

## Day 29: August 14, 2010

Really a lovely day today. Seas were active but comfortable. Started to see much more wildlife- sharks, turtles, flying fish and lots and lots of dolphins. At one point we had about 40 surrounding the boat and frolicking everywhere! Truly a spectacular treat! The water too is again this beautiful shade of blue. But a very different blue than the Atlantic. The Atlantic blue was deep, dark and rich. This blue is much more of a cobalt blue and remarkably see through. You could see the dolphins so clearly through the water it was as if it wasn't even there. Ryan said that this sight alone made the trip worth it. I do hope for his experience and Greer's that we see some large whales before Mobile.

We have now made it out to the 200 m depth line, where previous studies have documented the elusive Bryde's whales to hang out. Of course, that was then and this is now so we shall see what we find. Since these whales are currently only found by visual scanning, we have stopped for the night and will drift around the 200 m line until sunrise when we will resume watches and resume travelling. Our competitive spirits are up and we want to outdo the NOAA team as they only found one in 60 days. Of course that tells you just how hard this work is going to be.

Johnny and Greer tested out Dr. Mann's hydrophone (underwater microphone that is) and have it almost working. Cathy, Matt and Ryan made a bunch of short videos which should be to James and the website hopefully soon. I worked on details in Mobile and discussed the study plan with Iain some more (via satellite phone).

Our study will work like this:

Three months sample collection- six months of laboratory testing and analysis - three months of sample collection. This approach will ensure we are fully able to understand the impact and meaning of the data and make necessary adjustments. Thus, we will finish this sample collection period at the end of October and then focus on work in our USM lab. The boat will winter in Key West and then in May we will resume sample collection in the Gulf. I think its a good plan as this study is going to need to cover a period of years to figure out how toxic these pollutants are and how much accumulates in the animals and it takes time to accumulate.

All continues to be well here and I hope all is well with you.

John