

Complete Northwest Passage

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 25 August – 23 September 2023





Kangerlussuaq

DAY 1 | Friday 25 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 66°57.4'N

Longitude: 050°57.2'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: 0

Wind Speed: 7 knot S

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 7°C

To reach a port we must sail, sometimes with the wind, and sometimes against it.

But we must not drift or lie at anchor.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Today we arrived on our chartered flight from Toronto to the small settlement of Kangerlussuaq. Situated in western Greenland, Kangerlussuaq is in the Qeqqata municipality located at the head of the fjord of the same name. It is Greenland's main air transport hub and Greenland's largest commercial airport. The airport dates from American settlement during and after World War II, when the site was known as 'Bluie West-8' and then Sondrestrom Air Base.

The weather was beautiful. Greenland truly welcomed us with Arctic summer sunshine and balmy temperatures. After a quick transfer to the port, the Expedition Team was ready at the pier with all the gear that a real Expeditioner could need: lifejackets to ferry us to the ship by Zodiac, and Muck Boots to keep our feet warm and dry. We boarded the beautiful *Sylvia Earle*, where a delicious welcome buffet was waiting. Our smiling stewards kindly helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and we settled into our 'home away from home' for the next couple of weeks.

On board we are 77 passengers from 9 different nationalities, and a crew of 98 plus 18 Expedition Team representing 12 different nationalities. Our Expedition Team members cover a variety of specialties including polar exploration, mountaineering, geology, botany, archaeology, history, cetaceans, marine biology, terrestrial biology, photography, medicine, kayaking and local culture.

It was not long before Expedition Leader Ashley invited us into the lecture room to welcome those who had travelled from afar to discover the beauty and history of the Northwest Passage. Barbara gave us some handy pointers about how life works on board; and Doctor Gloria and Expedition Medic Hans explained the health and safety protocols for our voyage.

Despite the long day of travel, there was a definite buzz of excitement in the air!

Before dinner it was time for the all-important safety drill. Seven long blasts and one short blast of the ship's horn signalled us to grab our bulky orange lifejackets, our beanies and warm clothing, and to muster in the lecture room. We then followed our crew up to Deck 7 to see where the polar class life vessels are. Amazingly, they can hold 136 people each, for up to 5 days!

It was not long before we were lured into the dining room and we got to know our fellow Expeditioners over a delicious buffet dinner. After the many hours of travel to reach the frozen north of the world, it was finally time to kick back, breathe in the sea air and get ready for the upcoming adventure.



Sisimiut

DAY 2 | Saturday 26 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 66°56,5' N

Longitude: 053°49,7' W

Course: 088

Speed: 7.8 kn

Wind Speed: 12 knots W

Barometer: 1001

Air Temp: 8°C

I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.

—Louisa May Alcott

Sisimiut is Greenland's second largest town and northernmost year-round ice-free port in the country. Did you know there are 4,000 Greenlandic dogs in Sisimiut? That's almost as many as the human population. These beautiful creatures are working dog descendants of wolves. 'Sisimiut' literally means 'the residents at the foxholes'. The site has been inhabited for the last 4,500 years, first by peoples of the Saqqaq culture, then Dorset culture, and then the Thule people whose Inuit descendants form the majority of the current population.

It wasn't long after our arrival in Sisimiut before we dispersed amongst the brightly coloured buildings of town. Did you know the colours had a meaning back in the day? There were no house numbers or street names, so all buildings were painted one of five colours: red, black, yellow, green or blue. Each colour had a specific meaning. Red buildings signified churches, schools, teachers' or ministers' houses. Yellow colours were assigned to hospitals, doctors and health care personnel. Green was, at first, the symbol for radio communication and later became the colour of telecommunications. The colour blue was often reserved for fish factories, and the police stations were black. Today, owners are free to paint their property in any colour they choose. Many of us enjoyed the opportunity to visit the craft centre. Some took a stroll around the lake on the 'love trail' or hiked up to the highest point of town to take in the sweeping vistas across the water and surrounding mountains. Those on the bus tour were also able to make it to 'dog city' on the outskirts of town.

After marvelling at the skill displayed in a local kayak demonstration, we were soon on our way northwards. By mid-afternoon, a full fleet of vacuums was whirring in the lecture room as we completed our biosecurity checks, making sure that any organic matter or seeds inadvertently brought from home were removed from our outer clothing and backpacks. Down in the mudroom, the kayakers tried on their drysuits and gear required for the activity. Once completed, and along with our mandatory briefings, we were all set and ready for our outings over the coming days.

As evening approached, we gathered to enjoy a cocktail or champagne and to meet our Captain, Artem Kolmykov. He shared a few words about his seafaring career and our expedition, and then introduced his team of department heads. It was time to then raise our glasses to a successful voyage ahead. Cheers! A delicious Welcome Dinner was accompanied by happy chatter filling the dining room as we got to know our fellow

Expeditioners and shared our experiences from the day. While sleep beckoned for those still feeling the effects of jetlag, others enjoyed a night cap in the Tektite Bar. What a brilliant end to a brilliant day.



Ilulissat

DAY 3 | Sunday 27 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°11.4'N

Longitude: 057°39.4'W

Course: 074

Speed: 11.2 kn

Wind Speed: 8 knots E

Barometer: 1006

Air Temp: 8°C

It is the set of the sails, not the direction of the wind that determines which way we will go.

—Anonymous

This morning we woke to views of glistening icebergs parading along the horizon – on their journey from the immense Greenland ice sheet to the sea.

We had arrived in Ilulissat ('icebergs' in Kalaallisut), home of the most productive glacier in the northern hemisphere and the third-largest town in Greenland. Our plan today was to experience the UNESCO World Heritage listed Ilulissat Icefjord (Ilulissat Kangerlua), where the Ilulissat (previously Jakobshavn) Glacier (Sermeq Kujalleq) flows into the sea.

After a delicious breakfast from the galley crew, we headed off to explore the ice fjord and discover the local history on foot, by local boat or by kayak. Most of those who went ashore made a beeline for the Ice Fjord Centre, a striking new visitor's centre tucked in amongst the tundra. The centre combines unique architecture with interactive exhibits, including the remarkable permanent exhibition "Sermeq pillugu Qqaluttuaq – The Story of the Ice". For the scientifically inclined, there was an informative video about local ice core research conducted by the East Greenland Ice-Core Project (EGRIP), and a virtual reality tour of their station. In a small gallery space, art installations and 'sound art' invited a more contemplative response to the ice.

Of course, the Ilulissat Icefjord (Ilulissat Kangerlua) itself was the star of the show. A short walk along a gently undulating boardwalk transported us across the rolling tundra to a breathtaking viewpoint over the world-famous fjord.

Somewhat less dramatic but equally inspiring was a visit to the charming Ilulissat Museum, situated in the childhood home of Danish-Greenlandic explorer and ethnographer, Knud Rasmussen.

While some of us stretched our legs on land, others approached the ice fjord by sea by local boat, or with our kayaking team. Meandering amongst the immense masses of ice congregating at the outlet of the ice fjord, we were entranced by the multitude of white and blue hues. It was humbling to be in the presence of such ancient ice and witness its endless march towards the sea. Some of us had the pleasure of being accompanied by some unexpected guests: several humpback whales - including a mother and calf – and an enormous fin whale stopping by to feed in the abundant waters near the fjord.



Ataa Sund & At Sea

DAY 4 | Monday 28 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°44,7'N

Longitude: 050°53.7'W

Course: Various courses

Speed: 3.9 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots NW

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: 8°C

One's destination is never a place, but always a new way of seeing things.

—Henry Miller

The early morning wake-up call revealed the wisdom of the decision to head deep in to Ataa Sund, sheltered from the winds further out in Disko Bay. Clear weather and sun greeted us, and soon both Zodiacs and kayaks were out exploring. The blue and white colours of the icebergs popped against the greys, blacks and greens of the tundra hillsides and surrounding cliffs.

Initially we visited the abandoned settlement of Ataa, founded in around 1830 and housing close to 100 people by 1900. Featuring yarn making, a bacon processing plant and a packing warehouse at various times, it was abandoned in 1960. It was curious to see this artefact of the European settlement of the Arctic, attempting to remake it in their own image.

Leaving the settlement, we explored the spectacular geology of the coastline. Ancient volcanic activity of the continent had left dramatic veins and intrusions up and down the cliffs. As we wove between the icebergs, a raft of king eiders bobbed and dived, while Icelandic and glaucous gulls and kittiwakes looked down from their iceberg eyries. Reflecting the changing season, a black guillemot in full winter plumage made an appearance.

A long, fast drive across the sound brought us to the foot of a spectacular waterfall hissing down the granite cliff to a smooth slab. Several of us took a drink from the cascade, refreshing ourselves on fresh Greenlandic water.

Back on board, the vessel continued deeper into the fjord to view Eqip Sermia, a glacier draining the massive Greenland ice cap. Great crevasses lined the icefall, while pale grey colourings marked the recession on the cliffs either side.

With the weather still blissfully calm we cruised back out of the fjord, westwards towards Canada aiming for the southern end of Baffin Island. The seas very slowly built until we could feel a faint rolling. Talks from Renato on photography and Lisa on archaeology gave us both education and entertainment before the nightly recapitulation of the day's events.

Finally, at the end of a long and fulfilling day we watched 'The Wedding of Palo', a film written by Knud Rasmussen, continuing the theme of his presence and influence on the region.



Qikiqtarjuaq & At Sea

DAY 5 | Tuesday 29 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 68°08,3'N

Longitude: 061°29.4'W

Course: 251°

Speed: 13.3 knots

Wind Speed: 12 knots NW

Barometer: 997

Air Temp: 5°C

You can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.

—Christopher Columbus

We awoke grateful to have passed through our first time zone change of the voyage, which offered us an additional two blissful hours of sleep. Calm seas carried us through the morning towards Baffin Island and our first day in the Canadian Arctic. By mid-morning, intermittent fog lifted to reveal blue skies as we approached the coastline.

To keep us busy during our morning at sea, Pierre delivered a presentation on Arctic whales, seals and walrus followed by a well-attended citizen science workshop with Annette and Hans. We made our first cloud observation for NASA's GLOBE program and learned more about the Happy Whale project. We then completed another important biosecurity check.

Soon after lunch, we arrived to Qikiqtarjuaq, our first port of call in the Canadian Arctic and where we were required to clear customs and pass-through immigration. Four Royal Canadian Mounted Police boarded our expedition vessel to ensure all our visas and paperwork were in order. Once all the boxes were ticked, desserts eaten and coffee enjoyed, we were given the "all clear" to head to shore for a visit to this friendly hamlet located on the west coast of Broughton Island. While final preparations were being made for our community visit, we were informed that a polar bear was spotted in this very area just a week before, so we gathered in the lecture room to hear from Alex and Nils regarding our safety procedures for landing in polar bear environments.

Enthusiastic local children welcomed our Zodiacs into the peaceful harbour. Moored offshore were a dozen or so Nor-West Canoe boats fitted with powerful engines and an enclosed cab for sleeping. From the beach, we set off in two groups for a walking tour by local guides Geela and Ooleesia. We passed by the medical centre and school, which has over 150 students from Kindergarten to Year 12. At the National Parks Office, also known as the Gathering Centre, we viewed a historical exhibit of fur clothing and taxidermied ringed seals, followed by a pass through the local Northern Store. We met local artisans and craftspeople selling bone carvings and felt magnets and ended our afternoon with a message of thanks from local community members.

Departing Qikiqtarjuaq, the *Sylvia Earle* was northbound, passing pale blue and glistening white icebergs on a still calm sea. As evening wore on, we gathered for our nightly recap and precap where Geela demonstrated the lighting and maintenance of a qulliq (oil lamp) while Eli offered interpretation - an amazing cultural tradition to experience together. We then settled in to yet another delicious dinner, followed by a showing of the historic film, 'Nanook of the North'.



