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***Wager Bay, Northwest Territories, An  
Assessment Of Visitor Activities And Visitor  
Perceptions***

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***Author: Robin Karpan/arlene Karpan***

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# WAGER BAY, Northwest Territories

## An Assessment of Visitor Activities and Visitor Perceptions

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Prepared for Canadian Parks Service

Prepared by:

Robin Karpan and Arlene Karpan  
Writing, Photography, Tourism Industry Consulting  
639 - 6th Street East  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7H 1C3  
Phone & Fax: (306) 242-7731

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# CONTENTS

<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT</b> .....	1
<b>WHERE VISITORS ARE FROM</b> .....	1
<b>VISITOR ACTIVITIES</b> .....	2
Boat Excursions .....	2
Douglas Harbour .....	3
Douglas Harbour/Savage Islands .....	4
Bennett Bay .....	4
Bennett Bay/West Arm of Wager Bay .....	5
South Shore/Paliak Islands .....	5
Ford Lake .....	5
Hiking .....	6
Upper Falls/Falcon Gorge .....	6
First or Second Falls - West Side of River .....	7
First or Second Falls - East Side of River .....	8
Inland Lakes .....	8
North-west of Falls .....	8
The Peninsula .....	9
Observing and Photographing Wildlife .....	9
Fishing .....	11
Visiting Historic and Pre-Historic Sites .....	11
Learning About the Inuit Way of Life .....	12
How Activities are Arranged .....	13
<b>VISITOR PERCEPTIONS</b> .....	13
What did Visitors Expect to Find? .....	13
What were Visitors Surprised to Find? .....	14
What were the Most Popular Activities? .....	14
Which Activities Best Lived Up to Expectations? .....	15
Polar Bear Viewing and Photography .....	15
Bird Watching and Photography .....	16
Hiking .....	16
Fishing .....	16
How do Different Visitor Segments Perceive Wager Bay? .....	17
Wildlife Photographers .....	18
Naturalists .....	18
General Tourists .....	19
How does the Time of Year Affect Perceptions? .....	20
How do Inuit Guides Perceive Visitor Activities? .....	21

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to indicate who visits Wager Bay, where they come from, why they come, what they expect to find, what they do at Wager Bay, and whether or not they are satisfied with what they find.

The report is intended to assist Canadian Parks Service researchers in developing a proposal for a national park in Wager Bay.

This report is based on our experiences, observations and interviews at Sila Lodge in July, 1989, and July/August, 1991. We interviewed a cross section of visitors, leaders of tour groups, lodge staff and guides, and owners of Frontiers North, the tour company which handles all bookings for the lodge.

Numbers of visitors and where they come from are based on data supplied by Frontiers North.

## WHERE VISITORS ARE FROM

According to Frontiers North, the following visitors came to Sila Lodge in the past three years:

1989	Total visitors .....	22
	United States .....	12
	Canada .....	10
1990	Total visitors .....	36
	United States .....	28
	Canada .....	8

1991	Total visitors . . . . .	58
	United States . . . . .	44
	Canada . . . . .	4
	United Kingdom . . . . .	7
	Australia . . . . .	2
	France . . . . .	1

A breakdown is not available for provinces and states. Visitors from the United States have come from throughout the country with a high number from high population areas such as New York, Chicago and California.

The majority of visitors come on 10-day trips with some coming on 7-day trips. Based on data available thus far, there does not seem to be a correlation between the length of stay and where visitors come from.

## VISITOR ACTIVITIES

### BOAT EXCURSIONS

The main visitor activity at Sila Lodge is boat excursions. As a general rule, boat trips operate most days, weather permitting. Alternative activities such as hiking are often scheduled for days when the weather does not permit boat travel.

Scheduling of boat trips also depends on the tide. The lodge is located at the mouth of the Sila River which is affected by the tide. Launching and landing boats becomes difficult during low water.

Boat trips have several objectives, with the most important being finding and photographing polar bears. A polar bear may be followed when it is found swimming between ice floes, between islands or towards shore. Remaining in

the boat, visitors photograph the bear as it emerges from the water, shakes the water off itself, and climbs the rocky shore. While ice is in the bay, a bear will often run across a floe and dive off the other side.

