ORCAWALE 2001: Weekly Report for 11/01/01 to 11/07/01

## Bob Pitman:

Well, the Jordan is once again headed for the hospital. We started this leg 3 days late and are coming in 6 days early, all due to mechanical problems. Now we're headed for the ER with a triple bypass scheduled for the old gal: the port engine is shut down because we are in danger of losing the shaft and propeller on that side. We're running out of things to break down on here so we'll be shipping the entire operation up to San Francisco next leg to finish the cruise on the NOAA Ship McArthur. Our whole observer team will be shifting over to the Mac and the shiftless ones will stay behind. Between debacles this week we did manage three days of actual survey effort. Our most notable sighting was a pod of killer whales milling in an oil slick. A flock of birds was rapidly collecting over the area and we knew a kill had just happened (a slick forms when animal fat seeps from a carcass). We picked up a scrap from the killer whale table and it turned out to be a fresh, 50 lb. chunk of leatherback turtle carapace (upper shell) with the insides neatly excavated out. A pair of whales diving in the immediate area were apparently pulling the turtle apart underwater and nibbling on the choice bits. They must eat turtles like peanuts: chomping up the insides and spitting out the shells. The catch of the day though was a 150 lb mola mola (sunfish). A researcher at Scripps requested we bring back the largest mola mola we could handle, for study purposes. Our victim was "sunning" at the surface when Chico and I grabbed it and just barely managed to pull it into the launch with us. It is 4' long (and 6' deep if you count the fins), and shaped like a fat doormat with fins. It is currently taking up a lot of space in our food freezer, where, despite the rumored threat of tainting our ice cream supply (flounder flavor), the Steward's Dept has graciously, if not without some reservations, allowed us to store our catch. The crew must think God created scientists just to test them.

				Trackline	Avg
Date	Time	Lat	Long	Miles	Beauf
110101	1024 N	I46:11.	.52 W124:11.0	)3 49.2nmi	4.4
	1648 N	145:35.	.45 W125:02.0	)7	
110201	0708 N	I44:13.	.26 W127:07.7	74 69.8nmi	3.5
	1720 N	N43:10	.17 W127:50.	31	
110301	0710 N	J41:32.	.08 W128:20.1	2 60.6nmi	3.5
	1710 N	N40:21	.17 W128:44.	75	
110401	0706 N	J39:01.	.87 W128:21.5	63.0nmi	1.8
	1710 N	N38:40	.60 W126:42.	32	
110701	1219 N	136:42.	.98 W124:01.1	6 30.0nmi	5.0
	1636 N	N36:19	.73 W123:35.	90	

Code Species Tot#

17	shortbeak common dolphin	6
22	Pacific white-sided dolphin	5
27	northern right whale dolphin	12
37	killer whale	2
44	Dall's porpoise	10
71	minke whale	1
74	fin whale	3
76	humpback whale	1
77	unidentified delphinoid	3
78	unidentified small whale	3
	TOTAL	46

Biopsy (Juan Carlos Salinas and Erin LaBrecque) Photo-ID (Paula Olsen, Leigh Torres and Laura Morse)

		Biopsy		Photo
Species	#Biopsies	Cumulative	<b>#ID-Photos</b>	Cumulative
	(this week)	Total	(this week)	Total
Physeter macrocephalus	0	10	0	22
Balaenoptera musculus	0	10	0	16
Balaenoptera physalus	0	11	2	18
Megaptera novaeangliae	0	15	0	22
Delphinus delphis	6	76	2	20
Grampus griseus	0	1	0	1
Lagenorhyncus obliquidens	0	8	0	0
Lissodelphis borealis	7	23	0	0
Phocoenoides dalli	0	9	0	0
Orcinus orca	0	3	3 .	22
Eschrictius robustus	0	3	0	7
Stenella coeruleoalba	0	0	0	1
Tursiops truncatus	0	3	0	0
Ziphius cavirostris	0	1	0	1
(Leatherback Turtle)	1	1		
Total	14	174	0	122

Oceanography (Candice Hall)

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Day	#CTDs#XBT	s#Bongos	Notes	
1 November	0	2	0	Depart Astoria
2 November	0	5	1	
3 November	1	5	1	
4 November	1	4	1	
5 November	1	0	0	Stationary
6 November	0	2	0	Weather

7 November 0 5 1

Seabirds (Michael Force and Cornelia Oedekoven)

A shortened work week due to weather and an ailing ship, but not short on excitement for those in the seabird counting department. Mottled Petrels were recorded everyday this week, including a flock of 40 taking advantage of easy pickings at the Orca kill. Laysan Albatrosses, not recorded this cruise until last leg, also were seen everyday. A "Dark-rumped" Petrel of unknown species was only the second one seen this cruise and, like the previous one, was found far offshore. In an area of relatively low density we found a couple of fairly diverse shearwater flocks resting on the water, the birds presumably well fed. Each flock contained 4 species of shearwaters, including Flesh-footed and Short-tailed Shearwaters, as well as a mix of gulls, jaegers, and a single South Polar Skua. During 3 days, about 200 NM off Cape Mendocino, we witnessed a large movement of Brant southbound from their Alaskan breeding areas to winter quarters in coastal Baja California; thousands were observed by those on the 25x binoculars. One lost European Starling 194 NM west of Cape Mendocino, was a long way from the nearest McDonald's.

## Acoustics (Shannon Rankin and Jessica Burtenshaw)

Squeakly Report: Our brief attempt at leg 5 began with an early morning acoustic detection of sperm whales, followed by two busy days of common dolphins and right whale dolphins. Unlike the incessant whistling of the common dolphins, the right whale dolphins have been typically quiet. This week they more than made up for the past 4 legs by squeaking and clicking up a storm. Alas, just as Jessica was getting warmed up, we are homeward bound.