



HOOFING IT: Caribou race along the edge of Alaska's Beaufort Sea.

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, ALASKA Witness a Rite at Risk

■ ONE MOMENT THE landscape is vast, empty, and as profoundly silent as it gets on Earth. The next, it reverberates with the pounding hooves of 123,000 caribou in a procession that can last for days. The Porcupine caribou herd travels from the snowy Canadian Yukon in April to a coastal plain at the foot of Alaska's Brooks Range in June, where cool breezes keep insects at bay. Pregnant females compose the vanguard, traversing as many as 40 rivers on their 400-mile march, followed by younger females and males. "I've seen tens of thousands of caribou cross the Kongakut River," says David Hamilton, lead guide for ABEC's Alaska Adventures. Along the way wolves pick their fill, eagles snatch babies, and opportunistic grizzlies help themselves to passersby. The nexus of the action is in a region of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge that the Bush Administration still hopes to open for oil drilling. "Caribou are easily spooked," says Hamilton. "They won't come near anything unusual. That's why I fear the drills so much."



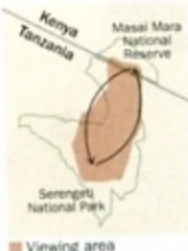
THE VITALS

Do: Arctic Wild offers an eight-day backpacking trip between the Chandalar and Canning Rivers (\$2,750, including flights to and from Fairbanks; www.arcticwild.com), and ABEC's Alaska Adventures guides a float trip on the Kongakut River (\$3,975 for ten days; www.abecalaska.com).

TANZANIA AND KENYA

Track a Movable Feast

■ THE GLOBE'S ULTIMATE road show remains the great migration, an annual cavalcade of 1.5 million wildebeests storming across the plains of East Africa. Tagalongs include zebras, gazelles, and freelancing scavengers. "This is the biggest buffet that walks the Earth," says Kent Redding, a former safari guide and the president of Africa Adventure Consultants. The wildebeests start the year in the plains of Tanzania's southern Serengeti. Late February and March see the mass birthing of 500,000 calves. Following the rains and greening pastures, the mob heads north, hitting the Masai Mara region of Kenya by August, then grazes until November before moving south again—a 375-mile round-trip. River crossings are ideal viewing locales, and the birthing season is ripe with Darwinian drama (many a wildebeest gets picked off by lions). Africa Adventure Consultants' mobile camps put you right in among the throng for dinner theater of the highest order.



THE VITALS

Do: Africa Adventure Consultants runs a Serengeti Classic Private Camp trip (\$1,950 for four nights; www.adventuresinafrica.com), and CC Africa's Tanzania Under Canvas luxury camps run year-round (\$540 a night; www.ccafrica.com). For migration updates, check out CC Africa's www.wildwatch.com.