



# North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management



Sketch by artist, Graeme George

SPRING 2015

## THE TOWLINE

VOL 7 NO 1



### From the Director

Congratulations to all of the successful whalers this spring! Bowhead whales were landed in Point Hope, Point Lay, Savoonga, Gambell, Wainwright and Barrow, and we are fortunate to have this resource for our villages. Thanks to all of the whaling captains for sharing with the communities.

There are many issues facing North Slope hunters, including new caribou regulations, new federal duck stamp regulations, and new Chukchi polar bear quotas.



These are discussed in this newsletter and, as always, please contact our department if you have questions or concerns about any of these changes.

We welcome your questions and concerns about the wildlife on the North Slope. The health of the animals is directly related to the health of the people, and we are doing our best to continue monitoring these community resources. Enjoy the summer teaching our young hunters! Qiksiksrautiqaḡniq!

Quyanaq,  
Taqulik Hepa

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### Pending Polar Bear Quota for the Chukchi Sea

On January 1, 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is intending to implement a quota for the Alaska-Chukotka (Chukchi Sea) polar bear population. This quota will initially be for villages from Point Lay to the south but the USFWS may eventually try to include Wainwright and Barrow. There could be substantial penalties from the Federal government for hunters that take bears after the quota has been reached. There was an article in our last newsletter that discussed the treaty between the U.S. and Russia on Alaska-Chukotka polar bears that is leading to this quota. The NSB is concerned that a quota is being implemented without reliable

science to support the need for a quota. In fact, the best available data suggest that the Chukchi Sea bears are doing well — bears are in good body condition, and they are producing many young.

Please let us know of your observations about Chukchi Sea polar bears. You can call us at 852-0350. You can help answer these questions: Is the population healthy? Are individual bears healthy? Is there a need for a quota? We need your observations so that the best available information can be used for determining whether a quota is needed and, if so, how large it should be. Also, please let your community leaders know your opinion about this pending quota.

## **Caribou Hunting Regulation Changes**

It has been nearly 30 years since any significant changes to State or Federal hunting regulations have been imposed on North Slope hunters but that will officially change on July 1, 2015. Because the Western Arctic (WAH) and Teshekpuk (TCH) caribou herds have declined rapidly in the past five to six years, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) requested that the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) consider a proposal to change caribou regulations on the North Slope. The ADF&G worked closely with the NSB Department of Wildlife Management (DWM) and presented population updates to the Mayor and NSB Assembly. ADF&G also accompanied DWM staff to hunter meetings in Barrow, Anaktuvuk Pass, Wainwright, Atqasuk, and Point Lay in order to communicate with North Slope hunters before submitting proposals to the BOG. We tried unsuccessfully to meet in Point Hope but intend to hold meetings there and Nuiqsut this summer.

The WAH declined from 490,000 caribou in 2003 to 235,000 animals in 2011. The TCH also declined by 50% but in a much shorter time period, with 68,000 animals in 2008, and dropping to 32,000 caribou by 2013. The herd decline is due to high cow mortality and low calf production and survival. A large portion of mortality has been caused by predators, mostly bear and wolves, but wolverine predation is also a factor for calf mortality. In 2014 only 30% of the cows had calves, which is about the lowest calving rate recorded in Alaska. We do not think hunting has been a major factor contributing to the population declines, but we do think it will become a contributing factor if we do not restrict our harvest of cows and calves.

The NSB-DWM noted hunter comments during each of our community meetings and met with the

NSB Fish and Game Management Committee (FGMC) to discuss hunters' ideas that could hasten the recovery of these herds. The NSB FGMC worked hard to use these ideas to amend the ADF&G proposal that would have



prohibited harvest for eight months out of the year. The NSB FGMC amended proposal allowed for the harvest of caribou during all months of the year while reducing the harvest of cows and calves. The FGMC and DWM presented testimony to the BOG in April that was well received, and the BOG accepted FGMC's amended proposal. The greatest changes occur within the TCH core range due to their rapid decline. Those changes are in Northern Unit 26A and impact the communities of Barrow, Atqasuk, Wainwright, and Nuiqsut. Changes in the southern portion of Unit 26A and portions of Units 23 and 24B will affect Anaktuvuk Pass, Point Hope, and Point Lay who harvest a fairly small proportion of the WAH.

