



## Pond Inlet Floe Edge Trip Report (June 14-22, 2022)

[Link: Pond Inlet Floe Edge Trip Report \(June 14- 22, 2022\)](#)

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An expedition to the far north of Baffin Island, where Narwhals, Polar Bears, and Bowhead Whales await. **Ottawa - Pond Inlet - Floe Edge**



*Pond Inlet*

Today was a transfer day from Ottawa to Pond Inlet. Things went relatively smoothly for arctic travel, meaning our flight was canceled but almost everyone was re-booked on a later flight, arriving in Pond Inlet in the evening. Steve, the guide, had to spend the night in Iqaluit but arrived the next morning in time to join the group which left the town's main beach in early afternoon. After another uneventful but incredibly scenic komatik ride to our camp, we encountered strong winds that had wreaked havoc on some of the tents. A couple of them and one sleeping bag were later found far off on the ice. It took four hours but the tent was put back together and everyone slept soundly under the arctic sun.



*Floe edge camp*

**Floe Edge** We had four full days to explore the floe edge, located about 15 minutes by komatik from camp. One additional half day was provided before departure back to Pond Inlet. Each day was different, though all were spent wandering around on the ice looking for wildlife and ice features, with two hikes on land thrown in to add to the variety.



© Steve Ogle Photography

*Snowmobile traveling on sea ice with meltwater on top*

Our main challenge on this trip was finding open water that was safe to access. On one day only did the pack ice push away enough from the edge to allow a large opening, but thankfully our friends the Bowhead Whales are adapted to move through the ice floes and approach the edge. Our first sightings of Bowheads included up to six in one area! So, despite the “closed” ice, the whales came to us and everyone had good looks of flukes, blowholes and even some interesting whale interactions. Later in the trip we were closer to the edge with more open water but we saw far fewer whales, leading us to hypothesize that perhaps earlier some whales had been “stuck” for a while in the smaller openings. However, only a whale knows!



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*Bowhead whale*



*At floe edge with bowhead whales © Steve Ogle*

On the first day we found signs of a seal recently predated by a Polar Bear. This was almost as exciting as seeing a live bear, which did happen the next outing. On this day we had trouble finding open water so instead spent some time viewing some grounded (and ice-bound) icebergs and later the bird nesting cliffs where thousands of Thick-billed Murres and Black-legged Kittiwakes come to nest. These were all impressive but, on our way back, we stopped at a small pond at the edge and happened to see a polar bear approaching from the flat ice. Approach it did, and it proceeded to lope by within several hundred metres then swim out onto the ice floes. On the last morning we saw one other Polar Bear heading out onto the ice floes, hanging around long enough for decent scope views.



*Polar bear tracks, dragging seal © Steve Ogle*



*polar bear from drone*



*Thick-billed Murre*



*Iceberg*

Narwhals were a difficult prospect with reports from both locals and outfitters near and far of their scarcity this season. Indeed, the odds were against us for four days with no large openings in the ice. Stress was mounting but warm food, good company and other wildlife were consolation prizes. We noted that scarcity and abundance are a fact of life up here in the arctic. That said, on our fourth day the ice opened up enough to provide the potential for Narwhals and wouldn't you know it, a female

with a calf swam by for several minutes! Later, we saw one more and a smaller dedicated contingent of guests stayed for an extra hour at the end of the day and spotted one more, while the rest of us hiked above camp. A final main sighting was that of a Bearded Seal on the final morning.

**Departure** We stayed a bit longer than planned out at the pack ice on the final morning since a Bowhead and Polar Bear showed up, aside from the Bearded Seal sighting. Back at camp we watched the large production of take-down at the end of the season (we were the last group of tourists for the spring). Our ride back was quite exciting with lots of water on top of the ice and even a rock/ice/snow avalanche that came down at some point and blocked the regular route along the edge of the sound. Despite this we arrived back to Pond Inlet safely and with a few stories to tell. We flew out on time the next morning.



*Mountain reflection © Steve Ogle*



*Purple Sandpiper*