

# Parks

*This chapter was published with  
the generous assistance  
of Parks Canada.*

# 89. AUYUITTUQ NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

by Pauline Scott

**Auyiuttuq National Park of is located on Cumberland Peninsula on Baffin Island between the two communities of Pangnirtung (Panniqtuuq) to the south and Qikiqtarjuaq on Broughton Island to the north-east.**

In Inuktitut *Auyiuttuq* means “land that never melts,” but with climate change evidence of melting is seen every summer in retreating glaciers, shrinking ice caps, swollen rivers, erosion, alteration in water courses and water-loosened falling rock.

The original agreement to create Auyiuttuq was signed in 1972. Since then the park has evolved through National Park Reserve status to become a National Park under the Canada National Parks Act in 2001.

Auyiuttuq is co-operatively managed by a Joint Park Management Committee that has equal membership appointed by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the Government of Canada. The committee provides advice and guidance on all aspects of park management and planning.

Parks Canada is a family of national parks, national historic sites and marine conservation areas. Each national park is created to represent at least one of the 39 Natural Regions of Canada. Auyiuttuq (pronounced Ow-you-ee-took) represents the Northern Davis Strait Natural Region and is 19,089 square kilometres in size.

The park is home to many cultural sites providing evidence of human occupation going back 4,000 years in waves of Pre-Dorset, Dorset, Thule and Inuit peoples. Modern Inuit use the park to travel overland between the two communities of Qikiqtarjuaq and Pangnirtung in spring. Under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Inuit have full rights to unrestricted access to the park and to carry out harvesting of wildlife and berries. Visitors to the park may encounter Inuit carrying out their right to harvest.

Visitors ski-tour or ski-mountaineer during the spring season from late March to late April. Summer visitors hike or climb from late June to mid-September. From October to March Auyiuttuq is subject to brutally high winds, blizzards and long periods of darkness, which make it an impractical visitor destination during this time.

Auyiuttuq showcases the dynamic nature of this part of Baffin Island. Here you can see three-billion-year-old pre-Cambrian shield and granite mountains thrusting skyward. These mountains were once over-laid by sedimentary rock from the ocean floor but as the the Laurentide ice sheet, the most recent North American ice age glaciation, retreated it stripped the covering of sedimentary rock away through erosion from the granite mountain cores.

The Penny Ice Cap is the largest ice cap on Baffin Island and along with the Barnes Ice Cap are all that remain of the Laurentide Ice Sheet. The sheer, polished granite faces of these mountains offer challenges that draw climbers from all over the world.

Akshayuk Pass is an ancient riverbed that has eroded to its present size and shape providing a travel route through, and drainage for, glaciers that spill into the river valleys below.

Most visitors travel the park using part or all of 97-kilometre Akshayuk Pass. Visitors access the park by way of the communities of Pangnirtung (Inuit say *Panniqtuuq* which means place of the bull caribou) or *Qikiqtarjuaq* (which means Big Island in Inuktitut) on Broughton Island. Visitors choosing to do a day hike or a shorter loop to Windy Lake, Thor Peak, Summit Lake or Glacier Lake access the park boundary 32 kilometres from Pangnirtung by ski or snow machine in spring and by boat or on foot in summer. For a ski trip or hike through the entire pass, Parks Canada recommends that visitors travel the 82 kilometers from Qikiqtarjuaq to the head of the North Pangnirtung Fjord by boat or snow machine due to the higher concentrations of polar bears on that coast. By starting the trip from the head of the fjord and then travelling immediately inland for three hours before camping, visitors can reduce their risk of polar bear encounters. All motorized access into the park must be arranged with licensed outfitters and guides.

Because of ice conditions during both break up and freeze up, summer visitors are often delayed until the first week of August before they can begin hiking from the Qikiqtarjuaq side of the park. Check with Auyuittuq staff for the latest update on open water and boat access to the park. On the Pangnirtung side of park, break up and freeze up conditions generally arrive earlier and start later.

Visitors expect their Arctic adventure will mean they will be hiking and skiing in silent landscapes filled with wildlife but in fact the opposite is true. This pass is an active geological place. Over the sound of your breath as you carry or pull your gear and the sound of your feet as you hike or ski, you will hear the crack of glacier ice or chunks of rock crashing into the pass. You might also hear boulders bouncing in rushing glacier waters, or moraine gravel and scree sliding and rolling along steep mountain sides. And always, ever-present in the pass, the sound of the wind. You may hear the call of ravens from above, but in a place that is 85 per cent snow, ice and rock, high concentrations of wildlife cannot be supported by the small pockets of vegetation. The spring and summer visitation season coincides with many wildlife reproductive cycles so the majority of animals are wary of humans. Several species of birds (red poll, snow goose, Canada goose, snow bunting, ptarmigan, red throated loon and peregrine falcon), lemming, short-tailed weasel, Arctic fox and Arctic hare may be glimpsed by the watchful visitor during a hike.

Auyuittuq is a remote wilderness national park meant for experienced backcountry backpackers, skiers and climbers who are self-reliant and well-prepared, looking for the adventure of their lives. Visitors here should be able to navigate, route find, acquire and know how to use topographical maps and be respectful and patient in a landscape that can turn suddenly deadly. Those travelling in Auyuittuq must be fit, healthy and able to haul their own personal gear over a variety of challenging terrain. One of the most challenging aspects is the number of glacier-fed river and stream crossings. Visitors must be prepared with hiking poles and good judgement as they

wait for lower water levels and be willing to explore up and down streams to find the best, ever-changing crossing location.

In this park there are no groomed trails, trail markers or well developed visitor facilities. Parks Canada provides emergency shelters and outhouses about one day's hike from each other along Akshayuk Pass. The emergency shelters provide very basic emergency assistance for those visitors who need it. The shelters have a radio inside and are a small, sturdy, windowless hut meant to shelter all visitors in the area in case of a polar bear encounter, a storm that destroys tents or because of illness or injury. Every visitor is expected to camp in their own tent unless it is an emergency. The shelters are not to be used for cooking or food storage as that may attract polar bears or other wildlife.

Each visitor is required to attend a mandatory orientation and safety briefing, pay a backcountry excursion fee and register at the park office before and then de-register after their trip. Make sure when planning your visit to include enough time in the communities for both those activities. It is best to call in advance to check appointment times for orientations.

## **DIRECTORY:**

---

To request the free Auyuittuq National Park pre-trip planning package and polar bear brochure contact:

Auyuittuq National Park of Canada

Box 353 , Pangnirtung, NU, CANADA X0A-0R0

Phone: 867-473-2500

Fax: 867-473-8612

E-mail: [Nunavut.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:Nunavut.info@pc.gc.ca)

Website : <http://www.pc.gc.ca>

# 90. QUTTINIRPAAQ NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

by Pauline Scott

**Q**uttinirpaaq National Park, the second largest national park in Canada, is located on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island and is just 800 kilometres from the Geographic North Pole.

The Inuktitut word *Quttinirpaaq* means, in spirit, “land at the top of the world” and is 37,775 square kilometers in size. This High Arctic park represents the Eastern High Arctic Glacier Natural Region within the Parks Canada system.

A Joint Park Management Committee that has equal membership appointed by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the Government of Canada co-operatively manages Quttinirpaaq. The Committee provides advice and guidance on all aspects of park management and planning.

First known as Ellesmere Island National Park Reserve when it was initially created in 1988, it officially became Quttinirpaaq National Park when the new Canada National Parks Act legislation was passed on Feb. 19, 2001.

Quttinirpaaq is a combination of ice caps, mountain ranges (including Mt. Barbeau which is the highest mountain in eastern North America at 2,616 metres), coastal fiords, ice shelves, glaciers, an Arctic desert and a thermal oasis within that desert that is remarkably lush for its latitude.

The broad network of very productive grass-sedge meadows within the oases of the Hazen plateau and the adjacent lands at the base of the Grant Land Ice Cap see much of the higher concentrations of wildlife. The meadows as well as lichens and other plants throughout the park, support musk ox, small groups of endangered Peary caribou, Arctic hare, 45 species of birds, lemming, Arctic fox and Arctic wolf. Generations of Arctic wolves have been using some denning sites for at least 1,000 years and possibly for as long as 4,000. Marine species along the coast include ringed and bearded seal, walrus as well as the occasional polar bear and whale.

Lake Hazen, the 10th largest lake in the circumpolar world, has evolved unique forms of varying sizes of Arctic char.

The Ward Hunt Ice Shelf at the north tip of the park has diminished in size dramatically over the last 50 years due to climate change. A major epilake drained because the ice shelf cracked during the 2000 season. The unique microbial mat eco-systems atop the ice shelf lakes or in the fiords behind the ice shelf are fast losing their habitat.

Humans have inhabited this remote area in successive waves for about 4,000 years. Archaeologists have identified cultural remains from Independence I and II, followed by Dorset and Thule cultures at various park locations. The last group disappeared from Ellesmere Island during the Little Ice Age of 1600-1850.

The closest communities to the park are Grise Fiord, 600 kilometres away on the southern coast of Ellesmere Island and Resolute, 900 kilometres away on Cornwallis Island. Both charter aircraft and cruise ships leave for the park from Resolute.

Over the years British, European, American and Canadian expeditions have explored, mapped, searched for the Northwest Passage, continuously pushed farther north, raced for the North Pole, conducted circumpolar research or exerted Canadian sovereignty in this region. They did this by over-wintering on this part of Ellesmere Island as early as 1875 (the Nares expedition).

The remains of some of those expeditions can be seen at Fort Conger, Lake Hazen and Tanquary Fiord. To this day, most Canadian North Pole expeditions set off from Ward Hunt Island before heading out onto the sea ice to the pole.

