 24° F
N-NE wind to 20. Clear, clouding, snow.

A quiet Sunday again in Sisualik. Apparently no people but us in Sisualik and though it was clear before 8 a.m. clouds and heavy snow obscured everything. We got a good three inches before two p.m.

Just as I began this three friends from Kotz dropped in and helped us eat up the abundant supper we had prepared. They came by 4-wheeler and had a rather rugged trip with whiteout and snowdrifts on the ice. We were glad to see them and they were glad for a warm dry shelter and a bite to eat. Made our day.

Marine waters extra low today and weatherman has forecast some fairly high winds forecast. With all this loose snow we may have some messy conditions. We wish our visiting friends good luck as they hoped to make it back into town tonight. Lots of moonlight but no trail stakes and rather dangerous ice conditions around Sisualik Point.

Our trail to winter camp will get good quickly if these conditions prevail for a couple of days. It will be good to see the old cabin – how it fared this summer with active bears around – and the beautiful white spruce trees that give us shelter there. And the birds – gray jays, chickadees, and maybe a hawk owl or horned owl. Wonder if there are snowshoe hares?

November 18 Low 10° F, High 22° F
N-NE wind to 20. Cloudy, some sun.

Off and on drifting snow in Sisualik and open country north.

Aachauq (the dog) and I made it up to our cabin in the white spruce patch today for the first time this fall. It was

hard to leave that sheltered place to come back down to where surface drift has been on all day. Snow is still hanging on to trees and willows around the cabin.

Things seem to have come through the summer pretty well though the “bear door” was down and some small creatures (red squirrels?) have been in the house making more of a mess of the uncleaned mess that it was when we left it. The bear must have pulled the spiked door down on himself and panicked at that. Only the weak doorknob latch was keeping most everything out of the house. We left in rather a hurry last spring not doing our usual final clean-up which we will now have to do either before or while we are moving back in.

Was pleased to see two groups of caribou up creek from the cabin and moose tracks around the cabin. Did not see any birds or hare tracks – both a bit of a disappointment but they may snow later.

There was a large fresh wolf track in our old trail.

November 19 Low -1° F, High 12° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, some sun.

Long day today though the sunshine part was short enough. Moonlight was quite long.

We decided just before noon to run up to the tomcod hooking site even though it seemed kind of cold. We did that but found a poor show of fish up there. Carrie got two and I got one plus numerous bullheads. It was cold sitting around with no fish but we kept at it for a while before heading home.

Trail was pretty good with more snow than either way down here or up toward our winter camp.

After we had gotten home and had a late lunch word came over the VHF that a couple of extended family folks had need of a new spark plug. They were on the way home (to town) after visiting Sisualik to do some necessary chores. They were a mile or so out on the ice from Sisualik Point. I put traveling clothes on again, gassed up, and headed for them with plugs. Plugs didn't do it. One cylinder had no compression. Maybe a burnt piston.

I couldn't leave Carrie alone too long and they suggested I go home and call their dad to have some boys come out and meet them. They had one cylinder going and left their sled. I watched and they got out of sight and I turned home. With the telephone we got their family to send out a couple of wheelers.

Not long after we got a weak VHF note that wheelers had passed them not seeing them. At the same time, they got thru to a knowledgeable friend in town and he said he would try to find them. He did and the first two wheelers reached us in Sisualik we put them on the right trail. In time they found their left sled and snowmachine but no people since they had already been picked up. They all eventually made it home and will pick up sled and machine tomorrow. In the meantime there is a large search on for two people leaving Noorvik yesterday for Kotzebue not arriving there. Aircraft and ground search are still going on as I write this at 10 p.m. It is a traveler's dangerous time of year, before trail stakes are in place and thin ice may be hidden by fresh or drifted snow.

November 20 Low 6° F, High 19° F
NE-E wind to 15. Clouds and sun.

The two missing boys were found this afternoon at an old camp north of the Noorvik-Kotzebue trail. Everyone is glad and a bit puzzled as to why they were not found the day before if they were at such a prominent location. Lots of time, money and personal risk went into the extensive search.

Sealing Point camp is activated again for a while. Four extended family boys went down today with wheeler and snowmachine. Tough trail for wheeler due to drifted snow.

Got ice and ran the dogs up the winter camp trail this morning and hauled in a load of driftwood from west of us this afternoon. There were wolf tracks on the trail from last night.

Travel through here from Kotzebue has been light but is picking up as thin ice gets thicker and normal winter trails are established. Between village travel is just now beginning.

Our son brought mail from town today breaking in the new snowmachine he received for his birthday from family.

Our ocean beach remains ice-free here by camp though winter fast ice has developed east of us from the Point towards Kotzebue.

November 21 Low 16° F, High 24° F
E-SE wind to 25. Cloudy, snow.

Planned to go fishing today but by daylight wind and drifting had picked up so we stayed home and watched the snow drift from the window. Now (9:00 p.m.) the wind has dropped. Temperatures are mild and moon is almost brighter than the sun earlier. Why not go fishing by moonlight?

A number of travelers today for a change and more people back in camps too. Both Sealing Point houses are occupied and the folks from Katyaaraq camp came. We are still the only occupied camp in Sisualik however. Two other travelers made a round trip to Kivalina.

Our ocean in front of camp is quite ice free and black today with wind ruffled surface and everything else, including the sky, is white. The contrast between dark ice free Sound water and white snow-covered land is remarkable and a navigational help for migrating snowy owls and local aircraft.

Didn't gain a lot of snow but our trail inland to winter cabin may have benefited from snow drift. When trail is run over every time there is a change in snow surface. The trail packs down and gets good quickly. We may yet get moved before Thanksgiving.

November 22 Low 20° F, High 30° F
NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, broken, snow.

We are getting our snow bit by bit.

We made our fishing trip today planned for yesterday. Wind and a large snow shower on our way up almost made us sorry we had started but that passed through about the time we got to the fishing holes. The sun almost came out!

There were fish this time and pretty large ones. Carrie even got one small burbot (titaliq³⁵), a species we had never taken at that location. That catch was interesting since that catch made a record of sorts. The record is this November we had taken three species of cod in one remote location on the Noatak Delta. Saffron cod are the species most normally found there in October and November. Arctic cod a more ocean (saltwater) species rarely found in fresh or brackish water and burbot a fresh water cod found in most of our large rivers of the region. The location of the fishing spot is on the largest slough on the west side of the Noatak Delta. It is about halfway between the mouth, where it empties into saltwater bay, and where it leaves the main stem of the Noatak River. Its waters are a mix of varying salinity – freshwater from Noatak main stem, salt from ocean bay behind Sisualik. Truly a brackish water location.

November 23 Low 24° F, High 37° F
NE-E wind to 30. Cloudy, snow, rain.

Before dawn this morning the world looked clear and promising. By daylight strong winds and a sky full of snow kept most people home. Radio weather indicates that that is a good idea. The forecast for Saturday and Sunday is bad with high winds and snow – blizzard conditions – and later possibly overflow flood conditions. Traveling conditions for Thanksgiving may not be very good.

