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**Bear Thief** We watched many of the always-hungry bears clamming and fishing at all stages of the tides.

One bear had been sleeping on the sand of the river delta for a considerable period. When it woke up, it didn't take long to catch a fish.

Almost immediately, a dominant male sauntered over and it was clear that he intended to steal the fish. We heard loud growls between them and observed the entire confrontation. The result was a disappointed angler

because it chose to retreat rather than fight and as a result lost its breakfast (photo).

**Unexpected** Hidden Harbor lies at the head of Kinak Bay ( [58 12.041 N, 154 36.432 W](#) ). It has a narrow entrance and is surrounded by steep mountainsides. It was at this location that we spotted a moose, which we rarely see along the shoreline.

The moose stood frozen for several minutes and we realized that it had spotted and was fixated on a bear wandering the shoreline 250 yards away. The moose also kept a watch on Carl when he paddled over.

Viewing the resulting photographs we could clearly see that she had a wound on her rear flank. We could only wonder if the wound was the result of a previous encounter with a bear or a pack of wolves (photo).



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**A Soggy Stretch**

After several days of clear weather, we knew it was only a matter of time until the weather would change. It is inevitable that we will experience a portion of every leg of the cruise when rain will affect our daily activities.

This did not dissuade our crew who enjoyed kayaking so much; they donned their heavy duty rain gear and went out in the rain to paddle around a sow and two cubs (photo).

The bear family remained close to shore for a long time while the mother dug for clams. The cubs learn by imitating their mother's actions. One of the cubs fumbled with a piece of clam the sow had dug up, but ultimately dropped it (photo). In their first year, their mother's milk is their primary source of food.

A large flotilla of black Zodiac inflatable shore boats from the cruise ship *The World* gathered behind our kayaks to also watch. Before long, they took off as they had apparently only stopped for quick visit in Geographic Harbor.

**Pink Salmon** We learned from the rangers that the river in Geographic Harbor is not commercially fished because only the less desirable chum and



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pink salmon return to spawn there. The bears show no preference and were instinctively prepared to chase the fish up and down the stream (photo).

The pink salmon is the smallest of the salmon species. They also have the shortest life cycle, which is just two years. Pink salmon are most commonly called “Humpies” because of the transformation that takes place at the end of their life cycle. The male pink salmon develops a pronounced hump and an elongated and hooked snout (photo below).

A Final Paddle The evening before we began

our return across Shelikoff Strait to Kodiak, Carl wanted one last experience with the bears, and it turned out to be the best to date for both videos and photography.

As a result of the recent heavy rains, the flow of the river had doubled. As the tide went out, the fishing conditions were perfect and the bears prospered. Earlier, they had been mostly unsuccessful (photo above).

Carl had a chance to visit with Buck Wilde, a veteran guide from one of the tourist boats whom it turned out he had read about many years before.

In 2001, a friend of Carl’s had mailed him



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an article from the local paper in Sun Valley, Idaho. The article entitled *The Giants of Katmai* described the bears we have been seeing. It mentioned Buck by name and was our initial exposure to the area and the inspiration for our first visit. The article is still in our files onboard the *Inside Passage*. Over the years, we have returned many times, and this year has been one of our best.

