

Alaska Sea Adventures

Yacht Charters & Cruises



Alaska Sea Adventures Spring Newsletter 2008

Information to help you make the most of your Alaska adventure - Share with your friends!

Spring 2008

In this issue

- ◆ Letter from Captain Dennis - pg. 1
- ◆ New SE Alaska Cruising Map - pg. 1
- ◆ Seymour Canal Special - pg. 2
- ◆ For the Love of Herring - pg. 2-3
- ◆ 2008 Available Dates - pg. 3
- ◆ Five Finger Lighthouse - pg. 4
- ◆ Featured Petersburg Lodging - pg. 4
- ◆ Admiralty Island - pg. 5
- ◆ Recipe - Salmon w/salsa verde - pg. 5
- ◆ Hail to the Herring! - pg. 6

Dear Friends,

The arrival of the vernal equinox is a very welcome time in Alaska, especially here in Southeast Alaska. It truly marks *the awakening* of Alaska's natural world with a plethora of wildlife events and the promise of many amazing new surprises I've yet to witness.



You know, I love those spectacularly brilliant, high definition footage programs from exotic locations around the world which look so real on a flat screen TV, it seems like you're almost there. Yet, I'm always reminded of how fortunate I am to live in, and be so intimately familiar with, one of the most beautiful and magical places on earth; my home front here in Southeast Alaska's magnificent Tongass Rainforest region.

My continuing objective is to share the knowledge I've accumulated through decades of experience from living, working, studying, playing and traveling on the waters and islands of Southeast Alaska. It gives me great pleasure, and it is truly my privilege to share it all with our valued guests who come from distant locations around the globe for an experience of a lifetime.



Alaska Adventurer at anchor in Frederick Sound

So, as we prepare the *Alaska Adventurer* for another exciting cruising season of adventure, I invite you to picture yourself in your own amazing, spectacularly brilliant, high definition journey in this wild and pristine location. I look forward to welcoming you aboard for your own a-once-in-a-lifetime, up-close-and-personal meeting with nature, wildlife, beauty and magic – a most unique and ultimate travel experience you just won't find anywhere else.

Sincerely,

Captain Dennis Rogers

PS: I hope you'll enjoy learning about unique features within the scope of our new SE Alaska cruising area map - Five Finger Lighthouse, Admiralty Island, Seymour Canal - highlights that help make our adventures so fun and exciting! And be sure to read the fascinating article about herring by our guest contributor, Naturalist/Guide and Wildlife Photographer, Jim Nahmens.



NEW SOUTHEAST ALASKA CRUISING MAP!

Alaska Sea Adventures introduces our newly-developed cruising area map. The area depicted on this beautiful, large, detailed, 27 inch wide by 39 inch tall map, is a cross section of central Southeast Alaska and is a modified version of the U.S Marine Navigational Chart. This map will be included in the Pre-cruise Planning Packets for all guests with reservations for a cruise with ASA. Additional copies of the map will be available for purchase from our web site and various locations around Petersburg for a nominal fee.



Included on the front side of the map is a log where travelers will be able to keep notes and a log of their Alaska adventures. The back side of the map has interesting information including: local Natural History; Tongass National Rainforest; Southeast Alaska

Continued on page 2

Wildlife; Petersburg, Alaska; and Business Section from local sponsors who can help you plan a visit or a return trip to the Petersburg area.

Here's an interesting fact that helps demonstrate how special Southeast Alaska and the *Alaska Adventurer's* cruising area really is: "There is no longer a single place in the continental United States more than 20 miles from a road."* By contrast, during a cruise on the *Alaska Adventurer*, the closest we would ever be to a road connecting with the contiguous states is typically around 130 miles direct line over the Coast Range Mountains and Devils Thumb Peak!

As you'll see when you study the map, Alaska Sea Adventures' cruises and charters are wilderness expeditions in the truest sense of remote journey travel!

**No Distant Place* by David Havlick and Michael P. Dombeck; pg 34



SEYMOUR CANAL - ONLY ONE CABIN LEFT AT HALF-PRICE!