Visitors ski or hike in Quttinirpaaq between late May and late August when Parks Canada staff are in the park. The only access to the park is by charter or private airplane, or by late August cruise ship via Resolute. All aircraft require an aircraft access permit from Parks Canada. Most visitors focus their explorations of the park between Tanquary Fiord and Lake Hazen warden stations. Visits to Fort Conger must be arranged well in advance with Parks Canada and a member of the Parks Canada staff must accompany visitors there.

Quttinirpaaq is an extremely remote High Arctic park. Backpacking or skiing visitors must be fit, healthy, and very experienced in backcountry wilderness travel, be self sufficient and capable of self-rescue techniques. Help is a very long way away and may take several days to arrive. Parks Canada staff have very limited capacity to provide rescue services and under some circumstances will have to summon assistance from as far away as Banff, Alberta, or Trenton, Ontario. Every visitor must assess his or her own experience and capability and consider travelling with an experienced and licensed outfitter and guide.

All visitors to Quttinirpaaq National Park must register, pay a backcountry excursion fee and take part in a mandatory orientation and safety briefing. Make sure to include ample time once you arrive at the park for the required registration, orientation and safety briefing as well as for de-registration after your visit.

---

## **DIRECTORY:**

---

For more information and a free pre-trip planning package contact:

Quttinirpaaq National Park

Box 353, Pangnirtung, NU X0A-0R0 CANADA

Phone: (867) 473-2500

OR

Box 278, Iqaluit, NU X0A-0H0 CANADA

Phone: (867) 975-4673

# 91. SIRMILIK NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

by Pauline Scott

**Sirmilik in Inuktitut means “Place of the Glaciers.” At 22,200 square kilometres, Sirmilik National Park lies within four parcels on or adjacent to the northern tip of Baffin Island. It includes much of the Borden Peninsula, Oliver Sound, the Baillairage Bay bird cliffs and the Bylot Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary, which is jointly managed with the Canadian Wildlife Service.**

Sirmilik became a national park under the Canada National Parks Act on February 19, 2001, and is part of Parks Canada’s family of national parks, national historic sites and national marine protected areas. Each national park represents at least one of the 39 natural regions in Canada and Sirmilik represents the “Eastern Arctic Lowlands and Northern Davis Natural Regions”.

A Joint Park Management Committee co-operatively manages Sirmilik with three representatives appointed by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and three representatives appointed by the Government of Canada. The Committee provides advice and guidance on all aspects of park management and planning.

Access to Sirmilik National Park is through the communities of Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet, which bracket the park to the east and west. Visitors to the park come to ski-mountaineer and view wildlife at the floe edge, during the spring (mid-April to mid-June) or boat and hike during the summer (late July to the end of August).

This part of Nunavut is exceptionally rich in high concentrations of terrestrial and marine wildlife, as well as offering visitors a breathtaking and diverse landscape to enjoy.

Visitors can expect to see ice caps, glaciers, icebergs, mountains, sand and sandstone hoodoos, sheer brilliantly striped cliffs, pingos, broad river valleys, and the most diverse and largest avian communities in the Arctic (50 species are present in the area). The marine mammal population includes both narwhal and beluga whales, seal, walrus and polar bear.

The cultural remains of Pre-Dorset, Dorset, Thule and Inuit who managed to survive in this area over the course of 4,000 years in successive waves, despite being 800 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, are present within the park. Modern Inuit live in nearby communities and still harvest and travel within the park boundaries. As part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Inuit are considered part of the eco-system of the national parks in Nunavut and have free and unrestricted access to harvest within all the national parks.

Visitors may encounter Inuit harvesting wildlife, bird eggs or berries while skiing or hiking in Sirmilik.

Visitors can enter Sirmilik from Pond Inlet by crossing Eclipse Sound to Bylot Island by snow machine or skis in spring, or by boat in summer. Visitors can travel west to Oliver Sound or west and north to Borden

Peninsula. From Arctic Bay visitors can access Borden Peninsula and other parts of the park by travelling east and north.

Sirmilik National Park is a wilderness park that offers no visitor facilities, no groomed trails and little standardized visitor routes for travelling within the park. Because it's a relatively new park, each adventure must be carefully researched as the trip is planned. Visitors must have strong mapping, navigating and route-finding skills, be experienced backcountry expedition skiers or hikers, be fit, healthy, well trained in and carry equipment for glacier travel and self-rescue techniques. This park is very remote and the Parks Canada staff has limited capacity to provide rescue services. In the case of an emergency it may be days before help can reach someone in trouble. Visitors should strongly consider travelling with an experienced and licensed guide and outfitter.

All visitors to Sirmilik must include ample time in advance of their trip to visit the park office in Pond Inlet or see hamlet staff in Arctic Bay to register, pay a backcountry excursion fee, take part in a mandatory orientation and safety briefing and de-register after their trip.

## **DIRECTORY:**

---

For the free Sirmilik National Park pre-trip planning package and polar bear brochure contact Parks Canada at:

Sirmilik National Park of Canada

Box 300, Pond Inlet, NU CANADA X0A-0S0

Phone: (867) 899-8092

Fax: (867) 899-8104

E-mail: [Sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:Sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca)

# **92. UKKUSIKSALIK NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA**

*by Pauline Scott*

**U**kkusiksalik is located on the west coast of Hudson Bay and is named for the carving stone found within its boundaries. It covers 20,500 square kilometres and includes the inland sea of Wager Bay and land surrounding it.

This national park is the 41st within Canada's family of national parks, national historic sites and marine conservation areas. The park was originally proposed in 1978 but was delayed until the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was negotiated. In the 1990s, six years of community consultations and then formal negotiations resulted in the signing of an agreement to create the park in August 2003.

The ceremony for the park agreement included the prime minister, the premier of Nunavut and the president of the Kivalliq Inuit Association. It was an exciting time for all as ceremonies were held in both Iqaluit and Repulse Bay and representatives from the other communities affected by the park (Rankin Inlet, Coral Harbour, Chesterfield Inlet, Baker Lake) were flown in to celebrate. Final steps in the creation of the park will include its formal legislation under the Canada National Parks Act.

At the time of this section's writing, the advisory park management committee, which is formed from members appointed by the Government of Canada and the Kivalliq Inuit Association, had yet to be appointed. A management plan developed through public consultation has yet to be completed as well.

Each national park represents at least one of the 39 natural regions of Canada and Ukkusiksalik represents the Central Tundra Natural Region.

The park features a rift valley, eskers and glacial features, lowlands, river valleys, rock desert, rubble-strewn uplands as well as tidal flats and river mouths that provide staging areas for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. Wager Bay has eight metre tides and one of the most interesting features in the park is the reversing falls that are created by those tides where Wager Bay meets Ford Lake.

Within the various marine and terrestrial habitats live a wide variety of plants and wildlife, including: wildflowers, sedges and lichen, polar bear, beluga, ringed and bearded seal, the occasional walrus and narwhal, peregrine and gyrfalcon, caribou, wolf, muskox, Arctic hare and Arctic ground squirrel.

Cultural resources within Ukkusiksalik are amazingly numerous with more than 500 archaeological sites already located. Pre-Dorset, Dorset and Thule occupations along with cultural remains from the Hudson's Bay Co. are part of the human story told by *Inuksuit*, caches, fox traps, tent rings and an abandoned Hudson's Bay Co. post.

This new park is in the very first stages of development. The normal infrastructure and staffing have just begun, so please contact the Parks Canada office in Iqaluit for all the latest details on planning a visit to Ukkusiksalik. Pre-trip planning packages, travel, safety and website information will follow over the next few years.

## **DIRECTORY:**

---

For more information please contact:

Parks Canada – Nunavut Field Unit

Box 278, Iqaluit, NU X0A-0H0 CANADA

Phone : (867) 975-4673

Fax : (867) 975-4674

E-mail :Nunavut.Info@pc.gc.ca

# 93. KUGLUK (BLOODY FALLS) TERRITORIAL PARK

By John Laird

**Kugluk (Bloody Falls) Territorial Park is located at Bloody Falls on the Coppermine River, near the community of Kugluktuk and is one of Nunavut's few parks with a shared history between the Inuit and the Dene Indians.**

Unfortunately, this history hasn't always been amiable. In fact, the falls got their English name in 1771, when European explorer Samuel Hearne witnessed the massacre of unsuspecting Inuit by the Chipewyan warriors with whom he was travelling. Today, Bloody Falls is recognized as a national historic site. The Inuit enjoy sharing their heritage with visitors, but ask that you respect the land of their ancestors.

At Bloody Falls, age-old volcanic rock forces the broad, swift-flowing river into a narrow channel of boiling rapids and twisting eddies. The roar of Bloody Falls calls out as you approach across the rolling, silent tundra. Inuit refer to the camp site at the falls as *Unnuagarhiurvik*, the place where you "stay all night," a name that recalls a time when fishing was an integral part of their nomadic lives. Even today Inuit camp here to fish, and some have cabins along the Coppermine River.

For the last 600 to 700 years, this region has been inhabited by the Copper Inuit, a people originally known for making tools from copper found in the Copper Mountains and along the Coppermine River to the south of Kugluk (Bloody Falls) Territorial Park. In the early 1800s many explorers, including an early expedition of the doomed Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, travelled through the area.

## The Land and Wildlife

The golden eagles that soar above the Coppermine River throughout the summer nest along the steep cliffs at the falls. Also watch for rough-legged hawks, peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons. Other avian cliff dwellers include countless swallows, which nest on rock cliffs at the falls.

Watch for animal tracks as you walk along the muddy shore. Barrenground caribou migrate nearby in spring and autumn and may also occasionally appear within the park or along the trail from Kugluktuk.

The tundra is also home to barrenground grizzly bears. Although your chances of encountering one are rare, you should still take precautions. Travel with a guide. When camping, store food well away from your tent, pack out all garbage when you leave the park, and keep fire pits clean and free of food. For more information on bears, contact the Department of Environment in Kugluktuk.

