

Five whales taken

From Staff Reports

By Tuesday afternoon, only five whales were reported taken along Alaska's northern coast.

According to reports, Point Hope so far has four whales taken. Gamble has one. And Barrow, where the whaling parties have been out on the ice for two weeks, none were taken so far, though one was reported struck.

Bad weather conditions and shifting ice leads account for the poor hunting thus far. Whalers along the coast were hoping to get 45 whales this season.

Though luck was generally bad, John Oktolik and his wife, Molly, of Point Hope, proved the exception to the rule. Last Saturday night, the

occasion of Molly's birthday, John took the fifth whale of his career as a whaling captain. It was Point Hope's third whale of the season.

But, while Molly danced in jubilation and the Point Hope community celebrated, the whaling crews in Barrow were still waiting patiently for improved conditions.

The leads off Barrow have been far off-shore, with unstable ice conditions preventing crews from getting to their prey. However, conditions early this week in Barrow looked more promising and Barrow crews are optimistic they may take their first whale this week.

Meanwhile, crews at Point

Hope reported record numbers of whales migrating northward. One crew member described the noise as a thunderous roar as the Belugas passed under the ice.