Our gas supply is getting low and we are in need of a shopping time. Weather will control our travel as usual.

I did go west today for a load of firewood and loosed the dogs but no one wanted to follow. Too warm and too soft for fat dogs. I did find some good firewood. Sawed the couple of trees into stove length rounds and filled the sled with them.

We are so fortunate to have such a high and dry supply of driftwood. Our big NW storm put most driftwood right on the peak of the sod line. Usually it ends the summer lower down towards the water's edge where it covers early with snow.

Hope our ocean don't get out of line with all this wind forecast. A late fall flood is no fun. Rather heavy rain for several hours late. Outdoor things will be pretty iced up.

November 24 Low 23° F, High 34° F
E-SE wind to 35. Cloudy, clearing.

A few travelers through here this Sunday in spite of rather high winds. One Sealing Point group were first to try the trail into Kotz. There is always some unknowns about trail conditions after the kind of day we had yesterday. But it turned out well this time. They made it in good time and a report of fine trail.

³⁵ Also "tittaaliq"

We had two inches of snow yesterday afternoon and then a couple of hours of rain which fastened down all new snow so strong winds didn't bring on forecast blizzard.

Ran up our winter camp trail this afternoon to pack down the new snow and pick up some lake ice for household water. Saw a small group (4-5) of fresh caribou tracks – the first seen on that trail since I made it. They came from the west.

Other travelers saw fresh wolf tracks in the Salluq area but had no time to follow them.

Our ocean getting some noisy this evening as winds gets a bit more southerly. We haven't heard real waves for some time.

We probably established a new record high for the date yesterday evening. We may make a town run when weather permits, probably before Thanksgiving and maybe also on Thanksgiving.

November 25 Low 24° F, High 34° F
E-SE wind to 18. Cloudy, fog, snow, rain.

A very somber and wet day in Sisualik. No travelers, few aircraft and very limited visibility.

The ocean waves quieted overnight and we are glad the wind backed to E instead of moving on to south and west which would have brought surf and possible high water. We have heard rumors of some overflow this evening and it may discourage the use of some trails for a while again.

Didn't go anywhere today. With rain gear it would have been all right but a limited gasoline reserve and the uncertainty of when we can refuel is a big factor now. We may have to use charter aircraft again. With both Thanksgiving and Carrie's birthday coming at the end of the week we are a little on edge as to how to handle things. She usually likes to spend both days with town family. We shall see what develops.

Our microtine populations continue to expand around camp. Tundra voles and arctic shrews are the dominant species. Numbers were down to rock bottom this spring and summer.

We had a rather delicious moose nose for supper last night. Some extended family from Noatak took one last September and gave us a good deal of the meat and the nose. Cooked whole all afternoon (5-6 hours) and then thoroughly cooled it makes for very attractive eating by those that know it is the best part of the whole moose.

November 26 Low 20° F, High 34° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy.

Much more pleasant weather today – still warm and a light wind. Not too bright!

Marine waters dropped quite abruptly so there is considerable overflow in places. Most of it went back down the cracks and holes it came up through.

Two Sealing Point boys – one with sno-go and one with wheeler – made it into town today and reported a good dry trail. We were glad to hear this as trail conditions are often bad after overflow conditions develop. We may yet get into town for Thanksgiving.

Worked a deal to get some gas today but it didn't quite get delivered. Hopefully it will make it tomorrow. Days are quite short now and pilot had some prior commitments.

We are still not sure how we will handle Thanksgiving and Carrie's birthday at the end of this week.

Our ocean was remarkably flat this day with a few swells beginning this evening. The lack of seals and sea ducks in our section is remarkable this fall. In some years there are lots of both, usually when arctic cod are plentiful. Not much sign of them in the ocean this year though a few were caught with saffron cod on Noatak Delta and Kotzebue saffron cod hooking areas.

A large flock (15-20) of snow buntings were around today. They seemed so large and white. There may have been some MacKay buntings with them.

November 27 Low 24° F, High 30° F
N-NE-E-SE wind to 15. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Our gas shortage problem still unresolved. Due to trail conditions and continued warm and wet weather we thought the best and quickest way to re-supply was by air. We completed arrangements for that yesterday then aircraft problems and limited daylight cancelled that out. Now today, fog, icing conditions and poor visibility prevented flight and landing. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving and we're down to 5 gallons. We have enough fuel to get to town and or two nights left for the light generator.

One sno-go made it from town this evening and two the day before. The only travelers on the town trail.

We'll see what tomorrow brings. We may or may not make the Thanksgiving Feast in town. There are other campers on Krusenstern beaches this Thanksgiving. Two at Katyaaraq and two at Sealing Point. We remain the only two in Sisualik.

Other creatures noted today from here were ravens. However, the boys at Sealing Point did see a "good group" of caribou moving our way. Interesting news as caribou sightings have been scarce this month.

Our daylight hours have shrunk rapidly. Hard to believe we now have less than four hours. On a cloudy blustery day like today it seems less than that. We had the generator (lights) on till 1 p.m. and restarted it at 4:30 p.m. Oh how great were those long days of sunshine in May and June!

Good night!!

November 28 Low 26° F, High 32° F
SE-S wind to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

We made it! To Kotzebue for the Thanksgiving Feast at the Church and at town family table! Two feasts as usual – one traditional gathering with friends church family and acquaintances and second equally as traditional in another culture. The one features frozen fish of several kinds, Bowhead whale maktak and blubber, caribou and reindeer soup, various berries, and of course akutuk³⁶ (Eskimo Ice Cream). The other turkey, ham, stuffing, sweet potatoes, gravy, fruit salad and pumpkin pie.

Life used to be simpler when only the local traditional treats were offered. Now two full blown traditions on the same day is too much! It is fun though! And we are glad we made it. That was quite an act in itself!

Told Carrie this morning if we had a fresh trail out of Kotzebue we would follow it. We haven't froze much for a week and there is snow, overflow and thin ice and with my diminishing eyesight I didn't feel up to making the 15 mile trip over.

Dinner was set for 4 p.m. at the Old Church. At 1 p.m. two rigs pulled in from town. Two of our grandkids' husbands. Then four more rigs with buddies of the first to come. Lots of trail! We put on travel clothes and followed. Lots of slush water and scary looking trail but we all made it in an hour or so. Taikuu!

November 29 Low 20° F, High 28° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, snow, warm.

The return trip! We haven't overnighted in town since last winter so it is always an adventure. We did have a good night with some sleep after all that overeating. There are many strange noises heard in the city that are not around remote camps.

Our real adventure began when we headed home on the ice after shopping in early afternoon. Overflow had spread around a bit so we couldn't follow yesterday's track across Kotz bar. One of our grandsons came along and made us a new track farther up toward the Noatak Mouth Trail. That went well and we got around the wet looking stuff.