Although bear watching is considered the high point of boat trips, there are stops at or near bird rookeries and nesting sites, archaeological sites, waterfalls and rivers, or attractive areas to take short hikes. There is always a stop for a shore lunch (or sometimes a stop for lunch on an ice floe), usually followed by exploring nearby on foot. The shore lunch usually consists of sandwiches, fruit and other cold food, supplemented by freshly made bannock and hot tea.

Generally, two or three boat will travel together. When travelling among islands, boats will go on different sides, signaling to the others if bears or other wildlife are spotted.

Over the course of a group's seven or ten day stay, an effort is made to take trips to as many different parts of the bay as possible.

The following are some of the more common routes for boat trips after the ice is out of the bay. These are not formalized routes, but rather a general framework for trips. Routes are often altered because of weather conditions, to take account of special interests of a group, or the movement of polar bears around the bay.

#### **1) Douglas Harbour**

The boats head south-east along the north shore of the bay, then weave through the nearby islands looking for bears. There is usually a stop at a gull rookery on a cliff face near Douglas Harbour, which guests photograph from the

boat. The boats might go part way into Douglas Harbour or continue farther south-east along the shore.

A popular lunch stop is on a low rocky point near Douglas Harbour which is especially rich in tent rings and other archaeological features. After lunch visitors explore the archaeological site, and the more active explore the nearby cliffs which offer excellent views across the bay. The cliffs show evidence of peregrine falcons having nested here, and we found a number of ptarmigan nearby. The stop might last for two hours or more depending upon the interests of the group.

## **2) Douglas Harbour / Savage Islands**

The trip might include some of the same route as above, then continue farther to the Savage Islands to look for bears. A stop might be made at Nuvudlik Island to see the remains of the Roman Catholic mission building.

The return trip might be back along the north shore, with an alternative being to cross to the south shore, then stop at or near the Paliak Islands before heading back to the lodge.

## **3) Bennett Bay**

Boats will circulate among the islands between the lodge and Bennett Bay. While the main objective here is finding polar bears, this is also a rich area for birdlife. A major stop is Guillemot Island, named for the large number of black guillemots that nest here. The cliffs on the island are also a favourite with nesting peregrines. As the island is quite large, there is often a chance of seeing and photographing caribou.

#### **4) Bennett Bay / West Arm of Wager Bay**

A trip to Bennett Bay might be combined with a longer trip to the western arm of Wager Bay which leads towards Ford Lake. Islands here might have polar bears. A popular lunch stop is at the remains of an historic snow machine, made of curious-looking corkscrew-shaped tracks.

#### **5) South Shore / Paliak Islands**

The boats usually head straight across the bay to the south shore. The appealing part of this trip is the dramatic scenery of high cliffs and several waterfalls. One major gull rookery on the cliff face can be easily seen from the boats. There's a good chance of seeing bears along the south shore or near the Paliak Islands.

A popular stop is at the river mouth immediately west of the Paliak Islands where there are dramatic rocky cliffs, spectacular rapids and good fishing just below the rapids.

#### **6) Ford Lake**

Trips are usually timed to cross Reversing Falls when the water in the bay and Ford Lake are more or less equal. Near the falls, the boats will usually pass very close to a gull rookery which covers a low, rocky island. Once in Ford Lake, a stop might be made near a peregrine nesting site high on the face of a cliff on the north shore.

The destination is the abandoned Hudson's Bay Company post on the narrow arm of the north shore of Ford Lake. Visitors explore the remains of the post. Their visit is enhanced when John Tatty is along to relate the story of his grandfather, known as "Inuit Dick", who ran the post for many years, and to tell of the winter Tatty and his family spent at the lonely post.



Another highlight of the trip is returning through Reversing Falls. If the tide is outgoing and water is pouring out of the lake into the bay, the stretch of white water makes for quite an exciting ride.

## **HIKING**

Hiking is the main visitor activity after boat excursions. It provides the opportunity to view and photograph wildlife other than polar bears, photograph scenery, explore archaeological sites, do some fishing, and generally enjoy being on the tundra.

There are good hiking opportunities throughout the bay. Short hikes are often combined with boat trips while longer all-day hikes are usually done in the hills behind the lodge. Hikers are accompanied by guides who carry firearms or other forms of deterrent in case of a polar bear encounter.