Sam Ford Fiord

DAY 6 | Wednesday 30 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 70°19.2'N

Longitude: 067°04.3'W

Course: 338°

Speed: 13.2 knots

Wind Speed: 13 knots NW

Barometer: 996

Air Temp: 2°C

Home is where the anchor drops.

—Unknown

Our voyage continued northbound along the eastern cost of Baffin Island with magnificent cliffs and peaks seen from the port side of *Sylvia Earle*. Visibility was good although the sky remained partly overcast (which comfortably avoids the full solar glare from nearby snowfields). Sailing conditions were excellent with a barely perceptible movement of the vessel. The day began with a presentation from Alex on sea ice and glaciers, a subject very appropriate for what we were to see this day and later during the voyage.

Shortly after lunch, we entered Sam Ford Fjord. The enormous fjord penetrates the interior of Baffin Island further than most of the other inlets and fjords, and has several glaciers along its course. Recent snowfall, a harbinger of the approaching Arctic winter, had lightly dusted the scene, rendering the geological structures more apparent as well as picturesque. There was much to see in all directions, with cliffs towering hundreds of metres skywards. Many presented sheer faces. Elsewhere, very steep valleys split the fjord walls, and a few contained flowing streams.

After sailing about seven kilometres into the fjord, the *Sylvia Earle* turned to a position favourable with the wind and water currents so we could undertake kayak and Zodiac operations. A sharp-eyed fellow expeditioner sighted a swimming polar bear (bear number one of this voyage!) and the news spread rapidly. It appeared to be a juvenile bear, who swam between different landings as we watched from an appropriate distance. Several seals (as much of interest to the bear as to us) were also seen far in the fjord, and a multitude of bird life whirled in the air above us. Comparison of distance and size was difficult in this immense landscape, but when another Zodiac came into sight, the vastness of the scenery became apparent. This provided an opportunity for some citizen science activity, with observations made with Secchi Disc, demonstrating the clarity of the fjord water.

After all were aboard, Captain Artem carefully approached the floating snout of one of the fjord's larger tide-water glaciers. This took us closer the impressive construction of the glacier, and views from the upper decks demonstrated its size and power. In the vicinity was a steep valley which - perhaps only decades ago - had a similar glacier that has now retreated, showing a valley wall clean and polished by the former moving ice. On leaving the fjord, a low mist had accumulated in Baffin Bay and a light snowfall began. This fall was snowflakes, and an occasional one, on close examination, showed its magical hexagonal crystalline shape.

It was a significant evening for two reasons: it was Dr Sylvia Earle's birthday and therefore a celebratory refreshment was considered most appropriate for those of us on her eponymous ship. It was also the date when John Ross entered Lancaster Sound with HMS Isabella and HMS Alexandra in 1818 – a major event in the discovery of the Northwest Passage.



Pond Inlet-Mittimatalik

DAY 7 | Thursday 31 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 72°30.4'N

Longitude: 074°30.1'W

Course: 313°

Speed: 11 knots

Wind Speed: 10 knots S

Barometer: 1000

Air Temp: 3°C

Land was created to provide a place for boats to visit.

—Brooks Atkinson

On the horizon of the Arctic Ocean, our expedition cruise ship *Sylvia Earle* glided through the icy waters, its purpose as profound as its namesake. On board this vessel are not mere tourists; we are modern-day explorers, guided by a thirst for knowledge and a deep respect for the fragile ecosystems that awaited us. We used the morning to not only to learn about Inuit heritage and archaeology, but also the history of the daring explorers and sailors, as well as the clouds above us.

As the *Sylvia Earle* approached Pond Inlet-Mittimatalik, after lunch we gathered on deck, wrapped in warm clothing and anticipation. The sun cast a soft glow on the landscape, revealing the beauty that lay ahead. The air was crisp and invigorating, an elixir that awakened the senses and emboldened the spirit. The ship's engines hummed softly as it navigated through the pristine waters, leaving behind a wake of ripples that danced like forgotten melodies.

Pond Inlet-Mittimatalik is a tranquil village nestled between towering mountains and endless expanses of untouched wilderness. The ship anchored and we disembarked, the excitement palpable. Led by experienced and newly-assigned local guides, we were taken on a journey to uncover more of the Arctic's hidden treasures.

Traversing a short hike, we reached a vantage point that offered a panoramic view of the Arctic expanse. The mountains, glaciers, and fjords stretched out before them in a symphony of tranquillity. The landscape was a masterpiece of nature's craftsmanship. Majestic icebergs floated serenely on the frigid waters; their surfaces adorned with shades of blue that defied description. Cameras clicked and shutters whirred, capturing the ethereal beauty that surrounded us. Yet, we knew that no photograph could truly capture the essence of this special landscape.

The guided walk continued through the hamlet and ended at the newly built community centre. There, we were greeted by a wonderful local performance with throat singing, drum dancing and the "one-foot-high" kick. It is considered to be among the most difficult of Inuit traditional games. A target is suspended at a pre-determined height. The athlete takes a run-up or a walk-up of a few steps, takes off from both feet, and while in the air, attempts to kick, or touch, the target with one foot only. Amazing!

At the end of our visit, a refreshing Zodiac shuttle whisked us back to the ship before we upped anchor. With



a final gaze at the village's modest buildings and the majestic mountains, the *Sylvia Earle* set sail once more. It carried with it not only the memories of a remarkable excursion, but also the commitment to protect and preserve the Arctic's delicate beauty for generations to come.

Cape Hay (Bylot Island)

DAY 8 | Friday 01 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 73°44.8'N

Longitude: 078°44.8'W

Course: 296°

Speed: 5 knots

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me), it's always our self we find in the sea.

—E.E. Cummings

The day began with a breathtaking sight - a sea as smooth as glass, mirroring the azure sky above. Our vessel sailed gracefully, with the majestic Bylot Island standing proudly on our port side. Its snow-capped mountains soared into the heavens, exuding an air of tranquillity that enveloped us all.

As the sun bathed the landscape in a warm glow, some of us had a rather leisurely start to the day. However, we were in for a treat as we gathered for a captivating lecture by Nina. Her topic, "An Introduction to the Northwest Passage," transported us through time. We delved into the annals of history, learning about the audacious explorations that carved a path through the unforgiving Arctic waters. It was during this lecture that we unearthed the intriguing tale behind Bylot Island's name, a place forever tied to the Hudson Bay mutineers. The brutal decision to cast Henry and his son adrift with only rudimentary survival equipment, designed to prolong their suffering, left us awestruck. Yet, the story that truly captivated our imagination was that of Captain Thomas James. The audacity of sinking his own ship, deliberately, sent shivers down our spines. Astonishingly, he managed to navigate the treacherous waters and return safely to the United Kingdom. We could not help but ponder the daring spirit that led to such a remarkable feat, though we wouldn't dare recommend such a course of action, especially for the *Sylvia Earle*.

After indulging in a hearty lunch, we embarked on a Zodiac cruise at Cape Hay. The rugged cliffs came alive with the vibrant presence of countless birds, creating a symphony of nature that echoed in our hearts. The icebergs, cracking and groaning as they drifted by, seemed like ancient sentinels guarding the secrets of the Arctic. The water below us was so clear and still, it resembled a vast expanse of polished glass, reflecting the grandeur of this frozen wilderness.

As evening descended upon us, we gathered for a feast fit for kings. The delectable dishes satisfied our appetites and elevated our spirits. Following dinner, we settled in to watch the film "Before Tomorrow," a poignant exploration of the challenging history of the Inuit people. The documentary shed light on their resilience and the profound connection they share with this unforgiving land.

Outside, as the day bid us adieu, we were treated to a spectacle of nature's beauty - a breathtaking sunset painting the sky with hues of orange and pink. And so, our day in the Arctic came to an end, filled with tales of

Wind Speed: 8 knots W

Barometer: 1001

Air Temp: 3°C

exploration, bravery, and a deep appreciation for the wonders of this remote corner of the world. Each moment etched in our memories, we eagerly awaited the adventures that awaited us on the morrow in this captivating land of ice and history.



Dundas Harbour & Croker Bay (Devon Island-Tallurutit)

DAY 9 | Saturday 02 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°32.4'N

Longitude: 082°28.8'W

Course: 314°

Speed: 4.1 knots

Wind Speed: 13 knots N

Barometer: 995

Air Temp: 4°C

And yet, there is only one great thing, the only thing, to see in huts and on journeys: the great day that dawns, and the light that fills the world.

—Inuit poem

It is a beautiful morning, the sun is out, and there's very little wind. Everything looks perfect for an epic shore visit. After breakfast, we eagerly board the Zodiacs to get ashore in Dundas Harbour. Once we scout the area, we proceed with the landing; it is a chance to stretch our legs and visit some Inuit archaeological sites. What sounds a promising morning, is soon interrupted by a radio message delivered by Nils: "polar bear, polar bear, polar bear". We immediately activate the evacuation procedures. In less than 25 minutes everyone is off the shore and safely returned to the ship. The polar bear is still safely at good distance from the pebble beach where we originally landed.

The change of plans leads us to join Nina in the lecture room for yet another talk on the Franklin expedition. We followed the journey of Jane Franklin, the Admiralty, and the British public, as they launched expedition after expedition in search of the lost Franklin expedition. In the end it took almost 15 years, over 30 expeditions and the help of local Inuit to piece together the fate of Franklin and his men.

After leaving Dundas Harbour, we headed to Croker Bay. The bay was named by William Edward Parry in 1819 in honour of John Wilson Crocker, First Secretary to the Admiralty.

The *Sylvia Earle* held position in front of Crocker Bay glacier, which flows into the sea from the Devon Island-Tallurutit icecap. The glacier covers an area of over 12,000 square kilometres (4,600 square miles). The highest point on Devon Island is found at the summit of the icecap, with an elevation of 1,921 metres (6,302 feet). The icecap has a maximum thickness of 880 metres (2,887 feet) and has been steadily shrinking since 1985.

The weather was definitely on our side - sunny, with calm seas and barely a breath of wind.

We spent around two hours exploring Croker Bay by Zodiac. Our fleet of Zodiacs also included two specialist boats: a citizen science boat with Annette, and a photography Zodiac led by Renato. The kayakers also had the opportunity to enjoy a paddle in this sheltered bay. We also had another sighting of a polar bear, although this time only a small glimpse as it retreated inland, too far away to be admired.

We then returned to the *Sylvia Earle* and have our usual pre-cap and re-cap for the following day. Later in the evening, Alex called us all to come out on deck (even in our pyjamas) to see walrus playing around in the water. What amazing animals!



Beechey Island & Radstock Bay

DAY 10 | Sunday, 03 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: Various positions

Longitude: Various positions

Course: Various courses

Speed: 7 Knots

Wind Speed: 05 knots NW

Barometer: 999

Air Temp: 3°C

It's strange how hungry for a treat you get on an Arctic journey.

—Roald Amundsen

Today was always going to be monumental, as we finally made it to one of the most significant historical sites of the Northwest Passage expeditions: Beechey Island. It had been high on many people's lists, and rightly so.

The bridge had safely delivered us through the night just outside Terror and Erebus Bay, off the small yet prominent island. Beechey Island was named after a British artist, William Beechey, who was the father of Lieutenant Frederick Beechey, serving under Captain Parry. It is the final resting place and gravesite of three men from the ill-fated Franklin expedition: John Torrington, William Braine, and John Hartnell. Also buried alongside them is Thomas Morgan from the HMS North Star, who perished during a search expedition. Others would follow in the years after.

