

BLUE WHALE TRIP LOG

March 2, 2011
Sea of Cortez, Loreto,
Baja California Sur, Mexico

This trip log was written by Keith Jones.

8:30 a.m.: We departed from the Loreto harbor dock after waiting 30 minutes for the Marine Park Ranger to arrive at his office to sell us the park admission bracelets. There was no wind and the ocean was dead calm. The air temperature was about 70 degrees. Counting myself our group size was 13. The group consisted of two English



citizens from Wales, 6 Americans from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maine, a couple from Argentina and a couple from France. I'm from Southern California.

We used three boats today. The boats can hold 5 or six passengers comfortably, with three sitting in formed in place seats and three seated on the raised rear deck that

serves as a bench seat. Fernando, my Blue Whale expert who has studied Blue whales off of Loreto for 20 years, took the lead with Luis and Tito captaining the other boats.

8:40 a.m.: We spotted a mother and baby finback whale. We watched this pair for 30 minutes. During this time they dived 5 times. On two occasions, between dives they



approached close to our boat and once the baby swam directly beneath our boat.

9:00 a.m.: Spotted 2 more individual finback whales, but we chose to continue to follow the mother and baby.

9:15 a.m.: Spotted multiple blows and decided it was time to leave the mother/baby pair. We next stayed 20 minutes with a trio of adult finbacks.

9:35 a.m.: We saw dolphins in the distance and chose to leave the 3 finback whales to go play with dolphins. This was a pod of 50 to 100 common dolphins. There were



several pods of dolphins about this same size in this area and we moved amongst them for one hour, enjoying their bow riding antics.

In all perhaps 500 to 1,000 dolphins were around us during this time.

10:30 a.m.: Our boat captain suggested we go further south, to the end of Isla Carmen in hopes we might find a blue whale. Our group was so engrossed in

the activity around us that nobody had asked me where the Blue whales were hiding.

11:00 a.m.: We arrived at the south end of Isla Carmen and sighted a blue whale. We were able to stay with this blue whale for an hour. It was feeding and pretty much



ignored us. But each time it dived our group played the guessing game of deciding where it would surface. The captain of the boat I was in, Tito, would motor to where we guessed and then we would float for 5 to 15 minutes. This blue whale stayed on the surface 3 to 5 minutes between dives and would then dive and

stay down 5 to 15 minutes. After an hour the Blue whale simply disappeared.

12:10 p.m.: The other boats called to us that everyone on board was hungry. They directed us to their location, since we had become separated when my boat went to play with the dolphins.

12:20 p.m.: As we motored to the small island for lunch, we spotted 2 more finback whales. Tito stopped and we watched them for five minutes. When they dived, we left and continued to the lunch rendezvous.



1:15 p.m.: Lunch ended and we started back toward the Loreto dock. From this southerly end of Isla Carmen it is ALWAYS a long and bumpy ride north to Loreto. Today was a great weather day and the swells were small, so the ride was relatively smooth.

1:35 p.m.: We stopped to observe a humpback whale that sadly had a blue fish net snarled around its tail. This whale was shy and after 5 minutes we parted ways.

1:50 p.m.: Spotted two adult finback whales traveling and hunting together. We watched them for a couple dives, about 20 minutes total before continuing north to Loreto.

3:30 p.m.: Arrived back at the harbor in Loreto.

Tally of cetacean sightings:

Blue whales – 1 adult

Finback whales - 11 finback whales (one baby)

Humpback whales – 1 adult

Common dolphins – multiple pods, perhaps 500 to 1,000 for the day.

In addition to the whales, we saw many birds that included Blue footed boobies, Frigates, both brown and white Pelicans and at least 20 other species. Today we also saw several seals and sea lions.

Guide comment: During the day we were almost always following and watching whales with virtually no search time. We had a total of 30 minutes boat time after leaving the dolphins before we came across the Blue whale. It would be almost impossible to have a more whale packed day out here on the Sea of Cortez.

The population of Blue Whales staying near Loreto is estimated to be 12 to 15 this year, a good number. Fernando has managed to identify half of these from past photos. The Finback whale population is estimated around 50. No estimate for Humpback whales. Two Bryde's whales have been identified.

After a day like this, all I have to say is **I LOVE MY JOB!**

This is only a one day trip log because I am usually leading our gray whale watching trips in Laguna Ojo de Liebre while my lucky guides get to enjoy the warm and scenic Sea of Cortez whale watching scene. I had a day without gray whales, so I was able to go out with this group of 13! A lucky whale watching number.

Keith



I always think of a diving whale's tail as "The whale is saying goodbye". Because when whale watching at Laguna Ojo de Liebre this always means they are submerging and going off somewhere else, usually away from our boat.