

Summer — Kiak

KIAKUTARTUKUT. – WE ARE GOING TO HAVE SUMMER PRETTY SOON.



Photo: Summertime at Ocean Bay, Sitkalidak Island.
Courtesy of the Don Clark collection.

Summer in the Kodiak Archipelago comes slowly. In April and May, low-pressure systems generated in the Aleutian Islands shift westward into the Bering Sea and Kodiak's weather begins to moderate. Warm, foggy conditions replace cold winter winds as the days lengthen and the sun rises high above the horizon. By June, temperatures are mild and the hillsides green.

For Alutiiq people, summer has always been a time of work. The resources critical to a subsistence lifestyle are abundant and most easily obtained during the warm months. In June and July, people hunt sea mammals and sea birds, fish for cod and halibut, and collect fresh greens from coastal meadows. Salmon fishing and berry picking follow in August and September.

In the distant past, summer was also the time for travel and trading. During the warm, light months, villagers regularly paddled to the Alaska mainland to visit their neighbors and obtain foods and raw materials not locally available.