The backdrop was starkly beautiful as we glided towards the landing. The bay is a welcome refuge sheltered from the strong seas and winds, surrounded by high landscape. At first glance, the environment looked barren, desolate even, but on closer inspection, we could see a huge variety of Arctic plant life. Different colours of saxifrage could be seen, along with big clumps of buttercups in brilliant yellows. Nodding lychnis and polar willows added to the otherworldliness of this special place.

We had two major sites on Beechey: the graves and remains of Northumberland House. This house was built by the crew of the HMS North Star expedition in 1852-53. It had a few gravesites next to it of brave seamen who came this far north in search of answers. The large amount of historic debris at this site was impressive, and it told a tale. The site was littered with the remains of tin cans, pieces of rusting metal, glass, and wood. Animal bones, bleached by the sun and aged, could be found all along the coastline and beyond. Some bones had started to form lichens and mosses on them. It was easy to imagine the sailors sheltering here, looking out across the vast bay.

Saying our farewells, we relocated not too far away to Radstock Bay. The ship rested in front of the dramatic presence of Caswell Tower. The imposing rocky tower was in stark contrast to the flat plains and gravelly raised beaches that spread out below it. The stone remains of Inuit houses extended away from the beach. Whale bones could be seen scattered everywhere and were used in part of the construction of the shelters.



We did not land, however, for a few major reasons. The area of the ancient camps was now occupied by polar bears, a large male and a female with a cub. We had seen them all from the ship. So, we cruised in Zodiacs to the next bay where we encountered another solo bear. He was not so sure of us, so we cruised on while the kayakers bravely paddled all the way back to the ship. In the next bay to the north, we saw yet more bears; this was clearly a mother with a cub. They were both relaxed and not concerned by us - a lovely sight. We admired them quietly and moved on.

Back on board, we were able to admire the full scene and sunset from Deck 8 - with the addition of a delicious BBQ dinner. We were deep in the land of the polar bear, and as we dined in warmth, they were roaming and feasting on the land beside us.



Maxwell Bay

DAY 11 | Monday 04 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°46,5'N

Longitude: 088°31.1'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots NW

Barometer: 1002

Air Temp: 2°C

Polar night, Longer and darker than any other night

Polar day, Longer and brighter than any other day

Polar landscape, Greater and mightier than any other landscape

A time I shall always carry within me and give expression to.

In reverence to the country, the light and the dark.

—Inger Johanne Qvam Hafsmo Fra 'Arctic light in oil on Canvas'

We awoke to the glorious 'Mars-scape' of Maxwell Bay in the Qikiqtaaluk Region on the southern coast of Devon Island-Talluritit (27th largest in the world!), which the good ship *Sylvia Earle* had spent the past few days hopscotching around. It was named by William Edward Parry in honour of Sir Murray Maxwell, a British Royal Navy officer. I never imagined seeing such an arid, brown-palate landscape of comfortingly familiar desert southwest scenery (think Utah, Arizona) juxtaposed with the occasional glacier and icebergs and aquamarine water.

The Paleozoic carbonates, siltstone, and shales so expertly weathered in this harsh and unforgiving terrain seemed incapable of supporting life, but it somehow did. The alien lushness was full of pteropods, sea angels, and sea butterflies, drifting over the patchwork quilt algae flagging in the tidal race. Fulmars and kittiwakes waited patiently for the incoming bounty the rising tide promised to deliver, as harp seals frolicked and foraged.

Following yet another delicious lunch spread, we headed into the lecture room to hear Alex give a description of the polar bears we had seen yesterday and to learn more about these fascinating creatures. Those who managed not to nap prior to Renato's "How to photograph birds in flight" talk headed to the upper decks for more citizen science activities of cloud and bird surveys.

There definitely was an Arctic chill in the air, arrival of autumn, perhaps? A very spirited recap/precap (while we sat at anchor hoping for a narwhal sighting) included Archaeologist Lisa discussing an intricately-carved polar bear figurine out of walrus ivory, dating back to the Dorset people between 2,500-700 years ago. They represent bears in ice-edge hunting poses as keen hunters would likely learn from the Nanuq techniques. Bob followed with a tale that began on 4 September 1871, involving 32 American whaling ships beset in the paleocrystic ice; all 1,000+ men survived. Eli gave a very passionate and enlightening talk on Inuit principles and values, as well as

traditional and modern Inuit clothing. The craftsmanship, beauty, and functionality of the skins and furs are mind-blowing!

Annette discussed a new Citizen Science project that we are the first passenger ship to be participating in, called Eyesea, for monitoring and mapping pollution and plastic trash in the maritime environment. She also displayed the plaster casts that were made of polar bear and musk tracks. Pierre showed us skulls of walrus and narwhal and discussed arctic cod and their importance to seals and birds. Eamon showed above and below water videos from the kayakers' perspective; stunning how the kaleidoscope of colours below mocked the monotone hues on land.

Finally, Ashley explained how she makes decisions and gave us a sneak preview of the next few days and what we might expect as we begin heading south. Just when we thought we were saturated, we made room for popcorn and a documentary about the Franklin expedition called 'Prisoners of the Ice'.



Prince Leopold Island (Aapait) & Port Leopold (Somerset Island-Kuuganajuk)

DAY 12 | Tuesday 05 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 073°58.9'N

Longitude: 089°57.7'W

Course: 205°

Speed: 3.5 knots

Wind Speed: 5 knots NNE

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: 3°C

The world cannot live without the Arctic; it affects every living thing on Earth and acts as a virtual thermostat, reflecting sunlight and cooling the planet.

—Philippe Cousteau, Jr.

The sense of adventure and a chilly morning outing was ahead of us as we ate breakfast with snow falling outside the ship's windows.

Setting off on a Zodiac cruise and a peaceful paddle for the kayakers, the majestic cliffs of Prince Leopold Island (Aapait) beckoned, offering a glimpse into the beauty of the Arctic. The towering bird cliffs were a sight to behold and did not disappoint. The cold temperatures were not enough to keep us away from exploring the marvellous cliffs with kittiwakes, glaucous gulls, ravens, guillemots and more, nesting and feeding. The clear turquoise waters were abundant with hundreds of pteropods (sea butterflies) scattered through the water. We explored the cliffs for the morning; however, all good things must come to an end and we returned to the ship across the increasing wind and waves (making a particularly exciting journey for the kayakers with the kayaks in tow!).

We returned to the ship to yet another amazing lunch put on by our galley team. As the day progressed, we sailed around the corner to Port Leopold on Somerset Island (Kuuganajuk). The scout party went ashore to assess the area and make sure we could safely land without any polar bears coming knocking. By this time the wind had increased, creating a bit of wave action making the Zodiac ride to the shore adventurous!

Short, medium and long hikers were able to get to shore and explore the coastline, looking at the historic house from the Hudson Bay Company and the Inuit archaeological sites. Walkers were able to see the amazing formations in the now polar desert, with interesting shapes and hollows created by the freezing and thawing of the land, which was described nicely by Alex at recap. The long hikers ventured all the way out to the windy spit, and it seemed like they had a great time. As the wintery weather closed in, we all made our way back to the ship to warm up with either a hot (or cold) beverage in time for recap.

After a satisfying dinner with some amazing options there was a busy lecture room as everyone came to enjoy 'Frozen Planet' narrated by the best, David Attenborough. A great way to close another amazing day in the Arctic.



Hazard Inlet (Qariaragyuk) & Bellot Strait

DAY 13 | Wednesday 06 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 72°04.2'N

Longitude: 093°42.6'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: 10 knots SW

Barometer: 1014

Air Temp: 4°C

Victory awaits him who has everything in order, luck some people call it. Defeat is certain for him who has neglected to take necessary precautions in time; this is called bad luck.

—Roald Amundsen

This morning we woke up just outside of Hazard Inlet (Qariaragyuk) on the south-eastern side of Somerset Island (Kuuganajuk).

A few of the Expedition Team got up very early to assess conditions for a possible landing for us at 4:45 am! Thank you. Conditions looked great and this meant it was a go. This was very exciting news as it is an Inuit site, occupied over the 15th and 16th centuries by families of bowhead whale hunters. The remains of at least 100 bowheads scatter the village and beach area of the fall/early winter site. There are about 20 sod houses recovered but there were clearly many more there - as many as 40. Behind the site, the cliff face and area on top of the cliff has many community burials. There are caches, kayak and umiak stands along the shore. The families who lived here worked communally to hunt bowheads - their primary food, but also the building materials for their houses. What a privilege to have been able to visit this place.

Over lunch, we relocated a bit further south into Bellot Strait for the afternoon. The strait is about two-kilometres wide and 25-kilometres long. It is named after Joseph René Bellot, who tragically died looking for Franklin. Everyone was on high wildlife alert as we were scanning hillsides for black dots and shorelines for grey mottles dots as we approached Zenith Point for our afternoon landing excursion.

Zenith Point marks the northernmost point of the north American continent. Yet, shortly after the first Zodiac drivers got on the water, weather conditions unfortunately changed. Fog and snowfall limited visibility dramatically, so that a safe landing could not be conducted. After all, we were still in polar bear territory. But as expeditioners we quickly adapted to new plans and we continued ship cruising through beautiful Bellot Strait.

Binoculars glued to our eyes, we kept scanning shore and water. We found the many "Muskrocks", yet finally we heard the call: "Muskox on the hillside". We quickly focused on a magnificent individual animal, standing proudly in its thick woollen coat. Shortly after we heard the other call we were waiting for: "Splashes in the water" - and indeed we got a glimpse of the elusive narwhal. A small group of females with a calf swam tucked along the shoreline. How privileged were we to see these magnificent animals of the high Arctic.

As we exited Bellot Strait and cruised southeast into Peel Sound, we enjoyed another too-delicious dinner and the fabulous calm sea conditions that we have been blessed with so far.



At Sea & De la Guiche Point

DAY 14 | Thursday 07 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°52.2'N

Longitude: 096°22.9'W

Course: 134°

Speed: 11.3 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots SW

Barometer: 1012

Air Temp: 4°C

Yesterday is ashes, tomorrow wood. Only today the fire shines brightly.

—Inuit Proverb

With a beautiful sunrise and a smooth wake-up call from Eamon, we greeted another day. This morning we were on the sea route south to de la Guiche Point, after Ashley has told us how important this point was and is in the history of expedition sailing.

At 0700 we were still 75 nautical miles away, sailing along the coast off Boothia Peninsula on our starboard side, so we enjoyed a wonderful breakfast and headed afterwards to the lecture room to learn from Annette about Arctic marine ecosystems. Later in the morning, Hans taught us again how to read clouds with the NASA Globe Citizen Science program, and how to identify birds in the sky with an application called E-bird. Peter [better known as Lisa's husband (as he calls himself)] gave us a very interesting overview about the ancient pioneers of the central Arctic and his experience on field research outing he did on Prince of Wales Island.

The weather that morning at sea was kind to us and the sun was shining, the sea was calm and only a light wind was blowing from the southwest. Some of us were on deck and enjoyed the pleasant sea air.

After lunch we had a short rest as we were still looking for a suitable anchorage for *Sylvia Earle* at de la Guiche Point. Part of the Expedition Team headed off by Zodiac on a scouting mission and to prepare for the first landing ever at this site. How exciting!

Finally, we heard the "ding dong" of the PA System and the first group was invited to the Mudroom to get ready. A wonderful and calm Zodiac drive later, we landed on this remarkable landing point and followed a flagged route to find the memorial plaque of Scottish Arctic explorer John Rae who, in 1854, was the first European to visit the area while mapping the northern coast of North America.

