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Letter from John Muir to Mother [Ann Gilrye Muir], 1881 Jul 4.

John Muir

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St Michaels Alaska
July 4th 1881.

My dear mother. Since I wrote
you before from this place
we have been again in the
Arctic ocean in search of the
land party that we sent out from
~~Koludschin Island~~
near Cape Serdze to explore the
Asiatic coast to the westward, in
search of tidings of the Jeanette
& the two Coast Whalers Vigilant &
Mt Volostan. We found our party
near Cape Serdze waiting our arrival
& succeeded in getting them safely
on board after much difficulty
on account of the ice that was
packed a mile or two wide along
the shore, & beaten by a heavy sea
that kept the loose blocks on the

edge of the pack in violent motion. They found difficulty in obtaining food for their 25 dogs, & also from the rough condition of the ice & depth of soft snow making travel very laborious. They were successful however in getting sure intelligence of one of the whalers at Cape Wankarem. Three men here told them that they had found a wrecked whaleship drifting in the pack about five miles from shore when they were hunting seals last fall. & that they went aboard & found everybody dead & the hold full of water. They brought off a great number of articles from the wreck which they showed to our party, thus placing the fate of one of the missing ships beyond doubt.

After taking our men aboard we made haste southward before a rising north gale, & stopped at anchor at East Cape a day & a half, where we had to land one of the native dog drivers who had been with the party. Here I climbed the mountains, & had very telling evidence of the grand ice-sheet that once flowed over them all on its way south. I also obtained a few specimens of flowers. The sun does not set at all now, & it has been light enough to read the finest print at midnight for more than a month, which is very convenient for making long excursions but tedious & confusing in the matter of bed time & in keeping track of the days. The last month has been one big eternal day. From E. Cape we went down the Asiatic Coast nearly to Plover Bay then crossed to this point.

Calling at St Lawrence Island again
on the way. We will leave here tom-
orrow or next day, & cruise along
the American Coast around by
Point Barrow. & then, when the ice
is likely to be most open, push off
as far into the Arctic Ocean toward
Wrangel Land.

We may find traces of the Jeanette
on Wrangel Land in case we should
be able to reach it through the ice, & if
so we will be back to San Francisco
in October or November. But if not
we will come again to St Michael,
take nine months provisions on board
& go again to the northward prepared
to winter somewhere on the north
Coast of Asia & make search
journeys with dogs & sleds over the
frozen Ocean. I am afraid I may not
hear a single word from you dear
mother, nor from any of the family until
the Cruise is done, or until the arrival