



Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge
Birch and Tiffany Robbins
PO Box 888 ~ Kodiak, Alaska ~ 99615

Newsletter 2010

www.raspberrylisland.com

Welcome

Well, another year is nearing conclusion. Today is November 30, it is 7:36am. It is completely dark outside, and I can hear the wind rustling against the house; it sounds calmer than it was during yesterday's 45 knot blow and 20°F temperatures. I sense it is still cold out this morning. However, I can still hear the hydro humming away, and Tiffany said the batteries are still reading 'full.' The kids are playing and rough housing already in their rooms, and Tiffany and I have enjoyed a couple of cups of coffee relaxing in bed.



Our pace has slowed dramatically since our last guests left the day after Thanksgiving, and the past few days have been consumed by family time, relaxation, and various projects aimed at preparing for the winter months ahead. The 'down time' will be short lived, as we hope friends can join us in a few days for a week of fun, then off to Wasilla over Christmas to visit Birch's mom and sisters, then close friends of ours from Kodiak will join us over New Years for a short week of relaxation by the fire.

It is so easy to reflect on the year we have shared with many of you and smile. THANK YOU for enjoying it with us, THANK YOU for your support which allows us to live here and lead the life that we do. THANK YOU for the thoughts, the prayers, the e-mails, letters, phone calls, and Facebook messages that brought you to us even if you weren't here in body. THANK YOU for the fresh memories of another wonderful year on Raspberry Island. We cannot do this without you. THANK YOU!!



Crab!!!!

New for 2010 was our crabbing addition to the fishing portion of what we can offer here on Raspberry Island. It was a tremendous success, as we pulled pot after pot teeming with Tanner (Snow, Opelio) Crab. Cleaned and boiled right away we enjoyed many a fresh crab feed, and most folks chose to take a frozen box or two home with them. It is very easy to meld this into a fishing trip, and we hope to try for shrimp next year, as well.

Whales

This was truly an incredible year for whale viewing. The picture below (credit goes to photographer Summer G., awesome shot-way to go!) summarizes one of many opportunities we had to view these amazing creatures up close. It remains wonderful to see the Fin, Humpback, Sei, Minkie, and Blue Whales (I'm certain we saw our first Blue this summer!) as they visit our area to feed. Also of course a treat are the occasional passing pods of Orcas and playful Dahl Porpoise.



Halibut Permits

New regulations become reality next year which will effectively reduce the current halibut charter fleet by 30-40%. The "halibut charter fleet" is made up of any boat or business taking folks out to catch and retain halibut for hire, like us. Please rest assured that Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge will have all the necessary permitting required to continue to guide you on halibut fishing trips, and you will be able to harvest your catch if you choose. South Central Alaska (including Kodiak and Raspberry Island) will remain on a two halibut per person per day limit, as we have always been (unlike SE Alaska, where the limits for halibut have been reduced to one per person per day).



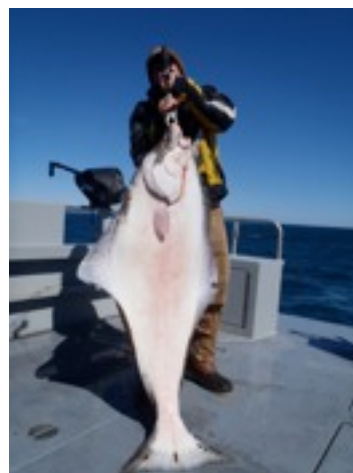
Mt. Olympus

Every year, whether by curiosity, optimism, or necessity, we sometimes seek new fishing ground to add to our collection of tried-and-true honey holes. This year we found a spot we ended up calling Mount Olympus, and is truly one of the most amazing halibut 'holes' we have ever fished. While we never landed a 'barn door,' evidence of her presence was indisputable--she even tried to



