

## Day 99: October 23, 2010

November is almost here. Seems like yesterday it was July. The day started out with promise. The sun was shining. The water was flat. We had high hopes. They faded fast.

Matt and Shouping were first up on whale watch. They get this honor each day because Rick does the 2-4 am helm watch and Johnny does the 4-6 am helm watch. Matt does the 10 pm - 12 am helm with me and Shouping has no helm watch so they get the 7-9 am whale watch. By 8 am, Johnny and Rick were up and having breakfast. Johnny was already starting in on how difficult it would be today because the wind was picking up. I told him to toughen up and stop being spoiled by flat water. Yes, it was rough, but it gave him the perfect opportunity to take the challenge to the next level. Rick found a Bryde's whale in flat water, now he could do it in choppy water.

At 9 am Matt was down and gave me quite the earful about how difficult it was to see and how we should just stop. He had already told me before he went up on watch that he slept poorly so I attributed much of the passion in his voice to starting tired and then 2 hours up the mast. Nevertheless, I gathered my stuff and went on watch myself to see and decide.

I found it quite windy. They were quite right about that. I tightened down the hat I was wearing. Portside was indeed difficult. Lots of whitecaps make it difficult to find blows of air in the water. The wind complicates it further. But starboard side was clean. Few whitecaps and fairly good visibility and the waves were not too bad. So I stayed to watch. By about 10:30 am, the waves had increased and the wind was blowing hard. If we did find a whale we could not retrieve a biopsy dart. It was time to stand down and see how the day played out. I called Johnny and Rick down off the mast and cancelled the watches until weather was better. It never did get better.

It was a warm sunny day, but it was blowing like crazy and lots of large swells. When I started this voyage, weather like today's was irritating as there is little one can do to keep busy. Read a little. Maybe write. But I have been out here a while now and have come to value weather like today's. It affords me the luxury of time. Time to think. Time to reflect. Time to plan. Time to enjoy the company of those I am with. Funny, but even crashing in the waves is now very productive time.

I spent the day at the aft table. People would venture to and fro and we would discuss science, the voyage, life and my plans. I wrote a lot as there is an awning above the table so my laptop never really leaves my side. Caught up on all of my emails. Came up with some new grant proposal and so on.

Now, its evening. Bailey has decided to change the mood and is manning his helm watch in a 3-piece suit. Sandy, Rick and the boys are playing a quiet game of cards. Shouping is shaking his head about this crazy American culture. Bob is headed down to the engine room. Ian is napping as he has the 2-4 am helm watch tonight (we switched

Rick to 12-2 am). I am writing to you and then turning my attention to a research paper I have been meaning to write. Pictures of all attached (except for sleeping Ian). Plus our great sunset and full moon. I also added the crew shot at the start of our final leg.

We hope for better weather tomorrow. The forecast says more of the same. But Iain Kerr tells me the storm causing this mess is due to make landfall tonight and dissipate. Funny to think of storms being safely on land...

John









