

2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 8



Terra Firma Roving brown bears, steep shorelines and earlier inclement weather had kept us onboard prior to our trip back across the Cook Inlet entrance to Port Chatham.

This historic site of the Portlock Cannery provided us with protected waters. It also gave us the chance to kayak and walk the beach to explore the remnants of the past. This key location existed at the height of the fishing industry's cannery era. When he joined us in "big red" kayak, it was Herb's first kayak in many years (**photo**).

The rusted iron remains of the by-gone cannery still litter the beach covered with barnacles. What were once large iron rivets remain now as small protrusions from the surface of long abandoned boilers. We walked the entire length of the beach and when it became impassable hiked into the surrounding woods. After we returned to the boat, a curious kingfisher landed on our bow railing. Carl quickly grabbed his camera to capture this infrequent visitor through the pilothouse window (**photo**).

Retracing Our Route On our return trip to Prince William Sound, we would be passing near where we saw the first dead humpback whale a month previous (Journal #4). We were curious to see if the black bears in the area had discovered and feasted on the humpback whale carcass as was done by the brown bears on the Alaska Peninsula (Journal #5).

With our binoculars searching the vicinity of the large cliff and landslide where the whale remains had been, we located the carcass a short distance from its original location.

Surprisingly, the body was mostly intact with only a few seagulls attempting to peck



2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 8



away. There was no evidence visible of present or past bear activity. The question is why had there been no bears? We don't have an answer.

Mountain Goats Rounding Gore Point, we spotted seven mountain goats grazing high on a steep mountainside (59 11.808 N, 160 57.871 W). Because our normal focus is on wildlife closer to sea level, we have rarely seen these agile animals. Although only small dots in the distance, we picked them out as their white coats were in significant contrast to the green carpet of the nearly vertical meadow (**photo**).

Summer Has Finally Arrived We followed the scenic coastline of the Kenai Peninsula for the next couple of days in clear sun-filled conditions. With almost no wind, we enjoyed the panoramic view from the flybridge of the *Inside Passage*. The Kenai Fjords National Park boasts an icefield wilderness, unnamed waterfalls in unnamed canyons, glaciers that sweep down narrow mountain valleys, and a coastline along which thousands of seabirds and marine mammals raise their young each year.

We anchored in calm Tonsina Bay protected by numerous barrier islands where we again kayaked to shore. This gentle bay afforded us another opportunity to exercise and contemplate the serene setting listening to the surf slapping on the shoreline (**photo**).

The Almost Perfect Vacation Home Location

A side trip took us to a mysterious platted subdivision below the Petrof Glacier that shows paper streets when viewed on Bing Maps (59 21.678 N, 150 50.556 W). Carl had discovered this property during preparations for the cruise and it apparently is one of the few privately owned parcels in the entire region.

At first glance, it appears to be a great location for a subdivision with a lake and the terminus of a glacier on one side and ocean frontage on the other. Unfortunately, it will never be accessible as land access is



2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 8



blocked by the vast Harding Ice Field. Once again we found ourselves with obvious questions and some head scratching...but no answers.

The Circle of Life We visited the Chiswell Islands before taking a brief respite from our wilderness journey to visit Seward to refuel the vessel in preparation for our delivery captain's long trip back to Seattle. Protruding into the Gulf of Alaska, these small rocky pinnacle islands are the ideal nesting sites to many varieties of seabirds (**photo**).

There are several haul out locations for the numerous "prides" (the collective noun we devised) of Stellar sea lions. There is also a sea lion rookery on a large sloping slab of rock on one of the islands (59 36.087 N, 149 34.205 W).

The dark chocolate brown pups were approximately six weeks old (**photo**). We learned a few years ago that the pups are usually all born within days of each other.

Like many other forms of wildlife, the concept of safety in numbers applies.

With our arrival in Cordova we ended this summer's eight week adventure. We consider ourselves fortunate to have enjoyed many new anchorages, great photographic opportunities, wonderful companions, and some unusual events. Hopefully there will be much more of all of these in our future.

