

Days 47, Voyage 2, July 25, 2011

It's funny how different each leg is and it's interesting at the difference in the crew. Part of it is each leg, we get a little bit more proficient and so we biopsy faster and better. The first leg we were in waters with few whales and we had not been to sea for about a year. Thus, when we found sperm whales we were slow and inefficient and really had to work for them. That crew really found it a challenge to biopsy. But, we were successful.

The second leg, our busiest ever, found us in water with plenty of whales and sampling them almost every day. The newbies on the crew wondered why finding whales was considered so hard or infrequent. Ah, if they only knew. Our old hand on that leg, Shouping, knew. But, it was a great leg and we were successful.

Now, it's the third leg - our first day on the ocean. Within 6 hours of leaving the Mississippi river, Bob Kuech sighted 2 whales about a mile away. We headed for them and low and behold a third whale popped up just to our starboard side. Within minutes, the whale was sampled, the sample arrow and buoy were collected and Cathy was in the lab processing the first sample of this leg. It was done with surgical efficiency as if the entire team had been at it for years. I am sure these newbies, even more than last legs, were going - "Well, that was easy". Let's hope it stays that way.

This leg's first whale was actually a treat. After giving us a sample, it stayed and hung out with us for a while. Since the original two whales had apparently dove and moved on. I asked Captain Bob to allow the whale to just hang out with this whale for a while. I moved to the bow sprit for a better view. Picture attached.

This whale just gently and slowly guided through the water apparently as intrigued by us as we were of it. We basically coasted in the boat while it swam in front. I could admire the contours of its body and the power and grace in its movements. Very impressive animal! After a little while, it had better things to do so it rolled on its side and waved and side tail fluke at us, as if to say goodbye and went on its way. A picture of the wave goodbye is attached.

We returned to looking for more whales.

We would find one more this day. We sampled it just before it dove. A picture of it too waving goodbye is attached.

All in all a successful, picturesque day. Picture of sunset attached.

John

P.S. We are on the Gulf off of Louisiana. Our current location is 28 degrees 19.5 minutes North and 89 degrees 09.6 minutes West, for those who want to track us as we go. For Google maps (not Google Earth – but maps) or Bing maps use (include letters and comma): 28.195 N, 89.096 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>