We have learnt a lot about the different expeditions in this part of the world, and under what conditions the ships' crews travelled under back then. So, we are even more grateful for our wonderful galley team, and the tasty dinner which they had prepared. To end this Day 14 of our expedition with style, we went to the lecture room to watch a documentary film partly based on the book 'Fatal Passage' about Sir John Franklin's lost expedition through the Northwest Passage.



Simpson Strait & Terror Bay (King William Island)

DAY 15 | Friday 08 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 68°50.5'N

Longitude: 099°05.8 W

Course: Various courses

Speed: Various speeds

Wind Speed: 4 knots SW

Barometer: 1009

Air Temp: 6°C

Believe you can and you're halfway there.

—Theodore Roosevelt

In the early hours of the morning, *Sylvia Earle* transited through Simpson Strait, a narrow channel between King William Island and mainland Nunavut. This shallow waterway was named for Scottish explorer Thomas Simpson in 1839.

Our expedition plan for this morning was to navigate into Terror Bay, which sits on the southwest corner of King William Island. Aply and serendipitously named, this shallow bay is now home to the infamous wreck of HMS Terror, one of Sir John Franklin's two vessels. Very few expedition-ships venture into this region, and despite its nondescript, flat terrain, we buzzed with excitement at the chance to explore the area which is home to one of the most notable and mystery-ridden shipwrecks in polar history.

Our fleet of Zodiacs began our journey at the southwest corner of Terror Bay where we observed female common eider ducks and tall, narrow cairns built for surveys of the area. We made our way north where we met long-tailed ducks and many adult and juvenile glaucous gulls. As we navigated through extensive shallows, we entered a large bay where we rafted our boats together, roped up alongside and bow to bow.

While we drifted downwind, Bob presented a thoughtful speech connecting our warm, comfortable home on board *Sylvia Earle* to the other "home" that exists in this area, that of HMS Terror, sitting peacefully on the seabed only 3 nautical miles from where we were. Together we listened to Stan Rogers' "Northwest Passage" song, a touching and memorable homage to the plight of Franklin and his men who potentially met their demise on the land that now surrounded us. Our fleet then travelled east, staying well clear of the western edge of the wreck's exclusion zone, to share one final moment bobbing in the same sea as HMS Terror before returning to *Sylvia Earle*.

After lunch, we gathered to learn all about narwhal, the unicorn of the high Arctic from Pierre. He offered a comprehensive look at their biology, past and current behavioural research and cultural ties to Inuit hunting practices. Afterwards, Hans and his cloud groupies waved to their favourite satellite from Deck 8, adding to their data set for NASA's GLOBE Observer program. Soon after, with bellies full of waffles and ice cream, the lecture room was absolutely packed for the final event in Nina's three-part series on Franklin - the "What Went Wrong?" panel discussion, featuring six of our onboard experts sharing their knowledge, insight, and interest into what

may or may not have led to the demise of this famous expedition. From archaeological findings to Inuit testimony and navigational insight, we asked more questions than we found answers, but were left with a sense of excitement and intrigue at what details may be revealed about the fate of this expedition in the decade to come.



Cambridge Bay - Iqaluktuuttiaq

DAY 16 | Saturday 09 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 68°47.2'N

Longitude: 104°41.1'W

Course: 285°

Speed: 8.1 knots

Wind Speed: 23 knots W

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 4°C

Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer.

—Anonymous

Passing Simpson Strait in the night just 120 years after Amundsen, we awoke in the Queen Maud Gulf, continuing westwards towards Victoria Island. As we made distance at sea through the morning, we continued with our education program. Renato gave an excellent talk on photography and was followed by Alex who spoke on the varied geology of the region in which we have been travelling.

Immediately after an early lunch, we arrived at Cambridge Bay. Approximately 1,700 people live in this town which is known in Inuinnaqtun as Iqaluktuuttiaq, which means "place of good fish". The abundant Arctic char have sustained communities here since the pre-Dorset, 4,000 years ago until today. Native copper found in the region has been used for centuries by the Inuit, and historical artefacts seen in museum displays reflected this fascinating technological situation.

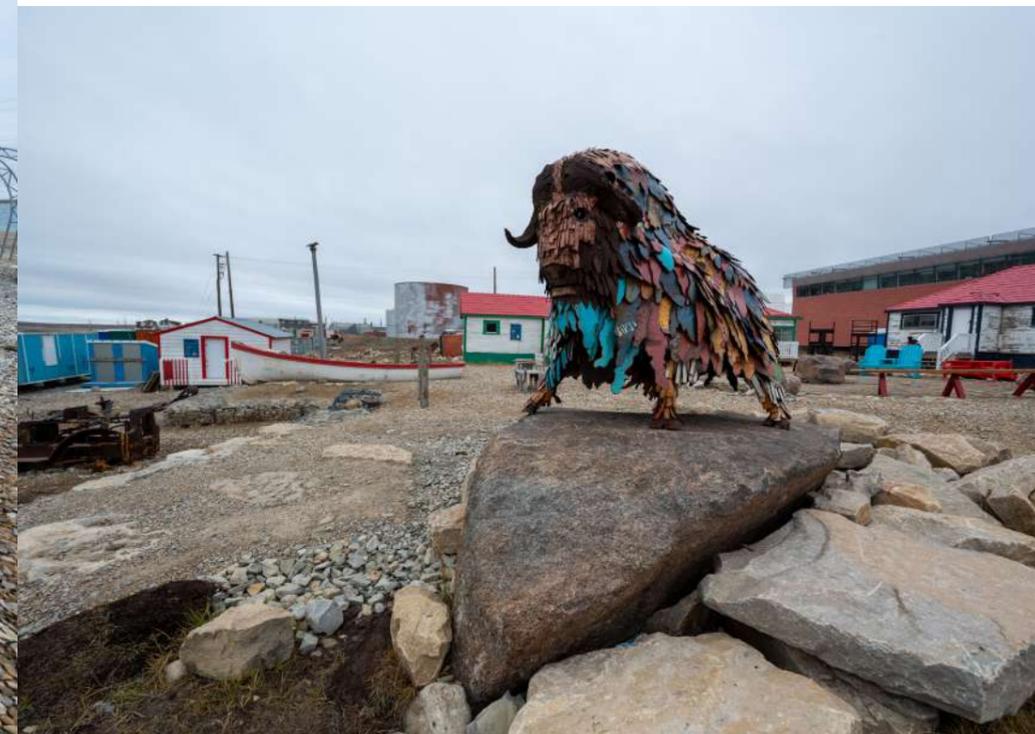
After a quick introduction on shore everyone set out on guided tours. The Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) is located here. A research centre combining western science and Inuit knowledge of the land, construction began in 2014 and today supports a wide range of research needs, from ecosystem monitoring to DNA analysis.

A heritage centre and a local school containing a fascinating museum were also visited as part of the tour. The museum showed evidence of the long presence of people in Cambridge Bay, attracted at the right times of the year by both the Arctic char and by caribou on their migration. In the 1940s and 1950s, the construction of a LORAN (Long Range Navigation) radio navigation system and then a DEW Line (Distant Early Warning) aircraft and missile detection system were built, adding to the Hudson Bay Company and RCMP presence. The new construction brought work and encouraged more permanent settlement instead of the more traditional life on the land which had existed for so long. The LORAN station has gone, replaced by GPS, but the North Warning System, the replacement of the DEW system, still resides in Cambridge Bay.

The Inuit continue to live close to nature, and to accentuate that, as many of us enjoyed local foods including caribou, char, bannock and muktuk, we watched as hunters headed out in their boats in pursuit of a group of belugas which had entered the bay.



Leaving Cambridge Bay, we headed into Dease Strait and continued our quest to complete the Northwest Passage.



Edinburgh Island

DAY 17 | Sunday 09 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 68°37.9'N

Longitude: 109°12.2'W

Course: 109°12.2'W

Speed: 8.6 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots E

Barometer: 1021

Air Temp: 6°C

Traveling is one way of lengthening life, at least in appearance.

—Ralph Wado Emmerson

We spent the morning at sea travelling through Dease Strait into Coronation Gulf. After a delicious breakfast we gathered in the lecture room for a special ship talk by our expedition leader Ashley, Captain Artem and Chief Engineer Luis. We learnt many great facts about our beautiful floating home, the *Sylvia Earle*.

A little later in the morning we met again for a short precap on the afternoon's activities. The plan was to explore Edinburgh Island in different hiking groups. Edinburgh Island is an island south of Victoria Island in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut with an elevation of around 103 metres. It is a former DEW (Distant Early Warning Line) and a current North Warning System (a joint United States and Canadian early warning radar system for the atmospheric air defence of North America) site.

Despite a fresh breeze, we enjoyed a lovely afternoon in the tundra amongst magnificent autumn colours. The long hiking group gained some elevation to a beautiful lookout and spotted a rock ptarmigan along the way. Two medium hiking groups explored the lower parts of the tundra and came across a peregrine falcon – what a special sight.

The short hikers explored the tundra in depth by detailed botanical studies - more than 29 species were identified. They also contributed to our on-going citizen science program by observing clouds as a satellite flew over during our time on shore: all three types of high-level clouds, cirrus, cirrostratus, and cirrocumulus were identified.

We enjoyed a slightly splashy ride back to the ship and everyone warmed up with a nice cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate. We then repositioned the ship a short 10 miles into Johansen Bay. Here, our Expedition Leader Ashley had decided, was the perfect place for our polar plunge. The Expedition Team set up a safe swimming zone quickly and 12 brave (some might call them, "crazy") souls took a refreshing, yet fairly short dip in the frigid waters of the Arctic Ocean.

After dinner, we screened the Canadian sports drama 'The Grizzlies'. The film is based on a true story, about



a youth lacrosse team that was set up to help combat an onslaught of youth suicide in the community of Kugluktuk, Nunavut.

Onwards we sailed towards the west with stormier days ahead. As we drifted into slumber, we kept our fingers crossed for tomorrow's plans to find shelter and land at Port Epworth.

Polar Plunge

DAY 17 | Sunday 09 September



Port Epworth-Kugluktoalok

DAY 18 | Monday 11 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 67°46.1'N

Longitude: 111°58.0'W

Course: 116°

Speed: 8.2 knots

Wind Speed: 9 knots S

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: 12°C

Who controls the past controls the future;
who controls the present controls the past.

—George Orwell

We started the day waking up at anchor in a beautiful bay of Port Epworth (Kugluktoalok). The sun was shining, and the temperature was quite pleasant compared to what we have been used to the last weeks. It was a quite different landscape that greeted us when we got to the shoreline. Bushes and vegetation with beautiful autumn colours and contrasts appeared. In addition, the local inhabitants greeted us - the ground squirrels, birds and finally, mosquitoes!

On land we found a beautiful river and waterfall coming down from a big lake, and without a doubt, a place where the Arctic char thrives. We also found huge numbers of stromatolites. Stromatolites are layered, biochemical, accretionary structures formed in shallow water by the trapping, binding, and cementation of sedimentary grains in biofilms, through the action of certain microbial lifeforms, especially cyanobacteria. Super fascinating even for people that view rocks as just rocks.

After all groups had enjoyed a pleasant walk and the landscape and nature, we headed back to the ship for a quick lunch. On a beautiful day like this we did not want to spend more time onboard than necessary!

Our next landing was just around the corner from the first landing. Still the temperature was pleasant, and the weather was nice. The only thing that in one way was a little unnerving, was the fact that the air was full of smoke from the forest fires many hundred kilometres south from us. This was a scary reminder of what is happening around the world with the change in climate. Again, the ground squirrels greeted us. These nifty little guys are rodents of the squirrel family that generally live on the ground or in burrows, rather than in trees like the tree squirrels. We also met a few ptarmigans that were just hanging out and doing their own thing.