Imagine observing a developing scenario of huge schools of Pacific herring by the thousands of tons gathering along a spectacular Alaska shoreline waiting for their eggs to ripen and for all of the required conditions to become just right for them to spawn their eggs – a magnificent celebration of spring itself!

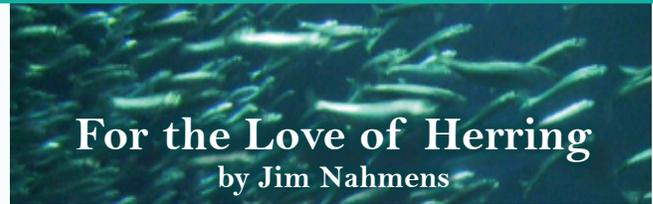
Pacific herring are the center of attention as this drama unfolds attracting a host of amazing wildlife that creates an incredible show of nature as predator pursues prey along a beautiful isolated Alaska shoreline. The high caloric, oil-rich herring are a critical part of the diet for humpback whales, orca, harbor seals, bald eagles plus a myriad of gulls and sea birds that require highly nutritious fish to replenish body reserves severely exhausted through winter survival.

While the eagles soar and circle overhead, Steller sea lions and humpback whales cruise near the shoreline before rushing and lunging through the huge school of herring gathering there...

You can witness all of the action just off the bow of the *Alaska Adventurer* and capture close-up images of this magnificent annual spring time festival of nature!

This exclusive trip is limited to a group of six persons.

Trip A058 Seymour Canal
8 days/7 nights April 30 - May 7, 2008



For the Love of Herring
by Jim Nahmens

Although every year has its surprises, our *Focus on Whales* trips in the summers of 2006 and 2007 were especially remarkable. Why? Well, it was the herring. Herring? You know, those seven-inch silvery, fast-swimming schooling fish. We're talking vast schools, acres upon acres of herring. But don't expect us to change the name of our trip to Focus on Herring anytime soon, because it's not necessarily the herring itself that provides the thrill. It was all the critters attracted by the herring—the eagles, harbor seals, Dall's porpoises, gulls and humpback whales.

I first saw, no I actually first heard, such huge schools of herring around 1995. On an otherwise clear day, we were watching a few humpbacks as they quickly disappeared into a thick fog bank that was moving our way. We tried



to follow the whales, but lost sight of them in the fog. We could not see them, but we sure could hear them, their lusty blows just out in front of us somewhere. We slowed and stood out on the bow to try to figure out what direction to go when another sound caught our attention, the sound of raindrops falling on the water. No, it couldn't be raindrops, the sky had been clear

just before the fog enveloped us. Then we noticed the source of the sound. It was thousands of herring flipping at the surface all around us. All of these splashes sounded like a heavy rain shower on the water. Then just ahead of us, barely visible in the fog three humpbacks surfaced coming right at us. Each of them opened their giant mouths and plowed, side-by-side, like giant harvesting machines, right through the school of herring.

Well that was over ten years ago and until the last two summers, I had not seen herring that thick again. But for the last two summers the herring have been exceptionally thick. It just so happens that the herring attract all the animals we love to see. Find the herring and watch the show. This last summer we happened upon a huge school of herring, all flipping at the surface. Dozens of bald eagles were diving on the herring, hovering above them then swooping down and trying to grasp them in their talons. If they caught one, they would



momentarily hover in an attempt to transfer the fish to their beak. After catching one, they went back for more. The photographic opportunities were amazing.

