

Gambell hunters get 4 whales

by Holly F. Reimer
Tundra Times reporter

Gambell villagers caught their biggest bowhead whale recently meeting their quota for the year of four whales. On May 7 Allen Kulukhon and his crew landed a 50-footer.

As springtime progresses northward villagers along the bowhead whales'

migration route satisfy their craving for fresh muktuk and whale meat while heedfully preparing for the winter's nutritional needs as subsistence whale hunting gets underway.

On April 20, Semore Tuzroyluke Sr., who has been a whaling captain for the past 25 years, landed Point Hope's first whale of the season.

Elijah Rock also of Point Hope

landed the second whale for the village on April 27.

Point Hope, as well as Gambell, Wales and Kivalina did not land a single whale last year. Gambell successfully met its quota this year, while Wales and Kivalina haven't used any strikes thus far.

Another whale also was killed in
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Point Hope during April but got stuck in the ice and could not be salvaged.

Mayor David Stone Sr. said the village was unable to take the muktuk but the flukes were still good.

Many times when a whale gets stuck in the ice, dangerous polar bears may be lurking in the distance, as was true this time.

"While I was there they sighted eight polar bears in the area. I only saw four, and one of them was about an 8-footer. He came about 500 yards from us and each time we chased it way from the area with a shotgun," he said.

Stone said the dead whale was lying on a mound of soft slushy ice which made moving the carcass virtually impossible.

"If it was on solid ice, moving it would not be a problem," he said.

This whale had been sitting too long, which Stone said was a shame.

"By this date I think old ocean beings are chewing on it," he said.

Stone said the village was given an additional strike but bad weather conditions have prevented any attempts to use it.

And Stone said the villagers are happy to receive one more strike, since last year's whaling season was unsuccessful.



In the village of Wainwright on May 6, Benny Ahmaogak Sr. landed a 38-foot bowhead, and on May 7 Jack Panik landed a 40-footer. Wainwright still has three more strikes before the migration season ends.

Also on May 7, Gambell villagers got what they had wished for, a bigger whale.

Gambell Mayor Branson Tungiyen said everybody in the village is happy.

"Everybody is very happy that this year has been so successful, and we're hoping the rest of spring hunting for walrus and seal will also be successful," Tungiyen said.

He said the 50-foot whale took two days to harvest but afterwards there was enough meat and muktuk — from all four of their landings — for everybody in the village to get enough.

"Nobody was left out. There was enough for the whole community," he said.

In the whaling story which appeared in the April 30 edition of the Tundra Times, Larry Kava did not land the 35-foot whale as reported, Chester Noongwook landed it.