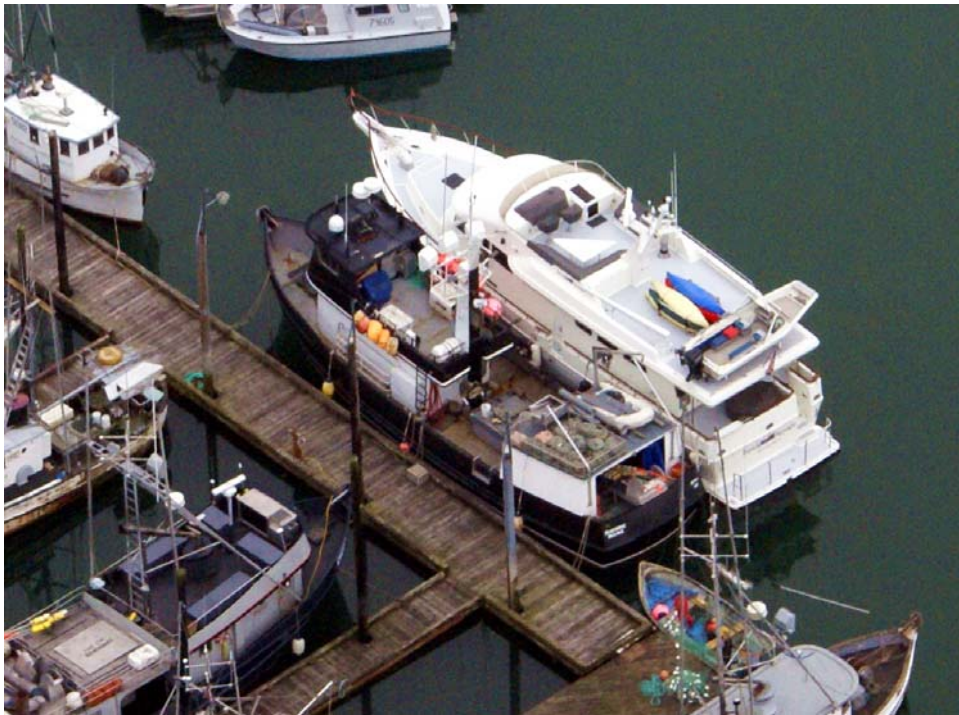


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Yakutat (Lat: 59°33.869' N; Lon: 139°44.446' W) Yakutat, a small fishing village on the eastern shore of Yakutat Bay, is the only population center (around 800 year round residents) in the coastal area between Southeast Alaska and Prince William Sound. Possibly due to the approaching heavy weather, the docks were full and we had to tie up outside a commercial fishing vessel (see photo). We got extra exercise climbing over it every time we wanted to go ashore. On previous visits, we have spent the next day making the 70 mile roundtrip to see the salt water terminus of the 92 mile long Hubbard Glacier. Since we were alone this time, we

decided to vary our routine. We made arrangements to rent a vehicle for a day so we could drive around and explore the inland area instead.

Onshore Adventures Leo, a colorful local with a pony tail, arrived the next morning with a very well used Chevrolet Suburban. It was perfect for the local road conditions once we adjusted to the noise from the leaky windows and resulting cold drafts of air. We drove all of the six paved miles of roads in Yakutat and most of the remaining fifty miles of dirt/gravel roads. It is a local custom to wave to oncoming drivers as well as pedestrians. This might seem like an unworkable burden until you realize how little traffic there is on the Yakutat road system. When we inquired where should hide the key for Leo when he picked up the vehicle the next morning, he made us laugh when he calmly said “in the ignition”. Most of the paved road runs between the harbor and the airport. At the airport, served daily by Alaska Airlines, we went into the Yakutat Coastal Aviation office to inquire about a flight-seeing trip the next day and ask about the huge pile

of snow we saw on the tarmac (see photo). The four-story high pile of excess snow created by a snow blower was the remains from what had been piled up over the winter. Yakutat had 90 inches of snow this past March alone! Winter was obviously slow in leaving Yakutat and the trees were just beginning to leaf out. We saw a garden with daffodils just blooming.



