



**NOAA Teacher at Sea
Kimberly Pratt
Onboard NOAA Ship MCARTHUR II
July 5 – 24, 2005**

Interview 2

“A Beautiful Birder”

Walking into the Dry Lab on the MCARTHUR II ship, you are likely to find a quiet, unobtrusive, and humble woman, carefully and delicately sketching her latest find. You have just found Sophie Webb, Senior Bird Observer on the MCARTHUR II. Sophie has been sailing with NOAA for over 13 years. Her responsibilities are; to census sea birds, and edit and organize data at night. Sophie’s love for birds started at a young age, when living in Cape Cod she attended Audubon Camp, a camp for young Ornithologists or Birders as they are called. After that she attended Boston University, and received her BA in Biology. During college she volunteered at the New England Aquarium and worked on college projects. After college she lived in a 12 sq. ft cabin outside of Stinson Beach and also in New York, working at the Museum of Natural History painting bird specimens. Now, she does field research on ships, sketches at the Museum of Natural History, paints and is working on her latest children’s book. Her accomplishments are many, she co-authored and illustrated Field Guides to Birds of Mexico and Central America published by Oxford Press and completed two children’s books, My Season with Sea Birds and Looking for Penguins. She has just recently finished another book titled the Birds of Brazil.



She really loves seeing birds that you normally would not see and an interesting bird she observed is a Honduran Emerald hummingbird seen in Honduras. This is very special because one had not been identified since the mid 1950’s. She views these birds during her extensive travel to locations such as the Galapagos Islands, Bolivia, Australia, Aleutian Island chain, and the Antarctica on her various research projects. Doing field work at sea can be either very busy or very quiet. To fill in the down time, Sophie, exercises, paints, writes and does e-mail.

Her career has depth and variety, and in order to be a successful birder she advises that you volunteer for field studies whenever possible. Learn good computer and camera skills, practice field sketching and learn all about birds at every opportunity.

The other day I witnessed Sophie's love for her craft. We were watching Pacific White-Sided Dolphins when all of a sudden a large flock of birds was seen. Her blue eyes sparkled with delight, when resident and long distance birds were identified. Some birds had traveled to the area from New Zealand, the Arctic, Hawaii and Chile. These long distance birds come to this area because it is so productive.

Sophie is an inspiration to all women, especially girls or women wishing to enter scientific fields. She demonstrates that being a scientist is fun and exciting, yet she advises, that you have to stand your ground and sometimes be assertive yet non-confrontational.

Sophie demonstrates that she has all these talents as evidenced by her successful and beautiful career.