

Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen

4-Day Photo Op Photo Tour 2025



The *Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen – 4-Day Photo Op Photo Tour 2025* is geared toward the intermediate to advanced wild-life photographer who is primarily interested in photographing the Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen and who would prefer to forego any formal instruction. This tour is a full day shorter than the full instructional photo tour and thus may appeal to those with slightly less time at their disposal. Those attending will spend four full days photographing the *Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen* in a very small group of like-minded individuals and with a highly-experienced bear guide and professional photography guide at their service. The opportunities offered by this tour to capture breathtaking images of North America's top land-based carnivore – the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) – are absolutely unsurpassed.

The Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary. Created in 1992, the 39,000 hectare (96,000 acre) Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary is Canada's only Grizzly Bear sanctuary and is located at the tip of a long and remote inlet on the northern coast of British Columbia. There are no roads, settlements, or even campsites in the region – it is true pristine wilderness. The bulk of the sanctuary is closed to the public – only two professional guides have licenses to lead very small groups into the heart of this majestic and globally unique ecosystem. The inlet is home to about 50 resident grizzlies, with many more passing through during the year. This remote piece of wilderness is set within one of the planet's few remaining completely intact temperate rainforests and offers a stunning, verdant backdrop to observe and photograph wild grizzlies as they interact with one another as they have for time immemorial. The bears themselves grant visitors with a very rare privilege: *they voluntarily allow humans completely into their rich and behaviourally diverse daily lives.*

