

Day 51: September 5, 2010

We are back at sea! There was a very relaxed spirit on the boat today commented on by many. A week in port is simply too long. The point was driven home for me when I entered the pilot house in the morning and there at the helm sat Engineer Rick, one of the monkey brethren, banana in hand (and mouth) and a big grin on his face. He raised the banana to me in a toast-like gesture and we both enjoyed a good chuckle. Another was at lunch when sure enough, Carolyne let her monkey-side show with a large banana, though she calls them "naners"...I guess we will let that one go... and accept her into the brethren anyway.

Today was focused on retrieving and servicing the Scripps HARP buoy that they deployed back in May. The buoy is a bit hard to describe, but it contains a hydrophone that float 30 feet above a base that contains computer hard drives and batteries. It sits on the bottom attached to about 250 pounds of weight with an intermediate section that contains the batteries and data recorders, 2 release cylinders and 4 large orange flotation balls. When we approached it, Ethan sent a signal that caused the cylinders to release the intermediate section from the weights so that the floatation device surged to the surface. It was all hands on deck to try and spot where it popped up. It turned out to be about 1500 feet from the stern right where it was supposed to be.

Next, Ethan and First Mate Ian drove over in our Zodiac tender to prepare it to be lifted onto the boat for servicing. Captain Bob drove the Odyssey around and with Rick running the crane and Johnny and Matt holding lines and Captain Bob ensuring that all details were taken care of; the unit was successfully hoisted into the boat. Cameraman Ian, Mario, Sandy and Carolyne all took lots of pictures and film of the effort.

It really went well without much difficulty save for one detail. We noticed on the horizon a small squall. Needless to say, that storm held off just long enough for Ethan and Ian to pull alongside the Odyssey. Just as they were affixing the rope from the crane to lift the unit, the rain began pouring down drenching everyone and everything. No one left, everyone continued on, and as one large team we all got soaked together. Ethan and First Mate Ian then secured the Zodiac, returned to the Odyssey, and it was time for the entire wet team to have lunch. Needless to say the storm passed and moved on, once everyone was in for lunch! Must have been a storm sent by BP :).

It turns out the HARP had collected lots of acoustic data from May through August 28, including sperm whales. Ethan was pleased for like any scientist- good data cures all! He will work into the night replacing the data cards and the batteries and then we will motor over to where we collected it, put it back in the water and then resume our search for whales.

But for today, by 2 pm, the water was calm and Ethan set up to work in the salon such that we began searching for whales with watches. Johnny, Matt and Carolyne are rotating on the midlevel platform. All are working 2 hours on and one hour off. No whales were seen just a bunch of jellyfish and some tuna.

We have also increased our helm responsibilities. I had talked with Captain Bob during the last leg about having the science team help with night helm watches. We agreed to do so. First Mate Ian, had recently trained students in just this aspect and proposed a watch system of 1 boat crew member and 1 science team member. Sandy, Johnny, Matt and I had volunteered for this opportunity/duty. I told Ian to let the others choose first as they had more specific time obligations than me. Johnny chose the 4 am - 6 am watch as he is up then anyway. Ian gave Sandy the 8 pm- 10 pm watch as she is cooking and has to rise early for breakfast. Matt then requested the 10 pm -midnight shift leaving me with the option of 12 am-2 am or 2 am - 4 am. I chose the former. Ian then noted that he had the 2 am- 4 am shift alone when Carolyn decided that she would volunteer for that shift... see I told you she was a bundle of energy! So here is how the night watches lay out: 8-10 Sandy/First Mate Ian, 10-12 Matt/Rick, 12-2 me/Captain Bob, 2-4 Carolyn/First Mate Ian, 4-6 Johnny/Rick.

It is a bit confusing at times on board with two Ians and an Ethan (which can sound like Ian), then factor in that Ian is Scottish for John and we are like George Foreman's kids... (all named George). I had interesting conversations with cameraman Ian about family (he has young kids in Montana) and science (he worked for some time at New England Biolabs) and the interface of excellent science (unbiased with no emotion) and excellent communication (passionate and full of emotion). I told you Alexandra's team also asks challenging questions. I had not really thought a lot about this topic and, upon reflecting on it, I realized that actually there is lots of passion and emotion in science (else why do it) - it's just that we don't always show a lot of passion and emotion as critics will accuse you of twisting the data to suit your passions. I think the challenge then is to be clearly passionate about your scientific subject, but to love it and respect it enough to conduct the necessary experiments that challenge your interpretation of the data. No one argues with solid data. I hope I can achieve this balance.

On a final humorous note today, as I prepare myself for my watch, I mentioned sometime back that I refer to Iain Kerr as Forest Gump from time to time because of the amazing number of random coincidences that occur with him. Ocean Alliance and Iain have recently purchased a historical building in Gloucester, Massachusetts that they are turning into their headquarters. Iain has worked very hard to build ties with the town of Gloucester. Thus, it should probably come as no surprise that cameraman Ian, who none of us knew before last week, and who Iain Kerr has never met or head of as Iain is in Peru,... is from Gloucester, Massachusetts! Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, he walks into ours! I know it should be boats and not gin joints, but what are the odds for this coincidence? (Doug that is rhetorical no need to actually calculate the odds for me). Oh and James- cameraman Ian loves frogs too!

Of course with cameraman Ian here, my lessons have progressed from always remember when talking to reporters you are always on the record to always be prepared to have your picture taken while on the voyage to... always be prepared to be filmed???!!! Yeah, there is no way that later one is going to work for me, Ian is simply going to get plenty of footage of us behaving normally as he moves too quietly and has too many vantage points for us to notice, and I am simply too focused on other things to

worry about my personal appearance. Sorry mom! But I will try to at least use the table manners you taught me so he does not catch me pushing food with my thumb, talking with food in my mouth, or holding my fork wrong etc. But even then, he is stealthy...

I wish you all a good night and hope for an exciting day tomorrow. Maybe we will find whales...

John