Wildflowers jump into bloom in late June, dotting the tundra with bright colours for three to four weeks. One of the more interesting plants found at Bloody Falls is the black-tipped groundsel, which was described here in 1821 by John Richardson, a surgeon-naturalist on the Franklin expedition.

The plant's black tips inspired Richardson to name it *senecio lugens*, from the Latin word *lugeo* ("to mourn"), a name that recalls the slaughter that once occurred at the site. By late August, the bright greens of summer give way to golden yellow, the tundra's last hurrah before winter begins.

## **What to See and Do**

Located on the west side of the river, Kugluk (Bloody Falls) Territorial Park covers a 7.5-square-kilometre tract of land centred on the falls. The park landscape is typical of the area, with rolling tundra occasionally interrupted by escarpments and rocky outcrops. From the park's highest hill, you can barely make out the community of Kugluktuk and the Arctic Ocean, about 13 kilometres to the north.

The ancestors of both the Inuit and Dene fished and hunted at Bloody Falls and you'll find stone remnants of winter houses used more than 1,000 years ago by people of the Thule culture. Other archeological evidence indicates earlier inhabitants, the Pre-Dorset, and Dorset cultures camped at the Falls as early as 3,500 years ago.

The remains of early caribou-hunting camps dating back some 7,000 years have also been found in the park and are linked with the Taltheilei, the Dene's ancestors. These camps are scattered on the sand hills along the west bank, downstream from the falls.

Bloody Falls is a great fishing spot, popular with local people and visitors alike. In spring, Arctic char migrate down the Coppermine River to the Arctic Ocean; some people say they taste best at this time of year. In late August, when the char begin to travel upstream again, the nearby community of Kugluktuk holds its annual fishing derby, an event enjoyed by many visitors.

Both Kugluktuk residents and Coppermine River travellers camp at Kugluk Park. The area isn't heavily used, however, so you may have the park to yourself. There are a few picnic tables and an outhouse at the camp site, and a maintained portage trail parallels the rapids. Drinking water can be obtained from the river.

## **Planning a Trip**

A rough, 13-kilometre trail stretches across the tundra from Kugluktuk to Bloody Falls. You can hike to the park in six to seven hours, but be prepared for wet, spongy ground and a few stream crossings. Despite these minor obstacles, it's a beautiful hike, taking you past many little lakes. Keep an eye out for grizzly bears! You can also rent an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in Kugluktuk and drive to the park in two hours. ATV rentals cost about \$200 per day. Guided walking tours cost \$250 per day. Motor boat trips to the park by licenced outfitter take one hour each way, so plan on at least a half day visit. The trip costs between \$100 and \$150 per person. Bring a picnic lunch if your guide isn't supplying one. The river is shallow sometimes, especially in August and September, so be prepared to hike the last few kilometres to Bloody Falls. Contact the Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association or the Kugluktuk Visitor Centre for more information on guides and rentals.

Outfitters offer rafting and canoeing trips down the Coppermine River. Groups fly from Yellowknife to points along the river for one-to two-week

adventures that usually terminate at Kugluktuk. Plan on stopping at Kugluk (Bloody Falls) Territorial Park and Bloody Falls.

You can also visit the park in winter, although it's highly recommended you do so with an outfitter who's familiar with the area, since blowing snow can obliterate landmarks in a frighteningly short time. The falls will be frozen, although the water continues to run below the ice so stay on the land to be safe.

## DIRECTORY

---

Nunavut Parks

Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut

PO Box 1000, Station 1340, Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0

Tel: 867-975-5900

Parks@gov.nu.ca

www.nunavut parks.com

# 94. OVAJOK TERRITORIAL PARK

*By Miriam Dewar*

**O**vajok Territorial Park is located 16 kilometers east of Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island.

The central feature, Mount Ovajok, is more than 200 metres high. For generations the mountain has been an important landmark and source of legends for Inuit and their predecessors.

There are 20 kilometres of trails available in the park, and it's advised that you stick to them as they were created to showcase the best views of the mountain and surrounding tundra while preserving the land at the same time.

There are five hiking trails in the park, rated from easy to strenuous, complete with interpretive signs, leading all over and around the mountain. There are picnic areas and camping spots available as well as lakes for fishing and kayaking or canoeing.

The park has three backcountry camp sites and campers should be prepared for high winds coming from the northwest in the summer months. Fishing is allowed within the park, but requires a license, which can be obtained from the wildlife officer in Cambridge Bay. Non-Inuit are not allowed to hunt within the park.

Polar bears are rare within the park, but officials say you may see barrenground grizzly bears. The park lies within muskox country, and while not overly aggressive, they may charge if threatened. You will likely see Arctic hares, along with a variety of birds, including Peregrine falcons, willow and rock ptarmigan, snowy owls, Canada geese and perhaps a king eider.

For more information about the park and how to access it, visit the Nunavut Parks website at [www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com), or contact the wildlife officer in Cambridge Bay at (867) 983-4167.

## 95. THELON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

*By Darren Keith*

**The Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary straddles the border between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, about halfway between Baker Lake and Yellowknife. An expanse of 52,000 square kilometres, the sanctuary was designed to protect shrinking muskox populations from decades of over-hunting by whalers and the Hudson Bay Co. Since the sanctuary was established, the local muskox population has gone from an estimated 300 in 1936 to 1,100 in 1994. However, its protected status, which prohibits hunting, has also affected the Inuit and Dene peoples who depended on its resources for their survival.**

### The Land and Wildlife

The Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary is a meeting place of different worlds. Here the Kivalliq tundra meets the boreal forest of the west, forming the treeline. The territories of ancient neighbours — Inuit and Dene — overlap and many places possess two names: one Chipewyan and one Inuktitut.

The great rivers of the Arctic and Hudson Bay drainages, the Back and Thelon rivers, flow from the sanctuary. The eternal pull of the Thelon draws driftwood into the barrens to rest on the shores of Beverly Lake, or *Tipjalik* (“it has driftwood”), furnishing generations of Inuit with precious building materials. Today, the sanctuary is home to muskox and caribou that provide sustenance to Inuit and Dene alike. For thousands of years, the area has served as a homeland, most recently for the *Aklinirmiut* whose members now reside in Baker Lake.

### The People and Their History

Archaeology documents the first arrival of people into the area some 8,000 years ago, shortly after the retreat of the continental glacier. Palaeo-Eskimo caribou hunters moved here around 1500 BC after climatic changes in the Arctic closed the ice leads on the Arctic Ocean, making seal hunting impossible. Ancestors of modern Dene peopled the Thelon valley around 2,500 years ago. In approximately AD 1000, Thule Inuit whale hunters moved east across the Arctic islands from Alaska in pursuit of the bowhead whale. These people, too, were ultimately attracted by the caribou and muskox of the Thelon valley, and by the trees and driftwood they found there.

The modern Inuit descendants of the Thule continued to draw on the sanctuary's rich resources. The area surrounding Beverly Lake and the middle Thelon River was home to the *Akilinirmiut*, so named because of the Akiliniq hills on the north side of Beverly Lake. Their historical life, based mainly on caribou hunting, is much in evidence here in the form of stone features such as tent rings, meat caches and *inuksuit*.

This area of the sanctuary has also drawn Inuit inland from such distant areas as Bathurst Inlet, the Back River/Chantrey Inlet, and the Kazan River. All sought the driftwood brought to the shores of Beverly Lake by the Thelon and Dubawnt Rivers. Trips were made by dogteam during winter, and offered the chance of meeting Inuit peoples from distant and diverse areas of Nunavut. Akiliniq became a trade centre for the Central Arctic and these chance meetings provided opportunities to exchange goods and information.

Euro-Canadians did not arrive in the land of the Aklinirmiut until 1893, when brothers Joseph and James Tyrell of the Geological Survey of Canada descended the Dubawnt River.

A return trip in 1900 convinced James Tyrell to lobby for the creation of a game sanctuary to protect the muskox population, whose numbers had been drastically reduced by the trade in muskox hides. Tyrell's idea was not acted upon until 1924-25, when the Department of the Interior's John Hornby and Captain J. C. Critchell-Bullock called for a protective sanctuary.

Established as the Thelon Game Sanctuary in 1927, the original 39,000 square kilometre boundary was altered in 1956 to accommodate mining interests in the southwest portion. As a result, the sanctuary grew to 56,000 square kilometres.

Hunting remains off limits. Billy Hoare, the sanctuary's first and last warden, journeyed inland with warden A. J. Knox of Wood Buffalo National Park and spent many arduous months hauling equipment and supplies from Great Slave Lake to the Thelon. In 1928, a warden outpost was established at what is now known as Warden's Grove near the Hanbury-Thelon junction. Canoeists today can still view the log structures built by Hoare and Knox.

Although the sanctuary was imposed on its Aboriginal inhabitants, it succeeded in its purpose. The muskox population has flourished and expanded beyond the Kazan River to the east. A process for determining the fate of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary with the full participation of Inuit was included in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. It is a tribute to the foresight of the Inuit of Baker Lake that they continue to support the sanctuary as a protected area. The draft management plan proposes an expansion of the boundaries to protect the calving grounds of the Beverly caribou herd, and to allow Aboriginal subsistence hunting.

## Planning a Visit

Due to the remote nature of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary, it remains accessible only to those adventurous enough to travel the Thelon River by boat. The attraction is not the technical difficulty of the river, but rather the abundant

wildlife. Muskox are numerous and caribou may be seen swimming across the river during their annual migration. Moose, wolves, grizzly bears and waterfowl are also plentiful.

Visitors must be careful when observing or photographing muskox. Their defensive strategy is not to run, but to form a circle and defend themselves with their horns. They will charge. It is equally important to be mindful of grizzly bears on the barrens. Freshly turned soil is a sure sign that grizzlies are digging for ground squirrels. Firearms may be carried in the sanctuary for protection, although there are no recorded incidents of defence kills of grizzly bears in recent years. Choose your camp carefully and keep it clean. See the chapter titled, "Land Mammals," for more details on wildlife concerns.

