

2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 7

Minor Mishap Departing Larsen Bay, we headed east back along the shore of Shelikof Strait towards the town of Kodiak where we were scheduled for a crew change. The seas began to build behind us as an 8' or 9' roller slid us from one side to the other. Jim Heber, who was enjoying the ride on the upper deck, heard a crash. The swinging and shifting had caused one end of the rack on which the shore boat rested to collapse. We strapped it down securely and proceeded to the night's anchorage where we celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary on July 30th. Even with all of the fuss our crew made over us, the collapse of the rack was not the way we wanted to remember this day.



On the crew's final afternoon in the serene wilderness of Kodiak Island, we kayaked near a large bird rookery. Hundreds of tufted puffins and kittiwakes were nesting on the offshore rocks and islets. Puffins, small winged seabirds with stubby bodies and short wings, look like they are not designed to fly. Getting airborne on a stomach full of small fish requires an extended effort of flapping across the water until they gain sufficient airspeed (**photo**).

The Fix We determined that the screws holding the shore boat rack in place were never properly bolted through the deck. Fortunately we had Jim, an expert engineer, and Bill Faia, a seasoned wood craftsman, onboard. They took charge of making a semi-permanent repair that will hold until the *Inside Passage* returns to Seattle.

With two large 2'x10' boards and plenty of galvanized hardware they solved the problem. Its sturdy construction makes up for what it lacks in esthetics (**photo**).

Farewell to Kodiak Our remaining weeks this summer will be shared with Lucy and Herb Pruzan of Seattle, frequent guests of ours for many voyages to Alaska in



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the past. Back in 2000, they were scheduled to make the visit to Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula but the trip was cut short because Carl and Joann had to fly to Florida to support his mother during his father's last days. This was the Pruzan's chance to finally experience this remote area (photo).

After we enjoyed a farewell dinner together with both the arriving and departing crews, we shopped for fresh provisions and took a short car tour of the island before heading off.

Geographic Harbor We made our second visit of the summer to

this scenic inlet where we were confident the Pruzans could see brown bears (58 06.894 N, 154 36.427 W). Overcast low clouds obscured the scenic cliffs and ash laden mountain tops of what to us is a very special inlet. As we passed through the waters outside the entrance, we stopped next to an isolated islet with an eagle's nest setting on the highest point. The Alaska Peninsula is effectively treeless except for small alders so rocky islets and bluffs become the preferred location for eagle nests. With depths over 160' up to the water's edge we approached sufficiently close to see a lone chick sitting in the nest.

Once in the inner harbor we anchored where we had a clear view of the delta of the major stream feeding the inlet. From the boat we could see bears wandering in an almost 360 degree arc. On our earlier visit we had visited briefly with a family of four from Austria. They remained encamped in a couple of tents along the shore. Well provisioned and equipped, they had an electric fence around their tents to which they retreated when bears approached. It was apparent that they spent a lot of time within their protected area (photo). It was as interesting to watch their behavior as it was to watch the bears. The only major item they lacked was a boat or kayaks. Given the bears and the steep terrain they were very limited in where they could travel. It appeared more like a zoo in reverse as they remained mostly caged while the bears roamed free.



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Scenic Splendor Our next day was like a sunny winter day in Seattle. Cold at first but the sun warmed the bay up by the time we kayaked around noon at the low tide. Waiting until then, we were able to paddle closer to the bears as they wandered out on the delta to dig for clams (photo).

It took a lot of patience to capture their photos as their faces were mostly in the sand as they dug steadily for the duration of the low tide. We thought by now we would see the bears catching salmon in the stream but it apparently was still a little early for the salmon run.

Hidden Harbor With strong winds on Shelikof Strait, we stayed in protected waters and moved a short distance to the northeast to the head

of Kinak Bay, a six mile deep fjord (58 12.038 N, 154 29.252 W). With its very narrow entrance, Hidden Harbor is appropriately named (photo). The width of the access channel with sufficient depth for the *Inside Passage* was no wider than our vessel's length.

Years ago we had been told by rangers that bears did not congregate in this area so we had never visited. That was a mistake as the anchorage was at once not only beautiful but peaceful, wild, and private. The 2,000' high mountains surrounding this cozy harbor served us well until the weather calmed down.

Got Fish? Once the winds died down, we made the final of three trips across Shelikof Strait.

With an avid fisherman onboard, we located a fishing hole for Herb off Afognak Island (58 11.774 N, 153 00.358 W). It didn't take long before he had a good sized halibut and a few cod onboard to keep our fish cleaning and filleting team busy.

Up next will be a return to the Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound after crossing Stevenson and Kennedy Entrances to Cook Inlet in the final week of our 2011 summer adventure.

