

Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Thursday, July 24, 2008

It's still quite dark at 3:30 this morning. It's important to keep your night vision so we set up to "run on red" lights in the pilothouse, dim all the displays and try to keep from turning on interior lights. A piece of the moon shines through the clear sky insuring we will have a touch of sea visibility. We disengage from the park mooring just before 4AM, move past the dark shadows of a few boats anchored near us, and turn due east in Houston Stewart Channel headed directly to the BC coastline, just 98 miles away.



(← The light on Garcin Rocks with seal residents as it looks during the day. Of course this morning it's just a 6-second flashing beacon in the dark.)



Thankfully the wind is light, seas are calm and there is no sign of a gale, yet. As soon as we clear the Channel, Lady Anne heats up her diesels to 2500 rpm and 15-knots. All we can see is her green starboard light and her large radar blip wiz by.

(← Seagate is the only boat visible for 85 miles.)



(← To our amazement, the flat seas and light winds show no sign of a gale.)

As our "scout" boat she will radio report on wind and sea conditions, and after her arrival, the state of the anchorage. More importantly, it also allows her to get off the big, open ocean before the forecasted gale. For some reason, the faster Seagate is

sticking with 9-knot Wild Blue, who is happy to have the company. It's the only boat we will see for 85 miles!

Although the boats have not been rocking, as the day turns from dark to light, we can see for miles around how flat the seas really are. We can also see the bull kelp scattered about, we haven't been able to avoid it in the dark, and since our speed over the bottom is low, we opt to back the boats down. After cavitating in reverse gear, or "We just unzipped our fly Mister Ryan" for you Red October buffs, we resume our forward progress avoiding the discarded kelp. With nothing to jiggle our nerves, our ride becomes fairly boring and it's job one to stay awake.



(← *A fast moving school of porpoises crosses our path but we can't seem to encourage them to go along with us.*)



(← *Our first boat in 85 miles turns out to be the cruise ship Ryndam headed north to Alaska.*)

Within 12 miles of the coast we see our first boat, the cruise ship Ryndam. It's 1:30PM and the seas are wonderful. Because a gale is forecast for this evening, Dick and Alex decide to continue in these favorable conditions to an anchorage closer to tomorrow's destination. Dick makes contact with Lady Anne who has already scoped out our original anchorage and is in favor of the move to Strom Bay another 12 miles further.



(← *"Crossing" party aboard Lady Anne.*)



Lady Anne meets us just as we make the BC Coastline. By 4PM , after our 12-hour journey we enter beautiful Strom Bay, just 5 miles from Shearwater, BC, tomorrows stop.

(← Party time aboard Lady Anne.)



After dropping our hooks (anchors), Lady Anne announces a “celebration of Hecate Strait crossing” party. We’re there.

Besides the crossing, we also celebrate the Haida Culture with the proper presentation of the “Cucumber Watchman”. Under the watchman on Lady Anne’s cucumber pole, instead of potlatches, each ring indicates the number of parties held aboard.

(← Lady Anne’s cucumber pole.)



(← A striking resemblance.)

Tonight we weather the gale, if it actually ever shows up. Tomorrow it’s on to Shearwater for crew exchange and provisioning.



(This BC ferry did a masterful wake job to Wild Blue.)

Wild Blue was anchored at the open end of Strom Bay. It was secure from the expected southeast, gale force winds but wide open to the wakes of passing ships. A large BC ferry waked us good causing colorful expletives to emanate from the mouth of Admiral Pat. See you in Shearwater.