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Leo's Warning The longest of our drives was the twenty-nine mile unpaved road out to the Dangerous River that flows out of the Harlequin Lake whose primary source is the Yakutat Glacier. The glacial melt river had icebergs flowing in it, but otherwise was not exactly thrilling. Traveling through mostly forest service land, we didn't see any wildlife but many



logged areas and plenty of muskeg marshes. The other primary place of interest was Cannon Beach, which derived its name from all of the rusted military remains from WWII. It may sound surprising but Yakutat is now known for surfing, although always in wetsuits. Leo had recommended Cannon Beach as a highlight with one bit of advice. He said "don't go too close to the beach" because he was tired of having to pull people out of the soft sand. The beach was impressive, long with strange gray-black sand, and we didn't park too close...or so we thought. After a long walk along the roaring gulf breakers, we returned on a quiet trail in the adjacent moss covered woods. When backing up to turn around, our tires started spinning...just what Leo had warned against. Fortunately, with some team effort and a little luck, we got out of the sand and made it safely back to the *Inside Passage*, concluding that we are much safer when we are on the water.

Our "Flight-See" We knew that we would be staying in Yakutat another day because of unfavorable weather on the Gulf. We made arrangements for a 45 minute flight to see the area from another view point. Hans and Tanya, the young couple who operate the flight service, picked us up the following morning. On



the way to the airport we met a young moose coming full speed in our direction in the ditch along the other side of the road. Unfortunately, it happened much too quickly to grab a photo. Fortunately, it didn't run out in front of our van. Moose are a major cause of car accidents in Alaska. Once airborne, we saw the glaciers and snow capped mountains from a totally different perspective from what we have seen at sea level. The ranger at the Wrangell-St. Elias Ranger Station had shared with us that the

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Hubbard Glacier was impossible to approach this summer because of the excessive amount of ice in the water in front of the glacier. It is likely there were many disappointed passengers because the cruise ships



were not getting any closer than about six miles from the glacier face. Our decision not to make the all day trip had turned out to be wise.

Hubbard Glacier's Surge (60°00.032' N; 139°29.683' W) We saw our favorite Hubbard Glacier in a surge condition. The term 'surge' as used here is quite different from the 'surge' which our President believes will



save Iraq, but that is the official term used to describe what we observed. Glacial surges are sudden, large-scaled, short lived movements within a glacier that advance it 10 to more than 100 times faster than a glacier's normal rate of flow (**photo on previous page**). The photo shows the exaggerated crevasses with a top surface much more fractured than usual. It also shows the ice stretching far out into the bay. The Hubbard was named for Gardiner G. Hubbard, the founder and first president of the National Geographic Society. As we flew by the face of the glacier, Hans pointed out that we were at an elevation of 500' (**photo on previous page**). Our self-imposed safety limitation is to stay a quarter-mile from the glacier face because a chunk of ice the size

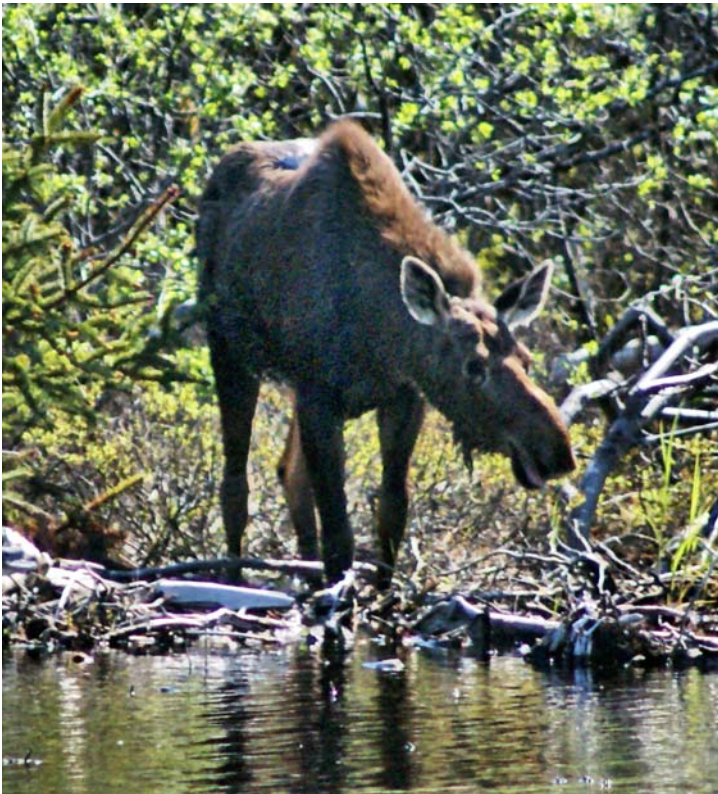
of a 50 story office building could do a lot of damage. Hans, Tanya, and son Tristan visited us on the boat for dessert that evening and we enjoyed a pleasant visit. They told us they stay by the phone most of the time as outlying lodges only accessible by plane may call, and so really don't socialize much and appreciated the opportunity to get out.

