



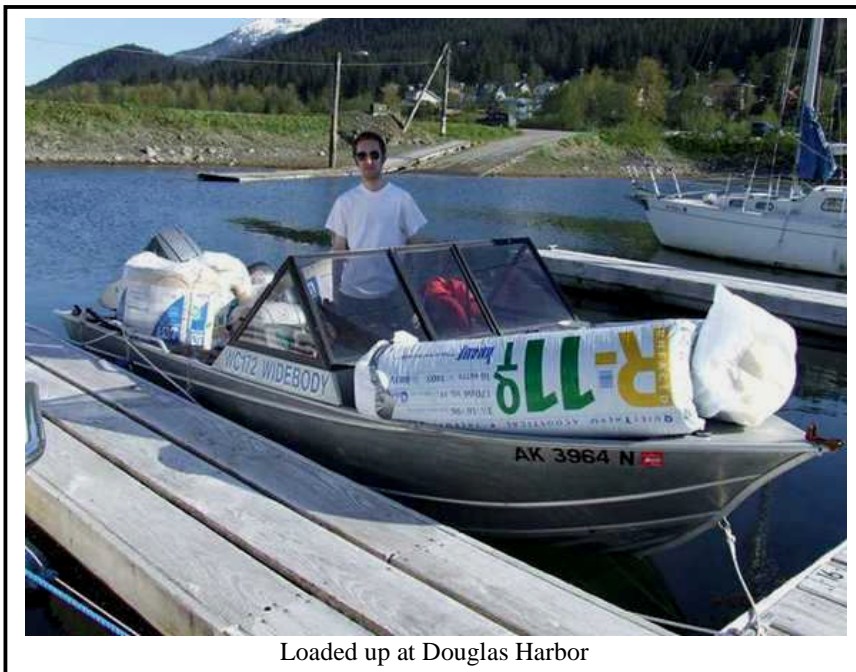
Homestead beach

Snettisham 2008 – 3: Summer May 23-25

It was sunny all week with the daily unfulfilled promise of showers. By the time Friday rolled around they'd given up on precipitation altogether and just called for sun and temperatures in the 60s all weekend. Travis and I took advantage of the fine weather during the week to install a bilge pump in my skiff. (Actually, I mostly stood around or ran errands while Travis did the work--I would have been lost!) I'd pulled the boat the week before to have the propeller repaired (which had been in poor shape for some time) so we were able to work on land. As expected, the job took a little longer than anticipated (we had to return a malfunctioning float switch, add some extra wires, construct a creative way to screw the system to the hull under the floorboards, etc.). On

Thursday the propeller repairman unexpectedly stopped by my office with a shiny white, perfect prop and that night Travis finished the bilge system. It was beautiful.

Chris and I were planning to head out after work on Friday and I had lunch plans that day so I got up at 5:15 and headed down to the boat with a small load to get ready. I cleaned up after the bilge work and installed the propeller before I hitched the boat up and took off. First stop was Douglas Depot to fill up the fuel tanks, then on



Loaded up at Douglas Harbor

to the harbor to launch the boat and idle over to my slip. I managed to tie up, walk back to the truck and drop the trailer off before sliding into work at 7:29 am. It was a long day of brilliant sunshine while I worked in my half-lit cave and 4:00 didn't come a moment

too soon. I headed straight home, changed clothes, and loaded the truck with the groceries, chain saw, rifle and other sundry items I wanted to bring along as well as a couple bundles of insulation. Then I headed over to the harbor and made two trips up and down the ramp to partially load the boat—high tide was in my favor for once! Back home I picked up the rest of the insulation and the dog and grabbed Chris on the way back. We loaded four more bundles of insulation onto the boat which took up most of the room and somewhat impeded visibility. Shortly after 5:00 pm we were underway in the brilliant sunshine drinking beer.



Humpback whale, Pt. Styleman in the background (Snettisham entrance)

The trip south was fairly uneventful. There were seas in Taku Inlet, but on the stern and not large—Grand Island south was pretty smooth and we listened to Miami Vice music as we sped along, strangely appropriate somehow! We passed whales at Arden, south of Grand, and had some beautiful fluking action just outside Snettisham. No lions left on the rocks (they took off early this year).

