

## Wednesday, April 6 – Ric the Blue - Mark Martin

We arrived at a place where people lived. A small quaint coastal town named Santa Rosalia. We left JP the camera/diver/medic Chilean with Mar and Shannon in a very quaint small town to get more supplies.

We started off and saw a lot of fish the inevitable pods of dolphins and more dolphins and then somebody screamed "*Those are not dolphins!*" Pilot whales lots of them.

We were close to the shore and we had boats around. It is sometimes hard to explain to tourists or other captains why we had crossbows pointed at dolphins and whales. Johnny came and told us the trick with pilots is to pick one and be aware of the other ones but stay with yours. They were many and it could get confusing. We released, we sampled, switched with Ric, he sampled, the next wave of pilots we missed. And we proceeded to lose a ring buoy that we looked for hours. We didn't like missing and we hated losing things. Shooting the crossbow was a Zen type of activity. It used a few parts of your head. You needed to be good, you needed to have confidence, you needed to know and keep in mind a lot. But you also had to feel the right moment. I was learning that quickly. Today John and Johnny had done really well in helping me understand that part. What Ric did next made me realize how.

I was up again at the mast, constantly pivoting my head, nothing, I kept remembering that big whale I saw, still nothing. Johnny and I were looking harder than anyone, I knew that, and he had better eyes. I scanned and thought, he called out with a different type of voice, I knew. He jumped up on the ladder next to me. On the radio and in the deck I heard the doubts about Johnny's sighting. How far 2 km? Did he say he saw a blue?. I believed him but I didn't see it. A blue was my dream, I didn't have to sample it, my dream was to see it. I had said it enough that everyone knew. I saw something, a blow a dark hump, still far. Eagle eyes on Johnny.

Our captain had it, the wait unnerving, at any time it could turn and go, dive and not come back.

But here it was, Johnny went down. I saw it and took over the radio. We followed it and then it turned, started coming toward us.

*"There it is port, turn to port!"* And there it was, a myth, a legend, the biggest animal that has lived on this world. It wasn't a simple creature, I seen whales, but the color and movement of this whale was surreal.

A light blue dragon was rising from the depths of the sea. It was as magical as a dragon, unreal, from another time, obviously wise, what I would give to know what it knows. It changed everything. I saw the shared awe of everyone that set eyes on it. The seasoned Spotter Carlos, seen hundreds, had a smile that was new to me. Johnny and Ric concentrated on something they really, really wanted. The crew made children wows. It dove. Not too long. Wait! the camera guy is not on the boat. Thank god for Hero's, I had set up two go pros, they were on it and rolling. Perfect.

It rose.

Right at our bow, and it was coming towards us. Decision time, not much to do. Turn to Port

The greyish blue was hypnotizing. I wonder how this fast whale that grows to 30 meters looks to other sea creatures. It turned, we turned. It came really close to the bow. Came up ever so slightly, no shot, no way. I started on the radio "turn to star..." "*Arrow in*" I had not even seen it but Ric had taken the best and most important shot of his life. Impossible, such a bad angle, came up so little. I have replayed the video and seen just what a fantastic shot that was. It is also one of the only videos of the great Ric the blue biopsying a whale. Of the many he has, but this was his moment, a life moment, I saw it in his face, I recognized that smile, I was wearing it too. I heard him tell me so. I was glad to see it, proud to be in their presence. and then I cried. I cried because of the magnificence of the whale, of the happiness to be in its presence. Of sharing this moment with Ric and the crews which from now on were now one. I considered not saying anything of it, not writing about my blue tears, but no, they were true and they are the part of the spell this giant of nature can cast on those who see it. Another reason to protect it to let it show humans how magnificent the world is. I understood that my body had held it back to be accurate to spot well, but with the job done a few tears of happiness for having the great luck of meeting one of my dreams, Gracias, Ballena.

We celebrated in town with music and games and a good dinner.

Whenever I turned to him I saw a hint of blue in Rick's eyes, and whenever we all saw each other with that eerie smile, We talked about the whale

We will always talk about that whale!

Mark