

ALASKA: 23 MAY - 9 JUNE 1998.

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INTRODUCTION

This was initially planned as a birding trip and this report is an abridged version of the original report for mammal enthusiasts. Alaska does not tend to feature high on the list for places to go as a result of the high cost of a visit. However the terrific mammal watching makes it a place worth visiting. Highlights during our visit included tremendous views of Polar, Grizzly & Black Bears.

COSTS

As mentioned above Alaska is expensive & even in 1998 the trip worked out at about £2,600 per person. You could however reduce the cost by hiring a car rather than a 4WD at Barrow where it was not really necessary & by staying in cheaper motels or camping.

REFERENCES

Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit - Alaska	Useful for pre-trip planning
Birdfinding in Forty National Forests & Grasslands (ABA)	Includes useful information on mammals.
Alaska Wildlife Viewing Guide by M Sydeman & A Lund	Purchased in Alaska, useful for mammals.
A Bird Finding Guide to Alaska by Nick Lethaby	Mainly accurate directions & the main source of reference for the trip, an essential purchase.

INTINERARY

23 rd	Arrived Anchorage mid evening, late evening Westchester Lagoon.	Puffin Inn.
24 th	Arctic Valley Road Hillside & flight to Nome arriving mid evening. Late pm Council Hwy	Nugget Inn
25 th	Morning. Kougarak Hwy, afternoon Safety Lagoon	Nugget Inn
26 th	Morning. Kougarak Hwy, afternoon Safety Lagoon	Nugget Inn
27 th	Teller Hwy until early evening then fly to Anchorage.	Puffin Inn
28 th	Seward Hwy all day	Harborview B&B Seward
29 th	Kenai Fjords then drove N along Seward Hwy	Brown Bear Motel
30 th	Early am near Brown Bear Motel & Potters Marsh. Late morning flight to St Paul, delayed at Dillingham for 2 hours by fog.	St Paul
31 st	St Paul all day	St Paul
1 st	St Paul all day	St Paul
2 nd	Morning St Paul, afternoon fly to Anchorage & drive to Palmer.	Pioneer Motel
3 rd	Glenn Highway all day	Sheep Mountain Lodge
4 th	Morning along Glenn Highway in poor weather. Afternoon return to Anchorage for flight to Barrow. Evening road to base of Point Barrow & Gas Well Road.	Airport Inn.
5 th	Barrow area all day	Airport Inn.
6 th	Barrow area all day. Return to Anchorage.	Puffin Inn
7 th	Early start in dire weather. Most of day along Denali Highway.	The Gracious House.
8 th	Early start for drive to Denali NP. Rest of day spent in park. Returned to Anchorage in evening.	Puffin Inn.
9 th	Early morning flight to London via Minneapolis.	

MAMMALS.

Moose	One Arctic Valley Road, 4 Teller Hwy, 4 Kougarak Hwy, 6+ Glenn Hwy, 12+ Denali Hwy, singles Parks Hwy & Denali NP.
Caribou	Three herds Nome area, large herd 300+ St Paul & small nos Glenn & Denali Hwy & Denali NP.
Polar Bear	Immature male Point Barrow.
Grizzly Bear	Eight inc one cub Denali NP
Black Bear	Four Northwestern Fjord
Arctic Fox	Common St Paul, one Barrow
Red Fox	Singles Denali NP & Parks Hwy
Musk Ox	c.25 Kougarak Hwy
Mountain Goat	Four Seward Hwy, three Kenai Fjords
Dall's Sheep.	Four Seward Hwy, 16 Sheep Mountain Lodge, 70+ Denali NP
Sea Otter	20+ Kenai Fjords
River Otter	Two Kenai Fjords
Muskrat	Two Glenn Hwy
Hoary Marmot	Three Denali NP
Northern Collared Lemming	One Hillside
Arctic Ground Squirrel	Common Nome area, small nos Denali Hwy & Denali NP
Snowshoe Hare	Two Glenn Hwy & Denali NP
Dall's Porpoise	Three Kenai Fjords
Humpback	Three Kenai Fjords
Grey Whale	One Kenai Fjords
Killer Whale	5+ Kenai Fjords
Steller's Sealion.	30+ Kenai Fjords
Harbour Seal	Common Kenai Fjords, 10+ Barrow

Northern Fur Seal	50+ St Paul
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KEY MAMMAL SITES

Nome	Kougarak Hwy is good for Musk Ox and Grizzly Bears are frequently seen here.
Seward	Seward is the starting point for boat trips into the Kenai Fjords NP. Several companies run trips, e.g. the full day tour run by Mariah Tours 907 224 8623. The mammal watching on the trip is excellent and we saw 4 Black Bears, Sea & River Otters, dall's Porpoise, Humpback, Gray & Killer Whales, Steller's Sealion & Harbour Seal.
St Paul	This is mainly a birding site but we saw Arctic Fox and Northern Fur Seal here.
Glenn Highway	Lethaby is again the main source of reference. Sheep Mountain Lodge makes a good base. Muskrat and Dall's Sheep were seen here.
Barrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Polar Bears can be seen at Point Barrow for most of the year, the exception being July-September when the pack ice breaks away from the point. Bears regularly feed on whale carcasses around the point, the maximum being seen at any one time being 22 !!! A Croatian generally known as 'Frank' runs 2 hour trips to the point in his hummer. Trying to get to the point by any other means would be difficult & potentially very dangerous. Frank can be contacted on 907 852 4512/1462. He charges \$55 per person per trip. The number of bears seen varies throughout the day. On our first late afternoon trip we saw one young male, there had been two that morning. The following day, a Saturday there had been up to four in the morning but by lunchtime they had all been disturbed by eskimos on skiddoos & we dipped. I suggest avoiding weekends for this reason. ▪ Bears are occasionally seen in Barrow itself, one was seen on pack ice opposite the Top of the World Hotel the day we arrived in Barrow. ▪ Walrus, Ringed & Bearded Seals & Belugas can all be seen at Barrow later in the season. Walruses do not normally occur until July which makes it difficult to see Polar Bear & Walrus on the same trip.
Denali Highway	We stayed at The Gracious House & spent most of our time looking for Grizzly Bears without success although they are said to be common in the area.
Denali Np	A bit dudey as you can only really do the park by shuttle bus but excellent for mammals & highly recommended. We saw eight Grizzly Bears & missed Wolf by seconds. We took the 0930 shuttle to Wonder Lake. Shuttles leave every half hour from 0600. Advance bookings (recommended) can be made when you reach Anchorage, telephone 800 622 7275 .