

Day 24, Voyage 2, July 1, 2011

I had a hard time sleeping last night. I knew we were likely to be in the sperm whale territory that was covered with oil; at 7 am and I kept waking up wondering "is it 7 am yet!!??" I was like a kid at Christmas eve waiting for Santa, except my wonderment was whether or not the whales had returned. Not sure why it struck me that way. It just did.

7 am finally arrived and I went up to see where things stood. Johnny and Ian were in the pilothouse and quickly explained that they had heard clicks, but seen nothing. There were no whale clicks then. It was a bit anticlimactic given my night of anticipation.

The day was routine until about 2 pm, Sandy came and told me a whale blow had been sighted. I was pleased to see when I arrived on deck the entire team in place despite any queasiness. Johnny was on the whale boom and Ian on the bowsprit- crossbows in hand. Nate was on the midlevel and John Branford the pilot house - spotting the whale. Cathy was sitting on the doghouse cover holding the data sheet. Sandy was in the bow ready for photo id pictures. Shouping was everywhere taking pictures of the whole event. Nick was near the net and buoys ready if arrow landed in the water. Jane was in the bow ready to assist as needed. Bob was at the helm and I was in and alongside the pilothouse.

We started towards the whale. Shallow dive. We continued along. Shallow dive. Then again. Finally, the arrows flew and we had our first sample of the day. New crew not even 24 hours in and we had a sample. They were going to think every day is like this one. Another whale was spotted and then another. All told there were about 8 whales spotted. It's a bit hard to tell the exact number as they move in three dimensions going down, while our third dimension is up. By the end of the day (i.e. 5 hours later) we had sampled 6 whales! The team was hot and exhausted and exhilarated by success.

We did have one particularly humorous moment. I always worry about the "Hey, that's a whale!" moment. That moment in time where a team member gets caught up in the amazing sight that is a whale and forgets to do their job. The sample was taken and the arrow hit the water. I was watching Nick, our netter, and Jane, who worked as his backup, to see who would capture the arrow. They were both looking out over the rail at the whale/arrow. I suddenly realized that not one, but both of them were caught in this moment. It was as if Nick was saying "Hey, that's a whale!" and Jane was saying "Hey yeah, isn't it amazing". Neither moved and the arrow flowed past. I grabbed for the net, but, alas, it was on the far side of the salon-ceiling deck and well out of my reach. We turned the boat and retrieved the arrows- ribbing Jane and Nick the whole time.

Photo of some of the team in place attached. Shouping in orange and Nick shirtless are nearest in view. Then Sandy in blue and Ian in the bow sprit. Johnny is on the whale boom. Cathy normally sits on the doghouse roof- that small structure in the bow that has a varnished roof, but at this point she and Jane were below in the lab. Nate is above everyone on the midlevel platform. Everyone else is behind me.

We are now off Alabama finding sperm whales. Our current location is 29 degrees 07.8 minutes North and 87 degrees 47.5 minutes West, for those who want to track us as we go. For Google maps (not Google Earth - but maps) use (include letters and comma): 29.078 N, 87.475 W

Productive day! Great teamwork.

Photo sunset attached.

John



