

Rusty Robinson
BYU M.S. Candidate
May 18, 2009

Ice Road Bear Timeline Summary

March 30, 2009

We received a phone call from Tom Evans at FWS in Anchorage in the morning stating that a polar bear den had been observed 100 m from the Badami ice road and that the bear had left the area. The FWS asked that we approach the den and take den measurements and coordinates so we met up with Zane Henning from Savant who showed us where the den was. Even though the den was close to the road we took snow machines as a safety precaution. We got on top of the island's bluff (3 m high) and rode a small perimeter looking for bears before we parked the machines, leaving them running and pointing away from the den. Next we approached the den and I stood by with bear spray in hand while BJ probed the den. When we had probed what we believed to be the entire den we began digging a second access hole. It was during this process that a bear peeked up at us through the hole then disappeared back into the hole. Not surprisingly, we immediately left the scene and drove 10 miles to the Badami facility where we called Tom Evans (FWS) and informed him of the incident. BJ, Zane Henning, Eric, and I were present during this phone call. I recall that it was late afternoon sometime between 4 and 6 PM. The speaker phone was not working so after informing Tom of the incident I handed the phone to Eric. At the conclusion of the phone call it was my understanding that the ice road would not be closed at this time but that a bear monitor would be posted at the site and traffic would be monitored and controlled.

March 31

We met up with Zane Henning at the ice road den site just before dusk and set up a camera. To our recollection 15 MPH speed limit signs had been posted approximately 0.5 miles either side of the den at this time. A bear monitor or checkpoint was yet to be in position. The camera was set up approximately 200m away from the den on the opposite side of the road so that we could see when trucks and equipment drive by. We thought it would be interesting to note how the bear responded to road traffic. Just after dusk we FLIR'd the den and saw a definite hot spot. We had no doubt that the bear was still present.

April 2

It was reported to us that the bear was seen on the evening of April 1st (the night before) so we called the bear monitor in the morning to get an update. I spoke with the person on bear watch duty who read the log taken by a different bear monitor the preceding night. Several bouts of bear activity were observed in the evening of the first until the bear abandoned the den just before dark.

April 4

We retrieved our camera and hard drive from the ice road den location and reviewed some of the footage. There were several bouts of bear activity as well as several instances of road traffic on April 1st.