We arrived at the homestead on a falling tide, but made it well up onto the beach. While I started unloading, Chris and Nigel headed into the woods and quickly discovered a



Bear damage to the water system hose

brown bear standing there. Nigel chased it up the hill and out of sight before I made my way up. The bear appeared to be gone so I decided to use the nearby outhouse, which of course is when the bear showed back up again. When I came out she was standing on a steep slope behind the lodge watching us. After one last (seemingly half-hearted) charge up the hill Nigel was persuaded to head into the lodge, after which Chris and I were able to watch her at our leisure as she lumbered down the slope and

went about her business. She was very fuzzy, still in her winter coat apparently.

By this time the boat had gone dry so we were forced to leave it there overnight. We packed everything inside the lodge, cooked dinner, and played Scattergories and gin until late. It had been a long week gathering materials, buying insulation, fixing the chain saw, installing the bilge pump, etc., and I was exhausted.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to sleep through the night! At 5:30 I woke to a banging sound outside the lodge. I threw open the back door to find the same bear laying in the middle of the path to the outhouse, gnawing contentedly on the hose for the water system. It was really pretty adorable, if frustratingly destructive, and I wish I'd been ready with my camera. She spooked when she saw me and cantered off into the forest. I later discovered that she'd scratched and bitten the bottom of one of the kayaks too, but didn't break through the thick plastic.



Breakfast in the sun

Although my intent was mad insulating over the weekend, I knew that weather and lingering exhaustion might change the plan...as it was we had a lazy morning lounging around on the deck in the sun. It was flawlessly sunny and warm. I did hike up to the head of the water system where I found the olive barrel washed a few feet downstream in the high water. I replaced it in the creek and opened the valve, trying to determine if any water was making it into the

pipe at all—it didn't look like it. Frustrated, I headed down the mountain, following the pipe to see if I could tell whether it was full of water and whether bears had done any more damage. Much to my relief it appeared to have water flowing through it all the way down and water was shooting out of the holes the bear made near the bottom. However, nothing was coming through the filters, hung about five feet up on the side of the lodge (it was the filters banging against the wall that woke me the night before). I messed around with them for a while and finally discovered that if I lowered them a few feet water flowed through. I have no idea why, but I quickly filled a couple of water jugs before hanging the filters back up. I still couldn't shut the valve at the bottom of the system just in front of the filters, so this formed a natural stop.

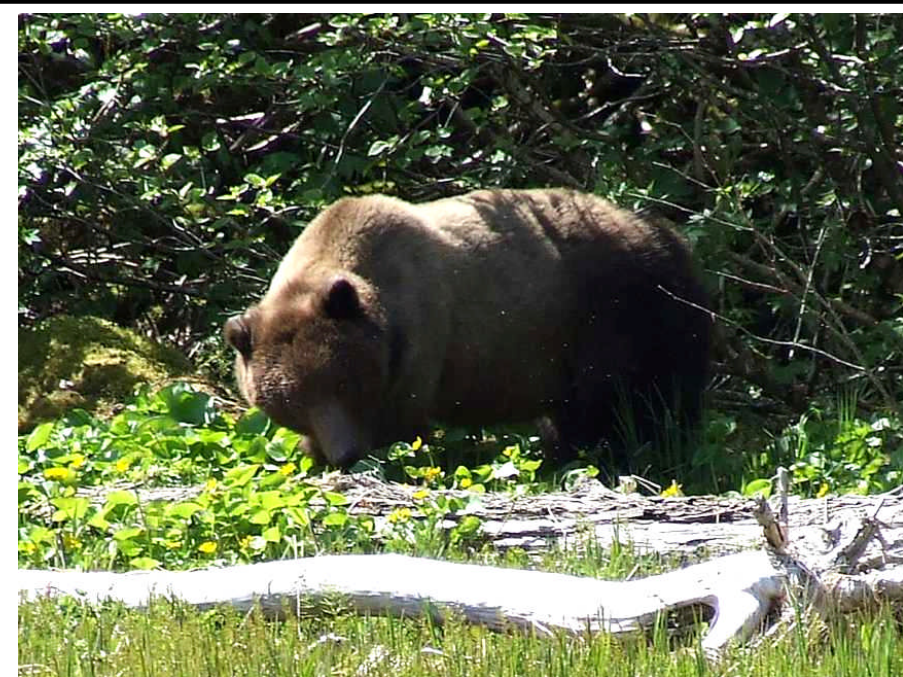
This successful endeavor was followed by a delicious nap in the hammock basking in the sun while hummingbirds buzzed by and Wilson's warblers darted about the berry bushes and spruce branches all around the porch. It was so hot that I was drenched in sweat just lying there and I started a wicked sunburn. It was fantastic and I could feel the sun finally soaking up the chill of winter.

