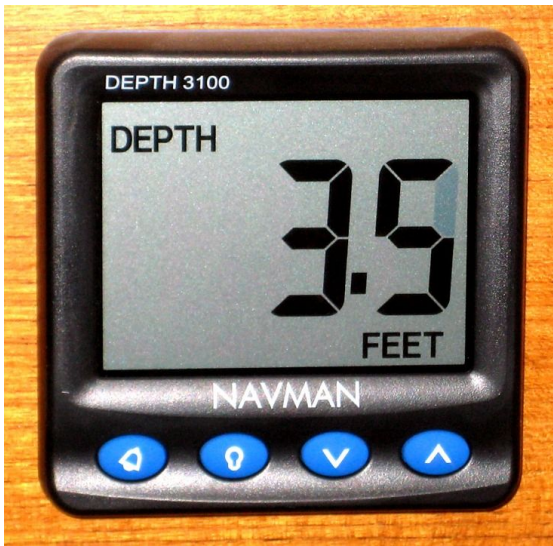


Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Monday, June 2, 2008

Last evenings Pinot Noir from the Seagate wine bar, with Crown and Jack served aboard Wild Blue, aka WB, set the stage for the 7AM crossing of Shoalwater Bar. Yesterday we crossed the Bar at a high tide of +15 feet and didn't think much about it. But this morning we can see what seems like 20 feet of exposed ground below the high tide line. Our minds are still a little fuzzy as we began to creep at 1 knot across the 400 yard wide bar. Wild Blue leads the way with Sid standing on the bow pulpit looking at the bottom just ahead. Sid can easily see the bottom through the clear water and scans for uncharted rocks. Seagate follows close behind. One glance at the instruments tells the story, and serves to immediately clear our minds. These are the actual photographs while in the Bar.



*(WB Depth gauge reading)*



*(WB Forward looking sonar. Note: Red is bad!)*

I know, I know. How can a boat that draws 5.5 feet keep afloat in 3.5 feet of water? Turns out the depth sensor is located 3 feet below the boat's waterline, so the correct depth reading is 3.5 plus 3.0 or 6.5 feet. It's like setting your clock 5 minutes ahead so you won't be late. So heck, we have a whole foot below the keel!

As sweat drips from Alex's forehead, Sid at the bow points to the left and mouths "rock". A quick bow thruster burst pushes Wild Blue to the right. We're hoping Seagate stays in our track. We finally clear the narrows, and pause for a potty break.

*(Seagate uses soft-grounding excuse to go "pedal to the metal" at 22 knots, just to check things out! →)*





Then over the radio “WB this is Seagate, we think we scraped a rock”. After what is known as a “soft grounding” Seagate’s starboard engine died. Their crew claims they hit bottom with the propeller causing the engine to quit, but we all know that those BIG diesels don’t run good at slow idle. Maybe they just used this as an excuse to run the boat up to 22 knots and test things out. All was A-OK.

*(← We enter the first fiord into Punchbowl Cove.)*

About six miles up the Behm Canal from Shoalwater we came to the entrance to one of the fiords of Misty Fiords National Monument. We entered the narrow channel into Punchbowl Cove with its 3000 feet high granite walls. The mist obscures the view of the upper walls and snow covered peaks. These walls serve as a conduit and backdrop for numerous ribbon waterfalls created from the melting snow.



*(← Waterfalls up close and from afar. The granite walls are so steep down into the water, you can get the boat right next to falls. We chickened out about at about 10 foot distance!)*

At the end of each of these coves we find a valley covered with rich green vegetation. Using the binoculars, we scan the shore for bears and their cubs.

There is major “bear fear” aboard Wild Blue, so we won’t be getting close.



*(← More waterfalls in Walker Cove.)*

After visiting Punchbowl, we exited into the Behm Canal and cruised further north to Walker Cove, another misty fiord. Upon entry, we were greeted by more waterfalls and grassy valleys surrounded by snow covered granite peaks.

Once again we exit into Behm Canal. The Canal is upside-down “U” shaped. It starts just outside Ketchikan, goes north around Revillagigedo Island, then west, then south back to Ketchikan. At the top of the “U” we come across Bell Island Hot Springs, which is due north of Ketchikan. We’re just about to get into our swim suits, but as we approach for landing, we notice things don’t seem quite right.

The photos tell the story. This once popular hot springs and fishing resort at one time attracted such luminaries as Clark Gable and John Wayne. But now the site is in a dilapidated state.



*(← Bell Island Hot Springs looks OK from a distance.)*

*(Not so great up close. →)*



The forecast calls for rain and high winds tonight. Our plan is to continue onto Yes Bay which our cruising guide calls “a bombproof shelter”. We pass the Yes Bay Lodge, and enter the Bay and it is quiet. We anchor in 50 feet of glassy water as the storm rages outside.



(← *Yes Bay Lodge.*)

Tomorrow the boats will be splitting up. Wild Blue will be heading over to

Ketchikan to get provisions and wifi to send out the Blog. Seagate will continue as planned up to Meyers Chuck. The Seagate crew wants to get to Wrangell early for a visit to the Anan Bear Reserve. Wild Blue has bear fear. The boats will rendezvous later this week in Wrangell.