He continued on past a huge iceberg for shallow water that we hadn't seen yesterday. He came roaring back and told us just go ahead on the trail we used yesterday. Well, he took off back toward town. Well we got onto the only tracks we could see and followed but they tended more and more towards Jones' Camp. We soon realized we had no track to follow heading toward Sisualik Lagoon.

My next thought was to get off the ice and wet overflow onto ground. We made a beeline for that – our fish trail up to Jones'. We crossed some wetness but no place to get stuck in slush and water. We eventually made it dry and with our big load intact. It then started to snow. No more visibility but we are home! Adventure! No matter how old one is.

³⁶ A mixture of fat, berries and other items, also "akutuq"

November 30 Low 18° F, High 26° F
S-SW-W wind to 35. Cloudy, snow, fog.

Strong southerly winds today which could have given us some worrisome high surf but soon after winds picked up around daylight thick slush and ice pans moved into the beach from Sisualigraaq to Ikpigraruq. It functions as a wide, wide breakwater. By noon we couldn't see ice free water on the other side. This is slush, broken ice pans and thickly concentrated. It now appears like solid springtime sea ice. Anyway, swells even might never penetrate to our beach, no matter how big or high they are.

It snowed off and on all day so we may now have enough snow to get moved up to our spruce patch and be free of waves and tidewater for a while.

Took our big dog (Aachauq) for a run west in the new loose snow. Loosed Terry the old dog, too, but he decided the big sno-go and soft snow was too much for him so he strolled around camp checking things out and then returned to his chain place.

Saw several willow ptarmigan and snow buntings today. There may be more of both for CBC next month.

We hope weather generally improves so we can get moved to winter camp before Christmas this year. December coming up! The month of very short days!

DECEMBER

December 1 Low 16° F, High 20° F
SW-NE wind to 10. Cloudy, snow.

This certainly was a December day. No sign of sun, complete "whiteout" through the day and only a sliver of morning moon left to add to what starlight or aurora we might have. Dark is the word for it and there will be more to come. It is time to remember those long full days of sun in May and June – no darkness!

Tried (but not very hard) to get back to the entrance trail through tablelands to winter camp. All our tidewater flats still have wet overflow problems. Marine water level has gone down but new and drifting snow is holding water like a sponge and all snowmachines throw slush all over everything. When temperatures drop enough for long enough all this mess will freeze and ideal trails will develop on top of everything.

We probably have enough snow now to complete our move to Sanningaruq and today our drum of gas by air finally got delivered so that major obstacle is cleared. We will have lights and travel capabilities for a while.

Our huge and extensive off shore slush and ice pan that moved in early yesterday when swells were beginning to climb over our beach has moved off shore again. It is so extensive that it didn't let any swells into the beach. No waves to worry over last night.

Maybe tomorrow will give opportunity to get up to the house and get on the way to more sheltered country.

December 2 Low 0° F, High 16° F
N-NE wind to 15. Clearing, clouding.

Across the back still wet overflow crossings and up to the house. I told Carrie I was only going to test the crossings and come back without the sled. Then after lunch I might take a few things up to the house. When I found the crossings useable but still wet I got into the tablelands on the trail and found it so nice and soft with new snow since my last trip up that I just kept going. I called Carrie on the VHF from the hill above the house and told her of my change of plans. I didn't mention the several caribou I saw in a clearing on the edge of the trees on the east front of the house.

As I went down to the house on the trail I was surprised to see many caribou tracks and diggings right in the trees around the house. I put on an old pair of snowshoes and walked out to the east edge of the spruces where I had seen the caribou. I knew they would be gone if they saw my light coming down the hill or were shy to snowmachine noise. They were not there but out in the open now too far for a shot. We are in need of fresh meat again though we still have old meat. The caribou seemed to be all bulls, most antlerless but several still retaining large antlers.

I walked out towards them in my black sno-go suit to see their reaction. They did circle coming closer on the windward side to test my scent. They were close enough for a long shot at that point but I didn't.

December 3 Low 13° F, High 28° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy, broken.

Took a small load (gasoline, seal oil and a whole unskinned caribou carcass) up to the house and tramped down the snow in the front yard with snowshoes in order to firm it up. There were no caribou around the house but several small bunches were scattered along the north side of the creek up the trail to the pass.

Three gray jays descended on the caribou carcass as soon as it was unloaded. I had seen only a shy single bird the day before. We are assured of having birds around camp now and that is good.

Achauq (the dog) made the trip up and back with me. He got a bit tired because he is pretty fat and the upper half of the trail still has a soft bottom as I had been over it only once.

On the way up, near a rocky knoll beside the trail, I had seen some tracks in the fresh snow that looked like rabbit tracks. I promised myself to stop and check them out on the way home as I have yet to see rabbit tracks this fall.

I did that, and surprise, surprise, they were not small snowshoe hare tracks but the large, neat, distant apart arctic hare traces. I have forgotten how many years have passed since I have seen jack rabbit tracks in our locality. It is great to see them again and hope there are others in the spots they prefer to live when they are in the country.

December 4 Low 18° F, High 35° F
NE-E-SE wind to 35. Cloudy, snow, rain.

Record breaking warm temps today with wind, drifting snow, rain, freezing rain and falling sticky snow.

It was not a good day to play out or travel without rain gear today. Everything outdoors is coated with ice or frozen sticky snow. There were a few travelers on the town trail coming and going. The ocean is quite open again – ice free with waves.

We do see a few snow buntings every day around camp buildings or in beach grass patches. The wheat heads on the robust beach rye plants are a major food source for this hardy sometimes overwintering bird.

Had a visitor stop just about dusk and we talked at length about moose season change.

A pod of belugas were seen in open water off Katyaaraq this week.

Voles and shrews making tracks shortly after each new coating. They are indeed making a comeback in this our region.

We are a bit at a loss to understand our long thawing trends and trust we will settle down to more seasonal weather. Day are already extremely short.

December 5 Low 22° F, High 36° F
NE-E wind to 25. Cloudy, snow, rain.

Well! Rain again – in December!

Went up to Sanningaruq this morning. The trail had gotten more snow – and rain – since I was last up there. The trail is getting great. No more bumps as bed of trail builds up to the height of most tussocks and a near level roadway develops with use. Our trail has now pretty much developed into that. Ideal for moving but we are still holding off till this “too warm” spell backs off. The saltwater ice and frozen overflow areas are so slushy that the sno-go track throws slush over everything in the sled. Then the super saturated salt water runs out of the slush onto the canvas cover and sticks to it. We are hoping surface will freeze and dry up one of these days.

There were 8-10 bull caribou feeding just on the edge of the trees by our east side exit trail. They didn't spook to sno-go light or noise so I donned snowshoes immediately upon reaching the cabin and set out to get one to test for meat quality. Most animals dropped their antlers in late November but a couple in this group retained quite large antlers.

I shot one of the smaller bulls that had long since shed antlers and grown hair over. The animal had some mesentery and kidney fat and possibly good bone marrow, at least good for cooking. This animal was well on the way to rebuilding after rut season in October. It is good to have fresh meat again.

