

Oceanographic Center Students Participate in Alaska Coastal Ecology Class



Graduate students from NSU's Oceanographic Center participated in the Alaska Coastal Ecology class this past July. Under the expert guidance of Alaskan native Amy Hirons, Ph.D. – now at the Oceanographic Center – 16 students and one teaching assistant spent 10 days exploring the biological, physical, chemical and geological aspects of Alaska's unique coastal environments.

The group flew to Anchorage on July 10 and traveled from there through Turnagain Arm to Homer Spit and across Kachemak Bay by boat to the University of Alaska-Fairbank's marine laboratory in Kasitsna Bay located at the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula. Using the marine lab as home base, the group spent six days exploring several different tidal bays, performing zooplankton tows and analyzing their finds, conducting otter trawls in order to get a closer look at the benthic communities, and taking in some of the great bird watching of the area. The class also visited the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward to learn about in-depth research being conducted on marine mammals and birds.

In addition, the group took advantage of Alaska's first class outdoor adventures – kayaking, fishing, glacier hiking and even snorkeling and swimming (only for the brave of heart).

The Alaska Coastal Ecology course was the first of what Hirons hopes to continue as a yearly class. The class required students to keep a field journal during the trip and to write a report based on the unique habitats found at these high latitudes. The class met twice before departing Ft. Lauderdale for Anchorage and, upon their return, presented a talk and slide show to the Oceanographic Center's staff, faculty and student body.

[Photo Gallery](#)
