

## Day 15, Voyage 2, June 22, 2011

As I hear about many wet and dreary days back home, I must confess to a certain amount of guilt as today is again sunny and hot, though the seas are a bit more rolling. But next week, just after we get into port, is looking like bad weather here for a few days- at least offshore.

At the bottom of each of these notes I put the GPS coordinates of our location. I do it for two reasons. One is to provide Iain Kerr with a daily location for us in case our communications ever fail. The other is for those sophisticated with GPS to follow along. However, it turns out that even if you are GPS-naïve - you can still find us and see where we are. Just go to Google maps (<http://maps.google.com/>) and in the search box enter the latitude and longitude then click the search button and it will put in a green arrow and show you our location. Now there is a format, which is basically the degrees followed by a decimal and then the minutes. I will include that format below each time. Try it.

We still have not seen anymore Bryde's whales. Disappointing for the whales and us. It makes for a very tired and quiet team as we lack the adrenaline rush of seeing whales and collecting whale biopsies. You just find yourself wondering whether you're ever going to see a whale again. But as I tell the team each time someone points out that something we are doing is hard, because all of it is, if it was easy-it would already be done. We specialize in the difficult.

I worry a lot about this particular population. Last year, NOAA searched and saw one Bryde's whale. We also searched, twice, and saw one whale. This year, so far, we have seen one Bryde's whale. It does not bode well.

Having been over this area once already on this trip (we are on our way back towards Tampa), we have stopped collecting water samples. Instead, we are attempting sediment samples. We have a device that looks like a claw on a Tonka truck. We set the claw/mouth open, put it in the water and send it to the bottom. Then when it is in the right position on the bottom, we release a weight (i.e. messenger) that slides along the string and trigger the claw/mouth to close.

It's a clever device, but the real challenge is getting it position right on the bottom. If it is tilted or on its side then it only grabs water. Remember, we cannot see the bottom and we cannot really even tell when it's on the bottom. There is a lot of guesswork. Our first attempt was last night. We tried three times in 2 hours (it takes a while to reach bottom and then retrieve it). We did not collect enough for a sample, but we did collect some material from the bottom so we took a step forward. It will be hard to get it right and 3,000 feet will pose yet another challenge. But, of course, we specialize in the difficult.

Of course, with the search for Bryde's and the attempts at collecting sediment- we are awash in difficult right now. I'll keep you posted.

Pictures of the sunset and of Johnny, Cyndi (in purple) and Sandy catching krill in Sargasso weed attached.

John

p.s. Our current location is somewhere off of southern Florida in the Gulf. 28 degrees 49.8 minutes North and 85 degrees 32.5 minutes West, for those who want to track us as we go. For Google maps use (include all numbers, decimal, letters and comma): 28.498 N, 85.325 W.



