Winter Solstice

This past summer Speedy’s two and a half year olds were seen regularly along the Chilkoot River during the day. They were a bit perplexed as every time they approached Speedy she would “chase” them off. They slowly adjusted to the fact they were on their own this year. For some reason, after Labor Day weekend, they went their own separate ways and only the female remained along the river. She was still there in early November. Two other sets of bears made regular appearances. The first, a sow with a single cub returned. The second, a sow with 3 cubs, was spotted early in the year. One of her cubs was killed when hit by a car but she and the other two cubs remained along the river during the summer. ADF&G bear biologist Anthony Crupi spotted BMJ’s daughter, LMJ, who has not been seen for many years. It is a welcome surprise to find that she is still alive. Photographs of each of the bears above are found on page 4.

Along with the local Alaska State Park Ranger, we again held guide training in early May. We worked with Parks to manage volunteers along the river monitoring and helping control human/bear activity. We again focused on education and public outreach at our booth during the Southeast Alaska State Fair. The weekly summer Farmer's Market was a place we had a presence to disseminate information about bears and sell merchandise that helps us pay for projects we support. In November, we had a table at the Alaska Bald Eagle Festival. Pam Randles gave presentations to Rainbow Glacier Adventure Tours and Constantine Metals on human bear interactions.

Alaska State Parks hired two monitors for the corridor this summer. They were helpful in working with visitors who came to view and photograph the bears.

Bear Tracts has focused on the bears along the Chilkoot River in previous issues. In this issue, we are starting to include the cultural history of the Chilkoot River Valley. Discover more about the Chilkoot Culture camp on page 5.
We believe that the best way to preserve the gifts of the Chilkoot and to resolve issues is to work cooperatively with the diverse interests that have a stake in the Chilkoot.

PFD Charitable Contributions Program
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When you apply for your Permanent Fund Dividend, you will have an opportunity to give to your favorite Alaska nonprofit organizations. The PFD Charitable Contributions Program began with the 2009 dividend. It provides a safe, secure and easy way to make a donation, and is available to all Alaskans who file on-line.

When you go online to apply for your dividend, you will see the option called “The Gift of Giving.” Click on Alaska Chilkoot Bear Foundation. Chose the amount you would like to donate.

You can find more information about the program including frequently asked questions at http://www.pickclickgive.org.

Annual Guide Training with Alaska State Parks

Tom McGuire at the Farmer's Market

Lkoot Culture Camp 2017 (See Article on Page 5)
Tourist’s Corner

Johanna Wolf and Klaus Bartsch, Germany: “Before starting our trip to Alaska, we searched for bear watching spots. And Haines is really a great spot to watch bears! We enjoyed it so much. We saw the two teenagers – the brother tried fishing and when he caught a fish, he left for his sister some pieces.”

Mary Madden, Kamloops, British Columbia: “2017 was my first trip to Haines. The park, the river and the bears were all amazing. The parks staff and volunteers were very friendly and informative. It's obvious that they care very much about the bears in the area, and they put the interests and needs of the bears front-and-center.”

Kay Kotzian, Muskegon, Michigan: “I have watched Speedy’s cubs mature into sub bears and have enjoyed them so much. It has been a privilege photographing them and getting to know the Park staff and volunteers. I really appreciate their love and dedication to the bears.”

Don Simon, Loveland, Colorado: “The Chilkoot in Haines is a terrific location for bear photo opportunities. Kudos to the Bear Foundation volunteers for helping to keep the bears safe and the photographers off the menu.”
The Bears of Summer

Brown bear fur can be whitish, blond, red, or black, in addition to the typical dark brown. Alaska Fish and Game researcher LaVern Beier saw several thousand bears over the past 30 years. He saw tremendous variation in bear coloration, including a number of light colored brown bears he characterized as blonde. “Blonde bears frequently have darker legs”, he said, “and color variations are often regional.” ADF&G biologist Steve Lewis has seen a wide variation in the color of brown bears along Lynn Canal between Juneau and Skagway. “Some are pretty blonde,” he said. He’s also seen grizzly bears so dark they resembled black bears, including one he helped capture this spring. “We had one that was so black we weren’t sure it wasn’t a black bear until we had it on the ground, although it certainly behaved like a brown bear.” (Source: Alaska Fish and Wildlife News)

The fur of an individual bear usually changes color during the year as they shed (molt) their old winter fur and grow summer fur. The winter fur appears shaggy and is a thicker, coarser tawny or reddish brown. The new summer/autumn coat is relatively short, thin and dark rich brown. The fur includes a dense inner layer about 3 inches long and outer guard hairs about 4 inches long. The lower body coat is woolly all through the year.
Lkoot Culture Camp 2017 by Ted Hart

Twenty years ago there was a thriving Culture Camp on the shores of the Chilkoot River every summer. Young people lived as our ancestors did for weeks at a time in a working camp putting up fish, learning our history, songs, and how to work together. Unfortunately this all stopped with the passing of the Jilkoot Leader Austin Hammond who founded the camp. He realized how important it was to teach the young ones. Also it became apparent that the insurance was just too much and the camp could not continue. The camp was left in limbo more or less for about 20 years.

