

BARROW WHALERS VANISH

Barrow's Joash Tukle Bags 60-ton Whale, Runs Into Ice Trouble

Eskimo whaler, Joash Tukle and his crew, caught a huge whale early yesterday that was believed to be weighing about 60 tons but the whalers ran into trouble when their motors ran out of gas after towing the big catch for hours at a snails pace.

Ben Itta's crew had been helping to tow the huge mammal when Itta decided to go for help in Barrow. He reached the village with just enough gas in his boat.

As soon as the news were told, a State Trooper flew out to the whale catch area but could not locate Joash Tukle and his crew.

"There is something funny that they can't locate Joash and

his crew because the weather is just perfect—clear," Sam Taalak told Tundra Times late yesterday.

Taalak said that planes had come back and were refueling for further search. He said there were also four motor boats heading toward the approximate location of Tukle's crew.

He said that one of the boats was about 40 feet in length.

Taalak said that Tukle and Itta crews had battled through slush ice as they were towing the whale. The slush forms on the surface of the sea after extended snowfall and the temperature of the water no longer melts it as the weather cools into winter.

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At about 3:30 p.m. yesterday, Sam Taalak said that the village was to have a meeting to map out plans of rescue and search.

"They are going to try to save the men and to heck with the whale is what I think," said Sam Taalak.

"The whale was about the size that Allen Rock caught at Point Hope in 1961—about 60 tons. That's quite a monster," said Taalak.

At his last report to Tundra Times after 4:00 p.m. yesterday, Sam Taalak said that the search planes were not able to locate Joash Tukle and his crew.

"There's no trace of them from the air and the people are worried here," he said.

He said emergency meeting was in progress at that time. The people had decided to call Search and Rescue units from Fairbanks and elsewhere to help search for the lost whalers.