

Day 72: September 26, 2010

Well, you know about the samples and that hung over me all night long. Early in morning, the boat slowed down. There was no call of whales so I wondered what might be up. Sandy was still in the cabin so I knew it must be dark out. I looked at my phone for the time and it was predawn, 6:45 am. Sandy went out to check and came back with the news that we were on whales! The new crew did not realize they needed to shout the news and the old crew had been tied up on deck with their discovery. We followed the whales for the entire morning. No luck. Could not even get close enough for much of an attempt.

After a few hours a rainstorm was looming and we had lost track of the whales. I did the only logical thing that one can do when rain is fast approaching and whales are out of sight... I donned my bathing suit and went up on the bow to get wet. Figured the rain would help wash away the sleepiness I felt from a sleepless night. First Mate Ian joined me. He brought shampoo. Then came Johnny and Matt. We all sudsed-up our hair and let the rain wash it clean. Then I went aft and found Monique and Dr. Bob had also joined in the rain washing. We all then enjoyed dumping water that had collected over ourselves. It was cool and refreshing and I felt much better.

Most went in to dry except Johnny who stayed behind to revisit a variety of details with me and enjoy some amusement as I continued to douse myself with awning water. After 72 days together at sea and away from home, there are always details to cover. Mostly, he talked about how proud he was of both his brother and sister for taking on the challenges of the day before. That and a healthy vision of things to come and more to do.

We realized then that the water was still and the rain had stopped and while still overcast and cloudy- it was sampling weather. I conferred with Captain Bob and he agreed and so I then had to tell the team... back on watches - its only rain! There a good group and within minutes they resumed their watches and within minutes whale was seen. I hollered whales! Nice and loud so the new crew would know how it's supposed to go (and believe me I can be loud!). This whale was 200 yards off.

Johnny had learned the lesson from the last time a whale appeared suddenly at such a short distance and was on the bow in moments. He was wearing pajamas basically as he had changed out of his suit and was settling in to study. He took no time to change as the lesson had been learned. I got out on deck, much of the team had assembled and an arrow as in the water biopsy inside. Go to see a lesson learned work.

Then the rain came. Within seconds we were all drenched from head to toe. All of us. We followed whales for the better part of the day, but never again really got close enough for an attempt. These whales acted differently than others in that they rarely dove deep and often dove shallow. With the weather conditions they would disappear from sight with every shallow dive and we would lose them. But they seemed happy and healthy just slightly out of our reach. By about 2 pm, we lost complete track of them

and went about readying the boat - putting out the whale boom, collecting water samples and catching fish samples. Five fish were caught.

For me the afternoon was basically lost. My stress over those samples released with the news that they were fine and I just kept falling back asleep. Not too happy about that, but I guess necessary as tomorrow is another day and maybe, just maybe I deserved a little rest.

Team is well and still laughing a lot. Samples are stored and in good hands in Maine. One new sample on board and tomorrow is another day!

Still heading west and helm watch is looming.

A picture of the team at work at 7 am is attached. Another fun picture from our galley is attached that I meant to send you one day one. Looks like the monkeys are back!

John