December 6 Low 32° F, High 36° F
E-SE wind to 20. Cloudy, rain.

Rain and record high temperatures continued today with a long break of sun and clearing some after. The warm above freezing temps of last night continued through the day and into the evening. Water puddles saturated some crusted snow with light top-freezing. Very slushy trails on lagoon or saltwater ice.

Town trail still being used. The biggest complaint is the amount of water and snow (slush) on ice surface. It is scary traveling since there is no way to be alert.

Took the dogs west to check for some more good firewood in case we are stuck longer.

Wanted to go get my caribou from yesterday as ravens are probably finishing it up but to run over the trail today would probably gouge it up and spoil its smooth bed. Hopefully it will freeze some tonight.

Those that used the town trail today said that it is very, very slushy. Some folks heading out to camps for the weekend. Hope everyone is lucky enough not to find any thin ice. Places of current, which eats ice away at the bottom, is a real hazard at this time on rivers, sloughs and inbetween connected lakes.

Most of our state, and especially the western portion of it, is under this unusual and prolonged warm spell.

Jones' Trail is now staked.

December 7 Low 26° F, High 34° F
NE-E wind to 15. Cloudy, rain, snow, fog.

We had about everything weather-wise today except sun. A one hour heavy sticky snowfall early afternoon whitened everything that off and on rain the past two days had darkened.

We were also surprised to see a lot of new overflow back in the lagoon area, up at Jones' Camp and Kotzebue. Some late afternoon travelers could not get into Kotzebue from Noatak and probably other places because of high water.

Before daylight this morning I worried about which direction I might go today. Up to winter camp with things, or possibly a quick town trip, or a trip west for firewood and ice for household water. I needn't have worried. West is the only possible direction to travel due to overflow. I got some good wood and our "nearby" freshwater lake was still accessible.

This long extended warm weather and rain is making for some very dangerous traveling conditions. Thin ice may develop under snow cover and not be easily discerned. Water has gathered on most lake surfaces under snow, and some small creeks may be running water on top of ice. All this is miserable for hunters, travelers and any who have outdoor work to do.

We look for a cooling drying trend but it does not seem to be in sight yet. The hour of new snow in place of rain

this afternoon quickly did away with extreme slippery conditions.

December 8 Low 28° F, High 34° F
E-SE wind to 18. Cloudy, rain, snow.

Not much weather change. A bit cooler but not much.

Two travelers from this side did make it to Kotzebue today by snowmachine in spite of overflow conditions. No straight line travel but by searching out possible ways of getting around deep spots.

A new creature has joined our camp group. A raven with a bent broken but healed foot has moved in to share Terry's (the dog) food. He is quite tame and sure of himself – that is, sure of what he is doing – unusual in a newly wounded bird. Three years ago I released a raven from a fox trap set by someone else near our camp here. The leg was broken but I didn't want to kill the unfortunate bird if it might have a chance for survival. Ravens are very resourceful creatures. Now I can hardly believe that this is the same bird that has returned either under stressful times or opportunistic ones but he seems so friendly and un-shy, like an old friend, that one wonders at how little we know of interactions and relationships between creatures of different species. Many times in my life there have been situations in this line that I do not have explanation for.

Weather and unusual seasonal conditions have sure put a crimp in our moving plans and I expect in a lot of other people's plans. Even animals and birds with their full winter coats may be experiencing some stress due to unusual warmth and wetness.

December 9 Low 24° F, High 34° F
E-SE wind to 20. Cloudy, clearing, snow sun.

Trail and ice conditions about the same. There seems a cooling trend and at least no more rain.

Several travelers – snowmachines only – no sleds – made the ice crossing from Kotzebue and back today but they went by way of Jones' Camp which has an early staked trail.

I didn't find a dry way to cross our lagoon to get on our winter camp trail today so I loosed the dogs and we went west on the beach to Akulak and picked up a few pieces of firewood. Saw a few willow ptarmigan and snow buntings but nothing else. There are a few fox tracks in the new snow but not much else.

There is a yesterday report by a traveler of "many" musk ox on Krusenstern beach ridges – scattered small groups here and there. There is also a report of "many" seals over at Sisualik Point. That eastern tip of Sisualik in years past was an important location in late fall for seal shooting from the beach and retrieval by kayak. There are some risks involved and the process is discontinued.

Common ringed seals and large sized spotted seals are very fat right now with several inches thickness of good blubber.

Maybe tomorrow I will get up on the winter house trail again. I hope so – time is wasting!

Moon showing well again this evening. It will be our main source of light for the next couple of weeks and then it will be December 21st, our shortest sunlit day.

December 10 Low 17° F, High 30° F
NE-E wind to 18. Cloudy, but sun in sight!

Well! It finally froze enough to eat our usual “kauk” (frozen fish) for lunch. (We have not done so for the past 3-4 days.) It also put a crust on snow so trail to town over saltwater ice is not so wet and slushy.

There were four roundtrip travelers today for various reasons and they report that the trail is much straighter and drier.

I finally got across our wet and slushy lagoon to the entrance of the tablelands and did it on dry trail by detouring around. Once I got on the trail I followed it up to the ridge that looks down on our house and spruce patch. We have a very good trail up that way now. Lots of snow, no more tussocks.

There were several groups of caribou in sight across – north – of our creek. It is good to see these animals hanging on back here. It means some overwintering and fresh meat whenever.

Didn't see any tracks except those of a single fox and the newly discovered local jack rabbit (arctic hare). Yes, it is still around!

Bird-wise – in Sisualik there are every day raven and snow buntings and willow ptarmigan west where the mud bluff and willows meet the sea beach.

Weather-wise it has been a much better day with dry air some brightness from the low-in-the-sky sun. Even the large white coastal range mountains took on that delicious yellow pinkness when the reddish sun hit.

December 11 Low 10° F, High 26° F
NE-E wind to 15. Cloudy, broken.

Made an early trip up the winter cabin trail with washing machine and a couple of small seals. I intended to drop them in at the house and then circle to the lower creek crossing to finally pick up my bull caribou taken some days back.

I got the first big surprise of the day when I reached the top of the ridge above the house. Looking up and across the creek from the house I saw the expected two to three bunches of bulls that have been around there for some time and then a bit farther up creek – couldn't believe my eyes! There were a thousand and more caribou spilling down the hill and across the creek, coming out of the mountains to the west. A very unexpected and very beautiful sight at this time of year – at any time of year. Don't know from whence they came since we have not heard of caribou in numbers nearby anywhere. Now – what to do? The nearest of these “new” caribou were a mile away and traveling east, paralleling my location. We should have several of these animals to see us thru the short days. I decided to hold off on the new animals and returned to my original plan and thereby formed my second big

surprise of the day. I dropped the wash machine and seals at the house, climbed back up the hill and circled to break the trail into my dead caribou. I did that – pulled up to the caribou and stopped the sled in place to load. The caribou carcass exploded into action as a very large and well-haired lynx came almost at me but a few feet to the side, the shortest route for him to the shelter of the trees.

