

North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management



Sketch by Jean Craighead George

THE TOWLINE

SPRING 2010

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From the Director

As the spring season approaches many are busy preparing for the hunting season. The bowhead whales are arriving! Good luck to all of the whaling crews across the Slope. Birds are on their way. Get ready for nigliq hunting! Beluga whales and caribou will also be making their way north as the summer approaches.

Remember to get your children out camping this season - aullaallaniq. Teach them traditional ways of hunting -

aḡuniallaniq - and respect for nature - qiksiksrautiqaḡniq iḡuuniagvigmun. And, don't forget to share your harvest with those unable to hunt - aviktuqaḡigigḡniq!

Our Subsistence Specialists will continue to conduct subsistence harvest surveys in all villages. Please help us by answering these survey questions about your hunting activities. All information collected in the surveys is confidential, and it is important in

justifying our nutritional and cultural needs in our communities. The surveys will help us protect our subsistence rights for the future.

We can all do our part to teach the next generation of subsistence hunters respectful and traditional ways.

Qyanaq!



Subsistence Hunt of Migratory Birds

The NSB-DWM, along with the Barrow Migratory Bird Task Force, helped to kick off the subsistence hunting season with a Migratory Bird Fair held in Barrow in April.

Geoff Carroll of the ADF&G sold state licenses and state duck stamps, and the USFWS had federal duck stamps available and explained federal hunting regulations. NSB-DWM and the USFWS provided information on geese and eiders.

There are four species of eiders that migrate to the North Slope:

common, king, spectacled and Steller's eiders. Common and king eiders are hunted as they fly north along the ice edge in the spring, and then again along the coast in the fall as they migrate south. Steller's and spectacled eiders are protected from hunting due to their low population numbers on the North Slope. Please take care to not hunt Steller's and spectacled eiders.

For more information on subsistence bird hunting regulations, contact **Mike Pederson** at **852-0350** or **mike.pederson@north-slope.org**.

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Agviq Whale Census at Barrow

An ice-based bowhead whale abundance survey or “census” is being carried out this April and May on the ice edge near Barrow. Staff are using binoculars and a surveyor’s theodolite to count whales that pass by a “perch” located on the edge of the open lead.

Hydrophones have been placed on the ocean bottom within the lead and are currently “listening” for whales that pass by. Using these two methods of counting bowhead whales, a population estimate will be calculated.

The last ice-based census was completed in 2001 after counting



SALOMI AKPIK, KATE STAFFORD, PERRY ANASHUGAK, AND JASON HERREMAN LOOKING FOR BOWHEADS IN 2009 (PHOTO CREDIT: CRAIG GEORGE)

efforts were conducted in 1999, 2000 and 2001. At that time, the estimate was about 10,500 bowhead whales in the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort stock with a growth rate

of about 3.5% per year.

Aerial surveys and photo identification were conducted in 2003-04 which provided a new population estimate of 12,600 bowhead whales. New aerial surveys will be conducted in the next few years to add to the data collected from the on-ice surveying.

A full census of bowhead whales is required by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) every 10 years. These estimates are used by the IWC to set the bowhead quota for the AEW. The current quota is in place until 2012. The 2010 census will be quite important in ensuring that the quota is maintained beyond 2012.

Ugruk Movements and Foraging Behavior in Wainwright and Barrow



BEARDED SEAL HALLED OUT ON ICE (PHOTO CREDIT: CRAIG GEORGE)

NSB-DWM wildlife biologist Jason Herreman, subsistence research coordinator Billy Adams, and scientists from NOAA will be working together to capture bearded seals near Wainwright and Barrow in order to study the seals’ seasonal movements, foraging behavior, and habitat use areas.

Seals will be captured using tangle nets, and the animals will be tagged with two different types of satellite-linked dive recorders or

SDR’s. One SDR attaches to the seal’s head and transmits data whenever the seal surfaces. The second SDR attaches to the seal’s flipper and transmits only when the seal is hauled out. The head mounted tag is shed during the next season’s molt and provides data for about 9 months. The flipper tag provides long term data for about 5 years. Samples will also be collected for genetics and health assessment. Ringed seals caught incidentally during this work will also be tagged.

The capturing efforts will occur after hunters have taken the animals they need for the season. In the Wainwright area, tagging will take place approximately between June 21st and July 17th. The study team

will be working with local hunters, and the plan is to hire 2-3 boats and 3-6 people. As the ice retreats north, operations will be moved to Peard Bay. A second capture phase in this project is planned for the Barrow area after fall whaling is completed. This year’s study is a pilot project and continuation will depend on successful results.

There will be a **\$100 gas certificate** reward for any tagged animal shot incidentally during hunting activities. In order to receive this reward, hunters please return the tags, and we also ask you to allow the scientists to sample the animal.

