

Uncharted Frontier

Finland and Franz Josef Land

Photography by Grace Chen



Uncharted Frontier

Finland and Franz Josef Land

Photography by Grace Chen

Uncharted Frontier

*It is the poetry of nature,
it is that which uplifts the spirit within us.....*

Rushin

John

Uncharted frontier: encounter wolverines in the wild, explore seldom-heard of archipelago in the Arctic Ocean and search for narwhal and bowhead whales. Lured by these elusive dreams, I embarked on an adventure to Finland and Franz Josef Land.

What an unforgettable "blind" experience it was to observe wildlife. This was akin to solitary confinement with sleep deprivation, silence and no excessive movements for a 16-hour stretch. We endured and were rewarded with sightings of the wolverines (even a family of four), wolves and brown bears. Finland also boasted countless lakes, primeval forests, bogs and unique flora. Yet, I was most impressed by the swarms of big, black and ubiquitous mosquitoes! Happy was I for heeding the warnings to bring appropriate deterrents.

After a hiatus of eleven years, it was easy to forget how calm the Arctic Ocean was compared to the tumultuous Southern Ocean. The hope to reacquaint with white furry friends and walruses did not disappoint. One female polar bear was not shy and indulged us for so long that indelible laugh lines were frozen to our faces! Or was it the cold temperature? A mystical close encounter with walruses in thick fog was spiritual for some. To a geologist delight, the columnar basalt twisted, turned and spiraled into unique geometric patterns. Equally impressive were the resilient flora that dotted and brightened the harsh arctic environment. One found the tiniest tree (polar willow), colorful poppies, buttercups and saxifraga in bloom. Icebergs displayed their great artistry sculpted by nature for our enjoyment.

I set several personal records. Reaching latitude 81° 47.3' N, was the furthest north I had ventured. Along with my trip mates, as far as we know, we were the first to ever land at Cape Yalik, Ziegler Island. I had two opportunities to walk on sea ice, hence walking on water!

Sadly, I did not see any narwhal or bowhead whale. Perhaps it will be an inducement for a future expedition?

I hope the images in this book capture the essence and diverse nature of this trip.

Grace Chen

© by the author of this book. The book author retains sole copyright to her contributions to this book.

The Blurb-provided layout designs and graphic elements are copyright Blurb Inc. This book was created using the Blurb creative publishing service. The book author retains sole copyright to her contributions to this book.





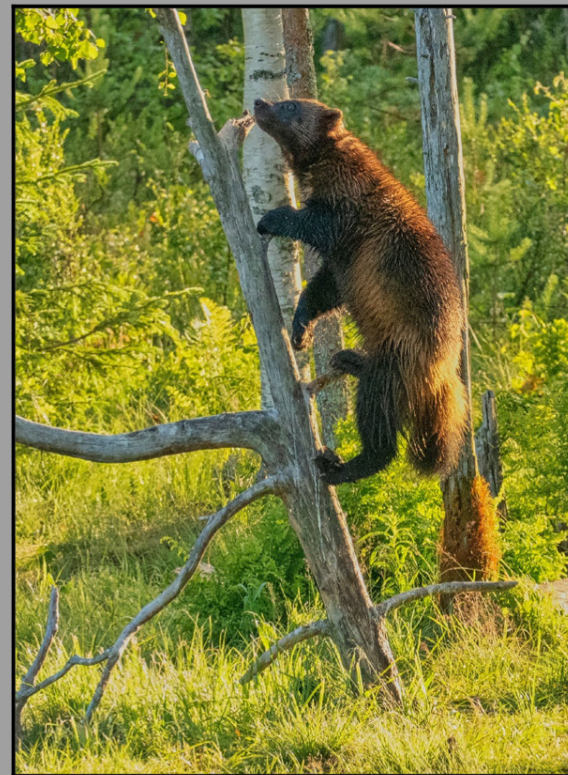
My Photography and Observation Blind



Mew Gull Checking Us Out



I See Food Up There!



Agile Climber



Big Man on Campus



A Sumptuous Feast



Northern Hawk-owl



Pied Flycatcher, Juvenile



Rustic Bunting, Female



Merlin



Reindeer



Eurasian Bullfinch



Red Squirrel



Mushroom Everywhere!



Eriophorum (Cottongrass) Accentuate Colorful Houses





Our Home for the Franz Josef Land Expedition



Follow the Ice





Artistry in Nature





Arctic Skua



Glaucous Gulls





Finally Glorious View of Polar Bear on Apollonoff Island



Guess What I Just Had for Breakfast?





Brännich's Guillemot





Happy Family



I'm Bored, Aren't You?