Hikes vary in length and duration according to the interests of the group and their physical condition. A longer hike may leave after breakfast and return in late afternoon or even early evening.

The following are some of the popular hikes leaving from Sila Lodge. There are no "trails" as such. The routes are loosely defined and are often varied.

### **1) Upper Falls / Falcon Gorge**

Originating in the hills north of Sila Lodge, the Sila River twists and turns and plunges over a series of falls before emptying into the bay in front of the lodge. The most popular all-day hike is to cross to the west side of the river by boat, then head almost due north, crossing a series of broad valleys and increasingly higher hills with sweeping views of the bay. Tents rings dot many of these

hill tops, and there are usually caribou nearby. For most of the morning, hikers are well away from the river which curves farther to the east.

After two to three hours, hikers arrive at the uppermost series of waterfalls on the Sila River, where it empties into a gorge. This is the favourite place to stop for lunch. Some visitors try fishing in the pool just above the falls.

The most scenic part of the hike is the walk back along the river. Just downstream is Falcon Gorge, where the river narrows between vertical rocky cliffs which are sometimes used as nesting sites by gyrfalcon.

A little farther downstream is the most spectacular falls, where the water funnels into a narrow opening then plunges several metres.

At the next falls, the river narrows again but the drop is less steep. The pool below the falls is considered one of the better fishing spots along this stretch of the river.

At the last set of falls, which can be seen from the runway behind the lodge, the river widens and spills over a series of rocky ledges.

If more than one guide is along, the group may split up at one of the falls. Those interested in fishing might stay longer, while others might explore the nearby cliffs which are known for peregrines, photograph caribou, or head back sooner to the lodge.

## **2) First or Second Falls - West Side of River**

In a short half-day version of the above hike, guests cross to the west side of the river, then follow the river upstream as far as the first or second falls. This is generally an easy ambling type of hike suited to those who may not want to

do a longer hike. It combines scenery of the waterfalls, a chance of seeing peregrines, caribou and other wildlife, and the option of fishing.

### **3) First or Second Falls - East Side of River**

For this hike, there is no need to cross the river. It is a hike favoured by those who want to go fishing near the first or second falls, or those who prefer a short outing.

### **4) Inland Lakes**

This hike begins by following the shore a short distance to the east, then heading inland to the north-east over low rolling hills. Hikers eventually come to two lakes, and behind here is a circular-shaped valley surrounded by rocky cliffs. This is a favoured area for peregrines, and caribou are often seen wandering into the sheltered valley.

A stop for lunch is made on the rocky shore of one of the lakes before hiking back to the lodge. To extend this walk hikers sometimes head west, arriving at the Sila River near the second falls, then following the river back to the lodge.

### **5) North-west of Falls**

The hike begins by crossing to the west side of the river, then walking north to the upper falls. From here, hikers follow the river for a short distance upstream, then head into the hills to the north-west. The cliffs in this area are favourite nesting areas for peregrines, and there are excellent views of the high country toward Bennett Bay and beyond. The return might be in a sweeping arch around the highest hills, arriving at the Sila River a short distance upstream from the lodge.

This is a less common hike, and can be up to 20 kilometres long with a very loosely defined route. It might be enjoyed by those who have done most of the other hikes and who prefer a more rigorous walk, or by those especially interested in birds.

#### **6) The Peninsula**

After crossing the mouth of the river by boat, guests walk south-west to the peninsula that juts into the bay. As hikers are never far from the lodge, this can be a half-day or full-day hike.

A normal route is to head almost straight south towards the point of the peninsula. The flats just across the river mouth are strewn with enormous boulders. This is one of the best places to see and photograph caribou. As you walk to the end of the flats, a pass leads through the rocky hills. Visitors might stop here to see the remains of an historic grave, with exposed wooden coffin.

The shoreline of the peninsula facing the bay is especially rugged and scenic. Hikers follow this shoreline in a north-westerly direction, often exploring the many archaeological sites between the rocky ridges. Guides often take visitors past the cluster of semi-subterranean houses in one of the valleys. From here, there is a natural gap in the hills which leads onto the flats for the walk back to the lodge. For a longer hike, visitors follow the shoreline for the entire length of the peninsula, then cross the flats back to the lodge.

