

MATT - NAVIGATING SEA ICE INTERVIEW

1. **What research were you working on?**

Studying peregrine falcons (stress levels, survival rate, recruitment rates, return rates, etc...)

2. **What do you pack in your qamutik in for ice safety?**

With being out in the field we bring survival gear (shelter, sleeping bag, stove, fuel, extra gas, food, extra rope, shovel)

3. **What time of year was it? (month)**

We would be out on the ice in May and June. We would stop being on the sea ice when it had too many open spots and no longer be safe to be out on for research.

4. **On your trip, did you come across interesting/unique ice? (e.g. melting areas, water, crack, multi-year ice, polynya, landfast ice, pack ice) Explain how the “different” ice affected your travel.**

Yes, we would have to deal with open water in channels. This would depend on how much of the channel was open. Sometimes it would just be a case of driving near the shore around the open water, other times it was drive onto land to drive around the open water.

Thin ice: there are times where we cannot go through an area due to thin ice. There have been times when we have hiked to the top of a hill to look at the ice in the area and to plan our way through as there was thin ice in the area. We wanted to drive only on the thick ice. The color of the ice is different when it is thick or thin.

Cracks: if they were still small (under a foot across) we just drive over them. If they were larger, we would drive down them to find an area that was not as big and cross there.

Multi-year ice: If it was really bad we might try go around it (although not very effective as sometimes we just had to go through it to get to where we needed to, so we would just go through slowly).

Pooling water: Try and avoid the large deep pools of water, try to follow the cracks; and, go near the shore as those areas are often drained the best.

Slush (slush and open water near the shore): With hope it is not too deep and we just deal with it if it happens. It was most likely to happen when going from ice to land or vice versa. Sometimes it is best to follow where someone has already gone and other times it was best to make your own trail because that could keep you on top of the slush.

Pressure ice: this is the ice just as you drive onto the sea ice and in Iglulik it really isn't a big deal as we have small tides, but in some places such as Kimmirut, this would be a very big challenge.



IMAGE 1 Photo of Matt.



5. **Has your snowmobile ever become stuck? If so, what tool did you use to get it out?**

Yes, we have gotten stuck. Typically we would just have to dig it out, lift to move it and try to go again. Sometimes this would take a while. If the situation allowed, we would also use the other snowmobile with us to help pull it out. But we wouldn't want to get that one stuck as well.

6. **What wildlife have you seen?**

We have seen seals, geese, hawks, falcons, seabirds, shore birds, ptarmigan, siksik, tracks for polar bears, and of course people.

7. **Did your navigation equipment ever stop working?**

No, we often have backup equipment though.

8. **Have you ever been lost on the land/ice? What did you do?**

For work we have never been lost. A few reasons for this would be: with the work on falcons, if the weather is bad there is more disruption to the falcons and their nesting abilities, so if we are also around them we would add even more stress. So we do not work on the really bad days. Also, as this is a job, there is no point in pushing it and risk getting lost. Our study area is also very easy to identify where we are and when we are near land as we have been through it for many years. And we don't need to go outside of our study area.

9. **What do you eat?**

Breakfast at the camp is oatmeal (quick and easy to get the day started). Lunches are usually bagels with meat and cheese as they pack well, also noodle soup that is just add water. Suppers can be anything from pasta and fried KLIK to char, but usually just some form of pasta like a few sidekicks. We also always have granola bars and cookies around to keep energy levels up... and they taste good.

10. **Did the ice conditions affect a wildlife population in that area?**

As we study birds that nest on the cliffs, the ice conditions would not affect them, however there have been times that the ice melts from an area and we can not access it so it affects the way we are able to study them.

11. **Anything cool to add about your experience as a researcher?**

It has been great being out on the ice in the springtime as it is warming up; and when you are out on the ice every day for a month you really see the changes that happen at that time of year. I am very fortunate to have a job that provides these opportunities.

MOSHI - SEA ICE KNOWLEDGE AND HAZARDS INTERVIEW

1. What was the purpose of your trip?

Just get out of town by dog team – around the Igloolik town bay.

2. What do you pack in your qamutik in regards to ice safety?

Harpoon is the biggest thing ice safety wise – you can use it to test the thickness of ice that you're unsure about. I know of people that bring dome tents that they can quickly pop up and warm up in case people get too wet.

3. What time of year was it? (month)

During the fall, when the ice was forming. (October? November? Unsure).

4. On your trip did you come across interesting/unique ice? (e.g. melting areas, water, crack, multi-year ice, polynya, landfast ice, pack ice)

All sorts of stuff over several trips – polynyas, glaciers, cracks, rough ice, new ice.

5. Explain how the “different” ice affected your travel

During the dog team trip with my father, we ran into thin ice – our dogs feet started breaking through the thin ice and eventually so did our qamutik, with us on it. The dogs got themselves to safety and then stopped, leaving my father and I stopped with our qamutik broken through the ice, and us, surrounded by thin ice. If we'd stepped off the qamutik, we'd fall through the ice. We eventually laid on the thin ice, rather than standing on the thin ice and got the front of the qamutik over the thin ice and then got the dogs going again. We quickly rushed home after that, but my toe got frostbitten, so after a while I lost my toenail, which eventually grew back.

