



**NOAA Teacher at Sea
Kimberly Wolke
Onboard NOAA ship RAINIER
July 24-August 11, 2006**

Mission: Hydrographic Surveys of the Shumagin Islands, Alaska

Day: Sunday, August 6, 2006

Weather from the bridge at 1600:

Skies: Partly Cloudy (PC)

Visibility: 10 nautical miles (nm)

Wind Direction: West/Southwest (WSW)

Wind Speed: 10 knots

Waves: N/A

Sea Water Temp. (°C): 10.0

Sea Level Pressure: 1019.7 millibars (mb)

Temp. (°C): 13.9 (air temperature)



TAS Kim Wolke kayaking in Porpoise Harbor in the Shumagin Islands in Alaska

Log 10



Seagulls perched on a rock in Porpoise Harbor

Today was an absolutely beautiful day here in the Shumagin Islands. By afternoon the clouds cleared out and the blue skies and sunshine took over. The acting Commanding Officer (CO) Julia Neander invited me to go kayaking with her, which I eagerly said yes to. We paddled along the coastline right into seagull territory. Although the sounds of the ship's engines were fading, the screeching seagulls filled our ears.

We also encountered many horned puffins (*Fratercula corniculata*), which are the cutest and silliest looking birds. They appeared to have some nesting areas on the rocky cliffs which they were trying to distract us from locating since they kept circling above us and flying away from the cliffs. Puffins typically stay out on the open sea through the winter but come to the land in late spring to breed. They are better built for swimming than flying which



A horned puffin (*Fratercula corniculata*) sitting on a cliff on St. Paul Island, AK. Picture taken by Mike Danzenbaker.

is evident when you see them fly. Under water their wings are used to propel them while their webbed feet are for maneuvering. To get airborne, they must run along the water surface before taking off. From land, they dive off cliffs to gain enough speed for flight, using their feet to help change direction. Puffins feed in flocks, eating mainly fish and zooplankton. They will dive straight into the water and continue their motion as they swim to get their next meal.

LT Ben Evans, the acting Executive Officer (XO), invited the other TAS, Jackie Hams, and me to dinner in the Wardroom this evening. Traditionally, the Wardroom is where the officers eat. Upholding tradition, the officers on the RAINIER have their meals there. There's even a seating arrangement, also based on tradition. I felt honored to be asked to eat with the officers since the rest of the crew eats in the Crew Mess, which is where I've had all of my meals as well.



AS Leslie Abramson putting on her hood in preparation for snorkeling.

After dinner this evening, I joined three of the NOAA divers and AB Leslie Abramson, who was snorkeling, as they did a recreational dive close to the ship. Since I am not a NOAA diver I was only able to stay on the skiff as they went under water. The water temperature was relatively warm at 52 degrees Fahrenheit. The divers all wore dry suits while Leslie wore a rather thick wet suit (7mm). Everyone wore a hood, booties, and gloves, all as protection from the cold water temperatures.

Who's Who on the NOAA ship RAINIER?

What I've recently learned and find very interesting is that there are several NOAA scuba divers onboard. Being a recreational diver, I was curious to learn about the NOAA divers. To become a NOAA diver, you need to complete the NOAA diver-training program through the NOAA Diving Program (NDP). Most of the training takes place at the facility in Seattle, Washington, however, in January there is also a class held in Key West, Florida.

Currently, there are six NOAA divers aboard the ship. They are: LT Ben Evans, ENS Sam Greenaway, Seaman Surveyor (SS) Carl VerPlank, SS Corey Muzzey, Senior Survey Technician (SST) Erin Campbell, and Able Seaman (AB) Jonathan Anderson. Another NOAA diver not on this leg is the 3rd Assistant Engineer Mike Riley. In the fall, ENS Nathan Eldridge,



SST Erin Campbell and SS Corey Muzzey check each other's dive equipment before a dive.

SS Eric Davis, and AB Leslie Abramson are going for their NOAA diver training, which takes place over a three-week period. SST Campbell and ENS Greenaway will also complete their Dive Master training in the fall.

NOAA divers have various jobs depending upon their locations. Divers can deploy and retrieve scientific instruments, document fish and marine animal behavior, perform emergency and routine ship repair and maintenance, and investigate submerged objects such as shipwrecks for nautical charting. Aboard the RAINIER, one of the common jobs of the divers is to install tide gauges 10-15 feet below water.



Dive tanks and other gear

If you're interested in learning more about NOAA divers check out the website: www.ndp.noaa.gov

Kim Wolke
Teacher at Sea ☺