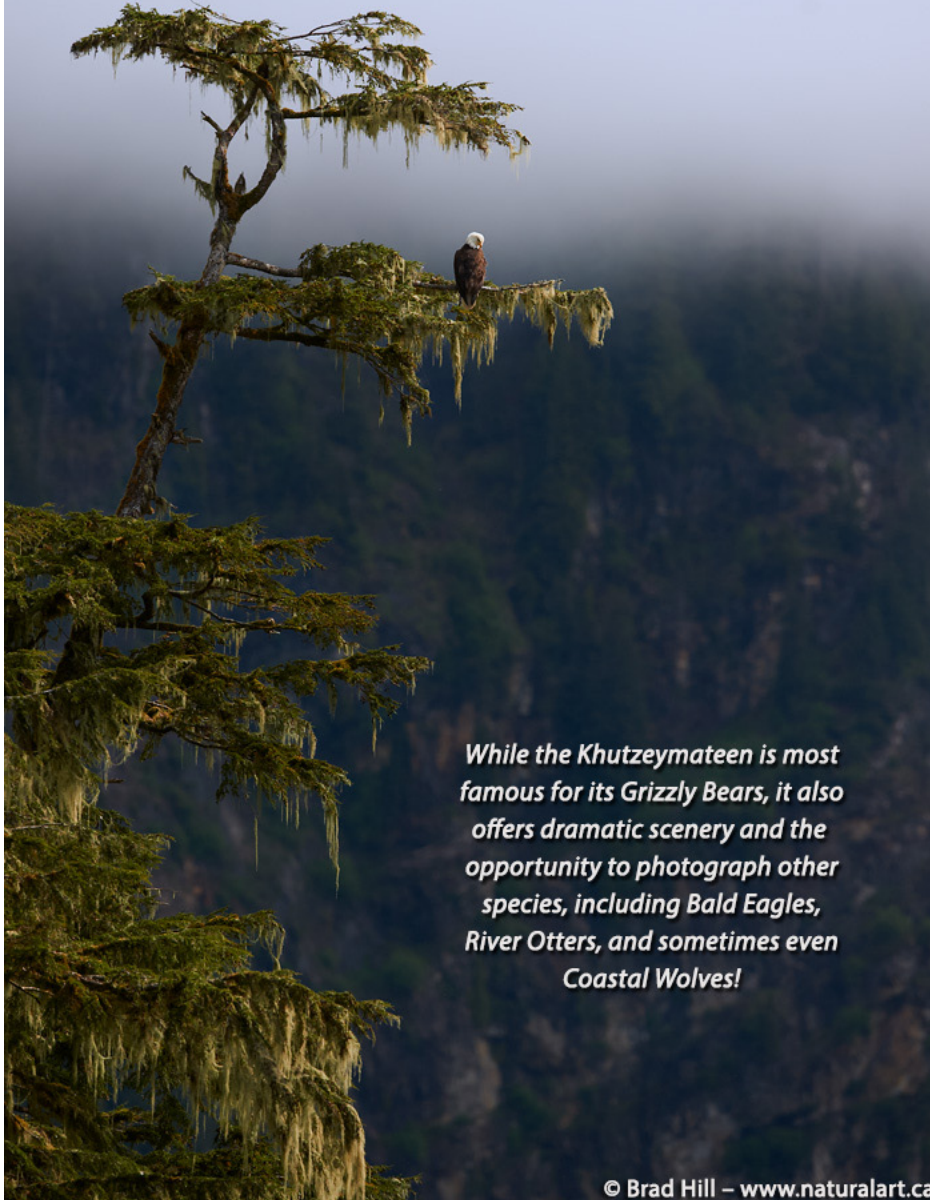


Course Correction to Starboard Side! Grizzlies are exceptionally good swimmers – and they regularly cross coastal inlets up to several kilometers wide.

Nikon Z9 with Nikkor Z 400mm f2.8S @ 560mm (built-in TC engaged). 1/1000s @ f4. ISO 400

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The Sentinel - Khutzeymateen Inlet
Nikon D3s with 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/1250s @ f5.6. ISO 200.



While the Khutzeymateen is most famous for its Grizzly Bears, it also offers dramatic scenery and the opportunity to photograph other species, including Bald Eagles, River Otters, and sometimes even Coastal Wolves!

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Be one of under 200 people – and far, far fewer photographers – annually gifted with the intimate experience of sharing the lives of the Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen.

To explore and photograph this spectacular valley we will use a 60-foot Gulf Commander expedition power boat (the *Afterglow I*) as our floating basecamp and then travel into the depths of the sanctuary using a motorized inflatable Zodiac®.

About the Photography “Style” On This Photo Tour. On this trip – as on my other photo tours – this is a “*photography in true wilderness*” experience. This means we will spend the bulk of our time in isolated and remote wilderness and away from other humans (and other photographers). We’ll have to “track down” our subject matter without the help of other outfitters, spotters or real-time online apps listing recent sightings (i.e., there is no “network of sightings” for us to plug into!). Additionally we’ll have no “set-up” situations where we can set up in a specific location ahead of time and with the knowledge that a certain species will predictably appear and pose for us! The advantage of our “*photography in true wilderness*” approach is that it produces a far more unique and personalized experience and it can often lead to more original and compelling photos. A possible downside is that it means we don’t know the specifics of the shooting conditions ahead of time and thus may put more onus on the photographer to make snap technical and creative decisions in a field setting. This means it may challenge – and encourage you to expand – your photographic skills more than other photo tours do!

Our Wildlife Subject Matter: While this is a *photography-in-true-wilderness* trip, we are definitely headed into a target-rich environment! Grizzlies are the dominant terrestrial mammal in this region and our primary target, but there are other species that we may encounter and, when the opportunity presents itself, photograph.

Northern River Otters are among the assemblage of carnivores found along the entire BC coast. I photographed this curious otter in the Khutzeymateen Estuary during my "Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen" Instructional Photo Tour in June of 2024.



Nikon Z9 with Nikkor Z 800mm f6.3S. 1/400s @ f6.3. ISO 1000

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Here's a quick run down of both our "most likely" wildlife subjects and our "less likely but possible" wildlife subjects:

2025 Dates: May 28th to June 2nd, 2025.

2025 Price: \$6799 CAD plus 5% GST.

What's Included?

- Float plane transportation into and the Khutzeymateen and water taxi transport out of the Khutzeymateen
- All food and accommodation while aboard the *Afterglow* in the Khutzeymateen (see Itinerary for details)
- A highly-experienced bear guide and professional photography guide
- A great cook and crew
- Jaw-dropping scenery and fabulous bears!

A. Most Likely Subjects (50% or greater probability of encounter):

- Grizzly Bears
- Black Bears
- Harbour Seals
- Bald Eagles
- Great Blue Herons
- Harlequin Ducks
- Herring Gulls
- American Mink
- Canada Geese
- Asst'd shorebirds
- Asst'd songbirds

B. Less Likely But Possible Subjects (<50% probability of encounter):

- Killer Whales
- Coastal Gray Wolves
- Humpback Whales
- River Otters
- American Marten
- Wolverine



What's Not?

- Transportation between your home and Prince Rupert, BC
- Personal belongings and equipment you bring on the photo tour
- Any meals and accommodation in Prince Rupert prior to Day 1
- Excess baggage charges from airlines
- Any extra personal expenses incurred because of weather, logistical delays, or delayed departures of chartered or scheduled aircraft
- Any gratuities for the crew of the *Afterglow*

What To Expect?