With renewed interest, a couple of Saak (Eulachon) gathering sessions and an overnight Harvest Camp we felt we were ready to bring back a Culture Camp! Which could not wait any longer as our Elders are leaving us at an alarming rate and a very culturally important and once thriving area was becoming very quiet culturally. That being said I was very pleased to see how much our Elders eagerly shared their knowledge and how contentedly our young ones listened to them, it was a very special time! Once it was time for the Camp The Campers showed up ready for the day with proper clothing ready to have fun and learn. We started out with some ice breakers to get everyone familiar with each other and have some fun. We then had some lunch song and dance then the afternoon we started processing 15 Chilkoot Sockeye with the kids. I was really pleased to see how well the kids worked together and divided tasks, it showed too because the fish were all cut up and put in to jars for fresh pack quicker than we expected.

We had a filleting station where almost every kid got to fillet a fish. Then we had a station to cut the fillets into jar sized pieces. Then we had a station putting salt into jars and stuffing them with the pieces of Salmon. We even had a station scraping the back bones and putting the scraped meat into jars as well. That evening the older kids fired up the pressure cooker with an outside propane cooker after the younger ones went home for the day. We had a nice evening of sitting around the fire singing, telling stories and listening to the pressure cooker rattle.

The next day we woke up to a nice breakfast prepared by our camp cook Grandma Sue Folletti. Younger kids arrived and those that hadn’t had breakfast yet got some food to eat and we headed out for a walk to the Lake. Next the kids started work on their mini dance paddles. Work had been done earlier to get all our paddles we needed were carved in advance by myself James Hart and Zack James. We carved them to be ready for the sanding stage. The kids did a good job sanding their paddles to be painted later on once the sanding was all done.

That afternoon we headed to Chilkoot Lake to take turns paddling a 30’ Strip Canoe modeled after a Northern Tlingit Canoe which held 7 adults, the kids loved it! There was also a fire where we all visited with Elders, Family and cooked hot dogs. It was a very powerful experience to push the canoe from camp on wheels and sing with it all the way with the kids to the Lake. That whole afternoon the Mountain tops echoed with the beat of our drums and the songs of our Ancestors filled the air just as they had done in the past. We had the kids create their own journals and write in them every day. It was great to see the time and care they took with their journal entries for the day.

The next day we followed our routine of breakfast and greeting the younger campers. Also our cherished Elders would usually show up in the morning and sit with us and talk. Joe Hotch, Smittie Katzeek and Marilyn Wilson were our regulars. Also Tommie Jimmie came from Juneau to observe and speak with our young ones. We took advantage of an invite to Kluhkwon, which included visits to Clan houses; a visit to Smitties smoke house and fish processing area right on the Chilkat River, a tour of the new visitor center which holds world renowned pieces such as the Whale House house posts along with many other important pieces. It was such a great trip with many more experiences and we were welcomed so warmly by the community.

Another great part of the camp was a Panel discussion about subsistence which included Tlingit Elders, Joe Hotch, Smittie Katzeek, Marilyn Wilson, Tommie Jimmie, Area Fish and Game Biologist Mark Sogge, Derek Pointsett from Takshanuk Watershed Council it was very unique to get all these people together to speak about subsistence issues. After our trip to Kluhkwon we had to put a lot of time towards our mini paddles in order to get them painted in time.

Paddle work took us right up until the end of camp which included an open house for the community. The kids came up and we asked each one what they would want their grandchildren to know and many of them said to protect the river and fish also to learn how to put up subsistence food. We then presented each one of them with their tee shirts and they danced into the kitchen and served our elders with food, I was so proud!

Much life was breathed back into the old Camp. Our Tlingit language filled the room once again, our young ones learned from Elders, fish was put up, people made lifelong friendships. Our cherished elder Paulina Phillips who held many of our songs was sitting in the cabin and a Brown Bear walked in front of us, she said being here made her feel like she could just get up and go look even though her legs wouldn’t allow her to. Being there brought back so many memories she thought she was still back in her earlier years.

Humans Can Live in Harmony With Bears.

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Going into Hibernation Reminder

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Bear Tracts is published by ACBF, a volunteer run non-profit organization. We rely on your support and membership to help protect the Chilkoot River watershed for generations to come.

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