The kayakers and a Zodiac or two went for a little river adventure, while the rest of us enjoyed more walking or simple 'beachcombing' and wildlife watching in the glorious afternoon.



Union Strait

DAY 19 | Tuesday 12 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 68°47.9'N

Longitude: 114°73.2'W

Course: 302°

Speed: 5.6 knots

Wind Speed: 37 knots E

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 4°C

Would you learn the secret of the sea? Only those who brave its dangers, comprehend its mystery!

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

This day was at sea. After an unexpectedly prolonged period of favourable weather, the more usual Arctic conditions returned. The *Sylvia Earle* remained in Dolphin and Union Strait for most of the day, experiencing up to Beaufort Force 7 winds, with several metres of swell in a relatively enclosed waterway. The atmosphere retained a faint odour of smoke from the tundra fires far south and the sky remained overcast. The motion of the ship was relatively comfortable when the wind and swell came from astern but any minor variation to this, and during the occasional change in course, gave the ship's stabilisers much work. It was a day for lectures, some of which had been postponed during the fine days when landings and excursions took precedence. This relatively 'quiet' day was enjoyed by many on board.

From a historical perspective of the Northwest Passage and Sir John Franklin, today marked the day in 1846 when HMS Terror and HMS Erebus had become beset north-west of King William Island.

After breakfast, Lisa gave the first lecture on 'The Long Journey of the Tunit', noting their migrations progressively eastward from Siberia and how they became associated with the Inuit and current boreal Arctic indigenous peoples. It was fascinating to see their journey illustrated with a series of maps, as well as images of the technology of various periods and peoples. Renato spoke before lunch on his specialisation of 'Organising and Editing your Photos' - practical information with so many keen photographers aboard, and a vast number of images needing these processes.

Lunch followed while the boisterous Arctic weather persisted. A 'Citizen Science Hour' began the afternoon's activities, with explanations of our contributions to weather reports. This was followed by practical time with sea-angels and pteropods. Later, Bob spoke on the 'History, Discovery, and Navigation of the Northwest Passage'. This presentation included a list and analysis of the transits from the earliest record until our voyage (although a week remains before our transit will be accomplished). A list of transits was distributed to those who wanted a copy of the record.

Recap followed with descriptions of what had been seen recently. The problems of smoke from a surprising (appalling) number of Canadian forest and tundra fires were illustrated, including the tendency to form deep red sunsets. The briefing of the following day's plans was dependent on weather, which was predicted to remain boisterous. Plans for competitive King Island to Eagle City traverses, along the lines of Roald Amundsen in 1906, were outlined to start at 09:30 in the morning (with Ashley and the Captain participating). Then dinner followed by a film of a long journey across the barren lands of far northern Canada as *Sylvia Earle* resumed a westbound course.



Amundsen Gulf

DAY 20 | Wednesday 13 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°38.4'N

Longitude: 118°36.4'W

Course: 302°

Speed: 8.4 knots

Wind Speed: 23 knots ESE

Barometer: 1009

Air Temp: 5°C

Seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy – myself.

—Inuit Proverb

We kept sailing west through the Amundsen Gulf, towards Smoking Hills, our next destination. Special guest Bob Headland started today's educational program with his talk 'Exploitation of the living resources of the Arctic, hunters and trappers, whalers and sealers'. Bob covered different topics, from biology to anthropology, and onwards to conservation and which products and animals had been exploited over time (whales, walrus, reindeers, musk oxen, polar bears and seals). Some of the wildlife was hunted close to extinction, but now thanks to conservation efforts, most have recovered.

Bob's talk was followed by a camera and binocular clinic with Renato and Pierre. The conversation focussed on camera features, multiple exposure techniques and other tips from Renato. Pierre offered tips on the proper use of binoculars to spot wildlife.

After yet another delicious lunch, Pierre offered another activity 'Citizen Science eBird' in the science lab. That was followed by a presentation from our marine mammal specialist, Annette. Her talk was about 'Whaling then and Conservation now'. She discussed the history of the whaling industry over the centuries, the techniques to catch and process the whales, the products that entered our daily life, the technological advancements that nearly drove entire populations to extinction. In 1930 approximately 40,000 whales were caught globally in a single year. In 1986 a moratorium was introduced, and although most countries signed up, a few have continued the hunt. Today, there are other major challenges whales face, such as ship strikes, noise pollution, and plastic debris, but thanks to a huge conservation effort most of the whales are on the way to recover, some species quicker than others. The giants of the ocean play a key role in fighting climate change, according to new research.

Recap followed, with information shared by several E Team members. Bob gave another brief history talk, Eamon shared some haiku poems, Inuit recipes were presented by Barbara, and Nina provided more historic info on Knud Rasmussen. Geela also described her experience of going hunting for caribou with her father when she was 11 years old. Ashley closed the recap with a briefing for tomorrow, and our intention to visit Smoking Hills. Before dinner, a toast was made for crossing longitude 122°46' West - the longitude at which Amundsen met the other whaling vessel and which is considered the completion of the first Northwest Passage.



Smoking Hills

DAY 21 | Thursday 14 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°57.8'N

Longitude: 126°39.6'W

Course: 273°

Speed: 5.5 knots

Wind Speed: 12 knots E

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: 5°C

Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right

—Inuit Proverb

The name of our destination today already sounded mysterious: "Smoking Hills".

It was intriguing, an area high up in the Canadian Arctic on Cape Bathurst (Awaq). Here, spread randomly along the coast of the cape are areas of oil shale that continuously smoulder, releasing columns of sulfuric dioxide smoke. It gives the Smoking Hills an eerie and ancient scene. The sulfur-rich lignite deposits can self- or auto-ignite causing large plumes of smoke to billow out. The coastline is weathered and erodes naturally, opening more areas that in turn, can ignite when exposed to the air.

The *Sylvia Earle* was positioned a fair distance from the cliffs so we could see a lot of the smoke columns as we approached in our Zodiacs. The swell was a decent one, so the kayak team did not paddle, and cruising in the Zodiacs was a quicker way to see more of the coastline. It was amazing to think that these hills have been smoking constantly for thousands of years. The whole hillside looks charred or cooked. It is noted that caribou will sometimes gather at the top of the hills and use the smoke to rid themselves of mosquitoes.

The afternoon cruise was much the same with spectacular views up and down the coast of the smoking vents. The sun was trying hard to make an appearance, so the light was changing the colours of the cliffs in front of us. On both outings today we had a photography Zodiac with Renato, and a citizen science Zodiac with Annette.

The main difference however with the afternoon session was a hot chocolate Zodiac! Yes, one Zodiac with a large urn was delivering hot chocolates to each Zodiac as they came along side. This floating beverage boat was driven by none other than Captain Artem. He seemed happy to be skipping a smaller and much simpler vessel than the *Sylvia Earle*. What a good surprise.

Back on board we rewarmed, and many of us joined a presentation on climate change, as delivered from a few different people and points of view. More of a discussion than a lecture. The recap was also full of interesting topics - history, mystery and explanations on what we had seen.



Sailing towards Prudhoe Bay

DAY 22 | Friday 15 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 77°25,0'N

Longitude: 132°27.5'W

Course: 270°

Speed: 11,4 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots ESE

Barometer: 948

Air Temp: 5°C

Anything, I eventually learned, is preferable to war; but that knowledge is something every man must learn for himself—usually at considerable expense.

—Kenneth Roberts, Northwest Passage

As dawn's gentle light permeated the expansive Beaufort Sea, the *Sylvia Earle* continued its journey steadily towards Alaska. With no scheduled landings or Zodiac cruises on the horizon, we embraced the prospect of a full day at sea—a restful interlude for some, a day brimming with educational and creative opportunities for others. After a hearty breakfast, Expeditioners gathered in the lecture room for a fascinating presentation from Singh, the Hotel Manager, to gain an insight into the team that fills our bellies and warms our hearts thrice daily.

Next on the schedule was an informative lecture from Bob, a seasoned Arctic researcher and historian, entitled 'Conflicts and Conundrums'. Participants learnt about geopolitical manoeuvres in pursuit of territory and resources, and the evolving significance of the Arctic as sea ice continues to melt.

In the lab, a cohort of budding citizen scientists joined Annette to bring some tiny icefish and zooplankton larvae into focus under the microscope. What an incredible privilege to witness these creatures, whose existence depends on environmental conditions so very different from our own.

After a delectable lunch, several hardy passengers gathered on the mist-swept deck to observe the wispy wonders surrounding the ship. Under the expert tutelage of naturalist Hans, they documented the fog enveloping the ship in a gentle 'Happy International Cloud Appreciation Day!' embrace. Their efforts will aid NASA in understanding the Earth's ever-changing atmosphere and may influence future climate models.

The nature painting and watercolour workshop with Gabby and Bob was both well-attended and much enjoyed. Participants were astonished by the quality of the work they could produce in such a short time under such skilled, patient guidance, and returned to their cabins with masterpieces to be proud of.

The afternoon took a playful yet eerie twist. Drawing inspiration from the tragic story of Franklin's Coppermine expedition, Barbara and Lauren had set up a murder mystery game. For a short time, the observation lounge was transformed into a theatrical scene of 19th-century Arctic exploration, as passengers immersed themselves in the mystery that had consumed so many lives.



Prudhoe Bay (USA)

DAY 23 | Saturday 16 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 71°03,5'N

Longitude: 145°56.1'W

Course: 263°

Speed: 11.5 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots N

Barometer: 997

Air Temp: 4°C

If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.

—Napoleon Hill

The morning was cool, and fog bound, but anticipation was building as we had crossed into Alaskan waters during the night. We were steadily approaching Prudhoe Bay, where an Alaskan pilot planned to join our ship to guide us through these waters. The 'Race to Eagle' event continued, with expeditioners recording many a mile of exercise on the gym's machines, or on deck walks in support of their respective teams.

Three groups of Expeditioners enjoyed a bridge tour where the ship officers informed them of the intricacies of running such a marvellous ship. Meanwhile, keen Expeditioners and Expedition Team members kept a wildlife watch on Observation Deck 8. Kittiwakes were spotted for the first time since we had left Bellot Strait 10 days ago. Observers were also treated to many common and Pacific loons flying across the bow. We were clearly back into productive marine waters and the excitement was palpable.

Bridge tours were followed by two energetic workshops, a writing workshop led by Lauren and Nina and an Inuit Art Workshop with Geela and Lisa.

During lunch, the Prudhoe Bay pilot boat came alongside and delivered our pilot for the remaining journey in the Beaufort Sea, into the Chuckchi Sea and Bering Strait, and onwards to Nome.

A cloud survey and wildlife watch followed lunch. Observers were attentive as changes in the wildlife were expected. Annette also presented another fascinating Citizen Science project called "Walrus from Space", where she demonstrated how to identify and count walrus on land from images obtained by satellite cameras. Expeditioners then enjoyed Gabby and Bob's sketching and painting workshop in the Observation Lounge.

Vigilant wildlife spotters were rewarded when short-tailed shearwaters streamed continuously by the ship around mid-afternoon. Hundreds of them were spotted for what seemed like hours. Later, Geela, Eli and Lisa held a fascinating workshop on Inuit Mythology in the library.

At the end of the day, Hans and other wildlife spotters saw distant bushy whale blows on the port side, indicating the presence of what were most likely bowhead whales. They disappeared as they dove, and we sailed on through the Western Beaufort Sea.

During the afternoon, we had crossed the 150W meridian, and, to celebrate we started the evening with a party in the Tektite Bar. Many songs were sung by celebrants trouped around the piano, while many enjoyed a special cocktail prepared for the occasion or their drink of choice. The winners of the Race to Eagle were announced, the A-Team went first, ending that friendly competition between fellow Expeditioners. The evening ended with Lisa Blaire giving the first "After Dinner Talk" presentation about her experience sailing alone through the Antarctic.