December 12 Low 4° F, High 18° F
N-NE wind to 15. Cloudy.

We did make a town trip today and it was a good and easy one. Just before we got into town an unlucky friend coming out from town got into a deep overflow hole right on the staked trail! This staked trail – the only one so far in our area – goes toward Jones' Camp from Arctic Lighterage. Our friend came out of town heading towards where we had just come from. Traveling on the staked trail, right where the deep water of Kotzebue Channel changes to mud bar and shallow water, his snowmachine hit rather deep water and slush and bogged down. Snowmachines travel well in one, two and even three feet of deep water when the bottom is firm and there is no slush or snow in the water. When there is snow or slush the track has nothing to fasten to and just spins with no movement forward and you're stuck! Get off and into the water and hope for a long rope and some help. Our friend was just getting helped out of this situation when we came along and being alerted by his predicament we were able to go around and stay dry. Most of the trail is good and now dry since weather has cooled.

On our return trip we met another friend coming back to town whom we had met earlier when he was going out. This time he had a caribou and a large wolf in his sled!

That's the way most days go in the traveling country. Good for some, worse for others!

December 13 Low 8° F, High 22° F
N-NE wind to 10. Cloudy, snow.

Hauled a few things up to the winter cabin and had a hot fire for several hours. We can move in any day now.

There were still caribou in sight on the north side of the creek and one very deep-cut fresh trail on the north side of Mills Valley indicated that a very large herd (several hundred) had traveled east recently (during the night?). Caribou in sight were few and scattered, nothing like the day before yesterday.

There were lots of tracks in the new snow around the house – red squirrel, gray jay, snowshoe hare, red-backed vole, shrew, lynx and red fox. The lynx had pulled much hair off the frozen caribou left there and feasted on meat where the neck joins the body. The frozen carcass is only a few feet from the door of the cabin.

The tree gray jays are glad for a helper from whose activities they can glean bill sized scraps.

Word of the wolf catch in this area yesterday has gotten around. Two young fellows from town caught up with me from behind soon after daylight.

I returned home around three and ran the dogs a short ways before lunch. For lunch we had boiled burbot – a very large freshwater cod – a gift from a Kiana friend.

December 14 Low -2° F, High 18° F
NE wind to 15. Cloudy, light snow.

We moved to Sanningaruq, our winter spruce patch cabin, today. We are away from ocean waves, drifting snow and main trail sno-go traffic. We are also a few miles farther from town Christmas shopping and the day or days of celebration with town family but usually that is not a problem except for during long periods of bad weather, overflow conditions, or mechanical breakdowns.

It is great to be in our sheltered winter place again with a bit different community of animals, birds and fish!

The large lynx that took possession of my bull caribou some days ago has now come right into camp (last night) to feed on what is left of the same caribou. We and our two dogs were not here of course, so it will be interesting to see how things go tonight.

We made two trips from Sisualik today. The first with Carrie, dogs, and things and the second with things we will need for living. We are now in pretty good shape as we leave most needful things for living up here all summer.

We have caribou and moose very close, not to mention marten, otter, mink and red squirrel.

We usually make this move in late October or early November and two years in the last fifty we couldn't make it till a few days after Christmas. Anyway, we and the dogs are glad to be here in this naturally sheltered place to work our way through the shortest days (less than 2 hours now) and coldest times.

December 15 Low -4° F, High 16° F
N wind to 18. Cloudy, light snow.

Short daylight hours now but the growing moon helps when our rather constant cloud cover and snow showers permit. Just think, in less than a week we will have passed our day of shortest daylight for the year. We have less than 2 hours sun up now.

I made good use of our allotted time today. Went to a very dismal, dark Sisualik (because of the black open water fog) and got our propane bottle and a sled load of odds and ends, like rocking chair and snowshoes. Didn't even look through binocs today, having no time to do anything if there was something to see.

There is a report today of many caribou at Sealing Point where they have been absent for some time. No hint of from whence they came or might be going. There was also the report of fifty musk-ox on Sealing Point lagoon today.

Our three camp gray jays are ecstatic that we have finally come home and rich with meat and fish chips and sawdust. They work pretty hard all the daylight time, hauling away and storing.

We are also finding storage caches inside the house from a different hard working creature. One of our house window was open a narrow crack all summer and a pioneering red squirrel made it in and stored found crackers

and remnant small bars of soap and at least one piece of turquoise from a New Mexico gift clock.

House flies (adults hibernating for winter) are flying in the house this evening with Carrie right behind with swatter. Annual thing as house gets thawed.

December 16 Low -2° F, High 12° F
NW wind to 18. Cloudy, light snow.

Yet another trip and another sled load of things from Sisualik and about the same kind of a day. I got a rather early start so I might have a bit of afternoon daylight to make a try for a fresh caribou or check out a place or two that might have a female moose. It didn't turn out that way.

I did get back in time for lunch and broke my snowshoe trail for the first time up to our lookout point. From there, there were thirty caribou laying just under a ridge east of us and sno-go lights and a few shots just beyond that towards Noatak Trail. The snow is pretty crusty and noisy to walk on so a stalk on the closest caribou didn't look promising and I don't like using a sno-go for a chase weapon.

There was a new moose track across the trail while I was in Sisualik but it was pretty large and blunt, indicating a bull, which we are not interested in either. Maybe another day.

The house has thawed out well and don't cool too much overnight now. This will be our third night here.

Our three camp gray jays take a real interest in every new thing that comes into camp. They hop right on the sled and take a firsthand close-up look. Have not yet seen sign of other bird species except ravens.

December 17 Low -4° F, High 8° F
Light winds. Cloudy, few snow grains.

Guess what? Yes, another haul trip to Sisualik for a number of things we think we need including Carrie's traveling box shelter as we do need to make a couple of trips into Kotzebue before December 25.

On return and after lunch I went west to overlook the far west white spruce patch for a possible female moose. We are a little pushed again this year for moose collection. The antlerless moose season will close the last day of December. Prior to this, in recent years, the season had remained open to the last day of March.

Our late move has put us behind again but we are catching up. It is hard to believe that our day of shortest sun for the year is only four days off.

There were no caribou in sight from here today, only many sno-gos with powerful lights all over the mountains.

Our snow cover after all that rain and snow last week has left the mountain devoid of trail problems. One can travel nearly everywhere and people are. Wolves, wolverines, red foxes and caribou and moose are the target creatures.

Our backcountry is wide open now and except for the shortness of daylight (less than 2 hours) one is free to search for many creatures. Our period of backcountry quiet wilderness was short this year.

December 18 Low -16° F, High -5° F
 N wind to 15. Clear.

Clear and cold for a change and we had a good look at what is left of the sun.

Firewood has gotten kind of low so made a trail into the spruce patch called Napaakturat south of us and got a few good pieces and when I got home our grandson-in-law had delivered a find big load of dry wood from Fish Creek camp (our son's camp on the NW corner of Kobuk Lake). We have lots of wood for a while now.

