



News

Fall 2004

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From Harvey and Sandy Bowers

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Local Events

- January Willow Winter Carnival
- February Iron Dog Race
- March Iditarod Days Festival
Iditarod Sled Dog Race
Sourdough Ball
- April Baby reindeer are born
- May Salmon fishing starts!
- June Colony Days
- July Wasilla Water Festival
Moose Dropping Festival
Palmer Pride Picnic
- August Alaska State Fair
- Sept. Aurora Borealis start to become visible
- Dec. Colony Christmas
Talkeetna Winterfest

Aurora Borealis.....The Northern Lights

Aurora Borealis *n* [NL, lit., northern dawn] : a luminous phenomenon that consists of streamers or arches of light in the sky visible at night, is held to be of electrical origin, and appears to best advantage in the arctic regions.....so says Webster's.

Commonly known as the Northern Lights, the spectacular light shows occur when electrons and protons enter the upper atmosphere toward the Earth's magnetic poles and collide with gas atoms, emitting radiation seen as light. The different colors we observe depend on the type of gas atoms the electrons and protons hit.



*Red Aurora
Agate Guest House
November, 2002*



Mt. Hut, Ruth Glacier, 2003

Auroras are brighter and spread over larger areas after intense solar activities.

The Aurora can be seen when the skies are clear and there is enough darkness to see the stars. In our area of Alaska the best viewing is from September through March when nights are the longest. The lights can appear at dusk and may last a few seconds, a few minutes, or all night. The brilliance, color and shape is constantly

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Knik Building, March 2004

awe whether the light show was dim or brilliant, green or red. The most spectacular displays have been red during November 2001 and 2002 and lasted for days.

From September through March, Harvey keeps the camera and tripod ready. Before going to bed each night, there is a short stop by the window on the north side of the house to check the skies, just in case the next show tops the last!



Northern Lights over Mt. McKinley

changing.

The University of Alaska, Fairbanks Geophysical Institute provides aurora forecasts by phone (907-474-7558) and on the web. The Online Aurora

Forecast is updated daily for the following two nights. Just click on the link on the Agate Inn web site <http://www.agateinn.com>

Over the past 34 years we have gazed at the Northern Lights with

Fish On !!!!!

Fishing in our area of Alaska is still one of our best kept secrets. The Mat-Su Valley rivers and lakes offer some of the best road accessible fishing in Alaska for salmon, lake and rainbow trout, grayling and pike.

The Little Susitna River produces all five species of Pacific salmon and is famous as one of the State's best silver salmon streams. The 70 mile long Little Su is open for salmon fishing from the Parks Highway

bridge to its terminus. The lower 33 miles meanders through Susitna Flats State Game Refuge. King salmon are the first to arrive late May with the peak season the end of June through the first two weeks of July. The feisty red salmon, our favorite, follow the kings from mid-July to mid-August. Chum and pink salmon swarm the rivers along with the reds. The salmon season ends with the silver salmon runs peaking late

July through August.

Kepler-Bradley Lakes, just minutes from the Agate Inn, holds some of the best trout fishing in the Wasilla-Palmer area. Easy access makes this a good choice for families and fly fishermen alike.

From bait fishing, to spinners and spoons or a fly rod equipped with *Lake Leeches*, *Woolly Buggers*, *Griffith's Gnats*, or *Elk-hair Caddis*, there are plenty of fish waiting just for you!



Reindeer Notes



Garnet....hours old

April 11, 2003, 8 pm, excitement in the reindeer pen again! A tiny female reindeer was born. Daddy Silver and brothers, Jade and Mica, were herded into an adjacent pen to give mom, Crystal and baby Garnet time alone.

From her first day Garnet was extremely interested in what her brothers were doing on the other side of the fence. By day three, she would run back and forth along the fence while Jade and Mica on the other side of the fence, ran its length, stopped abruptly, turned and ran back again. At five days old, she actually crawled under the fence and joined her dad and brothers in the adjoining pen. Mother, Crystal was frantic, unable to reach Garnet. She was perfectly safe and happy, though it took some real coaxing to get her back into her pen with Crystal.

A week later we let the herd reunite. Garnet dashed out the adjoining gate and chased Mica for 15 minutes through the hills and marsh. What a sight....a

tiny 20 pound ball of fur chasing a tall 125 pound yearling reindeer!

We had great fun in 2003 taking all five reindeer for walks in the yard. Harvey got pretty good at walking two reindeer at the same time, although there were a few times when the ropes got pretty tangled up in the process. One afternoon Garnet was so anxious to go for a walk, she didn't wait for her halter and slipped out behind Silver through the gate. She was so intent on eating dandelions, she ran to the nearest patch where we walked up to her, put on her halter and attached a rope. New rule at the Agate Inn...the baby reindeer is the first to be haltered before walking the reindeer.



Can you count the antlers?...July, 2003

Unfortunately, 2004 started off poorly. During a major wind storm on January 5, Garnet was intrigued by the plastic shopping bags blowing around and ate one. The vet was able to surgically remove one lodged in her esophagus. We nursed her in the barn and she recovered from the surgery. Weather permitting we let her spend daylight hours with the

rest of the herd. Sadly, on January 23 Garnet became very weak and died of shock. During the necropsy we found she had a second plastic bag in her stomach that blocked her intestines.

Garnet was such a sweet little thing and is sorely missed.



Granite....April 23, 2004

We spent the month of April, 2004 anxiously awaiting the birth of another reindeer calf. After a couple of false labors, another boy, Granite, was born on April 23, 2004. From the moment we found Granite lying under a tree, he was the tamest of all the reindeer. He didn't mind being endlessly rubbed. Within weeks, three year olds were feeding and petting him. Harness training was extremely easy with this little guy.

Without a yearling to play with, Granite takes advantage of every minute we are in the pen to play with us. We have learned not to turn our backs...those little antlers can be pretty sharp!

Watch <http://www.agateinn.com> for another baby reindeer announcement in April, 2005.



New Rooms Open in 2005.....Agate Inn Guest Complex Completed.....at last!



The Knik Building remodel is quickly coming to a close. The four new junior suites and the two wheelchair accessible suites will be ready for guests by June 1, 2005. With 15 rooms to choose from, accommodations now range from comfortable spacious rooms to luxurious suites, vacation homes and meeting facilities on our 16 acre wooded site.

Of course now that construction is winding down, Harvey doesn't want to get bored.....he is currently working with an engineer to design an independent power system incorporating power generation from solar, wind and all those reindeer droppings too!!!!!!

Remember to give us a call when you plan your next trip to the Matanuska-Susitna Valleys of Alaska.

Best Wishes.....

Harvey & Sandy Bowers

Crystal, Silver, Jade, Mica and Granite too!

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