

2017 Alaska Cruise Journal # 5



The Half-Way Point

Completing our short break home, our next crew met us in Seattle for the return flight to Kodiak.

Returning veteran crew member Carol Booth came from Flat Head Lake, MT and Carol's sister Barbara Callahan and her husband Bob came from Woodstock, NY to join us for another visit to Katmai Country (photo).

We were pleased to find the *Inside Passage* just as we left her in the Kodiak harbor. We picked up fresh

supplies and were promptly off the next morning to the Alaska Peninsula.

Hallo Bay Revisited The same sow and cub family that we had photographed ten days earlier were still in the area. Carl crossed a shallow stream to have a closer opportunity to watch this family of four again as the remainder of our party stayed on the other side resting on a large log.

Using our binoculars, we could see Carl using a dead tree to steady his new Sony camcorder with which he has taken most of his videos and photos this summer.

Interruption We had brought small walkie-talkies to communicate with each other when separated. Joann spotted a large bear heading towards Carl and the grazing family and gave him notice.

He moved from the approaching bear's path. The cubs clustered around their mother until the visitor had passed without any conflict (photo).



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High Wind Forecast The next morning we took notice of predicted elevated sea conditions for the next few days and traveled a short distance west to a more protected inlet where we have often had great wildlife



viewing opportunities. Scenic Geographic Harbor was a perfect choice with its ash coated mountain tops from a 100 year old volcanic eruption (58 06.902 N, 154 36.396 W). There were a few commercial boats that serve as floating lodges for photo enthusiasts who are charged \$10,000 each. They carried cameras with lenses the size of a person's leg.

Using front loader skiffs, they were shuttled like cattle to and from the photo sites. It was clear that these tourists had to be very dedicated to their hobby (photo).

A Curious Wolf One morning we were approached by a grey wolf that came right down to the water's edge to check us out with no apparent fear (photo).



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Shortly thereafter, the wolf encountered a bear moving in the opposite direction, and we anticipated a confrontation between the two. It never happened. The two passed within 20 feet of each other with each appearing to ignore the other (**photo on previous page**).

Return of the Drone

At high tide the tourist hordes returned to their vessels. Using this opportunity to enjoy some solitude among ourselves, our crew paddled to the mouth of the river.

We beached our kayaks

in the shallows (**photo**). Carl took out the drone to get an aerial view of what was beyond our view. He had never launched from the kayak before, but had seen it done on YouTube.

Carl was able to successfully calibrate the compass and the drone took off from the deck of the kayak.

It turned out he was able to video a large male bear that had gone up upstream fishing along the way.

With the sound of the rushing water masking the buzz of the drone, the bear was not aware of its presence as it splashed in the stream (**photo**).



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Busted While Carl was concentrating on the flight, Joann noticed three park rangers approaching (**photo**). While they were visiting with us, Carl signaled the drone to “come home”.



One of the rangers was a park enforcement officer with a hand gun that would have been effective against individuals but useless against a bear.

He informed us that using drones around wildlife was prohibited, but did not take any further action as Carl caught the hovering drone from the kayak and put it away.

Always interested in getting local knowledge on the areas we visit, we invited the three rangers to dinner on our boat and they accepted. We dined together on the back deck (**photo**). With their varied educational backgrounds from fine arts to music to environmental science, we had an interesting discussion as to what brought them to their jobs. For them, it was a love of the wilderness and the outdoors.



Bears vs Sea Otters

One of the rangers told us that he had recently watched a brown bear swim out in the ocean and return with a sea otter in his mouth.

He showed us photos where the bear had proceeded to devour the sea otter on the shoreline 150’ away from the ranger’s tent.

The photos also showed a grey wolf who had waited for the bear’s scraps but none became available. More in a few days...