#### **OBSERVING AND PHOTOGRAPHING WILDLIFE**

The main attraction of Wager Bay to most visitors is the diverse wildlife, especially polar bears. Bears can be seen and photographed throughout the summer. Ice break-up, usually in mid-July, is considered prime time for bear

photography. However, this is a very fleeting time and it can vary enormously from year to year.

We were in Wager Bay for one ideal period in July, 1989. The ice had broken up enough to allow boats to travel among the floes, yet there was still enough ice to keep most of the bears around, as they continued to hunt seals. We often encountered bears (individuals as well as mothers with cubs) swimming between floes. Bears would often jump on a floe, run across and dive off the other side. It was not unusual to see 10 bears in one day. These ideal conditions lasted for only five days. A wind storm the next day moved the ice out of much of the bay.

After the ice is gone there is still an excellent chance of finding bears, although they begin to disperse farther away from the water, with mothers and cubs often heading inland to avoid marauding males.

From the boats, photographers take pictures of bears and of the many bird rookeries on the cliffs that line the bay and islands.

Most other wildlife is photographed on land, usually while on hikes. Some wildlife photography is possible without even leaving the grounds of the lodge. Caribou frequently wander nearby, and an Arctic wolf often comes close to the buildings. Arctic ground squirrels are plentiful and used to people.

All visitors were interested in polar bears, while interests in other wildlife varied. Most visitors had at least a passing interest in birds, and a small number were especially enthusiastic about photographing gyrfalcon and peregrine falcon. These were mostly professional or serious amateur photographers who recognized the rare opportunity Wager Bay presented for photographing these

species. While gyrfalcon are more elusive, it is almost certain that visitors will see peregrines. In 1991, there were at least three nests within day hiking distance of the lodge, and more nests that could be reached by boat.

One professional wildlife photographer rated falcon higher than bears for his photographic purposes. In an attempt to quantify the relative importance, he said, "A peregrine falcon is worth two polar bears; a gyrfalcon is worth five polar bears."

Most visitors were interested in seeing and photographing Arctic wolf, although few came with that in mind.

Most visitors were interested in photographing caribou, although it did not seem to be a high priority.

## **FISHING**

While some guests fish during their stay, most do not. Of those who go fishing, most do not see it as an end in itself but rather as an aspect of hiking to see a variety of other things.

The most popular spots for fishing are along the Sila River between the river mouth and the second falls, or at small lakes a short hike from the lodge. Some guests try fishing at various stops on a boat excursion. In short, fishing is seen by most guests as an enjoyable option, but not as a high priority.

## **VISITING HISTORIC AND PRE-HISTORIC SITES**

The main historic site visited is the abandoned Hudson's Bay Company post on Ford Lake. Sometimes a stop is made at the remains of the historic snow machine on the way to Ford Lake. Visits to the remains of the Roman Catholic

mission building on Nuvudlik Island are sometimes made, although this is less common.

There are visits to various archaeological sites, although in most cases an archaeological site is only one of many stops during a day's outing rather than the main objective. The site most often seen by visitors is the cluster of tent rings just across the river from the runway, as this is on the route for most hikes along the Sila River. Sites on the peninsula across the river mouth are also frequently visited. Stops at other sites are sometimes made during a boat excursion, a popular one being the low rocky point with several features close to Douglas Harbour.

Before they arrived, few visitors were aware that Wager Bay had historic or pre-historic sites. Most were interested in seeing these sites, although it obviously had a lower priority than seeing and photographing wildlife. Our experience with some visitors was that early in their stay they showed only a passing interest when we came across a tent ring or other archaeological feature. But near the end of their stay, when they had done most of the boat trips and hikes and had seen most of the wildlife, they expressed interest in seeing more archaeological sites. Some guides were quite adept at explaining the intricacies of tent rings, caches, stone fox traps or other features.

#### **LEARNING ABOUT THE INUIT WAY OF LIFE**

While this was not a conscious "activity" as such, many visitors commented that this turned out to be a very rewarding part of their stay.

