

2019 Alaska Cruise Journal # 4



Back Onboard Upon our return to Alaska after the trip break, we found that the regional weather report for the next leg of our voyage called for warm weather and sunny skies.

The marine weather forecast does not report on that portion of the weather conditions, but did tell us the important additional fact that there would be 11' seas on Shelikof Strait which we needed to cross.

As a result, with new crew of son-in-law Ron Akin and long time friend Carol Booth, we waited a couple of days

in inlets off Afognak Island until the sea conditions became favorable **(photo)**.

While anchored in Nachalni Bay (57 58.737 N, 152 55.864 W) for the evening, we watched a couple of sea otters tearing apart and eating a large octopus.

Although it looked like the octopus would be too large for the otters to eat in one meal, we were aware that sea otters have an average daily food intake equal to 30% of their body weight. **(photo)**.

On a walk in the



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nearby woods, we discovered an unusual tree fungus shaped much like a flower. To our eyes, Mother Nature had created as fine a work of art as we might see in an art gallery. (photo).

Busy Salmon Stream

Once across Shelikof Strait, we were back in Geographic Harbor in Katmai National Park and Preserve. We returned at the height of the bear watching season (58 06.919 N, 154 36.918 W).

During one day, we saw five float planes plus four charter boats, all

present at the same time with tourists seeking a wilderness bear experience. Two days later, it reversed and there was only our boat and one other charter vessel.

We particularly enjoyed the interaction between a couple of bruins, who are normally solitary creatures, as they jawed at each other for several minutes (photo).

Was it an interaction among two siblings or possibly some romantic pre-mating behavior? Although the height of the mating season has passed, the mating process can take several weeks before the females accept the advances of a male suitor.



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Digging Clams We kayaked up to the head of nearby Kiniak Lagoon (58 11.116 N, 154 26.968 W).

There were no bears around, but there were thousands of salmon massed at the head of the stream that flowed into the lagoon. They were waiting for a good rain that would produce enough flow for them to swim upstream to spawn.

On our way back to the boat, we came across a young female actively digging and consuming numerous clams.

Nearby there was a

maggie squawking loudly as it waited for the opportunity to retrieve the leftovers. With beautiful coloring and a thick coat of fur, we waited for the bear to look in our direction for a good photo.

Ultimately she did, and other than the clam “*schmutz*” on her muzzle, we felt we got the (photo) we wanted.

Watching From Above

On one of the times we paddled along the shore following a wandering bear, Ron looked up and right above our heads was an immature bald eagle on a protruding rock ledge (photo).



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loaded with nesting pelagic seabirds, like the black legged kittiwakes and both tufted as well as many horned puffins. We were there shortly after the new chicks were born and took several photos and videos of one of the horned puffins with its distinctive yellow, orange, and red beak (photo).

As we paddled among the offshore islets, we got a well framed photo of the *Inside Passage* as she set in the anchorage, and felt it was good way to end this report on the 3rd leg of our voyage (photo).



Most eagles in the wild do not allow us to approach closely, and this was an exception as it sat motionless for several minutes. Bald eagles don't get their white heads until they are five years old.

Final Anchorage Anton Larsen Bay lies only a few hours outside of Kodiak where we will make our last change of crew for the summer(57 52.953 N, 152 38.994 W) before heading back to Cordova.

Anton Larsen is one of our favorite anchorages, not only for its protection from the elements, but also because it is ringed by offshore islands