Over the years our local knowledge has paid off. We have learned where the herring "hot-spots" are and routinely check these during our trips. It is in these spots where we typically find bubble-netting groups of humpback whales. Herring are very fast and single whales are not successful feeding on herring. But a group of humpbacks executing a highly choreographed prey capture strategy can be quite successful. They begin at the surface swimming close together, and then quickly dive. Most of the group travels close to the bottom, under the prey. Ascending, they herd the prey by flashing the bright white undersides of their flippers. Loud, repeated feeding calls are broadcasted to further drive and concentrate the prey. One whale remains at about sixty feet deep to release bubbles. The bubble blower moves forward in a broad arc, releasing a curtain of bubbles up to 120 feet long. The bubble blower circles back, creating



Photo: *Capturing Herring - Humpback whales cooperative 'bubble-net' feeding lunge!*

a rising cylinder of bubbles. The whales rush into the bottom of the net and force the prey to the surface. Their arrival at the surface is synchronized in a spectacular group lunge and engulfment. Though I have seen these lunges countless times, it is still breathtaking each and every time.

At one of our hot spots in 2005, we came upon a group of about a six humpbacks attacking the herring. Herring were everywhere. Harbor seals, steller sea lions and eagles were there too feeding on the herring. After a while we noticed more humpbacks joining in with the group.

They lunged on the herring several times and then split up into multiple groups. Later that day, there were four feeding groups within sight. This was new to me, something I had not seen in 15 years of whale watching in Alaska. Seeing a single bubble-netting group is spectacular, seeing multiple groups seemed beyond belief. Thank you herring, thank you.



Naturalist/Guide and Wildlife Photographer, Jim Nahmens "Sumdum Guide"



Availability for 2008

Dates for the upcoming 2008 season are nearly full. There are a lot of exciting trips and custom charters planned for this summer and we are anxious to untie the *Alaska Adventurer* and 'set sail' for adventures in Southeast Alaska's Tongass Rainforest region.

Here are the few dates still open for your reservation:

Trip # A058 April 30th – May 7th. One (1) cabin open **HALF PRICE!** *Seymour Canal Whales and Herring*

Trip # A078 May 19th – 28th. 10 days available for Custom Charter. (Number of days can be adjusted)

Trip # A098 June 8th – 14th. Available for Custom Charter. Approaching Summer Solstice – LONG days!

Trip # A128 July 5th - 12th. 'Focus on Whales' adventure with Dr. Adam Pack. One (1) berth for female traveler.

Trip # A138 July 14th – 21st. 'Focus on whales II' adventure with Jim Nahmens. One (1) cabin available.

Trip # A188 August 26th – Sept. 1st. Available for Custom Charter. Fantastic silver salmon!!!

If you have a desire to join Alaska Sea Adventures this summer and do not already have reservations, please contact us right away!



A group of frequent Alaska Adventurer travelers enjoying LeConte Glacier



Jacobo from Spain shows off his catch, and Rebeca show us the Dungeness crab she caught for dinner!



Five Finger Lighthouse Update

Alaska Adventurer stops near Five Finger Lighthouse for a visit.



USPS Commemorative Stamp Series Pacific Lighthouses, "Five Finger Light"



Five Finger Lighthouse sits on a tiny island in the Five Finger Island group in Frederick Sound



Many of you who have made trips with us are familiar with the lighthouse at Five Finger Islands. It's been a work in progress by the Juneau Lighthouse Association to restore and maintain this very historic structure sited in beautiful Frederick Sound. It's been fun to watch on our visits as the renovations continue and progress is made.

Alaska Sea Adventures web maestro, Dr Jeff Reynolds, has been graciously working on a very much needed major update of the Five Finger Lighthouse web site. Be sure to check it

out and remember that they are always glad to have your much needed and appreciated memberships and/or contributions.

Whale researcher, Dr. Fred Sharpe with the Alaska Whale Foundation, is working on a plan to use the lighthouse as a base for local whale research this coming summer.

We may now have other faces along with keeper Ed to greet us on our visits!



<http://www.5fingerlighthouse.com>

Featured Lodging in Petersburg, Alaska

A Guest House at Waters Edge

A Guest House at Water's Edge hosts, Barry and Kathy Bracken, have lived in Petersburg for over 30 years. Their experiences and love of the area make visits to "Southeast" even more memorable. They have created a relaxing, waterfront retreat on Frederick Sound, a short distance from downtown Petersburg.