The informal atmosphere at the lodge is conducive to socializing among the guests and the Inuit guides and their families. Visitors learned quite a lot about the day to day lives of the Inuit.

## **HOW ACTIVITIES ARE ARRANGED**

At any one time, there could be more than one tour group at the lodge, as well as visitors who did not come as part of a tour group. For the most part, all guests at the lodge take part in the same activities at the same time.

On a "boat day" everyone goes on boat trips. Anyone staying behind will generally remain at the lodge. Visitors are discouraged from hiking without a guide because of the risk of encountering polar bears. On a "boat day" the guides will usually all be busy with the boat tours.

On a "hiking day", practically everyone goes hiking. On some days there could be more than one hike - a long hike and a short hike, for example, or a hike where the destination is a good fishing spot. Guests, no matter if they arrived at the lodge individually or as part of a tour group, choose the hike they prefer.

Because all guests tend to do everything together, it is impossible to break down visitor activities according to where visitors are from. Likewise for visitor preferences. We found no correlation as to visitors from a particular area preferring certain activities.

## **VISITOR PERCEPTIONS**

### **WHAT DID VISITORS EXPECT TO FIND?**

All visitors came to Wager Bay expecting to find polar bears. Most expected to see other wildlife, such as caribou. Bird enthusiasts were for the most part aware that Wager Bay had peregrines and gyrfalcon, and many expected to see these birds.



A large number of visitors, perhaps half, had travelled to the Arctic before, and these people had fairly realistic expectations. A few, however, expected to see wildlife everywhere, as in an African wildlife preserve. A few said that they expected to see caribou in herds. Some expected to see the land covered in snow, and many members of one group in particular expected that there would be ice in the bay throughout the summer.

On the whole, we got the impression that the majority of visitors had fairly realistic expectations, considering that Wager Bay is still a "new" destination for tourists.

#### **WHAT WERE VISITORS SURPRISED TO FIND?**

Most were surprised at the ruggedness of the terrain, especially the high cliffs and the number of rivers, gorges and waterfalls. Many commented that they were surprised to see so much water covering the tundra during the flight from Baker Lake to Wager Bay.

Some were surprised that boats could get so close to swimming bears. One of the biggest wildlife surprises was how close it was possible to approach an Arctic wolf.

#### **WHAT WERE THE MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES?**

Travelling by boat to see and photograph polar bears was at the top of almost everyone's list.

The second most popular activity was hiking. Visitors found hiking rewarding as it combined physical activity at a comfortable pace with the chance to see a variety of wildlife and scenery. The only people not enthused about hiking were those who had trouble walking long distances or over rough terrain.

While a few of the more elderly guests preferred not to hike, most went on almost every hike that was available. For the most part, physical condition was a more important factor than age in guests deciding how much hiking to do.

Next in popularity was bird watching. While most guests were interested in seeing and photographing birds as part of a multi-purpose hike, a sizeable minority were clearly bird enthusiasts whose prime hiking objective was birdwatching. Gyrfalcon and peregrines were clearly the favourite species, although they were also interested in gulls, ptarmigan, black guillemots, loons, and other birds.

## **WHICH ACTIVITIES BEST LIVED UP TO EXPECTATIONS?**

### **Polar Bear Viewing and Photography**

During our experiences at Sila Lodge, every visitor who came to Wager Bay expecting to see polar bears did see polar bears. For those who were there during the ideal ice conditions, the bear watching and photography seemed to surpass their expectations. Those who visited after the ice was gone also saw bears but not as many. Most of these people said that the polar bear viewing lived up to their expectations, although there were exceptions. A few guests commented that they expected to see more bears, and a few were disappointed that they didn't see cubs.

While bears were spotted on most boat outings, occasionally there were days when bears were not seen. The majority of guests still found these days rewarding as there was always something of interest, such as other wildlife, archaeological sites, or dramatic scenery. Only a small minority expressed disappointment over a "bearless day".

## **Bird Watching and Photography**

Bird watchers and photographers indicated that, for the most part, Wager Bay was rewarding. In the summer of 1991, for example, gyrfalcon were difficult to find. Only a few visitors were able to get a photograph of a gyrfalcon. However these were the most avid bird photographers, and they considered this a satisfying accomplishment. Photographers who didn't get a shot of a gyrfalcon seemed to be realistic as to how difficult it is to photograph this bird.