6. Has your skidoo ever become stuck? If so, what tool did you use to get it out?

Not really – my father's did one fall day. He called me with a walkie talkie and let me know where he was and what happened. He had been trying to get from the ice onto the land, and his snowmobile went through the ice – maybe those areas are softer than the ice area and the land? I drove using a snowmobile to him and we dragged it out.

7. What wildlife did you see?

All sorts over several trips – seals, polar bears, foxes, birds

8. Have you ever been lost on the land/ice? If so, what did you do?

IMAGE 2 Photo by Moshi.



One time my brother and I were going back home from the floe edge and we lost our way in a white out. We were able to get reoriented because the dark clouds above the floe edge let us know where it was and then I remembered that my uncle had said that the “uqalurai”, the snow drifts, tended to be oriented a certain way around Igloodik – so I used the uqalurait to make sure that I was heading in a generally straight direction towards Igloodik. Once we hit the island, we travelled along the shore until we got to a trail and then used it to go home. It started getting dark too, so the white out condition disappeared.

9. What do you eat?

All sorts of stuff – seals, caribou, fish, bread, siva, tea, sugar, oatmeal, ramen noodles

10. Did the ice conditions affect a wildlife population in that area?

Not really sure – perhaps the shift in winds affect walrus and our access to them? When the wind is coming from the south a bit, we all sort of head out onto the thin ice to hunt walrus.

11. Did the ice conditions affect your trip outcome?

Yup – during the fall dog team trip, us falling through the thin ice resulted in us heading back home earlier.

12. Were you alone or working with others?

That dog team trip I was with my father, but generally I’m either with 1-3 people or alone.

ISAAC - MODERN DOG SLED RACE INTERVIEW

1. **When you travel with your dogs in the Nunavut Quest, what equipment is required (according to race rules) ?**

I need to bring a rifle, snow knife, stove, fuel for the stove, something to eat, and a thermos.

2. **What time of year is the Quest? (month)**

Spring, in early April or mid-April.

3. **On any of your Nunavut Quest trips, did you come across interesting/unique ice? (e.g. melting areas, water, crack, multi-year ice, polynya, landfast ice, pack ice)**

Travelling from one community to another, I saw a really big broken down glacier ice. When the dogs saw new ice, they just mostly ran.

4. **Explain how the “different” ice affected your travel/changed your trip**

It made me realize about the land and how difficult and different it is in different parts of Nunavut. The winds and currents and ice are always different when you go around Nunavut.

5. **Have you and dogs ever been stuck? ever become stuck? If so, what tool(s) did you use to get out?**

No.

6. **What wildlife did you see?**

All sorts! When dog sledding, most animals rarely hear you- they get closer when you are out with dogs. I have been out with the dogs to the floe edge and when I got there the seals were close to the edge.

7. **Did you ever see a polar bear? What did the dogs do?**

Yes. The dogs tried to chase it. It took everything I had to stop them. I just tried to stay away.

8. **Do you bring any navigation equipment?**

I don't bring a GPS or anything when I go on day trips. I just bring one when I am camping with the dogs.

9. **How do the dogs know where to go?**

I have been so surprised and amazed that the dogs know where to go. They have brought me home in a blizzard and also the pitch dark when I didn't even know where we were. Somehow they just knew. Or they smelled. I can't explain how they do it.



IMAGE 3 Photo of Isaac.



10. Have you ever been lost on the land/ice? If so, what did you do?

This one time I was on my first Nunavut Quest and on the 5th day, the blizzard came and I was lost for eleven hours trying to find the camp. I noticed the dogs started smelling something so I tried to go where they smelled, and then a skidoo showed up.

11. What do you eat when you travel with the dogs?

Country food, whatever I feel like eating.

12. Did the ice conditions affect a wildlife population in any areas that you have noticed?

No. If anything, I have seen an increase in animals not a decrease.

13. Have ice conditions ever affected your trip outcome?

No. All trips have been great.

14. Anything cool to add about your experience as someone who travels with dogs?

Cool? When you are out with dogs it is safer than going by skidoo because dogs are really smart.

15. Do you have to bring a lot of food for the dogs?

Not really. You can bring some and hunt some on your way, anything we see... seals. But the one with tags we just keep out of the way of.

16. Is dog sledding about working alone, or working with others?

Dog sledding is about working with others. I wouldn't have a dog team if it wasn't for others. Others help a lot. When I first started having my own team they used to bring me everywhere. People brought me out and taught me how to treat my dogs and harness them. What I have accomplished, and what I have done right, was with the help of everyone.

17. Are you racing again?

I will be in the Quest again this year. Arctic Bay to Igloolik!

MANASI - WHAT TO PACK? INTERVIEW

1. What was the purpose of your trip?

The purpose of the hunt is to feed my family, especially when my grandpa was still around. He liked the marine animals so I would try to provide meat for him and I enjoy the great outdoors.

