***Ocean Challenge Live!*–The Vendée Globe**
Solo, non-stop, around-the-world race

WEEK 10 wildlife

Race Online at sitesALIVE.com

Team of Experts • Q&A • Ship's Log
Photos • Podcasts • Videos • Essays

By Rich Wilson, Skipper
Aboard *Great American III*

Halfway around the world, through the Atlantic, Indian, and now Pacific Oceans, we have seen a diverse array of wildlife.

Porpoises have played in the bow wave, flying fish have leapt onto the boat, and unlucky squid have been washed onto the deck by errant waves. Birds are everywhere; we've seen petrels, terns, and now the inspiring albatross of the Southern Ocean. With a wingspan of 9-10 feet, they glide effortlessly, almost never flapping their wings, and are the royalty of the air.

On previous voyages, we've seen whales off South Africa, and sharks in the tropics. And here now, when a wave sweeps the deck, it leaves behind dozens of minuscule shrimp, each about 1 centimeter long. Last night, a small gray animal made a hasty exit from the surface as we approached, leaving only a whirlpool.

Each species we see at the surface is amazing in its own way. Beneath the surface more species are being discovered to add to the thousands known. Sadly, all are threatened by pollution, global warming, and overfishing.

What an embarrassing legacy. Still, as we did with the ozone hole and CFCs, perhaps we can organize globally to save the oceans and make them vibrant again. Individually, we can join a group, make a donation, or write a congressman. As the young boy said to me in Les Sables d'Olonne, "C'est important a participer."

Learning from Animals

By Ioannis Miaoulis, Director and President, Museum of Science

Rich's Ship Logs reveal an extraordinary variety of marine life including sea birds, porpoises, flying fish, tiny shrimp, and squid. As Rich mentions, the aerodynamics of the albatross and the agility of porpoises are amazing.

We can learn a lot from these animals about science, engineering, and our world. Animals have already solved some of their own engineering problems through evolution. For example, I learned while on a snorkeling trip to the Great Barrier Reef that the sea anemone has evolved into an ideal shape and size for filter feeding. It is engineered to retrieve its food without being swept away by the current.

When the Museum's visitor attends one of our animal presentations, and they explore an alligator, a great horned owl, or a hedgehog, they are engaged; they are learning. They observe, experiment, and conclude as scientists do. The Museum's 3-D Digital Cinema lets visitors swim with a whale shark, a great white shark, and more. In the upcoming *Frogs: A Chorus of Colors* exhibit (February 13-May 25, 2009), visitors will learn about the remarkable diversity among frog species.

So while we can't all sail the world's oceans to see wildlife like Rich, observing wildlife at home or at a museum can teach you a lot about your world.

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