

SPLASH 2004: NOAA Ship McArthur Weekly Science Report

04 November, 2004

Karin A. Forney - Cruise Leader

SCIENCE SUMMARY: 28 October - 03 November 2004

We made it! After completing the last of our offshore zigzags, just north of Dixon Entrance, we entered sheltered waters again for our southbound journey home through British Columbia. While the home stretch was quite scenic, the weather deteriorated and sightings fizzled dramatically during this last week. We encountered a whopping TWO humpback whales all week. One whale was seen ever so briefly, sneaking through remarkable Grenville Channel, which is only ¼ mile wide for about 20 miles and (unfortunately) offered no opportunity to pursue the whale or launch the small boat. The second whale was seen Oct 31 in Johnstone Strait, and we successfully launched the small boat to obtain our very last fluke shot and biopsy for the cruise. This brings our grand totals for the project to 917 humpback whale ID photos, and 507 humpback whale biopsies! Holly, Cornelia, Beth, Liz, and Amanda spent many long hours finishing the basic processing of all photos before our arrival, and we now have a complete, printed and organized catalog of these 917 humpback whales.

We also had a couple more killer whale sightings this week, adding five photos to the collection. Michael completed the cataloging of all killer whale photos taken during SPLASH, and he reports that we obtained 426 killer whale ID photos (not bad, for a *humpback* cruise!). Although some individuals are only represented by right side IDs, almost half have matched lefts and rights. There have not been any obvious internal matches, but Michael has already identified numerous individuals from other catalogs, and we expect further matches once the photos are compared to resident whales photographed in SE Alaska, the eastern Aleutians, and the Gulf of Alaska. There also no doubt will be many new animals.

On Tuesday, we pulled into Seattle one day early, because the weather decided to make the last few days unworkable. Today, Thursday, the cruise is officially wrapped up, the ship is unloaded, and everyone is on their way back home or off to their next adventure. As outgoing cruise leader, I would like to sincerely thank the many people who made this project a success. Foremost, the team of dedicated scientist and the outstanding crew of the McArthur II are to be acknowledged. Throughout the cruise, everyone worked together effectively and professionally to ensure safe, efficient science operations. It was truly a pleasure to work with everyone aboard. I'd also like to thank our excellent survey coordinator, Annette Henry, for her efficient and capable help – especially dealing with last minute end-of-cruise logistics.

-- THANK YOU!!!

Sightings and Effort Summary for Marine Mammals

Date	Start/Stop Time	Position	Total Distance	Avg. Beaufort
102804	No effort –bad weather			
102904	1257	N53:43.17 W129:49.45	35.4 nmi	1.0
	1655	N53:16.02 W129:07.94		
103004	0745	N53:14.05 W129:06.92	68.8 nmi	4.4
	1606	N52:36.56 W129:51.00		
103104	0740	N50:45.92 W127:13.51	71.7 nmi	2.3
	1640	N50:20.49 W125:28.94		
110104	No effort – bad weather			
110204	In port – Seattle			
110304	In port – Seattle			

CODE	SPECIES	TOT#
022	Lagenorhynchus obliquidens	1
037	Orcinus orca	2
070	Balaenoptera sp.	1
074	Balaenoptera physalus	3
076	Megaptera novaeangliae	2
	TOTAL	9

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

Biopsies (Juan Carlos Salinas)

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale	1	507
Fin whale	0	64
Northern Right Whale	0	22
Blue whale	0	4
Sperm whale	0	8
Killer whale	0	42
Baird's beaked whale	0	6
Dall's porpoise	0	2
Cuvier's beaked whale*	0	1
Grand Total	1	656

*dead when sampled

Photo-Project (Holly Fearnbach)

Species	Weekly #	Final tally
Humpback whale		
Catalog-quality flukes	1	917
Fin whale dorsal IDs	0	108
N Right Whale head IDs	0	23
Sperm whale fluke IDs	0	16
Blue whale dorsal IDs	0	5
Minke whale dorsal IDs	0	1
Killer whale dorsal IDs	5	426
Baird's beaked whales	0	21
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

Oceanographic Operations (Lacey O'Neal)

Date	Number CTDs
10/28	0
10/29	1
10/30	1
10/31	0
11/01	0
11/02	0
10/27	0