

Break-up Time in the Arctic, Eskimos Hunt Seals, Oogruks

By KAY KENNEDY

It's break-up time in the Alaska Arctic. The ice began to move out at Kotzebue last week and will continue until about June 10. Eskimo hunters are going out in their boats for seal, oogruk, whales and walrus.

The trickle of visitors is increasing as Wien Consolidated Airlines regular daily tours to Pt. Barrow, Ft. Yukon, Nome and Kotzebue went into high gear on June 2.

All along the Arctic Coast and at St. Lawrence and Little Diomed Islands, Eskimos are harvesting the sea animals. Gambell and Diomed have had good walrus hunting. Two big bowhead whales were taken at Gambell.

At Pt. Barrow, farther north, there are still whaling camps out on the sea ice which is still firmly attached to the shore and extends out for about 1 1/2 miles. Ten of the big whales, which weigh about one ton per lineal foot, have been taken at Barrow and one at Wainwright in addition to two taken at Pt. Hope.

The midnight sun has been circling the sky at Barrow since May 11 and will continue to do so until August 2. Great, huge ice cakes, some 20 to 30 feet high, have been pushed up on the ice off Barrow to look like the pictures of old whaling ships caught in the ice.

A program of summer activity for visitors there is in full swing—with Eskimo blanket toss, dances, crafts, dog sled rides and area sightseeing tours.

The Wien Arctic Hotel at Kotzebue is spruced up in preparation for a busy tour season. The snow is now gone and a clean-up campaign is underway in the village. A new jade-cutting shop is in operation. Large jade boulders can be seen at Kotzebue.

Drying racks for meat are filling up with seal and oogruk

meat and sheefish. Soon salmon will be added to the growing supply. Meanwhile the floating fresh water ice cakes from the Noatak and Kobuk Rivers pile up on the shore where residents chop up this free delivery ice to melt for water.

Visitors at this season are able to see and photograph these many interesting activities, along with the midnight sun and the extra bonus of the steady parade of ice cakes moving at six miles an hour in front of their hotel

window.

Thrift season rates to Nome and Kotzebue will be in effect until June 15 (\$129 plus \$5 tax) for a two day tour. One-day tours to both Pt. Barrow, and Kotzebue, and also to Ft. Yukon are now available from Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Wien Arctic tour bookings are up 30 per cent over last year and 12 per cent to Katmai National Monument and Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes and Wien Consolidated sports fishing camps.

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