Haven't worked wood for a while and those muscles used are making themselves know this evening.

We hope to make a town trip tomorrow but some increasing winds are forecast. We shall see. One trip in before Christmas Eve and then in again for sharing Christmas with family and Christmas Eve and day.

Sun was very red today but was up for its full allotted time – 1 hour, 50 minutes? Anyway, it will soon be gaining instead of losing. Oh boy!

December 19 Low -2° F, High 12° F
 E-SE wind to 40. Clear, some clouds.

Very windy today and some drifting but light drift for wind strength because recent past rain spells anchored down much of our snow cover.

We did not make our town trip though it would have been possible as visibility stayed pretty much at 5 or 6 miles and we do have the Jones' Camp stake trail into town from this side now. It is considerably off of straight line travel from here and town but the advantage of having stakes to follow over balances the extra travel distance.

It was a great bright day for the date and great for stalking anything but as I made a first snowshoe swing around and thru our white spruce patch I didn't see anything to stalk, only gray jay and raven. Not like last week, before we moved up here, when there were hundreds of caribou and fresh moose tracks each day! That is the way it goes sometimes.

Only a couple of days from our shortest sun of the year and a huge "straight up" full moon tonight. It is quite winter beautiful though the strong winds have taken a good deal of frozen/stuck icy snow off the willows and trees. The resulting snowbanks in low places will make some of our normal trails useable.

Hope we can make it to town tomorrow – time is getting short.

December 20 Low 8° F, High 16° F
E-SE wind to 25. Clear, scattered clouds.

We did make our town trip today with ground drift all the way but clear upper air and distant visibility good.

We were lucky to make it all the way home. There were new snowdrifts on our winding trail down the hill from the ridge we must climb when we use our back trail. We had a fair load with gasoline and some heavy odds and ends.

We didn't notice when a new drift apparently supported sled runners for a while and then broke through, putting extra strain and stress on that downhill side. Carrie complained of almost tipping over on the last little knoll by the house. After we stopped by the house I went back to the sled to help her out and found four broken stanchions on the left side of the sled. It is a small miracle that we made it in one piece. Taikuu!

We will need to have a new sled made and in the meantime will have use of our son's sled in Kotzebue – a Christmas present we will use before he gets to! Bum deal all right. An unpleasant ending to an otherwise good town trip.

A rather large group of caribou from the west hit our inland tablelands trail near the beach and followed it all the way up and into the trees to the house. Nobody home but Achauq and Terry.

Today brought some interesting things – wonder what to expect for tomorrow!

December 21 Low -8° F, High 12° F
Light winds. Clear, few clouds.

Well, well! No more loss of sun time. To be sure, we won't gain much right away but by mid-January brightness will be coming along well.

Grandson and daughter brought up our son's new sled for us to use till we get one built.

I loosed the dogs and finally broke our trail out the east side of our spruce patch and down to the two creek crossings. Went down to the big lake on our Sisualik trail and found a bit of snow free ice with a new crack running thru it. This is actually the first glare ice I've seen in the tablelands since our move up and it had a nice new crack with crystal clear ice. It didn't take long with our little pick to get several large blocks to haul home on the sno-go for our household water. Now with a sled again I will be able to get any amount of top quality ice for water.

Dogs were glad to run again and got excited over two day old caribou tracks.

Tomorrow we'll both go to Sisualik for odds and ends we think we need.

Weather forecast is looking good for our attendance at Christmas Eve church program and Christmas Day feast.

Saw two small groups of caribou near this morning but crusty noisy walking snow. Didn't offer much hope for stalking. I made one try but animals were not there when I peeked over. There were a good many just under the

spruce line at Milluraq.

December 22 Low 0° F, High 12° F
Light N wind. Clear, sun! Clouding.

It is pretty early in the new season to have the problem of being blinded by the sun when traveling a trail that makes you drive right into it. That is exactly what happened today though when we went to Sisualik sometime after noon. The trail in some places put the low but above the horizon sun blindingly in your eyes through the windshield.

The ocean at Sisualik was beautiful! Wide open, no ice and yellow-shiny from the sun.

Had a number of visitors today even though we weren't always home. Didn't have time or in readiness to welcome them much but they could warm up, have a hot drink and some limited conversation time.

Sealing Point boys took a couple of caribou down there but reported that they were not fat. Fair numbers of snowmachines out in the country this weekend with good trail conditions overland and good weather. There seems more caribou to the north and east of us than to the west and Sealing Point.

Red foxes are cleaning up scraps around our place in Sisualik. Dog food scraps and that kind of thing. One was still there eating when we go there and was quite tame.

Ran the dogs down the straight to town trail for the first time today. It is useable now. It cuts miles off of the town run.

December 23 Low 0° F, High 12° F
N-NW wind to 10. Cloudy, snow late.

Town trip for Christmas shop and gas. It was our first run "straight in" town run and didn't take much longer than one hour. This side of the bay has nice flat ice and crusted snow. One quarter of the Kotzebue side has small but spine shaking hard snowdrifts from the east on the last strong drifting snow. Several visitors from town yesterday went over the tableland part of the trail after I first went over it the day before. It is still lumpy and has some deep holes but it is passable and is a great shortcut to town.

There were a good number of fresh caribou tracks on the whole long sno-go trail though we didn't see any animals.

We will need to make the same trip tomorrow and get in by 6:00 p.m. when the Christmas Eve program begins at the Friends Church. We will probably overnight and enjoy Christmas Day Feast at the Friends Church.

Lots of machines running around the country for various reasons.

We are glad for getting settled in the winter spruce patch before Christmas. The two dogs even more so. They will not have drifting snow.

December 24 Low -4° F, High 10° F
Light winds. Cloudy, fog, snow.

An unwanted adventure today! We headed into town and family this morning (11 a.m.) for Christmas Eve and Day. When we got down to the edge of tidelands we could not see very far and there was no sign of Kotzebue lights so we did what we have to when distant visibility is poor and whiteout conditions prevail – we had to look for a staked trail and the only one available right now is the one to Jones’ Camp.

The plan (idea) is to run parallel to the tableland bluffs until hitting the trail (traveling east toward Noatak River mouth). The only catch is that there is a mile or two of “no bluff” before one comes to the trail. We traveled and traveled after leaving sight of the bluffs. It seemed to me that we had traveled too far and somehow passed thru or crossed over the staked trail. Whiteout conditions had become complete. We turned back and followed our back trail to try to re-orient ourselves. We both had lost sense of direction. When we got to an old trail we had passed (that was going the right direction – but no stakes) having no other out but going clear back to land, we followed the old trail as far as we could see it – which wasn’t far. When I lost track of it we stopped and tried to listen for aircraft or see a faint Kotz light. Nothing turned up but then Carrie said, “Hey! That looks like a small willow over there.” We quickly went toward it and found Jones’ staked trail!

December 25 Low -6° F, High 7° F
Light winds. Cloudy, fog, snow.