We recognize that restricting harvest is not popular but the changes that occurred came from local hunters' efforts to help the herd recover while still providing opportunities to provide food to the communities at all times of the year. See the details of the new regulations below, plus a calendar for residents of Northern Unit 26A on page 4 of this newsletter. For further questions, please contact Brian Person at 852-0350.

## **New Alaska Department of Fish and Game Caribou Regulations**

### **Southern Unit 26A, Unit 23NW and Unit 24N**

This area is south of the Colville and Utukok Rivers. Resident bag limits continue to be 5 caribou per day. However, no calves can be taken and there is a season for bulls and cows. Bulls are open Feb 1 to October 14, and cows are open from July 15 to April 30. Non-resident bag limits were reduced to one bull only from July 15 to September 30, 2015, for Southern Unit 26A, and reduced to one bull only from August 1 to September 30, 2015, for Unit 23NW and Unit 24N.

### **Northern Unit 26A - Nonresident**

Nonresident bag limits were reduced to one bull only from August 1 - September 30, 2015.

### **Northern Unit 26A - Resident**

Resident bag limits are listed by date below, and no harvest of calves is allowed at any time.

July 1 - July 15, 2015:

5 bulls per day, no cows

July 16 - October 15, 2015:

5 caribou per day, no more than 3 cows per day and no cows with calves

October 16 - December 31, 2015:

3 cows per day, no bulls

January 1 - March 15, 2016:

5 caribou per day, no more than 3 cows per day

March 16 - June 30, 2016:

5 bulls per day, no cows

## Iñupiaq Matching

Draw a line from the *Iñupiaq* name to the English name for these Plant Parts

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Akutuqpak</b>   | <b>Become Green</b>      |
| <b>Ipiq</b>        | <b>Blade of Grass</b>    |
| <b>Ivik</b>        | <b>Broad Leaf</b>        |
| <b>Ivruiq</b>      | <b>Dried Plant</b>       |
| <b>Kimagluk</b>    | <b>Edible Greens</b>     |
| <b>Manjuq</b>      | <b>Flower</b>            |
| <b>Nakaq</b>       | <b>Fruit</b>             |
| <b>Nauriaq</b>     | <b>Fuzzy Bud on Stem</b> |
| <b>Nautchiaq</b>   | <b>Grass Flower</b>      |
| <b>Nuvulukutaq</b> | <b>Long Taproot</b>      |
| <b>Palliksrat</b>  | <b>Plant</b>             |
| <b>Qimmiuraq</b>   | <b>Small, Thin Root</b>  |
| <b>Siigñaq</b>     | <b>Sod or Moss</b>       |
| <b>Sunaaq</b>      | <b>Stem</b>              |

Note: *Iñupiaq* name spellings vary between regions.

## FUN FACTS

### Did you know that?

Traditionally ... many plant leaves were stored in seal oil and saved to be eaten later in the year, like *qunjuq* or *ippiq* or *quagaq*.

... some plant leaves were used in teas for flavor, like *asiat* and *tilaaqiaq*.

... coltsfoot, or *milukataq*, leaves were used for healing sores and soothing arthritis.

... dried *pilgaurat* leaves were burned as a mosquito repellent when out camping.

... dried moss, *uqru*, was used for infant diapers.

... stinkweed, *sargiq*, was used as a tea for congestion & sore throats and as a poultice on sores.

