

Tuesday April 5, 2016 – Day 4 at Sea by Dr. Wise

Meals are always a key and central activity on a boat. The work of the day and the constant motion your body experiences makes you quite hungry. Indeed, the cook is often one of the favorite and most revered people on the boat. On this voyage, the cook prepares two meals – lunch and dinner. Breakfast is on your own. But, at noon and six – the cook rings the ships bell and like Pavlov's dogs- we all start salivating and milling into the galley to see what delights wait for our hungry belly. At sea – all food tastes better.

Shannon is our cook and she prepares very tasty meals. Sea Shepherd is our host organization and they crew the boat. As an organization in keeping with their mission, Sea Shepherd has chosen a vegan lifestyle for their vessels. Thus, each person, while onboard a Sea Shepherd vessel enjoys a vegan-only menu. Shannon, herself, is also vegan so she is quite skilled at preparing our meals.

Today, you could really tell them whole team has come together and is solidly focused on our mission at hand – finding whales to determine the extent of metal pollution in their tissues. You see a remarkable thing happened – the noon lunch bell rang and no one. No one went to eat because we were seeking whales.

It started out seemingly straightforward. By late morning, we had found a group of three fin whales. Fin whales appear to be the theme of this trip, which is fine. But, you remember how difficult fin whales are to catchup to and biopsy – just recall my email of a couple of days ago of the fin whale bay on Mars. Yet, as hard as those whales were, the first whale today was as easy as pie. It surfaced next to the boat. Lollygagged next to us for a moment as if to say – biopsy me right... here. So we did.

The other two proved a bit more challenging. Perhaps, they were feeding. But, as we intently searched and tried to catchup – the lunch bell rang. I am sure everyone's stomach gurgled with glee and anticipation. But – nobody moved. You might think – well who would with a whale right there? Ah yes, but the whale was not right there. It would be a half-an-hour before we caught up to one and biopsied it and another forty five minutes of trying for the third one. Plenty of time for individuals to head down, grab a bite and come back. But, nobody did.

Then later in the day, about 5:30, we came upon another group of fin whales. They were feeding, which means a biopsy would be highly unlikely. At, 6 pm the dinner bell

rang. Again, nobody moved. The whales paid us no mind and ate to their hearts content. The biopsiers asked to press on to get just one more sample. The light was fading and arrow recovery would be impossible in the dark. We went port. Close, close, nope whale dove. We went starboard. Close, close, nope whale dove. Wait one is behind us! Around and around we turned. Nope. Whale dove. At 6:30 pm still no closer and no biopsy. Still nobody moved. We continued to search. Still no closer. Still no sample. Still nobody moved for dinner. Finally, at 7 pm, I had to call it off. The light was too low and these whales were too busy feeding. The team wrapped it up and a lovely vegan taco dinner, with green beans, and salad was enjoyed by all.

The two units have become one team. I am hopeful for continued success. We managed to biopsy three whales today, two fin whales and one minke whale, bringing our total biopsied whales to 12.

I have attached photos of our amazing sunrise and a 4 picture sequence that shows you how little of the whale comes above the water. In pictures 3 & 4 – you can see the arrow (look for the orange fletch).

John













