



**NOAA Teacher at Sea  
Clare Wagstaff  
Onboard NOAA Ship JOHN N. COBB  
June 1 – 14, 2008**

**NOAA Teacher at Sea: Clare Wagstaff**

NOAA Ship JOHN N. COBB

Mission: Alaskan Harbor Seal – Pupping Phenology & Critical Habitat Study

Geographic Area: Southeast Alaska – Juneau. Traveling to Tebenkof Bay

Date: June 1, 2008

**Contact Information**

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**Weather Data from the Bridge (information taken at 1200)**

Weather: Overcast

Visibility (nautical miles): 10

Wind Speed (knots): 15

Wave Height (feet): 1

Sea Water Temp ( $^{\circ}$ C): 13.4

Air Temp ( $^{\circ}$ C): 11.3

**Science and Technology Log**

The first morning on the JOHN N. COBB started early. I am a little apprehensive about the cruise. I have never been on a ship for any great length of time, so this will truly be a test of my sea fairing legs! Today will be a full day of traveling to Tebenkof Bay, situated south of Juneau it is reached by traveling down Stephen's Passage and through part of Chatham Strait. The COBB travels at maximum of ten knots an hour. The wind, currents, sea conditions, the ship's hull speed and horsepower can all affect this speed. This means that it will take us approximately 13 hours to reach our destination. My stateroom is located on the main deck and is next to the galley (the kitchen). Here three hearty meals are produced each day for the crew. The ship has three decks, with sleeping quarters spread out over all the levels. The crew generally works in rotation with six hours on, six hours off, to maintain the COBB. This requires all aboard the ship to be considerate of others sleeping at any hour of the day or night. The amenities on the ship are basic but comfortable and include two toilets (called the 'head'), and a shower. The COBB carries all the water it requires for the entire two weeks cruise, so water conservation is a high priority. No long showers for anyone! On the upper deck is the bridge. It is here that the Commanding Officer (referred to as the CO or Captain) and Executive Officer (XO) control the vessel.

## The JOHN N. COBB Crew



### **Chad Cary, Commanding Officer (CO)**

Has authority over all embarked personnel and employees whenever aboard ship. Chad has been ‘Captain’ of the JOHN N. COBB for just over two years and is also the Safety Officer, so he has a lot of responsibility. He has a science background with a degree in Environmental Science and a Masters in Geography. Chad states that being away from his home and family is the hardest part of the job, especially as he is about to become a father for the first time very soon!



### **Jesse Stark, Acting Executive Officer (XO)**

Second in command to the CO and has primarily administrative duties. Jesse has 20 years of experience working on fishing vessels and ferries. He has a degree in Wildlife Management and thinks the one of the best aspects of the job is having the open water as his office.



### **Sam Hardy, Chief Marine Engineer (CME)**

Oversees the Engineering Department and has direct responsibility for all fixed mechanical and electrical systems on the ship. Sam has 20 years experience at sea and started out working for the Coast Guard. A big perk to working on a ship like the COBB, comments Sam, is the short commute to work each morning: roll out of bed and you’re there!



### **Joe Kelly, Marine Engineer (ME)**

Assists CME in the Engineering Department and has responsibility for all fixed mechanical and electrical systems on the ship. This is Joe’s first season on board a NOAA ship. Previously he worked on tugboats in NJ and NY. One of the big attractions for Joe with this assignment was the location and Alaska’s amazing views.



### **Jonathon Saunders, Acting Chief Bosun**

Oversees the Deck Department and has direct responsibility for all the deck operations and maintenance. He also acts as the on board scientific liaison for the ship. It is his duty to ensure that all deck operations are performed safely and efficiently. This is Jon’s first season on the COBB, but he has worked on ships since leaving school in 1977. He comments that the most challenging aspect of this work is the bad weather and being away from his family and friends.



### **Bill Lamoureux, Chief Steward (CS)**

Responsible for provisioning, feeding and berthing of the ship. Bill has worked for many years onboard a variety of vessels, including an Alaskan king crab ship further north. Bill always provides a feast for all those aboard and his homemade soups each lunch are legendary.



### **Mills Dunlop, Skilled Fisherman**

Participates in any required onboard activities necessary to complete the ships mission. Deploying and retrieving of equipment and personnel. This is Mills' first season aboard the COBB, but he has been raised on the water all his life. With a witty personality, Mills comments that being on the water is both the most enjoyable and worst aspect about being a crewmember!



### **Dave Taylor, Fisherman**

Participates in any required activities necessary to complete the ship's mission. Dave is in his second season working on the COBB. The biggest advantage to working at sea is his constant access to his favorite past time, fishing! In fact last year Dave caught an 110lb halibut off this ship!



### **Dave Withrow, Chief Scientist**

Shares the response with the Commanding Officer for the success of the mission. Dave has many years experience in research, having a degree in fisheries and psychology, he completed graduate work on Steller sea loins and was also as a killer whale trainer at an aquarium in Washington State. Dave has many fascinating stories about his research adventures: he needs to write a book!

## **Safety Is the Top Priority!**

A safety drill is required to take place within the first 24 hours at sea for “Abandon Ship” and “Fire”. Abandon ship is signaled by seven or more short blasts, then one long blast on the ship's whistle, followed the announcement to abandon ship. The procedure in this instance is to report to your assigned life raft on the bridge deck. You should be wearing long sleeves, gloves and a hat, and bring with you your survival suit. This bright orange suit can protect a crewmember in the cold Alaskan waters for up to three days. In addition to aiding as a floatation device and protection from the cold, its bright orange color and strobe light gives the person wearing it, in the case of an emergency, the ability to survive in the harshest of conditions until rescued.

## **Personal Log**

I was initially surprised at how many people it took to operate a vessel such as the COBB. Having seen the ship in action for a few hours now, I can see why they are all needed. Technically there are many aspects to running a ship safely. Jobs include, but are not limited to: navigating the vessel, maintaining the engine room and feeding the hungry crew.

It functions like a small army, with everyone in their place doing their specific job. Each person is necessary for the others to operate and complete their tasks. I do feel a little out of place at the moment, as I am yet to do anything to help the crew or Dave. I am sure over the next few days though that will change. Everyone has been very patient with me repeatedly asking questions about every aspect of the cruise: “How do you know that was a Humpback Whale?” “What is a Fathom?” “Why do you measure distance in nautical miles rather than land miles?” “Which side is port?”

It’s only the first day, yet while standing on the bridge we spot a humpback whale! At some distance off, the crew assured me that that wouldn’t be the best view I would get of one, but I was still very excited! What a truly amazing place and beautiful day!



**NOAA Teacher At Sea, Clare Wagstaff, in her immersion survival suit, also known as a “Gumby” suit.**

### **Question of the Day for Miss Wagstaff’s Science Class**

In science you are constantly asked to provide evidence to support you ideas and conclusion. With is in mind: which job aboard the COBB do you think is the most important? Be able to support you decision.