

Day 60: September 14, 2010

Sixty days in- hard to believe.

Well, it was just one of those days. Everything seemed out of sync and backwards. It was like we all collectively got up on the wrong side of the bed.

It started early enough. Matt burst into my cabin with news that we had whales. I leaped out of bed as I can get up really fast to that word (whales) and then three things struck me all at once. One- it was way too early (7:06 am) and I was still tired. Two- Sandy was still in bed and normally she is up at 6 am. Three- Matt woke me up and normally his watch on the mast is from 6-8 am. Weird I thought. Then more weirdness- I was up before everyone but Captain Bob. Normally, I am last one up. Odd- but nevertheless, I went on deck and we went about trying to capture the 50th biopsy.

It was choppy on the water but nothing too rough. Nevertheless, Matt and I went skittering about the pilothouse like we had never been at sea. Weird. Every whale we followed showed up where we would least expect it. Weird, even had one moment where Sandy exclaimed "Holy cow the whale is 50 feet from the bow" and everyone else was below deck - no biopsiers on deck - weird. In fact, I was the only one close enough to get to the crossbow and maybe get a sample attempt off. I thought about it and then realized I didn't know where the safety was. So the whale surfaces right next to the boat and we didn't even get an attempt off- weird. By the way, I did get Rick to teach me all about the crossbow, so next time...

We finally did collect a sample- one. But it was our 50th and so we were happy. The day continued in this weird way all day. Johnny's water bottle fell from the midlevel platform. A big crash and it did not roll into the water. But the really weird thing. It had come unscrewed and fell! No, I am not being clear enough, it's not what you're thinking. He did not take the lid off and drink and then accidentally drop it- it's not that kind of water bottle. Nope. This water bottle has a mouthpiece and a straw. The wind unscrewed it and the top was still up on the midlevel platform attached to the railing!

But the really crazy part came at about 2 pm. We had been working with this group of whales all day and just the one sample. I began to think it was time to move on and find another group, but I thought maybe we were making reasonable eastward progress. So I asked Captain Bob how far east we had travelled. He said we hadn't travelled east at all. In fact, we were so far west that it would take the rest of the day to just get back to where we started the day in the morning! Not a problem, but certainly unexpected.

I learned later why everyone was so sluggish when I got up turns out most slept through their alarms. Weird. Mostly, I think we are just collectively all tired. This leg has produced 36 biopsies and almost everyone is putting in 18 hours a day. Sandy, Carolyn and I put in a full day of USM land laboratory work plus whales. Johnny and Matt put in a full day of classes each day plus whales. Rick, Ian and Bob are either

driving of keeping up boat repairs plus whales. After almost 2 weeks of this, we need some rest. Which probably means... more whales tomorrow! Let's hope so.

You have all heard me talk about the array so much and the sperm whale clicks, I thought I would send you some audio recordings I made with my phone. I found I could open them on my computer and play them in iTunes but not my default windows player. I encourage you to listen to both about 30 - 45 seconds each as the range of clicks they make is amazing - some like popcorn popping, some like creaking chairs, some like chain saws and so on. Hope you enjoy them!

John