

# Creep into the DEEPEND

www.whaletimes.org

## SEAMAIL™

FROM: DEEPEND Science Team  
TO: DEEPEND Virtual Team Leaders  
SUBJECT: Life aboard the R/V Point Sur

Hello Virtual Science Team!

I'm a scientist studying the feeding habits of animals in the deep sea. In order to collect animals from the deep sea we have to travel offshore to water that is over a mile deep! In the Gulf of Mexico, that means getting on a boat and traveling hundreds of miles from land.

The DEEPEND Team uses a research vessel called the *R/V Point Sur*. The *R/V Point Sur* is 137 feet long. How long is that? The *R/V Point Sur* is almost four school buses long. Or equal to the length of thirty 10 year old kids. (Or what measurement can you think of?)

Twenty-one people can stay aboard the ship. Because we have to travel hundreds of miles to get to deeper water, we stay out at sea as long as possible. That way we can collect as many samples and gather as much data as we can.

A typical trip on the *R/V Point Sur* lasts 14 to 16 days. It's amazing to think that everything we will do for the next two weeks will take place on that boat that is only 137 feet long.

Over the course of two weeks, the *R/V Point Sur* is where we work, play, eat, sleep, shower, and go to the bathroom! Luckily for us, ships like the *R/V Point Sur* have everything we need to live comfortably while out in the middle of the ocean. There are small rooms (called staterooms) with bunk beds, bathrooms, and showers. There's a fully equipped kitchen, a dining area complete with satellite TV (and hundreds of movies), and a lab where we do our work. The *Point Sur* even has a chef on board who cooks up some delicious food like steak, ravioli, hamburgers, fresh fruit, salad and an unlimited supply of Cinnamon Toast Crunch™ (my favorite cereal).

While at sea, the DEEPEND Team doesn't have to cook, do dishes, or clean. Well, except for cleaning up our staterooms. However, we work many hours, day and night.

While we're at sea, we're surrounded by water. But we have to be careful we don't run out. How can that be? The ocean is salt water. People cannot drink or cook with saltwater. We need fresh

– continued –



WHALETIMES SEAMAIL WHALETIMES SEAMAIL WHALETIMES SEAMAIL WHALETIMES SEAMAIL WHALETIMES SEAMAIL

©2016 WhaleTimes, Inc. All Rights Reserved

water. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of being at sea is making sure we have enough fresh water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. Research vessels like the *R/V Point Sur* have the ability to create fresh water. However, we still have to be careful not to use up our freshwater faster than the boat can make it. If you were on the ship with us, how could you use less water? One way is to take really short showers. Another way is to turn off the water during our shower while we shampoo our hair. Some of you probably do that already so you don't use too much water.

Once we're on the boat and out at sea, our days and nights follow a strict schedule. Dinner is served at 6 pm. Work until about 10 pm. Sleep until 3 am when we wake up to haul in our nets and process the animals we've caught during the night. We usually work from 3 am until 6 a.m. when breakfast is served. Then we set the nets back out and go to sleep until lunch at noon. After lunch, we watch movies, take a shower, or catch up on a bit more sleep until the nets return again around 3 pm. Once the afternoon nets are brought in we work until dinner is served at 6 pm. Then we go to sleep so we're ready for a new day!

Speaking of sleep, sleeping on a boat is one of my favorite things to do while at sea because it's so peaceful. Many of the rooms where we sleep are below the main deck. That means our beds are below or level with the water line. That means when we're in bed, the ocean waves gently rock the boat back and forth. We can even hear the waves gently breaking against the hull as we fall asleep.

Besides being a cool experience, I've realized that living on a boat can teach you many valuable lessons that can be applied to your life back on land. While living on a boat you learn how to minimize food waste and conserve water, how to maximize what little space is given to you by being organized. Perhaps most importantly, you learn how to live simply and with items that are absolutely necessary.

Life on a boat requires takes some getting used to but overall it's a wonderful experience. I love being able to watch the sun rise and set on the ocean every day. We get to see dolphins when they come next to the boat to play in the boat's wake. Every day we bring up fascinating creatures from the depths of the ocean most people will never get the chance to see.

Maybe one day you can join us on a research cruise. I think you'd love it! Well, 3 a.m. will get here very soon, so I had better get to sleep. Thanks for joining us at the DEEPEND!

*Travis*

Travis Richards

Deep-Sea Explorer

[seamail@whaletimes.org](mailto:seamail@whaletimes.org)

Creep into the DEEPEND Mission