- Cool weather (daytime highs of about 12-18C or 54-65° fahrenheit); rain showers are likely but usually short-lived (and sunny skies are NOT uncommon at this time of year)
- Totally calm water at our floating basecamp – seasickness is not an issue on this trip
- Very long hours of daylight (giving us ample time in the field)
- Unsurpassed grizzly bear photography opportunities
- Hearty, healthy and delicious food
- Always warm, always dry floating basecamp!

The Crossing. Female Grizzly leads her cubs across the Khutzeymateen Estuary at high tide
Nikon D2x with 200-400mm f4 VR @ 250mm. 1/750s @ f4. ISO 200.



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Sample Itinerary

This is only a sample itinerary and how we actually spend our days may differ somewhat from this proposed schedule. Two factors interact to influence how we spend each day – the location of bears and the timing of the tides (we can only access some areas – such as the channels in the estuary – during high tides). Both of these factors change day-by-day.

Please Note: Due to the early meeting time and float plane trip into the Khutzeymateen on the first full day, *you must arrive in Prince Rupert prior to Day 1 of your expedition.* Which means you must arrive in Prince Rupert any time on the 28th of May, 2025.

Day 0 – On or Before May 28, 2025

Arrive in Prince Rupert, BC.

Day 1 – May 29, 2025

An early morning float plane flight from the Seal Cove float plane terminal takes you to the *Afterglow* and her crew who await at the head of the Khutzeymateen Inlet. Brief meet-and-greet with the crew and guides followed by an orientation to the boat, and then off to view and photograph the *Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen.*

Days 2 to 4 – May 30 to June 1, 2025

The daily itinerary will remain flexible so that we can maximize bear viewing and photography opportunities. We will spend the majority of each day in the Zodiac® viewing and photographing bears. Depending on the tides, our time will find us in some area of the inlet viewing and photographing what could be any number of animals including grizzly and black bears, seals, eagles, geese, ducks, and herons. At dusk, after the evening's activities, you will return to the boat to enjoy a hot drink and dinner while reflecting on the day's events (and reviewing your images!).

Day 5 – June 2, 2025

After a hearty breakfast (and by about 9 AM) the water taxi will arrive for your return trip to Prince Rupert. After about a 90 minute high-speed and picturesque cruise our time together will draw to an end. And...you'll be left with many fabulous memories and photographs!

My Ethical Stance – *Wildlife FIRST!*

Wildlife conservation is the primary reason for my involvement in wildlife photography and for running photo tours. As such, *I place the welfare and value of our subjects above the value of any photograph of them.* This philosophy is embodied in my *Wildlife FIRST!* rules of conduct that guide our collective actions during all my photo tours. These four simple ethical rules state that:

1. **Wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* should engage in *passive* wildlife photography only.** This means striving to capture images of wildlife behaving as naturally as possible and without the photographer taking any actions to guide the subject(s) toward desirable settings and/or backdrops or elicit specific “poses”.
2. **Wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* should do nothing *intentional* to alter or influence the behaviour of their subjects for the purpose of photography.** This includes NOT intentionally influencing their distribution in space and time or influencing their behaviour. This translates into NOT engaging in any form of luring or baiting (or any other form of food supplementation). Additionally, it extends to not using any sound to alter the behaviour of the subject for the purpose of photography, including using predator and/or prey calls, song or vocalization playbacks, vocal clicking, or making any other sound to cause the subject to alter its ongoing behaviour and look at the photographer.
3. While conforming to and working within any legal guidelines determining minimum allowable approach distances, **wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* should allow the**



Rough-housing in the Khutz!



Nikon D5 with Nikkor 180-400mm f4E @ 560mm. 1/2000s @ f5.6. ISO 2000

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wildlife subject – regardless of the species – to determine the **subject-to-photographer distance** it is comfortable with. This principle serves to reduce stress on the subject – and also allows the capture of photographs of the subject behaving in a more natural, and often more interesting, fashion

