

Day 33, Voyage 2, July 10, 2011

I heard the boat engine rev up so I headed up to the pilot house to see what was up. A whale had been sighted, but not close. It was 7:30 am on a Sunday so I stumbled back to my room to try and catch up on my sleep. I am a bit unclear on the details, but shortly after 8 am, I was calling whales and assembling the team on deck.

It was the typical pattern. Get close. Dive, Get close. Dive. Sample. It was hot. We worked hard. We collected 4 more biopsies. We were tired, hungry and worn out, but pleased at our success. As we approached the last whale of the morning, 4 biopsies in hand, we noticed our first real rain clouds of the summer heading our way. We were excited as there is nothing quite like a cool Gulf rain to relieve the heat of the morning.

We sent the camera's in and here is where you see the difference between people who live in the Gulf area (Ian and Bob), and people who don't (Sandy, Johnny, Cathy, John Bradford, Nick and I). Ian made a beeline for the pilot house with Bob, shutting the doors as the rain was "too cold". Sandy, Johnny, Cathy, John Bradford, Nick and I donned our bathing suits and let the rain wash over us. We delighted in the cool drops, smiles all around.

I was the last one in and sat down thinking what a busy morning it had been and how late lunch was. Only problem- it was 11 am! 4 biopsies and a frolic in the rain in only 3 hours. I couldn't believe my eyes-11 am. I asked Ian if the clock was right. He said "Yeah, it is. I know I can hardly believe it myself. I am starving and we still have an hour to lunch."

Eventually, the time passed and lunch came and went. I headed to my bunk to again try to catch up on that sleep. No sooner did I start dreaming, when over the radio came "whale dead ahead". I again headed to the pilot house, saw the whale and assembled the team. This whale spy hopped and dove and reappeared on the starboard side about 3 o'clock. Then either we were following it or it was following us, but we ended up making a figure 9 before the whale stopped and gave us our 5th biopsy of the day. Bob said following that whale was starting to make him dizzy.

I headed down to my bunk. I started to drift off again when the call came over the radio "whale at 2 o'clock". I headed up the pilot house. Saw the whale. Assembled the team. We took a sample, but the arrow shaft broke in two and the tissue fell out as it seems to do with this year's new tips. No sample.

This pattern would continue, though no more biopsies would be taken until I stopped trying to catch up on my sleep. At that point – no more whales were seen. So I was up and awake, but no whales to follow.

Oh well, I'll get some shut eye tonight and tomorrow will be another day.

Our biopsy total on this leg is 37 and our overall total is 41 sperm whales and 1 Bryde's whale.

Photo of sunset attached.

John

P.S. We are off Louisiana finding sperm whales. Our current location is 27 degrees 33.2 minutes North and 91 degrees 02.3 minutes West, for those who want to track us as we go. For Google maps (not Google Earth - but maps) use (include letters and comma): 27.332 N, 91.023 W

For those of you who are new to this email diary - the previous days can be found at: <https://cms.usm.maine.edu/toxicology/dr-wises-voyage-leg-summaries-2011>

