

Day 31, Voyage 2, July 8, 2011

It was the 19 year-olds who saved the day really, if such a thing can be said.

If yesterday was slow, today was like molasses. Nothing to see and nothing to hear. There was a brown pelican who flew by, but, alas, he was not carrying the sweet tea that someone promised to send by brown pelican. The team had settled into the rhythm of a slow day at sea.

Around midday, Ian and Johnny started mumbling around me about how nice a swim call would be. I said "not until we find a whale..."

They grinned rather confident in their whale finding abilities.

"...and biopsy it, I continued.

The grins vanished, but the confidence remained and they were sure they would find and biopsy a whale.

By 6:00 pm, many of the team had settled into friendly games of cards and spelling. Ian and Johnny acknowledged their defeat.

By 6:30 pm, thoughts of many were drifting to dinner. They day appeared lost as far as finding whales go and minds were wandering. Such days are always a bummer. But then at 6:45 pm, Nick spotted a whale from the mid-level platform. The team response was "Huh? Really??!!!" and then we collectively began moving as fast as a woolly mammoth trapped in the tar of the La Brea tar pits.

We managed to assemble ourselves in time as we approached the whale. Everything was lining up just right- except the whale got hungry and dove down deep. We waited.

It was John Bradford then who spotted another whale spy hopping (i.e. peeking) at us to get a better look. No one else saw it though and the ribbing began. It's tough to be the young guy on the boat.

But then Nick and Nate spotted the spy hopping whale from the midlevel platform and we headed towards it. Everything was lining up just right- except the whale got hungry and dove down deep. Sound familiar?

We waited and waited. We finally saw one of them as the sun was setting - 2 miles away; fluking as it dove for more food. With the sun almost gone and the whale feeding. The team headed in.

It was then about 7:45 pm. Some of the team were chatting in the pilot house. The last remains of the day still visible in the sky when John Bradford spotted the whale 100 yards from the boat. The team assembled on deck; quick as wink this time. But, alas, as we got close, the whale got hungry and dove again.

We would not sample a whale today, but we tried and tried and that made all the difference. The team had a nice bounce in their step and a song in their heart. So hat's off to our three 19 year-olds for helping us to end the day in an exciting manner and for showing that they have developed some nice whale finding skills. Pictures of the nineteen year-olds attached. Nick (in green shorts) and Nate and of John Bradford on the midlevel platform (you have to zoom to see him)-all looking for the evening whales. Congrats on a job well done!

Photo of sunset also attached.

John

P.S. We are still off Louisiana looking for sperm whales. Our current location is 27 degrees 35.0 minutes North and 90 degrees 67.0 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): 27.350 N, 90.670 W

For those of you who are new to this email diary - the previous days can be found at: <https://cms.usm.maine.edu/toxicology/dr-wises-voyage-leg-summaries-2011>