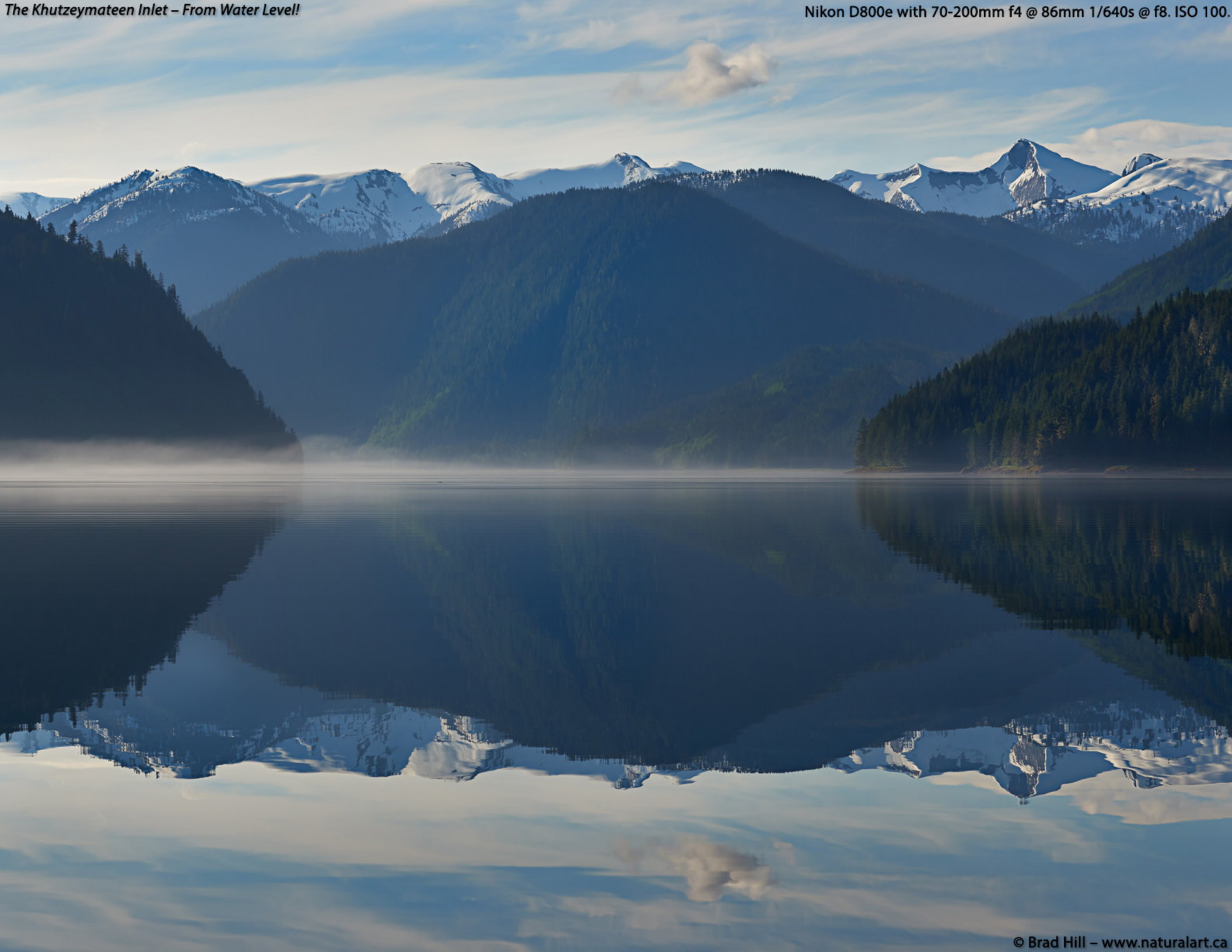
4. **Wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* always consider both their *individual and the overall collective effects* photographic activities can have on the subject(s).** This includes being aware of *your total time spent with the wildlife subject(s)* and, whenever possible, *the total time spent with the subject by all photographers utilizing the subject*. In practice this means the photographer may have to withdraw from the subject and cease photographic efforts of it, especially if there is any indication that his or her presence is impacting on the subject's behavioural routine (including activities such as feeding, resting and/or sleeping, caring for its offspring, etc.). This consideration is always important and may become even MORE important if multiple photographers or groups of photographers are simultaneously or sequentially sharing the same subject(s).

We will be adhering to these 4 rules during all my BC coastal photo tours.

All images in this trip compendium and on the *Natural Art Images* website (www.naturalart.ca) were captured following these **Wildlife *FIRST*** rules of photographer conduct.

For more information about this amazing trip contact Brad Hill at:

seminars@naturalart.ca



The Magical Khutzeymateen Estuary. The Khutzeymateen estuary has been referred to as the "Garden of the Grizzlies". It's an apt description!



Grizzly Cub – Brown on Green! Grizzlies of both sexes and all ages are found in the Khatzeymateen. In most years females avoid bringing first year cubs into the estuary owing to the threat posed by large male bears.







