

## Monday, May 1 – Day 21 by Dr. Wise

Dear All,

We had some confusion in our email delivery system, but I am told they have all been sent out now pictures and all. Of course, the emails are all [Day 0 through today's (Day 21)] on our website at: [www.WiseLaboratory.org](http://www.WiseLaboratory.org).

Weather held us in port for much of days 19 and all of day 20. Battling sun, wind and waves for so many days has worn us out, so we mostly just quietly hung out in the shade. Except, one interesting visit we made was to the Museo de la Ballena, the whale museum. Last time we were in La Paz, at the start of the trip, Rachel and Mark slipped off to visit this museum, and, afterwards, Mark had told us of their visit and how beautiful it was. Looking at it now, with my own eyes – Mark was right.

Even though it was a small museum, it was well set up and well presented with lots and lots of marine mammal and shark skeletons hanging in the air, and models of each species in the Sea of Cortez. We even stood inside a blue whale skeleton! Once inside one – you really appreciate how massive these whales are – the largest animal to exist on the planet. Worth a visit, for sure, if you are ever in La Paz. I was sorry Johnny missed seeing it, as I prefer my entire field team enjoy these types of things, but hopefully, on next year's trip, he will. For now, I got him a t-shirt.

Our original plan was to work at sea all day today and tomorrow. We departed just before dawn today, and in the course of reviewing the plan, learned that we cannot work, but for a few hours tomorrow morning. The Sea Shepherd crew is anxious to get north to Ensenada for their next project, and so, today, was to be our last full day on the water. We will reach Cabo San Lucas in the morning and depart the boat. Carlos and Andrea will return to La Paz. Mark, Sean, Rick and I will spend a day preparing and shipping supplies home and then on Thursday, we, too, will head home. Thus, this message will be my last email of this voyage. By the time you read it, we will probably be in port.

Chemical pollution has become a major problem for health. We seek here to discover and describe the extent and impacts of ocean pollution on health. Whales are our closest relatives in the ocean and, to put it simply, what happens to them will eventually happen to us. Wind, water, air and biological currents spread our chemical pollution far and wide, even reaching remote ocean regions. I believe we can change this problem. I believe people are simply unaware of the magnitude of the issue because these days – chemical pollution is rarely seen so it's not obvious. It's an out of sight out of mind thing. A kind of hidden in plain sight message.

I remember when I was a child, it was common practice to litter and simply throw your trash on the ground. Then a campaign started to stop the littering. A cartoon owl was created that would say: "Give a hoot! Don't pollute!" Perhaps, the most memorable and effective image was one of a Native American on a horse looking out of a field of trash. A single tear slides down his cheek at the sight of the mess. Ultimately, littering stopped and the campaign worked. These days it's rare to see somebody deliberately litter in the United States. Most people now dispose of their trash in trashcans somewhere.

I bet we can do a similar campaign with chemical pollution and reduce the chemical littering that happens today. I think people care. We will see. For now, we start to describe and explain the problem of chemicals in the sea including these whales, here, in the Sea of Cortez.

I thank Sea Shepherd for hosting us and Captain Fanch, Mike, Carolina, Sheila and Natan for being such kind and supportive crew. I thank Jorge, Carlos and Andrea for excellent collaboration and teamwork in collecting the samples. I thank the Wise Lab team: Johnny, Rick, Mark, Rachel, Sean, and James for their hard work and support in collecting the samples, sending the emails, posting on the website, etc. This work is not easy and it helps to have such dedicated people. I thank all of you for following along and your many kind words along the way- I have enjoyed them. Finally, I thank our people at home that take care of everything in our normal lives while we are away out here.

I hope you have enjoyed following along. I know I have enjoyed telling you our story. We always need help funding our work, so please consider a tax-deductible donation of any amount, which you can make on our website link here:

<https://www.oceanfdn.org/donate/wise-laboratory-field-research-program>

We have 63 whales from here to analyze. We have alligator sampling trips in Florida, sea turtle sampling trips in Puerto Rico and whale sampling trips in the Gulf of Maine all coming up soon. Carlos is hopeful that we will have the Mexican export permit soon to get the sample back to Kentucky and analyzed. Much to do. But, for now, I am mostly excited to be headed home.

Good night from here until the next trip.

John