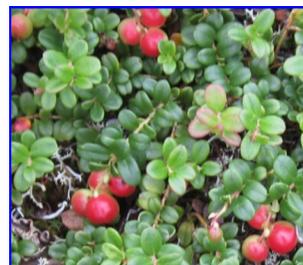
NOTE: When collecting local plants, be sure of the identification as some species look similar but may be inedible or poisonous. For more information on local plants and traditional uses, see our webpage: [www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/other-topics/common-plants-north-slope](http://www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/other-topics/common-plants-north-slope)

## Summer Berry HARVEST

Match # Plant Name to Picture.  
Go to our [website](#) for more plant information.

# \_\_\_\_\_

1  
*Aqpik*  
Cloudberry  
or Salmonberry  
*Rubus chamaemorus*



# \_\_\_\_\_

2  
*Asiaq*  
Blueberry  
*Vaccinium uliginosum*



# \_\_\_\_\_

3  
*Kavlaq*  
Black Bearberry  
*Arctostaphylos alpinus*



# \_\_\_\_\_

4  
*Kimmigñaq*  
Lingonberry or  
Lowbush Cranberry  
*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*



# \_\_\_\_\_

5  
*Paungaq*  
Crowberry  
or Blackberry  
*Empetrum nigrum*



## New Caribou Hunting Regulations for Residents of Northern Unit 26A

Below is a calendar outlining the new State of Alaska caribou hunting regulations for residents of Northern Unit 26A, which includes the area north of the Colville and Utukok Rivers. These regulations affect residents of Atkasuk, Barrow, Nuiqsut and Wainwright. We discuss these regulations on page 2;

however, since this hunting area is very complicated, we have added this calendar to help hunters understand the regulations throughout the year.

Happy hunting and remember to take only what you and your family need. This will also help protect this resource for the future.

| January |   |   |   |   |   |   | February |    |    |   |   |   |   | March |    |    |    |    |    |    | April   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|----|----|---|---|---|---|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| S       | M   | T | W | T | F | S | S        | M  | T  | W | T | F | S | S     | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S   | M | T | W | T | F | S |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|         |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |          |    |    |   |   | 1 |   |       |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5       | 5 caribou total per day<br>No more than 3 cows per day<br>No calves<br>January 1 - March 15 |   |   |   |   |   | 6        | 7  | 8  |   |   |   |   | 9     | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 5 bull caribou per day<br>No cows<br>No calves<br>March 16- July 15 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12      |   |   |   |   |   |   | 13       | 14 | 15 |   |   |   |   | 16    | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 19      |   |   |   |   |   |   | 20       | 21 | 22 |   |   |   |   | 23    | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 26      |   |   |   |   |   |   | 27       | 28 |    |   |   |   |   | 30    | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |

| May |    |   |   |   |   |   | June |    |   |   |   |   |   | July |    |    |    |    |    |    | August   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|----|---|---|---|---|---|------|----|---|---|---|---|---|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S   | M  | T   | W | T | F | S | S    | M  | T | W | T | F | S | S    | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S  | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|     |    |   |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1    | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |      |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 5 caribou total per day<br>No more than 3 cows per day<br>No calves<br>No cows with calves<br>July 16 - October 15 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4   | 5  | 5 bull caribou per day<br>No cows<br>No calves<br>March 16- July 15 |   |   |   |   | 13   | 14 |   |   |   |   |   | 6    | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11  | 12 |   |   |   |   |   | 20   | 21 |   |   |   |   |   | 13   | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 18  | 19 |   |   |   |   |   | 27   | 28 |   |   |   |   |   | 20   | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 25  | 26 |   |   |   |   |   |      |    |   |   |   |   |   | 27   | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |

| September  |   |   |   |   |   |   | October |    |    |    |    |    |    | November |    |    |    |    |    |    | December |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| S  | M | T | W | T | F | S | S       | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |    |  |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 caribou total per day<br>No more than 3 cows per day<br>No calves<br>No cows with calves<br>July 16 - October 15 |   |   |   |   |   |   |         |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4        |    |    |    |    |    |    |          |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 3 caribou total per day<br>No bulls<br>No calves<br>October 16 - December 31 |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5       | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12       | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 9        | 10 |    |    |    |    |    | 11 | 12   | 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   | 19      | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 16       | 17 |    |    |    |    |    | 16       | 17 |    |    |    |    |    | 18 | 19   | 20 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   | 26      | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    | 23       | 24 |    |    |    |    |    | 20       | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |  |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Federal Duck Stamps Not Needed for Subsistence Hunt

