

NUNAVUT (CANADA) August 25th-September 6<sup>th</sup> 2014

Seeing both Narwhal and Bowhead is not easy. Arctic Canada, and specially Baffin island seems to be the best place. I had the choice either to do an early June tour to the floe edge as Jon Hall did or to do a cruise. I don't like cruises, but regarding the different species expected and the price it seems to me the best choice. So I booked a cruise with One Ocean starting from Cambridge Bay and finishing in Iqaluit (Baffin).

August 24<sup>th</sup>, as I am in Edmonton I am informed that because of the conditions of ice it is not possible to start from Cambridge Bay and that we have to fly to Resolute. So no chance for Belugas which are plentiful around Sommerset Island.

August 25<sup>th</sup>: we fly to Resolute. It is cloudy and not very inviting. During the transfer from the "harbour" to the ship I see the first Bearded Seal of the trip and a group (the only one I saw) of Arctic Terns. Late afternoon we begin to sail south of Devon Island. Already we see a lot of Ringed seals, many Bearded seals and 3 Walruses.

August 26<sup>th</sup>: Beechey Island. Many Ringed and Bearded Seals and 7 Polar Bears including 2 females with cubs: 1 female catch and kill a Ringed Seal.

August 27<sup>th</sup>: Prince Leopold Island. Still many Ringed and Bearded Seals and a few Harp Seals. 8 Polar bears. 1 young one kills and eat a Guillemot.

August 28<sup>th</sup>: Devon island: Dundas Harbour and Crocker Bay. Harp seals are now common, but they are still Ringed seals. 1 Walrus, 2 Polar bears, 150 Musk oxen in small herds, footprints of Arctic Fox (kayakers see 1), dropping of Peary's Caribou (the staff tells me they rarely see them, because hunted they are very shy).

August 29<sup>th</sup>: Low Point Baffin Island, Simirlik NP, Navy Board inlet. Harp Seals, 6 Orcas.

August 30<sup>th</sup> Baffin Milne Inlet, Eclipse Sound. At least 40 Narwhals (including good sightings of tuskers) at a place where they had been seen by the staff during their former trip, 1 shy Bowhead.

August 31<sup>st</sup>. Baffin Island, Pond Inlet. Harp seals, Ringed seals, 6 Orcas (not the same), 1 Arctic Hare completely white (seen from the ship), droppings' and a den's lemming.

September 1<sup>st</sup>. Baffin Island, Gibbs Fjord. Harp seals, Ringed seals, 3 Polar bears.

September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Baffin Island, Isabella bay (this is a sanctuary for Bowhead). 2 Polar bears, around 70 Bowheads, including a group spyhopping.

September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Baffin Island. Sunneshine fjord. 1 white Arctic Hare seen during a landing.

September 4<sup>th</sup>. Baffin island. Pangnirtung. 1 Hermine during a landing. More than 1000 Harp Seals in large herds of 50 and more.

September 5<sup>th</sup>. Baffin Island. Monumental Island. Sunny day with a lot of wind. We can't approach by zodiac. It is a good site for a group of Walruses (40 seen during last trip). Nevertheless 3 seen swimming.

September 6<sup>th</sup>. Baffin Island. Iqaluit. 5 Harp Seals. Then flight to Toronto.

Despite the lack of Belugas it was a very successful trip. Nevertheless the sightings are far better from the floe edge (see Cheryl Antonucci's trip reportf) but with a very expensive trip. The lack of lemmings doesn't mean they were not present: they are rodents! 22 Polar bears seen mainly on icebergs in the north, but also further south on land or swimming. Several sightings of Snowy Owls means lemmings were present. Also several Gyr Falcons... Bearded seals seen only in the north (especially north west). Ringed very common in the north. Harp Seals common from the east to the southern part of the trip.

The weather was nearly perfect, mainly sunny, with just a little of rain 1 morning. But nearly 100 passengers is really too much: the landings were always very disappointing even with different groups. The staff too noisy during the landing. Finally the food was really bad and I am not fussy.

Dominique BRUGIERE

brugiere.dom@sfr.fr