The views of the rocky shore, the Sound, and the mainland mountains from the semi-secluded guest house are like a kaleidoscope of changing scenes – the ebb and flow of the tides, a variety of waterfowl, magnificent eagles, seals, sea lions, occasional whales and other wildlife, boats, icebergs, and of course, the weather!

Water's Edge is perfect as a vacation rental for small groups or two couples traveling together. Individual B&B accommodations are also available. The guest area includes a separate guest entrance, a common living area which offers a breathtaking view of the beachfront and the mountains, kitchen facilities, and two guest bedrooms. The *Beach Room*, with en suite private bath and a king-size bed (which can be made into two twins), commands a panoramic view of Frederick Sound from its five large windows. The *Creekside Room*, with a queen-size bed and a large adjacent private bath, overlooks a picturesque creek which runs through the property. Complimentary laundry facilities and bicycles are also available. VISA and Mastercard are accepted.

The Brackens' reputation of warm hospitality for the past 17 years draws many inquiries, and summer reservations are filling up quickly. Visit their web site for more information!



"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." ~John Muir



Contact information:

Kathy and Barry Bracken
A Guest House at Water's Edge
P.O. Box 1201 Petersburg, AK 99833
<http://www.petersburglodgingandtours.com/waters/index.html>
info@petersburglodgingandtours.com
Phone: Local: 772-3736 Reservations: 1-800-To-The-Sea

Friends of Admiralty Island

One of Alaska Sea Adventures' favorite incredibly beautiful destinations, and one of the jewels of Southeast Alaska's Tongass Forest, is Admiralty Island or to Tlingit native Tribe: "Kootznoowoo: Fortress of the bear."

Seymour Canal is located on the eastern side of Admiralty Island and the primary location for our spring and fall whale trips. It is in Seymour Canal that we find very distinct and fascinating whale behavior.



The head of a scenic bay on majestic Admiralty Island. A fantastic "National Treasure!"

In 1980 most of Admiralty Island was designated as a National Monument and Wilderness.

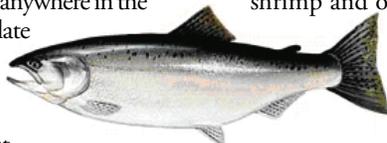
You can find more interesting information and history about this fascinating national treasure at the 'Friends of Admiralty Island' web site. The organizations March 2008 newsletter can also be downloaded from the web site by following these links:

<http://www.friendsofadmirty.org/index.html>
<http://www.friendsofadmirty.org/imagesfoa%20march%202008%20final.pdf>

Majesty of the King Salmon

Since this is our spring edition of our newsletter and as the season for winter king salmon nears its peak, it's only appropriate to feature a King Salmon recipe. There is not seafood to be found anywhere in the world that presents a flavor as sweet and rich to the palate than the delectable *fresh winter king salmon*.

Winter caught Chinook or King Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) is one, if not the best, if not *the* absolute best tasting and succulent fish in the world. Please don't misunderstand us, all wild salmon are great, but the winter king is really extraordinarily exceptional. In order to present this recipe correctly, we'll need to 'let the cat out of the bag' so to speak. Commercially caught between October and the end of April in Southeast Alaska, these "kings" of salmon feed on a diet rich in squid, which differs from their diet the remainder of the year, raising the oil content as well as giving the flesh a sweeter flavor. Only during the winter do squid abundantly move into



the waters of Alaska's Inside Passage and become a choice prey for king salmon which normally feed on Pacific herring, sand lance, shrimp and other smaller crustaceans. Because of the very limited commercial fishery for winter caught Chinook or King Salmon, they are a very rare breed and perhaps one of the most difficult and expensive of all seafood to obtain, especially fresh. The entire winter Chinook catch is limited to only 45,000 fish which seems like a lot but compared to the 200 million plus salmon that are harvested in Alaska during the commercial summer season, one realizes how truly rare and special this majestic salmon really is. The ultra Omega 3 rich winter king salmon are a very highly prized and well guarded local delight of residents of Southeast Alaska and those few others in the know. King salmon stocks are carefully managed by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and remain sustainably harvested species.