eat a 12lb Arrow-Toothed Flounder. Not catching her or one of her sisters was simply due to the abundance of other fish at this spot. First of all, it is a little tricky to fish; it's deeper than we normally fish, so deep I couldn't anchor, and had to back the motors into the tide and any wind to stay in position. Secondly, as soon as the gear hit the bottom, we would hook SOMETHING, whether it be a Grey Cod, Arrow-Tooth, Bull-Head, or Halibut. Most days we'd hit the bottom and immediately hook up on halibut--often catching two at once (two hooks on one rod). Most of the fish we caught were between 30 and 80 lbs--once we caught an 80 and a 60 on the same rod at the SAME TIME!! So you see, it's hard to let those fish go and target Big Mamma. Not saying we didn't TRY, and we know she's THERE, but sometimes it's just more fun to catch your limit on 30s and 60s then move on to salmon fishing.

While Olympus is certainly an addition to our list of honey holes, our other spots, some old, some new, also typically produced nice catches of halibut this summer. Fish ON!





Kayaking

2010 was another stellar year for Sea Kayaking in our area. Above is a fantastic picture (well done Lisa O) of a playful bear our guests came upon not far from the lodge on Afognak Island. While it looks like he is sleeping in this picture, he gave them quite a show, rolling, playing with drift wood, and walking through the wildflowers. They collected quite a number of photos during the experience and it was hard for me to pick out just one to share with you. Other bears were spotted this summer on both short and long paddles, as well as whales, Sea Otters, Eagles, Seals; the list goes on.

Web Cam

New for 2010 is our web cam, which refreshes an image every 5 minutes on the home page of our website, looking South down Raspberry Straits. It is mounted on the ocean corner of our fish house, so while it is nice to see the view, it also presents an excellent view of the fish cleaning table and kayak launching area. Keep an eye on it around 5:30pm our time in the summer to see what's up!



Hiking

Hiking on the trails around Raspberry was enjoyed by many this summer. Guide Jack did a great job leading folks through forests, up mountains, and along beaches. Three different species of Orchids were searched for and found by a couple from England, and numerous other types of both flora and fauna were spotted, observed, and photographed. Some enjoyed a nice campfire on the beach and accompanying S'more roast, and others enjoyed the breathtaking views from the top. It is a wonderful part of the Raspberry Island Experience and we recommend a hike or stroll to anyone visiting us here on the island.



Bears

Guests had another fantastic year bear viewing this year. Fly out trips to both Katmai National Park and the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge presented the bears in their natural environment, doing what bears do (sometimes 'in the woods'), up close and personal. It was wonderful to hear the reports after their flight, always with smiles, and "that was AWESOME!" We highly recommend the fly out bear view if bear viewing is a priority. We have also started to offer full day and multi-day bear views, based out of our lodge, if bear viewing is the focus of an upcoming trip.

Web Page Improvements

Once again we're expanding on our website, www.raspberrylsland.com. By the time you read this, our 2010 Scrapbook should be published on the 'Scrapbook' page. 2008 and '09 scrapbooks are archived under the links on the left side of the page, as well as '08 and '09 Newsletters. This one should be posted there, as well. Also new, as previously mentioned, is our new web cam, who's link is about 3/4 of the way down our home page. Some of you have followed our daily journals through Facebook and that mirror at the bottom of our homepage. While we will continue to journal on Facebook, we have removed the mirror and replaced it with a blog, located at the bottom of our home page. It will be fun to explore the potential of this new format as interactive updates are posted. Also, at the bottom of every page on our website, is a link to sign up for our new e-newsletter, which we plan on using to highlight activities on Raspberry Island, and will be e-mailed to everyone on the list as I create them.



Lastly, we are in the process of designing a new program called the "Package Creator." Since we specialize in a number of different activities, and guests are often interested in longer or shorter stays than described in our standard packages, the Package Creator will help folks potentially interested in visiting Raspberry pick and choose which activities you are interested in, and how long you'd like to stay. The Package Creator will then immediately produce your customized package and price for you to review. Upon creating the perfect package, you will then be able to submit your information and the form to us to check on availability and complete the booking. As indicated within the Package Creator, it is NOT an attempt to substitute personal service from Tiffany and I during the research and booking stages of planning a trip; just more information at your finger tips in today's world of information technology.