The U.S. Congress enacted an interim policy on the law regulating subsistence migratory bird hunting and egg gathering. It was implemented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on April 4th, 2015. This change provides for an exemption for “qualified” Alaska subsistence hunters from the requirement of purchasing a Federal Duck Stamp for hunting waterfowl. If you are a “permanent rural Alaska resident,” residing in a North Slope Borough village for at least 12 months, you qualify for this exemption for subsistence hunting in your “included” area.

The exemption is effective immediately and remains in effect until June 1, 2017. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be consulting with native tribes in Alaska and the State of Alaska to come up with a permanent exemption. Once the new regulation is developed, it will go through the public review and comment process.

This federal exemption does not affect the Alaska state hunting laws, meaning that hunters are still required to possess state hunting licenses and state duck stamps.



King Eider migrating past Barrow

Photo: Kate Stafford

## **DWM's Field Studies for the Summer of 2015**

Once again the NSB-DWM will be conducting field work this summer on wildlife surveys, subsistence surveys, and wildlife studies. Our biologists, wildlife veterinarian, subsistence researchers and technicians will be busy on the North Slope. We also have wildlife interns Dana Chrestman and Justice Kippi who will be helping with those studies and more. Dana and Justice are on break from college and are with us to learn more about what it means to be a wildlife biologist and a subsistence researcher.

Raphaella Stimmelmayer will oversee the beach surveys in Barrow, from Plover Point to Skull Cliffs. Surveyors will drive 4-wheelers along the beach looking for carcasses or live stranded marine mammals and birds. You may see our small silver tags on these carcasses which we use to mark those we have already surveyed. Please leave these tags so we do not count carcasses multiple times. If you find animals that we have not tagged and would like to report it, please call us at 852-0350. DWM staff will also be conducting similar beach surveys near some of the other coastal villages. These surveys will help us create a baseline of the numbers of animals that wash up on the beaches to help document possible future changes.

Ryan Klimstra continues his aerial surveys for

fox dens and caribou/calf pairs, as well as working with the USFWS on a lemming trapping study. Brian Person will be working with ADF&G on caribou collaring of the Teshekpuk Herd. He and Ryan will both be banding snow geese on the Ikpiqpuk delta in early August, monitoring the growth and habitat use of that colony on the North Slope.

Leandra de Sousa will be working with NOAA on fish surveys in the nearshore habitat near Barrow, and Todd Sformo will survey fish in Elson Lagoon as well as in the lagoon system near Wainwright. Both of these studies help us better understand the prey species of fish available in these habitats.

Throughout the spring and summer the DWM will be collecting water samples from subsistence fishery areas near Nuiqsut in an effort to monitor the water mold that has been found on subsistence-caught aanaakliq in past summers. If you have any concerns about fish that you catch, contact us with samples and pictures, if possible.

The DWM helped support a migratory bird count that occurred in April and May near Point Barrow. Those counts were primarily monitoring the status of King and Common eiders. You may have seen folks on the ice counting from their perch.

If you have any wildlife concerns, please contact us at 852-0350 so we can help to address them.