The long sitting time in the church (6:00 – 10:30 p.m.) for the Christmas Eve program was especially sweet last night after our time of being temporarily lost so near the trail. I haven’t felt that forlorn feeling of disorientation on the trail for a long, long time. It is a very strong feeling and relief from it is truly euphoric. We did thank the Lord for giving us what we needed to complete our trip into town.

The evening program was great as various groups of kids and adults said their pieces and sang their Christmas songs – and then the giving of candy bags and the big room full of Christmas presents. We have made this annual program for 53 of our 54 years of married life. (The year we missed was the one year we acted as pastors of the Fairbanks Friends Church.)

We found out later that a young lady from a close family friend lost a brand new sno-go in the water off Sisualik and, though wet, she walked the 6 or 7 miles to the only light she could see (besides town) at Jones’ Camp. This happened Christmas Eve and the young lady is fortunate to have survived without injury. After warming and sleep she seems fine but I’m sure will long remember this Christmas Eve night!

Christmas dinner today and we enjoyed the feast as always. It consists of both Eskimo foods and other culture goodies.

Home tomorrow to our by now very lonesome dogs.

December 26 Low -8° F, High 12° F
NW wind to 15. Cloudy, some clearing.

Well! The first thing on the radio weather report this morning was a strong blizzard warning. What a surprise! This seems a Christmas time of extraordinary events!

Needless to say we got an early daylight (11 a.m.) start home as wind was light and sky at least half clear with stars breaking dawn in the SE.

We could see our distant mountains and made a straight shot across the Sound (12 miles of ice) to our living tree trail marker at the tideland base of our inland trail. We made it quickly and without incident and were soon home with our lonesome dogs. They were glad to see us and had a good run down behind the sno-go.

It is 11 p.m. as I write this and still no sign of a blizzard! It is probably excusable but the inaccurate forecast most certainly upset many folks' plans. It is a holiday time and a time of much traveling, especially between villages and with still less than two hours of sun time good weather forecasts and updates are extremely important.

Great to be home again! Especially with everything seemingly intact.

December 27 Low -22° F, High 9° F
NW-NE wind to 10. Clear, few clouds early.

Temps dropped quickly this afternoon. This may be our coldest night so far this fall/winter.

Our oldest dog Terry doesn't think much of the change to colder temperatures. For some reason he sheds hair at this late season.

Did start the snowmachine this afternoon and wasn't surprised that it was hard to do. Twenty below usually has that effect on internal combustion equipment. That's why I was surprised that the generator and chainsaw both started rather easily earlier in the day, probably before the sharp temperature drop.

Did see four or five caribou just north of us and a lone animal had been feeding near our trail down to tidelands. It is good to see sign of some caribou around yet. We may later have a chance to get some fresh meat.

Our western neighbor in Sisualik who went to Buckland in early November is back in Sisualik and a friend of his who has a camp site at Sisualik Point is also there this week. Also one family that was earlier at Katyaaraq has moved to their clan camp at Sisualik. The camp at Sealing Point is being used pretty regularly by some of the family of its owners. This makes four occupied camps in December between Kotzebue and Port Site. That would be five counting us before we moved here to Sanningaruq on the 14th.

December 28 Low -23° F, High -6° F
N-NW wind to 18. Clear.

The wind and low temperatures made this a cold day for us folks unused to cold weather!

Thought to go to Sisualik for a few needed things but cancelled when our waving trees indicated increasing wind out in the open.

We had a full two hours of sun up today. That's up from 1 hr., 40 minutes on the 21st. We're on our way to a midnight sun again! Yeah!

No travelers this way today and our three industrious gray jays the only other creatures we saw about though tracks indicate a Red Squirrel or two had been out and about as well as several large voles, probably red-backed voles. A least weasel also made his small but wide spaced traces.

There is a lot of between village travel on now as the cooler temperatures make some assurance that trails on the ice are safe enough. There is little travel for hunting purposes as short daylight hours and cold weather make for tough and short hunting time.

For the first time in years our local antlerless moose season (Noatak drainage) will close on the 31st of December instead of March. Numbers have decreased significantly in the last few years. It is good that caribou numbers are still up and at least some local overwintering is taking place. Fresh meat may not be a problem.

It looks like we have a poor White Spruce cone crop again which means our CBC will have low count numbers and species, if it happens. Most of our past participants are somewhere else this year.

December 29 Low -28° F, High -16° F
Light N wind. Clear.

A gain of 5 minutes on our sun time today. The rate of gain will be picking up. We could have used a little warmth from it today with our so far coldest winter temp. We have become un-used to weather colder than -10°F.

I did get brave enough to attempt to start the sno-go this afternoon and though I could barely turn it over on first few pulls it did loosen up and started without too much strain.

Ran the dogs half way to Sisualik and then after taking them home I went all the way to Sisualik to pick up some needed things.

A very wide crack (3 to 4 feet) opened right at the end of our brand new Sisualik staked trail where beach meets ice. One snowmachine running in front of a partner hit the spot unexpectedly and spent some while getting the machine back up on the ice.

Unusual conditions. An earlier traveler had noticed water and ice moving up and down and called in about it. This would best be explained by swells off shore.

Not much sign of life on this planet today. Snow remains pretty much un-trampled. What caribou there are are north of us toward the Hatchery and maybe west on undisturbed feeding grounds. We may try to find some if temps warm up.

December 30 Low -34°F, High 0° F
NW wind to 18. Clear.

A remarkable sharp rise in temperatures this afternoon. We had been laboring since last night under restraining temps of twenty to thirty below. These ambient temperatures (-20°F and down) make things mechanical and things human very much harder to function than when at warmer temperatures.

Our dead quiet, still, cold air at -34°F rose in an hour's time to 0°F when a steady breeze of 10 to 15 knots from the NW replaced our still stagnant -34°F air. It is quite a thrill to experience this kind of quick air temp change. It's almost like walking into a warm house!

We have no hint of how long our reprieve will last. We could be back to the -30°F syndrome tonight – or next week!

We may go to town for New Year's celebration at the Friends Church tomorrow. Carrie wants very much to go but it will depend on temps and if she feels up to the inconvenience of travel.

A new year and already 2 hours and 5 minutes of sun! Its deep orange rays touched the cutbank (snowbank covered) to the rear of our white spruce patch, a huge natural sunray collecting dish or disk. It is quite likely that this natural solar collector is the reason for the existence of our white spruce patch 30 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

December 31 Low -6° F, High 8° F
NW wind to 18. Cloudy.

Well, the mildness of this last day of the year is appreciated. It is a fact of the north country that as temps drop to -20°F or more that everything becomes a little harder to do. There are, of course, some notable exceptions – wood splits easier and ice chips and splits easier which makes two everlasting camp chores easier rather than harder. However, all kinds of internal combustion engines (and we use many of them now – sno-go, chainsaw, ice auger, generator, etc.) get harder to start and more prone to malfunction. Thus in December, January, and February any time interval at temperatures warmer than the inevitable -20°F is appreciated for many reasons by both man and beast.

