

## **Days 42-48: August 27-September 2, 2010**

Bayou La Batre, Alabama. The weather has kept us in port, but we have been busy. First of all, we have added capacity. We did get our sediment sample that we were testing after our last email. Matt got up at 3 am and collected another one, so we know we can collect sediment. During this port stop, Ethan arrived from Scripps and Chris Gianios from USM and together they have been upgrading our acoustic capacity. We now have better technology to detect with the array, but we also have sonobuoys to detect even more sounds even farther away. They will both stay on for the first several days to ensure all is working. I also worked with the University of Montana to get an air sampler working so we can sample air. Chris and Johnny are working on a remote operated vehicle (rov) that can go underwater to see if we can collect video with it. We also have an interest to see what contaminants the whales are exhaling so we have been looking into ways to collect the air the exhale through their blow holes. We have also been busy working on the boat as Johnny and Matt inventoried about 80% of the boat at this time with more to come. We had one funny moment when Ethan asked Captain Bob if we had a grappling hook. Bob got a distant look in his eye and pondered it over a bit. When Johnny blurted out "Yes we do" followed by Matt saying "It's in the lazarette. It was the last thing we inventoried in there". Bob chuckled and said he wasn't sure if we had one or not. Thus, illustrating the utility of the inventory- besides keeping Johnny and Matt busy day and night. Very busy productive time.

We also have had crew changes. We said goodbye to Juli and Rob who worked hard and enjoyed a remarkable leg of the voyage. Kyle, our cook, was so inspired by the overall trip that he quit smoking & decided to go back to graduate school for film. He plans to write a screenplay about the voyage as part of his application. The only problem was that he announced his decision the day before we arrived at dock and left the day after.

Our new crew addition is Ian Glass, a professional first mate who is from Florida, but has spent a lot of time in Maine and Massachusetts. A remarkable coincidence given the Captain Bob is from Florida, Ocean Alliance from Massachusetts and USM from Maine. He also is a passionate former soccer player and current soccer fan. With all the added capacity, we need more scientist-capability on board and so Ian & I agreed to blend cooking with science. Sandy Wise has agreed to come on board now and do both science and cooking. Then on the student side Carolyn LaCerte, a graduate student in my laboratory, will be arriving tomorrow. So once again a full boat.

We have sperm whale cells that have emerged from the tissues Matt and I processed. I have enjoyed watching Matt's excitement at the anticipation if they would grow. I had explained to Matt that it would take at least a week before we would see anything. But he was so excited he could not wait and so early in the week he just had to peek at the cells. I discovered this when I entered the lab and the microscope cover was on the floor. We have nothing else to look at so it was a pretty good sign Matt had been looking at cells. I asked him about it and he rather dejectedly told me he saw nothing yet. I told him that it really was like Christmas morning and one just had to wait - there

was no way to accelerate the process. When he saw them finally he was quite please with the success and indeed the smile were like Christmas morning.

Our other big even is still going on. Alexandra Cousteau and the Blue Legacy project arrived at the boat to film us. I know what you are thinking and yes it is THAT Cousteau. Jacque Cousteau was her grandfather. They have also flown Cathy in for a day to be filmed with her. Yes THAT Cathy :). She arrived at 10 am today (Thursday) and will go home tomorrow (Friday) about 6 pm. They filmed for a couple of hours and it was quite tiring. But we will be on the National Geographic website and part of a documentary they are making, which will help showcase our work. Alexandra and her team were very nice and very professional. Tomorrow they will drive their tour bus over to the boat and have a catered barbeque reception in the parking lot. Quite an exciting time!

John