We eventually wrenched ourselves from the sun and lunched on quesadillas and cokes cooled in the freshet before going for a kayak as the tide rose. The harbor seals, seemingly scarce from land, popped up all around us with their usual curiosity as we headed into the inlet. Some ways out we came up on a grassy beach and encountered another bear, a beautiful brownie grazing on vegetation. It spooked and disappeared when it spotted us admiring it.

After our kayak we mixed some gas for the chainsaw (I'd bought a new jug after the bear ate the other one few weeks earlier) and we spent some time cutting firewood from the stack of branches piled up behind Cabin 2. The branches are no more than eight inches in



Chris kayaking, homestead in the background



Brownie

diameter so we cut them as rounds and made a nice stack. Unfortunately the wheelbarrow tire was flat so we only hauled what we could carry in our arms back to the lodge. That evening we ate Sweetheart salmon and played a few more rounds of Scattergories and gin while listening to KXLL on the crank radio.

On Sunday we finally managed to work a

little more and started installing the insulation in the lodge. The lodge building itself is a single 16'X24' room with a five foot porch in front and 2"X4" framing. The frame and roof went up in 2005, then the doors, windows, furniture, and the wood stove were installed in 2006. Last year we added the propane range, propane lights, porch steps and sink, but the walls are still bare studs and they've really started to bother me. I finally bit the bullet a few weeks ago and ordered hemlock siding from Icy Straits Lumber in Hoonah (the same place I bought the cedar for the porch). I debated whether to insulate or not, as the lodge already heats up quickly with the wood stove. But once the siding goes up insulating will be tricky and the possibility of visiting during the winter inspired me to go ahead with it. The week before I'd bought enough R-11 fiberglass insulation for both the walls and ceiling.

Chris and I got to work and soon fell into a pattern. I cut the insulation from a roll on the porch and Chris stapled them in place inside. It made me wish we'd been more consistent in the non-standard spacing between studs when we were framing it! It was mostly pretty straight forward work, though, and very satisfying. We finished the front wall and part of a second wall, and then put up a vapor barrier over the front by stapling up a single sheet of visqueen and cutting out the door and window. It looked great and I can see what an enormous difference the siding will make. As we worked, a whale entered the inlet and fed along the sandbars before making its way back out into Gilbert Bay.

Soon we were forced to clean and pack up and head back to town. A strong north wind was blowing, which made crossing Gilbert Bay rather unpleasant. As we entered Stephen's Passage we stopped for a few minutes to check out a bizarre mirage to

the south. What appeared to be a perfectly flat section of water was making crazy reflections and the Midway Islands looked five times their size and mushroom shaped and the point towards Seymour Canal was horribly distorted. I studied it for some time without ever really wrapping my head around it. Stephen's Passage turned out to be a fairly decent ride and it wasn't until crossing Taku Inlet that we really had to slow down. We stopped for a whale lunge feeding outside Taku Harbor but never caught it in action a second time. Eventually we made our way back to Douglas Harbor, all heat dazed and (myself anyway) blissed out with the sunshine. Summer at last!



Insulation!