

2015 Alaska Cruise Journal # 5



**We're Back Onboard** After five days back home in Seattle, we returned to Kodiak to continue this summer's explorations. We jumped across Shelikof Strait under lumpy sea conditions which were almost twice what the NOAA marine forecast had predicted. Our first visit was to Hallo Bay ( 58 24.875 N, 154 03.916 W ), where adverse weather conditions at the exposed anchorage had prevented us from going onshore earlier this summer.



The preferred method of landing at Hallo Bay is to run our shore boat, powered by a water jet engine that draws only six inches, through the opening in the tide flats created by the glacial fed river from the nearby Hallo Glacier.

Finding the channel through the wide river delta was difficult since the bottom was obscured by the silt laden glacial outflow.

**Grounded** On our second visit of the day and while the tide was still dropping, Carl prepared the crew for the possibility that we

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might run aground crossing the river entrance. His warning proved prescient as our aluminum shore boat found the bottom and noisily ground to an abrupt stop.

We climbed out to figure out how to get ashore. This was our unique welcome to Barry and Suzanne Goren, the crew on the third leg of the summer's voyage.

This is the Gorens second cruise onboard the *Inside Passage*. Suzanne is shown holding the staff with which she had just tried to part the sea, a

feat last accomplished by her ancestors several millennium ago (photo).

Fortunately, the jet boat only required cleaning the sand and gravel out of the water intake to make it sea worthy again (photo). There would however be a wait of over an hour until the tide came back in to refloat us.

Leaving an anchor in place, we hiked to reach the scene of bear activity. This required some wet feet as we had to wade through deep rivulets that overtopped our Alaska sneakers.

We photographed and videoed a sow and her cub who spent time fishing and playing together. Like



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many other mammal species including humans, play is important part of an youngster's life. The young mother, bathed in the evening sunlight, seemed to be posing for our cameras (**photo on first page**).

Carl returned to the shore boat as the tide came in sufficiently to lift our shore boat free. He picked the rest of the group up about a half hour later on the shore.

**Got Milk?** On a return the following day, we waited until the tide was sufficient to easily enter the river.

We crossed the meadow and saw a large bear sleeping in a

day bed, which is a depression that a bear will create for naps. Some are reused frequently and wind up surrounded by bear scat. We approached a sow wearing a radio collar whose two cubs were alternately grazing or sleeping. While the mother was lying at rest, we heard a roar. She had reacted to the attempt of one of the cubs to nurse. Shortly thereafter, she gave in and before long both were nursing. In the high grass, all we could see were their three heads (**photo**).

**We Named Him Rupert**

Walking along a driftwood-strewn portion of beach, we spotted a fox meandering among the beached logs searching for scraps of food (**photo**).

Instead of retreating when it saw us, he headed straight in our direction approaching rapidly to within a few feet. Not shy, the fox stayed nearby for over ten minutes. The fox appeared to ignore us yet





seemed to enjoy our presence.

**Boot Sucking Mud**

Going onshore the next day to hike the delta of one of the streams feeding Kukak Bay, we visited with a group of tourists returning to their vessel. Their guide Perry warned us to be careful of the “boot sucking mud” which we soon encountered.

He also had an explanation as to how archeologists knew to select Mink Island for excavations that led to the determination that the site had been used periodically for the last

7300 years (see 2015 Journal #4).

Perry explained that over the years, visitors to the island would find human skulls and other bones lying around or sticking out of the ground. Evidence of ancient human habitation had been known to locals for many years.

**Interrupting a Dinner**

Kayaking that evening, we rounded a corner and surprised a family of four river otters enjoying their evening meal (photo). With much chatter, they scurried into the brush carrying their dinner with them ( 58 17.471 N, 154 15.750 W ).



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**Interrupting Sleep** There is a Steller sea lion haul out on a large rock just off Cape Kuliak ([58 08.024 N, 154 12.241 W](#)). The tide was near its lowest point of the day and the sea lions were resting. Upon our approach, the females in the harem took a plunge followed by the territorial bull that created an enormous splash (**photo on previous page**). Sea lion bulls can reach 13' in length and weigh up to 2400 pounds.



**The Salmon Arrive** Geographic Harbor was the final destination on this leg although we will probably return once more before we start heading back east. As we move into August, there is increased activity of salmon returning to spawn in the creeks where they were born. Geographic Harbor combines a salmon stream with large tide flats where the bears can dig for clams when the tide is out. Highlights of this visit were a mother with three active cubs who continually ran about and worked to develop their fighting skills, and a young male earnestly trying to learn how to fish (**photos**).