Fly Fishing

I will say that this year we enjoyed some phenomenal fly fishing, both for Sockeye in the Spring and Silvers in the Fall. Late May through the first week of June was a bullseye as Sockeye pushed up one of our favorite rivers in droves. Unfortunately for us, there were TOO many fish, and by May 9 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game opened the area to the commercial fishing fleet. Great for the river (too many fish would starve) and great for our friends in the fleet, but bummer for our fly fishers after that. Next, by late August through late September, we focused on Silvers, targeting eight different fresh water systems in our area. We truly had them dialed in and experienced some amazing catches, on both fly and spinning gear.



Lodge Improvements

Every year we strive to make Raspberry Island a little better for our guests and a little easier for us. Big improvements this year are: New furniture in the living room! EVERYONE enjoyed the new overstuffed leather couches and love seats in the living room, accompanied by accent chairs. Tiffany spent a lot of time selecting what she wanted, which colors to incorporate, and the resulting layout and feel is perfect; unobtrusive yet inviting. Tiffany also met a lady from Kodiak this spring who owns Clay Creek Pottery and asked her to replace our dining ware in hand made pottery. The collection is almost complete and is beautiful! Lastly, she decided to replace all of the bedding in the guest cabins with new flannel and down comforters--another important part of any vacation is a good night's sleep.



We also converted the hot tub to a diesel fired heater, and wired the jets to our hydro plant. In the past we had to run our diesel generator to operate and heat the hot tub, now everything is quiet and automatic. Lastly, this year we invested in a hydraulics package for the Gemini. Unfortunately all of the parts and pieces didn't arrive on schedule, so was not a part of this summer's activities. However, next year we will have a hydraulically operated anchor winch that will hold 500' of line and 60' of chain for anchoring in the really deep holes (and pulling the anchor will be faster and easier), a hydraulic hoist mounted to our boom, primarily used for lifting the dinghy up onto the roof after landing on a beach, but also used to hoist big halibut etc, and of course a POT PULLER for pulling crab and shrimp pots. While crabbing was fun this summer, we still had to pull the pot by hand, which, well, the pot puller will be better. :)



Tiffany's Cookbook

Tiffany's cookbook continues to grow, and this year she introduced a few new recipes, most notably Aleena's Crab Dip, and a new Bread Pudding with Bourbon Sauce. She of course continues to feature fresh halibut, salmon, King Crab, and Iowa Pacific Processors' prime steaks. As always an electronic version of the cookbook is readily available. Just e mail us if you'd like a copy and we'll happily send one to you.

About Us

All is well with us as we settle into 'winter mode.' Tiffany is amazing as she started teaching Fisher kindergarten in August. He is doing well, and Sage is very participatory in her own preschool, often interacting with Fisher as he learns. While he is all boy, interested in video games and squirrel hunting, Sage is all girl, frequently wearing a tutu, is quite the artist, and has a very good imagination. They also play together very well (most of the time), and are wonderful kids. Tiffany remains the woman of my dreams and continues to amaze me through her spirit, strength, and beauty. I grow funnier and funnier, but, as a friend once said, "it's okay Birch, looks aren't everything."

Merry Christmas!



