

PICEAS – Pacific Island Cetacean and Ecosystem Assessment Survey
Weekly Report, October 13 – 19, 2005

Karin A. Forney – Cruise Leader

This week started out in Honolulu, with a broken acoustics winch and most of the scientific team scattered about the Hawaiian Islands getting some much-deserved R&R. Thanks to our capable land-based repair team, Randy and Mark, the winch was almost as good as new by Friday afternoon. Outgoing cruiseleader, Lisa Ballance, filled me in on all the project details and handed over cruiseleading duties on Wednesday. We also welcomed several new participants to PICEAS: David Johnston, Jen Pettis, Scott Benson, and Mark Deakos. On Monday morning, after fueling the ship and picking up a new engineer, we departed for the study area by late evening. All aboard have high hopes for fair skies, calm seas and more frequent cetacean encounters than during the last leg.

Our tracklines for this leg will take us SW from Hawaii to about 10°N, and then along a set of long parallel SW/NE lines as we work our way eastward towards Palmyra Atoll. We expect lower cetacean densities during the earlier (western) part of this leg, but we hope sighting rates will once again pick up as we approach the more productive waters near Palmyra. Our first few days have yielded three sightings, of striped dolphin, melon-headed whale, and the ubiquitous unidentified dolphin. We launched the small boat on the melon-headed whales, but they eluded our biopsy team with what seemed like a clever maneuver: sending out one animal as a decoy (which the small boat team dutifully followed, cameras and crossbows raised), while the rest of the group vanished. The decoy then skillfully approached the *McArthur II* and crossed the bow very close to the ship, so the small boat could not follow, and similarly disappeared within minutes. Nothing like being outsmarted by animals who are clearly in their element!

Speaking of outsmarted -- we thought we got rid of the acoustics gremlins in Honolulu, but it appears they are now continuing their mischief on leg 4 (see Squeakly Report below). Shannon will not be defeated, though! Thanks this week also to ET Clay, who repaired the treadmill in our gym. Tune in again next week for more news as we continue down our tracklines...

Marine Mammal Sighting Summary

101305	In Port	- Honolulu			
101405	In Port	- Honolulu			
101505	In Port	- Honolulu			
101605	In Port	- Honolulu			
101705	1710	N21:15.77	W157:56.67	8.6 nmi	5.0
	1800	N21:10.65	W158:04.05		
101805	0633	N20:24.94	W159:18.39	103.6 nmi	3.8
	1816	N19:26.22	W160:52.19		
101905	0831	N18:28.06	W162:58.64	43.3 nmi	3.9
	1749	N17:27.15	W163:45.78		

CODE	SPECIES	TOT#
013	Stenella coeruleoalba	1
031	Peponocephala electra	1
177	unid. small delphinid	1
	TOTAL	3

Acoustics Squeakly Report (Shannon Rankin & Jen Pettis)

~~This has quite possibly been the single best week for acoustics. After several days R&R in Maui, the acousticians regrouped for a new, improved PICEAS cruise. With a functional winch, a healthy array, and good karma (Jen Pettis)—we were on our way to good times.~~

Or, maybe not. We actually had nearly 9 hours of quality time listening to the array (and even to a group of striped dolphins!) before the gremlins awoke from their Honolulu Hangover. They are back to their sneaky tricks these days, attacking the primary array, the backup array, and the lead-in cables in one fell swoop. Lucky for me, I received multiple gift boxes of splicing kits, electronic testing equipment, and chocolate in Honolulu, so I am prepared to for a fight.

Birder Blurb (Michael Force & Sophie Webb)

It was a short 2-day “week” and a slow one for news, so our weekly seabird squawk is somewhat sparse. Nevertheless, we did manage to find 14 species of seabirds. Among these was an intermediate morph Kermadec Petrel, a White-necked Petrel, a couple of Hawaiian Petrels, and rather high numbers of Black-winged Petrels. The reduced numbers of Mottled Petrels compared to last week, when we were recording daily totals in double digits, suggest their southbound migration is winding down. On the other hand, perhaps we’ve simply moved away from their migratory corridor—if there is one that is. Stay tuned for a better idea of what’s happening out here after our first full week is done and our memories of a lovely port call in Honolulu are no longer providing a distraction.

Biopsy Weekly Report (Suzanne Yin and Mark Deakos)

	Weekly Total	Cruise Total
Bryde's whales	0	1
Pilot whales	0	2
Humpback whales	0	3
Melon-headed whales	0	40
Sperm whales	0	4
False killer whales	0	18
Spotted dolphins	0	2
Spinner dolphins	0	3
Rough-toothed dolphins	0	2
Bottlenose dolphins	0	11
TOTAL	0	86

Photo-ID Weekly Report (Chris Cutler and Beth Goodwin)

	Weekly Total	Cruise Total
Humpback whale fluke IDs	0	4
Bryde's whale	0	4
Melon-headed whale (# groups)	1	4
False killer whales (# groups)	0	3
Pilot whales (# groups)	0	12
Striped dolphins (# groups)	0	2
Spotted dolphins (# groups)	0	4
Spinner dolphins (# groups)	0	5
Fraser's dolphins (# groups)	0	2
Killer whales (# groups)	0	1
Risso's dolphins (# groups)	0	1
Rough-toothed dolphins (# groups)	0	1

Oceanographic Data Collections (Mindy Kelly and Lacey O'Neal)

DATE RANGE	DAY	CTD	XBT	Bongo	Manta
PICEAS05 Leg 4 10/17 to 10/20	Thursday	--	--	--	--
	Friday	--	--	--	--
	Saturday	--	--	--	--
	Sunday	--	--	--	--
	Monday	0	0	0	0
	Tuesday	0	5	0	0
	Wednesday	2	3	1	0
	Totals	2	8	1	0

We are off to another great start for leg four. All of the oceanographic equipment continues to operate as it should as well as our wonderful oceanography team. For this leg, we have visiting scientist Scott Benson joining us for evening net tow stations. In relation to his work with sea turtles, he is interested in viewing what the tows have to offer us each evening. Unfortunately, we missed out on our first manta tow last night due to winds gusting to 25 knots. Surface temperatures have held steady around 27°C (80.6°F) for the time being and XBT profiles have shown the thermocline to be around 75 meters. The first two CTD casts of the leg have lifted off the fantail without a hitch and the data look great.

Flyingfish Flights (Jim Cotton, your air traffic controller)

New to the dipping game this leg, now that Bob Pitman has left our ranks, are Shannon Rankin and Chris Cuttler. Only two stops this week as we quickly made our way to the study area. Before leaving the influence of the island we netted a few neritic forms (*Parexocetus*) nearly doubling our samples for this species. At our second station, we managed to get wetter than the specimens in our bucket, but at least it was a warm rain and we sloshed away with three species. Looking forward to dipping at Palmyra Atoll and hopefully adding new species to the collection.