

Day 9, Voyage 2, June 16, 2011

Another gorgeous day though the sea was a bit choppier. Everyone settled into their routine and I think today was the first day they felt the beginning of the grind. The morning had a bit of excitement as Johnny spotted some marine mammals in the distance. It took a while to identify them as they did not surface much. In the end, we decided they were most likely Risso's dolphins.

Then the routine really kicked in as there was not much to see and few sounds coming over the array. By afternoon, the adrenaline from being at sea had worn off and the grind of the work set in as there were bodies napping everywhere you looked. In the salon, in the galley, in the cabins on the aft deck benches, anywhere there was a reasonably comfortable spot a body was napping. The whole team is clear now if they weren't before- work at sea is hard.

About 5:45 pm the boat stopped. I went up figuring they were preparing for the 6 pm water sampling only to discover Ian had a tension on his fishing line. I teased him that it was only Sargasso weed. It was. I sat on the aft bench, thinking about the day and the leg ahead. You see the plan is look for sperm whales here and then head in to look for the Bryde's whales. Rick was on whale watch till 6 pm so the water could not start for a few minutes.

I took a couple of photos figuring the water sampling would be the highlight of the day, when Cyndi yelled she had seen a whale blow. Sure enough Cathy saw it next and I scrambled the team into position. It was a lone sperm whale and he was not far off. Johnny went out on the whale boom with one crossbow and Rick went into the bowsprit with the other. Sandy and Cathy took positions in the bow to take a photo id picture and record data, respectively (picture attached - Sandy is further out in blue shirt near Rick). Shanelle went onto the midlevel platform to take video and general photos and Alyssa joined her to spot whales (photo attached- Shanelle is on the right). Cyndi remained on top of the pilot house and did a truly excellent job of spotting whales throughout (picture attached). Nora readied the net and buoys (picture attached). Ian manned the helm (picture attached). We let Bob sleep (picture not attached) as Ian had the helm under control and there was only one whale so Cyndi would be on the pilot house until the sample was collected.

We got close. But never close enough. The whale made a deep dive. That meant 45 minutes until he surfaced again. Only this proved to be a remarkable whale and he stayed down for an hour and ten minutes! Sperm whales click when they are underwater and then are usually silent at the surface. We were listening anxiously for

the clicks to end meaning the whale had surfaced, particularly when 45 minutes passed. But that whale developed a pattern of 20 seconds of silence followed by more clicking. Each time it stopped, we thought this is it! But he'd start clicking again. It reached a point where it was so regular Ian became convinced it was a recording. Finally, after 70 minutes, the whale surfaced about a mile up ahead.

Keeping our eye on the whale, we sped along trying to catch up. We did. Just in time to see him fluke and dive deeply again. There was not 45 minutes of sunlight left so there would not be another attempt. As the whale dove, we heard the strangest sound over the array. I kid you not it sounded like "heh, heh, heh". As if the whale was laughing at us! I thought I was hearing things, but I asked Ian (the only other person in the pilothouse) if he heard it and indeed he had heard it too.

We were disappointed at the lack of a sample. But everyone is trained now and ready for the next chance. We also got our water samples. So the day ends with another tasty meal and a beautiful sunset (picture attached).

John