This is our third year being here. You can tell that my girls and I love it every time we come here. This is paradise for us. What a great few days! Talk about the best of Alaska. Amazing sights, people and food. We truly enjoyed our time here at the lodge and with your family....Thank you for an amazing time and we hope to have the opportunity to return. **What a great setting and excellent meals. We enjoyed the hospitality and the fishing. Our bear watch in Katmai was successful as well as three days of great fishing. Raspberry....does provide for the complete Alaska Experience. We hope to return soon.** *Our stay here on Raspberry Island has been amazing! It was everything we thought it would be and much much more! I think we saw every animal you could possibly see! We came within 30 ft of a huge Finback Whale in our kayaks, and even closer to the Alaskan Brown Bear! Fishing was a Blast! We loved watching the Eagles feast after Birch cleaned our Fish! The food was out of this world! You will definitely not go hungry! Thank you so much Birch, Tiffany, Jack, Aleena, Fisher and Sage for the wonderful Adventure! We will def be coming back! Thank you so much for sharing your home and Kodiak Island. My adventure was incredible, as incredible as your hospitality. My memories of this place will be unforgettable. I can't wait to come back and make more, especially to share them with my family and friends. From the moment we boarded the boat on Kodiak it has been a treat. Birch treated us to a full symphony of whales blowing and diving and showing us tail on the trip out. Then a multitude of otters were on display with a sea lion with a salmon in his mouth in their midst. We arrived and the whole clan greeted us like they had waited months for us to get here. We kayaked the same afternoon and while watching an eagle on her nest were treated with a bear calmly eating grass and not minding us a bit. Fishing was so much fun the next day and the guys finally learned how to help Birch a little, while the girls reeled in the King SALMON! Everything has been excellent including the accommodations, food and activities. Everyone has been so service oriented and want you to be so pampered. We have enjoyed everything immensely including the kids and dogs. Tiffany is a ***** (five star) chef. Yummy cookies! **We absolutely loved visiting Raspberry Island! Thank you so much for a great trip!! We really look forward to visiting again. We will be back-** Thanks so much for everything! You catered to our every need and really spoiled us! You made us feel so welcome in your wonderful home! Raspberry (Island Remote) Lodge is a great place to stay! The cabins are perfect! The food fantastic! The fishing was so much fun! Of course, the women out fished the men!! Birch is an awesome guide!! Can't say enough about all he did for us! From the first day: Whales, sea otters, a Sea Lion eating a salmon and a bear to the last day: the biggest salmon of our trip! It was all tremendous! Can't wait to return!! Great to be back again! Fabulous Fishing. Beautiful weather, great bear view, and of course great cooking, fun, laughter, hope to come back soon. We enjoyed the hospitality. Thanks for being so child friendly. The kids and I had a great trip. Thank you for the wonderful vacation. The first day was the best of 20 days fishing in Alaska over 3 different trips for us. We almost couldn't keep the lines in the water! But the fun and laughs we had at the lodge with you and your family were even better than the fishing. Hope to see you soon. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY AND OPENING UP YOUR BEAUTIFUL HOME. THE FOOD WAS MORE THAN EXCELLENT AND YOU AND YOUR STAFF DID EVERYTHING TO MAKE OUR STAY AS ENJOYABLE AS POSSIBLE. THE FISHING WAS GOOD AND WE ARE HAPPY WITH THE 100+LBS WE ARE SENDING HOME. THANKS AGAIN FOR EVERYTHING AND WE'LL LOOK FORWARD TO OUR NEXT VISIT TO RASPBERRY ISLAND REMOTE LODGE. ...WE HAVE HAD STELLAR FIVE DAYS WITH BIRCH, TIFFANY, JACK, FISHER, SAGE, MARIS, AND DAKOTA. FISHING HAS BEEN SUPERB, MEALS FABULOUS, BEAR VIEWING AND KAYAKING A GREAT TIME FOR MY BOYS. WE VENTURE BACK TO THE HOT, HUMID EAST COAST WITH HEAVY HEARTS BUT FOND MEMORIES (AND PLENTY OF FISH). HOPE TO BE BACK AGAIN SOON. Thank you Tiffany, Birch and Jack for a wonderful few days on Raspberry Island. It was the 'cherry on top' of a fabulous 30th Anniversary Trip: great food, great fun, peace and quiet. Tiffany and Birch you have two great kids, too! This may have been our first trip here, but surely not our last.*