For more information or to collect your reward, **call Jason Herreman or Billy Adams at 852-0350.**

UMKY (*Nanuq/Aiviq*) Patrol



МОНИТОРИНГ
MONITORING

Hunters from Chukotka traveled to Alaska to talk to North Slope subsistence hunters about walrus and polar bear conservation issues. They gave community presentations in Point Hope, Point Lay, Wainwright and Barrow this past February on traditional knowledge

and their polar bear patrol efforts. Mike Pederson, NSB-DWM Subsistence Research Coordinator, accompanied them.

The Chukotkans use spears to fend off the polar bears in order to prevent a stampede on the walrus haulout. Spears are also used, instead of firearms, during the walrus subsistence hunt for the same reason. Hunters are able to take a

walrus without endangering the rest of the herd in a stampede. Their trip was



CHUKOTKAN PATROLLERS PROTECT WALRUS HAULOUT (PHOTO COURTESY OF CHUKOTKAN HUNTER VLADILEN KAVRY)

sponsored by the WWF and the NSB.

Aiviq Sensory (Hearing and Smelling) Project

Activities such as oil and gas development, commercial fishing, and shipping have the potential to create environmental disturbance, noise, and chemical pollution, all of which may impact wildlife, including bowhead whales. These activities are expanding rapidly in the Arctic, and it is important to deter-



mine impacts so that injury to marine wildlife can be avoided or appropriate mitigation measures can be developed. The NSB-DWM's sensory research, with the help of Dr. Hans Thewissen, will provide a better understanding of the sensory **EAR DRUM OF BOWHEAD WHALE**

world of the bowhead whale and the potential for impacts. These data will provide basic information needed to assist in impact analysis and interpretation.

Local hunters have been telling DWM biologists for many years that bowhead whales could "smell" things. These new studies have confirmed, once again, the traditional knowledge of the senior whaling captains!

Oil and Gas - 2010 Plans for Chukchi & Beaufort

In 2006, exploration for oil and gas in the Beaufort and Chukchi increased dramatically because of the high cost of oil, and in 2010 numerous activities are planned. Shell plans to drill exploratory wells in Camden Bay in the Beaufort Sea and at the Burger prospect in the Chukchi Sea. Shell also plans shallow hazards and site clearance surveys in Harrison Bay. The Norwegian company, Statoil,

is planning to do seismic surveys in the Chukchi Sea. ION is planning a broad seismic survey across the Beaufort Sea and into the northeastern Chukchi Sea. The U.S. and Canadian governments are also planning some seismic surveys in the northern Beaufort Sea.

A considerable amount of scientific research is also planned by oil companies in order to better understand the environment, includ-

ing the distribution of marine mammals and impacts from the exploration. That information will help us better protect marine resources. Many people are very concerned that all the oil and gas activity will impact marine mammals and subsistence hunters. The DWM is working hard to try to make sure there will be as few impacts as possible on the ocean and the animals that are so important to the North Slope communities.

Tigiganniaq Winter Diet Project

During the summer of 2009, arctic fox were fitted with satellite collars in Prudhoe Bay and near Teshekpuk Lake. NSB-DWM wildlife biologist Dr. Brian Person is interested in retrieving as many of these fox as possible. Tissues from the carcasses can be analyzed to compare the winter diets between the two groups of foxes.

This study is a joint effort between UAF and the NSB.

If you come across a collared arctic fox this spring, and if you harvest it, save the **collar** and **carcass**, and contact **Brian Person** to exchange for a 15 gallon gas voucher.

Call 852-0350 or email
brian.person@north-slope.org



ARCTIC FOX WITH COLLAR (PHOTO CREDIT: ERICH FOLLMANN)

Toledo Zoo Nanuq Cub Naming Contest



CUB AT 3 MONTHS OF AGE
(PHOTO FROM TOLEDO ZOO)

NSBSD students were asked by the Toledo Zoo to choose a name for a new polar bear cub that was born December 3, 2009. We had 81 students submit names and three were chosen as finalists.

The Toledo Zoo chose the winning name for the cub, which is **Siku** meaning "ice" in Ifupiat. The winning name was submitted by

Isaiah Rexford, a 4th grader at Harold Kaveolook School in Kaktovik. The winner's family will receive a \$500 gift certificate for the AC and their school library will also receive \$500. All three finalists, Isaiah, Andrea Brower and Allison Heaston, will receive down coats courtesy of Polar Bears International. Other prizes were donated by World Wildlife Fund and the Toledo Zoo. Congratulations to all of the winners and many thanks to all of the students that participated! You can watch the new nanuq cub on the Toledo Zoo's webcam at <http://www.toledozoo.org/animals/polarbearcub>.



We thank the NSB Assembly and Mayor Itta for their continued support of the Department of Wildlife Management. Quyanaqpak!

GO TO THE NSB WEBSITE FOR DETAILS ON DWM STUDIES AND MORE!

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