Thelon is accessible by bush plane from Baker Lake, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. If your itinerary extends to Baker Lake, scheduled flights are available. Still, the many large lakes along the way can be dangerous due to the strong winds. Calculate a few extra days in your trip to allow for being wind-bound.

For more information about water, weather and camping conditions, contact the Northern Frontier Regional Visitors Centre in Yellowknife. No registration or permit is required to travel in the sanctuary. However, you should inform the RCMP of your travel plans (see the chapter titled, "Adventure Travel").

For those uncertain about their ability to attempt such a trip independently, there are licensed outfitters who can assist with the expedition logistics or guided trips.

## 96. INUJJAARVIK TERRITORIAL PARK

*By Miriam Dewar*

**Inuujaarvik Territorial Park (campground) provides a great place to camp while in Baker Lake – the Geographic Centre of Canada.**

It is perfect for canoeists from the Thelon or Kazan Heritage Rivers who want to check out the arts and crafts the hamlet is famous for, the Inuit Heritage Centre, the Akumalik Visitor Centre or to find an outfitter to take you out fishing.

Inuujaarvik campground is about a 15-minute walk from Baker Lake and has tent platforms with windbreaks that will accommodate up to 8 tents. There is a fire pit for cooking and a spacious cookhouse/shelter that has tables and benches inside. There is also a large deck facing the lake.

For more information on Inuujaarvik Territorial Park, visit the Nunavut Parks website at [www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com).

# 97. NORTHWEST PASSAGE TERRITORIAL PARK

By Michael P. Ellsworth

**You may know them from the lands and waters that bear their names: Martin Frobisher and John Davis, of the 16th century; Henry Hudson, of the 17th; and Edward Parry, John Ross, John Franklin, Robert McClure and Richard Collinson of the 19th century.**

These explorers sought a northern sea route that would take them from the Old World to the Orient. Despite terrible odds, these adventurers sailed perilous Arctic waters, armed with knowledge gained from previous voyagers. Yet the successful navigation of the Northwest Passage was due not only to the contributions of earlier expeditions, but also as a result of the knowledge shared by Inuit inhabitants of the North. Roald Amundsen was the first to adopt certain survival techniques of the *Nattilik* people on King William Island, such as hunting, fishing and toolmaking. He was also the first to traverse the Passage.

In Gjoa Haven on King William Island, you can learn about the extraordinary quest for the Passage by journeying along the Northwest Passage Territorial Historic Park walking trail. Here a historical route unveils more about the land that was home to Amundsen and his six crewmen from 1903 until 1906. At six locations around the community, you'll find signs describing the historical significance of the area.

The route begins at the George Porter Hamlet Centre where you'll find a miniature replica (1:50) of Amundsen's ship, the *Gjoa*. You can examine traditional tools such as *uluit* (knives used by women) and *kakivait* (spears), as well as caribou clothing and water containers, a kayak, and photos taken by one of Amundsen's crew during his stay in Gjoa Haven. You can also learn about the history of explorers such as Franklin and Amundsen, plus that of the *Nattilik* people.

Your first stop will be at the "magnet," a shelter Amundsen used in his observations of the North Magnetic Pole, which in 1903 was situated approximately 90 kilometres north of Gjoa Haven.

To help him in this work, the explorer and his men constructed the shelter from packing crates filled with sand and covered with sailcloth. In their construction, they had to take care not to use copper nails as these would interfere with magnetic observations. The crates also offered a space where crewmen could pursue leisure activities during the long, dark winter months. Two crewmen stayed in this shelter, while the others lived aboard the icebound *Gjoa*. The magnets and other instruments that Amundsen used here are on display in a museum in Norway.

The second site is the "observatory" Amundsen built to house his scientific instruments. In this refuge made of sailcloth, he spent many hours documenting his findings on the Pole. Perhaps, too, he reflected on his teacher and mentor, George Von Neumayer, for before leaving Gjoa Haven, Amundsen

erected a cairn here to honour him. Below the cairn was a marble slab that supported Amundsen's scientific instruments. Years later, the Hudson's Bay Co. rebuilt the cairn; the marble slab remains intact to this day. Close to the observatory, a third site shows where Amundsen's crew collected fresh water from a nearby lake. Recently, the lake was filled in because its location next to the local school was hazardous to children.

A key to Amundsen's discovery of the Passage may have been his discovery of Gjoa Haven, or what he called "the finest little harbour in the world." At the fourth site, you'll note the unique geography of this natural harbour. On September 9, 1903, the *Gjoa* entered a haven in this deep, narrow inlet, which provided refuge from massive pack ice and stormy seas. Here, after their arduous journey, Amundsen and his crew found a peaceful place to pursue their scientific work and to learn about the land from the Netsilik.

The fifth site offers a grim reminder of the challenges facing Arctic expeditions. Here, high on a sandy plateau, it's believed the remains of some of Franklin's crew were brought to rest after they were discovered on the southwest coast of King William Island. Their gravesite is one of many scattered across the North. You can also see the gravestone of William Harold, a Hudson's Bay Co. employee, who was found frozen to death on Oct. 22, 1905. The young man apparently perished while on his way out to hunt seals. On the chilly day of his death, his body was found without a hat or mitts.

As you walk to the Hudson's Bay Co. complex, the final site along the trail, you'll see an old wooden supply ship docked along the sandy shoal nearby. The *Kingalik* was hauled here by barge from Holman Island in 1993. Vessels like this were used to transport supplies to the Hudson's Bay Co. posts across the North. The goods they brought, such as firearms, southern food, clothing, tea and tobacco, quickly transformed the nomadic lifestyle of the Netsilik forever. In 1927, both the Hudson's Bay Co. and Can Alaska trading companies moved to Gjoa Haven from a port near Douglas Bay, about 50 kilometres from Gjoa Haven. Their outbuildings were the first modern structures in Gjoa. Today they are used by the Northern store.

In April 1998, a plaque commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Franklin Expedition was placed at Victory Point on the upper northwest coast of King William Island. The collection of artefacts in Gjoa Haven is devoted to the history of the Northwest Passage. It also features information on Arctic expeditions, including those of Franklin, Amundsen and Larson. Visitors come to appreciate the struggles of those brave explorers who came before and the adaptability and generosity of the local population.

---

## DIRECTORY:

---

Nunavut Parks

Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut

PO Box 1000, Station 1340, Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0

Tel: 867-975-5900

Parks@gov.nu.ca

www.nunavut parks.com

# 98. IQALUGAARJUUP NUNANGA TERRITORIAL PARK

**(formerly called Ijiraliq or Meliadine River Park)**

by Karen LeGresley Hamre

**J**ust inland from the west coast of Hudson Bay, about eight kilometres northwest of Rankin Inlet, lies the beautiful Iqalugaarjuup Nunanga Territorial Park, straddling the Meliadine River in the Meliadine River Valley. This park has also been (and is still sometimes called) either Meliadine River Park or Ijiraliq. Don't get confused into thinking there are three different parks!

The name *Iqalugaarjuup Nunanga* means *the land around the river of little fishes*, which points to some key features of the park. In summer, visitors and residents of Rankin Inlet enjoy the beauty of the river valley, pristine waters, good fishing and abundant wildlife — including the endangered peregrine falcon. Among the park's most outstanding features are its many excellent archeological sites.

## The Land and Wildlife

On the south side of the Meliadine River stands a massive esker — a sand and gravel ridge that forms a spine along the park. The main road and trails run along the top of it, providing spectacular views of the Meliadine River Valley and beyond. Because the esker is covered by lichen-moss, which is highly sensitive to disturbance, visitors should walk on the roads and paths wherever possible. Most of the park is covered by a variety of glacial deposits. A bedrock outcrop that rises about 47 metres above sea level is the park's highest point.

At least 24 unusual species of plants may be found in the park, including the rare three-awned grass (*Trisetum triflorum*), which grows only in the rich soil at the Thule ruins. It is unknown elsewhere in the Kivalliq.

The best time to visit the park is during July and early August. Even then, the weather can be variable. Generally, summers here begin in June and last until September. Some years, however, the weather is cool and rather nasty throughout. So come prepared for sudden climate changes. When you walk through the lovely Meliadine Valley on a warm, sunny day, however, you may easily forget other dismal times.

## What to See and Do

The main attractions and facilities here lie on the south side of the Meliadine River, along a one-kilometre-wide by five-kilometre-long strip. The road from Rankin Inlet branches off toward the river and leads to the park's major archeological site *Qamaviniqtalik* ("place with ancient sod houses"). A small path leads through the primary archeological features and there is a small picnic area nearby. There are benches, a picnic table,

“honey-bucket” outhouse, and bear-proof garbage bin there as well. A free brochure and a minimal cost guidebook will be available at the visitor centre in town when completed. Fishing is popular in the river, and there is good access near the historic site. Non-Inuit need a fishing license, available from the wildlife office.

The main road then winds its way up to the small, shallow Sandy Lake, perched above the river. Most summers, the lake is warm enough to provide delightful swimming. There are change rooms nearby, and picnic facilities. Farther on, there’s an elders’ cabin available for use by the public with similar picnic facilities nearby. Across the road on the river side are three tent-platforms available on a “first-come, first-served” basis, along with a barbecue. The road ends at the cabin, but a foot trail continues upstream to the beautiful Meliadine Lake. Look for interpretive signs throughout the park.

## **History**

Land use here spans some three millennia. The park has more than 45 archeological sites, some dating as far back as the Pre-Dorset period from 1000 BC to 500 BC. Although many features aren’t yet dated, most appear to be of the Thule period, between 1300 AD and 1600 AD. Archeological evidence indicates that ancient peoples used the lands for fishing and hunting caribou in summer and fall.