Icy Bay (59°55.254' N; 141°22.579' W) Since leaving Southeast Alaska, the skies had been mostly overcast with intermittent rain and temperatures in the 40s, so waking to clear skies and temperatures in the low 60's was a real treat. For natural beauty, nothing beats the adjoining mountain ranges along this coast. The Wrangell-St. Elias complex contains the most spectacular and extensive array of glaciers and ice fields found



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outside of the polar regions. Together they occupy a twenty million acre region and constitute one of the North America's outstanding wilderness resources. The Saint Elias are the highest coastal mountains in the world, exceeding the Himalayas in vertical relief, and containing the largest concentration of peaks over 14,500 feet in North America. Enroute to Icy Bay, we enjoyed a continuous view of these magnificent mountains and glaciers along the coast as well as the calming seas (**photo on previous page**). Icy Bay, at the foot of Mount St. Elias, is a major indentation that now extends more than twenty miles northward into the mountains and its glaciers. As recently as 1900, the bay was completely filled by glacier ice. On a clear day like we experienced, the view of Mount St. Elias at 18,008' above Icy Bay is one of the most spectacular in Alaska. Using the mountain as a backdrop, Carl feels he finally possesses the penultimate photo of the *Inside Passage* from among the thousands that he has taken over many years (**photo on last page**).



A Day of R & R The glorious weather persisted, and with a favorable forecast we realized we could stay in Icy Bay an additional day. We did some laundry and catch up work around the boat first, but then took off in the jet shore boat to go ashore on the Pt. Riou spit. This extensive strip of sandy moraine at the face of the bay has always provided us a place to stretch our legs and prepare for the long run to Prince William Sound. As we pulled up to shore, a couple of black oystercatchers (**photo on previous page**) flew off madly squawking. A familiar sight to us, it meant that there likely was a nest nearby. Black oystercatchers lay their eggs right on the beach gravel above the normal high tide line. Often, the eggs are almost impossible to find, but in this instance the camouflage colored eggs were considerably larger than the beach pebbles, and somewhat easier to see. Their shape keeps them from rolling easily (**photo on previous page**). This past winter must have been extra brutal as Pt. Riou spit was diminished in width with large dead

tree trunks tossed far inland. The sandy shoreline was marked with tracks of many bears, deer and moose. We passed by a scenic marshy pond and commented that it looked like a perfect spot for moose. Shortly thereafter, we simultaneously spotted a young moose watching us at the water's edge less than fifty yards away (**see photo above**).

The Long Run This year we will make the 18 hour 180 mile run between Icy Bay and Prince William Sound twice going both directions. Our passage on June 11th, close to the summer solstice, began with sunrise at 4:05 AM after a clear night in which you could have read a newspaper on deck all night long. Sunset at our destination was at 11:12 PM. The passage was uneventful with reading, editing photos, and preparing a draft of this journal consuming much of the time. We also listened to MP3 transcriptions we had made over the winter months of our favorite NPR programs such as Car Talk, This American Life, and Prairie Home Companion. There was no sign of another vessel on the radar, radio, or the new antenna transponder system which shows commercial vessels up to 50 miles away, until we picked up an outbound oil supertanker about 40 miles out from the Cape Hinchinbrook entrance to Prince William Sound.