Salmon with Salsa Verde

Craig Stoll at Delfina Restaurant in San Francisco serves this salmon dish with cranberry beans and Blue Lake or yellow wax beans.
Serves 4

Salsa Verde:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 shallot, minced | 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint |
| 2 tablespoons champagne vinegar | 1 tablespoon minced capers |
| 2 anchovy fillets | 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil |
| 2 garlic cloves , chopped | 4 salmon fillets, 6 oz. each, skin on |
| 1/2 cup chopped Italian parsley | salt, pepper and extra olive oil |



Photo by Terrence McCarthy

Combine the shallot and vinegar in a nonreactive bowl and let stand for 30 minutes. With a mortar and pestle, work the anchovy and garlic to a fine paste. Transfer the paste to a bowl. Crush the herbs and add to the anchovy paste. Stir in the capers. Drain the shallots (reserving vinegar); add them to the sauce. Stir in the olive oil. Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding salt or reserved vinegar as desired. Set aside salsa

verde. Preheat the oven to 325° F. Brush salmon with oil; season with salt and pepper. Set the fillets on a baking sheet, skin side down. Bake for 15 minutes or until salmon flakes slightly. The salmon will remain translucent, appearing less cooked than it is. If desired, cook a few minutes longer. Lift the salmon using a thin spatula to leave the skin behind. Drizzle the salmon with the salsa verde.

Alaska Sea Adventures

Yacht Charters & Cruises



HAIL TO THE HERRING!

We have focused on herring quite a lot in this newsletter because the herring spawning event is one of the many prime events and highlights of springtime in Alaska. (Check out the *Spring Extravaganza* section in our Fall 2007 Newsletter on our website.)

The Pacific Herring biomass is an essential resource for the existence of almost all marine wildlife and the annual spring spawning event is a celebration of this absolutely vital element of Southeast Alaska's natural environment.

Tlingit natives of Southeast Alaska revere and celebrate the herring spawn by placing hemlock branches in the water to collect a thick layer of herring eggs laid on the bows. This produces a highly prized, rich delicacy that is often dipped in seal oil.

Pacific Herring is also a commercially-fished resource. Historically, the herring were caught and rendered for their rich oil or reduced to make fish meal. More recently, uses for commercially-caught herring have included a limited food market, bait for other fisheries and food for zoo animals. The largest current commercial herring fishery is for the eggs, or roe, *kazunoko* which is an expensive delicacy in Japan.



A school of Pacific Herring presents an elusive prey for predators!

A major herring roe fishery is occurring right now in March in Sitka. You can see video footage of some of the action of this fishery at this web site: <http://www.sitka.com/herring-video.html>

And when you join us on our special *Spring Extravaganza Trips*, you'll witness this amazing event up-close-and-personal! The Hoonah Sound Trip (April 21-28, 2008) is sold out this year. But you can still catch a ride on the upcoming Seymour Canal Trip (April 30 – May 7, 2008) as we only have one cabin available at half-price!

You don't want to miss this once-a-year-only event! As Jim Nahmens wrote in his article, *For the Love of Herring*: "It just so happens that the herring attract all the animals we love to see. Find the herring and watch the show!" We know where to find the herring! 

Don't Miss the Once-in-your-lifetime, Up-close-and-personal Meeting with Nature Aboard the Alaska Adventurer!



"What a great trip! Lots of birds (especially Bald Eagles), seals and sea lions, humpbacks and orcas, wildflowers and icebergs, good weather and good companions-and lots of laughs along with the good food.. Thanks!" -Elizabeth W.



"WOW! What a wonderful experience! The whale watching surpassed my expectations. Dennis, you are a wonderful host, the boat is comfortable, the food was great, and I loved it all. Thank you very much. I hope we can do this again." -Gaylen G.



"Great fishing, food and hospitality! Would do it again in a heartbeat...." -Dr. Stephen Sinatra