

Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Friday and Saturday, June 6-7, 2008

The running creeks and small waterfalls lulled us to sleep, and then woke us early Friday morning. We started early in bright sunshine for Wrangell, AK about 40 miles up Seward Strait then Zimovia Strait. It was basically and uneventful run, as long as you paid attention the many “deadheads”, and to the occasional green-red buoy combinations that marked the tight spots.

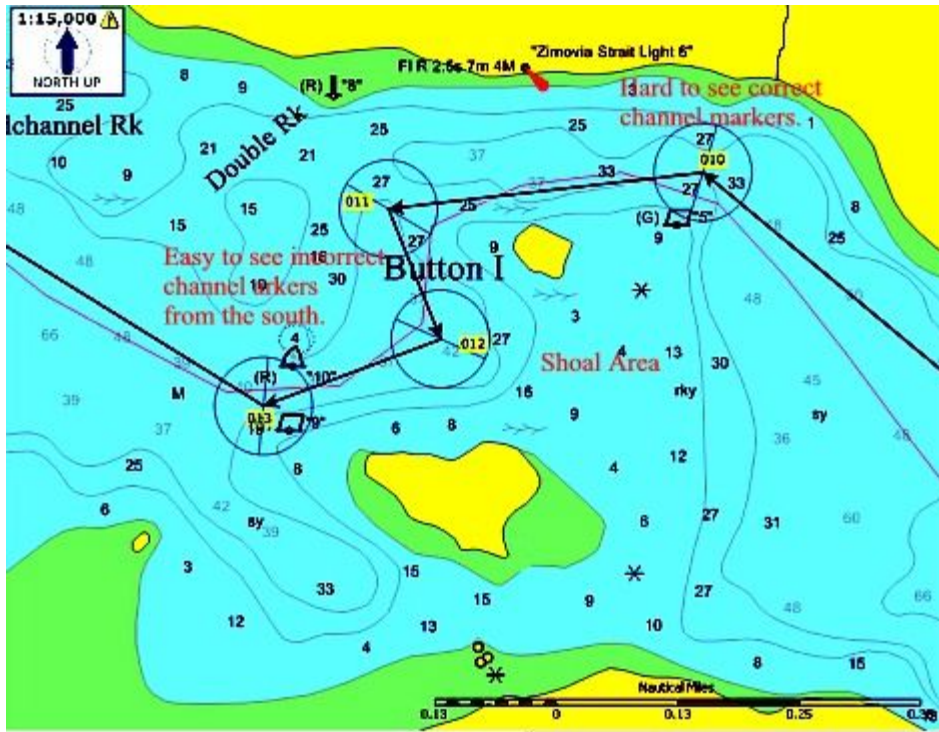


The “deadheads” are not of the Grateful Dead type, but rather more dangerous. They’re big logs, trees, stumps and other large flotsam, unattached to the bottom, that wait to collide with



your hull. So it pays to have a few extras sets of eyes aboard. We dodged many deadheads on the way up the Straits.

About halfway up Zimovia Strait going north is an easy to miss dogleg around infamous Button Island. At high tide it’s easy to see the wrong green-red channel markers just across a shoal, and quite difficult to see the correct green-red channel markers located near the shore. The US Vector charts lead one to believe you can cross south of Button Island, so many boats plow across the shoal. The shallow draft boats don’t have a problem. Wild Blue is not shallow drafted, so we carefully spotted (that’s all eight pairs of eyes aboard) the channel markers way over to the far right side of the Strait, and successfully navigated the “S” curve Narrows. After the Narrows it was an easy cruise into Wrangell, Alaska, a wonderful small community of 1200 souls.



(← *Dangerous Zimovia Narrows. Many boats are misled by the charts and the difficult to see channel markers.*)

Wrangell is this cool town right out of the *Leave It to Beaver* set. 1950's and 1960's buildings, a real main street, the friendliest people with dogs and kids running free. Alex talked to a Mr. Schmidt, a 30-year resident of Wrangell and a recently retired high school teacher. He sought out the Wild Blue crew when he noticed the boat's Morro Bay homeport.

(← *Zimovia Narrows channel markers on far right-hand-side. Leave green to port, red to starboard.*)



Mr. Schmidt was raised in Saratoga, CA but moved to Alaska with his young family in 1978. His kids grew up learning about guns, bears, snowmobiles and boats. They were trained on how to shoot

the 30-06 rifles for protection from bears. When you go golfing the 30-06 is in the bag with the golf clubs. Bears, which become a nuisance, are put down regularly, yet they continue to multiply. He says bear meat tastes ok when the bears have been eating berries, but not good when they diet on salmon. People don't lock their doors, but do leave their keys in car ignitions, and there is little or no crime. A 3-bedroom 2-bath home costs \$150,000 and everybody knows everybody else, and his or her friends and relatives. Mr. Schmidt's kids are graduates of Cal Poly and UCSB and he's quite familiar with the central coast. Alex traded two bottles of Paso Robles Petite Syrah for 4 pounds of moose burgers. Stay tuned for a later report on whether the moose had been eating berries.



(← Main Street, Wrangell, Alaska.)

(Wolf dog mix friendly demeanor is enhanced especially after a meal of BBQ duck. →)

Wrangell has large dogs, which are half bred dog and wolf. They are BIG, have the wolf's look with HUGE teeth, yet are quite friendly, and surprisingly aren't bothered by the bears.

We finally located the Seagate crew, in the local boatyard of all places! The City of Wrangell has recently purchased a brand new 150-ton Travel-lift and Dick, who couldn't find a diver to change his zincs, decided to haul out. This big Travel-lift is wireless and the operator walks along side it while operating what's probably the biggest remotely operated toy around. The lift hauls tugs, large yachts and giant fishing trawlers and has been a big plus to the local economy. Before the lift, boats could only use the city-owned tidal grid for haul out.

(Dick changes the zincs on Seagate. Wow that prop is shiny! →)





(← Wrangell tidal grid. This owner drove his boat on the grid, waited for the tide to fall, roll-painted his hull and bottom, and then floated off at high tide. He says “Who needs a Travel Lift!”)



(← Seagate heads for the launching area with new zincs.)

The Seagate crew was disappointed that the salmon weren't at the Anan Bear Reserve, which meant no bears to view. However, Harriett located the wonderful Stikane restaurant where all the crews dined.

Saturday was crew exchange day for Wild Blue. The Findleys departed for more Alaska sightseeing. Dave and Barbara on Seagate are having so much fun they're staying for two whole weeks. Wow! The new Wild Blue crew arrived Saturday afternoon.

(The crews for the past week after a great dinner at the Stikane Inn. L to R: Bensons, Squires, Findleys, Barbara and Dave. →)