At Sea

DAY 24 | Sunday 17 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 71°79,5'N

Longitude: 158°37.5'W

Course: 243°

Speed: 11.8 knots

Wind Speed: 23 knots N

Barometer: 1000

Air Temp: 4°C

Land was created so boats would have a place to visit.

—Sailor's Wisdom

As the day began, I (Eli) had no idea about what the day would entail. As we progressed into the morning, I (Eli) started preparing for the day ahead, aiming to share something new from my culture that would be beneficial for others to learn. So, the preparation began; I gathered everything together and planned out how it would work.

In my feelings, I had doubts about myself, questioning why I was conducting these workshops with my Aunt. Nevertheless, as everything was prepared, everyone picked their colours to work with. I showed them the design we would work on, and they were all surprised by what they would try to make.

I started handing out needles and thread for them to use. Once we began, I realized that some participants needed glasses to see things closer, and the beads were too small for them to see. I had to find solutions on how to make it work. Then, we started stitching the base of the product.

It was normal for everyone not to know exactly what to expect, and the reality turned out to be different. Mostly, it was a learning opportunity to see how the beads could be created with each participant's own style.

A highlight of the beading session was the realisation by participants that, "I now have so much respect for those who do these kinds of things and the effort they put into it." It's important to note that people from the north and elsewhere make a living out of their creations due to low income or no income, and often high costs for everyday items in the north.

In the mitten-making workshop, Geela was in charge. She checked in with me multiple times to ensure that everyone was sewing and stitching correctly. As she came by, she handed me a sewn paw side and the thumb side, both oversewn. I started laughing because she had every participant sew the same way, and they had to take apart some lines. I had such a good time - the workshops highlighted how good it feels for us to be able to pass on what we do and love.

Later in the day, we had a simple Inuktitut workshop in which a few expeditioners and expedition team members came along to. We all learnt a lot, and it was an enriching experience despite the brevity of the workshop.

We hope everyone enjoyed our efforts to share our culture and our Inuktitut tongue. We are very thankful to have been part of this journey.

Qujannamiik – Thank you,

Eli Qaqissaq



At Sea

DAY 25 | Monday 18 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°03.9'N

Longitude: 166°38.6'W

Course: 220°

Speed: 8.4 knots

Wind Speed: 17 knots NE

Barometer: 998

Air Temp: 5°C

A smooth sea never made a skilful sailor.

—Seafarer’s Wisdom

Awaking in the dark, Bob greeted the late autumn sunrise with a fascinating talk on the Russian aspects of the Arctic. This was followed by a range of workshops, on towel folding (with a cute crab included), plant identification and journaling.

The workshops continued immediately after lunch, with sessions on painting and citizen science, followed by a talk by Lisa on her sailing trips.

Recap was immediately preceded by a sighting of a large group of grey whales. During recap we turned around and arrived back at the whales as the talks finished. We drove slowly past the concentration as they swam and fluked, watching their activity. The heavy markings all over their bodies betray their habit of feeding on the sea bed, where they take great mouthfuls of sediment with invertebrates mixed in. At the surface we were amazed to see clouds of sediment surrounding their bodies as they forced it out through the short baleen, keeping back the food in their mouths to swallow.

Extirpated by humans from the Atlantic Ocean by the 18th century, a population still exists in the Pacific. Since the 1980s the gray whale appears to have been expanding its range as Arctic sea ice reduces, allowing access to the abundant shallow waters of the Alaskan and Russian coasts. In 2010 a gray whale was seen in the Mediterranean Sea, believed to have swum the Northwest Passage in the wake of the cripplingly low sea extent of 2007. Genetic analysis of grey whale remains suggests that the historic population in the Atlantic Ocean was related to waves of dispersion from the Pacific Ocean via the newly opened Bering Strait at the end of the last glacial period. The whales we saw were in their northern breeding grounds but will soon be heading south to Baja where they will condition their skin and produce their calves.



Bering Strait, Diomedede Islands & Ugiuvak (King Island)

DAY 26 | Tuesday 19 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 65°55.2'N

Longitude: 168°28.5'W

Course: 220°

Speed: 7.9 knots

Wind Speed: 24 knots NW

Barometer: 1003

Air Temp: 7°C

Ships were lost and brave people were killed, but that doesn’t mean we never went back to that part of the world again, and I consider it the same in space exploration.

—John L. Phillips

“Ding-Dong!” Bob’s dulcet wake-up and wisdom-filled voice echoed through the halls, announcing that we have departed the Chukchi Sea and entered the Bering Strait, marking the completion of our Northwest Passage. There have now been 390 complete journeys, and alphabetically, the *Sylvia Earle* is number 383, with 31 ships accomplishing this feat in 2023.

Mixed emotions flooded over us — feeling honoured to have been able to participate in this monumental undertaking, as well as sadness that it must now come to an end. This has been a bucket list item of many of the Expeditioners for so many years now and the experience was, in fact, so different from what our expectations had been. But that is why we travel, right? It doesn’t matter how many books we read, how many documentaries we watch, how many others’ first-person accounts we hear. For us to follow in the wake of, and walk in the footsteps of the native peoples, the early explorers, the myriad critters who call the Arctic home brings it all to life.

We attempt to process the vastness, the beauty, the solitude, the starkness, and to imagine how we as humans would interact with this landscape. An overwhelming appreciation of the ingenuity of the Inuit and those explorers that respected the concept of “oneness” with nature as opposed to an adversarial approach.

We ship-cruised an arm’s length away from Russia to our port with Big Diomedede, while appreciating the dramatic autumn hues of Little Diomedede to our starboard. Still recovering from our grey whale encounter of the previous evening, we witnessed the contribution of the Pacific Ocean mingling with the Arctic Ocean in this incredible profusion of life. Tufted puffins, horned puffins, crested auklet, Kittliz’s murrelet, swarms of kittiwakes and short-tailed shearwaters. . . oh my!

Then some blows near the turbulent tip of Little Diomedede, and we were reunited with the “Big-winged New Englanders” . . . aka the humpback whales, likely feasting on schools of capelin. As we departed the islands, the E-Team busied themselves with inventories, cleaning gear, and putting away Muck Boots and dry suits in the mudroom.

As we neared the abandoned stilt village, Ugiuvak, of the hardy Asiuluk (People of the Sea) Inupiat, spotted seals (another new species!) were seen on the shoreline. A scan of the island revealed puffin burrows and clouds of flying puffins. The rock formations dazzled as cameras attempted to capture the stunning scenery in the dramatic lighting.

Captain Artem gave a heartfelt and hilarious farewell prior to dinner as we all showed our appreciation for the incredibly hard-working staff and crew. After dinner, Bob dusted off the auction as beautiful and unique items were sold to the highest bidders to support the very worthy cause of the Polar Collective. A great night was had by all, and much guffawing was heard emanating from the Tektite Bar until late in the evening.



Nome - Alaska

DAY 27 | Wednesday 20 September

Position at 0700

Latitude: 64°50,6'N

Longitude: 165°40.8'W

Course: 180°

Speed: 7.5 knots

Wind Speed: 7.5 knots N

Barometer: 1003

Air Temp: 5°C

Arrogance and ignorance. Yet we were allowed through. The five months we were underway gave us memories, sights, and feelings that no encounter I can conjure ever could. I am humbled and blessed and forever I'll carry with me the blessings that were heaped upon me, upon us, during our transit of the Northwest Passage that summer of 2009.

—Sprague Theobald

Today we woke up with beautiful memories of the magnificent aurora borealis we spotted during the night. Amazing! With a beautiful sunrise, Alaska and the harbour of Nome gave us a special welcome. After our breakfast, we assembled in the lecture room to hear from Barbara what the day would bring us, and the plans for disembarkation.

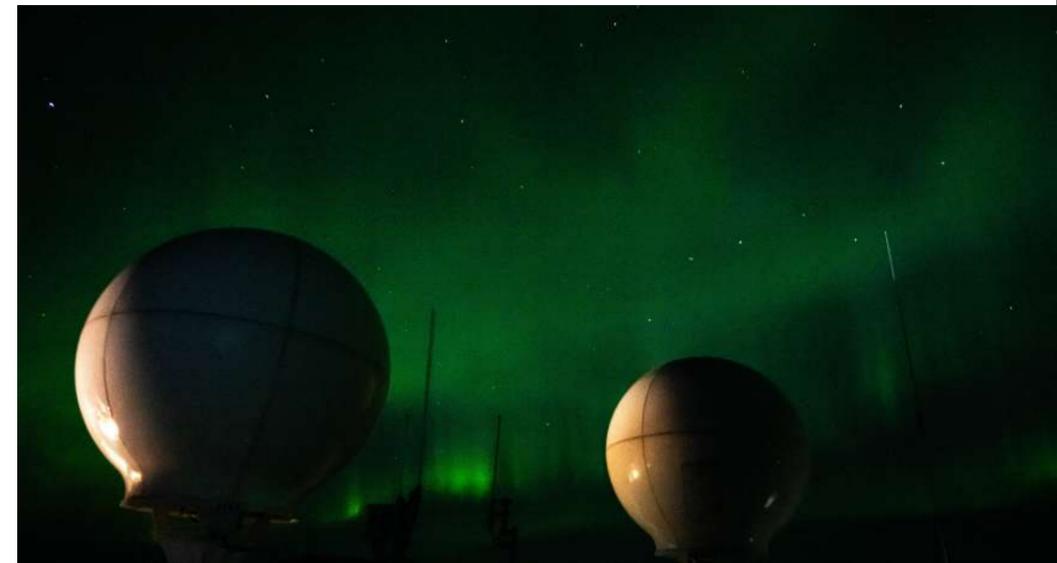
We then met with the US customs officials, who wanted to check us face-to-face, and see our passports accordingly. Everything went very smoothly so we could leave the ship - this time via the gangway on Deck 4 and not via the Mudroom! How unusual after so many weeks to be without Muck Boots, lifejackets and all the other gear worn for our Zodiac shuttles.

A big group of us enjoyed stretching our legs, and had a good walk from the newly built pier, called City Dock, into the centre of Nome. Others took the opportunity to hop on the minivan, driven by a charming local lady, to reach the city very quickly.

At the visitor centre, the church and the museum - in fact everywhere we went – we were greeted by friendly locals who wanted to chat with us and welcome us personally. Some of us visited the cemetery where there were rumours that muskox was to be seen – and this in the middle of town!

A little exhausted, the walk from the centre to the pier was almost 2 miles, but satisfied, we returned to the ship and relaxed with a good cup of afternoon tea.

During cocktail hour, Expedition Leader Ashley and the whole Expedition Team called us into the lounge to say goodbye and to reflect on this very special voyage together. At the end, Renato showed us his final masterpiece



-the voyage slide show. We were able to review our journey with a collection of wonderful photos and memories. Fortunately, we will receive this slideshow digitally, when we are at home.

After a relaxed Farewell Dinner, we started to pack our bags and get prepared to leave our home of the last month. It will be a challenge to get back to reality again!



Nome - Alaska

DAY 27 | Wednesday 20 September

Aurora Expeditions sends out a big thank you to you all for your great humour, infectious enthusiasm and smiling faces. It was a pleasure having you all on board and being able to share some of the pleasures that Northwest Passage had to offer. May your memories live long and bright.



Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Vanja, Gabby & Eamon

Number of Paddlers: 18

Total Paddle Outings: 15

Total Distance Paddled: 86,4 km

Paddlers:		
Dave Kalman	Ingrid Magryn	Ronald Chik
Shelby Ann Kalman	Lisa Blair	Peter Ormond
Thomas Reynolds	Lynne Tonti	Ian Clare
Mariluz Villa	Michael Rogers	Loris Higgins
Robin Wood	Esther Rogers	Julian Waters
Michael Romano	George Percy	
	Gillian Percy	

Sunday 27th Aug | Ilullissat

Distance 8 km

Our first chance to paddle today, but as there was also a lot to see onshore, we had a small group on the water. The wind had dropped to about 9 knots, and we found a sheltered little bay to get in the kayaks. Cruising along the coast we had to watch out for fast local boats buzzing in and out of the harbour. We also had other obstacles today, whales. At first one at the aft of the ship, a fin whale cruising along, then humpbacks; quite a lot of humpbacks around us feeding in small groups. We stayed together and watched from a distance as they lunged and dove about. It was a spectacular sight and sound. Those that were hoping to get close to nature, had that wish granted on Day one. We returned to the ship and all of us saw more whales that evening from the ship's decks, probably some of the same ones.

Monday 28th Aug | Ataa Sund

Distance 6.8 km

Nobody wanted to miss out on a great kayak experience today, we were all out on the water. Today we would be chasing the ship, sort of. It repositioned about 12kms further in Ataa Sund. We had some briefings for the whole team and then set off to paddle along the coastline of the sound. The formations and colours of the rock here are strikingly beautiful. We cruised past some big sculptural icebergs that presumably were from the glacier at the head of the sound. Across the other side a very tall waterfall ran down the cliff face. Conditions were perfect and calm. We could have stayed longer but the ship was awaiting our return. We all jumped into two Zodiacs to cover the kilometres we had left.

Tuesday 29th Aug | Qikiqtarjuaq

Distance 7.96 km

A bit of wind as we left the ship but otherwise good sunny conditions. Most of us opted to see the community from the water instead of touring on land. It was a good choice; the waters were clear and calm beside the town and deceptively tropical coloured. We hugged the shore and observed life here. As we drifted by, we drifted by, locals waved at us, and I hope admired our kayaking. After seeing the edges of town, we turned back to check out the one lonely iceberg that was in this strait. That done, we glided back to the ship, happy.

Wednesday 30th Aug | Sam Ford Fjord

Distance 9.65 km

Every direction we looked in was spectacular here in Sam Ford Fjord. Some choppy water as we departed from the ship, but we soon found shelter under the enormous cliffs, soaring hundreds of metres vertically above us. To add to the scenery, a fresh dusting of snow was on each ledge. Great ravines and cracks sometimes shot all the way to the top. Naturally the birds loved nesting here. We stayed a good distance away from the cliffs in case of rockfall, but we also needed to, to get the view to the top. Across the Fjord, snow capped mountains loomed above more cliffs. We passed the remains of an Inuit camp, tent circle rocks all that remained. Streams of water rushed down the rocks and cliffs - we wanted to drink it. We ended our paddle just as we heard the report of a polar bear seen swimming in the water way ahead of us. Luckily, we were safely in the Zodiacs when we learnt this.

Friday 1st Sept | Cape Hay (Bylot Island)

Distance 4.8 km

We had seen huge cliffs and birds before on Wednesday, but this was bird nesting on the next level. The cliffs of Cape Hay are a bird sanctuary. We had strict distances and speeds to adhere to. Easy enough in a kayak. The cliffs here initially were shale but then changed to basalt columns and it was there that the birds nested in their thousands. Thick-billed murre, kittiwakes and guillemots mostly, and ravens and a falcon were spotted also. The end point was a big waterfall tumbling into the sea. The ship had moved so we had to jump into Zodiacs to get back to it and our awaiting lunch.

Saturday 2nd Sept | Croker Bay

Distance 6.43 km

A calm sunny outing today. Gliding off the back of the ship there was a bit of rolling swell, but it was calmer as we neared the glacier. On a sunny day like this anything can happen paddling near a glacier, so we kept our distance. The ice walls jutted out precariously and teased us with a potential calving, but alas it was pretty quiet today. We rounded a medium iceberg and heard on the radio that there was a polar bear in the area, but it turned out to be very far away and probably sleeping way up in a valley. Not for us. We kayaked back along the glacier to the brash ice behind the ship before finishing the outing. Short but sweet.

Sunday 3rd Sept | Radstock Bay

Distance 3.13 km

We were going to paddle and land for a short stroll but, there were at least three polar bears there before us. They had booked the site as well maybe. So, we watched them from the ship and decided we would paddle in a different area nearby. We towed the kayaks a long way against the wind, and we spotted another bear, or it was maybe the same male bear that was walking away from the first sighting. We watched from the Zodiacs for a while with binoculars, then decided we wanted to paddle. With the wind behind us the team flew towards the high imposing Caswell Tower. Below the tower we drifted and saw a raven circling up high while other birds, kittiwakes, nested in the cracks. As we headed back to the ship the wind was now at our side and made the return a bit of an effort. But the workout was appreciated by most. That night we had BBQ dinner and more polar bears wandered the shore eating their own seal meals.

Monday 4th Sept | Maxwell Bay

Distance 9.65 km

Perfect conditions for a paddle, so we launched from the anchored *Sylvia Earle*. Surrounded by very high walls, Maxwell Bay is like a protected lagoon. The bay is very shallow, which made it popular with birds feeding on the rich waters and, something we had not yet seen, Arctic kelp. The shallow water and calm location were perfect for a large bed of beautifully coloured kelp. The bay also was home to a bearded seal that watched us cautiously, occasionally popping up to watch our progress. One gull in particular was not happy about our presence and kept swooping at us, even though we were a long way from any nests that may be high above. This was a super tranquil paddle, half the group landed for a stroll while the others soaked up the serenity on water.

Tuesday 5th Sept | Prince Leopold Island

Distance 2.9 km

We could see how enormous the cliffs of Prince Leopold Island were from the Zodiac as we approached, but it was only when we were at the base of them paddling along that we could appreciate the scale. Huge, along with the sound of tens of thousands of nesting birds here in this sanctuary. Kittiwakes, auks, gulls, fulmars, guillemots and more. We paddled slowly as we craned our necks skyward. The cliffs gave us protection from the wind, but that was short lived, and the distance was compact. We returned to the ship in awe of this magic spot.

Wednesday 6th Sept | Hazard Inlet

Distance 5.47 km

We were always going to land at the site in Hazard Inlet. It is an amazing archaeological site that has the remains of many Inuit houses and graves. To get there, we paddled. The feeling of paddling into an Inuit camp in kayaks is special, it's an honour. The group of about 12 of us hugged the shoreline looking out for any animals along the way. The water was clear, and a slight wind was at our backs. Eventually arriving at the site, we walked among

the significant ruins of the camp. The location was stunning. It was a perfect spot for dwellings with a great view. Archaeologist Lisa led us around and explained what we were looking at. She was the most excited out of all of us. We towed our kayaks back to the ship just as the wind started to increase. An impressive landing.

Thursday 7th Sept | De La Guiche Point

Distance 4.8 km

The sea floor near this landing site was shallow and rocky, so the ship anchored a long way out. This meant we towed all our kayaks in and would launch from the beach. Easier said than done in polar bear country. We did land briefly and headed out through the small waves to start our paddle. It was a short paddle to the main landing site where there was a memorial plaque to the explorer John Rae placed in 1999. It was here that Rae discovered the final waterway link to join all the waterways in the NW Passage. He named it Rae Strait. Some of the kayakers walked up to the plaque on this barren landscape while the other spent a little more time in their boats.

Friday 8th Sept | Terror Bay

Distance 4.9 km

Another historical paddle outing today. We were kayaking along the site of King William Island, not too far from where one of Franklin's ships, the Terror, was located. At first glance it was more polar desert and featureless coast-line but, knowing that inland there somewhere are still the remains of the men from that fated expedition made it a sombre and haunting outing. Ashley, our Expedition Leader joined us today and delivered a reading to mark the occasion. Our paddle destinations were some striking inukshuks on the point in the distance. They were eerie and stood out in the plain landscape. We played in some swell around a point and returned to the ship via Zodiac, with kayaks in tow.

Sunday 10th Sept | Edinburgh Island

Distance 2.25 km

We almost did not paddle. The wind was pretty strong and gusting, the sea looked choppy, but with luck we found a cove just sheltered enough for us to enter our kayaks, which I must say we were getting very good at doing from the Zodiac. Once on the water though, the wind swept us swiftly towards the landing site. I think the paddles were rarely used or needed. Some rocks to dodge and paddle through and very pretty landscape scattered with bones and parts of an old wooden boat. With the kayaking over too soon, we spent some time wandering around the site which was full of wildflowers, lichens, mosses, bones and algae. A short but worthwhile paddle.

Monday 11th Sept | Port Epworth

Distance 4.2 km

The sunrise coming into this bay was stunning this morning, it was going to be a great day. Our first paddle did not disappoint. We could not see the main group landing site but we were keen to kayak to it. After passing small rocky islands we cruised the rocky shoreline where some were lucky to see an arctic hare. Next, we spotted a few ptarmigans up the hill and nestling in the shrubs close to the waters edge. After the arid landscapes we had been in, the colours of the plants, flowers and rocks was very pleasant. Once at the landing site we had time to walk up the hill for a view. On the rocks, ancient stromatolites were everywhere. So many and so amazing. Gabby explained what they did to help shape life on earth as we know it. We were walking on billions of years of history. A ground squirrel appeared nearby - maybe wondering where all these weird creatures came from. We trekked a little further up to a lake view and the waterfall flowing off it. A very beautiful outing all round.