During Thule times, when sea levels rose as a result of glacial melting, the site lay closer to the shores of Hudson Bay than it does today. The main archeological site, referred to as simply “KfJm.3” by archeologists, is called *Qamaviniqtalik* by the local elders. (This site is sometimes referred to as *Ijiraliq*, but that name is more properly used for a cliff area on the north side of the river. *Ijiraliq* refers to an Inuit legend, of the name of one who turns into a caribou, or other spirit, that whistles.) *Qamaviniqtalik* boasts many intriguing artifacts dating from the 1400s to modern times. In an area of about 100 metres by 150 metres, you’ll find tent rings, caches, ingenious fox traps, graves, semi-subterranean houses, and kayak stands.

As all archeological sites are precious historical records in stone and are protected under government legislation, visitors must not disturb them.

## **Planning a Trip**

The hike to Iqalugaarjuup Nunanga Territorial Park is a long, though not uncomfortable, trek of about eight kilometres. To reach the elders’ cabin, you’ll have to go another four kilometres. Fortunately, the road along the top of the esker is well drained, allowing for easy walking. And the breeze at this height keeps the hordes of mosquitoes at bay.

Outfitters bring tourists out to the park, either as part of larger Inuit cultural experience tours, or on separate tours. Inquire at the visitor centre about hiring a local outfitter. You can also take a taxi to the park and around the sites, and arrange to be picked up later. The fare one way is about \$45 *per person*. If you prefer to drive yourself, you may be able to rent a truck or four-wheel all-terrain vehicle. Please remember, though, that driving off-road here is not permitted. The road is generally graded once a year; check the state of repair before leaving.

Crossing from the south to the north side of the Meliadine River is not encouraged because of peregrine nests, and there are no trails there. Please leave the north side of the river to the plants and wildlife, and enjoy the view from the south.

You need to be self-sufficient for camping here. In addition to your shelter, food and warm clothing, you'll need to bring everything necessary to ensure your health and hygiene. Camping does not require a permit and there is no charge. It's best to bring a large water container, or boil the water from the river (as a precaution). Note that the river, the source of fresh water, is about 200 metres away from the tent pads.

You can get away from the bugs and wind temporarily at the elders' cabin, but it's not really intended for overnight use. You may camp at other locations, but not at archeological sites or in private cabins within the park boundaries.

Because of the park's location, polar bears, wolves and barren-ground grizzly bears are a risk. Remember that there are no emergency services or park wardens to check on you. Check with the local wildlife office before setting out to see if there have been any recent wildlife sightings. Have plenty of bug juice on hand and come equipped with a bug jacket/hat. That way, when the wind dies, you'll be protected. The Kivalliq is notoriously windy. But the rare summer evenings when the wind is still can be exceedingly unpleasant unless you've come to study biting insects. Be prepared for all sorts of weather: rain, sun and cool temperatures. Bring waterproof clothing, a warm hat and one to keep off the sun, sturdy waterproof hiking boots, sunglasses and sunscreen for those long hours of sunlight.

## **DIRECTORY:**

---

Nunavut Parks

Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut

PO Box 1000, Station 1340, Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0

Tel: 867-975-5900

Parks@gov.nu.ca

www.nunavut parks.com

# 99. MALLIKJUAQ TERRITORIAL HISTORIC PARK

By John Laird

**M**allikjuaq means “big wave” in Inuktitut, an appropriate name for an island where rounded rock hills and low tundra valleys resemble giant rolling waves.

While Mallikjuaq Territorial Historic Park derives its name from its topography, it gets its spirit from its human history. A walk from Cape Dorset to Mallikjuaq takes a good half-day, and you’ll find archeological sites dating back some three millennia.

## The People and Their History

About 1,000 years ago, the people of the Thule culture lived on Mallikjuaq in low, stone houses framed with whalebone ribs and covered with hides and sod. The east arm of the island boasts the remains of nine winter houses with stone foundations still in place. Scattered throughout the area are the bones of whales, seals and walruses, a vital resource for the Thule. Archeological evidence indicates that people from the Dorset culture — predecessor of the Thule — also inhabited the island. To find the houses, walk a short distance inland from the southeast shore of Mallikjuaq Island to a large pond.

The northwest coast of Mallikjuaq Island boasts a number of more contemporary, though no less interesting, stone features. Tent rings, fireplaces and meat caches here date back between 50 and 200 years. The ingenuity of Arctic inhabitants is illustrated by the many self-supporting stone structures they created, such as *qajaq* (kayak) stands and *inuksuit*. Other stone piles here represent fox traps and burial sites. Local Inuit elders ask visitors to respect their heritage by not disturbing the sites, which are protected by government legislation.

## What to See and Do

Mallikjuaq’s archeological sites are easy to reach and can be thoroughly toured in a half day. The gentle slopes of the island’s east end offer superb views of the undulating landscape and of Hudson Strait. The steep rock hills in the southwest corner of the island are less easily scaled. Sandy beaches can be found among the island’s more common offering of gravel and rocky shorelines; these make excellent places to camp. You can also kayak around nearby coves and islands.

Wildlife is plentiful in summer, and you may see caribou, Arctic hare, peregrine falcons, snowy owls, ptarmigans and ducks. Polar bears roam the coast in spring and fall, an exciting yet potentially dangerous visitor. To avoid any unexpected encounters, travel with an experienced, licensed guide who can act as a bear monitor for you. Seals may appear at any time; beluga whales migrate through nearby waters in October and April. If you are very lucky you may even spot a massive bowhead whale, although they are infrequent visitors. Fishing for Arctic char is popular in nearby bays.

The best time of year to visit Mallikjuaq is in July and August, when warm temperatures and abundant sunshine bring tundra wildflowers briefly to life. Large patches of tundra are covered with these colourful, ground-hugging plants. Autumn starts in late August, when patches of tundra turn a vibrant red and yellow.

The Mallikjuaq Historic Park trail guide offers clear directions to the island and interprets the park's many features. You can obtain a copy from Cape Dorset's hamlet office.

## Planning a Trip

In summer, local outfitters will take individuals and groups on the 10-minute boat ride across the inlet. Ask about the possibility of a guided tour of the island's historic sites, wildlife and plants. Check to see if your guide will provide tea and bannock or local foods such as caribou, char or seal. Make arrangements well in advance of your arrival in Cape Dorset. Finding a guide on short notice is sometimes difficult. Your ideal guide is one who not only has a good understanding of the history of the island, but who also likes to tell stories about Inuit culture.

You can also hike to Mallikjuaq in about 60 to 90 minutes travelling from Cape Dorset to the northwest tip of Dorset Island and across the tidal flats of Tellik Inlet to Mallikjuaq. This hike, which is only possible at low tide, is recommended for agile walkers prepared for slippery, algae-covered rocks and innumerable puddles.

Make sure you check tide times before heading out or you may find yourself spending an evening on the island, alone and without food and shelter. The economic development officer at the hamlet office has information about tides and walking trips to Mallikjuaq. If you hike without a guide, inform someone of your travel plans, such as the local RCMP detachment or the hotel, if you are a guest. More information is available from the hamlet and the Aiviq Hunters and Trappers Organization.

In winter, the landscape of Mallikjuaq takes on a completely different appearance as snow creates a variety of patterns on the rock hills. Archeological sites and vegetation will be covered by snow, although you may be lucky enough to see a caribou or Arctic hare. Cape Dorset residents occasionally build iglus on the island.

At this time of year you can walk directly across the ice to Mallikjuaq or for \$120 to \$200 hire a guide with a snowmobile. A great way to travel is by dogteam, bundled in caribou skins on a *qamutiik* and listening to the quiet crunch of the snow as you glide over it. A day trip by dogteam costs \$150 to \$200 per person. It is not possible to cross to Tellik Inlet during breakup and freeze up, which occur in June and October. A late breakup may delay crossing until early July.

Even though the area enjoys long hours of sunlight each day in summer, the temperature averages a high of just 7.2° C and can drop below zero any time. Winter temperatures can plummet below -40° C between December and March. The shortest days of December yield about five hours of sunshine.

Regardless of the season in which you travel, always be prepared for the unexpected, as weather conditions can vary throughout the day. Even in summer, you'll need warm and waterproof clothing, a hat and mitts.

Rubber boots are best for getting to shore from a boat; sturdy, waterproof hiking boots work best on the spongy and sometimes soggy tundra. Insect repellent is a worthy companion, as bugs can be voracious, especially on calm days. In winter, insulated clothing such as parkas, snow pants, mitts and boots are essential. Bring sunglasses and sunscreen in any season. In summer, they'll protect you from long hours of sunlight. In winter and spring, they'll guard against the bright sun reflecting off the snow.

Though Mallikjuaq is a territorial park, it remains untouched. There are no services or facilities on the island. Local people will drink water from the island's many streams and ponds, although it is recommended that you bring your own drinking water or boil water collected on the island. To preserve the park, carry out your garbage and leave the island as you found it. Groceries and some camping supplies can be purchased in Cape Dorset at the Co-op and the Northern store. The Kingnait Inn will provide a boxed lunch.

## 100. KATANNILIK TERRITORIAL PARK RESERVE

by Robert Jaffray

**S**panning the Meta Incognita Peninsula in southern Baffin Island, Katannilik Territorial Park Reserve is a surprisingly fertile oasis tucked in the middle of an ancient and unforgiving landscape.

Central to the park is the Soper River Valley, some 110 kilometres of meandering wilderness punctuated by countless cascades.

*Katannilik*, “the place of waterfalls”, stretches northward from the top of Pleasant Inlet along the coast of Hudson Strait (just outside the community of Kimmirut) toward the south shore of Frobisher Bay, following the Soper Valley and a traditional overland trail called the *Itijjagiaq*. The park extends east and west beyond the valley, encompassing some of the rivers, lakes and hills that make up the low relief of the lower plateau. Known locally as *Kuujjuaq* — “big river” — the Soper was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1992 for its cultural significance in the lives of Inuit, its natural beauty and its countless opportunities for recreation.