One man from the United States came with the goal of seeing a gyrfalcon, and on his first day at the lodge he spotted one. The fact that it was too far away to photograph didn't seem to matter. The important thing was that he saw the bird and this went a long way towards making the trip a success.

As for peregrines, Wager Bay seemed to more than live up to birders' expectations. Peregrines were plentiful, easy to find and easy to photograph for anyone willing to do some hiking.

## **Hiking**

Hiking brought a high degree of visitor satisfaction. While most came with high expectations for seeing wildlife, few had expectations about the scenery. Consequently, the dramatic scenery was a pleasant surprise. In addition to scenery, the hikes seemed to have something of interest for everyone, whether it be wildlife (mostly caribou and birdlife), archaeological sites, fishing, or simply enjoying being out on the remote tundra with knowledgeable guides.

## **Fishing**

While Wager Bay generally has good fishing, not everyone who tried fishing met with success. We also found that in a few cases visitors brought fishing gear along with the intentions of doing a fair amount of fishing, but found that

there was a wider variety of interesting things to see and do that occupied most of their time.

An interesting change in perceptions occurred during our visit in 1989. Two American fishermen won a fishing trip to Sila Lodge. They were diehard fishing enthusiasts who talked of little else. While everyone else went in search of polar bears, they went fishing to several spots around the bay. The fishing was not as good as they expected. In the evening at the lodge they talked of their disappointment while all the other visitors were excited about the polar bears seen at close quarters on the ice. Near the end of their stay, the fishermen decided to join the rest of the guests. Their sullen expressions changed dramatically when they saw their first bear. They got caught up in the excitement and seemed to enjoy their stay a lot more, even though they weren't fishing all the time.

Something similar happened the following year. An American film crew came to do a story on Wager Bay for a fishing show on television. They too got carried away with Wager Bay's varied attractions such as the scenery and the wildlife, and the resulting TV show had very little on fishing.

#### **HOW DO DIFFERENT VISITOR SEGMENTS PERCEIVE WAGER BAY?**

In our experience at Wager Bay, visitors might be identified as "wildlife photographers", "naturalists" and "general tourists" with respect to how they perceived Wager Bay and how they fit into visitor activities. It must be stressed that these are not clearly defined categories that every guest fits into, but rather general descriptions that might be useful in understanding how various types of visitors relate to the bay.

### **Wildlife photographers**

A large number of visitors were photographers. These were not people who take the occasional picture, but who see photography as one of the main purposes if not "the" main purpose of the trip. A few were professional photographers although most were serious amateurs. Many seemed to be on a mission to photograph as many wildlife species as possible.

Photography of polar bears was the top priority, and when it was not possible to travel by boat because of weather or mechanical difficulties, it was members of this group who were more likely to express disappointment. A few of the amateurs commented that there weren't as many bears as they expected, and were disappointed that they didn't see caribou in herds.

Professional photographers, on the other hand, tended to have more realistic expectations as to the kinds of wildlife it was possible to find and how difficult it might be to get good shots.

### **Naturalists**

These were people who have a strong interest in nature. They may or may not be photographers. For those who are, getting good shots is only one part of the total experience rather than the overriding purpose. These people got more out of the boat trips on a consistent basis, and were able to enjoy watching a bear or falcon even if it was out of range for photography.

While they were most interested in bears, this group also showed more interest in smaller animals, the plantlife and scenery. They tended to see the tundra in much more detail than other visitors and understood more about the entire ecosystem. Many carried field guides to birds or flowers.

## General Tourists

This rather imprecise definition includes guests who do not fit into the above categories. They seemed to have come for a well-rounded northern experience. They were interested in most aspects of nature, but unlike the above group, they didn't have the depth of knowledge. They enjoyed seeing birds or wildflowers, for example, but weren't overly concerned about identifying species.

This group preferred to have a wide range of activities. For example, even though the weather was ideal for a boat trip, one tour group suggested going hiking instead because on the previous day they had gone boating and saw polar bears. Such a suggestion would likely not come from a group of photographers who are primarily interested in bears.