2. What do you pack in your qamutik for ice safety?

In regards to what to bring to a floe edge hunt, rule number one is don't leave without a harpoon. It is crucial to test the thickness of ice especially in newly formed ices. It is also important to have a device that would allow your home base to be notified in case of ice break up. Also, what you bring to hunt always needs to be in a qamutik, what it is in grub box, stove, pot, thermos, all that stuff. And it is important to bring fresh solid ice from lakes as there are times that you will not see good snow, most of it is salt water. Lastly it is important to bring extra mitts while gone to flow edge and kamik.



IMAGE 4 Photo by Manasi.

3. What time of year was it? (month)

December.

4. On your trip did you come across interesting/unique ice? (e.g. melting areas, water, crack, multi-year ice, polynya, landfast ice, pack ice) Explain how the “different” affected your travel.

Interesting thing that I came across was open water in unusual spots, so I had to look out for them and be alert to my surroundings.

5. Explain how the “different” ice affected your travel

I learned that you don't always expect what you have experienced before, because ice can form in different ways. It is good to look back to previous experience but it is good to be alert to unusual sightings.

6. Has your skidoo ever become stuck? If so, what tool did you use to get it out?

I have never gotten stuck but a friend of mine's machine went through the ice on the back part only, and we had to work together to get it out using longer ropes that went to the back of my skidoo.

7. What wildlife did you see?

Ring seals and bearded seals at the edge.



8. Did your navigation equipment ever stop working?

I don't really rely on navigation systems, GPS, it is important to see all your surroundings in case a GPS is not working. I do check it before I go to see if it is working or not.

9. Have you ever been lost on the land/ice? What did you do?

Yup, every hunter should have this experience, being lost in land. I had to make shelter and wait for a rescue.

An igluviga.

10. What do you eat on the land?

Good old Inuit food, tea and biscuits, and if I happen to catch something that was the source of the food.

11. Did the ice conditions affect a wildlife population in that area?

Has ice condition affected the wildlife? I don't know, but I could say that ice forms pretty late now and this affects us hunters more but wildlife wise I can't answer it for now, but when I become an elder, [laughs] I will be able to say something about it.

12. Did the ice conditions affect your trip outcome?

The ice, it has affected us as hunters, we need to be more alert to thin ice than before, as of this year.

13. Anything cool to add about your experience as a hunter?

It is great to be a hunter on ice, but I would suggest that if someone wants to become one, go with experienced hunters that are always going to the flow edge and get a feel of it before going solo, but it is always good to go with a friend.

14. Were you working alone or working with others?

Most of the times, I go with someone but if it is my last resort to go alone, than I would go alone.

SULA - SEAL HUNTING INTERVIEW

1. **Think about a time when you travelled on the land and across the ice. What was the purpose of your trip?**

I was going camping with my family. It was a week long camping trip.

2. **What do you pack in your qamutik for ice safety?**

Going hunting we bring tents, beds (mattresses), food, Niksiqs, rifles for polar bears, and a unaq to check the ice to see if it's okay.

3. **What time of year was it? (month)**

My family goes camping in the spring. End of June, beginning of July.

4. **On your trip did you come across interesting/unique ice? (e.g. melting areas, water, crack, multi-year ice, polynya, landfast ice, pack ice)**

On our way back home, when the ice is melting, you can see big holes (they are cracks). The water on top looks dark blue. It looks like a big hole. When the holes eventually meet the water underneath, the water on top drains through.

5. **Explain how the “different” ice affected your travel.**

We have to go faster because .. because if you slow down.... you just have to go faster before the ice melts. We don't want to get our machines stuck.

6. **Has your Skidoo ever become stuck? If so, what tool did you use to get it out?**

Going out hunting, when you are finally leaving the community there are deep big puddles (pools of water), and if your machine gets water in a piston or something then the machine just stops until you get it out of the water and you have to dry the piston or muffler.

7. **What wildlife did you see?**

There are usually lots of seal holes together (in one area) for the seals to breathe. And if there is a person at one hole that a seal usually goes to, then the seal can go to another. So we try to get a person to stand next to every hole. If a seal really has to breathe, it forces him up. Once when we were going back home after a day of seal hunting, it was 3:00 in the morning, I was really tired and wanted to go home. My Mum kept saying “one more, one more”. At the last one, I finally caught a seal and my tiredness went away. Then I kept telling my mum “can I get one more?” If we are going seal hunting for the day, usually after work we have supper then leave at 7pm and then come back at 4am or 5am.

8. **Have you ever been lost on the land/ice? What did you do?**



No I always travel as a family.

9. What do you eat?

Anything we can cook on a Coleman stove, or if we catch a seal we have some right away. Plants found on the tundra- in Inuktitut the plant I am thinking of is called “qijukta”.

10. Did the ice conditions affect your trip outcome?

Usually in the spring there is a spring from one side of town to the other side of Bylot Island (around June or July) The crack gets wider and eventually instead of going straight to town, you have to go around it to the other side.

11. Anything cool to add about your experience?

I love travelling with my family. Because it is family time without technology and people are interacting more, telling old stories. At a break during seal hunting, we have tea and tell stories.

12. Were you alone or working with others?

At the holes is working alone, but seal hunting is working together.