### The Land and Wildlife

A complex series of folds, plunges and shears dating from the formation of the Earth make Katannilik rich with a variety of rock formations and exposed geological domains. The park is comprised of three distinct landscapes.

The first starts at the south shore of Frobisher Bay, where the *Itijjagiaq* Trail begins. Rising 670 metres from sea level to the plateau of the Meta Incognita Peninsula, the landscape is a playground of deep gorges and sloping valleys. Increasing elevation means shelter becomes scarce as the topography flattens out. It also means a corresponding decrease in vegetation, as temperatures drop.

The plateau of the Meta Incognita Peninsula has changed little since the last glaciers receded. Glacial scars are readily discernible, and the shallow, rolling topography is testament to the force of these frozen behemoths. Rocks and boulders scattered across the smooth surface of the plateau look like they've fallen from the sky in a rock shower, adding to the unearthly appearance.

The third region of the park is the Soper Valley, a product of receding glaciers, water erosion and the existing thermal oasis. Over the millennia, the water level of the river has fluctuated, leaving terraces throughout the valley floor. These terraces range from three to 30 metres above the current height of the river. The river valley is most impressive at its northern end. To the south, the valley broadens and the walls start to diminish as the topography descends gently toward Hudson Strait.

Plant life in Katannilik varies from virtually nil in some areas to astoundingly abundant in others. Where conditions are inhospitable, such as along the plateau, you can still find plant life within millimetres of the ground. In the Soper Valley, where summer temperatures average some 5° C higher than nearby Kimmirut, itself the warmest community on Baffin Island, life is abundant.

In 1930 naturalist Joseph Dewey Soper, after whom the river was named, explored the area while working for the Canadian government. Soper catalogued much of the valley's plant life, including willow trees as tall as 3.6 metres, the tallest in the region. Uncommonly large willows still grow in a few well-protected areas of the valley.

Just as the landscape changes with elevation, so does the vegetation. Willow, dwarf birch, Lapland rosebay, Labrador tea and Arctic heather comprise the dwarf shrub/heath tundra community, which is found in moist areas below 210 metres in elevation.

The grassland tundra group, with its characteristic tussocks of moss surrounded by shallow water, is the one you want to avoid hiking across. The group includes sedges, Arctic cotton, sphagnum moss, bistorts and willows, and is usually found along bodies of water in the river valley.

The bedrock/hill summit community is in exposed areas that are neither wet nor warm. Generally lacking good soil, this community is characterized by large amounts of lichen, but also comprises purple saxifrage, Arctic poppy, mountain avens, broad-leafed willow herb and chickweed – all of which tend to grow close to the ground and form a mat of colour as they bloom.

The snowpatch community is aptly named for its penchant for late-thawing areas where drifting has slowed the seasonal development of plants. As the snow melts, it permits Arctic heather to grow first, followed by dwarf willows, mountain sorrel and finally, mosses. This regimented pattern results in rings of vegetation that distinguish the community.

Mid-July to late August is the best time to see Katannilik's vivid Arctic bloom, starting with purple saxifrage, and followed by bluebells and dwarf fireweed. In late summer and early autumn, berries carpet the park. Inuit from Kimmirut flock to the valley to harvest blueberries, crowberries, mountain cranberries and bearberries as they have done for millennia.

Where there is vegetation you'll find wildlife. With a terrain as rich as any in the Baffin Region, the Soper Valley is no exception. With any luck you should be able to spot caribou, lemmings, hares, foxes and wolves. And while polar bears could enter the valley at any time, their preference for seals keeps them in coastal areas to the north and south.

The most common animal in the park is the caribou. These caribou do not undertake the long overland migrations of the mainland variety, but circulate throughout south Baffin Island and the Meta Incognita Peninsula in particular. In summer and autumn, caribou prefer the lush vegetation of the valley. Winter and spring sees them moving to the uplands, where wind blows the ground free of snow and exposes lichens.

Wolves and foxes are also abundant throughout the park. Observant summer visitors may find fox dens in well-drained, rolling terrain throughout the valley; evidence of these winsome creatures is easier to spot in winter, as their tracks zigzag across the valley. Katannilik is home to both Arctic and red foxes. The number of wolves in the park fluctuates with the availability of prey, though they are not as numerous as foxes.

Lemmings and hares are a favourite food of many larger predators. With careful observation, you may catch a glimpse of one or both. Hares favour the protection of rocky hillsides, while lemmings dart from one tunnel to another.

Katannilik is a birder's paradise. Predatory birds such as the peregrine falcon, gyrfalcons, the snowy owl (recognizable by its white plumage and unmistakable eyes) and the rough-legged hawk all call Katannilik home.

The most common birds in Katannilik, however, are the rock ptarmigan and snow bunting. Ironically, the ptarmigan, which resides here throughout the year, is never easy to spot. In summer their mottled brown plumage blends in perfectly with the surroundings; in winter they are pure white.

Migratory birds such as Canada geese, red-breasted mergansers, and snow geese can be seen as they migrate. All three species of loon are often present closer to the coast at the southern end of the park, as are other shorebirds such as murre, terns and black guillemots.

Although there are generally no char in the Soper River, they can sometimes be found at either Soper Falls or at the reversing falls, where Soper Lake drains into the ocean. Landlocked char can be found in the lakes on either side of the Soper Valley.

Three varieties of cod can be found in Soper Lake: Arctic, Greenland and Atlantic. Inuit easily catch these in summer and throughout the winter.

## Geology

Minerals in Katannilik are as plentiful as they are varied. Exposed bedrock reveals diopside, marble, low-quality garnet and various other semiprecious gems. Apatite can be found in blue, green and rose hues. Bands of crystalline limestone transect the valley and the river.

Mining has been attempted sporadically in the Soper Valley since 1900, when a Scottish company extracted mica from a number of locales in and around the river. Graphite was also mined in the early 20th century. Outcrops of both are still easy to find.

A deposit of lapis lazuli, a brilliant blue gemstone found in only a few locations in the world, is also located in the valley. Though the stones here are of poor quality, their colour and rarity make them worth seeking. Lapis lazuli too was mined, but abandoned in the early 1970s. The mica and lapis lazuli deposits are located on a parcel of Inuit-owned land within the park boundaries and require special permission to access.

## What to See and Do

The Katannilik Park Centre is located in the restored Dewey Soper House. Staff here can register you into and out of the park itself and set up home-stays in Kimmirut. This is also the place to gather information about Katannilik and the Soper River.

The mainstay of summer activity in Katannilik is hiking, and the options are many. You can enjoy a casual discovery walk along the river terraces or perhaps tackle the entire trip from Kimmirut to Frobisher Bay, a 10- to 12-day trek across the Meta Incognita Peninsula.

Complementing Katannilik's hiking opportunities is the accessibility of much of the park by water. You could combine the two modes of transportation and spend a week hiking along the Soper River while a guide transports your gear by boat and prepares your meals. Another option is to raft down the Soper for a few hours each day, leaving you ample opportunity to explore the surrounding hills.

The Itijjagiq Trail is part of a route travelled for centuries by Inuit venturing north to the Nettilling Lake area to hunt caribou and meet with relatives from as far away as Pangnirtung. Although it is part of the park, Itijjagiq is nonetheless a rugged wilderness trail, so hikers contemplating it should be experienced in backcountry travel, first aid and map reading. The trailhead on the south shore of Frobisher Bay can be reached by boat from Iqaluit. The Unikkaarvik Visitors Centre keeps a list of licensed outfitters that can provide this service.

Seven emergency shelters are located along the 120-kilometre trail. A heated cabin in the Soper Valley can accommodate larger parties. It has a table, counters, sleeping platforms and washrooms. The park master plan includes building park maintenance facilities, a second group facility and the installation of signs along hiking trails.

Hikers planning to tackle the trail should look into buying the *Itijjagiq Trail Guide*. The guide provides a detailed description of the trail, including contour maps, emergency shelters, and points of interest. Park protocol and regulations are also included. It is available at the Katannilik Territorial Park Interpretive Centre in Kimmirut or the Unikkaarvik Visitors Centre in Iqaluit.

From Kimmirut, the cooling effects of the Arctic Ocean quickly fade as you hike inland into the park. As you approach the south end of the Soper Valley, where the river flows into the lake at Soper Falls, you'll find the first of several camping areas. Facilities here are limited to washrooms and tent platforms with windbreaks. Terraces further along the valley also provide good spots to set up camp.

As its name suggests, Katannilik is full of waterfalls. The largest is Soper Falls, where the emerald green Soper River flows into Soper Lake through a white marble chasm. Farther upstream, just before the Livingstone River flows into the Soper River, is Livingstone Falls; slightly further north, an easy day-hike up the Cascade River brings you to Cascade Falls, the highest waterfall in the park.

The *Soper River Guidebook* is a good resource for anyone travelling on the river. It provides detailed descriptions of points of interest along the river, the location and class of various rapids, and recommends a course through some of the trickier sections, all of which is referenced on accompanying maps. Available from the same sources that carry the *Itijjagiq Trail Guide* mentioned earlier, the *Soper River Guidebook* also includes useful park protocol and interpretive information.

In winter and spring, Katannilik is used by recreational snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, and dogsledding enthusiasts. Guided dogsled trips between Iqaluit and Kimmirut take about four days; on snowmobile it only takes some six hours. Dogsled trips may also be arranged.

## Planning a Trip

Katannilik is one of the most accessible parks in Nunavut. There are three ways to get there from Iqaluit. The simplest is to take a scheduled flight with First Air to Kimmirut. Those travelling in large groups may want to consider chartering a plane to Kimmirut.

The boundary of the park is only minutes from Kimmirut, although it will take you a good three hours to hike into the Soper Valley. For those more eager to get into the valley, boats can be hired in Kimmirut to take you across Soper Lake to Soper Falls at the south end of the valley.

