

SPLASH 2004: NOAA Ship McArthur Weekly Science Report

07 October, 2004

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SCIENCE SUMMARY: 30 September - 06 October 2004

After several days of much-deserved R&R in Kodiak, we headed back out to sea on Sunday, October 3. In Kodiak, we bid good-bye to outgoing cruise leader, Lisa Ballance, and scientists Bob Pitman, Leigh Torres, Todd Chandler and Lisa Munger. In fact, we said good-bye several times to Bob & Lisa, whose flight was repeatedly cancelled. But we are happy to hear they made it home after 'only' three days of weather delays. Incoming scientists for leg 4 are Jim Cotton, veteran marine mammal observer, Megan Ferguson, graduate student and marine mammal observer, and myself, the cruise leader. We are also happy to have returning scientists Julie Oswald, acoustician, and Richard Rowlett, marine mammal observer, back onboard (you may recall from earlier weekly reports that they were both on Leg 1). Welcome back!

Weather will be our big concern this month, as fall brings more and more storms our way. But so far the weather-gods have been smiling on us, and we've had workable conditions each day since sailing, including some very nice weather the last two days. The sunset two days ago was spectacular – with rainbows, snow-capped mountains, interesting clouds, and countless shades of orange, pink and purple in the sky. We are hoping for a couple more good days, before a nasty storm threatens to come our way again this weekend. --- Oh, where to hide? Prince William Sound, perhaps. I hear there are whales there...

So far this week, the whales have been plentiful – fin whales, that is. After finding one large aggregation of humpbacks our second day out on Portlock Bank (and completing a whopping 12.3 miles of trackline!), we've been mostly inundated with pesky fin whales everywhere we go. And most of the humpbacks have been too busy feeding to show us their flukes. But we did manage to get catalog-quality photographs from 15 humpbacks, and biopsies from 10 humpies and 5 fin whales. We've now completed the first two lines of the zigzags between Kodiak and the Kenai Peninsula, and we're hoping for more humpbacks soon. Wish us luck!

Birding update: Richard has been enjoying the diversity of visiting songbirds this week, including Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Bohemian Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Siskin, and many many more..... A Merlin has also been seen on several occasions – perhaps it's taking advantage of all the poor lost tweety birds? Migrating waterbirds have included a Yellow-billed Loon and all three scoter species.

Until next week!

Sightings and Effort Summary for Marine Mammals

Date	Start/Stop Time	Position	Total Distance	Avg. Beaufort
093004	-----	Pierside in Women's Bay, Kodiak -----		
100104	-----	Pierside in Women's Bay, Kodiak -----		
100204	-----	Pierside in Women's Bay, Kodiak -----		
100304	1453 1744	N57:42.26 W151:36.16 N58:06.25 W151:06.76	26.0 nmi	5.0
100404	1223 1545	N58:12.30 W151:07.64 N58:25.30 W150:59.45	12.3 nmi	4.8
100504	0723 1623	N58:46.22 W151:57.61 N58:46.80 W150:38.42	44.0 nmi	4.5
100604	0727 1751	N58:44.95 W150:36.14 N58:09.63 W149:24.81	61.0 nmi	3.0

CODE	SPECIES	TOT#
037	Orcinus orca	1
070	Balaenoptera sp.	3
074	Balaenoptera physalus	26
076	Megaptera novaeangliae	10
079	unid. large whale	5
	TOTAL	45

Note: Dall's & harbor porpoises and pinnipeds are not included.

Biopsies (Juan Carlos Salinas)

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale	10	410
Fin whale	5	63
Northern Right Whale	0	22
Blue whale	0	4
Sperm whale	0	6

Killer whale	0	37
Baird's beaked whale	0	3
Dall's porpoise	0	2
Cuvier's beaked whale*	0	1
Grand Total	15	548

*dead when sampled

Photo-Project (Holly Fearnbach)

Species	Weekly #	Cumulative #
Humpback whale		
Catalog-quality flukes	15	691
Fin whale dorsal IDs	7	99
N Right Whale head IDs	0	23
Sperm whale fluke IDs	0	13
Blue whale dorsal IDs	0	5
Minke whale dorsal IDs	0	1
Killer whale dorsal IDs	0	218
Baird's beaked whales	0	15
Northern right whale dolphins*	0	1
Pacific white-sided dolphins*	0	3
Cuvier's beaked whale (dead)	0	1
Steller sea lion	0	1

*number of groups photographed

PHOTO MATCHING NEWS FLASH

- On Monday (10/04), we resighted an animal originally photographed on 12 September in the Shumagins region @ N54:32.94 W163:39.98. When we photographed it this week, it was on the western edge of Portlock Bank (N58:15.6 W151:06.3), over 470 nautical miles from its location 21 days weeks ago. Looks like this animal is on the move!

- Several animals photographed during Leg 1 have been matched to the SE Alaska and BC catalogs by Jenn Cedarleaf at the University of Alaska SE. Two animals in the BC catalog were matched to sightings in the SE Alaska and Yakutat regions.

Oceanographic Operations (Lacey O'Neal)

Date	Number CTDs
09/30	0 – Pierside in Woman's Bay, Kodiak
10/01	0 – Pierside in Woman's Bay, Kodiak
10/02	0 – Pierside in Woman's Bay, Kodiak
10/03	1
10/04	1
10/05	1
10/06	1

Acoustics Squeakly Report (Shannon Rankin and Julie Oswald)

The acoustics team had a sleepy start to the week, with a few pathetic attempts to listen for right whales off Portlock Bank while working fins and humpbacks. I suppose it is reasonable that we should only hear humpbacks and finbacks, as we have had more than our share of good luck with regards to right whales. We wouldn't want to get greedy, now, would we? Other than that, we have had only one day with the array in the water, with nothing exciting to report.