While many of these people enjoyed photography, they were not obsessed by it. They were content to observe wildlife and take photographs whenever the opportunity arose. Ironically, many of these people got better photographs of the wolf than the avid photographers. When the wolf came near the lodge, they were content to watch at a distance, and only attempt to take photos when the wolf got used to the people and came closer on his own. When the wolf came into camp another time, a group of overly enthusiastic photographers scared him off when they tried to approach too close too fast.

The general tourists were the most outgoing towards the guides and lodge staff, often talking to them about the north in general and the Inuit way of life.

This group seemed to be the most tolerant of setbacks such as inclement weather or mechanical difficulties with the boats.

## HOW DOES THE TIME OF YEAR AFFECT PERCEPTIONS?

While many changes take place during the short tourist season, the two most important periods are "ice" and "no ice". As indicated earlier, the optimum time for polar bear viewing and photography is during the ice break-up when there is still enough ice to keep the bears interested in staying to hunt seals, but when the ice is broken enough to permit boat travel.

Visitors or tour companies wishing to come during this optimum time are faced with a dilemma. Ice break-up usually occurs in mid-July, but can vary by several days or even weeks from year to year, and last a very short time. If you come too late, the ice may be completely gone, but if you come too early the ice may not be broken enough to permit boat travel. In the latter case, it becomes much more difficult to see bears. It might be possible to travel on the ice by snowmobile, but it is generally not easy to get close to bears in this way.

After considering this dilemma, one tour company decided to schedule its trips later in the summer. They didn't want to run the risk of arriving too early and finding the ice too thick for travel in the bay. In such a circumstance, it is quite possible that guests may not see polar bears. Considering the amount of money that guests were paying, and their high expectations, this was thought too big a risk to take. By coming later, boat travel was assured and visitors were almost certain of seeing at least some bears. Another tour company, however, prefers the early summer, with hopes of hitting that optimum time.

Another experience during that optimum season is the "picnic on an ice floe". The boats stop for lunch on a floe in the middle of the bay. Tea is made from the fresh water of a melt hole on the floe. Guests can walk around the floe and see how it is formed, and there is a good chance that curious ringed seals

will come close to investigate. For many, this is a highlight of their visit and it tops almost everything else in exotic value.

Some visitors might choose the timing of their trip according to what they are most interested in seeing. Early summer is better for wildflowers, seeing birds build nests, and caribou with their young. In late summer (mid to late August) the caribou will begin to gather in groups. This is also the time to see or photograph mature peregrine chicks or other birds. The tundra is also teeming with edible berries although most wildflowers have already finished.

The scenery can vary throughout the summer. Ice formations along the shoreline in early summer make for interesting viewing and photography. Rivers carry more water, making waterfalls more spectacular.

In our experience, most visitors were not aware of most of the changes that take place during the summer.

#### **HOW DO INUIT GUIDES PERCEIVE VISITOR ACTIVITIES?**

For many guides, non-consumptive use of wildlife by tourists is a new concept. Indications are that initial skepticism about this concept has given way to acceptance.

In 1991, for example, a guide and his family from Repulse Bay spent the summer working at Sila Lodge. He had worked as a guide and outfitter for many years, taking people on fishing trips, caribou hunting trips, and guiding professionals such as wildlife biologists. Guiding visitors on photo safaris was a new experience.

He said that he found guiding these trips more enjoyable, although he sometimes had feelings of inadequacy when he knew people wanted to see polar



bears but he couldn't find any. He also had to deal with diverse expectations, with people on the same trip hoping to see many different things.

On hunting trips, he benefits by being able to use the meat and hide from the caribou the hunter shoots, so in effect he is being paid to hunt for his own food. However, the number of sport hunters he is able to guide is small, about 20 per season. At Sila Lodge he could guide 20 people a week for several weeks during the summer. After one season he has found the economics of this type of guiding to be quite appealing.

In addition to hunting and fishing, he said that photo safaris add another dimension to using wildlife resources. They provide more employment opportunities and another way of generating income.

John Tatty remarked that guiding naturalists and photographers has affected how he looked at the land. He was becoming more interested in the flora, for example, and was learning the names of flowers so he would know the next time a visitor asked. Before, he said he would just walk right over flowers without paying attention to them.