

Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Tuesday, July 29, 2008

“Queen Charlotte Sound Storm Warning Continued! Seas 3 to 4 meters,” says the 4AM July 28 VHF Canadian Marine weather radio update. It’s just after 4AM and the cabin lights on Seagate and Wild Blue are lighted, but only Dick and Alex are awake and listening. The boats need to get to Port Hardy so Pat can catch her flight back home tomorrow, but the weather forecast isn’t cooperating. The options are to wait out the weather here in Duncanby, maybe leave later today, or leave at 3AM tomorrow morning for a night rounding of Cape Caution. Of course we could just reschedule Pat’s air travel for later in the week. But Alex reminds us to think of those poor, lonely cats back home. Just how can they stand another day without their mother?

What’s up with this British Columbia weather? It’s baking in Los Angeles and the California Central Coast, but high winds, cold weather, and rain rule the skies up here with this unusual 990 millibar low. It blew hard all night, there is no sign of a let up and it’s raining hard now. Although the boats are just 20 feet apart, Dick decides to use the VHF. “Wild Blue, Seagate calling” barks the radio in a digital, sleepy voice. “This weather doesn’t look good. Suggest we go back to sleep and listen again at the 10:30 update.” And they did.

For the 10:30 weather update, everyone was awake and most were listening. The forecast still sucked: high winds and seas continued. Besides the forecast, this time we listened for the weather buoy and light station reports. These reports contain the actual wind speed along with wave heights recorded within the last half-hour. We were keen to hear the Egg Island report, as its location is just 10 miles away. To our surprise Egg Island was reporting winds gusts to 20 knots but seas just 1.3 meters, or 4 feet. On our May 5 northbound cruise, we easily managed 3-foot seas around Egg Island, however there was no wind. Even so, this was only a foot higher. In light of the forecast, it was hard to believe the report was accurate. The general feeling of the group was to stay put and wait it out, days if necessary. Oh those poor cats! However, after further discussion and much hand wringing, we agreed to go to Egg Island and checkout the conditions for ourselves. It would be an hour out to the Island, and if the weather was sucky, an hour back to Duncanby.



We finally pulled away from Duncanby at 11:30 and within 15 minutes we were in the thick of it.

(← Seas break on reefs near our course around Cape Caution.)

Close spaced, 3-foot seas coming directly at

us from the south made things bumpy, but they weren't breaking over the bow, yet. 30-minutes later, the seas had built to 5 feet with their direction changed from Southwest and they were spaced out. Although scary to look at, the boats managed these waves mainly due to our southerly course, and if I might ad, superior helmsmanship.

An hour into the cruise, while approaching Egg Island in 6 to 8 foot seas now from the west, we see another yacht coming at us. He seems to be bouncing as much or more than us. We are able to contact him on the VHF. He reports that since leaving at 6AM these seas are the biggest he's seen all day. He also reports the seas were less than 3 feet until Cape Caution, just 6 miles south. After his report, it's easy to make the decision to continue onward to Port Hardy.

At Cape Caution seas are now 9 feet but well-spaced apart and coming from the west. Just after the Cape, seas and wind moderate, the boats turn more south and the ride improves. At 2PM we're in Queen Charlotte Strait and protected from the big seas and big winds. An hour later

the seas are flat and we're thinking of cocktails in Port Hardy.

*(← Wild Blue dodges the 700-foot Carnival Spirit, which for some reason thinks it has the right of way!)*



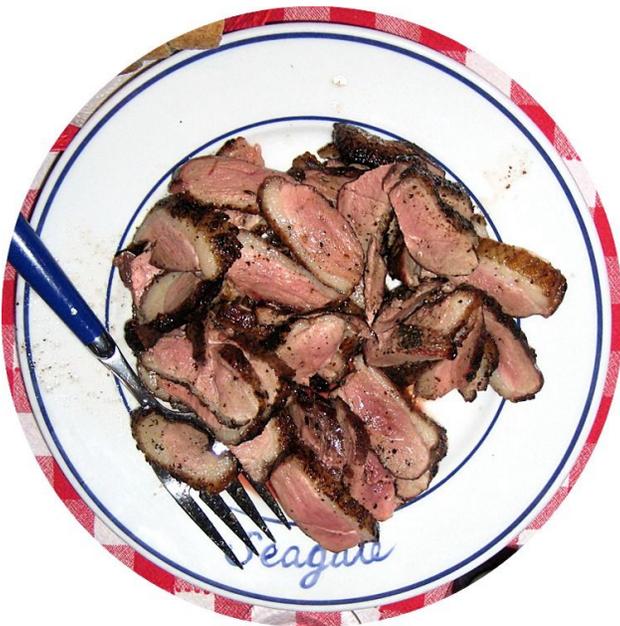
*(← Lady Anne and crew arrived yesterday in Port Hardy, missing the big storm. They were rewarded with a berth amongst the fishing boats. Their crew of Cam and Nadine left to return to Southern California earlier today.)*



*(← At last our boats are tied up with the Port Hardy fishing fleet, also waiting out the storm.)*

Wild Blue and Seagate enter Port Hardy just after 5PM. We are assigned space at the fishing dock, and we're happy. Seagate is

hosting a dinner in Pat's honor, as this is her last night aboard. And nothing would be finer than some BBQ Willie Bird duck breast. Yum!



*(← Pat can't wait to sink her teeth into this juicy Willie Bird BBQ duck breast.)*

Tomorrow we're sending Pat to the airport and the boats to Cutter Cove located on the BC mainland. It's near Johnstone Strait, which we'll use to get to southern BC and the Anacortes area later this week. Goodnight.



*(← Finally it gets dark at a decent hour so we can turn on Seagate's underwater lights and watch the nightly show without falling asleep first!)*