



NOAA Teacher at Sea
Ruth S. Meadows
Onboard NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow*
June 11 – July 18, 2009

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Ruth S. Meadows

NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow*

Mission: Census of Marine Life (MAR- ECO)

Geographical Area: Mid- Atlantic Ridge, Charlie- Gibbs Fracture Zone

Date: Saturday, July 11, 2009

Weather Data from the Bridge

Temperature 18° C

Humidity 61%

Wind speed 4.2 knots

Science and Technology Log

Today is our last day at sea and the weather is certainly cooperating with us. We have beautiful blue skies, warm temperatures and calm waters. It is a perfect day for observing marine life. Several of us spent most of the day on the bow of the ship looking for any type of marine life. Throughout the day, we spotted three *Mola mola* fish, which is a very large ocean sunfish that can be found in temperate oceans. One went right by the ship so we were able to see the entire body of this fish through the water.



A humpback whale breaches the water off the bow of the *Bigelow*.



Waiting to see what animals we can spot off the bow

Another one was just lying on its side but we were too far away to see it very well.

Finally it was supertime and we all went to the galley eat, somewhat disappointed that we had not seen more sea life. During supper, the call we had all been hoping to hear came, “Humpback whale off the bow.” We all left the galley and quickly ran up to the deck afraid we would miss seeing this majestic creature. We were in for a treat. It was as if the whale knew we were watching and performed for us. For over 40 minutes, the humpback whale slapped its pectoral fins, slapped its tail and even breached out of the water twice. It was an amazing sight. As the whale slowly swam around, the ship carefully followed at a safe distance giving us an amazing opportunity to observe this massive mammal in its natural



Above, the fluke of the humpback; Right, one of its flipper fins

looked down at the water next to the ship in time to point out a Mako shark swimming just below the surface moving slowly toward the rear of the ship. The afternoon turned into an amazing good bye present to the entire crew of the *Bigelow*. After the humpback whale made its final dive deep into the ocean, many of us stayed outside to enjoy our last sunset over the Atlantic Ocean.



Personal Log

The past four weeks on board the NOAA ship, *Henry B. Bigelow*, have been an amazing experience for me. We traveled over 5,000 nautical miles to search for rare and unusual animals that live in the deep ocean along the Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. I was truly fortunate to have been selected for this particular scientific cruise. The scientific crew,



A beautiful sunset on the Atlantic

habitat. At one point, the whale was floating on its back and slapping both of its pectoral fins in the water at the same time. We were close enough to actually hear the sound of the fins hitting the water. Many members of the ship's crew came to the bow to watch also. While we were watching, the chief engineer standing next to me

NOAA corps and crew were second to none. Everyone worked around the clock to make sure the goals of the cruise were accomplished. In addition to the professionalism of all the members of this cruise, everyone seemed to truly enjoy working together to complete all parts of the mission. Everyone, from the captain of the ship, the engineers, the deck hands, the cooks and the scientific crew, made me feel welcome and included in all the activities on board. I will take many things with me from this opportunity I was lucky enough to be selected for. I

knew I would learn a lot about the ocean and the organisms that live there. What I didn't know before I left was how much I would enjoy getting to know the people that were a part of the MAR-ECO cruise. Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of this wonderful experience.