These months, of course, are ice making months and much of the rest of the year and conditions thereby depend on amount and thickness of ice cover on lakes, streams and marine systems. Many diverse creatures depend on this ice formation.

People, of course, in their travel, search for food and search for other people benefit much by the formation of good solid ice on the country's water systems. For some of these reasons then we can bring ourselves to rejoice in the inconveniences of extended cold weather spells.

It is, however, a good feeling to experience warm temperatures after experiencing extended periods of cold. A fond farewell to the year 2002. Some of it was good!

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 Avingaurayuq (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 egging 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 Tailuqut (Map 2)

We can only see the mouth of Tailuqut 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 Itiptigvik (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 Itiptigvik [#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 OCS³⁷ crew doing a three year shorebird study camped nearly on the Giddings camp site of years before. We were again camped at Itiptigvik [#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 (Ivilyukpalik). 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 Napaaktuq [#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 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 Outer Continental Shelf

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 is 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 Amiliuq (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 Kaqsigraug (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), Tasuqagaruq (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 Killikmaiq 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 siliq (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 tiqtaaliq (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 tiqtaaliq (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 Tingmaiqpat (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 Napaaktauchaig (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	
Amiliuq	48a	(not on map)	
Anigaq	46	1	Anigaaq
Aupqugagaruq	77	1	
Auqsruraq	55	2	
Avingaurayuq	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	
Katyauraq	9 & 45	1	
Killichaiq	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	
Napaaktauchaiq	76	1	
Napaaktucharuaq	13	1	
Napaakturaq	26	1	
Napaaqtuqtuq	10	1	
Nasiqsaugaviq	20	2	
Nasitchviq	37	1	
Nauyalig	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	
Qaunagaulyaq	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	
Saliqaugaiq	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

SEWARD PENINSULA

Sisualik

Noatak Delta

To Kotzebue

To Kotzebue

To Kotzebue

AKUTIAQ LAGOON

19

27

26

12

71

97

96

93

10

94

13

15

69

71

65a

67

72

73

91

74

74

77

75

76

78

85

85

88

90

84

84

83

82

51

44

42

47

46

48

49

38a

38

37

39

02

03

04

05

06

08

07

09

16a

14

16

70

17

18

75

76

78

85

85

Cape Espenberg

ARCTIC CIRCLE



1 in = 4 miles

MAP 1

SEWARD PENINSULA

Sisualik

Noatak Delta

To Kotzebue

To Kotzebue

AKUTIAQ LAGOON

19

27

26

12

71

97

96

93

10

94

13

15

69

71

65a

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72

73

91

74

74

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16a

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85

85

Cape Espenberg

ARCTIC CIRCLE



1 in = 4 miles

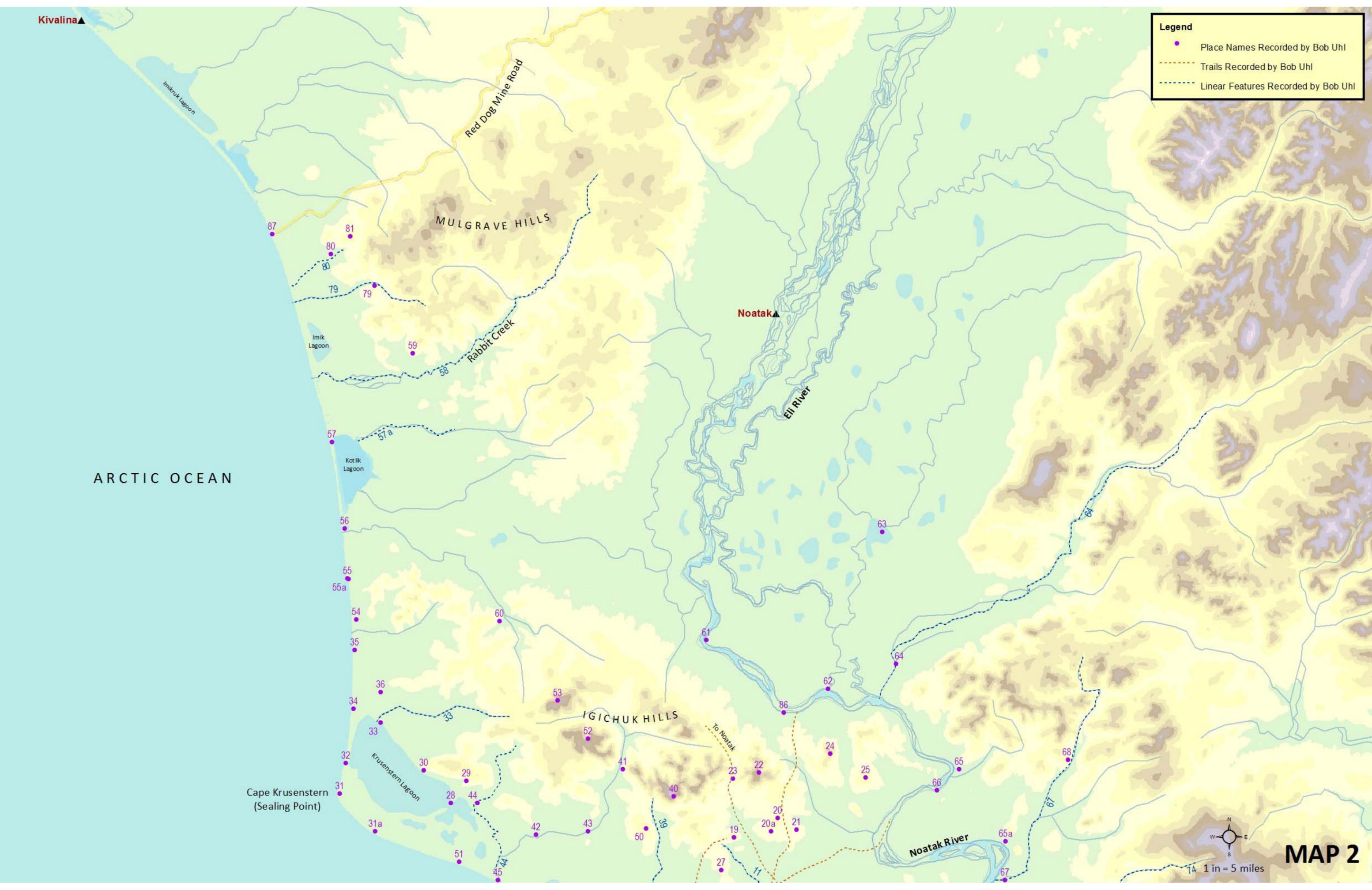
MAP 1

SEWARD PENINSULA

Kivalina▲

Legend

- Place Names Recorded by Bob Uhl
- Trails Recorded by Bob Uhl
- - - Linear Features Recorded by Bob Uhl



ARCTIC OCEAN

MULGRAVE HILLS

Noatak▲

Eli River

IGICHUK HILLS

Cape Krusenstern (Sealing Point)

Noatak River



MAP 2

1 in = 5 miles