



**NOAA Teacher at Sea
Margaret "Greta" Dykstra-Lyons
Onboard NOAA Ship DAVID STARR JORDAN
August 1 - 15, 2005**

Log 5

Day 12: August 12, 2005

Wind direction: 1'

Wind speed: 15 knots

Water temp: 17°C

Since I last checked in, several days and a lot of water have passed by. I wish I could say the same for marine mammals! For quite some time we have been in international waters



between 200 and 300 miles off shore. Some time last night we made a turn that put us at a heading of about 105 for most of today.

The turn of the boat also seems to have brought a turn of good luck for the observers. Up until today the sightings have been very sparse.

Tuesday only one sighting of sperm whales was recorded and observations were delayed due to

uncooperative weather. We did manage a successful fire-and- abandon-ship drill.

At about 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday a sperm whale was sighted and the decision to launch a small boat for photos and biopsy was made. Luckily for me, it was my turn in the rotation to take a ride. Despite using a directional hydrophone we were not as successful as we had hoped in tracking the whale while it was submerged. The closest we were able to get was about 30 yards away.

Oddly enough, in our pursuit of the sperm whale we stumbled upon a fin whale and had good luck pursuing him/her. The small boat returned to the JORDAN about at 6:30 p.m. It was quite a unique and thrilling experience to get that close to a such a gigantic animal! I am told that under normal circumstances, vessels must be at least 100 yards away from the whales or risk a hefty fine. Due to special permits we are allowed a more intimate experience.



Wednesday evening I assisted with the oceanography chores, including the bongo net tow. Thursday was a slow sighting day. It was not until the afternoon that a sperm whale was sighted. Shortly after dinner we passed by a weather buoy. This excited the crew because often fish will hang out by buoys and other floating objects. The observers took a short break and the boat made a few slow circles around the buoy. To everyone's dismay, no fish were caught. By Thursday evening we had reached our western most position.

Today, Friday, was a relatively busy day for sightings.

In total, nine animals were observed. Most exciting was a blue whale that passed within a good viewing distance from the ship. Cameras were clicking away! One other blue whale was sighted and the small boat was launched. In addition to the blue whales, sperm whales and fin whales were added to today's list. Due to equipment failure and malfunction in the oceanography lab, I stayed away today!



Photos-Annie and I trying to locate sperm whale with hydrophone. Me looking at plankton from bongo net.