

Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Monday, June 23, 2008

Wow these new crew haven't brought LA's or SLO town's hot and sunny weather. Instead we have rainy, cool and overcast conditions although the seas are near flat. After a lazy morning and full breakfast, the crews settle in for an exciting day cruising into Keku Strait.

Unlike Chatham Strait which is 1 to 5 miles wide, Keku is so narrow in places that there are “no passing” zones. Keku Strait, aka Rocky Pass, is some 30 miles long and is situated between Kuiu and Kupreanof Islands. There are 42 navigational markers that need to be passed on the correct side to avoid disaster. The Douglass guide book *Exploring Southeast Alaska* comments “Rocky Pass remains a wild, remote area requiring superior piloting skills. It is not recommended for all boats since the route involves considerable risk. We do not recommend Rocky Pass for larger boats or for skippers unsure of their piloting skills. Vessels over 30 feet beware!” No worries. We've ignored those 30-foot signs before in Bishop Bay Hot Springs. Everything worked out OK. Just don't let Pat or Harriett read this guidebook.



We entered the the northend of Keku Strait on a rising 14-foot tide at 2:30PM. As a southbound boat we want green marks on the starboard, or right side, and red marks on port. All hands are in the pilothouse helping to identify the numbered marks, looking for on coming traffic, repeating reading depth readings, and generally acting alert.

(← *Alert Wild Blue pilothouse crew.*)



*(Typical Rocky Pass narrow channel ahead. Make a left turn at the mark. →)*

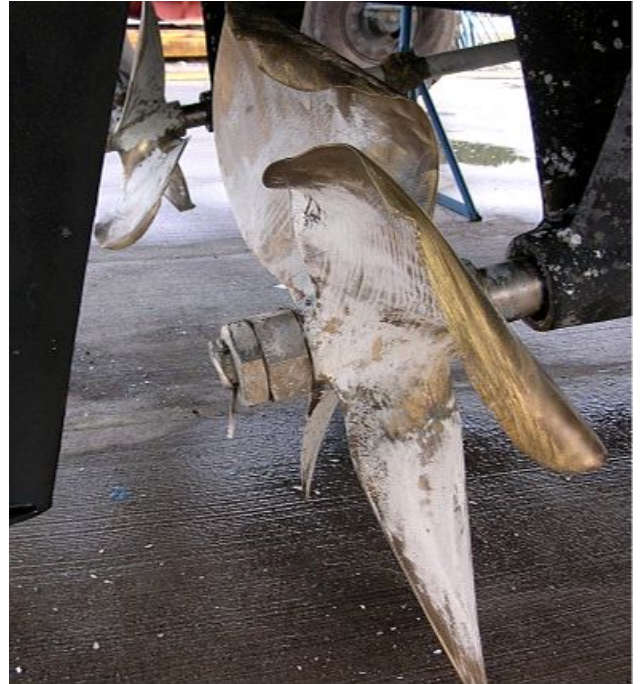
After passing 21 navigational marks, we arrived at our anchorage, the midway point in Rocky Pass, just before high tide for the evening. Entering the Pass on a rising tide gives us an option if we run aground. The option is to wait a bit for the tide to rise, and if a soft grounding, the rising water depth frees the boat to continue. Luckily neither boat ran aground in Keku Strait.





(← Another narrow channel.)

(File photo example of a boat that has run aground. This would not be considered a soft grounding. →)



(← Denny and Harriett discuss who gets the last prawn on Seagate. Wonder if these are the missing prawns from the Wild Blue trap? Note that bottle in the background looks to be an empty Francis Ford Coppolla variety. This photo was from the night before the “bottle in crab trap” incident.)

and, with heavy weight attached, dropped to just a foot above the bottom. The boys waited for fish with beers in hand.

Both Denny and Chuck are camera buffs and have brought some rather large zoom lens. Here's just some of Chuck's many photos.

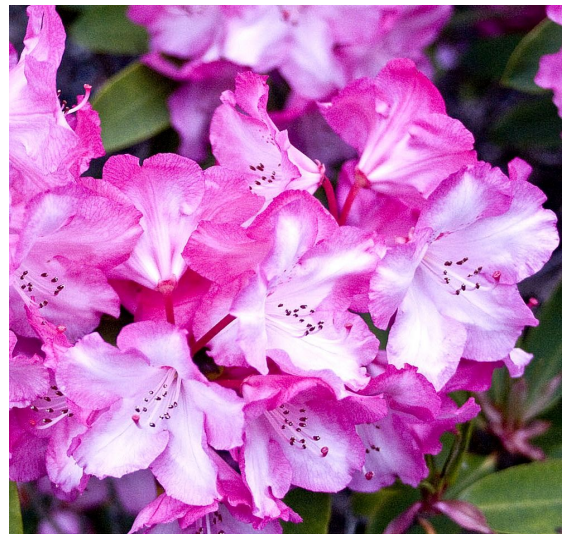




*(Like Denny, Chuck has a BIG lens for those far out photos.)*

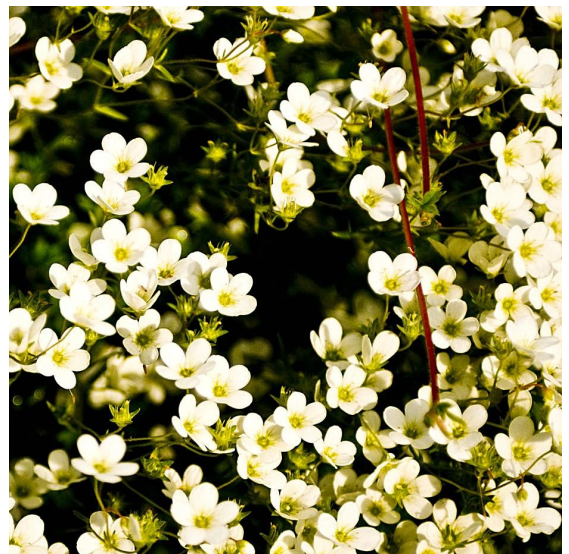


*(Life of an Alaskan Slug)*



*(Rhododendrons in Alaska)*

*(The Alaskan flower of unknown variety. →)*



It was a fishless experience for the Wild Blue crew. Perhaps tomorrow will be better after our 5AM departure for rising tide and a “groundless” departure from Keku Strait. We’ll continue on to El Capitan Passage and wait at the entrance for the new flood tide. We’ll finally anchor for the evening deep inside El Capitan Passage near the El Capitan Cave, the deepest cave on the Pacific Coast. Hopefully the weather will clear up. Goodnight.