## **Marine Mammal Tagging Studies—2015**

We will be continuing our seal tagging work this summer. You can check our website for the maps of tagged seals from last year: [www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/studies-and-research-projects/ice-seals/ringed-seal-research/ringed-seal-research-results-2014](http://www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/studies-and-research-projects/ice-seals/ringed-seal-research/ringed-seal-research-results-2014). Andy Von Duyke will be trying to capture and tag ringed and spotted seals throughout the summer near Barrow, Dease Inlet, and Peard Bay. Preparations will begin for possible tagging in Kaktovik in 2015 or 2016. Andy was also trained with bearded seal taggers in Kotzebue in May so will attempt to tag those larger seals as well. He will be assisted by Joe Skin, Isaac Leavitt, Jared Nayakik, Bobby Sarren and others. Getting tags on bearded seals and more ringed seals is important to better understand the movements and habitat use of these species. Spotted seals were the main tagged species last summer and will continue to be tagged as available.

Robert Suydam will be working with hunters and the community of Point Lay to capture and tag beluga whales in late June and early July after Point Lay's annual beluga har-



**Beluga whale being tagged near Point Lay in 2010**

vest. It has been 5 years since we tagged belugas and, at the community of Point Lay's request, we will continue this effort to monitor the movements of beluga and learn more about how they use the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. Tagging belugas in 2015 may also provide information about how belugas respond to drilling rigs and the numerous support vessels that will be in the Chukchi Sea this summer.



**North Slope Borough  
Department of Wildlife Management**

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Deputy Director: Harry Brower, Jr.



**ECRWSS  
BOXHOLDER**

CHECK OUT OUR  
NSB-DWM **WEBSITE!**

*We thank the NSB Assembly and Mayor Brower  
for their continued support. **Quyanaqpak!***

BECOME AN NSB-DWM  
**FACEBOOK FAN!**

**Hunters in Focus—Ajuniaqtivut**

Many thanks to the whaling captains who allowed us to collect samples and measurements from their whales. We were able to collect data from two whales in Point Hope this spring and hope to go back there, as well as Wainwright, next spring. We will also have people collecting samples for us in Kaktovik and Nuiqsut in the fall and Gambell and Savoonga in the spring. Getting information from other villages during different times of the migration helps us to better understand how bowhead whales use their habitat during migration. Several of the issues we are trying to better understand include differences in diet among the different areas, as well as the overall health of the whales.

These data are important for us to be able to provide scientific support

to the AEWC at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) meetings. The IWC Scientific Committee (SC) meetings this year were held in San Diego. We are doing all we can to prepare for the next quota renewal, which is scheduled for 2018. Each year at the IWC SC we talk about new biological information about bowhead whales and the harvest from the previous year. In San Diego, NSB biologist Robert Suydam was voted in as Vice Chair of the IWC SC for the next three years.

The Commission meetings, the political meetings where decisions are made, are now being held every other year. The next Commission meeting is planned for 2016 in Slovenia, and we are preparing now for that meeting.



**Rock Crew marking their whale  
in Point Hope**

**UME and Pinniped Health Assessment**

The Unusual Mortality Event (UME) for Pinnipeds has not been officially ended; however, no new cases have been identified since 2012. We continue to see some natchik and ugruk with varying degrees of hair loss and areas of black skin where no new hair is growing in, but they are alert, fat and healthy. Most of these were reported from the Bering Strait region with few seen on the North Slope. Despite exhaustive efforts to determine the underlying cause(s) for the 2011 seal disease, it remains a mystery. Pending no new seal observations during the spring hunt, the NSB-DWM UME on-site coordinator Dr. Raphaela Stimmelmayer, in collaboration with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the UME investigative team, will request official closure of the UME by summer 2015.

As in previous years the NSB-DWM in collaboration with hunters and communities will continue to monitor the health of seals and walrus on the North Slope through our 2015 ice seal and walrus health assessment. The collection of measurements and samples is important to continue monitoring the health of these animals and to be able to identify any possible contaminants, disease, or other concerns.

*If you would like to allow us to collect samples from your harvested healthy seals/walruses, or have a hunter-concern animal please call **Raphaela Stimmelmayer or Dave Ramey at 852-0350**. If you are in Barrow, we can come to you. If you are in another village, we can figure out how to get the samples and have them shipped to us right away, or frozen for later shipping. **Quyanaqpak!***