

## Alaska Trip (June 15<sup>th</sup> to July 30)

My wife Kirsten and I spent 2 weeks in Alaska vacationing. We spent quite a bit of the time mammal and bird watching. Here is the mammal information.

Day 1: The 1<sup>st</sup> mammals we saw were 2 **Moose** as we headed from Anchorage to Denali Nat. Park. We saw two more in Talkeetna down by the river.

As we drove into Denali we found a **Short-tailed Weasel** dead on the road. When we got to Denali we saw **Red Squirrels** near the visitor center. That evening we drove as far into the park as you can (about 14 miles to Savage River). We saw a few **Moose** on the way in. There was a **Beaver** in one of the ponds on the left as you head into the park and many **Snowshoe Hares**.

Day 2: We took the Shuttle bus into Denali and went as far as Wonder Lake. There were Red squirrels running all over the area where you catch the shuttle bus. The first mammal we saw on the bus was a beautiful **Lynx**. We got great looks at it from the bus as it sat under some brush about 6 feet off of the road. We past by a small pond that had a Muskrat swimming in it. Along this 10 hour drive we also saw: **Grizzly Bears** (9), **Arctic Ground Squirrels** (20), **Snowshoes Hares** (dozens), **Red Fox** (1), **Caribou** (60), Dall's Sheep (50) and many **Moose**. We also saw a **Taiga Vole** at one of our stops. We were here at a great time because most of the mammals had young with them.

Day 3: We got up and drove back out to the Savage River and walked along the River Hiking Trail. We saw **Hoary Marmots** (8), **Arctic Ground Squirrels** (6) and one **Collared Pika**. We also saw a family of Willow Ptarmigans on this trail. We then drove part of the Denali Highway. We saw **Moose** along this road also. It seemed like any where we went Moose were very easy to find. There were 2 moose walking by our cabins tonight. When we got back to Anchorage that evening we saw the thick V shaped blows of what had to be a mother and calf **Gray Whale** near the mouth of Knit Arm in Cook Inlet.

Day 4: Flight to Nome. As soon as we got to Nome we went up to Anvil Mountain (about 2 miles from the Airport) to look for **Muskox**. They were very easy to find. Saw a herd of about 30. Then we drove out on Council Road. Council Rd follows the coast of the Bering Sea. About 5 miles from Nome my wife spotted a **Walrus** on the beach. When we got a little closer we could see that it was dead and someone had removed its head. You should not expect to find walrus in Nome. Some natives told us that they wash up on the beach every summer and they said that the skulls can be worth thousands of dollars. They can only be sold legally by natives. About 30 or so miles down Council Rd. there is an exhibit called "trains to nowhere". There are several small gauge locomotives that have been abandoned in the middle of the tundra. While we were looking at the trains I noticed several voles running around under them. They turned out to be **Singing Voles** and we actually got to hear them "singing" an insect like sound.

Day 5: I drove 70 mile up Kougarak Rd. At about marker 50 I saw a herd of **Muskox**. Near mile marker 59 I saw an **Arctic Fox**. I also saw a few **Moose** along this area. I went to one of the shops in Nome and shipped a 6 foot long piece of baleen from a **Bowhead Whale** back to Florida to use in my biology classes.

Day 6: Spent more time with the **Muskox** and their young. The young make such a great mewling sound. Flight left at about noon. The plane stopped in Kotzebue (above the Arctic Circle) on the way back to Anchorage. As we were making a low approach into the Anchorage Airport we flew over Turnagain Arm. I spotted a pod of 12 to 15 **Belugas** from the plane.

Day 7 & 8: Spent a couple of days in Anchorage.

Day 9: Went on a Glacier tour out of Whittier. Before we left the dock we could see **Mountain Goats** from the boat in the mountains across from the dock. We also saw **Sea Otters, Harbor Seals** and **Black Bears** from the boat. We had great looks at calving glaciers. We saw more **Mountain Goats** later in the trip.

Day 10: We began our drive to the Kenai Peninsula. Our first stop was one night in Seward. We stayed at a great little place called the Alaska Saltwater Lodge. We had a beautiful bay window in our room that looked out over Resurrection Bay. We arrived at about 9 pm. It was still very light out and we sat in our bay window with binoculars and a spotting scope and within an hour or so we saw **Sea Otters, Harbor Seals, Steller's Sea Lions** and **Harbor Porpoise**. It was amazing!

Day 11, 12 & 13: We headed to Homer. On the way there about 3 miles before the town of Soldotna a **Lynx** ran across the road right in front of our car. I had to hit the break pretty hard to avoid hitting it. While in Homer we took a 3 hour boat trip out to Gull Island. Along the way we saw many **Sea Otters** and a couple of **Harbor Seals**. We also had great looks at both Tufted and Horned Puffins.

Day 14: We stayed in the town of Kenai. We saw several **Caribou** out on the Kenai Flats one with a young calf and **Moose** almost anywhere we went. As a matter of fact there were a couple of **Moose** that bedded down in the backyard of the bed & breakfast we stayed in.

Day 15: Back to Anchorage for our flight back to Florida. On the way back along Turnagain Arm we saw 5 **Dall's Sheep**

## **Alaska Mammals 2009**

1. Hoary Marmot
2. Arctic Ground Squirrel \*
3. Red Squirrel
4. American Beaver
5. Taiga Vole \*

6. Singing Vole \*
  7. Muskrat
  8. Collared Pika \*
  9. Snowshoe Hare
  10. Canadian Lynx \*
  11. Red Fox
  12. Arctic Fox \*
  13. Black Bear
  14. Brown Bear
  15. Steller's Sea Lion
  16. Harbor Seal
  17. Sea Otter
  18. Moose
  19. Caribou \*
  20. Mountain Goat \*
  21. Muskox \*
  22. Dall's Sheep \*
  23. Gray Whale
  24. Beluga Whale \*
  25. Harbor Porpoise
- Walrus (dead on beach in Nome)  
Short-tailed Weasel (dead on road)

*Total Lifers\* 11*