You can also get into the park by chartering an airplane to Mount Joy or the Livingstone River confluence, the two designated landing strips in the Soper Valley. This is the most popular method of getting into Katannilik. The strip at the Livingstone is on the west side of the river, though, and should only be used if you plan on taking some form of boat in with you. A few of the northern airlines have Twin Otters that can land on these strips.

Some Iqaluit outfitters offer package tours of Katannilik Park that fly visitors in or transport them by dogsled in winter. As part of the service visitors are taken across Frobisher Bay to the Itijjagiq trailhead, where they can hike southwest to the Soper Valley and eventually Kimmirut. Book in advance. It's often not possible to book outfitters by the day.

# 101. QAUMMAARVIIT HISTORIC PARK

By Bruce Rigby

**Q**aummaarviit, or “places that have rays of light” in Inuktitut (pronounced **cow-mar-veet**) is one of three territorial parks near Iqaluit, and is dedicated to preserving a cultural site of historic importance.

Created as a historic park in 1985, this group of Thule features has long been of interest to local residents and visitors alike; well over 750 years of intermittent occupancy are evident here.

## The People and Their History

Occupying approximately one-quarter square kilometre, the narrow island on which Qaummaarviit sits is part of a small group of islands at the north end of Frobisher Bay. Archaeologists generally agree that during occupation, no more than 25 people resided at the site at any one time.

The site preserves a record of the Thule people, who originated in Alaska some 1,000 years ago and slowly spread across the Arctic to Greenland. Researchers aren't sure what precipitated this migration, although many feel the Thule were taking advantage of a period of climatic warming to expand their harvesting area and travel to unexplored regions.

Thule culture is distinguished from others by its reputation for inventiveness and adaptability. In addition to travelling by dogsled and *qajaq* (kayak), the Thule are credited with developing the *umiaq* or “women's boat,” a large skin boat capable of holding entire families and their belongings. The *umiaq* was generally paddled by women as men travelled in the faster and more mobile *qajaq*. The Thule were adept at hunting all forms of land and sea mammals, including the mammoth bowhead whale.

Upon their arrival here, the Thule discovered they were not alone. Already resident were the Dorset Inuit, or *Tuniit*, who had occupied the eastern Arctic for approximately 1,500 years. The Tuniit are still a popular folklore topic, with elders telling stories of the giants who produced intricate artwork, only to disappear after the arrival of the Thule. Researchers feel the demise of the Tuniit was precipitated by their inability to adapt to changes in wildlife and climate. Although there is no evidence that the Tuniit occupied Qaummaarviit itself, tools and implements have been found that showed they used the area.

Although the Thule are generally understood to be a marine culture, the location of Qaummaarviit presents many questions to researchers, as it is located on one of the innermost inlets of Frobisher Bay, more than 100 kilometres from the normal winter location of the floe edge. However, the variety of animal bones found at the site indicates it was likely chosen because of its proximity to abundant land species, which were used for both clothing and food.

Evidence shows that Qaummaarviit was occupied until approximately the end of the 18th century, when it was abandoned as a permanent site. As the expansion of the Thule into this region may have corresponded to a warming climatic period, their departure from the site roughly corresponds to a period of global cooling termed the “Little Ice Age,” that began around A.D. 1400.

Qaummaarviit contains many features. In the summer, luxuriant patches of vegetation scattered throughout the park seem to be out of character with the landscape around them. This is caused by the decay of collections of buried organic materials known by archaeologists as “middens,” that accumulated at the site over the years. Rich with materials and artifacts for analysis, thousands of tools have been recovered from the site, as well as the remains of many animals such as ringed and harp seals, caribou, walrus, bowhead whale, beluga whale, fox, wolf, dogs and birds.

Eleven semi-buried sod houses, more permanent versions of the snow *iglu* still used across Nunavut, dot the site. These houses used whalebone, sod and stone as their building materials, but exhibit many characteristics similar to the traditional snowhouse. As with the *iglu*, the entrance to a sod house was constructed lower to the main living area in order to trap cold air and prevent it from entering the dwelling. Houses also used a “sleeping platform,” from which daily activities were directed. Care was taken to align the dwellings in a southeasterly direction to maximize the light and heat received from the sun. Several tent rings also indicate that the site was used in the summer months.

As part of the development of the site, two house foundations have been left open to viewing. A guidebook available from the Unikkaarvik Visitors Centre provides good background to the site, and describes the sights along the island’s well-marked trail, which winds its way generally in a southeast to northwest direction, terminating at grave sites, tent rings and meat caches. Interpretive signs explain features of interest.

## Planning a Trip

Qaummaarviit is accessible by ski, dogsled or snowmobile in the winter, and by boat during the open water season. However, as the park is located approximately 12 kilometres from Iqaluit, it is recommended that visitors take advantage of the local outfitting services, many of which provide on-site interpretation and a snack. Arrangements can be made through the Unikkaarvik Visitors Centre.

One of the most enjoyable ways to get to the park in the spring is by dog-team. As days lengthen and the snow melts away from the land, the sea ice remains firm and safe well into the latter parts of June. However, as temperatures warm, and the sun gets stronger, surface water begins to appear on the sea ice, and excursions are scheduled into the evening hours to take advantage of cooler temperatures, which make it easier for the dogs to pull the sled. Outfitters may dress their dogs with colourful booties, which protect their dogs’ feet from the rough and sharp edges of melted sea ice. Although surface water is present, the ice generally is still up to five metres thick in many places. As the season progresses, open water leads will

begin to appear and widen, eventually making it unsafe to travel to the island until break up is complete.

If dogsled is your chosen mode of transportation, allow yourself the better part of a day to travel to and properly explore the park. Travel by snow machine and *qamutik* is much quicker, significantly decreasing the length of your trip. Skiing to the park takes a good day, depending on your experience and ability. Also, remember that Frobisher Bay is subject to a tide of up to 15 metres, which can affect travel in any season. Earlier in the season this will simply mean that there is a greater expanse of rough ice to climb to get to the island. Later in the season, this can affect the amount of water on the surface, and the amount and location of open water near the shore.

Whether in winter or summer, visitors should dress warmly. Many local residents opt for heavy parkas when on the bay as the air temperature is generally cooler than on land, and the lack of high topography or trees ensures that even the lightest breeze will have a significant cooling effect. Good quality sunglasses are needed to prevent snow blindness in the spring, or to reduce the reflection of sunlight off the water in the summer. A general adage used by residents is “dress for the worst, enjoy the best.”

Break up in the north end of Frobisher Bay usually takes place around the middle of July.

Remember that in the early open water season there is often ice floating in the bay. Strong onshore winds may trap even the most experienced boaters. Boat travel to Qaummaarviit will take about 30 to 45 minutes, depending on tidal conditions and wind.

Camping is not permitted at Qaummaarviit.

## DIRECTORY

---

For assistance in planning a visit to the Park, contact the Unikkaarvik Visitors Centre  
Tel 1-800-491-7910 or 1866-686-2888, Fax 979-1261.

# 102. SYLVIA GRINNELL TERRITORIAL PARK

*By Colleen Dupuis*

**Set on the outskirts of Iqaluit, Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park is 148 hectares of natural beauty bound to make an impression on any visitor. Bring your camera; photo opportunities abound!**

As the name suggests, the park's most popular features are the gentle falls and crystal waters of the Sylvia Grinnell River, named for the daughter of one of the financiers of American explorer Charles Francis Hall. The lower part of the river – from the falls to Koojesse Inlet – is part of the tidal sys-

tem of the inlet and only navigable at high tide. During extremely high tides these gentle falls all but disappear, becoming an extensive series of rapids.

## What to See and Do

Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park is a favourite picnic site as well as a popular fishing spot. In the past, the river had an abundance of large Arctic char. It is still a great place to catch smaller, pan-sized char. Just remember to get a fishing license before you drop your line. Licenses are available at several retail outlets in Iqaluit.

Camping at the park is also quite common, although there is no running water or tent platforms. Small plateaus on the riverbank provide some shelter for campers. Future plans call for development of a short-term camping area, and trails around Peterhead Inlet and down to Qaummaarviit Territorial Historic Park.

The park is an ideal spot to spend the day exploring. Flora and fauna are varied and abundant. Several species of rare plants have been identified here, including the woodsia fern, one of the rarest plants in the country. Look for it in rocky outcrops; its scaly or hairy appearance is its most distinguishing feature. In summer, the tundra floor becomes a carpet of mountain avens, Arctic heather, Arctic poppies, saxifrages – purple saxifrage is the official flower of Nunavut – and other wildflowers. The subtle colours and delicate foliage are a photographer's delight. Keep in mind the park is a great place to visit in the fall as well. The fall colours of the Arctic may only be three inches high, but they are spectacular!

Wildlife sightings are not uncommon either. Caribou frequent the area in winter and spring; a few remain during the summer. Arctic fox dens are located within the park so be sure and watch for mother foxes returning to feed their young.

Southern Baffin Island is an area of major bird activity in summer, and the park is no exception. As many as 40 species can be found here during the balmy days of June and July. This area is the most southerly breeding ground of the elusive common ringed plover. Other commonly sighted species include the Lapland longspur and the snow bunting. Avid birders should also be on the lookout for the northern wheatear. Rarely seen in North America south of the Labrador coast, this bird nests in the park before its winter migration to Africa and India.

Once you have descended the steep riverbank, walking is relatively easy at Sylvia Grinnell. Nonetheless, the rocky tundra terrain is not the place for tennis shoes, so wear sturdy hiking boots. No formal trails exist in the park, but an old military road runs near the river. It crosses prime birding and wildlife-viewing areas before doubling back around the north end of the airport. This is an approximately 10-kilometre hike with spectacular scenery – don't forget your binoculars, lunch and sunscreen.