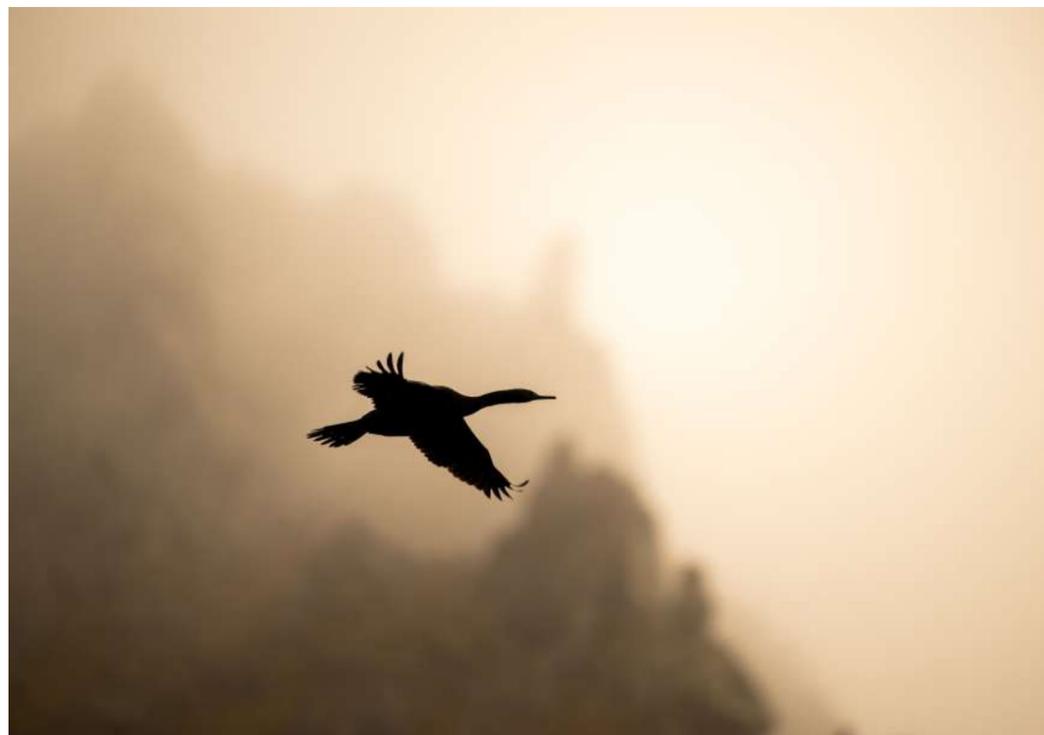
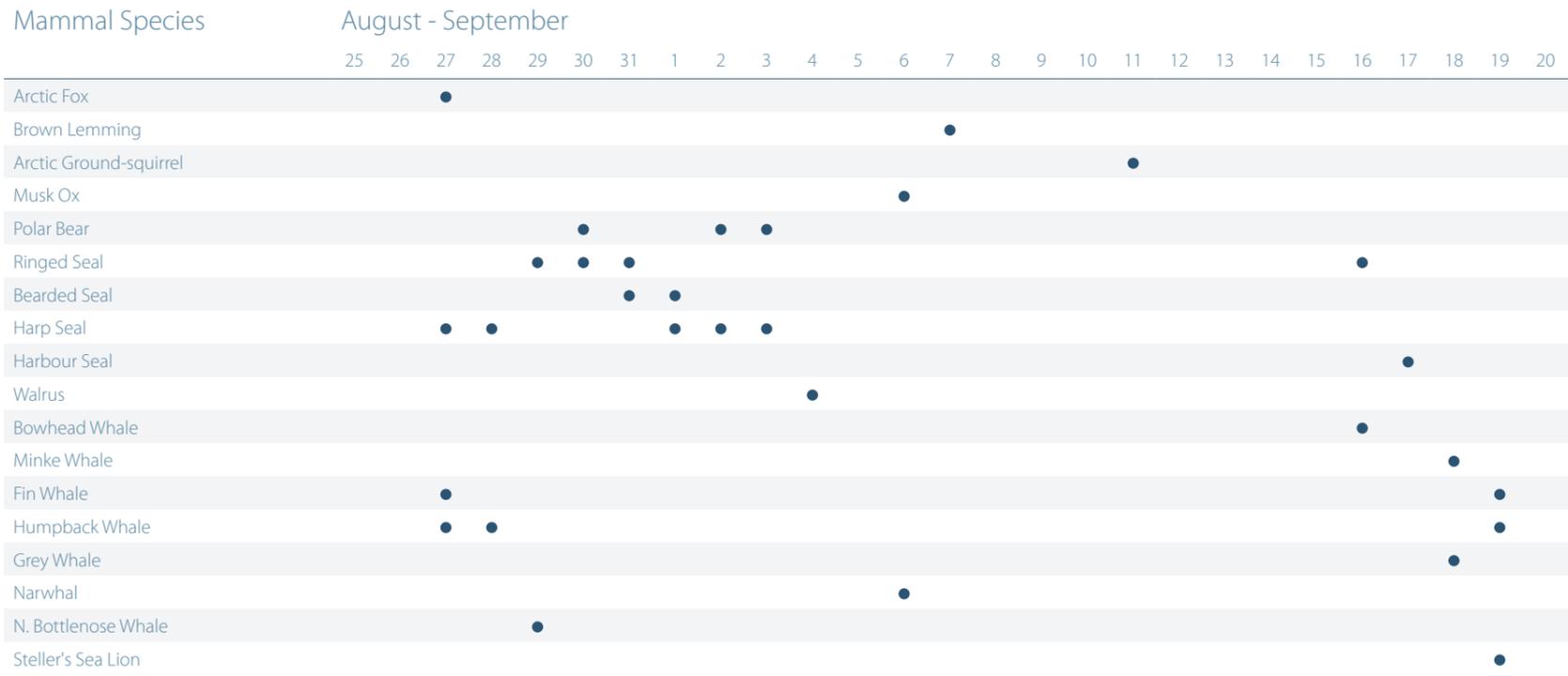
Monday 11th Sept | Tree River

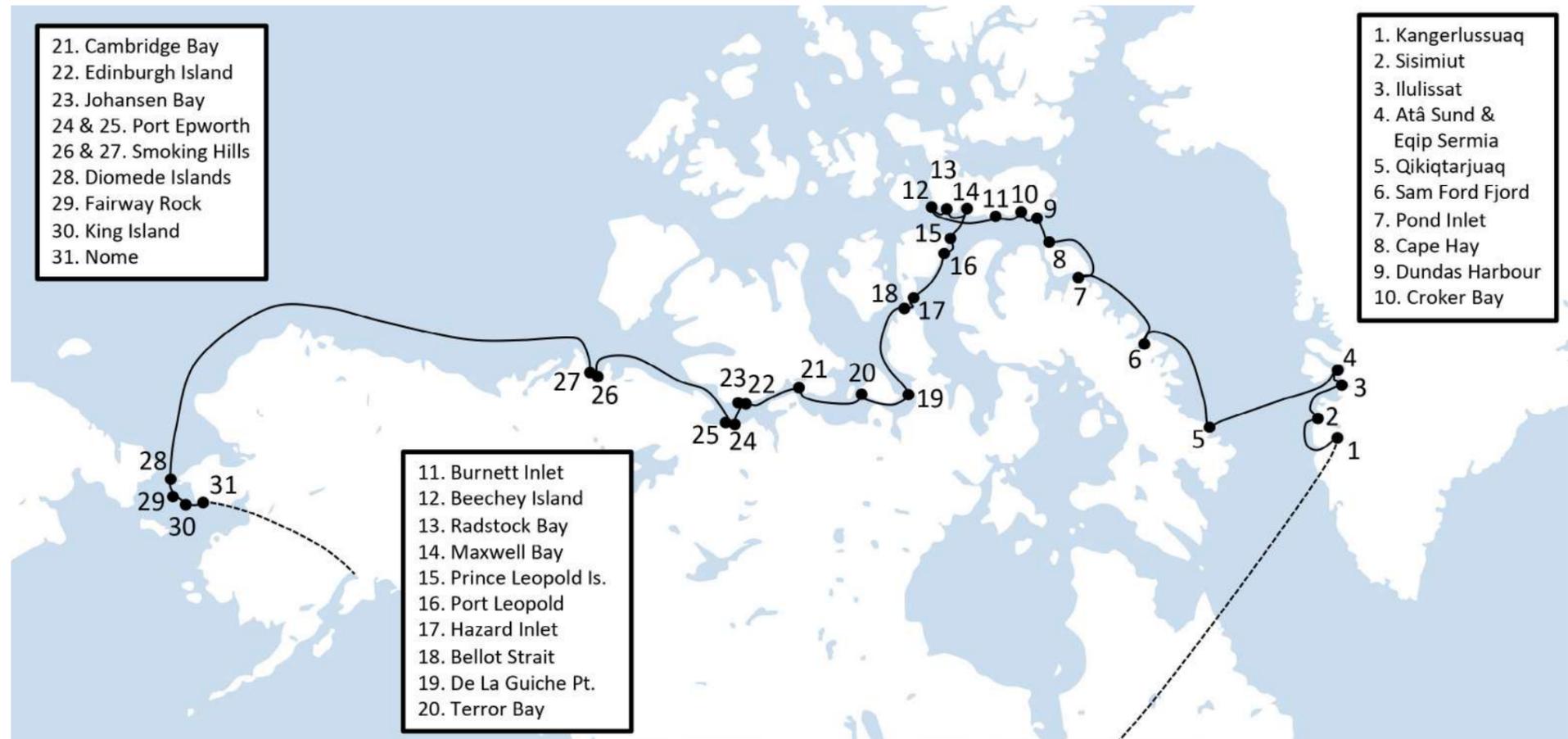
Distance 5.74 km

From leaving the ship we could make out the silhouette of a tall lone sentry on the ridgeline. It was Nils standing overwatch of the site and all below. We had not moved the ship from this morning but had paddled into another arm of Port Epworth. We took the opportunity on this outing to raft up and consider all the different places we had kayaked so far. We had a toast on the water, which was very delicious. Continuing, we started to enter the mouth of the Tree River, which was a long river reaching deep into the Canadian North. As we started to feel the effects of its current, we turned back and were then collected by a couple of Zodiacs and brought to shore or to the ship. A short walk on land where we met another squirrel and stumbled onto the grave of Otto Binder, a Hudson Bay Company employee who was caught up in a sad drama of murder and misfortune. Returning to the ship, we realised there was still so much to learn and explore in this remote but starkly beautiful place.



Mammal Sightings







Expeditioners:

Danny Cocks

Christine Cocks

Hans Scherbauer

Claudia Scherbauer

Horst Koberich

Elisabeth Bennett

Karen Branyan

William Branyan

Foo Chik Ki

Michael Romano

Steven Ransome

Miranda Ransome

Denise Ellis

Billy Ellis

Christian Lund

David Kalman

Shelby Kalman

Sandra Terauds

Peter Ormond

Wendy Mackie

Thomas Mackie

Helen Frederick

George Percy

Gillian Percy

David Hole

Lisa Blair

Ian Clare

Loris Higgins

Judith Browne

Andrew Browne

Richard Lucas

Ann Young

Dirk Selderyk

Marie Villa

Thomas Reynolds

Paul Chapman

Clive Waters

Sara Dickinson

David Dickinson

Esther Rogers

Michael Rogers

Graham Ezzy

Leanne Ezzy

Sylvia Milnes

Alan Milnes

Julie Cronin

Jody Kerr

Alun Webber

Lynne Tonti

Peter Ramsden

Ian Pakes

Dianne Pakes

Heather Wheat

Lindsay Doig

Peter Wundersitz

Mary Galavan

Jeffrey Foote

Anne Foote

Sohail Ahmed

Robin Wood

Dianne Brealey

Jennifer Stevens

Peter Clayton

Lesley Brooke

Paul Spillmann

Jens Hoybye

Carol Minns

Alden Stout

Edward Weigel

Richard Lee

Patricia Neal

Patricia Watson

Ingrid Magryn

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Ashley Perrin
Assistant Expedition Leader: Lauren Farmer
Onboard Expedition Manager: Barbara Ostwalt
Naturalist & CS Coordinator: Annette Bombusch
Biologist: Pierre Richard
Local Guide (Cultural Specialist): Geela Qaqqasiq
Historian: Nina Gallo
Archaeologist: Lisa Rankins
Firearms Manager: Nils Egeland
Photography Guide: Renato Graniere
Expedition Medic: Hans Brunning
Lead Kayak Guide: Eamon Larkin
Kayak Guide: Vanja Davidson
Kayak Guide: Gabby Bruce
Enrichment Specialist: Bob Headland
Onboard Expedition Assistant: Flor Torti

Expedition Team:

Community Ambassador Special Guest: Eli Qaqqasiq

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Artem Kolmykov
Chief Officer: Konstantinos Giannopoulos
Second Officer: Matko Zagorac
Safety Officer: Sergio Saldana Hernandez
Ship Doctor: Gino Tiraboschi
Chief Engineer: Luis Gil
First Engineer: Warlito Versoza
IT Officer: Nathaniel Vibares
Hotel Director: Balvant Singh
Head Bartender: Restlie Dimasaka Baldemor
Head Waiter: Roswald Esguerra
Chief Purser: Mark Walsh
Executive Chef: Suresh Pai Karkala
Sous Chef: I Gusti Ketut Purnawirawan
Hotel Controller: Rey Satuito Nolasco
Receptionist: Jonalyn Rivera Ecija
Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska
Head Steward: Eka Saptia
Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan
Able Seaman: Anthony John Narvaez Brosas
Able Seaman: Eduardo Caranoo Aloyan
Able Seaman: Bahar Buhari
Able Seaman: Rajiv Mahajan Rauniyar
Able Seaman: Luis Fernando Alvarez Santos
Able Seaman: Ferdy Noel Diaz Roque

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