



HLY0802: March 29-May 6, 2008

Chief Scientist's Log

March 31: Multicore, Sediment Traps, Albatross

Post by Carin Ashjian

Today we finished our first big station. We worked off the continental shelf in about 2500 m of water for 21 hours. The weather was pleasant when we started, but then kicked up to about 33 knots of wind with the accompanying 8-foot seas. The air temperature has been hovering around a balmy 36 deg. F so at least the rain doesn't feel so bad.

Despite the winds and seas, *Healy* hardly moves. Earlier, we sent the multicore (an instrument that collects multiple cores of sediment, with animals in it, from the seafloor) to the bottom. The bow of the ship was in the wind, the engines throbbed with a dull roar, and the ship rocked gently over the 8' seas. One gets a real feeling of the power and stability of this ship when the weather kicks up as it did. Earlier, we did a cast with the Video Plankton Recorder, an underwater microscope that records images of plankton and their environment. There was a driving rain and brisk wind but with the bow facing the wind, and working off the stern, there was the illusion of much calmer weather.

After we finished the station, we headed off to find our wayward floating sediment traps. They had tracked to the NW and then to the NE over more shallow water of the shelf (we put them in at 300 m of water depth). We were a bit concerned that the bottom of the string of traps would hit the seafloor, since the string was about 160 m long and the water depth was becoming increasingly shallow. We had received the positions of the traps from satellite via e-mail every hour and had good confidence that we could find them. Also, the traps had a radar reflector on top of the spar.

The weather was quite foggy as we approached the traps' position but we located them quickly, sailing "right to the spot". The small boat was launched to gently pull the traps over to the ship. There was quite a bit of swell, so the bright orange boat with its bright orange passengers (they were wearing orange suits) pitched around dramatically in the swell, although *Healy* moved only slowly. After some maneuvering, the traps were collected and brought on board, much to the delight of the scientist who will analyze the data.

During the trap recovery, we saw several types of birds circling *Healy*. We easily recognized the albatross. It turns out that we saw two types of albatross, the Laysan albatross and, much to the delight of our bird observers, the Short-Tailed albatross that is quite rare. A very exciting sighting!

I read today that there are 137 people on board our floating "village". Mealtimes are crowded but everyone is in a good humor and the cooks are doing a great job at keeping us well fed. Tomorrow brings another day with more science. As we move onto the shelf from deep water, we expect to see different species of plants and animals. The ice edge is only 60 miles away—we hope to get there late tonight and get into the ice before the wind picks up to the forecast 40 knots tomorrow.



The North Pacific Research Board and the National Science Foundation are partners in a six-year, \$50 million study of the Bering Sea marine ecosystem and the effects of climate change on this vital area. Learn more about the BEST-BSIERP Bering Sea research program at <http://bsierp.nprb.org>