The entire area around the park was gouged by massive glaciers and deposits are plentiful in the Sylvia Grinnell Valley. The viewing platform in the park, perched 55 metres above the falls, offers a commanding view of the work of these ice-age behemoths. Here you can easily trace the path of the receding glaciers and the deposits they left behind. The viewing platform is also a great place to watch the sun set.

If you are interested in archeological sites, there are also a few stone cairns and Thule ruins in the park. One of the best is just south of the falls on the east side of the river. Even in the absence of defined trails, navigation is easy; the river is to your right as you head south and on your left as you head north. A footbridge may be built across the river in the future, but until a bridge is constructed, don't attempt to cross on your own. The Sylvia Grinnell River may look relatively benign, but crossing it is difficult and dangerous at the best of times. You may be able to make arrangements with a local outfitter to take you to the far side by boat at high tide. Outfitters are not always available, so be sure to make arrangements in advance.

## Getting There

From the centre of Iqaluit, it's an easy 30-minute walk to the park; good signage will help visitors easily find the way. From the three-way stop at the gas station, proceed north to the Aeroplex Building, number 1084. Turn left and continue past the yield sign, until you see the sign for Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park. Turn right and follow the signs. This route will take you past some interesting local attractions, including an area near a stream where a local dogteam is kept for the summer. Feel free to take pictures, but don't get too close to the dogs. If you don't want to walk, the short cab ride to the park is \$7 per person. There are no phones in the park, so don't forget to make arrangements to be picked up later.

Facilities in the park include a parking area with two nearby outhouses, barbecue pits and a viewing platform. There is no fee for either day use or camping. The park pavilion, which overlooks the falls, is available for group rentals by contacting the Nunavut Parks office. Vehicle use in the park is not encouraged, although you may encounter the odd all-terrain vehicle.

Enjoy your visit to the park, but always keep in mind that although just outside Iqaluit, going for a hike here means going out on the tundra. Use caution not to disturb the flora more than necessary; signs of your passing will remain long after your visit. Carry out all your garbage, too. And remember to let someone know your plans and when you expect to be back.

# 103. KEKERTEN HISTORIC PARK

*by Mike Vlessides*

**L**ike many other historical sites in Nunavut, the legacy of Kekerten Island is born of the often-checked relationship between Inuit and the British and American whalers that pillaged Arctic waters in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Located on the north shore of Cumberland Sound some 50 kilometres from Pangnirtung, Kekerten was once the hub of whaling activity in the sound.

Today, Kekerten Historic Park is a fascinating destination for visitors to Pangnirtung wishing to make a day-trip into this turbulent world. Here

you'll find the remnants of a bygone era described by signage along an interpretive trail. Among the many features of the site are the foundations of three storehouses built in 1857 by Scottish whalers, large cast-iron pots once used for rendering whale oil, blubber-hauling pins and the remains of a whaleboat slip.

## The People and their History

Commercial whaling did not enter Canadian Arctic waters until 1820, when British whalers ventured north from their traditional territory off southeast Greenland into the area around Pond Inlet and Lancaster Sound. They were not disappointed. These untested waters were rich with their principal quarry, the valuable bowhead whale, and for the next two decades became the primary destination of the British whaling fleet. Indeed, the newfound region proved so fecund that between 1820 and 1840, more than 13,000 whales were slaughtered here.

But for all its profitability, bowhead whaling was an uncertain undertaking. During these two decades, the ravages of Arctic weather took a heavy toll on the whalers, resulting in hundreds of deaths and dozens of lost ships. In 1830 alone, 19 ships were lost and many others damaged.

As a result of these dangerous conditions — as well as a rapidly decreasing bowhead population in the immediate area — the whalers were forced to consider alternative choices in terms of livelihood. The prevailing sentiment was that a permanent whaling settlement in more southerly waters would provide the refuge so badly needed by both men and ships.

The answer came by way of a rumour. For years, whalers had heard tales of a large southerly bay that not only abounded with bowheads, but was also free of ice until well into January. Inuit called this place *Tenudiackbik*. In the spring of 1840, Scottish whaler William Penny decided to find the legendary body of water. He elicited the aid of a young Inuk named Eenooloopik, who directed the whaler into the mouth of what is now known as Cumberland Sound. British whaling was resuscitated. Within a few years, both British and American whaling ships were visiting the sound with increasing regularity.

In 1852, a group of American whalers aboard the vessel *McLellan* became the first group to spend the winter in Cumberland Sound, setting a precedent that was soon to become standard practice for most whalers in the region. Five years later, Penny established a permanent station in the sound when he erected a station house at Kekerten for the Arctic Aberdeen Company. The Americans soon followed suit. The establishment of these wintering stations created a permanent foundation for contact and trade between Inuit and non-Inuit; neither group would ever be the same.

Attracted by a culture rich with material items of which they were enamoured, Inuit flocked to the whaling stations to perform services that would get them the items they so desired. Among other things, Inuit transported blubber between the floe edge and the harbour, rendered whale oil and worked as whaleboat crews. They also supplied the whalers with fresh meat and fur clothing. In exchange, the whalers gave the Inuit a host of manufactured items, including rifles, telescopes, knives, needles and kettles. Inuit also received dry goods such as biscuits and tobacco.

While much good came of the relationship that was forged between the two cultures, Inuit suffered desperately for their newly found ties with the whalers. They were highly susceptible to the alien diseases of the Europeans and Americans, and viruses ravaged native settlements. By 1857, some 17 years after their initial contact with the whalers, the 1,000-strong Inuit of Cumberland Sound had seen their population reduced to less than 350. To exacerbate the problem, working with whalers drastically altered traditional Inuit subsistence patterns, and many failed to cache adequate food stores for times of shortage, often resulting in needless starvation.

The late 1850s and early 1860s were the golden years for bowhead whaling in Cumberland Sound. As many as 30 ships visited the area each autumn; about a dozen regularly spent the winter in the vicinity of Kekerten, or Penny's Harbour as it was known to the whalers. By 1860, stations at Blacklead Island (on the south shore of the sound) and Cape Haven (near the mouth of the sound) joined Kekerten as permanent whaling posts.

It was in this same year, however, that American whaling ships first ventured into Hudson Bay and discovered it to be a fertile whaling area. Most of the American fleet would concentrate on the area for a number of years, spending summers there and wintering in Cumberland Sound. It would only take five years for bowhead stocks in these new waters to shrink precipitously, so ships began returning to the sound.

They were met with a similar situation. Cumberland Sound was yielding fewer whales each year, the result of two decades of intense exploitation. The Arctic Aberdeen Company sold its stations, effectively ending William Penny's participation in the whale fishery. After 1864, the "discoverer" of Cumberland Sound never set foot in the Arctic again.

By 1870, the number of ships visiting the sound had declined to only half that of a decade earlier. But despite the relative dearth of whales, Cumberland Sound was still the location of choice for a dwindling industry. A few ships from each nation wintered there until the late 1870s. By 1882, American involvement in Eastern Arctic whaling was practically nil. The only permanent station still in operation was at Kekerten.

As bowhead populations shrank, whaling companies looked to other mammals to fill the void in their pocketbooks. As early as 1872, an American company was netting beluga whales at the head of the sound. More attention was paid to seals, however, which boasted enormous populations in the sound. The 1870s saw increasing trade for sealskins and seal blubber.

As a result of this novel demand for seal products, Inuit returned to preferred sealing grounds across the sound, where they would await the arrival of whaling companies and the products for which they traded. Within 20 years, the seal population had been decimated, leaving local Inuit with little food sources to see them through the long winters. This probably caused many Inuit to move back to the stations in large numbers in the late 1800s. By the waning months of the 19th century, both Blacklead and Kekerten were home to a few hundred Inuit and a handful of non-Inuit whalers.

When the price of whalebone dropped 17¢ per kilogram in 1912, the fate of the bowhead fishery was sealed. After 1913, no whaling ships left for the Arctic. Nonetheless, Inuit at Blacklead and Kekerten continued to hunt

whales there for five more years; by this time the whale fishery had become an important part of their culture. Both Kekerten and Blacklead served intermittently as trading posts, but were abandoned in the mid-1920s and late 1930s, respectively.

Today, whaling is largely a memory in the minds of a few Pangnirtung elders. In July 1998, however, that memory was briefly reignited when a historic bowhead whale hunt, negotiated as part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, saw several elders successfully harvest a single bowhead a short distance from the Kekerten whaling station.

## Planning a Trip

Trips to Kekerten are best arranged in Pangnirtung through the Angmarlik Centre, the local visitors centre and museum. Inquire about the different outfitters and services offered. Outfitters recommended by the Angmarlik Centre stay with visitors while at the park and provide interpretive tours. They also supply meals.

In late spring — early May to mid-June — most people reach Kekerten by snowmobile, although those with ample time and energy can ski. Regardless of your mode of transportation, always prepare for unexpectedly cold temperatures and icy winds that eat through several layers of clothing. Note that during the latter weeks of June and early July, travelling on the ice is an uncertain proposition and best left to Inuit who are well versed in pre-breakup travel.

Summer travel to Kekerten is usually by boat or freighter canoe. However, don't plan a seaward trip for earlier than July 15, since ice often lingers this late in the year. Once the ice clears, boat trips to the park are possible until late September, when the waters slowly begin to congeal once again. Dress warmly, even on the balmiest days. It's also worth carrying waterproof clothing, including rubber boots. Your licensed guide or outfitter will provide a survival suit for boat travel. If travelling without an outfitter, rent a survival suit in town. Pangnirtung Fiord is subject to tremendous tides, which will dictate your departure and arrival times.

Aside from ski excursions, a round-trip to Kekerten — with time out to enjoy the park — takes about 12 hours. You can't camp in the park proper, but camping is permitted on the rest of the island. A cabin at the park provides shelter in case of emergency; ask your guide if he or she carries survival gear before you embark. If you plan to ski there, then plan on camping for the night somewhere outside the park.