

## Friday, April 8. Day 7 at Sea - by Dr. Wise

By midday there were still no whales and the team was in need of an enthusiasm boost. The Captain and I noticed a pod of dolphins so I asked her to head their way. It's been an interesting contrast with the Gulf of Mexico and the Sea of Cortez. In the Gulf, when dolphins saw the boat, we would hear squeals and whistles of apparent delight on the array and the dolphins would race to the boat to bow ride and watch us. But, here in the Sea of Cortez, they pay us no mind and make no effort to bow ride. Curious difference for sure.

I'm not sure why I wanted to see the dolphins closer up, but it felt like the thing to do, so we did it.

Wow! What a delight! These dolphins were frolicking like little kids in a pool on a hot day. Leaping in the air, jostling about, a truly awesome sight. Some even swam over to the boat to check us out, but still no bow riding. The team oohed and awed and thoroughly enjoyed the wild dolphin show. As they swam off to the horizon, the team's spirits were buoyed and it was back to finding whales.

The day passed until about 5 pm, a whale blow was spotted in the distance. First one. Then another! We were back on our quest to find them again. Closer we moved. Blow, Blow, Fluke, a few minutes of nothing, then blow, blow, fluke, became the pattern over and over as we approached the one whale nearest our anchor point. It was as if the whale was leading us in. Blow, blow fluke, nothing. Closer. Blow, blow, fluke, nothing. Over and over and over. Each time, the blow got bigger and the fluke got clearer.

Then, blow, blow fluke, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing.... The whale was gone. We would not get a biopsy today as something drew the whale away deep underwater. Something only whales know that we cannot perceive and it was gone. The other whale was too far for the fading light and too close to rocks to pursue. Frustrated, we headed for anchor.

On the way, we again noticed a bunch of splashing. Rays jumping. It was curious for they were constantly jumping and splashing, but yet seemed to go nowhere. The day would end as it started with jubilant sea creatures enjoying the day. We swung over to see them and quickly saw through the water that there were hundreds of them. Each one jumping through the air. Thus, from a distance it seemed like a handful of rays

jumping over and over and over, but was actually hundreds of rays taking turns jumping. These were mobulas rays. The jumping is thought to be part of their mating ritual.

We passed the rays and anchored for the night. No biopsies today, but a rewarding day nonetheless.

I have attached pictures of the dolphins and the rays. In the image Rays1 – if you zoom in you can see a ray in the air. In the image Rays2 – if you look closely under the water you can see there were hundreds of rays in the water.

John





